

Global Brand Perception

Antara A. Gupta

Reedy High School

A Study of the Divergence of Target Perception and Consumer Perception in the United States,

India, and Mexico

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Introduction

Comprising a significant portion of international marketing, brand management is crucial to understanding and analyzing how different markets perceive a company's product or service. Especially at the international scale where the headquarters of a company are far away from different markets abroad, it is quite important to create a solid grasp of the customer base so that products and services are appealing in even a competitive market. Given the extent of globalization in today's economy, however, undertaking the task of creating a uniform perception of a brand is much more difficult, given that different cultures react to products and services in discrete manners.

In recent years, companies have changed their marketing strategies to incorporate a more local appeal to their brands so as to attract local culture. The age of romanticizing large multi-billion dollar corporations as the epitome of quality and service is slowly coming to an end; the limelight now shines bright on the local approach. However, what does this mean for brand management? Since brand management essentially deals with creating global uniformity in perception, this current trend seems to almost contradict the traditional approach. Nonetheless, using a blended approach of these seemingly juxtaposing ideas results in the most success in terms of marketing. Numerous studies have shown how simply incorporating a local aspect to a global brand can attract customers by conveying the legitimacy and authenticity of the brand. By including local aspects, the perception of customers in different countries can vary greatly based on how the product is marketed in each locale.

As a result, the purpose of this project is to analyze how different brands are perceived by consumers in various regions of the world and whether or not that perception matches the company's intended goal.

Background Information

In order to achieve a holistic understanding of global brands and how different factors influence consumer perception, surveys were distributed in the United States, Mexico, and India. The three countries in which the survey was tested significantly differ from one another due to their initial development, economic policies, and general demographics. In order to provide insight as to how such factors influence brand perception, some background information about the economy and current affairs of the countries being tested (United States, Mexico, and India) are provided.

United States Economy

With the Industrial Revolution occurring in the 19th century, the United States became a pioneer of industrialization, paving the way for other countries to develop a highly mechanized and consumer-driven economy. As a result, mass production has become a major component of the United States economy and it has allowed for big businesses to dominate both domestic and foreign markets.

Overall, the United States has the largest and most diversified economy based on its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of \$55,805 (United States Economy, 2018). Furthermore, since the United States dollar is used for most international transactions and has even been adopted as the de facto currency in many countries, the American economy plays a central role in a range of international institutions. Although the Great Recession during the early 2000s stagnated growth causing unemployment rates to drastically rise, the economy is slowly recovering with an average growth rate of 2.4% (United States Economy, 2018). Furthermore,

because of the sheer size and strength of the country, the American economy has been resilient to significant change.

Due to the strong background that the United States economy has, American consumerism has gone rampant in recent years. According to a Harvard research paper, an average of six hours per week are spent shopping, as opposed to only forty minutes of solely spending time with children (Frantz, 2010). As a result, this heightened era of consumerism has allowed for more large commodity-selling companies to emerge. In fact, 54% of the global brands in the 2017 Top 50 Best Global Brands Ranking by Interbrand, a consulting company for brands, were from the United States (Best Brands - Interbrand, 2018). In terms of marketing, companies largely depend on using social media and big data to predict the wants and needs of consumers. The effectiveness of traditional television commercials has significantly decreased due to the presence of streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu which limit the number of viewers that see a commercial. Overall, it becomes apparent that the culture of the United States is largely based around consumerism, and this area of expertise has allowed the country to dominate even at the international platform.

Mexican Economy

Sharing the same beginnings with many countries that were colonized by European powers, Mexico was also heavily exploited by the Spanish rule that began in the 16th century. As death and disease plagued the country, exploiting Mexico of its natural resources, most notably, silver, became quite easy. However, after attaining independence from Spain in 1810, the Mexican

economy was left devastated and impoverished after many wealthy Mexicans converted their assets into secure yet unproductive property. In order to end this period of economic stagnation, President Juarez revitalized the mining industry and improved overall infrastructure so that the country's raw materials could be further utilized. During the Porfiriato period, in which a group of technocrats ruled the country, Mexico grew rapidly in all sectors, bringing it to its current economic prosperity. However, after the Mexican Revolution, which challenged the dictatorship, occurred, much of the prosperity from the Porfiriato period was erased, and the Great Depression further weakened the economy (Vizcarra, 2014). Nonetheless, by the 1930s, Mexico had started to grow steadily and by imposing high protective tariffs, the country was able to grow its domestic output.

In present day, the Mexican economy is characterized with superior macroeconomic performance due to the development of the energy and telecommunication industries. With a Gross Domestic Product per capita of \$17,534, the country has been able to overcome many of the barriers that limited its growth in the past (Mexico Economy, 2018). However, lingering corruption and insufficient competition in the domestic market still hinder the country from reaching its full potential. With the onset of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico is heavily dependent on the United States for trade, and this led to the country being heavily affected by the 2008 recession in the United States. Nonetheless, the economy has been growing steadily at a rate of 2.5%, similar to the United States (Mexico Economy, 2018).

Because of the open market system and the disparity of wealth in the country, the consumer culture of Mexico falls in between that of the United States and India. In large cities such as Mexico City and Guadalajara, there is a strong presence of global brands. Nonetheless, the need for a “local feel” still remains, and therefore, the average consumer strives for products that are both high quality and come from companies with good customer service. Thus, the concept of brand loyalty is quite strong in Mexico and this loyalty is further emphasized by the numerous celebrity endorsements and sports team sponsorships. As a result, it becomes evident that Mexican consumer culture is largely affected by popular culture, and therefore large foreign brands are considered more superior if they are supported by popular culture icons. In terms of the marketing strategy of large companies operating in Mexico, social media marketing is much more efficient as it is able to target diverse groups. Nonetheless, television advertisements also have a large influence over the public because of the importance of the entertainment industry. Overall, Mexican consumerism has significantly changed over the past few decades due to the revitalization of the economy, creating a mix between modern and traditional culture.

Indian Economy

After the onset of British colonization, the East India Company heavily exploited India of its cotton and opium supply, meanwhile allowing for the country itself to industrialize. However, after achieving independence in 1947, the Indian economy was in shambles as the country became one of the most poverty-stricken regions in the world. Nonetheless, by adopting a five-year plan that focused on developing industries based on the country’s raw materials, India was able to steadily grow its economy. Furthermore, the Green Revolution in the 1960s allowed

for the agricultural output to significantly increase and therefore further develop the country's primary and secondary sectors. In addition, the Indian government also established numerous prestigious technical universities, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management in order to spur growth in the quaternary sector (Sheel, 2014). Such universities allowed for India to become a leader in the technical industries.

Overall, India has a stable economy but there is a large disparity in income, for both extreme poverty and extreme wealth coexist in the nation. Furthermore, after the rampant corruption and poor management of finance, overall development has been largely limited. With a Gross Domestic Product per capita of \$6,162, India is characterized as a developing country (Indian Economy, 2018). Nonetheless, as the Indian economy continues to slowly yet steadily develop across all sectors, the nation has achieved a faster than average growth rate of 7.3% yearly (Indian Economy, 2018). As a result, India has become a significant force in world trade despite its unstable past and present.

Most of the research that has been done on Indian consumerism is largely affected by "ethnoconsumerism", a mindset that does not account for cross-cultural differences. Nonetheless, consumerism in India is limited due to the lack of market freedom that the country has. The state maintains an extensive presence in public sector enterprises. Furthermore, many cities are characterized with "mom-and-pop shops" rather than the traditional chain stores and brands that are common in the Western world. Such "mom-and-pop shops" do not use modern marketing strategies and therefore heavily rely on word of mouth and strategic location. This trend has

come to limit the development of large global brands. Nonetheless, foreign brands have made a presence in the economy, but they remain limited because state-owned enterprises dominate the country. The brands that have made an entrance into the country are considered luxury products because of their characterization as a foreign entity, a mindset that plagues many developing countries. Furthermore, the television industry has come to largely influence advertising and it has become the primary method of marketing since it is able to reach all parts of the diverse country (Venkatesh, 1994). Thus, commercials play a significant role in affecting consumerism and the reach that both large domestic and global brands have.

Method

Participants

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. 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.

For the purpose of this study, the target sample size for this survey was 100 participants from each country. In the United States, a total of 145 people participated in the survey. In Mexico, 95 people participated in the survey. In India, there were a total of 98 participants. Thus, on average the desired sample size was met. Regarding the entire survey population, the study participants were quite varied in both age and gender. However, in each of the three countries tested, there seemed to be an apparent trend with the number of survey participants of a respective age and gender. In the United States, the majority of participants were females (68.5%) ranging from 12 to 19 years to age. Given that the survey was distributed heavily in school and on social media, the age range coincides with the statistics. In Mexico, the demographics of the sample population was heavily concentrated in males (64.9%) ranging from 30 to 50 years of age. In India, the majority of the participants of the survey were also male (58.8%) with many ranging from 20-30

years of age. Despite the discrepancies in the demographics among the three tested countries, the population tested remained diverse.

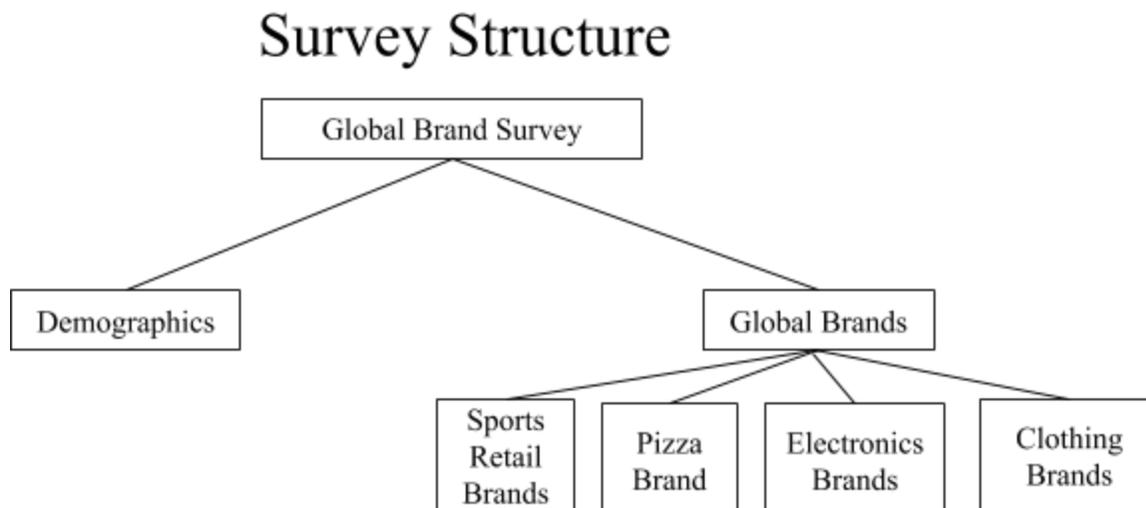
Within the three countries tested, a majority of participants resided from a few distinct concentrated areas. In the United States, 97% of the survey participants were from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex in Texas. Although most of the participants were from Frisco, a suburb of Dallas, many participants also resided in neighboring cities such as Plano, McKinney, and Allen. In Mexico, 71% of the participants resided in Mexico City (Ciudad de México). The remaining participants were from various cities such as Chihuahua, Pueblo, and Merida. In India, the participants were from various cities, but a majority of the cities are concentrated in North India, more specifically in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Survey

For the purpose of this study, the survey distributed to the three countries, United States, India, and Mexico, was created using Google Forms in order to ensure a uniform format and structure that would be familiar to most participants. The survey that was distributed to Mexico was translated into Spanish 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.

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.



Demographics

In this section of the survey, questions inquiring about the gender, age, and location of participants were asked so that conclusions about whether demographics affected brand perception could be made. In addition, the survey also asked whether the participant generally preferred global brands or local brands. This question gave insight on the participant's basic preference and whether or not it affected the perception of a global brand.

Global Brands

Each of the sections within the global brands category was formatted in a way so that the same questions were asked for each brand and brand comparison. Each section comprised of two brands that were similar in the type of products sold, the target market, and the brand's

permeation into the three tested countries. 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. A more detailed summary of the different sections of the global brands tested can be found below.

Sports Retail Brands

This section of the survey focused on the participant's knowledge and perception of two brands: 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.

Pizza Brands

The second section of the global brands category focused on pizza brands that have gone global and have made a name for themselves around the world. Pizza Hut and Domino's are both prime

examples of such brands, and because of their similar target market, these two brands were tested.

Electronics Brands

In this section, Apple and Samsung were tested in order to explore their respective consumer perception when compared to one another. Similar to the other sections, the brands tested in this section are also big competitors in the market, often sharing the same target market.

Clothing Brands

This final section of the survey inquired participants about their perception of H&M and Zara. Although the brands have slightly varying consumer bases, both of the companies are spread out throughout the world, allowing this survey to truly test whether consumer perception is affected by demographics.

Results

The results of this survey are grouped according to the Global Brand Category so that the variability in the brand perception can be easily compared among the countries.

Overall Brand Recognition

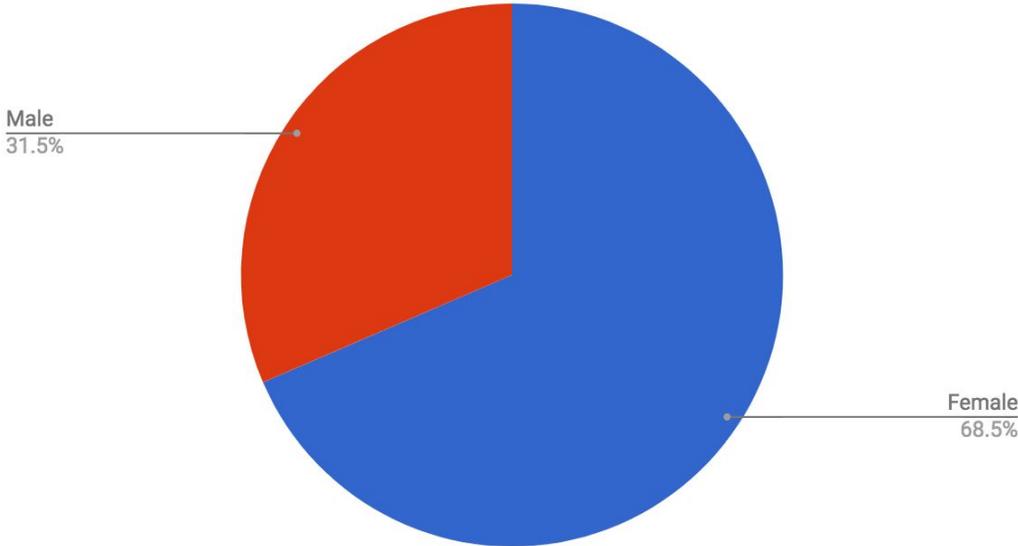
The table below provides insight on the overall recognition and knowledge that participants had over the tested brands. The column titled “Logo Recognition” measures the percent of survey participants from all three countries that correctly identified the brand logo. The column titled “Brand Knowledge” shows the percentage of survey participants that were able to accurately describe the type of products sold by the respective brand. The columns that follow divide the data by country so that the results are easier to analyze. As seen in the data table below, most participants had a solid understanding of all the brands, thus allowing the results from the rest of the survey to be accurate depictions of consumer brand perception.

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%

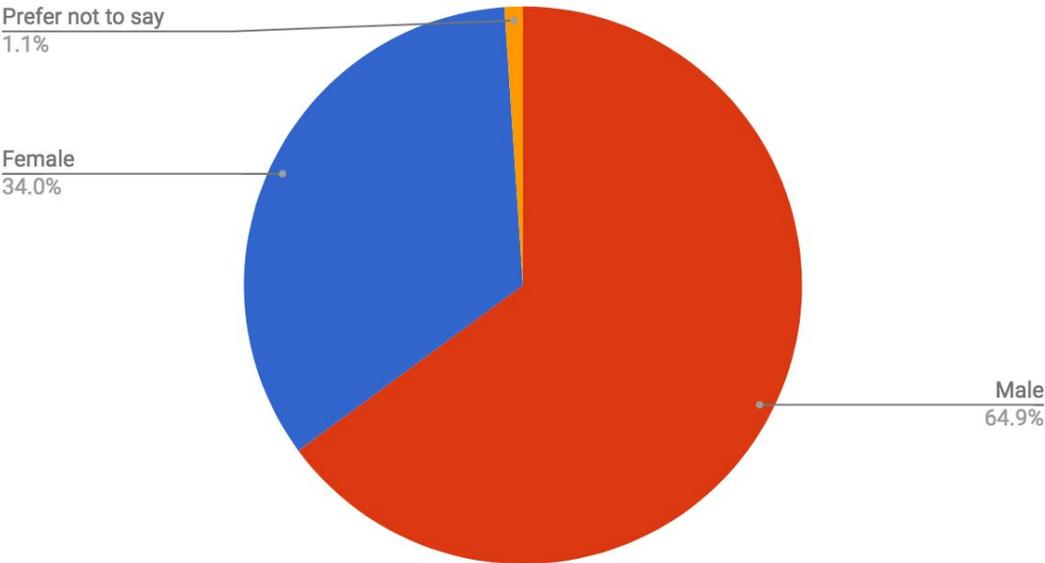
Zara	n/a	87.4%	n/a : 88.9%	n/a : 94.8%	n/a : 78.5%
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Demographics

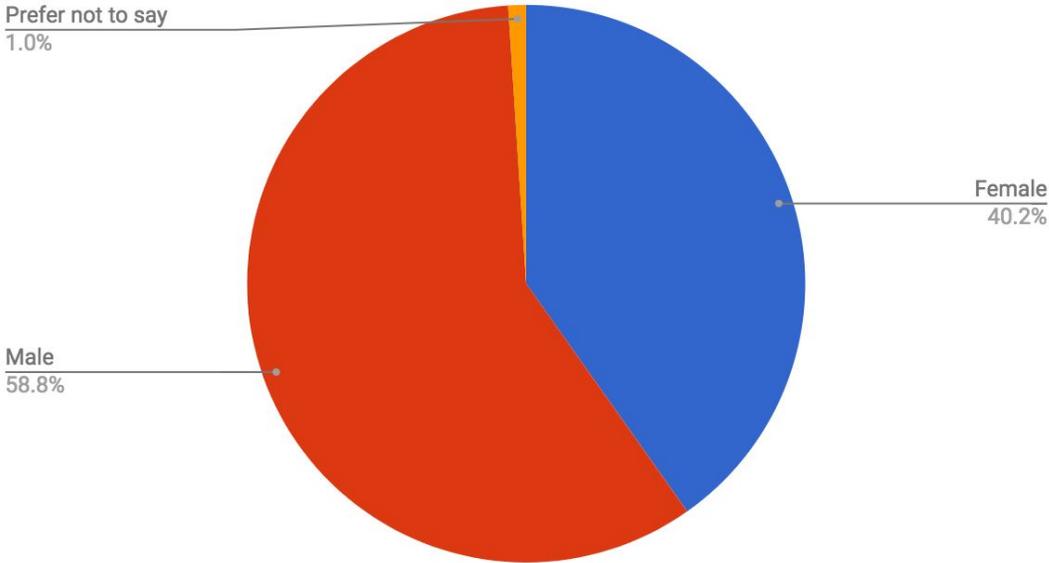
Gender Distribution of the United States Participants



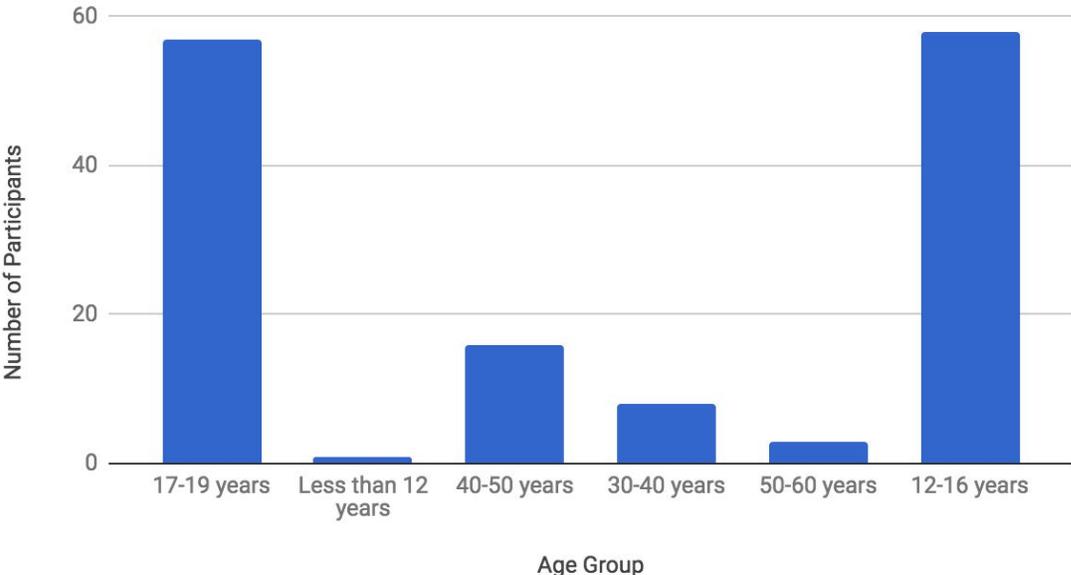
Gender Distribution of Mexico Participants

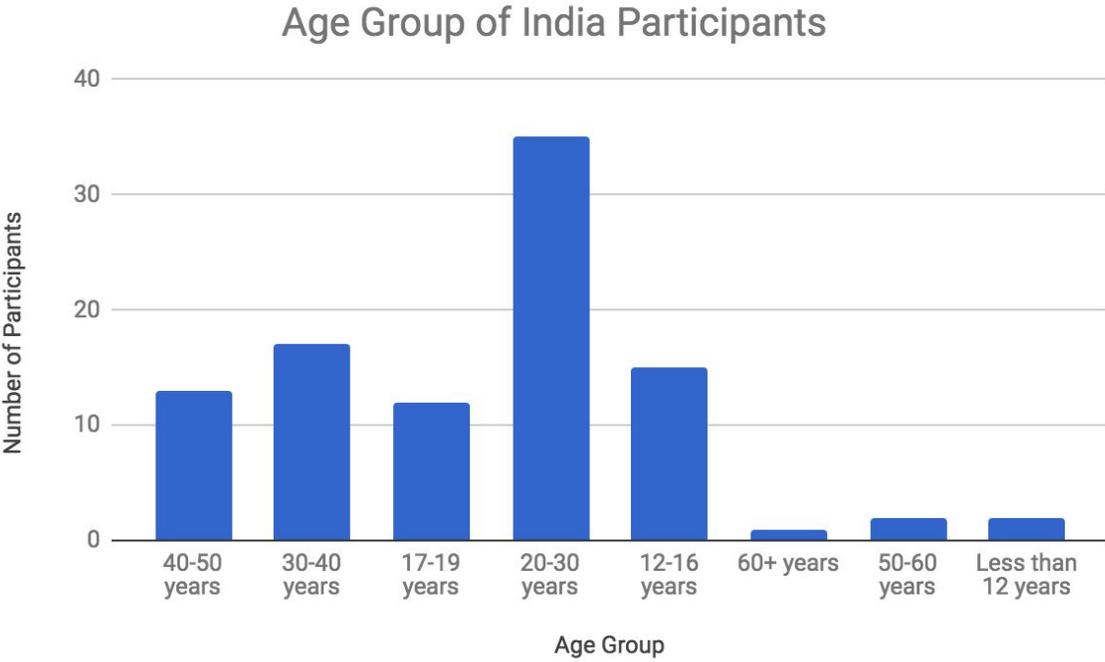
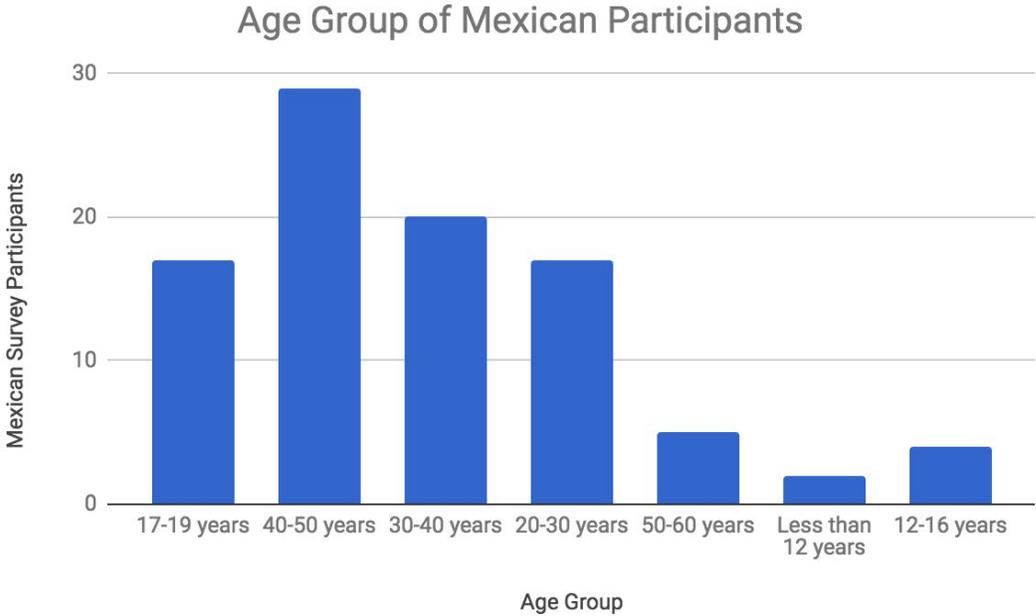


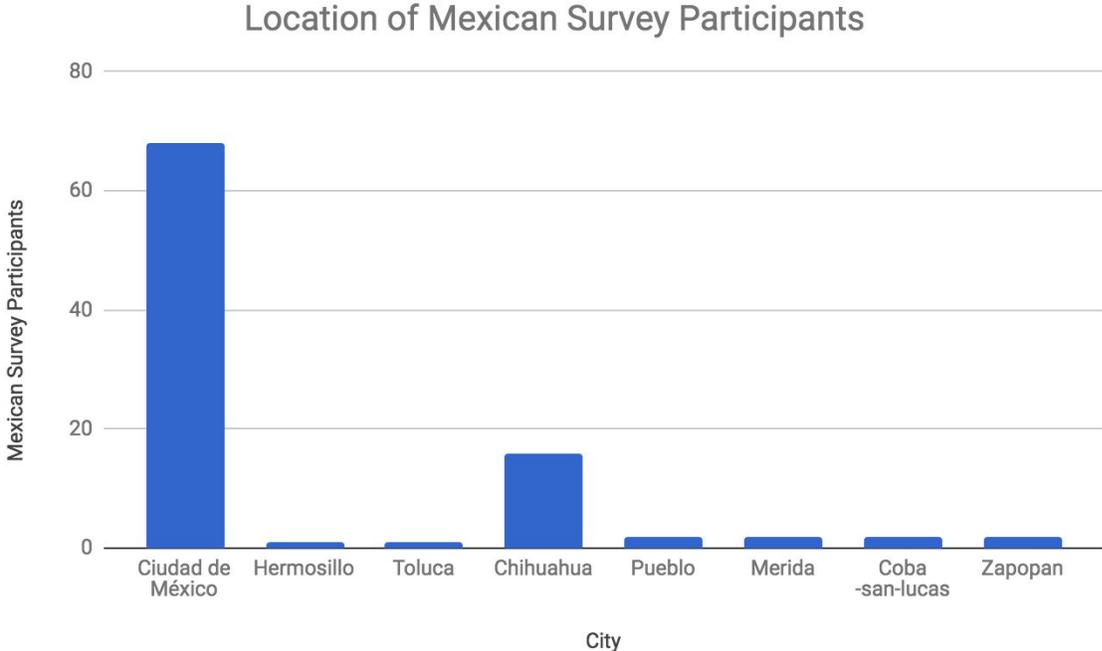
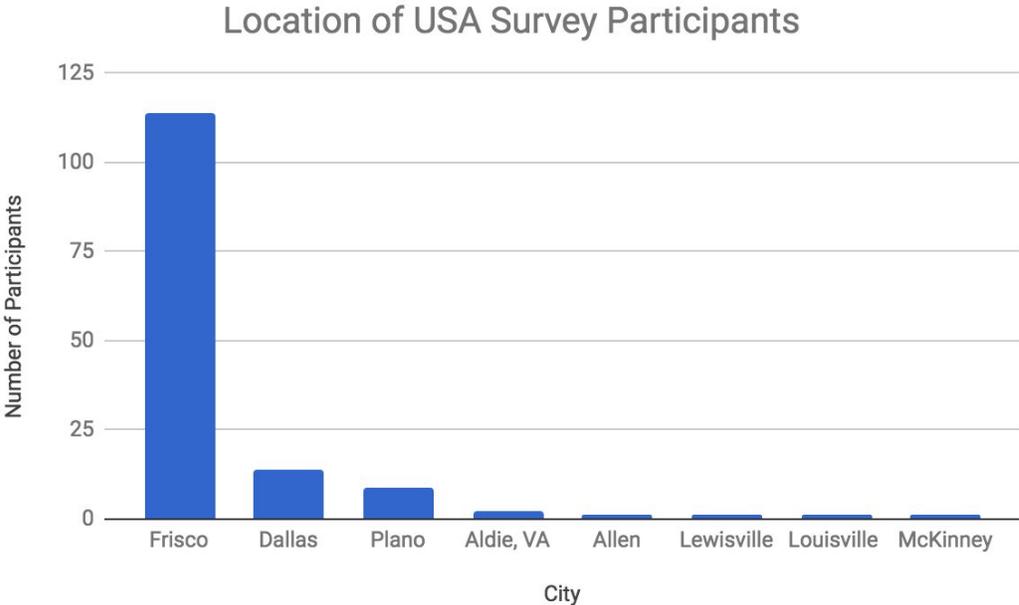
Gender Distribution of India Participants

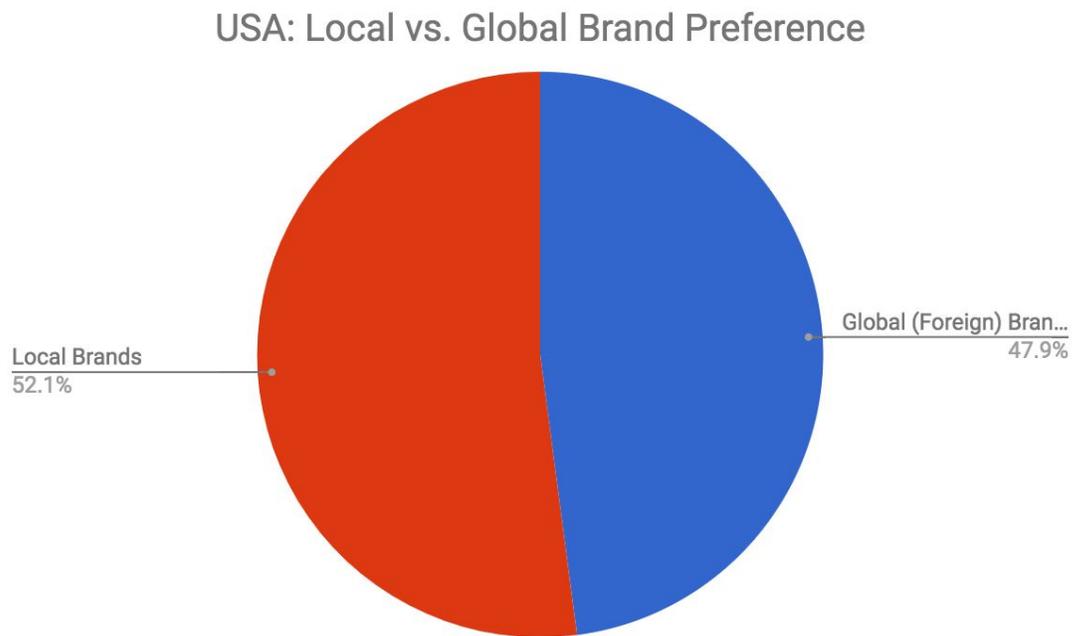
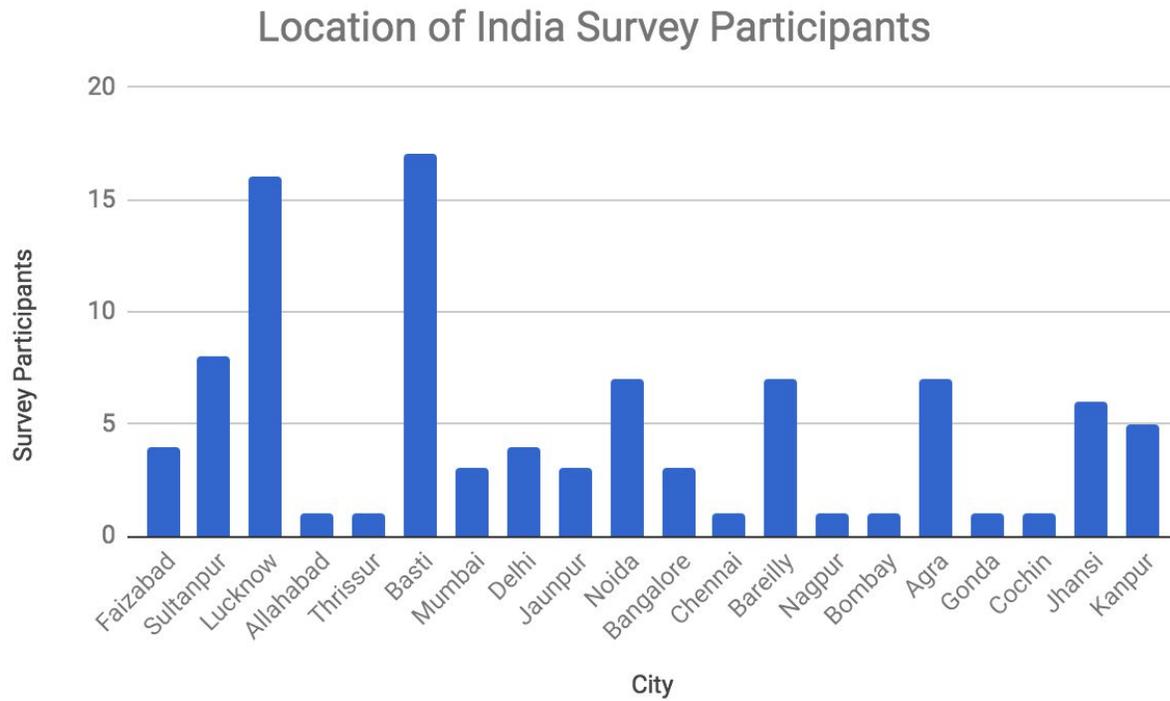


Age Group of USA Participants

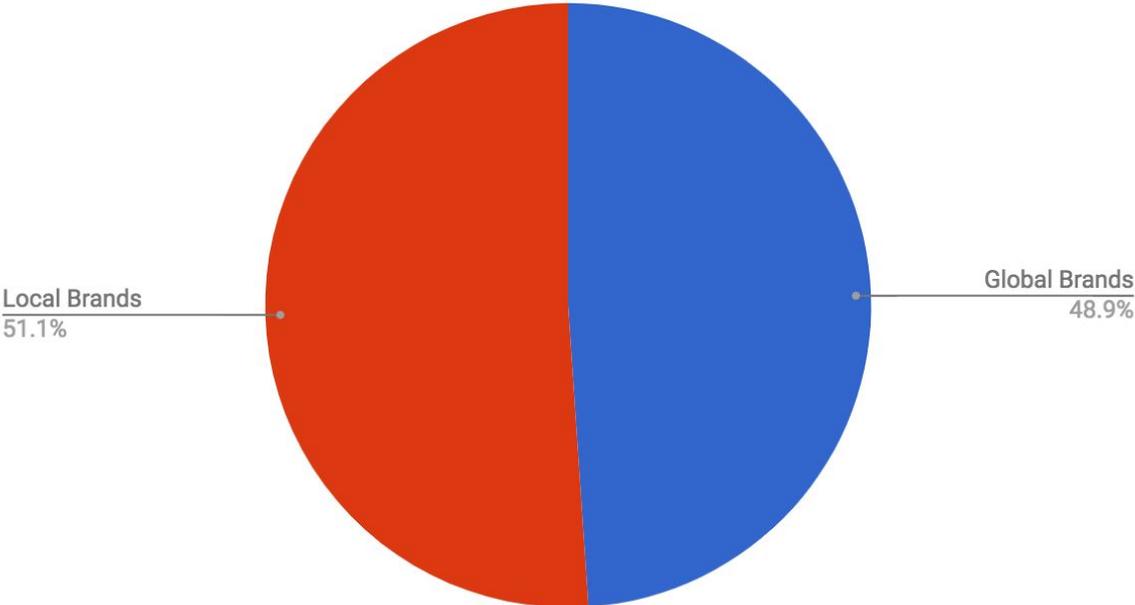




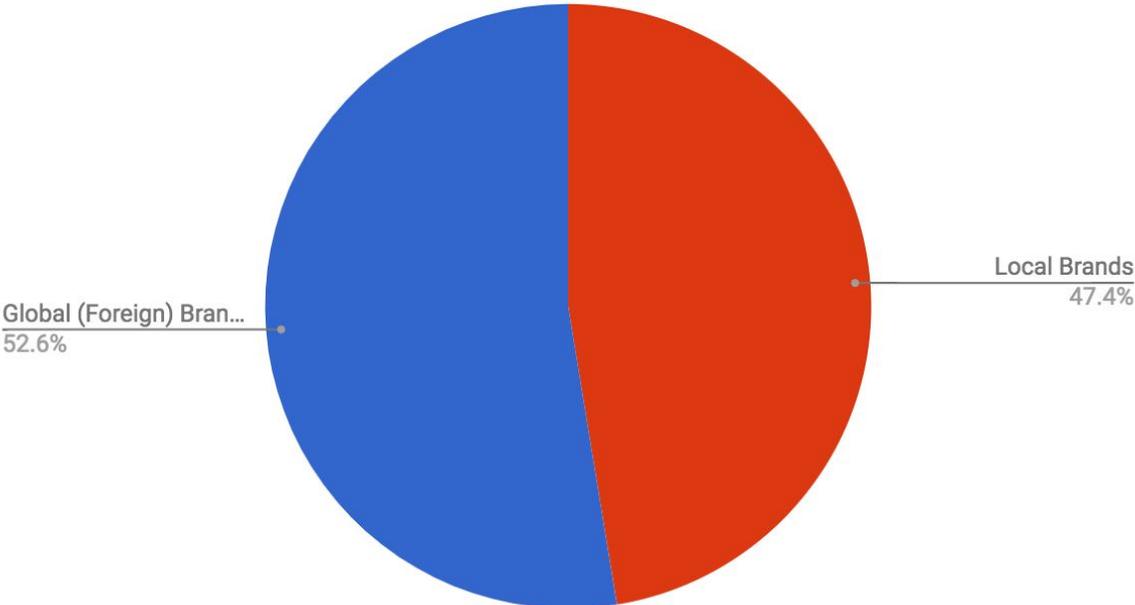




Mexico: Local vs. Global Brand Preference

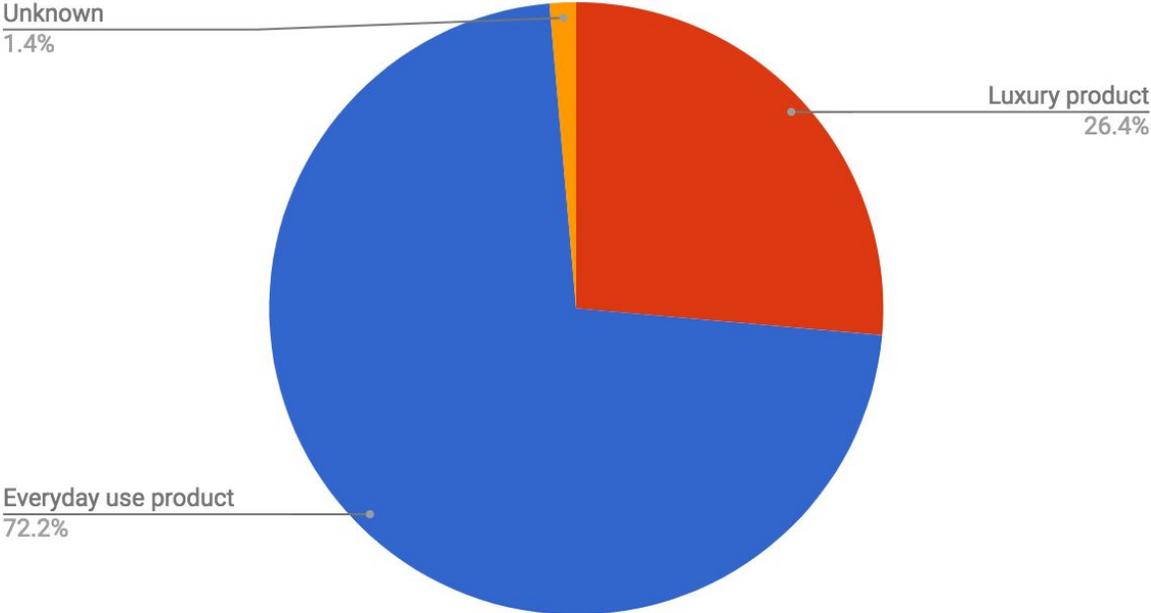


India: Local vs Global Brand Preference

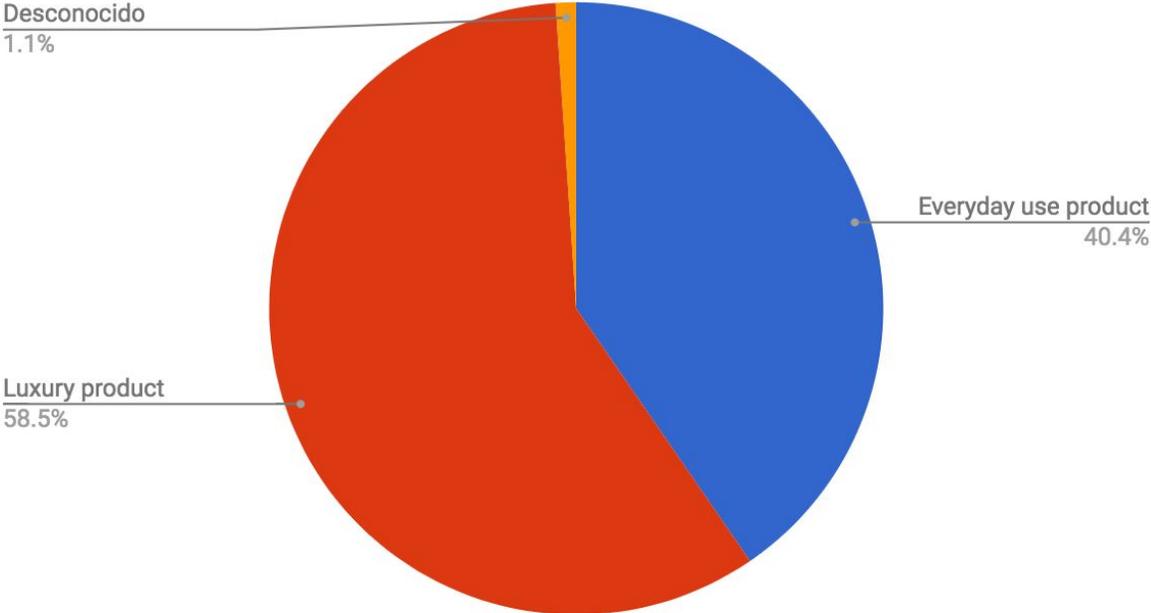


Sports Brand

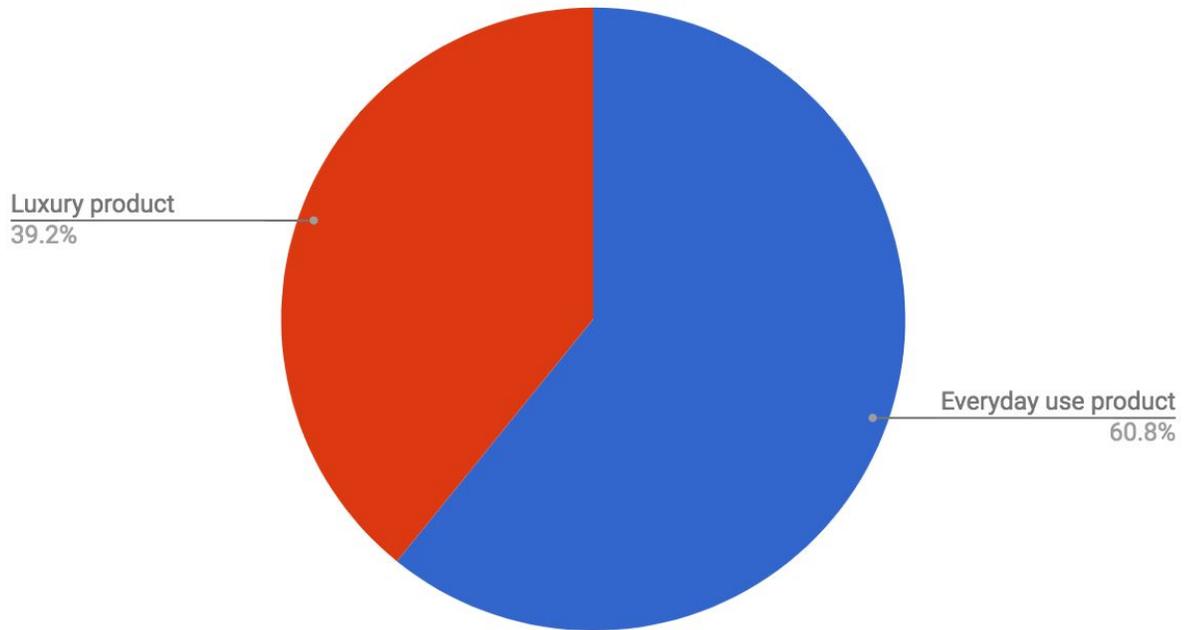
USA Perception of Nike



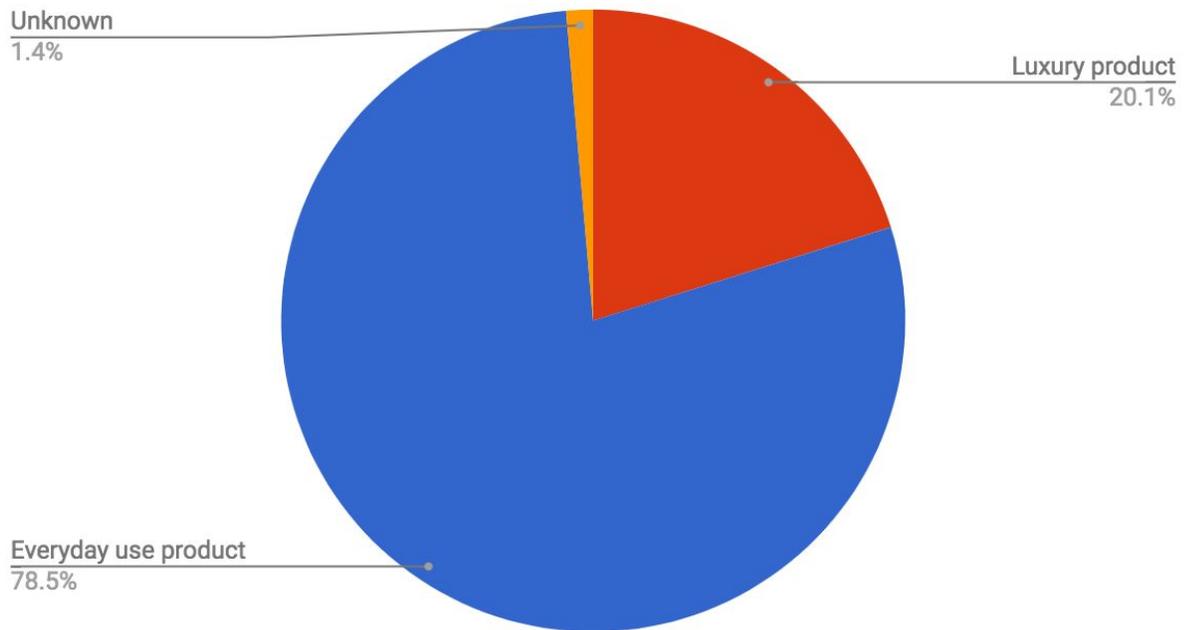
Mexican Perception of Nike



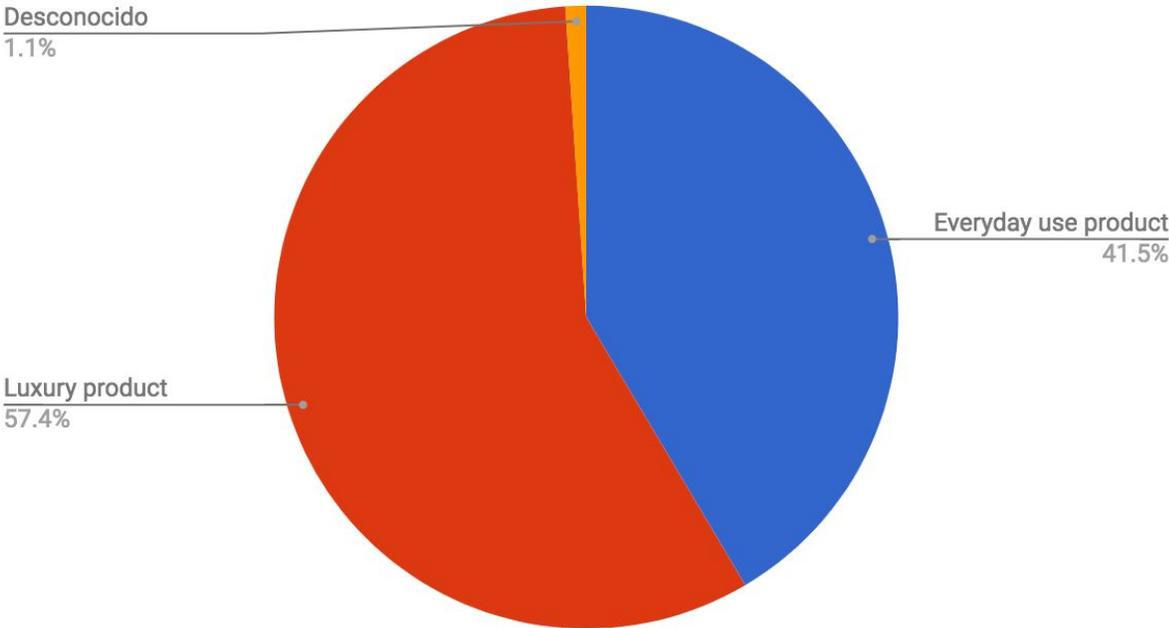
India Perception of Nike



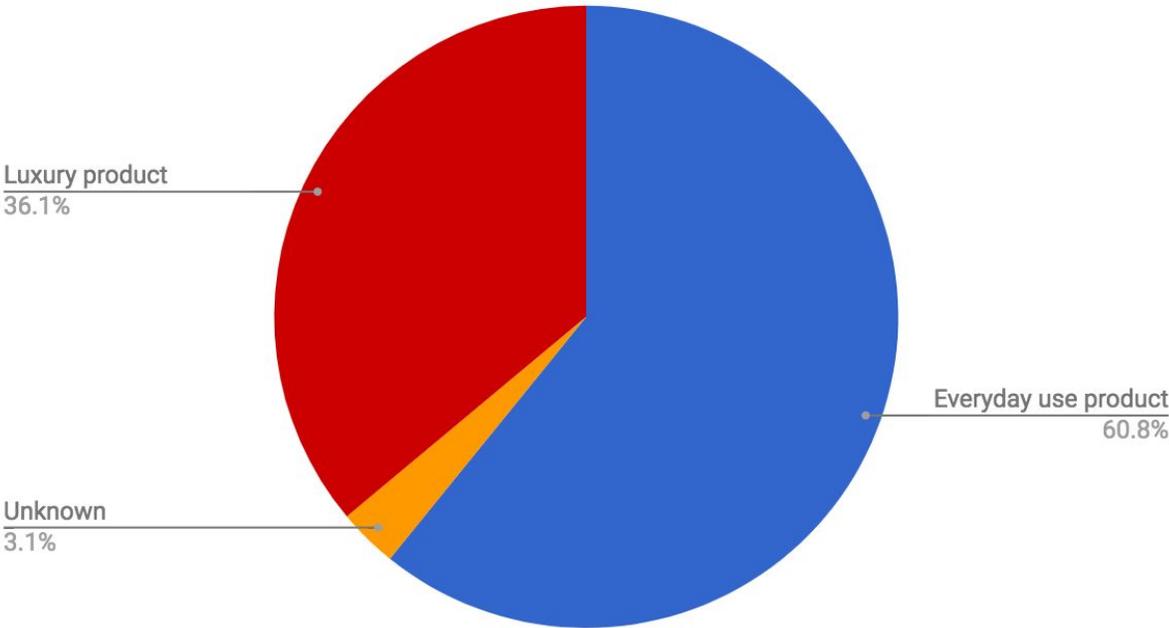
USA Perception of Adidas

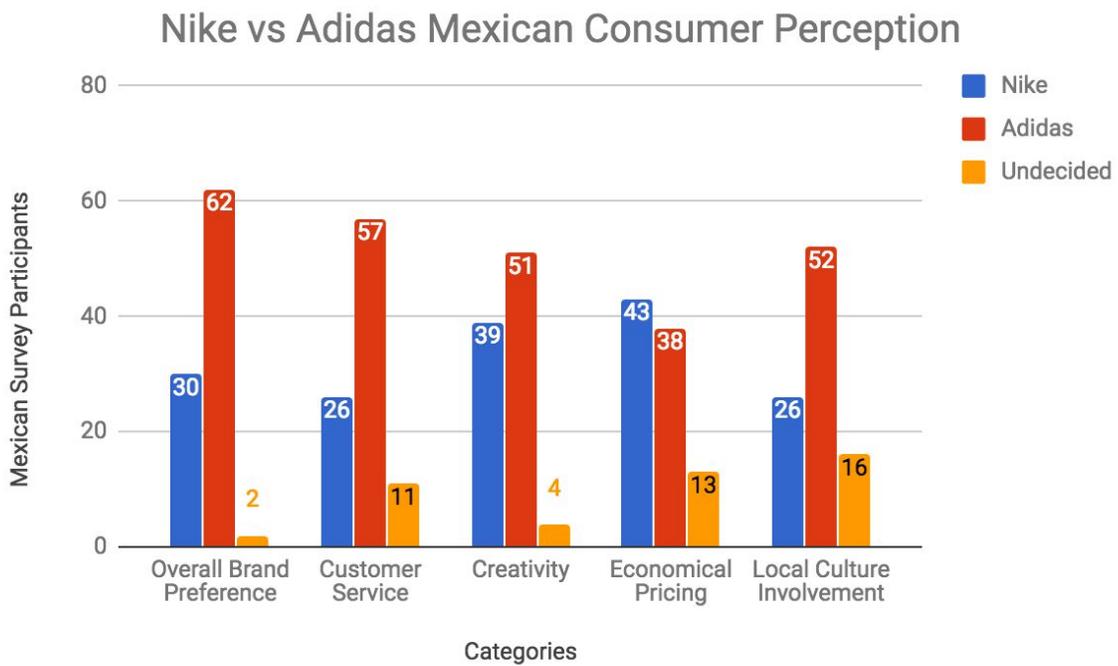
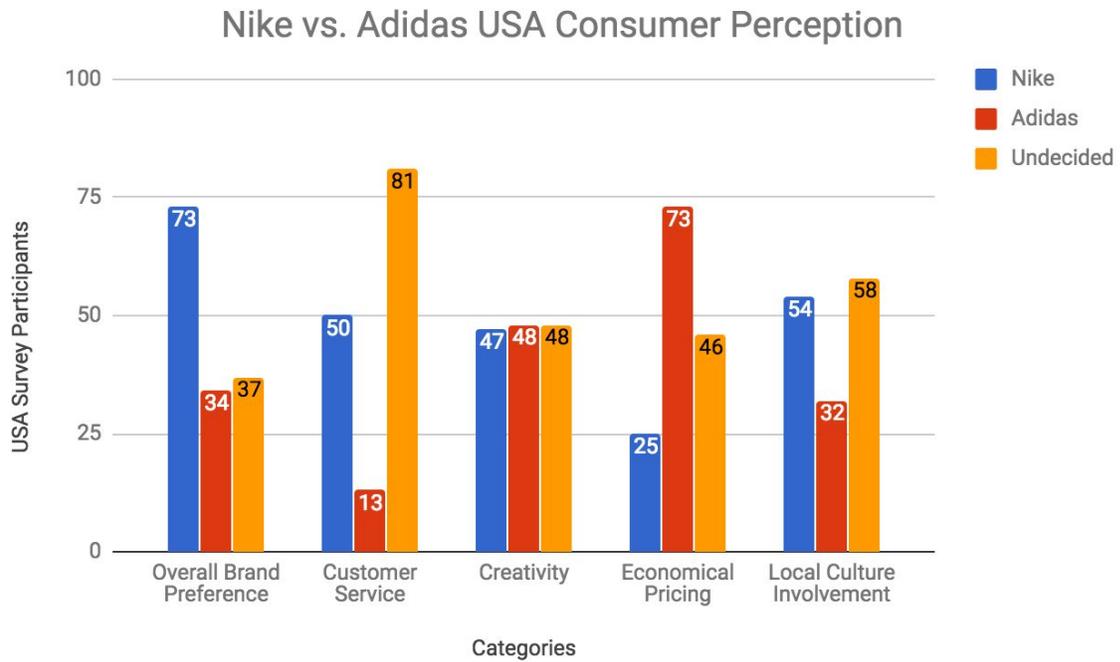


Mexican Perception of Adidas

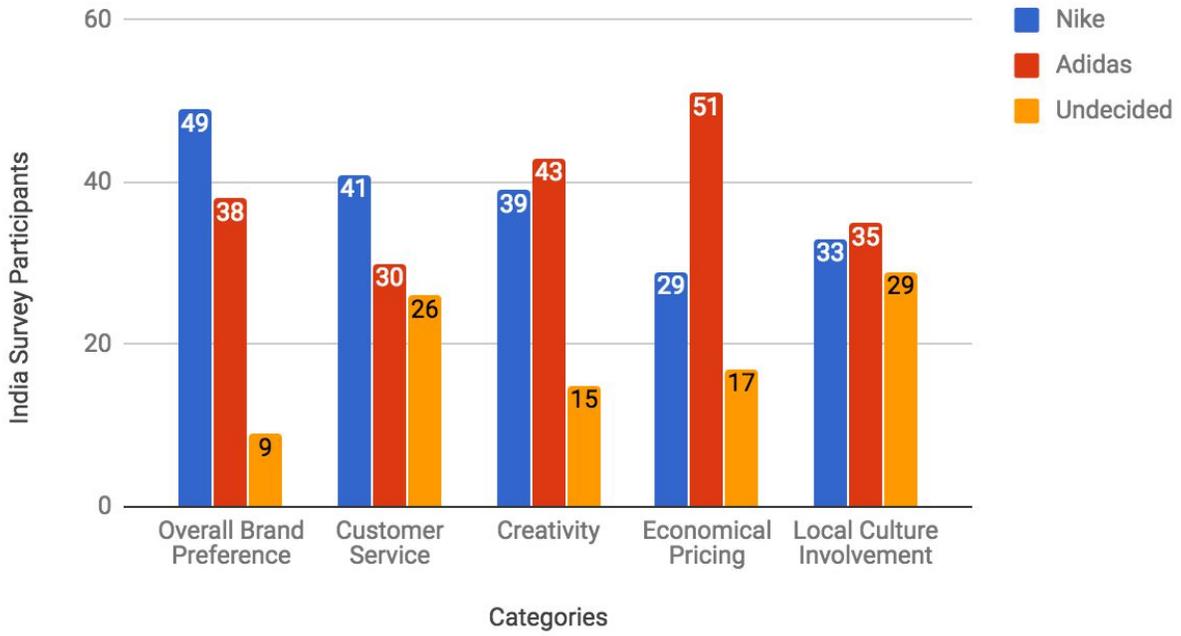


India Perception of Adidas



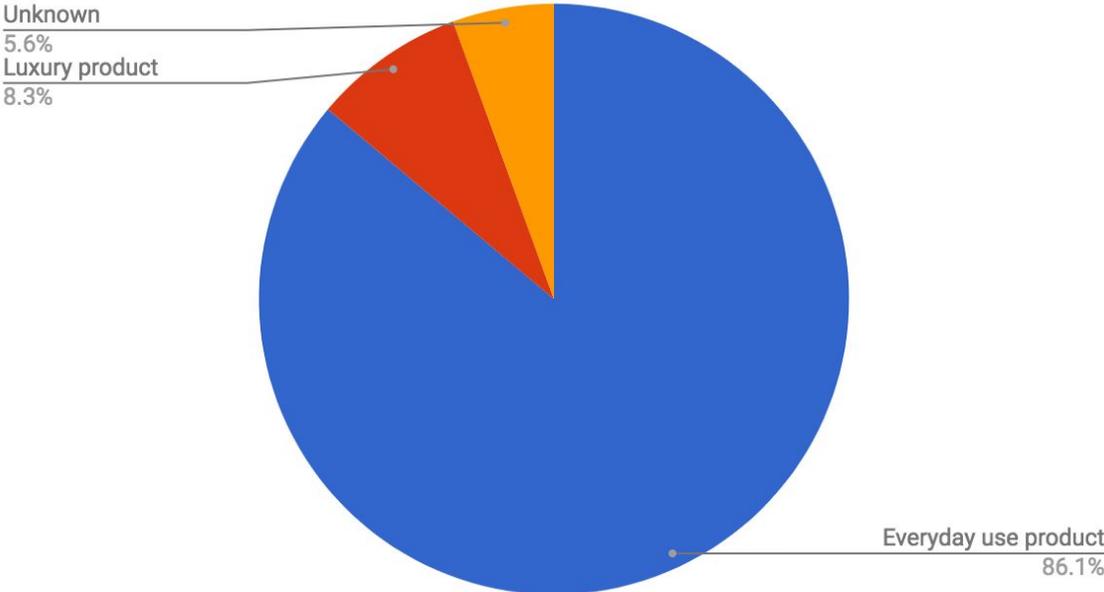


Nike vs Adidas India Consumer Perception

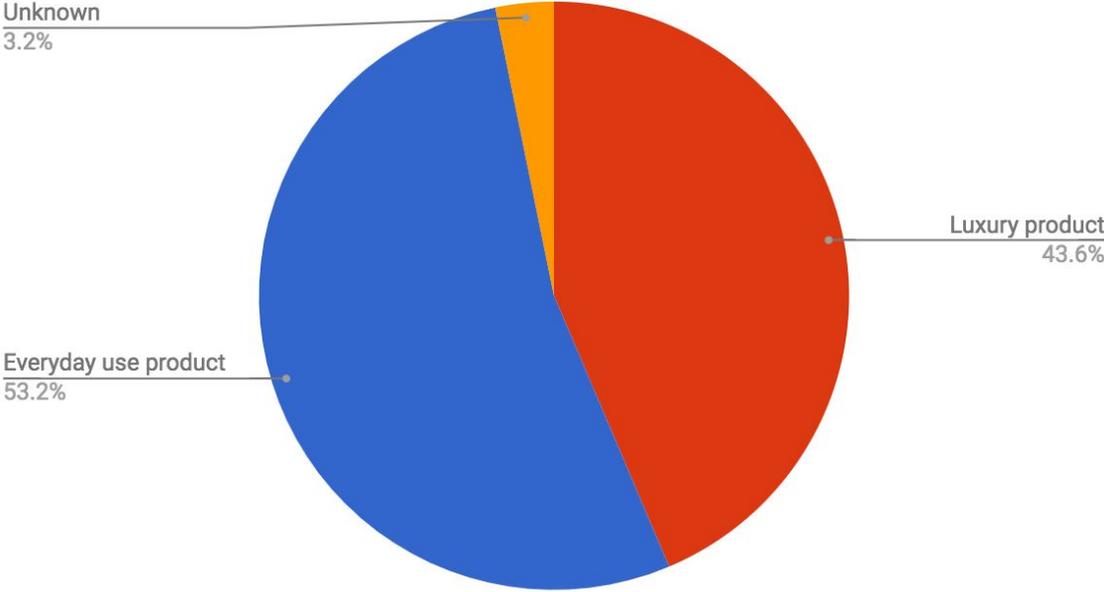


Pizza Brands

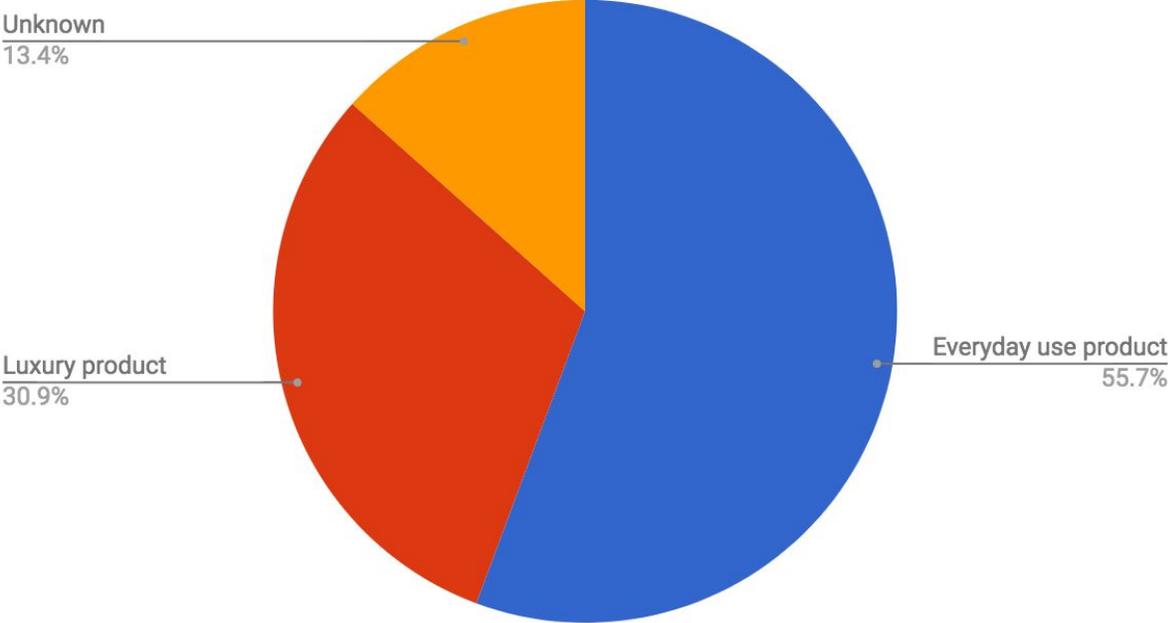
USA Perception of Pizza Hut



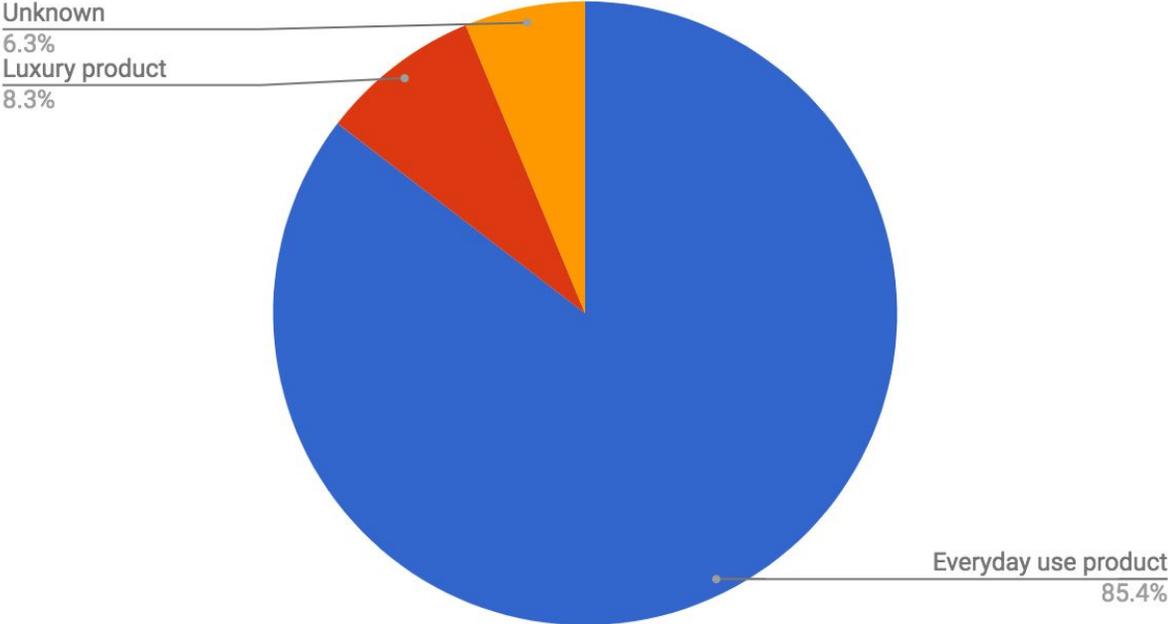
Mexico Perception of Pizza Hut



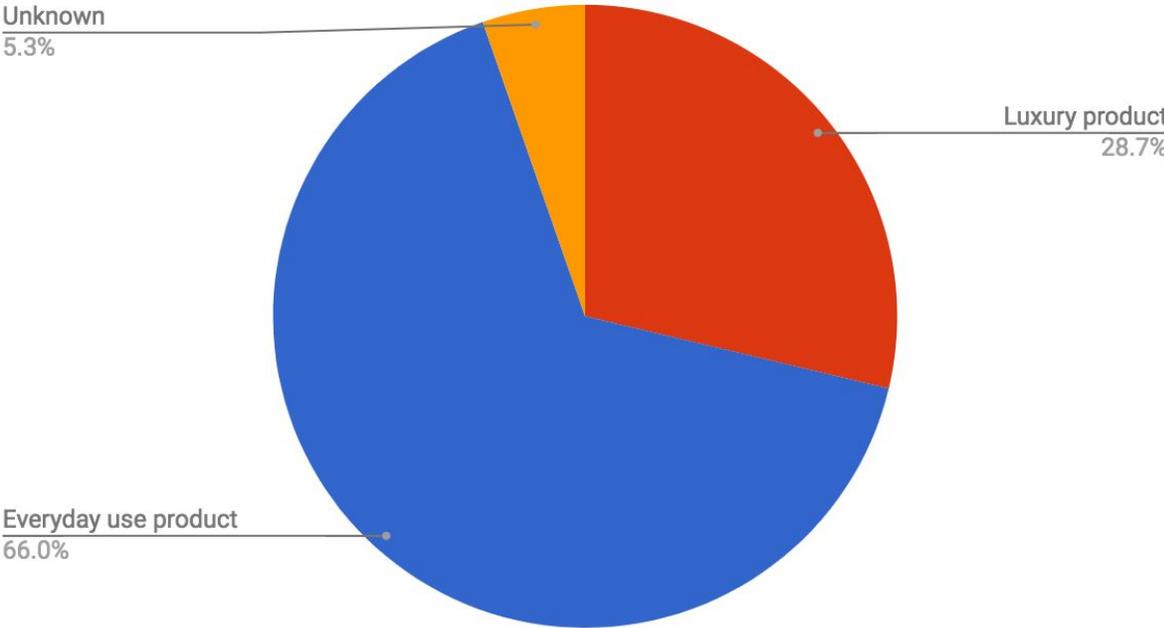
India Perception of Pizza Hut



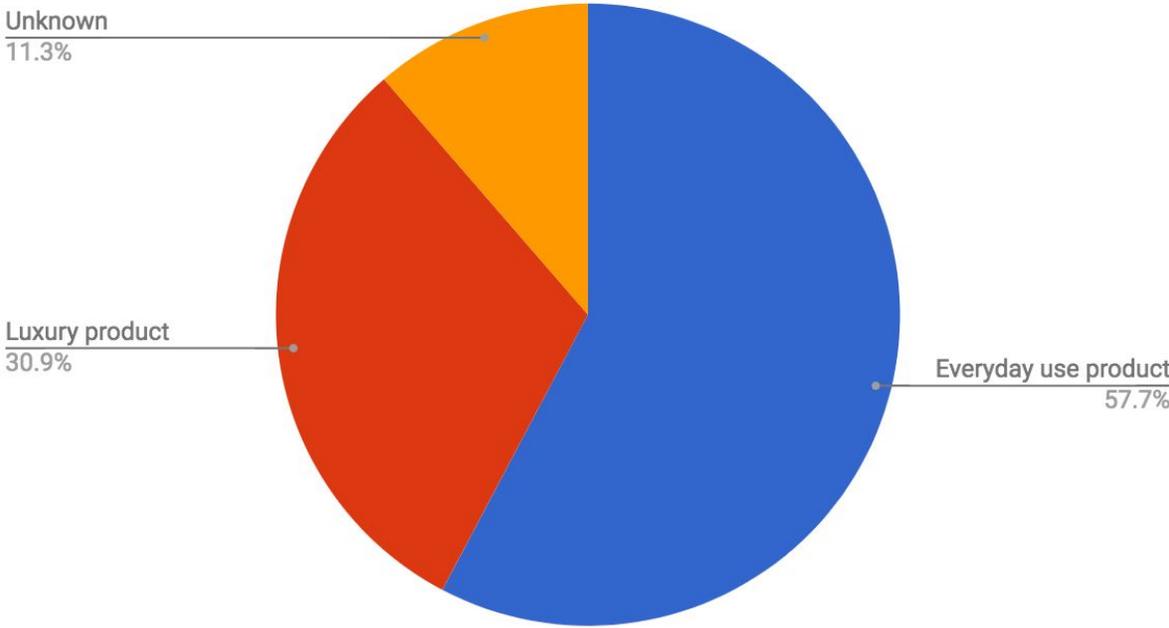
USA Perception of Dominos



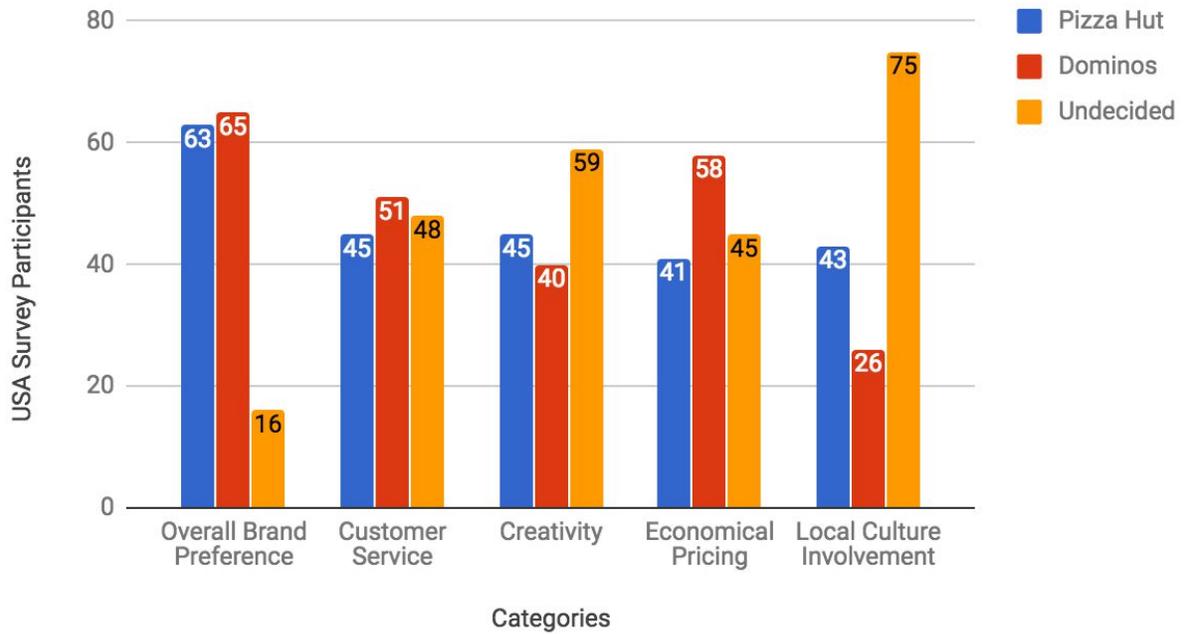
Mexico Perception of Domino's



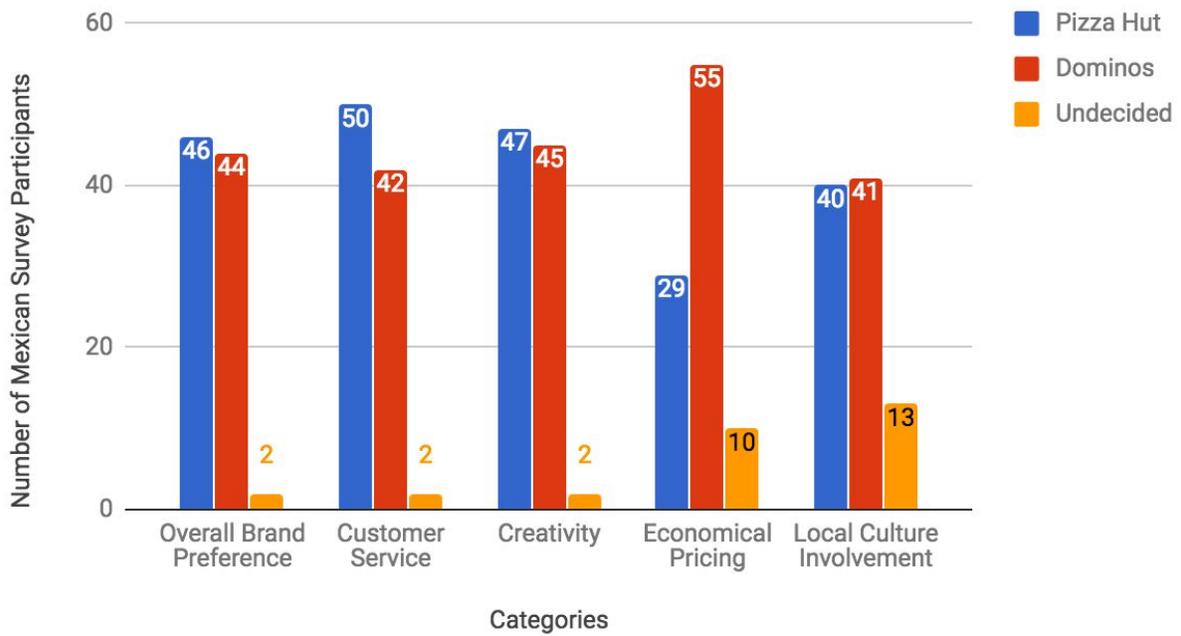
India Perception of Dominos



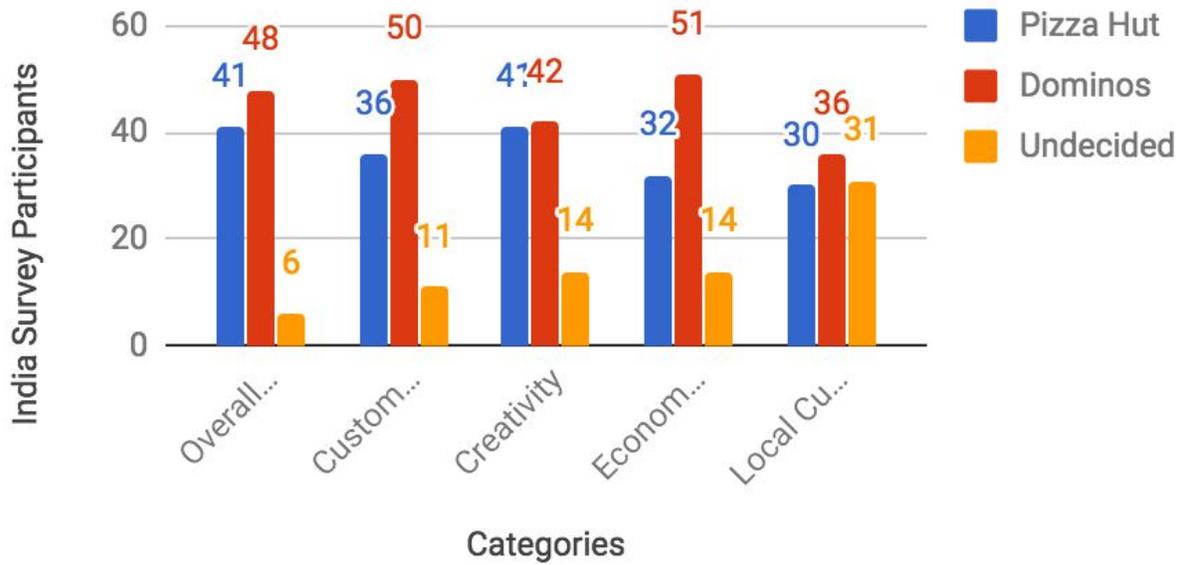
Pizza Hut vs. Dominos USA Consumer Perception



Pizza Hut vs Domino's Mexican Consumer Perception

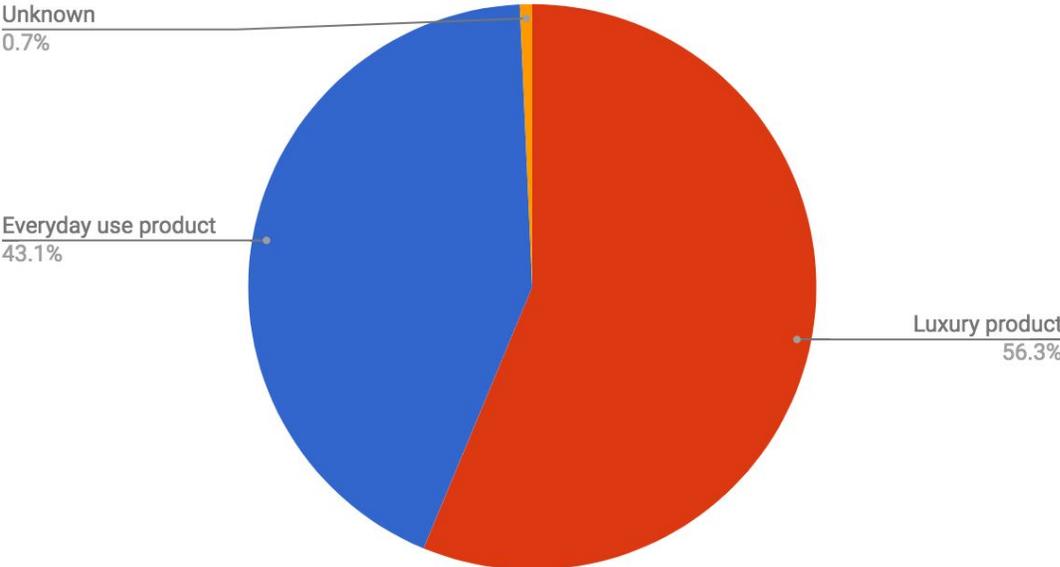


Pizza Hut vs. Dominos India Consumer Perception

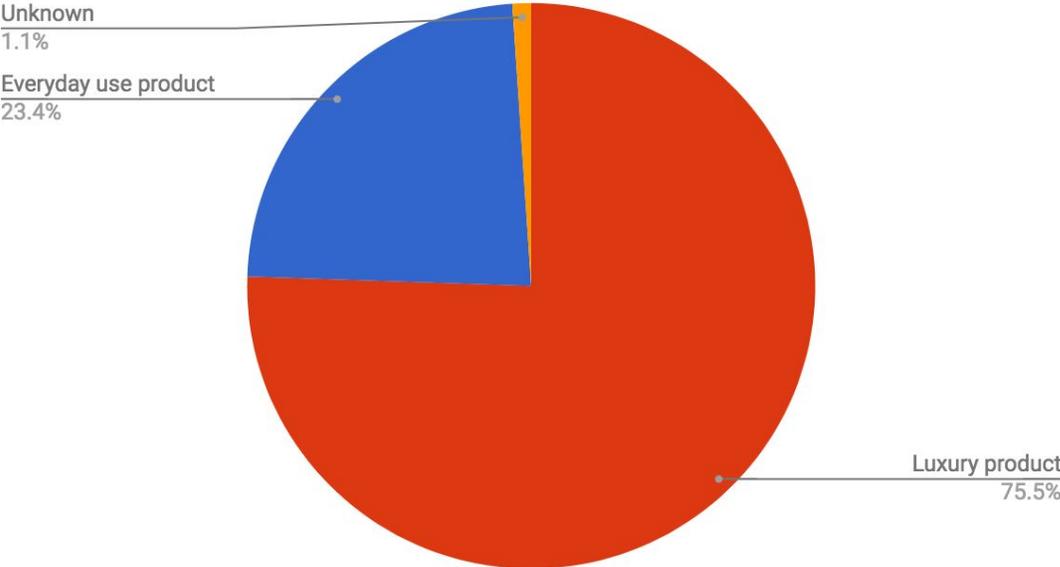


Electronics Brands

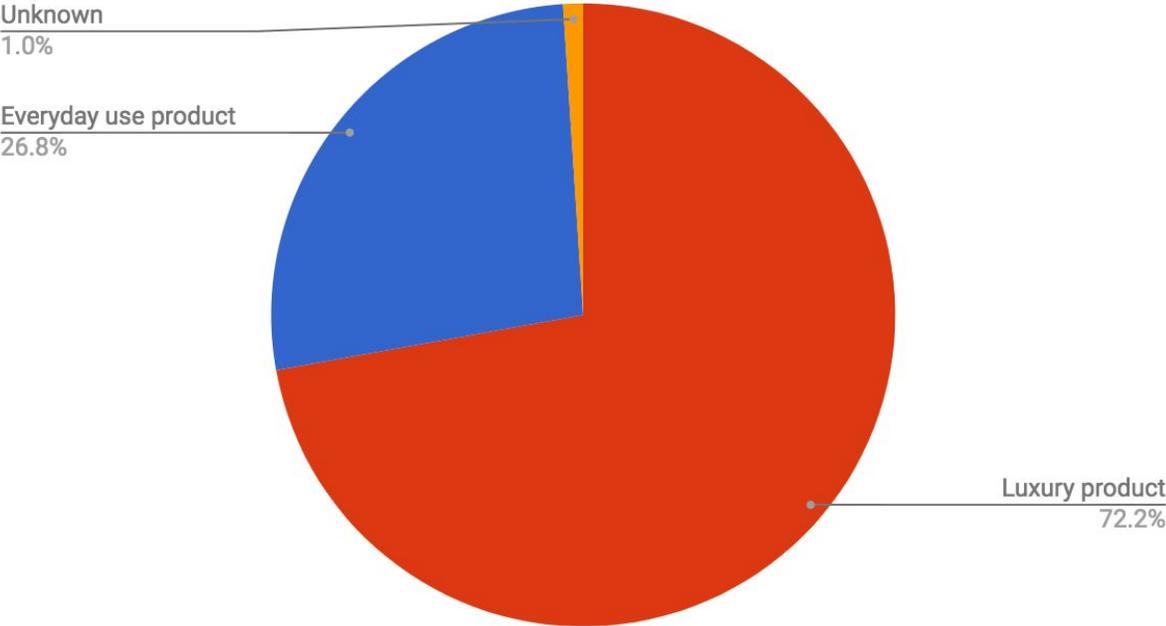
USA Perception of Apple



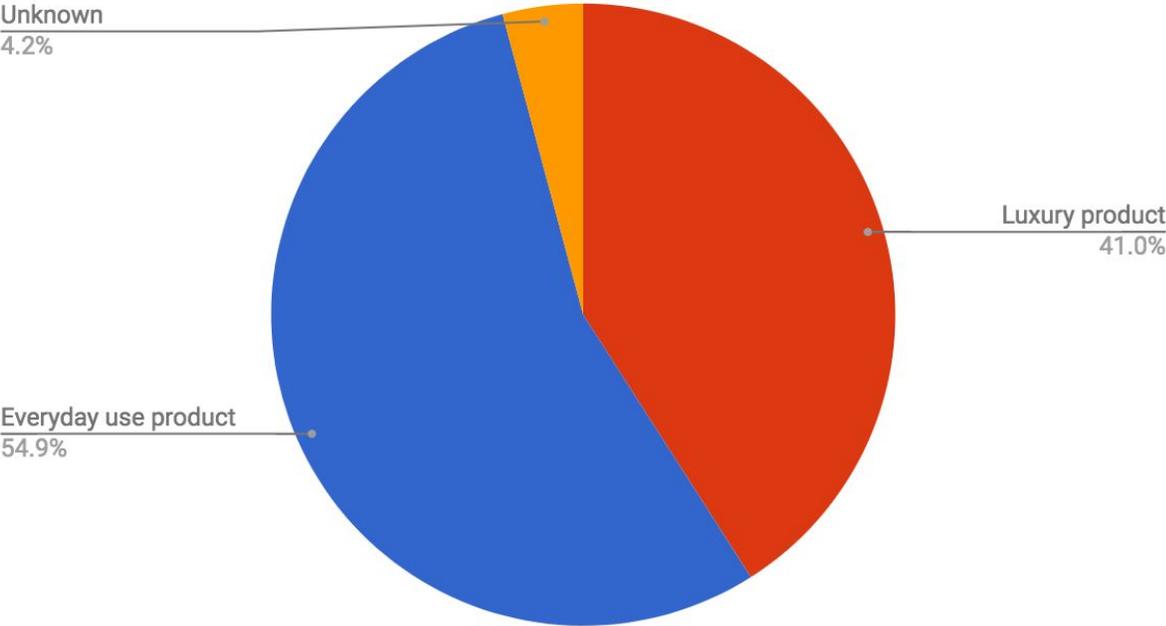
Mexico Perception of Apple



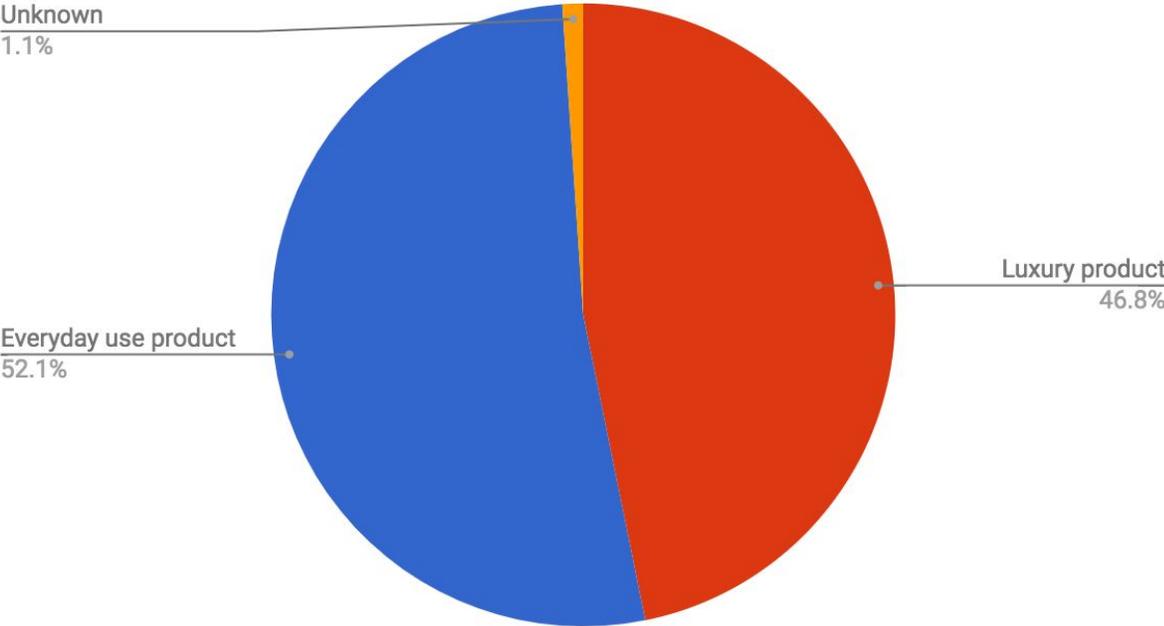
India Perception of Apple



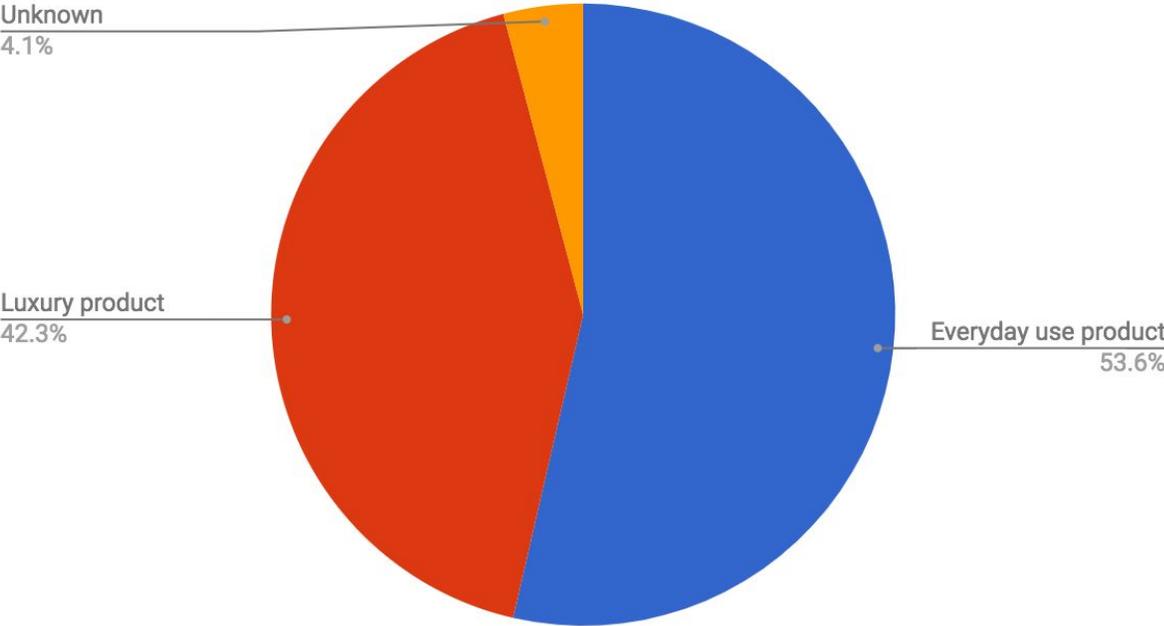
USA Perception of Samsung



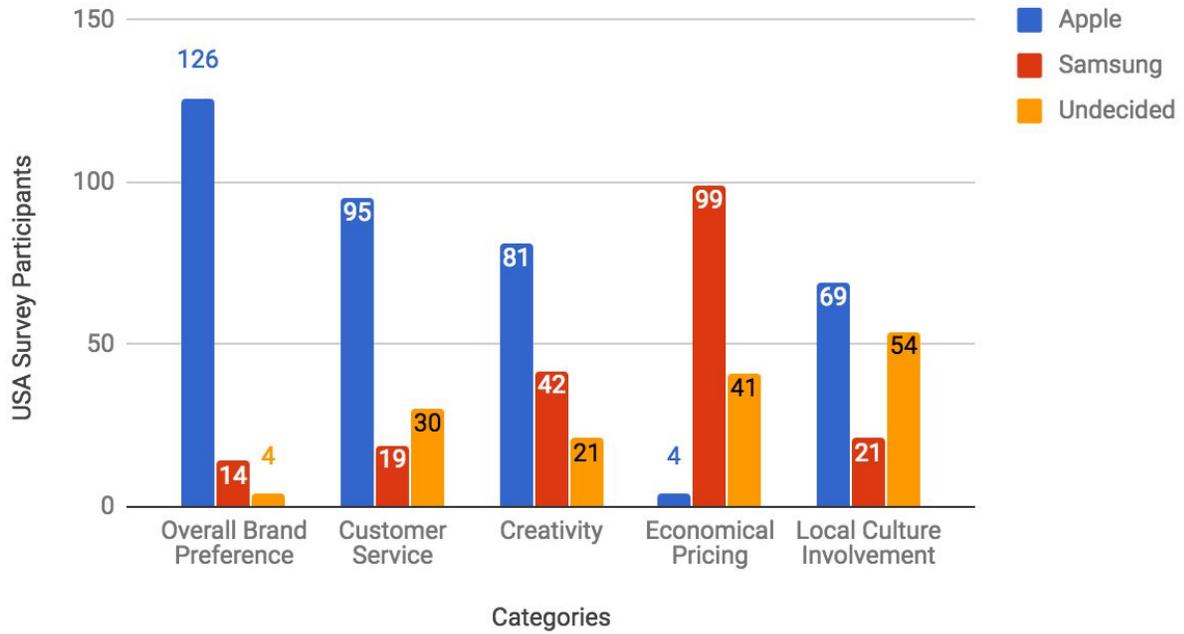
Mexico Perception of Samsung



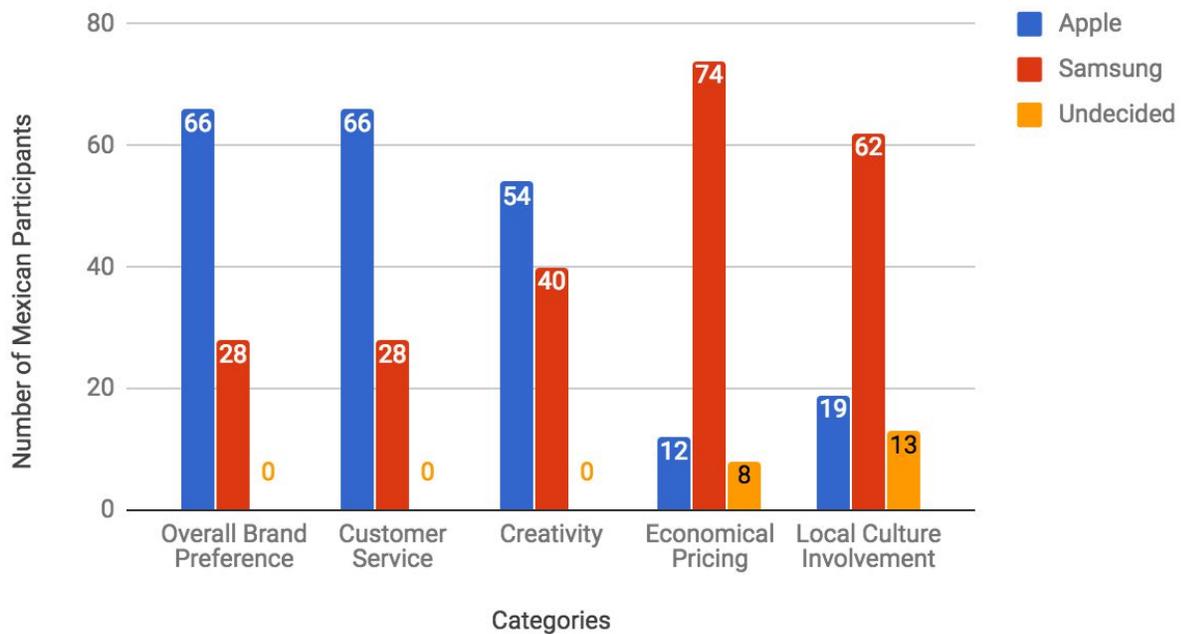
India Perception of Samsung



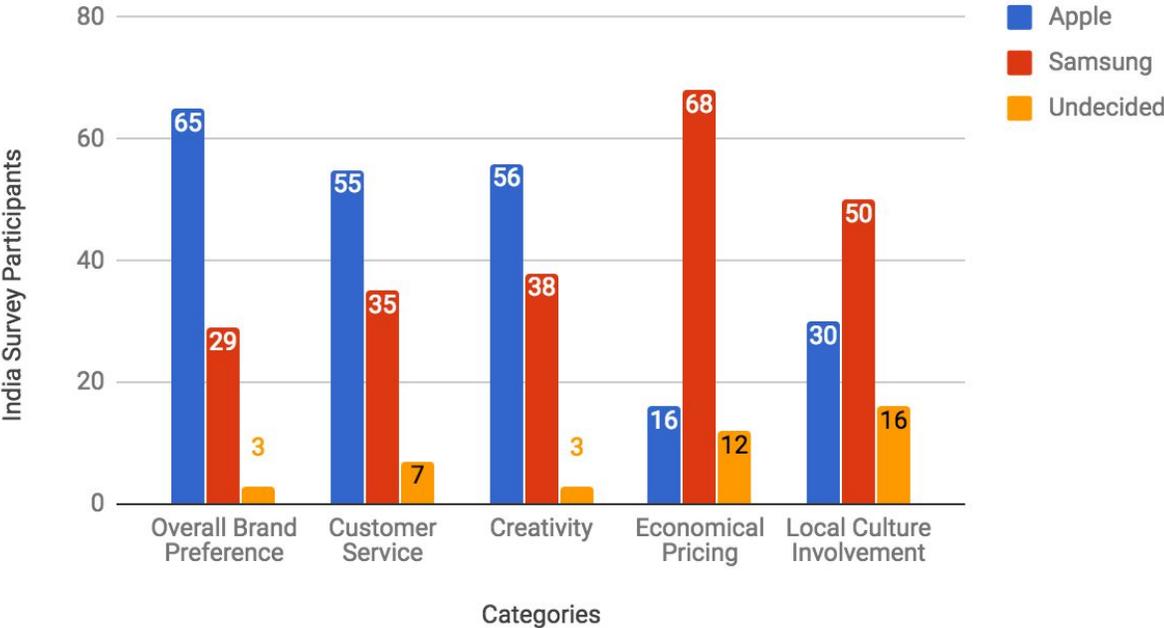
Apple vs. Samsung USA Consumer Perception



Apple vs Samsung Mexican Consumer Perception

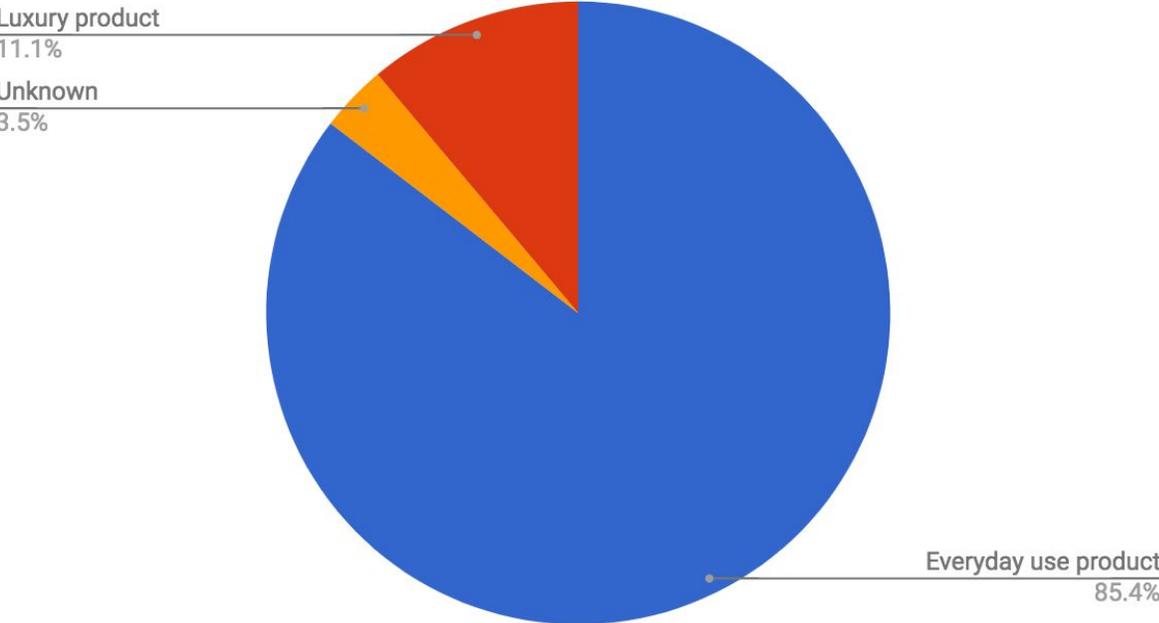


Apple vs Samsung India Consumer Perception

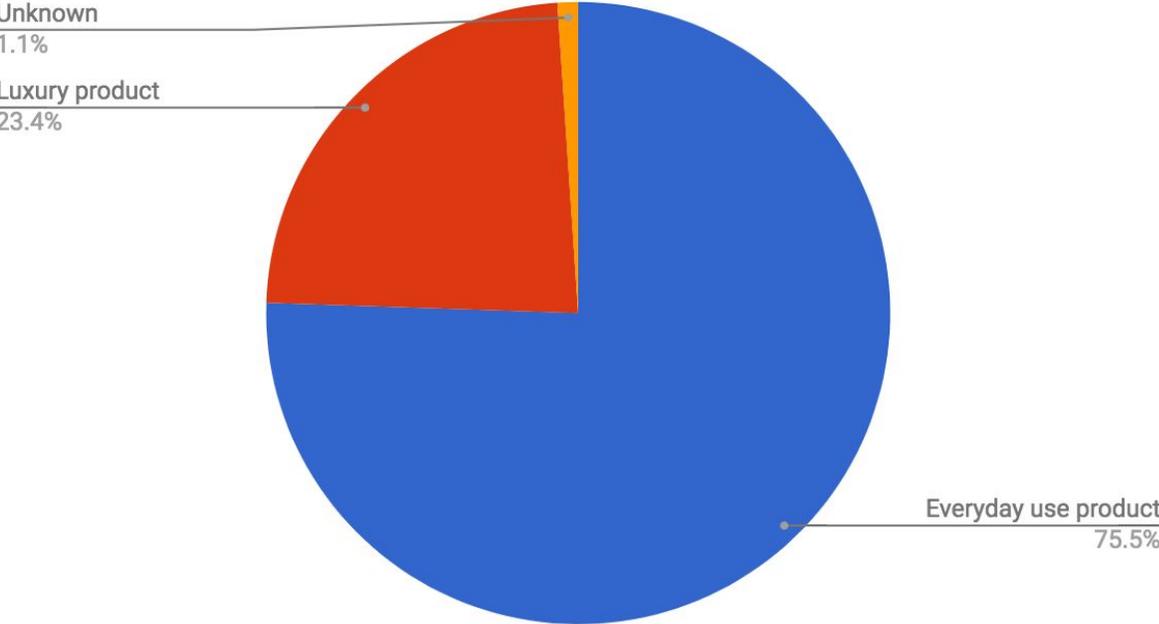


Clothing Brands

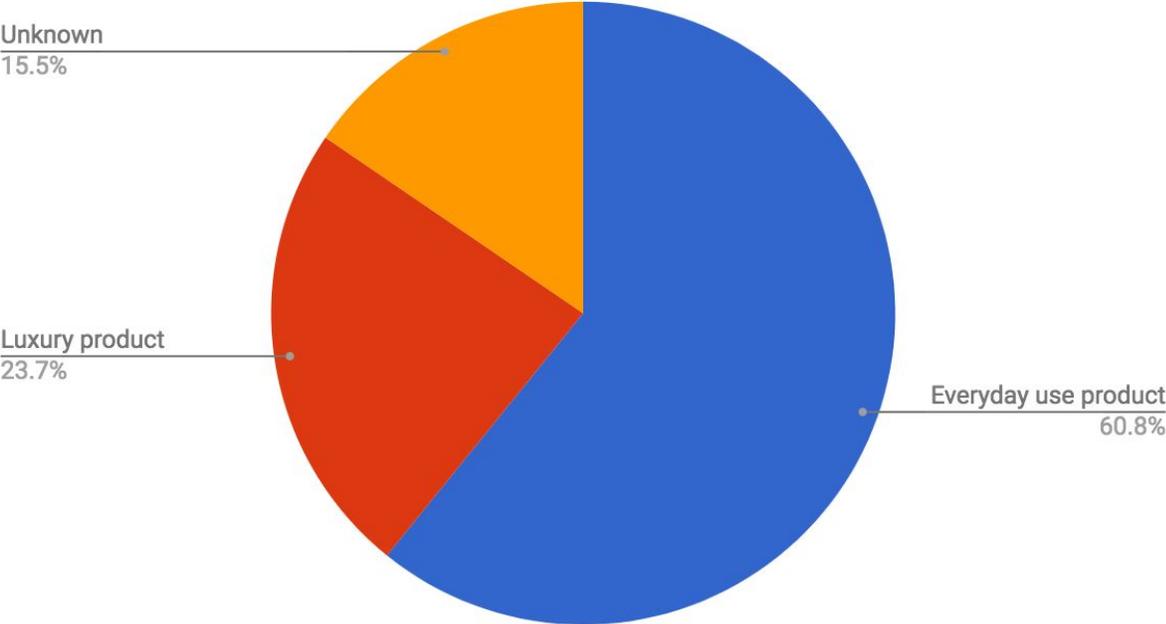
USA Perception of H&M



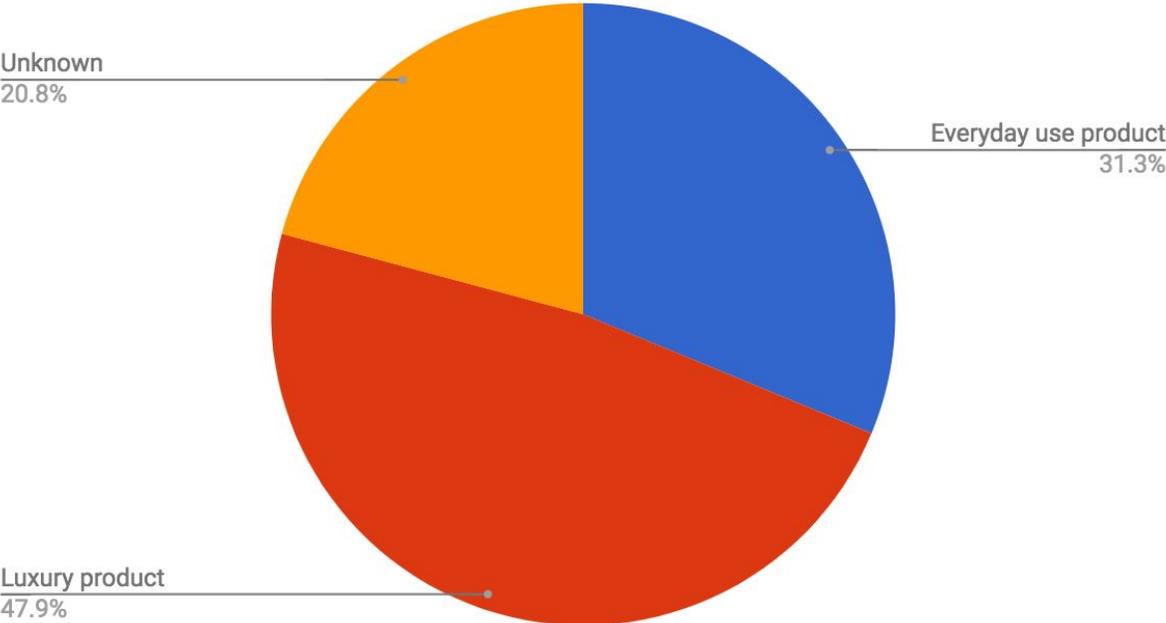
Mexican Perception of H&M



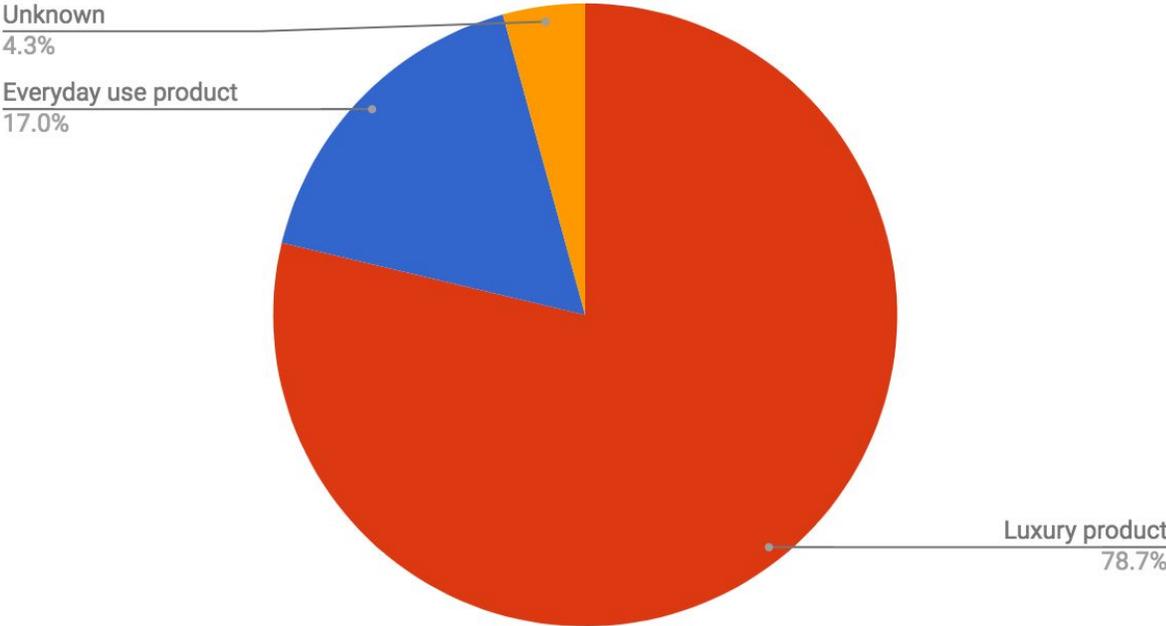
India Perception of H&M



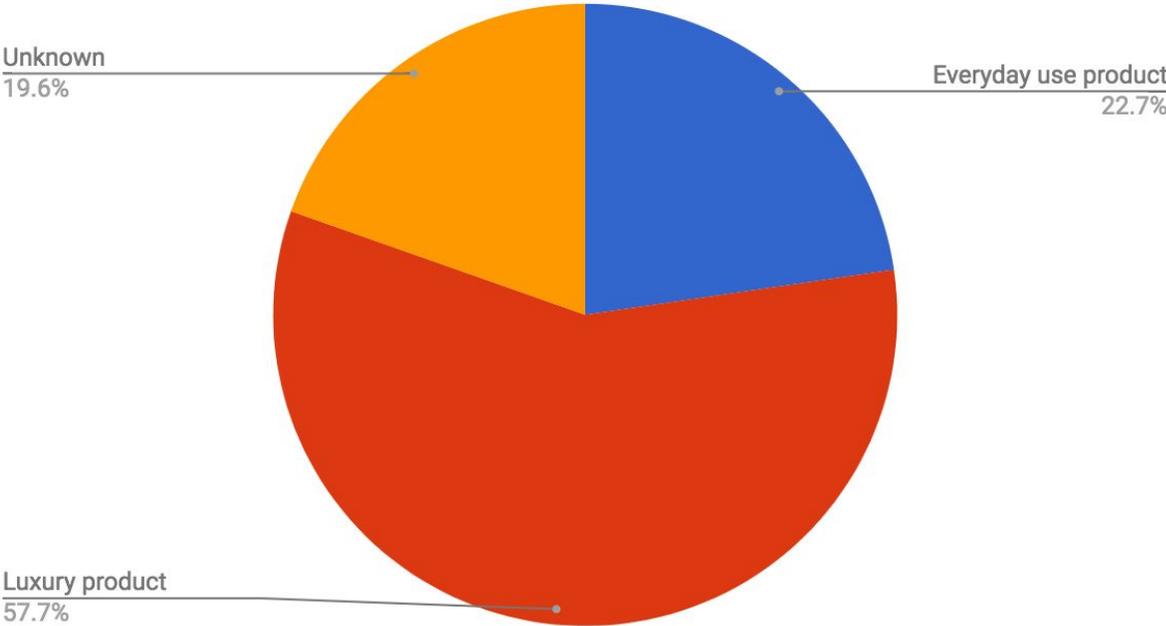
USA Perception of Zara



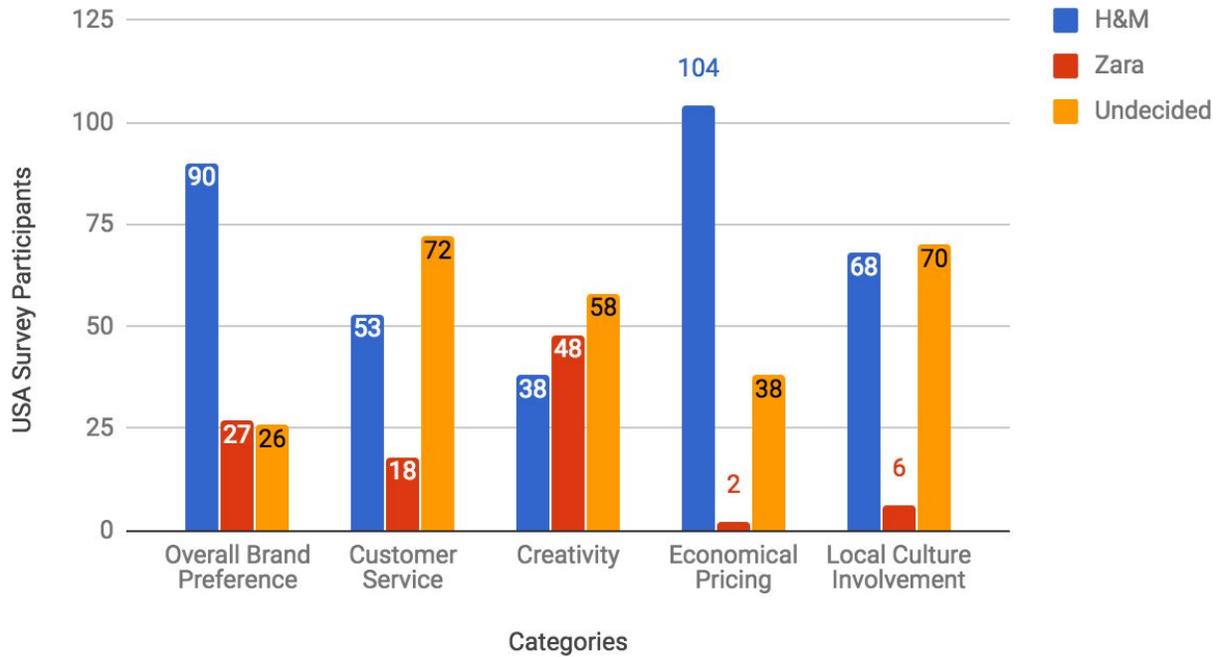
Mexico Perception of Zara



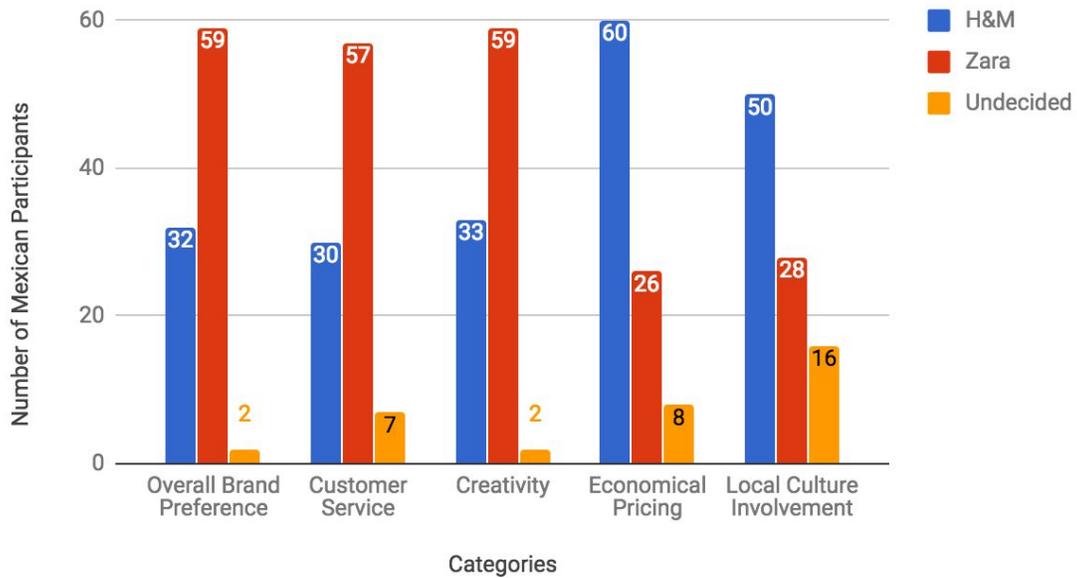
India Perception of Zara

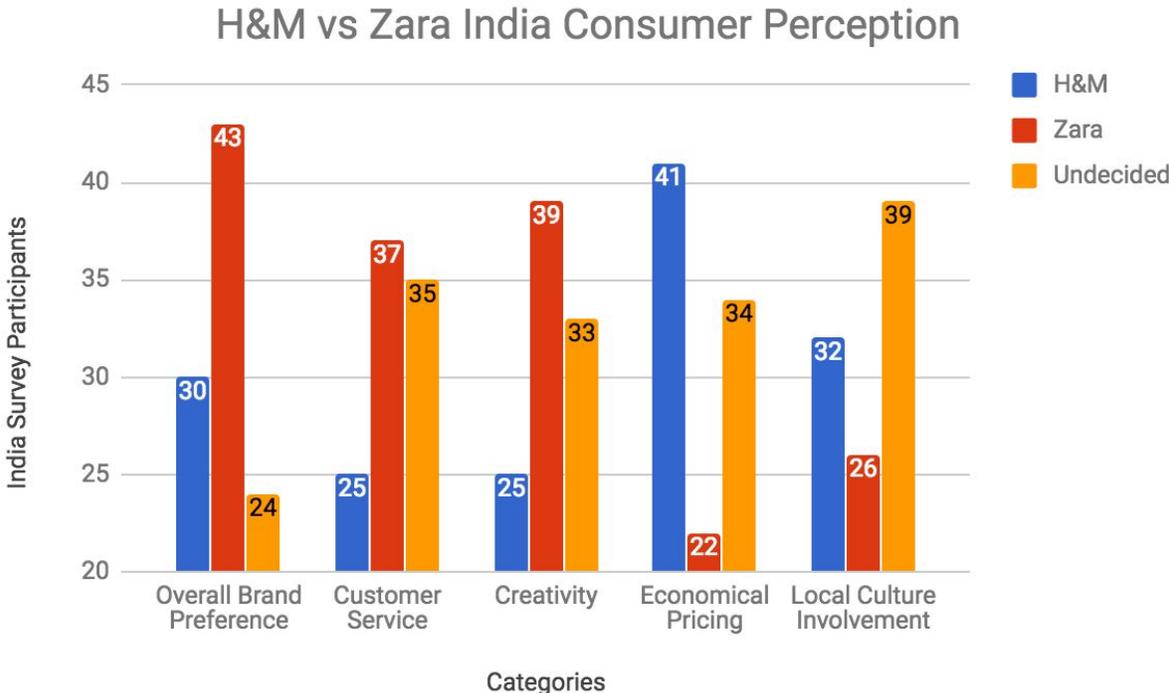


H&M vs Zara USA Consumer Perception



H&M vs Zara Mexican Consumer Perception





Discussion

Upon the conclusion of the survey, results were compared to the marketing strategies of the different brands' business plans to see whether the components on which a brand put emphasis on were apparent in the data collected from the United States, Mexico, and India. For companies that adopt different marketing strategies in foreign countries based on demographics, the success of such a plan is discussed and expanded upon. In order to cover all the aspects that influence the survey results, the discussion is divided into two parts: Country Analysis and Brand Analysis. Country analysis focuses on how the countries' economic policies affect the overall consumer perception of tested global brands. Brand Analysis focuses on how the overall business structure and marketing strategy affects the brand perception.

Country Analysis

Overall, all the brands tested were recognized by an overwhelming majority of the population. As a result, it becomes evident that the brands tested in the survey have spent ample resources in truly creating a global name for themselves. From an overall perspective, Apple had the highest rate of brand recognition, and Zara had the lowest rate of brand recognition. Nonetheless, due to the intimate relation that the economics and demographics of a country has with the consumerism of the local population, the results vary slightly from country to country. These variations and their causes are discussed more in depth below.

American Survey Participants

In the United States, where there is a heavy emphasis on consumerism, most of the participants recognized all of the brands and knew what the brand sold. This can be in part due the country's level of economic development, which has made it a primary target market for both domestic and foreign global brands (Whitman, 2007). In fact, out of all the countries tested, the American participants consistently had the highest rate of logo recognition and brand knowledge, thus showing how deeply the United States culture is rooted in globalization and large business. The only exception to this trend, however, was the logo recognition of Pizza Hut and Adidas.

Although no solid conclusions can be made as to why these two brands were recognized less in the United States than in another tested country, the changes in the logos of the brand can be to blame. In November of 2014, Pizza Hut completely changed its logo from the "classic hut" design to a more fresh-looking, circular design. Survey participants who do not actively purchase products from Pizza Hut and only remember the brand because of the old logo may have not recognized the new logo. In the case of Adidas, although there are no significant factors influencing as to why Adidas would be less recognized in the United States, the results can be due to the fact that the company has more than one logo associated with it — both of which are used for different lines of products. The three stripes logo is used on many of the high-performance products, whereas the trefoil design is used on more of the classic products and trendier apparel that the company sells. Since the population in the United States invests in both types of products, participants that associated the company with the trefoil logo may have not recognized the brand.

Out of all the tested brands, survey participants in the United States had the least brand knowledge of Zara, a Spanish company that sells trendy apparel. Breaking into the United States market in 1989, Zara offers a unique style consisted of trendy, form-fitting clothing. However, due to the fact that women in the United States prefer classic, roomier clothing, the brand has not been popular with the country's demographic (Caro, 2010). In addition, the company spends frugally on advertising, which is not effective in the consumer-driven society of the United States where advertisements and coupons comprise much of the retail industry.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, there were many brands that were recognized by all survey participants in the United States. Out of the tested brands, the logos of Nike, Domino's, Apple, and Samsung were recognized by all participants. Out of these brands, Apple and Samsung also had 100% brand knowledge, meaning the participants knew what type of products the company sold. Given that both Apple and Samsung are big competitors and they often try to one-up each other with new product launches and creative technology, especially in the United States, it is no wonder that the survey participants are aware of these brands and what they sell.

Mexican Survey Participants

Although the overall economy of Mexico is less developed than that of the United States, the penetration of foreign brands into both societies is more or less the same. For all the brands tested, about 95% of the population recognized the brand's logo and the type of products that the brand sold. In comparison to the United States, however, there was less overall logo recognition and brand knowledge for most of the brands. Given that the Mexican consumer culture is largely

a mix of traditional and modern society, the country at large preserves its need for local feel. As a result, customer service and brand loyalty are two important components of Mexican consumer culture, making it slightly harder for foreign companies to penetrate into society.

Some exceptions to the trend of Mexico having generally lower brand recognition are Adidas and Zara. In Mexico, all survey participants were able to identify the Adidas logo, as opposed to the 97.2% of participants in the United States. Given that soccer is one of the nation's favorite pastimes, and since Adidas sponsors many soccer teams in Mexico, many people are aware of the logo. In addition, the brand knowledge of Zara is much higher than it is in the United States. This may be due to the fact that there is a satellite site of Zara located in Mexico, from where products are distributed to the rest of the stores in the general region (Caro, 2010). Furthermore, since Zara is a Spanish company, the cultural similarity that Mexico and Spain share may also influence the brand recognition. Zara has also had more success breaking into the Mexican markets because of the company's strategic targeting of middle to high class consumers. By creating a perception as a luxury brand, Zara has been able to appeal to the urban populations, and most of the participants of the survey are from large cities in Mexico.

Similar to the United States, the overwhelming majority of the survey participants in Mexico recognized the Apple and Samsung logos and what the companies sold. However, unlike the United States participants, the participants from Mexico had greater brand knowledge of Samsung than they had of Apple. This trend can be explained by taking a closer look at the country's poverty rate. With over 45.5% of the population living below the poverty line, citizens

are unable to afford expensive brands such as Apple (Rasul, 2018). In order to make ends meet yet still stay connected, the majority of the population invests in Samsung phones. As a result, Samsung is used more commonly, and therefore the company has achieved greater brand recognition in Mexico.

Indian Survey Participants

In the past, the Indian government has been wary of letting large foreign businesses enter the country, for fear of history repeating itself with the East India Company. However, with the onset of major economic reforms that started merely two decades ago, foreign companies are now welcomed in India because they have the power to kickstart the country's slow economy (Sheel, 2012). Thus, the introduction of many of the global brands tested in the survey are relatively new to Indian consumer culture and have not fully penetrated society, as evidenced with the survey results. Overall, the participants from India consistently had lower brand recognition of the tested global brands. Furthermore, from the wide wealth disparity in India, much of the lower class and even middle class populations do not utilize products from the tested global brands, as they are only available in large metropolitan areas. Instead, there is a larger dependency on cheaper, domestic brands.

This concept can be seen more vividly seen in the results from the retail brands. Since the Indian population traditionally does not wear western clothing, the survey participants had the least amount of logo recognition and brand knowledge of H&M and Zara. Such global retail stores are

only popular in large cities, and therefore, the total penetration of these brands in Indian society remains largely limited.

Similar to the high rate of brand knowledge of Samsung in Mexico, India also has the same trend — and for the same reasons. Because both Mexico and India are characterized with a large destitute population, most people lack the means to afford Apple products, and therefore Samsung products are more popular. As a result, the overall population interacts with and recognizes what the Samsung brand sells more than what the Apple brand sells.

Brand Analysis

Often times, the message of a brand can get lost in translation and execution. In order to test the effects of the disparity that can emerge between a brand's target perception and consumer perception, the results of the survey were compared to each brand's marketing strategy. Notable findings are shared below.

Nike

With a focus on innovation and providing high quality products, Nike strives to create a brand identity based around maximizing comfort and increasing athletic performance. In order to reach as many customers as possible, the company is expanding operations in numerous regions, ranging from Asia to Africa (Brodeur et al., 2014).

In order to appeal to the average customer, Nike relies heavily on outsourcing in order to create economical priced goods. However, according to the survey results, many of the participants found Nike to be evenly distributed between a luxury and everyday use brand, with the majority of Mexican participants believing that the brand sold luxury items. Furthermore, both participants from India and the United States found the products of Nike to be more expensive than Adidas even though Nike is cheaper and has a central focus on selling economical goods (Iqbal, 2018). This false assumption may stem from the fact that Nike participates in more athlete sponsorships and celebrity-endorsed advertisements, leading society to believe that Nike is more desirable by the elite population.

In terms of customer service, Nike is considered superior to Adidas in the United States and India. Although customer service depends on many factors including the recruitment process and training programs, employee pay is a good indicator of customer service because a higher salary leads to more satisfied employees and therefore better customer service. According to Glassdoor, a site that advertises open jobs, the pay for a sales associate at Nike is \$1.16 higher than the pay for the same job at Adidas. As a result, consumer perception of Nike's customer service matches with what the brand portrays.

Although Nike strives to be a prime innovator in athletic technology, the survey results claim otherwise. With constant introductions of new types of shoes and apparel, Nike has attempted to maintain its status as a prime innovator in athletic technology. However, the survey results show that the consumer base in all three countries believe otherwise. Due to the brand's focus on

solely creating sports apparel, as opposed to Adidas, Nike's reputation as an innovator has suffered. In fact, Nike is largely known for its classic yet popular products in all three countries. In addition, Nike has attempted to remain involved with the local culture of different countries by creating different demographic specific ads and using diverse models. Furthermore, Nike has also become increasingly environmentally conscious in order to show its respect for natural resources, a value upheld in many different countries. Although Nike is less focused on the local culture of a population, it is perceived by participants as relatively having the same amount of involvement in local culture as Adidas.

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

Adidas

Maintaining similar strategies as Nike of releasing innovative and cheap products, Adidas has had much more widespread success in aligning the targeted perception with the consumer perception.

The Adidas brand places a heavy emphasis on innovation, and it has led the company to invent new technologies, such as ClimaCool, a shoe ventilation system. In addition, Adidas has also

expanded to selling more than just athletic wear, and therefore, the company's apparel and streetwear sections appeal to a larger population. Adidas strives to be inclusive to all genders, races, religions, and disabilities, and in such pursuits, numerous advertising campaigns with celebrities and models of all the backgrounds have been released (Roninger, 2002). Furthermore, because of Adidas's significant role in Mexican sports, it is seen as heavily involved in the local culture. However, in India and the United States, the brand's involvement with the local culture is considered simply mediocre.

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

Pizza Hut

Over the years, Pizza Hut has prided itself on the involvement that it has with the local culture of its international store locations. Because of the attention that Pizza Hut gives to the local culture, the brand also strives to be innovative in both the food produced and the technology used (Rohra, 2015). In addition to innovation, the company also emphasizes creating affordable goods for all consumers, and therefore it has been able to become popular in foreign countries. Nonetheless, some of the survey participants from India and Mexico perceived Pizza Hut as a luxury product, showing how demographics can influence perception.

Overall, the survey participants rated Pizza Hut and Domino’s equally in most categories. Pizza Hut shares many elements of its branding with Domino’s, and but there were no unique factors of the company.

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

Domino’s

Domino's has a marketing strategy that is quite similar to Pizza Hut, what makes the two brands big competitors. Although both brands pride themselves on creativity, Pizza Hut excels mainly in food innovation, whereas Domino’s excels in the technology used to make the food. In terms of the global marketing strategy, Domino’s has remained more consistent with its structure, thus creating a more uniform brand appeal (Rohra, 2015). As a result, the local culture involvement of Domino’s is less than that of Pizza Hut, and the survey participants from all three countries noticed this trend.

Customer service is another important aspect of Domino’s brand identity. The hiring process of Domino’s in both the United States and foreign nations is based around recruiting friendly

employees who are able to work well in a team. The survey participants from all three countries noted on Domino's superior customer service.

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

Apple

Overall, the Apple Company strives to be a pioneer in the technology field by releasing new products that introducing novel inventions, yet remain a sleek and simple design. When compared to its technology counterparts, Apple offers us smaller line of products, ranging from iPhones, iPads, and Macbooks. In addition to these technologies, numerous types of assistance products have been released, such as the Apple Watch, Apple Pay, and Apple Tv. Nonetheless, despite this limited line of products, Apple has consistently released new models of the products yearly.

In terms of the marketing strategy, the primary target market of Apple consists of small and mid-sized businesses, educational enterprises and government markets. Although Apple focuses on such enterprises as their main customers, the company also appeals to the local populus by focusing intently on customer service (Apple Inc, 2017). As a result, Apple prides itself on its

post-sale support and knowledgeable store employees that are able to assist customers with problems they may experience with certain Apple products.

Apple also strives to be perceived as a luxury brand with products that are much more expensive than other brands, but offer a better design and a more distinct style. As a result, Apple stores are primarily located in high-end malls and shopping centers so that this can further the company's targeted brand perception. Apple's targeted perception matches the consumer perception because most of the participants perceive the brand as selling luxury products. Apple has also succeeded in communicating its major brand focus to the general population because the survey participants found the Apple brand as more creative and more customer-service oriented than the Samsung brand. Furthermore, Apple strives to create products that change the lives of consumers, and therefore the company does not heavily involve itself with local cultures in order to keep a larger and more superior brand identity.

According to Interbrand's Top 50 Best Global Brands Ranking, Apple is the number one global brand. Based on the results of the survey it becomes apparent that when the consumer perception and target perception match, more financial success can be achieved.

Apple: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception	
Categories	Perception / Company Action Matched?
Customer Service	Yes
Creativity	Yes
Economical Pricing	Yes

Local Culture Involvement	Yes
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Samsung

Samsung, unlike Apple, sells a wide range of products and it has been able to attract a diverse group of consumers ranging from all continents. Overall, Samsung strives to create new innovations and provide affordable products to its customers. In addition, the company also wants to improve customer service by using surveys and different training events.

Because Samsung is popular in many different countries, the company has adopted a strategy of adapting to the local culture in order to create the best advertising campaigns and offer the best deals (Price & Johnson, 2015). Thus, as seen in the survey, the majority of all participants from the three countries believed that Samsung was more involved with the local culture than Apple. In addition, the survey participants agreed that Samsung offered the most affordable pricing on goods. Since the company is headquartered in Seoul, South Korea, the cost of producing the products in nearby Asian countries is not nearly as difficult as it is for companies such as Apple to outsource.

In the areas of customer service and creativity, most of the survey participants agreed that Apple overpowered Samsung in the aforementioned categories. Samsung has become famous for its reliable products, but no significant improvements are made in successive models, unlike Apple.

Samsung: Targeted Perception vs. Consumer Perception	
Categories	Perception / Company Action Matched?

Customer Service	No
Creativity	No
Economical Pricing	Yes
Local Culture Involvement	Yes

H&M

H&M largely focuses on creating more widespread recognition of the brand as an affordable retail store. Based on the survey results, the populations from all three countries generally agree with this trend and believe that H&M clothing is priced more economically than Zara.

Unlike Zara, H&M focuses more heavily on advertising and marketing techniques. In fact, the company has used many celebrities such as Karl Lagerfeld and Jimmy Choo in order to increase brand recognition. In addition, the company has also placed heavy emphasis on mobile marketing, allowing for customers to receive SMS coupons and announcements (Lynn, 2017). . Overall, H&M has also strived to be inclusive, and it has launched many social campaigns including “Fashion Against Aids”. Recently, however, the company came under the fire for showcasing a racist sweatshirt on a child model. Such negative publicity has greatly affected the sales of the company.

In terms of customer service, H&M aims to create a friendly shopping environment for teens and adults alike without little interference from employees (Delirium, P). As a result, in the United States, where such an environment is preferred, the customer service of H&M was rated as

higher than the customer service of Zara. However, in India and Mexico, where a sales team that is constantly assisting consumers is more appreciated, Zara was considered having better customer service. Overall, however, H&M places no significant emphasis in customer service.

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

Zara

Although Zara has remained cautious in expanding across the globe, it has still created a name for itself as a trendy apparel company. Overall, the company strives to adapt quickly to new fashion trends, sell high quality apparel, and create clothing at an affordable price.

Because of the unique way in which Zara combines high fashion with affordable pricing, it has earned itself many loyal customers. Therefore, it is perceived as highly creative, especially when compared to its competitors, which mainly sell casual clothing. In fact, in all of the countries tested, Zara was perceived as the most creative. In addition, Zara also has a higher price range of products because of the latest fashion trends that it sells. The higher price range was correctly identified by an overwhelming majority of the survey participants in each of the three countries. Furthermore, this higher price range communicates to consumers that brand sells luxury

products, and as evidenced in the survey, the majority of all participants viewed Zara as a luxury brand.

Because Zara spends frugally on advertising and relies more on investing in prime store locations, the brand does not integrate itself with the local culture. Rather, Zara tries to create a unique style that will be followed by consumers from across the world (Lynn, 2017). The participants of the survey also noticed Zara's lack of consumer involvement and therefore responded accordingly. Although Zara focuses little on customer service and it even pays its sales associate employees \$2.30 less than at H&M, the brand is perceived to offer better customer service. Given that Zara stores are more organized, making products easier to find, consumers feel as if the customer service is better because employees are able to help them find products easily.

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

Conclusion

After gathering data on the consumer perception of eight different global brands from the United States, Mexico, and India, it becomes apparent that differences may arise between a company's targeted perception and consumer perception. Since global brands encompass many different countries with various cultures and demographics, the message of a brand is not always correctly portrayed. Overall, the perception of global brands in countries where the demographic consists of higher socioeconomic populations has higher brand knowledge. Furthermore, brands that are able to eliminate the difference in a brand's target perception and consumer perception are able to profit the most, as seen in the case of Apple.

Brands that do not adapt to the local culture of the country they are penetrating have limited brand recognition and they are unable to showcase their wanted perception. For example, Zara, a brand that did not attempt to assimilate into the consumer-driven societies of the United States and India, was the least recognized in all tested countries. As a result, Zara missed out on a possible customer base. Nonetheless, in the case of Apple, a brand that has remained largely uniform in structure and function throughout all target markets, the marketing strategies coincide with what the consumer base thinks of the company. As a result, the ideal marketing strategy varies from industry to industry and country to country.

Given that the survey was conducted in a restrained time period, there was a 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.

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