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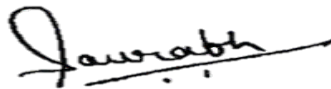
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**Title of Thesis:** BEST SUITED INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR MNCs – STANDARDIZATION, ADAPTATION OR COMBINATION – A CASE OF SPORTS APPAREL MAKER NIKE IN THE INDIAN MARKET

**Signature of research student:**



**Date:** 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to identify the basic marketing strategy that Nike follows in India – whether it implements its global marketing strategy or does it make any changes to adapt to the specific conditions of the Indian market and consumers with respect to the marketing mix. This study also attempted to find out the reaction of the consumers of sportswear in India to the different marketing elements of Nike in the country and make any recommendations to Nike for better use of the marketing mix in the Indian market if needed.

Thus, study used the positivist research philosophy and the inductive research approach because of nature of the study. It adopted a quantitative research strategy because of the quantitative use of primary data – a survey, along with a descriptive and cross-sectional research design. A survey was done among 100 respondents - consumers of sportswear in India, through a questionnaire with multiple choice answers to questions and value addition like the Likert Scale.

The study found that Nike followed a customization strategy for most of the marketing mix elements for the Indian market except its Process and Physical elements for which it follows its global strategy of delivering equal consumer experience throughout its consumer touch points. These were confirmed through both secondary and primary data. It was suggested that Nike should continue to follow the customization strategy for its marketing mix in India while trying to enhance the attitude of its staff to suit to what Indian consumers want. For other foreign companies in India, it was recommended that they follow a partial customization strategy for marketing with Product, Place, Price, Promotions and People being completely customized while Process and Physical elements being standardized.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1: Study Background**

This introductory chapter of the study aims to get the readers familiarized with the research topic as well as why this study is being done. To achieve this, this chapter provides a short background of the research issue showing why this study was necessary and the gap in the existing literature about the topic that still need to be explored as it was found to be relatively unaddressed. Additionally, this chapter also sets the specific objectives that it wants to address and the research questions that it wants to find answers to. Further, the scope of the study as well as the limitations faced during the study is mentioned in this chapter. This chapter also acts as a prelude to the next chapter - a critical review of literature on marketing strategies by global companies as well as their specific strategies for particular markets.

This study primarily aimed to explore the effective marketing strategy of the sports apparel maker Nike in India and estimate how consumers of the Indian market react to the existing marketing strategy of the company. This helped in comparing the current and the ideal strategy of the company in the Indian market which was done to ultimately provide some recommendations to the company about the kind of marketing strategy that it should follow in India to attract more customers.

In the broader perspective, this study aims to examine the overall effectiveness of a marketing strategy when considered from the prism of the marketing mix globally as well as for specific

markets. It is undeniable that the present globalized and open market business environment has allowed for much greater competition between multinational companies at the global stage as well as in individual national markets. Now since the ultimate aim of all companies is to make as much profits as possible by ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction, therefore the importance of marketing strategies to draw as many customers toward the brand as possible is also easily understandable (Kotabe, and Kothari. 2016).

There is ample evidence through past studies in marketing literature about effective marketing strategies that have been employed by multinational companies for global markets as well as for regional or national markets and the related most suitable marketing mix (Grebitus and Bruhn, 2011). However, to better understand this aspect of international marketing, there is need for obtaining a better understanding of the broader aspects of marketing strategy – through the marketing mix concept.

With the concept of marketing shifting from advertisements to include more business activities and strategies from other business aspects, the concept of marketing has also attained a broader shape. According to Wu, Tang and Shyu, (2009), the earliest perspective of marketing was generally obtained from it being viewed as function of management. But over the years, more importance has been given to the role of strategic thinking and strategy making in marketing and including it within the broader corporate strategies of companies. This has inevitably created an overlapping between marketing and strategic management as the concept and view towards marketing has broadened and since it has started to be viewed as an activity and as businesses have attempted to incorporate both strategic and operational aspects into marketing. This has made the role of developing innovative marketing strategies to not only compete and success but to sustain the success in a globalized and highly competitive business environment very important – especially for those companies that multinational operations (Joshi and Yadav, 2016).

The change in the concept of marketing was also prompted because of the opening up of economies, the emergence and spread of globalization and free trade and the effective elimination of geographical boundaries for businesses (Tadajewski and Jones, 2012). The process of globalization has also arguably globalized the taste and habits of consumers which is argued to be the reason behind most of the global consumers thinking alike. With the development of a commercial web worldwide, there is increased interconnections and dependency among the various markets. Further, it is also argued that currently consumers have



much greater access than before to information and knowledge about products and services – for those that available locally as well as in foreign markets, and hence have grown much conscious about the range of possibilities and choices they have (Song, et. al., 2017). Businesses and brands therefore need to consider the fact that consumers now are much more aware than before of the quality, price, etc. of products. This has therefore necessitated the adoption of a strategic approach to marketing to reach out to, attract and retain customers and strive to not only fulfill the needs of the customers but also their desires (Song, et. al., 2017).

According to Rundh, (2003), there are three key dimensions around which multinational companies are currently developing their marketing strategies - adaptation and standardization, implementation-coordination and integration of strategies. It is also argued that the strategic ideas that are developed based on the above considerations also have to be based on the type of relationships that brands have with their stakeholders as well as the resources that are available for allocation, the products being offered and the timing of the offers (Amuah, 2013). However even prior to reaching that stage, multinational firms such as Nike also need to decide on whether to standardize their marketing strategies with respect to the marketing mmix offered to the customers thereby making a single strategy applicable for all of their international markets or to customize and adapt the strategies according to the needs and desires of customers of a particular market (Rundh, 2011). (Rundh, 2011)

The aspect of standardization of marketing strategies is drawn from the concept of strategic integration aspect of management which is in turn dependent on the corporate level strategies that are adopted by multinational to compete (Rundh, 2011). Additionally, many have also argued in favor of a hybrid approach to marketing strategy making that can include aspects and characteristics of both the standardized and the customized or locally adapted marketing strategies (Swinnen and Maertens, 2007).

This makes it amply clear that multiple strategic marketing choices are available for multinationals such as Nike to consider and adopt. This is the central theme of this study with the addition that this choice can also be mediated by the needs and desires of customers of a particular national market. This topic was chosen not only because Nike is currently operating in the Indian market but also of the perceived differences in in the characteristics of Indian consumers and those in the company's home market of its Western markets. Additionally, this study also found a shortage of past studies that were done with specific reference to the sports apparel industry and the Indian market. This researcher felt the need to explore the marketing

strategies adopted by leading multinational companies in this sector such as Adidas and Nike that function within diverse market characteristics. This prompted this researcher to choose Nike as a company and India as the test market for examining and identifying the most appropriate strategic marketing choice that Nike has in the Indian market with respect to the marketing mix and from the perspective of Indian consumers.

## **1.2: Brief Preview of Nike**

At this stage it is pertinent to introduce the overall and broad marketing strategies of Nike in terms of its marketing mix offered globally and in the Indian context as well.

Nike was founded by University of Oregon track athlete Phil Knight and his coach Bill Bowerman in January 1964 and was originally called the Blue-Ribbon Sports (BRS). Initially the company functioned as a distributor for Japanese shoemaker Onitsuka Tiger (Nike Inc., 2016). Currently as of 2019, Nike was adjudged to be the most valuable apparel brand of the world and had a brand value of \$32.4 billion (Brandfinance.com, 2019)

According to the website of the company, its Missions is to *“bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world - if you have a body, you are an athlete”* (About.nike.com, 2021). The company says that its mission is to do *“everything possible to expand human potential.”* That is achieved by the company by making high impact sports innovations and manufacturing products in a more sustainable manner. The company claims to have a creative and diverse global team that helps it to leave a positive impact in the countries that it operates in. The Beaverton, Oregon-based Nike includes the Nike, Converse, and Jordan brands (About.nike.com, 2021)

The company also highlights the reason for its existence. *“Nike exists to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world. Our Purpose is to move the world forward through the power of sport – breaking barriers and building community to change the game for all”* (Purpose.nike.com, 2021).

It also claims to be growth-oriented company which means that growth and expansion is its only focus. The product strategy of the company is to create innovative products that become must-haves for consumers. Using its marketing mix elements, Nike strives to develop *“deep and personal connections with consumers”*.

Its sale channels – which Nike calls its marketplace, is integrated together which means that the company strives to offer the same consumer experience on its online channel as it does at

its physical stores. The company uses this place and people strategy to create a process for consumers that it claims provide its customers compelling retail experiences (Investors.nike.com, 2021).

The president of products and categories of Nike - Michael Spillane, had claimed in the company's October 2017 Investor Day presentation that the brand was the largest footwear and athletic apparel brand and its footwear business occupied the top position in all markets of the major categories and markets that it operated in. the product strategy adopted by Nike since 2017 has been to "edit to amplify" growth which resulted in the company reducing its styles by 25 per cent so that the remaining styles were able to become more appealing to customers. The strategy also included focusing distribution of the company to only those products that delivered it the fastest and the most profitable growth (Danziger, 2018).

Despite the above-mentioned product strategy of the company, Nike offers a wide range of products which includes shoes, apparels, equipment and accessories and its products covers a range of sports including football, basketball, tennis and golf. The pricing strategy of the company is dependent on the type of product – even though many of its products are premium priced, which the company claims to suit the very high quality that it offers. The company however also engages in competitive pricing even though it can dictate pricing since it is a market leader in many categories (Golapan, 2021).

The promotional strategy of the company involves attracting new customers while also retaining its old customers by promoting key products via channels such as online, in-store, public relations, television, word of mouth and sponsorships. The company has massive sponsorship deals with sports personalities such as Ronaldo and Michael Jordan who are the top athletes in their sport.

While Nike products are available in its flagship stores as well as retail outlets in more than 200 countries, the company also has a huge presence in the online medium as well where the company makes almost the entire range of its products available to customers.

### **1.3: Research Questions**

This study aims to find answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the basic marketing strategy that Nike follows in India – does the company implement its global marketing strategy or does it make any changes to adapt to the specific conditions of the Indian market and consumers with respect to the marketing mix?

(The answer to this question was to be obtained from analysis of secondary data from official sources of the company available from the publicly available documents of the company as well as data from other credible sources)

RQ 2: How do the consumers of sportswear in India react to the different marketing elements of Nike in the country?

(The answer to this question be obtained from the analysis of primary data got through a survey of Indian sportswear consumers as well as those who are not consumers of the company in India wherein the questionnaire was based on the marketing mix elements of Nike in India)

RQ 3: What can be suggested/recommended to Nike for better use of the marketing mix in the Indian market?

(Was obtained from the analysis of primary and secondary data)

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1: Introduction**

This chapter of the study focuses on reviewing the research work done previously on the topic from available documents. In this context, this section examined literature on marketing mix, the importance of marketing mix, the role and importance of marketing mix in the overall marketing strategy making, the available choices to multinational companies (MNCs) for creating marketing strategies, the need or irrelevance of adjustment of marketing strategies to local conditions, etc. These helped in formulating a theoretical framework that was used for gathering of primary data for this study

### **2.1: Marketing Mix and its Importance**

The origin of the concept of marketing mix is the single P (price) of microeconomic theory (Kolberg, 2007). The concept of marketing mix was offered by McCarthy (1964) – then referred to as the “4Ps” of marketing seen as a means of translating marketing planning into practice (Burton, 2001). Authors and practitioners have argued that marketing mix is not a scientific theory in itself but is merely a conceptual framework that identifies the principal decision making that managers make in configuring their offerings to suit the need of consumers through tools that can be used for developing both long-term strategies as well as short-term tactical programmes (Warrink, 2018). Researchers and authors have also equated the idea of marketing mix to that of cake making wherein a maker alters the various proportions of the ingredients of a cake to make it taste different and sit specific taste bids. In

the same manner, the concept or the framework of marketing mix can be used by altering and changing the proportion of the various elements of the marketing mix so that the ultimate resultant marketing strategy is suited to meet the market conditions and demands (Hasan and Jobaid, 2014).

The marketing mix management paradigm has dominated marketing thought, research and practice (Pulido Polo, 2018) and is viewed as a tool that can help to create a differentiation in marketing strategies (van Waterschoot and van den Bulte, 1992).

Kent (1986) referred to the 4Ps of the marketing mix as ‘the holy quadruple’ of the marketing faith. Marketing mix has been extremely influential in informing the development of both marketing theory and practise (Jiménez-Marín, 2018).

The primary reason that over the years, the concept of marketing mix has turned out to become a powerful concept is that it helps to make marketing seem quite easy to handle because it separates marketing from the other business activities while delegating the onus of marketing to specialists. Using the elements or the components of a marketing mix, it is possible to change the competitive positioning of a company (Manrai, 2019). Further, the concept of marketing mix also helps in identifying and specifying the job of a marketing manager wherein a marketer is able to easily view the trade-off of the one’s competitive strengths in the marketing mix compared to the benefits of others. It also ensures that there is enough clarity for a company for allocation of the available resources to meet the desired marketing aim (Davari and Strutton, 2014).

Therefore, it can be said that marketing mix is a conceptual framework that is used by marketers to identify the principles that one would want to use while offering their products or services to the consumers with the ultimate goal of meeting needs, demands and desires of consumers. The concept of marketing mix therefore gives the opportunity to companies and marketers to identify and decide on the various element’s or characteristics of a product and how to take it to the customers then and using those elements to create marketing strategies and messages to attract consumers (Abdullah Saif, 2015).

While the concept of marketing mix had started off only with the 4Ps, over the years three more elements or ‘Ps’ have been added to the concept. These are people, process and physical evidence – mostly related to the service offers of a company. Therefore, currently there are 7Ps or elements in the marketing mix concept which can be used to formulate long-term strategies

as well as for attaining short-term goals (Abdullah Saif, 2015). Therefore, the relatively modern marketing mix has 7Ps in all – product, price, place, promotions, people, process and physical evidence.

According to Constantinides, (2006), the field of research in marketing is dominated by the concept and practices of the efficient management of the marketing mix. It has been argued that the concept of the marketing mix is not important for marketing managers but has also been used for developing a number of theories in marketing while also being used extensively in practice as well (Gummerus, 2013).

Further, the concept of the marketing mix can also be used to estimate the competence of a marketing manager in terms of the ability to have better trade-offs between the marketing mix elements for a successful marketing strategy (Warrink, 2018).

## **2.2: Criticisms of Marketing Mix**

As mentioned in the previous section, the initial concept of the marketing mix which comprised of the 4Ps was altered in the following years by researchers and practitioners. This change came about because of criticism of the first concept. The initial 4 Ps of the marketing mix - product, price place and promotions, are considered to be specialised activities of the various departments and staff of an organisation and therefore it was difficult task to integrate them into a wholesome concept. Moreover, academics and practitioners have argued that the concept of marketing mix cannot be presented as whole because typically, consumers tend to experience the effects of the individual elements of the marketing mix separately and in diverse occasions, times and places even while companies and marketers go to great lengths to integrate all the elements of the marketing mix with their marketing activities internally (Constantinides, 2006).

Moreover, it has been argued that the initial 4Ps of the marketing mix were mostly related to physical products or production oriented and their marketing and the service industry was not at all included. This was potentially because when the marketing mix was created, the service sector as a separate industry had not developed as it is today (Bhalerao and Deshmukh, 2017). They have also argued that the consumers' perspectives were more or less ignored in the initial marketing mix framework comprising of the 4Ps and hence it was not a consumer-oriented concept (Park and Tran, 2018). This prompted researchers and practitioners to include the later 3Ps into the marketing mix so as to adequately include the service industry as well. This also prompted many academicians and practitioners to argue that each of the variables of the

marketing mix should be viewed from the consumers' perspective (Gruca, Sudharshan and Kumar, 2001). As a solution to this criticism, it was proposed and later accepted that the element 'product' should be viewed as providing a solution to the customer, while that of 'price' as the cost of the product to the customer, 'place' as the convenience of the consumer in accessing the product and 'promotions' as means of delivering the appropriate message to the customer in the most appropriate manner. Also considering the past studies have also indicated that equal importance to the four primary 4Ps of the marketing mix is not given by business executives and leaders but instead their focus is more on the elements of price and product and therefore marketing strategies and messaging are often formulated keeping only these two elements in mind (Pulido Polo, 2018).

Therefore, it can be argued that while the concept of the marketing mix can be a very useful tool for companies and marketers, the primary 4Ps should be viewed from the consumers' perspective without assuming consumers to be passive. It can be argued that view of the marketing mix can help companies and marketers to capture firm-customer relationships (Goi, 2009).

Critics of the marketing mix have also argued that the very concept does not have any theoretical basis or content and is only a management tool. There were also criticism of the original marketing mix comprising of the 4Ps did not consider the unique elements of services marketing (Baalbaki and Malhotra, 1995) and the need for a 'customer-focused management' of marketing.

This concept therefore now covers the service aspect as well which is often associated even with non-service categories such as sports apparel - such as in cases of after sale services, or return or replacement of faulty goods, etc.

### **2.3: Global Firms and Importance of Marketing Mix**

In recent decades there has been emergence and proliferation of multinational and global companies because of opening up of economies and the advent of the age of globalization. With this growth of local companies into foreign market – many of which go on to become global companies, functioning throughout the world, there has also been development of the concept of the international marketing mix model. It has turned out to become a tool for the international companies to use for trying to gain success in international markets. With increasing competition in virtually every market, it has now become imperative for most companies with high ambitions to be successful in markets outside of their home country. That



aim has now come to crucially depend on marketing mix decisions involving more than one of the elements of marketing mix model (Manrai, 2017).

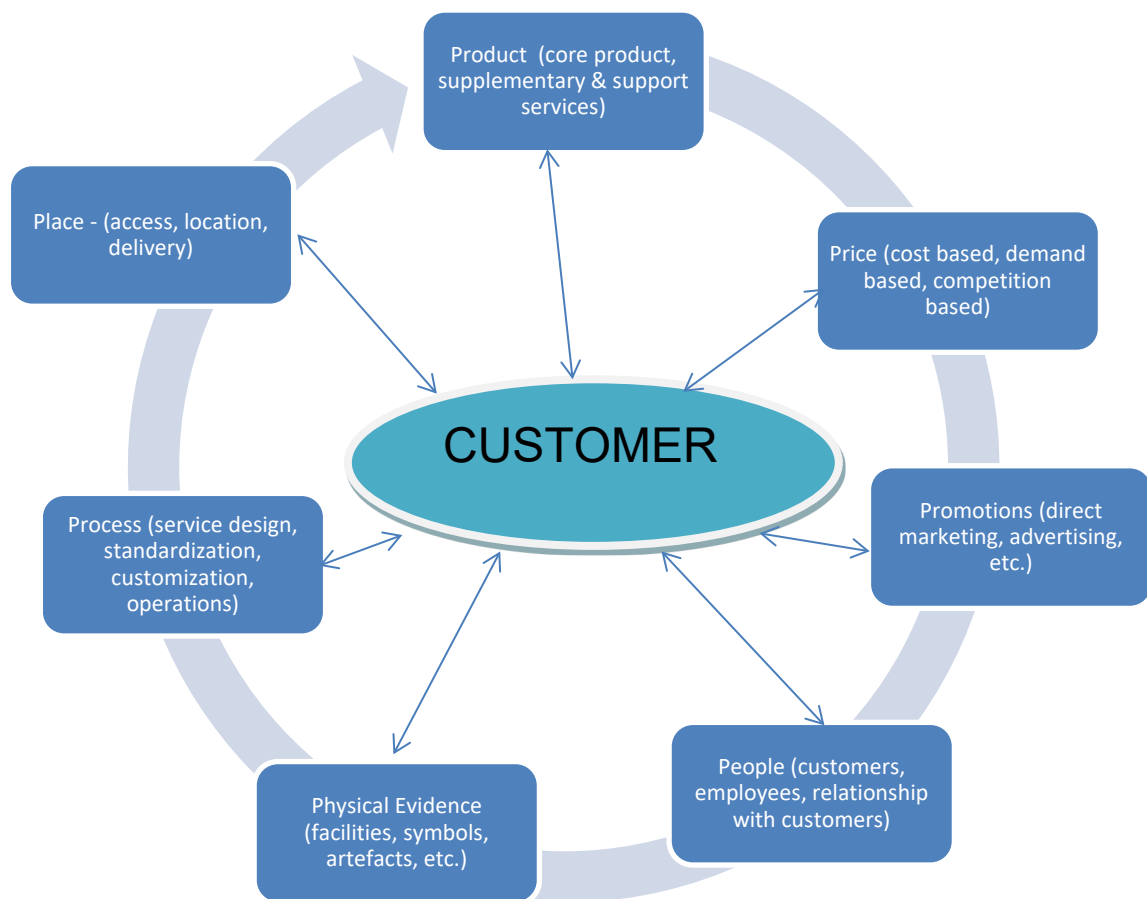
And even globalization has encouraged local businesses to expand and become global companies, there has also simultaneously been the emergence of and the development of the concept of international marketing which is focused on undertaking marketing activities to ensure smooth flow of products and services to consumers in a new environment or market (Chen and Li, 2006). This concept – like that of the marketing mix, is used as a tool or guidance for creating marketing strategies globally for addressing and adapting to the new market conditions and environment so that a company is able to achieve goals and targets while expanding.

This researcher however found a dearth in importance accorded to international marketing in literature when compared to the importance given to issues related to domestic marketing knowledge and the literature that has dealt with international marketing as a new concept has tended to focus on the very different characteristics of international marketing in comparison to domestic marketing. Researchers and authors have seemingly admitted of the more complex nature of the activities involved in international marketing compared to those that are utilised for marketing in the domestic market of the company this is so because companies have to generally face issues and challenges in foreign markets that can be new and relatively un-encountered previously and are mainly linked to customers and their views and wants and desires (Leonidou, et al., 2010). Such customer centric challenges faced by companies in a foreign market are often related to the different tastes, demands and cultures of consumers. Additionally, here can also be challenges that are related to differences in government policies and practices for business, the levels of available technologies in the market, etc. Therefore, the business strategies and tactics – including marketing strategies, used to tackle and address such challenges have to be different from the general and usual established strategies followed in the home market of companies. Foreign firms operating in a market are therefore forced to think differently and out of the box and potentially adopt a different approach for marketing in the wider global market (Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011). This therefore enhances the importance for MNCs to understand marketing in the international context and possibly also understand the need to think differently in order to address the different challenges in the international market.

## 2.4: The Global Marketing Mix

This section of the literature review examines show the challenges and factors present in a foreign market, as noted in the previous section, may be incorporated into the marketing mix concept which was introduced previously.

As noted previously, literature has identified marketing mix as an important tool that can used for formulating any marketing strategy – including the ones needed for the international markets. In this context, the marketing mix generally considered comprises of the 7Ps which are typically considered closely while formulating marketing strategies keeping in mind the view point of customers as well. Such usage of the marketing mix can help companies to develop an integrated international or global marketing strategy for a market that is getting increasingly interdependent and integrated with the wider global economy (Powers and Loyka, 2010).



*Figure 1: The International Marketing Mix (Source: created by Author)*

(Source: Powers and Loyka, 2010)

The diagram above shows how the marketing mix concept can be used to create a marketing strategy that can be applicable for international markets. It should be noted that at the centre of the diagram are customers of the market which indicates that the viewpoints of the customers are central to any marketing strategy that uses the marketing mix concept. Further it also indicates that customers influence the marketing strategies made by companies while themselves being influenced by the resultant marketing strategies, provided they are apt for them – as well as influencing and being influenced by each of the elements of the marketing mix.

The section below discusses each of the elements of the marketing mix and their relevance and importance in creating an overall marketing strategy.

#### **2.4.1: Product**

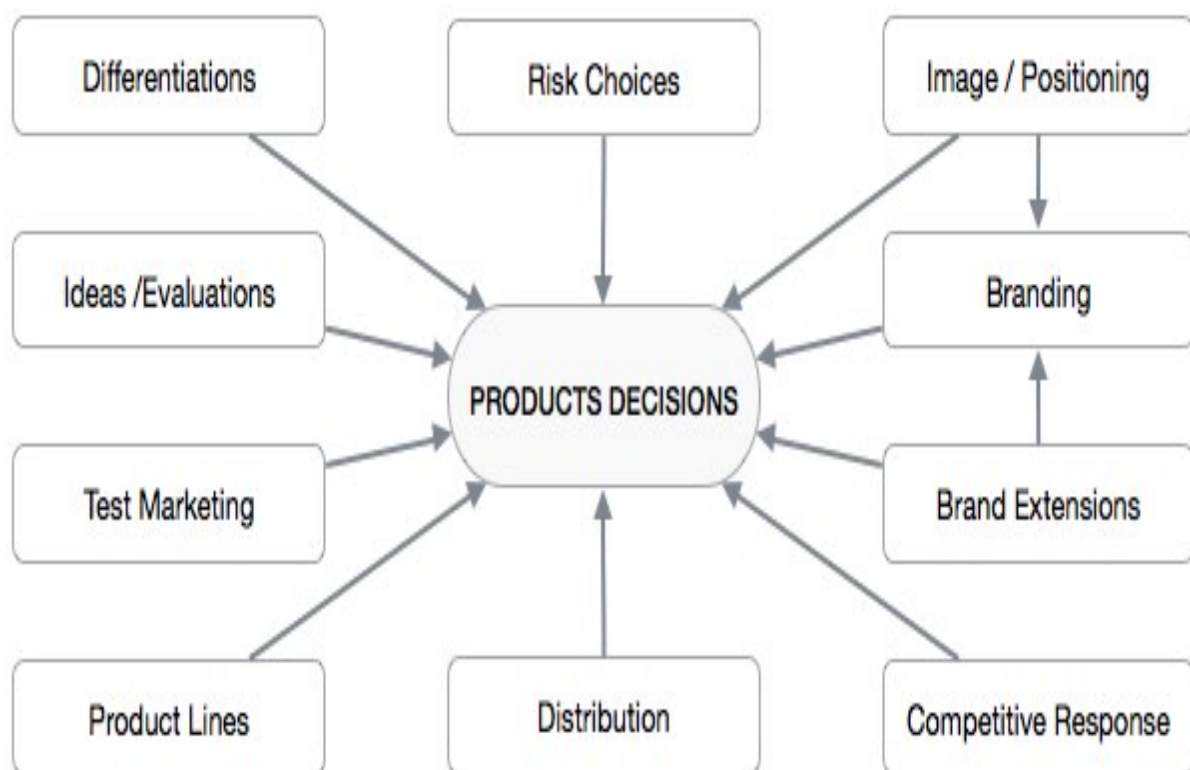
In the concept of the marketing mix, products are referred to the products and/or services that are offered by a company to its consumers. Since this study is focused on the outreach by MNCs to host market customers, therefore the customer centric view of the marketing mix elements is applied here. Under that consideration, it can be argued that MNCs such as Nike need to create products that are able to cater to and satisfy the needs, demands and desires of consumers by using such products or service (Weber, 2015).

Moreover, it is also assumed that the needs, wants and desires are also influenced by their personal views, opinions and beliefs (Hasan, 2012). When companies keep customers at the centre while creating products, it can be assumed that such products and/or services will likely be appreciated by consumers as well as be able to live up to the desired outcome that customers have from usage of such products or services.

In the case of MNCs planning to enter or have just entered a new foreign market, designing of products according to what customer's desire can be a challenge. This is so because of the possibility of the wants and desires of consumers of a host market could be very different from consumers in the company's home market with whom a company might have got used to in dealing with. Further, there can also be differences in needs, wants and desires of customers of different foreign markets – which also increases the complexity of product designing (Joseph, 2020). Hence, companies also need to consider such differences when making products so that they are able to satisfy the variety in demands and desires between consumers in different markets.

This is an awareness that MNCs need to also incorporate in their global or international marketing strategy and propagate the product attributes that are perceived to be able to meet the demand and desires of consumers of an international market (Cavusgil, Deligonul and Yaprak, 2005).

One of the crucial factors for MNCs international marketing strategies is product placement. The figure below shows a typical case of product placement and the specific elements that a company needs to consider while making a marketing strategy for the international market.



*Figure 2: Product placement criteria for international marketing strategy*

(Source: Cavusgil, Deligonul and Yaprak, 2005)

While the scope of this research does not permit this researcher to go into the details of the various elements that dictate product placement in the international market, the above figure has been included to showcase the complex nature of element ‘Product’ in an international marketing mix (Er and Simon, 2015). It is further argued that placing a product in a host market also requires MNCs to consider the local cultural factors of the host market – specifically those that influences the purchasing behaviour of consumers, as well as the competition in the market and the need for MNCs to differentiate its product, brand image, distribution, etc. in the market.

### 2.4.2: Price

It has been argued that the perception of value forms a consumers' perspective as dictated by the price of a product or a service (Warrink, 2018). Moreover, according to (40), the pricing strategy that is adopted by a company is also often dictated by the local market conditions and business environment and therefore such strategies need to have its basis on the location of the business and not on the global pricing strategy. The argument behind this assumption is that the perception of value for money expended by consumers – or value for money from usage of a product or a service, could vary from one market to another and between consumer groups. This argument potentially prompted Aliyev and Wagner, (2017) to note that while luxury brands do well in some markets, they do not do so in another market with similar characteristics such as economic conditions and purchasing power.

But Álvarez Rodríguez, (2020) has argued that MNCs need to develop and set a specific benchmark for their products to be offered in the international market. It has however also been argued that the same product may be priced differently in different international markets because of local factors such as cost of production or exporting, price sensitivity of the customers and their willingness to pay for the product in a particular international market, competition and pricing strategy of competitors, costs of operations, etc. Global pricing strategies as well as pricing strategies for specific international markets, are also argued to be dictated by a number of other factors including export price escalation, rate of inflation, currency conversion rates, transfer pricing, etc. (Nijssen and van Herk, 2009).

The figure below shows the multitude of factors that can have an influence on the global pricing strategy.

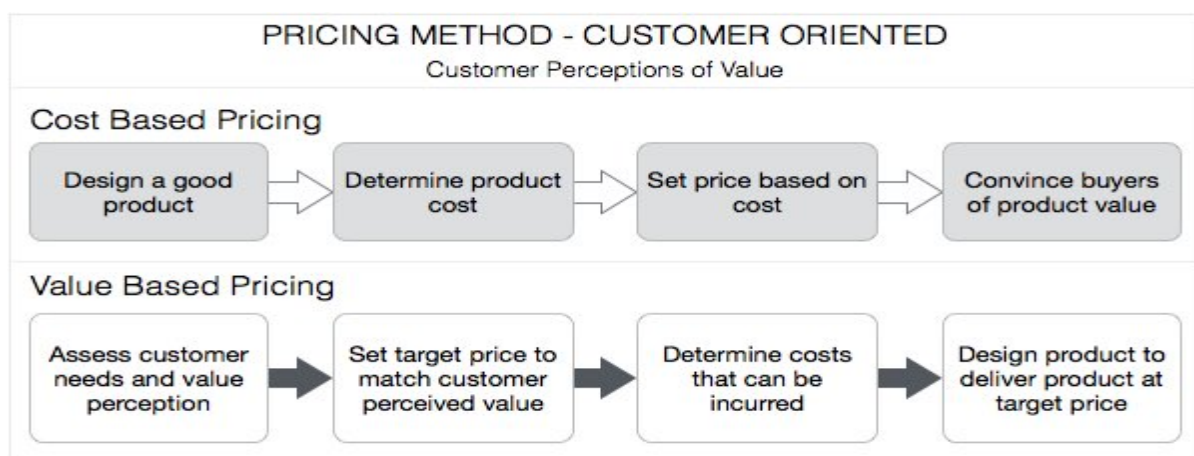


Figure 3: Pricing strategy factors for international marketing strategy (Source: 44)

(Source: Nijssen and van Herk, 2009)

### **2.4.3: Promotions**

Promotion is an important element of the international marketing mix and marketing strategies because it is the tool that helps MNCs to convey the values and personality of a product or a service to the customers (Grover and Srinivasan, 1992). There are number of conventional or traditional promotional activities that MNCs tend to engage in to convey their messages to the customers which include advertising, public relations, direct marketing, etc. Whatever the mode of messaging, the ultimate aim is to increase demand and consequently sales and revenues. But companies also use promotions to create, establish and maintain a brand within a market.

Typically, words, symbols, gestures, music, characters, etc. are used in such advertising and other promotional activities to reach out to consumers in a market and effectively deliver the message that a company wants its customers to hear, understand and assimilate about its products or services. But according to theories of culture, people belonging to different cultures may view the same words, symbols, gestures, music, characters, etc. differently. For customers in countries or markets that have differences in culture, the messages delivered by a company through promotions may not carry or convey the same meanings and importance as to customers in another country or market with a different culture. Hence, one promotional campaign that is very successful in one market may not be so in another that has a different culture – and could even be counterproductive. It can therefore be argued that those promotional activities that give a close consideration to the local or dominant culture are more likely to succeed than those that do not and simply rely on one global promotional strategy. This is because cultural differences between countries and international markets could result in the feelings and emotions or values that a company desires to deliver to consumers and communicate with them through such promotions may not be understood or even misunderstood (Alden, Steenkamp and Batra, 2006). It is important therefore for MNCs to consider the importance of delivering the right message in the most appropriate manner to the consumers or the targeted market segment through its promotional strategies. The promotional campaigns and messages should therefore be such that it carries and delivers the right language, gestures, symbols, customs, etc. to consumers in a foreign market

Further the promotional element of the marketing mix is also comprised of what is known as a promotional mix which is essentially a combination of various mediums and methods of

marketing communications, which are also considered while making a marketing strategy. The consideration of the modes of messages and promotions to be used in a marketing campaign is dependent on the selection of the best mode that is likely to reach out to the largest section of the targeted customer base in one or more international markets (Naik, Raman and Winer, 2005).

#### **2.4.4: Place**

Place in marketing mix denotes the actual space where consumers in a market can get access to a products or services offered by companies. Typically, MNCs and global companies offer a combination of ‘place’ – a physical store and a digital medium, where consumers can access products or services (Pulido Polo, 2018) (48). However, consumers of a particular market might exhibit a greater liking for accessing products or services through a particular ‘place’ which can prompt companies to focus more on one particular sale channel (Farooqi, 2017). For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a major shift of consumers to purchase from online sources as physical stores remained closed to prevent the spread of the virus. Hence companies spruced up their online sale channels to enable customers to access their products or services.

Further, local characteristics can also dictate how MNCs make their products available to customers. For example, rural areas might not have a strong enough internet connection and therefore a company should not expect to get much order for its products or services on its online sale channel from that area or region (Kolberg, 2007). Whatever the case may be, it is important for consumers to know where they can access products or services offered by a company. This aspect therefore also has to be communicated to customers through the marketing messages.

#### **2.5.5: People**

Within the concept of marketing mix, ‘people’ denotes the employees or staff of a company who come into direct contact with or interacts directly with customers. Such staff is considered to be the first point of contact between a company and its consumers – sometime the only direct human to human connect between the company and consumers (Jiménez-Marín, 2018). Kotrba et al., (2012) argues that consumers often want to see a reflection of the values, beliefs and convictions that are professed by a company through their marketing messages in the attitude and behaviour of the ‘people’ or the staff of the company. Customers look out for how the staff representing a company treats them. For example, if a company claims to be caring about the

personal choices of consumers, customers might want to view that value in the manner which they are treated by the brand – through the company staff that they come into contact with. Consumers can be put off if they do not find such reflection in the attitude of the ‘people’ representing a brand that they come into contact with during the purchasing process. This makes ‘people’ important in the marketing mix of brand and companies (Lin and Liang, 2011). Moreover, apart from the staff present at the physical stores of a company, the ‘people’ element also applies to tele-callers and those interacting with customers over online mediums.

#### **2.5.6: Process**

It is also common for brands and companies to try and portray or provide an idea about its business processes to customers to show how they bring products or services to them in a seamless manner. Marketing messages often talk about aspects related to production or their after-sale services or even about what they do in their supply chain (Lin and Liang, 2011). For example, companies touting eco-friendliness in their business processes tend to also showcase how they achieve eco-friendliness in their business processes. Moreover, the ‘process’ element can also relate to how companies offer the same quality of services and experience to customers wherever they are. This is a customer centric view of this marketing mix element wherein companies try to assure customers of offering a seamless and equal experience when they deal with the company irrespective of where they are situated (Lages and Jap, 2002). Such customer experience can be related to the personal experience of customers at a store or while they engage with a company online.

#### **2.5.7: Physical Evidence**

This aspect of the marketing mix relates to the desire of some customers to get physical cues about a product. This is not applicable to any significant degree for services because they are largely intangible. For customers, there can be a number of elements that they lookout for when trying to gain physical evidence of claims made by companies. It can include the place of business and even the surrounding area (Rahayu, 2019). Physical evidence of marketing elements may includes the supporting environment such as furniture, color, layout, noise level, supporting goods, spatial, hygiene and equipment, supporting facilities, etc. (Kukanja, Gomezelj Omerzel and Kodrič, 2016). According to Johansson, at al, (1998), companies tend to often exclude this element of the marketing mix. It is however touted to be an important aspect in terms of the overall experience that customers go through when dealing with a company and a satisfactory or good physical evidence can enhance customer experience



(Mahmoud, 2019) because it provides customers with tangible cues that support claims made by companies.

## **2.6: The Two concepts of International Marketing – Standardization Vs. Customization**

It is argued that marketing strategies at the international level by MNCs is influenced and it itself impacts almost all other business activities and therefore this is considered to be a critical element for achieving success in the international level for MNCs (Nandkeolyar, 2019).

According to Tuleja, (2005), the international marketing strategy and design of a company needs to be able to support the overall business strategy of a company – irrespective of whether it follows a differentiation or a cost leadership or a focused business strategy. For example, for a MNC that follows an overall differentiations strategy, it would need to develop marketing strategies that are able to underscore why and how the company and its products or services differ from its competitors (Búrca, Fletcher and Brown, 2004). This can also be extended for those MNCs that follow an overall cost leadership strategy in which marketers of the company need to highlight the financial benefits that customers can avail by using the products or services of the company, hence it can be said that all international marketing strategies are bound by the parameters of the overall corporate level business strategy of a company (Hill and James, 1991).

Hence it can also be easily perceived that the marketing mix that is used for framing of an international marketing strategy should also take into account the overall corporate strategy - be it standardization or customization for any particular international market (Czinkota, Ronkainen and Moffett, 2011). This therefore throws up two other different perspectives of corporate strategy that also influence international marketing. Managers and marketers have to generally choose one from these two options when deciding on a marketing strategy – while also considering the overarching corporate strategy. Marketers also have to decide on the extent to which they need or want to either standardize or customize their marketing strategies (Chung, Lu Wang and Huang, 2012).

In the standardised approach to international marketing, companies and their marketers present products or services to customers in all of the international markets in the same manner as in its domestic market. A customised approach to marketing strategy making on the other hand involves altering the marketing mix elements to address and appeal to the specific needs, wants and desires of customers of a one or more international markets (Chetty and Campbell-Hunt, 2004).

There is also a third approach in international marketing that can be found in literature –a geocentric approach, which involves MNCs adopting a middle path where standardized marketing mix is used for strategy making for all of the international markets that a MNC operates in based on an analysis of the general needs of all customer in all of the markets (Hossain and Yazdanifard, 2015).

Authors and practitioners like Sletten, (1994) have argued that MNCs find it easy to utilise the standardised approach because just one marketing strategy is required to be created and implemented and which can be applied to all international markets the company operates in. Proponents of this approach also point out its cost effectiveness compared to the customized approach to international marketing. But there are criticisms of this approach, according to which researchers and practitioners have argued that this approach might not deliver the desired results for a company using it for all of the international markets it operates in as this approach does not take into account the specific marketing needs of customers in specific foreign markets.

While proponents of customized approach to international marketing claim that the above cost issue as well as taking care of needs of customers of local customers can be resolved by adopting the customized approach, but that is costlier. This is because such an approach requires companies and marketers to design separate marketing strategies that can cater to suited to needs of customers of a specific or a few international markets (Mohamed, 2015). But at the same time, the customized approach is able to potentially enhance the reach of marketing campaigns and the impact in a particular market because it is potentially able to meet the marketing needs of local markets (Pehrsson, 2009).

And yet there are global companies that choose to adopt a mixture of the two approaches, according to Ding and Keh, (2016), that can strike a balance between standardization and customization. One of the best examples of this is the international marketing strategy of Coca Cola that uses the tag line “think locally, act globally” which is self-explanatory.

In most cases it has been observed that a standardization of marketing mix implies a centralized organizational design. On the other hand, customization implies creating a decentralized design. The ultimate choice of international marketing strategy is dependent on the overall company approach to business, its financial status and specific market factors of a company’s international market (Baalbaki and Malhotra, 1995).

It is widely accepted that the debate about the extent of standardization or adaptation has been going on for a long time now in the field of international marketing. Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou, (2009) argued that this debate was initiated as early as 1961 when it was considered with respect to worldwide advertising. Later on, this debate got expanded from the field of advertisement to the promotional mix and later on to the entire elements of the marketing mix (Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou 2009).

At the same time, opposing debates have also emerged about the two approaches to international marketing and the international marketing mix - standardization and adaptation of the marketing mix. Those supporting standardization assume that markets are getting increasingly homogeneous and believe that standardization of products and services is the crucial factor for survival and growth of companies in international markets (Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou 2009). Additionally, the supporters also argue in favor of the argument that there is no significant variation in the needs, wants and desires of customers across markets and/or countries. The wider argument put forward is that the entire globe is increasingly turning out to be similar with respect to environmental factors and consumer requirements. They postulate that increasingly consumers are developing the same demands irrespective of where they reside.

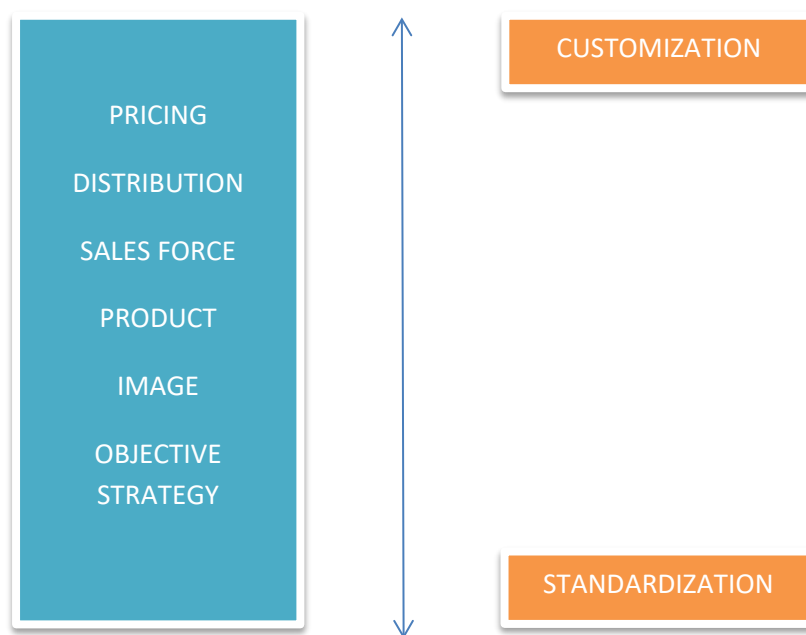
Conversely, advocates of adaptation of international marketing mix point out the difficulties of using the standardization approach for meeting the unique dimensions of various international markets. Additionally, they also argue that there are often insurmountable differences between markets and countries and even between regions with the same country (Ryans, Griffith and Steven White, 2003). Advocates of this approach to international marketing mix also argue the needs for MNCs to identify ways to adjust their marketing tactics and strategies as well as the related marketing mix with how they would distribute and sell products and services so that they are able to meet market requirements (Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou 2009).

However, it was observed in literature that there was an apparently a general consensus about the co-existence of standardization and adaptation in recent years. Vrontis and Kitchen (2005) also argued that international marketing for MNCs essentially do not belong to either of these two polarized approaches and both the approaches potentially likely co-exist – sometimes even within the same company, product line, or brand. (Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou. 2009).

Therefore, it is the onus of the international marketers to decide on the degree to which they want to adopt standardization or customization for all or the different components of the

marketing mix. There are in fact arguments that some elements of the marketing mix such as place, promotion and price can be more adapted to local conditions compared to others while product, among these, is the hardest element to adapt customize (Poulis, 2020).

This prompted researchers and practitioners such as Doole and Lowe (2001) to propose a continuum for standardization and customization for MNCs for striking a balance between the two approaches for element of marketing mix and the broader marketing management which is shown in the figure below.



*Figure 4: Standardization Vs. Customization Continuum*

(Source: Doole and Lowe, 2001).

The above figure depicts the level of difficulties for either standardization or customization of some marketing mix elements and some of the other marketing management elements.

The following table highlights the main causes of standardization and adaptation in marketing mix activities.

MARKETINGMIX STRATEGIES		CUSTOMIZATION	STANDARDIZATION
	Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost-effective</li> <li>High Product Image</li> </ul>



(Source: Akgün, Keskin and Ayar, 2014)

Researchers and practitioners have argued that the moment a company decides to expand into foreign markets it has to decide on whether to follow standardization or customization of their marketing mix. It has also been argued that such a decision to standardize or to adapt its marketing strategies is fundamental because it impacts the fundamental approach to business of the company and how companies compete (Ang and Massingham, 2007).

This debate among theorists as well as practitioners about standardization or customization of the marketing mix in different markets is a long standing one with all the relevant elements of the marketing mix being examined closely (Vrontis and Kitchen, 2005). Past studies shows that this debate first began with promotions and then gradually moved onto discussions and analysis of products and other elements - price and distribution (Özsomer and Simonin, 2004) even though it has been argued that more attention had been accorded to promotions and product on the issue of standardization versus customization.

As of yet the debate between standardization and customization has not been settled conclusively and there is lack of established consensual understanding (Ryans, Griffith, and White, 2003).

However, proponents of standardization continue to argue that the world is becoming more and more homogeneous driven by the advancements in communication and technology which has resulted in tastes and cultures also becoming homogeneous (Vrontis and Papasolomou, 2005). This means that consumers of the world are constantly sharing their preferences, needs, desires and demands (Jain, 2007). This similarity of demands – coupled with converging cultures and the lowering of barriers, makes it apt for multinational companies to standardize their marketing strategies and activities (Zou and Cavusgil 2002).

On the other hand, it has been argued by proponents of customization that there still exists significant difference between national cultures – even though consumers might want the same quality of products (Engelstätter and Sarbu, 2011). They argue that while customers in all markets might want similar products with respect to quality, their perception about various cultural elements can be very different. It is argued that marketing is that aspect of business strategies and management where companies have to reach out to and strike a chord with the customers' minds (Grębosz and Otto, 2017). Further, the personal choices and preferences – particularly about how they are approached by companies and the marketing messages that are

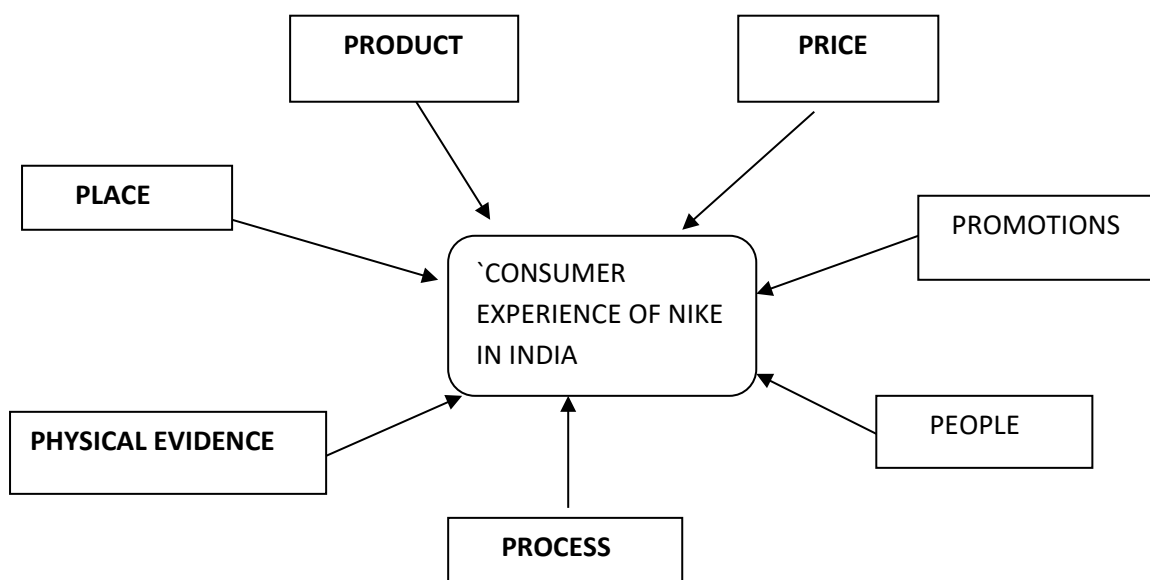
issued by companies, is dictated and understood by the consumers based on their cultural backgrounds (Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou, 2009). This means that while companies can standardize products, multinational companies have to consider cultural issues while forming marketing strategies and messages. This tilt the debate in favor of customization of the marketing mix of companies – arguably except products. Even in terms of products, companies need to consider making changes in design, packaging, price, or distribution of goods so that they are able to address the cultural differences between countries (Ruževičius and Ruževičiūtė, 2011). However, there are also criticism that even with customization, if companies are unable to aptly understand the local culture, a customization strategy can lead the company's marketing efforts to fail and further alienate the customers from the market and customers further.

However, the arguments from academics and practitioners also tend to generally accept that the final decision taken by multinational companies about standardization or customization is generally guided by the possible financial returns and risks involved for each alternative (Brei, et al., 2011).

## 2.7: The Conceptual Framework for

The conceptual framework for gathering of primary data is simple and is based on the 7Ps of marketing in the Indian context. While a fair idea of the global or the international marketing strategy of Nike is available from section 2.7, this conceptual framework uses the 7Ps of marketing to find Indian consumers' reactions to the marketing efforts of Nike in the Indian market.

The conceptual framework is depicted in the diagram below.



(Source: Author)

This framework was used for gathering primary data from Indian consumers of sportswear wherein the customers were asked questions related to each of the seven elements of the marketing mix as shown above. The results will indicate what the Indian customers think about the marketing strategy of the Nike in India and help this study to achieve its objective.

## **2.8: Summary of Literature review**

This literature review has detailed the elements of international marketing mix and why it is important for MNCs. This chapter also showed that why MNCs should consider or give importance to the marketing mix as well as consider whether they should have a single marketing strategy for all the international markets that they operate in or whether to make changes in strategy based on the local market environment and conditions. In that context this section showed how MNCs should also pay attention to each of the seven elements of the marketing mix and consider whether to standardize or customize one or more of the elements to create an overall marketing strategy. The conceptual framework developed will be used to gather primary data wherein the questions would be based on how consumers of Nike in India view the marketing strategy in India in terms of the individual marketing mix elements.

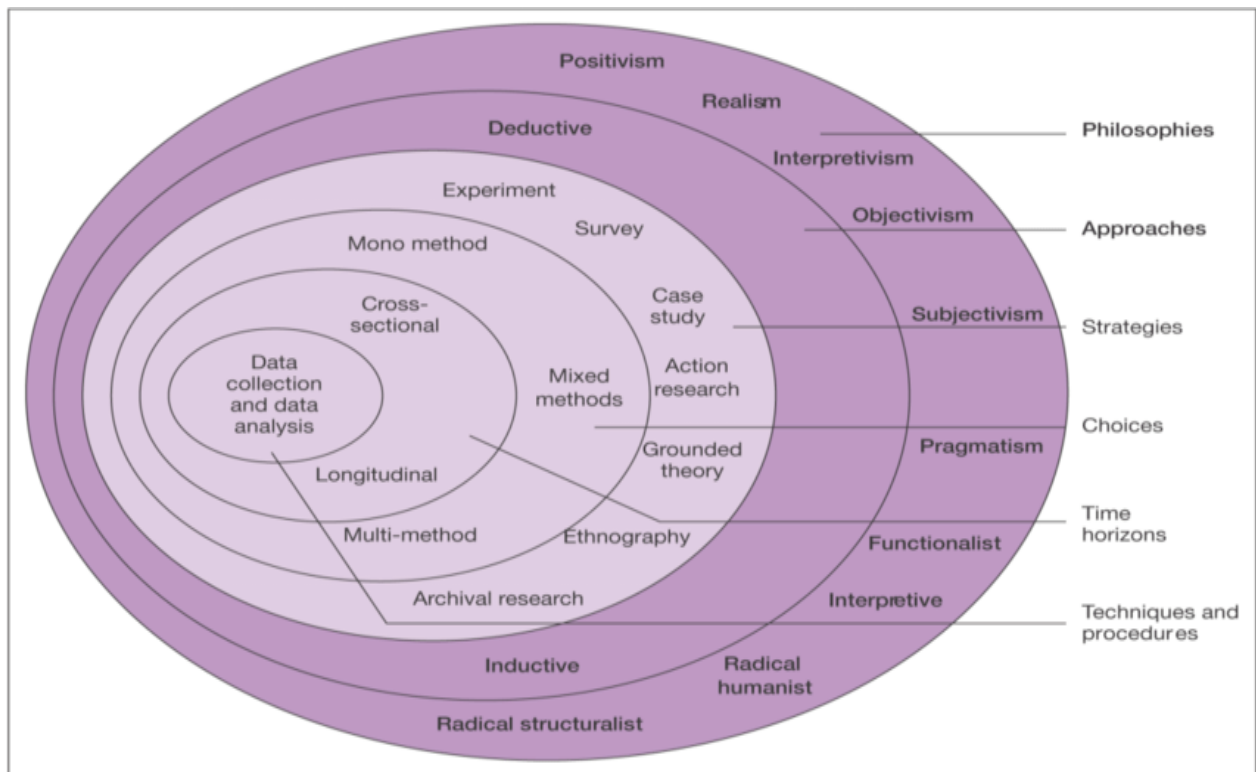


### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This part of the study provides readers an idea about the methods and techniques that were used for achieving the desired results from the study. The structured methodology used for this research is detailed in this section. A structured research methodology is often defined as a process that aids a researcher to choose the best possible methods for a study. Research methodology is not a method of conducting a research in itself but is a process that can be used as a guideline or a framework for selecting the most appropriate method for various parts of a research work and justifying the choice. Such choice of methods and techniques are most often dictated by the nature of a research (Goddard, and Melville. 2011). The research methodology that was followed for this study was based on the so called ‘Research Onion’ – also known better as the Saunder’s model, for selection of the most appropriate methods and techniques that were used for this study.

#### **3.1. The Saunder’s Model of Research Methodology**

The Saunder’s model or the Research Onion model suggests that a researcher should divide the method selection according to the various sections of a study and decide on the most apt method or technique to be used based on the nature and scope of the study. At the same time, the personal knowledge, wisdom and judgment of the researcher is also called into service (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill. 2016). The figure shown below is a pictorial representation of the Saunder’s model.



(Source: Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016)

The above picture clearly depicts that the concept of the Research Onion is based on a number of concentric layers wherein each of the layers denote a specific element of a research work – which in turn offers multiple methods or techniques to choose from for that particular layer. This model or framework for research methodology suggests that a research should take a bird’s eye view of a research work and then choose the general direction that the researcher wants the research to follow.

For example, the outermost layer in this picture denotes the philosophical approach that a researcher could take from among a number of choices. The philosophical stand point is shown the outermost of the first layer because it provides the general direction for a research. As one moves into the concentric circles and deeper into the model, the broad view is slowly transformed into a micro-view for the research and related choices come to the fore. This model suggests that it is the task of a researcher to go through the layers of the model just like when one would peel the layers of an onion till one reaches the innermost layer (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). Moreover, because the various parts of a research are interlinked hence the choice of method or technique or approach for one part affects the choice for the other parts also (Avison, Baskerville and Myers, 2001).

### **3.2: Research Philosophy**

The primary aim of this research work was to explore how consumers in India reacted to the 7 elements of the marketing mix of Nike as they see in around them in the Indian market. The aim was to take customers through the available data on Nike's marketing mix – product, price, place, promotions, people, process and physical, and ask related questions about the different elements of the marketing mix. This was hoped to reveal general view or opinion of Indian consumers how they view the overall marketing strategy of Nike in India. the aim was to extract the personal views, beliefs and opinions of the consumers on each of the specific elements of the 7Ps of Nike's marketing mix.

That means that the core composition of this research as well as its various aspects such as the variables of the research was closely linked to interpretation and the feelings of humans about the marketing mix of the multinational company – which in turn shows the psychology of consumers in this respect.

Additionally, the main or the central theme of this research was also closely linked to the personal choices of consumers about each of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix of Nike in India and hence was made up of their personal choices, feelings and beliefs. These elements or aspect of the research topic were given importance while selecting the research philosophy that was appropriate – while also keeping in mind the intended methods that this researcher intended to use such as for primary and secondary data gathering and analysis (Bryman, and Bell, 2011).

The above considerations led this researcher to choose the positivist research philosophy which allowed this study to make close observations of the research phenomenon – reaction of Indian consumers to the marketing mix elements of Nike in India, by way of primary data gathering. The data this gathered was objectively analyzed to explain what the impact was (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). These were allowed or postulated by the positivist research philosophy.

Moreover, the chosen research philosophy was such that does not allow personal influence of a researcher to be exerted on the research variables or the observation. This clause was also apt for this research as this researcher had no influence over the feeling or beliefs of the Indian consumers over how they viewed Nike's strategic marketing mix in India. This was instrumental in keeping the personal bias of the researcher completely out of the equation of primary data collection. For example, in this study, the researcher had no influence on the marketing mix elements of Nike as well as what the Indian consumers thought about them.

Hence it was believed the chosen research philosophy was best suited to give a general direction for this study.

### **3.3: Research Approach**

The Saunder's Model or the Research Onion suggests that the inductive and deductive approaches are two of the most important and widely used research approaches. This study chose to adopt the inductive approach which is also referred to as the process of inductive reasoning after considering the characteristics of the two approaches and evaluating them against the intended outcome from this study (Goddard, and Melville. 2011).

The justifications for this choice are given below.

According to this research approach, a researcher is allowed to begin a research with a set of observations (generally in the form of primary data), recording them and analysing them to come to a conclusion and form a generalised theory or hypothesis (Goddard, and Melville. 2011). In this study, the observations were the manner in which Indian consumers reacted to or were impacted by the marketing mix elements of Nike in India. This was how this researcher had also planned to conduct this study and therefore believed that this research approach was best suited for this study. For example, this researcher aimed opt basically use the observation method for assessing how Indian consumers reacted to the different marketing elements of Nike in India as explained in the Research Philosophy section. Based on the data gathered from such observation and analysis of such data to make suggestion and recommendations to Nike for better use of the marketing mix in the Indian market.

Additionally, the choice of the inductive research approach was also supported by the primary techniques postulated by this approach – identifying trends within the data gathered from the observations that are then analysed to form generalised theories which were used to provide an explanation of the research phenomenon (Bernard, 2011). This was also the initial plan for this study and hence inductive approach was chosen.

### **3.4: Research Strategy**

A quantitative research strategy was used for this study because the conceptualization of this study was initially based on quantitative use of primary data. The initial plan of this researcher was to undertake a survey of sports apparel consumers in the India market for which a qualitative research strategy was simply not possible to use.

Additionally, quantitative strategy is also supported by the positivist philosophy and inductive approach as was chosen previously which also justified this choice of research strategy (Bryman, and Bell. 2011). This also shows how the choice of a research method for one element of a study also affects the choice in other sections or parts.

Moreover, this researcher had planned to gather primary data from as many respondents as possible which would have resulted in large quantity of data. Reaching out to a large number of participants and analysis of large volumes of data derived from them is not possible through qualitative research strategy and hence a quantitative strategy was obvious (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016).

This researcher's initial plan was to conduct a survey among Indian consumers and use quantitative data for analysis to find answers to at least two of the research questions. The aim initially was to find trends and similarities among the answers through statistical methods so that it was possible to ascertain what the majority of the participants thought or what their views were of the marketing mix elements of Nike in India were. This mandated the use of quantitative research strategy throughout the study.

### **3.5: Research Design**

#### **3.5.1: Descriptive Research Design**

A descriptive research design was adopted for this research since the primary objective of this study was to systematically explain the study phenomenon as accurately as possible of the possible various impacts of Nike's marketing mix on Indian consumers. Hence the study aimed to find answer to what (the marketing mix elements influencing Indian consumers), where (in the stores and online channel in the Indian market), when (while interacting with and dealing with Nike) and how (creating either favorable or unfavorable attitude for Nike) of the phenomenon (Mishra, 2008). These elements mentioned above are characteristics of a descriptive research design which prompted this researcher to choose this research design. Additionally, descriptive design also allowed this researcher to identify characteristics, frequencies and trends among the consumers who are impacted by the marketing mix of Nike in India which was supported by this research design (Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell. 2005).

#### **3.5.2: Cross Sectional Design**

Further, a cross-sectional research design was adopted for this study since that gave this researcher the option of gathering data from multiple sources and individuals at a single point

in time. In this process the role of the researcher was that of an observer as there was no way that this researcher could influence the variables being observed. This supported the choice as a cross-sectional research design supported this characteristic.

Additionally, this type of research design is also well suited for studies in social science topics according to (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). The core research problem investigated in this research can also be characterised as being a social science related one because the phenomenon of the marketing mix of Nike has the potential to impact a large part of the Indian society that comprises of the consumers of sportswear in the country.

Moreover, this cross-sectional research design is also apt for studies that are done with certain constrain on resources – such as this one, because it allows for maximum utilization of the available resources – including time. However, critics have pointed out that using this design, it is possible to gather data only at a particular time and hence examination of the research topic or phenomenon over an extended period is not possible (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). But that constraint of the cross-sectional research design had no effect or impact on this study as it was not designed to make long term assessment of the impact of the marketing mix elements of Nike on Indian consumers.

### **3.6: Sampling and Participants**

For quantitative studies, sampling is one of the most crucial actions because quantitative studies generally involve a large number of people and reaching out to all of the members of a target population is not possible (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016)). Hence it is important to select a small number of people from the target population as a sample with the conscious effort to make it as representative as possible.

Using the Saunder's Model or the Research Onion, this study used a combination of simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique to create a representative sample from among the consumers of sportswear in India. The purposive sampling technique was used because it allowed this researcher to set predefined thresholds for inclusion and exclusion of participants from among the target population. The inclusion criteria for this study were the requirement of the participants to be consumers of sportswear and should have visited multiple Nike stores in India and had explored the online platform of the company in recent times. The nature of questionnaire designed for primary data gathering made imposing this inclusion criteria important. There were however no qualifying questions but the researcher ensured that the participants fulfilled the criteria before including them in the study.

Moreover, the use of the purposive sampling technique also allowed this researcher to get a representative sample from among the target population despite the target population being very large – potentially running into millions, this very large size of the target group was one of the major constraints of this study prior to the sampling action, because including all or a large part of the target population was impossible given the resource constraint. This made it necessary to get a representative sample and hence the simple random sampling technique was applied subsequent to the purposive sampling technique (Fowler and Lavrakas, 1988). Use of this sampling method allowed this researcher to get a sample in which there was theoretical possibility of participation of all the members of the target population in the study. Moreover, this sampling technique also allowed this researcher to also eliminate any personal bias in sample selection process (Cohen, Welkowitz, and Lea, 2011).

It is pertinent to mention at this point that the current pandemic situation caused by the novel coronavirus did not allow this researcher to physically reach out to the respondents or the participants of this study. Instead, this researcher used electronic modes of contact. For example, a number of social media platforms - and groups within them comprising of Indians, were identified and targeted reach out to the possible participants. Requests to potential participants were sent out and posted on the social platforms – primarily Facebook and Twitter, wherein a small brief of the study was provided with an appeal to join the study. Additionally, this researcher also used his personal contacts outside of the social media platforms to request people to participate in the study. That eliminated the critique of using only social media users which would not have been actually representative of the actual target population.

The use of social media for searching for respondents was conducted over a period 25 days and about 250 people were sent such requests from within the social media groups identified. The result was that about 118 of the 250 people responded and agreed to participate. The questionnaire for the study was sent to the participants electronically and the responses were also received electronically. Out of the 118 completed questionnaires, this researcher found 102 to be acceptable as they conformed to the 95 per cent completion benchmark that had been set by this researcher. Ultimately 100 responses were accepted for the purpose of ease of analysis – which included 12 responses from people gathered outside of the social media effort – basically using the personal contacts of this researcher. There were 59 males and 41 females in the sample and the age distribution was categorised into four brackets (18-20 yrs, 21-30 yrs, 31-40 yrs and those above 41 years of age)

Many of the participants also did not want their identity to be disclosed and therefore this researcher took care not to make such names public.

### **3.7: The Survey Research Questionnaire**

This study used the survey method for gathering of primary data which was completed with the use of questionnaire that comprised of 22 close ended questions. All of the questions had multiple choice answers and the participants were asked to select the most applicable answer according to their opinion. The questionnaire was mostly designed according to the Likert Scale wherein each answer was assigned a specific value ranging from 1 to 5. The use of the Likert type questionnaire helped this researcher to quickly transform the answers into statistical format for statistical analysis (Chang, 1994).

The first two questions were personal and demographic in nature while the rest were all related to the research topic. The rest 20 questions were further subdivided into eight sections – 7 of which were related to the 7 elements of the marketing mix and another related to the online sale platform of Nike. The detailed questionnaire is listed in the Appendix A. The questionnaire was divided into 7 more sections to represent the 7Ps with 4 questions for product strategy of Nike, 3 questions on its Pricing strategy, 3 questions on the Place element, 2 questions on the People element, 1 question on the Process element, 4 questions on the online sale channel of Nike in India and 2 questions on Nike's promotional strategy in India. All these questions were designed to bring out answers from the participants so that a fair idea of what consumers thought of the 7 elements of the Nike's marketing mix in India was available.

### **3.8: Data Analysis Procedures**

Since the study was followed the quantitative strategy and design, therefore statistical analysis of the primary data gathered from the survey was done. At the first stage of statistical analysis, the primary data was extracted from the survey answer sheets using the numerical values attributed to every answer according to the Likert Scale. That enabled transforming the answers into numerical form. These were then tabulated for analysis.

For analysis of the quantitative data, the statistical software Excel was used so that the process of analysis was accurate and fast as possible. Statistical methods were then applied to identify trends and patterns among the answers and those trends were compared with secondary data as well as bring out a generalised trend among the participants. In order to enhance the readability and to make the outcome of the analysis easy for readers to understand, the data was presented in the form of graphs, charts and tables.



Qualitative data analysis was done for data gathered from secondary sources through the literature review and on Nike's marketing mix in India. While direct reference to the company's marketing mix elements such as its product or pricing strategy was not available, inferences were arrived at qualitatively from the data gathered from secondary sources. This was done to gain an idea of the company's current marketing mix offered in India which helped to answer the first research question. The secondary sources of data included data from the website of Nike, company documents such as annual reports that were publicly available and other dependable sources.

### **3.9: Research Ethics**

During the entire course of this research, all the established ethical standards for academic research were followed. The participants of this study were sent detailed information about the topic and purpose of this research and requested to make an informed decision about participating. They were also assured about the safety, security and secrecy of the data that they would provide and were also assured that such data would be used only for this study and not for any commercial purposes. The participants were also assured that the data they provided would be permanently erased from the electronic device of this researcher after the publication of this research or six months – whichever was earlier. The participants were also informed that they could leave the research at any point in time without providing any reason whatsoever. For secondary data gathering, the researcher took all care to give proper credit and accreditation to all the authors whose work had been used in the study.

## **Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussions**

### **4.1: Results and Analysis of Secondary on Nike's Marketing Mix in India**

#### *Products*

In the Indian market, Nike offers a wide range of products including shoes, apparel and equipment that are specialized as sports products.

Nike does not offer any direct evidence of it significantly customizing its products for the Indian market, but rather seems to focus on bringing its best global products into the Indian market such as the Nike Air Jordans – even though it is limited to a handful of boutiques such as the VegNonVeg and Superkicks which were launched in Mumbai in 2018. However, it should be noted that one of the impediments for offering such elite footwear of the company is the high import duties which mean prices are higher in the Indian market (Zamindar, 2021). Another example of this is the Zoom Soldier 8 Flyease sneakers that the company has developed exclusively for people with disabilities to suit their needs and requirements. The company offers this in the Indian market and it has been reported that there is enthusiasm among Indian para-athletes about Nike's efforts to promote inclusion of these new sneakers in the Indian market (Dhyani, 2019).

The Nike India website offers 6720 different shoes and sneakers under different brands of the company - ranging from its lifestyle range of shoes to running shoes to basketball and football shoes to skateboarding and American football shoes. This researcher checked with the global website of the company which also offers a similar range (nike.com/in (a), 2021).

However, there are signals of some degree of customization in the products of the company. For example, Nike offers a very wide range of slippers or sandals or flipflops to its Indian customers - generally available through third party stores and e-commerce platforms, which are stylish. This researcher checked out the company website as well as the global e-commerce platforms for Nike flipflops and could not notice a wide range of these being offered in the Western markets to the degree they are offered for India. This is because such flipflops or sandals are a common product that most Indians use at home and sometimes even outside on very casual occasions.

Nike also offers a range of products for people interested in 'Yoga' in India. It should be mentioned that Yoga as a form of exercise is performed by a large number of people in India as a healthy life. Nike offers sports bras, tops and t-shirts, hoodies and sweatshirts, jackets and

gilets, trousers and tights and shorts under its Yoga brand. In fact, the Indian online sale channel of the company offers 43 different products under this section (nike.com/in, 2021). Nike also offers a few products under its 'Cricket' banner – wherein cricket is by far the most popular sports in India (nike.com/in (b), 2021).

Nike also has manufacturing agreements with independent contract manufacturers in India for manufacturing of footwear for sale primarily within the country (Nike Inc., 2020, p-72). This indicates that such locally made products are designed to suit local tastes of Indian customers as they are made in India and by Indian designers and makers.

### *Price*

There is ample evidence that Nike's pricing strategy in the Indian market is aimed at making its products – barring the exclusive ones, affordable for the average Indian consumer. While it is not possible to put an exact figure on the 'affordability' aspect in context of Indian consumers, based on the personal experience of this researcher of the price of local brands and those from Nike's rivals in India, this study can assume that such 'affordability' can range between a thousand to a few thousand Indian rupees for sneakers and sports shoes – especially for the huge middle-income group of consumers.

There are more than 50 different brands of shoes that Nike offers in India that are available for less than 2,247 Indian rupees. The lowest priced product is presumably the Nike Men Brown Sneakers which is available at 1,799 Indian rupees. It is possible for consumers to choose from a wide range of affordable products – both at the stores and online. Further, the pricing of the products is similar across all major cities such as Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Pune, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, NCR etc. (PriceDekho.com, 2021)

### *Place*

Nike entered India directly in June 2004, about six years after its main competitor Adidas. In the Indian market Nike uses both physical as well as online sale channels where consumers can access its products. At one point, there were about 350 exclusive Nike stores in India. In addition to mono-brand stores, Nike also has presence through about 150 odd multi-brand stores and more than 600 mom-and-pop stores as of 2018 (Business-standard.com, 2018). The company also offers its products through its India specific website Nike.com.in and through a

number of e-commerce platforms including those of Amazon.com, Snapdeal, Flipkaert, PriceDekho, etc.

However, in 2019, Nike decided to close down some of its flagship stores in the Indian market because of mounting losses to around 150 in 2019 and there were reports at that time that the company might further bring it down to 100, In comparison, Nike's rival Puma has 360 stores and Adidas has 600-700 stores in the Indian market (Satrar, 2019).

From the above data it is apparent that Nike is focused more on use of multi-brand retailing stores such as those in malls as well as other smaller retailing shops to offer its products. It should be noted at this stage that a major section of the Indian middle class that can afford Nike products and those who aspire to access world class products are situated outside of the metro cities and hence allowing such consumers to access Nike products through multi brand and retail stores is apparently the current Place strategy of the company. Further, e-commerce channels are also flourishing in India – apart from the recent surge in online buying during the Covid-19 pandemic, and therefore making its products widely available through such online sale channels is also an apt Place strategy for Nike.

### ***Promotions***

Nike's first Indian campaign was called the 'Da However, Ding' project which it had launched in 2015-2016 and which became very popular especially online. That campaign helped the brand to make inroads into the Indian consumer base – especially the youth and the middle-income group who are used to regularly viewing online content. Through such promotional campaigns, Nike has managed to take its brand to a different level across channels. The campaigns apparently focus on portraying Nike as a brand that can mean to so many different people (TheBrandingJournal.com, 2016).

Further, just like in its global promotional strategy, Nike also roped in sports personalities to become the brand ambassadors of the company. Cricket is by far the most popular sports in India and Nike had at one time hired the captain of the Indian national cricket team Virat Kohli as its brand ambassador. Kohli was part of the 'Bleed Blue' promotional campaign of the company which reaped significant benefits for the company (timesnownews.com, 2020). Nike also use the famous Indian film star Dipika Padukone as its brand ambassador to reach out to the non-sports consumers of the country as well (Shah, 2016). That was Nike's way of celebrating 'girl power' and aimed to rope in women consumers as well towards the brand.

Further, the global ad campaign of Nike in 2020 featured that Indian women's cricket team – which has also gained national popularity in addition to the men's team, which was another of the strategies of Nike to appeal to Indian consumers (ETBrandEquity.com, 2020). It should be mentioned here that this promotional strategy of Nike was not only to talk about women power but also to celebrate the success of the Indian women's cricket team in recent times and leverage that as a talking point in favor of the company and the brand.

### *People*

Be it at the physical stores or online on its e-commerce platform or on Nike's Indian website, the company attempts to achieve excellence in customer service through development of a culture of customer service among the sales team.

The company has run a e-learning program called Nike 'Sports Knowledge Underground' (SKU) for the sales associates of the company stationed at the company stores as well as those of other retailers that keep Nike. The aim of this program was to train the sales people in selling skills and product knowledge and enhancing their knowledge and interaction with customers. The interactive web-based training program closely resembled a video game and has gained popularity since it was launched in 2003 and has since been upgraded with arrival of new products and new technologies (sku.nike.com, 2021). The company's website in India also has multiple options for consumers, such as using either a smartphone or a computer, to interact with the company's backend staff for issues ranging from queries and complaints on products and orders to on information about the company through chat options. The company also has a helpline that can be used by consumers to interact with the company.

While the company has a single strategy for its business processes that it applies globally, at the local level, Nike has a strategy of focusing on collaboration and innovation.

### *Process and Physical*

This aspect of the marketing mix can be found in the attempts of the company to deliver equal consumer experience throughout its consumer touch points.

Nike is using an app to deepen its relationship with customers which provides access to the Nike Plus rewards program – offering exclusives and early access to new products. The 30-day wear test for shoes is another example of Nike's direct-to-consumer efforts. Further, consumers all over the world, including in India, can use the Nike Fit app to snap a picture of their feet

using their phone and get the perfect shoe size for every style of Nike shoes (Barseghian, 2019). The company has also established its own direct-to-consumer network, as well as a vastly streamlined slate of wholesale distribution partners as a part of its Triple Double Strategy (Danziger, 2018).

An example is the uniform customer support policy of the company in India irrespective of whether a customer had purchased a product from the company's physical stores or from online platforms. Nike offers the same help to customers purchasing products its mono-brand stores from multi-brand retail stores or from online platforms. The same warranty and exchange and return policy is applicable to every customer irrespective of their *Place* of purchase. Therefore, it can be said that Nike follows a single or a uniform strategy for customer experience to ensure same levels of efficiency all across the supply chain of the company so that a very high standard of product quality, availability and delivery is achieved in all its international.

#### **4.2: Primary Data Results and Analysis**

This section of the research presents and analyzes the results of the statistical analysis of the data derived from the survey of Indian consumers of Nike while trying to analyze what each of the data sets reveal in relation to the company's marketing strategy in India. The questions were based on the 7Ps of the marketing mix – products, price place, promotions, people, process and physical. In this aspect the elements of place and physical were combined together as both were not very different from one another in this case of Nike. Further, the online sale channel of the company was treated as a separate set of questions that tried to include as many applicable elements of the marketing mix as possible.

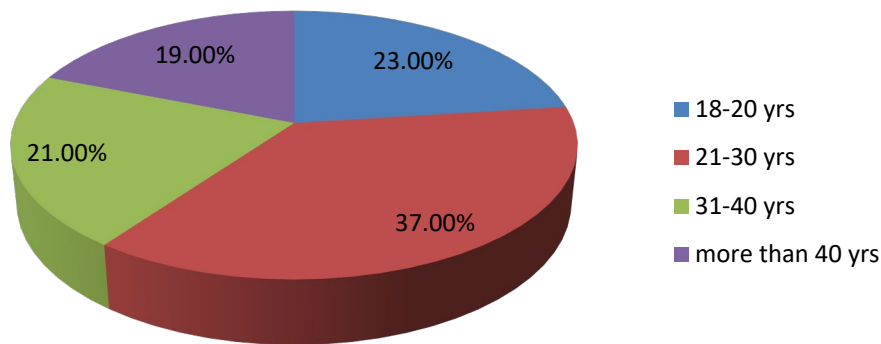
##### **4.1.1: Respondent Demographics**

In terms of gender, 59% of the participants were males while rest 41% were women which shows a wide spread of gender presence in the sample which helped to bring out opinions related to Nike' products of men's and women's range alike.

The largest section of the respondents (37%) was in the age group of 21-30 years while 23% were in the age group of 18-20 years and 21% belong to the group 31-40 years. The rest 19% were more than 41 years old (see graphical representation of data in Appendix B)

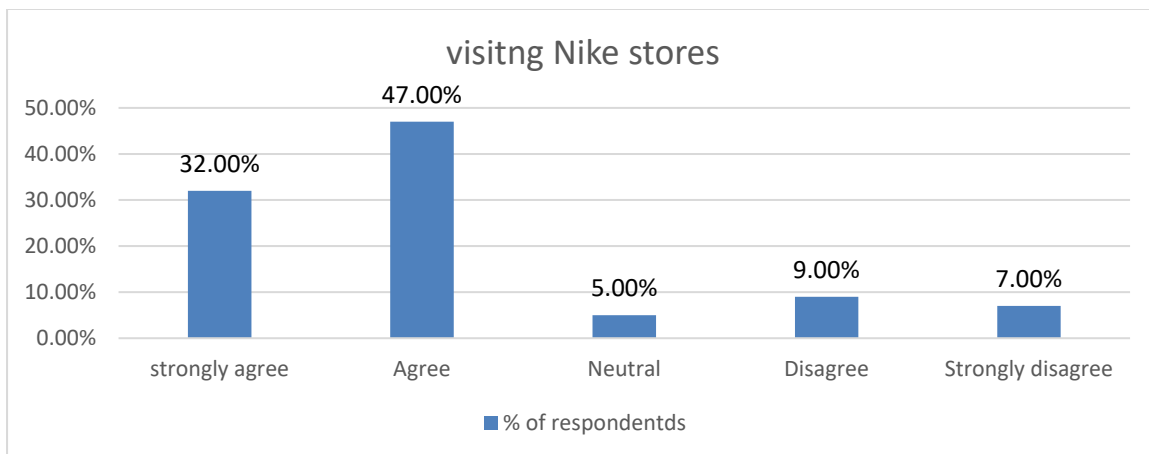
##### **Graph 1: Age Profile of Respondents**

### Age distribution of respondents



The next set of data, represented in the form of a chart, shows the distribution of the answers of the respondents to them visiting Nike store on more than one occasion.

*Graph 2: Respondents visiting Nike stores more than once*



(Source: author)

The above chart shows that majority of the respondents (79%) have visited Nike stores in India compared to a small number of them (16%) who had not visited such stores. This shows that the answers that the majority of the respondents were based on a good set of experience of visiting the company's stores and hence the answers were potentially detailed and accurate compared to the situation of a lesser number of respondents visiting the company's stores.

#### **4.1.2: Opinion of Consumers on Products Offered by Nike**

The next set of data showed what the participants thought of the products Nike offers to customers in India in terms of variety, quality, customization for Indian conditions, etc. The detailed charts of for these data sets can be found in *Appendix B*.

Even though Nike is a foreign company, it has been operational in Indian for quite some time now. Along with its rivals Puma and Adidas, Nike makes up a sizable portion of the Indian sportswear market.

The popularity of Nike' products in India can be gauged from the results of this survey which shows that a vast majority of consumers (78%) were find of its products compared to just 11% who were not. However, 11% of the participants were unable to make up their minds on this subject.

Further, a support for Nike' products offered in India is further displayed by the fact that a majority of the participants (54%) liked the even the packaging of the company's product while only 21% did not like the packaging. Notably one fourth of the participants chose not say anything potentially because they were unable to make up their mind about whether they liked Nike' product packaging or not which in turn could underscores that this aspect might not been given prior importance by them.

The survey data also showed that a large majority of the consumers (56%) some of the products offered by Nike were specifically designed to suit Indian conditions such as breathable apparel and sports shoes to match the hot and humid weather of the country compared to only 8% of the participants who did not. In this aspect too, there was a significantly large group of participants (27%) who did not say anything which potentially reflects their lack of experience of comparing Nike's products with the company's products that are available in foreign markets.

The above result was seemingly supported the next set of data on the question of what the participants thought about the products offered by Nike to Indian consumers of being of the same quality as those available in the western markets of the US and Europe. The largest section of the participants (47%) chose not to say anything as they potentially had no experience of comparing the quality of Nike's Indian products with those offered outside. Only 36% of the participants said the quality was same while 17% opined otherwise – which was a significant number because it revealed that about one fight of the participants believed that



Nike's products in India were potentially of lower quality compared to Western markets even though that was not explicitly asked nor stated.

Considering the above analysis, it can be said that the products of Nike offered in India is liked by a majority of the participants for reasons such as the customization of such products to the Indian environment, there were also doubts in the minds of the participants about the comparability of the quality of Nike products offered in India with those offered by the company in its western markets.

#### **4.1.3: Opinion of Consumers on Pricing Strategy of Nike in India**

There were a number of questions linked to the pricing strategy of Nike in India in the survey. The analysis of the answers provided by the participants helped to obtain a number of valuable insights about the company's pricing strategy in India (Detailed graphical representation of the data is available in *Appendix B*).

For example, a majority of the participants (53%) were of the opinion that the price of the products offered by Nike in India was affordable while a significant number of the participants (24%) thought otherwise. A significantly large number of participants (23%) chose not to say anything possibly since they did not have a parameter to compare the pricing. This question however did not include the income of the participants nor the money that they thought could be termed as affordable. Instead, this question was such designed so as to get a comparative view of Nike' product pricing and to know whether these participants considered the general pricing of Nike's products to be affordable based on their income.

Additionally, survey data analysis showed that about 33% of the participants were of the opinion that Nike' products were comparatively cheaper in India in comparison to the prices in many of its Western and developed markets. In contrast 20% of the participants thought otherwise. A very large number of the participants (37%) chose not to say anything potentially because they did not have any parameter to compare the affordability of Nike' products in India with those the company offers in its developed western markets. The analysis shows that on the overall, more participants think that Nike's products in India were comparatively cheaper – as much as they were affordable at least for the middle-income class, in comparison to the price of similar products of the company in other developed economies.

The survey probed further into the pricing aspect and comparative affordability and asked participants about their views on the reason for the specific pricing strategy of the company in

India. A vast majority of the participants (68%) believed that the affordability and competitive pricing strategy followed by Nike in India was because of the comparative lower purchasing power of Indian consumers. Only 19% of the participants denied this as a plausible reason while 13% said nothing. The data leads this researcher to infer that the majority of the participants were of the opinion the Nike made its products 'affordable' in India because of a comparatively lower purchasing power of India consumers compared to consumers in Nike's western markets.

Based on the above analysis, it can be said that Nike follows a pricing strategy that has been formulated keeping in mind the specific needs and abilities of the Indian consumers and it is primarily dictated by the purchasing power of consumers in the Indian market. But this researcher also believes that there can be additional factors to this pricing strategy such as lower costs of raw materials or labor or lower overhead costs which can result in lower manufacturing cost for Nike in India consequently comparatively lower prices.

#### **4.1.4: Consumers' Opinion on Place (stores and Online) Strategy of Nike in India**

Similar to insights obtained from primary data so far, insights were also obtained for the Place aspect of the marketing mix for Nike in India (Detailed graphical representation of the data is available in *Appendix B*).

Survey data analysis showed that a vast majority of the participants (76%) were impressed by the manner of display of Nike products at its stores while only 15% of the participants disliked them. Only 9% of the participants chose to say anything possibly because they had not been to other comparable stores of the rivals of Nike or had not been attentive enough to product display at stores. This shows that the product display - including window displays, was attractive and could be one of the reasons for the participants choosing to go to the Nike stores.

Primary data analysis also revealed that a majority of the consumers (63%) of the participants who visited multiple stores of the company found them to be strategically located making them easily visible, identifiable and easy to reach. 23% of the participants thought otherwise while 14% chose not to say anything. It can be inferred that those who did not like the positioning of Nike stores could have potentially found one or two of the three position elements (visible, identifiable and easy to reach) to be untrue from their personal experience and therefore the reaction. Also, the negative reactions of the participants also do not automatically mean that they did not find any of the three elements of strategic placement of the stores untrue. The data analysis also indicates that the participants potentially found the Nike stores - the touch points

for accessing Nike products, to be located centrally, were relatively easy to reach and were identifiable possible due to the conspicuous logo of the brand as well as the positioning. That meant that majority of the participants would actually find Nike stores easy to locate in an Indian city, and to identify it quite easily because of the distinctive positioning and the company logo. The stores were also easy to reach as they were centrally located.

Additionally, 76% of the participants found the Nike stores to be generally large and spacious while 15% did not and 9% chose not to say anything potentially because they had never been to a Nike store.

#### **4.1.5: Consumers' Opinion about People (staff at the stores) of Nike**

This set of questions in the survey aimed to get the views of the participants about the human touch points of the company – Nike's staff at the stores (graphical representation of the data presented in *Appendix B*).

Survey data analysis showed that a large majority of the consumers (84%) of the participants thought that the employees at Nike stores were generally local or could speak and converse in the local language whereas English seemed to be the common language of interaction. That made it easy for the participants to explain things to them and understand what they want to say easily. In contrast, only 7% of the participants thought otherwise and were potentially unhappy with the language skills of the Nike staff at the stores. 9% of the participants chose not to say anything. This analysis could provide insights into the hiring strategy of employees at the stores considering the needs and desires of the local market and consumers.

Survey data analysis also showed that a majority of the participants (60%) were impressed by attitude of staff at Nike's stores while 19% were unhappy. At the same time, 21% of the participants were seemingly undecided about what to conclude about the attitude of the staff of the company at the stores. That means at 40% of the participants either chose not to say anything or were unhappy about the attitude of the staff at the stores – which makes up a significant number of the participants. This indicates the need for Nike to work on the attitude of the staff to convert the 40% participants to be happy with staff attitudes.

#### **4.1.6: Process elements of the Marketing Mix of Nike in India**

This element of the marketing mix is related to the various processes used by companies to offer a smooth experience for consumers on all of the sale channels. This element suggests that

companies try to offer seamless experience to consumers over all their sale channels and regions (Detailed graphical representation of the data is available in *Appendix B*)

Primary data analysis from the survey shows that a vast majority of the participants (79%) found broad similarity in products, price and general experience of being in a Nike store irrespective of its location in India while only 9% did not. 12% of the participants chose to remain silent potentially because they did not have comparable experience of visiting Nike stores in different cities. This indicated that the company had by and large managed to create a seamless consumer experience across its stores in India.

#### *Consumers Opinion on the elements of Marketing Mix of Nike's online Sale Channel*

Survey data analysis showed that a vast majority of the participants (82%) found Nike offered the same range and quality of products on its online platform as it does in its stores in India while just 7% thought otherwise. 11% of the participants chose not to say anything. This data set further supports the seamless nature of the online channel of the company in terms of products offered.

Additionally, data analysis showed that a very large majority of the participants (74%) of the participants found little or no difference in price of products of the company available at its stores and those available on the company website and other online sale channels while just 15% of the participants were sceptical about the seamlessness of the company's pricing. 11% chose not to say anything. This illustrates similarity in prices between the online and offline channels of Nike.

Further, survey data also showed that a large majority of the participants (74%) found their experience of buying Nike products from the company's online channel to be quite similar to buying them from a store, barring the physical (trying out) aspect, while only 14% thought otherwise and 12% chose not to say anything.

Data analysis also showed that 62% of the participants were impressed by the company's response to online consumers – during purchasing as well as during follow up and found the back-office employees quite willing to answer queries online – the touch point between the online consumers and the company, while 19% said otherwise and 19% chose not to say anything. This analysis indicates that there is scope for Nike to improve its responses for online consumers as almost 40% did not like the services or were at least not visibly happy.

(Detailed graphical representation of the data is available in *Appendix B*)

#### *Consumers' Opinions on Promotional Campaigns of Nike in India*

Analysis of primary data showed that a vast majority of the participants (91%) agreed that Nike's advertisement campaign strategy with Indian sports personalities reflect Indian-ness while a negligible number of the participants said otherwise.

Analysis also showed that 68% of the participants were appreciative of the advertisement campaigns of the company in India such as the 'rise of Indian women in sports' campaign, women's cricket team in Nike's global ad, #BleedBlue campaign starring Virat Kohli and believed that they were uniquely designed for Indian society and attitudes of the Indian consumers. Just 13% of the participants opined otherwise while 19% chose to say nothing. Data therefore showed that 32% of the participants were at least not impressed or did not like the ad campaigns of the company and hence there is scope for the company to improve.

#### **4.3: Discussions**

In this section of the study, the results obtained from analysis of primary and secondary will be essentially summarized to examine whether the research questions have been answered.

This study obtained a fair idea about the current market strategy followed or implemented by Nike in India in terms of the 7Ps of marketing – data for which was obtained from secondary sources.

It is evident that a wide range of products including shoes, apparel and equipment that are specialized as sports products, are offered by the company in India. This study found no direct evidence was found about Nike customizing its products for the Indian market. What was quite evident though was that the company offered its best global products into the Indian market such as the Nike Air Jordans, and the Zoom Soldier 8 Flyease sneakers that the company has developed exclusively for people with disabilities to suit their needs and requirements. More than 6,700 shoe and sneakers of the company can be found on the Nike India website under different brands of the company which is also similar to what the company offers through its global website. Nike does offer some localized products such as a very wide range of slippers or sandals or flipflops in India which was distinct as the company apparently did not offer such a large range of those products globally. This is potentially because use of flipflops or sandals is very common in India. Some customization was also seen in the company offering a range of products for people interested in 'Yoga' in India – a stay healthy practice that is performed

by a large number of people in India. Further products offered through its 'Cricket' banner also indicate customization because cricket is the most popular sports in India. This study also found ample evidence to suggest that Nike attempts to make its products in India affordable for Indian consumers who tend to have a lower purchasing power compared to peers in most western markets. The brand uses both physical as well as online sale channels for offering its products in India even though it has significantly reduced the number of exclusive company showrooms in India and has instead used more third-party retailers and its online sale channel. Therefore the *Place* strategy of the company in India is focused more on use of multi-brand retailing stores and its online channels. The *Promotional* strategy of the company is significantly customized for the Indian market such as its 'Da third-party Ding' project campaign of 2015-2016 which helped the company to approach the youth and the middle-income group. Its use of Indian sports and film personalities as the brand ambassadors of the company – such as cricket star Virat Kohli and Indian film star Dipika Padukone, is also a completely customized strategy of the company for the Indian market. The *People* element of its marketing strategy in India offers experiences to customers that are tuned to meet Indian conditions. Its e-learning program called Nike 'Sports Knowledge Underground' (SKU) for the sales associates of the company stationed at the company stores as well as those of other retailers that keep Nike is aimed to impart selling skills and product knowledge and knowledge and aptitude to interact with customers. The helpline of the company allows consumers to speak in various Indian languages. Therefore, it can be said that Nike attempts to customize its *People* element for the Indian market. The *Process* and *Physical* elements of the company were found to follow its global strategy of delivering equal consumer experience throughout its consumer touch points.

Analysis of primary data also revealed some interesting aspects of how Indian consumers view Nike's marketing mix in India.

For example, primary data showed that consumers were fond of the products and its packaging. However only a little more than half of the consumers believed that Nike products are specifically designed to suit Indian conditions. Indian consumers were also unsure about whether the products offered by Nike to Indian consumers are of the same quality as those available in the western markets of the US and Europe possibly because most had no experience of comparing the quality of Nike's Indian products with those offered outside. Considering the above analysis, it can be said that the products of Nike offered in India are liked by a majority of the participants for reasons such as the customization of such products to the Indian

environment, there were also doubts in the minds of the participants about the comparability of the quality of Nike products offered in India with those offered by the company in its western markets. These seemingly also conform to the secondary data findings about the brand's marketing mix strategy in India.

Consumers however found Nike products to be affordably priced in India and consumers had the perception that the brand's products were comparatively cheaper in India in comparison to the prices in many of its Western and developed markets. This, the consumers believe was because of the awareness of the company about the comparative lower purchasing power of Indian consumers. These can lead one to suggest that primary data seems to corroborate the conclusion drawn about *pricing* of Nike from secondary data and that the company follows a pricing strategy that has been formulated keeping in mind the specific needs and abilities of the Indian consumers and it is primarily dictated by the purchasing power of consumers in the Indian market.

For the *Place* element of the marketing mix of Nike, primary data showed that consumers were impressed by the manner of display of Nike products at its stores and the strategic location of the stores. Primary data also showed consumers finding Nike offering the same range and quality of products on its online platform as it does in its stores in India which corroborates with findings from secondary data. Further, consumers also found no difference in the price of products of the company available at its stores and those available on the company website and other online sale channels as well as the experience of purchasing from the company's online channel were similar to buying them from a store, barring the physical (trying out) aspect. These were revelations that were not found in secondary data although the product range was found to be the same on online channel of the company according to secondary data.,

On the *People* aspect of the company, primary data broadly seemed satisfied with the employees at Nike stores in terms of their local language skills but a large section of them were not overtly impressed by the attitude of the staff. These do not conform to findings from secondary data which seemed to paint a very rosy picture of the *People* aspect of Nike's marketing mix in India.

Primary data with respect to the *Process* element of the marketing mix of Nike in India showed that consumers found broad similarity in products, price and general experience of being in a Nike store irrespective of its location in India. This is similar to what was found from secondary data in terms of similar experiences being offered by the company across all its channels.

On other overall, primary data analysis also showed that consumers were impressed by Nike' advertisement campaign strategy with Indian sports personalities since it reflected Indian-ness. Hence the *Promotions* element of the marketing mix conformed to secondary data findings about the customization of promotional campaigns by Nike in India.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This concluding chapter of the study sums up the entire work and examines whether this study was able to answer the research questions that it set out to achieve. The research questions were:



RQ1: What is the basic marketing strategy that Nike follows in India – does the company implement its global marketing strategy or does it make any changes to adapt to the specific conditions of the Indian market and consumers with respect to the marketing mix?

RQ 2: How do the consumers of sportswear in India react to the different marketing elements of Nike in the country?

RQ 3: What can be suggested/ recommended to Nike for better use of the marketing mix in the Indian market?

Based on the Discussions (section 4.3) of this study, it can be safely concluded that the study has been able to find answer to the first research question from secondary data. The study found some evidence of customization of Nike's products in India as well as for its place element as it focuses more on use of multi-brand retailing stores and its online channels. The *Promotional* strategy of the company is significantly customized for the Indian market while the pricing is also customized to suit the lower purchasing power of Indian consumers. This study also found that the *People* or the staff of the company is tuned to meet Indian conditions while the *Process* and *Physical* elements of the company were found to follow its global strategy of delivering equal consumer experience throughout its consumer touch points.

This study also revealed a number of interesting facts about what consumers thought about the Indian marketing mix of Nike in India. Many of those conformed to the secondary findings for the first research question while some did not. For example, primary data findings were similar to secondary data findings *Products* and *Price* elements of Nike's marketing mix. The *Place* element of the marketing mix of Nike as disclosed from primary data were more or less congruent with secondary data findings. However, the finding from primary data that Nike stores were strategically located and the experience of purchasing from the company's online channel were similar to buying them from a store, barring the physical (trying out) aspect were not available in secondary data gathered.

However, primary data finding that the attitude of Nike staff (*People*) did not overtly impress a large number of consumers is contrary to what was found from secondary data. For the *Process* element too, there was similarity of primary data findings with secondary data in terms of similar experiences being offered by the company across all its channels.

*Hence it can be concluded that Nike followed a customization strategy for most of the marketing mix elements for the Indian market except its Process and Physical elements for*

*which it follows its global strategy of delivering equal consumer experience throughout its consumer touch points. These were confirmed through both secondary and primary data.*

Based on the discussions and conclusions drawn from this study, it can be safely suggested that Nike should continue to follow the customization strategy for its marketing mix in India while trying to enhance the attitude of its staff to suit to what Indian consumers want. It can also be recommended that all foreign companies entering India or operating in India should follow a partial customization strategy for marketing with Product, Place, Price, Promotions and People being completely customized while Process and Physical elements being standardized.

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## **APPENDIX A: Survey Questionnaire**

(The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a research project that is part of an ..... at .....)

Research Topic:

**BEST SUITED INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR MNCs – STANDARDIZATION, ADAPTATION OR COMBINATION – A CASE OF SPORTS APPAREL MAKER NIKE IN THE INDIAN MARKET**

Sample No : \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview : \_\_\_\_\_

(Information gathered through this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.)

### **SECTION – A: Details of Respondent**

**Please ✓ for the answer that matches with you.**

1. Age of Respondent:

- 18-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41 and above

2. Gender of Respondent:

i. Male -

ii. Female –

iii. Other -

**SECTION – B: Details about marketing mix of Nike in India**

**Please ✓ for the answer that matches with you.**

(For the questions/statements below put a tick mark on the option you feel correct)

3. I have visited a Nike store in India

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

***Product***

4. I am fond of Nike' products

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

5. I like the product packaging offered by the company

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

6. I believe that some of the products offered by Nike are specifically designed to suit Indian conditions such as breathable apparel and sports shoes to match the hot and humid weather of the country

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

7. I think that the products offered by Nike to Indian consumers are of the same quality as those available in the western markets of the US and Europe

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

### **Price**

8. I am of the opinion that Nike' products are priced affordably to suit Indian consumers like me and are competitively priced when compared to rivals like Adidas and Puma

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

9. I think Nike' products are comparatively cheaper in India than in many of its Western markets and in developed economies

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)



10. I think the affordable pricing strategy of Nike in India is due to the comparatively lower purchasing power of Indian consumers

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

**Place**

11. I like the manner in which Nike's products are displayed at its stores

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

12. Nike's stores in India that I have seen in multiple cities are located strategically so that they are easily visible, identifiable and easy to reach

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

13. Most of the stores of Nike that I have visited are generally large and spacious and good space for shopping

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

### **People**

14. The employees at Nike stores are generally local or speak and converse in the local language and English seems to be the common language of interaction which has made it easy for me to explain things to them and understand what they want to say easily

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

15. I have mostly been impressed by the positive attitude of employees at Nike's stores

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

### **Process**

16. I have found that there is a broad similarity in products, price and general experience of being in a Nike store irrespective of its location in India

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

### Online

17. Nike offers the same range and quality of products online as it does at its stores in India

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

18. There is little or no difference in price of products of the company available at its stores and those available on the company website

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

19: Consumer experience of buying Nike products from its online channel is quite similar to buying them from a store barring the physical (trying out) aspect

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

20: The company's response to online consumers such as me is appreciable – during purchasing as well as during follow up, and I have experienced the employees are quite willing to answer queries online

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

### **Promotions**

21: I find Nike ads with Indian sports personalities like Virat Kohli, film star Deepika Padukone and fitness guru Kunal Rajput are quite interesting as they reflect Indian-ness

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

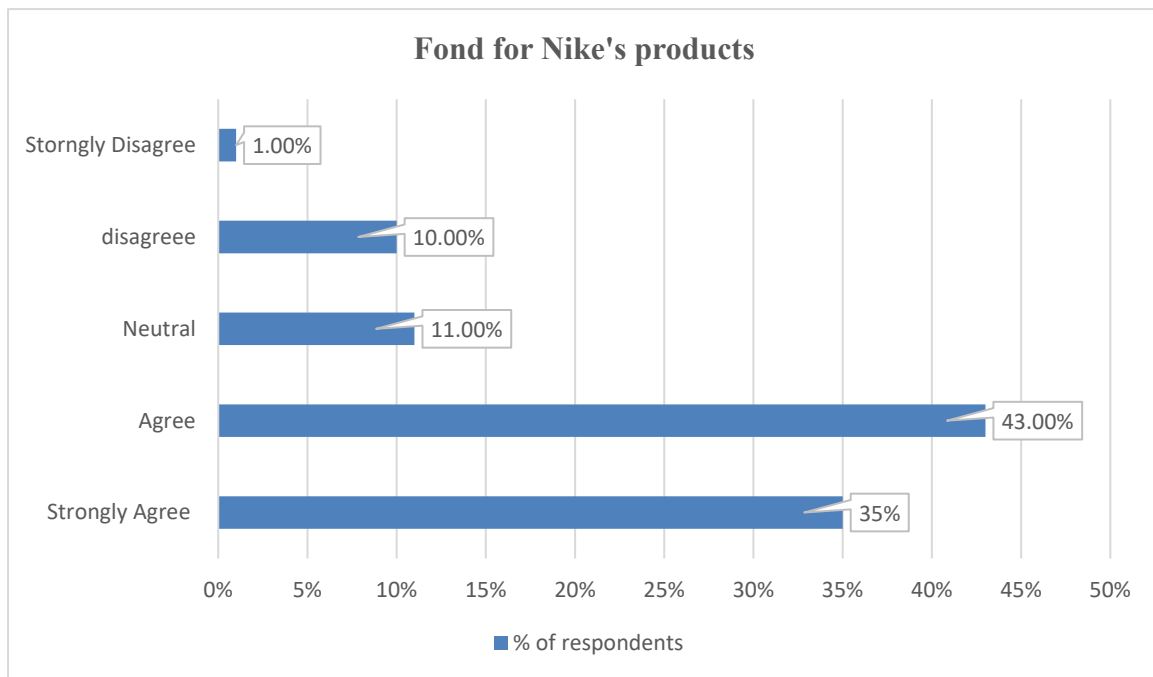
22: The advertisement campaigns of the company in India such as the 'rise of Indian women in sports' campaign, women's cricket team in Nike's global ad, #BleedBlue campaign starring Virat Kohli are uniquely designed for Indian society and attitudes of the Indian consumers

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

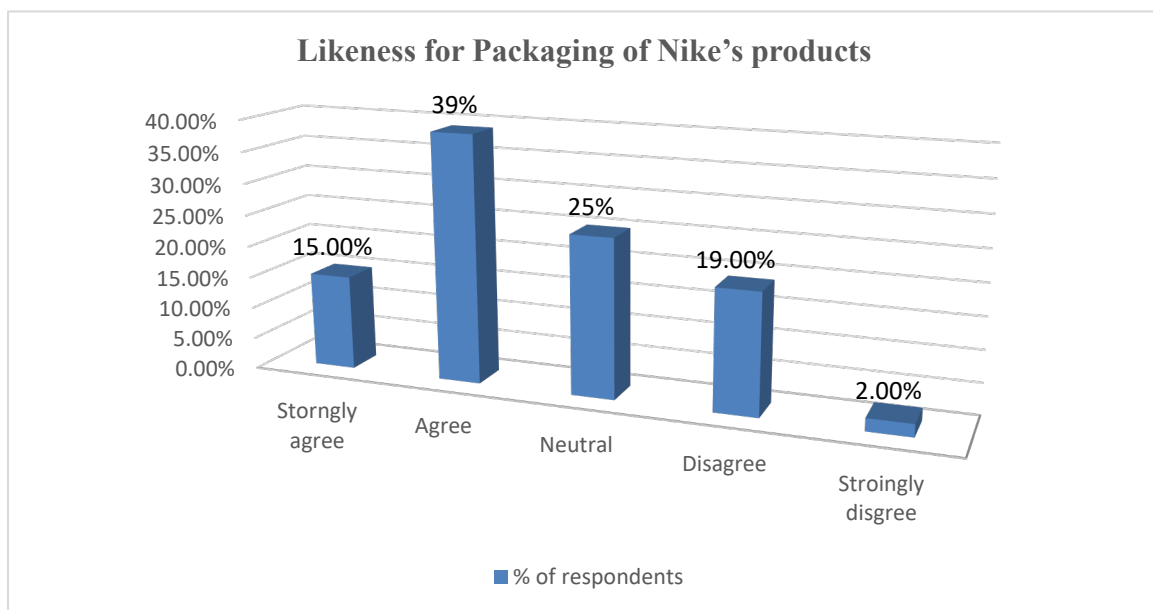
Thank you for your time and patience in completing this questionnaire.

### **APPENDIX B: Graphs of Analysis of Survey Data**

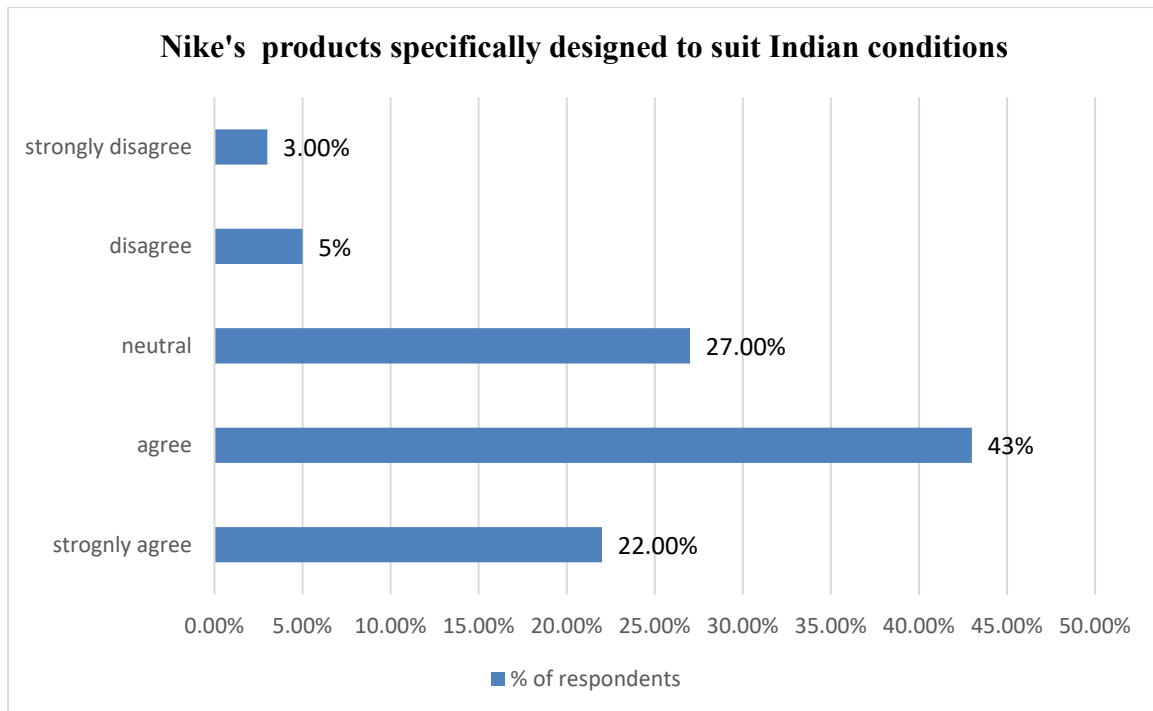
#### *Appreciation for Nike's products*



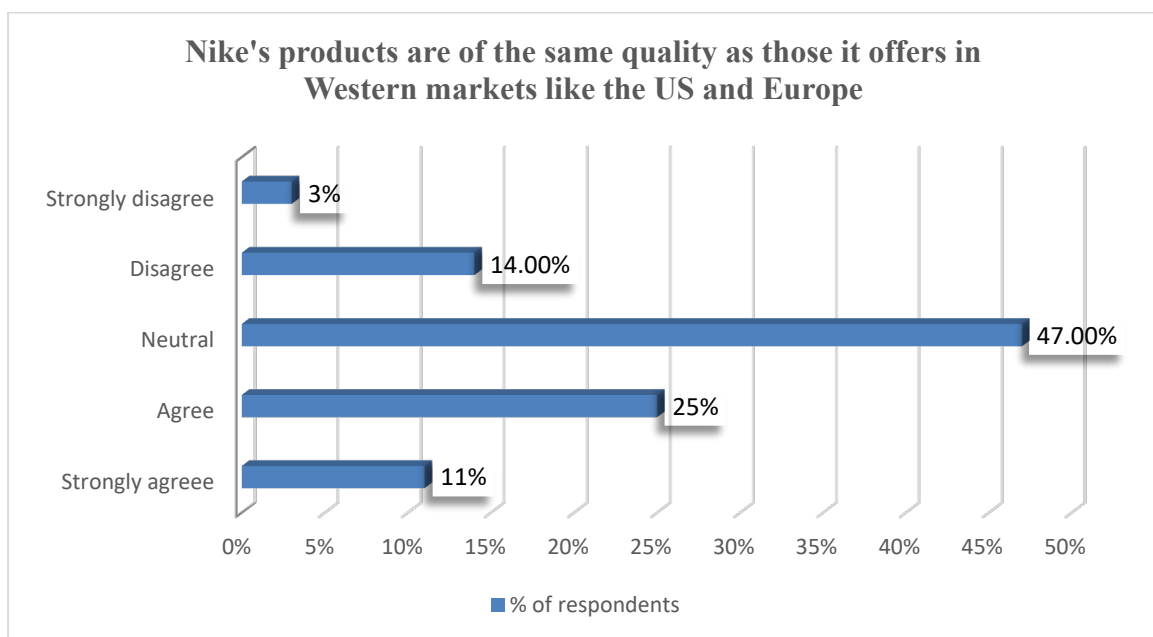
*Likeness for Packaging of Nike's products*



*Are Nike's products specifically designed to suit Indian conditions?*

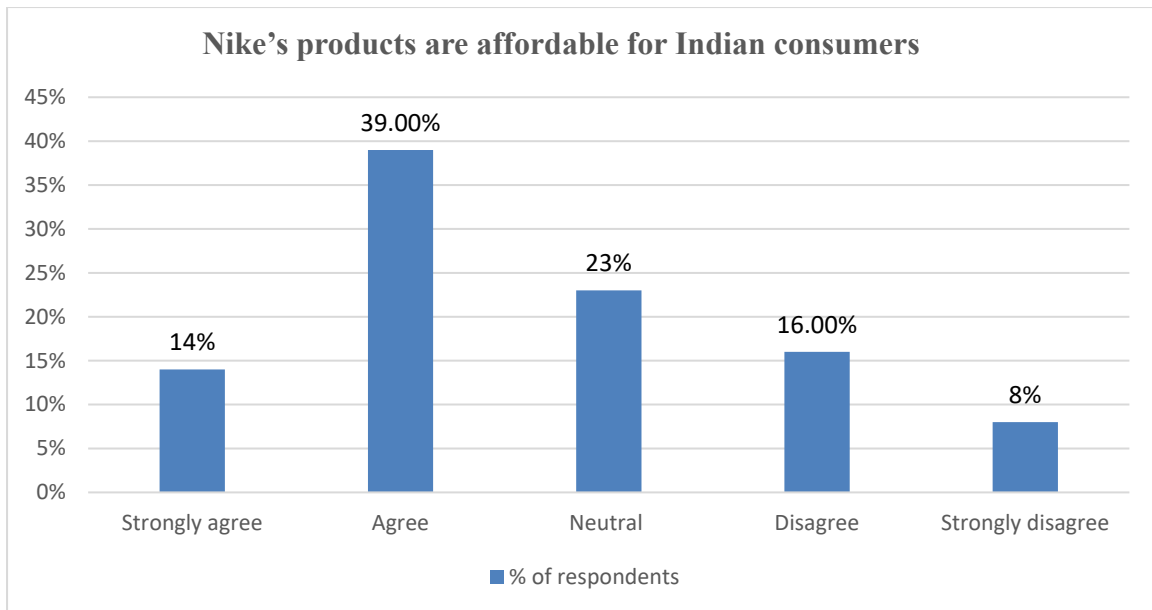


*Nike's products are of the same quality as those it offers in Western markets like the US and Europe*

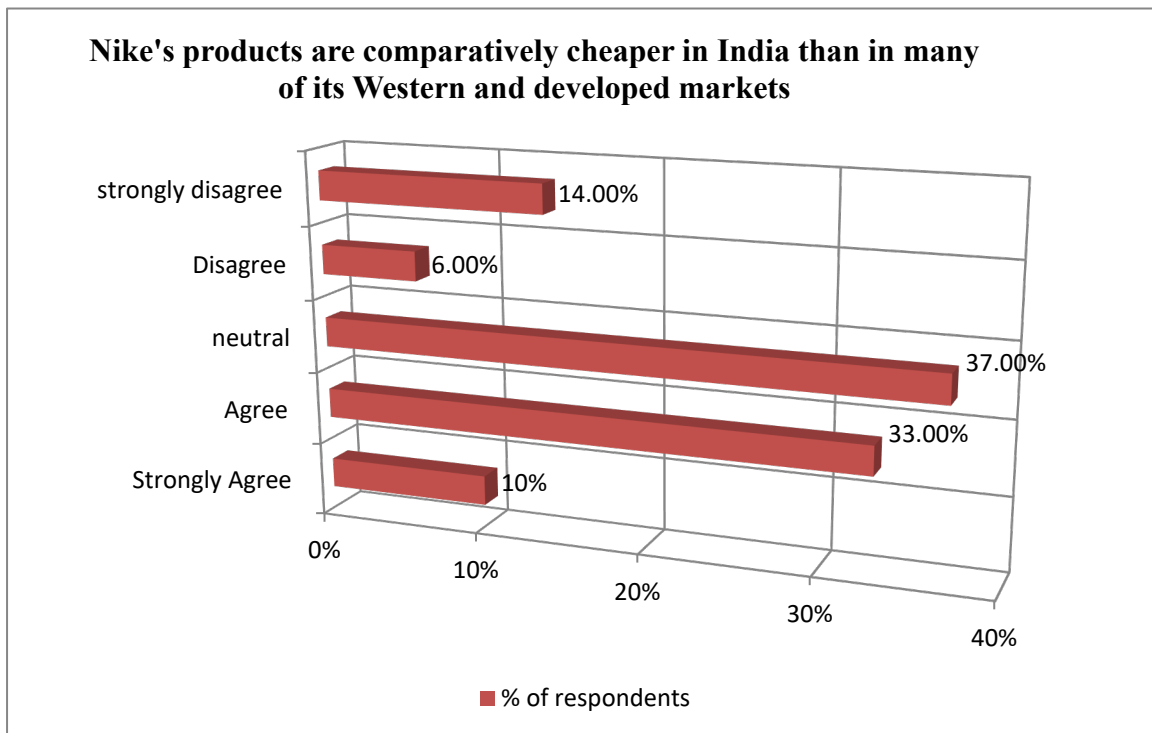


### ***Opinion of Pricing Strategy of Nike in India***

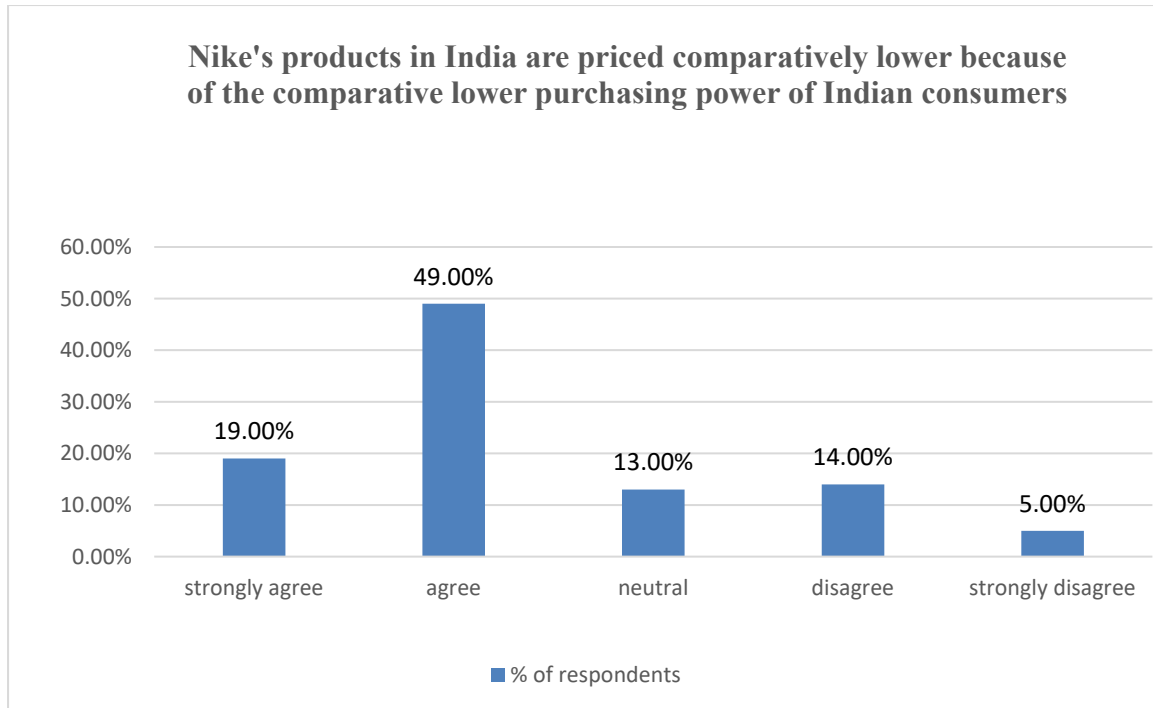
*Nike's products are affordable for Indian consumers*



*Nike's products are comparatively cheaper in India than in many of its Western and developed markets*



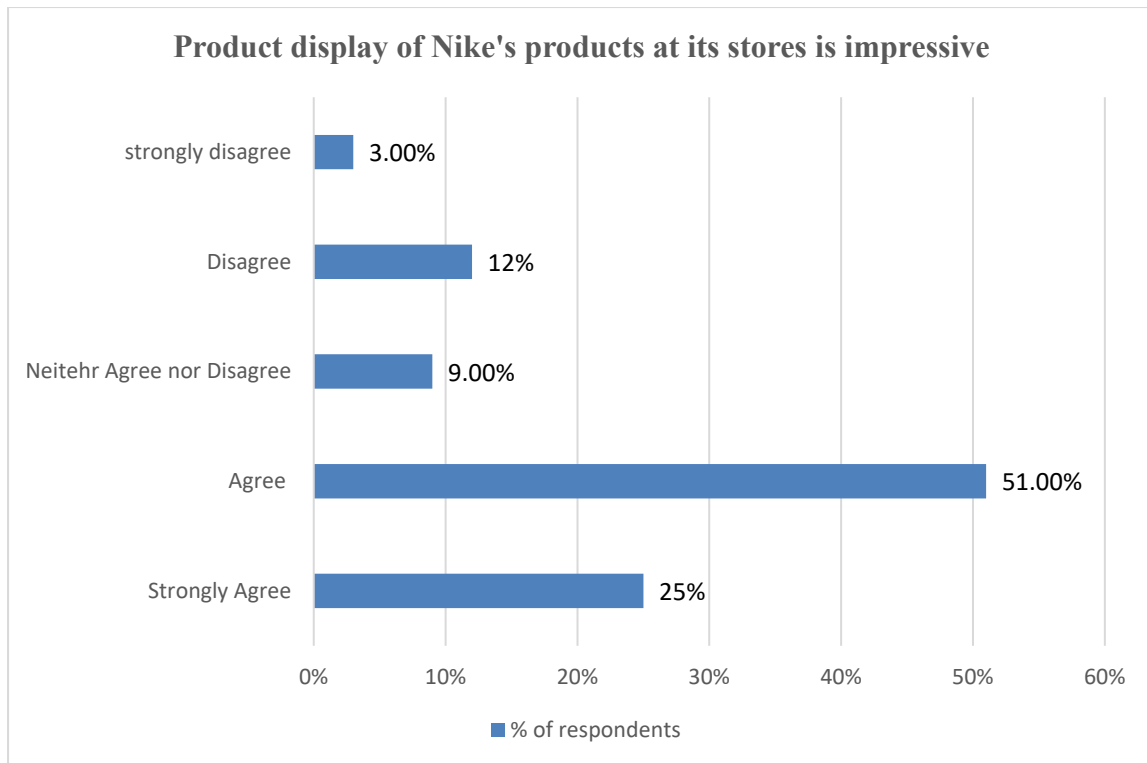
*Nike's products in India are priced comparatively lower because of the comparative lower purchasing power of Indian consumers*



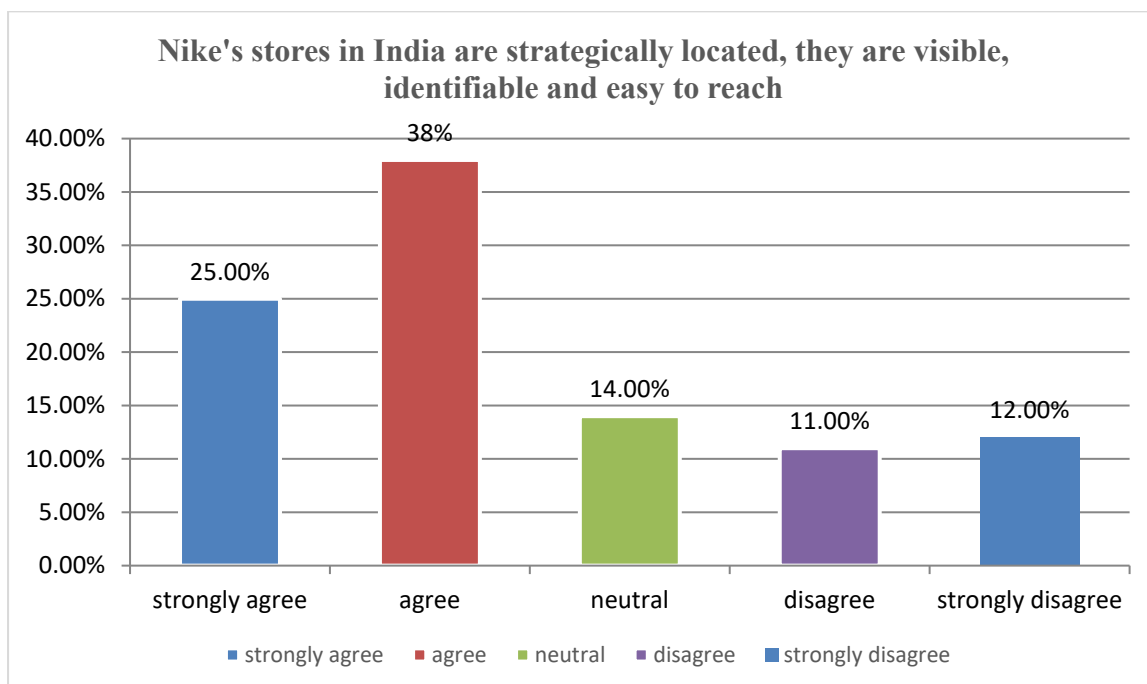
### ***Consumers' Opinion on Place (stores) Strategy of Nike in India***

*Product display of Nike's products at its stores is impressive*

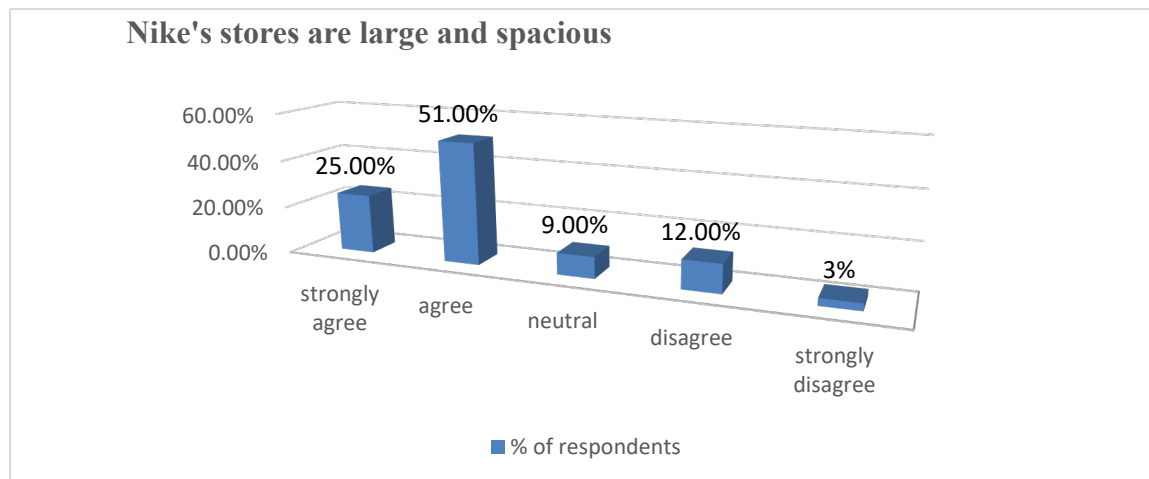




*Nike's stores in India are strategically located, they are visible, identifiable and easy to reach*

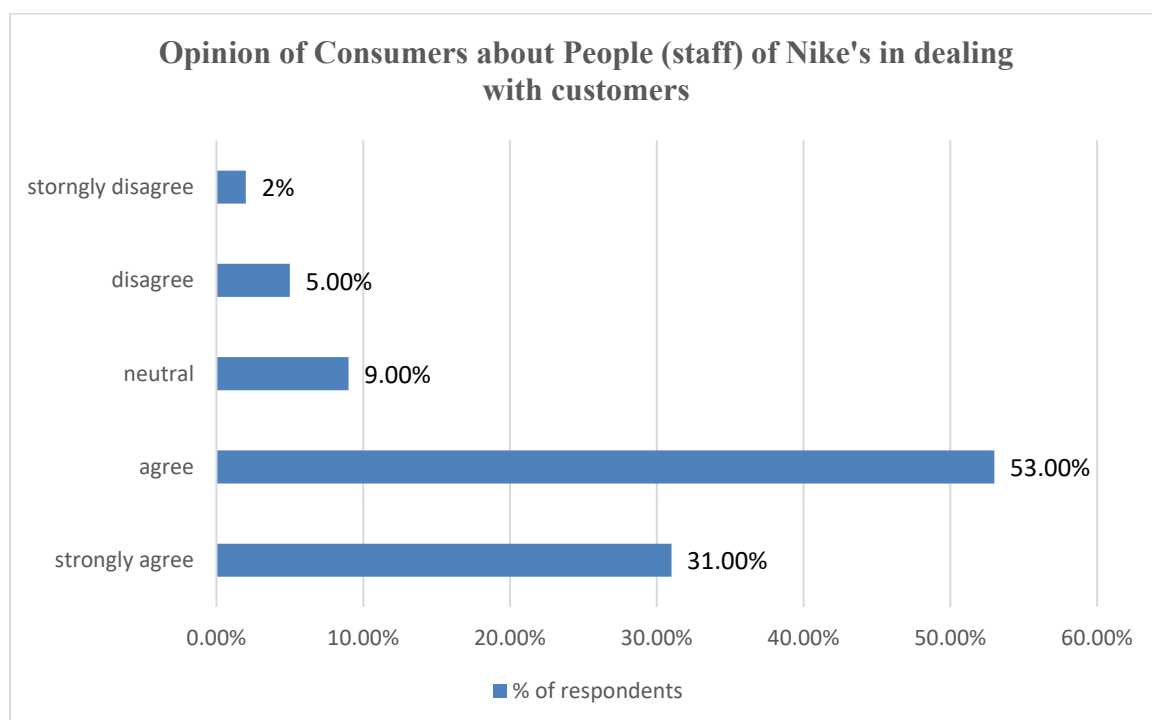


*Nike's stores are large and spacious*

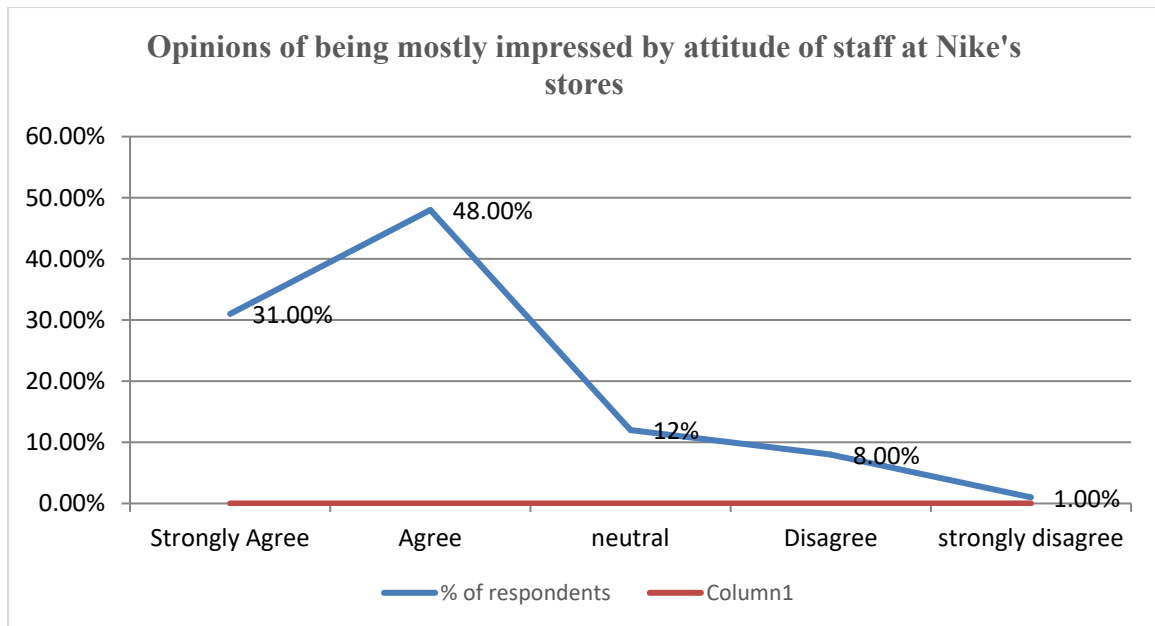


## ***People***

*Opinion of Consumers about People (staff) of Nike's in terms of knowledge of local language and English as a common language of interaction*

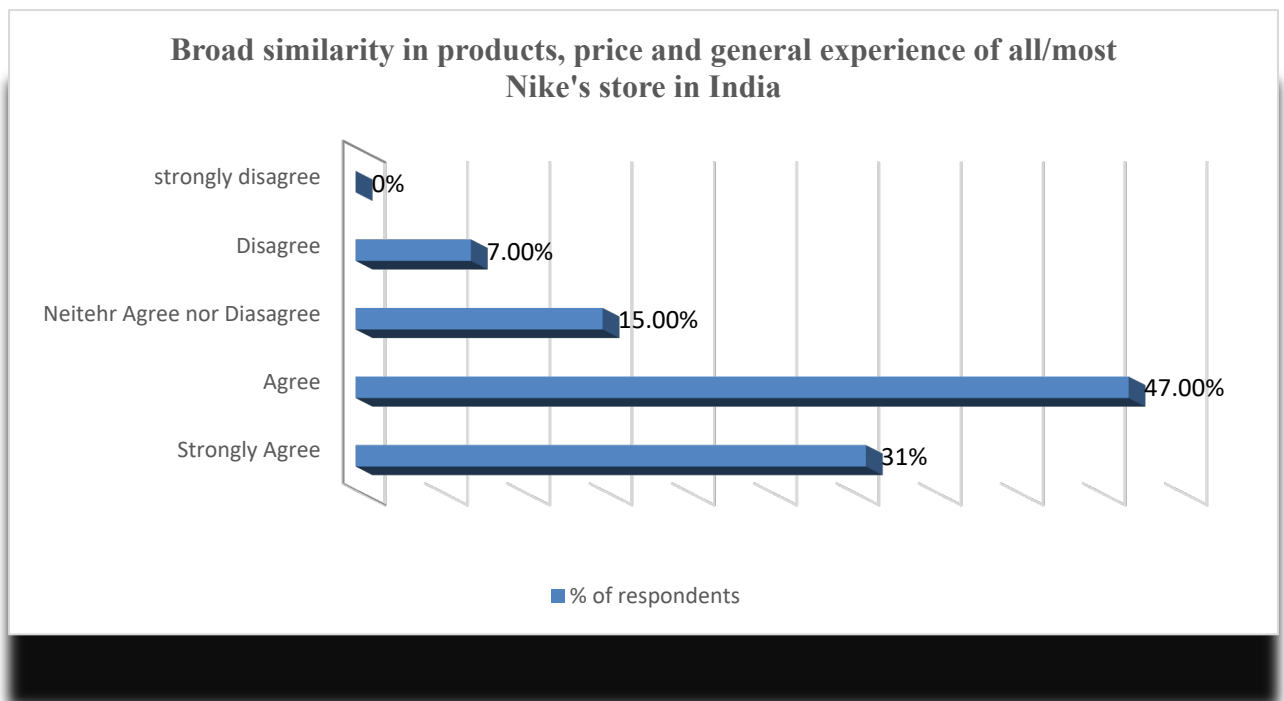


*Opinions of being mostly impressed by attitude of staff at Nike's stores*



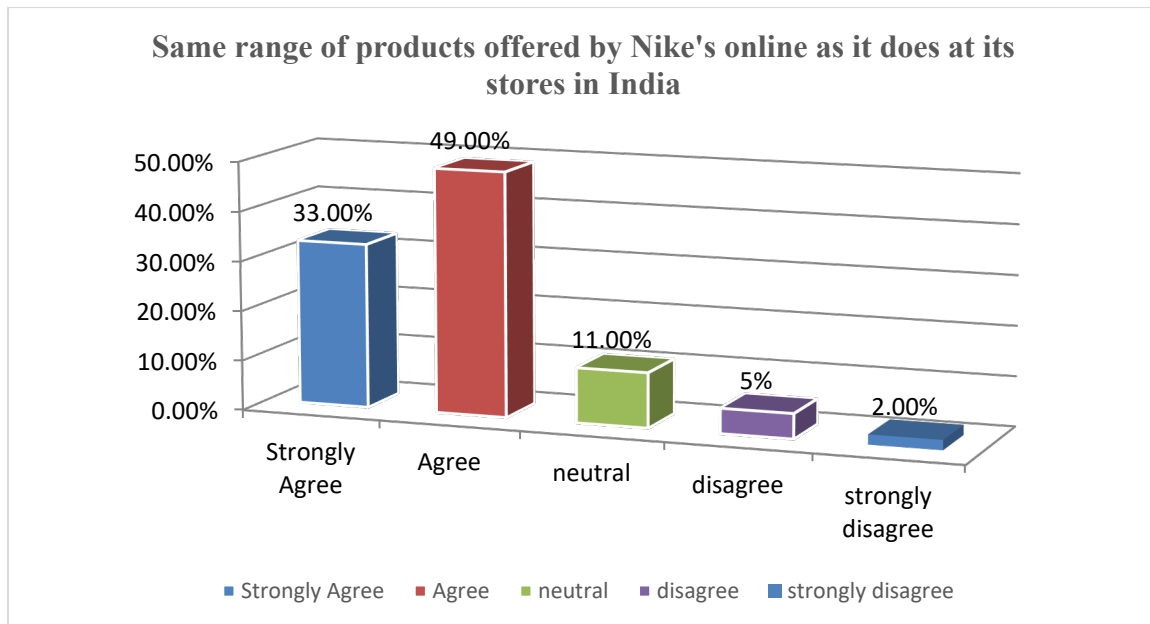
### ***Process***

*Broad similarity in products, price and general experience of all/most Nike's store in India*

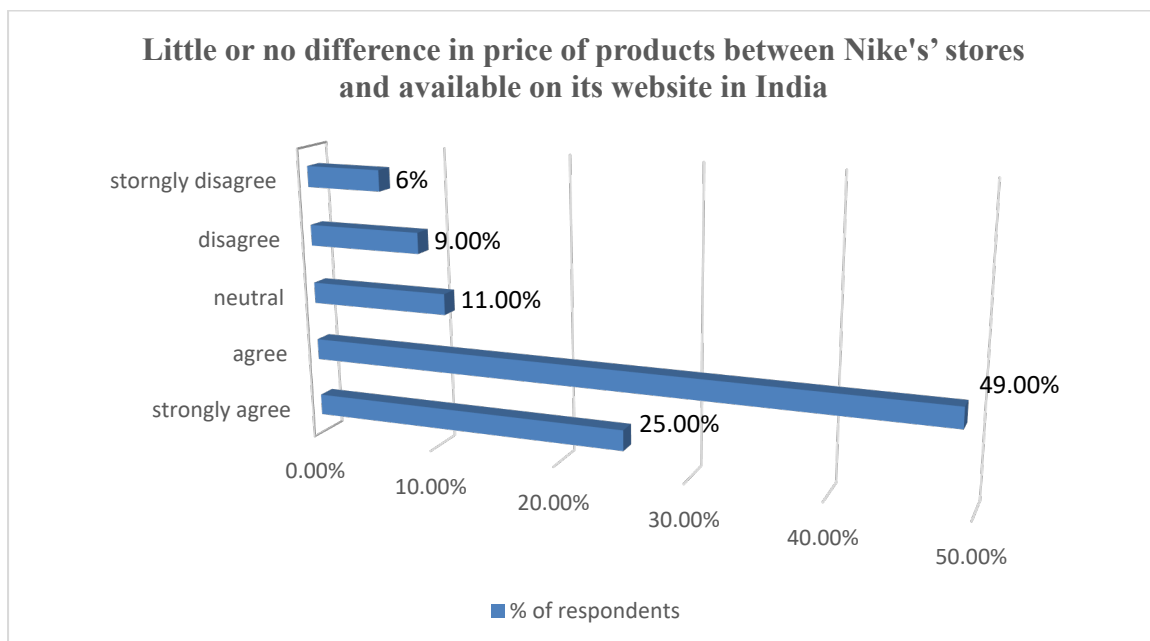


### ***Online***

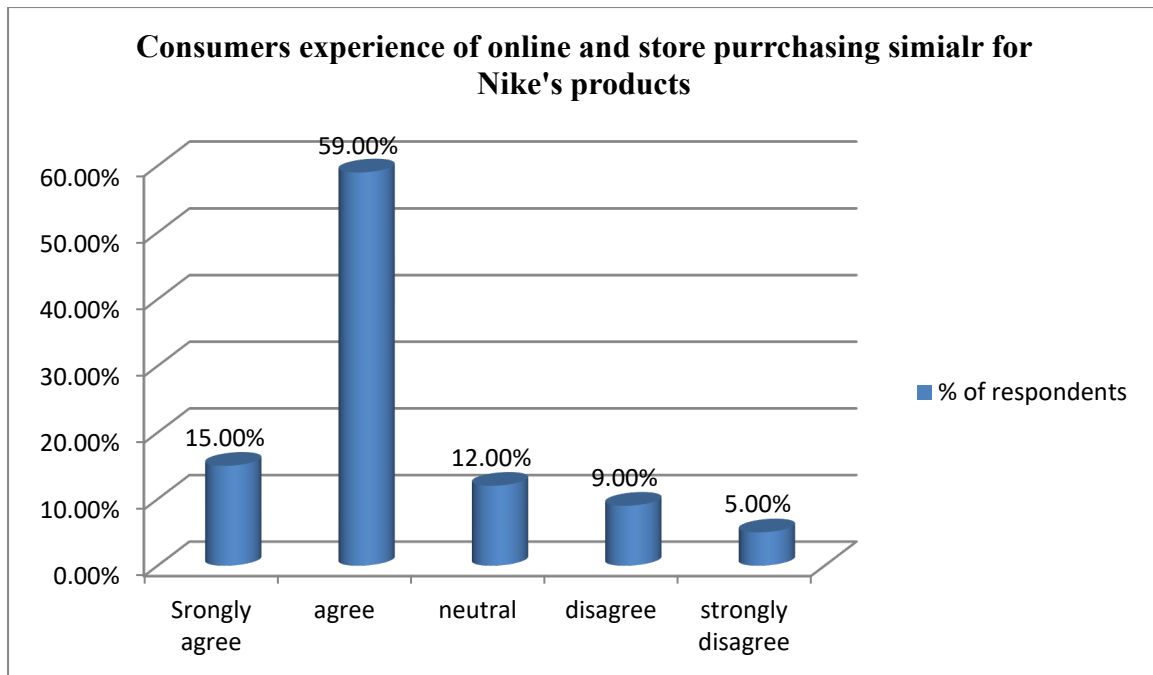
*Same range of products offered by Nike's online as it does at its stores in India*



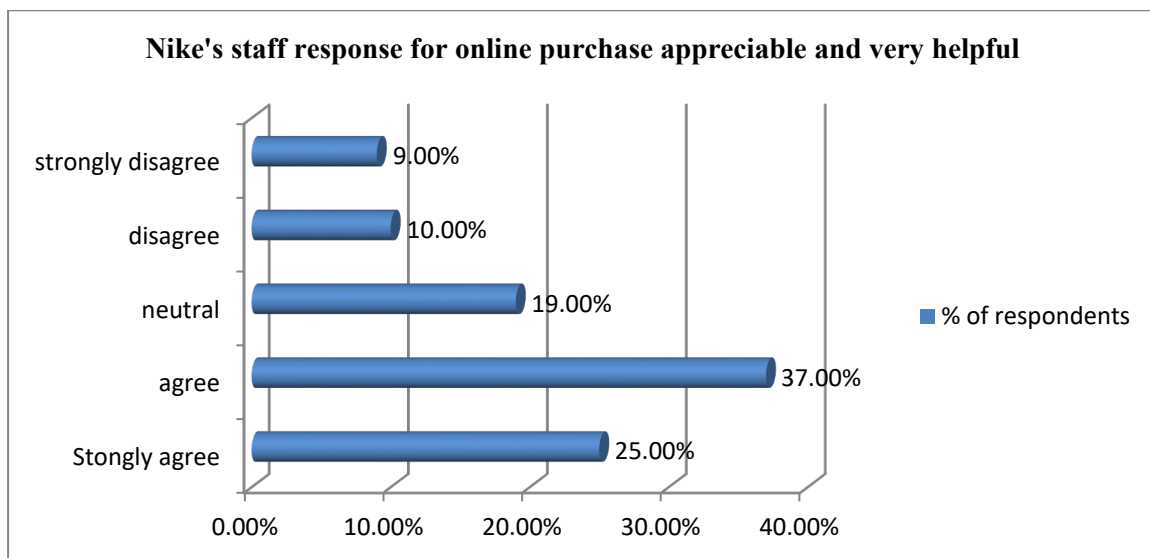
*Little or no difference in price of products between Nike's stores and available on its website in India*



*Except the physical (trying out) part, consumers experience of purchasing Nike's products online is similar to purchasing from store*

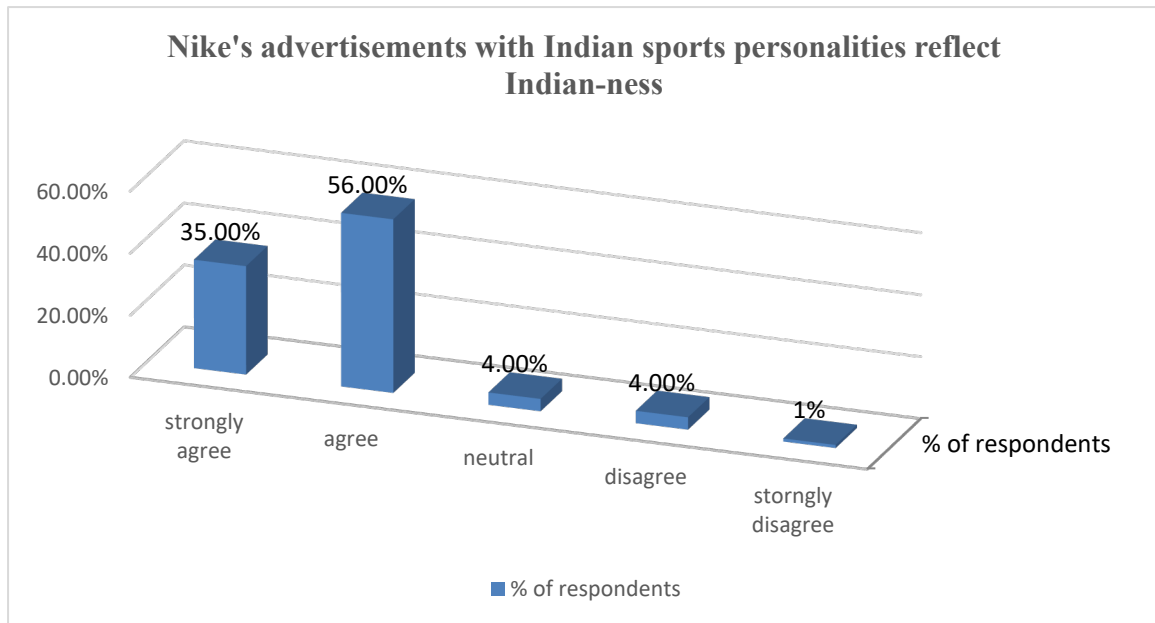


*Nike's staff response for online purchase appreciable and very helpful*



### ***Promotions***

*Nike's advertisements with Indian sports personalities reflect Indian-ness*



*Nike's advertisement campaigns uniquely designed for Indian society and reflects attitudes of Indian consumers*

