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Independent Study & Mentorship

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### **Original Work Assessment**

After studying International Marketing over the course of the first semester through the help of numerous professionals and academic journals, I wanted to create something that could help me further expand my knowledge. Thus, given my desire to be “original” and test my limits, I decided to conduct a survey in three different countries, United States, India, and Mexico, over how the brand perception of a company differs from its consumer perception. Growing up in the United States has made me fortunate enough to recognize and even own products from some of the top global brands. However, when I visit India, it becomes apparent that not everyone grows up in such an environment. In fact, often times, my family members would perceive brands such as Nike as a means to communicate high socioeconomic status, often wearing it to big parties or celebrations. After expounding on this discrepancy and noticing that the same trend is present in other countries as well, I talked to my mentor and she also shared her numerous experiences in how culture and demographics affect the of perceptions of brands. Thus, interested in the cross-section of culture and business, I decided to incorporate both aspects into my original work.

**Objective:**

The objective of this project was to analyze how eight brands (Nike, Adidas, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Apple, Samsung, H&M, and Zara) were perceived differently by consumers in the United States, India, and Mexico. By conducting this survey, I wanted to see how demographics and culture played a role in brand perception and to what degree this affect made consumer perception differ from the company's target brand perception. After receiving data from my survey, I compared the results to the information about marketing strategies I found from each brand's annual reports. More information on how designed and distributed my survey can be found below.

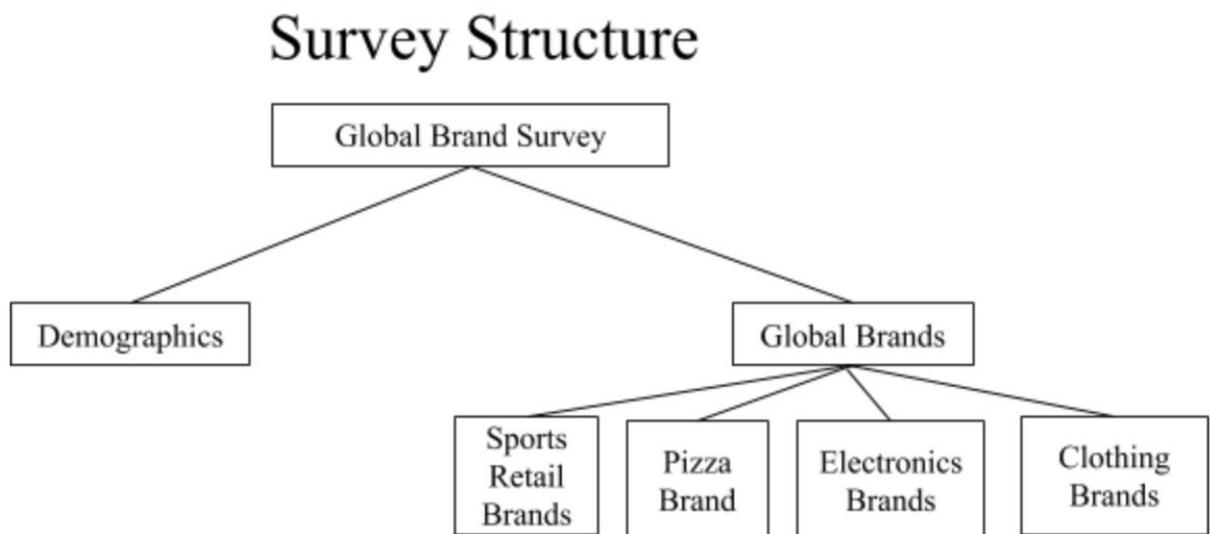
**Description of Process:**

In order to achieve my objective, I first figured out which brands I wanted to test and in which countries I wanted to distribute my survey in. After talking to my mentor, I decided to have 4 different categories of brands and 2 specific brands that were big competitors within in each category. In order to decide the categories, I looked at the major areas of purchase around the globe, and I came up with: Sports Brands, Pizza Brands, Technology Brands, and Clothing Brands.

For the Sports Brands section, I chose Nike and Adidas. Longtime competitors, these two brands operate in all habitable continents and they have a wide fan base around them with many celebrity endorsements sports team sponsorships. Because of similar backgrounds that both Nike and Adidas share, they were used in the survey. For the Pizza Brand section, I used Pizza Hut and Domino's because they both have similar target markets and big competitors. In the

Electronics Brand section, I chose Apple and Samsung because like the other brands mentioned above, they were also big competitors, often sharing the same target market. For the Clothing Brands, I used H&M and Zara because both of these companies are spread throughout the world and appeal to the relatively same socioeconomic group.

In terms of structure, the survey was divided into two main categories: demographics and global brands. The latter category was divided further into four sections: sports retail brands, pizza brands, electronics brands, and clothing brands. Using these distinct categories, conclusions were able to be drawn about the consumer perception of global brands. The illustration below provides more clarity on how the survey was structured.



For each of the sections in the Global Brands category, the same questions were asked for each brand and brand comparison. To begin, each section started off by asking participants to name the logo shown and provide a description of what the brand sold. These two questions sought to uncover whether the brand had limited or widespread recognition. Following these general

inquiries about the brands were a series of questions that compared the two brands in the respective section. The areas of comparison were as follows: overall preference, customer service, creativity, economical pricing, and local culture involvement. Using the responses of the participants in each country and comparing it to data about the brands from company websites allowed conclusions to be made about how demographics affected global brand perception and whether or not consumer perception matched the perception that the brand desired to display.

The population of interest for this study was all children and adults ranging from ages 12 to 60 that reside in the United States, Mexico, or India and have at least a basic familiarity with global brands. The reason that I chose to distribute my survey in these countries is because I had direct contacts and methods to distribute my survey. In addition, each country described a different demographic; United States has the wealthiest economy and India has the poorest economy, with Mexico's economy lying in between. Given the time and financial restraints, the population accessible for the purpose of this study was limited to children and adults with access to the internet, for the survey was distributed using social media and texting applications such as WhatsApp. Thus, by doing so, much of the potential rural population, especially in India and Mexico, that would have limited knowledge over global brands was eliminated. In addition, I also sought to receive at least 100 participants from each country so that I could make solid conclusions about the data.

To create the survey, I used Google Forms in order to ensure a uniform format and structure that would be familiar to most participants. Furthermore, The survey that was distributed to Mexico was translated into Spanish using my basic Spanish skills and Spanish Dictionary so that it would be comprehensible by the majority of the population. However,

because there are many different languages spoken and written in India, the survey was not translated into another language.

To distribute the survey, I posted links to my survey on social media accounts such as Twitter and Instagram. I also texted my friends to spread the survey. In addition, I also made flyers to fill out my survey and put them in my teacher's classrooms. I also used Whatsapp to tell my family in India about the survey and they spread it to their friends using this texting app as well. In order to spread my survey to Mexico, I asked my mentor to help me get participants and she contacted her co-workers in Mexico. I also emailed my Spanish teacher to spread the survey out to this family.

After gaining about 100 participants from each country, I started to analyze the results. I made graphs and then I compared it to the marketing strategies of the brands that I had tested. After making conclusions, I wrote my research paper, organizing my findings both my brand and country. The link that follows shows the actual survey that was made and used via Google Forms <https://goo.gl/forms/ZKOsY3EW04Ng9GmJ2>. This link shows the survey that was translated into Spanish <https://goo.gl/forms/PpE2h0qE76nv7e8v2>.

**Date/s:**

Given that this project had many different components, ranging from conducting initial research, creating the survey, distributing the survey in different countries, analyzing the results, and sharing my results in a research paper, the days that I worked on my original work were quite spread out. In order to gain approval for the project, I completed the Original Work Proposal on November 16th and finally put my ideas in writing. Over the course of the next two

weeks (November 20th to December 8th), my mentor and I talked about the resources that I have and could use to help me distribute and analyze my survey. On December 16th, I created my Global Brand Perception Survey and after getting approval from my mentor, I passed it out to friends and family using text messaging and social media. In addition, I also translated the survey to Spanish on December 17th, and then I contacted my Spanish teachers and asked if they could help me distribute my survey to Mexico. My mentor also helped with distributing my survey to people in Mexico by contacting her co-workers. At the point, I had about half of the participants that I needed in each country, so then on December 26th, I started calling and texting my parent's friends to also fill out my survey and send it to their family in India and Mexico.

After getting about 75 participants in each country, I stopped focusing so intensely on getting participants for I had exhausted all my resources, and I decided to let time take its course; more people would fill out the survey as it spread. From there on, I looked into the marketing strategies of the eight different brands that I was testing and wrote a brief summary on January 12th. By that date I had also achieved my target sample size. Then, on January 18th, I made all the graphs for the data and I wrote the entire research paper on January 21st. I edited the paper and made final touches on January 22nd.

**Time/s:**

I worked on a majority of this project over winter break and weekends because that is when I had free time and I could concentrate on what exactly needed to be done. Often times, I also worked after school. I also used many of my mentor visits to talk about my original work and plan out the necessary steps to see this project into fruition.

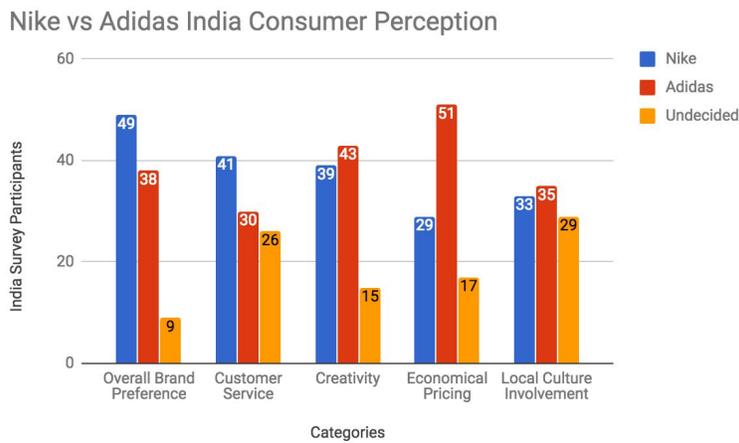
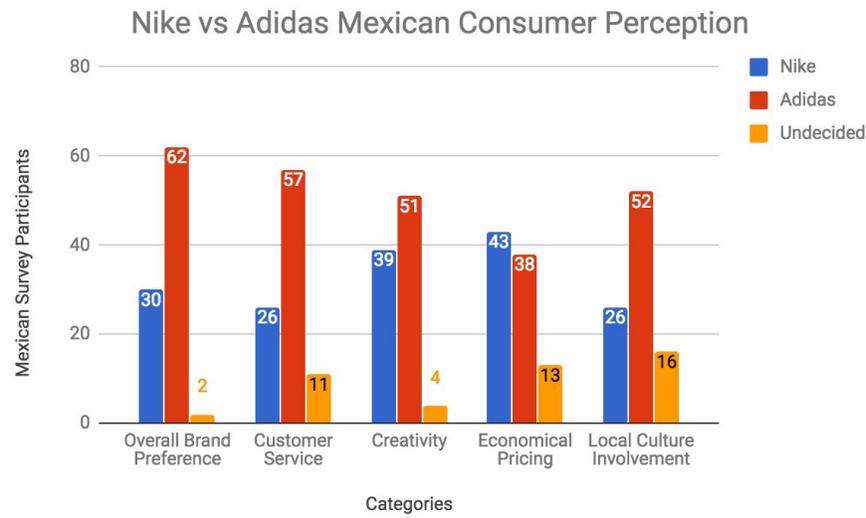
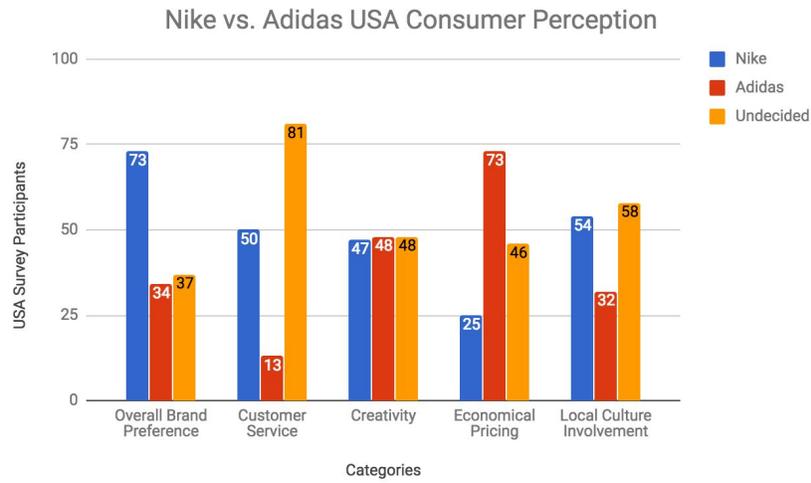
**Materials:**

For the purpose of this project, the biggest tool that I needed was access to the internet because this is how I made and distributed my survey. In addition, having social media accounts and having connections with people in each of the different countries that I distributed my survey in was also beneficial. Aside from social media applications such Instagram and Twitter, WhatsApp, which is used to text in countries like India and Mexico, also significantly helped.

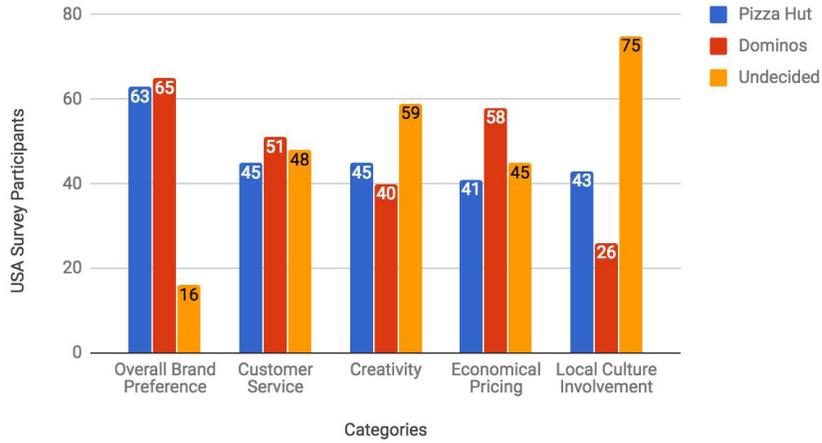
**Results:**

Overall, the results of the survey were distributed using charts and graphs.

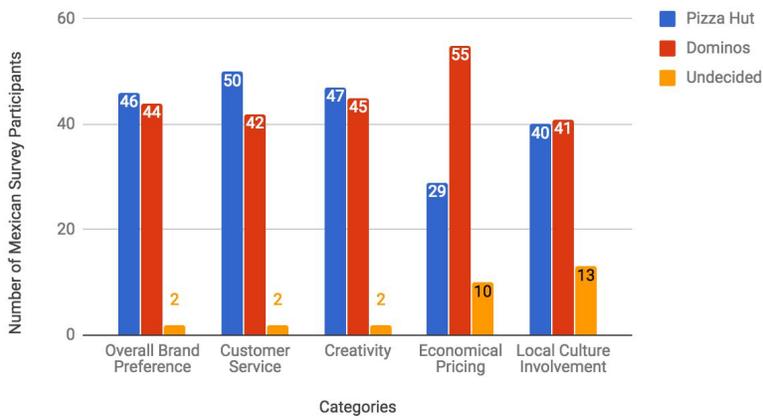
Tested Global Brands	Logo Recognition	Brand Knowledge	Overall USA LR: BK	Overall MX LR: BK	Overall India LR: BK
Nike	99.2%	96.3%	100% : 98.6%	99.7% : 97.8%	97.9% : 92.7%
Adidas	97.4%	95.7%	97.2% : 98.6%	100% : 97.9%	94.9% : 90.8%
Pizza Hut	95.6%	95.8%	96.5% : 98.6%	97.6% : 97.2%	92.8% : 91.8%
Domino's	98.3%	95.2%	100% : 98.6%	99.2% : 95.2%	95.9% : 91.8%
Apple	100%	97.2%	100% : 100%	100% : 97.8%	100% : 93.8%
Samsung	99.6%	99.2%	100% : 100%	100% : 100%	98.9% : 97.8%
H&M	n/a	94.2%	n/a : 100%	n/a : 100%	n/a : 82.6%
Zara	n/a	87.4%	n/a : 88.9%	n/a : 94.8%	n/a : 78.5%



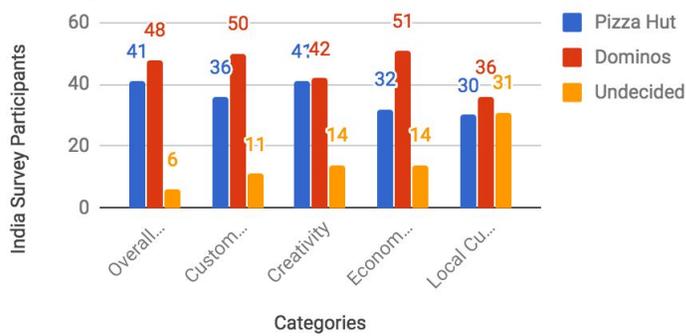
### Pizza Hut vs. Dominos USA Consumer Perception



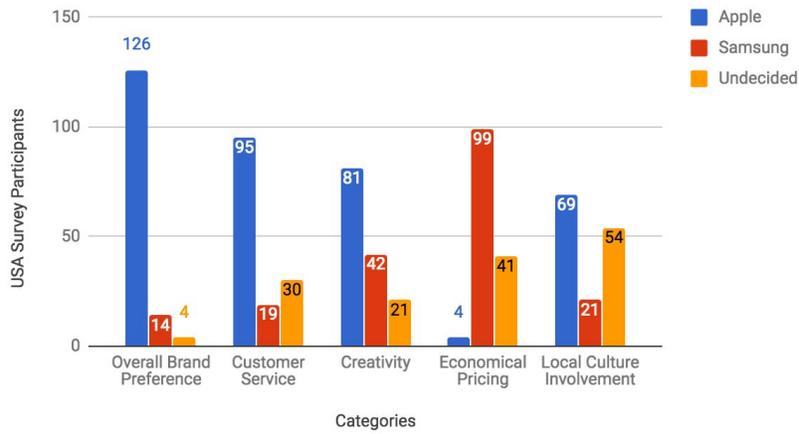
### Pizza Hut vs Domino's Mexican Consumer Perception



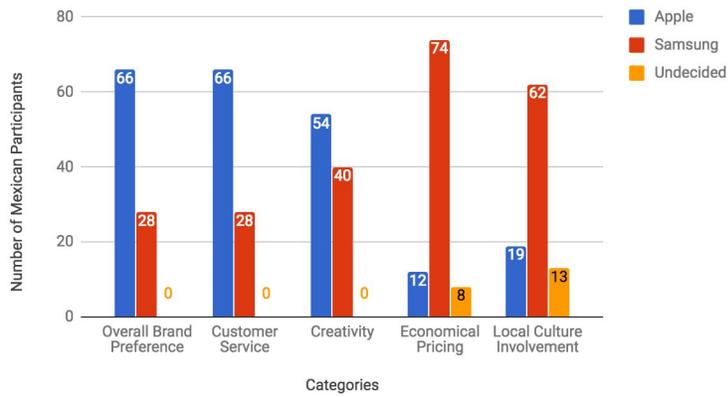
### Pizza Hut vs. Dominos India Consumer Perception



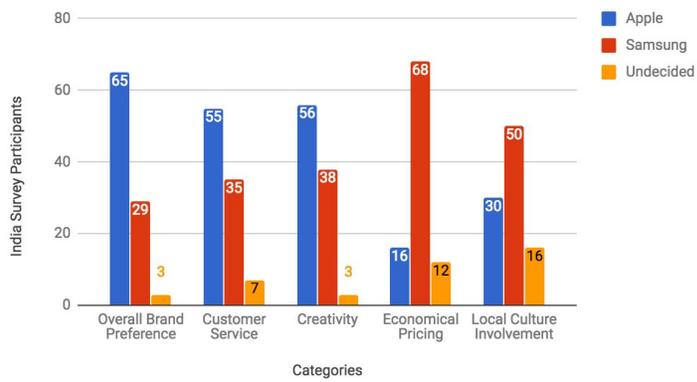
### Apple vs. Samsung USA Consumer Perception

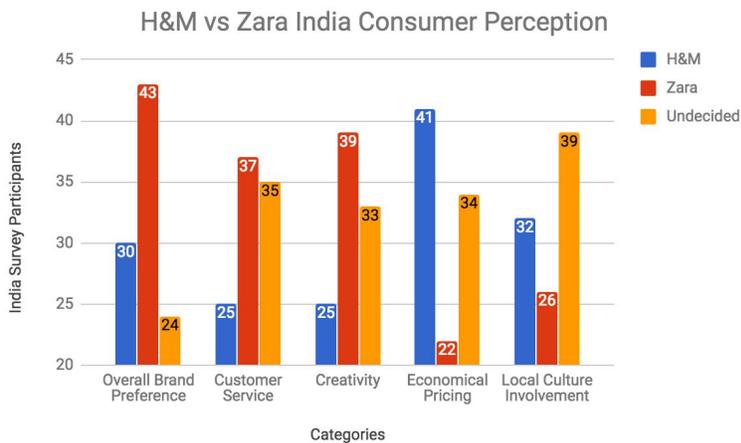
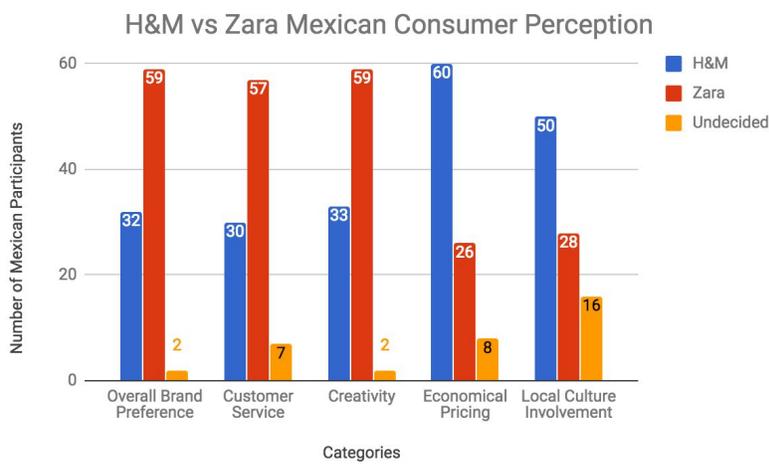
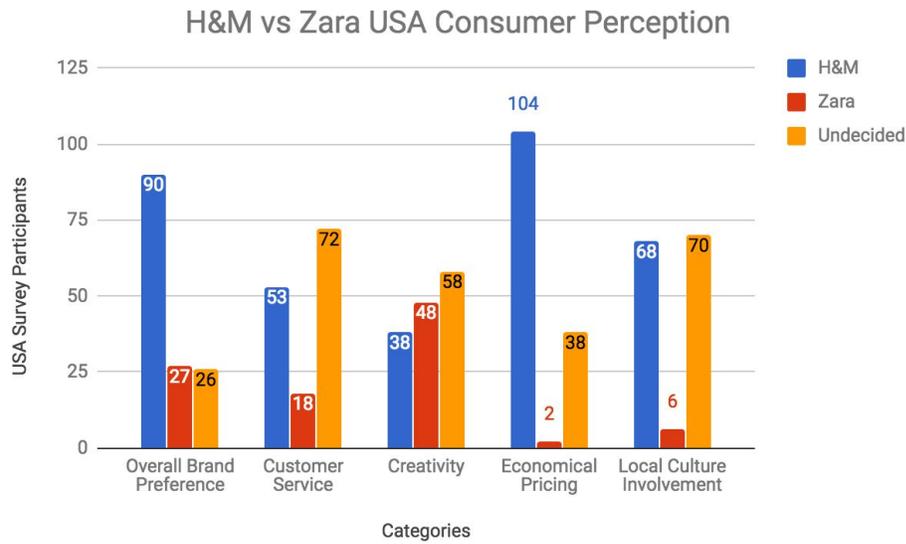


### Apple vs Samsung Mexican Consumer Perception



### Apple vs Samsung India Consumer Perception





<b>Nike: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	Yes
Creativity	No
Economical Pricing	No
Local Culture Involvement	Maybe - not a major brand focus

<b>Adidas: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	No
Creativity	Yes
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Maybe - major brand focus

<b>Pizza Hut: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	No
Creativity	Maybe - equal with Domino's
Economical Pricing	No
Local Culture Involvement	Maybe - equal with Domino's

<b>Domino's: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	Yes
Creativity	Maybe - equal with Pizza Hut
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Maybe - equal with Pizza Hut

<b>Apple: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	Yes
Creativity	Yes
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Yes

<b>Samsung: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	No
Creativity	No
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Yes

<b>H&amp;M: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	No
Creativity	No
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Yes

<b>Zara: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Perception / Company Action Matched?</b>
Customer Service	No
Creativity	Yes
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Yes

**Conclusions/ Interpretations:**

When looking at the graphs and charts, it became apparent that brands that had limited efforts to advertise in a country or offer culture specific products had the most trouble achieving their targeted brand perception. In the United States, most people were typically undecided with how they felt about the different brands used. This shows that since the brands tested were such big aspects of the American culture, the participants did not care much about the brand.

In Mexico and India, the perception of global brands followed one of two trends. Brands that were heavily immersed in the local culture were successful in communicating aspects of their brand. For example, with the case of Zara, the brand did not invest in advertising in overseas locations and therefore not many people knew about it. The other trend for creating the correct perception of global brands is having uniform aspects of branding. For example, Apple is rated first in the Top 50 Global Brands Ranking by Interbrand and all aspects of their brand perception matched with consumer perception as seen above.

One interesting case that was noticed in the results was Zara. Despite the brand having the least amount of brand knowledge and logo recognition in all three countries, the participants were able to identify the core aspects of the brand, such as creativity and economical pricing. In the United States, most people did not know what Zara was, yet even their basic knowledge of the brand allowed them to distinguish some elements of the marketing strategy. This shows that Zara's logo communicated a level of higher fashion that was both creative and expensive.

In addition, some brands were able to overcome their weaknesses using solid advertising techniques. In Mexico, participants often rated Domino's as having better prices than Pizza Hut

even though in reality that prices are the same. Given that Domino's heavily advertises about its economical pricing, the consumer believes it is cheaper.

Given that the survey was conducted in a restrained time period, there was minimal number of participants from each country, and they all were concentrated in small geographic regions. As a result, such demographics may have been too specific to speak for the consumer perception of the entire country. Thus, if this study were to be expanded upon, the survey could be introduced in other nations such as Taiwan and South Africa in order to see how culture truly affects brand perception. In addition, more survey participants could be procured so that more accurate conclusions can be made. Overall, this survey provided considerable insight on brands and the degree to which demographics affects consumer perception.

### **Application/ Meaning:**

Overall, this survey strived to show how consumer perception can differ from the targeted brand perception. This became quite apparent when the results of the survey were compared to the marketing strategies of different brands. The research and results of the survey can be used by the tested brands and other brands to see what areas they can improve their branding in. In terms of my project, I would like to also create new marketing plans for each of the brands tested based on the information that I found. This way, I can learn more about how international business plan are carried out and communicated with others.

### **Utilization of High Level Thinking Skills:**

Throughout the course of this survey, the high level thinking skills that I utilized most throughout the survey was analysis. After passing out the survey and receiving the results, I compared the results to the research that I had done to come up with conclusions about whether global brand perception matched consumer perception. I also have analyzed how the demographics of a country affected the consumer brand perception. When I was using the results to create conclusions, I also used the higher level thinking skills of synthesis to play a research paper that detailed how consumer brand protection differed from the target perception. Finally, when I was using both the information about the different countries I tested and the different brands that I tested, I had to analyze how they applied to the idea of brand perception.

**Research Material:**

The following sources were used to guide research. I used these sources to find out more about the marketing strategies of the different brands that I tested.

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Price, T. & Johnson E (2015). "A Dominant Force in the Electronics Industry." *PennState University*. Retrieved from <http://sites.psu.edu/ejohnson1/wp-content/uploads/sites/42297/2016/03/Marketingplanfinaldraft.pdf>

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