

Apparel Brand Perceptions:
An examination of consumers' perceptions of six athletic apparel brands

by
Katelyn Conway

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

Honors College

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Merchandising Management
(Honors Scholar)

Presented June 15, 2017
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Katelyn Conway for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Merchandising Management presented on June 15, 2017. Title: Apparel Brand Perceptions: An examination of consumers' perceptions of six athletic apparel brands

Abstract Approved: _____
Kathy Mullet

Brands are becoming more relevant in today's society, especially in order to differentiate among competitors and in the eyes of the consumer. As a result of this relevance, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain a strong brand perception among consumer markets. Therefore, it is fundamental for brands to understand how consumers perceive them and if this aligns with how brands want to be perceived.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the importance of branding and brand perception. An online survey was conducted to determine the perception of six apparel companies regarding ten characteristics.

Key Words: Athletic brands, consumer perceptions

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Go Beavs

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Brand perception is owned by consumers, not brands. Regardless of a company's message, whatever consumers are thinking and saying about a brand, becomes the brand (Smith, 2015). Brand perception is an extremely vital factor in the success of a company, especially in today's era where the industry is becoming increasingly more competitive. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to develop a brand that is perceived as different and competitive. For a majority, if not all of companies that have succeeded in the market put the consumer at the forefront of all decision-making processes. With this in mind, it is fundamental that brands understand how their consumers realistically perceive them, not how brands *want* to be perceived by their consumers.

The purpose of this study is to determine consumer perceptions and preferences of six athletic apparel brands including: Nike, Adidas, Under Armor, Champion, Athleta, and Puma. Perceptions will be revealed through analysis of specific garment/product and brand characteristics.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Comfort:** Positive interaction between the textile product and the body; includes aspects related to physical, physiological, and psychological factors (Kadolph, 2007).
- **Durability:** The length of time a textile product will be useable for its intended purpose (Kadolph, 2007).

- Fabric: The material from which the garment is created with.
- Fit: The ability for a garment to allow freedom of movement, and have an attractive appearance on the body.
- Function: How well a product does what it is designed to do (Kadolph, 2007).
- Innovation: Something new released to the public for approval and adoption.
- Overall Value: Relationship between price and quality.
- Quality: A complex concept used to describe the degree to which a process, material, product, or service possesses desirable physical or intangible attributes (Kadolph, 2007).
- Social Responsibility: The idea that businesses should balance profit-making activities with activities that benefit society; it involves developing businesses with a positive relationship to the society in which they operate (Dragonette, 2017).
- Style: A design with a distinct appearance.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Participants are familiar with the brands identified in the survey.
2. Participants are familiar with the characteristics identified in the survey.
3. The order of ranking questions may have influenced the responses.
4. All participants' responses were not based on gender identity.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to determine the brand perception of six athletic brands. The review of literature will concentrate on the six selected brands and explain the advertising and media promotion that each company has provided to the public. Consumers often base their perception about a brand from both use of the particular brand but also are influenced by the advertising or message which the company provides to consumer.

Brand Perception

Consumers have a significant influence on brand perception, brand concept management plays a vital role in creating a sustainable brand. It is suggested that there are three stages that allow consumers to perceive brand value. These three stages include introduction, elaboration, and fortification. Introduction is the stage that allows consumers to understand brand image, which often occurs during market entry. Elaboration is the stage that enables consumers to perceive the brand's increasing value. During this stage, positioning strategies should focus on enhancing the value of the brand in comparison to its competitors. Lastly, fortification is the stage that generalizes the product to other products created by the specified company. Although fortification is the final stage, Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis suggest that the elaboration stage should continue throughout the life of the brand (Jaworski, MacInnis, Park, 1986).

A significant factor to consider when moving towards understanding a consumer is to analyze consumer purchase behavior. In this particular study, it is important to understand how consumers evaluate quality, as well as the specific criterion that consumers utilize to evaluate a product during the purchasing process. In a separate study conducted to understand consumer perceptions of clothing quality, it was found that 75% of the informational cues were used by consumers, which can include cues such as fabric, fashion, performance, and hand. While 36% of consumers relied on expectations of a high-quality garment in their purchase decision, such as how long the garment should last and the positive feeling experienced when wearing the garment (Herbst, 2010). Given that the informational cues were the most significant to the consumer in the purchase process, this study will also focus on informational cues.

Another study that examined women specific consumer purchase behavior examined the specific criteria utilized by consumers. Respondents identified that the style attribute was the most important, followed by price, retail store, and lastly, brand. It was also concluded that there is a relationship between age and style as well as age and brand (North, 2010).

The six athletic brands selected for the study are Nike, Adidas, Champion, Puma, Under Armour and Athleta. Each of these brands will be discussed as to the mission and advertising promotion which the company provides in their websites and media.

Nike

Nike, which also owns Jordan, Hurley, and Converse was founded in 1964 and is headquartered in Beaverton, Oregon. The company prides itself on its culture of invention. It has a research lab that focuses on product innovation, known as the Nike Blue Ribbon Studio. According to their website, Nike also focuses heavily on community involvement and implementing positive change on a local and global level (“About Nike”, 2017).

Nike recognizes that sustainability and business growth are complementary. With that being said, the company is striving towards a low-carbon growth economy and reevaluating their supply chain processes.

Nike’s mission is to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world. *If you have a body, you are an athlete (“About Nike”, 2017). This mentality is present in several of their advertisements (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Advertisement for Nike. From “About Nike” by Nike, 2017, Retrieved from <http://about.nike.com/>



Adidas

Adidas was established in 1949 in Herzogenaurach, Germany, where its headquarters are still located to this day. The company considers itself to employ a multi-brand strategy through both mass and niche markets by engaging athletes and fashionistas with their distinct and versatile products. In addition, Adidas is comprised of “more than 55,000 [employee] in over 160 countries, we produce more than 778 million product units every year and generate sales of € 17 billion (all figures relate to 2015)” (“Adidas Official Website”, 2017). Adidas also prides itself on each of their internal brands (Adidas, Reebok, and TaylorMade) complementing one another to add to the value of their product.

The guiding principles in which Adidas strives to live by include: strengthening their brands and products to remain competitive, staying consumer-focused, being leaders in innovation and design, delivering “outstanding financial results” (“Adidas Official Website”, 2017), and lastly, remaining a global organization that is socially and environmentally responsible.

Adidas official mission statement is, “The Adidas Group strives to be the global leader in the sporting goods industry with brands built on a passion for sports and a sporting lifestyle” (“Adidas Official Website”, 2017). The advertisements convey the lifestyle mentality Adidas has further been adopting in recent years, featuring celebrities such as Snoop Dawg. The term “all original” featured in Figure 2.2 refers to the original, throwback styles that Adidas began the

company by producing. These styles have become retro in a sense and are being seen as lifestyle products today. However, Adidas still promotes the athletic side of their company as well, which can be seen in Figure 2.3 with a soccer cleat.

Figure 2.2: Advertisement for Adidas.

From "Adidas Original 'All Originals' Ad Campaign", 2011, Retrieved from <http://www.sneakerwatch.com/article/5265/adidas-originals-all-originals-ad-campaign>



Figure 2.3: Advertisement for Adidas.

From "There Will Be Haters", 2015, Retrieved from http://adsoftheworld.com/media/online/adidas_there_will_be_haters



Under Armor

Under Armour was founded in 1996 in Georgetown, Washington DC with the purpose to create a superior performance T-shirt. The headquarters are now located in Baltimore, Maryland. Although it all began with a T-shirt, the company has included technologies in their product assortment where consumers should wear HeatGear when it's hot, ColdGear when it's cold, and AllSeasonGear between extreme weathers.

The four main pillars that Under Armour has built and grown their foundation is to make a great product, to tell a great story, to provide great service, and build a great team.

Under Armour identifies that they seek to comply with United States laws (not identified), as well as their personal Code of Conduct. Their compliance is broken down on several levels including but not limited to nondiscrimination, harassment or abuse, forced and child labor, exports, and sustainable business practices ("Our Mission", 2017).

Their mission statement is, "To make all athletes better through passion, design and the relentless pursuit of innovation" ("Our Mission", 2017). This mentality is demonstrated in Figure 2.4 by picturing powerful athletes and encouraging their customers to reach their highest capabilities.

Figure 2.4: Under Armour Advertisement.

From “Ad of the Day: Under Armour Hypnotically Captures the Army of Athletes Inside Each Star” by Richards, K., 2015, *Ad Week*, Retrieved from

<http://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/ad-day-under-armour-hypnotically-captures-army-athletes-inside-each-star-166511/>



Champion

HanesBrands (Hanes), which owns Champion among several other brands and was founded in 1901 based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The company has approximately 65,300 employees in more than 40 countries. Unlike many U.S. apparel brands, “Hanes primarily operates its own manufacturing facilities. More than 90 percent of the apparel units that we sell worldwide and in the United States are manufactured in our own plants or those of dedicated contractors” (“HanesBrands Inc”, 2017). The company prides itself on its corporate responsibility program. In the future, Hanes has goals to reduce energy use, carbon emissions, and water use while it publicly reports its progress on these goals each year.

Through its advertisements, Champion prides itself on innovative

performance apparel, as well as outfitting athletes on and off the field or gym. These statements embody Champions' and Hanes mission to deliver high quality, comfortable sportswear clothing. This mentality is carried through with their advertisements by stating exactly that, which is seen in both Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.5: Advertisement for Champion.

From "Champion Women's Jersey V-neck Tee", 2017, Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Champion-Womens-Jersey-V-neck-Tee/dp/B00HWF7JZ0>



Figure 2.6: Advertisement for Champion.

From "Champion Women's Jersey V-neck Tee", 2017, Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Champion-Womens-Jersey-V-neck-Tee/dp/B00HWF7JZ0>



Athleta

Gap Inc., which owns Athleta among other brands, was founded in 1969 by creating a pair of jeans that were the perfect fit. It wasn't until recent years in 2008 that Gap acquired Athleta.

Athleta is a female focused sportswear apparel brand that strives to empower women of all ages to find balance in life through exercise and mental health. Through its advertising, Athleta encourages its customers to believe in themselves. In one of Athleta's advertisements, the company attempts to define beauty as energy, strength, and motion. Athleta inspires its customers to be active because it's an essential part of who they are.

Athleta's slogan is "The Movement Movement", which is striving to enact change in its customers, as well as its potential customers to move ("About Gap Inc", 2017). Overall, the brand centers itself around inspiring and fueling women. This mentality can be seen in each of their advertisements in Figure 2.7.

Puma

The Puma Group, which was established in 1948 and owns Puma, Cobra Golf and Dobotex. The company distributes its products in more than 120 countries, employs more than 11,000 people worldwide, and is headquartered in Herzogenaurach, Germany, the same city as Adidas. In 2016, footwear accounted for 43.4% of its total sales, apparel with 38.3% of sales, and accessories with 18.3% ("About Puma", 2017).

Figure 2.7: Advertisement for Athleta.

From "Athleta", Lentz J., n.d., Retrieved from <http://cargocollective.com/joshleutz/Athleta>



The brand stands for four core values: brave, confident, determined, and joyful. Through these core values, the company has multiple product lines. Puma's product portfolio includes Teamsport, Running and Training, Golf, Motorsport, Sportstyle, and Accessories. Puma has also stated that sustainability is an important value. In addition, the company believes that the future is female, in reference to the future of their currently booming female consumer.

In 2014, Puma created a strategic plan for the years to come in order to thrive in the industry. These strategies included repositioning Puma as the Fastest Sports Brand in the world and create brand heat, improve the product engine, optimize the distribution quality, increase the speed of Puma's organization, and lastly, to renew the IT infrastructure.

Puma's advertisements predominantly focus on the promotion of their gear

through celebrities. The advertisement in Figure 2.9 aligns with Puma's current strive towards promoting women in accordance with the future is female mentality.

Figure 2.9: Advertisement for Puma.

From "Kylie Jenner Stars in First Puma Ad, Reveals New Sneaker Style", by Fashion Gone Rogue, 2016, Retrieved from <http://www.fashiongonerogue.com/kylie-jenner-puma-2016-ad-campaign/>



CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Prior to data being collected, each of the six companies was researched from an advertisement and company perspective. This research revealed that each of the companies come from a rich and unique history.

Following the background research, it was unclear as to what the consumer perceptions and preferences were regarding the comparison of each company. Therefore, it was recognized that there is a need for further investigation.

Survey

An online survey was developed to determine the brand perception . The survey consisted of 18 questions. The survey poses basic questions such as demographic details, as well as questions where the user is asked to rate on a scale their preferences for each of the six companies (Appendix A).

Questions 1 through 3 were focused on understanding the overall brand preference, as well as end use for the products purchased. Question 1 focused highly on overall brand preference, while Question 2 focused on aspirational brand preference, where the consumer may not be able to afford it but they would purchase it if money allowed. Lastly, Question 3 focused on end use intentions of purchased products.

These questions were asked first in order to understand overall brand preference before breaking down the components of a brand and its products into separate questions and diving deeper into the details.

Questions 5 to 14 were set up as rankings of each of the characteristics, which were important in understanding brand perception. Each of the characteristics was determined as important.

Question 5: Fit

Question 5 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “fit”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what good and bad fit is. In this study, fit was defined as the ability for a garment to allow freedom of movement, and have an attractive appearance on the body. This would be important for brand perception in that if a consumer is not happy with the fit of the garment for whatever reason, it would reflect poorly on the brand.

Question 6: Social Responsibility

Question 6 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “social responsibility”. It was assumed that participants have a basic knowledge of what social responsibility is. In this study, social responsibility was defined as the idea that businesses should balance profit-making activities with activities that benefit society; it involves developing businesses with a positive relationship to the society in which they operate. This is significant for brand perception because many consumers are beginning to factor levels of corporate social responsibility into their purchase decision and can be a driving factor for many consumers.

Question 7: Quality

Question 7 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “quality”. It

was assumed that participants have an understanding of what quality is. In this study, quality is defined as a complex concept used to describe the degree to which a process, material, product, or service possesses desirable physical or intangible attributes. This is important for brand perception in that if a consumer does not perceive a brand to have high quality, it is likely that strong brand loyalty will not develop over time; however, if the consumer perceives a brand to produce high quality products, they will likely return.

Question 8: Durability

Question 8 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “durability”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what durability is. In this study, durability is considered to be the length of time a textile product will be useable for its intended purpose. This would be significant for brand perception because if products do not last very long, consumers are likely to perceive a brand poorly.

Question 9: Comfort

Question 9 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “comfort”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what comfort is. In this study, comfort is considered a positive interaction between the textile product and the body; includes aspects related to physical, physiological, and psychological factors. This is important for brand perception because consumers prefer products that are comfortable, especially with athletic products, and will associate a positive

perception with the brand.

Question 10: Overall Value

Question 10 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “overall value”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what overall value is in regards to products and brands. In this study, overall value is considered the relationship between price and quality. This is significant in brand perception in that if a consumer believes they are receiving the overall best value for a product and brand for the given price, they are likely to have positive perceptions of a brand.

Question 11: Innovation

Question 11 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “innovation”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what innovation is. In this study, innovation is considered something new released to the public for approval and adoption. This is important for brand perception because several companies pride themselves on being innovative, but if consumers do not see the brand as innovative, then the brand is not achieving a high enough level of innovation in the eyes of the consumer.

Question 12: Style

Question 12 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “style”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what style is. In this study, style is defined as a design with a distinct appearance. This is significant for brand perception in that consumers are likely to purchase products that they feel good in

and that feel express their personal style well.

Question 13: Fabric

Question 13 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “fabric”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what fabric is. In this study, fabric is defined as the material from which the garment is created with. This is important for brand perception in that fabric choice can have physical, psychological, and physiological comfort factors associated and are especially essential for athletic use.

Question 14: Function

Question 14 asked the participants to rank the six companies on “function”. It was assumed that participants have an understanding of what function is. In this study, function refers to how well a product does what it is designed to do. This is significant for brand perception in that consumers want their products to perform and function as they are advertised as and if a discrepancy occurs, brand perception can decrease.

Questions 15 to 18 were demographic questions to obtain information about the participants regarding the identified gender, age range, field of study, and state and or country of origin.

Before the survey could be distributed, the survey needed to be approved by the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). During this step, there were several forms that were required and the board reviewed the survey itself

(Appendix B, Appendix C).

Participants

After IRB approved the survey, the survey was distributed among various Design and Human Environment (DHE) courses of college-aged students with a variety of fields of study. This variation allowed for the data collected to be broad and less specific to one type of student. As stated in the IRB approval, students in the DHE courses would be more likely to know the brands and the garment characteristics in which they were asked to rank.

The survey was open from March 6th to May 11th for respondents.

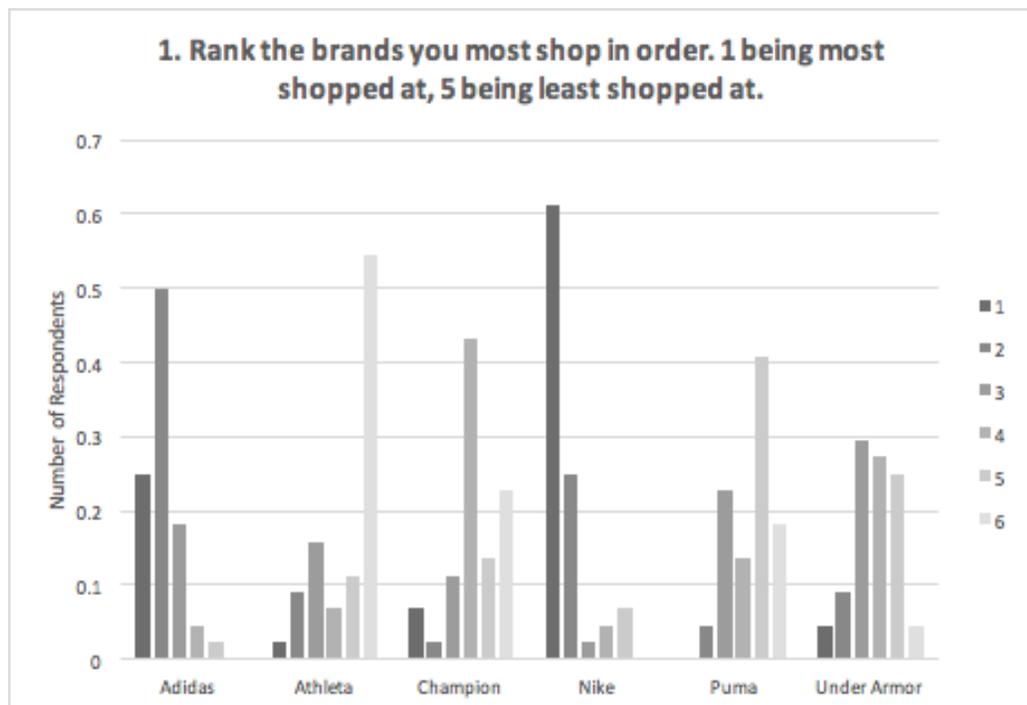
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Following the distribution of the survey and data collection, there was a total of 48 survey respondents. The data was analyzed and formatted into charts. Ten garment and brand characteristics were identified as important to determine brand perception. Subjects were asked to rank each of the six companies as to their perception of each characteristic. The survey results for each question are as follows. Additional rank information and analysis will be provided as necessary:

Question 1. Rank the brands you most shop in order. 1 being most shopped at, 5 being least shopped at.

Figure 4.1: Question 1. Includes all of the rankings for the brand most shopped at.



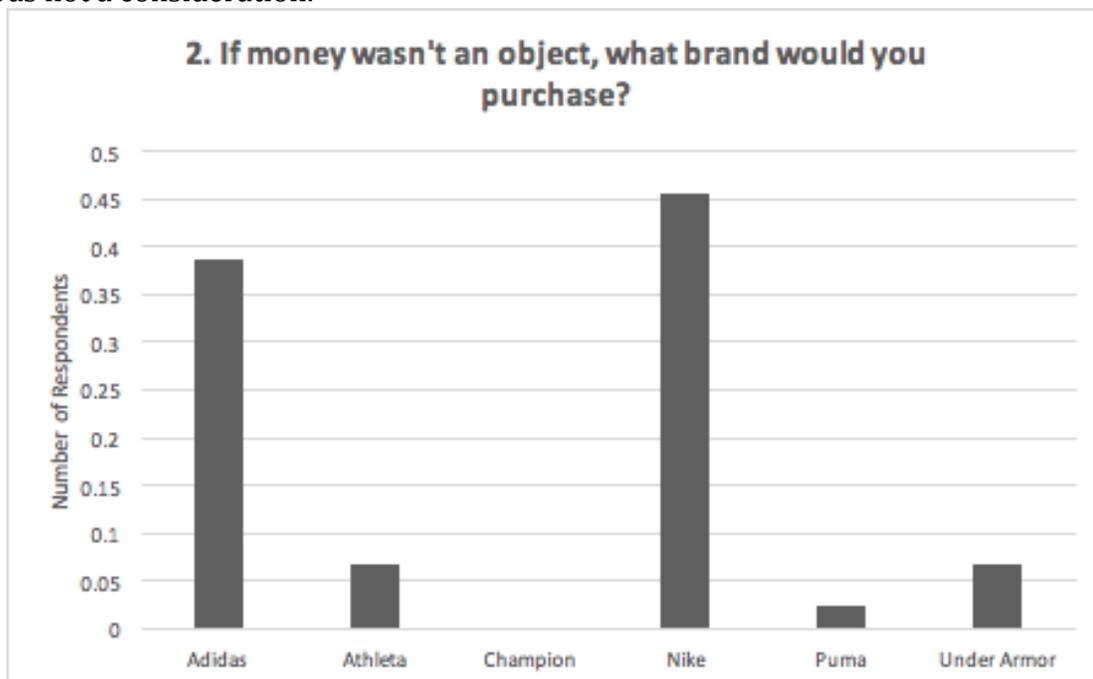
Rank #1: For being most shopped at, Nike is ranked number one with a 61.36%,

compared to Adidas ranking number two at 25%. Puma is ranked at 0%, Under Armour ranks at 4.55%, Athleta ranks at 2.27%, and Champion ranks at 6.82%.

It is apparent through this data that Nike is the leading brand for being most shopped at, with Adidas following in being the second most shopped at.

Question 2. If money wasn't an object, what brand would you purchase?

Figure 4.2: Question 2. Includes ranking for brands that would be chosen if money was not a consideration.



If money was not an object, 45.45% of respondents would purchase Nike.

This is followed by Adidas with 38.64%. Next, Athleta and Under Armour are tied with 6.82%, Puma is at 2.27%, and lastly, Champion is ranked at 0%.

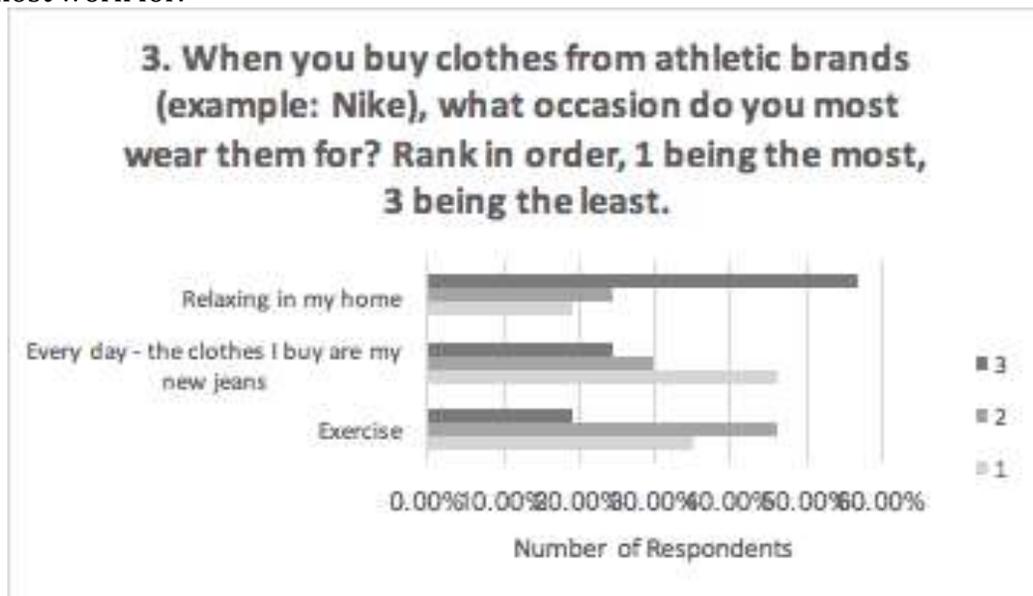
Through this data, it is evident that Nike and Adidas rank the highest in brands that would be purchased if money was not a concern. Athleta and Under Armour are

perceived similarly in this context and Puma and Champion are not very relevant to consumers in this category.

Question 3. When you buy clothes from athletic brands (example: Nike), what occasion do you most often wear them for?

This question the respondents were to rank in order, 1 being the most, 3 being the least., for each of the following activities:-Exercise, Every day and Relaxing in my home

Figure 4.3: Question 3. Includes all of the rankings for the occasion athletic apparel is most worn for.



Rank #1: “Every day” use is ranked the highest at 45.95%, with “exercise” not too far behind with 35.14%. “Relaxing in my home” is ranked lowest at 18.92%.

Rank #2: “Exercise” is ranked the highest at 45.95%, with “everyday” use at 29.73%, and “relaxing in my home” being close behind with 24.32%.

Rank #3: “Relaxing in my home” is ranked the highest at 56.76%, “every day”

use is ranked at 24.32%, and lastly, “exercise” is ranked at 18.92%.

This specific data provides insight into what the consumer is looking for in a product and its end use. With the recent rise in athleisure, it does not come as a surprise that “every day” is ranked the highest in the #1 ranking. It is common for athletic wear to be worn for exercise, so it is also not surprising that exercise was the highest ranked in the #2 ranking.

Question 4. For questions 5-14, please put in order, best to worst, the brand that best provides the following characteristics:

Question 4 was developed from the characteristics which were identified in the literature as contributing to brand perception. Question 5-14 are the characteristics of Fit, Social Responsibility, Quality, Durability, Comfort, Overall Value, Innovation, Style, Fabric, and Function. The results of each characteristics will be given and discussed.

Question 5. Fit

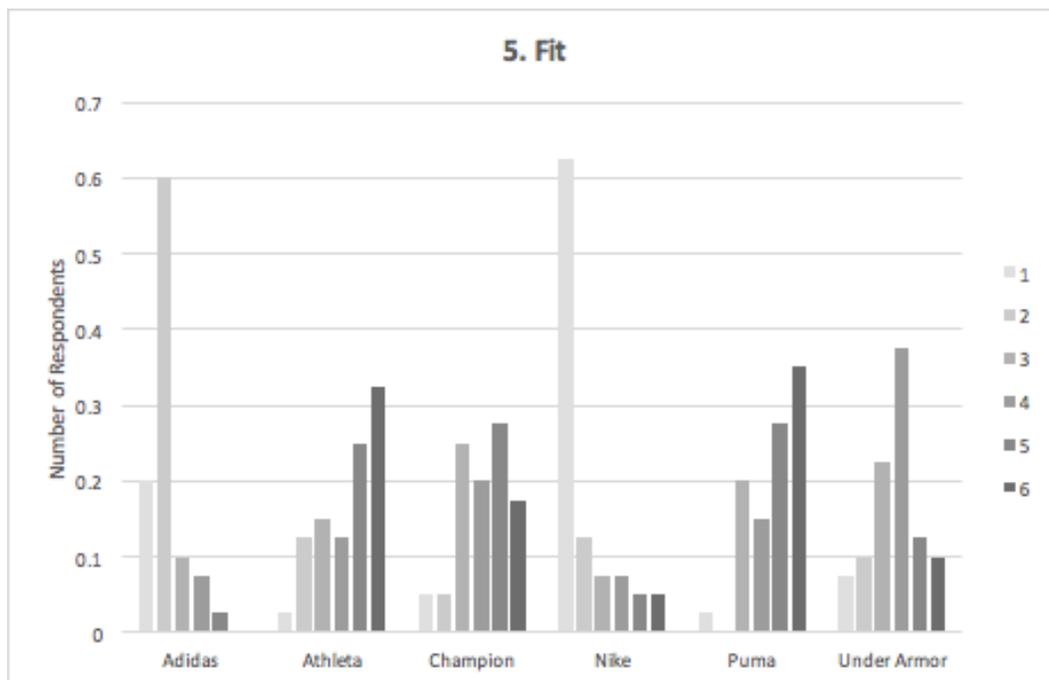
Rank #1: Nike is ranked highest at 62.5% for the best fit, followed by Adidas at 20%. Under Armour is ranked third at 7.5% and Champion is ranked next at 5%. Athleta and Puma are tied at 2.5%.

Rank #2: Adidas is ranked highest at 60%, followed by Nike and Athleta tied for 12.5%. Under Armour is ranked third again at 10%, followed by Champion at 5% and Puma at 0%.

The second ranking is provided as Adidas takes a substantial jump over Nike. Nike is ranked the first highest overall, however if rankings #1 and #2 were to be

combined, Adidas would not be far behind Nike. Therefore, it can be determined that Nike is the leading brand in fit; however, Adidas is a close second.

Figure 4.4: Question 4. Includes all of the rankings for fit.



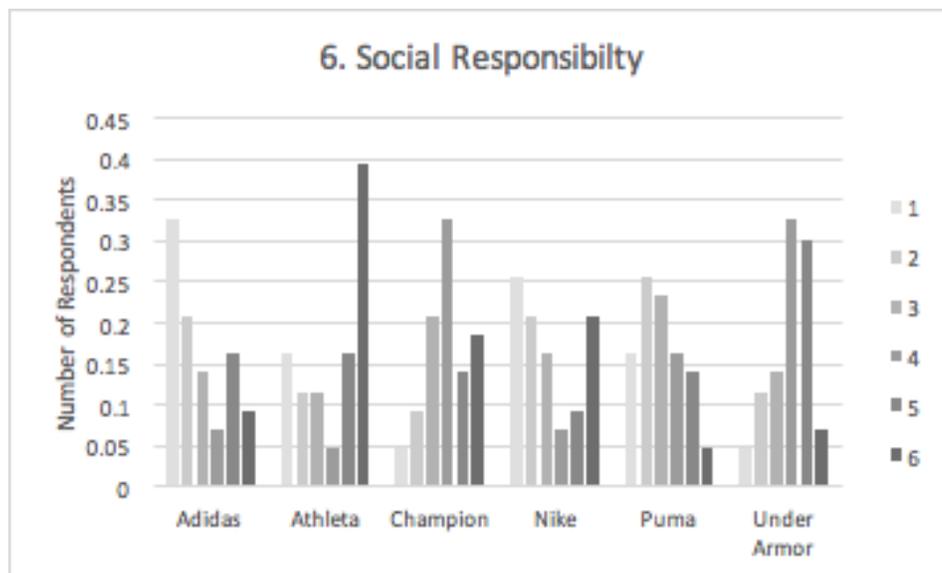
Question 6. Social Responsibility

Rank #1: Adidas is ranked highest at 32.56%, with Nike following second highest at 25.58%. Athleta and Puma are tied next at 16.28%, while Under Armour and Champion are tied last at 4.65%.

Rank #2: Puma is ranked highest at 25.58%. Nike and Adidas are tied for second highest with 20.93%. Under Armour and Athleta are tied at 11.63% and Champion is lowest ranked at 9.3%.

This data is surprising in that Athleta and Puma have consistently ranked lower in all other characteristics; however, these brands appear to be more highly regarded in social responsibility. Nike and Adidas are still front runners, but fall behind in this category.

Figure 4.5: Question 6. Includes all of the rankings for social responsibility.



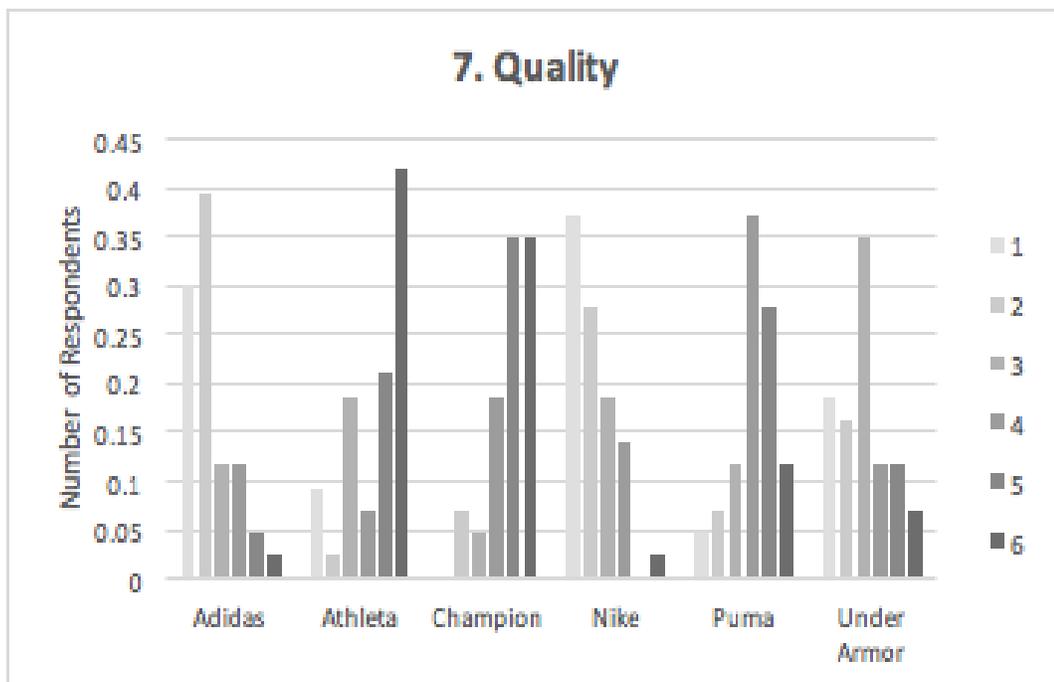
Question 7. Quality

Rank #1: Nike scored highest in quality at 37.21%, with Adidas not far behind at 30.23%. Under Armour was ranked the next highest at 18.6%, followed by Athleta at 9.3%. Puma ranked at 4.65% and Champion ranked lowest at 0%.

Rank #2: Adidas ranked the highest at 39.53%, with Nike following at 27.91%. Under Armour is next with 16.28%, followed by Puma and Champion tied at 6.98%, and lastly, Athleta is ranked at 2.33%.

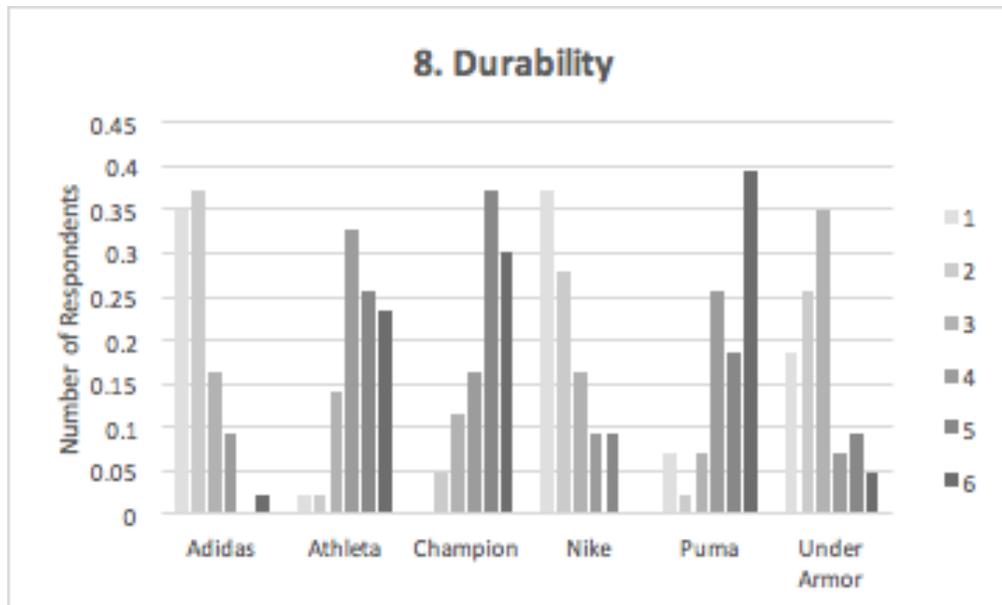
This data is interesting because Champion is ranked at 0% in the number one ranking; however, it is ranked higher than Athleta in the number two ranking. Additionally, Nike and Adidas switched significantly in the second ranking, but are still the top two brands in this characteristic.

Figure 4.6: Question 7. Includes all rankings for quality.



Question 8. Durability

Figure 4.7: Question 8. Includes all rankings for durability.



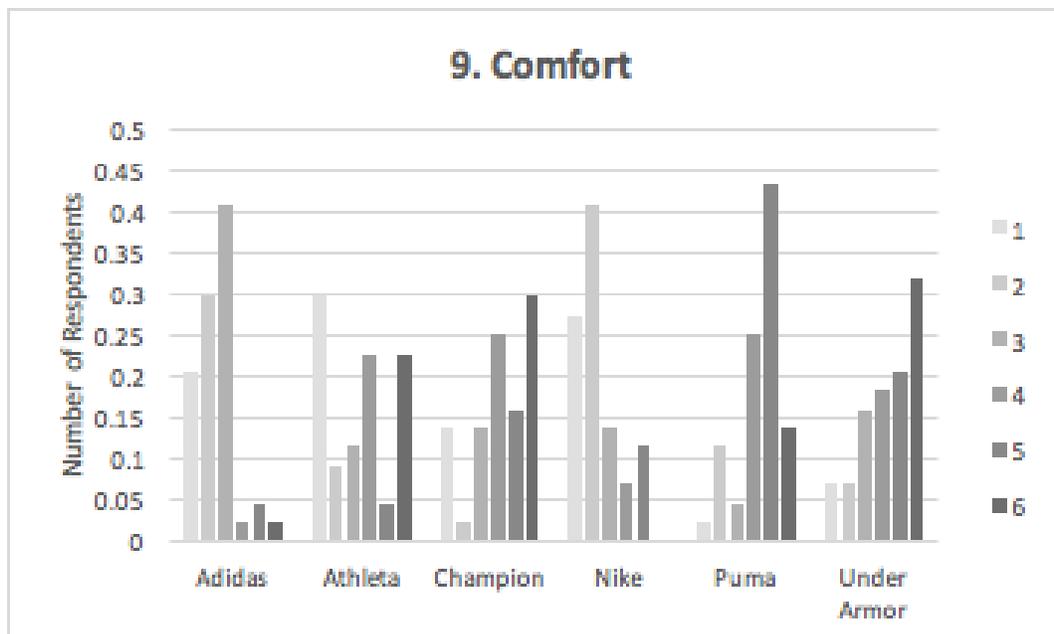
Rank #1: Nike ranked the highest at 37.21%, followed by Adidas at 34.88%. Under Armour ranked third at 18.6%, while Athleta ranked at 2.33% and Champion at 0%.

Rank #2: Adidas ranked the highest at 37.21%, with Nike following at 27.91%. Under Armour took a jump to 25.58%, followed by Champion ranking at 4.65%. Athleta and Puma tied last at 2.33%.

This data identifies that Nike and Adidas are regarded as having the best durability in its products. Under Armour scored higher in this characteristic than it has in most others, signifying that Under Armour may be stronger in the durability of its products than most other characteristics.

Question 9. Comfort

Figure 4.8: Question 9. Includes all rankings for comfort



Rank #1: Athleta ranked highest at 29.55% for comfort, followed by Nike at 27.27%. Adidas was third at 20.45%, followed by Champion at 13.64%. Under Armour was ranked at 6.82%, and lastly, Puma was ranked at 2.27%.

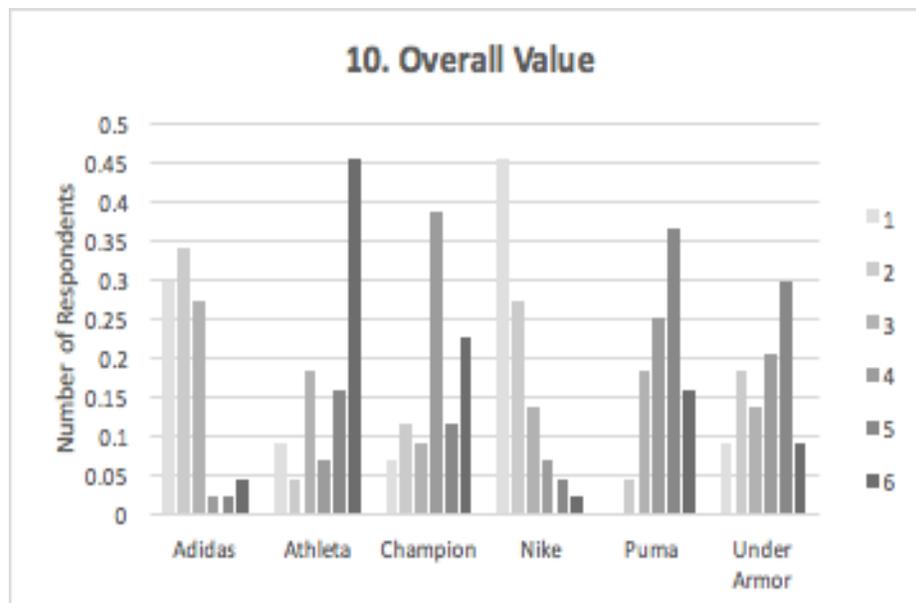
Rank #2: Nike scored highest at 40.91%, followed by Adidas at 29.55%. Puma scored third highest at 11.36%. Athleta was ranked at 9.09%, and lastly, Champion was ranked at 2.27%.

This data is surprising because Athleta, which has been scoring relatively low in all categories, was ranked as number one for comfort. As a number two ranking, Nike took an impressive lead in numbers and Athleta took a massive decline.

Overall, it appears that consumers believe Athleta has the greatest perceived comfort.

Question 10. Overall Value

Figure 4.9: Question 10. Includes all rankings for overall value.

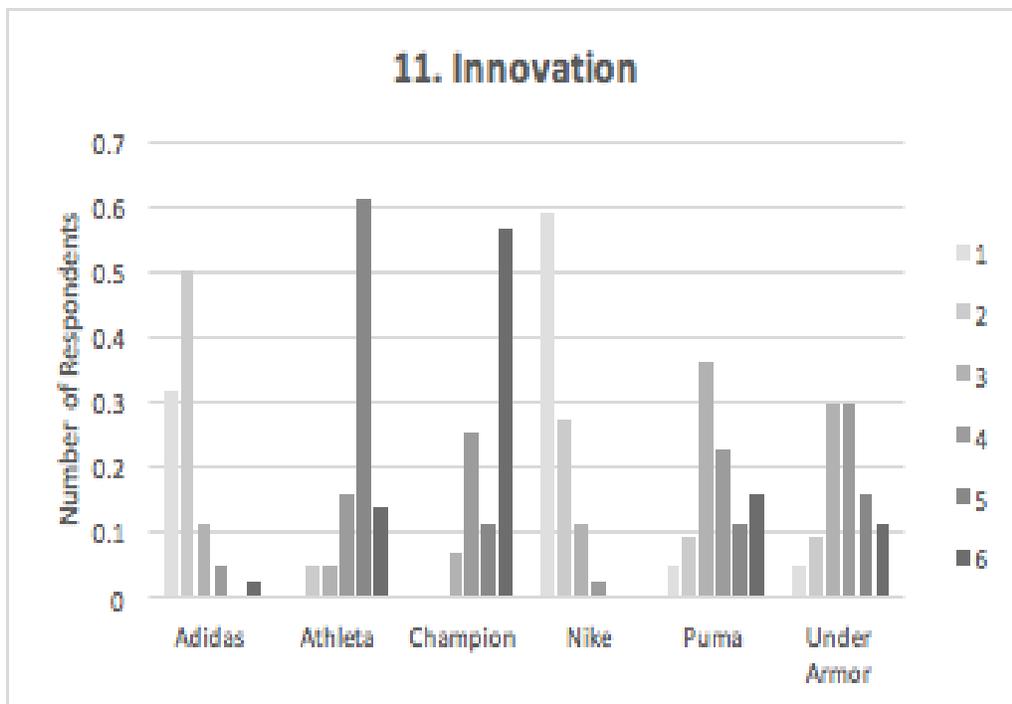


Nike was ranked the highest in overall value at 45.45%, while Adidas ranked at 29.55%. Under Armor and Athleta tied for third at 9.09%, followed by Champion at 6.82%, and lastly, Puma at 0%.

This information is relatively consistent with all other characteristic responses because Nike is the highest ranked in the number one ranking and Adidas is second highest. It is apparent that consumers find Nike to have the greatest overall value in its products.

Question11. Innovation

Figure 4.10: Question 11. Includes all rankings for innovation.



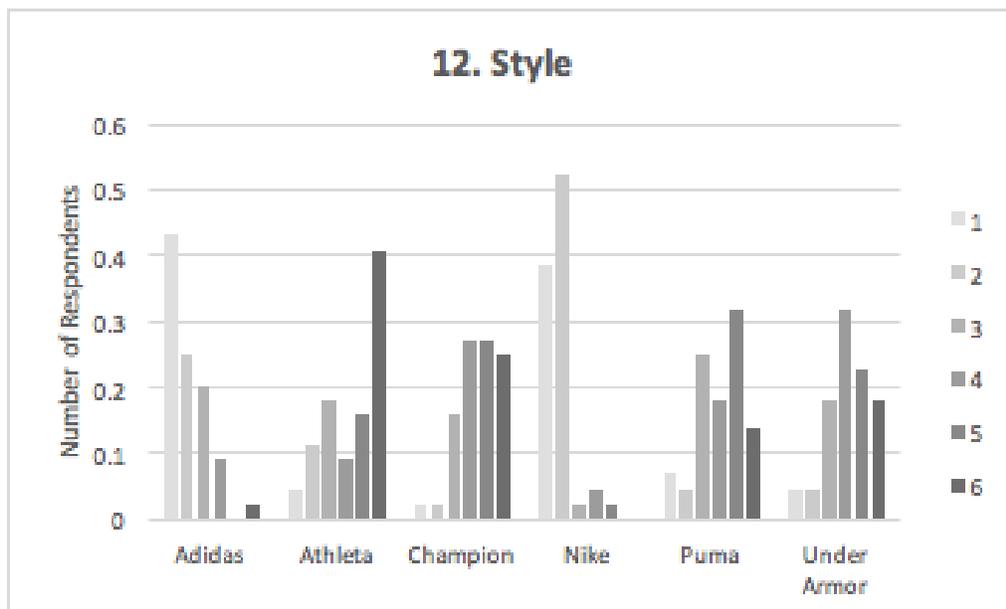
Nike ranked highest in innovation at 59.09%, followed by Adidas at 31.82%.

Under Armour and Puma tied for third at 4.55% and Champion and Athleta were both ranked at 0%.

This data indicates that consumers strongly perceive Nike to be the most innovative brand. This perception may be highly influenced by marketing techniques.

Question 12. Style

Figure 4.11: Question 12. Includes all rankings for style.

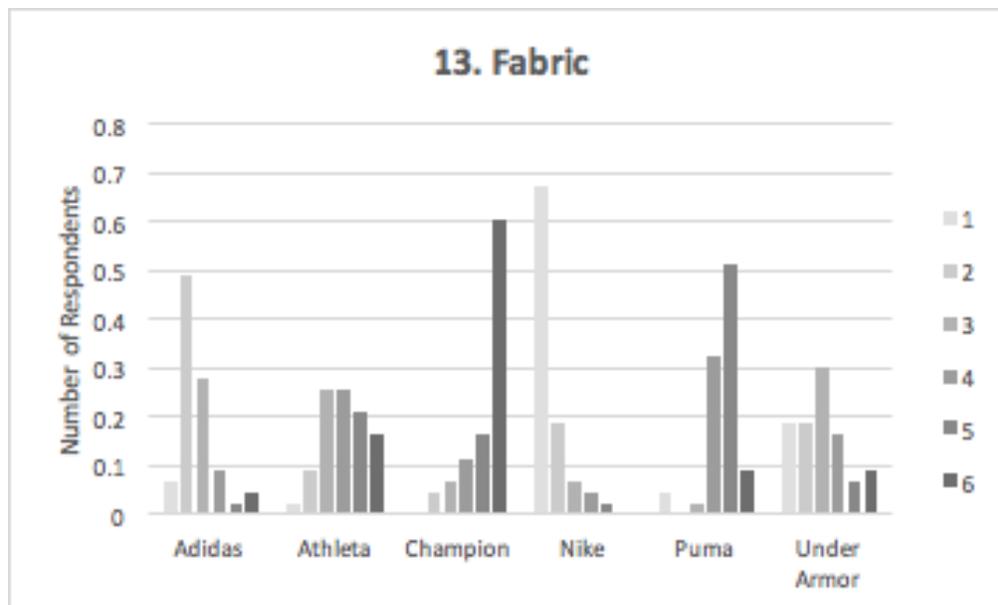


Adidas ranked the highest at 43.18%, followed by Nike at 38.64%. Next ranked is Puma at 6.82%, followed by Under Armour and Athleta tied for fourth at 4.55%. Lastly, Champion is ranked at 2.27%.

This information suggests that consumers perceive Adidas as the most stylish brand. In recent years, Adidas has positioned their brand to focus more on style and athleisure than on athletic gear, therefore, this positioning has been well received by this group of consumers.

Question 13. Fabric

Figure 4.12: Question 13. Includes all rankings for fabric.



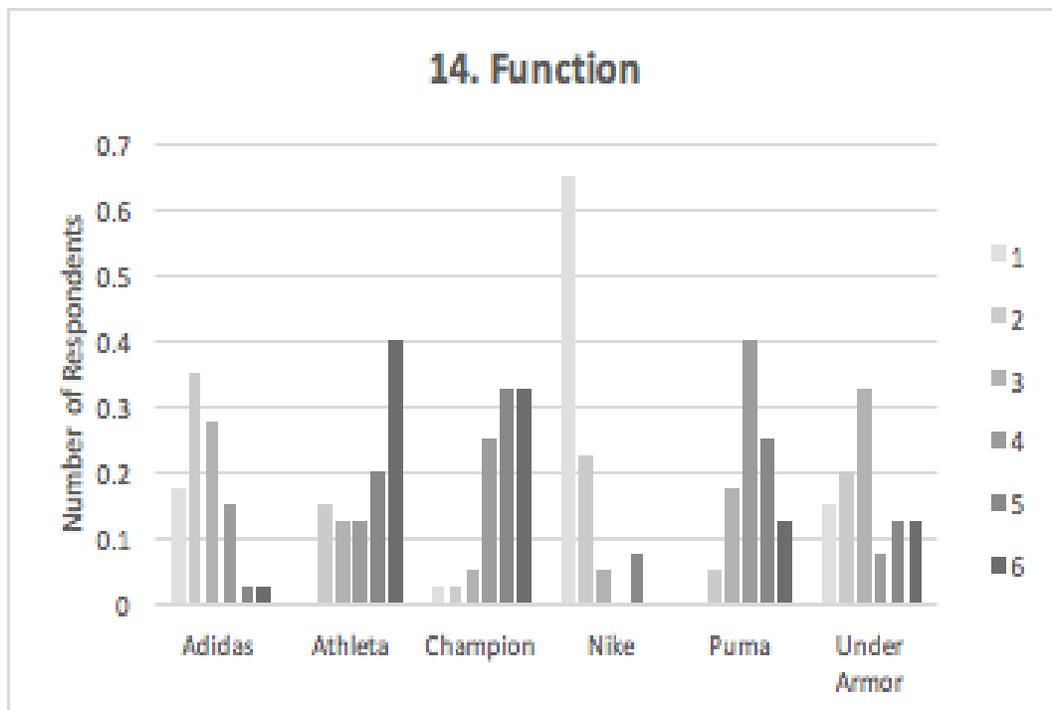
Rank #1: Nike ranked highest for fabric at 67.44%, followed by Under Armour at 18.6%. Adidas ranked third highest at 6.98%, followed by Puma at 4.65%. Athleta ranked at 2.33%, followed by Champion at 0%.

Rank #2: Adidas ranked the highest at 48.84%, followed by Nike and Under Armour tied for second at 18.6%. Athleta ranked third highest at 9.3%, followed by Champion at 4.65% and Puma ranked at 0%.

This data implies that Nike is the frontrunner in fabric usage and Adidas is a runner up, as it was highly ranked number two.

Question14. Function

Figure 4.13: Question 14. Includes all rankings for function.



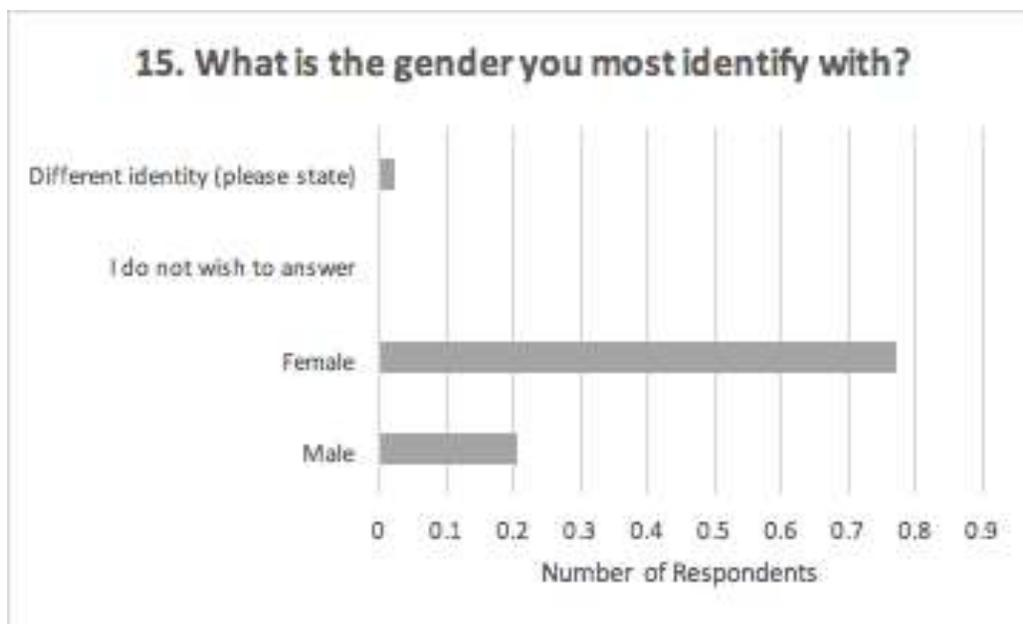
Rank #1: Nike ranked highest in function with 65%, followed by Adidas at 17.5%. Under Armour ranked third at 15%, followed by Champion at 2.5%. Athleta and Puma both ranked at 0%.

Rank #2: Adidas ranked highest at 35%, followed by Nike at 22.5%. Under Armour ranked third at 20%, followed by Athleta at 15%. Puma is ranked at 5% and Champion is ranked at 2.5%.

This data conveys that Nike products have an obvious higher perceived function and Adidas has the second highest function.

Question 15. What is the gender you most identify with?

Figure 4.14: Question 15. Includes gender identity.



A majority of the respondents are female (77.27%), while a small portion are male (20.45%) and 2.27% of respondents identify otherwise.

Question 16. What is your major?

This is a write-in response question, where the majority of respondents study Merchandising Management. Other majors included Apparel Design, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Digital Communications, Civil Engineering, Renewable Materials, Public Health, Kinesiology, Agricultural Business Management, and Music Production.

Question 17. Select your age range.

The respondents were to select from a grouping of ages, which were: 18-20;

21-24; 25-30; and 30+. Older ages were not targeted as respondents .

Figure 4.15: Question 17. Includes all age ranges.



59.09% of respondents are ages 21-24, while 29.55% are ages 18-20. 6.82% of respondents are 30+ and 4.55% of respondents are ages 25-30.

Question 18. What country are you from? If you are from the United States, what state are you from?

This is a write-in response question. Majority of the respondents are from Oregon. Other respondents from the United States are from California, Washington, Georgia, Hawaii, Alaska, and Arizona. Respondents from other countries include South Korea and Tokyo, Japan. This information aids in understanding the target market this data represents.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent through the survey responses that Nike and Adidas are frontrunner brands in all areas. Both Nike and Adidas were consistently ranked number one and two in almost all questions regarding garment characteristics, as well as brand perception overall.

On the other hand, Champion was consistently the lowest ranked company throughout the survey. In addition, Athleta was relatively low in all areas except social responsibility and comfort. Similarly to Athleta, Puma was ranked relatively low throughout the survey, as well. Puma was similar to Athleta with ranking higher in social responsibility.

After compiling all of the data, overall brand preference of the six brands seems to occur in the following order: Nike, Adidas, Under Armour and Athleta, and Puma and Champion. Nike and Adidas were consistently the top two companies, while Under Armour and Athleta seemed to trade off in being the third most preferred brand. Lastly, Puma and Champion were also interchangeable as the two brands also tended to alternate in lowest brand preference.

These results may have been influenced by how popular and well known brands are. For example, Nike is a very well known brand across the world, while Athleta is not as well known. This consumer and participant knowledge could greatly impact brand perception, as well as the results of the survey conducted. Through these results, it can be suggested that companies such as Nike and Adidas

are doing an exceptional job at providing strong informational cues, as well as implementing rigid and successful brand concept management.

Recommendations and Limitations

The methodology to this process produced its limitations. Limitations include but are not limited to: only questioning Oregon State University students in DHE courses, the wording or order of questions may have produced bias, the survey was only accessible to those who had access to the appropriate technology, and ultimately, brand recognition was not determined through this research process. If brand recognition had been determined, there may be further explanation for the responses. Therefore, if further research and investigation is to be conducted, it is recommended to determine and understand brand recognition of respondents in order to gain insight into varied responses.

As for the companies which did not perform as well as others, it is recommended that the companies focus on the stages of their brand concept management, specifically the elaboration and fortification stages, as well as enhancing their informational cues during the production and buying stages as these were the most important factors for consumers during their purchase decision. From the previous results, it is apparent that the advertisements and produced image for companies such as Champion, are not being perceived as intended by its consumers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Consumers' Perception of Six Athletic Brands Survey

Explanation of this Study

Purpose. The purpose of this study is understand consumers' perceptions of six athletic brands

Activities. You are being asked to complete an online survey in which you will rank the six brands on various characteristics, such as fit and overall value.

Time. The survey will take no longer than 20 minutes.

Voluntariness. Participation is voluntary; there is no penalty for choosing not to participate or for leaving the study at any time. You are free to skip any questions or activities. Your decision to take part, or not take part in the research will not impact your grades, your relationship with your professors nor your standing at the university

Contact information: You may contact Dr Kathy Mullet, the PI and course instructor, if you have questions regarding this study. Dr Mullet's email is Kathy.mullet@oregonstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

1 Rank the brands you shop most in order. 1 being most shopped at, 5 being least shopped at.

- _____ Nike (1)
- _____ Adidas (2)
- _____ Puma (3)
- _____ Under Armor (4)
- _____ Athleta (5)
- _____ Champion (6)

2 If money wasn't an object, what brand would you purchase?

- Puma (1)
- Nike (2)
- Under Armor (3)
- Adidas (4)
- Champion (5)
- Athleta (6)

3 When you buy clothes from athletic brands (example: Nike), what occasion do you most often wear them for? Rank in order, 1 being the most, 3 being the least.

- _____ Exercise (1)
- _____ Every day - the clothes I buy are my new jeans (2)
- _____ Relaxing in my home (3)

4 For questions 5-14, please put in order, best to worst, the brand that best provides the following characteristics: -Fit-Social Responsibility -Quality-Durability - Comfort -Overall Value-Innovation-Style-Fabric-Function

5 Fit

- _____ Nike (1)
- _____ Adidas (2)
- _____ Champion (3)
- _____ Athleta (4)
- _____ Puma (5)
- _____ Under Armor (6)

6 Social Responsibility

- _____ Puma (1)
- _____ Champion (2)
- _____ Nike (3)
- _____ Under Armor (4)
- _____ Athleta (5)
- _____ Adidas (6)

7 Quality

- _____ Under Armor (1)
- _____ Nike (2)
- _____ Puma (3)
- _____ Adidas (4)
- _____ Champion (5)
- _____ Athleta (6)

8 Durability

- Adidas (1)
- Under Armor (2)
- Nike (3)
- Athleta (4)
- Champion (5)
- Puma (6)

9 Comfort

- Athleta (1)
- Puma (2)
- Champion (3)
- Adidas (4)
- Nike (5)
- Under Armor (6)

10 Overall Value

- Champion (1)
- Nike (2)
- Puma (3)
- Under Armor (4)
- Adidas (5)
- Athleta (6)

11 Innovation

- Adidas (1)
- Puma (2)
- Nike (3)
- Under Armor (4)
- Athleta (5)
- Champion (6)

12 Style

- Champion (1)
- Nike (2)
- Under Armor (3)
- Adidas (4)
- Puma (5)
- Athleta (6)

13 Fabric

- Under Armor (1)
- Nike (2)
- Athleta (3)
- Puma (4)
- Champion (5)
- Adidas (6)

14 Function

- Nike (1)
- Puma (2)
- Adidas (3)
- Champion (4)
- Athleta (5)
- Under Armor (6)

15 What is the gender you most identify with?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Different identity (please state)
- I do not wish to answer (3)

16 What is your major?

17 Select your age range

- 18-20 (1)
- 21-24 (2)
- 25-30 (3)
- 30+ (4)

18 What country are you from? If you are from the United States, what state are you from?

APPENDIX B**CONSENT FORM**

Project Title: Consumers' Perceptions of Six Athletic Brands

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kathy Mullet

Student Researcher: Katelyn Conway

Version Date: 03-01-2017

Explanation of this Study

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to understand consumers' perceptions of six athletic brands

Activities. You are being asked to complete an online survey in which you will rank the six brands on various characteristics, such as fit and overall value.

Time. The survey will take no longer than 20 minutes.

Voluntariness. Participation is voluntary; there is no penalty for choosing not to participate or for leaving the study at any time. You are free to skip any questions or activities. Your decision to take part, or not take part in the research will not impact your grades, your relationship with your professors nor your standing at the university

Contact information: You may contact Dr Kathy Mullet, the PI and course instructor, if you have questions regarding this study. Dr Mullet's email is Kathy.mullet@oregonstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Consent: By continuing with this online survey, you consent to your anonymous answers being used to complete this study. Thank you.

https://oregonstate.qualtrics.com/jfe5/preview/SV_1Z8P6bEdeLGSpcF

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Post for Canvas

Survey of Consumers' Perceptions of Six Athletic Brands

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to understand consumers' perceptions of six athletic brands.

You are being asked to complete an online survey in which you will rank the six brands on various characteristics, such as fit and overall value.

Contact information: You may contact Dr Kathy Mullet, the PI and course instructor, if you have questions regarding this study. If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Survey link: https://oregonstate.qualtrics.com/jfe5/preview/SV_1Z8P6bEdeLGSpcF

