NielsenIQ

Asia Powerhouses

A fresh look at consumers in key Asian markets

NIQ Consumer Life Global

March 2026

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About this report

Asia Powerhouses

Long the world's growth engine, Asia's economic strength and resilience cannot be overstated. Beyond its economic weight, Asia has firmly established itself as a global hub for innovation and a powerful cultural trendsetter—making it essential for companies worldwide to understand and continuously monitor its evolution.

Yet Asia's strategic importance is matched by its extraordinary complexity. The rapidly transforming region houses some of the world's wealthiest and poorest nations, its most economically optimistic and pessimistic populations, and both the most pro-technology and most tech-skeptical consumers.

This report examines the economic conditions, population structures, consumer mindsets, purchase priorities, and category behaviors in eight key markets, highlighting the factors that distinguish each market within Asia and from the global average. The analysis focuses on:

- **Developing Asia**: China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand
- **Developed Asia**: Japan, South Korea (referred to as Korea in this report), and Singapore

Note: This report draws primarily on data from the NIQ Consumer Life 2025 Global study. A small number of survey questions were not fielded in all markets. Trended data for Asia is available only for Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Korea.

Softer power: Asia's cultural export boom is just beginning
—Jan. 2026, The World Economic Forum

It's not just Labubu dolls. Chinese brands are booming.
—Jun. 2025, The Economist

Is this a 'very Chinese time in your life'? The trend boosting China's soft power
—Feb. 2026, BBC

How Japan replaced France as the country young Americans obsessively romanticize
—Feb. 2026, Forbes

DeepSeek was a warning shot. China is building its next surprise.
—Jan. 2026, The Wall Street Journal

'KPop Demon Hunters' Is Most-Streamed Movie of 2025
—Jan. 2026, Variety

'KPop Demon Hunters' makes Grammys history
—Feb. 2026, NBC News

TikTok-fueled K-beauty boom triggers a retail race in the U.S.
—Nov. 2025, CNBC

China's BYD overtakes Tesla as world's top EV seller
—Jan. 2026, BBC

The next big gaming power? Chinese titles packed halls at Europe's biggest fair
—Aug. 2025, South China Morning Post

Softer power: Asia's cultural export boom is just beginning | World Economic Forum, 'KPop Demon Hunters' Is Most Streamed Movie of 2025, 'KPop Demon Hunters' makes Grammys history, Opinion | Why Labubu craze is just the start of China's branding boom, TikTok-fueled K-beauty boom triggers a retail race in the U.S. US surpasses China as K-beauty's top market amid record, Is this a 'very Chinese time in your life'? The trend boosting China's soft power, More Americans travelling to Japan compared to Paris for the first time, The next big gaming power? Chinese titles packed halls at Europe's biggest fair, China's BYD overtakes Tesla as world's top EV seller, Opinion | DeepSeek was a warning shot. China is building its next surprise, How Japan replaced France as the country young Americans obsessively romanticize

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NIQ

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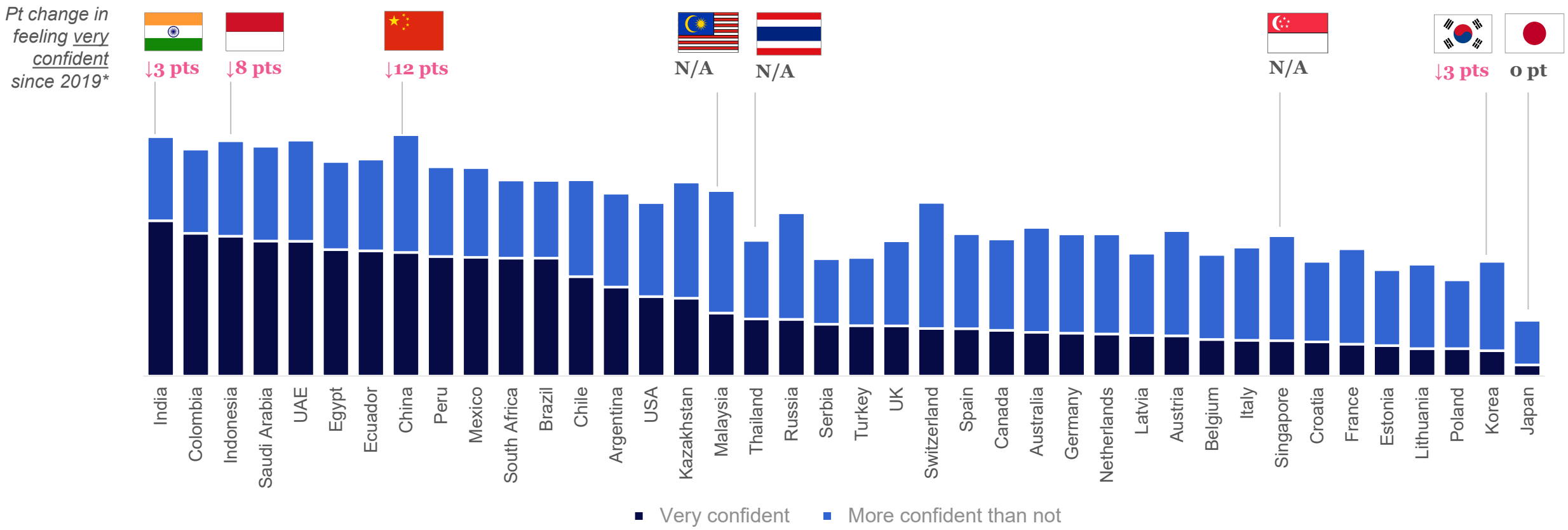
Asia has the most and least economically confident markets globally

Confidence dropped in the most optimistic Asian economies over recent years—especially China where the economy slowed

% feeling confident that their personal financial situation will improve in 12 months (sorted by the share of consumers feeling very confident)



NIQ Consumer Life Global 2019 and 2025, *Trended data not available for Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore

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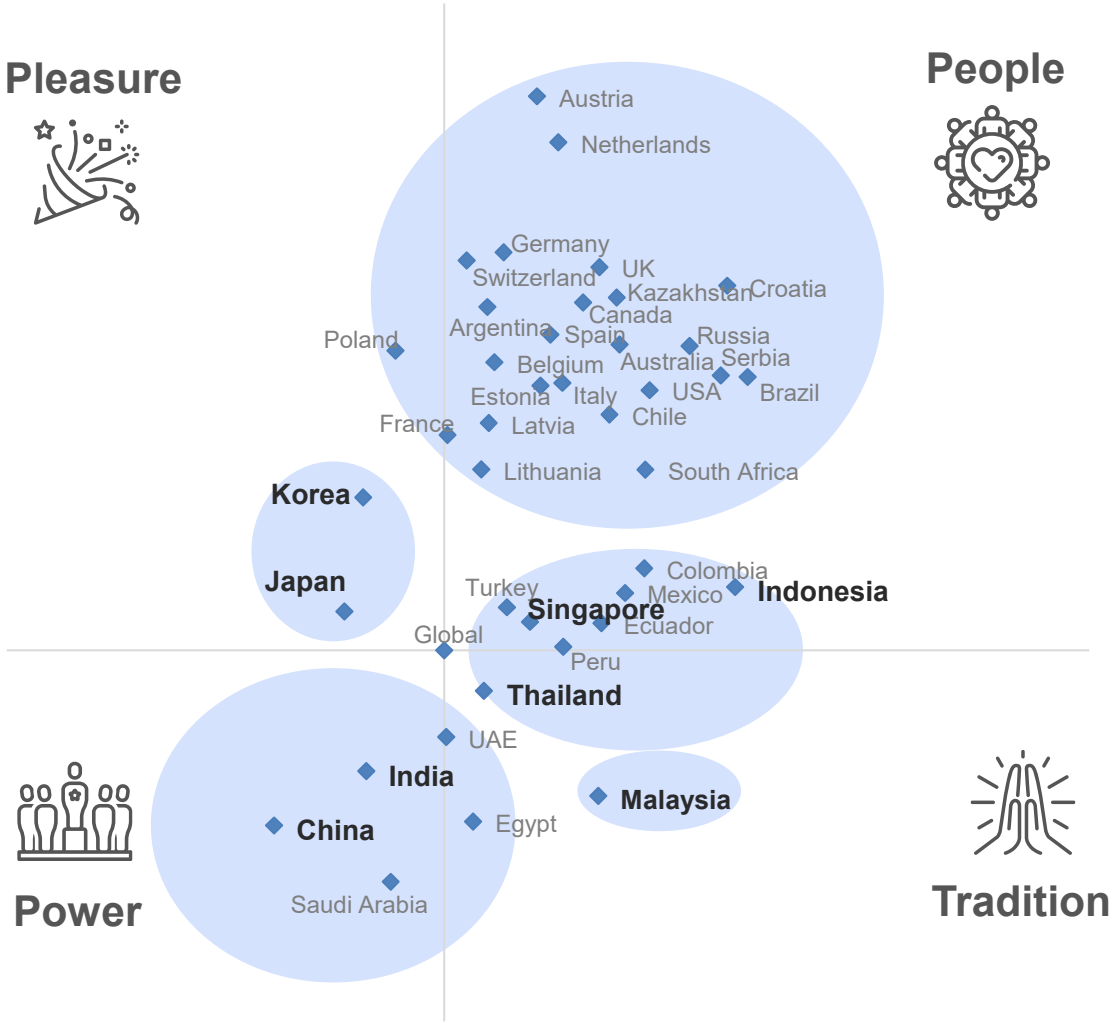
Values orientation varies notably in Asia, spreading across four values spaces

In comparison, Western markets are more aligned in mindset, concentrating primarily in the People space on the values map



Most differentiating values for the nation

Korea
Leisure (#X, +XX from Global)
Wealth (#XX, +XX)
Pleasure (#XX, +XX)

Japan
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

India
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

China
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

Singapore
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

Indonesia
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

Thailand
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

Malaysia
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)
XX (#XX, +XX)

The NIQ Consumer Life Values Position Map offers a quick view of consumers' fundamental mindset and how different groups relate to each other. The four quadrants of the map represent four basic types of values:

- ***Pleasure:** Focused on fun, excitement, and stimulating experiences*
- ***People:** Centered around relationships, community, and being true to self*
- ***Tradition**: Conformists, focused more on tradition*
- ***Power:** Prioritizing more around achiever values such as ambition & wealth*

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 C1 (global = 40 countries)

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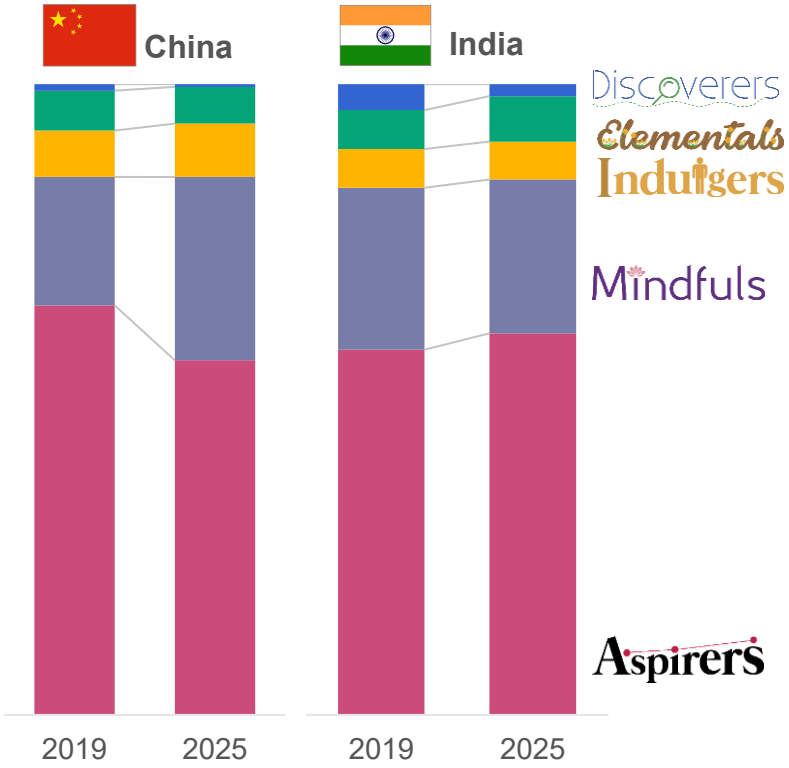
India has overtaken China to be the most aspiring nation worldwide

A trend driven by younger generations

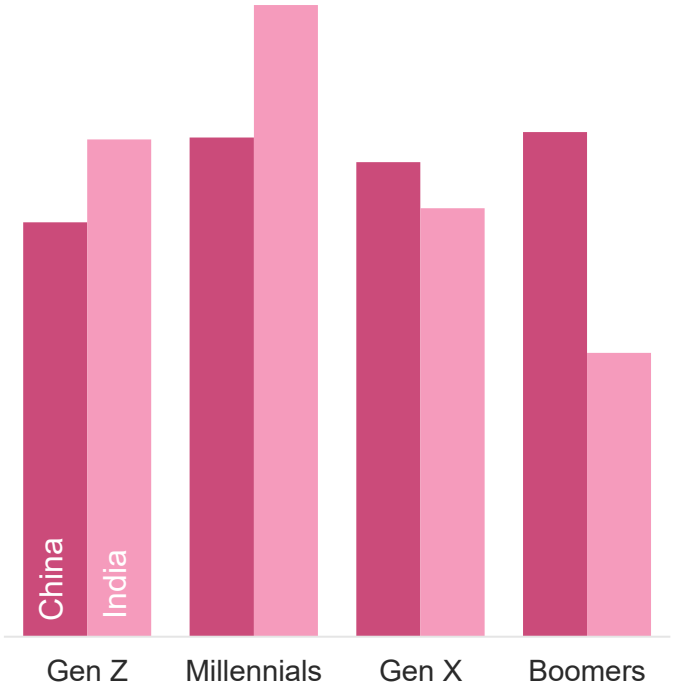
China saw the decline of Aspirers and rise of Mindfuls in recent years. The opposite was the case for India.

Values segment distribution (%)



India's Gen Z and Millennials are much more aspiring than their Chinese peers. Among older generations, Chinese still show higher tendencies to be Aspirers.

Share of Aspirers by generation (%)



China's disillusioned young people take slacking off to new heights

An evolution of the 2021 "lying flat" movement, a growing number of young Chinese are rejecting hustle culture and embracing a shut-in "rat person" identity. The trend reflects disillusionment amid an economic slowdown, burnout from intense work demands, and a belief that hard work no longer guarantees prosperity. It's also enabled by China's decades of rapid growth—Gen Z is the first generation with enough family support to step back, many being children of those who benefited most from the country's economic rise.

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2019 and 2025 C1, https://www.newsweek.com/china-rat-people-counterculture-work-economy-2062931, https://fortune.com/2025/11/14/china-unemployed-gen-z-rat-people-rebelling-against-workplace-burnout/,

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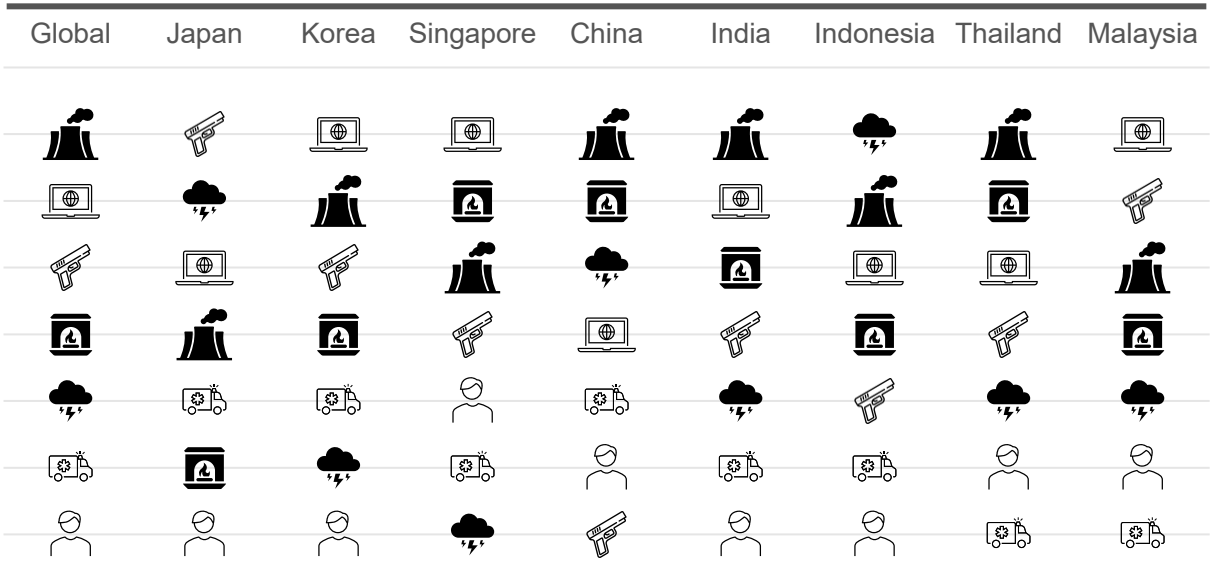
Environmental hazards are seen as top threats to wellbeing in Asia

India has emerged as one of the nations most worried about pollution and climate change

***Top threats** (ranks)*



- **Unhealthy outdoor environment (e.g., pollution, germs)**
- Risk of being a victim of a crime online (e.g., my identity being stolen)
- Risk of being a victim of a crime in person (e.g., getting mugged or attacked)
- **Unhealthy environment at home or work (e.g., poor air or water quality, allergens)**
- **Dangerous weather events**
- Limited access to medical and emergency services
- Pressure from other people to do things that are unhealthy or dangerous

Top personal concerns
(Rank of environmental concerns on a list of 24 concerns measured)

Environmental pollution		Climate change	
India	#X	**Japan**	#X
Thailand	#X	**India**	#X
China	#X	**Korea**	#X
Central East/Europe	#X	**Indonesia**	#X
Korea	#X	Latin America	#X
Middle East/Africa	#X	**Thailand**	#X
Latin America	#X	META	#X
Indonesia	#X	Western Europe	#X
Western Europe	#X	**Singapore**	#X
Japan	#X	**China**	#X
Singapore	#X	**Malaysia**	#X
Baltics	#X	North America	#X
Malaysia	#X	Baltics	#X
North America	#X	CEE	#X

Can India learn from China's progress? India now has 13 out of the 20 most polluted cities in the world. Its capital New Delhi was the world's most polluted capital for the sixth consecutive year, with a PM2.5 concentration of 91.8. China used to dominate global rankings of the world's worst air but has made progress over the past decade. Since 2013, when the Chinese government launched its Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan, China's particulate pollution levels have declined by nearly 40%. Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) estimates that this improvement could potentially help Chinese residents live two years longer.

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 A2, H48 (global = 40 countries), https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/11/india/air-pollution-global-ranking-asia-india-intl-hnk, https://climate.uchicago.edu/insights/what-india-can-learn-from-chinas-approach-to-improving-air-quality/

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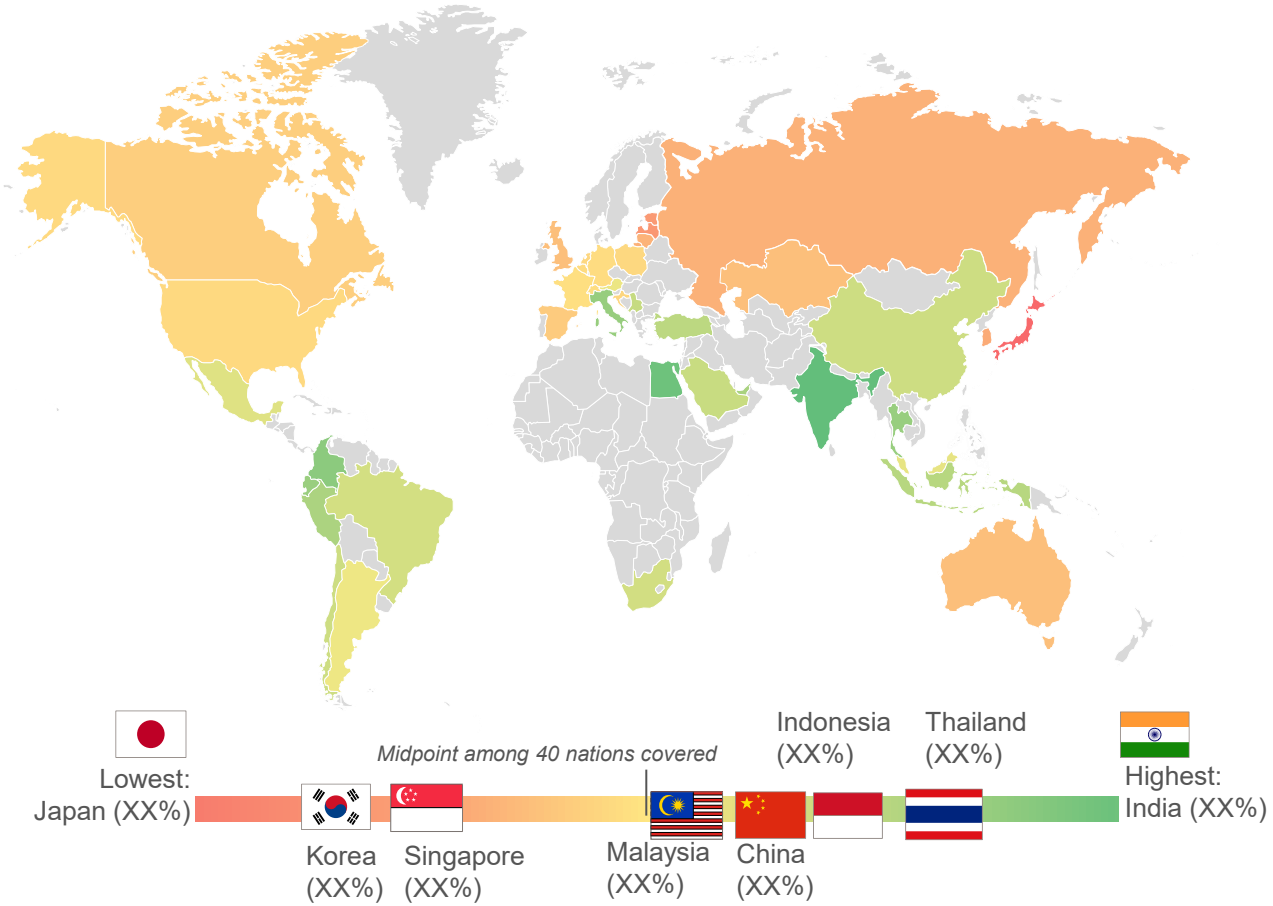
India is now the most likely to take sustainability into consideration when making purchases

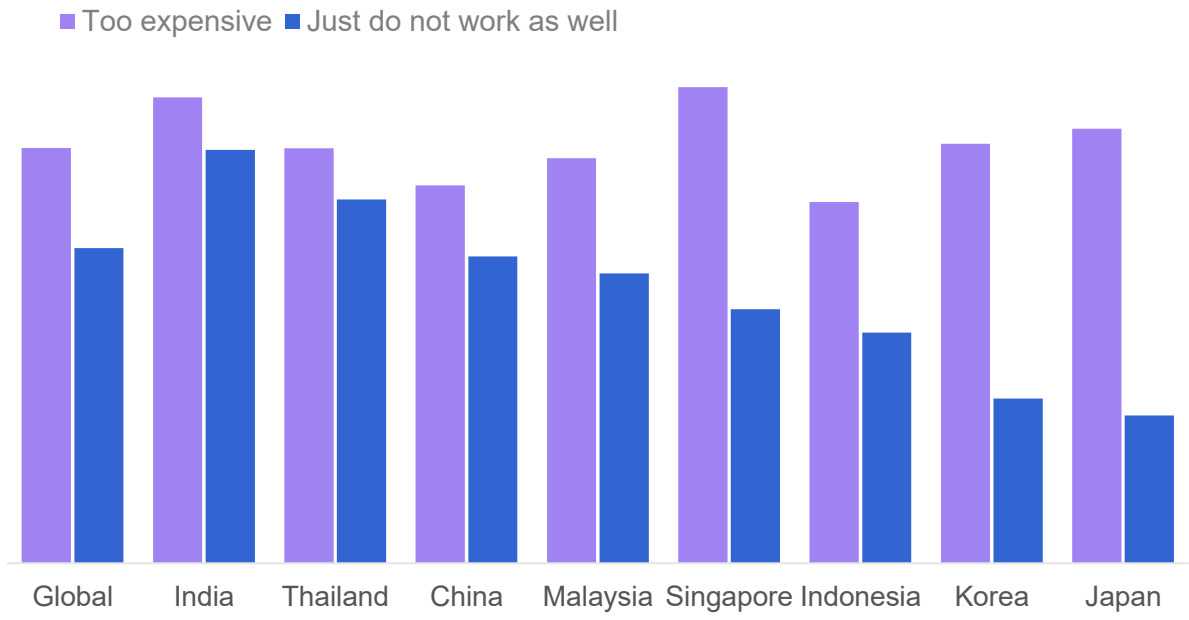
Cost and product efficacy still limit conversion from interest to adoption

% who take the environment into consideration when making purchase decisions



Cost is a notable barrier for green purchases across markets, while efficacy weighs more in emerging markets, especially India and Thailand.

% saying the environmentally friendly alternatives for many of the products they use and need are…



NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 GG2, GG3 (global = 40 countries)

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Technology has reshaped the shopping experience in Asia

Asia boasts the largest and the fastest-growing ecommerce markets

XX% *of Asian consumers agree*

"My smartphone and/or tablet is my most important online shopping tool"

#1 shopping attitude* globally and in all key Asian markets except for Korea where it ranks #2

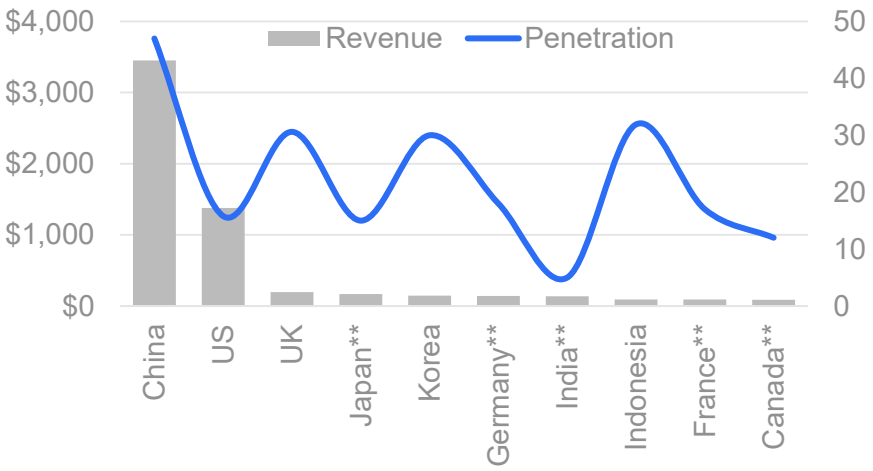
XX% *of Asian consumers agree*

"I can shop online for nearly 100% of the products/services I need"

#2 shopping attitude* globally
#1 in Korea, #2 Japan & Thailand, #3 China

China remains by far the largest ecommerce market

Sales revenue (in billions of dollars) and penetration (%) of top 10 ecommerce markets in the world, 2025



Developing Asia dominates the fastest growing ecommerce markets

	Growth rate (%)	Revenue (in billions of dollars)
Philippines	24.1	$18
India	**22**	**$136**
Indonesia	**20**	**$94**
Malaysia	**18**	**$15**
Thailand	**16**	**$25**
Vietnam	15	$28
Mexico	1	$85
Argentina	12+	$25
Brazil	11	$81
US	11	$1,380

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 FB11, B5 (global = 40 countries), *on a list of 11 shopping attitudes measured, **estimates,
https://www.mobiloud.com/blog/ecommerce-market-size-by-country, https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2025-India-instant-shopping/,
Multinationals race into China's US$143.9 billion instant retail market | South China Morning Post

Instant deliveries help drive ecommerce adoption in Developing Asia

With low labor costs and high population density, emerging markets such as China and India are well positioned for instant commerce—ultra-fast delivery of online orders, often within an hour.

Multinationals race into China's US$143.9 billion instant retail market

Ikea, Continental and Aldi Nord enlist local partners to launch faster, more comprehensive delivery services than they offer abroad.

—Jan. 2026, South China Morning Post

XX% of Chinese consumers shop for groceries online regularly

World's fastest deliveries ignite an investment frenzy in India

Startups are jostling with Amazon and Walmart to turn 10-minute commerce into a $100 billion market.

—Aug. 2025, Bloomberg

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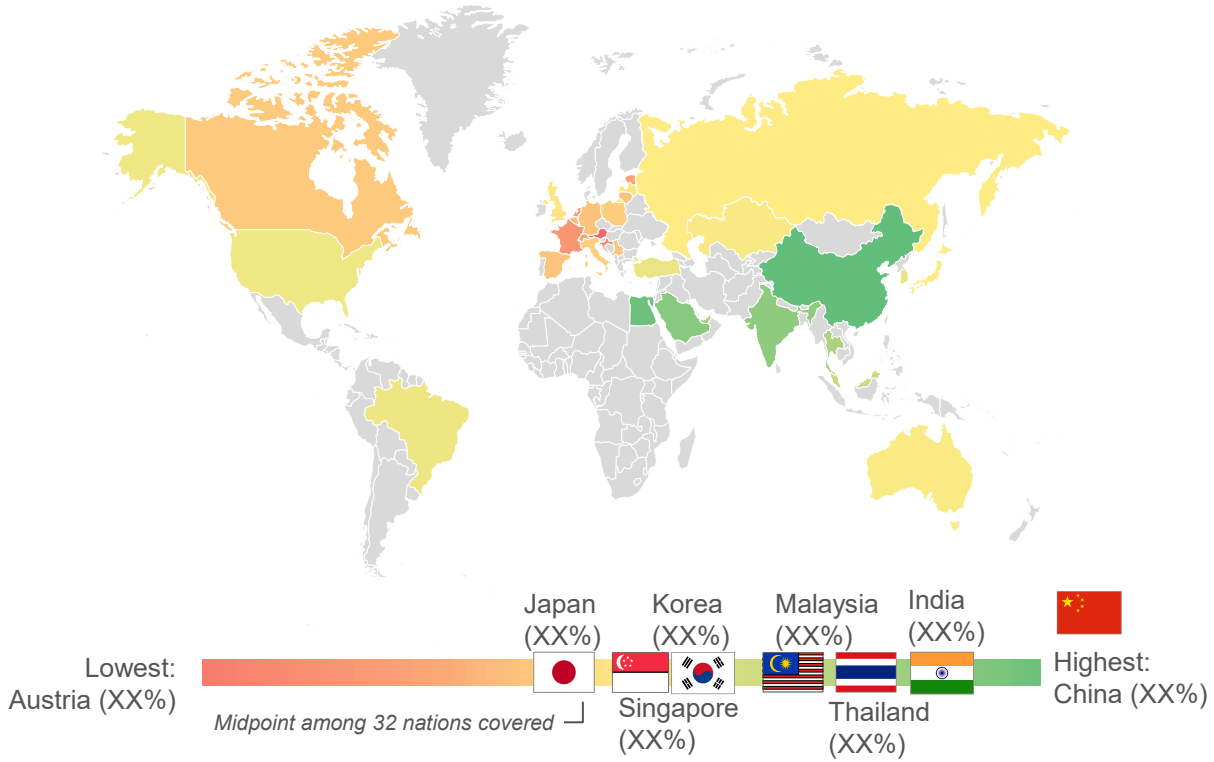
The impact of social media influence varies substantially by market

China remains the distant leader in social and livestream shopping

XX% of Chinese consumers say that they **follow product/topic experts or reviewers on social media, +XX pts** from Total Global

XX% in India
XX % Thailand
XX % Malaysia
XX % Singapore
XX % Korea
XX % Japan

*% agree **"Social media influencers impact the brands I buy"***



In China, AI avatars extend social media and livestream commerce with 24/7 engagement

$1.1 trillion Livestream retail sales in China are expected to reach $1.1 trillion in 2026, from $683 billion in 2023.

> Across the country, brands are integrating AI hosts into their livestream e-commerce strategies to cut costs and improve efficiency, employing human hosts during peak hours to engage viewers and virtual hosts during off-peak hours to maintain traffic. —Jing Daily, Nov. 2025

With about 7 million followers on Douyin as of Feb. 2026, Chinese AI beauty influencer Liu Yexi has collaborated with brands like Xpeng.

In Jun. 2025, Baidu, one of the largest tech companies in China, hosted a livestream session featuring an AI version of Luo Yonghao, an ecommerce influencer with millions of social media followers. The six-hour livestream session drew over 13 million views and generated over 55 million RMB ($7.7 million) in sales.

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 FB_11 (global = 32 countries), Cracking the code to livestream e-commerce in the_market, https://jingdaily.com/posts/how-china-is-building-the-future-of-ai-powered-retail, https://www.douyin.com/, Chinese 'Virtual Human' Salespeople Are Outperforming Their Real Human Counterparts | WIRED, AI avatars in China just proved they are ace influencers

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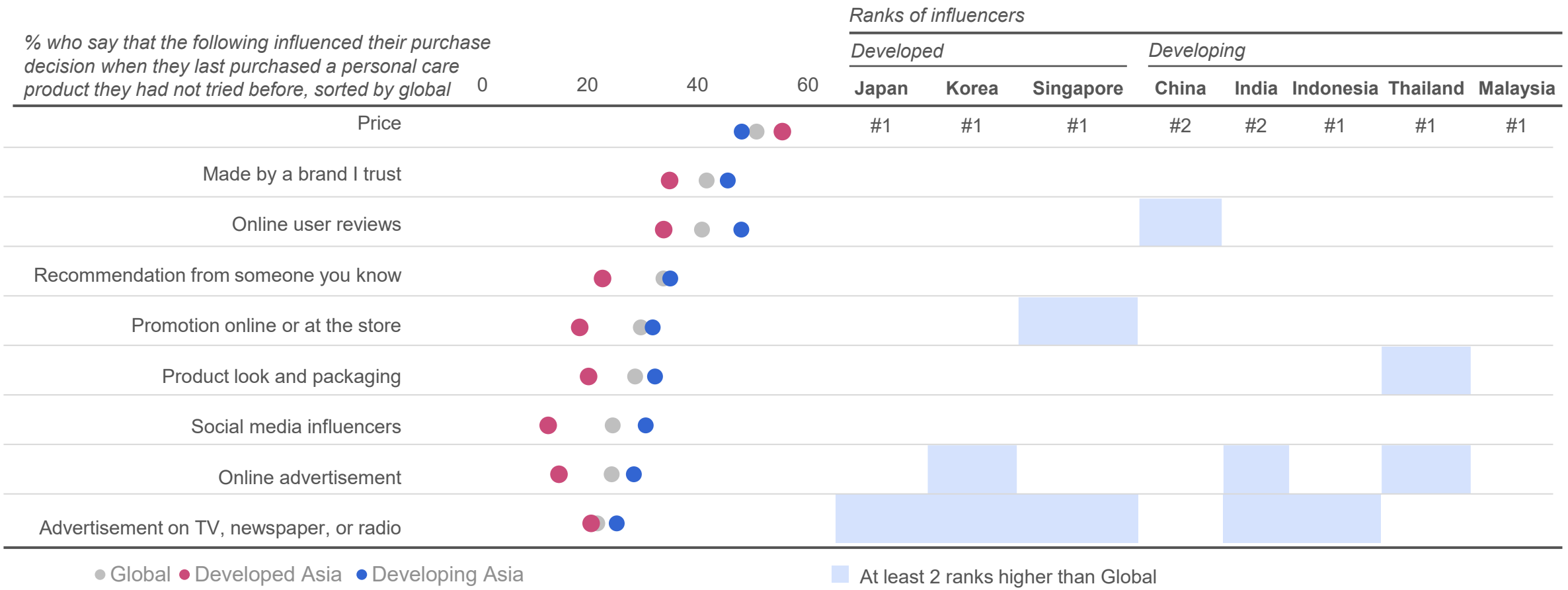
Still, price and brand trust have more sway in driving trials

Online reviews exert top influence in China when it comes to trying new health & beauty products

Price is by far the top consideration in Developed Asia. In Developing Asia, however, brand trust and online reviews nearly rival price. This doesn't mean that consumers in emerging markets are more price-tolerant; rather, it in part reflects that brand quality is often less consistent in developing countries, making trust and reviews more critical in helping consumers identify safe and reliable options.



NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 R11 (global = 40 countries)

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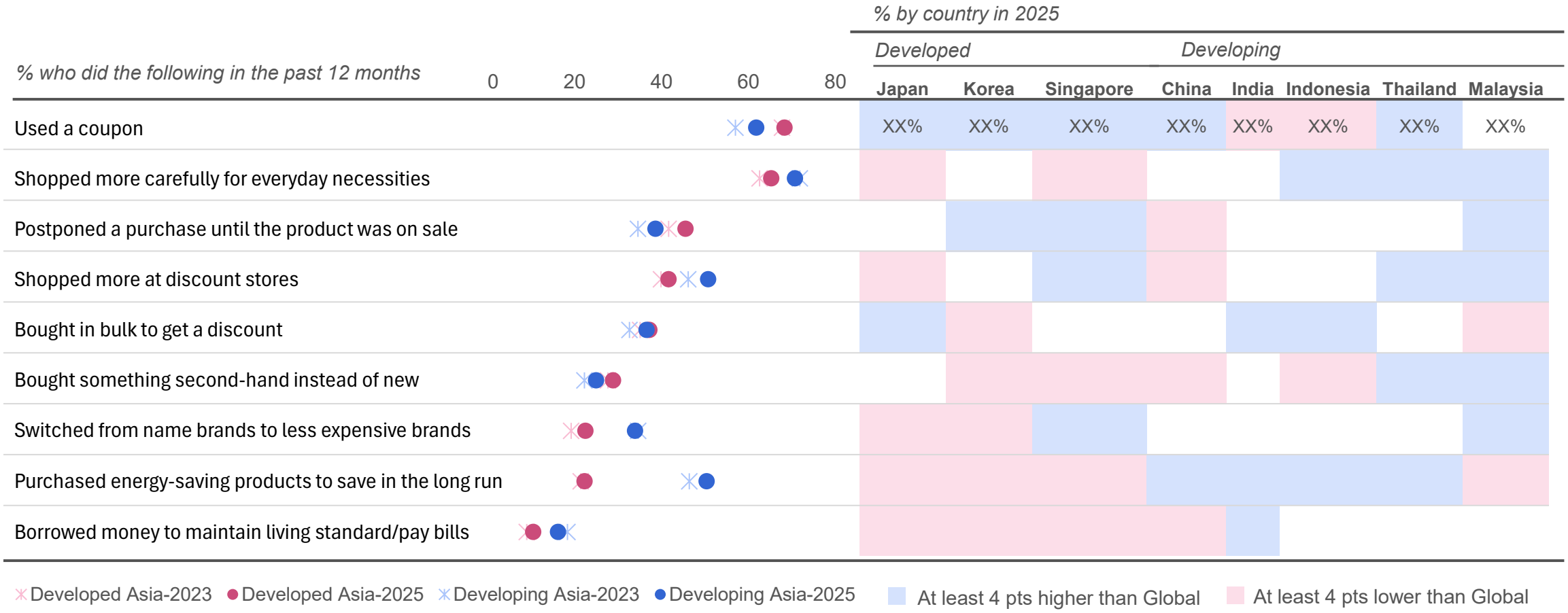
Consumers increasingly leverage shopping tactics to hunt for the best value for money

Use of money-saving shopping tactics has risen, especially in Developing Asia

Couponing is the top strategy in most markets; shopping at discounters, trading down, and buying energy-efficient products for long-term savings display the biggest gaps between markets



NIQ Consumer Life Global 2023 and 2025 B38 (global = core 18 countries)

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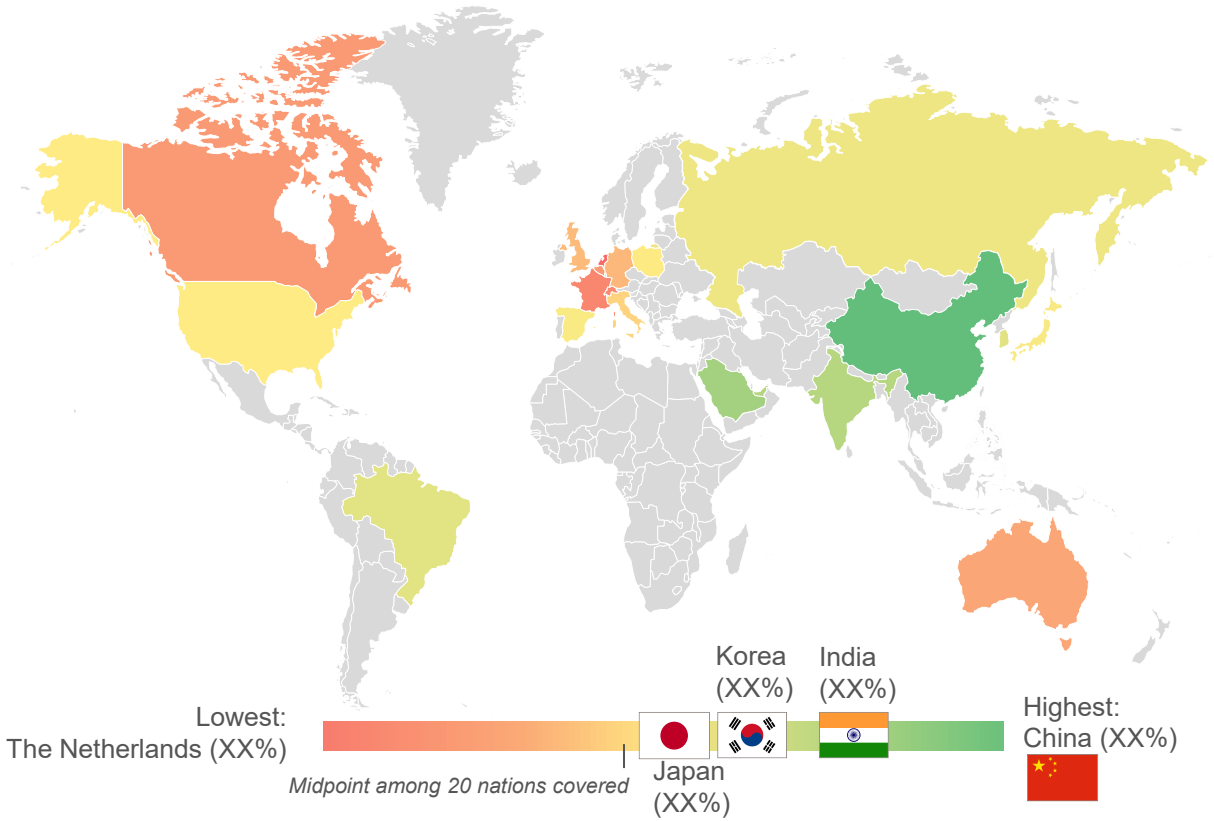
China has emerged as by far the most pro-AI nation

Overall, consumers in emerging markets are more likely to believe that AI's benefits outweigh its risks

% agree

"I think that the potential benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) outweigh its potential harm"



China Has a Different Vision for AI. It Might Be Smarter.

With growing fears of an AI bubble, Beijing is charting a pragmatic alternative to Silicon Valley's pursuit of artificial superintelligence

—Aug. 2025, Wall Street Journal

In August, the Chinese State Council unveiled its ten-year plan to fully integrate AI into every aspect of the country's economy and society by 2035. Called "AI+," the ambitious plan sees AI becoming a "key growth engine for the country's economic development," a transformation mirroring that of the internet age.

As the Wall Street Journal recently pointed out, the People's Republic has already embraced the practical rollout of AI to huge portions of the nation's infrastructure, from manufacturing to meteorology, and even in Chinese-made self-driving Tesla vehicles.

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2024, TDA (global = 20 countries), China Has a Different Vision for AI. It Might Be Smarter, China Is Suddenly Deploying AI Everywhere

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Apathy is a top smart home barrier in Developed Asia

Those in emerging markets are more deterred by cost and privacy worries

Obstacles in purchasing smart home products (ranks)	Global	*Developed* Japan	Korea	Singapore	*Developing* China	India	Thailand	Malaysia
Cost	#1	#1	#2	#1	#2	#3	#1	#1
Concern about privacy								
Safety concerns in my home								
I don't see the need for it								
Seems too complicated								
Home internet network may not support it								
Technology across different systems may not be able to communicate with each other								
I don't know enough about the technology								
Need agreement of landlord / homeowner								

At least 2 ranks higher than Global At least 2 ranks lower than Global

Reducing perceived complexity will help win over Chinese and Koreans.

Home internet limitation remains a key issue for India and Malaysia.

Education is particularly important in Japan and Korea where consumers admit that lack of knowledge is a key barrier for smart home adoption.

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 TD26 (global = 26 countries)

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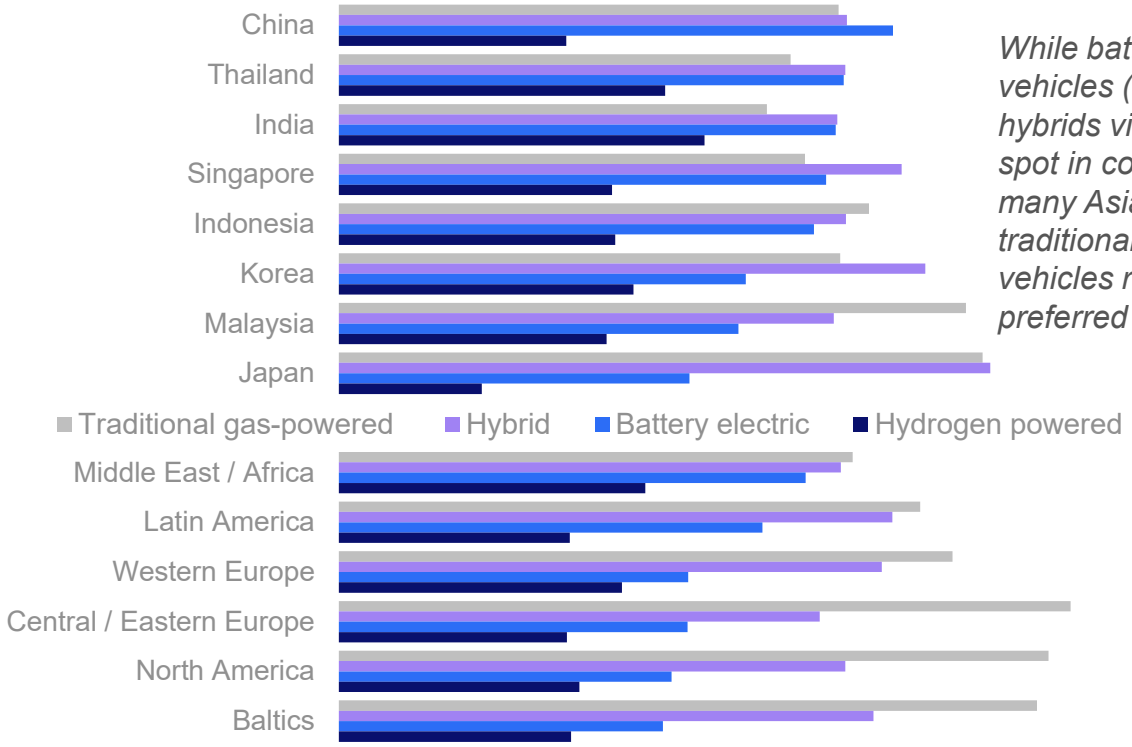
Asian consumers are open to alternative engines

BEVs are now the most intended engine type in China; hybrids top the list in Korea, Japan, and Singapore; and the two are neck-and-neck in Thailand and India

Would consider the following types of vehicles for their next purchases, index (average of the four types = 100)



While battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and hybrids vie for the top spot in consideration in many Asian markets, traditional gas-powered vehicles remain the most preferred in the West.

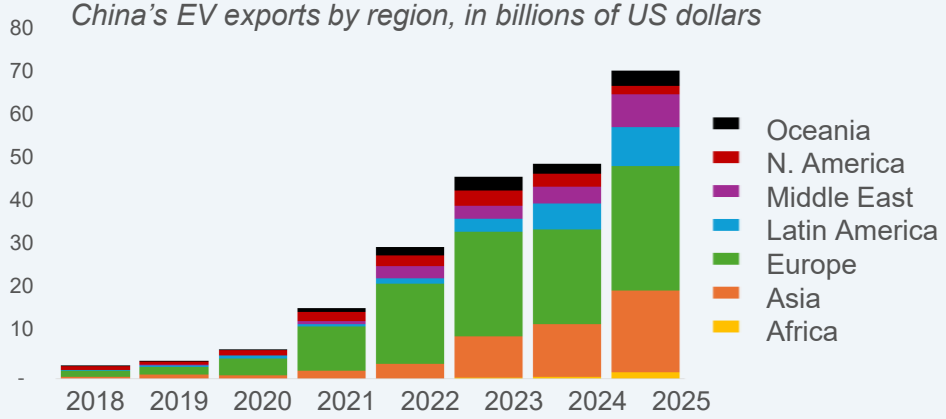
China has emerged as the global EV leader

It was estimated that BEV sales in China reached 13.2 million in 2025, accounting for 53% of new car sales. That makes China both the largest EV market by volume and one of the fastest-growing in terms of market share. In comparison, the US has a 10% BEV sales share in 2025, with roughly 1.6 million BEVs sold.

China's EV dominance is also expanding globally, helping drive adoption in other markets, including Asia. Last year, Chinese automaker BYD overtook Tesla in global BEV sales for the first time.

Chinese tech giant races ahead: *The Xiaomi SU7, introduced by the Chinese smartphone maker in Mar. 2024, overtook Tesla Model 3 in 2025 to become the best-selling premium EV sedan in China for the first time. In Jan. 2026, Xiaomi's YU7 SUV, launched in summer 2025, became the best-selling vehicle in China, selling twice as many vehicles as Tesla Model Y.*

China's EV exports by region, in billions of US dollars



NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 D22, https://www.reuters.com/markets/china-tightens-clean-tech-grip-with-growing-ev-export-reach-2026-02-06/, https://www.visualcapitalist.com/ev-share-new-car-sales-by-country-2019-vs-2025/, https://www.cnbc.com/2026/01/02/chinas-byd-to-overtake-tesla-as-worlds-top-ev-seller-for-first-time.html, https://electrek.co/2026/01/26/xiaomi-su7-outsells-tesla-model-3-china/, https://www.cnbc.com/2026/02/13/xiaomis-electric-suv-tops-china-sales-in-january-sells-twice-as-many-as-teslas-model-y.html

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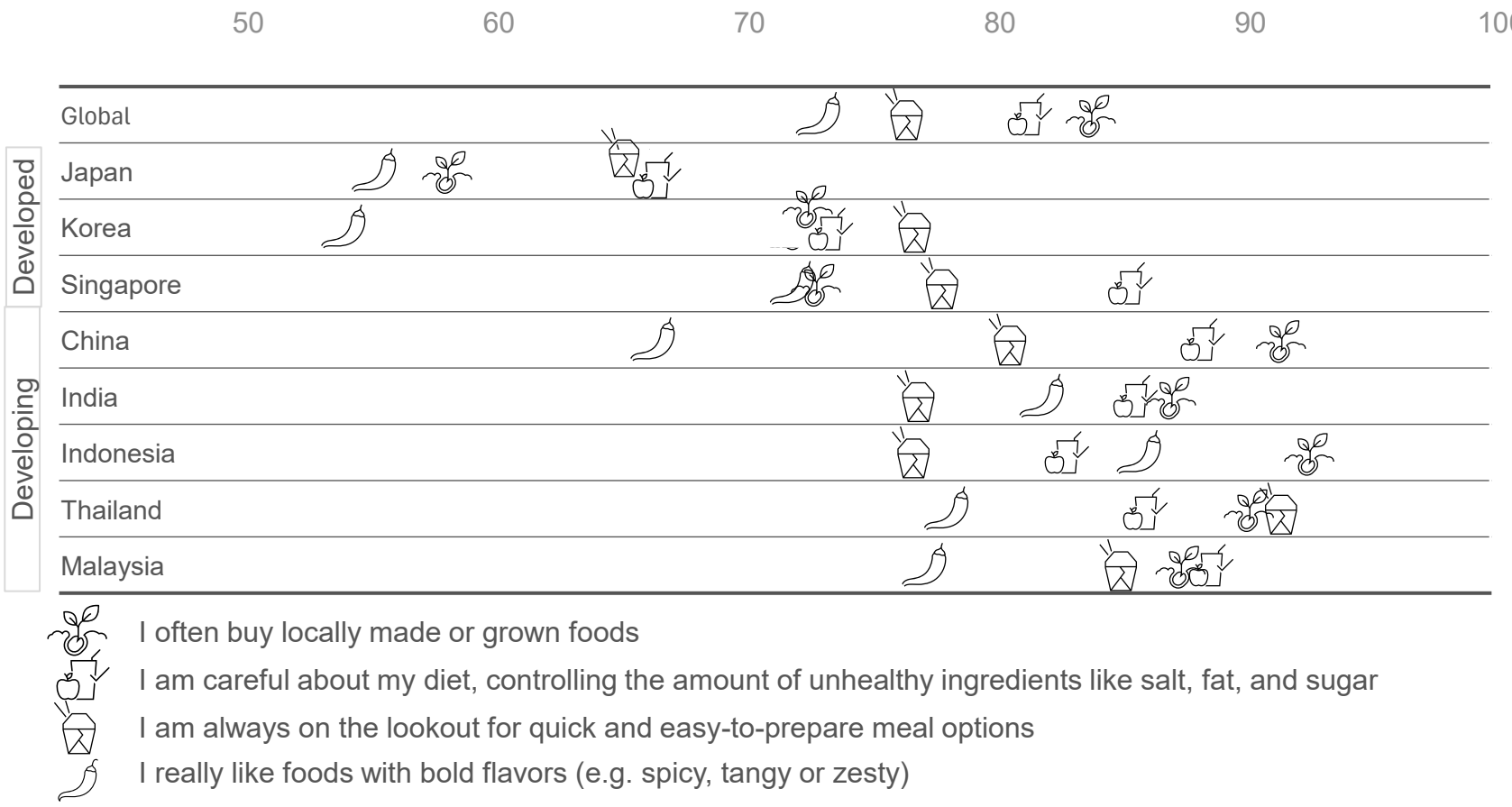
Buying local is more mainstream in Developing Asia

Convenience tends to take priority in developed markets

% who agree with the following statements



"I make a real effort to buy from local businesses to support them"

#XX life attitude on a list of 44 globally

Developing
- #XX in Indonesia
- #XX Malaysia
- #XX Thailand
- #XX India
- #XX China

Developed
- #XX Singapore
- #XX Japan
- #XX Korea

NIQ Consumer Life Global 2025 F11, ATL (global = 40 countries)

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