

Bigger

Which brands have the strongest identities? Macintosh or Windows? Kennedy or Reagan? Walmart or Target?

Since the recession is not a whole lot of fun, we thought we'd take a break from business-as-usual and play a little game. It was a simple little survey where all you had to do was make a gut-level choice between two big brands in a bunch of different categories.

We pitted BMW against Mercedes and Toyota versus Honda. Walmart versus Target. Is it Whole Foods or Trader Joe's? McDonald's or Burger King? Macintosh or Windows? Quick: Which one is stronger? You get the idea.

We also included some pop-culture face-offs: Beatles or Elvis? Ali or Armstrong? Che Guevara or Mona Lisa?

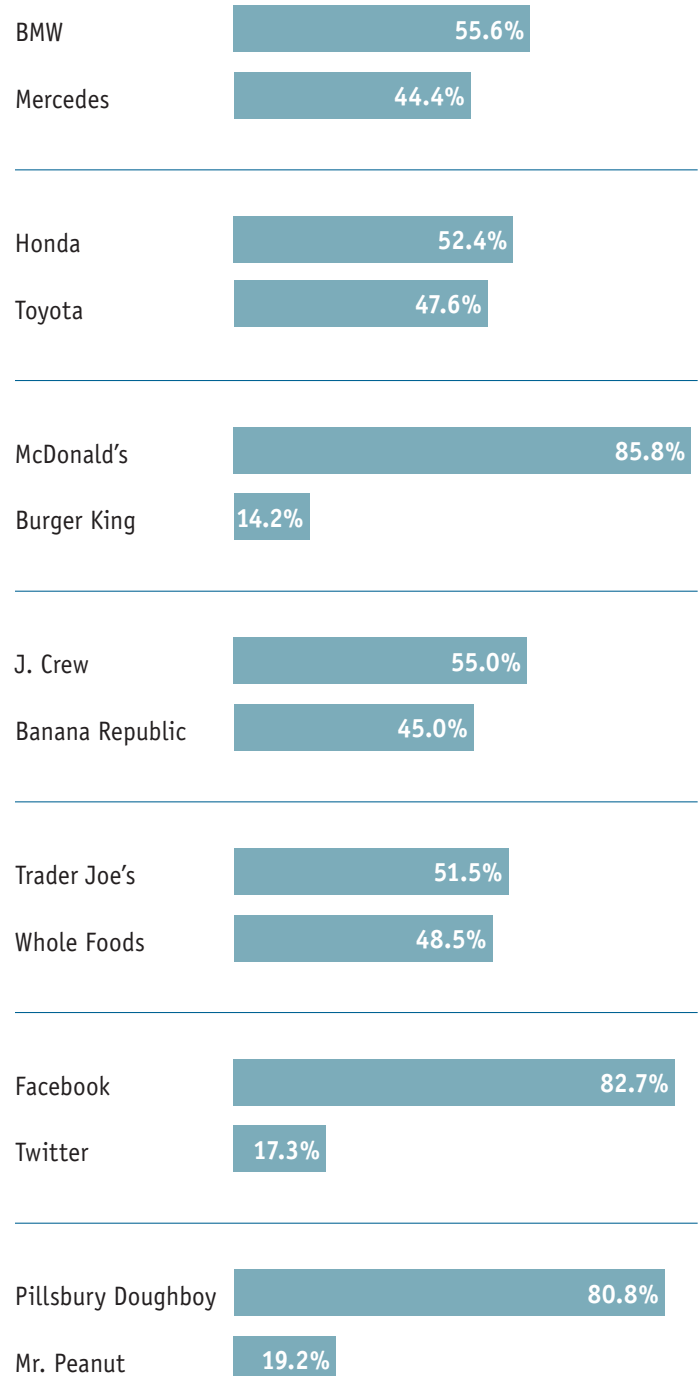
Sometimes the results were lopsided. Coke swallowed Pepsi and McDonald's ate Burger King's lunch. Facebook outhyped Twitter and Starbucks decaffeinated Dunkin' Donuts. Adidas was no match for Nike and the Pillsbury Doughboy rolled right over Mr. Peanut.

A few glimmers of hope sparkled for the vanquished, however. A number of survey panelists praised Burger King for its flame-broiled burgers. Adidas earned kudos for "authenticity." And while the Doughboy is much loved for his giggle, a few lonely souls still think that Mr. Peanut is "cool."

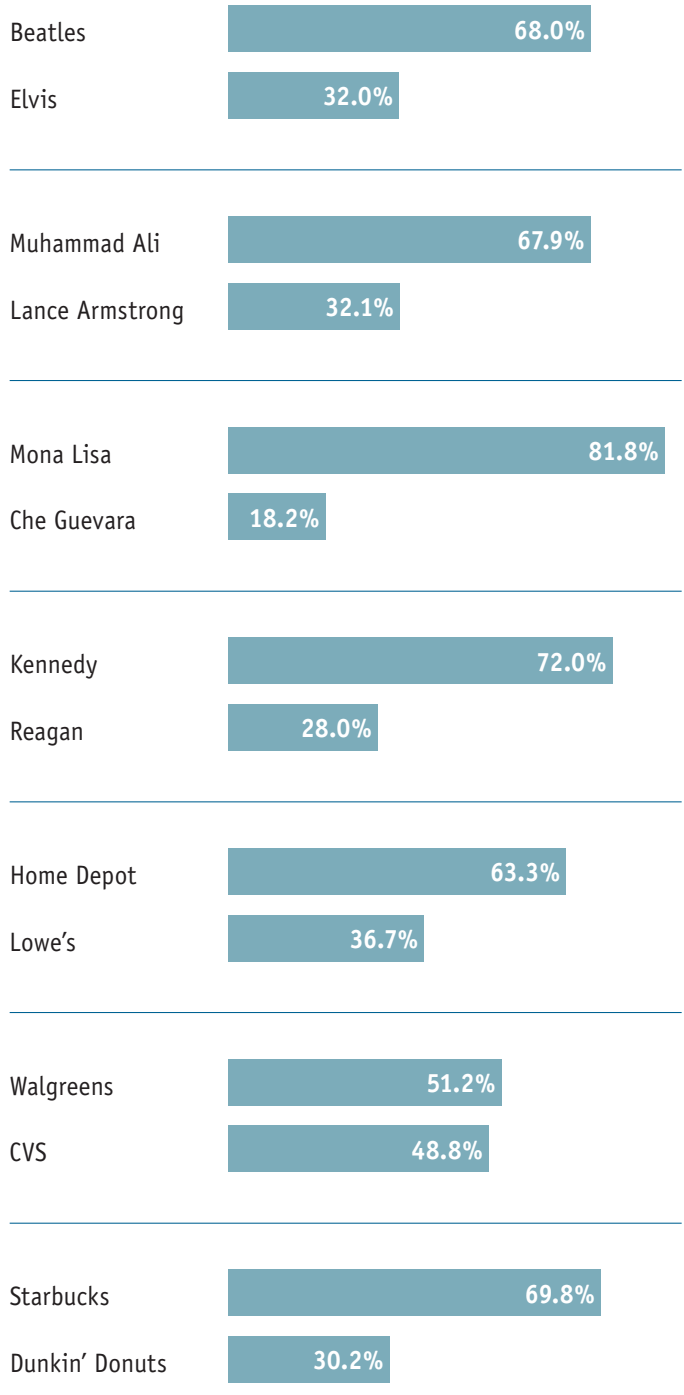
The contests were tighter between BMW and Mercedes, Honda and Toyota and tightest of all between CVS and Walgreen's and Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. The brand-identity battle between J. Crew and Banana Republic is also somewhat close, with Crew pulling ahead, thanks probably to Michelle Obama's tacit endorsement.

Perhaps most intriguing of all were the Walmart versus Target and Macintosh versus Windows match-ups. One might think that since Walmart and Windows command their respective marketplaces that they would also be perceived as having the stronger brand identities.

Not so — at least among our readers. Target beat Walmart 57%-43% and Macintosh whipped Microsoft, 54%-46%. In a similar vein, Jay



than Elvis



Leno may have trumped David Letterman in the ratings, but Dave's brand identity swept our survey, 58%-42%. Is this good news or bad news for those in the business of building brand identity?

When Los Angeles lost out to New York, it was not without a chorus of "Yo, whoyatawkin to?" and "Fughetaboutit!" On Eric Clapton versus Jimi Hendrix, a respondent explained, "Jimi Hendrix did not steal George Harrison's wife." Neither did Clapton, but Jimi edged Eric anyway, 58%-42%.

While it didn't seem to matter to anyone that Elvis is dead, mortality is a problem for Julia Child, who lost out to Martha Stewart because, well, "she's dead, isn't she?" Martha, who bested Julia 55%-45%, took her lumps, too: "Post-felon chic simply hasn't taken hold," one survey-taker said.

To top it all off, we asked this question: "If your life depended on picking just one brand identity that is the all-time strongest in the world, which one would it be?" It is Coke—or perhaps Coke Is It. By a wide margin, too: Coke 32%; Apple 10%; McDonald's 5%; and Nike 4%.

The rest were scattered across a wide variety of brands, led by Disney, Kleenex, Marlboro and Harley-Davidson. Other popular choices included the United States of America, Christianity and President Obama. Perhaps the biggest surprise was that Google only received four votes, Target two votes, Microsoft one vote and Walmart no votes.

This was so much fun we're going to run it again next year! Please send suggestions for brand-identity face-offs to: brand@hubmagazine.com.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

A total of 523 survey respondents included agencies (24%), brand marketers (26%) and consulting firms (17%). Thirty-four percent worked in packaged goods firms, nine percent in media/entertainment and eight percent in retail. A majority were senior-level executives, with 75% reporting more than ten years of experience in marketing.

Survey Results:

www.hubmagazine.com/survey/brands_battle/