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ORIGINAL

Positioning of clothing brands in Colombia

Posicionamiento de marcas de ropa en Colombia

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ABSTRACT

The positioning of the brand has prominence today in the marketing world thanks to the corporate benefits that are reflected in the market, in Colombia clothing brands year after year have been growing economically, throwing large sales figures and injecting development in the national economy. The objective of this study is to know how is the positioning of clothing brands in Colombia. It is a descriptive study, from a descriptive review with referential sources on the studies that have been carried out regarding the positioning of clothing brands in the Colombian territory. The results indicate that Arturo Calle is the best positioned brand in the market thanks to its high reputation and consumer preference.

Keywords: Brand; Positioning; Fashion; Perception.

RESUMEN

El posicionamiento de la marca tiene protagonismo hoy en día en el mundo del marketing gracias a los beneficios corporativos que se reflejan dentro del mercado, en Colombia las marcas de ropa año tras año han ido en creciente económica, arrojando grandes cifras en ventas e inyectando desarrollo en la economía nacional. El objetivo de este estudio es conocer cómo es el posicionamiento de las marcas de ropa en Colombia, Es un estudio descriptivo, desde una revisión descriptiva con fuentes referenciales sobre los estudios que se han realizado con respecto al posicionamiento de las marcas de ropa en el territorio colombiano. Los resultados indican que Arturo Calle es la marca mejor posicionada dentro del mercado gracias a su alta reputación y preferencia por los consumidores.

Palabras clave: Marca; Posicionamiento; Moda; Percepción.

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INTRODUCTION

The textile sector is vital for every economy globally; therefore, it is no different for Colombia. This paper will discuss how this sector, led by clothing brands in the country, can position itself in the market with perception and reputation.[1,2,3] As for the review of the specifics, we will mention the breaking point towards the development of this sector in the history of humanity to understand that what is done in this economic activity is not only summarized in a great outfit with accessories worn by the consumer, but it can provide lifestyles and above all opportunities.[4]

In the preamble to the brief review of the sector's history, concepts in which the reader will enter into the matter can be self-proclaimed as materialization, standardization, and improvement of a simple garment.[5,6] The purpose of this work is that the reader takes into account details at the moment of choosing a clothing brand after reading this writing. After that, they will be able to relate and understand critical concepts within the national economy that are achieved by most of the brands in the sector.

METHOD

This descriptive review article is the most pertinent because it allows the reader the knowledge of valuable concepts in constant evolution.[7] This article, following the foundation of this type of review, aims to present the main findings regarding the positioning of clothing brands in Colombia, taking into account that the descriptive review is beneficial in teaching this type of subject and will also interest many people in related fields.[8] For the development of this article, four stages were established, which will be described below 1) bibliographic search; 2) collection, selection, and organization of information; 3) analysis of the information; and 4) structuring and writing of the review article.

Bibliographic search

A search and analysis of the different referential sources, indexed in different bibliographic databases such as Google Scholar, Scielo, and Redalyc on the researches that investigate the positioning of different brands in the Colombian territory, meeting points, quality standards, prices, pioneer brands, benefits, and characteristics according to the inquiries made by different authors compiled in this study, was carried out.

Compilation, selection, and organization of the information

After reviewing the summaries, the most relevant articles about the criteria established for the subject matter addressed and the stipulated objective were selected. The criteria for inclusion were the quality of the information, the established source, the timeliness of the publication, and its relevance. Likewise, the information is complemented with sources from national newspapers and web pages as an adjunct to the information provided by the articles, texts, books, and institutional reports annexed to this review.

Analysis of the information

A thorough reading of each of the selected sources of information was carried out, identifying key concepts, prices, quality, business characteristics, similarities between brands, and perception of brands by consumers. Based on this, a descriptive exposition and evaluation of the findings is made, discussing their relevance regarding the positioning of the leading clothing brands in Colombia.

Structure and writing

The findings were organized according to the critical aspects identified, starting with the history of these concepts at a global level, establishing the definition of concepts, strategies for change, different protagonists, and data on brands positioned in the country.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thanks to technology, innovation, and globalization, humans can achieve things quickly that decades ago could not be achieved. This is due to the development in the different economic sectors and their respective manufacturing machinery that have made each product and service more beneficial for everyone. The philosopher and economist Adam Smith, during the last years of the 17th century, recognized that the invention of machinery within the division of labor allowed the more excellent dexterity of the operator, saving time spent in executing one activity of another of a different kind and the introduction of specialized machines, which allows the realization of what is known today as technological improvement.[9]

When mentioning technological and innovative progress in the history of humanity, we must emphasize the event that represented a before and after in society and its different economic sectors: the Industrial Revolution.

Palmero (2022) points out, "With the industrial revolution, a new growth was born, never seen in any other country. All this leads us to think that this change is the antecedent of modern economic growth". Thanks to this evolution, throughout history, everything has gone hand in hand and has been in constant change, always looking for innovation and continuous improvement; this topic is aware of our main subject, clothing brands, and all that these concerns. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, symbol, or design, or a combination of such elements whose purpose is to represent the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from the competition.[10]

According to the above, it is coherent to mention that a brand is everything that comes to life, no matter how intangible it may be, and whose purpose is to gain value for some economic activity.[11] Kottler (2002) comments in his book Marketing Management Essential Concepts that a brand is essentially the promise of a selling party to provide, in a consistent manner to buyers, a specific

set of characteristics, benefits, and services.

Although at the beginning we mentioned the historical fact of the industrial transformation that arose in past centuries, brands are no stranger to these changes exposed since that time, the change in process and intensification in making each product made the general progress towards a consumer economy and above all trained for the demand that would be born tiny by little. Historians also saw this as a consumerist revolution, as people not only began to consume more (thanks to low-priced goods produced industrially) but also began to consider consumption as part of everyday life.[12]

Chaves (2004) called this the take-off, which leads to self-sustaining development that one invention gives rise to the next, and the same invention becomes a habit. In this way, we can see that the revolutionary process, accompanied by various aspects such as labor, raw materials, new resources, and new inventions, resulted in technological progress that, from the first moment, would mark a succession of improvements one after another with each thing done.

To discuss the brand's history, we must first discuss why this arises. It is for the trade market to obtain a benefit (product-service) in exchange for something (money); this is called a means of payment.[13] This began with the famous barter, which consisted of mutually exchanging goods between people to satisfy their needs, i.e., exchanging a good or product that the other needed. Centuries ago, those who exchanged a product with another using a barter did not worry much because their product had intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics as it is done today; this is where the brand takes prominence and importance in today's market. This has a more conscious sense and is taken by the brand as an essential step to be part of a market. By the above, we must consider what Toro (2007) states: that the brand is created from an excellent external and internal communication strategy since everyone is a transmitter of its brand.

Not only can we take a brand's communication as part of its advertising to the target, but also this is born from the product's image. As such, this was not taken into account centuries ago at the time of the emergence of economic activity in humanity nor with its means of payment of the time. On the other hand, it is essential to emphasize that history has always set guidelines for improving human life since evolution has been constant.

Taking into account the above and the brief review of the beginnings of trade marketing and the industrial revolution marked in this work as two fundamental pillars in the creation of the brand, it is clear that this has resulted in everything we know today in the new commercial activities, tools such as marketing and all that this entails to the different economic sectors. They need it to emerge, develop, and maintain.

To return to the central axis, let us remember that 1764, the spinning machine was created so that one person could spin several yarns simultaneously. According to the review made by Cartwright (2023), this produced an increase in the textile sector of the time, which was accompanied by other inventions such as:

- Richard Arkwright's hydraulic spinning machine (1769).
- Samuel Crompton's spinning mule (1779)
- Edmund Cartwright's power loom (1785)
- Eli Whitney's cotton gin (1794)
- Richard Roberts' loom (1822)
- Richard Roberts' automatic spinning mule (1825)
- Elias Howe's sewing machine (1844).

All these inventions were taken so that fashion at that time had significant changes in the quality and design of each garment, which was only possible with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, as already mentioned. Knowing the basis of the sector protagonist of this writing, we can mention that today, we have much more innovative and efficient machines in the industry, but this would not be possible without the historical fact mentioned above; for this reason, it is essential to emphasize that the textile sector worldwide is commanded by innovative brands in both product and marketing, the latter being catapult as a differentiating factor between market competitions.

We recognize that clothing appears with the need of Homo Sapiens to protect themselves from the cold with the skins of the animals they hunted; Hiraldo (2021) argues that the evolution of the need of primitive man to the current man goes beyond a shield against an external factor today, today everyone, beyond dressing to go out or have a garment on him that deprives him of not walking naked, what he seeks is to have a style and even a rhythm of life with brands of clothing that border on the extraordinary and move away from the ordinary more and more. Sometime after the changing event in the sector, clothing brands began to emerge, companies that decided to bet on clothing in an organized way and not in an empirical way as it had done since the primitive years. Brooks&Co, created in 1818, is considered the oldest fashion brand in the world still in operation, with Henry Sands Brooks as its founder.[14] After Brooks & Co., clothing brands were created that are still in force, for example:[14]

Table 1. Trademarks in force according to López (2022)

Brands	Year
Hermés	1837
Loewe	1846
Louis Vuitton	1854
Levi's	1853

Burberry	1856
Lanvin	1889
Chanel	1909
Prada	1913
Balenciaga	1917
Gucci	1921
Fendi	1925
Salvatore Ferragamo	1928
Note: this table shows the clothing brands since their year of validity	

According to Ekos (2022), some of the former brands mentioned as the first and oldest in the market are still in force and even better, leading the market with revenues, such as, for example:

Table 2. Current brands with annual revenue Ekos (2022)

Current brand	**Annual income**
Louis Vuitton	USD 10,100 million
Hermes	5,300 million
Gucci	USD 4,500 million
Prada	USD 3,7 billion
Note: this table shows the current leading apparel brands by revenue	

Following this line, we see that fashion has been present in the history of humanity, transforming as society has evolved so that the fashion industry can become a reflection of economic, political, cultural, religious, and social spheres.

It is essential to be clear that seniority in the market does not make the brand company a leader in the sector; what is clear is that the mentioned brands keep regularity and worldwide positioning. Their years have been worthwhile because they handle admirable income, and their distribution in many parts of the world is why consumers know the market. This action is a reflection of the positioning in the market; this is not only the relationship and consumer preference with the product, but it has to do with the brand in general, its values, its attributes, and especially the perception that this has at the time of having an experience with the product. Positioning is not what you do with a product, but what you do with the prospective customer's mind, that is, how you position the product in his mind.[7]

Mora & Schupnik (2001) mention that positioning is the place that a product or service occupies in the consumer's mind and is the result of a strategy designed to project the specific image of that product, service, idea, brand, or even a person.

The pioneer brands and those with the highest income in the market have the positioning thanks to their years of work. However, above all, because of what each of their products represents, these are synonymous with quality, lifestyles, and exclusivity. Since not everyone has the monetary capacity to acquire them, all these aspects are summarized in only one that groups them in a specific criterion but yields. As a result of significant deductions, this is the perception. Guerrero (2008) states that the user's perception of the product will determine its success in the market, which will be related to the satisfaction of needs and the series of benefits provided to the consumer. It is evident that the perception of each brand exposed is high, and positively, it is demonstrated in years of longevity and duration in the market. It is essential to talk about the sector; the Global Textile Market was valued in 2021 at $654.6 billion.[15]

It is no secret that the textile market is vital for many countries, whether developed or undeveloped; this sector brings many benefits, such as employment, development, growth, and contribution to the national economy of any country. In 2021, China was the world's leading exporter of textiles, with a trade value of its transactions of approximately US$145 billion. The European Union ranked second, although its exports were half the value achieved by the Asian giant. It should be noted that textiles can refer to the materials used in the production of clothing and finished garments.[16] In Colombia, the textile sector plays a vital role in the economy. According to data from the Raddar Fashion Observatory, in conjunction with Inexmoda, fashion consumption in the country during 2022 amounted to $30 billion, evidencing a 9% increase in 2021.[17] According to Procolombia (2023), the industry represents 9.4% of industrial GDP and generates jobs for about 600 thousand people in the country.

For this year, the fashion market continues to grow in Colombia, according to data reported by El País (2023). At the beginning of the year, profits in January and February reached $5.09 billion, i.e., 5.4% more than the same months of 2022. Based on the above, the critical role that the textile industry has in our country is that year after year, it has had growth not only in numbers but also in its products; it is no longer the same casual clothing that could dress any Colombian, and styles have evolved and with them hand in hand have come new brands that understand today, can know how to manage and direct fashion in Colombians.

It is not a secret to the world the cultural diversity that Colombia manages; this is something differentiating that we have always had but previously was not highly valued and exploited by companies. In this era, it is easy to find brands that fit your needs and even the consumer's personality because they identify with it, and it makes them feel understood but, above all, valued. That is why

the fashion world is so changeable; it often touches the personality, emotions, styles, beliefs, and even climatic stages.

The textile sector is everything related to the industry responsible for manufacturing products such as clothing, fabrics, and yarns. This niche in the Colombian country has thousands of clothing brands ranging from the empirical to the organized and standardized. As of July 1, 2021, there are 12,712 active companies registered in the RUES-Confecámaras base associated with textile sector activities1. Micro enterprises constitute 89.6% of the business fabric, followed by small (7.5%), medium (2.3%), and large enterprises (0.6%) (Fuentes, 2021). Our focus is directed to fashion companies and what they entail since they are dedicated to designing, manufacturing, and marketing all these garments and everything related to them. Starting from our main objective, the positioning of these brands in the country, we can bring to coalition many names like Arturo Calle, Koaj, H&M, Studio F, Gef, Tennis, etc.

It is no secret that there are many renowned brands in the market and others that have been losing prominence within the brand positioning not only looks at the name since it takes into account the perception and personal experience of each consumer, but this can also be very subjective as it is linked to the individual consumer's thinking. Ruiz and Grande (2013) assert that: "Perception can be understood as a process of capturing and evaluating stimuli from the outside, selected and organized, and that allows us to understand the world around us" (p. 25).

Positioning must take into account aspects of the product/service that should make the consumer prefer the brand, one of them is the price; it is no secret that the user will always look for the economy, which is not linked to quality and guarantee of what he is acquiring, which is why the latter two are of vital importance when a buyer is inclined to choose one brand over another. We can talk about different types of positioning, but beyond typifying them, we will handle them as strategies within positioning that allow us to extract more specific information. According to the Graphic Group (2023), this can be divided according to the strategies (types) listed below:

Table 3. Types of Graphic positioning (2023)

Types	Description
Based on their characteristics	We will rely on the product's own technical characteristics to make it stand out from its competitors.
Based on their use	The use of the product is taken into account, i.e. how it is used, when it is used, where it is used and what it is used for.
Based on its benefits	It is the need that the consumer is trying to cover, but it can also have other complementary benefits that will help the consumer's loyalty to the product.
Consumer-based	It is the positioning made by the consumers themselves, where they tell their experience with the product.
Based on competition	Consumers tend to compare before buying the desired product.
Based on lifestyle	This positioning is focused on the consumer's lifestyle and an example can be the case of automobiles.
Based on quality or price	It is a positioning strategy that is mainly based on the quality of the product or based on its price. For example, transmitting the image of exclusivity and luxury with high prices as in the case of many fashion brands.

Note: this table shows the different types of positioning and their description

Bringing the above in context, clothing brands are positioned in the market by considering their products' price, quality, benefits, and features. Additionally, the lifestyle in this industry has to do with what their identity and image give us since this type of brand focuses on what is external. This is called visual merchandising according to the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines it as the implementation and control necessary to the marketing of goods and services in the places, at the times, at the prices, and in the quantities likely to facilitate the achievement of the marketing objectives of the company.[18]

In the industry, the issue of visual merchandising is that consumers look a lot at the outside of all its products; that is, they look at the extrinsic characteristics at a glance. On the other hand, this tool favors outdoor decoration (showcases), combining outfits that solve, in part, the attire that everyone is looking for. In the same way that it concentrates on details to incline the consumer to the brand, it also focuses on all the aesthetic parts of each brand; they can be taken from the physical infrastructure to a simple exhibition that has its reason for being.

The protagonism helps guarantee and generate environments in general and particular details that will make each brand establishment pleasing to each person. In addition, it is responsible for creating an attractive experience at each point of sale to influence consumer purchases. Likewise, as stated by Batista et al. (2020), visual merchandising is a technique that allows the creation of a store environment through various features such as visual communication, decoration, architecture, and design, among others, to involve the consumer in an environment conducive to purchase, there is a combination of stimuli such as taste, hearing, smell, and touch, present in the store environment, covering the human senses and the perception of the environment by the consumer.

Going into the positioning of brands in Colombia, we must take into account the above written; we must know and understand that not all brands have the exposed strategies, and not all handle the visual merchandising in an objective and standardized way, which makes it lose initial perception at the time the consumer try to lean towards a brand. We can name brands such as Arturo Calle,

Studio F, Punto Blanco, Seven Seven Seven, Koaj, Chevignon, Tennis, Lacoste, Polo-Ralph Lauren, Quicksilver, Burberry, Gucci among others. In addition to their name recognition and growing sales, these brands are the ones that Colombians tend to consume more.

Year after year, they make measurements among brands in a given sector to determine leading companies in certain aspects; this is the case of Brand Asset Valuator (BAV), which is a brand equity model that provides the brand equity value of many brands and helps to compare the brand equity among many brands. According to the BAV model, gathering information about consumers will help improve the health and future of the brand. The four critical components of brand equity are Differentiation, Relevance, Esteem, and Knowledge (Clootrack, n.d).

A recent study by (BAV) in Colombia revealed that Leonisa, Arturo Calle, GEF, and Punto Blanco national brands top the ranking of preferred clothing brands this year. The BAV data is taken thanks to the response of more than 14,100 Colombians surveyed in the last measurement carried out in 2023. Most Colombians surveyed preferred these local brands over recognized foreign brands such as Levi's, H&M, Victoria's Secret and Tennis, Lacoste, and Polo/Ralph Lauren, among others present in the country.[19]

Table 4. Preference of local brands according to adult survey in the year 2023

Colombia - Adults 2023	Brand_Asset_R	Preferencia
Leonisa	92,8	35,7
Arturo Calle	96,8	33,7
GEF	82,2	31,0
Punto Blanco	91,7	30,5
Levi's	85,8	28,2
H&M	58,9	20,4
Victoria`s Secret	80,3	19,5
Tennis (clothing)	63,1	19,0
Lacoste	65,8	17,3
Polo/Ralph Lauren	34,6	17,3
Chevignon	50,6	16,4
Diesel (Clothing)	52,5	16,1
Bershka	29,8	15,7
Calvin Klein	56,9	15,3
Gap	30,3	13,2
Zara	54,3	12,1
Tania	26,4	12,0
Benetton	36,2	11,9
Giorgio Armani	51,3	11,5
Chanel	56,7	11,2
Gucci	43,3	10,5
Quicksilver	21,7	9,7
Forever 21	28,8	9,2
Womens Secret	7,3	9,0
Burberry	22,0	4,7

Note: Table data taken from El tiempo (2023)

Based on the above study, it is valid to state that Colombians tend to go for traditional brands, which, year after year, since our growth we have preceded. Julián Pulido, director of BAV at VMLY&R Colombia, highlighted that the presence of national brands demonstrates these companies' "great cultural value" for Colombians.[20,21]

On the other hand, MERCO (Monitor Empresarial de Reputación Corporativa) is the corporate monitor of reference in Ibero-America that has been evaluating the reputation of companies since 2000. It is a reputational evaluation instrument launched in 2000, based on a multi-stakeholder methodology composed of six evaluations and more than twenty sources of information (Merco, S.F).

Taking into account the reputation evaluated by this monitor, Schlesinger in his text Imagen y reputación corporativa Estudio empírico de operadoras de telefonía en España (Corporate image and reputation: An empirical study of telephone operators in Spain). He mentions that this can be understood as the company's perception from the outside or the external image constructed.[22]

For this reason, we can affirm that reputation is subjective since it is obtained according to the perception of each consumer; at the same time, such perception is the result of standards set by the buyer as experience with the acquisition of the product or service,

price, quality, and benefits. Given the above MERCO in its latest study (2022), the brands with the highest reputation are:

Table 5. Brands with the highest reputation in Colombia (MERCO, 2022)

Position	Company
1	Comercializadora Arturo Calle
2	Mario Hernández
3	Cueros Vélez
4	Adidas
5	Totto Nalsani
6	Leonisa
7	Crystal

Note: Taken from Merco (2023)

In summary, Top is the most accepted in the market for its reputation and remains differentiated from the rest, i.e., it not only has a good reputation but is also able to maintain over time as a brand with a history in the market.[23] This aspect can incline any consumer to choose a brand, but this is only in search of something specific; the consumer is looking for something specific because the Top and registered brands in Colombia do not all sell the same thing.

However, it should be noted that, although not all brands sell the same, there are different prices within brands that handle similar products. Even so, after fulfilling the types of positioning (according to their characteristics, based on their use, consumer benefits, quality - price, competition, and lifestyle, it is clear that the current market defines the Top. We find that Arturo Calle is the best-positioned clothing brand in Colombia for its high reputation[24] and preference in the market.[19]

CONCLUSIONS

The positioning will always go hand in hand with different aspects aimed at the perfection of the brand; determining this within a sector will border on the subjective a priori. However, the only approved result will be the one in which the regularity and majority in the results obtained if quantitative and qualitative data are concerned, so it is essential to understand the trends in perceptions that each consumer in the market comes to have. Each brand is responsible for and seeks to be within the market's top of mind, based on work and meet the aspects mentioned above may achieve it. However, you have to look at what positioning seeks to stand out because all brands, for their different portfolios, are not measured with the same yardstick. Finally, in Colombia, this sector is vital for the country's economy; the sector's benefits make it to be taken into account when wanting to invest and especially to achieve development, as happened throughout the emergence of the textile sector.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Jorge Enrique Jiménez Rendón, Maribel Garcia Rojas.
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