Waiting on the world to change

Weighing value with values

Kearney Consumer Institute
Q2 2025

Consumers’ penchant to “shop by their values” takes on various characterizations:

Consumer activism	**Values-based consumption**
Organized brand boycotts	**Conscious consumerism**

Global boycotts illustrate consumption's political undertones.

39%

of consumers report boycotting a brand in the past 12 months

The issue of the moment can be a moving target:

Indonesian and Malaysian brands rise on Israeli consumer boycott

Which US companies are pulling back on diversity initiatives?

Shoppers continue business boycotts. What to know

Buy American? No Thanks, Europe Says, as Tariff Backlash Grows.

Recent examples

- Conflict over religious policies or donations
- Problems with politics of leading executive
- Desire for made-in-country/ made locally
- Concerns over both DEI policies and the removal of them

Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025; Newsweek, Harici, AP, New York Times

Media coverage alludes that **consumers are increasingly voting with their wallets.**

But are they?

Consumers are conflicted over brand values.

68%

Of consumers think that **brands should voice their values**

but

51%

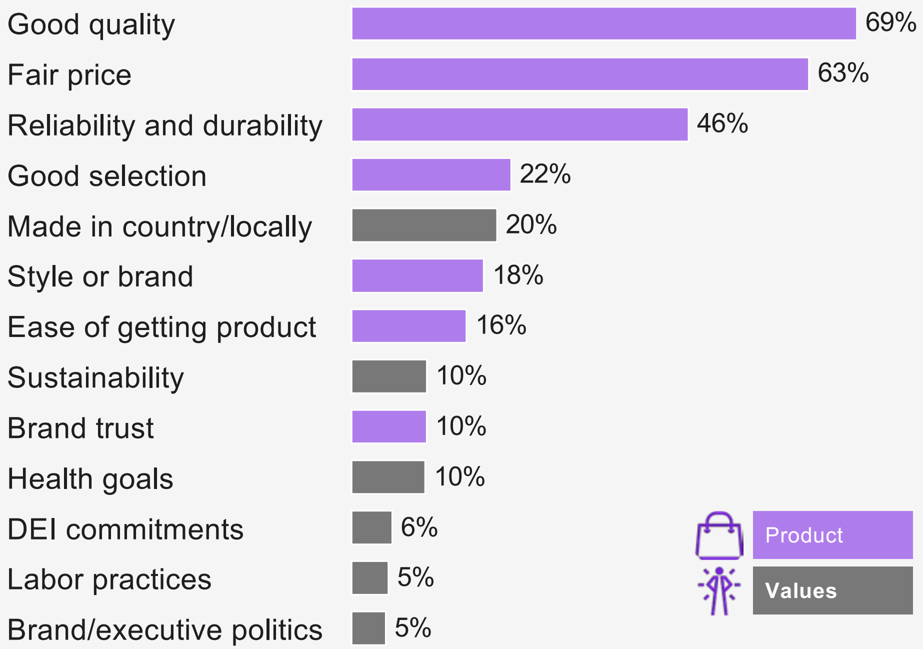
Of consumers **have stopped shopping a brand that did not align with their values**

Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Trust Study, February 2025

Values remain a secondary purchasing factor for most consumers.

Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025

What is most important when choosing what products to buy? (Top 3)



Consumers prioritize product qualities over values.

Communicating values presents both opportunity and risk.

Consumers can easily shop according to their values

- ✓ Overall options, including values-based products, continue to increase.
- ✓ The pandemic gave consumers more time to discover new brands and higher savings rates, which allowed experimentation and purchase of higher-priced items.

Consumers desire (and claim) to shop by their values

- ✓ Consumers aspire to spend their money on brands that have a purpose.
- ✓ It can be a signal to their “community” or personal brand.
- ✓ Consumers may find emotional satisfaction in brands that do good.

Consumers who care about values can be vocal and viral

- ✓ When backlash occurs, the results can have an outsized impact.
- ✓ Consumers shop both for and against their values.

Source: Kearney analysis

Consumers weigh their values with price and quality expectations.

Consumers can easily shop according to their values

… but most consumers will only do so if the price/ quality is right

80%
agree that shopping by values is sometimes or usually more expensive

71%
agree that shopping by values is sometimes or usually less convenient

Consumers desire (and claim) to shop by their values

… but consumers do not follow through or know the specifics

65%
do not have time to research brands that align with their values

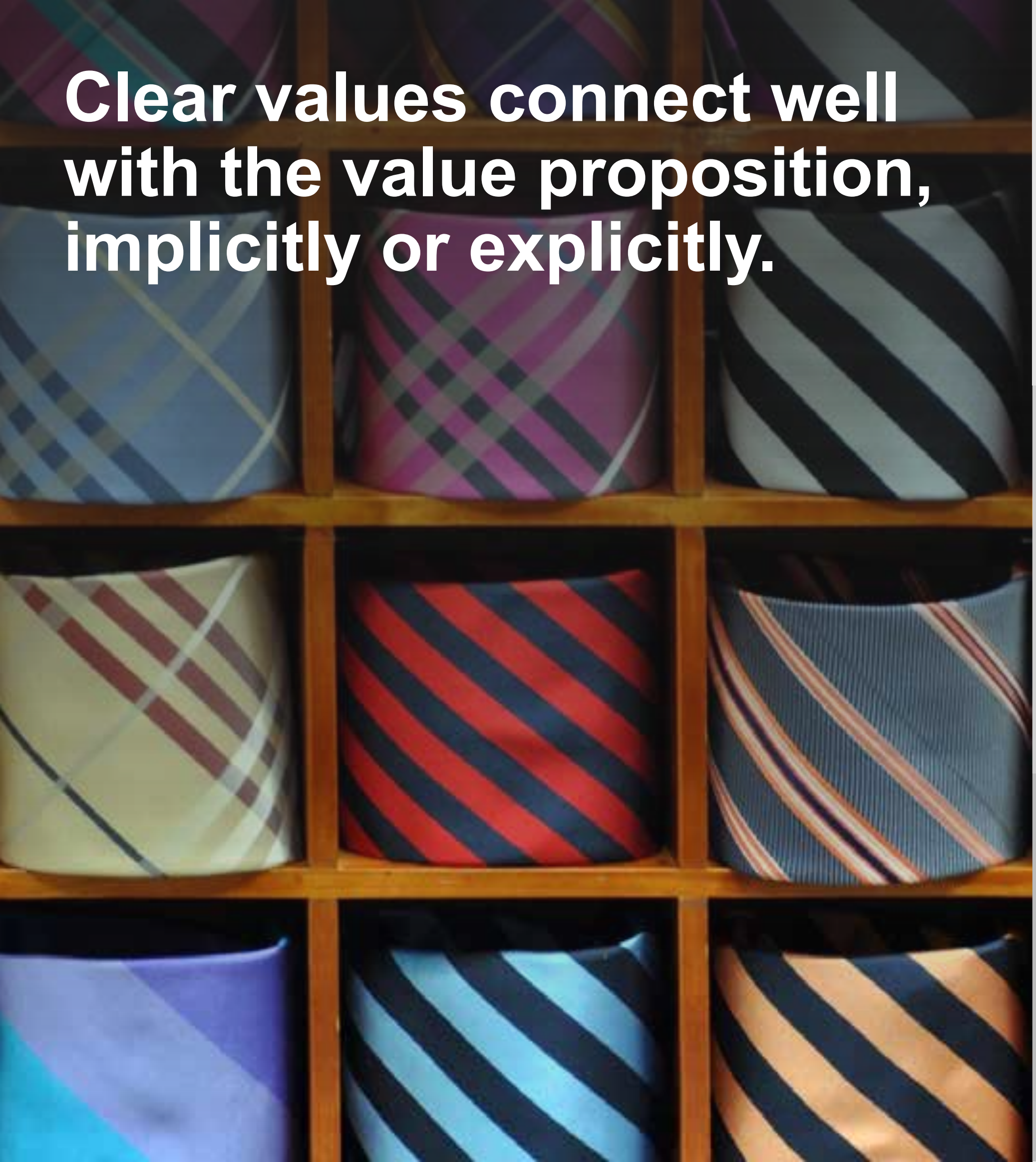
In the US, **28%** of consumers claim to have purchased Made in America clothing in the past year *(only 2–3% of purchased apparel is produced in America)*

Consumers who care about values can be vocal and viral

… but this group is still the minority

79%
of consumers agree that it's more important that a brand delivers on quality expectations vs. voicing values

Source: Kearney analysis



Clear values connect well with the value proposition, implicitly or explicitly.

Elevated basics (into quiet luxury)

Proposition: Minimalist, high-quality basics…

Value: … with a focus on natural fabrics and longevity

UNIQLO
EILEEN FISHER
KHAITE
COS
TOTEME
THE ROW

Clinical skincare

Proposition: Science- or dermatologist-backed beauty products...

Value: … that align with consumers' health goals

The Ordinary.
Avène
LA ROCHE-POSAY
SHISEIDO
Dr.Jart+

Grown and sourced locally

Proposition: Grocery stores that partner with regional farmers…

Value: … to enable consumers to buy local

NATURALIA
Country Delight
SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET
FARM BOY
ALNATURA

Pointed "values" questions provide guidance.

Is there a willingness to lose sales by communicating values?

Many brands living by their values are not doing it specifically to get credit for it from the consumer.

Brands from On running to Patagonia have communicated that it is part of their brand ethos, regardless of how consumers feel.

Is there a history of public commitment to specific values?

Many brands have communicated values or purpose over the years, in the interest of transparency or connecting with the consumer.

Recent boycotts have stemmed from brands walking away from previous and long-standing commitments.

Is the value reflected internally in the organization?

Demonstration of values can start from within, from executives and leadership, to employee resource groups, to suppliers and vendors.

Black Lives Matter protests highlighted organizations that voiced public support while lacking the representation internally.

Source: Kearney analysis

An honest reflection may illustrate larger issues.

Supposedly consumers are walking away due to:

Values

Boycotts

Politics

Tariffs

The reality may be longer-term fundamentals

Premium pricing without premium quality or innovation

Poor merchandising and/or selection

Lack of differentiation

Looking forward

What the KCI is watching

Our Consumer Stress Index dives into consumer sentiment and stress. All eyes are on tariffs and pricing implications. Consumers are showing some signs of recessionary and cautious behaviors, while still generally spending.

We do not anticipate a major pullback in spend until price increases hit the widespread markets or consumers are impacted by other tariff repercussions, such as layoffs.

What comes next

At the Consumer Goods Forum in June, we are launching a report on consumers' health journeys, including a custom segment that outlines key behavioral and philosophical differences in their approach to health.

Next KCI

quarterly briefing:

August 2025

Kearney Consumer Institute (KCI)

What is it?

Kearney think tank creating thoughtful, consumer-first content and perspectives, assessing existing and evolving consumer behaviors, needs, and decision-making

What does it do?

Advocates for the consumer

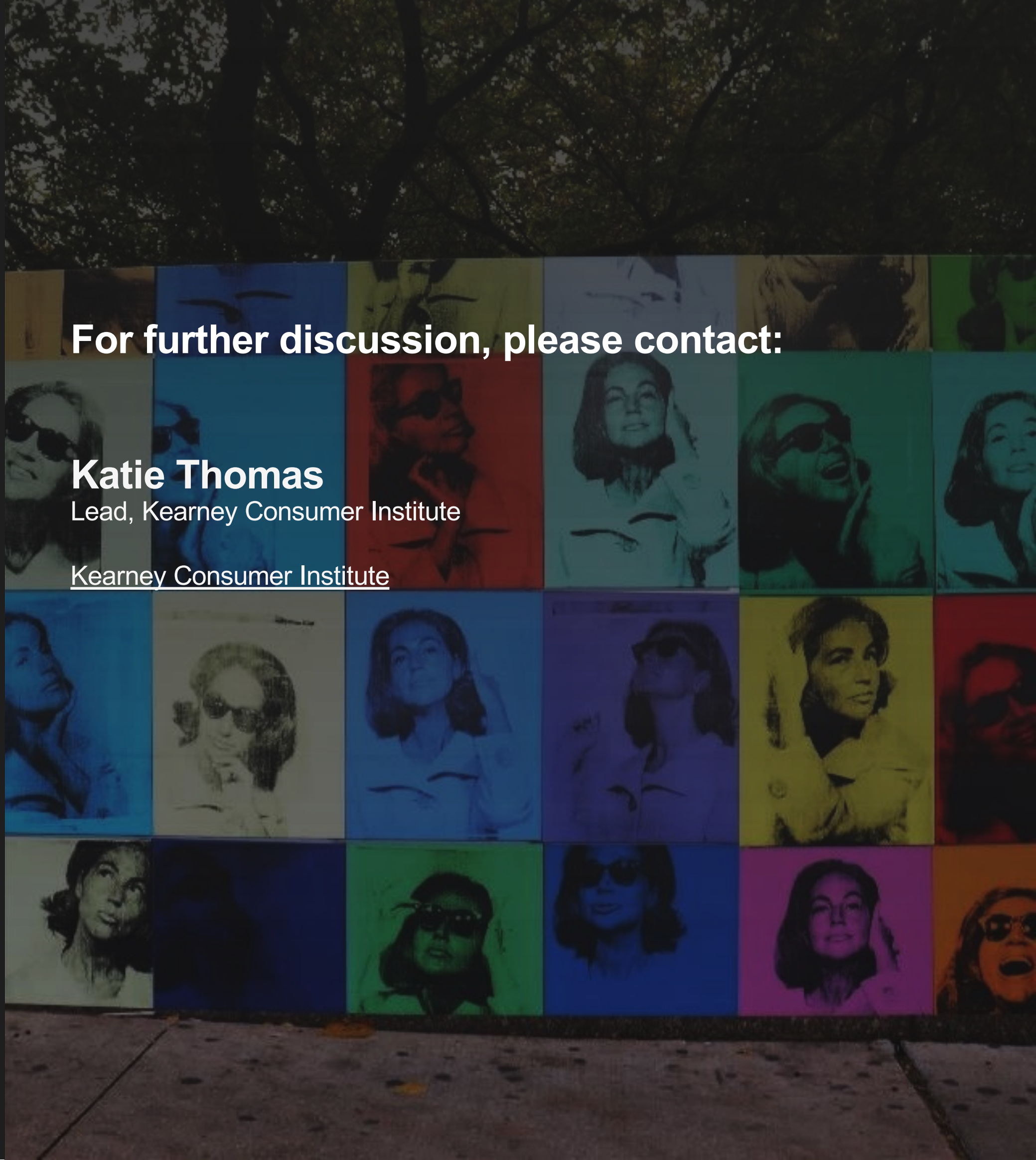
Challenges existing assumptions

Reframes to ask different questions

Generates conversation

Translates into action

KEARNEY



For further discussion, please contact:

Katie Thomas
Lead, Kearney Consumer Institute

Kearney Consumer Institute

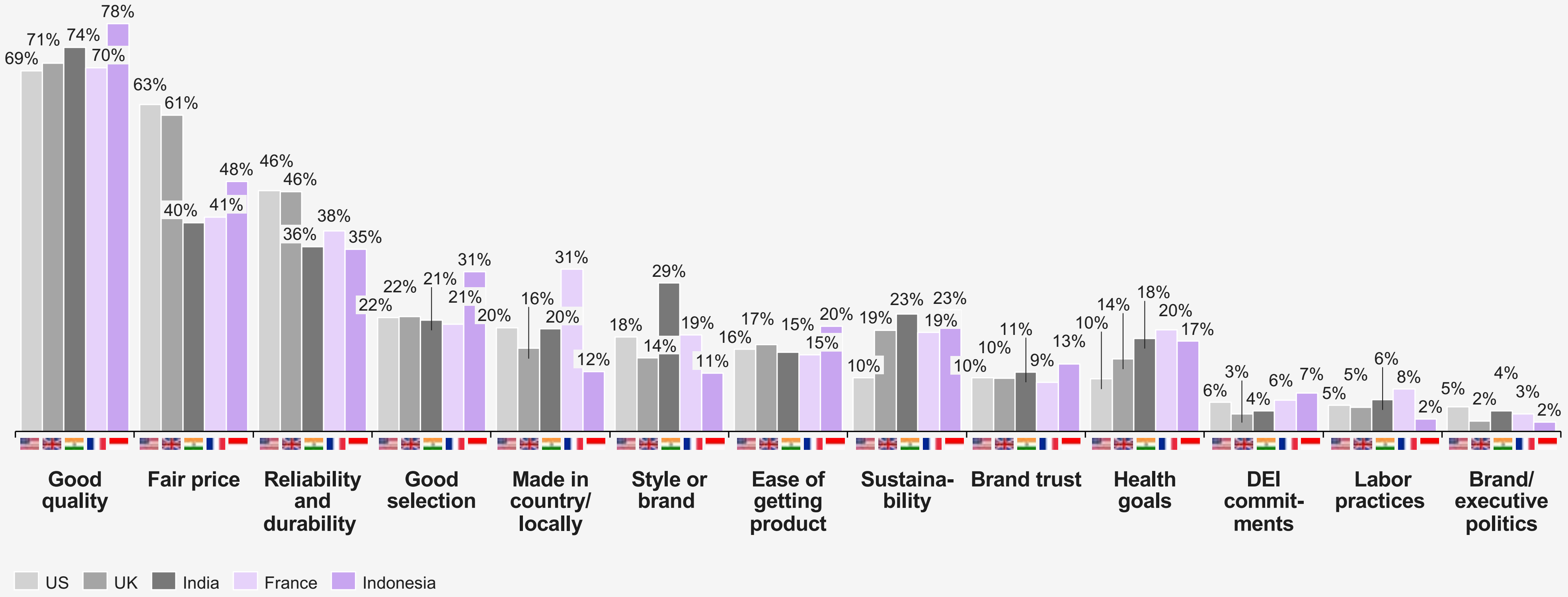
Appendix: International Data

Data in report is from US survey

Appendix includes United Kingdom, India, France, and Indonesia

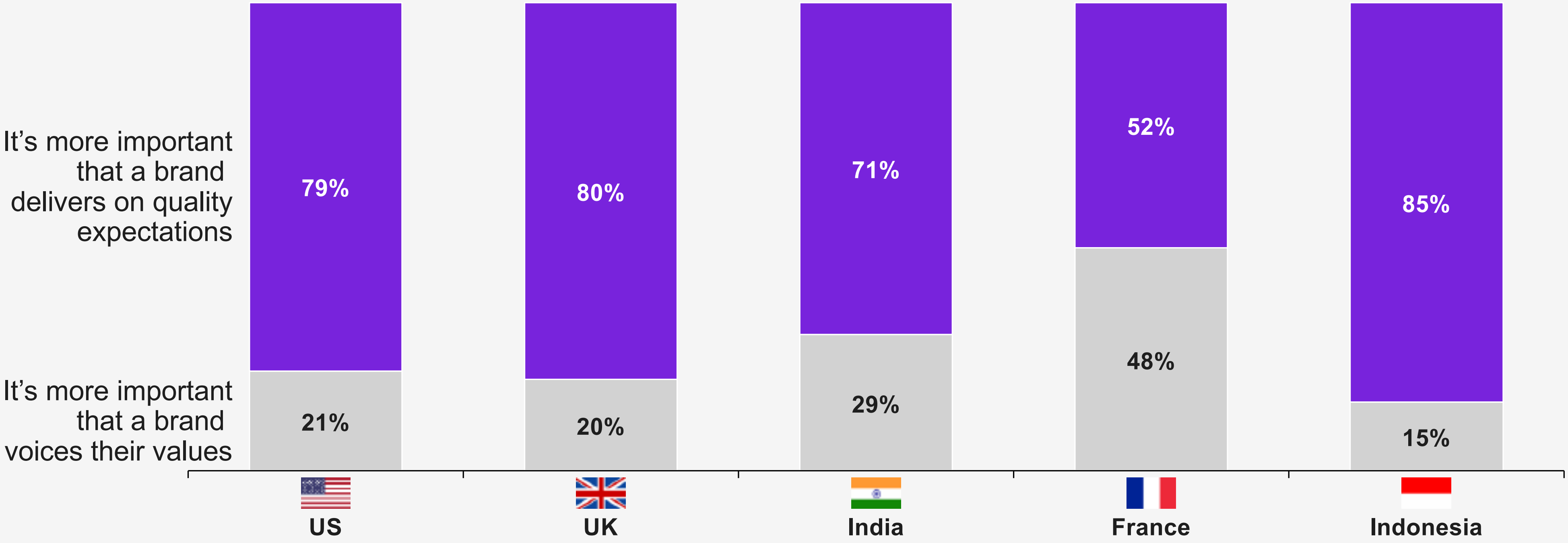
Which of these are most important when you choose what products/brands to buy?

Top 3



Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025

Which do you agree with more?



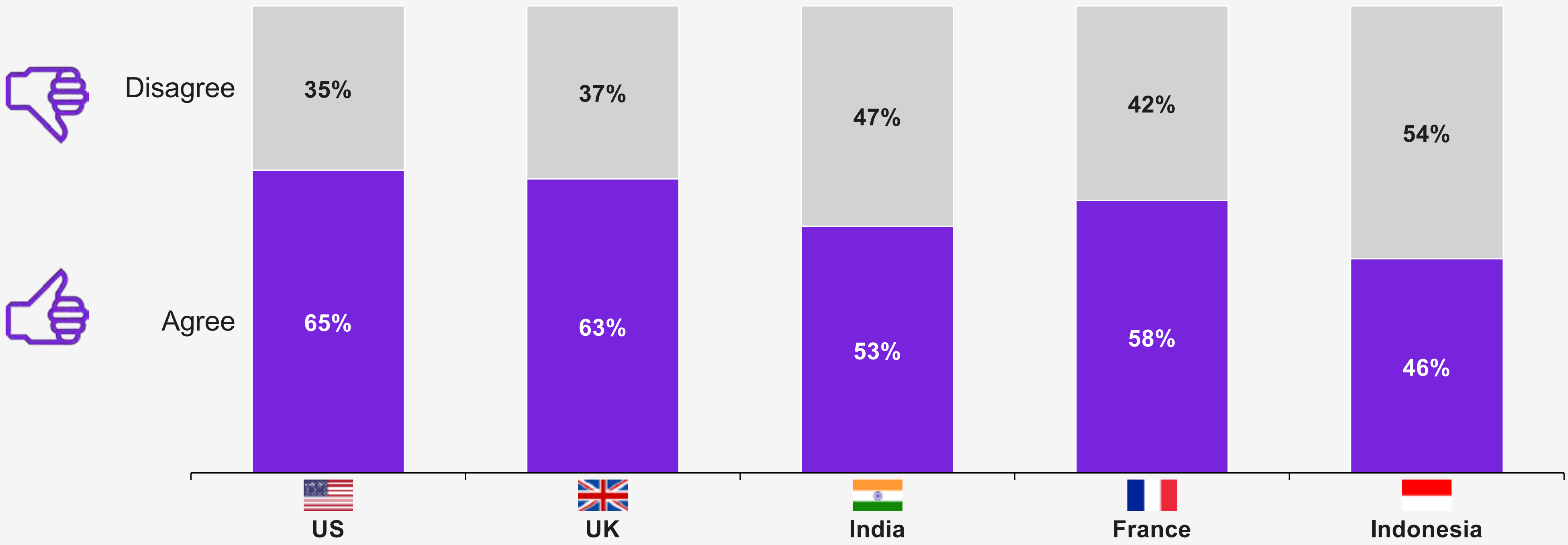
Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025

Consumers across geos agree that values-based shopping can be pricier or inconvenient.

		US	UK	India	France	Indonesia
Shopping by my values is more expensive	Usually	28%	32%	41%	34%	23%
	Sometimes	51%	50%	49%	51%	51%
	Rarely	20%	18%	10%	15%	26%
Shopping by my values is more incon-venient	Usually	24%	25%	38%	24%	16%
	Sometimes	47%	46%	40%	54%	42%
	Rarely	29%	29%	24%	22%	43%

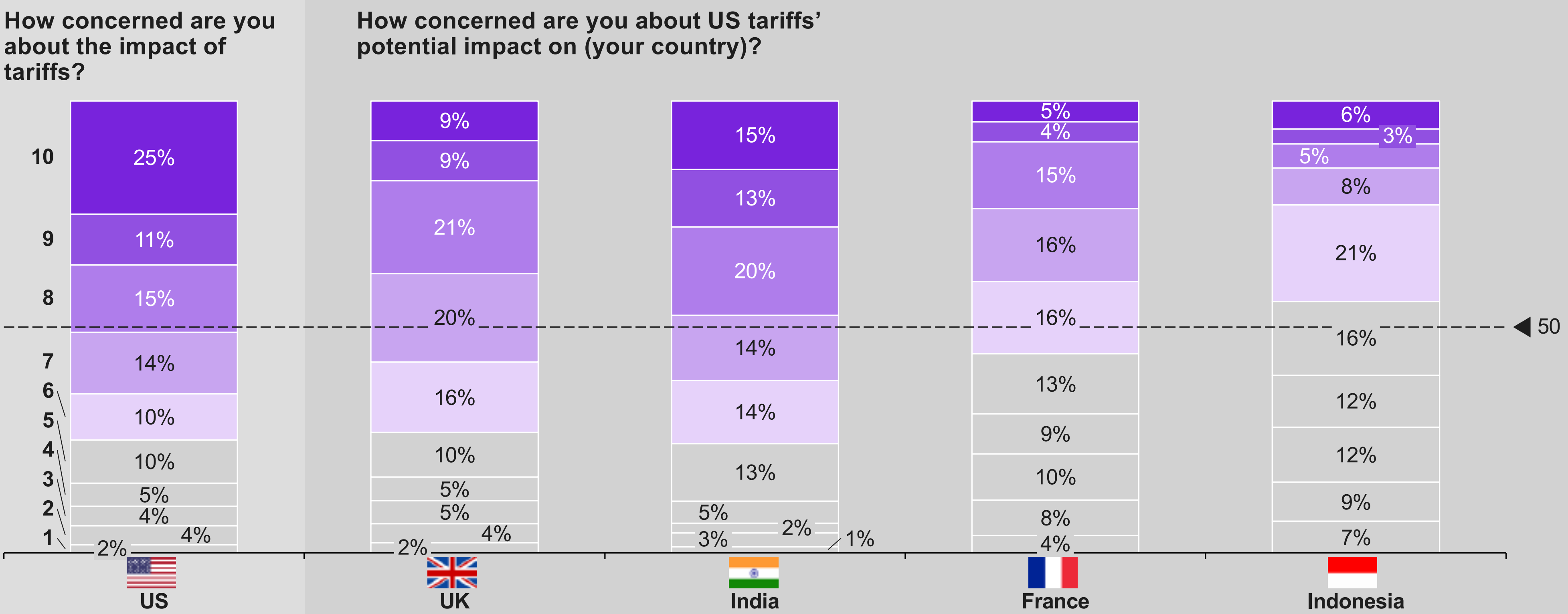
Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025

I don’t always have time to research brands that have my values.



Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025

Concerns about US tariffs extend around the world.



Source: Kearney Consumer Institute Values Study, May 2025