

Exploring Perceptions: Why Do Mexican Consumers Buy Chinese Cars?

Armando Espinoza¹, Martha L. Espinoza-Oliva¹

1. IIESCA, Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, MEX

Corresponding author: Martha L. Espinoza-Oliva, marespinoza@uv.mx

Received 08/11/2025
Review began 08/17/2025
Review ended 11/12/2025
Published 12/30/2025

© Copyright 2025
Espinoza et al. This is an open access
article distributed under the terms of the
Creative Commons Attribution License CC-
BY 4.0., which permits unrestricted use,
distribution, and reproduction in any
medium, provided the original author and
source are credited.

DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.7759/s44404-025-09577-y>

Abstract

Since the arrival of the second wave of Chinese automakers in Mexico in 2019, these manufacturers have rapidly gained traction, capturing approximately 10% of the market with over 25 brands by 2024 and becoming a significant force in the most in-demand segments of the automotive industry. This study delves into the complex motivations behind Mexican consumers' preference for Chinese cars. Methods were employed to uncover not only conscious perceptions but also the unconscious reasons that drive consumers to choose Chinese brands over traditional "Western" alternatives. Our findings reveal that the decision-making process is heavily influenced by the dynamic interplay of complex perceptions and underlying motives, particularly novelty and price in the case of Chinese brands. Consumers do not just buy a car; they navigate a sophisticated framework of perceived attributes and hidden factors. Chinese light vehicle brands have a competitive advantage over "Western" brands: they appeal to a sense of novelty, but other attributes are valued in a motivational sense rather than in perception. Understanding these nuanced perceptual frameworks is crucial for strategic marketing and communication. By grasping how they are perceived, as well as the deeper, often subconscious, reasons for consumer behavior, culture, and strategic planning, both companies and brands (Chinese or "Western") can develop more effective strategies to connect with their target market.

Categories: Consumer Behavior, Marketing and Market Issues in Business

Keywords: consumer behaviour, perception, consumer attitudes, marketing, motivation

Introduction

In 2008, the First Automotive Works (FAW) group attempted to enter the Mexican market with a few compact models; however, it left after two years (Carrasquero, 2023). A second "wave" of Chinese manufacturers arrived around 2019, with a market share of 0.01%, flooding the market with available cars during the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Mexico, while "Western" manufacturers experienced a drop in inventory (Mendoza-Álvarez and Carbajal-De-Nova, 2024). Since then, the offer of Chinese cars has boosted the market share to 9.8% in 2024, with 302,837 units sold, accounting for one in every ten vehicles sold in the country, ranging from compact to luxury cars, and commercial vehicles. As consumer preferences have shifted toward utility vehicles such as SUV, the trend is expected to continue, increasing the market share of Chinese manufacturers (Bureau, 2020) (El Economista, 2025) (Ewing, 2024) (Valladolid, 2024). With previous motives (an individual's inner conditions) guiding behaviour according to their perception, which may be described as a reaction to the environment, people tend to choose, organize, and interpret inputs, both internal and external. Along with memory (past experiences), the urge to be satisfied, and how one wishes to be perceived by others, stimuli that have already been interpreted have the potential to alter a consumer's behaviour (Fill and Turnbull, 2023). Additionally, this may occur when making decisions about consumption as consumers are prompted to engage in rationalization, presenting socially acceptable justifications that may deviate from the actual, unconscious motivations behind a purchase and the decision process (Berelson and Steiner, 1964) (Skinner, 1953).

In this study, we aim to uncover how Chinese manufacturers are perceived in the Mexican market and the motivations that influence consumer behavior to understand their purchase-decision process. While Chinese automotive brands have aggressively penetrated the Mexican market, rapidly capturing significant share through competitive pricing and fast model deployment, existing industry reports primarily focus on descriptive sales data and market growth. This study advances knowledge by moving beyond these aggregate figures to conduct an in-depth, explanatory study of Mexican consumer perceptions. By segmenting and analyzing the unique psychological factors influencing Mexican car buyers, it offers prescriptive insights for both Chinese and "Western" manufacturers on how to localize their branding, service networks, and product features to foster trust and convey long-term reliability beyond the potential price advantage. Finally, we empirically model how initial consumer motivations (e.g., novelty and price) may clash with post-purchase experiences.

We aimed to identify how stimuli direct the perception and unconscious driving forces of consumers. In particular, at the time of purchase, the customer acts on feelings and impulses, based on reactions to

How to cite this article

Espinoza A, Espinoza-Oliva M L (December 30, 2025) Exploring Perceptions: Why Do Mexican Consumers Buy Chinese Cars?. Cureus J Bus Econ 2 : es44404-025-09577-y. DOI <https://doi.org/10.7759/s44404-025-09577-y>

images and/or symbols existing in their unconscious, related to the product according to their perception of themselves and how they would like to be perceived publicly. Such perception directly influences the purchasing decision-making process, particularly the motivation behind acquiring a vehicle from a Chinese manufacturer. This is of great interest not only to car manufacturers, as knowing why consumers buy, in addition to the context, may be vital for strategic, marketing, and organizational planning.

International automotive context

In 2023, Chinese car brands significantly expanded their presence in emerging economies, such as Mexico, with over 17.5 million vehicles sold. These brands gained substantial market share in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa, while also growing in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Chinese sales were boosted by an increase in international demand and growth in those emerging markets. However, this growth occurred despite increasing trade tensions and global economic challenges; therefore, the industry now faces stronger headwinds in 2025, as more countries, including the US, EU and Turkey, implement tariffs to protect their domestic markets from Chinese light vehicles (CNBC, 2024) (Iordache and Kiderlin, 2024) (Reuters, 2024).

Table 1 presents the top 10 best-selling light vehicles globally in 2024, including the electric, SUV, pickup, and compact segments (Statista, 2025). For the second year in a row, the Tesla Model Y (electric) remained the top seller, despite a slight drop in sales of 10% from the previous year. It is noticeable that the Chinese Build Your Dreams (BYD) Song (electric) reached the 9th place from the 19th in 2023, representing an increase in sales of just over 50%. The second most sold vehicle in 2024 is the Toyota Corolla, with over 1 million units sold, a 35% increase from the previous year, ranking 4th (Munoz, 2025).

#	Manufacturer	Model	Segment	Units	Origin
1	Tesla	Model Y	Electric	1,090,000	Western
2	Toyota	Corolla sedan	Compact	1,080,000	Western
3	Toyota	RAV4	SUV	1,020,000	Western
4	Ford	F-150	Pickup	900,000	Western
5	Honda	CR-V	SUV	740,000	Western
6	Chevrolet (GM)	Silverado	Pickup	640,000	Western
7	Hyundai	Tucson	SUV	610,000	Western
8	Toyota	Camry	Compact	580,000	Western
9	BYD	Song	SUV (Electric)	570,000	Chinese
10	Volkswagen	Tiguan	SUV	540,000	Western

TABLE 1: Top 10 best-selling models globally in 2024.

Source: (Statista, 2025).

GM, General Motors; BYD, Build Your Dreams; SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle

Mexico is the second-largest destination market for Chinese vehicles, with 320 K units in 2024, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Bork, 2024). It is expected that this trend will continue to grow due to the increasing demand in emerging countries. Rising demand for Chinese cars in emerging economies is a noteworthy trend, as competitive pricing is a key driver of this growth.

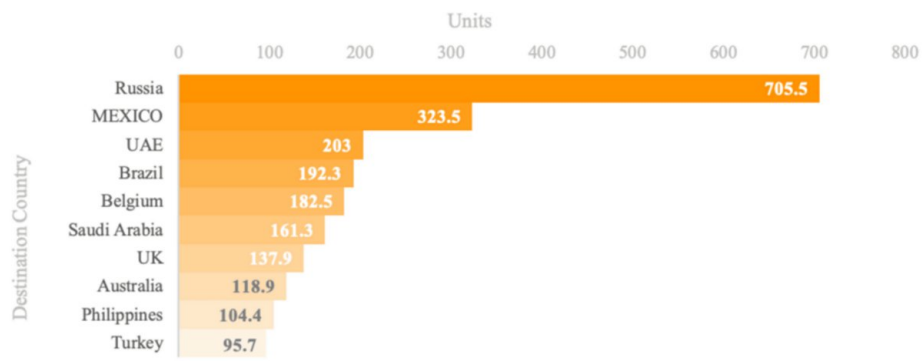


FIGURE 1: Top 10 best-selling Chinese light vehicle export destinations in 2024.

Note: Units in thousands.

Source: (Bork, 2024).

Several prominent automakers have a long-standing presence in Mexico and actively sell and assemble vehicles. Chevrolet (General Motors), Volkswagen, and Nissan have consistently competed for dominance in the light vehicle market. Mexico's automotive sector is a vital and growing component of the national economy. It began with U.S. assembly companies arriving in the 1920s, leading to significant development by the 1960s, when cars were fully manufactured domestically. By 1977, Mexico was exporting vehicles, primarily to the United States. Since 2000, the industry has experienced consistent growth, driven by ongoing public investment and the construction of new production plants. In 2008, the Chinese manufacturer FAW Group attempted to enter the Mexican market by commercializing its models directly in department stores instead of dealerships, with a Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) starting at US\$3,500. However, after two brief years of complaints regarding customer and technical service and the perceived quality of the cars, it was decided to end FAW's participation in Mexico (Bureau, 2020) (Carrasquero, 2023) (Silverio, 2009).

Nearly 70% of vehicles sold in Mexico in 2022 are imported, with China leading the way, with more than 180,000 units, followed by the United States, over 100,000 units, and Brazil, almost 100,000 units, as shown in Table 2 (AMDA, 2025).

	China	USA	Brazil	Japan	India	Thailand	Indonesia	Germany	Canada	Spain
2019	7,737	139,109	53,647	84,726	51,201	18,224	4,873	31,074	34,021	31,462
2024	182,253	101,863	99,075	75,547	67,279	56,909	28,726	24,249	15,831	13,920

TABLE 2: Comparison of (light) vehicle imports by country of origin in Mexico, 2019–2024.

Source: (AMDA, 2025).

Automotive context in Mexico

Similarly, imports from other Southeast Asian countries are increasing, whereas imports from European countries, such as Germany and Spain, have decreased significantly. For the purposes of this study, we selected 2019 because Chinese manufacturers attempted to enter the Mexican market for a second time with several brands and models, using a more better commercial strategy. Some Western automakers, such as Chevrolet, Suzuki, and Volkswagen, moved the production of certain models to countries such as China, India, Thailand, and Brazil to meet domestic demand and reduce production and sales costs (El Economista, 2022) (El Economista, 2025) (Mendoza-Álvarez and Carbajal-De-Nova, 2024).

Moreover, Figure 2 illustrates that the SUV segment has seen the greatest growth, with sales steadily increasing over 500,000 units (AMDA, 2025). The sub-compact and compact segments come next, each with nearly 300,000 units; however, these segments experience deceleration. The sports, minivan, luxury,

hybrid, and electric segments are excluded for purposes of this study.

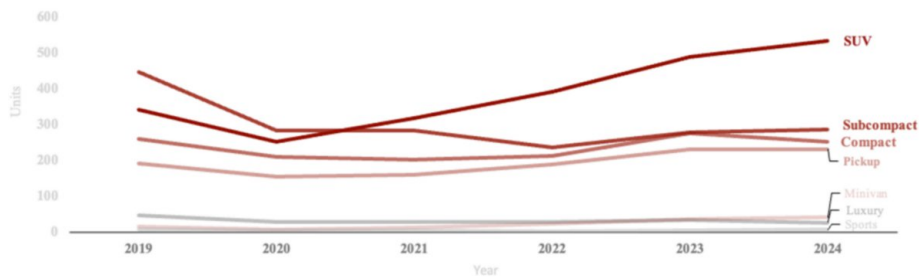


FIGURE 2: Annual light vehicle units sold, by segment, in Mexico, 2019–2024.

Note: Units in thousands.

Source: (AMD, 2025).

SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle

Market share

Given that 2019 marks the year Chinese brands entered Mexico, their sales are expected to differ from those of “Western” manufacturers. However, their market share growth is accelerating, particularly with the introduction of several models in the SUV segment (El Financiero, 2024) (Forbes, 2023) (Monroy, 2024).

Furthermore, Figure 3 illustrates market share trends by brand country of origin, comparing the years 2019 and 2024. The growth of Chinese brands is noticeable, increasing by 9.1% in 2024 compared to 2019 (AMD, 2025) (INEGI, 2025). Also, brands from Japan (-3.6%), the USA (-2.5%), and Germany (-3.5%) saw declines, despite representing some of the best-selling brands across all segments in Mexico.

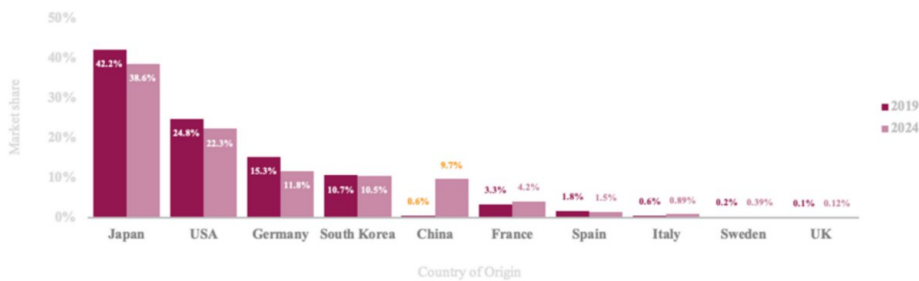


FIGURE 3: Light vehicle market share trend by brand country of origin, 2019 vs. 2024.

Source: (AMD, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

Furthermore, Figure 4 illustrates the market share of the best-selling car automakers in Mexico dominated by “Western” brands: Nissan, 17.2%; General Motors, 13.2%; Volkswagen, 9.7%; and Toyota, 8.1%, with only a few of their models included among the 10 best-selling vehicles.

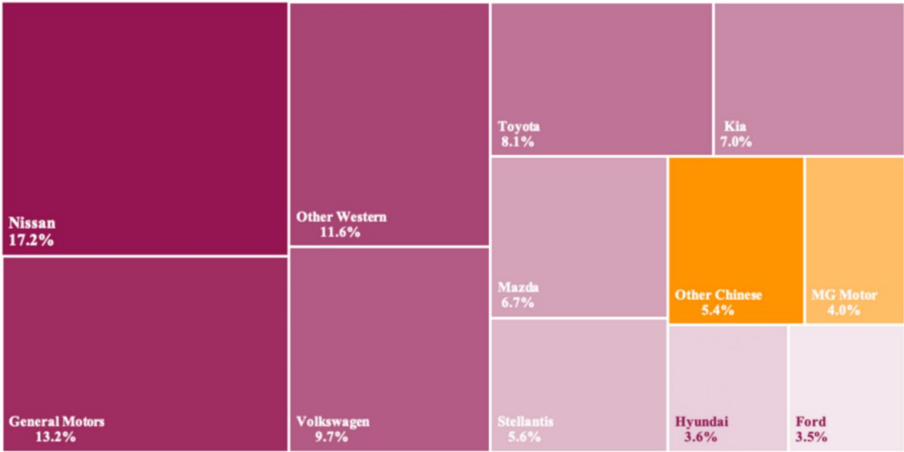


FIGURE 4: Market share of light vehicles brands of the selected segments in Mexico, 2024.

Note: General Motors includes Chevrolet, Buick, and GMC. Stellantis includes Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram, Alfa Romeo, and Peugeot.

Source: (AMDA, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

Additionally, the Chinese brands, new to the Mexican market, are gaining momentum, with MG Motor at 4.0%, Chirey Motor at 1.8%, and JAC at 1.7% market share, compared to older “Western” brands such as Honda (2.8%) and Suzuki (2.9%).

Moreover, the variation (VAR) in market share in 2024 is illustrated in Figure 5, where manufacturer performance is measured in units based on accumulated year-over-year (YoY) variation (a metric that measures the annual growth rate of a value over time) compared to the previous year, 2023 (AMDA, 2025) (INEGI, 2025). Sales of the top-selling “Western” brands are relatively steady and low compared to the cumulative YoY growth of Chinese brands, such as Jetour (almost 100%) and JAC (around 35%). Not only does their sales unit growth remain consistent, but they also gain market share. MG Motor, the leading Chinese brand in Mexico, with 4% of the total market share, experienced a very discrete accumulated YoY growth of 0.1%, with the top-selling SUV and compact models. Other Chinese manufacturers, present with several models, account for 5.4% of the Mexican light vehicle market, including Chirey Motor (1.8%), JAC (1.7%), and Motornation (0.7%).

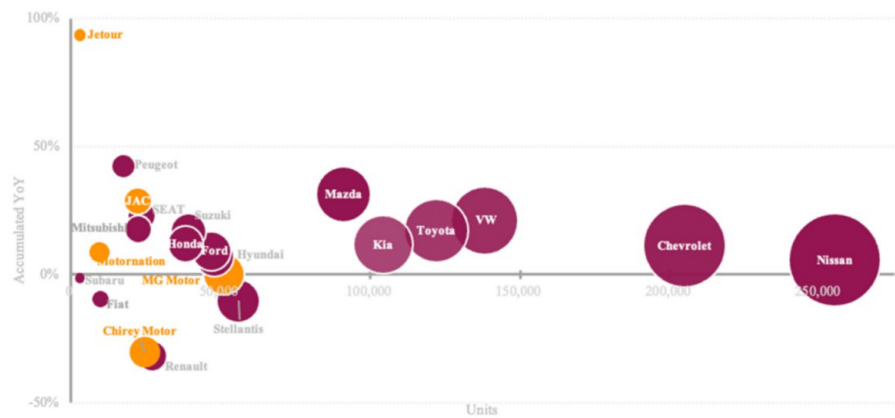


FIGURE 5: Brand performance by annual growth rate and units sold in 2024.

Note: Chirey Motor includes Chirey and Omoda; Chrysler includes Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and Ram; Motornation includes BAIC, JMC, DFSK, Changan, and Seres.

Source: (AMD, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

BAIC, Beijing Automotive Industry Corporation; DFSK, Dongfeng Sokon; JMC, Jiangling Motors Corporation; VW, Volkswagen

Figure 6 shows the sales trend in terms of units (in thousands) of the top five best-selling “Western” and the top four Chinese manufacturers for the period 2019-2024 (AMD, 2025) (INEGI, 2025). The fifth Chinese brand is not included, as its sales are too low to be represented in the line chart. Nissan dominates the market, followed by General Motors (Chevrolet).

As for Chinese manufacturers, JAC, being the first on the scene in 2019, maintained discrete growth over time; however, it was surpassed by MG Motors and Chirey Motors within only one year of operations in Mexico, highlighting the dynamic shift in the Mexican light vehicle market.

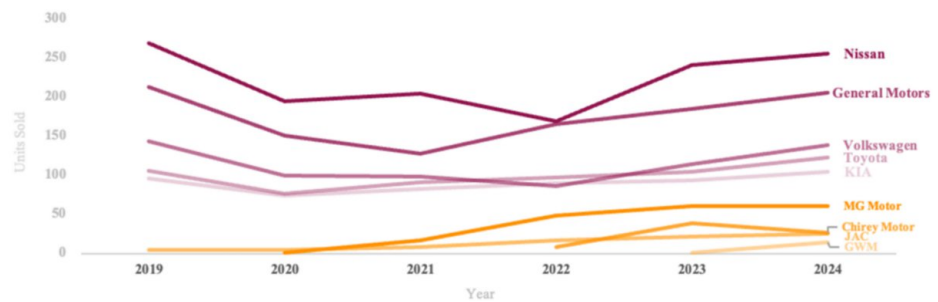


FIGURE 6: Top best-selling “Western” and Chinese manufacturers in Mexico, 2019–2024.

Note: Units in thousands.

Source: (AMD, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

GWM, Great Wall Motor

In addition, Table 3 summarizes the market share and year-to-date (YTD) sales in 2024 for light vehicle manufacturers in Mexico (AMD, 2025) (INEGI, 2025). The variation (VAR) in market share is based on the previous year. In terms of YTD sales, “Western” manufacturers dominate the top 10 best-selling brands; however, the Chinese MG Motor ranks 8th, surpassing brands such as Hyundai, Ford, and Honda. The table excludes previously unconsidered segments.

Rank	Manufacturer	Origin	Sales YTD	Market share	VAR
1	Nissan	Western	255,116	17.2%	5.8%
2	Chevrolet (GM)	Western	205,043	13.2%	11.4%
3	Volkswagen	Western	138,181	9.7%	21.2%
4	Toyota	Western	121,968	8.1%	17.1%
5	Kia	Western	104,384	7.0%	11.7%
6	Mazda	Western	99,797	6.7%	31.3%
7	Stallantis	Western	93,361	6.3%	-10.2%
8	MG Motor	Chinese	60,168	4.0%	0.1%
9	Hyundai	Western	53,305	3.6%	7.1%
10	Ford	Western	52,359	3.5%	9.2%
11	Suzuki	Western	43,661	2.9%	16.8%
12	Honda	Western	42,336	2.8%	12.0%
13	Renault	Western	29,892	2.0%	-31.7%
14	Chirey Motor	Chinese	26,834	1.8%	-30.2%
15	SEAT	Western	26,023	1.8%	23.0%
16	JAC	Chinese	24,826	1.7%	17.8%
17	Mitsubishi	Western	24,706	1.7%	28.8%
20	Great Wall Motors	Chinese	14,455	1.0%	290.2%
23	Motornation	Chinese	10,497	0.7%	8.8%

TABLE 3: Light vehicle sales and market share in Mexico, 2024.

Notes: Data as of January 2025. Chirey Motor includes Chirey and Omoda; Stellantis includes Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, RAM, Peugeot, and Fiat; GM includes Chevrolet, GMC, Buick, and Cadillac; Motornation includes BAIC, JMC, DFSK, Changan, and Seres. VAR refers to variation compared to 2023.

Source: (AMDA, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

BAIC, Beijing Automotive Industry Corporation; DFSK, Dongfeng Sokon; GM, General Motors; JMC, Jiangling Motors Corporation; YTD, Year To Date

Figure 7 shows the total sales in units in 2024 for all segments of interest for the top-selling brands (AMDA, 2025) (INEGI, 2025). It is remarkable that Nissan is the most popular brand, followed by Chevrolet (manufactured in China). However, the Chinese brand MG Motor, present in all three segments, has gained market share, surpassing “Western” brands such as Honda and Suzuki, with just over 50,000 units sold.

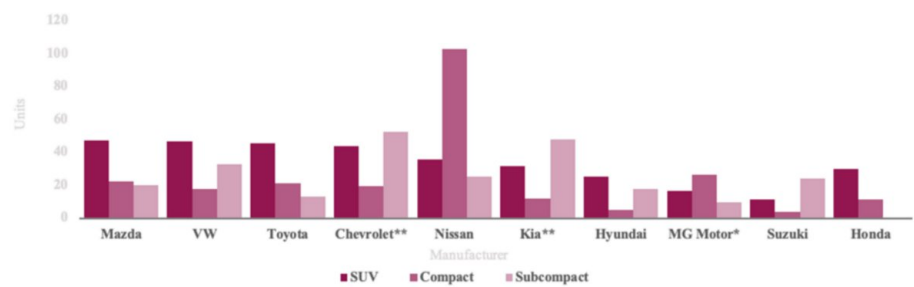


FIGURE 7: Top best-selling “Western” and Chinese manufacturers by segment in Mexico, 2024.

Note: Units in thousands.

*Chinese brand; **Manufactures in China.

Source: (AMDA, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle; VW, Volkswagen

Units sold vs. average MSRP

Figure 8 compares the average MSRP between “Western” and Chinese light vehicle manufacturers in Mexico, considering only the top-selling brands. Notably, the difference between the MSRP is minimal. In addition, a few manufacturers offer models in the subcompact segment, while the SUV segment, the most expensive, is crowded with an average of three models per manufacturer (AMDA, 2025) (Chevrolet, 2024) (Honda Mexico, 2024) (Hyundai Motor Mexico, 2024) (INEGI, 2025) (Kia Mexico, 2024) (Mazda Motor Mexico, 2024) (Morris Garages, 2024) (Nissan Mexico, 2024) (Renault Mexico, 2024) (Suzuki Mexico, 2024) (Toyota Mexico, 2024) (Volkswagen Mexico, 2024).

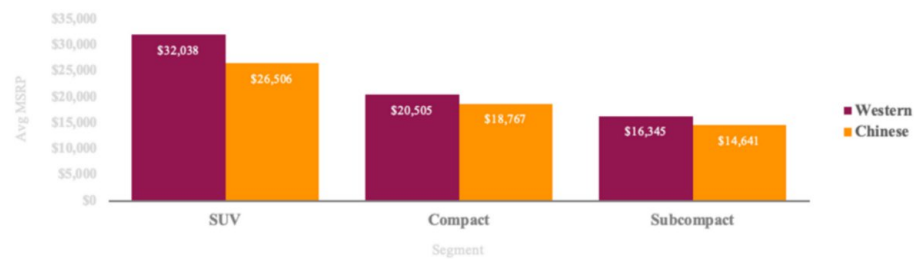


FIGURE 8: Average MSRP comparison: “Western” and Chinese manufacturers in Mexico, 2024.

Note: Average MSRP in US dollar.

Source: (AMDA, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

MSRP, Manufacturer’s Suggested Retail Price; SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle

Figure 9 illustrates the relationship between the average retail price, average MSRP, and units sold in 2024, for the top 10 best-selling light vehicles in the three previously mentioned segments: SUV (Figure 9a), compact (Figure 9b), and subcompacts (Figure 9c).

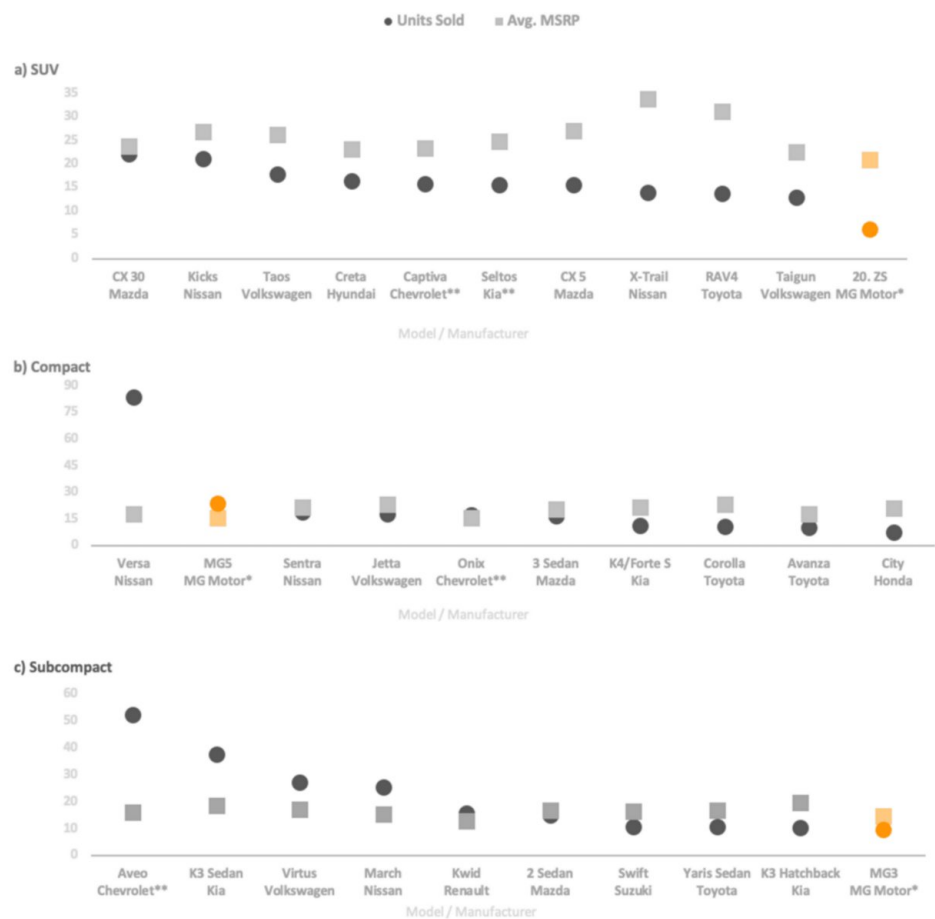


FIGURE 9: Relationship between units sold and average MSRP of the top 10 best-selling (a) SUV, (b) compact, and (c) subcompact models in Mexico, 2024.

Notes: Data as of January 2025. Average MSRP in US dollar. Avg. MSRP and units are represented in thousands.

*Chinese manufacturer; **Made in China.

Source: (AMDA, 2025) and (INEGI, 2025).

MSRP, Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price; SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle

Figure 9a illustrates the top 10 SUV models in terms of sales. Mazda CX30 dominates the segment, selling over 20,000 units. The comparison shows that the MG Motor ZS is the cheapest SUV model in Mexico, with an average MSRP slightly over \$20,000 USD. It is included in the comparison because it is the most popular Chinese SUV, despite ranking 20th in 2024. The most expensive SUV model is the Nissan X-Trail (Rogue), with an average MSRP of over \$30,000 USD, ranking 8th in sales units. Moreover, Figure 9b shows the top 10 best-selling compact models in Mexico. In this case, MG Motor MG5 is ranked 2nd, with nearly 30,000 units sold and an MSRP of \$15,000 USD, making it the cheapest model. For the 10th consecutive year, Nissan Versa has taken the top spot, with slightly fewer than 90,000 units sold in 2024 and an average MSRP of \$15,000 USD. The most expensive compact model is the Toyota Corolla (ranking 8th), excluding the hybrid version. Finally, Figure 9c shows the top 10 best-selling subcompact models. Chevrolet (General Motors) Aveo leads this segment, with over 50,000 units sold and an average MSRP of \$18,000 USD. Renault Kwid (Dacia) is the cheapest model, with an average MSRP \$ of 12,000 USD in late 2024. Chinese MG Motor MG3 ranks 10th, with over 10,000 units sold at an average MSRP of \$15,000 USD. The most expensive subcompact model is KIA K3 Sedan (ranking 2nd) with an average MSRP of \$20,000 USD.

The average MSRP is based on prices shared on each manufacturer's website in Mexico as of December 2024, with a currency conversion from Mexican Pesos to US Dollars at \$20.64 on December 25, 2024. Models group the various versions of technology, motorization, and automatic transmission as optional features. Sales promotions are not taken into consideration.

Dealerships

The Mexican light vehicle market, when viewed through the lens of dealership distribution (Figure 10: 10a, Western manufacturers; 10b, Chinese manufacturers) (INEGI, 2025), shows a clear concentration in three key states: Mexico City (center), a significant hub collectively representing all manufacturers, has 268 “Western” and 67 Chinese dealerships, followed by Nuevo León (northeast) and Jalisco (west). A notable contrast emerges: Chinese dealerships (532) represent nearly half of the 1,057 “Western” dealerships. The northeast, south, and southwest are the regions with the fewest dealerships. MG Motor dominates the scene with over 90 dealerships.

As of May 2025, there are 18 “Western” brands and 22 Chinese brands in Mexico (both within the previously selected segments). Commercial vehicles, minivans, electric, pickup, luxury, and sports segments are excluded, including brands such as Audi, BMW, BYD, Chrysler, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, SEV, and Tesla. In addition, new Chinese manufacturers are entering the Mexican market, as well as some current brands are expected to cease operations in 2025 (AutoDinámico, 2025) (Expansión, 2025).

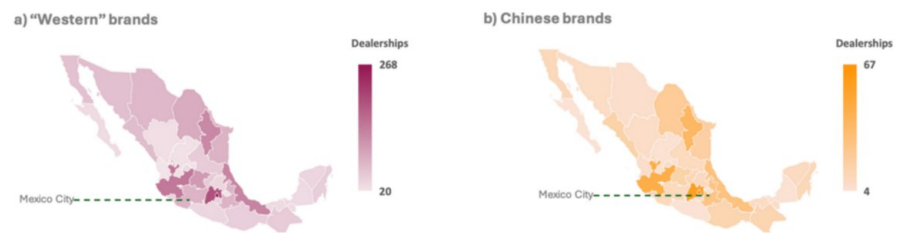


FIGURE 10: Maps of light vehicle dealerships in Mexico, 2024: (a) Western manufacturers; (b) Chinese manufacturers.

Note: Data as of May 2025.

Source: (AMD, 2025).

Finally, the Mexican light vehicle market is undergoing a significant transformation driven by the increasing presence of Chinese car manufacturers. In 2024, Chinese brands accounted for approximately 10% of total light vehicle sales, demonstrating a rapid shift in market dynamics. While established “Western” manufacturers such as Chevrolet (General Motors), Nissan, and Volkswagen continue to dominate the market shares, the influx of competitively priced Chinese vehicles, particularly SUVs, reshapes consumer preferences. This evolving scenario presents a rich area for research into consumer behavior, brand perception, and the strategic adaptations of both incumbent and emerging automotive players in a rapidly globalizing market. For this reasons, the following research questions were posed:

- RQ1: How are Chinese car brands perceived in Mexico?
- RQ2: What are the underlying motives for purchasing a Chinese-brand car?

Theoretical perspectives

Purchase Decision Process

Examining marketing stimuli, the environment, and psychological processes (such as the need for esteem, personality, and recognition) is essential to comprehending consumer behavior, and more especially, the underlying factors that influence purchasing decisions, as shown in Figure 11 (Kotler et al., 2022).

Consumer behavior refers to the process, which significantly impacts the purchase, by which individuals identify, select, research, acquire, utilize, and dispose of products to fulfill their needs. If a consumer believes they have a need, it will become a desire that leads them to act impulsively. Individuals can desire something they do not need or need something they do not want. Likewise, a product does not have to adapt to the desire to be acquired. Purchasing is an intentional activity, motivated by the belief that the ultimate consequence of the purchase will be a much happier life. In this attempt to seek happiness through purchases, individuals become sensitive to the contrasts of the human condition, a source of cognitive discrepancy with their Ideal Self (Kotler et al., 2022) (Mothersbaugh et al., 2024) (O'Shaughnessy, 1989).

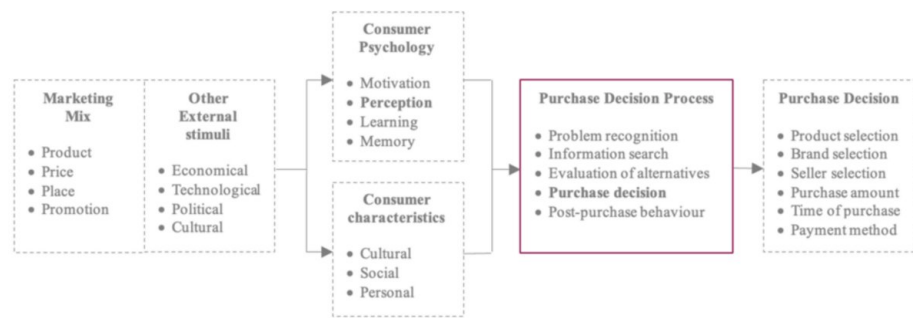


FIGURE 11: Consumer behavior model.

Source: (Kotler et al., 2022).

Consumers have many goals they wish to achieve to attain satisfaction (an individual's feelings of pleasure or disappointment from contrasting the perceived performance with expectations) (Berelson and Steiner, 1964). These goals are determined by a preference structure that shapes distinct life conditions. Thus, consumers experience indecision during their purchases, as these preferences tend to be constantly changing in their quest to obtain all the elements necessary for satisfaction in their version of the Ideal Self. Aside from needs, the main goals of purchasing are social, through which one communicates one's position, values, and preferred self-image to other individuals (O'Shaughnessy, 1989). This refers to the fact that purchasing is not an isolated event but rather part of the lifestyle within a social consumption system (Mothersbaugh et al., 2024). Moreover, needs can be expressed through the desire to acquire a product that leads the consumer to achieve their satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2022). A purchase can be motivated by the belief that the product satisfies needs; however, it is based on the perception of beliefs, central values of life (Diallo et al., 2013) (Dootson et al., 2016) (Janoskova et al., 2021) (Kropff, 1971) (Pérez, 2006).

Motivation

Defined as the conditions of internal striving grouped as needs and drives. It is a generic phrase used to describe all conditions of internal reinforcement, including needs, desires, and basic human requirements such as food, water, clothing, and transportation. It is defined as the reason to action (Dean, 2010) (Nuttin et al., 1982). A motive is the "why" an individual satisfies a human need, an unobservable internal force that activates a behavioural response (Doyal and Gough, 1984). According to Abraham Maslow, motivation is based on social interaction as basic motives might be critical and a prerequisite for "advanced" motives (Kotler et al., 2022). This progressive emergence suggests a sequential process of motivational fulfillment is summarized in the hierarchy of human needs that influence behaviour that correspond to social needs, such as Belongingness (group acceptance, friendship), Esteem (Status), and Self-actualization (self-fulfillment). However, the Physiological and Safety needs must be satisfied first (Freud, 1989). Hence, absolute or basic, needs are described as something required for a person to survive and lead a healthy existence, as well as to feel content and have purpose in life. Understanding these fundamental drivers is crucial for deciphering consumer behaviour, as unmet basic needs significantly influence purchasing decisions and overall well-being. Furthermore, the interplay between these absolute needs and an individual's psychological state often gives rise to latent motives, which operate beneath conscious awareness (Kropff, 1971). Therefore, latent motives are to the consumer: 1) Unknown (subconscious); 2) Reluctant to admit them publicly (socially unwelcome); and 3) Difficult to explain because these motivations are bound to one's own self-perception and social goals; compared with the manifest motives, which are freely admitted and known to the individual (Berelson and Steiner, 1964) (Dimitriu and Guesalaga, 2017) (Mothersbaugh et al., 2024) (Rondoni et al., 2020).

Perception

According to (Berelson and Steiner, 1964), understanding how individuals interpret their context is quite important while studying consumer behaviour. It is the process by which an individual chooses, arranges, and evaluates the stimuli (information) they are exposed to in order to construct an impression of the outside world is known as perception, while creating a cohesive mental image of the stimuli that are around them, impacted by both internal and external variables (Skinner, 1978). Assigning interpretations to these stimuli or causes in relation to the "why" inquiry or the direct causes of consumer behaviour is a component of perception (Kotler et al., 2022). By contrast, motivation, emotions, and positive or negative reinforcements have an impact on the various variables that stimuli in perception have. Similarly, additional perceptual phenomena are thought to be based on the interactions between the elements (Rock, 1984). Moreover, external variables and other stimuli that can cause "noise" in the delivery of messages, the approach will be determined by the value offered, its benefits, the market and the

personality of both the product and the consumer (Goldiamond, 1958) (McDonald and Oates, 2006).

WCes in contact with a sensory receptor, exposure takes place (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025). Attention is attracted when that stimulus activates one or more sensory receptors and moves on to the next stage, interpretation, which is the process when people give the stimulus meaning (Fill and Turnbull, 2023). These three stages occur simultaneously. The information processed is then stored in the memory, where it may have an impact on present and future purchases based on experiences (Lestrud, 2013) (Mothersbaugh et al., 2024) (Rock, 1984).

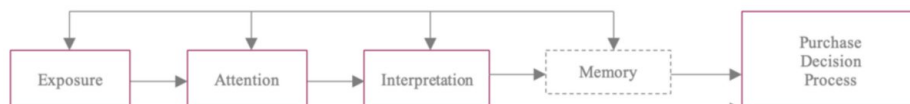


FIGURE 12: Perception process.

Source: (Fill and Turnbull, 2023) and (Mothersbaugh et al., 2024).

A perceptual map method is quite useful to understand how brands are perceived by customers in an illustrative form, along the purchase decision process. A perceptual map is a visual representation in which attributes are plotted in Euclidean space, which is the set of all n -component vectors for which scalar multiplication and vector addition are permitted. The map makes it possible to show distances and how customers perceive different brands, graph size and direction using vectors as attributes, and the dimensions by which consumers differentiate between brands. Factor analysis, a perceptual mapping technique, provides a methodical approach to extracting information about the underlying construct from a data matrix comprising consumer perceptions of observable or tangible attributes, such as physical features of the product and service characteristics. The length of each attribute vector graphically represents the proportion of the variance of that attribute gathered by the map. The visual representation of the factor-loading matrix is the attribute vectors, where the cosine of the angle between an attribute vector and the corresponding factor is the correlation between any attribute and a factor (Carroll and Green, 1997) (Lilien and Rangaswamy, 2004).

Self-Concept

Self-concept is based on how individuals perceive themselves. This depends on the reactions of others; that is, perfection depends on the image captured in accordance with what the individual wants to project. Thus, if an individual achieves the Ideal Self, it is because it has improved the Real Self, and the perceived image of others is satisfied. Therefore, the positive reactions of others dictate an individual's behavior. Purchase behavior is linked to an individual's perception of themselves and how they would like other people to perceive them; in these cases, there is a discrepancy due to not reaching the Ideal Self (DiCaprio, 1983) (O'Brien et al., 1977).

Consumers choose brands to align with their desired social perception, seeking an enhanced Ideal Self that is congruent with their Real Self to avoid cognitive dissonance (Horney, 1950). Discrepancies between these selves create conflicts, influenced by social perceptions (DiCaprio, 1983). A persistent gap can lead to a pseudo-real self, causing frustration (Freud, 1989). This psychological dynamic significantly influences consumer behaviour as brands serve as symbolic resources for building and projecting identity (Birdwell, 1968) (Landon, 1974) (Tian et al., 2001).

The influence of reference groups and the degree of visibility of the purchase process are determined when the product is publicly consumed (observed by others). In the context of consumption, it can be said that a product purchased will be visibly noticeable but also the brand's personality associated to the individual. The self-congruity model implies that a person will select a specific product whose image resembles and reflects the consumer's self-image and represents what they would like to be or what they consider socially acceptable (Bearden and Etzel, 1982) (Hughes and Guerrero, 1971) (Sirgy, 2018).

Numerous studies (Evans, 1959) (Parmer and Dillard, 2015) (Shende, 2014) (Westfall, 1962) have looked into the connection between a consumer's personality and their car. An individual's self-concept is their personal identity, encompassing everything known about them, including central components that define who they are. An individual's personality and behavior are shaped by both internal motivators and external factors like environment and context that lead to internal experiences. In terms of consumer behavior, a person's motives and self-concept influence the symbolic value they attach to products they buy. Ultimately, the self-concept is unique to each individual's personality, which establishes a relationship between the consumption pattern and the characteristics of the purchase (DiCaprio, 1983) (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967) (Ilieva et al., 2002).

Why People Buy

Purchasing is an intentional activity motivated and driven by the belief that one of the consequences of the purchase will be satisfaction. In this attempt to seek satisfaction through purchases, consumers become sensitive to the contrasts of the true human condition and the reasons for the discrepancy between the Real and Ideal Selves, prioritizing numerous evolving goals, structured by preferences, that directly influence product selection. Importantly, purchasing is not an isolated event and is not just about personal needs; it is a social act, signaling the consumer's status, values, and desired self-image within a broader consumption system. Needs, as desires, drive product acquisition to achieve goals and satisfaction, forming the basis of the commercial theorem: “Desiring something is a necessary condition for buying it, and not desiring it is a necessary condition for not buying it” (Barden, 2012) (Kotler et al., 2022) (O'Shaughnessy, 1989).

To summarize, Figure 13 illustrates that purchase decisions are based on extrinsic factors (O'Shaughnessy, 1989).

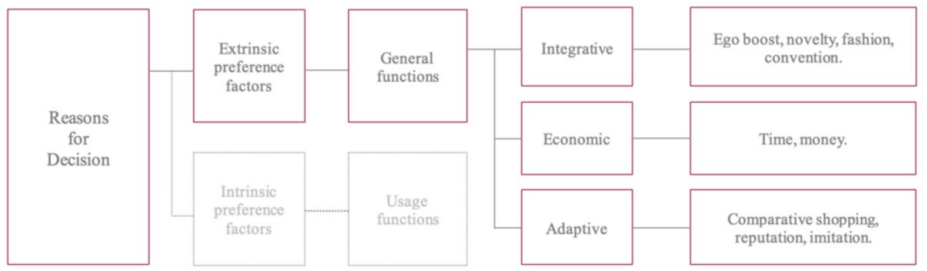


FIGURE 13: Consumer choice criteria.

Source: (O'Shaughnessy, 1989).

These range from social and self-enhancement aspects to monetary and time sacrifices and, finally, to managing purchase-related risks. This leads to consumer satisfaction, after they have used the product and the experience has met their needs and ultimate goals. If the brand (car manufacturers) offers and exceeds the consumer expectations, it would result in a retained customer, in other words, a loyal customer (Fill and Turnbull, 2023).

Research Method

The methodology for researching latent purchase motives regarding Chinese light vehicles involves the strategic application of a well-designed survey instrument. While overt factors might be evident, a survey can uncover deeper, often unstated motivations, such as the desire for status or signaling perceptions of value beyond just the price tag, to go beyond surface-level queries and explore behavioral, psychographic, and attitudinal aspects that respondents might not be immediately aware of, revealing unstated or perhaps subconscious drivers of preference - the latent motives of purchase (Hulland et al., 2018) (Reutterer and Dan, 2022) (Stewart, 1981).

The design methodology, with an approach believed to be connected to the earlier theoretical framework, was implemented by developing and applying an instrument intended to understand the motives and perceptions regarding Chinese car manufacturers in Mexico. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the findings on long-term reliability and after-sales service are particularly vulnerable to this generalization limit, as these factors are highly dependent on local dealer investment and infrastructure, which vary by city. To mitigate this, we frame our study as a critical case analysis that establishes a foundational explanatory model for how quality perception is formed in a key secondary metropolitan market. Future research is recommended to test this developed model in the three major automotive clusters (Mexico City [center], Monterrey [north], and Guadalajara [west]) to confirm external validity.

Questionnaire design

This study utilized a carefully designed questionnaire, ensuring clarity and relevance to enhance reliability, in order to explore the perception and preferences regarding Chinese car manufacturers (see Appendices). The instrument, applied between May and June 2025, is divided into two parts of questions: 1) Perception - how Chinese cars are perceived; and 2) Preference, of segments and brands, to uncover latent motivations for purchase. Questions were based on a number of attributes defined after an informal survey of 50 participants at light vehicle dealerships in the city of Xalapa, Mexico, during the period January-March 2024, for both “Western” and Chinese manufacturers. To strengthen the questionnaire, we applied Cronbach's alpha to ensure the reliability of the items. We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9442,

which indicates an excellent level of internal consistency and reliability for a measurement instrument, meaning the items are highly correlated and effectively measure the same underlying construct.

Regarding the design of the preference section, disguised questions were included to conceal the study’s objective, which was to evade or subtly craft inquiries that elicit responses offering crucial information about the client’s actual beliefs or intentions. Because our goal is to “dissect” the responses, the questions should be precise. Using a questionnaire enables us to obtain opinions and points of view that are extremely close to the truth while avoiding “Why” questions, which (Kropff, 1971) claims cause negative reactions, such as anxiety, in those surveyed. The study of perception was conducted through perceptual mapping (multidimensional scaling), a visual representation of an individual’s perceptions related to product attributes (Berelson and Steiner, 1964) (Mothersbaugh et al., 2024) (Rock, 1984).

Sampling and data collection

The target population comprised individuals in possession of a light vehicle, or in any stage of the purchase decision process, regardless of the segment, in the state of Veracruz, Mexico. The capital of the state, Xalapa, is the second city in Mexico with the greatest number of vehicles in daily circulation, 200,000 (Diario de Xalapa, 2024), with a population of around 500,000 (DataMexico, 2025). The survey was distributed online using the platform Google Forms, in Spanish, through a previously acquired email dataset. A total of 267 usable responses were collected and considered practically and statistically significant (Hair et al., 2014), surpassing the calculated sample size ($n = 246$) determined following the formula for infinite sample size, with a confidence level (z) of 95%, an estimated population proportion (p) of 0.2, and a desired margin of error (e) of 0.05.

$$n = (z^2(p)(q))/e^2$$

The methodology is deemed appropriate and related to the previous theoretical framework and context in the Mexican light vehicle market. An Excel spreadsheet was used to preserve the data gathered for later management, cleaning, and formatting.

Data

Information gathered summarizes attributes defined by participants through the informal in-site survey: price, safety, technology (equipment), service (post-sale), and novelty (how new or old the brand is perceived). Participants were requested to answer the questions and evaluate the Chinese car manufacturer based on these attributes, in order to understand and visualize their perception of the brand, along with the sentence completion question to unveil the latent motives of purchase. The answers are rational in nature, that is, about intrinsic elements of the product’s passive or active characteristics, which are the ones of interest to this study.

For both sections (perception and preference), a qualitative analysis of the data collected was performed. The final dataset was cleaned using spreadsheets by removing duplicates, null values, and inaccurate entries - a total of 36, as shown in Table 4. The dataset ($n = 267$) was formatted appropriately to match the type of information and then presented with an in-depth analysis of the qualitative responses. Finally, the gathered data was visualized using Excel to create pie, line, and bar graphs, and the marketing engineering software Enginius® (DecisionPro, 2025) to create perceptual maps to visualize the results. Data analysis led to conclusions regarding the research questions (RQs) described previously, in order to verify their rejection or acceptance.

Number of items captured	Invalid items	Sample size	Period of collection
303	36	267	May-June 2025

TABLE 4: Summary information obtained from the online survey.

Source: Author.

In the case of the perception study, the dataset was arranged and summarized, including all the participants’ answers, as an average of the questions regarding the evaluation of the ordinal variables arranged as an evaluation of the attributes (rows), compared to each brand (columns). The factor analysis procedure was used as mapping technique for the perception research, where the responses were managed and analyzed into a new dataset through Enginius®.

Results And Discussion

The results section summarizes and presents the significant findings of the present study.

Perceptual map

The perceptual map's brand distances show how similar the brands are perceived to be. Closely spaced offerings are viewed as similar to one another, whereas widely spaced offerings are viewed as distinct. The selected dimensions that consumers typically use to distinguish between offerings are the axes of perceptual maps. The meaning of each axis can be inferred from the attributes aligned near it. The importance of each axis in explaining customer perceptions is indicated by the variance it explains. A two-dimensional visualization was required, as the first two dimensions of the perceptual map explain 99.0% of the variance in the data (Table 5).

	Variance explained	Cumulative variance
Dimension 1	95.4%	95.4%
Dimension 2	3.6%	99.0%
Dimension 3	0.5%	99.5%
Dimension 4	0.4%	99.9%
Dimension 5	0.1%	100.0%

TABLE 5: Variance and cumulative variance explained by dimension.

Source: Author.

Furthermore, Figure 14 illustrates the two-dimensional perceptual map after a cleaning, gathering, and analyzing process in Excel for the survey results, resulting in a summarized table to be further run online in Enginius® through the positioning model, divided into two-dimensional relations, which are the dimensions with the most cumulative variance, 99%. Also, attributes going in the same direction indicate that they are positively correlated.

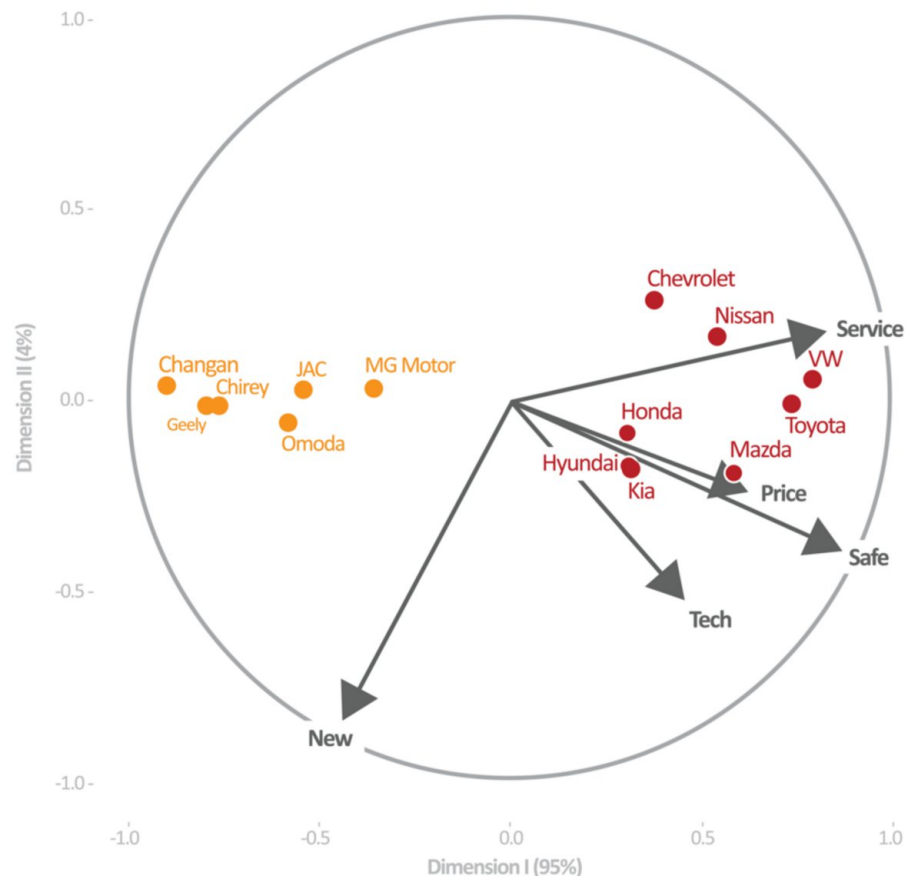


FIGURE 14: Perceptual map: Attributes in first and second dimensions.

Note: Figure created with Enginius®, vectorized with Adobe® Illustrator.

Source: Author.

VW, Volkswagen

Two clusters are quite identifiable. First, the “Western” cluster is on the right side of the graph. The closer the brands are to each other, the more the area is perceived as equal, as in the case of Honda and Hyundai in terms of “Price” and “Safety,” as affordable and relatively safe. In the case of Toyota and Volkswagen, both are perceived as expensive with good post-sale service. Almost all of the “Western” brands are perceived as old.

Moreover, the Chinese cluster, on the left of the graph, is quite compact. The brands are close enough to each other, meaning that consumers perceive almost no difference between them, particularly Chirey and Geely. In general, Chinese brands are perceived as new, with JAC perceived as the oldest Chinese brand. Also, all the Chinese brands are perceived as affordable. “Price” is the attribute best evaluated in the perception values.

However, all Chinese manufacturers are quite far from the “Service” and “Safe” vectors. “Service,” in reference to assistance, maintenance, repairs, customer support, and warranty services, is poorly perceived for all the Chinese brands. MG Motor is the best evaluated in terms of average perception across all attributes; however, along with JAC, it is perceived as one of the oldest Chinese brands. In terms of “Safe,” all of the Chinese brands are perceived as unsafe, away from the direction of the vector. Furthermore, the longer the vector is, the better the attribute is captured by the two dimensions. Our empirical findings demonstrate that Chinese automotive brands face substantial, measurable deficits in two critical areas of consumer perception compared with established Western competitors: Safety and Service. Specifically, when measuring perceived safety (on a 9-point scale), Western brands achieved a high mean score of 7.15. This results in a massive 3.59-point perception gap relative to Chinese brands, which scored significantly lower, with a mean of 3.56. Similarly, the perception of the After-Sales Service Network reveals a critical deficiency: Western brands attained a mean score of 6.82, whereas Chinese

brands scored only 3.48. This 3.44-point disparity in service perception confirms that the initial appeal of Chinese technology and price is severely undermined by tangible and psychological resistance rooted in long-term reliability and support skepticism. These gaps emphasize the core challenge that Chinese automakers must overcome to foster sustained market loyalty.

This can be confirmed with Table 6, where the means and standard deviations (SD) of the attributes are displayed. Additionally, the perceptual data is summarized in Table 7. Values of Chirey, Changan, and Geely fall less than one SD from the mean in terms of “Price,” “Safe” (safety), “Tech” (technology), and “Service.” Regarding “New” (novelty), the same Chinese brands, along with Omoda, are significantly above the average perception (+1 SD).

Attribute	Mean	Standard deviation
Price	5.229	1.941
Safe	5.636	1.881
Tech	6	1.086
Service	5.393	1.785
New	5.071	2.078

TABLE 6: Mean and standard deviation for the five attributes.

Source: Author.

Attribute	Changan	Chevrolet	Chirey	Geely	Honda	Hyundai	JAC	Kia	Mazda	MG Motor	Nissan	Omoda	Toyota	VW
Price	2.3	6.4	2.5	2.9	6.3	6.3	3.4	6.3	7.6	4.2	6.6	3.8	7	7.6
Safe	3.1	6.4	3.4	3.3	6.9	6.9	3.8	6.8	7.3	4.2	6.9	3.9	8	8
Tech	4.3	6	4.9	4.6	6.5	6.5	5.2	6.9	7.4	5.4	6.6	5	7.4	7.3
Service	2.9	6.6	3.1	3.2	6.4	6.4	3.7	6.2	6.8	4.3	7.3	3.7	7.5	7.4
New	7.7	2.4	7.4	7.7	4.8	4.8	6.4	5.1	4.3	5.9	2.4	7.3	2.7	2.1

TABLE 7: Perceptual data overview.

Source: Author.

VW, Volkswagen

Nevertheless, JAC, MG Motor, and Omoda fall within one SD from the average perception (mean) in all the previous attributes: safety, technology, and “Service.” This suggests that they are perceived as the most expensive, the safest, with more technology and better post-sale service among the Chinese brands. However, only the “Price” and “New” attributes are considered positive, as the other values are lower than the mean, while all the “Western” brands fall within one SD in all five attributes.

Therefore, only the oldest Chinese brands, MG Motor and JAC, falling within one SD from the mean, were well evaluated in terms of perception across the five most important attributes for light vehicle consumers in Mexico.

To summarize, Figure 15 shows a histogram of brand positions. It is noticeable that the Chinese manufacturers are well perceived according to the attributes: “New” (scale from 1-Old to 9-New), Figure 15a, illustrating Changan, Geely, and Chirey; and “Price” (scale from 1-Affordable to 9-Expensive), Figure 15b, where the previously named Chinese brands are perceived as the most affordable.

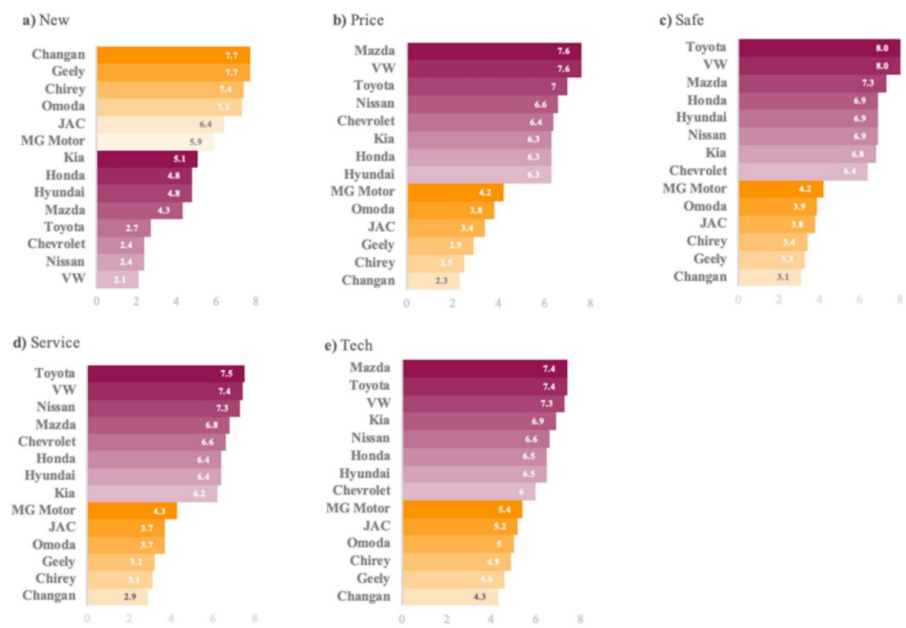


FIGURE 15: Attributes histograms.

Source: Author.

VW, Volkswagen

However, Chinese manufacturers are not well perceived in terms of “Safe” (scale from 1-Unsafe to 9-Safe), as shown in Figure 15c; “Service” (scale from 1-Worst to 9-Best), shown in Figure 15d; and “Tech” (scale from 1-Least to 9-Most), shown in Figure 15e. In all three of these attributes, particularly Changan, Chirey, and Geely are the worst-evaluated Chinese brands.

Preference

Furthermore, almost 46% of respondents prefer an SUV, while 31.6% prefer a compact model, as illustrated in Figure 16 - a segment dominated in recent years by Nissan and Chevrolet. Only a few Chinese manufacturers participate in this segment; MG Motor is gaining market share quite fast with the MG5. This aligns with the market trends and current offers of manufacturers. Less than 7% prefer a subcompact model, clearly a segment in decline (Figure 2), with the fewest models available. The Chevrolet Aveo, manufactured in China, and the Kia K3 are the most sold models in a segment represented by only a few Chinese models, such as the MG Motor MG3 (10th most sold model and the most affordable one), as previously shown in Figure 8.

Finally, Figure 17 illustrates Volkswagen (VW) as the most desired brand, with 13% of respondents, followed closely by Toyota at 12%. Most manufacturers obtained less than 3% as a desired brand. No Chinese light vehicle manufacturer was selected.

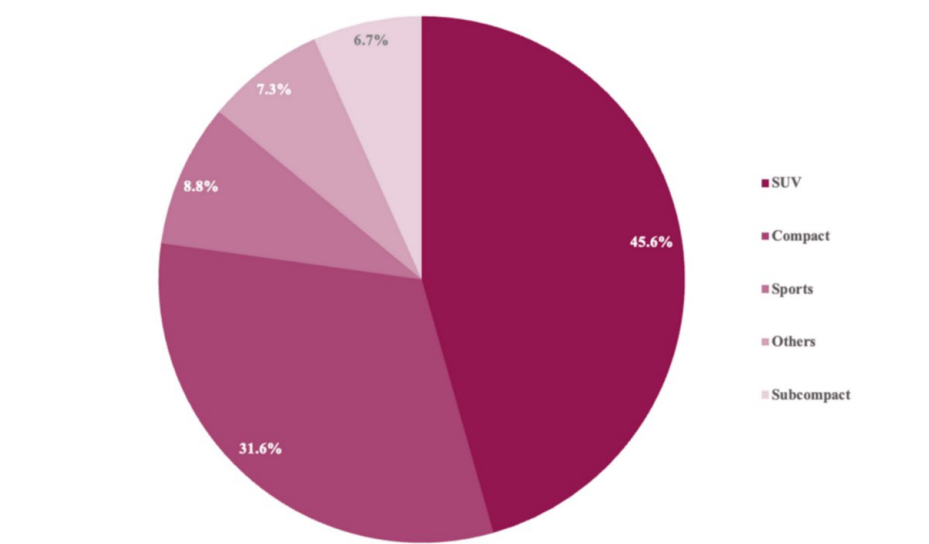


FIGURE 16: Segment preference.

Source: Author.

SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle

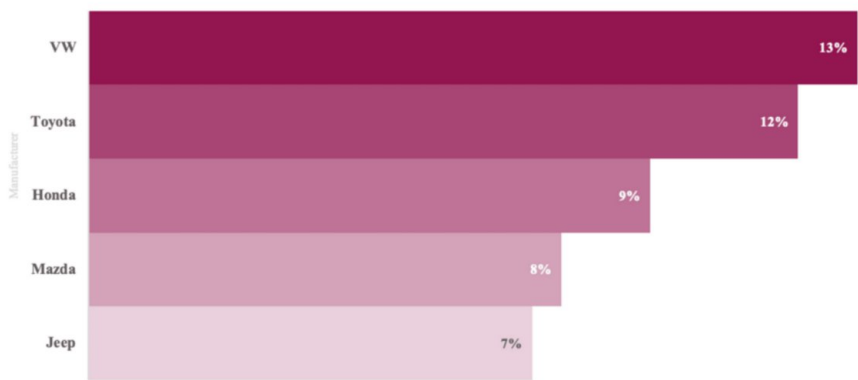


FIGURE 17: Most desired brands.

Source: Author.

VW, Volkswagen

We argue that the perception of Chinese cars among Mexican consumers is influenced by larger characteristics such as novelty, affordability (price), and tech-forward (equipment), steadily gaining market share yearly since the “second wave” introduction in 2019. Nevertheless, aggressive marketing strategies have allowed Chinese manufacturers to capture a sizable portion of the Mexican light vehicle market, such as reporting vehicle sales to the Mexican Association of Automobile Dealers (AMDA) and INEGI as real sales. Also, imported cars from China are reported as sold. However, those reported cars have not yet been sold to the final consumer. These vehicles are afterwards, even months later, marketed as used vehicles. Moreover, the warranty (a powerful sales incentive) takes effect when the vehicle is reported as manufactured rather than when the car is sold to the final customer ([AutoDinámico, 2025](#)) ([Maldonado, 2025](#)).

Therefore, the authors agree on the results obtained, as the objective and goals of the study were met, according to the state of the art and the methodology designed and observed. Finally, few studies were found on the perception of Chinese cars ([He and Thøgersen, 2017](#)) ([Liu et al., 2018](#)) ([Mamedov, 2020](#)) ([Zhu et al., 2012](#)); however, they refer exclusively to the Chinese and Russian markets. Additionally, industry

reports confirm the aggressive market penetration of Chinese light vehicles across key emerging markets in 2024. In Brazil, manufacturers accounted for an 11% share of the passenger car segment. This dominance is projected to intensify across the region, with Chinese imports forecasted to account for 24% of the total South American market. Additionally, Chinese brands have secured a significant 9% market share in Africa's automotive hub, South Africa, highlighting their broad regional success. These markets are mainly dominated by BYD (electric), Chery, GWM, Changan, and JAC. No literature exploring the perception of Chinese cars in the Mexican market was found.

Limitations of the study

The study is primarily constrained by its geographic focus, as data collection was limited to the state of Veracruz, specifically Xalapa. However, it is the second city in the country with the greatest number of vehicles in daily circulation. Another significant limitation is the exclusion of several key vehicle segments, including electric, hybrid, luxury, and pickup models. By focusing only on SUVs and compact cars, the research misses insights into the rapidly growing "green" tech sector led by brands like BYD. This omission restricts the analysis of how premium features or environmental concerns might drive consumer motivations differently. However, the study focused on the three segments with the most sales. Additionally, the study notes a complete lack of existing literature regarding Chinese car perceptions in Mexico. This forced a heavy reliance on studies from the Russian and Chinese markets, which may have different cultural and economic drivers. Finally, the findings represent a specific time snapshot from late 2024 to early 2025, which may not capture long-term market shifts, as the Mexican automotive market is in a "second wave" of rapid transformation, perception of brand reliability and "newness" could shift significantly within just a few months.

Conclusions

A recent study explored Mexican consumer perceptions of Chinese light vehicles, which are rapidly gaining market shares in the SUV, compact, and subcompact segments. The findings reveal a market divided into two clusters: a "Western" cluster, associated with established brands and reliable service, and a "Chinese" cluster linked to novelty and affordability. While affordability is a major draw for consumers, the study identified a significant lack of brand identity for new Chinese brands, such as Chirey and Geely. Overall, the primary appeal of Chinese cars was their newness and competitive pricing (RQ1).

Despite their affordability, Chinese automakers face significant challenges in overcoming negative perceptions of safety, technology, and after-sales service (RQ2). These factors are critical for Mexican consumers, with safety being the top priority. The study found that brands such as Changan, Chirey, and Geely are often viewed as less safe and lacking technological sophistication and adequate warranty support. The study suggests that for Chinese automakers to achieve long-term success in the Mexican market, they must focus on building consumer trust by demonstrably improving product quality, strengthening after-sales support, and adopting more transparent business practices. The long-term success of Chinese light vehicle manufacturers in Mexico requires a strategic pivot from the current price-value advantage to addressing the severe safety and service deficits. Closing this perception gap requires tangible infrastructure investment to build trust-reliability and foster long-term consumer confidence. Chinese automakers must mandate dealer investment in certified after-sales service centers and guarantee rapid relief through a 48-hour localized parts supply chain to mitigate the long-term ownership anxieties of consumers. Simultaneously, brands must aggressively seek and publicly promote high Latin New Car Assessment Programme safety certifications (in the case of the Mexican market) for all models, directly countering the "Country of Origin" perception gap. Finally, offering transparent warranty programs that meet or exceed Western manufacturers can convert initial skepticism into durable market loyalty in the long-term.

Future scope

In order to better understand the distinct market drivers of previously excluded vehicle segments, such as electric, hybrid, and/or luxury models, future research should broaden the study's scope. Examining the effects of domestic Chinese electric brands may provide vital information on how consumers view green technology in contrast to conventional engines. Furthermore, a more representative understanding of national attitudes would be ensured by expanding the geographic focus beyond Xalapa to major urban centers, such as Mexico City or Monterrey. These regional differences are crucial for creating all-encompassing marketing plans that consider market's varied brand availability.

Future research could look into whether consumers can tell the difference between a Chinese brand and a "Western brand made in China," as some "Western" brands (like Chevrolet [GM]) shift production to China to cut costs. Future research could also examine how newer brands can shift from being perceived as inexpensive novelties to aspirational status symbols by delving deeper into the psychological "Ideal Self" and "Self-congruity" models to observe how these companies could turn novelty into aspirational status or prestige, creating psychological brand identity. Moreover, since current literature mostly focuses on Russia or China, a comparative study between other top export destinations) could reveal if the "Western vs. Chinese" cluster pattern is a global phenomenon. Finally, building long-term brand loyalty requires an

understanding of the transition from subconscious emotional connections to rational purchase motives, such as price, followed by a longitudinal analysis of post-sale service to monitor whether the negative perception changes in the following years.

Appendices

The following Tables 8-10 present key questions from the survey designed to understand how Chinese car brands are perceived in Mexico.

Please select values from 1 to 9, with 1 being the lowest and 9 being the highest, for each row.														
	Changan	Chevrolet	Chirey	Geely	Honda	Hyundai	JAC	Kia	Mazda	MG	Nissan	Omoda	Toyota	VW
Price														
New														
Safety														
Service														
Technology														

TABLE 8: Questionnaire used in the survey (Q1).

Source: Author.

VW, Volkswagen

Please select one.							
Which one do you prefer?	SUV	Compact	Subcompact	Luxury	Sports	Pickup	Minivan

TABLE 9: Questionnaire used in the survey (Q2).

Source: Author.

SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle

Please select one								
BAIC	Bestune	Changan	Chevrolet	Chirey	FIAT	Ford	Geely	Honda
Hyundai	JAC	Jaecco	Jeep	Jetour	Kia	Mazda	MG	Mitsubishi
Nissan	Omoda	Renault	Seat	Suzuki	Toyota	VW	Do not know	

TABLE 10: Questionnaire used in the survey (Q3).

Source: Author.

BAIC, Beijing Automotive Industry Corporation; VW, Volkswagen

Additional Information

Author Contributions

All authors have reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Concept and design: Armando Espinoza

Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data: Armando Espinoza, Martha L. Espinoza-Oliva

Drafting of the manuscript: Armando Espinoza

Critical review of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Martha L. Espinoza-Oliva

Supervision: Martha L. Espinoza-Oliva

Disclosures

Human subjects: Consent was obtained or waived by all participants in this study. IIESCA Ethics Committee issued approval (Universidad Veracruzana). The Ethics Committee of the IIESCA, Universidad Veracruzana, waived the need for ethics approval and patient consent for the collection, analysis, and publication of the retrospectively obtained and anonymized data for this non-interventional study.

Animal subjects: All authors have confirmed that this study did not involve animal subjects or tissue.

Conflicts of interest: In compliance with the ICMJE uniform disclosure form, all authors declare the following: **Payment/services info:** All authors have declared that no financial support was received from any organization for the submitted work. **Financial relationships:** All authors have declared that they have no financial relationships at present or within the previous three years with any organizations that might have an interest in the submitted work. **Other relationships:** All authors have declared that there are no other relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

Acknowledgements

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available on Figshare at <http://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.29825159>.

References

1. AMDA. (2025). Accessed: January 10, 2025: <https://www.amda.mx/power-rank/>.
2. AutoDinámico. (2025). Accessed: May 6, 2025: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1vu_Zxps6Q.
3. Barden P: Decoded: The Science Behind Why We Buy. Wiley, Hoboken, NJ; 2012.
4. Bearden WO, Etzel MJ: Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1982, 9:183-194.
5. Berelson B, Steiner GA: Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings. Harcourt, Brace & World, New York; 1964.
6. Birdwell AE: A study of the influence of image congruence on consumer choice. *The Journal of Business*. 1968, 41:76-88. [10.1086/295047](https://doi.org/10.1086/295047)
7. Bork H: The top import countries for Chinese cars. All-About-Industries.com. 2024, Accessed: January 8, 2025: <https://www.all-about-industries.com/the-top-import-countries-for-chinese-cars-a-01000ac2714892132c84b0663ba1ff87/>.
8. Bureau M: La vez que Elektra quiso vender coches junto a refrigeris y teles: la historia que pavimentó la mala reputación de los autos chinos en México [The time Elektra tried to sell cars alongside refrigerators and televisions: the story that paved the way for the bad reputation of Chinese cars in Mexico]. *Motorpasión Mexico*. 2020, Accessed: January 8, 2025: <https://www.motorpasion.com.mx/industria/vez-que-elektra-quiso-vender-coches-a-refris-teles-historia-que-pavimento-ma...>
9. Carrasquero R: FAW Autos FAW | Conoce detalles, historia y modelos de esta marca China [FAW Cars | Learn about the details, history, and models of this Chinese brand]. KAVAK. 2023, Accessed: May 4, 2025: <https://www.kavak.com/mx/blog/autos-faw-conoce-detalles-historia-modelos>.
10. Carroll JD, Green PE: Vector and matrix concepts from a geometric viewpoint. *Mathematical Tools for Applied Multivariate Analysis (Revised Edition)*. Academic Press, London; 1997. 77-126. [10.1016/B978-012160954-2/50004-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012160954-2/50004-4)
11. Chevrolet. (2024). Accessed: November 25, 2024: <https://www.chevrolet.com.mx>.
12. CNBC. (2024). Accessed: January 9, 2025: <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/06/14/chinese-automakers-overtake-us-rivals-in-sales-for-the-first-time.html>.
13. DataMexico. (2025). Accessed: January 7, 2025: <https://www.economia.gob.mx/datamexico/es/profile/geo/xalapa>.
14. Dean H: Understanding Human Need. Policy Press, Bristol; 2010. [10.56687/9781447342021](https://doi.org/10.56687/9781447342021)
15. DecisionPro. (2025). Accessed: May 17, 2025: <https://www.enginius.biz>.
16. Diallo MF, Chandon J, Cliquet G, Philippe J: Factors influencing consumer behaviour towards store brands: evidence from the French market. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*. 2013, 41:422-441. [10.1108/09590551311330816](https://doi.org/10.1108/09590551311330816)
17. Diario de Xalapa. (2024). Accessed: February 17, 2025: <https://oem.com.mx/diariodexalapa/local/xalapa-segunda-ciudad-autos-en-mexico-13446299>.
18. DiCaprio NS: Personality Theories: A Guide to Human Nature. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York; 1983.
19. Dimitriu R, Guesalaga R: Consumers' social media brand behaviors: Uncovering underlying motivators and deriving meaningful consumer segments. *Psychology & Marketing*. 2017, 34:580-592. [10.1002/mar.21007](https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21007)
20. Dootson P, Johnston KA, Beatson A, Lings I: Where do consumers draw the line? Factors informing perceptions and justifications of deviant consumer behaviour. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 2016, 32:750-776. [10.1080/0267257x.2015.1131734](https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2015.1131734)
21. Doyal L, Gough I: A theory of human needs. *Critical Social Policy*. 1984, 4:6-38. [10.1177/026101838400401002](https://doi.org/10.1177/026101838400401002)
22. El Economista. (2022). Accessed: March 24, 2025: <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/empresas/Mexico-se->

- mantuvo-como-el-7-productor-mundial-de-vehiculos-20220322-0005.html.
23. El Economista. (2025). Accessed: April 17, 2025: <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/autos-chinos-mexico.html>.
 24. El Financiero. (2024). Accessed: November 8, 2024: <https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/empresas/2024/01/16/autos-chinos-meten-nitro-y-crecen-sus-ventas-en-mexico-cuales-son...>
 25. Encyclopedia Britannica. (2025). Accessed: January 5, 2025: <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/stimulus>.
 26. Evans FB: Psychological and objective factors in the prediction of brand choice Ford versus Chevrolet. The Journal of Business. 1959, 32:340-369. [10.1086/294291](https://doi.org/10.1086/294291)
 27. Ewing J: Los fabricantes chinos de automóviles arrasan en México [Chinese automakers are sweeping Mexico]. The New York Times en Español. 2024. Accessed: April 15, 2025: <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2024/12/09/espanol/negocios/autos-chinos-mexico-estados-unidos-coches.html>.
 28. Expansión. (2025). Accessed: May 24, 2025: <https://expansion.mx/empresas/2025/04/30/segunda-ola-de-marcas-de-autos-chinos-de-lujo-viene-a-mexico>.
 29. Fill C, Turnbull S: Marketing Communications. Pearson, Essex; 2023.
 30. Forbes. (2023). Accessed: January 19, 2025: <https://www.forbes.com.mx/los-autos-chinos-conquistan-mexico-estas-son-las-marcas-presentes-en-el-pais/>.
 31. Freud S: The ego and the id (1923). TACD Journal. 1989, 17:5-22. [10.1080/1046171x.1989.12034344](https://doi.org/10.1080/1046171x.1989.12034344)
 32. Goldiamond I: Indicators of perception: I. Subliminal perception, subception, unconscious perception: An analysis in terms of psychophysical indicator methodology. Psychological Bulletin. 1958, 55:373-411. [10.1037/h0046992](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0046992)
 33. Grubb EL, Grathwohl HL: Consumer self-concept, symbolism and market behavior: A theoretical approach. Journal of Marketing. 1967, 31:22-27. [10.1177/002224296703100405](https://doi.org/10.1177/002224296703100405)
 34. Hair JF, Black WC, Babin BJ, Anderson RE: Multivariate Data Analysis. Pearson, Essex; 2014.
 35. He SY, Thøgersen J: The impact of attitudes and perceptions on travel mode choice and car ownership in a Chinese megacity: The case of Guangzhou. Research in Transportation Economics. 2017, 62:57-67. [10.1016/j.retrec.2017.03.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.retrec.2017.03.004)
 36. Honda Mexico. (2024). Accessed: May 4, 2025: <https://www.honda.mx/autos>.
 37. Horney K: Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization. W. W. Norton & Company, New York; 1950.
 38. Hughes GD, Guerrero JL: Automobile self-congruity models reexamined. Journal of Marketing Research. 1971, 8:125-127. [10.2307/3149743](https://doi.org/10.2307/3149743)
 39. Hulland J, Baumgartner H, Smith KM: Marketing survey research best practices: evidence and recommendations from a review of JAMS articles. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. 2018, 46:92-108. [10.1007/s11747-017-0532-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0532-y)
 40. Hyundai Motor Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 24, 2024: <https://www.hyundai.com.mx>.
 41. Ilieva J, Baron S, Healey NM: Online surveys in marketing research. International Journal of Market Research. 2002, 44:1-14. [10.1177/147078530204400303](https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530204400303)
 42. INEGI. (2025). Accessed: March 10, 2025: <https://www.inegi.org.mx/>.
 43. Iordache R, Kiderlin S: European Union announces higher tariffs of up to 38% on Chinese EVs. CNBC. 2024, Accessed: February 14, 2025: <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/06/12/eu-announces-higher-tariffs-on-chinese-evs-as-trade-tensions-sharpen.html>.
 44. Janoskova K, Kral P, Popescu GH, Rowland Z, Kramarova K: Perception of car brands with an emphasis on expected benefits and features as prerequisites for customer satisfaction. Management & Marketing. 2021, 16:300-315. [10.2478/mmcks-2021-0018](https://doi.org/10.2478/mmcks-2021-0018)
 45. Kia Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 25, 2024: <https://www.Kia.com/mx/>.
 46. Kotler P, Keller KL, Chernev A: Marketing Management. Pearson, Essex; 2022.
 47. Kropff HF: Investigación de Motivaciones [Research of motivations]. Rialp, Madrid; 1971.
 48. Landon EL: Self concept, ideal self concept, and consumer purchase intentions. Journal of Consumer Research. 1974, 1:44-51. [10.1086/208590](https://doi.org/10.1086/208590)
 49. Lestrud M: Sensory stimuli. Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Volkmar FR (ed): Springer, New York, NY; 2013. 2816-2817. [10.1007/978-1-4419-1698-3_1597](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1698-3_1597)
 50. Lilien GL, Rangaswamy A: Marketing Engineering. Trafford, Victoria, Canada; 2004.
 51. Liu C, Jin Y, Ding X, Xie Y: Young Chinese consumers' perception of passenger car form in rear view. Design, User Experience, and Usability: Users, Contexts and Case Studies. DUXU 2018. Lecture Notes in Computer Science. Marcus A, Wang W (ed): Springer, Cham; 2018. 10920:329-341. [10.1007/978-3-319-91806-8_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91806-8_25)
 52. Maldonado A: Autos usados que nunca han sido manejados: el nuevo problema de algunas marcas chinas [Used cars that have never been driven: the new problem for some Chinese brands]. Autospecs.com. 2025, Accessed: July 4, 2025: <https://autospecs.com.mx/autos-usados-que-nunca-han-sido-manejados-el-nuevo-problema-de-algunas-marcas-chinas/?fbclid...>
 53. Mamedov S: Consumer perception towards Chinese cars in Russia. Bachelor Thesis, LAB University of Applied Sciences. 2020, 1-48. Accessed: May 6, 2025: <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-2020121528315>.
 54. Mazda Motor Mexico. (2024). Accessed: December 22, 2024: <https://www.mazda.mx>.
 55. McDonald S, Oates CJ: Sustainability: Consumer perceptions and marketing strategies. Business Strategy and the Environment. 2006, 15:157-170. [10.1002/bse.524](https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.524)
 56. Mendoza-Álvarez D, Carbajal-De-Nova C: Un estudio del impacto de la COVID-19 en la industria automotriz: el caso de México [A study of the impact of COVID-19 on the automotive industry: The case of Mexico]. Realidad, datos y espacio. Revista internacional de estadística y geografía. 2024, 15:1-23.
 57. Monroy P: Uno de cada cinco autos vendidos en México ya es de origen chino, y su momento apenas comienza [One in five cars sold in Mexico is already of Chinese origin, and its moment is just beginning]. Motorpasión México. 2024, Accessed: February 20, 2025: <https://www.motorpasion.com.mx/industria/coches-chinos-ganan-terreno-mexico>.
 58. Morris Garages. (2024). Accessed: November 24, 2024: <https://www.mgmotor.com.mx>.
 59. Mothersbaugh D, Kleiser S, Hawkins D: Consumer Behavior: Building Marketing Strategy, 15th Edition. McGraw Hill, New York; 2024.

60. Munoz F: BYD outsells Tesla in Europe for the first time as registrations surge in April. 2025, Accessed: June 1, 2025: <https://www.jato.com/resources/media-and-press-releases/byd-outsells-tesla-in-europe-for-the-first-time-as-registrati....>
61. Nissan Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 25, 2024: <https://www.nissan.com.mx>.
62. Nuttin J, Piéron H and Buthendijk FJJ: Motivation. Nueva Visión, Buenos Aires; 1982.
63. O'Brien TV, Tapia HS, Brown TL: The self-concept in buyer behavior. *Business Horizons*. 1977, 20:65-71. [10.1016/0007-6813\(77\)90059-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813(77)90059-3)
64. O'Shaughnessy J: Why People Buy. Oxford University Press, Oxford; 1989.
65. Parmer L, Dillard J: The relationship between personality and consumer behavior buying patterns within the automobile industry. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research*. 2015, 8:1-13.
66. Pérez R: Algunas consideraciones mercadológicas para llevar a cabo la segmentación de mercados eficaz [Some marketing considerations for carrying out effective market segmentation]. *Gestión y Estrategia*. 2006, 29:73-86. [10.24275/uam/azc/dcsh/gye/2006n29/perez](https://doi.org/10.24275/uam/azc/dcsh/gye/2006n29/perez)
67. Renault Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 25, 2024: <https://www.renault.com.mx>.
68. Reuters. (2024). Accessed: January 24, 2025: <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/mexico-raises-concerns-about-us-plan-bar-chinese-vehicle-softwa....>
69. Reutterer T, Dan D: Cluster analysis in marketing research. *Handbook of Market Research*. Homburg C, Klarmann M, Vomberg A (ed): Springer, Cham; 2022. 221-249. [10.1007/978-3-319-57413-4_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57413-4_11)
70. Rock I: Perception. W. H. Freeman and Company, New York; 1984.
71. Rondoni A, Asioli D, Millan E: Consumer behaviour, perceptions, and preferences towards eggs: A review of the literature and discussion of industry implications. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*. 2020, 106:391-401. [10.1016/j.tifs.2020.10.038](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2020.10.038)
72. Shende V: Analysis of research in consumer behavior of automobile passenger car customer. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*.. 2014, 4:1-4.
73. Silverio R: La construcción de la Planta de FAW en México ha sido cancelada [The construction of the FAW plant in Mexico has been cancelled]. *Autocosmos.com*. 2009, Accessed: January 24, 2025: <https://noticias.autocosmos.com.mx/2009/6/16/la-construccion-de-la-planta-de-faw-en-mexico-ha-sido-cancelada>.
74. Sirgy MJ: Self-congruity theory in consumer behavior: A little history. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*. 2018, 28:197-207. [10.1080/21639159.2018.1436981](https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2018.1436981)
75. Skinner BF: Science and Human Behavior. Macmillan, New York; 1953.
76. Skinner BF: Reflections on Behaviorism and Society. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs; 1978.
77. Statista. (2025). Accessed: February, 21, 2025: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/239229/most-sold-car-models-worldwide/>.
78. Stewart DW: The application and misapplication of factor analysis in marketing research. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1981, 18:51-62. [10.1177/002224378101800105](https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800105)
79. Suzuki Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 25, 2024: <https://www.suzuki.com.mx>.
80. Tian KT, Bearden WO, Hunter GL: Consumers' need for uniqueness: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 2001, 28:50-66. [10.1086/321947](https://doi.org/10.1086/321947)
81. Toyota Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 24, 2024: <https://www.toyota.mx>.
82. Valladolid. (2024). Accessed: November 9, 2024: <https://forbes.com.mx/estas-son-las-13-marcas-de-autos-chinos-en-mexico-mas-confiables/>.
83. Volkswagen Mexico. (2024). Accessed: November 24, 2024: <https://www.vw.com.mx/>.
84. Westfall R: Psychological factors in predicting product choice. *Journal of Marketing*. 1962, 26:34-40. [10.2307/1248434](https://doi.org/10.2307/1248434)
85. Zhu C, Zhu Y, Lu R, He R, Xia Z: Perceptions and aspirations for car ownership among Chinese students attending two universities in the Yangtze Delta, China. *Journal of Transport Geography*. 2012, 24:315-323. [10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2012.03.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2012.03.011)