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ANALYSIS OF COUNTRIES' IMAGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR CONSUMERS: THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND TECHNO-SOCIO-CULTURAL DESIRE

Abstract: This study aims to deepen the understanding of marketing and the development of its strategies, with a particular focus on marketing mix management. It seeks to identify consumer perceptions from three Latin American countries regarding their national images, considering the impact of political, economic, and techno-social factors. The project employs an exploratory study design, utilizing both primary and secondary data, bibliographic research, and descriptive statistics through the country image scale developed by Martin and Eroglu (1993). According to these authors, country image is defined as the totality of all descriptive, inferential, and informative beliefs about a particular country. The study highlights the implications of utilizing marketing strategies based on these evaluations and perceptions, emphasizing the necessity of constructing a trustworthy image for consumers in the execution of goods or services.

Keywords: Marketing strategy, Country image, retail.

JEL classification: M30

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ქვეყნების იმიჯის ანალიზი მომხმარებლების პერსპექტივიდან: მათი პოლიტიკური, ეკონომიკური და ტექნო-სოციალ-კულტურული სურვილის გავლენა

აბსტრაქტი: კვლევა მიზნად ისახავს მარკეტინგის გაგების გაღრმავებას და მისი სტრატეგიების შემუშავებას, განსაკუთრებული აქცენტით მარკეტინგული მიქსის მენეჯმენტზე. კვლევაში შევეცადეთ გამოვავლინოთ მომხმარებელთა აღქმა ლათინური ამერიკის სამი ქვეყნიდან მათ ეროვნულ იმიჯთან დაკავშირებით, პოლიტიკური, ეკონომიკური და ტექნო-სოციალური ფაქტორების გავლენის გათვალისწინებით. კვლევაში გამოყენებულია საძიებო კვლევის დიზაინის მეთოდი, რომელიც დაფუძნებულია როგორც პირველად, ისე მეორად მონაცემებს, ბიბლიოგრაფიულ კვლევას და აღწერით სტატისტიკას მარტინ და ეროლლუს (1993) მიერ შემუშავებული

ქვეყნის გამოსახულების მასშტაბით. ავტორების აზრით, ქვეყნის იმიჯი განისაზღვრება, როგორც ყველა აღწერითი, დასკვნისა და ინფორმაციული რწმენის მთლიანობა კონკრეტული ქვეყნის შესახებ. კვლევა ხაზს უსვამს ამ შეფასებებსა და აღქმებზე დაფუძნებული მარკეტინგული სტრატეგიების გამოყენების შედეგებს, რაც ხაზს უსვამს მომხმარებელთა სანდო იმიჯის ჩამოყალიბების აუცილებლობას საქონლისა და მომსახურების განხორციელებაში.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მარკეტინგული სტრატეგია, ქვეყნის იმიჯი, საცალო ვაჭრობა.

JEL კლასიფიკაცია: M30

Introduction

According to Maheswaran (1994), in their mental process of evaluating products, consumers can take into account several signals. Information about intrinsic characteristics of the products (size, color, smell, among others), as well as extrinsic aspects (type of sales channel, price, among others), can be considered. When the decision involves foreign products, the country of origin (i.e., the country where the product was or is believed to have been produced) can be important information to be used by the consumer (MANRAI, LASCU, & MANRAI, 1998).

Although several studies have already verified that the country of origin influences the way consumers evaluate foreign products, recent research has focused on understanding whether the different aspects that make up the country's image have a different impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors towards foreign products. Furthermore, several studies have attempted to present the influences of the country's image and the contingencies under which effects tend to be stronger.

This study investigates the evaluation of the image of Latin American countries from the perspective of their consumers. With the aim of providing a better understanding of the state of the art on the impact of the country's image, this literature review is organized into three theoretical axes: (1) Presentation of the main concepts of the country's image and its impact on the assessment of perceptions of its products; (2) the role of consumers' emotional response to products of different origins; (3) marketing mix considerations that may influence consumer perceptions, and seeks to answer the following research question: In what ways can political, economic, and technological impacts influence the image of a country according to the perspectives of its consumers?

To seek the answer to this research question, the retail sector was selected as the main object of investigation. Thus, this article was developed through an exploratory study in the field and descriptive studies in multiple countries, namely: Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. This study aims to analyze the dimensions that make up the evaluation of the image of Latin American countries from the perspective of their consumers. These dimensions include the impact of consumers' political, economic, and technological-social desires on their respective countries. And, to achieve this objective, the following specific objectives were determined.

- a) Identify how consumers in the countries under study evaluate the perceived image of their country of origin;
- b) Describe the existing relationships between the variables that compose the dimensions of the evaluation of the image of countries;

c) Point out the managerial implications of using marketing strategies associated with the identified evaluation and perception.

Initial Considerations on Country Image

Image represents the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person or a group of people have about an object. The object can be a company, product, brand, or place. Images, however, guide behavior, providing a suggestion for processing information, and can be used as mental shortcuts for information processing in decision-making (AYALA, D. C. S, 2016, p. 44).

The image of countries as the origin of products is one of the many extrinsic pieces of information, such as price and brand, that can be part of the total image of a product, according to Eroglu and Machleit (1989). Previous research, such as that of Bilkey and Nes (1982), demonstrated that consumers tend to consider products manufactured in a particular country with consistently positive or negative attitudes. These origin biases appear to exist for products in general, for specific products, and for end users and industrial buyers (BILKEY AND NES, 1982; DZEVEVER AND QUESTER, 1999).

Johansson (1989) similarly suggests that source information is an important attribute of a product, which directly influences consumers through affective and behavioral processes, and can evoke positive or negative feelings regarding the country of origin. Additionally, Nes and Bilkey (1993) highlight that origin biases were found for both developed and less developed countries. Generally, the products of the latter are perceived as riskier and of lower quality than products manufactured in more developed countries.

In this sense, Papadoulos, Larochi, and Mourali (2003) also pointed out that the origin of a product, in the evaluation of its consumers, generally frames the image of a country as a guide that consumers use to gauge the quality of an unknown product of foreign origin. The reason for this is that when consumers have little knowledge about the attributes of a foreign product, they commonly resort to using indirect evidence - such as the country of origin - to evaluate products and brands, drawing conclusions regardless of the quality of these products' attributes.

Papadopoulos (1993) postulates that the image of a product results from the perception that people have of it and the phenomena that surround it. Based on studies conducted in eight different countries, Papadopoulos et al. (1988) were the first to incorporate measures of different countries' images into country image research and the first to attempt to model the relationship between beliefs about the country, beliefs about the product, familiarity, evaluation of the product, and willingness to purchase. After delving into the data from their studies (and others), the authors proposed that consumers' perceptions about the country of origin of a product include (Papadopoulos et al., 1988, 1990, 2000):

- (a) a cognitive component, which includes consumers' beliefs about the industrial development and technological advancement of the country;
- (b) an affective component, which describes the affective response of consumers to the people from the country; and
- (c) a conative component, which consists of the level of intent of consumers to interact with the country supplier.

It is believed that, although the country's image affects product evaluations, its own structure, or rather, the relative importance assigned to its cognitive, affective, and conative components, can have a significant impact on the extent of its influence on product assessments.

Variables Composing Country Image Assessments

Some researchers construct the notion of a country's image, in a general sense of the image of a country, focusing fundamentally on the country's economic, technological, social, and political variables. Others prefer to link the image of the product with that of the country. The multiplicity of its possible effects in these branches (economic, technological, social, and political) led to the conduct of various studies in different theoretical fields, and this would have led to the large number of divergent definitions and concepts in the literature (AYALA, D. C. S, 2016, p. 45).

Papadoulos et al. (2003) define that a country's image is a multidimensional construction of three factors: beliefs about the country; the effect on individuals; and the desired level of interaction between the consumer and the country supplier.

Depending on a consumer's familiarity level with the country's products, the country's image serves as a guide, where consumers gauge the attributes of the product, or as a constructed summary that categorizes the consumer's beliefs about the attributes of this product (HAN, 1989).

In the case of little familiarity with the products, Han (1989) points out that a country's image affects consumer attitudes indirectly through beliefs about the products (Country Image -> Beliefs -> Attitudes). In the case of greater familiarity, the image directly affects consumer attitudes about the product, while beliefs about the product do not directly affect attitudes (Beliefs -> Country Image -> Attitudes).

In the model proposed by Papadopoulos et al. (1988, 1990) and Han (1989), product beliefs refer to consumers' beliefs about the intrinsic characteristics of a product, such as quality and reliability. Product evaluation, on the other hand, refers to the consumer's attitude toward the product and its operationalization in terms of brand pride and purchase intention. In this proposed model, there is a simultaneous processing of a country's image and beliefs about the product regardless of familiarity. Additionally, it is expected that the country's image influences beliefs about the product, and therefore, there is an additional indirect effect on product evaluation.

On the other hand, Allred, Chakraborty, and Miller (1999, p. 36) find that the perception or impression that organizations and consumers have about a country is based on the variables of the country's economic condition, its political structure, culture, conflict with other countries, working conditions, and environmental issues.

The Impact of Political, Economic, And Technological-Social Consumer Desires On Country Image Formation

Countries are increasingly aware of the importance of their image, given that a country's image represents a fundamental asset in new economic and political relations. Therefore, research on country images has been gaining relevance in academic study fields (AYALA, D. C. S, 2016, p. 9).

In this context, as consumers become increasingly demanding, international markets become more complex, and countries are increasingly aware of the value of their image and reputation internationally (AYALA, D. C. S, 2016, p. 9). Costa (2016) suggested a study hypothesis that evaluates the magnitude of the effect of a country's image on the evaluation of the quality of

foreign products, with variations between consumers from developed and developing countries, and whether the nationality of the consumer affects the strength of the country's image in the evaluation of the quality of foreign products.

The study reinforces the importance of considering the consumer's country development level, that is, consumers tend to favor products from countries based on the proximity and knowledge they have of these nations, and furthermore, the willingness to buy a foreign product depends on the development level (industrial, economic, and technological) of this country, as well as the consumer (COSTA, Camila, 2016).

The article discusses that the magnitude of a country's image and its effect is greater in consumers from developing markets than in developed ones, but Sharma (2011) found empirical support to say that consumers from developing markets, compared to those from developed ones, would produce more favorable evaluations of the product - in terms of quality, performance, and value for money - of products originating from developed markets, and that consumers from developed countries, compared to those from developing ones, would express fewer favorable comments about products originating from developing markets.

The author understands that there is a variation, in different consumer nationalities, in the perception of a country's image, and as a consequence, in the absolute value of consumer preferences, a point to be studied in this article.

Research Method

This research will be initially exploratory in nature. As Malhotra (2005) points out, research can be exploratory or conclusive. Exploratory research aims to provide criteria on the problem situation faced by the researcher and its understanding. Exploratory studies can be conducted using various sources of information: observation, secondary data, informed individuals, and experienced individuals. This research will focus on secondary data as the basic source of information: information already produced by others, according to Mattar (2007).

Exploratory research can be followed by descriptive studies, which, according to Aaker, Kumar, and Day (2001, p. 94), allow us to "obtain a precise snapshot of some aspects of the market environment," that is, to describe it in its characteristics or functions. Descriptive study can, according to Mattar (2007), be developed in the form of case studies or statistical studies. In this case, in a second stage, the proposal is to conduct case studies. According to Yin (2001), a case study is an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

As a data collection procedure, the country image scale by Martin and Eroglu (1993) will be used. Country image is defined as "the sum of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs about a given country" (MARTIN AND EROGLU 1993, p.193).

Country image is conceptualized as different from the attitude toward products from a particular country and can be affected by direct experience with a country, external sources of information such as advertising or word of mouth, or inferences (whether correct or incorrect) from previous experiences with products from a particular country. Although four dimensions of country image were originally conceptualized (political, economic, technological, and social desire), the

final form of the scale has three dimensions, composed of a political factor of five items, an economic factor of five items, and a technological factor of four items.

The authors concluded that the social aspect of the construct was adequately reflected in the three retained dimensions. Items are scored using a 7-point Likert scale, and these scores can be summed within the dimension (factor) to form separate indexes for the economic, political, and technological factors, or all 14 item scores can be summed to form an overall country image composite.

Data analysis will be performed through Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) has emerged as a new paradigm, bridging qualitative and quantitative approaches, as highlighted by Ragin (2009). As a research methodology, this method has three distinct characteristics. First, it allows for conjunctural formation in the form of configurations. This means that it is assumed that the combination of distinct factors is responsible for the occurrence of a specific outcome, unlike traditional regression-based models (also called RBMs) where the net effect of each factor on the outcome in question is analyzed (FISS, SHARAPOV, AND CRONQVIST, 2013).

Second, as highlighted by the study of Berg-Schlosser et al., (2009), QCA adopts the concept of equifinality, meaning that a variety of different configurations can lead to the same outcome. And third, it is assumed that the relationships between factors and outcomes are not necessarily symmetrical, as emphasized by Woodside (2013). This means that a factor X, for example, can be a sufficient or necessary condition for an outcome Y, while traditional RBMs assume that X is both a sufficient and necessary condition (LIU ET AL., 2015).

As a research approach, it is particularly useful for the social sciences disciplines, as it can help capture the inherent complexity of ecosystem dynamics and strategies, as highlighted in the study by El Sawy et al. (2010) or, according to Y. Liu et al., (2015), behavioral research, allowing for equifinality and asymmetry.

Analysis And Discussion of Results

This research was conducted in three different countries in South America, namely Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, and involved the participation of their native consumers who were separately subjected to a questionnaire previously adjusted with the intention of evaluating the image of their countries in some sectors, according to their own perspectives. The research involved a total of 141 participants, specifically comprising 36 Brazilian consumers, 36 Colombian consumers, and 69 Mexican consumers.

Of the Brazilian consumers, 41.7% are aged between 18 and 25, 27.8% between 46 and 55 years old, and only 13.9% are over 60 years old. Similarly, 30.6% of Brazilian participants have a income level up to 3,000.00 reais, 22% with income level between 5,000.00 to 8,000.00 reais, and only 16.7% have income over 11,000.00 reais. Finally, in terms of education level, it was found that 33.3% of participants have completed higher education, 22.2% have incomplete higher education, and 13.89% have only completed high school.

In the sampling collection of Colombian consumers, it was found that 30.8% are aged between 18 and 25, 34.6% between 46 and 55 years old, and 7.7% are over 60 years old. Regarding the income level of Colombian consumers, with the Colombian peso as reference, 27.8% of participants earn up to 2,500.00 pesos, 50% have an income level between 2,500.00 to 6,500.00

pesos, and only 11.1% earn above 9,500.00 pesos. In terms of education level, Colombian consumers resulted in 19.4% having completed higher education, 13.9% having incomplete higher education, and 36.1% were at the master's level.

Finally, in the sampling collection in Mexico, it was found that 15.1% of participants are aged between 18 and 25, 35.9% are between 46 and 55 years old, and 18.9% are between 56 and 60 years old. The income level, due to having more participants, was quite diverse, where, with the Mexican peso as reference, it was noted that 11.6% earn up to 10,000.00 Mexican pesos, while 27.5% earn between 11,000.00 to 17,000.00 Mexican pesos, and 21.7% have an income level mostly above 18,000.00 Mexican pesos.

Participants, through the provided questionnaire and based on their perception of their countries, were asked to rate the following national characteristics:

Industrial Level of the country; Economic Level; Government System; Production System; Form of Government; Employment Cost; Literacy Rate; Market System; Social Security; Exportation; Technology; Cost of Living; Research and Development; and Economic Environment.

Next, we will proceed with the analysis of the collected data. The scale that will classify the evaluation will be composed of the scores from the collected graphs, where values 1 and 2 will refer to the best evaluation; 3, 4, and 5 will represent median evaluations; and 6 and 7 will represent low evaluations.

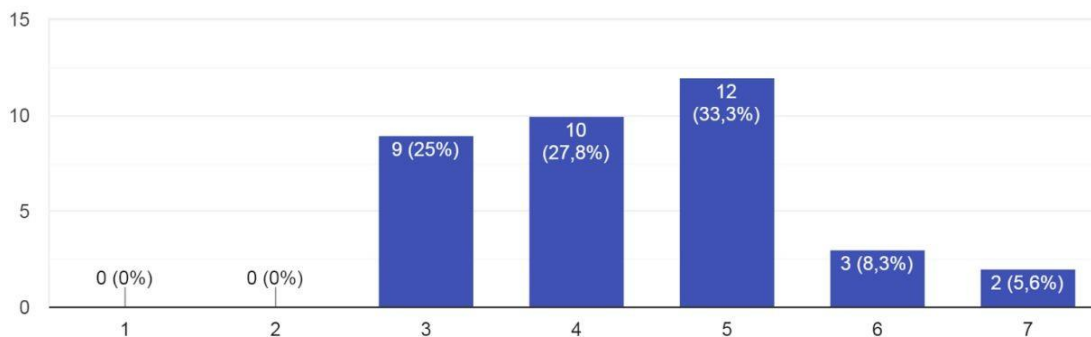
ANALYSIS 1: BRAZIL

It is noted that in the analysis of the data extracted from the research in Brazilian territory, the vast majority of consumers participating in the survey perceive that Brazil maintains an intermediate level in aspects such as industrial level, economic level, technological level, and literacy rate.

Figure 1. Economy.

1. Economia:

36 respostas

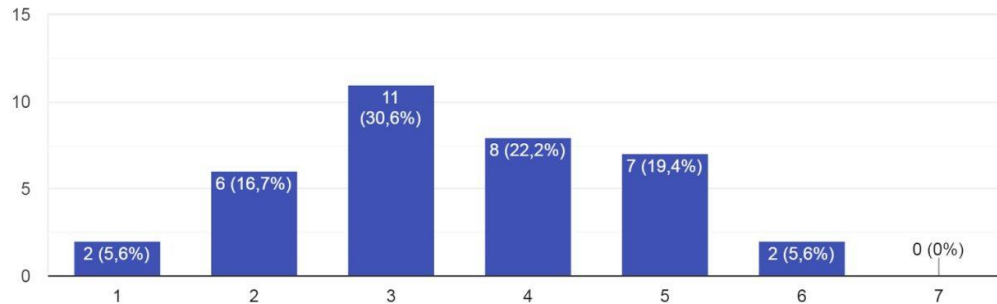


Observing the collected graphs, it is possible to note in Figure 1 that in terms of economic level, Brazil is classified with an image of being economically underdeveloped, as not a single vote was dedicated to classifying it with a completely developed economic rating. 31 out of 36

participants classified Brazil as average and 5 below average, characterizing it as economically underdeveloped.

Figure 2. Industrial level.

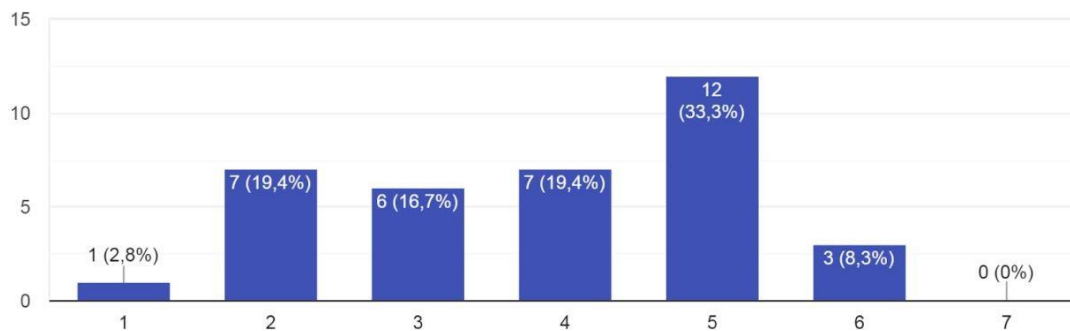
5. Nível industrial:
36 respostas



Next, in Figure 2, which assesses the level of industrial development of the country, Brazil's image was maintained as predominantly industrialized, where 8 out of 36 participants classified Brazil with the highest ratings of industrialization and 26 with the same interchangeable ratings.

Figure 3. Technology.

12. Tecnologia:
36 respostas

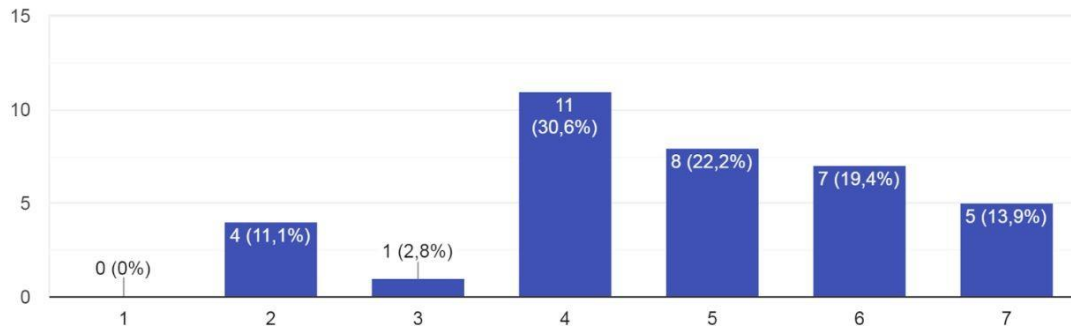


However, examining Figure 3, regarding Brazil's technological level, it's possible to note that the participating consumers mostly voted that the country is mainly responsible for producing products of medium quality, as 25 out of 36 participants voted for medium ratings, 8 for high ratings, and 3 for low ratings of technological development in the country.

Figure 4. Literacy rate.

7. Taxa de alfabetização:

36 respostas



On the other hand, in Figure 4, the rating of the literacy rate in Brazil also received a low score in the evaluation by its consumers, where 20 out of 36 participants rated Brazil in the average category of literacy development and 12 in the low literacy rate category.

Through a brief analysis of the graphs, it is notable the low rate of positive classification by Brazilian consumers - when evaluating their country - in the economic, industrial, and technological aspects, leading to an increase in distrust of Brazilian products by their consumers. According to Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015), consumers' beliefs about a country's image are usually related to its economic situation (MARTIN; EROGLU, 1993; WANG; LAMB, 1983), political system (HESLOP et al., 2004), people's skills (HESLOP et al., 2004), and technological advancement.

To confirm the significant distrust of Brazil's image from the perspective of its consumers, Heslop et al. (2004) point out that when evaluating a country or its inhabitants, a distinction must be made between its competencies and characteristics. Characteristics refer to the country's role in international politics, similarities between the country in question and the country of origin, the quality of environmental protection, and political stability or living standards, among others.

Competencies, on the other hand, include factors related to the production and evaluation of products originating from a country, as well as factors that allow a total evaluation of the country in question, such as technological development, economic stability, and the level of economic development and well-being.

Similarly, Allred, Chakraborty, and Miller (1999, p. 36) find that the perception or impression that organizations and consumers have about a country is based on variables such as the country's economic condition, political structure, culture, conflicts with other countries, working conditions, and environmental issues.

Therefore, knowing that aspects related to the country's economic condition, technological and industrial levels are essential for the formation of countries' images, it is easy to see that, according to the collected research, Brazil has an insecure image among its consumers, as the majority of them voted for distrust in these analyzed aspects.

This demonstrates the negative influence of the cognitive component, which includes consumers' beliefs about the country's industrial development and technological advancement (Papadoulos et al., 1988), and the overall image of the country at the macro level of Brazilian consumers when evaluating the image of their home country. The macro level corresponds to the overall image of the country (technology, economy, and politics), while the micro level corresponds to the image of products from that country (innovation, prestige, and design) (PAPPU; QUESTER; COOKSEY, 2007), theoretically increasing the distrust of Brazilian products by their own consumers.

However, contrary to the participants' votes in the research, it is possible to note that Brazil has the largest economy in Latin America (ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC), 2015) and is positioned as one of the countries with the highest growth in the region (PORZECANSKI, 2015).

Therefore, due to having such a diminished view of Brazil, theoretically, Brazilian consumers tend to rate foreign products more favorably, as the willingness to buy a foreign product depends on the level of development (industrial, economic, and technological) of that country, as well as the consumer (COSTA, Camila, 2016).

Thus, it is also possible to explain the poor rating of the literacy rate, according to Brazilian consumers, in Brazil. Interestingly, as the evaluation of the Brazilian educational level is poor, theoretically, Brazilian consumers should value foreign products less, due to their low knowledge of other countries, as the socioeconomic level is related to the consumer's purchasing power, and people from higher social classes are more exposed to information and other cultures, being more likely to have contact with other cultures. With the increase in the educational level of consumers, it is more likely that they have greater knowledge of other countries and cultures, as well as greater tolerance for such cultural differences, as the educational level is positively associated with knowledge of the country of origin (PASWAN, SHARMA, 2004).

As mentioned, in the country of origin literature, there are several factors that lead to knowledge of the country of origin of a particular brand, such as education, social class, receptivity to other cultures, and exposure to other cultures (AL-SULAITI; BAKER, 1998; HOLFSTEAD, 1991), with educational level and socioeconomic level standing out as the most relevant factor.

However, in the Brazilian questionnaire, the effect was inverse, as the evaluation of the Brazilian educational and economic level was low, which would theoretically indicate a preference for domestic products. However, due to the economic and industrial evaluation of Brazil, the distrust of essential elements in the production process of Brazilian products is notable, favoring the search for foreign products.

Several studies highlight the inconsistency of results regarding consumer preferences in emerging economies (ERICKSON, JOHANSON, CHAO, 1984), regarding the country of origin of products: while in countries with strong economies there is a preference for domestic products when compared to imports (NETEMEYER et al., 1991), others highlight the preference for imported products in emerging countries (BATRA et al., 2000).

On the other hand, Giraldi and Carvalho (2009) emphasize that most studies on the effects of the country of origin have sought to identify processes that can help explain how the country of origin influences the evaluation of a product. The "country of origin" factor is built on the idea that

people have stereotyped evaluations about other people and countries and, consequently, about products manufactured in those countries (BALABANIS; MUELLER; MELEWAR, 1999). The stereotypes that consumers have about countries and people can transcend assessments of specific brands or products and determine purchasing intentions and people's behavior.

For a more detailed analysis of the variables that make up the evaluation of a country's image, the Analytical Approach of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) was used in this research, in order to qualitatively measure the complex causations of this phenomenon, revealing patterns of associations between sets and evaluating whether the conditions and combinations of the analyzed factors are sufficient and necessary.

Table 1. Brasil.

Literacy rate= (Cost of living, Economy, Technology)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Economy	78,7%	32%	87%
Cost of living * Technology	52,6%	0,59%	88,6%
Consistency cut-off: 82,2%			
Solution coverage: 84,7%			
Solution Consistency: 84,7%			

According to the analysis conducted in Brazil using the analytical approach, it is possible to observe that the proposed solution has a very high Consistency Cutoff, meaning that the model presented for the Literacy Rate as a function of Cost of Living, Economy, and Technology is explanatory enough in 82.2% of cases, considering the Literacy Rate outcome. Furthermore, the Intermediate Solution demonstrates a Solution Coverage and Solution Consistency of 84.7%, indicating that the Intermediate Solution explains the proposed model in 84.7% (Literacy Rate = $f(\text{Cost of Living, Economy, Technology})$).

Based on this, we can derive two autonomous premises based on the responses of consumers in Brazil. The first premise consists of the isolated function of the Economy. According to Table 1, the Economy function, on its own, is sufficient to explain the collected Literacy Rate indices. The Gross Coverage (how much of the outcome is explained by a set) of the Economy indicates that this condition is explained by 78.7% in relation to the Literacy Rate outcome.

Additionally, out of this 78.7%, 32% of this value is solely explained by the Economy condition, as shown in the Unique Coverage (how much of this explanation from the Gross Coverage can be attributed exclusively to this set and no other). The Consistency of 87% for the Economy indicates that this condition is highly sufficient to explain the Literacy Rate outcome.

The second premise consists of two joint conditions, Cost of Living and Technology. This combination of conditions has a Gross Coverage of 52.6%, which means that this set of conditions is explained by this value, which, when compared to the Economy in isolation, is low. The Unique Coverage indicates that, out of the 52.6% that can be explained by Cost of Living and Technology, only 0.59% of this can be attributed to this set of conditions to explain the outcome. This shows that these conditions are not significantly explained in relation to the Literacy Rate outcome.

Although the Consistency of the combination of these conditions is 88.6%, higher than the previous one, the interpretation is similar, and the coverage ends up being insufficient in this case, meaning that the Economy condition has more relevant data to explain the Literacy Rate outcome in isolation.

The consistency measure of conditions, which is the main validation criterion of QCA (Ragin, 2006), is a descriptive measure to assess the strength of empirical support for theoretical argumentation, which describes causal relations between sets (concepts). It measures the degree of proximity of the relationship between sets; it evaluates the degree to which cases that share a certain condition (or combination of conditions) agree with the outcome.

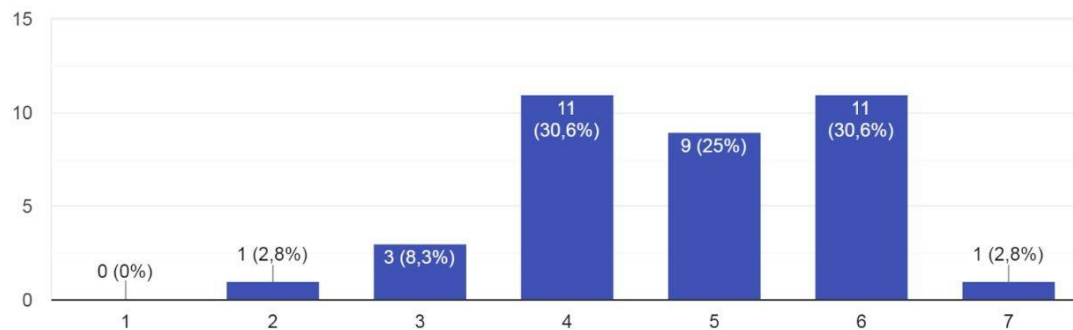
The coverage measure, on the other hand, provides a quantification of the empirical relevance of a causal condition or combination in the set of causal combinations. It assesses the degree to which a causal condition or combination of causal conditions accounts for an outcome. It is similar to the coefficient of determination in econometric context (Thiem, 2010).

ANALYSIS 2: COLOMBIA

On the other hand, when consulting the data from the survey conducted in Colombian territory, it is possible to observe evaluations somewhat similar from its consumers, when compared to the data from Brazil, regarding the country's image regarding aspects of industrial level, economic level, research and development level, and technological level.

Figure 5. Economy.

1. Economía:
36 respuestas

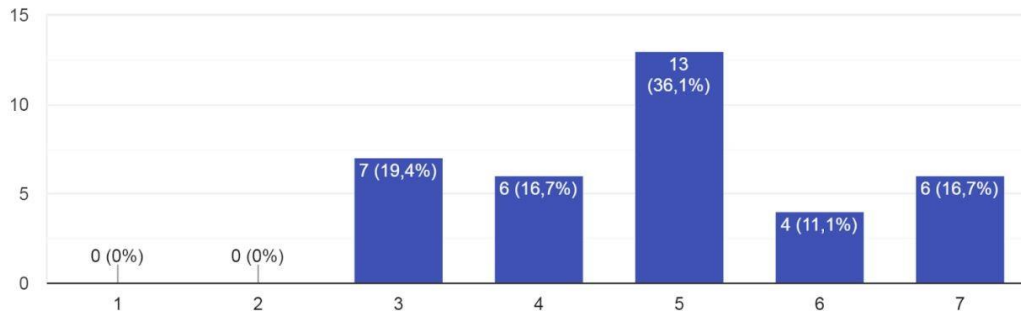


Initially, in Figure 5, if the assessment of the Brazilian image in terms of economic level started from unpleasant ratings, the evaluation by Colombian consumers remained similarly unfavorable, with 35 out of 36 participants ranking Colombia's economic level as either average or completely economically underdeveloped.

Figure 6. Industrial level

5. Nivel industrial:

36 respuestas

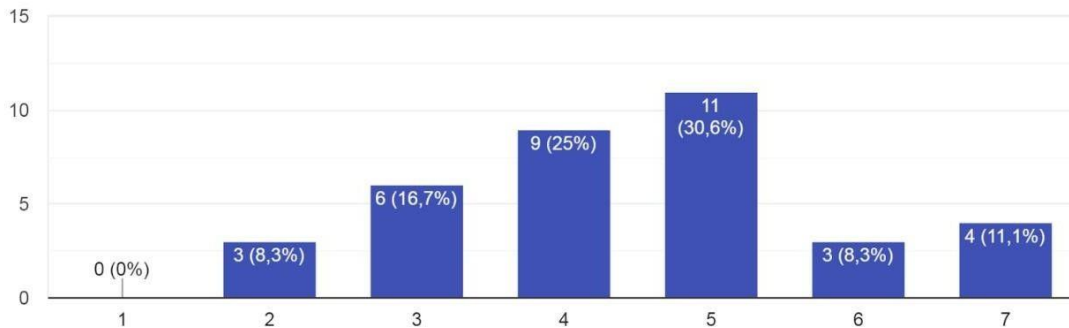


On the other hand, in terms of industrial level, as extracted from Figure 6, there is a slightly lower level of assessment of Colombia's image in this area, with no votes classifying the country as predominantly industrialized and 36 participant votes classifying Colombian industry as intermediate or completely non-industrialized.

Figure 7. Technology.

12. Tecnología:

36 respuestas

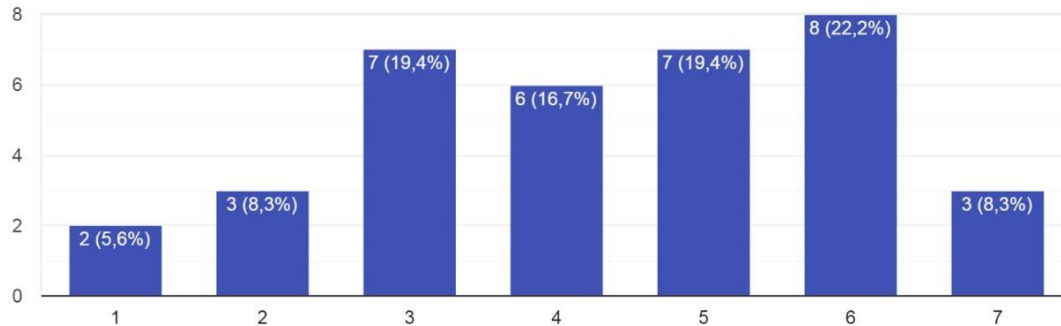


In Figure 7, which deals with Colombia's image in terms of technological level, there was a greater distribution of votes, with 33 out of 36 participant votes classifying Colombia's technological level as average or as entirely responsible for the production of low-quality products, with only 3 votes for the image of producing high-quality goods. In a brief summary, it is possible to observe a similar distrust by the research participants of Colombia's image in economic, technological, and industrial aspects as that found in the Brazilian image.

Figure 8. Literacy rate

7. Tasa de alfabetización:

36 respuestas



Finally, in the assessment of Colombia's literacy level, participants portrayed the country's image with a predominance of low literacy rates, concentrating 31 out of 36 votes in the average or complete absence of literacy projects in the country. As previously stated, such a view is highly detrimental to the country's image, as consumers' beliefs about a country's image are usually related to its economic situation (MARTIN; EROGLU, 1993; WANG; LAMB, 1983), political system (HESLOP et al., 2004), people's skills (HESLOP et al., 2004), and the degree of technological advancement, as previously discussed.

Similar to the analysis of Brazil's image, in Colombia, one can also ascertain the negative influence of consumers' cognitive component, which includes beliefs about the country's industrial development and technological advancement (Papadoulos et al. 1988), and the overall image of the country at the macro level of Colombian consumers when evaluating the image of their home country, generating, likewise, a huge distrust of products generated in this country and the corresponding image.

However, given that Colombian consumers' assessment of their own country is more positive than Brazil's regarding the literacy rate, Colombian consumers may be more open to foreign products, as a more positive image of the literacy rate allows for greater exposure to other cultures, as education is positively associated with knowledge of the country of origin (PASWAN, SHARMA, 2004). Nevertheless, in addition to the high literacy rate enabling contact with other cultures and the image of other countries, the devaluation of Colombian products by their consumers is corroborated by the distrust generated by low assessments of economic, technological, and industrial levels (MARTIN; EROGLU, 1993; WANG; LAMB, 1983).

Using the analytical approach of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) again to qualitatively measure the complex causations of this phenomenon, let's move on to the analysis of data extracted from Colombia, according to native consumers of the country.

Table 2. Colombia.

Research and Development = (Industrial level, Economy, Economic environment, Technology)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Industrial level * Economy * Economic environment	57,3%	0,8%	96%
Industrial level * Economy * Technology	60,6%	10,4%	98%
Consistency cutt-off: 85,8%			
Solution Coverage: 75,6%			
Solution Consistency: 93,5%			

Initially, it is noted that the proposed solution has a Consistency Cutoff of 85.8%, meaning that the model exposed for Research and Development as a function of the variables of Industrial Level, Economy, Economic Environment, and Technology is sufficiently explained in this percentage.

Similarly, it has been demonstrated that the selected Intermediate Solution from Colombia has a Solution Coverage of 75.6%, meaning this is the percentage to which a causal condition or combination of causal conditions contributes to the result of Research and Development. The Solution Consistency is 93.5%, a high index that exposes the percentage of cases that agree with a certain condition (or combination of conditions) regarding the Research and Development result in this Solution.

Continuing with the analysis of Table 2, it is noted that two autonomous premises are also proposed according to the responses of Colombian consumers. The first one is composed of the function determined by the conditions of Industrial Level, Economy, and Economic Environment, responsible for explaining the indices of the Research and Development result.

Regarding the Gross Coverage of this first combination of conditions, it is observed that the combination of conditions is explained by 57.3% in relation to the Research and Development result. According to the Unique Coverage, of this 57.3%, only 0.8% of this value, according to the combinations of conditions, is able to explain the collected result. However, despite the low values of the Coverages, it is possible to observe that the Consistency of this combination of conditions hovers around 96%, a substantial value of the combination to clarify the Research and Development result.

On the other hand, the second premise also establishes a combination of conditions to establish the Research and Development result, namely Industrial Level, Economy, and Technology. This combination has a Gross Coverage, as indicated, of 60.6%, slightly higher than the previous combination. However, the Unique Coverage of this combination is substantially higher than the previous combination, but still maintains a low percentage, within the 10.4% referring to the Gross Coverage that can be attributed to this set of combinations to explain the result. This shows that, in the two exposed combinations, the conditions are not significantly explained in relation to the Research and Development result.

It turns out that the Consistency of this second premise, with the combinations of Industrial Level, Economy, and Technology conditions, is reaching a percentage of 98%, higher than the previous combination and almost completely sufficient to explain the causal result of Research and Development.

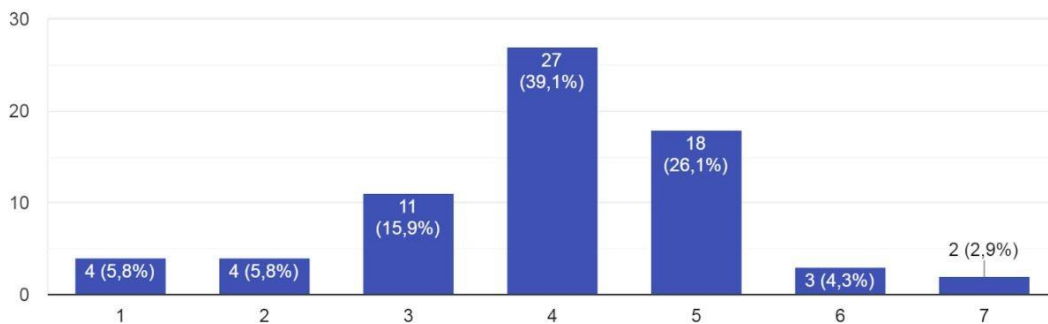
ANALYSIS 3: MÉXICO

Unlike the surveys conducted in Brazil and Colombia, each with 36 participants, the analysis in Mexico involved 69 consumers from the country, encompassing a greater variety of opinions and votes. Consequently, this led to a more consolidated average of values.

Figure 9. Economy.

1. Economía:

69 respuestas

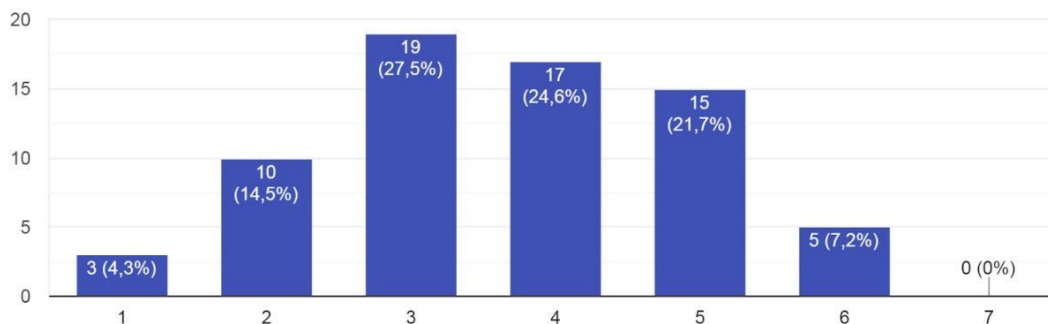


In Figure 9, which addressed the assessment of Mexico's economic level according to its own consumers, a higher concentration in the medium range of economic development is noticeable. Out of the 69 participants, 56 voted for the medium development values, with only 8 votes in the economically developed category and 5 votes in the economically underdeveloped category.

Figure 10. Industrial level

5. Nivel industrial:

69 respuestas

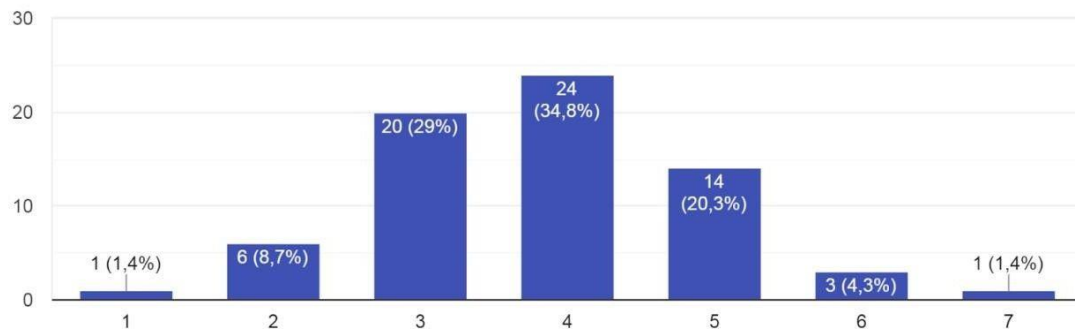


Next, in Figure 10, the assessment of Mexico's industrial level is collected, which, when compared to the other two countries under analysis, received a positive feedback regarding its image from the perspective of its consumers. 51 out of 69 participants rated Mexico's industrial level as average, while 13 participants listed the country as nearly or fully developed industrially.

Figure 11. Technology.

12. Tecnología:

69 respuestas

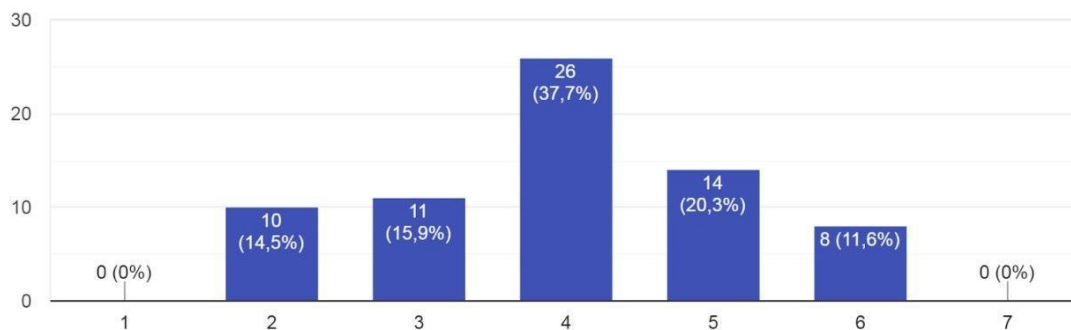


In the aspect of the technological level image, as shown in Figure 11, the balance was maintained, with 58 out of 69 participants classifying the country's technological image at an intermediate level, with a propensity of 7 votes to classify products manufactured in Mexico as high-quality and only 4 votes classifying them as low quality.

Figure 12. Literacy rate.

7. Tasa de alfabetización:

69 respuestas



In Figure 12, which dealt with the literacy rate level in Mexico, the balance remained, with 51 out of 69 participants also classifying the country's literacy level at an intermediate level. 10 votes were closer to a complete literacy process in the country, while only 8 votes were closer to an incomplete literacy process, indicating a more positive aspect in Mexico than the data extracted from the other countries under analysis.

Therefore, in contrast to the previous analyses of Brazil and Colombia, applying the above-mentioned bibliographies, due to the image that consumers in Mexico have of the country's levels of economic, industrial, and technological development, with assessment scores hovering around medium and higher levels positively, it can be noted that these consumers are more likely to consume products originating from their own homeland.

Despite the Mexican literacy rate being well-rated by the consumers in the survey, the collected ratings from the poll were slightly lower than those for economic, industrial, and technological development. Therefore, there is a possibility of seeking foreign products due to the high literacy rate, allowing for contact with other cultures and the image of other countries; however, the national image of Mexico and its development remains well-rated, increasing the propensity for internal consumption in the country.

Thus, under the analytical approach, the data collected from Mexican consumers will be evaluated, considering their perspective on the image of their homeland's structural aspects.

Table 3. Mexico.

Employment Cost = (Research and Development, Cost of living, Economy, Literacy rate)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Cost of living * Research and Development * Economy	51,1%	10%	96%
Research and Development * Economy * deLiteray rate	41%	0,4%	97,5%
Consistency cut-off: 94,3%			
Solution Coverage: 73,3%			
Solution Consistency: 95,4%			

Initially, according to the data collected in Mexico, it is observable that the solution identified has a Consistency Cutoff superior to those demonstrated in Brazil and Colombia, reaching a rate of 94.3%. Therefore, it denotes the high value in which the Employment Cost result is explained as a function of the conditions Research and Development, Cost of Living, Economy, and Literacy Rate.

Similarly, it is pointed out that the Intermediate Solution formulated obtained a Solution Coverage of 73.3%, a lower rate compared to those collected in Brazil and Colombia. This indicates that, in comparison with these countries, the Solution of the combination of causal conditions to form the Employment Cost result is more weakened. On the other hand, the Solution Consistency

reached higher percentages, where the cases that share a certain condition (or combination of conditions) agree with the Employment Cost result, reaching 95.4% in this Solution.

Thus, the Solution exposes us again to two autonomous premises capable of allowing the analysis of Mexican consumers' responses to understand the formulation of the Employment Cost result according to the data collected.

The first one is composed of the combination of Cost of Living, Research and Development, and Economy conditions to form the Employment Cost result. Observing the Gross Coverage of this set, a very small value is noted compared to the data from other countries, where only the combination of conditions is explained in relation to the result by 51.1%. Still, from this percentage of Gross Coverage, only 10% is sufficiently explained by these conditions, according to the Unique Coverage. However, despite the low percentages collected by the Condition Coverages, the Consistency of this combination of conditions demonstrates a more positive result, reaching 96% to explain the Employment Cost result.

The second premise establishes the Employment Cost result as a function of the combination of Research and Development, Economy, and Literacy Rate conditions. The Gross Coverage of this set reached even lower values than the previous premise, at 41%. Similarly, the Unique Coverage of this combination of conditions was also insignificant, hovering only at 0.4% of this gross percentage value. However, despite the first premise having a combination more apt to explain the Employment Cost result, the Consistency of this second premise reached higher values, at 97.5%.

Conclusions

In light of all the theoretical framework collected and the sample characteristics gathered during the elaboration of this research, it is possible to observe more deeply the impacts of the political, economic, and technological-social desires of the native consumers of the selected Latin American countries when forming their perception of the image of their respective countries.

During the development of this study, it was observed that political, economic, and technological impacts constitute the fundamental factors for evaluating the image and products of a country, noting how consumers' beliefs about a country's image are usually related to its economic situation, political system, people's skills, and the degree of technological and industrial advancement.

In the collected sample, it was identified how consumers in the countries under analysis evaluate the perceived image of their country of origin. By answering the proposed questionnaire, it was possible to gauge a mistrust of Brazilian consumers in the image they have of their country, as they assessed the country as economically underdeveloped with a low literacy rate, while placing it in the middle range in terms of technological and industrial development.

Similarly, the evaluation of Colombia's image by its consumers did not encompass more optimistic indices, as votes were collected indicating a median or low evaluation of economic, technological, and industrial development, also resulting in a low rating for the country's literacy rate.

In Mexico, the evaluation by its consumers showed good indices regarding the country's image compared to the other countries evaluated in this study. The country was classified in a positive index of economic, technological, industrial development, and literacy rate, with the

majority of votes covering average rating scores, while the remaining votes reached the best evaluation indices.

Therefore, knowing that aspects related to the country's economic condition, technological and industrial level are essential for the formation of countries' images, it is easy to see that, according to the collected research, Brazil and Colombia have an insecure image in front of their consumers, as they mostly voted for distrust in these analyzed aspects and in the skills of these countries. This is because factors that allow a complete evaluation of the country in question, such as technological development, economic stability, and the level of economic development and well-being, presented low positive ratings in the survey collection.

On the other hand, Mexico has a better image of its country from the perspective of its consumers, with positive evaluations in economic, industrial, and technological levels, indicating greater confidence in national development and production sectors by its consumers. Still, in the same way, due to having a good evaluation of the success of the country's literacy rate, it is possible to expect a greater openness from these consumers to positively evaluate the image of foreign countries because, as previously exposed, a higher development of culture in the country is an essential requirement for building positive international relations.

Subsequently, continuing with the development of the research, it was possible to describe the relationships between the variables that make up the dimensions of the evaluation of the countries' image, using the analytical approach of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), and measuring qualitatively the complex causalities of this phenomenon, revealing patterns of associations between the sets and evaluating whether the conditions and combinations of the analyzed factors were sufficient and necessary.

In Brazil, the solution proposed by the method of this approach indicated the model regarding the Literacy Rate result as a function of the conditions Cost of Living, Technology, and Economy. Thus, it was possible to verify that the Economy condition, by itself, is sufficient to explain the literacy rate indices in Brazil, when compared to the set of conditions of the second premise, Technology, and Cost of Living in the country.

In Colombia, the generated solution required the model of the Research and Development result as a function of the variables of Industrial Level, Economy, Economic Environment, and Technology. Two premises were proposed, one that determines this result as explained by the conditions of Industrial Level, Economy, and Economic Environment. And the second premise, composed of the conditions of Industrial Level, Economy, and Technology, which was more consistently percentage-wise in explaining the Research and Development result in the country.

Moreover, in the exposition of Mexico, according to the data collected, it was possible to observe the result, with a high consistency index, of the Employment Cost, as a function of the conditions Research and Development, Cost of Living, Economy, and Literacy Rate. Similarly, to the previous collections, two premises were exposed, with the first one composed of the conditions Cost of Living, Research and Development, and Economy, and the second - which was the most expressive in terms of consistency and sample coverage - highlighted that the Employment Cost result is better explained when composed of the variable conditions of Research and Development, Economy, and Literacy Rate.

Finally, regarding the managerial implications of using marketing strategies associated with the identified evaluation and perception about the studied countries, it is emphasized the need, in the execution of goods or services, for the construction of an image that conveys the necessary trust to consumers.

Thus, using as a parameter the mistrust of consumers collected in this research, it would be necessary to build a dissemination project aimed at strengthening the image of the industrial and technological level of a company, conveying to these consumers a good view of the productive potential, durability, and quality of the products of this business.

Therefore, it is interesting for the business to build an imaginary in its consumers that induces the association of the company with a high level of research and development of its infrastructure, in a way that the intellectual production of the company presents to the native consumer a greater transparency and trust in the productive process of that business.

The process of constructing this study was halted at times due to the researcher's unfamiliarity with the knowledge areas involved in the research, which, however, were later overcome. Furthermore, at the end of the construction, it can also be affirmed that the developed study will help academia, to some extent, by bringing together bibliographies that address the image of Latin American countries according to their native consumers, as well as demonstrating empirically their implications and foundations, according to the collected sample.

For those studies that will still be produced in this theme, it is pointed out as necessary to explore with more rigor the causal and material phenomena that result in the formation of the image of Latin American countries - both for their consumers and internationally - with a return to the historical process of construction of these countries, to understand the concrete factors that affect the Latin American image.

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