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Organizational identity construction of Colombian brands of swimwear on Instagram

Construcción de identidad organizacional de marcas colombianas de vestidos de baño en Instagram

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ABSTRACT

The analysis of brand management through images on social networks has become increasingly important for companies, and this is why the purpose of this article is to analyse how visual content strategies and interactions with consumers on Instagram contribute to the construction of the organizational identity of Colombian swimwear brands through the analysis of netnography, in order to improve the understanding of key attributes of digital marketing management. As a first step in collecting the data, the netnography method was used and then the data was analysed through content analysis. In general, it was observed that organizational identity can be born and raised in two ways, a more tangible one that includes factors that describe what the organization expresses and represents; and another made up of the essence, soul, and heart of the brand, both with equal importance when building the organizational identity in social networks based on images. Human Communications are being shaped by new technologies, so this research for practice could be of great use since SNS today are gaining more and more strength as a marketing and advertising tool within organizations.

Keywords: Instagram, Social media, Brand, Identity, Images, Organization.

RESUMEN

Analizar la gestión de la marca a través de las imágenes en las redes sociales se ha vuelto cada vez más importante para las empresas y es por esto que el propósito de este artículo es analizar cómo las estrategias de contenido visual y las interacciones con los consumidores en Instagram contribuyen a la construcción de la identidad organizacional de las marcas colombianas de trajes de baño a través de un análisis netnográfico, con el fin de mejorar la comprensión de los atributos claves de gestión de marketing digital. Como primer paso para recolectar los datos se utilizó el método propuesto por la netnografía y datos fueron analizados a través del análisis de contenido. En general, se observó que la identidad organizacional puede surgir de dos maneras, una más tangible que incluye factores que describen lo que la organización expresa y representa y otra que se compone de la esencia, el alma y el corazón de la marca, ambas con igual importancia a la hora de construir la identidad organizacional en redes sociales basadas en imágenes. Las comunicaciones humanas están siendo moldeadas por las nuevas tecnologías, por lo que esta investigación para la práctica puede ser de gran utilidad ya que hoy en día las redes sociales están ganando cada vez más fuerza como herramienta de marketing y publicidad dentro de las organizaciones.

Palabras clave: Instagram, Red social, Marca, Identidad, Imágenes, Organización.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Social Networking Sites (SNS) have experienced significant growth, attracting millions of users. It is necessary to be in constant change to stand out among the various options available to online users today. Users not only consume content from the internet, but also help to create it. This indicates that our connections can become the connections of our contacts, and these contacts can alter the nature of that content or add new content, almost instantly. SNS can grow and evolve very quickly in unexpected ways (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). Thus, online action and interaction allow consumers to display meaning, tell stories, create an extended digital self, and collectively generate an aggregate digital self (Belk, 2013).

In this vast digital world, knowing a brand and being clear about the image the brand wants to reflect is essential, since this can help a brand increase its influence and popularity within these networks. Consumer-brand relationships include emotions such as love and passion (Schembri & Lorien, 2015). Therefore, seeking to generate positive emotions in consumers is a fundamental point when creating digital content. With social interaction being one of the main motivations for using SNS, digital platforms have become a powerful place where consumers can interact and collaborate with brands and other consumers to co-create unique brand experiences (Kim & Drumwright, 2016).

In contemporary context, content based on images and videos have reached elevated levels of popularity in SNS consumers no longer see applications that simply allow them to add filters and effects, but also, look for social networks that include tools that seek to entertain their users. Interactivity has been referred to as the ability of users to influence the form or content of media (Xu & Sundar, 2016). Interactivity-driven control facilitated by social media may offer superior communication capabilities compared to traditional communication platforms (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2020). Brands possess digital tools that enable high levels of user interaction by providing access to extensive information, fostering networking and collaboration, and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of business processes (Kraus *et al.*, 2019).

The textile industry in Colombia, although it has had its crises, is a strong sector of the national economy, the designs and knowledge of clothing and production help to make this industry important for the country. In the case of swimwear, the director of textiles and clothing at Procolombia, an entity in charge of promoting tourism, exports, and investments at the national level, says: "We are the leading producer and exporter in South America of swimwear and number 29 in the world" (Moreno, 2018) which reflects that this sector has gained strength not only nationally but also internationally. Being situated near the Caribbean and rich in diverse fauna and flora, Colombia serves as a hub of inspiration for brands and designers. To develop products that resonate with consumers, it is crucial to understand women, their preferences, and their demands. This understanding enables the development of designs that not only utilize excellent materials but also meet the specific needs of their audience.

The big brands of swimwear in Colombia no longer respond to the national market exclusively, but they have inter-

national projections in most cases. An example is that one of the brands in this study, is among the brands that are part of L'Catterton, owned by Louis Vuitton since 2017. Therefore, due to the expansion that has taken place within the swimwear sector, it is necessary to understand how brands will reflect their identity, not only to Colombian and Latin consumers but also to consumers from all over the world without losing a clear focus on what their identity is. For brands, Instagram serves as a popular platform for promoting businesses and engaging with individuals who share similar interests and tastes (Dutta & Sharma, 2023). Additionally, it allows consumers to stay updated on day-to-day activities, with these interactions often functioning as a form of advertising. Understanding the relationship between digital engagement experiences and advertising effectiveness is crucial for brands to fully leverage the benefits that this social networking site offers (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018).

This article commences with a review of the literature, emphasizing social networking sites and organizational identity. It then presents the methodology, explaining the rationale for selecting netnography as the study's methodology. After discussing the sample and data collection methods, the data analysis is followed by a discussion. In this discussion, we developed a matrix based on Urde's corporate identity matrix, viewing the brand from three aspects: internal factors, external factors, and a combination of both. The results and conclusions of our analysis offer significant recommendations for brands, while the identified limitations of the study indicate potential directions for future research. As for contribution to the academic literature, the present work seeks to study how the construction of brand identity occurs in an SNS based on images for this case Instagram, this being a very popular network among brands, as a means of communication. This research will focus on Colombian swimwear brands, as this is a sector with immense potential for the country, and because of the great audio-visual content of their publications, it would be expected to obtain and achieve stronger and lasting connections with their consumers.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the primary objective of this study is to identify the factors influencing the construction of the organizational identity of Colombian swimwear brands on Instagram. This analysis explores how visual content strategies, customer interactions, and the utilization of tools provided by social media platforms contribute to creating a strong and coherent brand identity. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand the elements brands use to establish emotional connections with their consumers, thereby strengthening their presence in the digital environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (SNS) have emerged as one of the most significant communication phenomena, with marketing communications disseminated through these platforms proving instrumental in developing a brand image and enhanc-

ing consumer response (Raji *et al.,* 2019). New types of SNS are continually created, having in common that they all share an underlying platform that is based on Web 2.0 technology. This means they are based on an Internet structure that allows a large number of users to share in the creation, manipulation, and distribution of content (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). Multiple SNS have been evolving to adapt to the needs of their growing number of users, specializing in the way in which content is shared between heterogeneous groups of people who can share personal tastes and preferences on the web. The purpose of these sites is to allow users to create personal profiles, share photos and information, and form online relationships with other like-minded people (Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018).

Boyd and Ellison define SNS as web-based services that allow people to (1) build a public or semi-public profile within a limited system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and (3) view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). SNS not only create new ways of communicating among users but also generate changes in the way brands, products, and services can be promoted. Online users tend to accept and benefit from online information in their decision-making processes by sharing personal experiences and feelings about brands (Farzin *et al.,* 2020) Traditional marketing used to focus on two aims, such as sales and communication, among others. Digital marketing focuses primarily on engagement, which is characterized by thoughts, emotional connections, and/or consumer actions such as videos, apps, ads, or sponsored content (Scheinbaum, 2016) generating a bidirectional communication between brands and their consumers.

The interaction between brands and consumers has changed over the years. Today, consumers actively influence brand messages and meanings, consumer opinions help dictate the variety of products and services. Mobile devices represent the lines of communication, and online "chatter" serves as a crystal ball to help companies determine future product or service initiatives (Hanna *et al.,* 2011), so for brands this digital tool becomes not only a means to promote their products and services but also to obtain information from their customers. Social media engagement is fundamentally about communication. Lasswell's (1960) model of communication identified the source, content, receiver, channel, and effect as important factors in the communication process. Source factors relate to messenger characteristics such as attractiveness; content factors encompass the type of arguments and appeals in the message (Xie-Carson, 2023).

For brands, creating relationships with their consumers is part of the commitment they have with them when interacting through their SNS. In other words, engagement for brands is the act of generating an emotional bond between the company and its online community. This commitment encourages customers to interact with the company (Prado-Gascó *et al.,* 2017), which turns out to be something positive, either because strategies such as word of mouth increase their followers or for the information they receive from their consumers as a source

of inspiration for future products or services. Velicia-Martin *et al.,* (2022) conducted a study with the primary objective of analyzing the factors that encourage buyers to recommend purchases via mobile devices using mobile Word of Mouth (mWOM). The study highlights the importance of online reputation, revealing that these variables capture users' perceptions of the selling company. It encompasses the overall assessment consumers make of a company based on their interactions with it, the company's publications, and their reactions to its goods and services.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words; sharing pictures using SNS platforms has made it more convenient and faster for people to exchange and spread information (Hu, *et al.,* 2017). SNS based on images have been modifying the interaction they generate between users, which allows them to make changes that truly adapt to what they expect. All this being a way for brands to create clearer content that adds value to their followers, where brands and consumers generate a mutual commitment through audiovisual content. "Engagement" in contrast to "satisfaction" focuses on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dynamics of consumers during brand-specific interactions (while satisfaction may largely emerge thereafter) (Hollebeek *et al.,* 2014) thus, brand and customer satisfaction pages can be used to gain and maintain customer loyalty (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016).

2.2. Organizational Identity

Often identity is linked to an image, in most cases brand identity elements are wide ranging and can include colors, logos, characters and taglines (Ward *et al.,* 2020), but it is not as simply as a set of physical characteristics of the organization but rather involves a whole series of behaviors that make it different from the others (Oliva & Carvajal Prieto, 2015). When thinking about how identity should be built, brands do not think of a single place or moment of exposure of this identity. In other words, not only face-to-face sites should talk about the brand, but you also have to know how to take it to the virtual world.

Identity messages refer to the exposures that an organization makes and communicates to its key audiences about itself, these can include messages that describe "who we are", "what we do", "how we do what we do", "why we do what we do" and "how we are different from other similar organizations. Similarly, identity messages, or expressions of identity, can communicate important values (core) to an organization. Identity messages can be found in content generated by the organization, such as its website content, news, published speeches, social media posts, press releases, etc. (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016).

A review of the literature reveals that an individual's identity formation involves the continual derivation or association of ("What I am") and the disassociation of ("What I am not") to the characteristics of their social context and groups of reference (Roca *et al.,* 2017). In other words, within the individual personality as well as that of brands, what must be clear is what we want to be associated with and what not.

As the literature review progressed, we discovered that the corporate brand identity matrix, proposed by Urde (2013), is composed of nine elements. Its internal component (issuer) is

described in terms of three characteristics of the organization: its "mission and vision", its "culture" and its "competencies"; the external component (receiver) comprises "value proposition", "relationships" and "position". The array is populated with three elements that are both internal and external. "Personality" describes the individual character of the corporate brand, while "expression" defines the verbal and visual manifestations of the brand. The "core brand", consisting of a brand promise and supporting core values, is at the heart of the corporate brand identity matrix (Urde, 2013).

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, proposed by Urde (2013), is particularly relevant for this research as it considers elements that can be evaluated within the communication strategies employed by the selected swimwear brands in our sample.
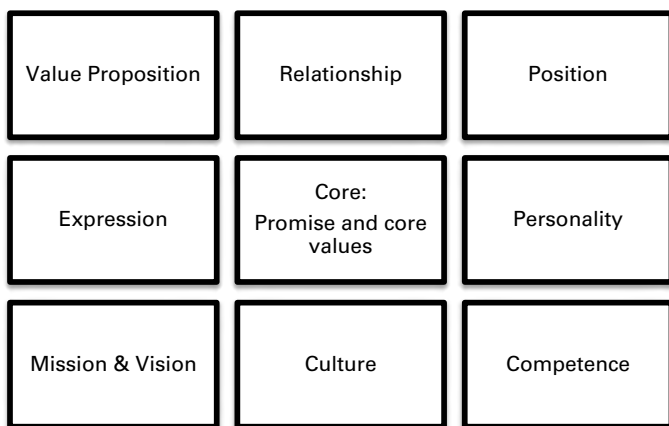

Figure 1
Corporate Brand Identity Matrix
Source: Urde (2013, p. 75)

Identity construction is linked to both position and role in the network, suggesting that a network perspective is critical to understanding identity. The way organizations perceive and are perceived by others serves as a framework through which identity construction takes place (Purchase *et al.,* 2015).

New technologies have allowed organizations to have new opportunities to develop their brand identity. When consumers are highly involved in SNS, they are more interested and willing to dedicate time and effort to use SNS to learn more about products and services. of interest. They may even use SNS as their main means of sharing their experiences or suggestions about the use of products and services (Cheung & To, 2016).

When talking about image-based SNS in some cases, the projected images could be a "genuine attempt to represent essential features of organizational identity to others"; in most cases, however, the projected images "convey a socially desirable and managed impression that emphasizes selected aspects of identity" (Zamparini & Lurati, 2017).

2.3. Identity and Branding

Over the past two decades, numerous models of brand identity have been proposed. For instance, Hankinson (2004) intro-

duced the concept of a core brand, encompassing personality, positioning, and reality, as a representation of brand identity (Rodrigues & Schmidt, 2021). Other researchers define brand identity as a psychological state in which consumers perceive, feel, and value their sense of belonging to a brand (Lam *et al.,* 2013). Additionally, brand identity is considered a reflection of consumer perceptions and can be evaluated through the associations held in memory (Farzin *et al.,* 2022).

The power of the brand goes beyond its recognition and position in the market in which it operates; whether the brand identity is more emotional or rational is less important than the values and beliefs that the brand communicates to create social influence (Alvarado & Guzmán, 2020). It should speak of how the promise of value is fulfilled or not and how the client develops feelings and emotions towards the brand. Consumer aspirations are an important aspect in the branding process, often linked to issues of self-image and status, so before publishing the brand must decide what kind of relationship they want to have with their customers and build it based on what they expect to see and receive from the brand (Anagnostopoulos *et al.,* 2018).

The construction of the brand in SNS must have a clear beacon that guides the strategies and decisions of the organization, which is why content can be created for several reasons, such as building relationships or promoting values, and this as such, it can reveal aspects of the organization's strategy and at the same time of the corporate identity (Devereux *et al.,* 2017), which will lead to a relationship with its consumers that will grow over time through mutual interactions and not only in moments of consumption of the product or service.

Within the brand identity are the aspects that define it and that make it stand out in the market and that remain in the mind of the consumer, branding speaks of the brand in general and reaches the aspects that are not perceived by the consumer at first glance but that make the brand what it is.

According to the above, the following study seeks to explore the construction of organizational identity in social networks, in this case Instagram, since we believe that these digital tools that communicate through subjective elements are one of those that most create emotional connections and interactions today between brands and consumers, which draws attention to be explored and seeks to be understood from a theoretical perspective that generates new sources of knowledge and discussions in the research field.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Netnography

The analysis of the construction of the identity through images was achieved through a nonparticipative, netnographic study (Kozinets, 2009). While netnographic studies could be used in various sectors, researchers stress the great opportunity of netnography in the fashion sector (Parrott *et al.,* 2015). Netnography, an area of ethnography is a qualitative research meth-

od based on precise techniques and applied approaches used for online communities which helps to understand the actions, conduct and participant's relation in the community (Vannini, 2019)

This study sought to investigate the behavior of brands and consumers in SNS and how technology has assisted the evolution of communication between them. Netnography is a special kind of qualitative social media research, that applies ethnographic techniques to comprehend social interaction in settings of modern digital communications (Bansal *et al.,* 2024). This research technique uses the information that is publicly available in online communities to identify and understand the needs of its members (Divakaran, 2017). It was mainly used to observe and understand the interactions and attitudes between some brands and their consumers, collecting a significant amount of data that gives way to a clearer understanding of the symbolic construction that human beings live in the digital world. In conclusion, netnography is writing about people's interactions in social networks (Kozinets, 2015).

Netnography helps researchers reach the data faster and easier without interaction with actual individuals (Vo Thanh and Kirova, 2018) and as a research method, within its qualitative nature, it allows us to understand the social behavior in which people use power technologies to share stories, play identities and influence perceptions and narratives (Lund *et al.,* 2017). It is based on a set of guidelines combined with flexible procedures that emphasize researcher engagement, ethical considerations, and contextualization (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). It also serves to understand the behavior of brands and their identities in the digital space within the communities to be investigated, in the case of this research, Instagram. The netnographic research tradition in marketing and consumer research emphasizes understanding connections rather than geographic location (Hine, 2000), and explores how social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings represent consumers' lived experiences (Myers, 2013).

Netnography embraces holistic digital contexts and as such, it can offer a window into the evolving digital ecosystem where human and machine voices coalesce and intermingle in a complex and dynamic technocultural milieu (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Now that they are collected and a state of data saturation is reached, Kozinets proposes to look at categories, codes, abstractions, conceptions, and constructs in a general way. Once this is done, he proposes to try to use the imagination and then remember a new hermeneutical interpretation. He thinks about the holonic sphere and its relation to social interaction and experience, and how human social and interactive experiences are designed and connected through technology (Kozinets, 2015), and it is at this point that the propositional moment of the method occurs.

It is important to highlight that visual and textual analysis is starting to incorporate digital images on the SNS image-sharing platform Instagram as research data (Drenten *et al.,* 2019) and through a netnographic process of hermeneutic analysis where reading and rereading, interpreting and reinterpreting what has already been reinterpreted leads to the construction of informa-

tion that makes sense and is seen from the digital context as understandable and true. Netnography is closely aligned with the idea of investigating human experience so that social reality is seen as an iterative process in constant change (Reid & Duffy, 2018).

3.2. Sample design and data collection method

For this study, 10 Colombian swimwear brands with a high number of followers on Instagram were selected. While sample sizes might be a cause for concern for positivists, in an interpretivist paradigm the size of a qualitative sample is relevant only in respect to the project's nature (MacCarthy, 2022). These accounts were chosen at the convenience of the researchers, and the information was collected over four months. Netnography encompasses a diverse range of online content such as images, drawings, photography, sound files, and audiovisual presentations (Jeacle, 2020). The data for this study included the photos and videos posted, the number of likes, the descriptions accompanying the posts, and comments from followers. For each of the brands, a file was generated, in which the data from those four months was stored, and later codified using MAXQDA software.

The SNS selected was Instagram, first because it is one of the most popular social networks in the world, particularly among young people (Marquez, *et al.,* 2022), and on the other hand it is used not only for interactions with other people but also for purchases (Dos Santos & Tateo, 2024). It has a significant impact on decisions related to consumption (Dumas *et al.,* 2020; Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019; Yurdagül *et al.,* 2021).

The purpose of collecting the photos and videos together with the descriptions was to identify how the text that accompanies the photo influences the creation of the organizational identity based on the image or if it was just another form of communication that the SNS provided to the brand.

Through the use of emojis and hashtags, the brands could establish patterns that would mark their behavior within the SNS in a unique way. At the time this information was collected, we searched within each of the web pages of the analyzed brands for their statement of who they are or their mission, to later compare how what they expressed through text was reflected through images within their SNS or if their identity was different through these two types of communication.

As outlined in the methodology section, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on 10 Colombian swimwear brands. The study involved gathering data on each brand's presence on Instagram, along with a compilation of the descriptions provided on their respective websites. The collected data provided valuable insights into the online strategies and branding efforts employed by each brand. The following table presents a detailed overview of the SNS and website descriptions for each of the 10 brands, offering a holistic perspective on their digital presence and brand positioning within the swimwear industry in Colombia.

Table 1
Brands Description

Brand Number	Web Site	Number of Followers	Verified Account	Description
1	www.aguabendita.com	654.000	Yes	Catalina Álvarez and Mariana Hinestroza, two Colombian women who are passionate about design, decided to create unique and exclusive swimwear to tell the world their story, by mixing details, contemporary design, and crafts.
2	www.maajiswimwear.com	563.000	Yes	The portfolio of this brand includes swimwear, sportswear, cover-ups, children, bags, and accessories. All its lines have a unique combination of colors, shapes, avant-garde silhouettes, textures, and the ubiquitous presence of details that define the brand's philosophy. Its commitment is to always surprise with products of excellent quality, design, and innovative technology.
3	www.palorosabeachwear.com	383.000	No	Palo Rosa is an eccentric, unconventional, and modern brand, dedicated to satisfying avant-garde women who are passionate about attracting attention by always wearing exclusive garments. This Colombian brand of swimwear aims to satisfy today's woman and highlight her femininity with high-tech materials and hand-made to result in a unique product that makes a difference.
4	www.ondademar.com	240.000	Yes	Onda de Mar products are known for their style, originality and superior quality. The company ensures an exclusive and unique look required by fashion and resort lifestyle lovers. His clothes are meticulously designed, inspired by a relaxed and sophisticated lifestyle. Its product lines range from casual to sophisticated and refined, always maintaining luxury as its main characteristic.
5	www.ancoraswimwear.com	173.000	No	From the beginning, Ancora has been characterized as a conceptual, pioneering brand totally focused on conceptualizing the same elegant and innovative lifestyle for men and women. The slogan "Dressed to Swim" or "Dress to swim" calls for the use of urban trends in swimwear for both men and women.
6	www.malaiswimwear.com	127.000	No	Contemporary passionate women who not only seek to be at the forefront but also want a responsible product with a soul. Women who when they wear a Malai garment remember who made it. A woman who feels the power of energy and everything around her. A woman who wants to take with her the best moment of her life "vacation at sea". They say they exist for the woman who is looking for a high-end product that makes her feel happy.
7	www.granadinabm.com	132.000	No	Every swimsuit is an adventure. The print on each garment is unique and as a general rule, each of these garments must be comfortable, versatile, and tell a story. Each Granadina swimsuit is unique and represents the essence of the group of friends. But there is more. It is not only about bathing suits, but about the lifestyle of real women who like to be comfortable, of course, but without stopping showing off on their vacations, in their moments of sunshine.
8	www.towerswimwear.com	98.900	No	Towers Swimwear It was born as an initiative of entrepreneurship and love for summer, the beach, and the sea, since then each of its designs has been characterized by its uniqueness, authenticity, and irreverence, in addition to the quality of its garments made by women head of family from the city of Medellin and 100% Colombian supplies.
9	www.cositalinda.com	79.900	No	Their garments are created as part of a unique collection, specially developed with a style that mixes shapes, fabrics, bases, embroidery, and graphic elements that refer to a widely explored concept to generate trends. Products are designed and produced by an interdisciplinary work team, people concerned about the best quality and giving the user an excellent experience of elegance that reflects the best of beauty, style, and luxury.
10	www.palmarosa.com	34.200	No	The brand is heavily influenced by the beautiful country of Colombia; its colors, culture, and diversity have helped create a very unexpected mix of patterns and textures that have characterized Palmarosa since its inception. All textile patterns and designs are created by Palmarosa, giving them a bohemian and sophisticated feeling with a romantic mix, with a subtle Latin style and always maintaining high-quality standards.

Source (s): Authors and brands Web sites.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. Meaning-making can refer to subjective or social meanings (Mezmir, 2020).By combining a methodology such as Netnography for data collection and following the sequential steps described by Silverman (2006, p. 159) for content analysis, along with a manual review of the sample material, it was sought to analyze not only the explicit meaning conveyed through words, but also to gain a deeper understanding of the representations conveyed by images and videos in the creation of brand identity through Instagram. It should also be noted that netnography questions the binary separation between participation and passive observation, considering it a continuum that includes various degrees and nuances (Wu, 2022).

In the first place, it should be considered that these brands were followed up on their profiles created on Instagram for 4 months, where not only the image was collected, but also the text that accompanied it, as well as the comments left by the people within each of the publications. In this case, it is not exclusively about followers because as they are open pages it is not necessary to follow these brands on Instagram to comment, like or simply observe.

Qualitative coding protocols are necessary to break down, extract, and assign meaningful labels within the data set. Coding entails the work of scrutinizing, pondering, and organizing collected observations and relating them to theoretically relevant abstract features and possible relationships (Locke *et al.,* 2022). Once this coding process is completed and verified as robust (Anderson, 2017), second-order or analytical codes and patterns may be identified and evaluated (Discetti *et al.,* 2023). The coding that was given to each one of the images was based on the idea of making textual what could be observed in the images, all this in a descriptive way, such as describing the colors that are observed in the image, the places, if there is a product or not, if there is a presence of models, foods, or phrases, to name a few. Qualitative descriptive research generates data that describes the "who, what, and where of events or experiences" from a subjective perspective (Kim *et al.,* 2017). Following this, the text that accompanies the image published by each of the brands was also coded, looking for the relationship between what they showed visually and what they wanted to communicate as a brand, giving greater importance to the use of emojis and hashtags, these two elements that have emerged from the evolution of communication through SNS. The first allows for a better demonstration of what is being expressed; emojis establish a framework for categorizing the set of signals used by consumers online, where emojis are classified as a form of visual textual paralanguage that can influence brand perceptions, consumer experience, and the brand-consumer relationship (Luangrath *et al.,* 2017). The second was initially created to generate trends but is also used to improve search patterns by users of the SNS.

From a general perspective, it could be inferred that when talking about swimwear brands, images of the sea, beaches, and sunny days will come to consumers' minds. That is to say, a mental relationship is formed regarding the use that would be given to the garments offered by these brands. In this sense, when analyzing these brands, it is found that, although these obvious places for the human mind do have space within the publications of the brands, they do not generate a pattern of visual identification of these. That is to say, the brands go further, and it could be said that the vast majority of them not only present the obvious but also seek to show the entire lifestyle, understanding that the term "lifestyle" refers to a way of life or the way in which an individual chooses to live, characterized by a patterned system of life structure and activities (Dayun & Eunju, 2021). In this case all of that surrounds the garments that when we use is when we reveal the most of our bodies.

When beginning to observe the collected data, it is evident how the brands are interested in showing their consumers tips to lead a desirable lifestyle to wear the garments designed by them in the best way. Food images, recommendations of places to visit, hydration or tanning advice, complete looks that accompany the garments, and in general the search for physical care are topics that are beginning to be discussed and evidenced within the contents of these brands. All of this is because fashion brands contribute to the development of commercial activities, relationships among people, fields such as art, music, literature, culture, beauty, and many more (Noris *et al.,* 2020).

For brands it is clear that to sell their garments, they must present to their consumers how they will accompany the non-verbal expression of their personal styles. In other words, a woman who wears a brand like brand one, which is full of details, colors, and textures, is not the same as one who wears, a brand that hopes to be recognized for the simplicity and sophistication of its garments. All of these brand expresses their styles very well, which speak to two different women who by wearing any of their clothes, will let the world see more of their personality. As stated by Kalbaska *et al.,* (2019), it is also a matter of communication: from a more personal level fashion helps people communicate their own identity, who they are and also who they would like to be, and from a wider level, it gathers together many communication and marketing experts, coming from different fields and having different backgrounds.

Like consumers, brands recognize that an image is worth more than a thousand words; each of the people who access SNS seeks identification, a sense of belonging, and, as previously discussed within the theoretical framework, emotional connections. When talking about fashion clothing it is important to recognize that these are not simple objects that one uses to cover or adorn one´s body. There is much more involved in the simple act of putting on clothes, since "nothing is only one thing" (Tateo & Marsico, 2019, p. 135)

By having the brands selected and as a first approach, each of their web pages was explored, especially the part in which they talk about who they are, and what their missions are, what they want to express, but through text so that once audiovisual data could be compared, it could be determinated if they are consistent with what they express textually within their websites and what they present within their SNS profiles.

Within the analysis of the data, some relationships became evident, and others raised doubts about the intention of the publication. The vast majority of these brands allude to the impor-

tance of being Colombian, that they are made in the country, and that in general, they recognize their Latin roots, but in contrast to this it is found that a small part of these make use of Colombian landscapes to show their products. Most of these brands in the texts that accompany the images address their consumers in English. Certainly, given the discourse within each brand, this can be attributed to their international strategic approach upon which they are placing their wagers.

Likewise, each one speaks of its importance of being unique, innovative, and exclusive, which also allows us to conclude that there is a clear understanding that consumers today are greatly affected by aspects such as being unique and feeling that although they are not personalized garments, using any of these brands will give a touch of exclusivity to their look.

Compared to what they express within their websites, there is one more aspect that should be mentioned: the vast majority speak only of being feminine brands, only some of them, such as brand 5, express that women's swimsuits complement men's shorts. But when analyzing their publications, they refer to the fact that they are practically family brands, where there is a swimsuit for the different members of the family in the case of children and in others, being able to wear outfits that combine with your partner is one of the greatest benefits offered by these brands.

Online experiences challenge brands since emotions and sensations must be produced through images or videos, taking advantage of the fact that social networks offer consumers and businesses valuable opportunities to establish positive connections and enhance their advertising efforts (Salem & Alanadoly, 2021). Each of the evaluated brands showed a different evolution that, in general, stems from a clearer and broader understanding of their consumers. Words such as exclusive, unique, and innovative can be seen in each of the brands, but the important thing is to understand what the consumers of each of the brands understand by exclusive, unique, and innovative, which will allow them to generate not only garments but also content with which to identify each other and thus generate long-term relationships.

In summary, and as indicated above, the methods applied followed the recommended procedures concerning netnography (Kozinets, 2015, 2020) and content analysis (Silverman, 2006) to ensure a high level of reliability in the research conducted.

5. FINDINGS

In this study, the most significant data obtained from the observation of the 10 swimwear brands will be used and will be located within the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix proposed by Urde (2013), which is composed of nine elements within an organizational identity framework described from the textual. Additionally, we believe that, as mentioned previously, this framework adapts very well to the construction of identity that can be achieved through social media based on images. As a result of this study, these elements will be further described for audiovisual identity construction, which is the main objective of this study. This approach allows us to examine how these brands utilize visual content on social media to shape their identity, considering the unique aspects of image-based communication in

the digital landscape. By integrating the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix with the visual strategies observed, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how swimwear brands establish and reinforce their identity in the online space, focusing specifically on the visual elements that resonate with their target audience.
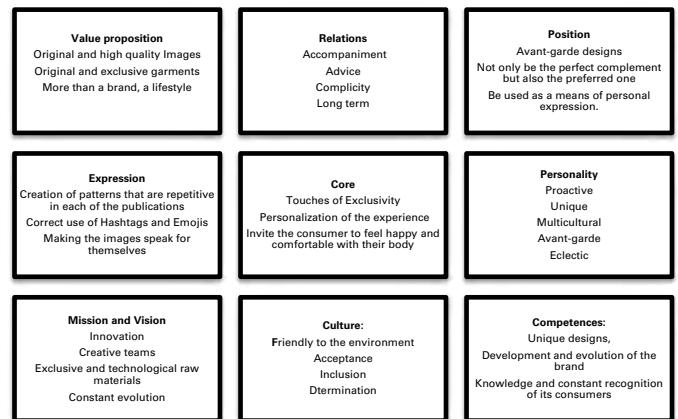
Corporate Brand Identity Matrix

Figure 2
Corporate Identity Matrix
Source: Authors from Urde (2013, p. 75).

As nowadays many consumers prefer simpler but richer shopping experiences by using the Internet and new shopping technologies, retailers need to create the necessary conditions for providing the right experience (Silva *et al.,* 2020). The swimwear brands evaluated in most of the data reflected a clear focus on the creation of lifestyles, that is, they do not want to be the garment that accompanies only a moment but are seen as a way of living life. They not only want to be a company, but they also want to be a guide for their consumers.

In the first link of the corporate identity matrix proposed by Urde are the value proposition, relationships, and position. These three, as external factors, occur when the brands have already carried out an initial recognition process and have created guidelines for the development of what they want to reflect externally. From the visual part, original and high-quality images must be created through which the brand's designs can be shown pleasantly and creatively. Moreover, relationships are no longer just the general knowledge of the consumers, but they should be long term, where the accompaniment and the complicity of giving advice make the relationships feel more like friendship than a commercial transaction.

Regarding the position, it is clear that earning a place in the market is led by earning a place in the minds and hearts of consumers, which is why it must be a form of expression to reach a place where they are not only consumed but also preferred over other brands that can offer the same but do not go beyond being simple clothing producers. In other words, consumers no longer see swimwear only as clothes for the beach, but by following brands and communicating with them through social network sites they are making an even broader statement of their tastes and preferences.

The second link of the corporate identity matrix proposed by Urde tells us about the elements that can be seen both internally and externally. Expression plays a fundamental role in the creation of organizational identity through images, since it makes an obvious allusion to what is being sought and involves knowing how to correctly express everything that the brand has to communicate to its consumers visually.

Creating images and videos that when seen are immediately connected with the brand should be the goal. Whether it is the backgrounds of the photos or the music in the videos, it should be determined what the visual and/or auditory pattern is with which they want to be associated. Likewise, as this SNS (Instagram) allows for text to accompany the audiovisual content, the supporting elements that can be used are especially hashtags and emojis. The first is to create their own and thus generate search patterns where the brand is the first to be found, and the second is to find those that express the thoughts and ideas that the brand wants to communicate.

In terms of personality, this is one of the elements with which greater closeness with consumers can be achieved, since this is a way in which the brand is described humanly. This will allow consumers to feel closer to it and to be able to determine in a clear way in which they are similar or if the brand can take on a more aspirational role in the life of the consumer.

In the third link of the corporate identity matrix proposed by Urde, there are internal factors of the brands, these must be recognized initially and from this, guidelines for the development of what they want to reflect externally should be created. The mission and vision tell us who we are and who we want to become but considering that the world of fashion is changing and constantly evolving, these brands must keep in mind that the consumer and the market change; nothing stays the same. While brands evolve, they must remain relevant and true to who they are because if trends are made just to satisfy momentary changes, they can jeopardize the relationships that have been built for a long time with their consumers. That is to say, these two elements must be raised, but constantly evaluated and somehow redirected.

The culture will always be represented through clear and concrete actions, which is to say that through this it will be verified that everything that has been said and exposed is fulfilled. Marketing allows these brands to achieve social expressions that are coupled to each culture. The need to cover ourselves is the same, what makes it different in how we do it is culture, and this in turn is dynamic and changing.

Therefore, through these audiovisual contents, it becomes easier to express oneself in different ways to reach more markets that in turn include different cultures with which each brand seeks to be identified. Finally, within this link is the competition, which within the visual part must seek to show that the brand is in constant evolution and the reasons why it must be first on the preference scale of its consumers.

It is essential to make use of visual content to show significant changes experienced by the brand, remembering that today's consumers have changing tastes and that they will always be on the lookout for brands that surprise them and offer them something new.

The core of the brand is part of the second link, but in some way, it involves all the elements, so it should be referred to as a set of all the elements named above. At this point, it is the promise that is made to consumers, and this has a role of significant importance in the construction of identity since it is where this the trust that exists between brands and consumers is formed and gains strength. This element has a prominent level of subjectivity since this is where the secret of why it is unique lies and the reason for truly wanting to offer not only products but also original experiences for its consumers.

This last element holds Whitin itself the reason why consumers will recognize brands as different and purposeful. The components of this element must be clear and understood by company collaborators, but indecipherable by their competitors, with the sole purpose of fostering a heart-to-heart relationship between brands and consumers. It's not about what other brands do, it's about what makes each brand stand out from the rest.

The nine elements of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix proposed by Urde are clearly evident in their applicability to Colombian swimwear fashion brands. Through the analysis of these brands on Instagram, it is apparent how each element of the matrix, from mission and vision to values and brand personality, is reflected in the visual communication strategies employed. This approach not only provides a deep understanding of how these brands construct and maintain their organizational identity but also highlights the importance of tailoring these strategies to a specific market. The integration of Urde's matrix with the observations made offers valuable guidance for brands seeking to strengthen their presence and resonance in the competitive digital fashion market.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In terms of the principal conclusions, first, the essence, the soul, and the heart are by nature intangible and imaginary in some way, but by bringing them together and giving them meaning and value they make not only human beings but also brands stand out from each other. It is important to keep in mind that personal expression is based on communicating what you feel and think verbally and nonverbally. The personality of brands is built from these two forms; the verbal form is what you can show tangibly, either through words, designs or styles and the nonverbal form is when it goes beyond what the consumer expects it to be and makes its way into the consumer's habits not only of purchase but also begins to become part of their digital world.

At this point, subjectivity plays a fundamental role since everything lies in the perspective of the core of the brand and how it expects to be represented in the outside world. Subjectivity itself refers to a way of thinking and feeling for oneself, which is why subjective characteristics are a determining factor in the construction of digital content since differentiators will emerge from these that will allow brands to be unique. Thus, they can decide how they want to be seen and how not, as proposed by Roca *et al.* (2017). Unlike more objective or universal approaches, subjectivity in fashion recognizes that decisions about what is beautiful, what is appropriate or what is trendy are deeply influenced by individual and cultural factors. In the specific case of this study, it is also being influenced by the relationship between brands and their consumers, whereby building brands together they end up identifying themselves through the preferences of both.

Taking a tour of the digital world of swimwear brands, you could immediately say that you only see more of the same; pretty women in swimsuits, with spectacular bodies enjoying paradisiacal beaches. However, but deep down, you begin to find that first, brands have ceased to be aspirational in order to make their consumers feel closer to the brand, either by publishing images sent by their users or by sharing images where having a sculptural body does not prevail but rather the sensation of tranquility, comfort and a total acceptance of who they are. Brands have understood that through social networks, it is about making consumers feel closer to them, since the sole purpose of social networks is not a commercial transaction, consumers first consolidate longer and more lasting relationships, where they feel they are taken into account as part of the brands.

Second, the products move to another plane. Although brands want to be profitable, they have understood that their consumers not only want brands that sell to them but also brands with which they can have two-way communication. SNS represents a new challenge for brands and consumer researchers, as they present a new form of the consumer-brand relationship (Davis *et al.,* 2014). Showing ideas of places to meet, beauty products, ideas for personal care, and motivational phrases are some of the content that demonstrates a clear association with the correct lifestyle that should be led to better enjoy the products of the brand. This seems to be one of the most important points revealed by this research, which indicates that building relationships with their consumers not only based on the sale and purchase of products helps to share and promote brand organizational values. Being able to co-create and have two-way relationships with their consumers supports the process of creating not only products but in this case especially identity in SNS based on images.

This point highlights that brands within SNS in terms of content control, still have the power to decide how to display their identity through these media. In this sense, brand literature tends to conceptualize brand identity as an internal construct that emanates unilaterally from the organization (So *et al.,* 2017). As human beings what makes us different from each other, apart from our appearance, is the personality forged and formed by our roots, lifestyles and culture. The same happens with brands; their personality is born from the roots that their creator imprints on Them. It is intended to be used in certain moments of life and the culture to which it belongs marks the path of the needs that it will satisfy.

Mobile and web-based technologies create interactive platforms for individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann *et al.,* 2011). These technologies have revolutionized the way people relate to content created by brands, allowing real-time interactions. Organizations can now take advantage of these digital spaces to create and project their identity in a more dynamic and interactive way. This real-time interaction allows organizations to continually evolve their identity based on the opinions and contributions of their community, allowing for a more fluid and responsive approach. As a result, the integration of mobile technologies and image-based social networks is not only improving connectivity, but also transforming the fundamental ways in which identity is constructed and perceived in the digital age. The constant increase in connectivity that these platforms allow

has also given rise to the formulation of new ways of constructing organizational identity.

7. THEORICAL CONTRIBUTION

The research reveals how visual content strategies and social media interactions contribute significantly to the formation of brand identity, aligning with the approaches of Urde (2013) in his Corporate Identity Matrix. This model suggests that brand identity is built through a combination of internal and external factors, such as mission and vision, organizational culture, and competencies, as well as value proposition, relationships and market position. In the digital context, these elements materialize in the posts and visual content that brands share on platforms such as Instagram. Furthermore, the research corroborates McFarland and Ployhart's (2015) theories on the rapid evolution of social networks and their ability to transform communication between brands and consumers. Social network interactions allow consumers to influence brand messages and meanings, which aligns with Farzin *et al.*'s (2020) findings on consumers' active participation in creating and modifying branded content online. This bidirectionality in communication is fundamental to building a coherent and resonant brand identity.

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Human communications are being shaped by new technologies, so this research for practice could be of great use since SNS today are gaining more and more strength as a marketing and advertising tool within organizations.

In the case of the swimwear brands analyzed, there was an initial perception that it was only necessary to publish pretty women in swimwear and that's it. However, after conducting the research, the brands have evolved and must continue in constant evolution to build lasting relationships with their consumers through SNS.

It is not only about looking for women with bodies that are almost unattainable for their consumers, but it is also about showing a real brand, that adapts to anybody a brand that does not want to be seen in an aspirational way but in a real way. Not only through their communication but also in building relationships that feel real, true and lasting.

That is why, by building their identity on SNS based on images, this research will serve as a source of support for brands to understand that they not only sell products through their photos but that their consumers look for brands that reflect lifestyles, and that speak to real women, making value propositions that the consumer can perceive.

Finally, this study contributes to understanding how brands can leverage image-based platforms to differentiate themselves and create a strong and consistent identity that resonates with consumers.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study is not free of empirical, methodological and conceptual limitations. At an empirical level, the case study period is

limited, but according to the direction offered by netnography, it is extensive enough to provide an in-depth account of the aspects that contribute to the creation of organizational identity in social networks based on images, in the case of this study, Instagram.

This research has some limitations. Firstly, it focuses only on netnographic research on chosen brands, considering that Internet research can be broader, since it can use other approaches. The web provides researchers with various opportunities that can be considered. in future research. Furthermore, it is clear that this research cannot be generalized to the entire fashion population, since it is exploratory. Therefore, for future research a greater number of brands or brands that are part of markets other than the Colombian one could be selected.

As a continuation of the present study, a future line will be to identify if the comments that accompany the photos or videos, written by the brand, generate some type of influence on the comments that are given by the users of the SNS, such as the use of the same emojis. By validating whether this happens or not, it will be possible to demonstrate in a better way that the relationship that exists between brands and consumers through the SNS, has not only remained a like but has also evolved to the point of influencing how comments on these photos or videos are made. The understanding and validation of this will also serve as a source of reference to give a broader explanation of the aforementioned if the brand wants to identify itself with its consumers or if it wants its consumers to identify with it.

In the same way, this type of research could be replicated in other sectors in which a high use of SNS based on images is shown, to understand how identity is built through these, which would allow in the future consideration of how the construction of identity through images occurs as well as how organizational identity is built through text in a general way.

Additionally, this research could be applied to other social media platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube Shorts, where strategies for constructing organizational identity based on visual content can be explored and adapted. These platforms, known for their emphasis on visual content, offer new opportunities for brands to connect with their consumers in creative and dynamic ways. Extending the analysis to these social network sites allows an investigation into how brands can maintain their organizational identity while leveraging the unique features of each platform to maximize their reach and impact.

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