Humanization of the brand and its impact on the purchase decision. Case: Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo

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Abstract

By establishing an emotional relationship with consumers, brands can promote trust, which gives them an important competitive advantage. The objective is to analyze the positioning of a brand according to consumers' perceptions. This objective responds to an outcome of the research project: Methodology for measuring positioning through multivariate analysis, for the development of brand equity: a business approach. In order to create marketing programs that help increase the rate of student recruitment at Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo and focus its resources on the indicated segments, a qualitative type of research was used, with a multidimensional scaling model, with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The sample consisted of participants from the different studies selected for analysis, the techniques used were focus groups, a survey for data collection and a bibliographic review; the instrument used was the data collection form. The qualitative analysis highlights the relevance of sincerity, passion and extroversion as qualities that establish a positive relationship between individuals and brands, thus indicating a possible connection between customer loyalty and brand identity.

Key words: Consumer, Competitiveness, Emotional, Brands, Loyalty,

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Humanización de la marca y su impacto en la decisión de compra. Caso: Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo

Resumen

Al establecer una relación emocional con los consumidores, las marcas pueden fomentar la confianza, lo que les proporciona una importante ventaja competitiva. El objetivo es analizar el posicionamiento de una marca según las percepciones de los consumidores. Este objetivo responde a un resultado del proyecto de investigación: Metodología de medición del posicionamiento mediante análisis multivariante, para el desarrollo del valor de marca: un enfoque empresarial. Con la finalidad de crear programas de mercadotecnia que ayuden a incrementar la tasa de captación de estudiantes en el Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo y enfocar sus recursos a los segmentos indicados, se utilizó una investigación de tipo cualitativo, con un modelo de escalamiento multidimensional, con el programa Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). La muestra estuvo constituida por participantes de los diferentes estudios seleccionados para el análisis, las técnicas utilizadas fueron grupos focales, una encuesta para la recolección de datos y una revisión bibliográfica; el instrumento utilizado fue el formulario de recolección de datos. El análisis cualitativo destaca la relevancia de la sinceridad, la pasión y la extroversión como cualidades que establecen una relación positiva entre los individuos y las marcas, indicando así una posible conexión entre la fidelidad del cliente y la identidad de marca.

Palabras clave: Consumidor, Competitividad, Emocional, Marcas, Lealtad

INTRODUCTION

Consumer familiarity when purchasing products and the strategies applied by marketers in a highly competitive market are two crucial aspects that define the importance of humanizing a brand and its impact on purchasing decisions. By establishing an emotional connection with consumers, brands can build customer trust and loyalty, which translates into an important competitive advantage. Humanizing a brand involves creating an authentic identity that resonates with the values and desires of the target audience, which can decisively influence consumers' purchasing behavior by establishing an emotional connection that goes beyond the features of the product or service offered.

In an environment where competition is fierce and market saturation is commonplace, humanizing a brand becomes an essential strategy to stand out and cultivate strong relationships with consumers, which in turn can translate into greater commercial success. Consumers tend to feel more confident buying products from well-known brands, as they believe they offer higher quality and reliability. This can make it difficult for lesser-known brands to gain consumer trust (Alvarez, H., et al., 2022). This is a crucial factor in the purchase process, and well-known brands often benefit from an inherent advantage in this regard.

Consumers tend to associate the familiarity of a brand with the quality and reliability of its products. This perception is reinforced by positive past experiences and effective marketing campaigns that reinforce the brand's image. Consequently, lesser-known brands face a significant challenge in gaining consumer trust, as

they lack the same level of recognition and reputation as established brands.

The lack of trust in lesser-known brands may be due to consumers' perception of risk. Faced with uncertainty about the quality and product performance of a lesser-known brand, consumers tend to opt for brands they consider safer and more proven. This phenomenon is compounded by the risk aversion inherent in many purchasing decisions, which leads to a preference for the known and established over the unknown.

Lesser-known brands face a dual challenge: they must not only overcome consumer unfamiliarity, but also counter the entrenched perception that popular brands offer higher quality and reliability. To address this problem, these brands may need targeted marketing and communication strategies that highlight their product attributes, offer quality assurances and build trust through testimonials from satisfied customers or partnerships with industry opinion leaders.

The purpose of this project is to examine how consumers perceive a brand, which will serve as a basis for developing marketing strategies to attract students to Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo and optimize the allocation of resources to the appropriate segments. A thorough understanding of consumer perspectives is critical in the business world, especially when it comes to understanding their buying preferences in a marketplace saturated with similar options.

When consumers are faced with products that offer similar features, the influence of marketing can be a determining factor in their purchasing decisions. It is crucial to investigate how consumers perceive the image of brands, what factors influence their choice and how they respond to advertising strategies. This detailed knowledge enables companies to adapt their marketing strategies

to better meet consumers' needs and desires, as well as to identify opportunities to differentiate themselves from the competition.

Understanding the consumer's view of their buying preferences not only provides valuable information about their behaviors and motivations, but also allows companies to adjust their business strategies more effectively. By understanding why consumers choose popular branded products, companies can identify areas for improvement in their own marketing strategy, from product differentiation to brand communication.

In-depth analysis can help companies develop more persuasive marketing messages and build stronger relationships with consumers by directly addressing their concerns and preferences. Ultimately, understanding and analyzing the consumer perspective is essential to remain competitive in an ever-changing marketplace and to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of marketing strategies in today's business world.

There are aspects of everyday life, which are important to understand in order to perform an analysis based on purchases, trade or consumption; Rodríguez, L., & Velandia, A. (2018), mention that, the concept of Brand Value or Brand Equity arises as a singular idea, interpreted either as the price that a consumer is willing to pay or as the perception that a consumer has about a brand and its ability to foster loyalty.

Understanding how consumers perceive communication about social issues and analyzing the transparency of these actions is essential to determine the importance consumers attach to a brand's human approach. Gálvez, S., et al., (2021), mention that this analysis will enable brands to better understand the level of engagement consumers expect in relation to the social role they expect them to play. This deeper understanding will make it easier

for brands to establish a more authentic and engaged approach to their consumers' social expectations.

It is essential to understand how consumers' perception of communication on social issues influences the humanization of a brand. By assessing the transparency of these actions, companies can better understand how consumers perceive the brand's social commitment and how this aspect contributes to the humanization of its image. By taking this point into account, brands can adapt their communication strategies to authentically and genuinely reflect their commitment to relevant social issues.

Other aspects worth defining are consumer purchasing preferences; Ortega, C. (2021) mentions that, in practice, each government agency, faced with different needs, makes decisions about what to buy and in what quantity. This diversity of decisions can result in the occurrence of overpricing, inefficiencies and dispersion of actions, which can lead to a series of problems in terms of the real benefit obtained from the allocated budgets.

What the author points out is that it depends not only on the degree of affinity with a product, but also on a series of factors that derive from the action of buying, such as economic level, social influence, usefulness or diverse needs, among others. Possebon, J., et al., (2019) already mentioned. The buying process begins when needs are identified, and the willingness to buy arises from the individual motivations and stimuli of each person.

There is abundant information on the theories, characteristics, and processes of buying, as well as on the cultural, social, and psychological factors that directly affect consumers' buying decisions. Therefore, understanding customers and, above all, understanding what, when and how they influence their behavior, is very valuable information for a company's decision making. Although understanding consumer buying behavior is not a simple

task, this in-depth knowledge is essential for effective decision making in companies (Garcia, & Gastulo., 2018).

Authors such as Zavaleta, M., et al., (2023), mention that consumers demand more than product features, they seek experiences that connect them emotionally with brands. For this reason, experiential marketing is being treated with greater emphasis by companies, as it offers opportunities to create meaningful emotional bonds with customers; which brings us to the other side of the coin, what marketers should do to create that bond with customers about their brand.

Peñarrieta, G. (2021), states that fostering two-way interactions, building communities of followers, providing a more human identity to the brand and generating value are key aspects. In this context, customer service plays a fundamental role, and social networks are presented as an ideal environment to carry out these actions; this action contributes to building solid relationships and satisfying customers' needs and expectations. Social networks offer an ideal space to carry out these activities, as they allow direct and close communication with users, thus facilitating the creation of emotional bonds and the construction of a solid brand with a base of committed followers.

Humanizing brands is essential for business success. In the communication strategy, knowing the identity behind the brand is crucial. By identifying the people involved, and not just what the brand stands for, the receiver will feel more understood (Cabarcas, E., et al., 2022). This connection is based on mutual understanding and the brand's ability to empathize with the needs, values and desires of its audience. By showing the human face behind the brand, trust is generated and the relationship between the company and its customers is strengthened, which can translate

into increased loyalty, positive recommendations and, ultimately, commercial success.

Verastegul, F., & Vargas, J. (2021) state that, the use of visualization, presentation, management and seduction techniques in merchandising, both in physical and digital environments, demonstrate their effectiveness in achieving positive results. These strategies not only attract new customers, but also generate significant increases in sales for any company.

METHODOLOGY

The research process begins with a focus on qualitative research. This methodology is deliberately chosen to delve deeper into consumers' perceptions and experiences in relation to brands. The multidimensional scaling model will be used, with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Qualitative research allows exploring in detail how consumers interact with brands, what emotions and associations they evoke, and how these influences affect their purchase decisions (Moscoso, L., & Díaz, L. 2018).

To conduct this study, students from Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo were sampled, the inclusion of a variety of perspectives ensures a more complete and nuanced understanding of how brand humanization affects different consumer groups (Bron, M. 2019). These participants are recruited from previous studies related to the topic, which provides a solid foundation for comparative analysis. In addition to using tools such as focus groups to find the main attributes, and survey for data collection (Sanchez, M., et al., 2021), a comprehensive literature review is conducted to contextualize the findings and enrich the theoretical understanding of the topic.

The main instrument used to collect information during the study is the data collection form. This tool provides an organized structure for recording and analyzing relevant data related to brand humanization and its impact on the purchase decision. The data collection sheet allows systematizing the information collected from various sources, which facilitates the identification of significant patterns and trends in the qualitative data obtained (Gonzáles, J. 2020). Together, these elements make up a rigorous and systematic research process that sheds light on the complex interaction between brand humanization and consumer behavior in the purchasing process.

RESULTS

The findings of Hannis, J. (2020), indicated that people connect favorably with the brand in terms of sincerity, passion and extraversion. These results validate the association between brand loyalty and brand personality, which varies according to the individual analysis of people. While demographic factors have some influence on this relationship, communication strategies balance this impact through the value perceived by consumers.

The participants of the study conducted by Valera, L. (2016), are of the opinion that the advertising medium used by brands does not influence their final purchase decision, although men tend to be more influenced by commercial brands. This contrasts with the fact that, despite consuming in several stores, they find that Mercadona offers greater convenience, better value for money and a greater variety of products, despite the fact that this chain does not advertise and offers mainly private labels.

Mendoza, D., (2021) in the results of his study points out that, during the stage of recognition of a need in the purchase decision process of the participating fast fashion consumers, the indicators

have an occasional average influence. In addition, it highlights that cultural elements, such as seeing family or friends wearing a garment they like and the desire to be fashionable, always influence more frequently. It is noted that marketing influence is at a secondary level, as casual contact with garments or stores on the street is often the result of carefully planned display or discount situations. On the other hand, the influence of advertising campaigns in recognizing the need to buy is rarely relevant.

The results of these indicators are organized according to the magnitude of the average, which establishes a rating hierarchy. This means that the attribute with the highest rating is the humanitarian one, while the one with the lowest rating is the modest one. To calculate the average rating, a numerical value is assigned to each response option, which facilitates the calculation process (Mayorga, J. 2017).

The findings of Hannis, J. (2020), highlight the importance of sincerity, passion and extraversion as attributes that generate a positive connection between people and brands, suggesting an association between consumer loyalty and brand personality. While demographic factors may influence this relationship, communication strategies can balance this impact by delivering perceived value to consumers.

On the other hand, Valera, L. (2016), reveals that, although the advertising medium does not significantly affect consumers' purchasing decisions, men tend to be more influenced by commercial brands. This finding contrasts with consumers' preference for Mercadona, which offers convenience, value for money and a wide variety of products despite its non-advertising approach. In addition, Mendoza, D. (2021), highlights that, during the needs recognition stage in the fast fashion buying process,

cultural factors have a significant influence, while marketing influence is considered secondary.

Finally, Mayorga, J. (2017), establishes a hierarchy of valuation for the indicators, where the humanitarian attribute is the most valued and the modest the least valued, providing a clear structure for the interpretation of the results.Principle of the form.

The study by Hannis, J. (2020), highlights the importance of brand personality in the emotional connection established by consumers. The results reveal that aspects such as sincerity, passion and extraversion are key elements in generating a positive and lasting relationship between customers and the brand. This relationship translates into a higher level of consumer loyalty. In addition, the study suggests that while demographic factors may influence this relationship, communication strategies are critical to balance this impact, as they contribute to consumers' perception of value. Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of brands developing a distinctive and authentic personality, as well as effective communication strategies, to establish strong emotional connections with their customers and foster long-term loyalty.

Analyzing what Valera, L. (2016) stated about the apparent paradox between the influence of brand advertising and consumers' purchasing decisions. Although respondents indicate that the advertising medium does not significantly impact their final choices, there is a tendency among men to be guided more by commercial brands. However, this behavior contrasts with the preference for Mercadona, where consumers find convenience, value for money and assortment, despite the fact that this chain does not invest in advertising and offers mainly private labels.

This finding suggests to the authors that while advertising may influence certain segments of the population, other factors such as convenience, price and product variety play a crucial role in the final

purchase decision. The preference for Mercadona, despite its non-advertising focus, highlights the importance of customer satisfaction and perceived value in consumer loyalty, even in a highly competitive environment.

The results presented by Mendoza, D. (2021), offer a detailed view on how fast fashion consumers experience the needs recognition stage in their purchase process. It is highlighted that, although indicators have an occasional influence on this stage, cultural aspects, such as the influence of friends or relatives and the desire to follow fashion trends, exert a much more constant and significant influence. This finding suggests that, in the context of fast fashion, consumers are more likely to be influenced by social and cultural factors than by traditional marketing strategies.

The low relevance of advertising campaigns in recognizing the need to purchase highlights the importance of other forms of brand exposure, such as street display and price promotions, in the consumer decision-making process. In summary, these results underscore the complexity of consumer behavior in the fast fashion industry and the need for companies to understand and adapt to the cultural and social influences at play.

The approach used by Mayorga, J. (2017), by ordering the indicators according to the magnitude of the average and establishing a valuation hierarchy, provides a clear structure for understanding the relative importance of each attribute evaluated. By identifying the humanitarian attribute as the most highly valued and the modest attribute as the least valued, it highlights the importance that consumers attach to aspects related to social responsibility and the humanitarian impact of a brand or product.

This quantitative approach, by assigning numerical values to each response option, allows for an accurate and objective assessment of the data collected, thus facilitating the interpretation of results

and informed decision making. Ultimately, this analysis methodology provides valuable guidance for companies in prioritizing their efforts and resources in areas that have the greatest impact on consumer perception and preferences.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented reveal a diversity of factors that influence the purchase preferences of Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo students in a market saturated with similar options. The importance of sincerity, passion and extraversion are highlighted as attributes that generate a positive connection between people and brands, suggesting an association between consumer loyalty and brand personality. However, it is noted that demographic factors may have some influence on this relationship, although communication strategies can offset this impact by providing perceived value to consumers.

On the other hand, there is evidence that traditional advertising may have a limited effect on consumers' purchasing decisions, especially in comparison with other factors such as convenience, value for money and product variety. Although men tend to be more influenced by commercial brands, consumers' preference for certain brands or establishments may be based on more practical and concrete considerations, such as shopping experience and overall satisfaction.

In the specific context of fast fashion, it is observed that cultural factors play a significant role in the need recognition stage of the buying process. The influence of marketing is considered secondary to the consumer's personal experience and social environment. This finding suggests that marketing strategies should be adapted to reflect consumers' cultural and social preferences, rather than relying exclusively on traditional advertising campaigns.

Ultimately, the results presented highlight the importance of understanding individual consumer perspectives and preferences in an increasingly competitive marketplace. While marketing may influence some purchasing decisions, other factors such as shopping experience, perceived quality and personal preferences play an equally important role. For companies, therefore, in-depth knowledge and analysis of the consumer perspective is essential to adapt their marketing strategies and better meet the needs and desires of the market.

Brand humanization and its influence on purchase decisions represent a fascinating and evolving area of research in marketing. To explore this topic further, there is a need to explore how factors such as authenticity, empathy and personalization affect consumer perception and, ultimately, purchase behavior. Important questions include the role of new technologies in brand humanization, the influence of culture and socioeconomic context on the interpretation of humanizing strategies, and the extent to which emotional connection to the brand translates into consumer loyalty and advocacy. These studies could shed light on how companies can cultivate deeper and more meaningful relationships with their audiences, generating a positive impact on their long-term business success.

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