



Programme: Master of Business Administration

Module: International Marketing Principles and Practices

Module code: LCMB7026

Assessment Title: Assessment component 1: Individual report

Lecturer: Dr. Tushara Balendran

Student Name: Md Easin Hossen

Student ID: 2419904

Word Count (body only): 5163

Submission Date: 24th April 2026

Table of Contents

List of Figures	4
List of Tables	4
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Company Background	6
3. Comparative Macro-Environment Analysis: PESTEL	7
3.0 PESTEL Definition	7
3.1 Political and Legal Factors.....	7
3.2 Economic Factors.....	8
3.3 Social Factors.....	8
3.4 Cultural Factors.....	8
3.5 Technological Factors	9
3.6 Environmental Factors	9
3.7 PESTEL Favourability Summary	9
4. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions — Social and Cultural Deep Dive	10
4.1 Hofstede Comparison and Interpretation	10
4.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Hofstede	12
5. Comparative STP Analysis	12
5.1 Segmentation.....	12
5.2 Targeting	13
5.3 Positioning	13
6. Comparative 7Ps Analysis	15
6.1 Product	15
6.2 Price	15

6.3 Place.....	15
6.4 Promotion.....	16
6.5 People.....	16
6.6 Process	16
6.7 Physical Evidence	17
7. Directional Development Strategy — BCG Matrix in Spain	19
7.1 Framework Definition and Rationale.....	19
7.2 BCG Application — Zara Spain Portfolio.....	20
7.3 Strategic Implications and Critical Evaluation	21
8. Ethical Issues in Zara's Marketing Mix — United States	22
8.1 Ethical Implementation Examples (USA)	22
8.2 Unethical Execution Examples (USA)	22
9. Strategic Recommendations.....	25
10. Conclusion	26
Section 2: Reflective Account — Gibbs' Reflective Cycle	27
Description.....	27
Feelings.....	28
Evaluation	28
Analysis.....	29
Conclusion	29
Action Plan.....	30
References	31
Appendix A: Zara Visual Comparison Pack.....	35
Appendix B: Supporting Market Comparison Metrics	37

List of Figures

Figure 1: PESTEL Favourability Comparison.....	7
Figure 2: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Radar Chart — Spain vs USA	11
Figure 3: Indicative perceptual map of Zara and selected US apparel rivals	14
Figure 4: 7Ps Adaptation Matrix — Spain (Standardised, navy) vs USA (Adapted, red)	18
Figure 5: BCG Matrix — Zara Spain Portfolio (Henderson, 1970; Hedley, 1977).....	20
Figure 6: Gibbs Reflective Cycle used to structure the reflective account.....	27

List of Tables

Table 1: PESTEL Favourability Matrix — Spain vs USA for Zara	10
Table 2: STP Comparison Matrix — Spain vs USA	14
Table 3: 7Ps Adaptation Matrix — Spain vs USA	17
Table 4: Ethical and Unethical Examples — Zara USA mapped to 7Ps	23

1. Introduction

In the year 2023, Inditex earned revenue amounting to EUR 35.94 billion, and Zara continued to be the retail powerhouse of the group, operating in over 200 markets (Inditex, 2023). This report discusses the international marketing strategy of Zara by comparing the home country and operation centre of the brand, Spain, and the non-European country, the United States, which is one of the country's key markets. It discusses the macro-environment, cultural differences, STP, 7Ps, the strategy of directional development of Zara in Spain, ethical issues in the United States, recommendations and a reflective account. The regulatory environment, cultural code and consumer expectations are significantly different in Spain and the US. Spain provides Zara with supply-chain closeness, thorough brand recognition, and store density, but the US offers greater income rates, multicultural needs, and more critical attitudes towards inclusiveness and sustainability. The analysis thus examines the extent to which a design-based global retailer can homogenise its brand and the places where selective adaptation is business-needed.

2. Company Background

The mission of Zara is to provide trend-relevant fashion at a fast pace and at affordable rates, and the broader Inditex vision is to become more creative, agile, efficient, and respectful towards customers and society (Inditex, 2024; Tokatli, 2007). Collectively, these assertions justify why Zara safeguards brand consistency and yet remains flexible with customer-facing decisions in which the market conditions vary.

Zara, which is the main retail format in the Inditex group, was established in 1975 in Arteixo. Its competitive edge has been due to its short design-to-store lead times, close feedback loop on merchandising and coordinated sourcing and replenishment (Tokatli, 2007; Caro and Gallien, 2010).

Spain is the most powerful operational base of Zara. The advantages of the brand are the direct closeness to the headquarters, short replenishment lines, and extremely high domestic recognition. Simultaneously, home-market strength generates a strategic conflict: Zara needs to protect the image of the premium-fashion brand in the market where the brand is already extremely familiar, and when further expansion of the portfolio is the key to growth rather than the opening of new stores (Inditex, 2023; Statista, 2024).

The US is another maturity profile. Zara has grown since 1989 by having direct-controlled stores that are located in large metropolitan centres and not franchised. The market is important, with nearly 14 per cent of group sales being made by North America. US operations are more distant, culturally diverse, and complicated to comply with than those in Spain (FashionUnited, 2025).

3. Comparative Macro-Environment Analysis: PESTEL

3.0 PESTEL Definition

PESTEL analyses political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal forces that determine market attractiveness but are mostly beyond the control of managers (Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes, 2017). In the present report, the factors are rated as favourable, mixed, or unfavourable to the marketing implementation of Zara in both Spain and the United States.

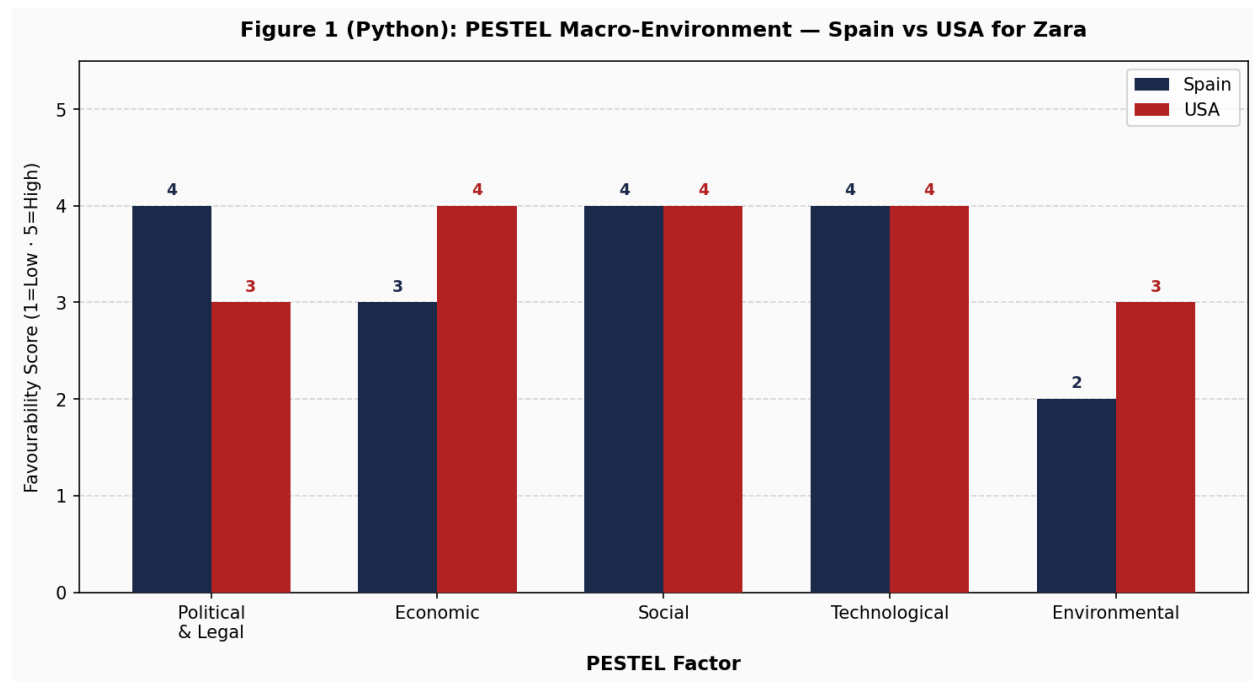


Figure 1: PESTEL Favourability Comparison

3.1 Political and Legal Factors

Zara has a favourable political and legal environment in Spain. Efficient operations are encouraged by European Union single-market regulations, robust consumer protection and being close to European and North African supply chains. There are high standards of labour, privacy and sustainability, which must be governed. The situation is more complex in the United States, where there is stability, but the legal framework is more complicated. Zara is subject to tariffs, fragmented

state regulations, and increased risk of litigation. In both markets, compliance is high, although in Spain, continuity is provided, and in the US, coordination and adaptation costs are higher.

3.2 Economic Factors

In Spain, the fashion market is fully developed and slow-growing. The reduced income and unemployment rates make consumers more value-conscious as they become price sensitive. In the case of Zara, this is a mixed situation: reduce consumer spending and yet demand will remain stable, as the brand is well known and the market share is high. An increase in disposable income and a bigger market in apparel in the United States promises to be more growth opportunities. The high level of competition and the increase in costs diminish margins. The two markets attach value, but Spain focuses more on affordability, whereas the US focuses on differentiation and profitability.

3.3 Social Factors

Spain is still a country where social trends prefer an urban, fashion-conscious style of dressing, yet they are more careful about discretionary spending and more worried about sustainability, quality of garments, and their longevity. Multicultural demand, inclusive-sizing expectations, omnichannel convenience, and high social-media influences are more influential in shaping social trends in the US. These are some of the conditions that favour Zara since they can fit a rapid refresh model, but it also poses a risk when the brand looks overly standardised, overly exclusive, or lacks transparency.

3.4 Cultural Factors

Hofstede assists in making the cultural differences clearer in the broader PESTEL context. The fact that uncertainty avoidance in Spain is much higher implies that more reliance on a reliable sizing, consistent returns processes and reliable quality signals is desired, whereas the US is more individualistic and rich, and therefore prefers self-expression, experimentation, and personal styling (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede Insights, 2024). Culture is thus accommodating

in both nations, albeit due to different factors: Spain accommodates Zara on the basis of familiarity with fashion and social visibility, but the US accommodates on the basis of individuality, inclusivity, and choice.

3.5 Technological Factors

Both markets have favourable technological factors. The RFID-driven inventory system, app ecosystem and store-to-online integration at Zara enhance fast replenishment and omnichannel selling both in Spain and the US (Caro and Gallien, 2010). The gap lies in the fact that proximity-based speed is more beneficial to Spain, and the US relies more on seamless BOPIS, mobile commerce and last-mile service reliability.

3.6 Environmental Factors

The countries have mixed environmental conditions. The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive is an EU regulation that enhances the pressure of formal compliance in Spain. The environmental scrutiny of the US is more consumer activism-based, challenged by NGOs, and endangered by greenwashing than a single federal scheme (European Commission, 2022; Fashion Revolution, 2021; Kent, 2022). Both markets only make positive sustainability claims that Zara can favourably support when they are backed by clear evidence.

3.7 PESTEL Favourability Summary

Factor	Spain (Home Market)	USA (Expansion Market)
Political/Legal	Favourable (EU Single Market integration removes friction)	Mixed (Protectionist tariffs and fragmented state laws)
Economic	Mixed (High unemployment limits pure premium growth)	Favourable (High GDP per capita, robust disposable income)

Social	Favourable (Deep brand familiarity and loyalty)	Favourable (High volume churn, sizing adaptation limits)
Technological	Favourable (Advanced RFID integration)	Favourable (Mature omnichannel environment)
Environmental	Increasing Pressure (Stringent EU CSRD standards)	Moderate Pressure (Consumer NGO scrutiny)

Table 1: PESTEL Favourability Matrix — Spain vs USA for Zara

In terms of PESTEL, Spain and the United States will compensate Zara due to speed, omnichannel, and visibility. Spain is the country with operational benefits, whereas the US has a better growth potential. The two require success to be based on local alignment and credible sustainability performance.

4. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions — Social and Cultural Deep Dive

4.1 Hofstede Comparison and Interpretation

In order to describe the variation in the understanding of the same brand, Zara, in Spain and the United States, one may employ the cultural dimensions model, which Hofstede has proposed. The most applicable gaps are individualism and uncertainty avoidance. The US is highly more individualistic, with Spain being highly more uncertain about things, meaning that they have different expectations on self-expression, reassurance and decision-making as regards to fashion consumption (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede Insights, 2024).

Figure 2 (Python): Hofstede Cultural Dimensions — Spain vs USA

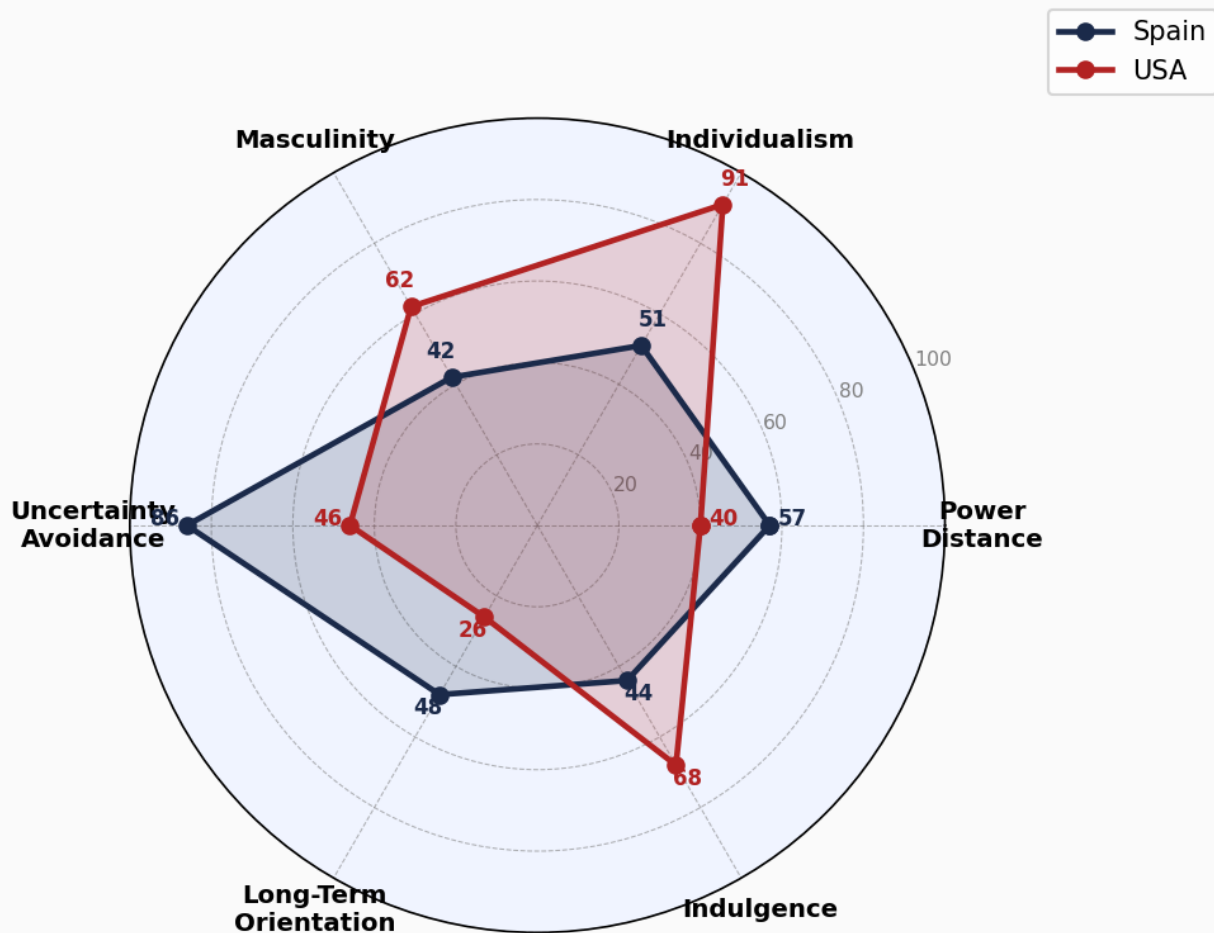


Figure 2: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Radar Chart — Spain vs USA

In the case of Zara, culture is favourable in both the United States and Spain, although in different aspects. The US has individualism and indulgence that promotes rapid adoption of trends and self-expression. Fashion in Spain is socially present and known, but the greater the uncertainty avoidance, the more the consistency and reliability expectations.

Clothing is a sign of identity in the two markets. Nevertheless, the US consumers focus on individuality and inclusiveness, whereas the Spanish consumers are concerned with social fit and quality that they trust. Zara can maintain a uniform design strategy, but ought to customise the message and service to local demand.

4.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Hofstede

The primary benefit of Hofstede is that it translates general cultural disparity into practical marketing suggestions, like tone of message, reassurance in services, and promotional focus. It also provides a universal comparative wording of initial global market analysis (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010).

Nonetheless, the model is limited in a number of ways. It has an old-fashioned original data set, which may obscure regional variation, national averages are capable of concealing multicultural identity, and it is less able to represent multicultural identity and accelerated generational change (McSweeney, 2002; Jones, 2007). That is why Hofstede can best be used as a guide rather than an explanation of consumer behaviour.

5. Comparative STP Analysis

5.1 Segmentation

In the case of Zara, the Spanish market is segmented by 25-45-year-old consumers who are fashion-oriented and have mid- to upper-middle incomes. Cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville are centred on demand. On the psychographic side, Zara is focused on style-sensitive customers who want the latest trends at affordable prices, and behaviourally, it is focused on customers who frequent the store and app regularly and react swiftly to new collections and seasonal changes.

Segmentation in the United States is more comprehensive. Zara focuses on millennials, the Gen Z, and higher-income professionals. It targets large metropolitan and wealthy suburban consumers, appealing to digital-first, image-conscious consumers. It targets social-oriented, omnichannel customers in their behaviour, which makes the segmentation more varied and variable-based in comparison to Spain.

5.2 Targeting

Zara has varying targets between markets. Zara employs a broad differentiated positioning in Spain, with the brand taking into account various market segments with its lines, such as Zara Woman, Man, Kids, and Home. The proximity to headquarters in Arteixo facilitates quick 24-48 hour replenishment and localised stock decisions, but market saturation restrains further expansion. Zara uses a narrow targeting approach in the United States, targeting high-end urban and wealthy suburban shoppers. It does not use discount channels, preserving brand equity and margins and focusing on high-value segments.

5.3 Positioning

The positioning of Zara is based on trend-responsive, accessible premium, but implementation varies depending on the market. Zara is a well-established local leader in Spain. Nonetheless, this familiarity threatens to lower aspiration, as the brand will appear too mainstream. In response to this, Inditex invests in upscale flagship stores and high-end retail spaces to retain a high image. Zara has a good European fashion reputation in the United States. Nevertheless, it is usually contrasted to such rivals as H&M. To position itself, Zara focuses on high-quality visual merchandising and the most central locations in cities, to support the design quality and the high-end positioning.

Figure 3. Indicative perceptual map of Zara and selected US apparel rivals

Axes: perceived price (x) and fashionability / trend responsiveness (y).



Figure 3: Indicative perceptual map of Zara and selected US apparel rivals

Zara is situated in the upper-middle to premium-trend quadrant (figure 3) above H&M and Gap in fashionability, but nearest to Mango in European style indicators. It thus confirms the US requirement of Zara to protect an accessible fashion power position as opposed to competing on the lowest price.

Table 2: STP Comparison Matrix — Spain vs USA

STP Stage	Spain	United States
Segmentation	Narrower, culturally homogenous segments; heavy urban professional indexing	Vast, multicultural, geographically diverse behavioural and digital segments

Targeting	Differentiated targeting (cross-demographic) utilising extreme supply-chain proximity	Concentrated targeting on the top 20 metro areas; complete avoidance of outlet channel
Positioning	Defending premium aspiration against extreme domestic familiarity fatigue	Maintaining “European design cachet” while distinguishing from budget fast-fashion

6. Comparative 7Ps Analysis

6.1 Product

At Zara, the product strategy is a trade-off between standardisation and adaptation. In both the US and Spain, the width of the products along key lines is similar. But Spain is replenishing at a better rate, and the US needs a more drastic change in size, occasion wear and weather mix.

6.2 Price

In Spain, Zara uses a premium-parity price, which is more appropriate to Western European standards and uses psychological pricing and high turnover as a means of preserving its margins. It is a premium positioning, which is not excessively dependent on discounts. In the United States, Zara uses a premium-maintenance policy whereby it sets higher base prices in order to allow it to cover its costs but below luxury prices, and offers selective discounts to preserve the perceived value.

6.3 Place

Network logic and the integration of channels shape place. The advantages of Spain include a high store network, quicker replenishment, and coordination between the stores and warehouses. The US is dependent on a more focused metropolitan footprint that is buttressed by online ordering, BOPIS, and reduced, but larger destination stores. Illustrative store and site cues of both countries can be found in Appendix A, with Spain focusing on the importance of convenience with density and the US focusing on flagship experience and digital-route shopping.

6.4 Promotion

Integrated Marketing Communications of Zara means that there is a coherent message throughout touchpoints. Zara does not use conventional mass advertising but employs visual stories, in-store visual merchandising, and online platforms. In Spain, communication lays stress on fashion credibility and sustainability. In the United States, it is more inclined toward inclusivity, the representation of various cultures, and high-impact digital storytelling to connect with different audiences.

6.5 People

Scale differences are in the people strategy of Zara. Inditex has a huge number of employees in Spain, and this is highly connected to the headquarters, which strengthens the connection to the corporate strategy. Teams are smaller and locally organised in metropolitan areas in the United States. Store personnel play the role of brand ambassadors in both markets, although in Spain, it is more connected to the corporate core.

6.6 Process

The process is not just about the flow of inventory but service recovery as well. Both markets incorporate online and in-store fulfilment, both integrated, albeit with a slight difference in the customer complaints process. In Spain, Zara directs complaints to chat, telephone, WhatsApp, social channels, and in-store product evaluation, whereas the US uses chat, telephone, social

channels, online return requests, and store or drop-off returns to resolve the issue (Zara, 2026a; Zara, 2026b; Zara, 2026c; Zara, 2026d). This renders the process favourable in both countries, where complaints are addressed promptly and uniformly.

6.7 Physical Evidence

In the case of Zara, physical evidence is a sign of the uniform minimalist self in Spain and the United States. But the implementation is different: Spain is more focused on the density of stores and the familiarity, whereas the US is more focused on flagship experiences and better navigation using digital means. Through the 7Ps, Zara has a fast, design-led, premium-mass identity, although product depth, pricing, distribution, promotion, people and service are flexible. Spain is less customised, and the US needs a more noticeable change.

Table 3: 7Ps Adaptation Matrix — Spain vs USA

7P Element	General Strategy	Spain Reality	USA Adaptation
Product	Standardized Core	Studio/Menswear lead	Extended sizing (00-22); occasion wear
Price	Deliberate Premium	Parity European baseline	+15-25% tariff/logistics premium
Place	Flagship + App	24-48 hr replenishment	Coastal concentration; BOPIS requisite

Promotion	Digital / Editorial	Influencer led (sustainability)	localized US casting; trend-forward
People	Corporate Culture	HQ embedded talent pipeline	Localized HR; high- turnover environment
Process	RFID spine	Proximity as a marketing tool	5-7 day DC replenishment lag
Physical Evidence	Standardised premium design	Upgraded marble/gallery spaces	Experiential renovations (\$22m Fifth Ave)

**Figure 3: 7Ps Standardisation vs Adaptation —
Zara Spain vs USA**

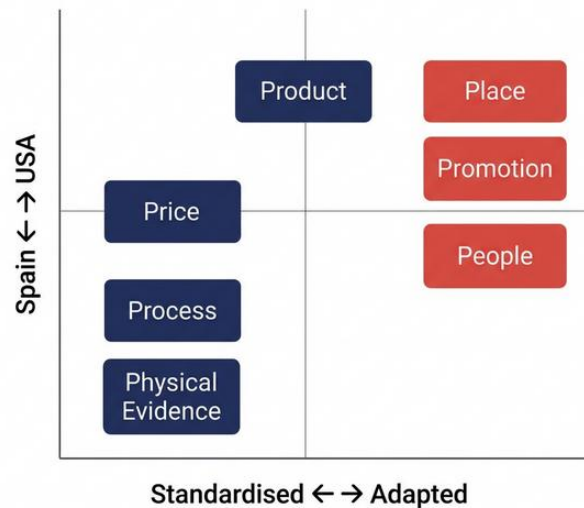


Figure 4: 7Ps Adaptation Matrix — Spain (Standardised, navy) vs USA (Adapted, red)

7. Directional Development Strategy — BCG Matrix in Spain

7.1 Framework Definition and Rationale

An original diagnostic tool of corporate portfolio analysis is the BCG Growth-Share Matrix, which was initially proposed by Henderson (1970). It positions strategic business units or product lines on two variables, namely, market growth rate (reflecting industry appeal) and relative market share (reflecting competitive power). Four classifications are obtained by using this matrix. Products fall into Stars (high growth and share), Cash Cows (mature share, low growth), Question Marks (growth markets where share lags) and Dogs (failing on both measures). The model outlines the specific resource allocation, according to which companies are encouraged to invest in Stars, extract Cash Cows, examine Question Marks, and sell Dogs (Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes, 2017).

Although the Ansoff Matrix is often used in international marketing analyses to assess the cross-border expansion (e.g., entering the US), the present report uses the BCG Matrix to analyse the Spanish home market of Zara. Spain is a well-developed, almost saturated retail market (Statista, 2024). In this case, expansion will not be by simply adding new storefronts but will have to be produced by refining a multifaceted portfolio of differentiated product lines (Women's Wear, Menswear, Kids, Studio, Join Life, and Home), to squeeze out a maximum margin and prescribe directional investment choices.

Figure 4: BCG Matrix — Zara Spain Domestic Portfolio

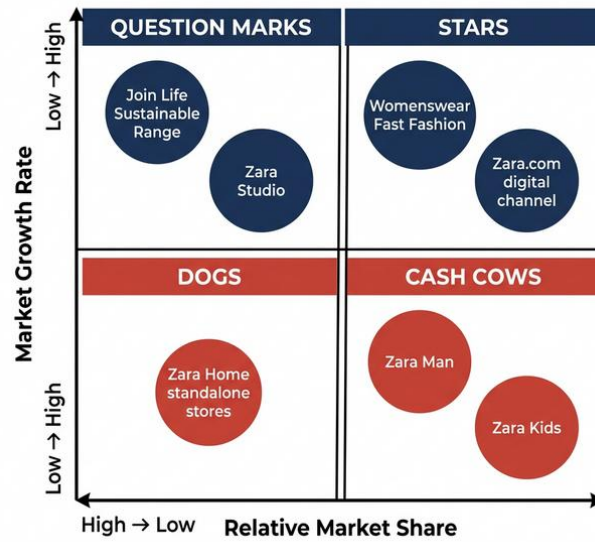


Figure 5: BCG Matrix — Zara Spain Portfolio (Henderson, 1970; Hedley, 1977)

7.2 BCG Application — Zara Spain Portfolio

The projection of the domestic portfolio of Zara onto the BCG matrix displays a range of more definite investment priorities instead of a mere growth narrative (FashionUnited, 2025; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2024).

Stars (Invest): The fast-fashion segment of mainstream women's wear has an impressive market share of 22% in Spain, which is set to expand in the Spanish fashion industry, which has already increased by 4.5% each year since the pandemic (Statista, 2024). It is ruthless in terms of capital outlay to safeguard its leadership. On the same note, Zara.com online platform may be termed as a Star; online retail is currently surpassing physical retail development across Europe (~8% YoY) and needs to invest actively in technology to capture the shifting consumer behaviour.

Cash Cows (Harvest): The divisions of The Zara Man and Zara Kids are Cash Cows. Zara Man is a mature, established market leader in a slower-growing Spanish menswear segment. Zara Kids also enjoys consistent volume on a broader demographic headwind (the incredibly low fertility

rate of 1.16 in Spain naturally limits the growth of the aggregate children's wear market; INE, 2024).

Question Marks (Decide): The sustainable sub-line of the brand, Join Life, and the high-end, Zara Studio, collections are found here. The sustainable fashion market is growing fast (~12% YoY), yet the market share of Join Life in comparison to pure-play ethical brands is unclear and is slowed down by the scepticism of greenwashing (Gheorghe, 2021). Zara Studio is aimed at the expanding high-end segment, but is so far lacking in core lines volume.

Dogs (Divest): Strictly standalone physical boutiques of the Zara Home business are Dogs in a hyper-competitive, low-growth, Spanish homewares market dominated by IKEA and local specialists. Inditex realised this weakness, and since 2016, it has been busy dis-positioning standalone Home footprints by moving the category into centralised Zara flagship locations so as to reduce overhead.

7.3 Strategic Implications and Critical Evaluation

Using the BCG matrix, it is clear that the expansion of Zara Spain should not rely on further expansion of stores, but rather on portfolio discipline. Inditex must thus refocus cash flows in mature categories into digital capacity and into some lines with greater potential, like Studio and more plausible sustainable propositions.

There are theoretical shortcomings in the framework. According to Hedley (1977), the designation of high versus low market growth is commonly arbitrary and relative to category definitions. Another fatal flaw of the model is the fact that it uses transparent data on market share (Hambrick, MacMillan, and Day, 1982). To cover up its domestic weakness, Inditex announces global consolidated revenues rather than country-specific brand profitability. This BCG mapping is therefore based on the external estimations, as opposed to the internal ledgers.

8. Ethical Issues in Zara's Marketing Mix — United States

8.1 Ethical Implementation Examples (USA)

Example 1: Product — Animal Welfare Standards

In its international business, which is also covered by the US market, Inditex has a comprehensive animal welfare policy that stipulates banning fur, angora, and exotic animal skin (Inditex Statement on Non-Financial Information, 2023). This is an extreme ethical position in particular, since American federal policy does not universally prohibit the domestication of fur or sale to retail. As a result, Zara implements a voluntary policy that has a higher ethical standard than the minimum floor set by regulations within the United States.

Example 2: Process and Physical Evidence — Circular Economy Collection

Zara responded directly to this growing consumer demand towards sustainability interventions with a comprehensive US garment collection programme, mobilising clothing drop boxes at about forty major retail outlets in the US. This programme redirects the volumes of fast-fashion textiles to avoid disastrous landfill destinations in the US, through partnerships with major American recycling systems, including the American Red Cross and local charities (Santero and Hendley, 2022). Importantly, in comparison to the European Union, which has a legal requirement to increase circular tracking due to impending CSRD regulation (European Commission, 2022), Zara's implementation in the US is purely voluntary. This is an indication of proactive implementation of ethics that is not only well mapped in retail Physical Evidence (store drop boxes) but also in logistical Process (reverse supply chains).

8.2 Unethical Execution Examples (USA)

Example 1: Promotion — "Join Life" Greenwashing

In spite of the initiatives described above, Zara is still subject to acute ethical critique with regard to promotional greenwashing in the US. Nevertheless, the independent NGO research found that

the Join Life variety comprised less than 15% of the total US stock (Fashion Revolution, 2021). Moreover, research has pinpointed widespread dependence on traditional, highly resource-intensive cotton and untraceable polyester mixtures disguised under this so-called sustainable promotional slogan (Gheorghe, 2021; Stand.earth, 2021). As a result, such practices were put on the radar of environmental alliances as deceptive in the Green Guides of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC, 2012; Kent, 2022).

Example 2: People and Place — Ethiopian Supplier Labour Exploitation

The worst ethical misdeeds are those related to the obscurity of the fast-fashion supply chain. In one of the most notorious 2019 BBC reports, horrific labour practices in the Zara supply chain were revealed, where garment workers were paid as little as an estimated 26 per month to work in their factories in the Hawassa Industrial Park, Ethiopia, which is less than half of the established living wage (Chamberlain, 2019). As those clothes flow directly to the profitable European and American supply points of the Zara supply chain, the Inditex supply chain has maintained some distance operationally by exploiting the network of subcontractors. The ethical breach is acute in the US market as American consumers are dependent on the FTC regulatory confidence of overall ethical sourcing; however, US federal fashion regulation does not contain mandatory supply-chain labour traceability disclosures (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2023). Zara USA enjoys the benefits of these opaque world economics and shields the American consumer from the actuality of its sourcing practices. This is irreducibly associated with unethical uses of People (supplier labourers) and Place (obscured sourcing geographies).

Table 4: Ethical and Unethical Examples — Zara USA mapped to 7Ps

Ethical Status	Initiative	7P Element	Rationale
Ethical	Animal Welfare Standards	Product	Global ban on fur/exotic skins

			voluntarily exceeds US legal mandates
Ethical	Circular Garment Collection	Process, Physical Evidence	Voluntary US rollout of store-level recycling despite a lack of federal requirement
Unethical	"Join Life" Greenwashing	Promotion	Misleading promotional aesthetics flagged under the FTC Green Guides (Kent, 2022)
Unethical	Ethiopian Labour Exploitation	People, Place	Extreme wage depression in opaque tier-2 subcontractor geographies (Chamberlain, 2019)

9. Strategic Recommendations

1. Rejuvenate domestic desire in Spain by carrying on flagship renovations and through Zara Studio and other higher-pricing collections, to alleviate familiarity fatigue in the domestic market.
2. Build a US tier-two city roadmap of data-gated access to ensure expansion outside coastal metropolitan centres is disciplined, selective and in line with profitable clusters of demand.
3. Reposition Join Life as a promotional sub-label to a traceable supply-chain standard with evidence to back it, to make sustainability messages more justifiable in both markets.
4. Transform US size-inclusivity promises into standard delivery of operations through aligning communication and inventory on hand, fit guidance, and personnel assistance.
5. Prioritise Spanish investment expenditure based on the BCG analysis to cushion the digital growth and reap mature lines with greater discipline in margin.

10. Conclusion

This comparison indicates that Zara requires various international marketing rationales in promoting its products in the local market and the foreign market. Spaniards are operational with intimacy, faster replenishment and greater brand embeddedness, yet it is saturated. The US is larger and needs higher scale and high-end development, but needs more visible scale adjustment, communication, service design and ethical assurance. Overall, Zara is most successful in defending the identity of its design and bending the customer-facing information that generates value and trust. PESTEL analysis and Hofstede, STP analysis and 7Ps analysis, analysis of BCG and ethics all point to the same conclusion: standardisation is efficiency, and selective adaptation is relevance and credibility.

Section 2: Reflective Account — Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Figure 6. Gibbs Reflective Cycle used to structure the reflective account

The reflection follows the six linked stages proposed by Gibbs (1988).



Figure 6: Gibbs Reflective Cycle used to structure the reflective account

The reflective discussion below follows the six stages shown in Figure 6.

Description

This learning reflection assesses my learning as I analyse Zara in both Spain and the United States. With Gibbs Reflective Cycle, I centred on the issue of being able to remain objectively analytical when examining a brand within the home market. First, I thought that Spain would offer a clear baseline because of the origins of Zara, which could be directly compared to the US. I started mechanically, using PESTEL and cultural frameworks to bring out the domestic strengths and compare them with the US adaptations. But this supposition was confining. Familiarity with Spain would have been a danger of bias by promoting domestic practices as being normal and not critically analyzing it. In the process, I realised that there is no need to scrutinise a home market any less. I was taught to challenge implicit assumptions, to think of other ways of interpretation,

and not to give a preference to a specific context as the default option. This change enhanced my analytical balance and boosted my perception of how the world brands change strategy in dissimilar settings.

Feelings

My choice brought about good confidence at first. Since Zara is well documented and integrated deep-rooted in Europe, I thought that data constraints would not be a problem. But as I advanced in my research, this confidence changed into intellectual discomfort. When writing the Spanish PESTEL analysis, the majority of factors were too favourable, which was why the analysis was uncritical and too confirmatory. This conflict made me doubt my beliefs. I understood that I was justifying the success of Zara in Spain instead of critically examining its strategy. Home market familiarity had resulted in a bias of the market, which focused on the strengths and ignored the underlying threats. This observation grew to a more scholarly interest. I started to feel that a good home-market presence in itself can create strategic problems. In Spain, the ubiquity of Zara covers problems like saturation in the market and poor growth opportunities, which are not reflected in my initial framework application. This experience has shown that data that is readily accessible does not imply an objective analysis but rather demands a more critical approach and questioning.

Evaluation

Critiquing my process, the choice to implement the BCG Matrix, particularly on the Spanish portfolio, was a true breakthrough. The directional frameworks, such as the Ansoff Matrix, are traditionally used to conduct international marketing assignments by plotting aggressive foreign market entry (Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes, 2017). I was able to bust my own analytical complacency by compelling myself to use a portfolio management lens (BCG) to Spain, rather. It obliged me to accept the fact that the Spanish control of Zara needs ruthless investment rigour to handle flat cash-cows, as opposed to unrestrained growth-thirst (Hambrick, MacMillan, and Day, 1982). My initial research implementation in the United States, on the other hand, was very ineffective. My initial US macroeconomic analyses were grossly generic, as they were mostly based on the generalisations of the World Bank instead of concentrating on the affluent, targeted,

and coastal metros where Zara's American strategy is actually implemented. Three separate research cycles had to be undertaken to find comparable and localised US data to be able to compare it to the specific Spanish demographics offered by the INE, in particular.

Analysis

Relating this experience to theory, my initial problem of objectivity is associated with the observations of the Cultural Dimensions Theory by Hofstede. I was influenced to perceive Spain as a steady and predictable place by the fact that Uncertainty Avoidance in Spain is much higher than in the United States. This reflected cultural dispositions to structure and familiarity, which I inadvertently replicated in my discussion of Zara. Nonetheless, there was confirmation bias due to the perceived stability. I assumed that the environment of Spain was favourable in nature, which did not consider certain risks like saturation of the market and the lack of novelty among consumers. The market became familiar and seemed less complicated as it was. This foundation increased my awareness of being critical. It demonstrated that cultural constructs not only describe consumer behaviour, but they can also affect the thinking patterns of the researcher. Being aware of this bias, I was able to be more critical of assumptions and construct a more balanced, evidence-based assessment of the domestic and international strategies of Zara.

Conclusion

It is not easier to analyse a ubiquitous global brand in its domestic market than it is to analyse a totally foreign geography. It involves intentional defamiliarisation. A country of origin as a country of origin is not a country of origin that can be defaulted to an MBA-level international marketing analysis; the home market is an extremely specific, fragile strategic posture that requires very critical analysis. Finally, comparative insight, which came as a result of comparing Spain and the US, was possible only after I stopped relying on some comfortable, well-established beliefs about the European supremacy of Zara.

Action Plan

In order to better analyse Zara cross-culturally in Spain and the United States, I will, in the future, make three methodological adjustments. To begin with, I am going to reverse my order of working, with the least familiar market being analysed first to minimise the chances of home-market bias defining future interpretations. Second, I will use more stringent triangulation of data. The cultural models, like the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory, will not be applied in isolation, as the existing economic or behavioural measures will be used to guarantee relevance and validity. This is in response to the issue of being over-dependent on old frameworks. Lastly, I will deliberately use the provided tools in unusual ways to break the routine of thought. As an example, the defence of the domestic market by employing the BCG Matrix instead of expansion. The modifications will help me to avoid mechanical analysis, encourage more critical thinking, and increase the quality and originality of my future work.

References

- Caro, F. and Gallien, J. (2010) 'Clearance pricing optimization for a fast-fashion retailer', *Operations Research*, 58(6), pp. 1465–1485. doi:10.1287/opre.1100.0839.
- Chamberlain, G. (2019) *Zara and Mango face questions over Ethiopian wages*, The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/07/zara-mango-ethiopian-wages> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- Clean Clothes Campaign (2023) *Fashion Labour Standards Report*. Amsterdam: Clean Clothes Campaign. Available at: <https://cleanclothes.org> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- de Mooij, M. and Hofstede, G. (2010) 'The Hofstede model: applications to global branding and advertising strategy and research', *International Journal of Advertising*, 29(1), pp. 85–110. doi:10.2501/S026504870920104X.
- European Commission (2022) *Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)*. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: https://finance.ec.europa.eu/capital-markets-union-and-financial-markets/company-reporting-and-auditing/company-reporting/corporate-sustainability-reporting_en (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- Eurostat (2024) *Unemployment statistics*. Luxembourg: Eurostat. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- Fashion Revolution (2021) *Fashion Transparency Index 2021*. London: Fashion Revolution. Available at: <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/resources/fashion-transparency-index> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- FashionUnited (2025) *Inditex company profile and financial data*. Available at: <https://fashionunited.uk/companies/inditex> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) (2012) *Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims (Green Guides)*. Washington DC: FTC. Available at: <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/guides-use-environmental-marketing-claims-green-guides> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

Gheorghe, M. (2021) 'How green is fast fashion? Greenwashing and the regulation of environmental claims in the EU fashion industry', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 44(4), pp. 591–613. doi:10.1007/s10603-021-09493-z.

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

Hambrick, D.C., MacMillan, I.C. and Day, D.L. (1982) 'Strategic attributes and performance in the BCG matrix — a PIMS-based analysis of industrial product businesses', *Academy of Management Journal*, 25(3), pp. 510–531. doi:10.2307/256077.

Hedley, B. (1977) 'Strategy and the "business portfolio"', *Long Range Planning*, 10(1), pp. 9–15. doi:10.1016/0024-6301(77)90042-5.

Hofstede Insights (2024) *Country comparison: Spain vs United States*. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/spain,the-usa> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

Inditex (2023) *Annual Report 2023*. Arteixo: Inditex Group. Available at: <https://www.inditex.com/investors/investors-and-shareholders/annual-report> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) (2024) *Spain Statistical Yearbook 2024*. Madrid: INE. Available at: <https://www.ine.es/prodyser/pubweb/anuario23/anuario23.pdf> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

Johnson, G., Whittington, R. and Scholes, K. (2017) *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases*. 11th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.

- Jones, M. (2007) 'Hofstede — culturally questionable?', *Oxford Business & Economics Conference*, 24–26 June 2007. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Kent, A. (2022) 'Fashion sustainability claims under scrutiny: greenwashing risk in fast-fashion marketing', *Sustainability in Fashion*, 14(3), pp. 1–18. doi:10.3390/su14031234.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2016) *Marketing Management*. 15th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- McSweeney, B. (2002) 'Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: a triumph of faith — a failure of analysis', *Human Relations*, 55(1), pp. 89–118. doi:10.1177/0018726702551004.
- Moon, J.A. (1999) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory and Practice*. London: Kogan Page.
- Santero, A. and Hendley, C. (2022) 'Retail take-back programmes and textile waste: a systematic review of life-cycle outcomes', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 343, article 130948. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.130948.
- Stand.earth (2021) *Unzipped: Exposing Zara and H&M's Unsustainable Fashion Claims*. Vancouver: Stand.earth. Available at: <https://stand.earth/resources/unzipped> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- Statista (2024) *Apparel market revenue in Spain 2019–2024*. Hamburg: Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/apparel/spain> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).
- Theodosiou, M. and Leonidou, L.C. (2003) 'Standardization versus adaptation of international marketing strategy: an integrative assessment of the empirical research', *International Business Review*, 12(2), pp. 141–171. doi:10.1016/S0969-5931(02)00094-X.
- Tokatli, N. (2007) 'Global sourcing: insights from the global clothing industry — the case of Zara, a fast fashion retailer', *Journal of Economic Geography*, 8(1), pp. 21–38. doi:10.1093/jeg/lbm035.

Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A. and Lamprianou, I. (2009) 'International marketing adaptation versus standardisation of multinational companies', *International Marketing Review*, 26(4/5), pp. 477–500. doi:10.1108/02651330910971995.

World Bank (2024a) *GDP per capita, United States (current US\$)*. Washington DC: World Bank Open Data. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=US> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

World Bank (2024b) *Inflation, consumer prices for the United States*. Washington DC: World Bank Open Data. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG?locations=US> (Accessed: 13 March 2026).

Inditex (2024) Annual Report 2024. Arteixo: Inditex Group. Available at: <https://static.inditex.com/annualreport2024/en> (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

Zara (2026a) Customer service - Spain. Available at: <https://www.zara.com/es/en/contact> (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

Zara (2026b) Customer service - United States. Available at: <https://www.zara.com/us/en/contact> (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

Zara (2026c) How to Return | Help | ZARA United States. Available at: <https://www.zara.com/us/en/help-center/HowToReturn> (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

Zara (2026d) Items Warranty | Help | ZARA Spain. Available at: <https://www.zara.com/es/en/help-center/FaultyItems> (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

Appendix A: Zara Visual Comparison Pack

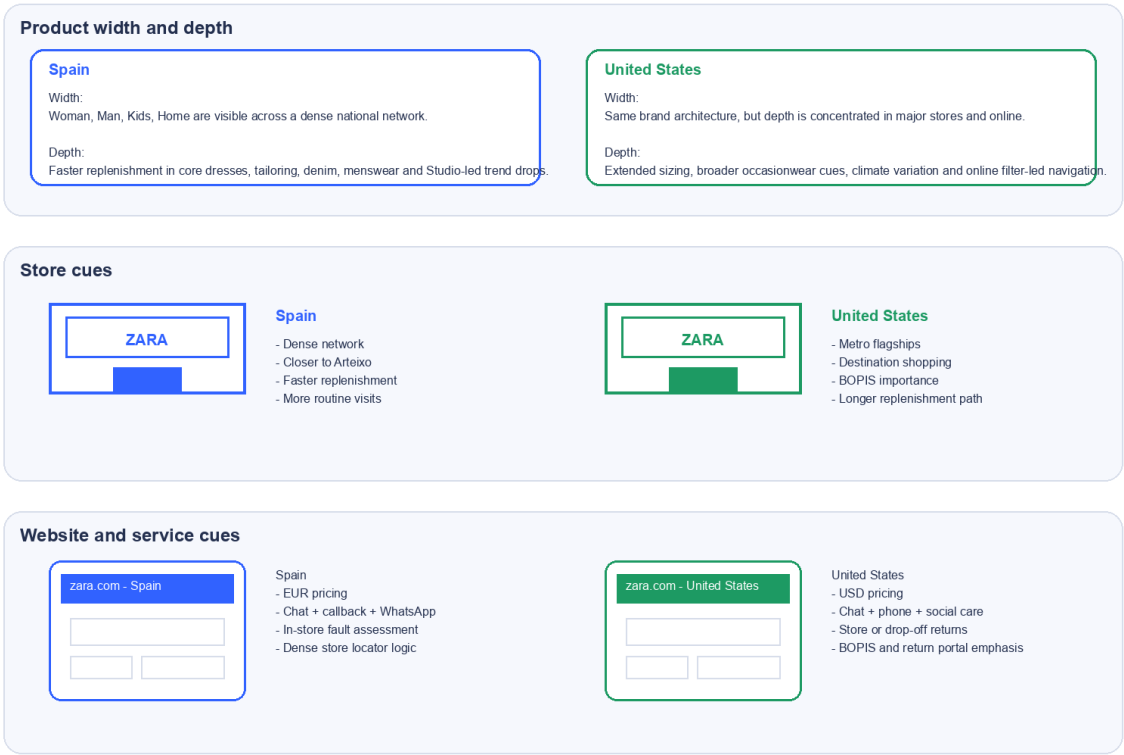
Appendix A summarises product width/depth and physical-evidence cues for the two markets.

Dimension	Spain	United States
Product width	Woman, Man, Kids, and Home are visible across a dense domestic network.	The same brand architecture is present, but the width is concentrated in major stores and online.
Product depth	Faster replenishment in core fashion, menswear, and selected Studio-led drops.	Greater emphasis on extended sizing, occasionwear, and climate-sensitive assortment depth.
What it shows	Spain benefits from proximity and fuller line visibility.	The US needs more selective but more visibly adapted depth.

Appendix Visual A1: Product, store and website comparison cues for Zara Spain and Zara US.

Appendix Visual A1. Product, store and website comparison cues for Zara Spain and Zara L

Illustrative summary based on the product, place, process, and physical-evidence discussion.



Source: synthesised from Inditex (2024), Zara (2026a; 2026b; 2026c; 2026d), and the main body analysis.

Appendix B: Supporting Market Comparison Metrics

Appendix B condenses the comparison points that recur across the body discussion.

Metric	Spain	United States	Strategic implication
Market role	Home market and operational base	Large foreign growth market	Objectives differ across the two countries.
Price logic	Premium-parity and limited markdown reliance	Higher base prices plus selective markdowns	Price adaptation is more visible in the US.
Service route	Chat, phone, WhatsApp, social, in-store assessment	Chat, phone, social, online return portal, store/drop-off return	Complaint handling is part of the process adaptation.
People disclosure	49,915 employees reported in Spain	Standalone Zara US headcount is not publicly disaggregated	Spain's people system is more visible and closer to the headquarters.

Source: synthesised from Inditex (2024), FashionUnited (2025), Hofstede Insights (2024), and Zara (2026a; 2026b; 2026c; 2026d).