

BRIEFING NOTE:

U.S. CONSUMERS' TECH PURCHASE PREFERENCES

Insights for brands who manufacture in China
from our February 2025 research study

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OVERVIEW

A February 2025 study, conducted by PR agency [Proper Propaganda](#) in collaboration with US-based research firm [Audience Audit](#), surveyed 1,001 U.S. consumers to examine key factors influencing their consumer technology purchasing decisions.

The respondent group mirrors U.S. Census distribution by region, age, gender, race, ethnicity, and household income, and the research provides statistically reliable insights into how American consumers assess foreign brands.

The study focuses on product origin, transparency, AI integration, political alignment, and trade policies—**facts particularly relevant for Chinese technology brands seeking to establish trust and succeed in the U.S. market.**

PURPOSE

For Chinese consumer technology brands entering or expanding in the U.S., overcoming the existing trust deficit is critical. This report offers data-driven insights on:

- How product origin influences consumer trust and how brands can position themselves effectively
- The role of transparency in purchasing decisions and how Chinese brands can balance openness with brand control
- U.S. consumers' evolving retail preferences, including the ongoing importance of brick-and-mortar stores
- The key factors that truly drive purchasing decisions, such as price, quality, and independent product reviews

By understanding these priorities, Chinese companies can refine their market strategy, optimize retail channels, and strengthen consumer trust.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents key data on U.S. consumer attitudes, examining major influences on purchasing decisions, including product origin, transparency, AI adoption, and tariffs. Building on this data, we provide actionable recommendations to help Chinese brands address challenges, refine messaging, and improve market positioning. Each recommendation is directly informed by our data, consumer sentiment and behavior.

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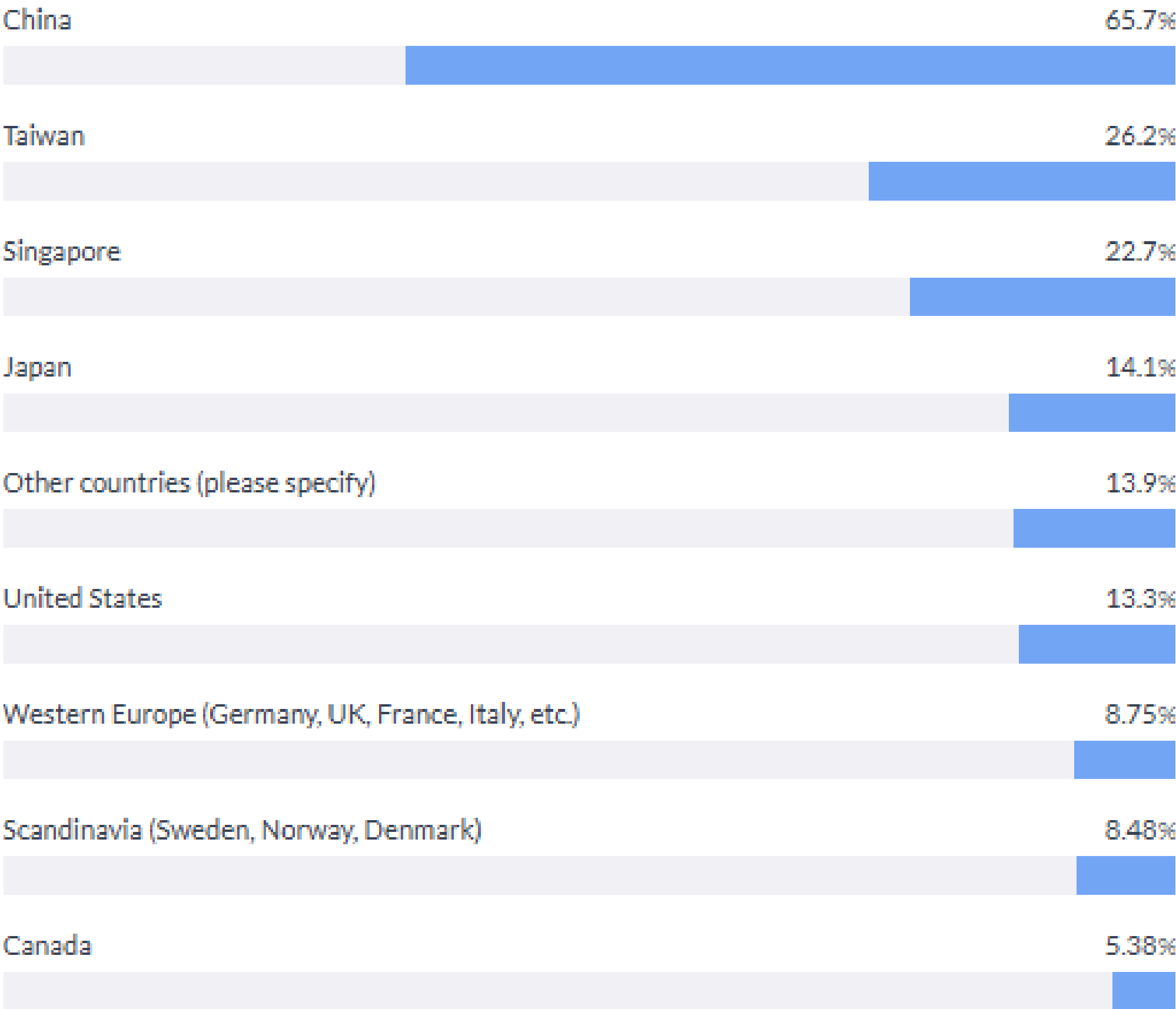
STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Succeeding in the U.S. market requires more than competitive pricing—Chinese technology brands must navigate trust barriers, consumer skepticism, and evolving retail preferences. The following sections outline strategic opportunities based on consumer sentiment data. Organized by theme, these insights help Chinese technology brands strengthen trust, improve transparency, optimize pricing strategies, and refine their retail approach to better connect with U.S. buyers.

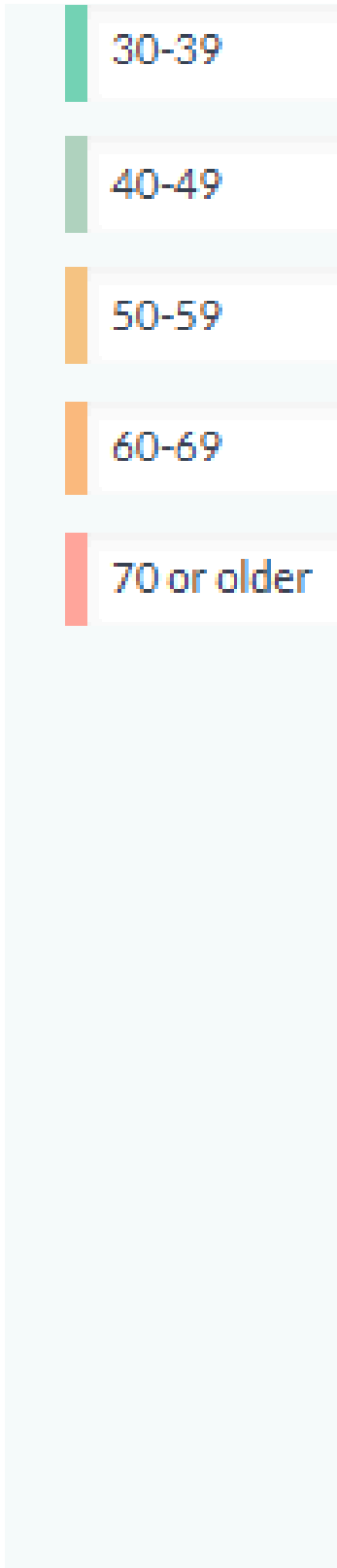
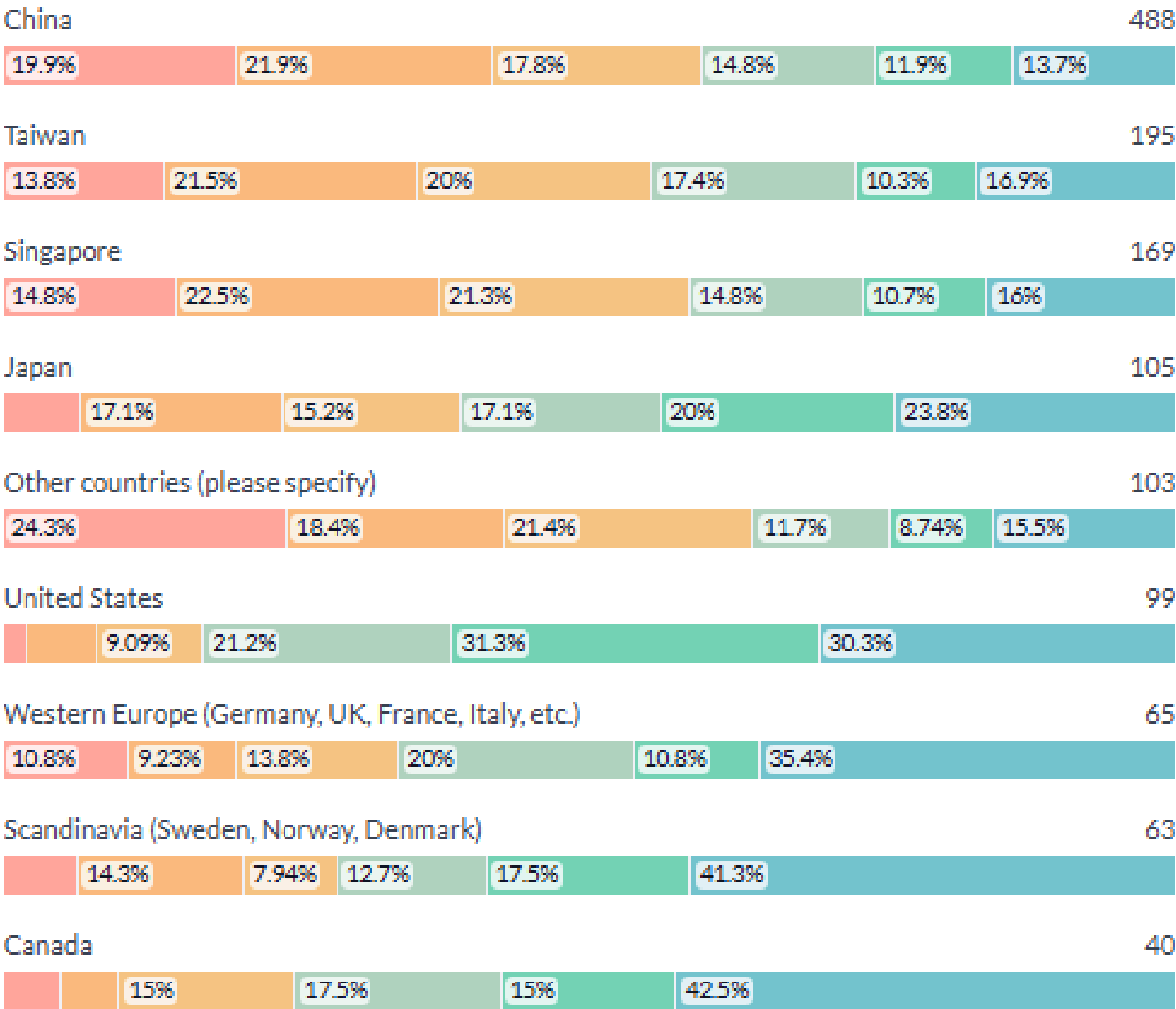
PRODUCT ORIGIN & CONSUMER TRUST

Consumer trust in tech products is closely tied to where they are made. This section explores concerns about Chinese manufacturing and how brands can build credibility in the U.S. market.

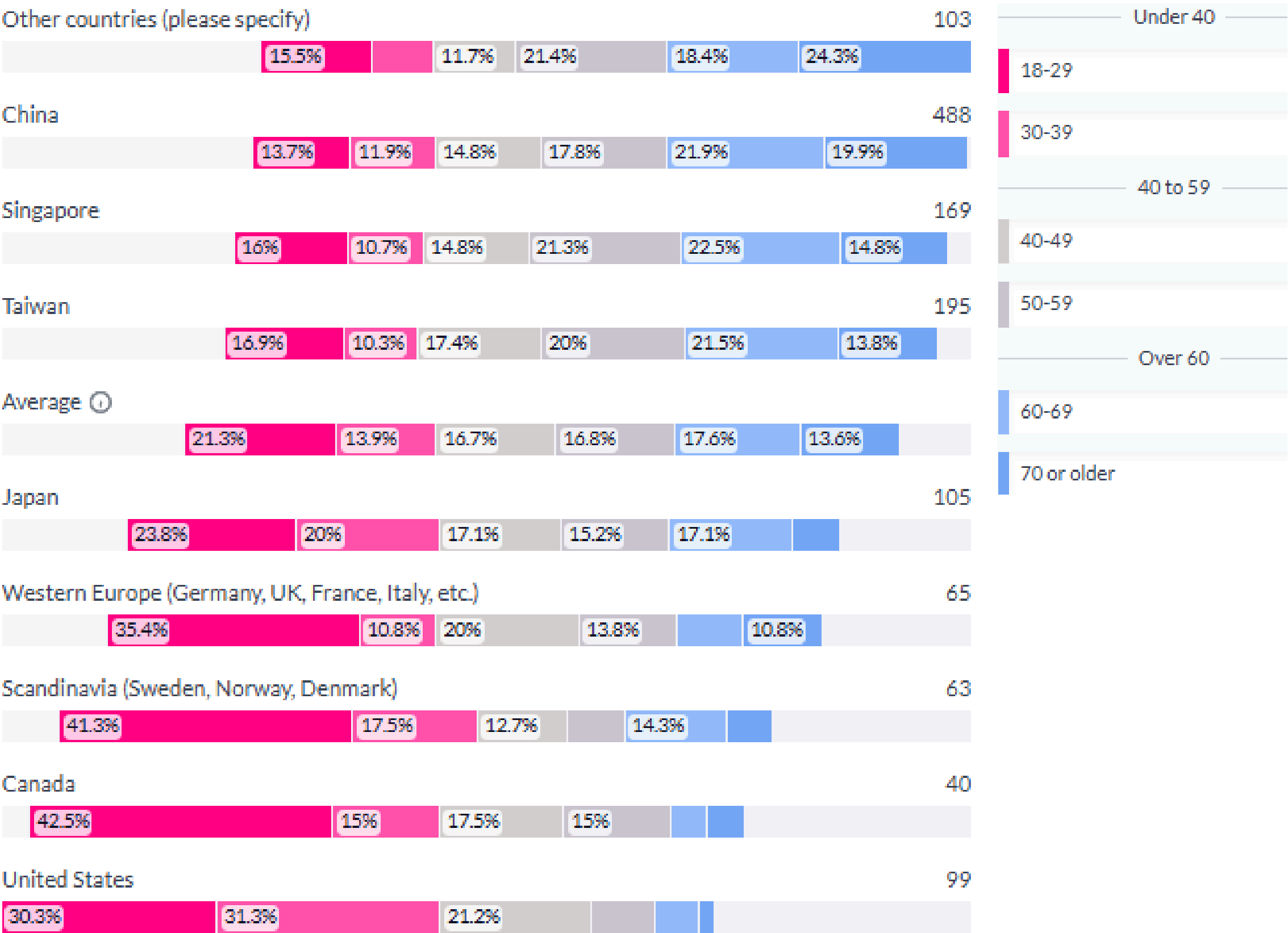
COUNTRIES THAT
RAISE THE MOST
CONCERN AS
MANUFACTURING
LOCATIONS



COUNTRIES THAT
RAISE THE MOST
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AGE GROUP



COUNTRIES THAT RAISE THE MOST CONCERN AS MANUFACTURING LOCATIONS BY AGE GROUP



CONCERNS ABOUT CHINA AND MANUFACTURING LOCATIONS

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- 65.7% of all respondents³⁸ identified China as a country of concern when it comes to places tech is manufactured. It was far and away number one³⁹, a fact that held across all demographics we tested for.
- Consumer trust in product quality depends on manufacturing origin, with U.S. production generally favored over Chinese-made goods³⁴:
 - American-Made with American Parts: 65% expressed strong or absolute trust, reinforcing confidence in domestic manufacturing.
 - American-Made with Chinese Parts: 39.4% showed moderate trust, indicating component sourcing affects perception.
 - U.S.-Assembled with Chinese Workers and Parts: 33.5% expressed moderate trust, reflecting mixed confidence in these products.
 - Chinese-Made with Chinese Parts: 32.6% reported little to no trust, though 24.8% had some to moderate trust, highlighting divided views.

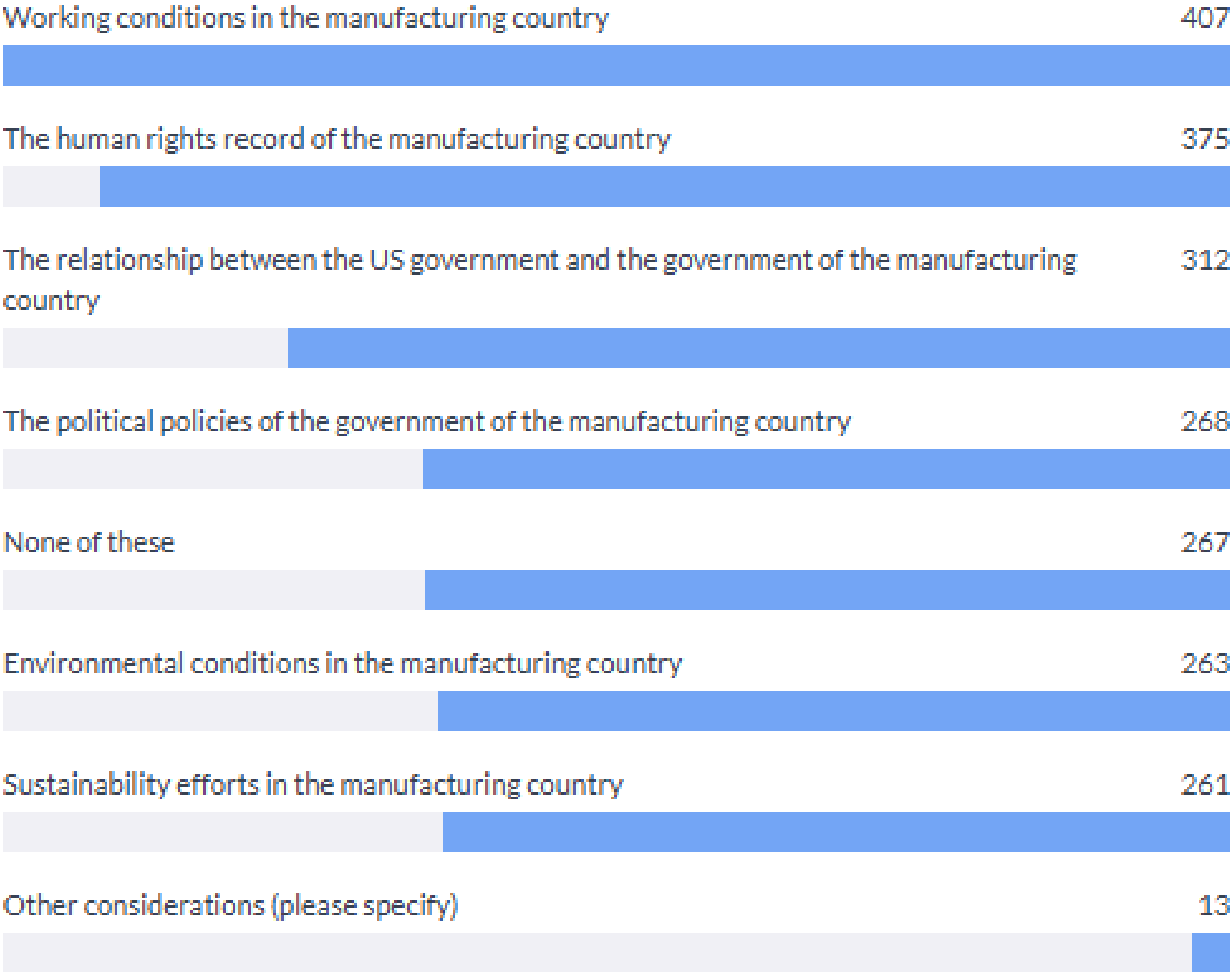
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SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- A whopping 79.4% of American consumers aged 60+ expressed reservations about Chinese-made products³⁸.

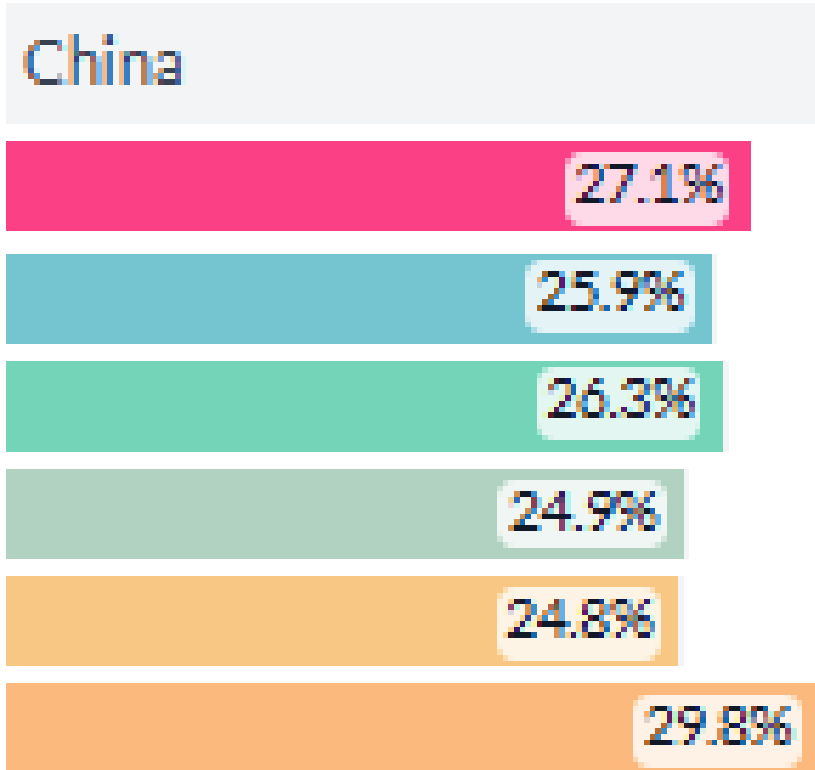
OPPORTUNITIES

- Our research showed that US consumers are wary of Chinese products. This despite the fact that the vast majority of consumer tech products are made in China. How should Chinese brands deal with this? They can build trust by addressing concerns about product origin, labor conditions, and quality control. Clear communication about ethical manufacturing, sustainability, and supply chain transparency will strengthen credibility, making disclosure a key opportunity for Chinese brands. Highlighting strict quality standards and worker welfare initiatives can further reassure U.S. consumers. This is where professional PR help comes in and why it is essential for Chinese companies in the US.



**FACTORS THAT
SHAPE CONSUMER
DECISIONS ABOUT
TECH
MANUFACTURED
ABROAD**

FACTORS THAT DRIVE CONCERN ABOUT TECH MADE IN CHINA



- Concerns about data privacy or cybersecurity risks
- Concerns about poor working conditions or labor exploitation in manufacturing facilities
- Concerns about their trade or diplomatic relationship with the United States
- Concerns about their human rights record
- Concerns their environmental practices
- Something else (please specify)

REASONS CITED FOR CONCERN ABOUT NON-AMERICAN-MADE PRODUCTS

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- When considering tech products made outside U.S., consumers cited the following as key drivers⁴⁰:
- 63.1% of all respondents cited concerns about poor working conditions or labor exploitation in manufacturing facilities.
- 51.5% of all respondents cited concerns about the human rights record.
- 38.9% of all respondents cited concerns about environmental practices.
- 61.9% of all respondents cited concerns about data privacy or cybersecurity risks.
- 47.7% of all respondents cited concerns about trade or diplomatic relations with the United States.

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SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Younger consumers (under 40) are most concerned about environmental practices (49.2%), while older consumers (60+) prioritize data privacy and cybersecurity risks (72.8%)⁴⁰.
- Politically, Democrats focus on labor and human rights (74.5%), whereas Republicans are most concerned with data security (69%)⁴⁰.

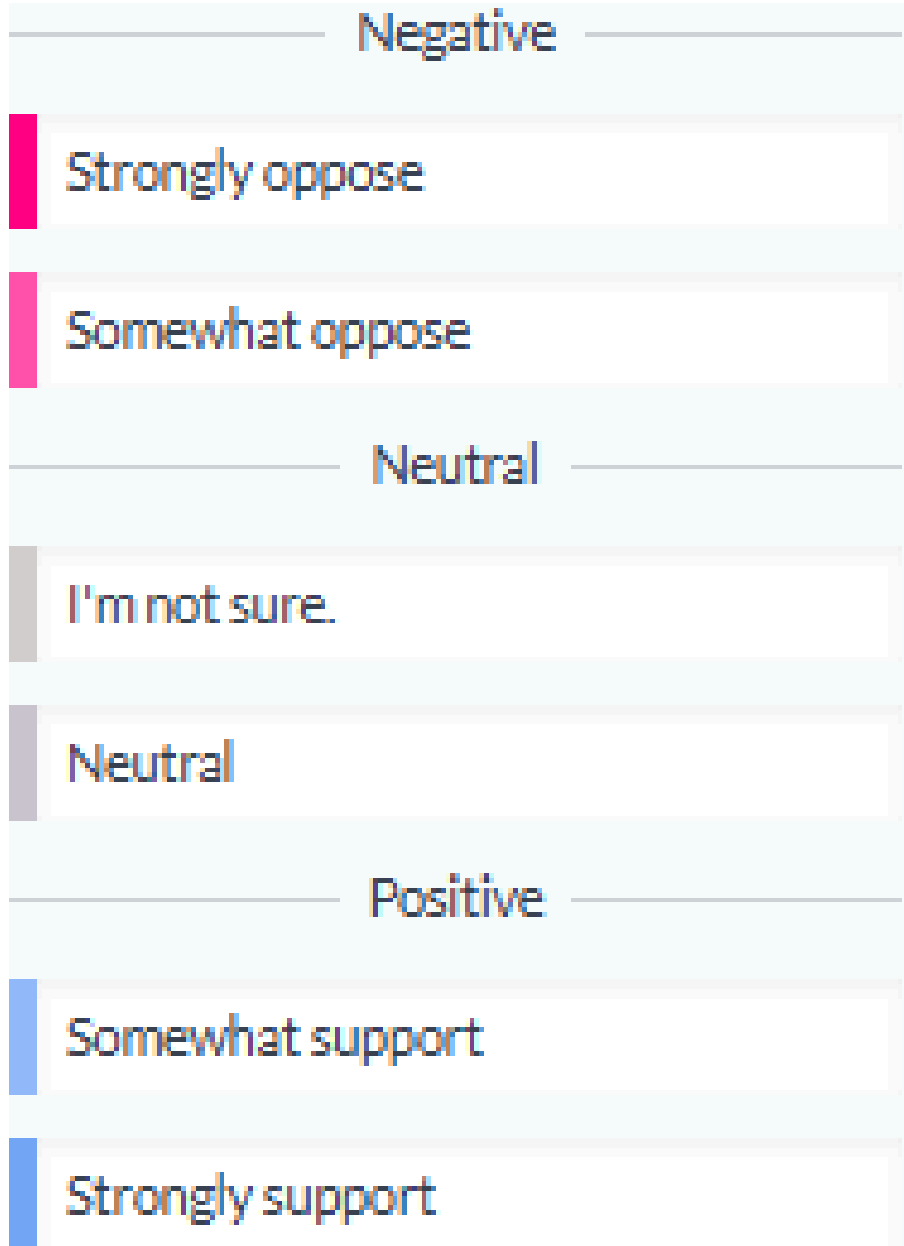
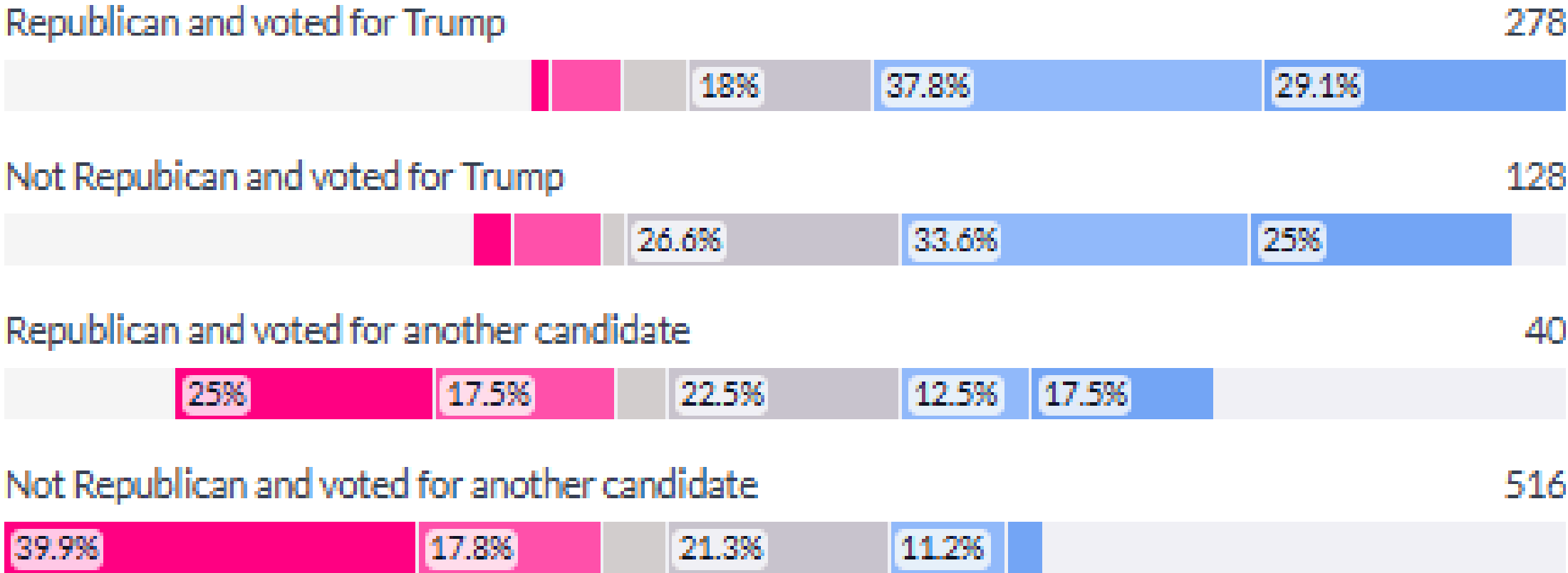
OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese brands should address labor, human rights, and sustainability concerns with clear ethical commitments.
- Privacy and cybersecurity protections will be key for older consumers and Republicans, while eco-friendly practices appeal most to younger buyers.

TARIFFS & TRADE POLICIES

Many Americans are unclear how tariffs affect pricing and competition. This section examines consumer attitudes toward trade policies and the opportunity for Chinese brands to shape perceptions.

OPINIONS ON U.S. TARIFF POLICY BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND 2024 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE



A POOR UNDERSTANDING OF TARIFFS

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- Most Americans don't understand tariffs well, and few strongly support them.
- Only 29.9% of survey respondents claim to be very familiar with what a tariff is⁵⁰.
- Only 14.3% claim to strongly support tariffs⁵¹.
- Only 44.2% of Americans expected the imposition of tariffs to prompt trade retaliations from targeted countries⁵³.
- Only 27.7% of Americans think the tariffs will impact prices or restrict competition⁵³.
- Only a slim majority of Americans (53% of those we surveyed) think the tariffs will increase costs to American businesses⁵³.
- 29.9% of all respondents agreed that tariffs imposed by the US government on goods from other countries would reduce reliance on foreign suppliers, especially adversarial nations⁵³.

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SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Even among Trump voters, only 27.8% strongly support using tariffs⁵¹.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese firms have a huge opportunity to educate US consumers about how tariffs impact pricing and availability, especially for affordable consumer tech products. Messaging should clarify how trade relationships affect innovation, supply chains, and accessibility of high-quality, well-priced tech.

THE IMPACT OF TARIFFS ON BUYING BEHAVIOR

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- Consumer responses to potential 25% price increases on tech products due to tariffs were mixed:
- 36% would choose the lowest-priced product⁵².
- 15.9% said their buying habits wouldn't change⁵².
- 21.2% would opt for a U.S.-made alternative, even at the same cost as an imported product⁵².
- 21.3% would only buy an imported product if they trusted the brand; otherwise, they'd buy American-made⁵².

SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- 31.6% of Trump voters preferred a U.S.-made alternative, even if the price matched an imported product whereas 41.1% of Harris voters prioritized the lowest price⁵².

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OPPORTUNITIES

- While price is critical, we know that brand trust and perceived value also shape purchasing decisions. Chinese brands will need to strengthen branding and consumer confidence to offset price concerns.
- Companies can further optimize production efficiency and pricing to attract budget-conscious buyers, or even consider U.S.-based assembly or hybrid production to appeal to the 21.2% willing to pay the same for a U.S.-made product.
- There's value in building partnerships with American companies and highlighting U.S. regulatory compliance to engage trade-friendly consumers.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY'S PERCEIVED IMPACT ON CONSUMER TECH

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- A combined 82.5% of U.S. consumers believe the global economy positively affects tech product quality (30.6% somewhat positive, 33.6% positive, 18.3% very positive)¹.

SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Oddly, Trump voters generally cited the global economy as having had a positive impact on the quality (87.4%), innovation (85%), and availability (84.6%) of tech products, comparable to Harris voters (quality 80.6%, innovation 83.8%, and availability 83.3%)¹.

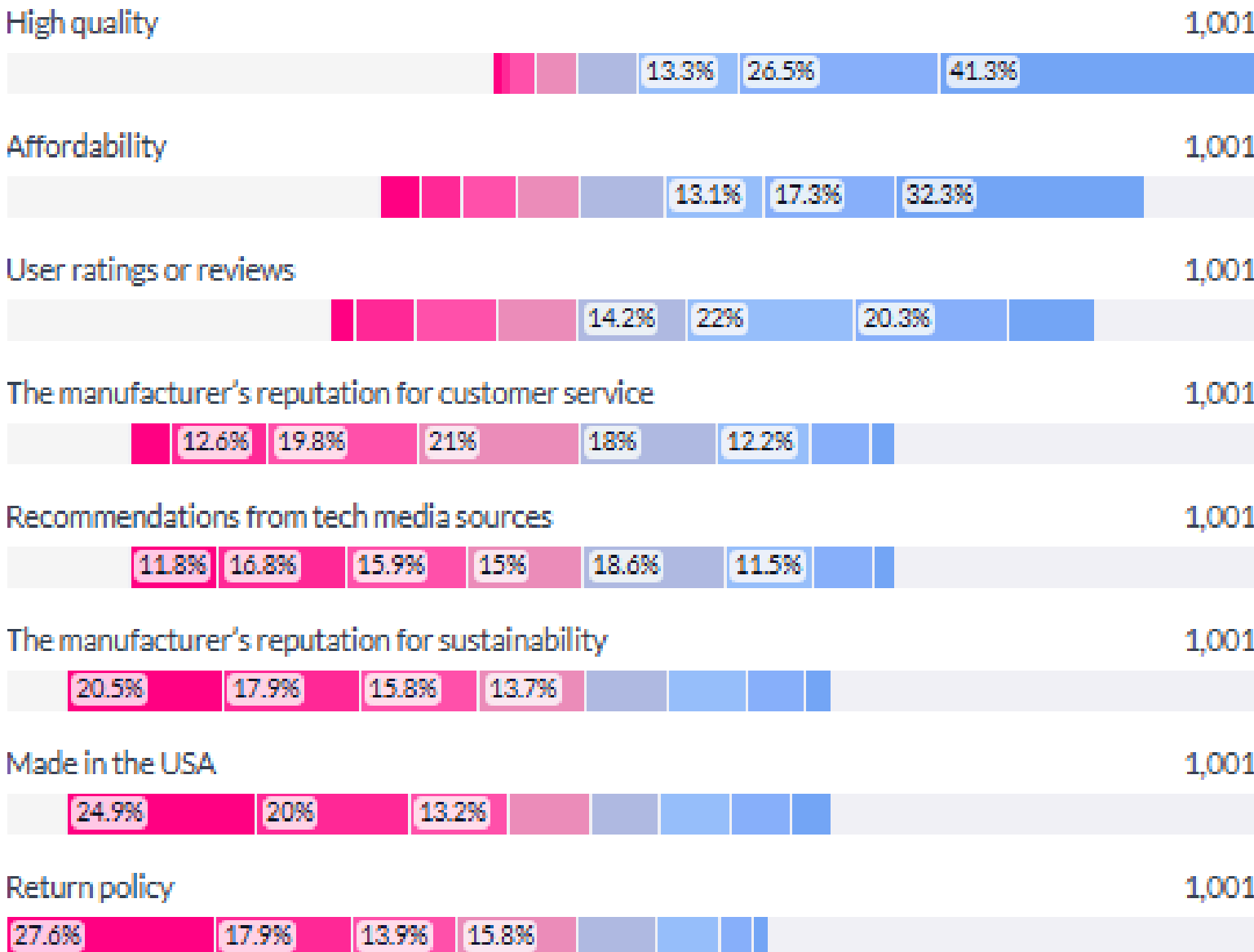
OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese firms should highlight the great benefits of participation in the global economy. This is especially true for firms who sell heavily into Red States. Trumpers clearly like the personal benefits that accrue to their being able to buy varied, advanced and well-priced tech.

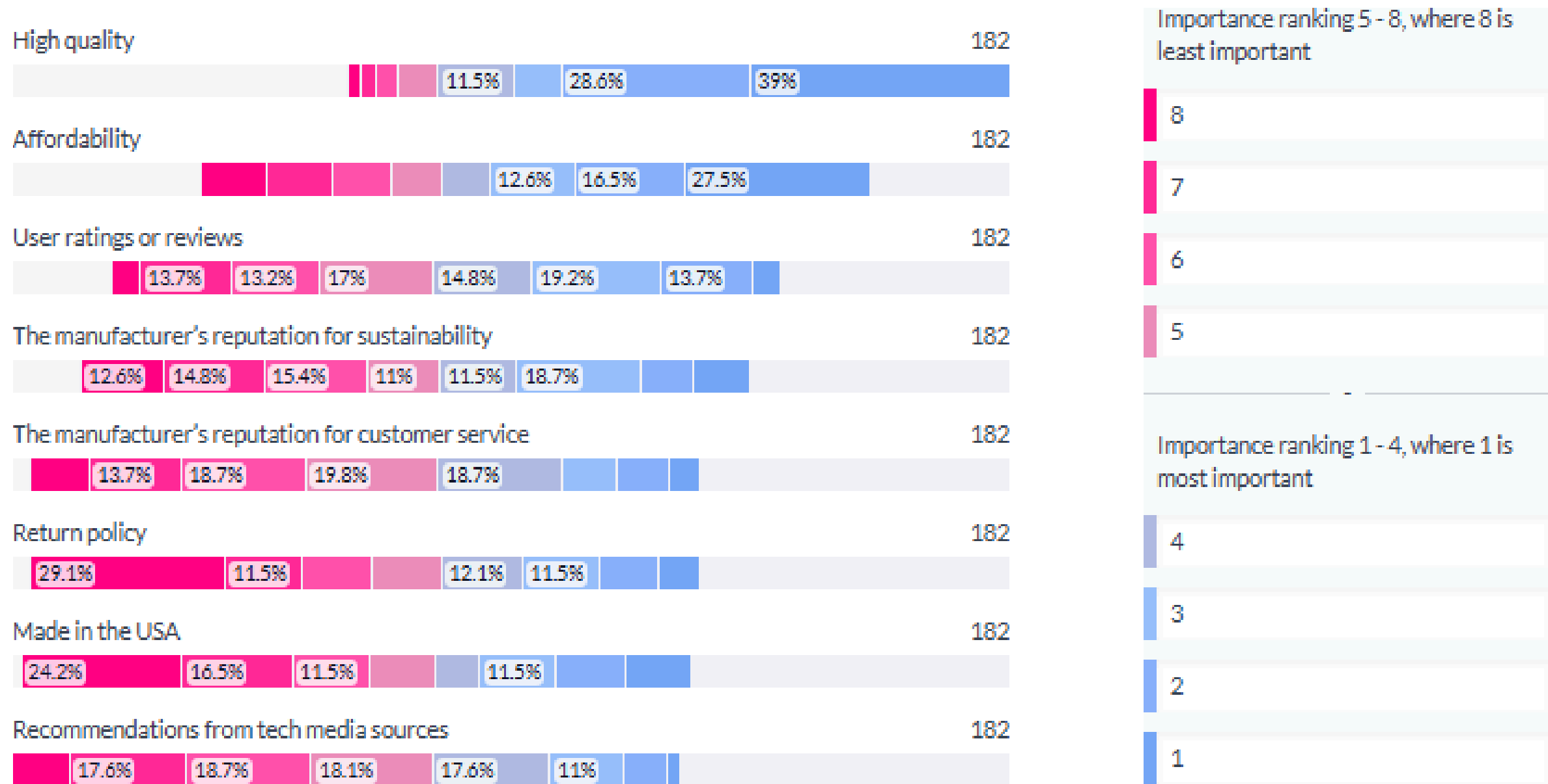
QUALITY & AFFORDABILITY

Price and quality consistently rank as the top factors in U.S. tech purchases. This section highlights how these priorities shift across price points and how Chinese brands can stay competitive.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TECH PURCHASES AT THE \$100 PRICE POINT



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TECH PURCHASES AT THE \$1000 PRICE POINT



QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY REMAIN KEY PRIORITIES

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- Regardless of whether a purchase was \$100, \$500, or \$1000, high quality and affordability consistently rank as the top two consumer priorities when purchasing tech, reinforcing the need for competitive pricing and product excellence among Chinese exporters^{4 6 8}.

SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Even amongst Trump voters, “Made in the USA” ranked low as a priority. It never scored higher than the 5th priority out of 8 for this group. Interestingly, the "Made in the USA" consideration decreases in importance as the price of the product increases (i.e. 6th priority for a \$500 product; 7th priority for a \$1000 product)^{4 6 8}.

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OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese firms need to understand price elasticity of demand is tied primarily to product quality and value perceptions. They should prioritize value-driven messaging that underscores competitive pricing and premium features to appeal to cost-conscious consumers.

THE POWER OF REVIEWS

This section looks at the role of third-party endorsements, customer feedback, and media credibility in purchasing decisions.

WHO CONSUMERS BELIEVE WHEN PRODUCT REVIEWS ARE MIXED



POSITIVE REVIEWS PRIORITIZED OVER PLACE-OF-ORIGIN TRANSPARENCY

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- When choosing between a product with transparent manufacturing details and one with strong positive reviews, 66.5% of consumers trust reviews more, showing that reputation and peer feedback outweigh production transparency in purchase decisions³².
- Traditional media still holds influence, with 61.2% of respondents getting news from network TV, 27.1% from newspapers, and 26.9% from radio⁴³.
- However, trust in media is declining, with 72.2% citing inaccurate reporting, 61.8% citing lack of transparency, and 54.4% citing political bias as key concerns⁴².

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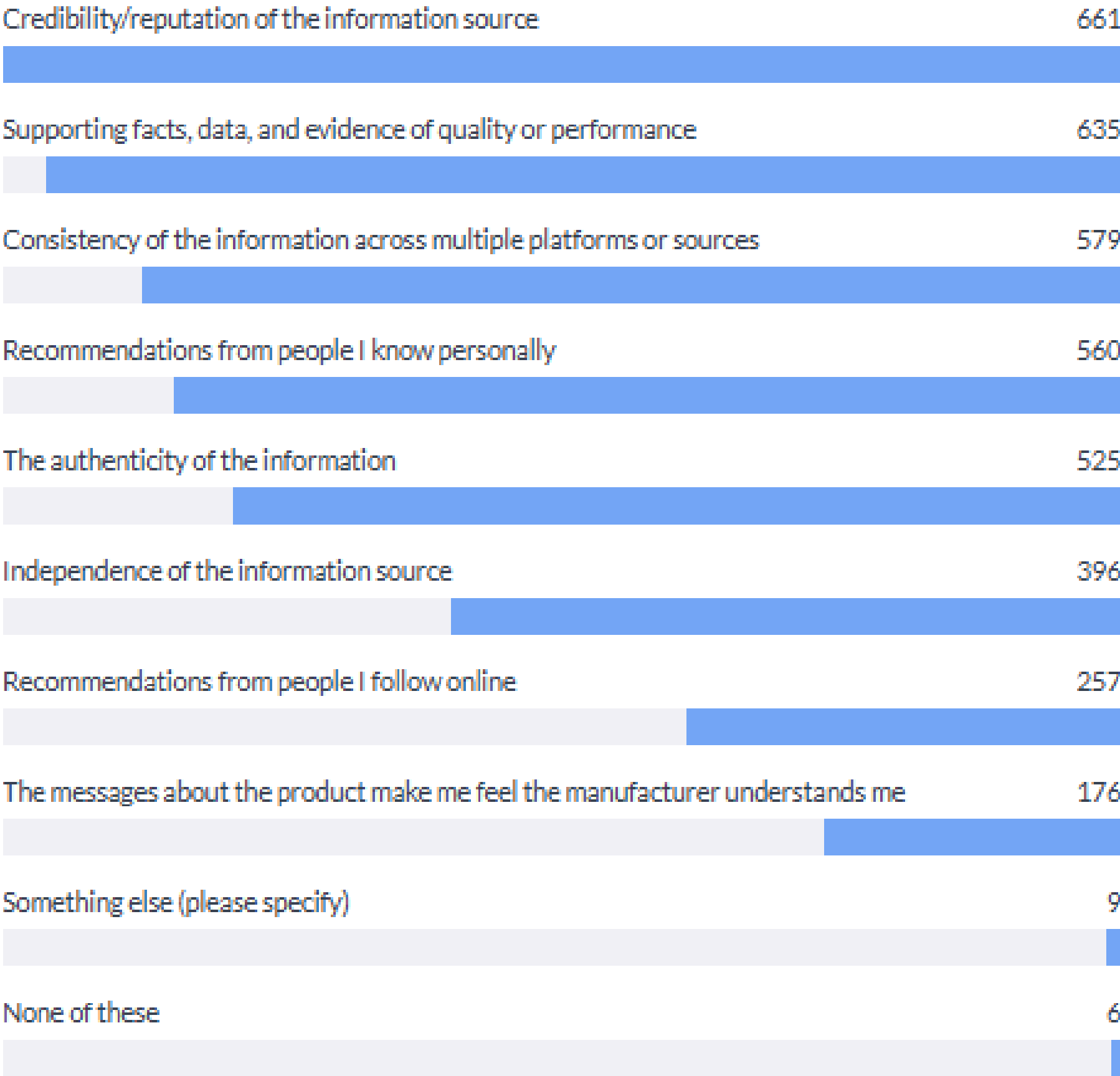
SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

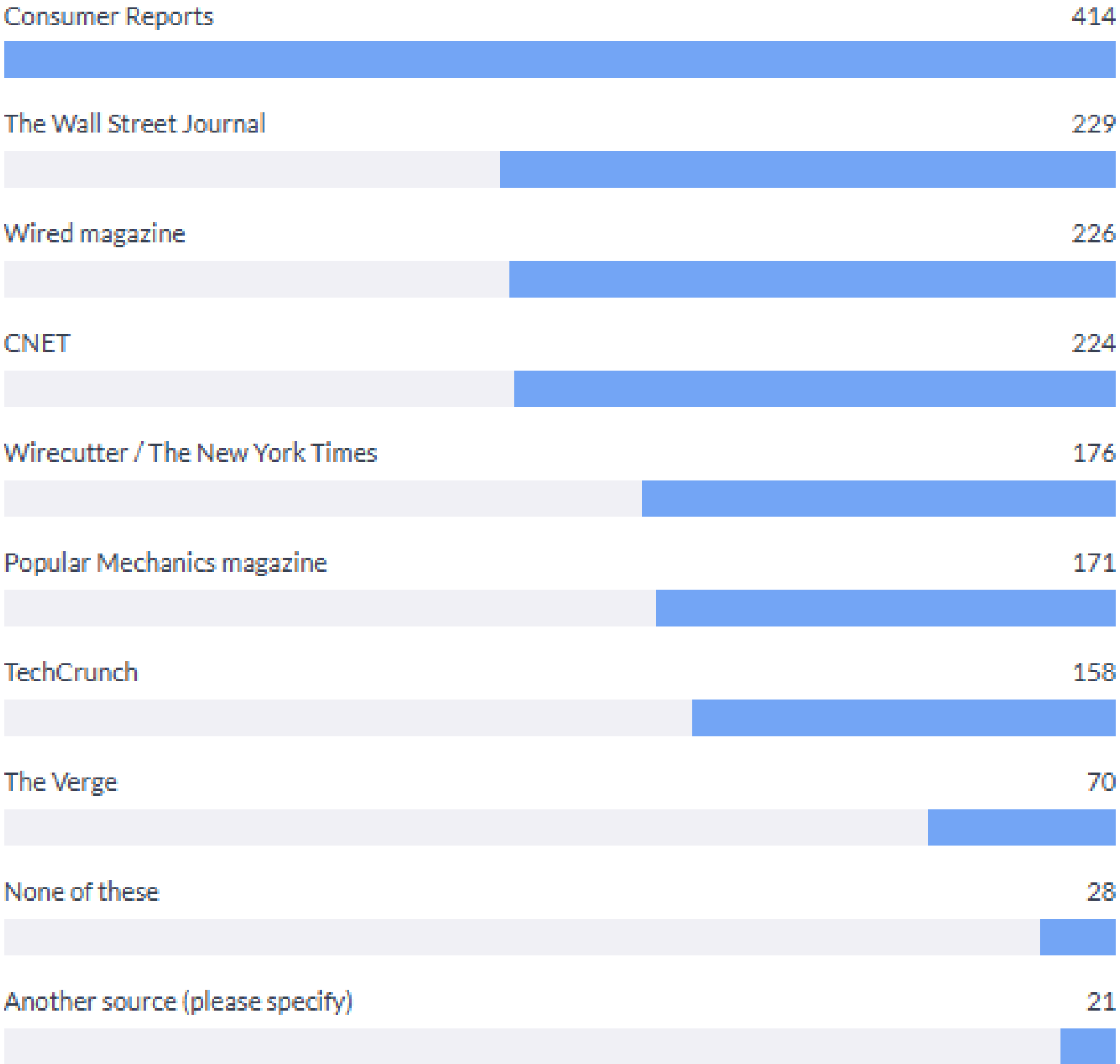
- A whopping 57.4% of Trump voters say they trust mainstream media less (20.5% somewhat less, 36.9% much less) than they did 5 years ago. Only 36.2% of Harris voters do (23.8% somewhat less, 12.4% much less)⁴⁴. This matters immensely when devising PR strategies.

OPPORTUNITIES

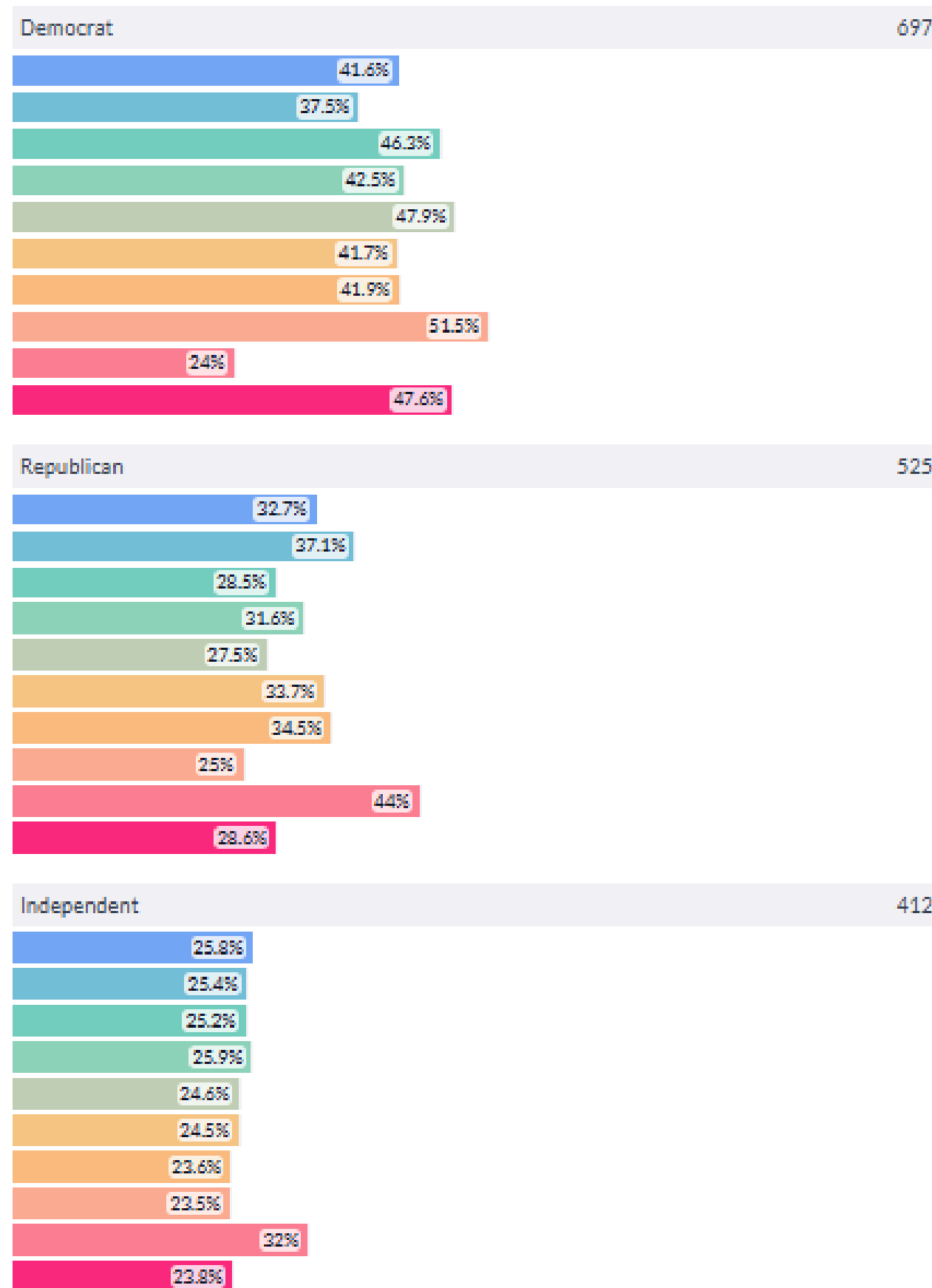
- Chinese brands should prioritize third-party reviews and customer testimonials to reinforce quality and build trust. Securing coverage in credible media outlets, including traditional media, can further strengthen reputation and consumer confidence.

FACTORS THAT BUILD TRUST IN CONSUMER TECH PRODUCT INFORMATION





**MEDIA SOURCES U.S.
CONSUMERS TRUST FOR
TECH PRODUCT
INFORMATION**



- Consumer Reports
- The Wall Street Journal
- Wired magazine
- CNET
- Wirecutter / The New York Times
- Popular Mechanics magazine
- TechCrunch
- The Verge
- None of these
- Another source (please specify)

TRUSTED MEDIA SOURCES FOR TECH PRODUCT INFORMATION BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION

TRUSTED REVIEW SOURCES AND WORD-OF-MOUTH INFLUENCE

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- US tech consumers rely heavily on independent product reviews from third parties, with customer satisfaction surveys (74.7%) and in-depth hands-on reviews (68.5%) ranking as the most trusted sources pre-purchase⁹.
- Consumer Reports is the most trusted tech media review platform (69.7%), beating even the NY Times (29.6%) and Wall Street Journal (38.6%) by almost 30 percentage points¹⁰.
- 49.4% of consumers considering a \$100 tech product consult friends or family before purchasing³.
- The reviews most likely to convince buyers that information about a product is authentic or honest are¹³:
 - Reviews that include a lot of detail (64.8%).
 - Reviews include product criticisms or shortcomings (57.2%).
 - Reviews that include personal stories or experiences with the product (50%).
 - Discussions about the product seem real and unfiltered (48.9%).

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SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- When it comes to perceiving the authenticity and honesty of information about a consumer tech product, younger consumers (under 40) are less concerned about the presence of sponsored content or advertising (33.7%) compared to older consumers aged 60 and above (47.2%)¹³

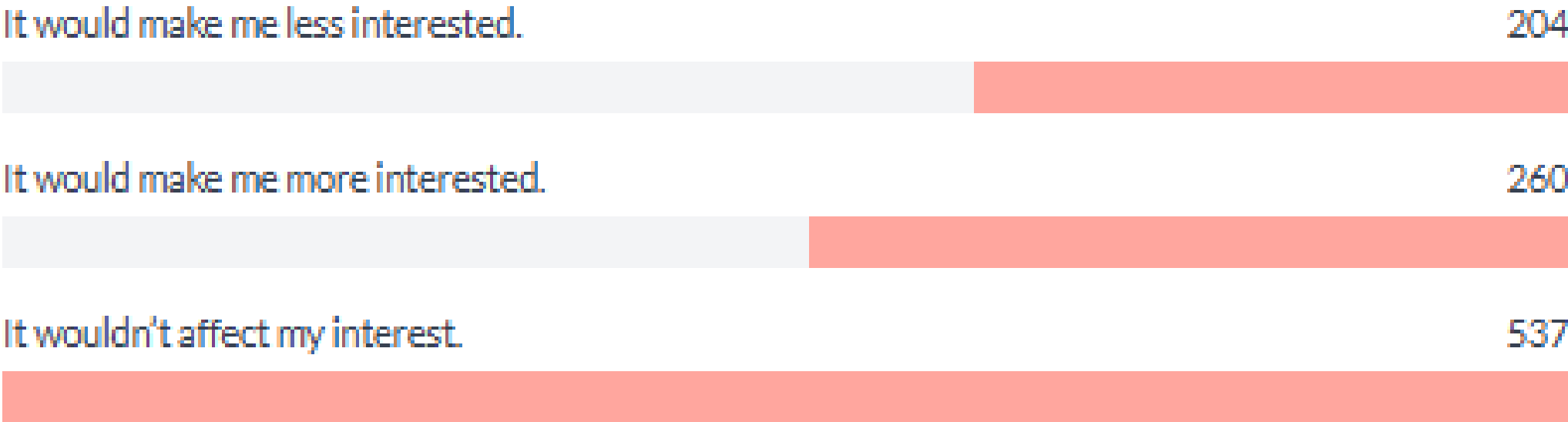
OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese firms should prioritize securing reputable third-party reviews and promote customer advocacy and user generated content in their marketing. The latter behaviours can be incentivized for younger audiences.

AI & INNOVATION

AI-powered technology sparks both interest and skepticism. This section explores consumer attitudes toward AI branding and how brands can communicate its benefits effectively.

IMPACT OF “POWERED BY AI” LABELING ON CONSUMER WILLINGNESS TO BUY



AI MARKETING AND REPUBLICAN VOTERS

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- It appears AI-marketing (i.e. labelling a tech product as “Powered by AI” or some variant thereof) has limited impact on Americans. Only 25.9% of respondents said this would make them more interested in a product. 53.7% said it would have only a neutral impact and 20.4% said the tactic would make them less interested in buying the product²⁶.
- Supporters believe AI enhances efficiency (67.8%) and adds advanced features, while concerns include ethics (62.1%) and data privacy (48.3%)²⁷.
- Over 80% of consumers across political affiliations value clear AI explanations²⁹.

SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- 31.8% of Trump voters said AI-specific marketing messages would make them more interested in buying versus only 24.9% of Harris voters²⁶.
- There were caveats there though: Among Trump voters, 85.3% prioritize a clear explanation of AI use²⁹.
- When asked whether a product labeled “Powered by AI” would influence their interest in purchasing, 30.1% of American consumers aged 60+ said they would be less interested²⁶. Combined with the stated-earlier finding that 79.4%³⁸ of respondents in this age group are concerned about buying consumer tech products made in China, this suggests that older demographics may be particularly wary of AI-powered products from Chinese manufacturers.

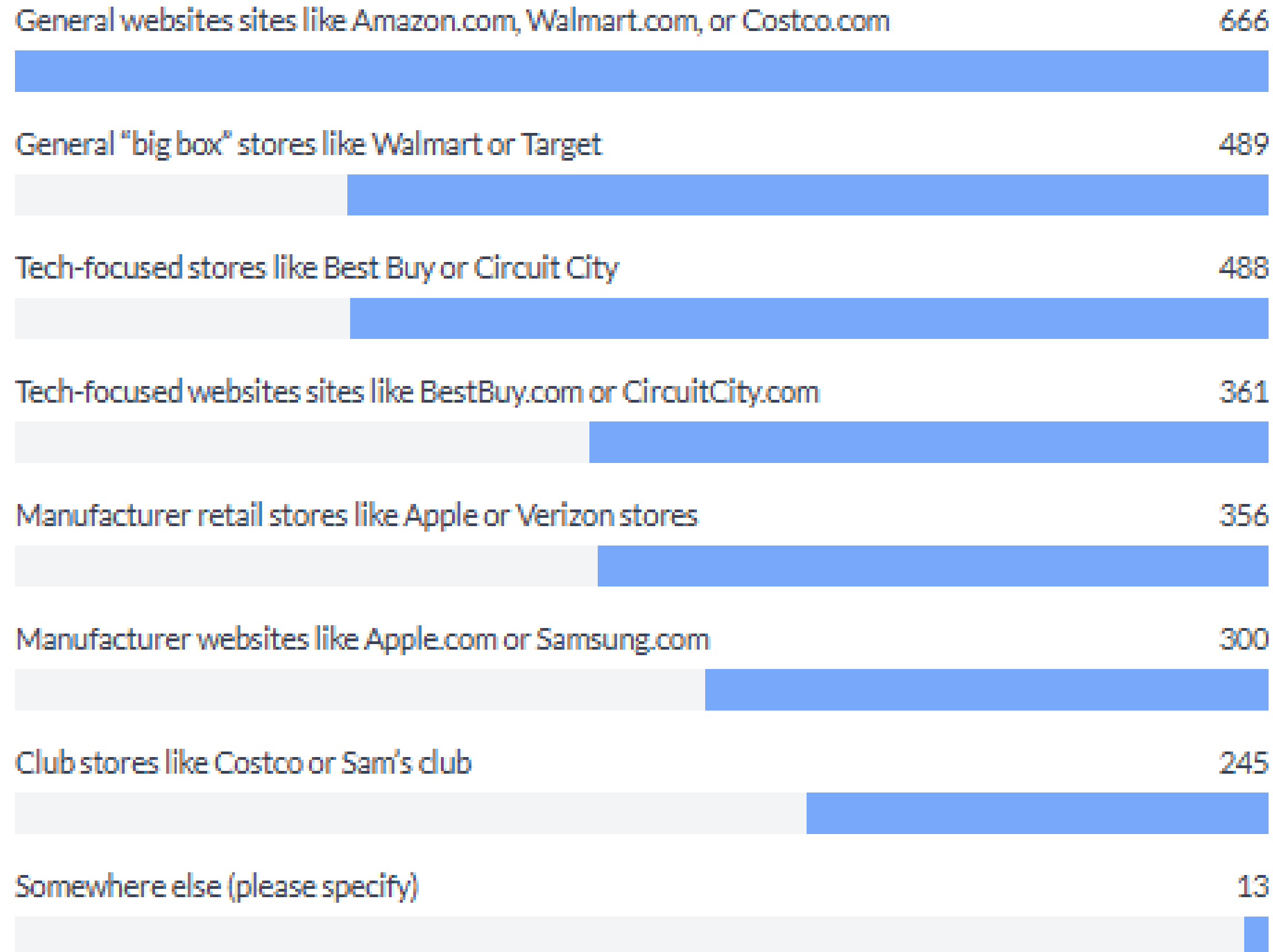
OPPORTUNITIES

- AI messaging and product origin are key considerations. Rather than relying on "AI-powered" branding, Chinese firms should emphasize clear, practical benefits while proactively addressing security, data privacy, and reliability to build trust. Transparency around AI functionality and data protection is essential for credibility.

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RETAIL & E-COMMERCE

U.S. consumers are split between online and in-store shopping. This section reveals how Chinese brands can optimize their retail strategies based on shifting consumer behaviors.



WHERE CONSUMERS PREFER TO BUY TECH PRODUCTS

WHERE AND HOW CONSUMERS SHOP

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- Consumers remain split between in-store and online shopping¹⁹:
 - 38.9% prefer brick-and-mortar retail stores.
 - 26.9% prefer shopping on websites.
- Consumers who prefer shopping brick-and-mortar value hands-on product testing, immediate assistance, instant gratification, easier returns, and avoiding shipping issues, with some prioritizing better pricing, customer service, and local business support²⁰.
- Consumers who prefer buying from websites over brick & mortar stores prioritize convenience, wider selection, better prices, access to reviews, and easy product comparisons. They also value detailed product information, avoiding crowds, accessibility, and favorable return policies, with some trusting reputable online retailers more than physical stores²¹.
- When shopping online, 33% prefer general e-commerce sites (Amazon, Walmart, Costco), while 28.3% prefer manufacturer websites (DTC). A significant 38.7% indicate that their choice "depends."¹⁶

- Consumers prefer manufacturer websites for expertise, trust, and better service¹⁷, while general websites are favored for lower prices, wider selection, stronger customer service, and more authentic reviews¹⁸.
- 61.2% felt the product's listing on a manufacturer's e-commerce website or Amazon.com were equally trustworthy³⁰.

SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Older Americans (47.3%), Trumpers (42.1%), African Americans (39.3%), Whites (38.9%), and Asians (33.3%), all ranked brick and mortar as decidedly more preferential than the alternatives¹⁹.
- General e-commerce sites hold a slight edge (40%) with younger consumers over manufacturer websites (25.6%)¹⁶.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese firms need a retail entry and optimization strategies that involve brick and mortar. PR and brand building are critical to this as retail today is all about the unassisted sale. ` Clear return policies were cited as a critical driver in trust of DTC websites, so this needs to be tight.

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ABANDONED CARTS & ONLINE SHOPPING GRIPEs

OVERALL INSIGHTS

- 38.8% of consumers have abandoned online purchases due to poor user experiences²⁴.
- The top 10 gripes regarding purchase experience are the inability to physically inspect the product before buying, concerns over product quality and whether it matches the online description, high shipping costs and potential damage during delivery, difficult return policies and poor customer service, lack of in-person assistance for setup or technical issues, insufficient or unclear product information, counterfeit products, and doubts about the authenticity and reliability of online reviews²³.
- Key barriers to purchasing from a company's e-commerce site include high shipping costs (62.1%), unclear return policies (55.4%), and a lack of customer reviews (53.7%)³¹.

SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Unclear return policies strongly deter older consumers (60+) from buying from a company's e-commerce website, with 69.6% citing this concern³¹.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Chinese brands can reduce cart abandonment and build trust by improving product transparency, return policies, and customer support. Clear, detailed product descriptions, robust quality assurance, and trusted third-party reviews help reassure buyers. Ensuring high-quality English on websites and online channels enhances credibility and reduces confusion. Offering flexible returns, reliable shipping, and responsive support will further improve the online purchase experience.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This research report is based on data from an online survey taken from January 29 to February 3, 2025, by 1,001 U.S. consumers aged 18-70 who have purchased a consumer technology product in the last six months. The respondent group was secured through a research panel provider and balanced to match US Census data based on age group, gender, annual household income, ethnicity, and race. The data quality was assured through both pre-survey and post-survey methods. The overall number of respondents exhibits a margin of error of +/- 3.34 percentage points at a 97% confidence level. Some questions were served only to specific subgroups and thus have a higher margin of error.

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ATTRIBUTION

The research was conducted by Proper Propaganda, a public relations firm serving technology companies, in partnership with Audience Audit Inc., a US-based research agency.

All statistics cited in this report must be attributed to “**Proper Propaganda & Audience Audit Inc. (2025). Briefing Note: U.S. Consumers’ tech purchase preferences - Insights for Chinese brands from our February 2025 research study**” when shared or referenced.

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MODERN PR FOR TECH

audienceaudit™

LET'S TALK

Breaking into the U.S. market takes more than great products—it takes trust, strategic positioning, and the right messaging.

As a PR agency specializing in market entry, we help Chinese tech brands build credibility, shape consumer perception, and turn insights into influence.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Perceived impact of the global economy on consumer tech and quality of life.
- ³ Pre-purchase actions for a \$100 consumer tech product.
- ⁴ Consumer priorities when purchasing a \$100 tech product.
- ⁶, Consumer priorities when purchasing a \$500 tech product.
- ⁸ Consumer priorities when purchasing a \$1000 tech product.
- ⁹ Preferred media sources for consumer tech product research.
- ¹⁰ Trust in sources for consumer tech information.
- ¹³ Factors influencing trust in consumer tech product information.
- ¹⁶ Preference for buying consumer tech: manufacturer vs. general retail websites.
- ¹⁷ Reasons for preferring manufacturer websites over general retailers.
- ¹⁸ Reasons for preferring general retail websites over manufacturer websites.
- ¹⁹ Preferred purchasing channel for consumer tech products: brick & mortar vs. online.
- ²⁰ Reasons for preferring brick-and-mortar stores over online shopping.
- ²¹ Reasons for preferring online shopping over brick-and-mortar stores.
- ²³ Biggest frustrations with online consumer tech purchases.
- ²⁴ Abandoning online consumer tech purchases due to purchase experience.

- ²⁶ Impact of 'Powered by AI' labeling on purchase interest.
- ²⁷ Reasons AI labeling increases product interest.
- ²⁹ Priority when purchasing AI-powered products: usage transparency vs. price.
- ³⁰ Key factor in confidence about product quality.
- ³¹ Factors that discourage purchases from a company's e-commerce site.
- ³² Trust preference: manufacturing transparency vs. trusted media reviews.
- ³⁸ Geographic concerns about consumer tech manufacturing locations.
- ³⁹ Ranking top concerns about consumer tech manufacturing locations.
- ³⁴ Trust in product quality based on the origin of labor, manufacturing location, and component sourcing.
- ⁴⁰ Concerns about product manufacturing based on location.
- ⁴² Factors that reduce trust in media sources.
- ⁴³ Regular use of traditional media sources for news.
- ⁴⁴ Changes in trust toward mainstream news media over five years.
- ⁵⁰ Familiarity with tariffs on imported products.
- ⁵¹ Opinion on the current U.S. administration's use of tariffs.
- ⁵² Consumer purchasing behavior in response to tariff-driven price increases.
- ⁵³ Perceived effects of U.S. government-imposed tariffs