

Domestic versus foreign franchising gastronomic brand in the context of brand trust

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Abstract: The presented article deals with Brand trust issues in the context of the difference between domestic and foreign franchising brands. The aim of the presented article is to (1) measure the trustworthiness of a selected domestic (Pizza Mizza) and foreign franchising brand (McDonald's) and (2) identify differences in the context of the country of origin. The article is supported by a primary survey, the basis of which was 506 respondents from Slovakia. Brand trust was measured using a simple scale model. The measuring tool achieves a high degree of reliability. The results show an average to below-average level of brand trust in the investigated brands. Differences can be observed within the individual dimensions of brand trust. In general, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between domestic and foreign franchising brands in terms of brand trust. The results can be applied in marketing, strategic marketing as well as in brand management.

Keywords: brand trust, country of origin, brand origin, franchising brands, Slovakia

JEL Classification codes: M31, D10, D91

INTRODUCTION

A good brand strategy is an important asset and a source of comparative and sustainable advantage. Its connection from the aspect of loyalty to franchising is a determinant for the origin and existence of franchising because only a well-known brand in the field of franchising can establish itself on the market and address the customer with its portfolio of products or services. Franchising includes various systems and industries, from fast-food retailing to homecare. There are some familiar names, such as McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, 7-Eleven, Body Shop, Tie-Rack, Pizza Hut, and Service Master (Inma, 2005). The business sectors experiencing the most franchising growth are retail and restaurants (Hoffman & Preble, 2004).

Brand trust is important in brand management. The level of brand trust can be one of the key factors of brand success. In the context of brand trust, we rarely focus on franchising brands, but it is necessary to realize that it is franchising brands that need to maintain brand trust, since the brand represents the entire business concept.

In the context of the country of origin, it is possible to expect that ethnocentric customers and customers subject to the country of origin effect will prefer domestic or foreign brands.

The aim of the presented article is to (1) measure the brand trust of a selected domestic (Pizza Mizza) and foreign franchising brand (McDonald's) and (2) identify differences in the context of the country of origin.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Kotler and Keller (2012, p. 241) defined a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". Farhana et al. (2012) similarly sees a brand as a combination of name, symbol, or design, which creates a distinctive identity to consumers within a crowd of choices through its different brand elements. To sustain a competitive advantage, companies have to develop and build brands that meet real needs and are differentiated in the minds of customers (Chahal & Bala, 2010). The value of the brand continues very closely with the trust of the brand (Shubhapriya & Byoungcho, 2017; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). These theses are confirmed and developed interdisciplinarity with the enterprise management system by Pizar and Bilkova (2019). Authors Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) and So et al. (2013) agree when customers possess a high level of trust in a brand and confidently demonstrate an expectation of the brand's reliability and intentions.

As some authors have recognized (Jeon et al., 2014; Shin, et al., 2016; Nyadzayo et al., 2011; Pitt et al., 2003; Zachary et al., 2011) a franchising brand should be managed with care given the shared brand name within the franchising chain. A reputable brand name is highly sought after by franchisees when choosing a franchisor (Gauzente, 2003; Hodge et al., 2013). Bobek et al. (2019) state that for franchisees, before entering franchising and acquiring a new brand, it is crucial that the brand is already known and successful. Jeon et al. (2014) claim that customers have contrasting perceptions toward franchising and non-franchising brands. A team of authors led by Shin (Shin et al., 2016) found that while a franchising brand is viewed as generating higher service tangibility, convenience, and perceived risk than a non-franchising brand, a non-franchising brand is regarded as signaling higher service reliability and perceived security than a franchising brand. Gensler et al. (2013) add that although the nationally recognized franchising brand name is a valuable intangible asset of the franchising system, it can be in jeopardy when the franchising brand is poorly managed. As reported by some sources (e.g., Frazer et al., 2012; Nyadzayo et al., 2011), franchise relationship management increases positive franchisees' results, such as brand trust, brand commitment, and brand satisfaction in favour of the brand.

Zamazalová et al. (2010) points out that consumers may be subject to the brand's country of origin when choosing a brand. The theoretical basis that connects country of origin with brands can be found in the studies of Thakor and Kohli (1996), who created a new theory of the so-called Brand origin. However, this concept is not considered in terms of franchising brands.

2 METHODOLOGY

The aim of the presented article is to (1) measure the trustworthiness of a selected domestic (Pizza Mizza) and foreign franchising brand (McDonald's) and (2) identify differences in the context of the country of origin.

Based on the objective and the presented literature review, we formulated the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of McDonald's brand trust perception?

RQ2: What is the level of Pizza Mizza's brand trust perception?

RQ3: How can the differences in the perception of domestic and foreign franchising brands be interpreted in the context of brand trust?

H1: *There are significant differences between the average trustworthiness ratings of the selected brands based on the survey.*

In the article, we focus on two companies - Pizza Mizza (domestic brand - Slovakia) and McDonald's (foreign brand - USA). From the point of view of the domestic or foreign brands, the most famous franchising brands. At the same time, McDonald's represents one of the most famous brands, which is currently (in 2022) the most recommended franchise brand in the context of sales, image, brand awareness, support, etc. (Hart, 2022).

Sample

The present study is based on a primary survey. The research was carried out using electronic and printed questionnaires. The basic population was defined as "Slovak consumers older than 15 years". The reason for the age limit is both ethical and at the same time a simple analogy, with consumers over the age of 15 developing their shopping habits and already having their funds. As the definition of population implies, we have two key factors: age and nationality. The reason for defining the age is due to the ethics of the research, as well as due to the assumption that respondents over 15 years of age will already have some money of their own and also formed primary purchasing decisions as well as general knowledge. In the primary survey, we use non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling. The choice of sampling has significant disadvantages but is suitable for pilot testing. This type of sampling has significant advantages, but it should be added that the results cannot be completely generalized. For a sample of 506 respondents (54 % was women and 46 % was men), the maximum statistical error (with a 95 % confidence probability) is about 4,36 %.

Research tool

The main topic of the article is the brand trust of selected gastronomic franchising brands. To measure brand trust (quantitative component), we decided to use (as a base) the tool "Perceived Brand Trust" developed by Hess (1995). The tool takes the form of eleven statements, to which the respondent responds by expressing the degree of his/her agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. Hess (1995) states that brand trust is based on altruistic, reliable, honest, and competent aspects and that the consumer knows what to expect from a brand. Of these aspects, the brand trust scale assesses brand honesty, altruism, and reliability. The scale achieved high inter-dimensional correlation and high reliability. It is important to note that modern tools for measuring brand trust are also created and modified on a given dimensional basis (e. g. Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003).

As we use a significantly modified scale, it is necessary to verify its reliability. Cronbach's alpha is used to investigate the reliability (accuracy and reliability of a research tool) within the internal consistency of the selected scale, while the value of Cronbach's alpha should be in the range of 0.750 – 0.950 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The standard deviation shows to what extent the individual measured values are around the mean value. The smaller the standard deviation, the closer the measured values are to the mean value. If the variance is smaller, it can be understood that the statement was rated similarly by all respondents.

In this work, we use basic statistical indicators such as average and indicators of the mean value of the position. From the point of view of practice, the arithmetic mean (simple mean) is most often used. The arithmetic mean represents the sum of all character values divided by their number. We know two mean values of position, mode and median. The mode represents the value of the character that occurs most frequently in the file. The median represents a value that divides an ordered set into two equally numerous parts. The advantage of the median over the arithmetic mean is that the extreme values in the set will not significantly affect it. To calculate the median, the values of the statistical file are arranged in ascending order of variation.

In general, it can be stated that each interviewee responded to 22 statements (2 selected brands of 11 questions). Mean scores, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas for the modified Brand Trust Scale for selected gastronomic franchising brands are presented in Tab. 1 (for McDonald's) and Tab. 2 (for Pizza Mizza).

Table 1 Modified Brand Trust scale for McDonald's

Statements for McDonald's*	Mean	St. dev.	Cronbach's alpha***
1. McDonald's is interested in more than just selling me a product and making a profit.	3.46	1.17	0.839
2. I believe that McDonald's would respond respectfully and, in my favour, when the problem arises.	3.78	0.90	0.825
3. McDonald's is genuinely committed to my satisfaction.	3.88	0.91	0.821
4. McDonald's will do whatever it takes to make me happy.	3.56	0.99	0.829
5. When I see McDonald's advertisement, I believe the information in it is accurate.	2.63	1.12	0.817
6. Most of what McDonald's says about its products is true.	2.98	1.03	0.809
7. I think that some of McDonald's claims about its products are puffed up to make them seem better than they really are**	2.21	0.99	0.829
8. If McDonald's makes a claim or promise about its product, it's probably true.	3.32	0.91	0.819
9. McDonald's has quality products.	2.81	1.18	0.812
10. I feel like I know what to expect from McDonald's.	4.16	0.76	0.842
11. McDonald's always offers perfect products.	2.97	1.13	0.810

Notes: * Used 5-degree Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement, 5 = strong agreement).

** Negative / opposite evaluation.

*** Overall Cronbach's alpha = 0.845

Source: Own calculation.

Based on the results shown in Tab. 1, it can be stated that the total value of the research tool reaches a high value of reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.845). Regarding the partial values of Cronbach's alpha belonging to the individual statements, it can be stated that the statements are set correctly (none of the statements needs to be omitted or updated). From the point of view of the standard deviation, it can be stated that the perception of the respondents is relatively consistent. The lowest value of the standard deviation was found in statement No. 10 (with the highest average value of 4.16 points), which clearly indicates to us that the respondents know what to expect from McDonald's.

Tab. 2 Modified Brand Trust scale for Pizza Mizza

Statements for Pizza Mizza*	Mean scores	St. dev.	Cronbach's alpha***
1. Pizza Mizza is interested in more than just selling me a product and making a profit.	3.06	0.78	0.862
2. I believe that Pizza Mizza would respond respectfully and in my favour when the problem arises.	3.26	0.71	0.852
3. Pizza Mizza is genuinely committed to my satisfaction.	3.32	0.71	0.842
4. Pizza Mizza will do whatever it takes to make me happy.	3.16	0.76	0.846
5. When I see Pizza Mizza advertisement, I believe the information in it is accurate.	3.17	0.68	0.851
6. Most of what Pizza Mizza says about its products is true.	3.19	0.65	0.847
7. I think that some of Pizza Mizza claims about its products are puffed up to make them seem better than they really are.**	2.88	0.69	0.875
8. If Pizza Mizza makes a claim or promise about its product, it's probably true.	3.23	0.64	0.849
9. Pizza Mizza has quality products.	3.33	0.80	0.839
10. I feel like I know what to expect from Pizza Mizza.	3.39	0.83	0.854
11. Pizza Mizza always offers perfect products.	3.14	0.77	0.844

Notes: * Used 5-degree Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement, 5 = strong agreement).

** Negative / opposite evaluation.

*** Overall Cronbach's alpha = 0.863

Source: Own calculation.

As shown in Tab. 2, the application of the modified Brand Trust scale on the Pizza Mizza label reached a high value of total Cronbach's alpha (0.863), indicating rather high reliability of the research tool. Based on a selective examination of the reliability of individual statements, it can be stated that the exclusion of statement No.7, would increase the overall reliability of the instrument. As we can see, the standard deviation reaches a low value (in all cases the value is up to 0.83), which indicates a relatively strong agreement of the respondents' assessment of the statements.

The modified scale retains the dimensions of the original scale, and thus contains three dimensions: altruism (items 1 – 4), honesty (items 5 – 8) and reliability (items 9 – 11). We used correlation analysis to examine the relationships of individual components of the scale. Of course, given the two companies examined, we calculated the interconnection in both companies. We recorded the results in Tab. 3.

Tab. 3 Correlations among the dimensions (factors)

	altruism		honesty		reliability
altruism	1				
honesty	0.529*	0.607**	1		
reliability	0.479*	0.645**	0.641*	0.688**	1

Notes:

* for McDonald's

** for Pizza Mizza

Source: Own calculations.

Based on Tab. 3, a strong interconnection of dimensions can be stated in all three applications of the scale. It can be stated that the dimensions form a logical sequence and were chosen correctly.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the survey, we used a quantitative method to collect data. We conducted a standardized query using a questionnaire. The research was attended by 506 respondents. All respondents come from Slovakia. To achieve the main goal, we focused on solving partial goals, based on which we formulated hypotheses and research questions. In the next section, we focus on answering research questions and verifying hypotheses.

RQ1: What is the level of McDonald's brand trust perception?

To measure the perception of brand trust, we used a modified scale, which consisted of eleven statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strong disagreement, 5 – strong agreement). From the above, it can be stated that the measured values can be doubted in the range from 11 to 55 points. The mean measured value when applying the scale to McDonald's was 35.76 points with a standard deviation of 6.88, which represents an average to slightly above average value (the mean value of the scale is 33 points). The minimum measured value was 16 points, and the maximum measured value was 55 points, which represents the maximum possible value of the scale. The median value was 36 points and the mode value were 31 points. Overall, we rate McDonald's brand trust as average to slightly above average.

RQ2: What is the level of Pizza Mizza's brand trust perception?

To measure the perception of brand trust, we used a modified scale, which consisted of eleven statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strong disagreement, 5 – strong agreement). From the above, it can be stated that the measured values can be doubted in the range from 11 to 55 points. In the case of Pizza Mizza the average measured value was 35.13 points with a standard deviation of 5.23 points. The median and modus reached the same value, namely 33 points. The lowest measured value was 17 points, and the maximum value was 52 points. Overall, we interpret the measured value as average.

RQ3: How can the differences in the perception of domestic and foreign franchising brands be interpreted in the context of brand trust?

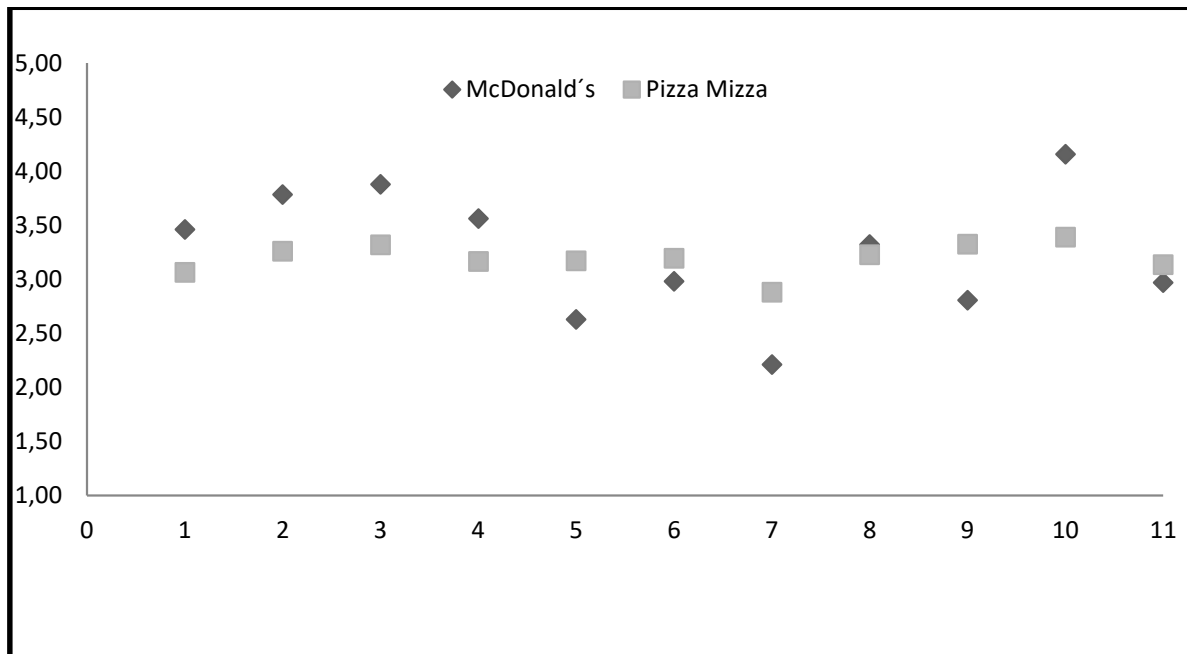
H1: There are significant differences between the average trustworthiness ratings of the selected brands based on the survey.

From the initial analysis focused on the total average value of the Brand trust, it can be stated that there are no significant differences (McDonald's – 35.76; Pizza Mizza – 35.13). Overall, it can be stated that there are no significant differences from the point of view of the country of origin as we might expect (concerning the effect of ethnocentrism, the effect of the country of origin, etc.). As we can observe, the domestic gastronomic company (brand) achieves an overall lower average brand trust. From the point of view of accuracy, it should be noted that these results are only indications. To know the existence of a differences between the perception of brand trust of selected brands (H1), we used the ANOVA test, based on which it can be stated that we do not have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, therefore we can expect that the mean brand trust ratings will not have significant differences (P-value = 0.103; alpha = 0.05).

If we focus on specific statements and specific dimensions, we can observe certain differences (see Graph 1). As can be seen from Graph 1, in terms of dimensions, McDonald's reaches the better level in the dimension of altruism. On the contrary, McDonald's has significant

shortcomings in the dimension of honesty. McDonald's has significant fluctuations in the reliability dimension, while Pizza Mizza maintain above-average levels of perception.

Graph 1 Difference of individual statements



Note: The X-axis represents the individual statements of the instrument and the Y-axis represents the average measured values.

Source: Own processing.

3.1 Discussion

The article provides an overview of franchising brands in the gastronomy industry. The set goals of the work were fulfilled based on the results. Based on the results of the primary survey, it can be stated that consumers perceive the brand trust of selected companies in approximately the same way. However, we find significant differences in the closer analysis of the elements of the research tool. In the dimension of altruism, McDonald's achieved the best score. There may be several reasons. One reason may be the wide range of activities that a company (under its own brand) carries out in favour of social and environmental responsibility. From the findings of the primary survey, consumers are also satisfied with the service that the company offers, and this satisfaction is transformed into happiness. Pizza Mizza brand was second but it should be noted that brand achieved above-average results in the given dimension. From the point of view of the country of origin, it can be stated that foreign companies achieved equal placements. We also consider it important to state that the subject of our research was franchising brands. In this context, it can be stated that a high level of brand trust can be caused by this business model. It can be stated that this is a highly competitive advantage, which is also reflected in brand trust. Of course, if low values were measured, this could be explained as a risk for potential franchisees. McDonald's performed badly in the honest dimension. Respondents perceive McDonald's as a company that is not honest and even misleading. It follows from the above that the company should refine its branding strategies and especially communication. In terms of reliability and quality, McDonald's achieved a low score, but in terms of expectations, it can be clearly stated that

consumers know what to expect from the brand. The results provide essential findings for determining branding strategies, marketing mix applications and managerial decision-making.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the presented article was to (1) measure the trustworthiness of a selected domestic (Pizza Mizza) and foreign franchising brand (McDonald's) and (2) identify differences in the context of the country of origin. This goal can be considered fulfilled.

The research focused on selected franchising gastronomic brands: McDonald's and Pizza Mizza. Although these brands each offer different products, from a marketing point of view, they satisfy the same primary needs of customers. They can therefore be considered as competing brands.

The measurement of brand trust was performed using the modified Perceived Brand Trust scale proposed by Hess (1995). The scale had to be modified to a large degree, as it focused on the automotive industry (but the dimensions were retained). The modified scale achieved high reliability in all applications (Cronbach's alpha for individual brands were 0.845 – McDonald's, 0.863 – Pizza Mizza). Based on the results, it can be stated that the brands reached roughly the same level of brand trust. However, it should be noted that there were significant differences in consumer perceptions in terms of the individual dimensions of the instrument (altruism, honesty, and reliability).

Pizza Mizza received the lower overall average score. Therefore, it would be prudent for the company to increase community engagement and outreach, which can lead to higher brand trust. Another possible factor that affected the overall score may be the limited number of years the company has been operating. Pizza Mizza also speaks against its strong geographical concentration (especially around the capital of Slovakia).

Our research also has its limits. We consider the selection of samples to be one of the most important. The selection of the sample limits us to interpretation only for the given sample, and therefore we understand consumers only in terms of consumers in our research sample. It is necessary to realize that although there are several surveys examining brand trust, these are not comparable in terms of methodology. It should also be noted that the research took place in only one country, and thus the results may be affected by regional variables not considered.

Future research should further validate and develop the theory of brand trust. We consider the international measurement of brand trust to be an option, whether in terms of franchise brands or other areas. We recommend for future research to eliminate possible sample limits, and to examine several brands based on a modified scale. By making an international comparison, it would be possible to examine other factors that could affect brand trust (e.g. cultural dimensions, demography).

The results of the brand trust scale can be used both in scientific work and in order to examine the brand trust of private labels. The results can then be applied in marketing campaigns, as well as in all elements of the marketing mix. At the same time, the results offer useful data for managerial decision-making.

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