Customer Perception Study: Small-Size Cars

US, UK, Germany (n=150 total; 50 each)

Objective: Understand familiarity, perceptions, drivers/barriers, and purchase intent for small/compact cars across three markets.

Executive Summary

Awareness & Acceptance

Awareness and acceptance are significantly higher in Europe; US lags on familiarity and trust. Positive sentiment: US 38%, UK 62%, DE 68%.

Suitability Perception

Daily-use suitability and fuel efficiency importance are much higher in UK/DE. US remains largely neutral (42%) on overall perception.

Powertrain Preferences

Germany shows strongest EV interest (34%); US remains gasoline-led (54%), with UK in transition phase.

Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity is highest in the US; Europe accepts higher prices for quality/efficiency. US: $18K-$24K; UK: £14K-£19K; DE: €16K-€21K.

Value Perception

Europe sees small cars as value-efficient (UK 68%, DE 72% positive); US uncertainty (30% unsure) shows low awareness of benefits.

Satisfaction & Advocacy

Satisfaction and advocacy strongest in Europe (DE 78%, UK 72% recommend), reinforcing word-of-mouth momentum; US at 48%.

Market Implications

Prioritize education and safety-proof messaging in US; emphasize efficiency/engineering in Europe; tailor pricing/financing by market. US requires strongest differentiation strategy to overcome larger vehicle preference (62% would choose larger). Leverage high European advocacy for referral programs.

Methodology & Visualization Standard

Sample

Total: n=150 participants

Distribution:

- US: n=50 participants
- UK: n=50 participants
- Germany: n=50 participants

Demographics: Adults aged 25-65 with driver's license and vehicle purchasing authority

Approach

Method: Online survey

Scope: 17 questions covering:

- Awareness & familiarity
- Perception & sentiment
- Usage patterns
- Value assessment
- Brand associations
- Purchase considerations

Scales Used

Familiarity: 1-5 scale

Suitability: 1-5 scale

Trust: 1-5 scale

Satisfaction: 1-5 scale

Sentiment: % distribution (Positive/Neutral/Negative)

Preferences: % distribution across options

Visualization Standard

Country Colors:

US (Blue)

UK (Green)

Germany (Orange)

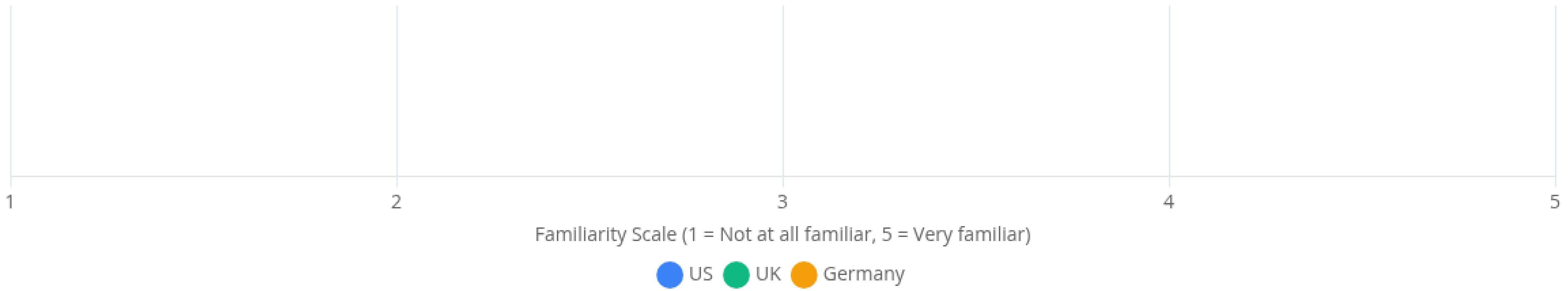
Chart Types:

Dot plots (points only)

Donuts for composition

Familiarity with Small/Compact Cars (1–5)

United States	United Kingdom	Germany
3.1	4.2	4.4
out of 5	out of 5	out of 5



Key Insight

European markets exhibit higher everyday exposure to small cars due to fuel prices, urban streets, and parking constraints. The US shows significantly lower familiarity, indicating a need for education-focused marketing to build awareness and understanding of the small car segment benefits.

Overall Perception (Positive / Neutral / Negative)

United States

Positive: 38% Neutral: 42%
Negative: 20%

United Kingdom

Positive: 62% Neutral: 28%
Negative: 10%

Germany

Positive: 68% Neutral: 22%
Negative: 10%

Key Insight

European markets show substantially stronger acceptance of small cars, with Germany leading at 68% positive perception. This reflects the cultural normalization of compact vehicles through brands like VW, Audi, and Opel. US customers remain predominantly neutral (42%), suggesting persistent image and status perception barriers that marketing must address through repositioning strategies.

Suitability for Daily Use (1–5)

United States

3.0

out of 5

United Kingdom

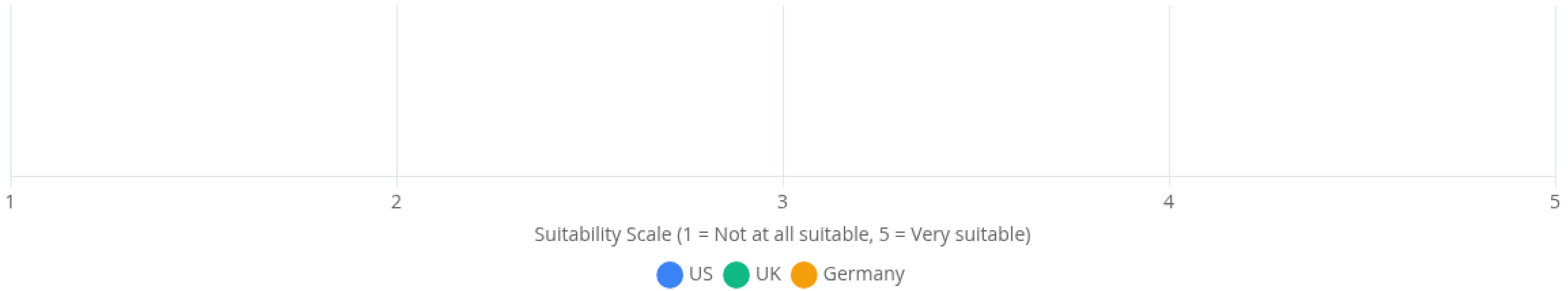
4.1

out of 5

Germany

4.3

out of 5



Key Insight

Small cars are seen as highly practical in UK and Germany for city commutes and everyday use. US customers associate daily use with larger vehicles, suggesting a need for benefit-focused messaging that highlights parking ease, fuel savings, and urban mobility advantages in US marketing materials.

Most Important Purchase Factors (Ranked)

United States

1. Price
2. Safety
3. Brand

United Kingdom

1. Fuel Efficiency
2. Price
3. Size

Germany

1. Fuel Efficiency
2. Engineering Quality
3. Safety

Key Insight

Fuel efficiency dominates European priorities, aligning with higher fuel costs and environmental awareness. US customers prioritize affordability and brand trust above other factors, suggesting a value-oriented approach. German buyers uniquely emphasize engineering quality, reflecting their domestic manufacturing culture and technical expectations. This indicates different marketing approaches are needed: US (affordability and reliability), UK (efficiency and value), Germany (technical excellence and efficiency).

Importance of Fuel Efficiency (1–5)

United States

3.6

out of 5

United Kingdom

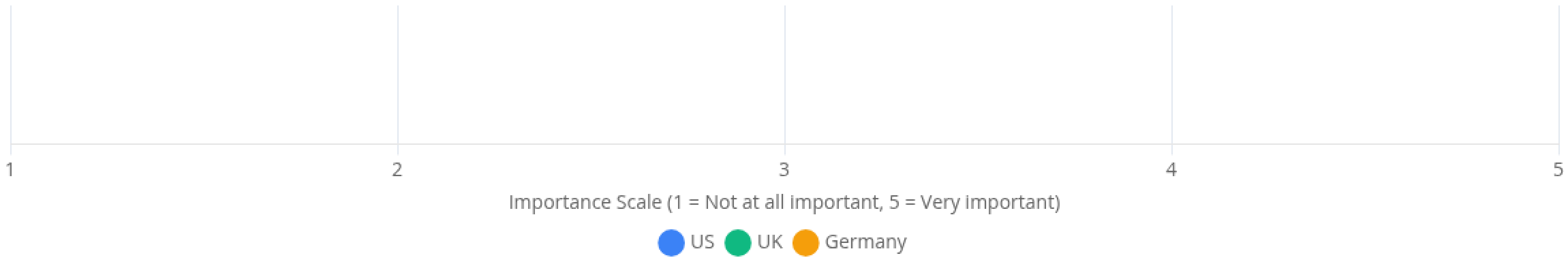
4.5

out of 5

Germany

4.7

out of 5



Key Insight

Higher fuel costs and environmental awareness drive exceptionally high importance scores in Europe, especially in Germany (4.7) and UK (4.5). US consumers (3.6) recognize fuel efficiency as beneficial but not decisive in purchasing decisions, suggesting different marketing focus is needed for each region.

Brands Associated with Small Cars

United States

- Toyota
- Honda
- Mini
- Kia

United Kingdom

- Mini
- Ford
- VW
- Fiat

Germany

- VW
- Audi A1
- Opel
- Smart

Key Insight

Brand recall closely mirrors market exposure and product presence. The US market primarily associates Asian and European imports with small cars, reflecting a lack of strong domestic compact offerings. European markets show stronger recognition of local brands, particularly in Germany where domestic manufacturers dominate small-car mindshare. This suggests brand partnership opportunities in the US market, while European strategies should leverage established brand equity.

Trust in Small-Car Brands (1–5)

United States

3.4

out of 5

United Kingdom

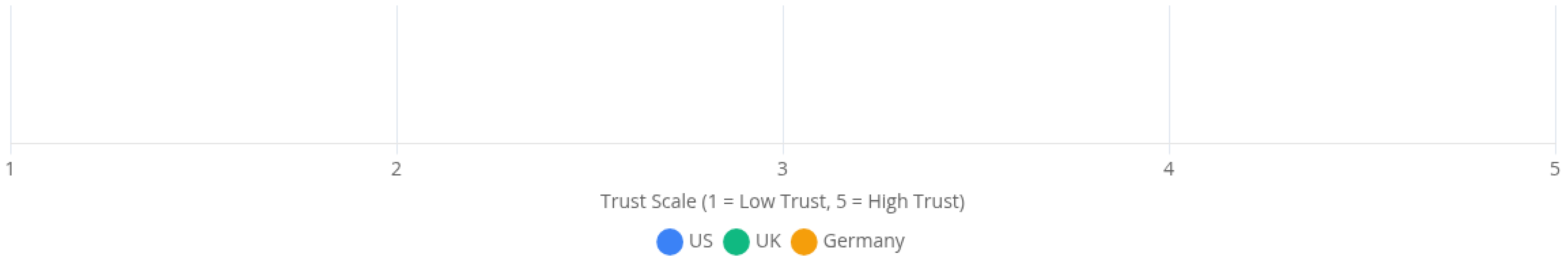
4.2

out of 5

Germany

4.5

out of 5



Key Insight

German and UK consumers show significantly higher trust in established small-car manufacturers, which directly correlates with higher purchase intent. The US market displays a trust gap that reflects lower familiarity with compact vehicles. This suggests that building brand credibility through transparent safety data, quality metrics, and ownership testimonials could help close the perception gap in the US market.

Key Concerns by Market

United States

1. Safety
2. Size
3. Status perception

United Kingdom

1. Space for family
2. Highway performance

Germany

1. Storage space
2. Long-distance comfort

Key Insight

Safety perception is the biggest US barrier, even though modern small cars rate highly—this represents a messaging opportunity to address misconceptions. European concerns are more practical, focusing on functional aspects like space and comfort. UK buyers prioritize family suitability, while German customers are concerned with utility and long-distance performance. Marketing should address safety proof points in the US, family adaptability in the UK, and emphasize comfort/storage solutions in Germany.

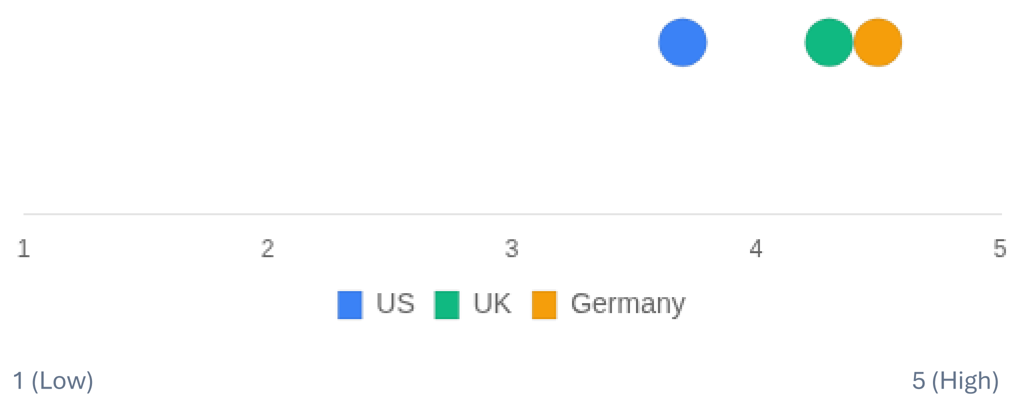
Preference for Larger Vehicles

Key Insight

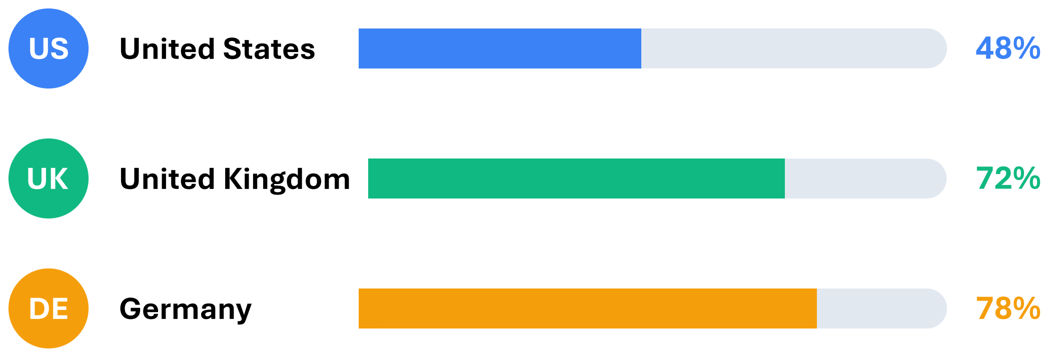
SUV and larger vehicle preference remains dominant in US automotive culture, with 62% of respondents preferring larger vehicles despite discussing small cars. In contrast, European markets strongly favor compact vehicles that align with urban practicality needs - particularly in Germany (72%) where infrastructure and city planning supports smaller vehicles. This substantial preference gap indicates a need for market-specific product strategies and positioning.

Satisfaction & Recommendations

Satisfaction Among Owners (1-5 scale)



Would Recommend to Others



Key Insight

European markets demonstrate significantly stronger satisfaction (UK 4.3, Germany 4.5) and advocacy levels (UK 72%, Germany 78%) compared to the US (3.7 satisfaction, 48% recommendation). This creates a powerful word-of-mouth advantage in Europe that reinforces positive perception loops, while the US lacks this organic growth driver. The gap between European and US advocacy (24-30 percentage points) highlights the need for targeted experience marketing in the US market to build stronger advocacy networks through testimonials and influencer strategies.

Strategic Recommendations & Next Steps

United States

1. Lead with safety proof points (crash ratings, ADAS features) to counter perception gap
2. Develop cost-of-ownership calculators highlighting fuel/maintenance savings
3. Feature parking ease and urban maneuverability in marketing creative
4. Launch influencer and extended test-drive programs to counter status bias
5. Offer aggressive entry pricing/financing options within $18-24K range

United Kingdom

1. Emphasize fuel efficiency and city practicality messaging in campaigns
2. Highlight compact footprint advantages for city parking and navigation
3. Create specialized value trims with best-in-class MPG/mi/kWh ratings
4. Position as smart family second car option with space-maximizing features
5. Leverage high advocacy rate (72%) with owner testimonial campaigns

Germany

1. Spotlight engineering quality and technical excellence in messaging
2. Emphasize Autobahn-ready performance, comfort and noise reduction
3. Prioritize EV/hybrid line-ups with advanced drivetrain technology
4. Position compact models with premium engineering and materials
5. Develop storage solutions to address key concern about cargo space

Cross-Market Initiatives

1. Launch education campaign on modern small car safety standards and technologies
2. Offer bundled service/warranty programs to boost value perception
3. Create targeted digital creative by driving use case and market segment
4. Implement advocacy tracking to amplify word-of-mouth momentum

Thank You

Do you have any questions?

+91-959-915-8047

info@sperresearch.com

https://www.sperresearch.com

Corporate Office:
#303-304, Tower B, Noida One, Sector 62, Noida, India