Food nationalism, price and fraud in imported agricultural product preference

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates how food nationalism, adulteration perception and perceived price shape Turkish consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward imported agricultural foods.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Using an online survey, data from 213 adults were analysed with partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

Findings: The strongest relationship in the model is that perceived price positively affects attitude towards imported products ($\beta = 0.771$, $p < 0.001$). Food nationalism variable significantly but weakly negatively affected attitude ($\beta = -0.103$, $p = 0.023$). No significant relationship was found between perception of adulteration and attitude ($\beta = -0.060$, $p = 0.221$). The effect of attitude on purchase intention is significant and negative ($\beta = -0.377$, $p < 0.001$). The purchase intention scale is reverse scored; therefore, a negative coefficient actually indicates a positive behavioral intention. The explanatory power of the model is high for attitude ($R^2 = 0.65$) and weak for purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.142$).

Research Limitations/Implications: Convenience sampling and online collection restrict generalisability; future studies should adopt probability sampling, broader demographics and mixed methods. Adding perceived quality, brand image and health concerns may enhance explanatory power.

Social Implications: Marketers should highlight quality rather than engage solely in price competition, while policymakers can bolster consumer welfare through price-advantage regulations.

Originality/Value: By integrating food nationalism, adulteration perception and price perception into a single structural model, this research provides a holistic, empirically validated framework that advances understanding of imported-food choice drivers in an emerging economy.

Keywords: Agricultural product import, consumer purchase intention, imported product attitude, smart pls.

İthal tarım ürünleri tercihinde gıda milliyetçiliği, fiyat ve sahtecilik

Özet

Amaç: Bu çalışma, gıda milliyetçiliği, sahtecilik (tağşiş) algısı ve algılanan fiyatın Türk tüketicilerin ithal tarım ürünlerine yönelik tutumlarını ve satın alma niyetlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırmaktadır.

Tasarım/Metodoloji/Yaklaşım: Çevrimiçi bir anket kullanılarak, 213 yetişkinden elde edilen veriler kısmi en küçük kareler yapısal eşitlik modellemesi (PLS-SEM) ile analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Modeldeki en güçlü ilişki, algılanan fiyatın ithal ürünlere karşı tutumu olumlu yönde etkilemesidir ($\beta = 0,771$, $p < 0,001$). Gıda milliyetçiliği değişkeni, tutumu önemli ölçüde ancak zayıf bir şekilde olumsuz etkilemiştir ($\beta = -0,103$, $p = 0,023$). Tağşiş algısı ile tutum arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmamıştır ($\beta = -0,060$, $p = 0,221$). Tutumun satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisi anlamlı ve olumsuzdur ($\beta = -0,377$, $p < 0,001$). Satın alma niyeti ölçeği ters puanlanmıştır; bu nedenle, negatif katsayı aslında pozitif davranış niyetini gösterir. Modelin açıklayıcı gücü tutum için yüksektir ($R^2 = 0,65$) ve satın alma niyeti için zayıftır ($R^2 = 0,142$).

Araştırmanın Sınırlılıkları/Etkileri: Kolaylık örneklemesi ve çevrimiçi veri toplama, genelleştirilebilirliği kısıtlamaktadır; gelecekteki çalışmalar olasılık örneklemesi, daha geniş demografik bilgiler ve karma yöntemler kullanmalıdır. Algılanan kalite, marka imajı ve sağlık endişelerinin eklenmesi açıklayıcı gücü artırabilir.

Sosyal Çıkarımlar: Pazarlamacılar, yalnızca fiyat rekabetine girmek yerine kaliteyi vurgulamalı, politika yapıcılar ise fiyat avantajı düzenlemeleriyle tüketici refahını artırabilir.

Özgünlük/Değer: Gıda milliyetçiliği, tağşiş algısı ve fiyat algısını tek bir yapısal modele entegre eden bu araştırma, gelişmekte olan bir ekonomide ithal gıda seçimini etkileyen faktörlerin anlaşılmasını ilerleten, bütüncül ve ampirik olarak doğrulanmış bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tarımsal ürün ithalatı, tüketici satın alma niyeti, ithal ürün tutumu, smart pls.

INTRODUCTION

With globalization and the development of foreign trade, imported agricultural products have become more visible in the Turkish market, and consumers have begun to easily access imported products in addition to domestic products. Turkey's agricultural product imports have exceeded US$21.6 billion (TÜİK, 2025). This situation shows that, despite the strategic importance of the agricultural sector, dependence on imports continues in some inputs (Türkmen Ceylan et al., 2025). In particular, increasing dependence on imports of products such as wheat, corn, soybeans, and meat is creating sensitivity among consumers regarding food safety and supply chain issues. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence consumer preferences is important in guiding import policies (Merdan & Çomaklı, 2025).

Agricultural imports affect not only supply but also consumer behavior and the competitiveness of domestic producers. Kılıç and Aydın Eryılmaz (2020) state that increasing imports shape consumers' preferences for price, quality, and accessibility, and that this difference in perception changes the dynamics of the domestic market. Özkan et al. (2023) reveal that imported products lead to different consumer behaviors based on perceptions of quality and safety. Siddiqui et al. (2023) emphasize that consumer confidence is strengthened by factors such as health awareness, label reliability, and food safety. These findings indicate that social perception dimensions, not just economic ones, must be considered in import policies.

Consumers' preferences for imported products are multidimensional. Price perception, food nationalism, and adulteration perception are particularly prominent in decision-making processes. Zeithaml (1988) states that price is evaluated not only in terms of cost but also in terms of quality and perceived value, while Lichtenstein et al. (1993) state that price is a determining factor in purchase intention in terms of value and profitability. Kılıç and Aydın Eryılmaz (2020) demonstrate that global price fluctuations and competitive pricing can directly influence preferences for imported products.

On the other hand, consumer ethnocentrism, as defined by Shimp and Sharma (1987), transforms into "food nationalism" in the context of food, leading consumers to prefer local products for moral and cultural reasons (DeSoucey, 2010). However, in some cases, national sensitivities may take a backseat, and consumers may turn to imported products based on price and quality considerations. Perceptions of adulteration, meanwhile, erode consumer trust; uncertainties regarding origin, content, and production conditions, in particular, exacerbate negative attitudes toward imported products (Djekic & Smigic, 2024). Evaluating these factors together is critical to understanding the multidimensional nature of consumer behavior.

This study examines the effects of these three important variables—price perception, food nationalism, and adulteration perception—on attitudes toward imported products and purchase intentions using an empirical model. This multidimensional perspective aims to contribute both academically and practically to imported product policies, marketing strategies, and public regulations. Addressing these factors, which are generally evaluated separately in the literature, in an interactive manner will enable a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. In this context, the second section of the study presents the theoretical framework and findings from previous research on the concepts of price perception, food nationalism, and adulteration perception through a literature review. The third section explains the methodology of the study, detailing the sample structure, data collection tool, and analysis methods. In the fourth section, the findings are interpreted in light of empirical analysis, and the relationships between variables are evaluated. In the fifth and final section, the results are summarized, and the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, as well as recommendations for policymakers and industry actors, are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With globalization, imported agricultural products have become more accessible in Turkey, but consumer attitudes have remained cautious compared to domestic products, influenced by factors such as price perception, food nationalism, and adulteration. This study examines Turkish consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward imported agricultural products based on these three key factors highlighted in the literature.

Food nationalism and preference for domestic products

One of the important factors influencing attitudes toward imported products is the consumer ethnocentrism tendency defined in the literature as "food nationalism." This tendency causes individuals to develop an emotional attachment to domestic foods and to approach foreign-sourced products with caution. Studies conducted in Turkey

show that ethnocentrism is positively related to the intention to purchase domestic products and negatively related to attitudes toward imported products (Sertoğlu & Çatlı, 2017; Şahin & Sancı, 2017). According to the study by Kılıç and Aydın Eryılmaz (2020), the majority of those who prefer local products act out of nationalist sentiments, while those who prefer imported products emphasize technological superiority or price advantages. A study conducted by Özyürek et al. (2019) in Erzincan also reached similar findings; while only 5.7% of respondents preferred imported red meat, 33.3% avoided imported meat on the grounds of supporting domestic production. This situation clearly demonstrates the effect of food nationalism on consumer preferences.

Consumer ethnocentrism is not only economically but also socio-psychologically grounded. Onurlubaş and Altunışık (2019) noted that consumers in Istanbul actively preferred domestic products due to ethnocentric tendencies; similarly, Aytoş et al. (2023) revealed in their studies that nationalism and country-of-origin perception had a significant effect on the intention to purchase domestic products. Gürbüz and Bardakçı (2023) determined that CETSCALE is a valid measurement tool in the context of food consumption and confirmed the multidimensional structure of ethnocentrism. This literature shows that there is a strong "local product" trend in Turkey and that the dimension of nationalism should not be ignored in the marketing of imported products.

Perception of adulteration and product reliability

The risk of adulteration in imported food products creates uncertainty and distrust among consumers, leading to more selective behavior. Consumers' intention to purchase imported agricultural products is closely related to their confidence in the authenticity of the products. In particular, concerns about adulteration can weaken consumer confidence and negatively affect purchase intentions (Spink & Moyer, 2011). This situation leads to a preference for well-known brands and attention to packaging/label information.

The perception of adulteration in imported products shapes not only consumers' sense of trust but also their preferences. Özyürek et al. (2019) noted in their study conducted in Erzincan that imported red meat was preferred by only 5.7% of consumers, with the main reasons being distrust and a tendency to support domestic production. All consumers stated that the origin of the product should be clearly indicated. Food adulteration increases consumers' perception of risk, and this situation negatively affects purchasing behavior by causing uncertainty in the decision-making process, especially for imported products (Djekic & Smigic, 2024).

On the other hand, trust in the countries of origin of imported products can positively influence consumer behavior. Kılıç & Aydın Eryılmaz (2020) stated that imported products from developed countries are considered more reliable and that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for these products. Indeed, Meerzan & Gustafson (2019) state that although consumers are sensitive to the risk of adulteration, they exhibit a more flexible and positive attitude toward products from reliable countries of origin.

The effect of price perception

Price perception refers to consumers' subjective assessments of whether a product is expensive or cheap, and is an important determinant of attitudes toward imported products. In particular, the perception of reasonable prices for imported agricultural products can increase the demand for these products. Karabaş and colleagues (2013) found that when the price of imported animal products decreases, the likelihood of them being preferred increases by 4.13 times; Angus beef, in particular, can be preferred 38 times more than domestic beef. Similarly, Kılıç and Aydın Eryılmaz (2020) noted that price is one of the primary motivations for consumers who prefer imported products. These results indicate that price advantages can outweigh preferences for domestic products.

However, price perception is not limited to low prices; excessively low prices may be perceived by some consumers as an indication of low quality or adulteration. Especially in cases where quality cannot be tested, low prices can create a perception of low quality (Heinsalu, 2018). In conclusion, price perception can strengthen the preference for imported products; however, this effect should be evaluated in conjunction with psychological and socio-cultural perceptions.

Attitude toward imported goods

In consumer behavior and international trade literature, attitudes toward imported goods refer to consumers' general evaluations, feelings, and judgments regarding foreign-made products. These attitudes are influenced by various factors, including individual values, national identity, cultural approaches, and perceptions related to the product's origin. Consumer ethnocentrism can lead to negative attitudes toward imported products, based on the belief that domestic products should be preferred and that foreign products may harm national interests (Bayniş & Geçti,

2022). Onurlubaş and Altunışık (2019) found that preferences for domestic products in the food sector increase negative attitudes toward imported products. In contrast, xenocentric consumers may view foreign products as higher quality and more prestigious, thereby exhibiting positive attitudes (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Bayniş & Geçti, 2022).

Country-of-origin image and consumer hostility are also important factors influencing these attitudes. Negative perceptions formed for political or historical reasons may cause a distant attitude towards foreign products; however, Yörük et al. (2016) stated that young Turkish consumers make decisions relatively independent of political crises. Yurtsever (2021) stated that individuals with a global identity focus on factors such as quality and innovation rather than origin and exhibit more positive attitudes.

In recent years, factors such as perceptions of adulteration, product safety, and price sensitivity have also shaped attitudes (Kılıç & Eryılmaz, 2020). Adulteration creates distrust among consumers, while products from developed countries are perceived as more reliable and support positive attitudes (Onurlubaş & Altunışık, 2019). Price, on the other hand, constitutes the economic aspect of attitude. Ergin and Akbay (2010) note that some consumers view imported products as status symbols, while economic crises and currency fluctuations can increase price sensitivity and create negative attitudes (Bayniş & Geçti, 2022). In this context, cultural tendencies, along with adulteration, security, and price perception, are the fundamental factors determining consumer attitudes toward imported products.

Intention to purchase imported goods

A consumer's intention to purchase an imported product is shaped by the individual's attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, as defined in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In this context, the literature frequently emphasizes that a positive attitude toward imported goods increases purchase intention (Camacho et al., 2020). Specifically in Turkey, Bayniş and Geçti (2022) found that Turkish consumers' positive attitudes toward imported products significantly influenced their purchase intention.

Ergin and Akbay (2010) state that some consumers view imported products as status symbols and that this perception can strengthen their intention to purchase. This situation highlights the impact of social influence and cultural symbols on consumer behavior. However, purchase intention does not always translate into behavior. External factors such as exchange rate fluctuations, import taxes, or economic uncertainties can limit the realization of positive intentions. Nevertheless, a study by Yörük et al. (2016) shows that even during diplomatic crises, young Turkish consumers do not easily give up their intention to purchase imported products.

In conclusion, the intention to purchase imported agricultural products is shaped by a combination of multidimensional factors such as nationalism, economic sensitivities, and security concerns. Food nationalism creates a distant attitude toward imported products, while price perception reflects economic evaluations and adulteration concerns reflect psychological factors related to food safety. The interaction of these variables determines the consumer's attitude toward imported agricultural products and the transformation of this attitude into purchasing intent. Based on the findings from the literature, the hypotheses established in this study are as follows:

H_1: Food nationalism negatively affects consumer attitudes toward imported goods.

H_2: Falsification perception negatively affects consumer attitudes toward imported goods.

H_3: Higher perceived price as an indicator of quality positively influences consumer attitudes toward imported goods.

H_4: Positive attitudes toward imported goods positively affect the intention to purchase imported goods.

Based on these hypotheses, the conceptual research model depicting the relationships among food nationalism, food adulteration perception, perceived price, attitude, and purchase intention is shown in Figure 1.
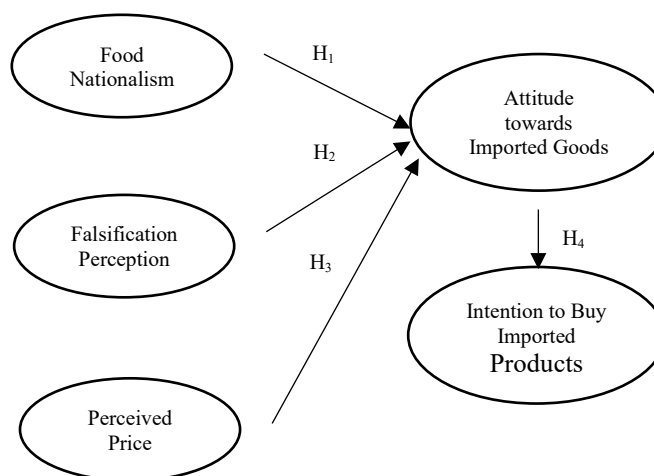
Figure 1. Research Model

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was designed within the framework of quantitative research methods, and data were collected through an online survey. The ethical approval for these forms was obtained from The Mudanya University Ethics Committees on 25.06.2025. This study used a non-probability convenience sampling method because it targeted adult consumers who purchase imported agricultural products in Türkiye and have internet access. The survey was distributed online via social media and consumer forums between June 25 and 29, 2025. A total of 213 valid surveys were obtained and used in the analyses. No clustering or stratification by age, income, or location was performed before sampling, as the study aimed to achieve heterogeneous participation within a voluntary and accessible population rather than a representative demographic distribution. However, to ensure diversity, the sample included participants from various provinces with varying age, education, and income groups, as shown in Table 1. The sample size of 213 used in this study exceeds the threshold value of 200 recommended for structural equation modeling (SEM). In the literature, SEM samples are classified as small (<100), medium (100–200), and large (>200), with sample sizes above 200 considered sufficient for statistical analysis (Bilici, 2024). The PLS-SEM method, in particular, is a preferred technique for testing complex structural models due to its flexibility in working with small and medium-sized samples without the need for a normal distribution assumption. In this regard, the 213 participants in the study fall into the "large" sample category and are considered statistically sufficient for PLS-SEM application. Additionally, the fact that each structure in the model is represented by a sufficient number of indicators increases the reliability of the analyses and the testing power of the model.

The questionnaire form used as the data collection tool was created based on scales whose validity and reliability have been tested in the literature. Participants were asked to evaluate a series of statements measuring each concept using a 5-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). The food nationalism variable was measured using the variable developed by Aytop, Aytekin, and Aktaş (2023)'s study on the effect of ethnocentrism on the intention to purchase local products; the adulteration perception variable was taken from Djekic and Smigic's (2023) study examining consumer-oriented food adulteration perceptions in Serbia and Montenegro; the perceived price and attitude toward imported goods variables are adapted from Bilici's (2024) study on perceptions of natural honey and purchasing behavior; and the intention to purchase imported goods is adapted from the scale developed by Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998) within the framework of the hostility model.

All scales were modeled based on Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior and designed to explain the causal relationships between attitude, belief, and behavioral intention. The reliability of the items in the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's α coefficient, and all scales were found to be above the acceptable level. In this context, the internal consistency of the scales was calculated as 0.86 for food nationalism, 0.76 for adulteration concerns, 0.81 for price perception, 0.93 for attitude toward imported goods, and 0.77 for purchase intention. These values indicate that the scales are both reliable and suitable for testing inter-structural relationships. The main reasons for choosing the PLS-SEM method are the exploratory nature of the model, the relatively large number of variables, the reflective nature of the measurement models, and the sample size being sufficient for the PLS algorithm. Additionally, PLS-

SEM offers analytical advantages compatible with the purpose of this study due to its non-parametric structure, which does not require the assumption of multiple normality, and its ability to handle complex models (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic characteristics of survey participants

The findings regarding the demographic profile of the participants are presented in detail in Table 1. The table provides a general view of the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals.

Table 1. Distribution of demographic characteristics of participants

	Variable	N	%
Gender	Male	111	52.11%
	Female	102	47.89%
Age	18-25	75	35.21%
	26-35	42	19.72%
	36-45	68	31.92%
	46-55	21	9.86%
	56 and above	7	3.29%
Education	High school and below	20	9.39%
	Two Year Degree	38	17.84%
	Undergraduate	117	54.93%
	Postgraduate	38	17.84%
Job	Private Sector	95	44.60%
	Self Employment	65	30.52%
	Public Sector	41	19.25%
	Retired	12	5.63%
Income	40.001 - 60.000 TL	63	29.58%
	20,000 TL and below	60	28.17%
	30.001 - 40.000 TL	31	14.55%
	80.001 TL ve üzeri	24	11.27%
	20.001 - 30.000 TL	23	10.80%
	60.001 - 80.000 TL	12	5.63%
Marital Status	Married	113	53.05%
	Single	100	46.95%

According to Table 1, when the demographic profile of the 213 participants in the study is examined, it is seen that the gender distribution is balanced, 52.11% of the participants are male and 47.89% are female. The highest share among the age groups is the 18-25 age group with 35.21%, followed by the 36-45 age group with 31.92% and the 26-35 age group with 19.72%; the rate of participants aged 46 and over is 13.15%. It is seen that the majority of the participants at the level of education are bachelor's degree graduates (54.93%), and there are similar rates of postgraduate (17.84%) and associate degree (17.84%) graduates, while those with high school or below education remain at 9.39%. 44.60% of the participants work in the private sector, 30.52% work for themselves, while 19.25% work in the public sector, and 5.63% are retired. The largest share in the income distribution is in the 40,001-60,000 TL band with 29.58%, followed by the 20,000 TL and below income group with 28.17%; the rates of other income brackets are distributed as 14.55% (30,001-40,000 TL), 11.27% (80,001 TL and above), 10.80% (20,001-30,000 TL) and 5.63% (60,001-80,000 TL). Finally, 53.05% of the participants are married and 46.95% are single, and the sample exhibits a relatively balanced structure in terms of marital status.

Table 2. Measurement model analysis results

Expressions	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability - CR	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Food Nationalism (FNation)				
Preferring domestic agricultural products is important because it contributes to the Turkish economy.	0.759			
When I buy domestic agricultural products, I feel happy that I am supporting Turkish farmers.	0.789			
A real citizen should support domestic agricultural products instead of imported products.	0.807			
The excessive preference of imported agricultural products creates an economic risk for domestic producers.	0.731	0.863	0.869	0.548
I think that domestic agricultural products should be protected and encouraged in our markets.	0.781			
Preferring foreign brands when there are domestic agricultural products can have negative consequences in terms of national production.	0.647			
Even if it is costly in the long run, I prefer Turkish products.	0.651			
Falsification Perception (Fals)				
I am careful about the risk of adulteration when purchasing imported agricultural products.	0.553			
I believe that there have been more counterfeit imported agricultural products on the market in recent years.	0.811	0.758	0.821	0.582
I am concerned about food adulteration activities in imported agricultural products.	0.893			
I believe that counterfeit imported agricultural products can cause serious health problems for consumers.	0.754			
Perceived Price (Price)				
The prices of imported agricultural products that are natural and high quality are usually high.	0.840			
Imported agricultural products provide benefits that are worth the money paid.	0.821	0.809	0.833	0.722
The price of an imported agricultural product is an indicator of the quality of that product.	0.887			
Attitudes towards Imported Goods (Att)				
I think imported agricultural products are healthy.	0.854			
I think imported agricultural products are beneficial in terms of nutritional value.	0.922	0.927	0.927	0.820
I trust imported agricultural products.	0.940			
I think imported agricultural products are of high quality.	0.905			
Intention to Buy Imported Goods (Intention)				
I avoid buying imported agricultural products whenever possible.	0.789			
I prefer to buy domestic agricultural products when available.	0.616			
I don't like the idea of having imported agricultural products.	0.785	0.769	0.789	0.519
I feel guilty if I buy an imported agricultural product.	0.743			
If domestic and imported agricultural products are equal in quality, I would rather pay more for domestic products.	0.654			

The findings regarding the measurement model in Table 2 show that the scale has generally acceptable reliability and validity levels. Three items (two food nationalism, one attitude) were eliminated because their factor loadings were below 0.40; the loadings of the remaining items were in the range of 0.553–0.940 and were above the 0.40 threshold recommended in the literature (Rianto et al., 2024; Li & Lay, 2024). Cronbach's α and Composite Reliability (CR) values in all dimensions were above 0.70, and Average Variance Extraction (AVE) was above 0.50, meeting the classical acceptance limits (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, the scale was found to be statistically robust in terms of both internal consistency and convergent validity; it was confirmed that it can be used safely in the subsequent structural model stages.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) results

Table 3. Discriminant validity findings according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Attitudes towards Imported Goods (1)	**0.906**				
Falsification Perception (2)	-0.186	**0.763**			
Food Nationalism (3)	-0.256	0.415	**0.740**		
Intention to Buy Imported Goods (4)	-0.377	0.420	0.574	**0.721**	
Perceived Price (5)	0.795	-0.109	-0.167	-0.133	**0.850**

In Table 3, the value of each construct is higher than its relations with other constructs. This shows that each scale measures its own subject better than the others. In other words, each concept is clearly separated from each other without being mixed with other concepts (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and therefore, it is seen that the Fornell and Larcker criterion is met.

Table 4. Discriminant validity findings according to the HTMT Criteria

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Attitudes towards Imported Goods (1)					
Falsification Perception (2)	0.212				
Food Nationalism (3)	0.268	0.548			
Intention to Buy Imported Goods (4)	0.435	0.594	0.701		
Perceived Price (5)	0.884	0.130	0.188	0.193	

Discriminant validity was additionally tested with the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio method. Table 4 shows the HTMT values between the constructs. HTMT is a single measure of the correlations of two different constructs and should be below 0.85 as a discriminant validity criterion (above 0.90 is also used in the literature) (Henseler et al., 2015). According to the HTMT ratios obtained in Table 4, the HTMT value for most dimension pairs in the model is below 0.85. The closest situation to the limit value was seen in the HTMT ratio between Attitude and Perceived Price, which was calculated as 0.884. This value is slightly above the 0.85 limit; however, it is below the 0.90 threshold accepted in the literature. Therefore, although there is a high correlation between Attitude and Price perception, the HTMT value of 0.884 shows that these two constructs are still separated and are not exactly the same construct. In general, the fact that the HTMT ratios between all constructs remain below 0.90 confirms that the discriminant validity of the model is achieved.

As a result, all the reliability (internal consistency) and validity criteria were met within the scope of measurement model evaluation. Cronbach's α and CR values of all constructs were at acceptable levels; AVE values fulfilled the requirement of explaining at least 50% of the variance. In addition, it was shown that the scales could be sufficiently distinguished from each other using the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria. These findings reveal that the survey scale is psychometrically satisfactory and provides a suitable basis for proceeding to the structural model analysis.
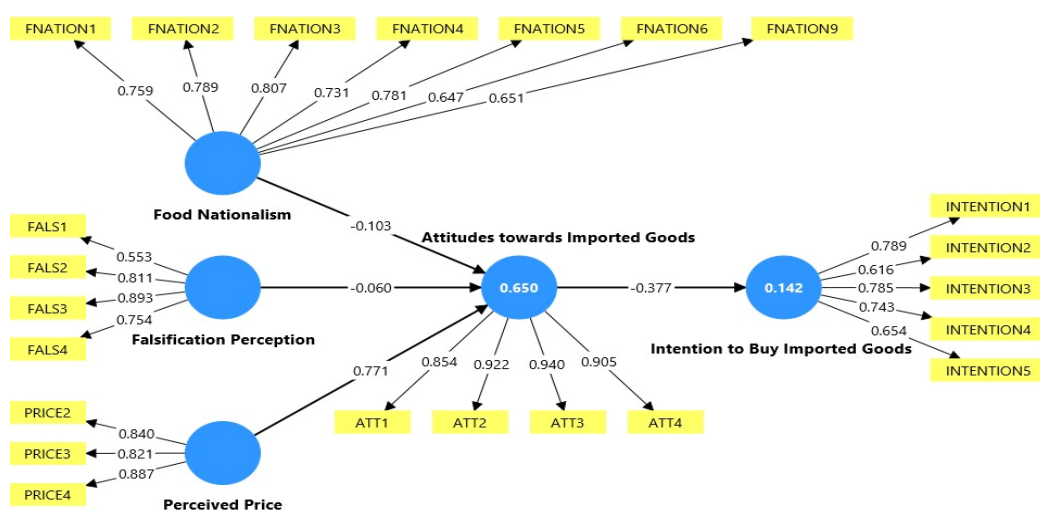

Figure 2. PLS-SEM Analysis results

Table 5. PLS-SEM Analysis results

	PATHS	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Standard deviation	T value	P values	Results
H₁	Food Nationalism -> Attitudes towards Imported Goods	-0.103	0.045	2.281	0.023	Accepted
H₂	Falsification Perception -> Attitudes towards Imported Goods	-0.060	0.049	1.223	0.221	Rejected
H₃	Perceived Price -> Attitudes towards Imported Goods	0.771	0.041	18.684	0.000	Accepted
H₄	Attitudes towards Imported Goods -> Intention to Buy Imported Goods	-0.377	0.077	4.893	0.000	Accepted

After the measurement model was found to be suitable, it was seen that the relationships between the constructs in the research model were suitable for performing structural equation modeling. Table 5 summarizes the path coefficients in the structural model, hypothesis testing results, and statistical significance of each relationship. A total of four research hypotheses (H_1–H_4) were tested, and the results are presented separately for each hypothesis below:

Within the scope of H_1, the effect of food nationalism on the attitude relationship was evaluated. The calculated coefficient was $\beta = -0.103$ and the effect was statistically significant ($t = 2.281$, $p = 0.023$). This result shows that individuals with a high tendency to support domestic products have a more negative attitude towards imported products. H_1 was supported accordingly. However, the magnitude of the effect is limited; although food nationalism significantly affects attitude, its effect is weak. This finding is consistent with the consumer ethnocentrism literature; it has been shown in many studies that ethnocentric tendencies negatively affect attitudes towards foreign products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Sharma et al., 1994). Although nationalism is effective in the current study, it is seen that consumers give more importance to evaluations such as price, and attitudes are essentially shaped by such perception (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004).

Within the scope of H_2, the relationship between adulteration concern and attitude was tested. The coefficient obtained was $\beta = -0.060$ and the effect was statistically insignificant ($t = 1.223$, $p = 0.221$). This shows that adulteration concern in imported agricultural products does not have a significant effect on consumer attitudes. H_2 was therefore not supported. The result contradicts theoretical expectations that food safety concerns generally negatively affect product perception (Spink & Moyer, 2011). However, the fact that its effect remained weak here suggests that consumers either see the risk of adulteration as low or do not reflect it in their general attitudes. In particular, associating imported products with reliable brands or countries may trivialize this risk. Similar ineffectiveness has been reported in the literature in consumer groups with low adulteration awareness. In this study, it is seen that the main factors shaping attitude are perceptions such as quality and price. The effect of attitude on purchase intention was examined.

Within the scope of H_3, the relationship between perceived price and attitude was tested. The coefficient obtained is $\beta = +0.771$ and the effect is highly significant ($t = 18.684$, $p = 0.001$). This finding shows that perceived price has a strong and positive effect on consumer attitudes. H_3 was strongly supported in this direction. The price scale reflects the perceptions that high price is an indicator of quality, that the product is worth it and that it gives confidence. Consumers with this perception approach imported products more positively. A high coefficient shows that perceived price is the most determining factor of attitude. This situation overlaps with the price-quality perception in the marketing literature; consumers often associate high prices with high quality (Rao & Monroe, 1989; Zeithaml, 1988). Similarly, it is consistent with previous findings that prestigious and expensive imported products are perceived more positively (Lichtenstein et al., 1993).

The effect of attitude on purchase intention was examined within the scope of H_4. The calculated coefficient is $\beta = -0.377$ and the effect is statistically significant ($t = 4.893$, $p = 0.000$). The purchase intention scale is reverse scored; therefore, a negative coefficient actually indicates a positive behavioral intention. This result shows that individuals with a positive attitude towards imported products are less likely to avoid purchasing these products. In other words, as positive attitudes increase, the tendency to purchase imported products also increases. H_4 was supported in this direction. The findings are consistent with classical theories that suggest that attitude is a determinant of behavioral intention. According to Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes are the main determinants of intention.

Table 6. Results for R², Q², f², and VIF

PATHS	R²	Q²	VIF	f²
Food Nationalism -> Attitudes towards Imported Goods			1.230	0.024
Falsification Perception -> Attitudes towards Imported Goods	0.650	0.636	1.210	0.008
Perceived Price -> Attitudes towards Imported Goods			1.031	1.648
Attitudes towards Imported Goods -> Intention to Buy Imported Goods	0.142	0.036	1.000	0.166

In structural equation modeling, if the R² value is above 0.75, it is considered high, if it is around 0.50, it is medium, and if it is at the level of 0.25, it is considered low explanatory power (Hair et al., 2011; Sarstedt et al., 2017). A Q² value greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive validity (Hair et al., 2011; Götz et al., 2009). If the f² value is between 0.02–0.15, it is small, if it is between 0.15–0.35, it is medium, and if it is above 0.35, it indicates a large effect size (Hair et al., 2014). A VIF value below 5 indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem (Hair et al., 2011; Sarstedt et al., 2017).

In the evaluations regarding the structural model, the general suitability of the model and the explained variance of the dependent variables were examined through Table 6. The R² value of the attitude variable towards imported goods is 0.650, indicating that 65% of the variance of this variable is explained by food nationalism, concern about adulteration and perceived price variables. In the context of social sciences, this rate indicates a medium-high level of explanatory power (Chin, 1998). In contrast, the R² value of the intention to purchase imported products variable was determined as 0.142, and this result shows that the model is weak in explaining this variable. When the Q² coefficients are examined, the value of 0.636 calculated for the attitude variable is quite high, indicating that the model has a strong predictive ability on this variable. The Q² value obtained for the intention to purchase is 0.036, and although it is positive, it is low, revealing that the predictive power of the model in this area is limited.

In the effect size (f²) analysis, the f² value of perceived price on attitude was found to be very high at 1.648. This clearly shows that price perception plays a central role in determining attitude. The f² value of food nationalism on attitude is small at 0.024, while the concern about adulteration is negligible at 0.008. On the other hand, the effect of the attitude variable on purchase intention is moderate, with an f² value of 0.166. This shows that attitude is an important factor affecting intention, consistent with the general findings in the literature. Finally, the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values calculated to evaluate the multicollinearity problem in the model are around 1 in all variables. This reveals that there is no multicollinearity problem among the independent variables and that the model does not violate the structural assumptions (Hair et al., 2011; Kock, 2015). In general, it is seen that the model has a strong explanatory and predictive power for the attitude variable and a limited explanatory and predictive power for purchase intention; especially the effect of price perception is quite evident.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study largely coincide with theoretical expectations in the literature. As expected (Sertoğlu & Çatlı, 2017; Şahin & Sancı, 2017), food nationalism negatively affected attitudes ($\beta = –0.10$, $p < 0.05$), but the magnitude of this effect was limited ($f² = 0.024$). This shows that consumers make decisions not only with national feelings but also with rational reasons such as quality, health and price. In fact, Kılıç & Aydın Eryılmaz, (2020) emphasized in their study that consumers tend to prefer attractively priced or high-quality foreign products.

However, the effect of adulteration anxiety on attitudes was not found to be statistically significant in the study ($\beta = –0.06$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that participants either perceive the risk of adulteration as low or their concerns about countries of origin that they trust are weaker. Although it has been reported in the literature that perception of adulteration has negative effects on attitude (Spink & Moyer, 2011; Djekic & Smigic, 2024), no significant effect was observed in this study. This result supports the finding in Kılıç & Aydın Eryılmaz (2020) and Meerzan & Gustafson (2019) studies that consumers do not have trust issues in imported products from countries of origin they trust.

The most striking finding is the effect of perceived price on attitude ($\beta = +0.77$, $p < 0.001$). This variable was the strongest determinant of attitude. This result is consistent with the findings of Karabaş et al. (2013); Kılıç and Aydın Eryılmaz (2020). These studies revealed that price perception has a positive effect on purchase intention. In contrast to this result, as Heinsalu (2018) mentioned in his study, companies should address the issue together with the psychological and socio-cultural perceptions of consumers regarding the prices of imported agricultural products. Price perception also reflects beliefs that the product is of high quality, worth the money, and provides confidence. These results are consistent with the price-quality relationship suggested by studies such as Zeithaml (1988), Rao & Monroe (1989), and Lichtenstein et al. (1993) and support these theories in the context of agricultural imports.

In the analysis findings of this study, it was observed that the consumer's attitude towards imported goods has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention. This result largely coincides with the theoretical expectations in the literature. In the consumer behavior and international trade literature, it is emphasized that positive attitudes towards imported products are an important determinant that directly affects the consumer's purchase behavior. Attitude is positively related to intention as it reflects the consumer's general evaluation, emotional tendencies, and judgments regarding foreign products (Bayniş & Geçti, 2022).

In this context, the positive relationship obtained is consistent with the findings of Onurlubaş and Altunışık (2019) showing that the preference for domestic goods in the food sector affects the attitude towards imported products. In addition, as stated by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2016) and Yurtsever (2021), the fact that individuals with a global identity prioritize values such as quality and prestige and develop more positive attitudes explains this positive effect on intention. The findings that factors such as adulteration concerns and product safety shape attitudes (Kılıç & Eryılmaz, 2020) and that products from developed countries are found to be more reliable support positive attitudes are also consistent with the results of this study. Therefore, the analysis finding is in line with the general acceptance in the literature that individual, cultural and economic factors shape purchase intentions through attitudes.

As a result, while the study confirms the effect of attitude on intention, it draws attention to the lower than expected effect of adulteration concerns and the determining power of price perception. Food nationalism demonstrates the role of national values with its limited effect; however, consumers' evaluations based on benefits often override emotional or ethical concerns. This reveals the weight of the utilitarian approach in consumer behavior.

The research findings offer important practical implications for marketing managers, import strategy makers and food safety authorities. Consumers' price-focused approach, especially the belief that the perceived high price of imported products is an indicator of quality, should shape managerial decisions. On the other hand, the effect of nationalist-based attitudes, although limited, is present and should not be ignored. The strategies and policies that can be developed in light of the findings are summarized below:

Marketing Strategies: Companies marketing imported products should design their pricing strategies in a way that positively affects consumers' perception of quality. Since the findings show that consumers perceive high-priced imported products as high-quality and reliable, positioning and value communication in the premium segment become important. Brand managers can reinforce the consumer's perception of "value for money" by emphasizing the superior quality, nutritional or health benefits of the product that are worth its high price. In addition, segmentation strategies can target segments with low levels of consumer ethnocentrism and a global perspective; young consumers who are more cosmopolitan and open to foreign brands should be prioritized in marketing campaigns for imported products.

Import Policies: Policy makers should focus on providing competitive price advantage in imported food products by taking into account the price sensitivity of consumers. Customs duties and incentive policies can contribute to the development of positive attitudes by consumers by keeping imported product prices at reasonable levels. Considering the importance consumers attach to price in the study, price stability should be considered as much as supply security in import policies. In addition, without completely ignoring the motivation of consumers to support domestic producers, the indirect contributions of imported products to the national economy (e.g. distribution channels that create employment, taxes, etc.) should be explained transparently. Thus, import policies can be supported with a communication strategy that will balance nationalist sensitivities in order to increase social acceptance.

Consumer Confidence and Food Safety Practices: Although adulteration concerns did not have a significant effect on attitudes in this study, proactive measures are critical in terms of food safety and consumer confidence. Consumers should be assured about the origin of imported products, production standards, and supply chain transparency. Importing companies and supervisory institutions can eliminate possible adulteration concerns by documenting the originality of products with product certifications, quality marks, and traceability systems. Food adulteration is seen as a threat to public health on a global scale (Spink & Moyer, 2011); therefore, in Turkey, control mechanisms for imported food products should be continuously improved and the awareness level of consumers should be increased. In order to instill confidence in consumers, the results of periodic controls and analyses can be shared with the public, thus establishing trust without revealing latent concerns.

Managing Nationalist Tendencies: Local producers and importers should develop a communication language by taking into account the nationalist tendency in consumers. Local product campaigns can win the hearts of ethnocentric consumers with marketing messages themed as "use local products". On the other hand, imported brands

can implement "glocalization" strategies to neutralize nationalist attitudes: For example, steps such as adapting products to local culture, making references to Turkish culture on their packaging and advertisements, or emphasizing that they have invested in Turkey can make foreign brands more "local-friendly" in the eyes of consumers. Thus, imported products can soften the perception of "foreign", create an image that respects national identity, and reduce ethnocentric barriers. As a result, adopting an approach based on trust and national values in marketing and communication activities will both increase consumer satisfaction and contribute to the sustainability of both the local and imported product ecosystem in the long term.

LIMITATIONS

Although this study provides meaningful insights in the field of agricultural imports and consumer behavior, it also brings with it some limitations. The sample of 213 people collected online with convenience sampling may not fully represent the wider population as it is limited to volunteers using the internet. It is recommended to collect more comprehensive data with different demographic and regional groups with probability sampling methods in the future. In addition, the study focused only on certain variables (food nationalism, price perception, adulteration, anxiety, attitude and intention) and excluded factors such as brand image, perceived quality, health anxiety and income level. Including these dimensions in future studies will make the model more comprehensive. Finally, the fact that the findings were obtained only with quantitative methods may lead to some contextual dynamics being overlooked; therefore, mixed-method studies supported by qualitative data collection techniques are recommended. Furthermore, this study did not differentiate between conventional, organic, and GMO-based imported agricultural products. Future research should consider these distinctions to capture more nuanced patterns in consumer behavior.

Ethics statement

It was found ethically appropriate by The Mudanya University Ethics Committees in its meeting dated 25.06.2025 and numbered 2025-3. (Protocol Code: E-40839601-50.04-163).

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