Exploring brand equity assessment within consumer perception. Case of the jeans industry

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The adoption of institutionalist theory derived from Thorstein Veblen is justified by its capacity to confer legitimacy to the subject in an environment where symbolic economies guide exchange intentions. In this context, the fashion industry, grappling with challenges in acquiring new clients and enhancing management performance, seeks alternatives such as brand equity to foster profound symbolic relationships between fashion brands and consumers while conferring legitimacy to the consumer. This study contributes to the comprehension of fashion consumer perception, particularly in response to symbolic stimuli, by delving into the measurement of brand equity in jeans garments. Our methodology was guided by a comprehensive literature review, enabling the construction of a survey instrument to gauge fashion consumers' perceptions of brand equity. Subsequently, we collected a sample of 857 university students from Medellín City, Colombia. The survey results underwent exploratory factor analysis, revealing that brand equity is instrumental in comprehending market dynamics within the fashion industry. We specifically focused on neotraditional, contemporary, and exhibitionist archetypes, highlighting their significance in purchasing jeanswear. These archetypes create symbolic associations between brands and products based on status, differentiation, and market acceptance. Essential consumer variables include popularity, rebuy intent, and social responsibility. These findings hold theoretical and managerial implications, shedding light on the intricate interplay between brand equity, consumer perceptions, and symbolic aspects in the fashion industry.

Keywords: sociology of consumption; brand equity; fashion industry; jeans apparel; exploratory factor analysis

JEL codes: M3; Y8, Y80

Оценка торговой марки в контексте ее восприятия потребителем (на примере джинсовой одежды)

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Заложенная Торстейном Вебленом институциональная теория показала, что экономическим обменом может руководить символическое значение предмета обмена. В этом отношении компании, работающие в сфере моды, ввиду стремления привлечь новых клиентов и повысить эффективность управления, обращают внимание на способы увеличить ценность торговой марки, тем самым упрочивая символические отношения между модным брендом и потребителем. Наше исследование направлено на то, чтобы улучшить понимание процессов, связанных с восприятием моды потребителями, в особенности в ответ на стимулы символической природы. Мы сосредоточились на измерении ценности торговой марки на примере брендов джинсовой одежды. Обзор литературы послужил теоретико-методологической основой для разработки инструментария, который позволил провести оценку восприятия потребителями тех или иных торговых марок модной одежды. Опрос охватил выборку из 857 студентов университетов г. Медельин, Колумбия. Факторный анализ результатов опроса показал, что оценка торговой марки играет важную роль в понимании рыночной динамики в индустрии моды. Мы уделили особое внимание таким архетипам как неотрадиционный, современный и ориентированный на создание эффектного образа, подчеркнув их значение при выборе джинсовой одежды. Эти архетипы образуют символические ассоциации между торговой маркой и товаром на основе статуса, дифференцирования и рыночного признания. Важнейшими переменными, связанными с восприятием потребителя, являются популярность, намерение совершить повторную покупку и социальная ответственность. Результаты значимы как с теоретической точки зрения, так и в плане управленческих процессов, поскольку проясняют сложную взаимосвязь между ценностью торговой марки, восприятием ее потребителями и символическими аспектами в индустрии моды.

Ключевые слова: *социология потребления; ценность торговой марки; индустрия моды; джинсовая одежда; факторный анализ*

Introduction

The fashion industry shows some needs related to management performance, facing difficulties in achieving new clients. Hence, brand equity appears as an alternative to enable deep relationships in symbolic aspects between fashion brands and consumers. The context in which we settle is Medellín, Colombia because this city's primary income comes from the fashion industry chain, contributing to the country's GDP[1]

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[1] Banco de la República (2021). Informe de política monetaria, p. 130. https://www.banrep.gov.co/sites/default/files/paginas/amjd_marzo_2021.pdf

(Carbonó López, 2021). Brand equity facilitates the practice and efficiency of scholars and practitioners to comprehend consumer perception, brand, and its relevance in fashion due to diverse associations made by clients to brand features (Arnett et al., 2003; Davis et al., 2009; Valette-Florence et al., 2011). Some relevant characteristics that brand equity stands out for fashion brands are brand image, stimuli, quality, and awareness, among others, in symbolic aspects representing benefits for fashion consumers (Cho et al., 2015; Raut et al., 2019). Those features of brand equity for the fashion context in Medellín allow us to select the path of messages and communications impact to catch client attention and strengthen loyalty to brands symbolically (Rahman et al., 2021b; Rindell and Santos, 2021).

The fashion phenomenon's main feature is its dynamism in dressing the body and consuming artifacts. We identify a gap in articulating fashion, management, and marketing, particularly in the effort made by managers, which avoid the symbolic aspects, communications, and stimuli that garments generate in fashion consumers conduct to purchase (Quintas-Froufe and Quintas-Froufe, 2010; Hsiao et al., 2020; Koivisto and Mattila, 2020; Llovet Rodríguez, 2016; Wu et al., 2020). Attending to the multiple needs and problem, we focus on symbolic aspects of fashion and garments (Collett et al., 2013; Hsiao et al., 2020). Moreover, brand equity contributes to reducing management gap by studying fashion consumers in Medellín city.

This is due to the need for more knowledge about the relevance of symbolic aspects for the fashion industry (Barthes, 1978; Peirce, 1974), particularly for consumers. We consider the application of brand equity in the process of comprehension from practitioners and scholars of management about fashion consumers, and measuring it through brand equity is an alternative to fill the gap (Kim et al., 2019). In addition, we recognize that the symbolic aspects result in complex translations in strategies and sales for managers. However, those aspects are essential to activate the purchase intention of consumers (Collett et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2019). We decided to study the incidence of garment signs in fashion marketing; in this sense, we want to explore the brand equity measure of fashion consumers' perception in the jeans apparel industry. We mainly focus on the Medellín-Colombia fashion market because we did not find empirical evidence of measuring brand equity punctually in the jeans industry related to consumers' perceptions, which is an opportunity to perform a relevant study to feed the available knowledge.

Brand equity improves symbolic relations where consumers feel represented by fashion brands' discourse (Aaker, 1996b; Raut et al., 2019). Hence, brand equity allows practitioners to reduce management inefficiencies when creating value, and comprehending this concept from a consumer perspective is a guide to proposing strategies (Gómez and Pérez, 2018; Tasci, 2021; Wood, 2000). As well, positive associations given by brand equity generated consumer ease management. However, it is essential to measure and manage results with a reliable instrument (Quan et al., 2020).

Thus, brand equity experts mention emergent concepts to help others comprehend them; scholars recommend some categories to understand the benefits of brands, such as awareness, positive associations, brand image, and quality (Kotler and Keller, 2012; Leuthesser et al., 1995). In this sense, the brand equity approach to explaining human behavior and purpose archetypes helps build brand identity (Castro et al., 2006). The pillars identified among all conceptual proposals are differentiation, attitude, and brand knowledge (Ailawadi et al., 2003; Whan Park et al., 2010). For example, attitude segmentation measures the latent variable of attitude, which is observable in consumers. Another proposal is a price premium to measure perceived quality, indicating consumers' perception of the product (Ailawadi et al., 2003; Huang et al., 2014).

Consumers' perceptions and awareness become the main target of brand equity (Raut et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2012; Zarfino, 2010). The measure implications help management performance; also, a survey for brand equity could inform their dimensions (Davis et al., 2009). The brand equity index is also valuable because it explains consumer perception and enables practitioners to make better decisions in the short term and plan strategies in the long term. Therefore, it is necessary to perform brand equity measurements in fashion to improve market development.

Furthermore, the information on brand equity directs us to understand it as a conceptual focus on the client's perception of brand value (Aaker, 1996b). One of the relevant aspects of this concept is that it allows consumers to connect with brands in a symbolic sense (Whan Park et al., 2010). This discovery is one of the central values of brand equity because, in the economic field, no one focuses on the intangible attributes, which means enriching the symbolic content of brands to strengthen the relationship with users (Gómez and Pérez, 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Obiegbu et al., 2020; Xara-Brasil

et al., 2018). We identify that brand equity still has potential, particularly in the fashion industry, where the symbolic aspect is not fully developed. In this sense, approaching to measure this concept allows us to comprehend fashion brands' tangible and symbolic features (Aaker, 1996b); it also helps us understand the influence of brand equity in consumer perception of jeans apparel.

Moreover, proposing an instrument to measure brand equity can elevate marketing impact in the fashion industry because we will know consumer perception of fashion brands (Horstmann, 2017; Perez and Bairon, 2013; Tranavičiūtė, 2020). Some relevant concepts associated with brand equity are loyalty, quality perception, and fashion awareness as an approach to the consumer (Aaker, 1996b); those insights lead us to recognize the importance of applying, understanding, and measuring brand equity in the fashion industry. In the identification process, we detect a latent need to know and measure consumers' perceptions about the symbolic associations of brands. Solving this need should help us predict purchase decisions and product performance (Hunt, 2010). Furthermore, the Medellín fashion industry represents an attractive context for research and measuring brand equity because it is a growing market, especially in jeans production. Hence, we turn to a segmented sample of fashion consumers of Medellín. In other words, the selection focuses on three consumers' archetypes (Ganassali and Matysiewicz, 2021; Jung, 1970).

On the other hand, scholars mainly use SEM and PLS; these techniques help measure constructs through observable variables, incidences, and correlations (Baah et al., 2021; Matzler et al., 2007). Despite the lack of tools in the literature, the authors encouraged us to explore some ideas of the type of questions we can use for brand equity measures (Aaker, 1996b). Among all Aaker's insights, we highlight (1) does this brand have personality?, and (2) have you ever listened to this brand?

Following the conceptual background, we propose an instrument and a measurement model to comprehend fashion consumers' perceptions about jeans brands' benefits. Moreover, we consider concepts such as brand awareness, differentiation, communications, loyalty, and archetypes (Aaker, 1996a; Keller et al., 2015; Leuthesser et al., 1995). Also, we consider the jeans apparel industry, characterized by the use of denim as a primal fabric, and the silhouette is flexible[2] (Giraldo and Aparicio, 2016). Consequently, we triangulate these variables with three common consumer archetypes named neotraditional, contemporary, and exhibitionist, which we will describe later (Cho et al., 2015; Collett et al., 2013; Goldsmith et al., 1994; Horstmann, 2017; Jung, 1970; Li et al., 2013). Furthermore, we prioritize measuring consumer perception of brand impact and symbolic associations due to the lack of tools created for the fashion industry (Aaker, 1996a; Aaker, 1997). In other words, we want to avoid fashion, management, and marketing inefficiencies by measuring clients' perceptions of value in garment representation (Arai et al., 2013). To create the instrument, we try to increase available information on the concept using a literature review, and we complement it with empirical testing among jeanswear buyers from Medellín.

In this context, our research focuses on creating a measurement instrument of brand equity, and we try to support our decision in the research process; that is why we present the report of the achievements in this text. Furthermore, we found that measuring brand equity might provide tangible and symbolic insights for practitioners and researchers (Bridson and Evans, 2004). Our contribution is oriented to fulfil the lack of theoretical and empirical studies of brand equity in the fashion industry located in the Medellín context. We structure our manuscript as follows. Initially, we offer a general context in the introduction. In the following section, we introduce a brand equity theoretical framework. We describe the methodology that leads us to present our results. In the next section, we offer the literature review, the constructs, and the measurement model. Then, we develop the discussion with other authors. Finally, we feature the conclusions, limitations, and references.

Theoretical background

General context

Initially, the institutionalist theory was adopted for the theoretical frameworks, mainly drawn from Veblen's (2000) work on the leisure class. We chose this because Veblen's text provides insights into marketing, clothing, and symbols, considering them influential factors in specific contexts. The

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[2] SURA (2014). Informe sectorial sistema moda. *Estrategias Comerciales*, pp. 7–12. https://www.sura.com/estrategiasComerciales/documentos/pdf/informeSectorial-sistemaModa.pdf (accessed on September 9, 2022)

adoption of institutionalist theory from Veblen is justified by its ability to confer legitimacy to the subject in an environment where the economy of symbols guides exchange intentions. It allows individuals to showcase or imitate the power bestowed upon them through social validation, demonstrating authority, power, or influence. This establishes a social structure that assign status based on one's role, thereby facilitating the integration of disciplinary studies on marketing strategies and clothing symbols.

In Veblen's framework, social dynamics operate on various levels, emphasizing the importance of market dynamics, social roles, and the representation of individuals through clothing for meaningful interactions. The consumption and choice of attire become crucial elements for individuals to achieve interaction and social mobility, symbolizing their economic status.

Specifically, institutionalist theory aids in comprehending the individual, clothing symbols, and the economic backdrop. This theory is enriched by the science of semiotics to delve into the nature of signs, their structures, and the linguistic model, drawing on Peirce's approach (Peirce, 1974). Additionally, the perspective on the market and consumer behavior is enhanced by incorporating the theory of selective attention, which posits that consumers pay heightened attention to specific products when stimuli align with context, imaginaries, and consumer desires (Broadbent, 1958). Furthermore, the project incorporates the symbolic interactionism theory, proposing using a sign system for individuals to communicate intentions within a social context (Simmel, 1950).

In addition, we approach the concept of clothing from a symbolic and communicative perspective rather than focusing on its functional aspects. Scholars suggest a reexamination of its meaning. For instance, researchers characterize clothing as an expression of social habits and traditions (Riello, 2001). Simultaneously, clothing is integral to individuals' social lives, empowering them to represent a particular social status in a given context (Goux, 2011). Moreover, within the realm of economic reasoning, clothing mirrors social values (Gómez, 2011; Jiménez Gómez, 2008) as it serves as both a product and an artefact crafted by individuals to fulfil human and symbolic needs (Baudrillard, 2009).

In economics and management, academics and practitioners study the process where consumers establish emotional bonds with brands, leading experts to create new ways to link them with new proposals or brand values (Rahman et al., 2021a). In this sense, brand equity appears as a construct that allows consumers to create relations with brands in symbolic aspects due to their perception of product features (Wood, 2000). Consequently, we present the main approaches to the brand equity concept.

Authors' approach to brand equity

Brand equity refers to the identity and value of a brand or organization that consumers perceive as attractive; spectators receive a message and build a relationship. However, it is more complex; brand equity reinforces brand attributes in client perception through symbolic meanings of brand products or services (Elliott, 1999). The symbolic perspective of brand equity presents implications for practitioners because consumers search for identity and bonds through the symbolic charge of goods (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Therefore, signs and symbols have been considered relevant in business transactions due to their immaterial attributes and difficulty measuring a symbol (Law et al., 2012).

In this sense, we found that the brand equity concept was born in the 1980s, and the pioneer is Lance Leuthesser. This author proposes that brand equity directly influences consumers' knowledge about brands and influences their responses (Leuthesser et al., 1995), helping us comprehend their perceptions. Additionally, differentiation is essential in brand equity to affect customers' expectations (Leuthesser et al., 1995; Leuthesser and Kohli, 1997).

Leuthesser mentions other factors, such as knowledge, because consumers must know brands' attributes and features (Leuthesser, 1997). In his proposal, the consumer response reflects the desire to allow brands to generate loyalty, and one of the main tactics to attract consumers is promotion because it makes them closer to brands hoping to develop loyalty, among other attitudes (Leuthesser, 1997). The elements mentioned represent the first equity stage, particularly brand vision and identity. Additionally, Leuthesser's effort to define the pillars conducts to comprehend value exchange and communication to consolidate a brand's perception. The last element is brand performance, including brand loyalty and price premium. In Leuthesser's (1997) proposal, we recognize the intention to catch and preserve consumers and the necessity of evaluating customers willing to pay

the price to indicate quality, status, and a symbolic representation. Hence, the main recommendation by the author is to go beyond instrumental practices in the brand equity study involving the lifestyle and beliefs of consumers in brand practices.

Another relevant exponent of brand equity is Kevin Keller, who proposed that brand equity is product value, which eludes brand discourse and approach to consumption practice. In contrast to Leuthesser, Keller centers on the product, saying that brand equity generates value and reflects in consumers' feelings (Keller et al., 2015; Kotler and Keller, 2012). He approaches consumer-based brand equity and the effect of brand knowledge produced on consumer response (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The consumer perspective is essential for brands to know consumer power through time. Keller emphasizes clients' perception of brand differences and consumers' responses to brand knowledge, perception, behavior, and preferences (Kotler and Keller, 2012); this leads us to conduct our approach to the perception of fashion consumers. We can see those elements in brand promises, where experts envision what brands should become for consumers, creating brand representations (Keller et al., 2015; Kotler and Keller, 2012).

Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (2012) illustrate some practitioners' applications of brand equity. For example, the BRANDASSET model supported differentiation to measure consumer perception of diverse attributes. In addition, brand attractiveness is one of the valuable features that drew customers' attention, enhancing brand equity performance. Also, Keller mentions a second model named BRANDZ; this model presents sequential steps to achieve brand equity performance (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The first step is the presence, understood as a visualization that helps organizations get closer to consumers, allowing brands to transcend. The authors' proposal on the first stage will enable managers to develop beliefs in consumers for brands. Then, in addition to presence and faith, emotional bonds create market advantages for brands to become competitive (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Finally, the bond where consumers establish rational and emotional attachments with brands and consequences involves consumer perceptions of symbolic features. The purpose of the models is to help brands differentiate in the market. Significantly, Kotler and Keller (2012) determine that brand equity arises when customers know how to differentiate brands according to their attributes and benefits.

On the other hand, one of the most representative authors on brand equity is David Aaker (1996a). His proposal suggests the Likert scale to measure the brand equity concept. Initially, Aaker said that brand equity is a way to create value and hold it on time. He recommends considering price premiums to indicate customers' loyalty to brands. Price premiums give information about consumers' willingness to pay. Another relevant aspect is the perceived quality, which helps measure brand equity under the client's perception of the product and its attributes (Aaker, 1996b).

Aaker suggests considering leadership and popularity to measure brand equity due to consumers' perception and their effect on brand behavior. On the contrary, he determines that associations are among the most vital indicators for measuring brand equity. Consumers perceive value, brand personality, and organizational associations as appealing to symbolic imaginaries of fashion clients. Aaker's proposals are oriented to the symbolic aspects of brands and products that influence clients' responses. Awareness influences consumer perceptions and attitudes toward fashion brands. Finally, Aaker mentions that market behavior refers to market share, price, and distribution due to these elements affecting brands' performance.

Consequently, other authors worked on the brand equity concept, which refers to brand characteristics that add or subtract the value of products (Yoo et al., 2000). Initially, brand equity helps consumers know its value from the consumer's point of view, leading them to make decisions (Baker and Sinkula, 1999). J. Aaker (1997) says that brand equity refers to symbolic aspects of brands because consumers give intangible personalities and attributes to brands to create a bond with products and services. Later, Rahman et al. (2021a) suggested paying attention to consumer-based brand equity. The study shows that brand experiences and cultural intelligence influence consumers' responses to stimuli. The authors' proposals lead us to think that the social aspects of clients determine their relationship with brands. Hence, Tasci (2021) says that consumer-based brand equity focuses on perception categories such as familiarity, image, perceived quality, consumer value, and brand loyalty. Brand equity relates to consumers' symbolic, social, and cultural aspects (Moorman and Rust, 1999).

Notably, consumers establish a relationship between brand equity and fashion when they make symbolic associations with brands (Jayasuriya, 2022). Furthermore, brand equity occurs when sym-

bolic associations consolidate consumer knowledge (Sharma, 2020). Consequently, the brand image is reflected in consumers' self-image. Moreover, the products reflect consumers' identity and self-expression (Seliani and Pratomo, 2019).

In the relationship process between brand equity and fashion, we recognize in the literature that marketing incorporates signs in strategic deployment; however, positive or negative interpretation of signs depends on consumer perception (Sari et al., 2022). Hence, this work recognizes fashion consumers' perceptions and their interpretations of garment signs to make purchase decisions. Thus, brand equity dimensions of associations are essential for brands because signs allow managers and fashion brands to focus on management and marketing activities to generate memories in consumers' minds (Kewenter and Galkin, 2021).

We should remember that brand equity influences consumer perception just as consumers' behavior. Notably, this work approaches the symbolic scenario that is part of the associations' category (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019; Kewenter and Galkin, 2021). Moreover, brand equity in fashion provides competitive advantages for companies, making them respond quickly to fashion trends (Sharma, 2020). In this sense, fashion consumers bond with styles, trends, and products (Cho et al., 2018).

Consequently, brand equity mediates the relationship between brands and fashion, especially from consumers' symbolic associations; this leads brands to construct themselves to provide social signs to consumers (Pool et al., 2018). In the value and signs delivery between consumers, the brand equity must face the typology of clients such as sensorial ones, which search assert themselves through hedonic stimuli that brands offer (Venkatraman and Price, 1990). In other words, the value that brand equity gives to fashion consumers from symbolic associations is external, from product signs that enable the consumer to receive admiration, putting them in a spot of superiority. At the same time, internally, fashion products give status and exclusiveness feeling (Kuusela, 2021). Studying consumer perceptions and their symbolic associations enriches brand equity centers in consumers. Thus, managers and researchers could distinguish and classify fashion consumers more assertively.

We consider literature on brand equity to construct a measurement instrument in this context. Academic ideas lead us to question consumer perception concerning fashion brands and products: (1) do consumers perceive brand value through brand equity; (2) do consumers pay attention to products when they are aware of a fashion brand; (3) whether brand equity allows consumers to make symbolic associations with fashion brands to guarantee a bond. Moreover, we conduct a mixed-method approach to determine the relationship between brand equity and fashion mediated by consumer perceptions.

Methodology

We oriented our methodology through a literature review to obtain referents (Donthu et al., 2021), which allowed us to construct an instrument to measure fashion consumers' perceptions of brand equity. We identify the literature material and acquire and organize the texts by brand equity content to pursue our goal. Later, we filter texts and choose the relevant ones to report the information later (Paul et al., 2021).

Additionally, to organize and analyze the data, we identify the purpose; later, we review construct behavior and prepare test specifications. Furthermore, we extract statistical properties and apply reliability and validity proofs. Finally, we finish by interpreting the scores (Crocker and Algina, 2006).

We collect a peculiar sample for our research. Initially, we segmented the respondents as fashion consumers of jeans. Then, we classify them into three consumer archetypes; this word refers to a model that functions to copy as a referent of perfection related to something. Hence, the fashion industry is not an exception, so we recognize three archetypes. The neotraditional one is characterized for being a person with a classic style that includes new visions (Caldwell et al., 2010; Jung, 1970). The contemporary archetype evolves with new dynamics and proposals (Caldwell et al., 2010; Maloney, 1999). The exhibitionist archetype presents an orientation for extravagance and trends (Baker et al., 2019; Lee and Jung, 2020).

Likewise, we fit the consumers' archetypes into university students. We mainly collect the sample in private and public universities, reaching 857 answers. Moreover, we include in our instrument the primary constructs found in the literature to comprehend the observable variables and consumer perception of brand equity through the measurement instrument. Table 1 presents our methodology design next to the technical details.

Table 1

Methodology design

Criteria	Qualitative approach	Quantitative approach
Role of the theory	Inductive	Deductive
Research strategy	Case study	
Unit of analysis	Constructs	
Sample	53 Documents – 9 primary documents from Scopus database	857 university students from Medellín City[3]
Variables	Characterize the constructs and observable variables	Participants' perceptions of constructs
Data analysis	Literature review and content analysis[4]	Exploratory factor analysis (Crocker and Algina, 2006)

Source: authors

In summary, we execute our analysis in IBM SPSS software, where we interpret the numerical values to achieve the reliability and validity of our created instrument in the specific case of Medellín.

Results

Medellín City is recognized as a fashion and textile producer in Colombia, which is why we center on this industry[5] (Carbonó López, 2021). Hence, we identify the opportunity to study brand equity and settle on the context by creating a measurement instrument of brand equity. Consequently, we initiate the qualitative approach to continue with the quantitative one. In interpreting the results, we choose the KMO, a measure of adequacy that helps to know if the instrument suits well (Baah et al., 2021). Consequently, we use Cronbach Alpha, a reliability measure, to analyze whether the instrument meets the required consistency. Those indices allow us to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument (Baah et al., 2021). As we present our methodology, we start identifying the purpose we offer next.

Identify the purpose

A few studies center on a measurement instrument in brand equity, especially to know consumer perception about symbolic aspects. Furthermore, it is expected to find available literature on measure models focused on miscellaneous brand equity, such as perceived quality, price, and brand image (Aaker, 1996b). In this sense, we aim to measure variables about symbolic brand equity issues through consumer perception. Our research approaches to studying and comprehending brand equity with symbolic associations consumers perceive in a fashion context. In this sense, we explore how to measure brand equity in the jeanswear fashion industry in Medellín. Hence, we comprehend the brand equity concept and its observable variables to construct and apply the instrument in the field.

Identify the behavior of the constructs

In our path to consolidate a measuring instrument, we conducted a literature review. We contrast our findings with the authors' ideas, and they clarify that a construct is a concept product of an informed imagination, explaining human behavior (Crocker and Algina, 2006). Usually, tests help researchers to measure constructs through visible indicators. To perform brand equity measurement, we conducted a literature review and recognized the constructs' order and their associated variables. We start with the scholars' proposals around the brand equity construct, and we finish with a synthesis of the authors' proposals, the techniques they used, and the constructs they performed. In this sense Feldwick (1996) says that brand equity has three uses:

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[3]   For a minimum viable sample, we followed suggestions by Hair et al., 2019.
[4]   Literature review and content analysis were guided by Barari et al. (2020) and Crocker and Algina (2006).
[5]   Banco de la República as cited above.

- The brand value groups the total of measurable aspects of brands.
- Brand strength measures the strength of clients' attachment.
- Brand description and is associated with consumer beliefs.

Feldwick (1996) takes data from the market, relative prices, behavioral measures from purchase frequency, and product evaluations to measure these uses. In addition, Leuthesser and Kohli (1997) mention the halo effect. This effect is a distortion of the measurement scale. Applying the halo effect on brand equity helps produce a bidirectional relation between beliefs and attitudes. In other words, attitude may generate consumer beliefs about brands. Moreover, this is important because Van Osselaer and Alba (2000) mention that some consumer responses are not conditioned and are intuitive. These findings help us project a consumer response prediction.

Besides, Ailawadi et al. (2003) determined that consumer and business-based brand equity share the same goal: increasing income, cash flow, and profit. The authors propose an income premium to measure brand equity because it is flexible around context changes such as price and market. However, we found more information about consumer-based brand equity in the literature. In this sense, Buil et al. (2013), who studied brand equity and consumer response, say that brand equity depends on perceived quality. Hence, quality leads consumers to value brands. Buil et al. (2013) conclude that brand equity improves clients' relationships and positive value over brands.

Another perspective of consumer-based brand equity is the proposal by Yoo and Donthu (2001). The authors say psychometric scales are optimal for measuring brand equity and help comprehend clients' cognitive value of brands. Those scales help practitioners to evaluate brands' performance. However, Chandon (2003) mentions the pyramid knowledge, including brand awareness, associations, favorable valuations, and active loyalty. Those classifications allow measuring consumer perceptions. Moreover, those proposals enable us to validate our categories and observable variables.

In the review, we identify that brand equity presents different models; in general, brand equity models are the cost-based method, the method based on market value for organizations, the financial method, and the consumer-based method. However, above all methods, we focus on the last one, mainly interpreting (Aaker, 1996a; 1996b; Aaker, 1997) approach and focus on consumer perception of brand equity in garment signs. Moreover, as we present next, we analyze and recreate the Aaker model for our specific case, as the Figure below depicts.
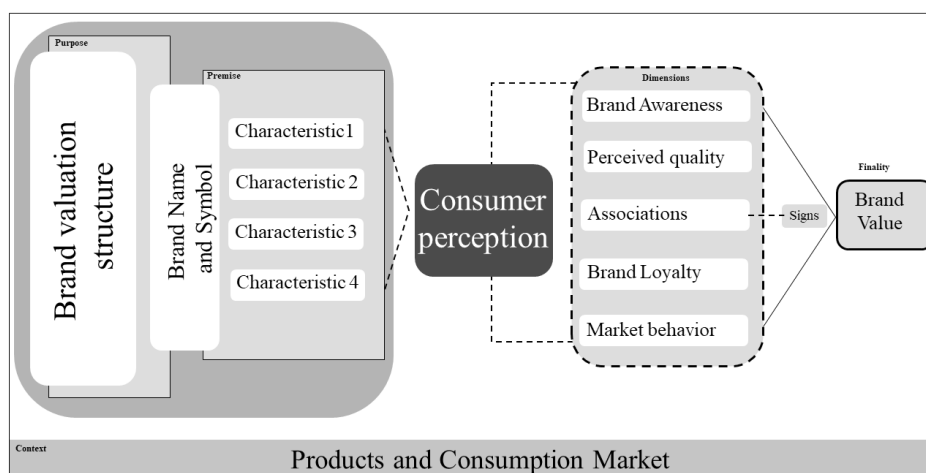

Fig. Interpretation of Aaker's model

Source: authors

Particularly in Aaker's (1996a) model, we pay special attention to the dimensions we use to delimit our instrument because we are interested in consumer perception. Furthermore, we performed a literature review, compiling primary documents extracted from Scopus that provided information about brand equity measures. In this review, we focus on the technique used by chosen authors to measure brand equity and the constructs we present in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of the literature review

Author	Technique	Constructs
Feldwick, 1996	Literature review	Brand value
		Brand strength, e.g., loyalty, awareness, quality, and other associations
Feldwick, 1996	Model review	Beliefs
		Attitudes
		Attributes
		Associations
Ailawadi et al., 2003	Brand equity correlations review	Attitude
		Awareness
		Picture
		Knowledge
Chandon, 2003	Method review	Satisfaction
		Leadership
		Perceived value
		Brand personality
		Brand associations
		Organizational associations
		Brand awareness
Van Osselaer and Alba, 2000	Experimental design	Product features description
		Instinctive attributes
Yoo and Donthu, 2001	Theory review	Consumer willingness, e.g., profit
		Sustainable competitive advantage, e.g., cash flow
		Product
Buil et al., 2013	Conceptual model	Brand awareness, e.g., recognition and familiarity
		Associations, e.g., perceived value, brand personality, and organizational associations
Valette-Florence et al., 2011	Conceptual model	Promotion intensity, e.g., perceived sales
		Brand personality, e.g., amiability, awareness, sophistication, fallacy, and introversion
		Brand equity, e.g., brand social values, brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality
		Symbolic associations
Aaker, 1996a	Brand equity measures	Loyalty
		Perceived quality
		Associations
		Awareness
Tuominen, 1999	Literature review	Brand awareness, e.g., recognition and remembrance
		Brand image, e.g., associations, the strength of associations, favorability of the associations, and unique associations
Tuominen, 1999	Case study	Athletic expertise
		Competition style
		Sportsmanship
		Rivalry
		Physical attractiveness
		Symbol
		Body fitness
		Life story
		Model to follow
		Effort in relationships
Tuominen, 1999	Service case	Brand equity
		Brand awareness
		Brand image

Source: authors

This review helps us identify the constructs, the observable variables, and the most popular techniques to measure the brand equity construct. Moreover, we use that information to present the following results.

Prepare test specifications

We created test specifications for measurement instruments. In this sense, we present multi-dimensional constructs extracted from literature (Castro et al., 2006). Moreover, our model has multiple constructs: first-order, second-order, and third-order. Following the authors' proposals about brand equity constructs, our model presents multidimensional constructs and is helpful for the theory because this type of model gives more context and can perform reflective or formative correlations (Wetzels et al., 2009). Moreover, a model with multidimensional constructs related between them is more valid and reduces theoretical complexity from a functional aspect (Bagozzi et al., 2013).

Consequently, we use the brand equity (Aaker, 1996a) proposal for the test specifications and extract the first, second, and third-order constructs. For example, our first-order construct is brand equity, and from Aaker, (1996a) we took the second-order constructs such as loyalty, perceived quality, brand image, and awareness. At the same time, we take the archetype construct from Arai et al. (2013). The order of constructs of brand equity is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Ordered constructs of brand equity

First-order construct	Second-order constructs	Third-order constructs
Brand equity	Loyalty	Loyalty
		Brand equity
	Brand image	Associations
		Symbols
		Life story
	Brand awareness	Awareness
	Archetype	Role model
		Fitness
		Physical attractiveness
		Rivalry
		Sportsmanship
		Competition style
		Experience

Source: authors

It is essential to recognize the observable variables for each construct. This recognition helps us to design a complete instrument. Below, we present the identification of the visible variables in Appendix 1. Test specifications constructs and observable variables.

The initial pool of items

Moreover, we use (Aaker, 1996a) and other authors' proposals to build the initial pool of items. However, not all the constructs suit the specific case of jeans apparel and the archetypical consumers; for that reason, we select the most concordant observable variables. Consequently, we continue the questionnaire writing to the literature review and identify the observable variables in Appendix 2, which shows the initial pool of items. In this sense, we took the most representative visible variables proposed by the authors, and we offer the following questions for each construct and variable. After we perform our questionnaire writing process, we follow the reviewing phase, where we involve some academics and practitioners to acquire their opinions and suggestions about the questions.

Review the items

Consequently, we submitted our questionnaire for linguistic verification from experts (Crocker and Algina, 2006). Moreover, we considered the order of the questions and tried to correspond to the observable variables.

Make a preliminary test

In particular, we conduct a tryout with four academic peers from Medellín University and thirty students from Pascual Bravo University and Medellín University (Crocker and Algina, 2006). In this context, we consider a preliminary test with a piece of the sample to check the questionnaire from the perspective of time to answer, verbal tome of the questions, grammar, and drive a common language for the young respondents.

Perform a field-test

In the field test, we clarified that this study collects the necessary answers using information tools due to the pandemic context we have been through; the primary tools were Google Forms, virtual classes, e-mail, and social media to share the questionnaire with our interest sample. Additionally, we followed the proposal of Hair et al. (2019) when he mentioned that every sample should have a 5:1 ratio (Hair et al., 2019). The sample ratio means that if we have 40 questions, we must collect 200 answers. Consequently, we collect 857 responses from jeanswear buyers between 20 and 30 years old. The sample characteristics of fashion consumers allow us to have a significant study. Our empirical contribution is oriented to the lack of evidence of brand equity performance in fashion, specifically with neotraditional, contemporary, and exhibitionist consumer profiles who purchase jeans garments.

Determine statistical properties

In this part, we follow an exploratory factor analysis of a statistical model representing the relationship between variables (Hair et al., 2019). This analysis typically explains the relations through latent variables named factors. The exploratory factor analysis includes statistical procedures to study new dimensions of a scientific problem (Howard, 2016). Furthermore, we implement the exploratory factor analysis to find new latent dimensions of our research problem. As we said before, we apply a questionnaire through observable variables to measure the brand equity construct.

We use the IMB SPSS® software, which helps us process data. For the use of the software, we configure factor extraction. In this part, we choose the maximum likelihood based on the eigenvalue. Next, in rotation, we put Promax. Then, in factorial punctuation, we selected the coefficient matrix. Finally, we suppressed small coefficients in the option, and our absolute value was 0.3. Once the initial configuration was ready, we applied a reliability analysis (Skvoretz et al., 1992). This analysis consists of verifying the reliability and validity of the test under Cronbach alpha parameters, which is a reliability measure, to analyze instrument consistency (Baah et al., 2021).

Design reliability and validity test

We apply some reliability and validity tests to the data in this context. First, in our configuration matrix, the variables change. As we saw before, we had the constructs of loyalty, brand image, brand awareness, and archetype. These constructs vary in the exploratory factor analysis. In our study, the software thought out four factors. In the first one, the IBM software group 14 observable variables related to brand image, awareness, quality, and archetype. In addition, we found that all the factors accomplished with the minimum significance value, the second-factor group nine observable variables related to brand image and archetype. The third factor has six visible variables: loyalty, brand image, and archetype. Finally, the fourth factor has five observable variables linked to the archetype observed in Appendix 3, configuration matrix from IBM SPSS® software.

Consequently, we performed the reliability and validity test through the KMO and Bartlett's test (Escobar-Sierra et al., 2021; Howard, 2016). The KMO relates the correlation coefficients (Baah et al.,

2021). The KMO scale means that if the number is near, one implies a high relation (Howard, 2016; W. Li et al., 2019). In our case, the KMO is 0.930. Hence, a number greater than nine represents a high correlation (Khalili-Damghani et al., 2015). Equally, we apply the Bartlett test, which contrasts the variance. In our data, zero represents a high intercorrelation degree (Hair et al., 2019).

In addition to the KMO and Bartlett test, we perform another reliability test called Cronbach Alpha. We use Cronbach's Alpha to measure the reliability of the data (Yang et al., 2019). We have high reliability because we got a scale of 0.93 (Bartlett, 1959). This number means that our instrument is significant, reliable, and valid (Zaim et al., 2010).

Interpret the scores

We verify the constructs' validity and reliability proposed for the instrument in the fashion context. We recognize that fashion consumers comprehend jeans brands' value through brand equity because the concept exalts symbolic attributes for clients to develop attachments to brands (Leuthesser, 1997). On the other hand, we consider that consumers are aware of the fashion attributes of brands; however, it is necessary to comprehend in depth the effect of the product on consumers due to our consumers' profile selection (Aaker, 1996b; Leuthesser, 1997).

Subsequently, we identify that consumers make symbolic associations with fashion brands through brand equity. Hence, it is crucial to verify the influence of jeans garment signs on brand equity (Aaker, 1996b; Kotler and Keller, 2012). Furthermore, we suggest a new factor grouping supporting the authors' review. Our first factor is performance, second is brand personality, third is satisfaction, and fourth is competitiveness. The new classification is offered in Appendix 4.

Once we consolidate the constructs and their factors, we perform a hermeneutic interpretation to obtain the new factors that IMB SPSS® software throws. In this sense, factor one is oriented to the brand performance in consumer perception. The second factor is brand personality, which refers to the feeling consumers develop for a brand or a product. The third factor is satisfaction, which is oriented to the relationship with the consumer. Furthermore, the last factor is competitiveness, which is the perception of consumers about how the brand relates to the context (Aaker, 1996a; Arai et al., 2013).

Discussion with other authors

Our discussion with other authors found that measuring brand equity involves different aspects. One of those aspects is the second-order constructs. We agree with Aaker's (1996b) proposal because he presents a panoramic view of the essential elements such as brand image, perceived quality, and brand awareness. Those concepts help the researchers and practitioners apply brand equity. Additionally, Aaker's proposal highlights ways to develop brand discourse and catch consumer attention. At this point, we know that measuring brand equity could be complex because we must measure a symbolic phenomenon. However, the process becomes easy if we follow the construct proposal by Aaker (1996b).

In contrast, we identify that some authors use brand equity only to measure clients' perceptions; this is an incorrect use of brand equity because it limits the fieldwork for brands. Brand equity implies multiple functions, such as creating brand discourse, evaluating the impact of quality on clients' purchases, and identifying a specific brand's consumer knowledge (Rahman et al., 2021a). Those elements help to improve brand performance. In addition, the proposal byVan Osselaer and Alba, 2000 needs to be revised because the brand equity measure focuses on product description and instinctive attributes, limiting the clients' relationship with brands. Another weak proposal is from Yoo and Donthu (2001), who said that consumer willingness and competitive advantage help measure brand equity. However, this proposal is just one aspect of brand equity that focuses on organizational performance and needs to cover the share market; brand behavior centers on organizational performance and needs to cover the share market, brand behavior, and context changes.

The literature review finds some essential common elements among the authors. Independent of the type of research, all the authors agree on brand value, price, and brand personality (Aaker, 1996a; 1996b; Ailawadi et al., 2003; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). Moreover, the associations are in the symbolic relation between consumers and brands or products (Leuthesser, 1997; Leuthesser et al., 1995). In

addition, literature usually shows loyalty and brand awareness (Buil et al., 2013; Chandon, 2003). We can infer that studying brand equity involves understanding the brand dimensions of consumer, organization, and context (Arai et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2009).

Conclusions

Exploring brand equity measurement under fashion consumer perception in the jeans industry, we found that symbolic aspects that consumers perceive improve economic discipline as stimuli elements related to purchases; this enables client experiences and the construction of brand awareness. We recognize that exploring brand equity measures is viable and truthful, particularly in the factor extraction process and reliability test. In this sense, we find essential consumer variables such as popularity, rebuy, and social responsibility.

Brand equity affects differentiation because consumers understand the different elements of brands. However, symbolic aspects are included in the differentiation, making consumers choose a brand. This research contributes to the understanding of fashion consumer perception under symbolic stimuli. Understanding other brand equity dimensions in fashion allows academics to chase, review, implement, and evaluate the performance of actions promoting symbolic experiences between consumers and brands. This research presents other variables and a solid symbolic dimension as an alternative to comprehending brand equity.

Our managerial contribution focuses on taking advantage of the impact of symbolic aspects on consumers. Moreover, our proposed instrument might help managers to design and create marketing strategies for the fashion industry focused on brand performance, brand personality from differentiation and taste sense, satisfaction perception, and competitiveness with social awareness. Those variables promote symbolic bonds with brands from fashion consumer perception.

Symbolic focusing that mediates between brand equity, fashion, and consumer perception implies a grade of subjectivity that does not constitute a measurable variable. Additionally, the context and the consumer typology mainly conduct inferences; the challenge consists of taking features of brand equity that scholars and managers may generalize with universal characteristics of fashion consumers to materialize strategies centered in symbolic aspects. One direction important for future research should be to track material variables and attributes of symbolism to define a measurement model and apply confirmatory analysis followed by generic strategies that help to use the construct in diverse contexts.

Furthermore, our methodology allows us to follow a pragmatical process in the humanities field that results in a valid instrument. The qualitative approach gives us the conceptual basis for understanding and measuring the multiple dimensions of the brand equity construct. Consequently, the quantitative approach helps us measure brand equity through statistical analysis that results in the applicability of fashion marketing.

Additionally, once we created and tested our measure instrument, we found that brand equity is helpful to understanding market aspects of brands and consumer perception, particularly in the fashion industry, where we select the neotraditional, contemporary, and exhibitionist archetypes. In addition, we focus on those archetypes that purchase jeanswear, and they establish symbolic associations of brand and products through the comprehension of symbolic aspects such as status, differentiation, and market acceptance. This process allowed us to put academic knowledge into practice. In the future, we expect to contribute to performing a transdisciplinary approach between fashion and marketing with our proposal. Later, we suggest developing a model of structural equations for brand equity. Future research must focus on and replicate our process in the specific field of the marketing mix. Those interested in fashion should develop our approach in the garment and sign context. Our recommendations are oriented toward establishing a conceptual relation between constructs.

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Appendix 1

Test specifications constructs and observable variables

First-order construct	Second-order constructs	Third-order constructs	Observable variables
Brand equity	Loyalty	Loyalty Brand equity	Satisfaction
			Favoritism
			Recommend to other
			Buyback
	Brand image	Associations Symbols Life story	Leadership
			Popular
			Innovative
			Value for money
			Personality
			Interesting
			Clear picture
			Confidence
			Admiration
			Different
			Attractive
			Style
			Trend
			History
			Drama
			Watch out
			Performance
			High quality
	Brand awareness	Awareness	Recognition
			Remembrance
			The first
			Known
			Strong
			Leader
	Archetype	Role model Fitness Physical attractiveness Rivalry Sportsmanship Competition style Experience	Dominant
			Knowledge
			Skills
			Distinctive
			Exciting
			Charismatic
			Respect
			Rivalry
			Attractive
			Beautiful
			Good condition
			Responsible
			Social
			Model to follow
			Leader

Source: authors

Pool of items

Construct	Questionnaire
Brand equity	By buying your favorite brand, you feel satisfied
	After buying your favorite brand, you would recommend it
	After buying your favorite brand, you would repurchase it
	Your favorite brand is a leader in its category
	Your favorite brand is famous
	Your favorite brand is innovative
	Your favorite brand is good value for money
	Your favorite brand has a personality
	Your favorite brand is attractive
	The image of your favorite brand is clear
	Your favorite brand builds your confidence
	You feel admiration for your favorite brand
	Your favorite brand is different
	Your favorites brand is attractive
	Your favorite brand has style
	Your favorite brand is trending
	Your favorite brand has a history
	Your favorite brand performs well
	Your favorite brand offers high quality
	Your favorite brand is recognized
	You remember the elements of your favorite brand, such as color, logo, and slogan
	Your favorite brand is the first you think of when it comes to clothing
	Your favorite brand is known
	Your favorite brand is vital
	Your favorite brand is the dominant one
	Your favorite brand is an expert at what it does
	Your favorite brand can compete with others in its class
	Your favorite brand is different
	Your favorite brand is exciting
	Your favorite brand is charismatic
	Your favorite brand is respectful
	Your favorite brand has an evident rivalry with other brands in the same category
	Your favorite brand is attractive
	Your favorite brand is excellent
	When you buy products from your favorite brand, they are in good condition
	Your favorite brand is responsible
	Your favorite brand is socially responsible
	Your favorite brand is a role model

Source: authors

Appendix 3

Configuration matrix

Question	Factor			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
When you buy your favorite brand of jeans, you feel satisfied			,809	
After buying your favorite brand of jeans, you would recommend them			,787	
After buying your favorite brand of jeans, you will repurchase it			,907	
Your favorite brand of jeans is a leader in its category	,679			
Your favorite brand of jeans is famous	,912			
Your favorite brand of jeans is innovative		,736		
Your favorite brand of jeans is good value for the money			,530	
Your favorite jeans brand has personality		,748		
Your favorite brand of jeans is attractive		,810		
The image of your favorite brand of jeans is clear				
Your favorite jeans brand builds confidence	.		,539	
You feel admiration for your favorite brand of jeans		,457		
Your favorite brand of jeans is different		,879		
Your favorite brand of jeans is attractive		,819		
Your favorite brand of jeans has style		,758		
Your favorite brand of jeans is trending	,427	,616		
Your favorite jeans brand has a history	,624			
You remember the elements of your favorite jeans brand, such as color, logo, and slogan	.	.		
Your favorite brand is the first you think of when it comes to clothing				
Your favorite brand of jeans is known	,954			
Your favorite brand of jeans is strong	,806			
Your favorite brand of jeans is a top	,661	.		
Your favorite brand of jeans is the best				
Your favorite brand of jeans is consistent	,400			
Your favorite brand of jeans is dominant	,698			
Your favorite jeans brand is an expert at what it does	,495			
Your favorite brand of jeans can compete with others of its kind	,490			
Your favorite brand of jeans is different		,631		
Your favorite jeans brand is exciting		,694		
Your favorite brand of jeans is respectful				,753
Your favorite jeans brand has an evident rivalry with other brands in the same category	,419			
Your favorite brand of jeans is friendly				,400
When buying products from your favorite jeans brand, these are in good condition			,631	
Your favorite brand of jeans is responsible				,883
Your favorite brand of jeans is socially responsible				,831
Your favorite brand of jeans is a role model				,719
Your favorite brand of jeans is charismatic		,453		,432

Source: authors

A new factor classification based on the literature review

Factor 1: Performance		
Question	**Score**	**Authors**
Your favorite brand of jeans is a leader in its category	0,679	Aaker, 1996a;
Your favorite brand of jeans is popular	0,912	Arai et al., 2013
Your favorite brand of jeans is trending	0,427	
Your favorite jeans brand has a history	0,623	
Your favorite brand of jeans is known	0,954	
Your favorite brand of jeans is strong	0,806	
Your favorite brand of jeans is top	0,661	
Your favorite brand of jeans is consistent	0,400	
Your favorite brand of jeans is dominant	0,698	
Your favorite jeans brand is an expert at what it does	0,494	
Your favorite brand of jeans can compete with others of its kind	0,490	
Factor 2: Brand personality		
Question	**Score**	**Authors**
Your favorite brand of jeans is innovative	0,736	Arai et al., 2013
Your favorite jeans brand has personality	0,748	
Your favorite brand of jeans is interesting	0,809	
You feel admiration for your favorite brand of jeans	0,457	
Your favorite brand of jeans is different	0,879	
Your favorite brand of jeans is attractive	0,819	
Your favorite brand of jeans has style	0,758	
Your favorite brand of jeans is different	0,631	
Factor 3: Satisfaction		
Question	**Score**	**Authors**
When you buy your favorite brand of jeans, you feel satisfied	0,809	Aaker, 1996b
After buying your favorite brand of jeans, you would recommend them	0,787	
After buying your favorite brand of jeans, you will buy it again	0,907	
Your favorite brand of jeans is good value for money	0,529	
Your favorite jeans brand builds confidence	0,539	
When buying products from your favorite brand of jeans, these are in good condition	0,630	
Factor 4: Competitiveness		
Question	**Score**	**Authors**
Your favorite brand of jeans is respectful	0,753	Arai et al., 2013
Your favorite brand of jeans is nice	0,400	
Your favorite brand of jeans is responsible	0,883	
Your favorite brand of jeans is socially responsible	0,831	
Your favorite brand of jeans is a role model	0,719	

Source: authors