



## PACARI BRAND ENGAGEMENT AND ITS EMOTIONAL CONNECTION IN ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

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### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper analyzes the factors that brand engagement produces in the growth of a brand, studying the values of creating emotional bonds to retain customers and develop consumer cultures. The PACARI brand is taken as a reference, which has international recognition, managing to position Ecuador as the country where the best chocolate in the world originates. The objective is to analyze the impact of PACARI and its connection in ethical consumption, where the brand has generated impact from the word of mouth marketing that it creates from influencers, and the commitment with its interest groups.*

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays it is impressive to see the evolution that brands have had in terms of the different changes in the market, the development of strategies, the creation of new products, strategic plans, media and even more important to humanize, connect and link the commitment of the brand - identifying symbol of the company - with the main protagonists of the business world: the customers, who are - said by Rodriguez (2018), Roberts (2004) and Rubio (2014) -, the pillar of the success or failure of a company. However, it is the brand, its management and its commitment to the stakeholders of the organizations that determine whether the company is still standing or not, since it is these that through the company's philosophy transmit and raise awareness with the public.

For this, it is necessary to study the branch in charge of managing brand engagement, in this case, brand engagement, which consists of perfecting three of the eight values that the brand possesses: adaptation, empathy and humanity. Variables that are uncommon in the business management processes of Ecuadorian companies, even more so among SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) as is the case of the number one Ecuadorian chocolate company, PACARI. This is one of the industrial organizations that has achieved the greatest success with its stakeholders both internationally and nationally, since its positioning in the market in 2005.

The main objective of this article is to analyze the impact of brand engagement and the emotional connection of the brand in the development of a culture of ethical consumption in Ecuadorians, through the breakdown of the values of the company; its philosophy; the mentality of its founders and the perceptions of its customers, as well as its partners and employees. Thus obtaining a model for the application of brand engagement strategies in the current market for the knowledge of SMEs, micro-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs.

Likewise, to provide aspects of the PACARI brand that have made the company recognized worldwide, maintaining the social commitment with which the company was founded and the ethical responsibility with which it was established. Another objective of this article is to contribute to the community of chocolate markets in Ecuador, which is the internal management process with which they achieve that employees connect with the brand, through the full knowledge of the company, the motivations and aspirations that it has; as well as the application of emotional intelligence in the workplace.

The importance of researching this topic comes from the amazing growth that the PACARI brand has had at an international and national level, since its foundation in 2002 by Santiago Peralta and Carla Barbotó, the PACARI brand has achieved around 300 awards worldwide, positioning itself as one of the best chocolate brands. But, what makes this case more attractive is the basis on which the brand was born, since its origins arise from the idea of its founders to change the structure from slavery to industrial humanism, knowing how to value the work of a farmer and training him to develop a quality product that satisfies and delights the customer.

Therefore, the problem is posed taking into account the main study variables to be addressed in this article, such as: brand engagement, emotional connection and ethical consumption culture. Thus, the following question is formulated: what is the impact of PACARI's brand engagement and its emotional connection on the development of an ethical consumption culture in Ecuador?

## 2. State of the Art

Nowadays, the use of social networks, technological media and mass digital media is essential, which is why they have become the main connector of engagement between consumer-product of several companies. However, and as throughout the history of the world of advertising marketing and brands, not all companies manage to connect with their customers in the same way as they have in the past.

This is because the value of emotional connection and brand engagement for the creation of perennial bonds of loyalty and emotion is unknown, especially in the entrepreneurial sector.

Within the state of the art or background that allows to understand the panorama of brands with emotional bonds, commitment relationship and complete interaction with customers, also called by Kevin Roberts as "lovemarks", the following insights are compiled, considered relevant points for the topic being addressed:

Ospina (2016) conducts a research study in which he addresses the techniques and the process of applying engagement from marketing models, digital media and the massive use of social networks. In this he attributes that engagement as an advertising tool allows generating unconditional relationships between consumers and a brand.

Puig (2016) explains for the Branderstand Blog, "only people make brands". Under the rationale that the company does not represent the full encompassing percentage if it fails to understand the people it is targeting.

(Keller, 1993) Witness brand equity from the individual consumer's perspective, in which the consumer knows about the brand and this knowledge becomes the foundation for engaging in customer-based marketing and value strategies.

Hollebeek (2011) states that brand engagement refers to the "mental level of motivation of the customer" in relation to the brand and that the levels of relationship and interaction that the customer has will depend on the levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity that the brand generates.

Valiente (2015) Indicates that it is interesting to analyze the rate of engagement reach and the strategies that companies address to create emotional connections with people, given that the television medium is a constantly changing environment; even more so, when media consumption through the Internet is imposed.

Salvador (2014) exposes in an article prepared for CIDECAN that the branch of marketing that has been established to study and apply strategies that create emotional relationships with customers, consumers, target audience or some market niche; is emotional marketing, since this is responsible for conquering emotions to achieve a strategic positioning in the mind of the consumer.

Roberts (2004) indicates in his book *Lovemarks* that part of the development of emotional connections with consumers has to do with the total understanding of what the customer wants, desires, needs and requires; within which emotional intelligence and the generation of ideas, as well as the creation of stories, play a fundamental role when connecting with the public.

These are some of the concepts that serve as the basis for the analysis of the impact of the application of emotional connections based on brand engagement in the Ecuadorian brand of organic products - specifically the cocoa group- PACARI.

To understand how brand engagement works within brands and a company's business philosophy, it is necessary to understand the definition of the terms brand and engagement; at the same time, to know how they influence customers or consumers and how emotions are involved in them to provide the brand's sealing value, where the customer manages to love the brand so much that he/she is loyal to it at all times.

The word brand translates as brand and is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as a product made by a particular company, where the brand is the symbol of identity of this company or enterprise. Interpreting chapter one of Naomi Klein's book *No Logo*, the term brand as such, arises in the period of globalization, when several entrepreneurs knew that a brand was a priority to distinguish themselves in the market, but still gave greater value to the product's attributes (2002). On the other hand, there is advertising, which is where the term engagement had its boom, this after the word of mouth. According to Valiente (2015), this construct tries to establish engagement through more mature communications, in which the message is interpreted and remembered by the receiver even in the long term. In other words, engagement is the process by which the company, through the appropriate communication channels, the message correctly thought out for the customer -not only for sales-, and the strategies within a specific planning, achieves that in the long term the company's brand connects with customers, is remembered and above all generates a commitment link between what is offered, what the customer wants and what is expected from the product.

According to Ospina (2016), the benefits of engagement are best seen when passion is created between the public and the brand, as this allows the creation of true and lasting relationships with the target audience (p.19), thus being understood as one of the links that facilitates the process of relationship and remembrance that a company has within its market niche. A clear example of the emotional connection that engagement generates occurs with soccer teams, where spectators connect to such an extent that they become loyal lovers and become fans.

But how does this happen? According to Alex Rubio (2014), a Spanish planner, for a current consumer to establish a perfect relationship with the brand, he evaluates the company within eight values: adaptation, empathy, simplicity, coherence, differentiation, risk, transparency and humanity. Of

those that are most closely related to engagement are adaptation, empathy and humanity; where, the first revolves around the innovation that the customer expects to see from the product; the second, complete knowledge of the product; and the last, the sensitivity of the brand through what it communicates.

In this sense, brand engagement is seen as the commitment to the brand, from which consumer loyalty and the brand lover will derive. In which the company, as a brand, should avoid appealing to the consumer as a buyer and try to focus on it more in a human way. For, "human attention has become our main currency" (Roberts, 2004). It is also worth saying that this human focus is a conscious being, but persuasible from the emotional level, so it is essential that people feel good about the brand and that they arouse positive feelings. In this way, in the long run, the brand even obtains publicity and continuity in the market.

Likewise, social networks and the current digital media have been a key brand engagement tool for brands, especially when connecting with influencers, who are individuals that contribute to a company's brand connecting even more with customers. This clearly puts the company's target and target audience. According to Hernán Darío (2004), it is at this point when emotional marketing and emotional intelligence merge with brand engagement to strengthen the commitment of the customer-oriented brand, where "trust is the emotion of the company" (p. 6). In other words, generating trusting relationships based on the brand creates commitment.

The Ecuadorian company that has managed to position Ecuadorian chocolate and fine aroma cocoa in the world, based on a culture of fair trade, ethical consumption and social commitment. It was founded in 2002 by Santiago Peralta and Carla Barbotó, with the objective of positioning the country in the world of chocolate.

Ecuadorian on the map of high quality chocolate producers, not only for the cocoa but also for the chocolate production. Currently, it has nineteen years of experience in the market and eleven years producing chocolates.

PACARI takes its brand name from the Quechua translation of the word nature, which represents for the brand and its creators, the values with which it was founded and with which it wishes to be recognized: ethical responsibility and fair trade. According to PACARI's archive "To turn to nature while respecting the principles of Mother Earth. To take care of her by giving her back the life she gives us, (...), coupling biodynamics as an agricultural practice". That is, respecting the production environment and the farmers in charge of harvesting, sowing and preparing the land for agricultural activity.

Its identifying symbol is the man tree of the Valdivia culture, which reinforces Peralta's criterion of wanting to leave Ecuadorian culture high on an international level. For this reason, they carried out the movement 'From Tree to Bar' whose mission benefits the conservation and regrowth of 2.5% of the genetic bank of the best cocoa in the world, generating a virtuous circle that generates multiple advantages for the entire chain. Analyzed from Saussure's theory (meaning-signifier), the PACARI brand evokes a sense of cultural appropriation in the Ecuadorian consumer.

What generates this feeling of cultural appropriation? The constant work and creation of links that Peralta and Barbotó have been managing for their company, where even the use of the communicational tone has played an important role in their establishment within the world market of chocolate production. Paraphrasing Fabrizio Noboa<sup>1</sup>, to study PACARI is not only to analyze sales levels or advertising success, it is to analyze an environment focused on responsibility towards farmers, towards the Ecuadorian people and that innovates in the field of fairness and ethics, internally and externally.

The origins of PACARI's cocoa production, which today has around 300 world-wide recognitions, came about in Esmeraldas, a province in the north of Ecuador, when Santiago Peralta and Carla Barbotó investigated the effects that the climatic conditions of this region had on the production of fine aroma cocoa. Agustín Gaspar, a local producer, mentions that PACARI's cocoa bean is an organic product, without fertilizers, which takes full advantage of the area's climatic conditions, making it the best chocolate in the world.

In Alan Ladd's degree thesis<sup>2</sup>, it is evident and specified that the success of PACARI for its founders lies in having placed the producer first, since the quality of the product is a reflection of the teamwork of hundreds of small-scale farmers (2016). This is the strategy that has allowed them, in addition to obtaining high quality raw material, to "strengthen their relationship with the chocolate stakeholders"

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(Ladd, 2016, p. 18), that is, with the public of interest that owns the brand, suppliers, collectors and the agricultural industry that demands a lot of care (monitoring, quality and investment). Factors that are highlighted by PACARI in its social responsibility. PACARI has also managed to position itself in the market by the constitution of its values and business philosophy, which revolve around respect, trust, leadership and sustainability; in addition to the mission/commitment of the company, which is to be the best chocolate for the world and not just the best chocolate in the world. Today, PACARI is one of the companies with the greatest recognition and influence in the Ecuadorian country, also because of the emotional connection that PACARI has made with its customers.

Established with both local and international consumers, innovating and maintaining its commitment values.

### 3. Research Methodology

The research method used in this research is deductive, which is generated from the development of reasoning and logical conclusions based on facts, events and theories. In this case, it is applied to determine the factual factors that have achieved that the brand engagement that PACARI manages and its emotional connection, have given way to a culture of ethical consumption in Ecuador. Taking into account the pillars of brand engagement and the thesis of the CEO of Brand Word, Puig, that the success of brand engagement depends on the emotional ties and love for the brand of consumers, stakeholders and even the internal organization of the company, i.e., employees.

Likewise, use is made of secondary bibliographic sources, such as: books, YouTube interviews, business blogs, Podcast, among others. And empirical knowledge is applied through the observation method to provide contributions from the consumer perspective and the existing consumer market in Ecuador. Basically, the observation is applied from the perception of the environment of the world of chocolate brands and the evolution that these have had over the years; for the case in question, from 2004 when PACARI positioned itself in the market for the production of fine aroma cocoa.

It is also part of the research methodology of this article, the hypothetical deductive method, which consists of the presentation of a hypothesis that will allow to obtain conclusions that help to solve the research problem posed. In addition, this method allows understanding the empirical notions developed from the observation technique, which is the one that allows developing concepts intuitively. However, the success of the strategic models developed by Santiago Peralta and Carla Barbotó for their brand, since the establishment of its name, will be used as a study tool for the case of PACARI.

### 4. Results

PACARI is one of the Ecuadorian brands that has been a pioneer - within the chocolate and cocoa production market above - in the management of the ethical, social and environmental responsibility of the company before its public of interest, understanding that the value of the brand revolved entirely on what was offered to the consumer, but at the same time giving a purpose that contributed to society. That is to say, it is one of the Ecuadorian companies that has managed to fully understand the operation of marketing 3.0<sup>3</sup>, where the quality of the producer depends on the commitment that the brand has with its customers, so the results will always be in favor of the customer to prefer the product again and again, again and again, before any prognosis.

To understand a little more about the evolution of PACARI's brand engagement in the business world of the Ecuadorian chocolate market, it is convenient to start from the definition proposed by the book. Companies that leave their mark<sup>4</sup>. "The keys to business today are more related to service, knowledge, information, talent, brand, intangibles, technology, than to the products themselves" (p. 16). That is, the efficient operation of the company and the reflection of the brand comes from the commitment that the

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<sup>3</sup> It is one of the four phases of marketing evolution, this consists of taking into account the customer and the product, in order to offer a better shopping and consumption experience, which can even generate a good *Word of Mouth* or word of mouth marketing. (Ospina. 2016, p.28) It differs from marketing 1.0, 2.0 and 4.0; since the first focuses only on the product; the second only on the customer; and the last is based on the performance and knowledge of artificial intelligence and digital media to know what people require.

<sup>4</sup> It is a book that addresses the issue of the *brand employer*, that is, professional, knowledgeable, committed and trained employees are a fundamental part of the evolution and growth of the business organization both internally and externally. Written by Miriam Aguado & Alfonso Jiménez in 2017.

members of the company have, first, with the values, objectives and business philosophy of the company, and, second, the behavior that they have in everything that the brand as a company performs (events, marketing, communication, design, among others) to connect with its public.

In this way, PACARI has reflected the commitment it has with the public and with those who form its company, when the founding partners established the brand, they set the goal of promoting fair trade for Ecuadorian farmers, given that, for the couple, it was not possible for farmers to be paid a price below what someone specialized in the production of organic cocoa should really earn. They decided then, as a first method to accomplish their goal, to train. By informing community members how they could obtain greater benefits from the cocoa-growing area of Esmeraldas, such as making their own raw material of premium quality.

PACARI first connected with its producers. The company's implicit brand engagement was internal, because how to achieve the best without first engaging with the farmers? And this is the real objective of brand engagement, to connect not only with customers but also with the work team. It is already mentioned by Miguel Ángel (2018) when exposing in his thesis research that the impact of brand engagement is in the responsibility that the company possesses both in the internal and external business organization, in addition to the commitment that the organization establishes with customers. For the core of a business entity is its members and it depends on their link with the company to transmit the values of the organization properly.

However, it is recalled that engagement is based on the total understanding of the values of adaptation, empathy and humanity<sup>5</sup>. Among these, empathy and humanity are considered of greater relevance for the analysis, and PACARI is known as a brand with social commitment. Its 'boom' in Ecuador was in 2014, when the company began to conduct chocolate tastings in the city of Quito in order for people to know, taste and identify the brand. This was how the method was introduced to fulfill one of the second goals of the organization: to offer the best chocolate to the world; since, although internationally the brand was already gaining recognition, it had not yet managed to connect with Ecuadorian consumers where the chocolate came from.

Empathy was reflected at this point by the sensitivity generated by the product among the tasters, also called potential consumers, given that, "the consumer gives a position to the brand in his mind by evaluating it as good or bad" (Barrera & Rodríguez, 2018, p. 12) These terms are processed in the mind of the individual according to find characteristics of the product, which make it different from other brands that have been consumed before; then, the sense of sensitivity of PACARI is given in the right touch of the flavors with which it has been elaborated.

In an interview with Santiago Peralta in one of his chocolate production factories<sup>6</sup>, he said that in order to humanize the brand it was also necessary to transmit what it meant through the visual identity or branding process. Transmitting the message of Ecuadorian culture together with the richness of the country with the choice of a symbol and a name based on the Andean community and the Valdivia culture, thus making the brand become a person; that is to say, to make the brand become a person.

Another way in which PACARI has achieved its brand engagement is with the flavor lines of its products; since it has chocolates according to the Ecuadorian regions, the traditional fruits of certain sectors (mortiño, uvilla, among others), percentage of cocoa, with coffee and even salt of Cuzco. How has it achieved this? By taking into account the preferences of its customers, analyzing their tastes, their desires and offering them a quality product, worthy of the palate of each one of them, with messages that provoke emotion, that understand emotions and that evolve without losing sight of the company's objective, within a constantly changing market.

By connecting emotionally with consumers, Roberts says that it is easier for a brand to create a new purchasing culture and consumer habits (2004), and more than anything else, to reaffirm and strengthen them for those interest groups that are already immersed in some of the consumerism trends. In this case, when talking about 100% organic products, consumers are included within the trends of ethical and sustainable consumption, which has become more intense nowadays due to people's commitment to protect the environment.

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<sup>5</sup> From the eight brand values proposed by planner Alex Rubio in 2014, mentioned above in point 3.1 of the wording of this article.

<sup>6</sup> The interview was conducted by the YouTube channel Medios Públicos EP, and can be watched at the following link: <https://youtu.be/lsvnBHzWR94>

This shift from conventional to ethical consumption is explained by Estela Díaz in the following words: "If in conventional consumption decisions are based on functional attributes (e.g. price, quality or quantity), in ethical consumption attention is paid to the interests of 'others' and 'distant others', to collective concerns related to human rights, environmental protection and/or animal advocacy" (p. 2).

Ethical consumption is thus understood as a consumer culture that focuses on the needs of the consumer and the environment: collective problems of global concern. Factors that, placed on the scene of the PACARI world in Ecuador, are reflected in fair trade, responsible consumption, care for the environment and social commitment; the last points refer to the care and treatment of the soil and the actions taken by society to prevent environmental pollution. It is here where brand engagement plays an even more important role in the creation and development of this consumer culture.

In the first instance, the fair trade established by PACARI, since in Ecuador there is only 1% of companies that apply it and have implemented the appropriate payment for the activities and labor of their employees. The exact figure is evidenced by Vinicio Martínez (2019) in a report for the CECJ<sup>7</sup>, where it is indicated that only 59 companies are certified in fair trade; being one of these PACARI. This fact that occurs internally is nowadays known by all followers of the brand, since these are data and mission with which the company has been working since its foundation in 2002.

On the other hand, there is the dissemination of environmental responsibility and social commitment; facts that PACARI has achieved hand in hand with the first, since it has been responsible for conditioning its production factories, training its staff and constantly monitoring the processes, including even a cocoa school that allows new farmers to learn the process of agriculture, processing and chocolate making, which even allows them to provide more jobs to Ecuadorian farmers and farmers. A philosophy of Peralta and Barbotó that consists of in paying more and selling more, also because the idea of the organization was designed to change the structure in the industry, i.e. from slavery to humanism.

In addition, this commitment had to be reflected among its consumers and stakeholders, so according to Barbotó, a business plan had to be devised, a marketing strategy and a product that would make the customer fall in love and encourage them to rethink a new consumption model; the engine being given from what PACARI meant, love for nature, with care and respect for mother earth, for what surrounds us and what we are privileged to have (PACARI Archive, 2021). And although the brand's recognition was found in restaurants and luxurious places, its founders maintained their vision of being the best chocolate in the world and the most democratic; that is, accessible to all audiences.

It is from the mentality of the producers and the voice they have given to PACARI around the 42 countries in the world where it is today, as in Ecuador, with the boom of sustainable consumption started in 2015, PACARI managed to break through and cover even more markets within the country, focusing mainly on the young audience, of which, are part of the influencers of the medium and who are who are at the height of following trends and changing lifestyles.

This deduction according to the study conducted by Fernando Sampedro in 2016, on the new consumption habits in the young public. So how does PACARI create the culture of ethical consumption? With the emotional projection of the brand, especially in the digital media, the development of its blog with healthy options that employ its product line and with the chocolate tastings that they carry out on monthly and other annual occasions.

Emotional bonds or connections are defined by Riera (2011) as the capacity of understanding that people have towards others and towards themselves, being able to create relationships that allow them to connect in their environment. Generating an emotional bond will depend a lot on human perception, ideas and the reception of messages that are encoded by the individual; that is, in the world of brands, making customers fall in love is a process of connection that is planned from the humanization and identity of the brand.

As Roberts (2004) explains in his book, for a brand to become a lovemark and prevail over time, it is necessary for the company to exceed the expectations of its consumers, stakeholders and competitors. Making the customer fall in love and become a fan will be reflected in the approaches of those who shape the company to attract the public without being only technical and strategic. In other words, working in the knowledge that the brand is aimed at people for whom "love is more than just liking a lot (...) it is a response, an intuitive and delicate feeling" (p. 52). Taking into account these notions and those

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<sup>7</sup> It is the entity Coordinadora Ecuatoriana de Comercio Justo (Ecuadorian Fair Trade Coordinator), its president is Vinicio Martínez.

addressed around the article, PACARI has been one of the brands that has managed to become a lovemark in the Ecuadorian market -even more so in the international market-; from the consolidation of the brand identity, the creation of the name, marketing strategies, communication methods, its philosophy and even the development of its strategic plans. The impact it has had and the fact that today it is a brand that connects is due to the internal, fair trade, sustainable and environmental work it has, understanding its evolution from its origins. That is, producing chocolate from the country and not only exporting the raw material to be processed by other companies.

In addition to this, it has influenced the emotional marketing that prevails as a strategy of the company, of which Carla Barbotó highlights the relationships with the consumer that have been generated; the pillar of this is based on PACARI as a brand with purpose. As mentioned above, an organic, vegan, animal cruelty-free chocolate, and above all, committed to the environment. Packaging has now been upgraded to compostable packaging, which has a decomposition time of five years, ten years less than the decomposition time of plastic.

Being a type B company, which are known as triple impact companies<sup>8</sup> has consolidated the mission of the company PACARI with its stakeholders and consumers; being awarded and recognized in the environment for its fair trade work (paying triple to its farmers), environmental (promoting recycling and reuse) and social (providing job opportunities and training), which today has led it to be one of the brands loved by Ecuadorians.

This includes the company's constant innovation, since, although PACARI started as a chocolate production company, its product portfolio now includes cocoa powder, organic and vegan ice cream and even a coffee shop, all with its physical store in the city of Quito. PACARI has also been a sensory brand in Ecuador, its brand engagement has made the experiences they provide to their consumers take them to another world, relate them directly to their own origins and make them appreciate the exotic flavor of pure cocoa. For this, they conducted chocolate tastings and the cocoa route, in which the public can taste and at the same time get the history and personal advice of the founders; a relevant fact of the company to maintain this experience among its consumers was to conduct virtual chocolate tastings, after the declaration of the pandemic state by Covid-19 in 2020.

Another way to connect this brand is the customer service that exists in its physical store in Quito, a place where customers can approach, taste the chocolates, buy combos to give as gifts, get a sensory experience smelling and tasting the different flavors and even enjoy and learn about the processes and history of PACARI in Ecuador and the world, all this, as Santiago Peralta, is in charge of transmitting the history of the brand. In fact, he says in an interview<sup>9</sup> that PACARI has managed to involve consumers, stakeholders and new customers in the mentality of a sustainable consumption culture. However, he mentions that it is still a bit tedious to get fully involved with 25-year-olds, since 100 percent health care has not become a priority in this niche market. Peralta also confesses in this interview, that part of the emotional bonds that have been generated has to do with the perception and word-of-mouth marketing they have obtained abroad; since internationally, PACARI revolves around a premium quality segment, being one of the biggest referents Oprah Winfrey, who has declared herself a lover of PACARI chocolate flavored with lemon verbena. In short, PACARI has managed to win the hearts of its Ecuadorian and foreign consumers, and is currently creating a culture of sustainable and ethical consumption by maintaining its brand engagement, innovating in meeting its stakeholders and keeping them engaged through motivation, storytelling<sup>10</sup>, varying its product portfolio, conducting chocolate tastings and offering its customers a product thinking about their health and well-being and not only in the sales that can be generated; maintaining transparency in its actions and prioritizing fair trade. This has even led it to be one of the first Ecuadorian brands to be studied by Harvard University.

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<sup>8</sup> Companies that have social, environmental and economic influence. According to Santiago Peralta, there are currently two B-certified companies in Ecuador, and PACARI is the only one that has been requalified.

<sup>9</sup> The interview is conducted by Nicolás Muñoz, as a video report for a section of this Youtuber's channel: Marcas que Impactan. It can be viewed at the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oj9IZLFxpk&ab\\_channel=Nicol%C3%A1sRMu%C3%B1oz](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oj9IZLFxpk&ab_channel=Nicol%C3%A1sRMu%C3%B1oz)

<sup>10</sup> It is a technique of advertising, marketing and *branding* in general, which deals with purposeful storytelling that connects with people and generates emotional ties (Salmon, 2007).



## 5. Conclusions

Brand engagement is one of the fundamental pillars in the branding process in order to generate the essence of the brand's commitment to consumers. In this process it is vital that the company manages to transmit the objectives, vision, mission and philosophy to all the members that make it up; so that, in this way, the generation of emotional bonds is easier to carry out. Because if we remember Puig (2016), "only people make brands". That is to say, if the company makes its work team fall in love, it will avoid bad comments that distort the brand and will even generate word-of-mouth marketing; in addition, if the workers love the brand, it will be even more genuine to transmit this love to customers, since, "for a company to succeed, it must first create emotional bonds" (Roberts, 2007). This brand engagement process also involves reinforcing the three brand values: adaptation, empathy and humanity; being the humanization of the brand one of the points that make it an entity capable of transmitting emotions in a natural and genuine way; that is, understanding what the public wants, feels and longs for. Therefore, generating an emotional connection is the key to success in brand engagement, since emotional connections consist of connecting in a rational and emotional way with what we think and feel, from what is communicated to the feeling it generates.

This is how in Ecuador, within the chocolate and fine aroma cocoa market, the company PACARI founded by Santiago Peralta and Carla Barbotó manages to address brand engagement in a complete sense, from the approach of its brand commitment to the conquest of its customers, and even the formation of a culture of sustainable consumption. How is this whole process carried out? Since 2002, when the idea came from the couple when they discovered that Ecuador had the potential to produce its own chocolate and not only be an exporter of raw material, even choosing to change the country's industrial structure from a slave-owning one to a humanist one. This is how the first step of PACARI was born as a brand with commitment, since the productions revolved around fair trade, maintaining the firm belief of Peralta "pay more, sell more", based on paying farmers the deserved value to their work, i.e. triple the salary that is determined to this group. And once this was worked out, in 2005 when it was officially launched to the international market, it formalized another of its brand engagement values, its visual identity, where the name and the identifying symbol are part of the Ecuadorian origins, making evident another of its commitment which is that the Ecuadorian society can value what is produced in the country, to rediscover its value and its origins.

The first years PACARI focused on exporting its product, gaining high recognition in hundreds of countries around the world, awarded as the best chocolate in Ecuador and certified as a category B company - triple impact, creating an eco-friendly packaging that offered a variety of flavors that made it even a sensory brand, capable of transmitting that sense of origin with a bite. And how did it come to influence Ecuador? In 2010, when its founders decided it was time for Ecuadorians to know the delicious taste of PACARI. The way the brand has created an emotional connection in the Ecuadorian market is through its chocolate tastings, the opinions of influencers and, of course, the promotion of its culture of environmental and social commitment and sustainable consumption, conveying that it is a brand designed for the customer.

In conclusion, PACARI has indeed managed to develop a culture of ethical consumption in Ecuador, from the hard work done by its founders as internal management in each of its companies and the constant change and innovation made in response to the suggestions and needs of its stakeholders. And although it is still unusual to see a transcendental change among Ecuadorian consumers in the chocolate market, PACARI has so enamored its public, its farmers and their families, that it is among the most chosen organic chocolates. The brand's commitment has even led it to be one of the first brands to be studied by Harvard University, leaving a question: to what extent has its impact as a brand of commitment managed to transcend and inspire the birth of new organic chocolate brands in Ecuador?

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