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FAST FASHION RETAILER'S MARKETING STRATEGIES:

BRAND AWARENESS AND CUSTOMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an exploratory study, with a quantitative approach, carried out through a survey, applied through a questionnaire using an online tool, aimed at consumers in the clothing / fashion sector in France. Its central objective is to understand customer involvement with two brands that have different marketing strategies. Two of the world's largest brands were selected, H&M and Zara. It was observed that while the company H&M invests in traditional advertising and acts strongly with the involvement of its audience in the online environment, seeking to establish links and add value to customers. The company Zara chooses to invest little in marketing and work with market expansion strategies, seeking to establish itself physically in a greater number of countries, showing the greater recognition of the brand. The results obtained allowed us to verify that although companies have similar results, the company that adopts greater engagement with the client tends to stand out, regardless of the strategy that it uses for this engagement to occur.

*Keywords:* Fast Fashion, Publicity; Brand perception; Customer engagement.

## RESUMO

Este estudo trata-se de um estudo exploratório, com abordagem quantitativa, realizado através de um *survey*, aplicado por meio de questionário usando ferramenta online, direcionado a consumidores do setor de vestuário/moda na França. Seu objetivo central é compreender o envolvimento do cliente com duas marcas que possuem estratégias de marketing diferentes. Foram selecionadas duas das maiores marcas mundiais, a H&M e a Zara. Observou-se que enquanto a empresa H&M investe em propaganda tradicional e atua fortemente com o envolvimento de seu público no ambiente online, procurando estabelecer vínculos e agregar valores aos clientes. A empresa Zara opta por investir pouco em marketing e trabalhar com estratégias de expansão de mercado, procurando se estabelecer-se fisicamente em maior quantidade de países, evidenciando o maior reconhecimento da marca. Os resultados obtidos permitiram verificar que a embora as empresas tenham resultados semelhantes, a empresa que adota maior engajamento com o cliente tende a se destacar, independente da estratégia que use para que este engajamento ocorra.

Palavras-chaves: *Fast fashion*; Publicidade; Percepção de marca; Engajamento do cliente.

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## Introduction

In marketing research and practice, advertising has long been known as an efficient tool to highlight a brand. In their introductory chapter, authors Esther Thorson and Shelly Rodgers, the editors of “Advertising Theory” (2019), employ a well-established concept of advertising messages, which can be defined as a paid form of communication, whose sponsor is identified, and which uses mass media to persuade a given audience. In an insight about a theoretical framework of advertising, Nichifor (2014) states that advertising performs a crucial role in most companies marketing strategies, and it can nowadays be considered a complex system of communication, which is valuable for both organizations and its audiences.

Advertising efforts configure an essential step to promote a brand and increase sales, the most prominent indicator of which being brand awareness. The positive effects of high and favorable brand awareness are many. Hanzae and Yazd (2010) have shown how a high positive brand awareness might mitigate the price sacrifice feeling, increase the word-of-mouth communications repurchase intention and quality perceptions. Brand awareness also covers many other terms of the marketing portfolio that provide important effects in the consumer’s purchase process. Concepts such as brand recall, brand recognition and brand name are key elements in the Brand Awareness theory and they are all forged by marketers for the same objective, receive higher consumer preferences (Chi *et al.*, 2009).

By explaining the importance of brand awareness, the goal is to draw attention to the possible link that might exist between this concept and brands’ marketing efforts and customer engagement. As presented by Sashi (2012), consumer engagement is an effective way of co-creating value. In this sense, the evolution of customer engagement theories has been showing how the decision power has been shifting when it comes to marketing mix

choices. What were once resolutions reached mainly by the managers are now also up to the consumers (Dessart *et al.* 2015).

According to Thakur (2017), consumer engagement is a psychological state of mind that leads to constant interactions with the environment that, in this case, is the brand. The relationship constructed between the brand and the consumer, from which these interactions emerge, is mutually beneficial and provides important responses for both parts. This connection gives the consumer the sense of importance in which his or her actions can be truly seen as influential. The importance and the power of customer engagement cannot be overstated in the current business environment.

Still in this matter, Zheng *et al.* (2015, p. 93) provide us with a more empirical interpretation of the term Customer Engagement, by defining it as “individual participation and promotion behavior”. According to van Doorn *et al.* (2010), this behavior can be further explained by dividing it in 5 main dimensions, which are: valence, form or modality, scope, nature of its impact and customer goals.<sup>1</sup> In other words, this customer’s manifestations towards the brand can be analyzed in several forms. It can be seen by the brand as positive or negative; can involve a wide range of money and time; can be taken through a long or a short amount of time and in a local or global manner; can have a significant and enduring impact or the opposite; and can serve to innumerable customer’s goals.

Even though this thesis does not focus on social media, it is worth mentioning briefly how the variables presented in this paper are being studied and applied by fast-fashion retailers in recent years in order to highlight the topicality of this particular study. Fast-fashion companies’ presence and attention to social media has indisputably increased in the past years. This form of communication significantly changed the landscape in which fast-

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<sup>1</sup> For a deep review of the dimensions of customer engagement, the reader is encouraged to see van Doorn *et al.*, 2010.

fashion companies connect to its customers and increased the levels of engagement that they expect from such interactions (Loureiro *et al.*, 2019).

According to the study of Loureiro *et al.* (2019), H&M has a very effective way of interacting with its customers online. When compared to Zara, H&M published almost two times the total number of photos and videos in its social media in the six-month period analyzed by the authors. Furthermore, their strong aptitude to respond to customers' comments give them a sense of belonging to their online community, which can often unfold into higher levels of brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention.

Another insight is proposed by Bonilla *et al.* (2019), who state that, as social media evolves, fast-fashion companies have been trying to refine the manner in which they advertise in the hope of generating more engagement from the audience. Their study dissects several variables present in Instagram posts from the Swedish fast-fashion retailer H&M – such as people, text in picture, localization, videos accessories, etc. – to understand which aspects of their message, specifically on this social media channel, would lead to the highest levels of engagement.

In addition to that, it is also worth mentioning that Ahiaveh and Mawire (2020) have recently studied the racial variable and how it needs to be put in place by fast-fashion retailers if they want to actually look appealing for millennial minorities. According to the authors, if fast-fashion brands really want the attention and engagement of millennial customers, one of the most important variables when creating advertisements is taking into account the racial identification that minority consumers will feel when impacted by their ads. Ethnic minority millennials tend to value a more plural and diverse representation in advertising due to, among other reasons, the identification with models that look like them. Furthermore, still according to the research, both minority and majority groups will also identify with a specific

ad due to other variables such as the fashion style portrayed in the ad, the aesthetics of the visuals as well as the body sizes customers identify themselves with.

Considering that there might be a positive correlation between advertising and high levels of brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention, this paper proposes a parallel between two brands: H&M, which invests on traditional propaganda, and Zara, which doesn't invest on traditional marketing strategies, although it understands the importance of staying close to clients and their wishes just as much as the former. Based on the aforementioned, this paper's research question is outlined: In the fashion sector, what are the results of customer engagement and adding value to the brand of companies that choose to invest in traditional marketing and companies that adopt other strategies?

In the fashion sector, what are the results of customer engagement and adding value to the brand of companies that choose to invest in traditional marketing and companies that adopt other strategies?

As for the research objectives, the general objective is to understand the level of customer involvement with a company that invests in traditional marketing and another company that chooses to invest in another form of strategy to build this engagement, which brings us to the specific objectives:

- ✓ Studying brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention and their potential relation with advertising.
- ✓ Analyzing whether and how the brands (H&M and Zara) invest marketing techniques.
- ✓ Understanding customers' perception of the advertising strategies of both studied companies through the results of a standardized quantitative online survey and whether and how it translates into brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention.

To do so, chapter 2 is structured by reviewing relevant literature in the fields of traditional and non-traditional advertising, brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention, as well as studies about result measurement and its tools. In sequence, chapter 3 outlines the methodology employed to compare the theory and the results of the customer survey, with a final analysis of the given survey under the light of the chosen theories. Finally, we have reached a conclusion that may be considered relevant for current times, since both the survey results and the theoretical analysis translate into contemporary assets to fast fashion retailers' marketing strategies.

### **Choice of Topic**

Fast fashion retailers have significantly changed the way the fashion industry works. The decision of choosing such industry for this exploratory study is a result of many factors. Besides the author's interest for the field, the study of the industry is relevant due to the manner in which they revolutionized the fashion industry, their rapid economic growth throughout the past decades, the way they reconstructed the traditional fashion supply chain and, in more recent years, the spotlight that has been shone on the biggest players due to possible harmful ecological and social consequences of its actions.

The dynamic environment in the fashion industry – provided in most part by the easy access to information and the evolving culture of the customers – has led consumers to be constantly more aware of the fashion trends. Due to these new behavior patterns, fast fashion is continuously growing, and it is often treated as a new business model where the high market speed is one of its main characteristics. Instead of predicting trends, fast fashion retailers work with real time data in order to fulfill their consumer's needs at the same time as creating new ones (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013).

Logistical changes in the supply chain had to be implemented in order to effectively

diminish production time and ship new garments and new collection to the racks in the shortest possible amount of time. Such changes are frequently related – but not limited – to technologies enhancements like computer-aided-design and electronic data interchange (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). The fashion industry itself has one of the largest chains of production and consumption, and it is estimated that one in six people work at some point of this chain (Linden, 2016).

According to Mckinsey Global Fashion Index (2020) the fashion industry sales grew in 2019 around 3.5% in comparison with the previous year. Still in 2019, the biggest European fast fashion brand, based on revenue, was Inditex, followed by the H&M group, and, in third place, the Mark & Spencer Group. Still according to the publication, together those 4 retailers earned globally over 55 million GBP, whereas the 10 top players in the European market had a revenue of over 75 million GBP (Sabanoglu, 2020).

### **Literature Review**

Given the increasing amount of information and choices presented to the consumer nowadays, it is ever more crucial to build a strong brand, one the buyers would identify themselves with, one to be trusted and which carries along with it the qualities and values which are important to these buyers. The word branding comprises the very process of shaping a brand, giving it a strong identity, advertising it and attaching to it a set of values appealing to its target group, distinguishing it from similar products and aiming to make this brand the natural or most popular choice of purchasing. Companies also have the concern of connecting with the customers, getting to know their needs and demands and developing strategies that result in customer loyalty towards the product, making the brand the primary choice of purchase, as well as the first one that comes to their minds when a certain product is mentioned. (Kokemuller, 2019).

To achieve this goal, there are a few marketing concepts that can be worked on, such as developing brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention. One of the most common ways of promoting a brand and developing a successful branding process is advertising, which “is one of the most visible forms of communication, and the set of associations the consumers have about a brand is the result of all the marketing efforts built up behind the brand” (Bornmark *et al.*, 2005, p. 41). Therefore, it is pertinent to analyze whether and how advertising efforts in the fast fashion industry interacts with brands’ indicators of brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention. This analysis will be articulated by reviewing theories that propose what influence advertising has on brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention, which will later be juxtaposed to the results of the survey applied through a 15-question questionnaire in Paris, France, concerning two famous fast fashion retailers.

### **Traditional and Non-Traditional Propaganda**

Throughout the last 3 decades, with the fast development of internet, the debate among marketers increased significantly when it comes to investment strategies. Evaluating between traditional forms of propaganda and the new digital ways of advertising is, up to this day, a complex decision (Talafuse, Brizek 2014).

Traditional ways of advertising lie mainly on the idea of delivering a message to a far-flung homogeneous mass audience, being it more difficult to truly segment its spectators. When talking about newspaper and/or magazine, the reader needs to have the print advertising physically in front of him to absolutely touched by said propaganda. The same idea goes for television, it is mandatory that the viewer is positioned in front of the TV to be influenced by determined message (F. Mulhern, 2006).

According to Efstathiou (2019), traditional forms of advertising was and still is mostly used by companies for branding purposes and, in many cases, as a call to action a sales



promotion. For example, the use of radio can be mostly used by smalls companies to advertise themselves for audiences in the business's vicinity.

Parallel to this idea, there's a whole advertising strategy that was and it is still being developed based on social networks, filters, cloud computing and algorithms. If on one side, we have a traditional media that is still focused on the creative side of the business, there's another side that is being built on the idea of data, metrics and quantitative models (F. Mulhern, 2006).

All these new concepts that arose with digital forms of advertising brought to the marketing context new capabilities. It is possible now to switch the strategy of reaching a homogenous audience, into the capacity of targeting smaller segments with possible shared interests. Moreover, the digital marketing presented itself as an efficient manner to develop a relationship with the consumers and to deeper understand their needs. The interactivity between the brand and its target audience allows a continuous form of communication and a possibility of building a loyal relationship between both parties (Talafuse, Brizek 2014).

According to F. Mulhern (2006) there are some premises that work as the bedrock of modern advertising. The most important of those ideas is the concept of gathering audiences into relatively homogeneous groups that will accept intrusive commercial messages as long as they come along with free, or nearly free, content that would be seen as relevant for that determined target audience.

It is crucial to highlight that each specific form of advertising will have its perks as well as its disadvantages. For example, still according to Talafuse and Brizek (2014), television continues to be relevant at this day in age, especially when it comes to increasing brand awareness and, also, when the advertising can be integrated with new technologies advances. At the same time, TV's ads effectiveness can be questioned because audiences usually prefer programing without commercials. As for internet advertising ads – which can include popup advertising, banner ads, paid search, advertising on social media, etc. –, they can be tailor made

and less expensive, but their efficiency can be unsuccessful if targeting some specific older demographics.

As an example, in 2014 Heineken launched its tequila-flavored beer in the south of the United States combining these two forms of advertising. The company invested in TV commercials throughout all southern the states but chose a few ones to also run ads on mobile phones at specific times. In the digital campaign states, they were able to target an audience that would not be watching TV on a Friday at 9 p.m. and this resulted at a 23% awareness of millennials at those states, a much higher rate than the other states (Bond, 2015).

Bringing the discussion to a more contemporary background, according to Alex Barker (2020), this year the ad spending in digital medias such as Google, Facebook and Alibaba were expected to overtake traditional forms of media for the first time. According to the Financial Times publication, this phenomenon can be closed linked with the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst the pure digital advertising environment is expected to decrease around 2,5% in comparison with 2019, the traditional media – such as television, newspaper and out-of-home – should fall more than 20%, also in comparison with the previous year.

## **Brand Awareness**

Although having been proposed almost three decades ago, the most widely accepted concept of brand awareness indicates that it refers to the level of acknowledgment a certain brand has among its target consumers, and how they can perceive and recognize it (Aaker, 1991). Brands with a high level of brand awareness are known as “popular” or “trending”; being the ones the consumers first associate with the product that bears it when making a purchase, this concept and its relevance may sound somewhat vague for business owners who commonly gauge their success with solid numbers, as its efficiency cannot be mathematically determined. It does not mean, however, that brand awareness is not an important tool to measure up the efficiency

of one branding process, as marketers and manufacturers are aware of each year, companies invest great sums of money to develop and increase brand awareness.

Among other aspects, it is crucial that customers remain acquainted with the products, as it is known that 82% of customers searching online favorite brands, they are already familiar with (Decker, 2018). Many studies have been made and surveys conducted that emphasize how both brand recall and brand identity have positive connections with purchase intentions. When a consumer is seeking to obtain a product and a brand's name comes to mind in a positive manner, this association will most likely increase the chances of purchase (Chi *et al.*, 2009). In other cases, when the consumer does not have familiarity with the class of products she or he intends to buy, the brand popularity will play a significant role to attract a consumer towards a product (Hanzaee, Yazd, 2010).

The effects of brand awareness can be farther understood in the following statement made by Su (2016, p. 475): "Brand awareness helps consumers assess the overall utility of the brand based on perceptions of what is received and what is given relative to other brands". Furthermore, still according to the author, it is essential that marketers focus on building up their brand's awareness because what follows is a direct and strong impact in perceived value and loyalty. In order to deepen a company's knowledge about brand awareness, consumer research emerges as a central method, whose "insights have long played an important role in managerial decision making in many areas of marketing" (Keller, 2003, p. 595). Hereinafter, some of the most employed ways of measuring brand awareness will be presented.

### ***Measuring Brand Awareness***

According to Decker (2018) when it comes to measuring brand awareness, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) may vary in a wide range of ways, depending mainly on the channels the brand regularly advertises, sells and how it is perceived by consumers. There are a

few tools marketers use to assess and to measure the brand awareness of a specific product, such as Brand Awareness Surveys.

An old school and yet effective to this very day method of measurement are surveys. Talking directly to the source – potential consumers in the product’s target audience – is an effective way to perceive Brand Awareness. As per stated by Russini (2020) “there are several considerations of measure when looking at brand awareness; however, the two main measures are brand recognition and brand recall, both of which require consumer surveying through either in-person or electronic formats”. A well-designed survey is an excellent way to measure the progress a marketing campaign is making towards its goal.

Decker (2018) suggests that a brand survey can start by asking the target audience unaided questions, without revealing the name of the brand surveyed, to accurately determine how often it is recalled by consumers. For example, when making a survey about running shoes, the first question could be: “When you think of running shoes, what is the first brand that comes to your mind?”, and start from there, adding up specific brand related questions to assess the brand awareness of a specific brand and how it is perceived by the public. “Whether brand awareness surveys are completed in-person or electronically, they can be comparatively measured over time and reviewed against market competitors” (Russini, 2020).

An important tool a company disposes of to measure brand awareness is a questionnaire-based survey. Considered as the medium of communication between two individuals (the researcher and the subject), the questionnaire presents the questions of the survey designed to elicit the information required. The subject’s answers, thus, are conveyed back to the researcher contributing to the achievement of the research objectives. Writing an appropriate questionnaire is an inexpensive form of conducting a brand awareness survey. In doing so, the researcher must be as objective as possible so that the ultimate decision makers (those who solicited the questionnaire in the first place) are provided with the most adequate scenario derived from the

results. Furthermore, the objectives of the study must be translated into a clear set of information requirements, which should be formatted as the questions that will ultimately compose the questionnaire. (Brace, 2018).

These are a few tools marketers and manufacturers have to measure Brand Awareness. The choice of one or all of them depends a lot on the characteristics of the target audience, its level of instruction, its familiarity with different types media and age group. It is important to know how such consumers feel about the brand, their level of identification and, specially, if the given brand is often recalled in the moment of purchase – the ultimate definition of brand awareness (Decker, 2018). Considering the aforementioned, we can assert that there are several paths to properly measure Brand Awareness, aiming to better execute the marketing actions to the target customer audience.

### ***Advertising and Brand Awareness***

Known as one of the most widespread strategies to improve a company's brand awareness, advertising still proves to be an essential tool in marketing development. Used simultaneously to inform and educate people about the product, it can also increase predisposition and incentives to purchase (Domazet *et al.*, 2017). As we can see, “advertising is one of the most visible forms of communication, and the set of associations the consumers have about a brand is the result of all the marketing efforts built up behind the brand” (Bornmark *et al.*, 2005, p. 41). Usually defined as a media paid to convince (Arens, 2020), advertising works as a persuasive tool that claims attention to a given product or brand.

It is known that “(...) there is clear evidence that the more involvement (or “engagement”) there is in advertising, the greater the impact of the ad on memory, message believability, attitude toward the ad, and intention to purchase” (Rodgers & Thorson, 2019, p.

12). Soon we see that if advertising influences the memory of consumers, then it may have some impact on brand awareness.

### **Customer Engagement**

Having the customer recall the brand in the moment of purchase is the first step to make a sale, but not the only one. To make a purchase, the customer needs to feel somewhat connected to the brand in question, have identification with the brand, its values and lifestyle associated with it, especially now in the XXI century, when people have all kinds of information and choices in their hands to make an informed decision. The connection between brand and customer, in most various levels, is called customer engagement. Customer engagement can be defined as the amount of interaction the consumers have with a brand and how able this brand is to provide a personalized and positive experience to the customer. Every interaction can be counted as customer engagement, although it typically means providing a relevant experience that results in long-term engagement (Courvoisier, 2018).

The increasing importance of this term in recent years follows the realization that a well-established customer engagement will bring a positive implication in brand performance (Dessart *et al.* 2015). This stimulus can come from many sources but, according to Thakur (2017), a positive experience with the retailer – i.e., satisfaction – can work as one of the main drivers of consumer engagement. The feeling of satisfaction by a consumer will work as an amplifier for her or him to engage with a brand.

After conducting an exhaustive literature review regarding the most widely accepted definitions and applications of the term customer engagement, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014, p. 6) conceptualize it “as a consumer's positively valence brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/ brand interactions.” In a more recent approach, Ferreira *et al.* (2020) define it as a positive investment (cognitive, emotional and

behavioral) made by a consumer in a focal object. This investment can be carried out through both direct or indirect interactions, namely websites, brand communities or advertising.

### ***Increasing a Brand's Customer Engagement***

According to Ference (2017), there are different ways to increase customer engagement, such as making customer experience the number 1 priority: a study by the US House Office of Consumer Affairs found that 80% of US customers would be willing to pay more for a product or service to ensure a better customer experience. Such number gives the company the exact idea of how important enchanting and inspiring the customer really is. More than just goods or services, people are expecting to be heard, getting answers to questions, having problems fixed and feeling a connection with the brand.

Besides, it is important to humanize the brand. According to Ference (2017) it's important to give the brand a face, someone who has a connection with the target audience and can communicate to it, making the consumer welcomed into the brand's universe. Companies can find a person within the organization who is passionate by the brand, with natural communication skills and give them a voice to personalize the brand and engage the audience. Customers will respond better to a trusted face they can connect and relate to. Furthermore, companies should create useful content, since publishing brand-related contents of interest to the target audience is becoming an increasingly common strategy of customer engagement.

Ultimately, listening to customers, giving them a meaningful experience from the first contact, with a consistent and exceptional interaction will reward the company with engagement, trust and loyalty (Ference, 2017).

### **Purchase Intention**

All the concepts and tools discussed above aim at ultimately increasing the number of purchases of a given brand. Hence, marketers know the importance of bringing up in customers the intent of making the purchase, as well as measuring such intentions among the target audience. Purchase intention is a situation where a consumer tends to buy a certain product in a certain condition. A customer's purchase decision is a complex process and it's usually related to the behavior, perceptions and attitudes of consumers (Mirabi *et al.*, 2015).

It is known that “consumers’ stated purchase intentions are one of the primary inputs that marketing managers use to forecast future sales and to determine how the actions they take will impact consumers’ purchasing behavior” (Morwitz, 2014, p. 182). Working with this indicator is fundamental to develop advertising, and consequently improve brand awareness. Next, we will go over some of the most widely employed forms to assess customer intention.

### ***Assessing Customer Purchase Intention***

To assess purchase intention, marketers generally develop a predicative model to help identify the possibility of future outcomes, based on historical data. It involves putting together several variables to assess the likelihood of the purchasing event. The more variables the developed model includes, from as many sources as possible, the more accurate the purchase intention analysis will be. The core set of variables can include, for example, factors like demographics, website visiting, past purchases, participation on brand communities and interaction with marketing campaigns, such as clicking on internet banners, answering surveys, writing reviews etc. Offline, factors may also include attendance to sponsored events and customer engagement. On the other hand, although no purchase intention evaluation model is complete and accurate using only one or two factors, it is crucial to the process that the marketer knows how to determine which variable – or set of variables – has the greater impact on the analysis, considering the product and the target group (Rouse, 2012).



Vroutas (2020) gives an accurate example of how important it is to analyze all variable sets to build a model that efficiently determines the purchase intention of a specific group. Say a brand sells online baby products and develops an evaluation model based only on demographic data to find potential customers to be analyzed. This model would fail to determine the intentions of the ideal customer for a targeted campaign: baby parents. Therefore, the number one criterion for such model should be people who have at least one baby. Using this as a sole factor, however, would exclude a group that, according to Google, accounts for 40% of all baby product purchases: people who do not have kids. Therefore, in short, a complete purchase-intention-evaluating model must be carefully thought to include variables that represent the groups that are more likely to purchase the product. Knowing the target audience and specially its behaviors and shopping habits narrows down the variables to the necessary ones and helps prioritize one or the other when developing the model and analyzing the results given.

The whole point of assessing purchase intention lies on learning how effective an online or offline marketing campaign is turning out to be and determine whether and how the investment on marketing is paying off, which can be done by analyzing the ROI (Return on Investment). An efficient evaluation of a brand's purchase intention and the behavior of its buyers helps deliver the right message to the right audience, in the right time. "Used effectively, purchase intent can improve conversion rates, expedite deal velocity and create stronger synergies between marketing and sales" (Rouse, 2012, p.21).

## **Methodology and Data Analysis**

### **Research and Methodology**

The present research was conducted by recurring to bibliographic information, having its foundation mainly based on recent publications such as books, thesis, and articles in all forms, including digital ones. Moreover, Snyder (2019) talks about the importance of literature review as a building block of the academic activity in all its disciplines. The literature review is a research methodology based on the gathering and synthetization of information in a systematic manner and its purpose is to construct a foundation for the development of the knowledge based on earlier studies.

In addition, quantitative data analysis was also employed, which according to Silva (2011) is the most adequate method to search for opinions and attitudes of a target audience on a subject. A standardized survey form was applied, allowing the display of the collected data in a percentage projection, along with a comparative analysis of one or more items of the research.

It has been decided to limit the geographic scope of the research in France due to both its historic importance in the fashion industry but, most importantly, to the fact that – according to Euromonitor Country Report (2018)<sup>2</sup> – the Apparel and Footwear Industry have been decelerating in the past five years. For that reason, it will be of great contribution to analyze the actions taken by companies in the sense of marketing strategies to mitigate these adverse circumstances.

After having delimited the, a decision has been made to analyze the current two

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.portal.euromonitor.com.sbproxy.fgv.br/portal/analysis/tab>;

biggest players in the fast fashion industry in the country with a broad worldwide presence<sup>3</sup>, which are – also according to the Euromonitor Country Report (2018) – Zara and Hennes & Mauritz Sarl (H&M).

Besides customer engagement, recent marketing strategies must also be highlighted in the scope of the study. Marketing campaigns put in place in France as well as global campaigns that were also implemented in the country by the chosen brands have a significant relevance to understanding the existence or not of a high and positive brand awareness. Actions such as celebrity endorsement, collaborations with high fashion brands, app development and data collection among other initiatives have also an impact in the brand's recognition in the consumer's mind. The scrutiny of such actions is also important to illustrate what has already been said, that fast fashion retailers changed the way the fashion industry works, even when it comes to advertising it. The review of such strategies will, therefore, bring a contribution in the sense that will show how said changes are being put into action.

Furthermore, Apuke (2017) presents a set of criteria when building a quantitative research. According to the author, the quantitative research is constructed with the purpose of testing the hypotheses, looking for cause and effect and making predictions. This purpose is built by studying specific variables and identifying statistical relationships. One form of this type of research, and the one that is used in this work, is the survey. The survey method consists of a scientific sampling technique with a pre constructed questionnaire to measure the characteristics of a given population and then make analysis to better understand their behavior.

According to Stockemer (2019), when establishing a survey, the order of the questions needs to follow a smoothly flow. Furthermore, the number of questions should not be too

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<sup>3</sup> Even though the report mentions the relevance of brands such as Vivarte and Kiabi, neither of these companies have well established worldwide presence and therefore should not be included in the study;

large to not discourage a possible respondent. The questions should be clear, precise and simple avoiding possible vagueness, bias, complexity or negative aspects.

Another approach posits that “it is one of the skills of the questionnaire writer to write questions that have the same meaning to all respondents, regardless of how an interviewer might say them or how they are read on the page or screen” (Brace, 2018, p. 2). Still according to Brace (2018) and when it comes to research methodology, the questionnaire’s function is to bring forward the required information for that the researcher can answer the objectives of the survey.

Considering such knowledge and taking advantage of present technology, after having come up with the questions, the survey was submitted to google forms, in order to reach a greater number of respondents. It will be then possible to understand with a deeper clarity if the results of the questionnaire correspond, in fact, with what has been implemented by Company 1 and Company 2’s marketers. The ultimate intention of the study is to be an exploratory research that will assess the levels of preferences of the interviews and cross that information with the reviewed literature and the advertising strategies of each specific brand.

### **Data Collection**

The survey questionnaire was composed by fifteen multiple choice questions and was submitted to respondents using Google forms for a period of ten days until it reached one hundred respondents, having been closed immediately afterwards. The choice of employing an online method is given by its practicality and quickness to collect answers. Besides, an online questionnaire provides a standardized application, as it does not require human interaction with supervisors. The survey was sent out by WhatsApp to colleagues and friends, so people could answer about the comparison between both brands. Beyond budgetary and time constraints, it is noteworthy that the sample size of 100 respondents was chosen

considering the researcher's approximate number of acquaintances which comprises the author's network in Paris, France, given his period as an exchange student at HEC Paris between August and December 2018. By doing so, the researcher intended to mitigate potential practical issues related to approaching the sample and collecting the answers, considering the ability to connect with this segment, as they represented the most accessible one. The questionnaire is available in Appendix C.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The scientific method used in this work allows the researcher to use a confirmatory scientific method, in opposition of an exploratory one. Which means that the theory is conceived prior to the execution of the survey and it is tested according to the data gathered in the survey (Apuke, 2017).

When analyzing the data resulted from the survey, the percentage outcome of each possible question needs to be analyzed and interpreted as a first step to understand respondents' preferences. By using closed ended questions, the analyses, counting and interpretations of the data become more feasible. It becomes possible to oversee the percentage result that fall into each category and draw a conclusion regarding the inclinations and desires of the sample (Stockemer, 2019).

Going further in the analyses, it is possible to cross the information between two questions with multiple choice pre-determined answers. By doing that it is possible to analyze in a two-by-two graph the relationship between said questions. With this method it is possible for the researcher to ask more specific questions, which means that instead of "how many respondents prefer a specific company?", the researcher might go further and ask: "how many of the respondents that prefer company X, do it because of their price?" (Stockemer, 2019).

### **Statistical Analysis**

The data in the present study are categorical, therefore, at the descriptive statistic of this paper they were showed as percentages of total frequencies following the recommendation of literature (Jaggia & Hawke, 2019).

To evaluate the association between questions: Q9 - Which store is more appealing to you? (H&M, Zara) x Q10 - Regarding question 9, why is that? (Display, Popular, Price, Refined); Q11 - Do you feel closer to the world of the celebrities wearing which brand? (H&M, Zara) x Q12 - Regarding question 11, why is that? (Fame, Price, Quality) and Q13 - Do you feel more exclusive at? (H&M, Zara) x Q14- Regarding question 13, why is that? (Cooler, Fame, Price, Quality) a chi-square test was used.

The chi-square statistic is used when the variable is measured at the nominal (also called categorical) level. With nominal data, each category is mutually exclusive (Connely, 2019). All statistical analyzes were performed using the Stats cloud software (Gurney, 2019) and the graphics were generated in Excel and Google Survey.

### **Research Characteristics**

In face of the definitions discussed above, that will guide the conduction of the research, the three large phases of the study were established, as follows:

- ✓ Phase 1: Literature review about the theme, based on bibliographic research. As Snyder (2019) clarifies, this is an important step, because it consists in selecting the reading material and the organization of the studies. According to the research proposal, the themes searched concerned the business management strategies employed by both brands in question to attract new customers, whether they involved marketing strategies or not.
- ✓ Phase 2: A multiple choice questionnaire survey was formulated, structured with simple and clear questions to ensure uniform understanding from the respondents.

Silva (2011) explains that this kind of survey demands a larger number of respondents, as it aims to bring a measurable aspect to a given subject.

- ✓ Phase 3: Percentage analysis of the answers applying the information obtained through the bibliographic research. Thereby, it was possible to get conclusions and solutions to the research question.

In conclusion, the present research could be, according to Atmowardoyo (2018) classified as exploratory study, because its main objective is to describe, in the most accurate manner, an existing phenomenon. Using instruments such as a survey, the study will examine a specific population's mindset regarding an event.

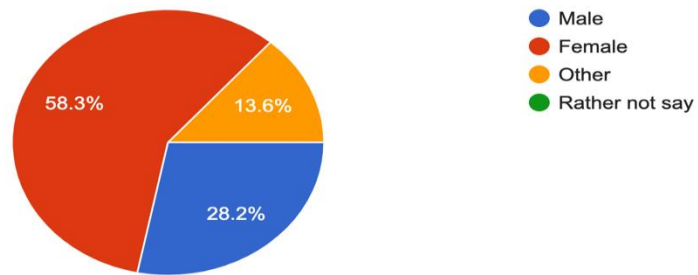
Still, this kind of research aims to detail the existing arrangement of a precise case, specially what happens inside it, allowing to accurately comprise the characteristics of a specific individual, a situation or a group, as well as to unveil the relationship between events (Atmowardoyo, 2018).

### **Questionnaire Results**

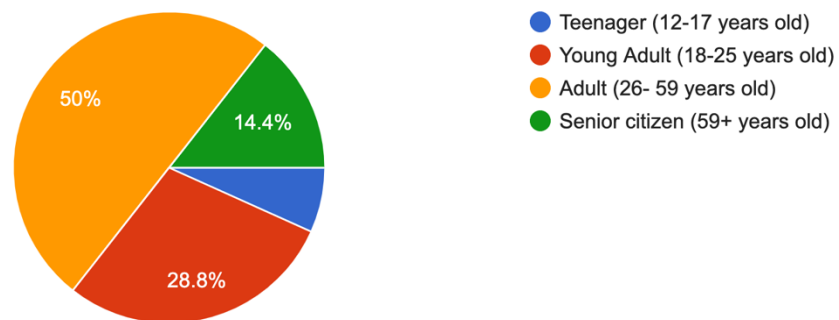
All the of results from the questionnaire are in Appendix C. To the study, the responses considered the most significant for the analysis of the result were also presented in this section.

**Figure 1 - Respondents' gender**

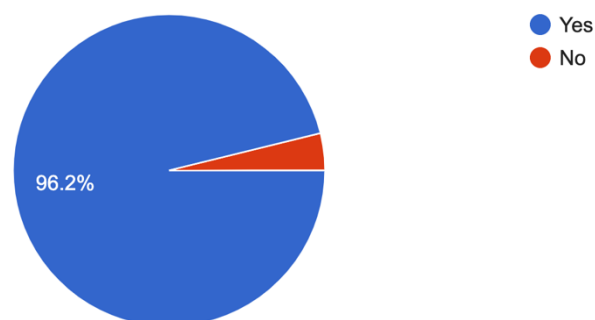
103 responses

**Figure 2 - Respondents' age**

104 responses

**Figure 3 - H&M's brand awareness**

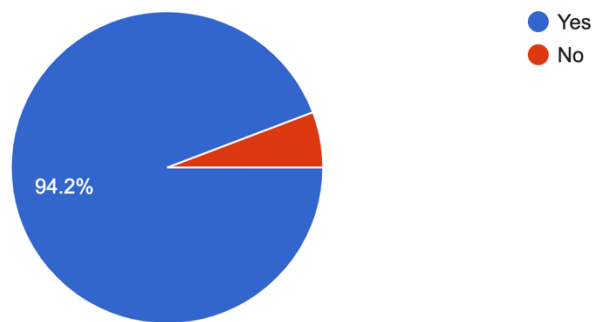
104 responses



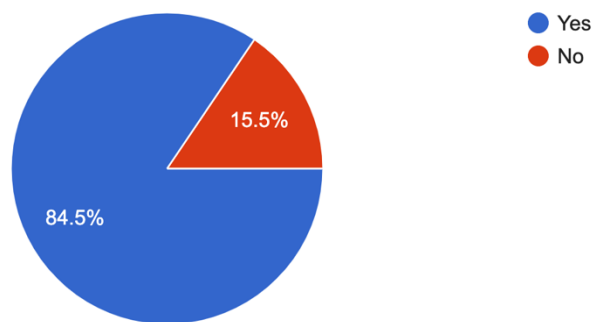


**Figure 4 - ZARA's brand awareness**

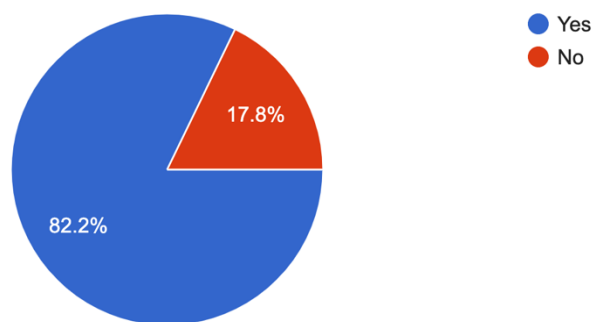
104 responses

**Figure 5 - H&M's propaganda awareness**

103 responses

**Figure 6 - ZARA's propaganda awareness**

101 responses



## **Data Analysis and Discussion**

In this section, the results from the survey are presented, with their partial analysis and a macro analysis at the end of this topic. It should be noted that the survey was open for respondents on August 7<sup>th</sup> and closed on August 15<sup>th</sup> of 2020 having had 105 respondents. The charts containing the percentual results for each question may be found in Appendix C. Another aspect to be highlighted is that respondents weren't obligated to answer one question in order to answer the subsequent ones. It allowed the respondents to skip any questions they desired, answering only the ones they had actual interest in doing so. Therefore, from the total of 105 respondents, there are questions with fewer answers. Such fact, nonetheless, causes no distortion to the final goal of the research, which was attempting to identify whether employing marketing techniques on the branding process of a brand is vital for making it exist and succeed. Finally, it is noteworthy that this survey was conducted in Paris, France, where I spent a semester in an exchange program at HEC.

First, to gather information about the demographics of the sample and to have a clearer profile of the respondents, three questions were put in place in the beginning of the form. In order to mention briefly the results from those questions, it was discovered that the gender universe of respondents was in its majority female (58.3%) whilst male and others accounted for 41.8%. Furthermore, the most representative age group were adults (50%), followed by young adults (28.8%). Following the demographic information about the sample, significantly positive results were perceived when it comes to the brands' recognition that can be attributed to the fact that both Company 1 and Company 2 have a massive presence throughout European countries, including France, which according to the company's profile on Forbes (2020) it is the third biggest country for the Company 2 in the world in number of stores.

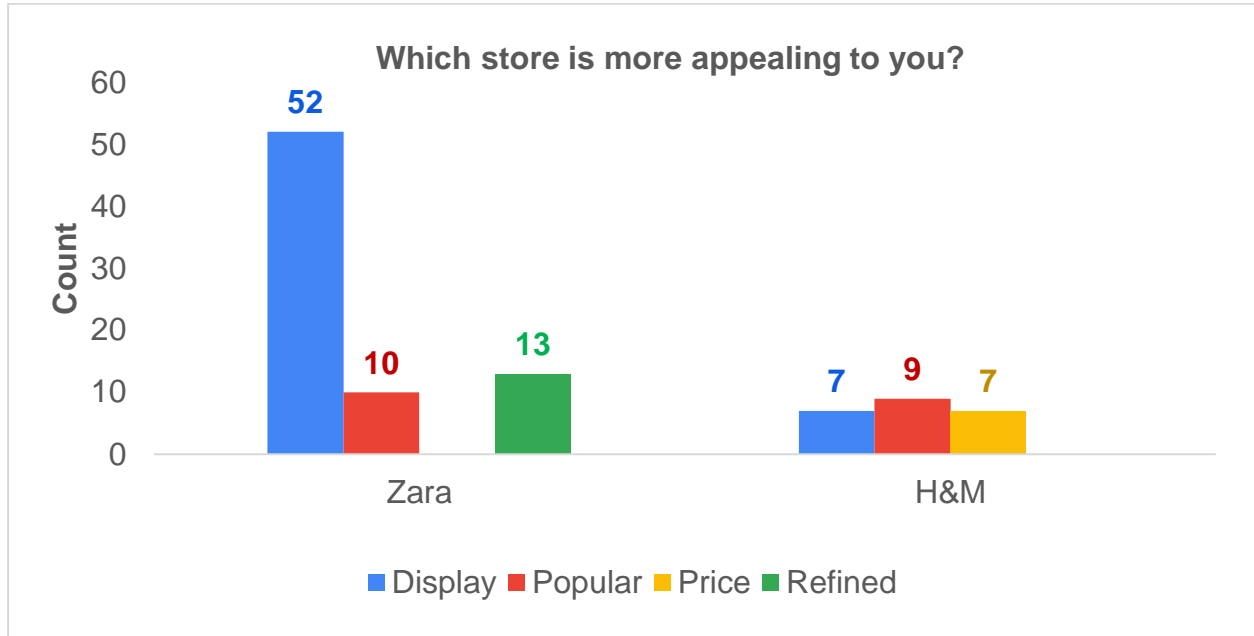
As a third impression from the results, it was seen that according to the respondent's opinion, both companies had a similar level of impression when it comes to affecting interviewees by their own specific form of advertisements. The survey wanted to understand if the customer's had memory of contact with any kind of the companies' advertising. The responses were for the most part positive (Company 1: 84.5%; Company 2: 82.2%). To confirm the likelihood of the gathered data mentioned above, a maximum likelihood ratio chi-square test was performed to examine the association between questions 3) Are you familiar with fashion brand H&M? and 5) Have you ever seen an H&M Advertisement? and the association between these questions were statistically significant ( $p\text{-value} < .001$ ). The same test was conducted between the same questions regarding Zara and the association was also significant ( $p\text{-value} < .001$ ).

Examining and comparing the results of questions 3 to 6, we may infer that both companies achieved a similarly high percentage of advertising recognition (~80-85%) and, consequently, a high level of brand awareness among survey respondents. Further analyzing the results collected, more than 80% of the sample believe that a brand should indeed advertise its products, against a non-significant percentage of the other alternatives. The most pointed out reason was the facility of showing at once both the products and its prices (88.6%). When asked to choose between the two companies and which one would be more appealing, Company 2 had the biggest number of responses and the reason was, in its majority, due to the display of products from the windows to the racks, followed by its popular aspect and lastly its refined aspect as shown in Figure 7.

Therefore, we acknowledge that Company 2 appeals the most to its customers when it comes to entering its stores in the intention of purchasing. That is mostly due to the manner in which the brand displays its products, which according to this study corresponds to the

strategy most used by the brand, the effectivity of immediately identifying trends and displaying them into their stores (Kala, 2018).

**Figure 7 - Crossed results from questions 9 and 10**

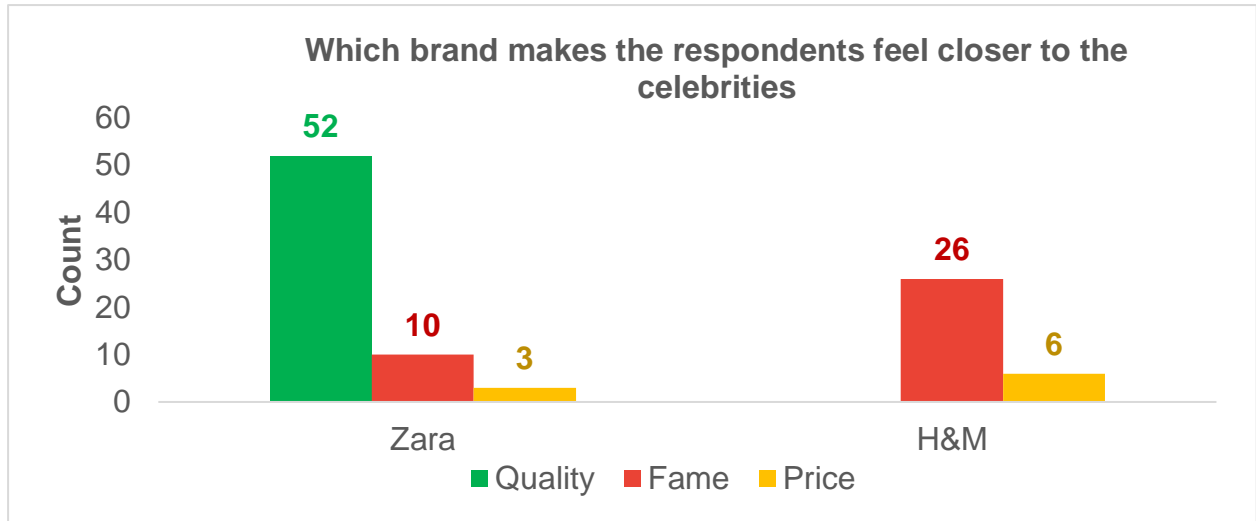


Despite both companies having approximately the same level of advertising perception among survey respondents, Company 2 stands out as the most appealing to customers, with a significantly higher percentage of preference than Company 1, respectively, 77.8% against 22.%. Considering that the feelings proposed in the survey such as exclusivity and proximity to celebrities are indicators of consumer engagement, we proceed with the analysis of questions 11 through 14. According to Ference (2017) the willingness of the customer to engage with a specific brand will be a result of their ability to provide an enchanting and inspiring experience as well as the capacity of relating the brand to a known face.

When it comes to question 11, it was perceived that 69.1% of the total sample think Company 2 brings them closer to the world of celebrities, which can be understood as a reflection of the brand's goals and strategies, which are thereby corroborated in the universe of this survey. In the following question (12), the quality of the products appeared as the main

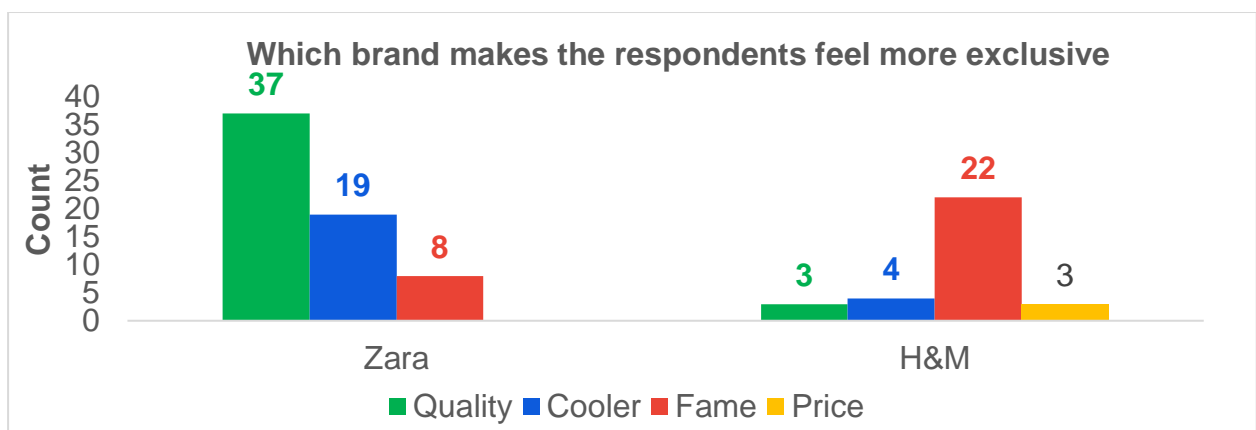
reason why respondents feel closer to the world of celebrities when wearing Company 2 apparel. The association between questions 11 and 12 was, according to the applied chi-square test of independence, statistically significant with a p-value of  $< .001$ , as shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8 - Crossed results from questions 11 and 12**



Following the same trend, 70% of the respondents of question 13 associate Company 2 with being more exclusive. When asked the reason why they think that way, most answers were once again associated with product quality, as shown in Figure 9. In an additional note, it is interesting to see that the answers highlight that price was not a relevant factor to make respondents feel more exclusive.

**Figure 9 - Crossed results from questions 13 and 14**



In the beginning of the data analysis, it was stated that both companies have shown approximately the same levels of customers' perception towards advertising. Nevertheless, Company 2 has presented higher level of customer engagement among respondents, given that most of them feel more inclined to engage with said company due to its exclusivity character and closeness to the world of celebrities.

## Conclusion

Propaganda in its various forms, including advertising, has permeated centuries performing its role of showing something to someone. Such fact became clear in this research, especially in the literature review, which showed the importance of advertising to a brand. The literature review also highlighted the methods of measuring the impact of the use of traditional and non-traditional forms of advertising. Considering both companies, it was clear that advertising makes the brand more acknowledgeable in the market, but it was also clear that there is more than one way to achieve such status. Traditional propaganda and advertising techniques might work well for some brands, but more modern ways of advertising also play an important part nowadays.

Each company has very different advertising strategic approaches. After reviewing relevant literature concerning traditional and new forms of advertising, brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention, this thesis expected that making use of common advertising channels would be a game changer in the fast-fashion industry when it comes to customer perception towards advertising. By confronting the aforementioned with the previously detailed survey, we found that, as far as this investigation goes, the fast-fashion industry has its own particularities and the level of perception deriving from the traditional forms of advertising employed by Company 1 did not lead to higher levels of brand awareness, customer engagement and purchase intention than Company 2, which instead of directing financial resources to traditional advertising, converts them into digital advertising presence, affordable prices and its own efficient manufacturing and supply chain.

The gathered data showed that both brands have virtually the same percentage of positive responses when it comes high levels of consumer's perception and brand awareness. Further studies can be conducted in order to understand if the respondents might have

understood that the premium locations of Company 2 stores, the display of products in its windows and shelves, the anticipation of trends and other aspects as a particular form of advertising, since when it comes to traditional advertising channels, Company 2 does not have a significant presence in this field.

Finally, after understanding and analyzing the variables, applying the questionnaire to studying its results it is now possible to answer the research question “In the fashion sector, what are the results of customer engagement and adding value to the brand of companies that choose to invest in traditional marketing and companies that adopt other strategies?”. It can be concluded that in the current technological environment, the way brands connect with its customers can be very different even within companies from the same niche. Traditional forms of propaganda no longer hold the only key to achieving marketing goals. It is clear by the previous analysis that the fast-fashion industry requires strategies that go beyond what we were used to understanding as marketing.

Both companies impacted their customers almost at the same rate when it comes to advertising. Therefore, it is possible to note that the way in which those customers see advertising is now broader than only taking into account traditional propaganda. Even though one of the companies does not have presence in traditional advertising, it still acquired better levels of purchase intention and customer engagement.



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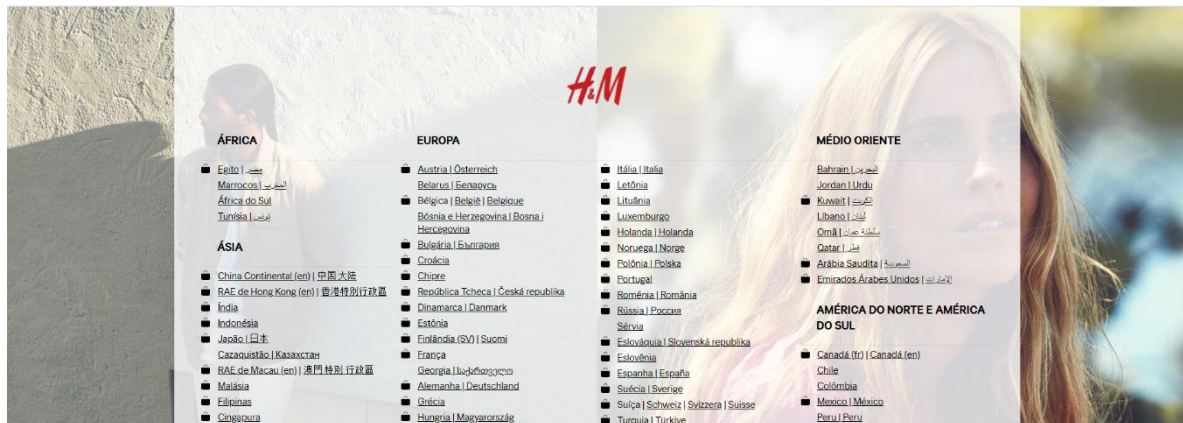
## **Appendix A – The Companies**

### **Company 1 – H&M**

One of the most recognizable brands in the fashion history, with over 4000 stores worldwide, H&M plans to open 7000-8000 new stores in the future. Having one of the most successful revenues among fashion brands, it is known for its trend-led fashion and designer collaboration and it will be referred to in this paper as Company 1, with a business model that invests in marketing. Despite being known for its affordable budget merchandise, the H&M group also owns high-end product brand COS and other brands like Weekday, advertise and H&M Home. The success of Company 1 can be attributed to its fast fashion model, which consists in launching several lines along the season, moving the merchandise from the designer table and production line to the stores as fast as possible. It also provides affordable, “cheap chic” fashion (Tun, 2019).

Unlike other fast fashion brands, Company 1 does not manufacture its products in house; it outsources the production to more than 900 independent suppliers around the world (Figure 4), mainly in Europe and Asia. In addition, only 80% of the merchandise is stocked year-round, the other 20% is produced on demand, in smaller lots, to meet the demands of the prevailing fashion trends, granting the brand to be always up to date with the latest fashion trends (Tun, 2019).

Figure 10 - H&amp;M



Source: H&M, 2020.

### *H&M's History*

According to H&M's (2019) official website, the history of this retailer giant dates back to 1946, when Erling Persson, a Swedish entrepreneur came back to Sweden from the United States, with the idea of selling women's clothing. The first store opened one year later, in his hometown, Vasteras, and is named Hennes, Swedish for hers. During the 50s, Persson launched stores in Stockholm, including a Flagship store in one of the first Swedish skyscrapers. Moreover, as popularity rises, Persson shows his beliefs in advertising, by taking out a full-page color ad in Sweden's largest daily newspaper.

In 1968, Hennes acquired hunting and flagship apparel retailer Mauritz Widfoss, changing its name to Hennes & Mauritz, which would later be renamed H&M in 1974. During the late 60s and the 70s, H&M started expanding its business internationally, first in Norway, followed by Denmark, UK and Switzerland. At the same time, there was also an expansion regarding the products provided by the stores. If in the beginning H&M sold exclusively women's clothing, by the late 70s, it was selling clothing, jeans and underwear to every public. The year of 2000 marked the expansion of H&M outside Europe, with the opening of a flagship store on the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York, USA. In 2004, H&M innovated the fashion

world by teaming up with Karl Lagerfeld and launching the first designer line at popular prices, which would become a staple of the brand along the years. To celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, H&M launched COS – its high-end fashion brand – and later welcomed the brands Weekday, Monki and Cheap Monday, by purchasing the FaBric Scandinavian AB. As Karl Persson took over as CEO in 2009, H&M once again expanded its product portfolio by launching H&M Home (H&M, 2019).

### ***Marketing, Brand Awareness and Customer Engagement Strategies***

Ever since the beginning of its activities, Company 1 has realized the power of marketing and has taken special care of its promotional activities, setting its advertising focus on conveying the image of quality items at reasonable prices (H&M, 2019). H&M ads have appeared on famous magazines, such as Vogue Nederland, British Vogue and British GQ. The brand uses some exceptional strategies for the marketing of its products. Regularly, it sponsors trendy shows on TV networks like MTV and, in two years, it made a bold marketing move by airing a David Beckham underwear line during the Super Bowl commercials. With over 100 million viewers worldwide, a 30-second ad on Super Bowl can cost up to 5 million dollars. To capitalize such huge investment, in the weeks prior to game, in 2014, Company 1 launched a poll among customers to find out whether they wanted Beckham covered or uncovered in the commercial. Such move aimed to increase customer engagement towards the brand (Bhasin, 2019).

In his article “Marketing Mix of H&M”, Bhasin also points out that ad campaigns involving celebrities are a usual strategy employed by Company 1’s marketing team. As stated before, since 2004, the Company has been investing in partnerships with designers like Karl Lagerfeld, Jimmy Choo and Alexander Wang. Having its image associated to such celebrity designers, Company 1 sends to the users the image of a sophisticated, yet affordable



brand. Other than teaming up with celebrity designers, another marketing strategy employed by the brand consists in sending clothing items to famous people and having their names associated with the brand, as they appear in public events wearing Company 1 creations, like what was recently done by the singer Rihanna.

As marketers started to realize US customers were buying products directly from Instagram, especially from the influencers' pages, Company 1 captured the power of these influencers to act as faces of the Brand, personalizing it and bringing it closer to the public. Using such phenomenon as a marketing strategy, Company 1 launched the H&M League, where a group of digital influencers chosen to represent all kinds of public show more Company 1 contents on their pages, from where the public is able to buy the items. To grant diversity, the program will change the group of influencers every year. This year's instagrammers include some of the most popular influencers, like Arielle Charnas and Brittany Xavier. Along with showing looks online, the influencers also take part on special events, telling followers all about the exclusives afterwards (Sutton, 2019).

As more than three quarters of the consumers have bought something based on a digital influencer recommendation, marketers do plan to continue spending on such partnerships. However, as celebrities, influencers can be a pricey investment and at times aren't so loyal to the brand, occasionally raising their rates and not having as much followers as they purport to, Company 1 has launched earlier this year a different kind of influencer program: The H&M Insiders, where 15 US employees were given the title of Brand Ambassadors for a year. The Company says that the program is "centered on its most valued advocate and style advisors: its own employees" (Mullen, 2019).

The Insiders ambassadors are chosen among the more than 16,000 Company 1's employees in the US, based on their style, personality, brand values, location and social media content. Every month, Company 1's website publishes pictures of the Insiders wearing their

favorite outfits from the Brand, as well as their Instagram posts. According to the Company, shoppers can see how Insiders “incorporate H&M into their everyday lives from edgy outfit style to chic home decorating”. Mario Moreno, H&M USA head of marketing referred to an ambassador as an elevated influencer, who consistently promotes the brand’s image and embodies its values (Mullen, 2019).

Inspired on the users' activities on its social platforms such as Facebook, Company 1 is also launching a shoppable fashion hub that aims to simplify and democratize access to style advice as well as uniting conversation, in the model of a brand community, with e-commerce. Still in the BETA version, the platform, named Its Park, allows users to enjoy product discovery features, create shoppable guides and access both fashion contents and lifestyle tips. With Its Park, Company 1 aims to take advantage of users' activities on its social platforms elsewhere and bring them into a shopping environment for consumers (Aziz, 2019).

## **Company 2 – ZARA**

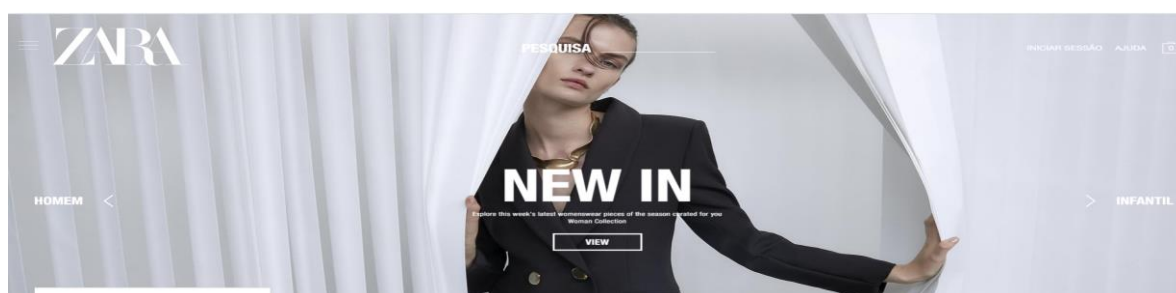
The most important company of the Inditex Group, with about 1770 stores across 86 countries and with a strong online sales platform, Zara (Figure 5) is one of the largest fast fashion retailers in the world and it will be referred to in this paper as Company 2, with a business model that does not invest in marketing. Like few clothing brands, it can keep up with the latest fashion trends and offer high quality products at an affordable price. Since its very beginning, Company 2’s policy was to democratize luxury products, making them accessible to everyone. With a non-advertising policy and sticking to its core values, Company 2 is loyal to the keywords that define its stores: Beauty, clarity, functionality and sustainability. Although it’s a company that aims to speak to the younger people, something that even reflects on its recruitment policy, Company 2 offers a wide range of choices for

women, men and children. The Brand also launched a line of cosmetics, perfumes and household products (Kala, 2018).

All of Company 2's lines and products are instant hits at stores worldwide, because they are manufactured and supplied based on consumer trends. Company 2 strongly believes that better than advertising their goods, the key to success is to understand customers, their needs and demands and respond to them very quickly. Going as far as anticipating trends even before they hit the runways gives the company a competitive advantage in relation to other retailers. The brand can identify new trends and immediately put them in production. The secret for never missing out on a trend is to produce four or five updated campaigns after the initial seasonal launch. After the products are designed, it takes 10 to 15 days to reach the stores, which are supplied with new items twice a week, thanks to a very efficient logistics plan. In an era in which most clothing manufacturers outsource production to China and other low-cost locations, Inditex produces two-thirds of its garments in Spain and surrounding countries.

Its logistics comprises factories especially in Europe and Asia, a 10,000 square meter base in Arteixo, Spain and warehouses and distribution centers all around the world. One of the great strategies employed by Company 2 is the commitment to supply any store within 48 hours after the product leaves the factory (Kala, 2018). Figure 5 shows an ad from the brand.

**Figure 11 - Zara**



Source: Zara, 2020

### ***Zara's History***

Zara's history, as well as the history of its parent company Inditex, was and continues to be written by a Spanish entrepreneur called Amancio Ortega. One of the richest men in the world, the now retired founder of the Brand lives a discreet, almost anonymous life in Spain. Having previously worked as a tailor assistant in a clothing factory, before opening his first clothing factory, with humble origins and living a frugal life away from the spotlights, his low-profile life matches the belief of the no-advertising policy adopted by Zara.

Ortega opened his first fashion enterprise in 1963, a small dressing gown factory in La Coruña, a traditional textile city in Spain, in partnership with his then wife Rosalia Mera, who also had experience in a clothing manufacturer named GOA. After over ten years in the textile business, the couple launched a clothing store named ZARA, in 1975, which, according to the Company website, "shrinks the gap between fashion creations and the customer, bringing customers closer than ever to products they want, at an affordable price". During the 80s, Zara opened its logistics center in Arteixo, Spain and inaugurated stores in other European countries and the USA. In 1985, Ortega brought Zara and his clothing enterprises GOA and Samlor under the same banner and launched the Inditex (Industria de Deseño Textil) group (Inditex, 2019).

### ***Inditex's Distribution System***

Inditex established a pioneer distribution system capable of reacting to shifting market trends extremely quickly, for which Zara and its sister companies are still known nowadays. Inditex comprises another nine brands, being Zara still the largest and most valuable one. The other brands are Pull and Bear and Massimo Dutti, both acquired in 1991, Bershka, launched in 1998, Stradivarius, acquired in 1999 and six other brands launched by the group: Lefties

(1999), Oysho (2001), Zara Kids, Zara Home (2003) and Uterque (2008). The Company went public in 2001 for the first time in Madrid and started its online activities in 2010. Today Inditex is the largest retail group in the world, with a profit of 3.44 million euros in 2018, according to its annual report (Inditex, 2019).

### ***Marketing, Brand Awareness and Customer Engagement Strategies***

To Ortega, listening to the demands of the customers, giving them what they want and supplying the stores with the newest trends within a short time between production and delivery is far more important than having his company name on billboards, magazines or TV. In his own words, “the future of Inditex is tied to our capacity to respond day by day to the demands of the market and to design and set 29 in motion new projects which are capable of connecting with the desires of our clients around the world” (Orwing, 2019).

Company 2, like all Inditex Group companies and unlike other fast-fashion retailers, which have a big advertising budget, has a unique marketing police of “zero advertising”. Instead, the money that would be used in these marketing campaigns is reverted to its affordable prices and efficient distribution system, which grants that all newest trends will be in stores in time to meet the ever so changing demands of the customers. In order to stay tuned with the latest trends, one of Inditex’s strategies is to produce and deliver its garments to supply the stores in small batches. It makes it easier to remove from stores an item if it does not sell well and replace it by some other product that meets the fashion demand, which can be produced within 10 days (Bhasin, 2019).

Through the philosophy of giving the customers what they want, in a fast pace and with affordable prices, the group relies on word-of-mouth advertising more than in any other marketing strategy. As the company does not talk about itself, it leaves up to the customers

to do so. It is not a matter of saying how good it would be but having a satisfied customer saying the shopping experience was worth it (Bhasin, 2019).

As Inditex hardly has a marketing department at all, it doesn't engage on flashy campaigns like most retailers, like teaming up with fashion designers such as Roberto Cavalli and Stella McCartney. Instead, Company 2 and the Inditex Group have another marketing strategy: the stores, other than having their interior designs carefully thought and standardized all over the world, are located on the best spots of the cities, preferably next to big high-end brands (Hansen, 2012).

In 2011, Inditex paid US\$ 324 million for a space on the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, in New York, to grant a location among the most sophisticated brands in the world. As the high street is divided by brand value, stores like Gucci, Chanel and Prada stay close together and have no desire to be associated with fast-fashion brands. However, the Inditex group specifically places its stores near them, as a clever marketing strategy in which, by being close by such exquisite places, the stores can borrow some of their value.

## **Appendix B – Questionnaire and Survey Results**

### **Questionnaire**

This survey serves to contribute to the formulation of a master thesis. It is worth noting that the research consists of a marketing study of two well-known brands: H&M and Zara. Thank you for your participation.

Q1 Please, select your gender:

☐ male

☐ female

☐ other

☐ rather not say

Q2 Please, select your age:

☐ Teenager (12-17 years old)

☐ Young Adult (18-25 years old)

☐ Adult (26- 59 years old)

☐ Senior citizen (59+ years old)

Q3 Are you familiar with fashion brand H&M?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q4 Are you familiar with fashion brand Zara?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q5 Have you ever seen an H&M Advertisement?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q6 Have you ever seen a Zara Advertisement?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q7 Do you believe every fashion brand should advertise its season campaigns in the media?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q8 If you answered “Yes” on question 7, why is that?

☐ It is easier to see the products available

☐ It is easier to see the prices

☐ Both answers apply

Q9 Which store is more appealing to you?

☐ H&M

☐ Zara

Q10 Regarding question 9, why is that?

☐ The price

☐ The display of the products from the windows to the racks

☐ It is more popular

☐ It is fancier

Q11 Do you feel closer to the world of the celebrities wearing which brand?

☐ H&M

☐ Zara

Q12 Regarding question 11, why is that?

☐ Fame

☐ Price

☐ Quality of the products



Q13 Do you feel more exclusive at:

☐ H&M

☐ Zara

Q14 Regarding question 13, why is that?

☐ Fame

☐ “Cooler” fashion items

☐ Price

☐ Quality of the products

Q15 Which brand offers more exclusive and expensive products in its campaigns?

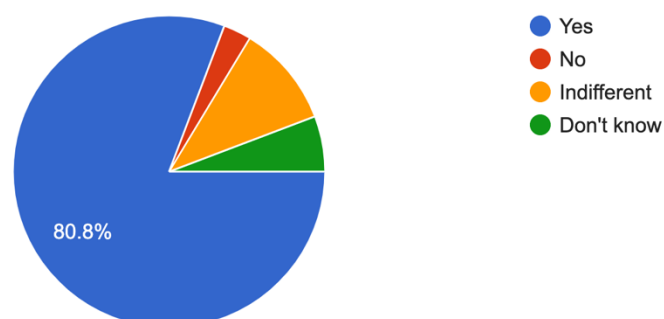
☐ Zara

☐ H&M

## Survey Results

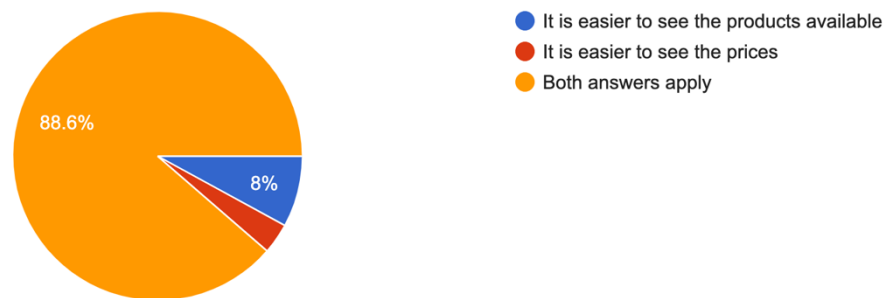
**Figure 12 - Should brands advertise its campaigns**

104 responses



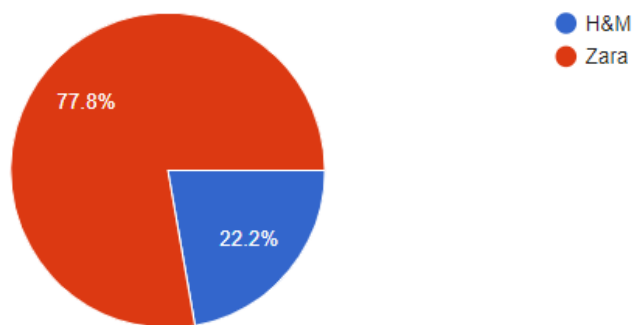
**Figure 13 - Regarding the previous question, why is that?**

88 responses



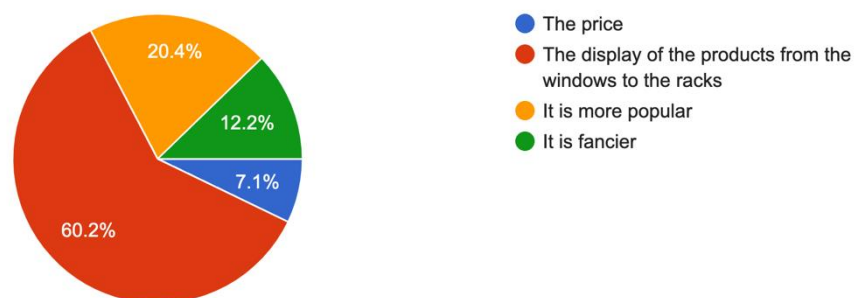
**Figure 14 - Which brand is more appealing**

99 responses



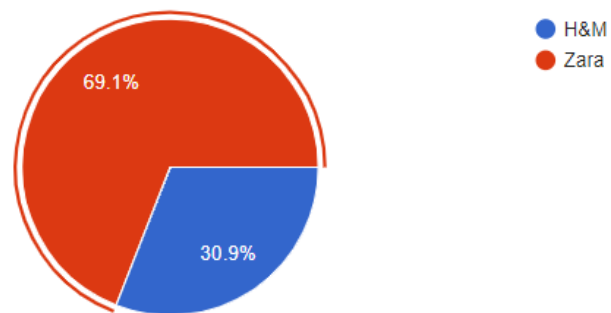
**Figure 15 - Regarding the previous question, why is that?**

98 responses



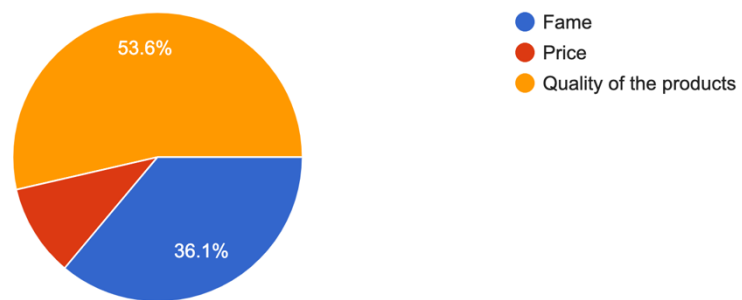
**Figure 16 - Which brand makes the respondents feel closer to the celebrities**

97 responses



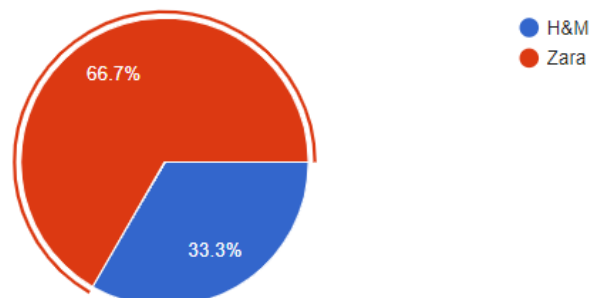
**Figure 17 - Regarding the previous question, why is that?**

97 responses



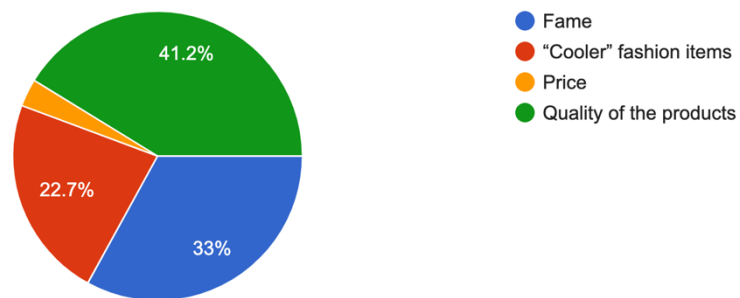
**Figure 18 - Which brand makes the respondents feel more exclusive**

96 responses



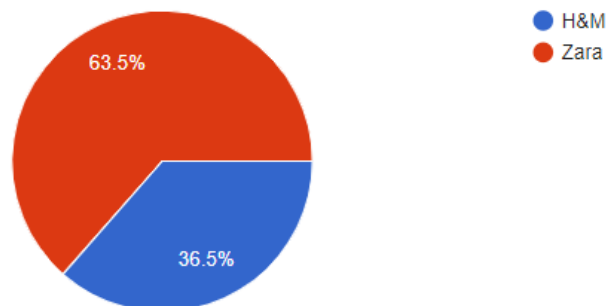
**Figure 19 - Regarding the previous question, why is that?**

97 responses



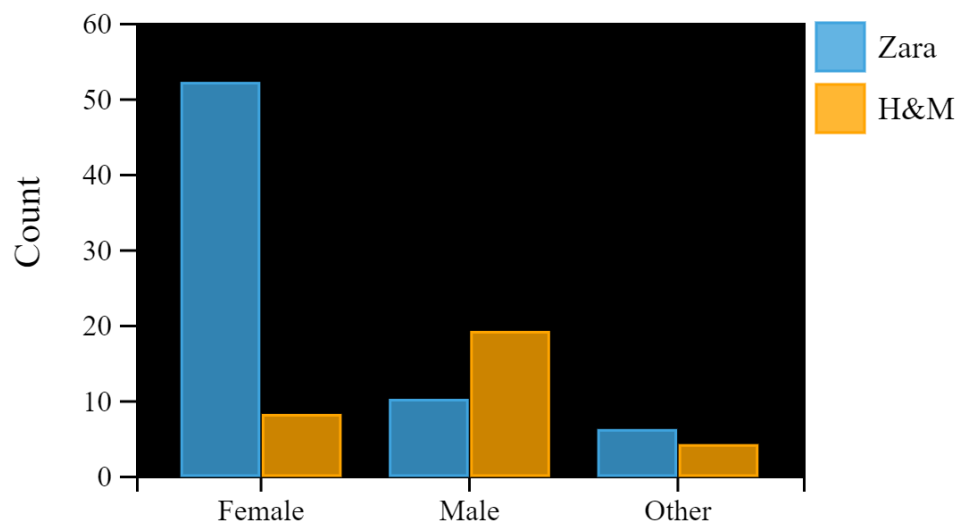
**Figure 20 - Which brand offers more exclusive and expensive products**

96 responses



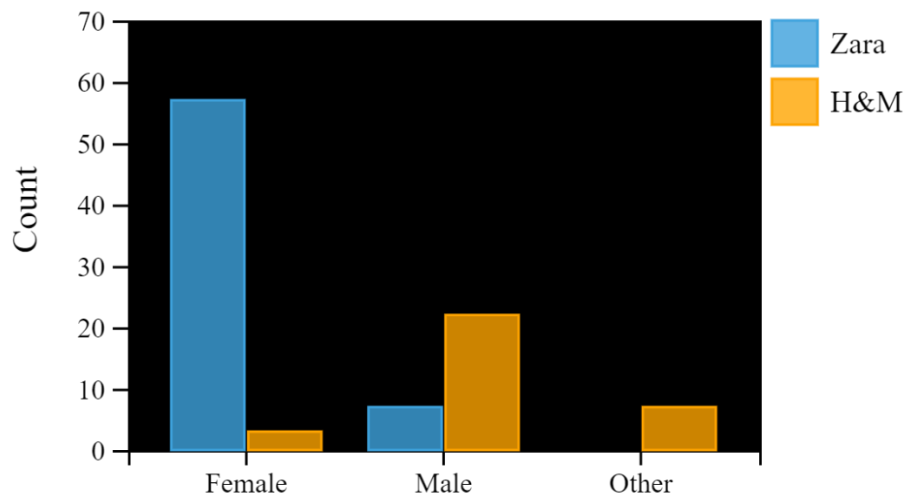
Source: Survey Google. ago/2020.

**Figure 21 - Which store is more appealing X Gender?**



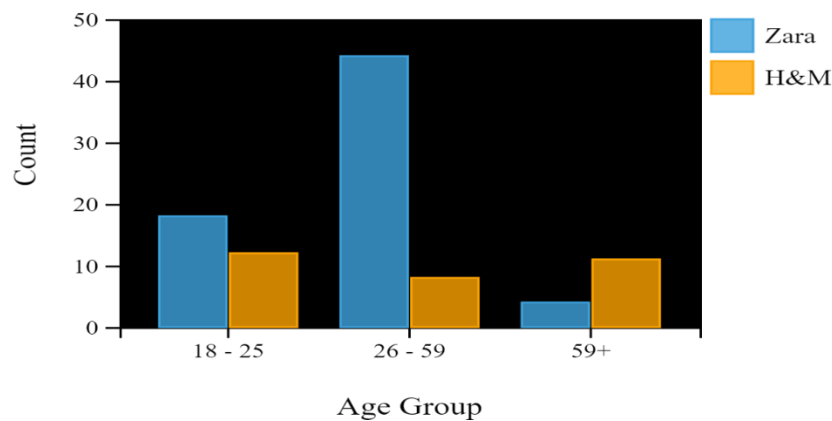
A Pearson's chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between Gender and Which store is more appealing. The association between these variables was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 99) = 25.14, p < .001$ , *Cramer's V* = 0.50.

**Figure 22 - Which store makes you feel more exclusive X Gender?**



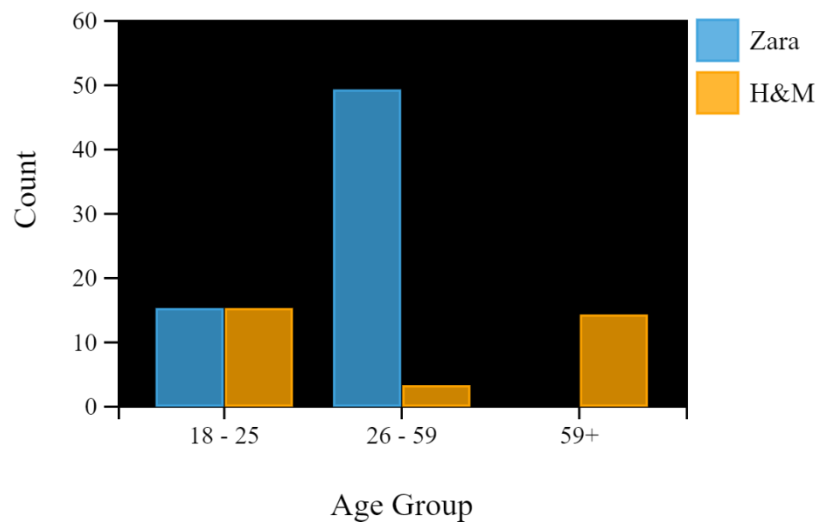
A maximum likelihood ratio chi-square test was performed to examine the association between Gender and Which store makes you feel more exclusive. The association between these variables was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 66.33, p < .001$ , *Cramer's V* = 0.83.

**Figure 23 - Which store is more appealing X Age Group?**



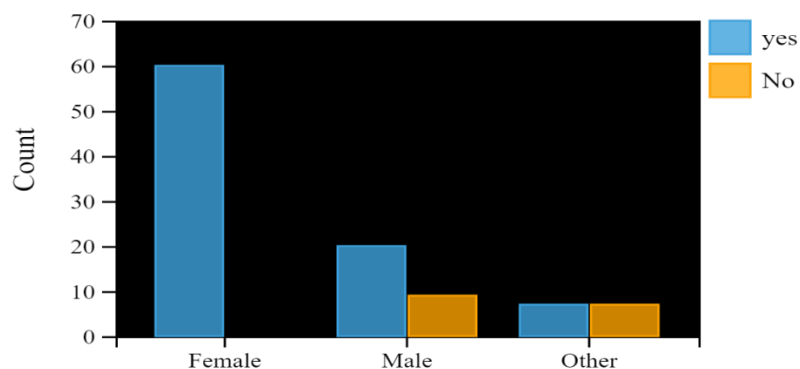
A Pearson's chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between Age Group and Which store is more appealing. The association between these variables was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 97) = 19.27, p < .001$ , *Cramer's V* = 0.45.

**Figure 24 - Which store makes you feel more exclusive X Age Group**



A Pearson's chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between Age Group and Which store makes you feel more exclusive. The association between these variables was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 49.53, p < .001$ , *Cramer's V* = 0.72.

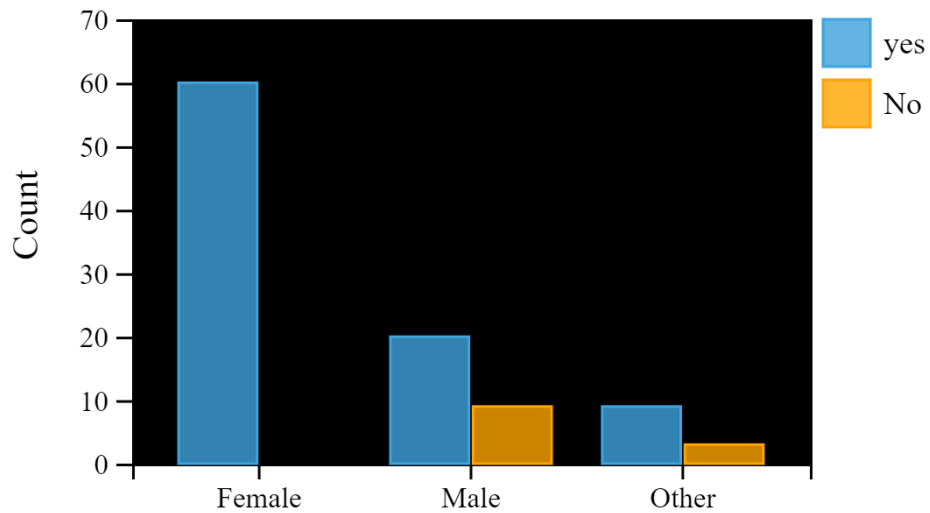
**Figure 25 - Have you ever seen an H&M Advertisement X Gender?**



A maximum likelihood ratio chi-square test was performed to examine the association between Gender and 5) Have you ever seen an H&M Advertisement? The association

between these variables was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 103) = 33.63, p < .001$ , *Cramer's V* = 0.57.

**Figure 26 - Have you ever seen a Zara Advertisement X Gender?**



A maximum likelihood ratio chi-square test was performed to examine the association between Gender and 6) Have you ever seen a Zara Advertisement? The association between these variables was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 101) = 24.22, p < .001$ , *Cramer's V* = 0.49.