Engagement marketing and brand equity strategies of the Fapi Náutica brand in the adhesives market

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Abstract

Objective(s): This study aims to analyze what engagement marketing actions the Fapi Náutica brand can adopt to add value to its brand equity. **Method(s):** A quantitative approach was used with a descriptive method and a case study research technique. A questionnaire was given to all active company customers in 2022. **Results:** Our main results indicate that most clients have knowledge about the performance of the brand in the market and claim that it transmits security and confidence in its processes, attributing greater importance to these factors than the practiced price, which users considered higher than that of the competition. Results also suggest that the company shows logistic loss-making, with insufficient distribution outside the state of Rio Grande do Sul and available sales formats. **Contributions:** We conclude that the theme of this study is important not only for its theoretical reflections on brand equity and engagement marketing but also for the professional environment due to its updated content and increasing relevance for companies precisely because they produce satisfactory results and efficient solutions. Thus, the studied company can, based on our results, better understand its performance and develop new strategies to improve its function.

Keywords: Branding. Brand equity. Brand Positioning. Engagement Marketing. Fapi Náutica.

Estratégias de marketing de engajamento e de *brand equity* da marca Fapi Náutica no mercado de adesivos

Resumo

Objetivo(s): Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar quais ações de marketing de engajamento podem ser adotadas para agregar valor ao *brand equity* da marca Fapi Náutica. **Método(s):** utiliza-se uma abordagem quantitativa, com método descritivo e técnica de pesquisa de estudo de caso. Foi realizado um questionário com todos os clientes ativos da empresa em 2022. **Resultados:** Os principais resultados apontados foram que grande parte dos clientes têm conhecimento sobre a atuação da marca no mercado, e afirmam que a marca transmite segurança e confiança em seus processos, sendo estes fatores mais importantes do que o preço praticado, que em comparação à concorrência foi considerado alto. Além disso, os resultados mostraram que a empresa é deficitária logisticamente, falhando em algumas distribuições fora do estado do Rio Grande do Sul, além de carecer nos formatos de vendas disponíveis. **Contribuições:** Conclui-se que o tema deste estudo se mostra importante não apenas para reflexões teóricas sobre *brand equity* e marketing de engajamento, mas também para o meio profissional, pois são conteúdos atualizados e que estão ganhando relevância nas empresas justamente por apresentarem resultados satisfatórios e soluções eficientes. Neste sentido, a empresa estudada poderá, a partir dos resultados obtidos, entender melhor sua atuação e desenvolver novas estratégias para aperfeiçoar o trabalho que já vem sendo realizado.

Palavras-chave: Branding. *Brand equity*. Posicionamento de Marca. Marketing de Engajamento. Fapi Náutica.

Estrategias de marketing de compromiso y *brand equity* de la marca Fapi Náutica en el mercado de adhesivos

Resumen

Objetivo(s): Este estudio tiene como finalidad analizar qué acciones de marketing de compromiso se pueden adoptar para agregar valor al *brand equity* de la marca Fapi Náutica. **Método(s):** Se utiliza un enfoque cuantitativo, con método descriptivo y técnica de investigación de estudio de casos. Se realizó un cuestionario a todos los clientes activos de la empresa en el año 2022. **Resultados:** Los principales resultados apuntados fueron que la mayoría de los clientes conocen el desempeño de la marca en el mercado, y afirman que esta transmite seguridad y confianza en sus procesos, siendo estos factores más importantes que el precio cobrado, y que en comparación con la competencia fue considerado un valor alto. Además, los resultados mostraron que la empresa tiene problemas logísticos, fallando en la distribución fuera del estado de Rio Grande do Sul, y también careciendo de formatos disponibles de venta. **Contribuciones:** Se concluye que el tema de este estudio es esencial no solo para las reflexiones teóricas sobre el *brand equity* y el marketing de compromiso, sino también para el ámbito profesional, ya que son contenidos actualizados que están cobrando relevancia en las empresas precisamente porque muestran resultados satisfactorios y soluciones eficientes. En este sentido, la empresa estudiada podrá, a partir de los resultados obtenidos, comprender mejor su desempeño y desarrollar nuevas estrategias para mejorar el trabajo que ya viene realizando.

Palabras clave: Branding. Brand equity. Posicionamiento de marca. Marketing de Compromiso. Fapi Náutica.

Introduction

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has brought a reality full of uncertainties and difficulties to the business world. Amidst so many events, several companies had to change their business model or market positioning, i.e., the way in which brands differentiate themselves from their competitors in customers' minds and the market in general (Keller, 2003; Baker, 2005; Semprini, 2006; Bortoli et al., 2017; Sciasci et al., 2012) to boost sales, a market that proved difficult to please. Pleasing and engaging customers is key to effectively generating brand value.

Thus, this study evaluated Fapi Adesivos, an Argentine-Brazilian chemical industry with its headquarters in Buenos Aires, Argentina and a branch in the municipality of Sapiranga, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The company has operated for more than 65 years in adhesives, solvents, and sealants aimed at the nautical, footwear, furniture, and upholstery industries in Latin America. Due to the scenarios and conditions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Brazilian Fapi Adesivos unit (2022) underwent internal restructuring, reducing its footwear line and redirecting its focus to the nautical sector, aiming at more attractive margins and the exploration of a different segment of footwear, which senior management deemed saturated.

Thus, this study aimed to analyze the marketing sector of Fapi Náutica, precisely because it is a new sector within the company. We found no marketing actions aimed at strengthening and adding value to the brand and positioning and differentiating its products in one way or another. This study aimed to analyze what engagement marketing actions Fapi Náutica can adopt to add value to its brand equity by the following guiding question: "What engagement marketing actions can Fapi Náutica adopt to add value to its brand equity?"

We conducted this descriptive quantitative single case study with the Fapi Náutica brand, collecting data by a questionnaire and choosing the positive and negative points of customers' perceived positioning to analyze data and content (Gil, 2008; Aaker et al., 2004; Bardin, 2009). We divided this article into the following sections: the next one describes our literature review; the third, our methodology; the fourth, the obtained results and our discussion; and the last section, our final considerations, followed by references.

Literature Review

Next, we explore brand equity management as its concepts are relevant to understanding how to strengthen a brand. Then, we will explore engagement marketing as marketing relations can trigger interactions between companies and markets.

Brand equity management

A brand can consist of a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, which may be combined to identify supplier goods or services to differentiate them from the competition (Keller et al., 2006; Tavares, 2008). For these authors, brand success can be defined as consumers perceiving that the values of a brand are relevant (unique), that their desires and needs will be satisfied, and that this success will result in the ability to balance and maintain these values against competitors (Chernatony et al., 2011). Companies may also employ it as a strategy since, by building a valued brand and successfully managing it practically ensures a path to success as companies will not only relay product attributes, but also differentiate themselves to obtain relevance and attractiveness for consumers (Kotler et al., 2007; Ross et al., 2010; Nascimento et al., 2011; Romanello et al., 2020; American Marketing Association, 2017).

Nascimento et al. (2011) claim that brands constitute the result of a behavior, mirroring an organization, the personality and managers' decisions, thus requiring teams to test and internally evaluate them by daily discussing the situations that may add value to them, rendering brands the result of the direct and/or indirect actions of all that contribute to the perception of the brand image in consumers' minds. Brand engagement requires identifying important information of interest to consumers. The set of associations companies hope to implement or maintain in consumers' minds constitutes the identity of a brand, associations configuring all a brand intends to accomplish, including promises and hopes (Cunha, 2016).

Kapferer (2003) groups identity into six dimensions: physical environment (objective qualities); personality (subjective qualities); culture (the context in which these qualities develop); relationships (coexistence with target audiences); reflection (how target audiences perceive this identity); and mentalization (the specific generated internal feelings).

Aaker (2007), on the other hand, finds four important perspectives regarding brand identity: product, organization, person, and symbol. The author believes that "product" enables a number of associations and functionally and emotionally benefits customers. The author also states that "organization" configures an identity construction attribute as people, culture, and innovative and good programs can create it. As "person," brands reiterate their personality and becomes human by assuming characteristics such as being active, fun, and competent. Finally, as "symbol," the author believes that brands carry three similarities: visual images, metaphors, and tradition (Aaker, 2007).

Cunha (2016) points out that the dimensions in Kapferer (2003) and Aaker (2007) models characterize brand value, breaking product barriers and their physical characteristics by providing credibility to their offer. Romanello et al. (2020) claim that brands must find their value and equity guidelines if they want success, thus requiring constructing and analyzing

value separately. The authors also state that the relationship brands develop with their clients affects their total value the most, i.e., brand equity (Romanello et al., 2020).

We can define brand equity as the added value attributed to goods and services, reflected in how consumers think, feel, and act toward brands. Thus, high brand equity means that consumers will have a greater number of positive associations with the brand, finding it has great quality and establishing a certain loyalty to it. This loyalty, i.e., brand awareness, (among other brand ownership issues) constitute the meaning of brand equity (Ries et al., 2001; Kotler et al., 2012; Prado et al., 2015).

Romanello et al. (2020) claim that the bedrock of brand equity consists of:

- Brand awareness, i.e., individuals' ability to remember and recognize a brand, which can affect customer perception and even lead them to change their decisions;
- Brand associations, in which consumers must first know a brand to then create associations with it, carrying the meaning of a brand to consumers and relating to any aspect linked to consumers' memory and attributes such as performance and personality. Brands must develop images that stimulate customers' emotions and contribute to developing positive brand associations and increasing their loyalty;
- Perceived quality, defined by customers' judgment of the excellence or superiority of a brand against its competition, which may motivate them to buy products;
- Brand loyalty, often characterized as the bond between customers and brands, divided into two types: behavioral loyalty (indicated by several purchases, for example) and cognitive loyalty (related to consumers' intention to buy a brand as their first choice).

Figure 1 illustrates the brand equity model in Romanello et al. (2020), prepared by Oliveira (2013):

Figure 1
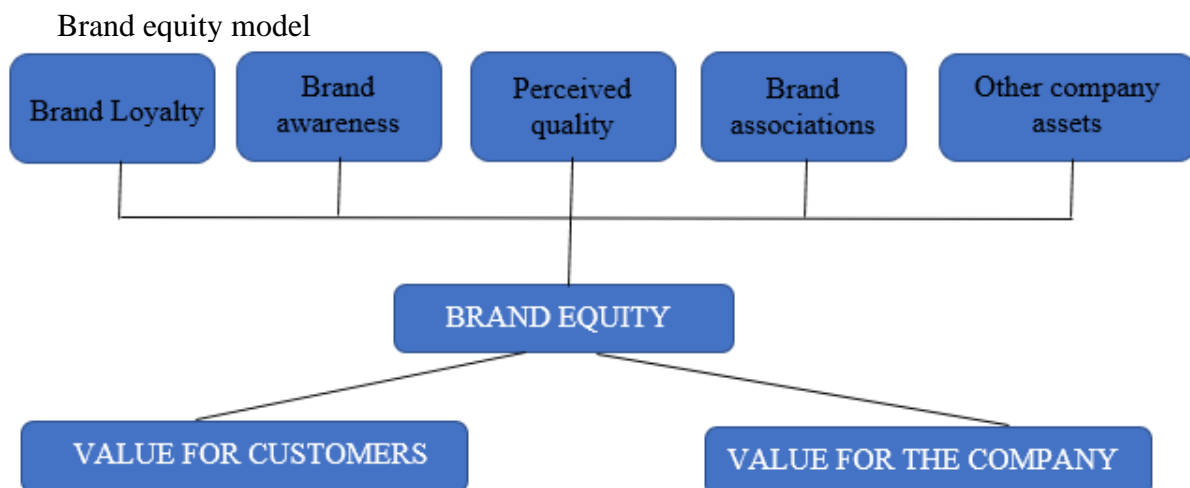
Brand equity model

Source: Oliveira (2013, p. 35).

For Oliveira (2013), the brand equity model in Figure 1 aids managers to understand how brands can provide value to companies and consumers. The author (2013) adds that the categories in Romanello et al. (2020) and Figure 1 influence and suffer the influence of each other, relating to each other. Such dimensions are unequally important across markets, meaning that, in certain segments, one dimension may have a greater relevance than another (Oliveira, 2013).

Kotler et al. (2012) describe a brand equity model they call brand asset valuator (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Brand Asset Valuator Model.
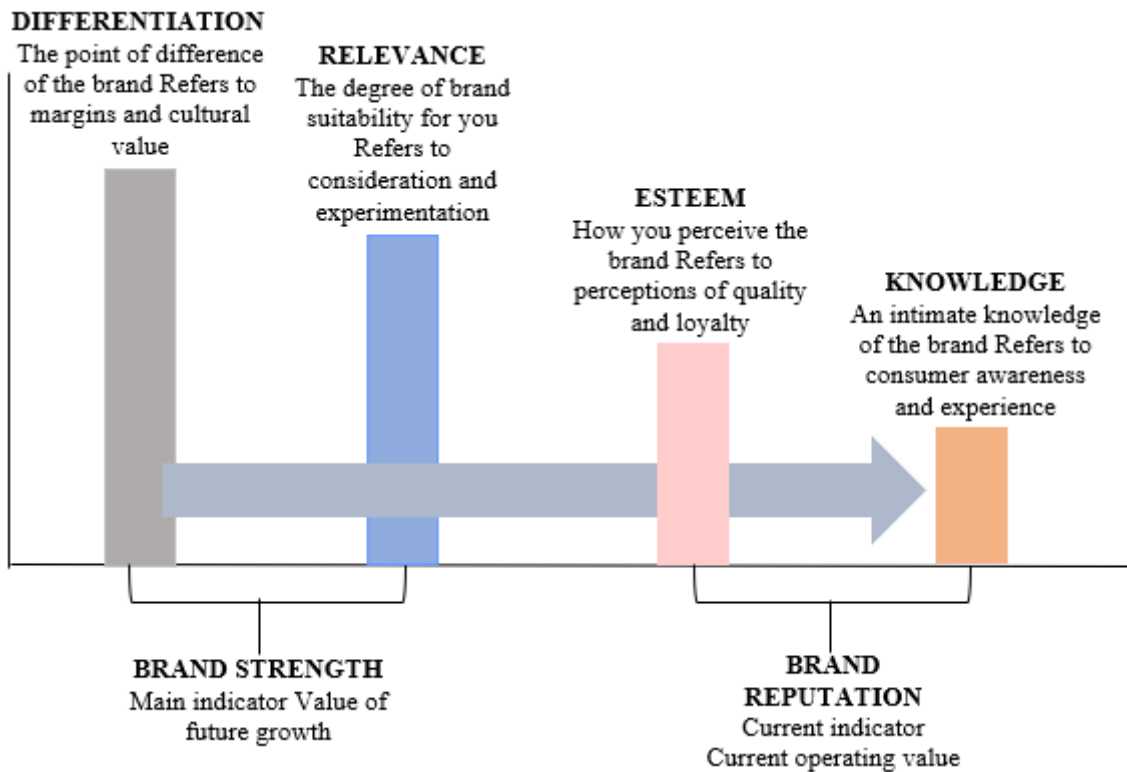
Source: Kotler et al. (2012, p. 262).

According to the authors, this model has four key components:

- Differentiation: the degree to which a brand is perceived as differing from others;
- Relevance: the appropriateness and breadth of the brand;
- Esteem: perceptions regarding quality, loyalty, or respect;
- Knowledge: how much consumers know and become familiar with the brand.

For the authors, differentiation and relevance will determine the strength of a brand, i.e., the main indicator of its future growth of value, whereas esteem and knowledge will develop the reputation of a brand, functioning as a kind of historical data and indicators of present value.

Kotler et al. (2017) find six attributes that enable the development of brand equity with a management based on human being's characteristics:

- Physicality: A physically attractive person can exert a greater influence on others, so if brands intend to influence their customers, they must offer something attractive that makes them unique. An example of attractiveness include well-designed logos and slogans.
- Intellectuality: The human capacity to aggregate learning, ideas, and thoughts. Thinking beyond the obvious and innovating constitute aspects of this attribute. Intellectual

brands are innovative, developing products and services other brands or consumers were yet to imagine.

- Sociability: Strong sociability means confidence in engaging with others by good communication and verbal and non-verbal clarity. Brands with high sociability avoid facing talking to consumers as a hindrance or a difficulty. Conversations are natural events that aim to listen to what clients have to say and stimulate conversations between them. It shows agile problem-solving and engages customers in multiple media.
- Emotionality: Reaching consumers' emotions to induce their actions. Emotional connections can occur by exciting messages that provoke strong emotions in clients.
- Personability: Strong personability means having self-awareness. Recognizing virtues but admitting that there remains much to learn. Brands with strong personalities know exactly what they are representing, i.e., their reason for being. Concomitantly, rather than hiding their flaws, these brands take responsibility for their actions, making them more human.
- Morality: Ethics and integrity. Morality deals with differentiating right from wrong and having the courage to make the best decisions and the right choices. Ethical business models configure the main differentiation of a brand, which will honor its word and fulfill its promises, even in the absence of consumers' strict control.

Kotler et al. (2017) believe that if brands want to influence consumers and become more human, they must possess the aforementioned attributes. Effectively discovering and addressing consumers' anxieties and desires requires physically attractive, intellectually interesting, socially engaging, and emotionally fascinating brands with a strong personality and solid morality. Developing these six attributes well will greatly influence consumers, generating physical or digital interaction and engagement to widen the human qualities that attracted them and led them to engage with a brand.

Engagement Marketing

For Sterne (2011, p. 123), engagement relates to involvement, intimacy, and influence, and occurs "when somebody cares and interacts," claiming that engagement joins two actions: interest and interaction. As per Dessart et al. (2015), engagement (the different ways customers/consumers and companies interact with each other) involves a complex network and relates to individuals' interactions with a brand, thus influencing their behavior. The result of these motivations, according to Nery et al. (2020, p. 58), "have a mediating role, presenting itself as a means for a customer's intention to talk about a brand and buy from that brand in the future."

For Beis et al. (2015), reaching a positive audience depends, in most cases, on content production that can "dialogue" with its public. Determining content quality and achieving good engagement requires understanding and recognizing these main interests. Lee et al. (2018) believe that marketing communication can improve consumer engagement with a brand, increase profitability, create competitive advantages, and improve company performance.

Brodie et al. (2011) and Van Doorn et al. (2010) define engagement from a multidimensional perspective as a form of co-creation of value with brands. For Nery et al. (2020), engagement concepts are based on the relationship between a subject and an object in different intensities, which may vary according to context —considered the scenario in which consumer interactions will happen, often going beyond the act of purchase. Regarding the dynamics between consumers and brands, the existing engagement is seen as a kind of

psychological condition that occurs from the interactive experiences between customers and focal objects, in this case, brands (Nery et al., 2020).

We can understand engagement as a form of behavior, a set of several customers' behavior manifestations. Engagement can also be interpreted as a form of interaction in which customers with different levels of experience with a particular brand respond to emotional stimuli and get closer to brand loyalty with each interaction focused on a company. It may configure an expression to name subjects' activities in communication processes and refer to imaginative and emotional issues, i.e., when customers create an emotional meaning toward the objects to which they relate. Thus, engagement has a behavioral dimension involving interactions between members of a brand community, which will imply a process of value creation for the brand since engagement will differentiate fans from average consumers (Almeida et al., 2015; Grohmann, 2018).

Kotler et al. (2012) find it extremely important that company marketing professionals focus on providing consumers with one or more positive signs that would justify their choice, such as advertisement frequency and greatly visible sponsorships, among other techniques to increase subjects' familiarity with a brand. Thus, trust expresses security and reliability in interactions and the understanding that a brand will always act in consumers' best interest.

Methods

An applied descriptive approach to a single case study (the Fapi Náutica brand) was used, following the indications of Gil (2008), Marconi et al. (2009), and Malhotra (2012). A quantitative approach was used since data were collected by a questionnaire with customers of the Fapi Náutica brand, aiming to identify customers' perceived brand positioning. Our questionnaire had eight questions (six closed and two open ones) based on concepts in previous studies, especially Aaker (2007) and Viana et al. (2020).

According to the sampling process stages in Malhotra (2012), our target population was defined first. In total, 246 clients of the nautical sector of the Fapi Náutica brand — divided into industries (producers of dinghies, boats, surfboards, life jackets, etc.) and final consumers (repair and maintenance workers on boats, inflatables, etc.) — were included in this study.

Then, our sampling framework and size were defined. A probabilistic sampling was used, enabling the sample determination and the possibility of extracting a certain size from this population (Malhotra, 2012). In this context, 100% of active clients were chosen, totaling 34 clients. According to Fapi Náutica evaluations, active customers are those who buy or contact the company within a four-month period. The brand focuses on having a select group of customers who buy in large quantities.

Following Malhotra (2012), the proper implementation of this research first required pre-testing the questionnaire, which took place on July 2, 2022. No changes were required. Thus, questionnaire application, forwarded by a Google Forms link, began on July 6, 2022. Our invitation for people to answer our questionnaire was sent directly by email to the 34 active customers' purchasing sector contacts. Collection ended on July 25, 2022, lasting 20 days and totaling 27 answered surveys.

Despite this qualitative collection technique, obtained data were qualitatively analyzed due to our objective and small number of clients (27 responses). Thus, content analysis was chosen to analyze data. As per Bardin (2009), analysis had three stages: pre-analysis, which operationally organized the questionnaire, systematized initial ideas, and defined two analytical categories — the positive and negative points on clients' perceived positioning; analysis, which organized graphs and word clouds (elaborated in Infogram); and data treatment, which interpreted results and resulted in suggestions for improvements.

Results and Discussion

This section shows the results we obtained and our suggestions for improvement based on our analyses of collected information.

Customers' perceived positioning of the Fapi Náutica brand

The first question in our questionnaire referred to the practices of the company: "How would you describe the practices of Fapi Náutica?" Graph 1 describes the collected answers.

Graph 1

Fapi Náutica Practices
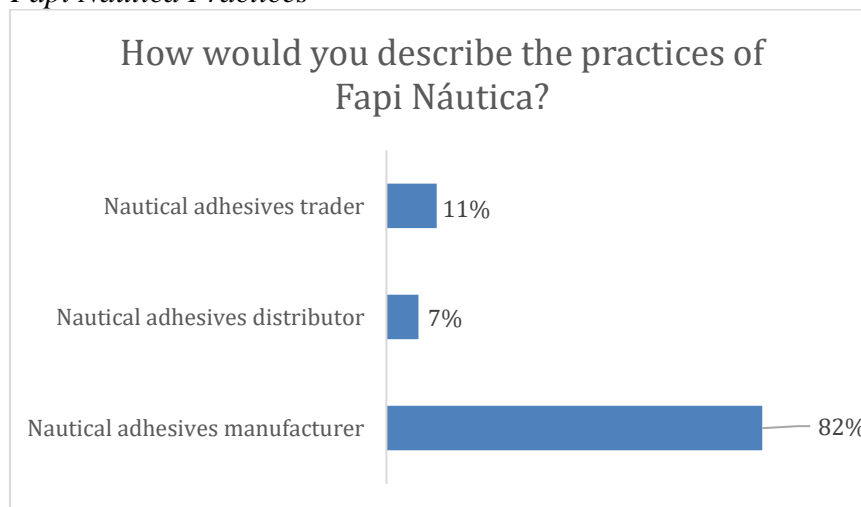
Source: Based on our research (2022).

Graph 1 shows that 82% of respondents describe Fapi Náutica as a "nautical adhesives manufacturer;" 11%, as a "nautical adhesives trader;" and 7%, as a "nautical adhesives distributor." This proves that 82% of respondents have knowledge about the practices the brand seeks to set in the market. As per Ries et al. (2001), Keller (2003), Baker (2005), Semprini (2006), and Sciasci et al. (2012), companies must develop superiority in consumers' minds and seek to concentrate efforts to differentiate themselves from other players in the market to build a solid position on its practices and objectives within the market. These authors mention differentiating oneself from competitors, communicating functional and emotional benefits, and interpreting consumers' view as relevant opportunities for reorganization.

We elaborated our second question as an open one: "When you think of Fapi Náutica, what is the first word that comes into your head?" Figure 3 shows the responses in a word cloud (in which the larger the font, the greater its frequency). As described in the methodological section, we elaborated our word cloud in Infogram using respondents' answers.

Figure 3

Thoughts on Fapi Náutica

When you think of Fapi Náutica, what is
the first word that comes into your head?

Quality
Sea   Glue   Good product
Focus   Product
Excellence   Adhesive
Good glue   Adhesives
Commitment   Dinghies
Trust   Commitment
Good quality, service, and Price
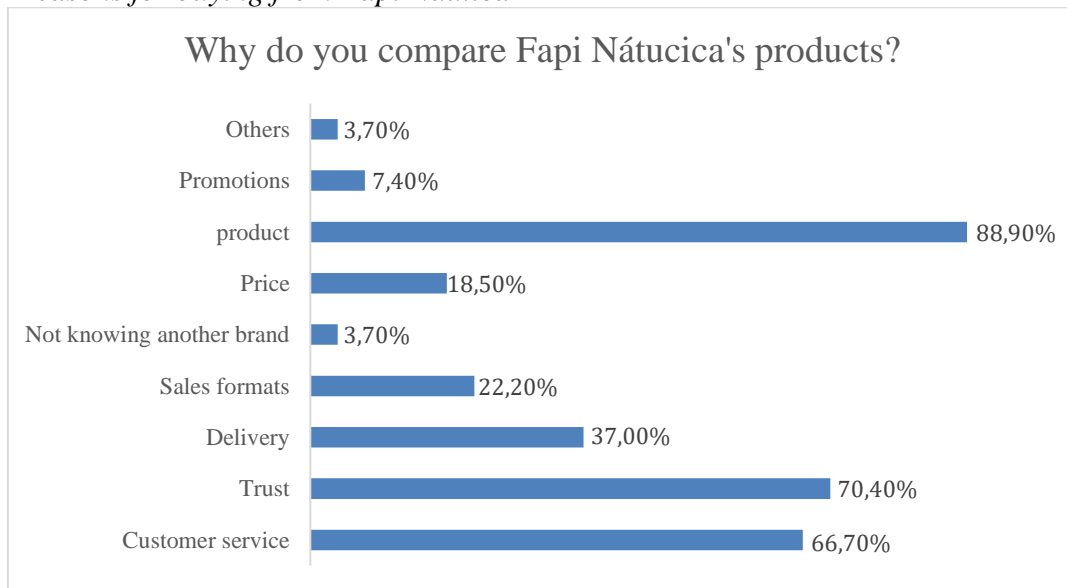
Source: Based on our research (2022).

We found that respondents mentioned "quality" and "glue" the most often, followed by "adhesive" and "dinghies." We observed that answers agree with the practices of the brand and the markets in which it operates, proving the public's understanding of the activities and offers of the brand. Kotler et al. (2012) suggest considering the four fundamental pillars of brand equity to assess the value of a brand asset: differentiation (the degree to which a brand differs from another), relevance (the breadth of the brand and how well it fits the market), esteem (perceptions of quality, respect, and loyalty toward a brand), and knowledge (how well consumers know the brand). Thus, we observed that the brand requires efficient management to preserve and strengthen these four pillars and avoid erroneous actions that may harm the value of its assets or its positioning.

In the next question, "Why do you buy Fapi Náutica products?" respondents could choose more than one option (Graph 2).
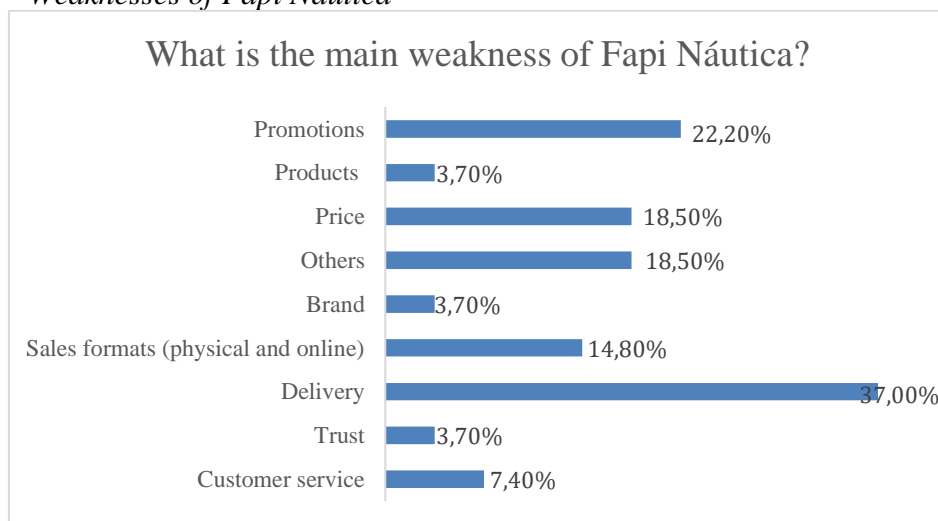
Graph 2

Reasons for buying from Fapi Náutica

Why do you compare Fapi Nátucica's products?

Others	3,70%
Promotions	7,40%
product	88,90%
Price	18,50%
Not knowing another brand	3,70%
Sales formats	22,20%
Delivery	37,00%
Trust	70,40%
Customer service	66,70%

Source: Based on our research (2022).

Graph 2 shows that 88.9% of respondents chose "product;" 70.4%, "trust;" 66.7%, "attendance;" 37%, "delivery;" 22.2%, "sales formats;" 18.5%, "price;" 7.4% "promotions;" and 3.7%, "not knowing another brand." We found that 3.7% of respondents opted for "other," adding "quality" to their reasons for buying from the brand. These constitute the strengths of Fapi Náutica.

The fourth question also allowed for more than one answer: "What is the main weakness of Fapi Náutica?" The answers in Graph 3 contrast with the previous question so we could understand what differs from the points perceived as positive.

Graph 3

Weaknesses of Fapi Náutica

What is the main weakness of Fapi Náutica?

Promotions	22,20%
Products	3,70%
Price	18,50%
Others	18,50%
Brand	3,70%
Sales formats (physical and online)	14,80%
Delivery	37,00%
Trust	3,70%
Customer service	7,40%

Source: Based on our research (2022).

Graph 3 shows that 37% of respondents chose "delivery" as the main weakness of the brand, followed by "promotions" (22.2%); "price" (18.5%); "sales formats" (14.8%); "service" (7.4%); and "products," "brand," and "trust" (3.7%). Finally, 18.50% of respondents chose "other," mentioning "logistics," "marketing," and "expiration dates."

A comparison of Graphs 2 and 3 shows two categories: strengths and weaknesses. Graph 2 answers shows two important perspectives regarding brand identity: product and internal team. We stress that "product" carries numerous associations and provides (by these interactions) functional and emotional benefits to customers and that the workers approaching customers regarding the provided service can also offer distinction. Aaker (2007) and Romanello et al. (2020) find these perceived perspectives as necessary for brand identity to benefit customers functionally and emotionally. We found that "product" and "person" obtained low negative percentages (Graph 3), confirming that they constitute the positive points of the brand.

Moreover, the studied brand equity bases (Aaker, 2007; Romanello et al., 2020) show "loyalty," whose characteristic refers to establishing a bond between customers and brands. This attribute, identified by "trust," showed a high response rate (70.4%) in Graph 2 and a low percentage (3.7%) in Graph 3. Thus, if consumers trust the brand, they tend to make repeated purchases (behavioral loyalty) and opt for the brand as their first option (cognitive loyalty). In this case, we can infer the presence of loyalty between Fapi Náutica and its customers.

"Delivery" showed the same percentage (37%) in our questions on strong and weak points, requiring the attention of the brand, as with "price" (18.5%) in both graphs. Thus, we refer to the considerations on perceived quality in Kapferer (2003), Oliveira (2013), and Romanello et al. (2020) and on providing credibility to offers, following Cunha (2016), as they constitute bases of good brand equity, management and can logically motivate customers toward purchases.
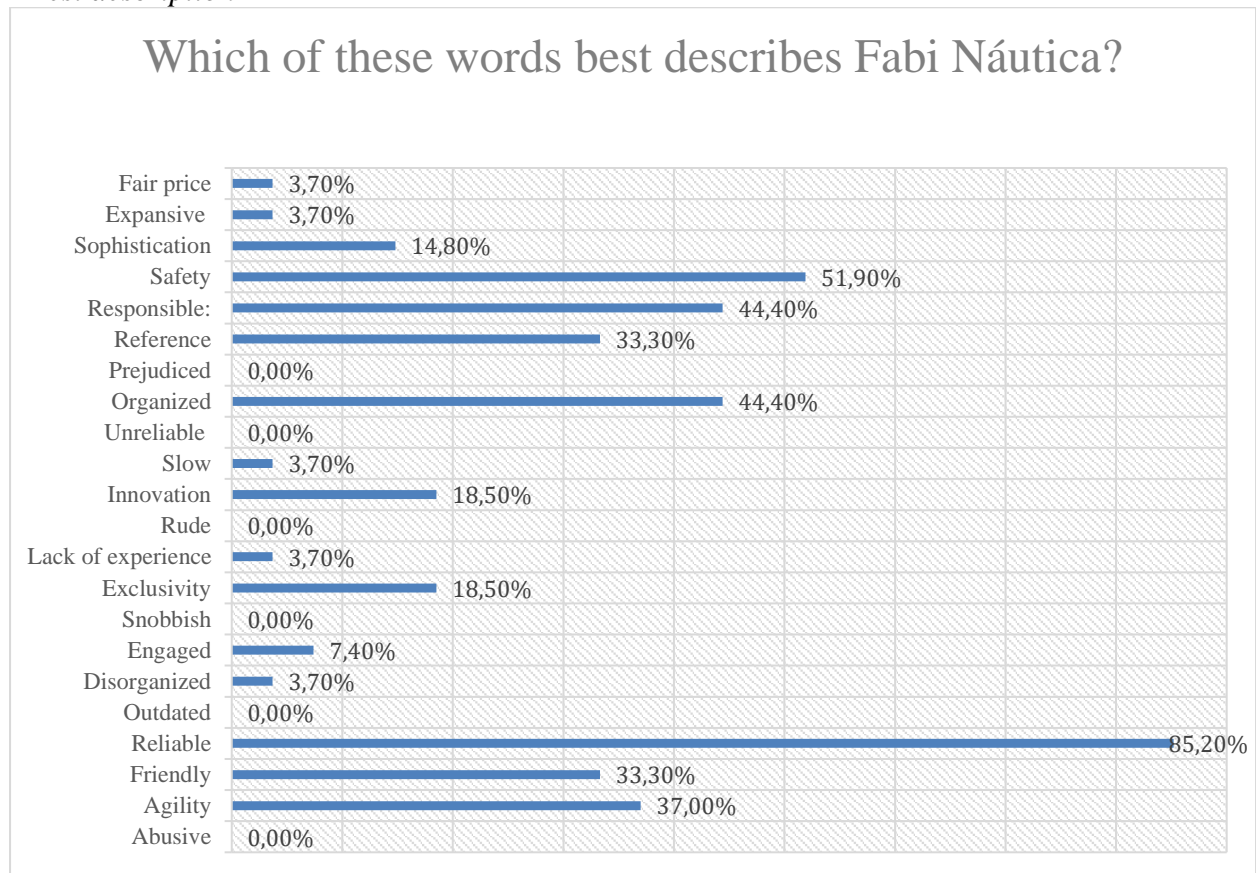
"Promotions," mentioned in 22.2% of responses to weak points and only 7.4% to strengths, also deserves attention. Kotler et al. (2012), Cunha (2016), Lee et al. (2018), and Romanello et al. (2020) claim that marketing professionals should worry about the frequency of interactions of a brand. Many professionals forget that relationships with greater scope and impact add value to brands and, according to Kotler et al. (2012), brand reputation is built with esteem and knowledge. Moreover, good promotion will influence sociability and emotionality, as per Kotler et al. (2017).

Our fifth question, "Which word best describes Fapi Náutica?," had multiple choices and aimed to describe terms that indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the brand. Chart 4 shows respondents' answers.

Graph 4

Best description

Which of these words best describes Fabi Náutica?

Word	Percentage
Fair price	3,70%
Expansive	3,70%
Sophistication	14,80%
Safety	51,90%
Responsible:	44,40%
Reference	33,30%
Prejudiced	0,00%
Organized	44,40%
Unreliable	0,00%
Slow	3,70%
Innovation	18,50%
Rude	0,00%
Lack of experience	3,70%
Exclusivity	18,50%
Snobbish	0,00%
Engaged	7,40%
Disorganized	3,70%
Outdated	0,00%
Reliable	85,20%
Friendly	33,30%
Agility	37,00%
Abusive	0,00%

Source: Based on our research (2022).

In Graph 4, the word "reliable" stands out (85.2%), followed by "security" (51.9%), "organized" and "responsible" (both with 44.4%), "agility" (37%), "reference" and "friendly" (33.3% each), "innovation" and "exclusivity" (18.5%), "sophistication" (14.8%), and "engaged" (7.4%). Finally, "fair price," "expansive," "slow," "lack of experience," and "disorganized" received the lowest percentages (3.7%). "Prejudiced," "unreliable," "rude," "snobbish," "outdated," and "abusive" received no mention.
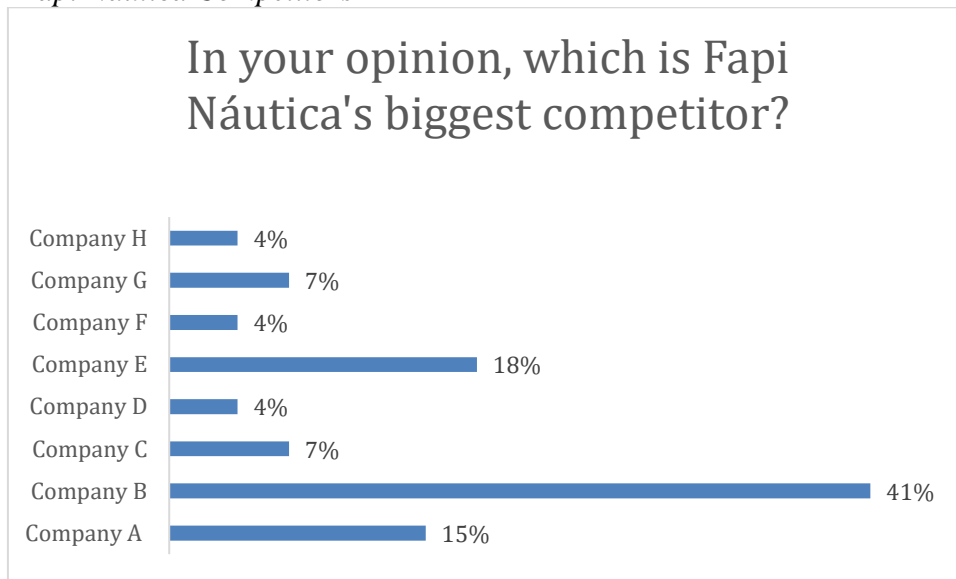
Receiving positive feedback from consumers depends, most of the time, on an ability to "dialogue" with the public as this establishes positive associations with a company in brand equity (Oliveira, 2013; Romanello et al., 2020) — evinced by customers, for example, considering a brand as "trustworthy," "safe," and "organized." The "trust" attribute in Graphs 2 and 4 is present in the value generation model and can express the security and reliability respondents place in the brand as they interact with it. Regarding brand equity, the esteem pillar, which measures perceptions of quality and loyalty and, especially regarding respect, takes place when we find a high percentage of the words "responsible" and "organized," corroborating the themes in Kotler et al. (2012), Almeida et al. (2015), and Beis et al. (2015), and in the attributes of morality and personality in Kotler et al. (2017).

Our sixth question asked, "In your opinion, which is Fapi Náutica's biggest competitor?" To illustrate answers in Graph 5, we replaced the names of competing companies by letters of the alphabet for preservation and disclosure reasons.

Graph 5

Fapi Náutica Competitors

In your opinion, which is Fapi Náutica's biggest competitor?

Company	%
Company H	4%
Company G	7%
Company F	4%
Company E	18%
Company D	4%
Company C	7%
Company B	41%
Company A	15%

Source: Based on our research (2022).

Graph 5 shows that 41% of respondents consider "Company B" as the biggest competitor of Fapi Náutica; 18%, "Company E;" 15%, "Company A;" 7% both "Company G" and "Company C;" and 4%, that the biggest competitors of the brand are companies H, F, and D. Note that "Company B" had a more effective position in the nautical adhesives market, with twice as many responses as the second most common response "Company E."

The next question is related to Graph 5 as it seeks to understand "What benefits does this competitor better offer than Fapi Náutica?" This was an open-ended question. Figure 4 shows, by a word cloud elaborated in Infogram, competitor benefits according to respondents.

Figure 4

Benefits offered by Fapi Náutica competitors

Logistics outside Rio Grande do Sul

Delivery None

Price

gift

Distributors in other states

Service in SP

Market agility Durability

Relationships and constant visitations

Payment negotiations

Source: Based on our research (2022).

We found that respondents claimed most often that the main benefit the competition offered refers to "price," followed by "delivery" and "distributors in other states." "Service in SP (São Paulo)" and "logistics outside Rio Grande do Sul" appear next, as do "durability" and "constant relationships and visitations." Respondents also mentioned "none," pointing out that the competition offers no benefit when compared to Fapi Náutica. Finally, "gifts," "market agility," and "payment negotiation" complete our word cloud with less expressive mentions and thus less emphasis.

The positioning of a brand in the market is based on how it differentiates itself from its competitors in customers' minds, convincing them of the benefits of its products in comparison to the competition (Keller, 2003; Baker, 2005; Semprini, 2006; Lima et al., 2010; Kotler et al., 2012; Romanello et al. 2020). Note that "Company B" offers great risk for Fapi Náutica, configuring a potential competitor precisely because market respondents remember and recognize it (Chernatony et al., 2011) as offering a different price to that of Fapi Náutica and distributing in other states (highlighting that "delivery" constitutes the main weakness of Fapi Náutica in Graph 3). Finally, we performed a restricted analysis of the answers to our seventh question, referring to those who answered "Company B" in the previous question. We found that its most often mentioned differentials referred to "price," "delivery," and "distributors in other states."

Our eighth question asked, "Would you indicate Fapi Náutica to other people/companies?" All interviewees answered affirmatively. For brand equity, indicating a brand to other persons or companies constitute loyalty, which we can characterize as the bond a brand established with customers, making them fans (Almeida et al., 2015; Grohmann, 2018).

According to brand pillars, a "relevant" brand, following Keller et al. (2006) and Tavares (2008), can adapt and be broad and, if it has strengthened "esteem," obtain perceptions about its quality, consumer loyalty, and the respect it imposes on negotiators. Thus, we found that respondents indicating a brand to third parties show loyalty, relevance, and esteem, as per Kapferer (2003), Kotler et al. (2012), and Romanello et al. (2020).

Suggestions for engagement marketing actions

Based on respondents' answers and our theoretical framework, we suggest that the company adopt brand awareness actions, such as revitalizing its social media and sponsoring events related to its main activity (nautical adhesives, solvents, and sealants). These actions may help customers and prospects to recognize and perceive the brand and its market practices, which can transform people's interpretation regarding the activities and services of the brand.

We found that, of the four brand equity pillars in Figure 2 (Oliveira, 2013), "esteem" is identified in the company when viewing "quality" as one of the words that were most mentioned, and the pillar of "knowledge" identified when seeing the words "glue," "sticker" and "dinghies," showing that respondents correctly relate the activity and the products/services offered by the brand. Thus, to complement the rest of the pillars of brand equity, we suggest that the brand strengthens its pillar of differentiation by management based on human characteristics, concentrating its actions on physicality (Kapferer, 2003; Kotler et al., 2017). Thus, we propose actions to make the brand more attractive and unique in customers' perception, such as a new packaging model and a modernized logo and visual materials.

Analyzing the answers in Graphs 2 and 3 and competitor differentials, we suggest actions to improve its sales format for customers, making available an online sales platform, for example. The company can also establish partnerships with carriers or freight companies to improve the delivery (speed) of its orders. In the case of no distribution in the state of São Paulo or constant visitations, for example (which would make physical interactions more

complicated), the company must look for other ways to interact and be present either by online meetings, social media posts, lives, or video calls, showing it to be in constant contact with its customers, even if physically distant, thus expanding its interaction network, as per Dessart et al. (2015).

Investing in actions to strengthen company sociability is also relevant as it must try to understand what customers think and want and quickly solve problems. Thus, we suggest that the brand improve its brand equity sociability (Kotler et al., 2017), which concerns trust in relationships with other people and clarity in communication. The brand must act quickly to solve the identified problems and/or differences and promote engagement in multiple avenues (digital, physical, etc.). Regarding price and promotions, by strengthening the "intellectuality" pillar of the brand, Fapi can adopt innovative and creative ideas, such as bonus campaigns for purchase frequency or item quantity.

To solve the gap of promotions in Graph 3, we recommend that the company improve its commitment attribute, valuing the relationship between parties (customers and brand) by marketing actions that show customers the effort made to this maintain relationship, increasing profitability and creating competitive advantages (Lee et al., 2018). The brand can also show this effort by specialized customer service. For this service differentiation, we recommend a specific training to its commercial team, including internal sellers, external representatives, and other employees working directly with customers. We also suggest a content marketing and engagement plan for social media, especially Instagram.

As per Kotler et al. (2017), the brand equity foundation of morality explains that companies must tell right from wrong and have the courage to make the best decisions. The authors find that ethics can be an important brand differentiation; ethical brands will honor their word and fulfill their promises. They can achieve ethics by the personality basis and must recognize their virtues, reminding themselves to make commitments and understand that there remains much to learn. Having personality means that the brand knows what it stands for, avoids hiding its flaws, and takes responsibility for its actions. Thus, analyzing respondents' answers showed that the Fapi Náutica brand has personality and is ethical in its activities, a virtue recognized by respondents.

Conclusion

The development of new technologies makes available new products and services to the market. This improvement and innovation process reminds companies to remain up to date and constantly seek to develop creativity to not only retain existing customers, but also attract new ones. Thus, we find the importance of managing brand equity since it can provide a number of benefits, e.g., engaging customers, improving their perceptions, and positioning a brand in the market against its competitors, in other words, branding strategies are fundamental to generate value and improve customer engagement techniques.

We conducted this study at Sapiranga Indústrias Químicas Limitada, in the municipality of Sapiranga, Rio Grande do Sul. We specially focused on Fapi Náutica and its practice in the adhesives market, analyzing its brand equity strategies. Following the indications for content analysis, we analyzed two categories: strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include most respondents having knowledge about the practices of a brand in a market, perceiving the good quality of the offered products, and correctly relating these products with the segment of the brand. We also found that offered products and trust in the company configure the main reasons for customers' purchases.

Weaknesses include "delivery," showing that the brand must improve its logistics and sales formats. On the other hand, we observed that "reliable" best described Fapi Náutica,

proving that the brand fulfills its promises. Regarding competition and its benefits, we found that "Company B" had a greater number of mentions that referred its price and distribution in other states as its greatest benefits, proving again the importance customers give to logistics. Finally, all respondents claimed that they would indicate the brand to other people/companies, which may prove their satisfaction with the brand.

By analyzing our results, we could propose engagement marketing actions that could add value to the brand. We offered five main suggestions for improvements to strengthen the company brand. The first one refers to revitalizing its social media and sponsoring nautical events; the second, to adopting actions to modernize its image, such as updating its packaging model and visual materials.

Our third suggestion relates to developing an online sales platform, establishing partnerships with carriers and distribution centers outside Rio Grande do Sul and implementing premium campaigns to customers; our fourth, to involving the company and its customers and providing specific training for its commercial team; and our fifth, to more quickly solving problems and interacting with its target audience by actions that prove its effort and dedication to its audience, generating physical and online engagement.

We offer two proposals for future studies: that the company conduct a new research in six months to evaluate the effectiveness of the adopted actions and that it apply a questionnaire to other companies (from other fields of activity) to academically compare positioning effectiveness and engagement strategies.

We conclude that the theme of this study is important not only for its theoretical reflections on brand equity and engagement marketing but also for the professional environment due to its updated content, which received increasing relevance in companies precisely because they produce satisfactory results and efficient solutions. Thus, the studied company can, based on our results, better understand its performance and develop new strategies to improve its function.

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