

Investigating Customers' Online Purchasing Intention towards Foreign Products in Qingdao, China

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Abstract

This study investigates customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China. Based on theory of planned behaviour, the researcher uses the quantitative method to propose research hypotheses and examine the influencing factors of customers' purchasing intention. Data were collected by questionnaire survey, and SPSS software was used for data analysis. The results show that perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control have an impact on customers' purchasing intention. Thus, there is a significant positive correlation between these variables and customers' purchasing intention. This study's results are helpful to enrich the academic research on customers' purchasing intention. Furthermore, it provides reference for domestic and abroad e-commerce enterprises. This study provides an additional opportunity for decision makers to develop and design more effective marketing strategies to ensure the enterprises' performance. Meanwhile, it helps to promote better and sustainable development of China's cross border e-commerce industry.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, China's financial progress has changed the economic structure from investment and export to consumption (Liao, 2018). The internal demand of domestic economic development has prompted China to implement the new policy on expanding and stimulating imports (FBI, 2019). The government of China puts forward appropriate measures to encourage official cross border e-commerce (CBEC) growth in 2014 (Qian, 2017). Moreover, China presented (E-Commerce Law) on January 1, 2019 (Gonzales, 2018). The new regulation provides better protections on customers' rights and further develops the e-commerce market healthily. According to iResearch, the CBEC (import) retail market's transaction value rose by 49.6 percent year-on-year, reaching 111.3 billion yuan in 2017. By 2021 it is anticipated to achieve over 350 billion yuan, but the growth rate will fall to

25.9%. With the increase of customers' demands, Chinese customers are increasingly pursuing cross border goods and services, and their demands on the complicated e-commerce company cross borders are increasingly greater (Ding et al., 2017). Foreign products are complex and varied, especially foreign products which are popular among Chinese customers in recent years. As a second-tier city in China, Qingdao is strategic international shipping location for local customers to purchase cross-border products.

Some literatures pointed out that due to relatively few offline channels for second-tier cities, second-tier cities are more willing to choose online shopping across borders to meet foreign products demand (Mao, 2016). Qingdao's cross-border industrial e-commerce park was set up in 2015, for the growth of e-commerce cross borders. Wang (2016) conducted an empirical study of variables influencing e-

commerce purchasing intentions cross borders in Wuhan, one second-tier city. However, none of the past studies were conducted in Qingdao which is a second-tier city. Also many studies focused on general perception towards online purchasing intention but less studies solely focus on customers online purchasing on foreign products.

E-commerce cross borders started late compared with national e-commerce in China. Thus, variables influencing the buyer's purchasing intention of e-commerce cross borders are comparatively few studies (Mou et al., 2017). As a result, the research literature on the customers' purchasing intention of e-commerce cross borders is not perfect in China. At present, e-commerce cross borders' platform research is the main form, while extensive study does not exist on customers' purchasing intention towards foreign products through e-commerce cross borders in Qingdao, China. Especially overseas products have been popular in China's second-tier city in latest years.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1 Customers' purchasing intention

Purchasing intention is customers' preference for purchasing goods or services. Traditionally, intention refers to the preconditions for stimulating and promoting customers to purchase products and services (Walintukan, 2018). In China, the research literature on customers' purchasing intention in e-commerce cross-borders is mainly based on e-commerce platform cross borders research (Chen, 2016; Liu, 2017; Jia, 2018; Zhao, 2016; Wang, 2017). Some scholars have empirically analysed their relationship with customers purchasing overseas products intention from the aspects of tariffs, brand image of origin and cultural factors (He, 2018). Chen (2017) used cross-border e-commerce users aged 19-45 as a sample to explore the relationship between customer's foreign cultural identity, perceived benefit, perceived cost, perceived risk and consumers' purchasing willingness in cross-border e-commerce. Wang (2016) conducted an empirical study on the variables influencing

purchasing willingness of Wuhan college students' e-commerce cross borders, including behavioural attitudes which are better usability, the usefulness, perceived price and perceived risk. Huang (2017) used mother infant products as an example to study perceived usability, perceived usefulness, perceived security, cross-border online shopping experience and cross-border reference groups are associated with customers' online shopping cross borders. In the e-commerce cross borders, online purchasing intention relates to the subjective possibility of customers purchasing foreign products online. In previous studies, the subjective norm and attitudes of online shopping cross-borders' customers have an influence on their intentions based on rational behaviour. In the online shopping cross-borders' environment, customers' online shopping intentions cross borders is basically the same as that of ordinary online shopping intentions, but the difference is that customers face overseas products. Therefore, there are more uncertainties in commodity information and more asymmetries between buyers and sellers. Based on the above review, the contradictions between studies are mostly caused by different concepts, and measurement approaches of customers' purchasing intention.

2.2 Relationship between perceived quality and customers' purchasing intention

Perceived quality relates to customers' assessment of overall brand excellence based on internal (performance and durability) and external (brand name). Therefore, quality is described as an estimation of the total superiority of a product or service (Asshidin, Abidin & Borhan, 2016). Other investigators also discovered that brand quality impacts customers' buying willingness (Tih & Lee, 2013; Tariq et al., 2013). Asshidin, Abidin and Borhan (2016) discussed Malaysian customers' purchasing intentions towards American goods. The outcomes presented that perceived quality had a significant influence on purchasing intentions. When customers think that the quality of products is high, their perceived value towards products is also high, which increases their purchasing intention (Tamimi

& Sebastianelli, 2016). Perceived quality affects purchase decision-making and behaviour, and actually affects purchasing intention. Hence, the study hypothesizes that: Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between perceived quality and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.

2.3 Relationship between perceived price and customers' purchasing intention

Wang (2016, 2017) in his study found out that Wuhan college students like to compare price of home products with overseas products through e-commerce shopping platform. Seeking the best price is a key motivation for online shopping customers (Swatman, Krueger & Vander, 2006) and Setiawan and Ashyar (2013) explored that in the online shopping setting, perceived price is related to consumer's purchasing willingness. Hence, the study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between perceived price and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.

2.4 Relationship between perceived value and customers' purchasing intention

This is known as the general evaluation for a commodity or service's utility after customers weigh perceived advantages and expenses incurred in acquiring the item. In the study of the cultural marketing strategy of e-commerce cross borders, Zhang (2015) pointed out that e-commerce cross borders should meet customers' shopping habits in introducing their own goods & services and shopping process design. On the basis of the characteristics of e-commerce websites cross borders, Lee (2016) explored the connection between perceived value and consumer's purchasing decision in cross-border online shopping, to help operators improve platform services. Customers' online purchasing intention is influenced by perceived value, because the virtualization of online shopping causes customers to pay more attention to perceived benefits and perceived costs. Perceived value

increased leads to online purchasing intention through eliminating the need to find alternatives. Hence, the study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between perceived value and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.

2.5 Relationship between subjective norm and customers' purchasing intention

Wang (2016) studied the impact of subjective norm on college students in e-commerce cross borders, pointed out that when individuals purchasing target goods through the new form of online shopping cross borders, their subjective perception is affected by other factor. Song and Xiao (2012) used the five-dimensional strategic module of experience to study customers' purchase intention, found that subjective norm indirectly affect purchasing intention by emotional attitudes. It is different from the result based on the traditional rational behaviour theory model that subjective norm directly affect purchase intention. Supanat (2012) also proves that subjective norm affects the intention to use e-commerce, but the impact is smaller than other variables. Hasbullah et al. (2016) explored the influencing factors of teenagers' online purchasing intention in Malaysian public university. He found that subjective norm had a moderate influence on customers' purchasing willingness through Internet. Haller and Michael (2008) said that as subjective norm, friends, family and colleagues have a beneficial effect on personal shopping online. Wang (2016) pointed out that college students' subjective norm is positively associated with their willingness in the empirical research of e-commerce cross borders. Lang and Lee (2018) on the basis of the theory of technology acceptance model (TAM), found that subjective norm can directly affect customers' buying willingness. Therefore, the study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between subjective norm and customers' online

purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.

2.6 Relationship between perceived behavioural control and customers' purchasing intention

Wang (2016) pointed out that it is the degree of difficulty for customers to complete the whole purpose of online shopping cross borders in the empirical study of e-commerce cross borders for college students. Moreover, when individuals have a more positive attitude toward a particular behaviour, they will have a higher intention, in contrast, they will have a lower intention (Taylor & Tood, 1995). On the basis of the theory of planned behaviour, perceived behavioural control affects purchase willingness (Ajzen, 1991). However, Bignne et al. (2010) found that perceived behavioural control did not directly affect users' willingness to buy tickets online in the investigation of perceived behaviour control structure. In another study, San Martin and Herrero (2012) found that they could not predict their intention to book rooms online, taking into account convenience conditions (similar to the concept of perceived behavioural control). Maichum et al. (2016) pointed out that confidence in individuals' ability to control their behaviour was positively correlated with purchase intention. Zhang, Bai and Lee (2011) according to rational behaviour theory and planned behaviour theory, proposed that perceived behavioural control has an important effect on online purchasing willingness. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.

3. **Research framework**

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is the principal theory and theoretical grounding of this study. TPB was presented by Ajzen in 1991, which analyses and predicts the rational consumption behaviour of customers. Therefore, TPB added the variable of perceived behavioural control in view of the theory of rational action. In the framework of

TPB, individual behaviour is impacted by attitude towards behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. That is to say, three variables affect customers' purchase attitudes, and affect their purchase intention, resulting in purchase behaviour. This model mainly focuses on the study of customer intention, and expands TRA under ideal conditions, which has more practical significance for theoretical research. At present, TPB was commonly recognized in predicting the particular intention and behaviour of the individual. In the guidance of this theory, this research explores the impact of perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on customers' purchasing intention in e-commerce cross borders.

4. **Research methodology**

Electronic questionnaires are used as the primary survey instrument in this research, which are distributed by social media such as forums, WeChat. Perceived quality in this research refers to three questions adopt from Lee (2016). Perceived price in this research refers to three questions adopt from Strader and Shaw (1997); Han (2009) and Wang (2016). Perceived value in this research relates to 3 questions adopt from Lee (2016). Subjective norm in this research relates to 3 questions adopt from Davis (1989) and Wang (2016), and perceived behavioural control refers to three questions adopt from Park (2004) and Wang (2016). Customer purchasing intention refers to 3 questions adopt from Berry and Parasuraman (1991).

This study aims at investigating Chinese customers' purchasing intention towards foreign products through e-commerce cross borders. Taking Qingdao as a segmentation market, the population of this study is e-commerce cross borders' customers who live in Qingdao and purchase oversea goods. The researcher distributed electronic questionnaires to target groups through social media such as WeChat. At the same time, the respondents send questionnaires to their relatives and friends who are the target groups. Data collection time is about one month, starting in late April 2019. Within one month, the participants transferred 175

questionnaires to the investigator. For the sample size assessment, 165 answers were gathered. After careful testing of the questionnaires returned, the questionnaires with obvious regularity (e.g., the answers are all 3-neutral), refused to be further analysed. Hence, after screening, the response of 165 respondents will be analysed in this study.

5. Findings

According to the results of the survey, the age, gender, education and monthly income were analysed by demographic method. Of the 165 questionnaires analysed, most of the participants were between the age of 25-30 which is 28.5%. In addition, the majority of participants were female which 58.8% is. Most participants finished a bachelor's degree qualification. Finally, most respondents earned more than 12,000 Yuan one month. In addition, on the basis of the analysis of the average, most of the respondents agreed. Furthermore, the data of all dependent variables and independent variable in this investigation are reliable. Besides that, to identify the effect and correlation of independent variables with dependent variable, the investigator chose correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. These outcomes show that a favourable correlation exists between all independent variables (perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) and dependent variable (purchasing intention of customers). Additional multiple regression analysis verified that these factors had important impacts on the buying willingness of consumers because all variables below 0.05 recorded sig value (p-value).

The starting hypothesis focuses on the variables of perceived quality and customer's purchasing intention. To achieve this goal, the analysis of correlation and regression are used to provide a clear response to current study issues as the finest statistical methods. The findings of the correlation analysis show in this research that there is an important beneficial connection between perceived quality and the purchasing intention of customers. The correlation value of Pearson is ($r = 0.524$, $\text{sig} =$

$0.000 < p < 0.01$). Similar findings were achieved through regression analysis, where values ($\text{beta} = 0.113$, $\text{sig} = 0.049 < p < 0.05$) were recorded, demonstrating that perceived quality had a substantial beneficial influence on the buying willingness of customers. Hence, the perceived quality hypothesis is placed forward, which promotes the perceived quality impact on customers' purchasing intention. It is shown that there is an important statistical connection between perceived quality and customers' purchasing intention. These results show an important connection exists in Qingdao, China, between perceived quality and customers' intention to purchase foreign products.

The second hypothesis focuses on the perceived price factors and the intention to purchase from customers. From the outcomes of chapter 4, the connection between the perceived value and the buying willingness of consumers has an important positive correlation that is demonstrated by the correlation assessment ($r = 0.542$, $\text{sig} = 0.000 < p < 0.01$). Moreover, the use of multiple regression analysis also supports this link and effect. The perceived value has a significant positive connection with customers' purchasing willingness from the regression outcomes ($\text{beta} = 0.136$, $\text{sig} = 0.024 < p < 0.05$). Therefore, these results address this study issues and support this hypothesis, which also validates There is an important connection between perceived cost and purchasing intention online from customers towards overseas products in Qingdao, China.

The third hypothesis presented in this study focuses on the variables of perceived value and customer's purchasing intention. Researchers try to afford a clear answer by analysing the data collected. Chapter 4 concludes that the perceived value correlates favourably with the buying willingness of consumers. The result can be seen from the score of correlation coefficient ($r = 0.744$, $\text{sig} = 0.000 < p < 0.01$). Regression analysis was used to help this outcome to determine that the perceived value was favourably linked with the purchasing intention of customers ($\text{beta} = 0.500$, $\text{sig} = 0.000 < p < 0.05$). It

shows that perceived value is positively correlated with customers' buying intention. The significant positive relationship and impact indicate that customers' purchasing intentions increase with the increase of perceived value. Therefore, it supports the hypothesis put forward in chapter 1 that there is an important connection between perceived value and customers' online purchasing willingness towards foreign goods in Qingdao, China.

The fourth hypothesis focuses on the factors of subjective norm and customers' purchasing intentions. The findings of the connection assessment in this study indicate that subjective norm is positively related with customers' intention to purchase. Pearson correlation value is ($r = 0.589$, $\text{sig} = 0.000 < p \text{ of } 0.01$). Analogous findings were acquired through regression analysis, where values ($\text{beta} = 0.148$, $\text{sig} = 0.018 < p \text{ of } 0.05$) were recorded, demonstrating an important positive connection between subjective norm and the buying willingness of customers. Therefore, subjective norm hypothesis is suggested, which demonstrates that the subjective norm has an important statistical connection with consumers' buying intention. These results show that an important connection exists between the subjective norm and customers' purchasing intention towards foreign goods online in Qingdao, China.

The last hypothesis raised is focused on the variables of perceived behavioural control and the customers' purchasing intentions. The connection between perceived behavioural control and the customers' purchasing intention is an important positive correlation from the outcomes which is proved by correlation analysis ($r = 0.492$, $\text{sig} = 0.000 < p \text{ of } 0.01$). Furthermore, application of multiple regression analysis also supports this connection. Perceived behavioural control has an important beneficial connection to the buying intention of customers from the regression outcomes ($\text{beta} = 0.116$, $\text{sig} = 0.042 < p \text{ of } 0.05$). These results therefore address this research question and support this hypothesis, which also validates There is an important connection between perceived behavioural

control and customers' purchasing intention towards overseas products online in Qingdao, China.

Multiple linear regression analysis found that the R value is 0.806, indicating that the model's appropriate degree is very good and that the forecast level is also very good. Meanwhile, the R square value is 0.649 that showed the correlation between the dependent variable and independent variables. Consequently, due to R square is about 0.65, the link between the dependent variable and independent variables is examined to be better. This signifies that chosen independent variables can explain about 65% of the purchasing intentions of customers. That is to say, the predictive factors of perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control contributed approximately 65% of customers' purchasing willingness, which means that the remaining 35% was contributed with other variables not covered in this research. On the basis of Filed (2009), ANOVA table is employed to demonstrate variance assessment as a result of F ratio values and p-value or sig values. It also demonstrates whether or not the regression model is statistically important. As you can see from the ANOVA table above, the variance analysis demonstrates that the F statistics produced ($F = 58.815$) are important at 0.05 ($p = 0.000$) levels. It can therefore be concluded that an important statistical connection between independent variables and dependent variable occurs when the p-value is less than 0.05. It implies that there are independent variables (perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) included in the model are statistically significant predictors of customer purchase intention. In short, this means that these selected independent variables (perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) are related to dependent variable (customers' purchasing intention).

When an independent variable is added by one unit, the coefficient table is employed to investigate the anticipated increase of the independent variable, keeping all other independent variables unchanged.

This can be achieved by the following regression equation which is produced and interpreted on account of the coefficient outcomes. According to the coefficients table above, five independent variables are available (predictors), including perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, to predict the impact on customers' purchasing intention (dependent variables). In this study, the researcher uses the generated equation to find out how much customers' purchasing intention increase when the independent variable is added to a unit, as shown below:

$$Y=a+b1X1, b2X2, \dots, bnXn$$

$$\text{Customers' purchasing intention} = -1.912 + 0.136 (\text{perceived quality}) + 0.156 (\text{perceived price}) + 0.582 (\text{perceived value}) + 0.170 (\text{subjective norms}) + 0.123 (\text{perceived behavioural control})$$

From the above equation, it is observed that when the perceived quality of a unit increases and all other independent variables remain unchanged, customers' purchasing intention is anticipated to grow by 0.136 units. When the perceived price of a unit increases and all other independent variables remain unchanged, customers' purchasing intention expectation will raise by 0.156 units. When the perceived value of a unit raises and all other independent variables remain unchanged, customers' purchasing intention is anticipated to grow by 0.582 units. When the subjective norms of a unit increase and all other independent variables remain unchanged, customers' purchasing intention expectation will raise by 0.170 units. And, when the perceived behavioural control of a unit raises and all other independent variables remain unchanged, customers' purchasing intention expectation will increase by 0.123 units. Therefore, among the target population, perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control have an important influence on consumers' purchasing willingness.

In this portion, whether the study hypotheses are accepted or rejected will be determined. The table as follows;

Hypothesis	Decision
H1: There is a significant relationship between perceived quality and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.	Accepted
H2: There is a significant relationship between perceived price and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.	Accepted
H3: There is a significant relationship between perceived value and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.	Accepted
H4: There is a significant relationship between subjective norm and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.	Accepted
H5: There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and customers' online purchasing intention towards foreign products in Qingdao, China.	Accepted

6. Conclusion

From the theoretical perspective, this investigation has a great implication to the theoretical point of view. Since it is anticipated that the outcomes of this investigation will contribute to fresh knowledge. It is helpful to understand the existing literature on the relationship between customers' purchasing intention and the factors. The findings of this research are compatible with prior research of the TPB model implementation. The results show that attitude towards behaviour (perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value), subjective norms and perceived behaviour control are connected with customers' buying willingness, which fits the TPB

model. The data contained in this research will assist enterprises realize importance of customer purchasing intentions to achieve corporate strategic objectives. It is hoped that this research will be helpful to further study the factors affecting customers' purchasing intention against e-commerce cross borders' context, whether from psychological factors or product factors. This study also enriches the research on Chinese customers' purchasing intention under the condition of e-commerce cross borders. The research results can be used to formulate the marketing strategy of e-commerce cross borders for companies in target industries and help enterprises formulate marketing plans to attract customers' e-commerce cross borders to purchase their products in China. As China's e-commerce scale develops across borders, the variables that motivate Chinese consumers to buy overseas products need to be determined, so as to help Chinese and foreign enterprises formulate feasible business plans to improve market competitiveness and improve the growth of the e-commerce industry across borders. Specifically, findings can be used to plan, develop, implement and evaluate the business plans currently used by the company. In addition, it can also be used to develop and adopt new marketing schemes to enhance customers' purchasing intention. Moreover, it will help top managers develop such strategies and ultimately improve customers' purchasing intention, thus ensuring that the company's performance remains at the high level. This study provides practical implication for Chinese and foreign enterprises to carry out e-commerce operations cross borders, and promotes the expansion of e-commerce cross borders in China.

The constraints were also discovered in this research, like other research, which will provide ideas for future investigators. This investigation is restricted to investigating impacts for five independent variables on the purchasing intention of customers, including perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control. Another limitation of the research is its approach of collecting information through the questionnaire. Moreover, the sample

framework of this research is restricted to the purchase of foreign products for users by e-commerce cross borders in Qingdao, China. Therefore, in other areas of China are suggested to be studied. Furthermore, the researcher cannot use random sampling to guarantee the universality of study outcomes owing to time and cost limitations, due to choose convenient sampling methods as a fast way to obtain information from participants. Despite these constraints, the research has accomplished its aims effectively and delivered significant and useful outcomes.

Since this research just focus on five independent variables, including perceived quality, perceived price, perceived value, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, it is suggested that the researcher expand this investigation to examine the connection between other independent variables (e.g. brand, experience, different cultures) and customers' purchasing intention, so as to improve their understanding of this topic. In addition, it is suggested that the connection between these factors and customers' purchasing intention be compared to provide more information and evidence in this research. Moreover, this investigation examines the willingness of clients to buy through Internet towards foreign goods in Qingdao, China. It is suggested that the scope of the study be expanded, such as selecting other regions of China to conduct a survey at the same time, and then regional comparison can be made. It can also analyse the orientated population of the sample who are the local university students. Those will improve the consistency of the research results. Besides that, in order to obtain more effective research results, more than one information collection instrument can be used by future investigators, in particular by using interviews to obtain information from participants. It is suggested to be a large sample size of random sampling method to use in future studies, to ensure the universality of the results for all population.

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