



Corporate identity analysis of gastronomic SMEs, Sangolqui, Ecuador

Análisis de la identidad corporativa de las Pymes gastronómicas, Sangolqui, Ecuador

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Abstract

This research was carried out in Rumiñahui canton, Selva Alegre neighborhood. Twenty-six small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) of Francisco Guarderas Avenue were analyzed through a zoning by observation method, in order to establish the size of the population or universe. Subsequently, the researchers proposed indicators, with aspects such as: naming, slogan, clothing, stationery, signage and social networks to determine the size of the sample. After that, an analysis was made of seven SMEs that correspond to the sample, to determine trends in terms of typology, typography, naming, color and shape. At the same time, basic aspects of brand construction were suggested in order to demonstrate that it is possible to create a corporate identity that is attractive, easy to identify, adaptable and harmonious to be used in different graphic supports. The results indicate that SMEs do not apply corporate image elements, as they do not have a philosophy, visual identity or online reputation. Likewise, they have not built the brand of their businesses with basic parameters of brand construction, doing it in an empirical way, due to the lack of knowledge, training and budget on the part of their owners.

Keywords: Corporate image, brand, SMEs, Sangolqui.

Resumen

La presente investigación se realizó en el cantón Rumiñahui, barrio Selva Alegre. En ésta se analizaron 26 pequeñas y medianas empresas (Pymes) de la Av. Francisco Guarderas, a través de una zonificación mediante el método de observación, a fin de establecer el tamaño de la población o universo. Posteriormente, se hizo uso de los indicadores propuestos por los investigadores, con aspectos como: naming, eslogan, indumentaria, papelería, rotulación y redes sociales para determinar el tamaño de la muestra. Consecutivamente, se realizó un análisis de siete Pymes que corresponden a la muestra, para determinar las tendencias en cuanto a: tipología, tipografía, naming, cromática y forma. A su vez, se sugirieron aspectos básicos de construcción marcaria para poder demostrar que se puede elaborar una identidad corporativa pregnante, fácil de identificar, adaptable y armónica para ser empleada en diferentes soportes gráficos. Los resultados indican que las Pymes no aplican elementos de la imagen corporativa, al no contar con filosofía, identidad visual ni reputación online. Asimismo, no han construido la marca de sus comercios con parámetros básicos de construcción marcaria, haciéndolo de manera empírica, esto debido a la falta de conocimiento, capacitación y presupuesto por parte de sus propietarios.

Palabras clave: Imagen corporativa, marca, Pymes, Sangolqui

◆ Introduction

This article analyzed how small and medium-sized enterprises or SMEs have built their graphic identity and how entrepreneurs are aware of the importance and potential they have when communicating something to their customers. According to Montero Soto (2021), corporate identity manages to create a personality in order to stand out in the consumer's mind, since in these times there is high competition among establishments of any kind. This research has examined the communicative variables of the corporate visual identity of the gastronomic SMEs of Selva Alegre neighborhood to collect the most common trends in the corporate image they project through their logos (brand text).

Regarding corporate identity, brand image and logos, Capriotti (2009) states that they are the impact of the combination of everything planned and unplanned, the visual and verbal components generated by the corporation that shows the brand through visual units. On the other hand, Chaves & Belluccia (2003) emphasize that brand design and graphic identification signs do not go beyond the character of an illustration, but rather speak of generating a sort of allegory that alludes to the activity of the entity or to any key data of its identity. On the other hand, Van den Bosch, De Jong & Elving (2004) postulate that the work has to aim at disseminating the results, favoring the development of the knowledge of graphic designers, advertisers and advertising and branding experts.

The fact that the analysis of logos is used as a reference of an entity's corporate identity is based on theoretical approaches and previous research. Van den Bosch et al. (2004) differentiate between three levels of corporate visual identity: the strategic, the operational and the design level. Logotypes, together with names, slogans, color and typography are placed within this last level, according to these authors. On the other hand, Rincón (2019) states that the corporate identifier or graphic brand, the visual sign of any type -logo, symbol, monogram, mascot-, has the function of individualizing an entity, just like a proper name. In other words, brand identity is a symbolic creation expressed by means of a brand promise, which tries to satisfy the expectations of its specific public. It must manifest its essence and be formed by values, attributes

and benefits (Avalos, 2010). It is also worth mentioning that the purpose of perfecting or resizing a brand is to develop a new position in the minds of customers, managing to keep pace with the changes occurring in the marketing environment. For his part, Chaves (2015) mentions that the brand is nothing but the visual version of the name and that there is exact equivalence between the two. The signature materializes that equivalence, whether or not the name it represents is legible.

Throughout the world, corporate identity has become essential as it serves as an instrument of great importance for better communication between the sender and receiver, marking a difference between brands, which are characterized by their colors, shapes, typographies, slogans or phrases that allow the recognition of their customers, by being impregnated in the minds of consumers.

At the same time, corporate identity is an important element of any company, although it is not usually taken into account until a crisis forces the company to face some kind of change. The corporate identity of an organization is nothing more than the sum of properties, values and beliefs with which a company identifies itself, and due to which it differentiates itself from other organizations on a permanent basis.

Corporate identity is made up of philosophy and culture. These pillars should be fundamental in any type of organization, since they are the axis that leads to the creation of the image and, therefore, achieves a planned projection of the communicational actions (Castellari, 2014). In other words, corporate identity is the DNA of the company, the chromosomes of its genesis, which are the inheritance of the characters of its founding entrepreneur, and which are inoculated in it in the act of instituting, in the institutional spirit of the organization (Costa, 1993, 2003, 2004). In line with this initiative, Etkin, Baños, Bongiovanin & Pagani (2022) relate the term identity to personality, since the latter defines the particular aspects that make the institution unique. Thus, identity belongs to the intangible values and is a key factor for the organization, since it expresses all the behaviors and communications executed by the company.

To delimit and conceptualize corporate identity was and still is a challenge, as well as several other concepts. In particular, it has been studied by several disciplines and has been called "the tower of Babel" in the investigation of identity (Schultz, Hatch & Larsen, 2000). In line with the above, Nuño (2017) indicates that for "corporate identity to be favorable and earn the good reviews of users, it is important to be creative, to make the ordinary something extraordinary and, only in this way, we will get the target audience we want to address to notice us" (parr. 6).

In Ecuador, organizations agree with the need to improve the corporate image, trying to find a strategic communication that protects the interests of the company and seeks to have a high level of competitiveness in a globalized market, improving its place in the minds of consumers.

In Ecuador there are micro-enterprises and companies that have built institutional identifiers, which have been captured in the minds of their customers, allowing that, over the years, have been positioned within a specific market.

These companies or SMEs, according to López (2016), are small and medium-sized organizations with a small number of workers and a moderate turnover, which are considered the primary engine of the economy. SMEs are key contributors to job creation and, in several cases, are the organizations that provide the most jobs. They are concentrated in service occupations, cottage industries, as well as self-employment. According to the 2019 business directory of the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2010), there are 882,766 companies in Ecuador, of which 99.5% are considered MSMEs, which sold USD 46,921 million in 2019, or 27.7% of total sales generated by all companies in the country. In addition, they generated 1,832,967 job positions in 2019, or 60.4% of the total number of jobs registered by the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security (IESS).

In Rumiñahui canton it is essential to highlight the corporate identity of gastronomic SMEs, because there is a large market that requires differentiation from the competition. However, the lack of corporate identity does not allow organizations to stand out in the business framework in which they develop their occupations. Regarding gastronomy, the World Tourism Organization (2019) states that the reasoned understanding of what we eat and how we eat it encloses several processes such as the cultivation, processing, sharing and consumption of food and beverages.

According to Salazar Duque & Burbano Argoti (2017), from the tourism worldview, gastronomy has formed an essential union when welcoming visitors regardless of what their destination is, thus promoting the term "gastronomic tourism". The food and beverage area is directly involved in the tourism field, providing economic risks for the establishment that by effect manages to position itself competitively in the market.

The food and beverage sector is considered to be one of those that gives rise to a primary service occupation, which positively benefits the generation of tourism in a geographic sector. Its contribution creates significant economic income on a local, regional or national scale. Something to consider in this regard is the installed capacity at the level of places of gastronomy that Rumiñahui canton has: 5,942 places, most of which are grouped in the parish of San Rafael, although the cantonal capital is Sangolquí.

Likewise, the largest number of jobs is in San Rafael, where the number of jobs offered by the gastronomic establishments in the cantonal capital is double. At this point it is important to mention that the places considered at the level of lodging and gastronomy are those that are

registered with the Tourism Directorate of the Municipality of Rumiñahui and, therefore, are those that meet the requirements for this type of premises.

The existence of SMEs and their effect on society are viewed with great attention, given their capacity to adapt to diverse organizational environments and entrepreneurial projects (Pacheco Ruiz, 2013). According to information from the Competitive Management Study of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Republic of Ecuador, SMEs represent 95% of productive units (Jácome & King, 2013). In addition, SMEs in the gastronomic sector are sources of work that have boosted economic development, are economic dynamizers and generate new jobs, hence the value of producing policies and tactics to improve their level of competitiveness.

Therefore, the objective of this research was to analyze the corporate image, emphasizing how it is constituted, observing specific points, such as typology, chromatics (color or combination thereof), typography and iconography of the corporate identity of the SMEs of the gastronomic sector of the Selva Alegre neighborhood, which helped to conclude what is the incidence of the corporate image in each establishment.

Methodology

The study employed a methodology similar to that of Rivero & Vizcaíno-Laorga (2018), who perform a comparative use of 54 brands linked to the Asociación de Creadores de Moda de España (ACME). Likewise, Vozmediano (2013) was taken as a reference, which performs an analysis of fashion magazines in Spain, from a chromatic perspective, accentuating its interest in comparing color or graphics, referring to texts, images and typology of reticles.

Due to the nature of the study, it was decided to work in a qualitative, descriptive and transversal way. In the course of the development of the research, in the first instance, data were collected using a mapping of the Selva Alegre neighborhood, on Francisco Guarderas Street, to establish the universe or population size of the existing gastronomic SMEs, as shown in Figure 1. Each of them was assigned a particular coding, as can be seen in the same figure.

Then, by means of a check list (see Table 1), six indicators were proposed: naming i1 -creative process of sociological marketing techniques-, slogan i2, clothing i3, stationery i4, signage i5 and presence in social networks i6. A value of 1 was assigned if the SME complied with the proposed indicator and 0 if it did not, all this by means of the observation method. Likewise, through a convenience sample, the SMEs were selected that, through tabulation, had a total of 5 and 6 points in compliance with the indicators. A total of seven SMEs were obtained, which make up the study sample for the analysis. On the other hand, an analysis sheet was prepared

(see Table 2) to examine each of the brands, which have the parameters described below: typography, typography, naming, color and shape.

Results In the first instance, to determine the existing gastronomic SMEs in Selva Alegre neighborhood, in Sangolquí city, Rumiñahui canton, a zoning was carried out, which corresponds to the collection of data through the observation method (see Figure 1).

Once the survey of each of the SMEs had been carried out, the minimum graphic aspects of corporate identity that each of the establishments should have been described. For this purpose, an instrument was implemented in which the lowercase "i" was used to refer to indicators, accompanied by an ascending consecutive numbering, thus facilitating the understanding of the analysis. Thus, the following were: i1 naming, which refers to the name of the establishment; i2 slogan, that is, a phrase that identifies a product or service; i3 clothing, which refers to the distinctive clothing of the establishment; i4 stationery, which includes invoices, business cards, letterheads, flyers, labels and brochures. It should be emphasized that it was considered relevant to evaluate this indicator, since it is one of the aspects related to corporate image, although it is known beforehand that there are certain SMEs that have omitted the use of this indicator, since the use of social networks has increased. The following were also part of the instrument: i5 signage, a primary indicator that allows a customer to recognize an establishment, differentiating it from its direct and indirect competition; and finally, i6 social networks, i.e., Internet platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok and Twitter, sites where business information, such as publications, images and videos, can be found.



Figura 1. Zoning and coding of SMEs in Selva Alegre neighborhood. Source: self-made.

Once the zoning of the gastronomic SMEs in Selva Alegre neighborhood was completed, verification was carried out according to the established graphic indicators, through a field survey in which the commercial premises were accessed to determine whether or not the SMEs complied with the proposed indicators.

To facilitate the handling of the information, the number 1 was used when the code complied and the number 0 for the opposite case, resulting in what can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Check list of brand components

Brand components							
Code	i1 Naming	i2 Eslogan	i3 Appareal	i4 Stationery	i5 Signage	i6 S. Networks	Total
M1	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
M2	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
M3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
M4	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
M5	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
M6	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
M7	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
M8	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
M9	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
M10	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
M11	1	0	0	1	1	1	3
M12	1	0	0	1	1	1	3
M13	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
M14	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
M15	1	1	0	1	1	1	4
M16	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
M17	1	0	0	1	1	1	3
M18	1	1	0	1	1	1	4
M19	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
M20	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
M21	1	0	0	1	1	1	3
M22	1	0	0	1	1	1	3
M23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M24	1	1	1	1	0	0	5
M25	1	0	0	1	1	1	4
M26	1	0	0	1	1	1	3

Source: self-made.

In Table 1, the letter "M" is used to refer to the brand of the establishment followed by an ascending consecutive numbering. By means of a convenience sample, the businesses that reached a total of five and six points in compliance with the indicators were selected, obtaining a total of seven SMEs, which make up the study sample: M2, M4, M5, M7, M16, M20 and M24. M1, M6, M11, M12, M17, M19, M21, M22, M23 and M26 scored three points; M15, M18 and M25 scored four points; M8, M9, M10, M13 and M14 scored two points; M3 scored only one point and M23 scored no points. All of them were not studied, since they did not meet the minimum graphic indicators for analysis.

The results after the analysis can give a clear vision of the trends implemented in terms of branding, as well as show whether the elements of the corporate image are being used. On the other hand, they also allow to notice how the brands of the gastronomic SMEs of Francisco Guarderas Avenue are constructed.

Subsequently, a comparison of the different SMEs investigated was carried out to verify the graphic indicators and the scores obtained. Once the seven SMEs with the highest graphic indicator scores were identified, they were presented visually to continue with the analysis of the brand aspects (see Figure 2).

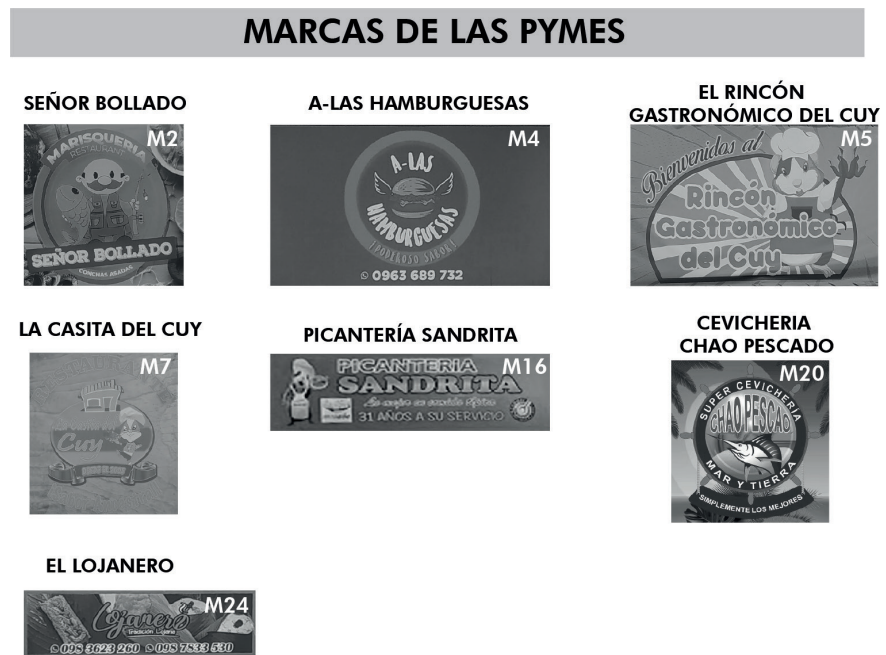


Figure 2. SME brands.
Source: Own elaboration.

For the analysis of the graphic identifiers of the seven selected brands, prior to the field study, five fundamental aspects were considered, which are described below.

The first point evaluated was the typology of the brand, considering the most used characteristics. Among the typology is the isotype, the logotype, the imagotype and the isologotype. Secondly, for the typographic analysis, the use of one of the following styles was taken into consideration: italic, serif, sans serif or decorative, and that the typography should be clear, legible and adaptable. As a third point, the naming indicator was evaluated, taking into account the following aspects: that the name be simple, complex, short, creative, innovative, adaptable, easy to read, easy to pronounce, catchy, suggestive, differentiable, euphonic, convincing and coherent. All these considerations help in the creation and selection process. In a third point, chromatics was evaluated, considering the existence of chromatic harmony, harmonic colors or specific colors. Finally, the shape was analyzed, taking into account whether the mark was circular, square, rectangular, triangular, oval or other. All this responds to a method of observation and analysis proposed by the researchers. Each of the indicators was considered and assigned a value of 1 when it complies and 0 if it does not, for subsequent analysis.

Table 2. Analysis of graphic indicators

Code	Type of brand				Typographical analysis							Naming										Chromatics			Form									
	Iso-type	Logo-type	Imagotype	Isologotype	Italic	Serif	Sans serif	Decorative	Tip clear and legible	Adaptable	Simple	Complex	Short	Creative	Innovative	Adaptable	Easy to read	To pronounce	Pregnante	Suggestive	Differentiable	Euphonic	Convincing	Coherent	Chromatic Harmony	Colors harmonic	Colors specific	Circular	Square	Rectangular	Triangular	Oval	Other	
M2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
M4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
M5	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
M7	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
M18	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M20	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
M24	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1	3	3	0	3	5	1	5	5	6	1	5	2	0	6	7	7	1	1	1	0	0	1	3	6	6	3	0	1	0	2	0	0

Source: self-made

The following is an individual analysis of the elements of corporate identity.

With respect to the brand analysis, the SMEs use more frequently imagotypes (combination of symbol and text) and isologues (text and symbol merged) compared to logos and isotypes (symbolic part of the brand) which are used less frequently in the design of the brands. It is presumed that establishments use more frequently imagotypes, since they work separately the text and the symbol, providing functionality when implemented in different supports. On the other hand, the isologue is present in the same percentage as the logo: three SMEs use this feature.

In relation to the typographic analysis, it was identified that the gastronomic SMEs do not use italic typography, unlike the serif type, used by three establishments, and sans serif, which is used by three other businesses. On the other hand, only one business opted to use a decorative typeface. In turn, two of the seven SMEs do not have clear, legible and adaptable typefaces (M4, M7).

According to the naming coding, it was determined that 86% comply with the parameter of simple and adaptable brand design, while 71%, for reasons of impact, opt for a short name. On the other hand, SMEs M2, M4, M5, M7, M18, M20 and M24 complied with easy to read and easy to pronounce, M2, M5 and M20 have criteria such as: suggestive, differentiable, coherent and complex. Also, M20 is catchy and has a creative name, as does M2. The results of the analyzed naming criteria can be seen in Figure 3.

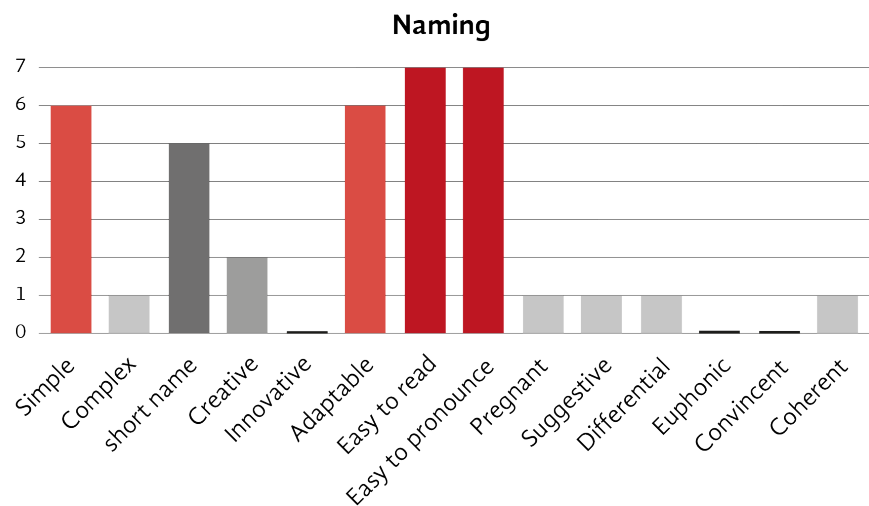


Figure 3. Naming.
Source: self-made

With regard to the chromatics of the gastronomic SMEs, six used the parameters established for the business line, three applied chromatic harmony (M2, M4 and M24) responding to color parameters such as: analogous, triads and complementary, while with regard to harmonic colors and specific colors, only M7 did not apply any criteria.

With respect to the results analyzed in terms of the shape of the corporate image of the gastronomic SMEs, it can be seen that the circular shape is present in three SMEs, making it the most used, as opposed to the rectangular and oval shapes used by two businesses, or the square and triangular shapes, which obtained a value of zero. The following is a graphical representation of the shape (see Figure 4).

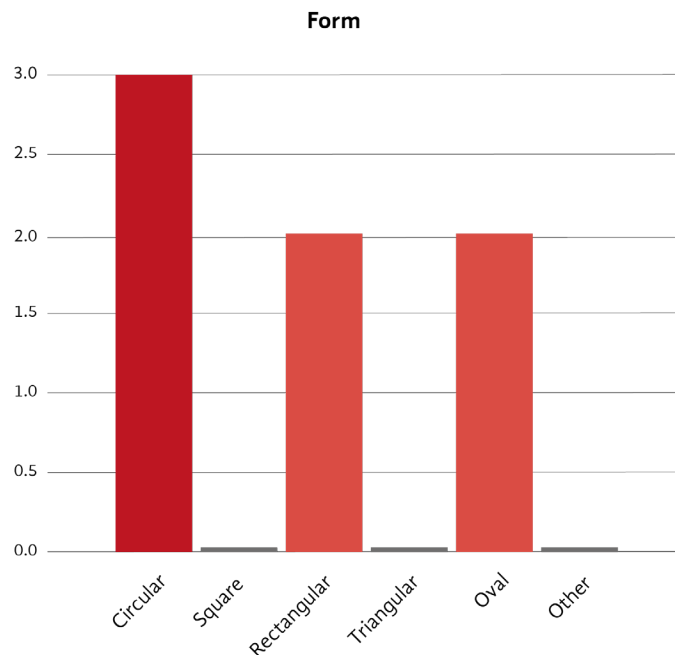


Figure 4. Shape
Source: self-made

Once the brands were identified and analyzed, as well as the different graphic elements that compose them, the parameters of brand construction that a brand must contain in order to be adequately constituted were defined.

With respect to the typology or type of brand, according to Olivares (2014), this parameter responds to the graphic or visual representations of the brands, which are divided into logotype, isotype, imagotype and isologotype. The purpose of this is that the products, services and those who produce and provide them are identified, distinguished, remembered and consumed.

On the other hand, typography, according to Pérez Quintero (2010), influences what is said, so it should not be forgotten that the important thing in this regard is that it is done in a legible, clear and understandable way. In this sense, it is recommended to use San serif typographies, which are easy to read, adaptable and modern.

Regarding naming, taking into account Cordova (2010), the simpler and easier to remember the brand name is, the catchier it will be in most people's minds. This reduction in the number of words in the naming favors its relevance, adaptability, easy reading and pronunciation. On the other hand, regarding chromatics, according to Olier and Gonzalez (2017), colors such as red, yellow, blue and green are frequently used in restaurants or supermarket food products, as they stimulate appetite and increase passion.

◆ Conclusions

With respect to the analysis of the corporate identity of the SMEs in Selva Alegre neighborhood, we can say that of the 26 businesses analyzed, only four comply with all the basic brand components and indicators that refer to: naming, slogan, use of clothing, stationery, signage and social networks in line with the brand.

However, these four SMEs do not have a brand created with basic construction parameters. The naming is too long, not very catchy and evocative, and in some cases, there is repetition of brand names by simply changing or adding a letter, word or number, leaving aside originality and uniqueness. On the other hand, in terms of color, there is an excessive use of the same tone, thus omitting chromatic harmony, as well as the use of gradients that can hardly be used in certain platforms. It should be noted that the most used colors are red and yellow, which are in accordance with the line of business.

With respect to typography, only two stores use legible and adaptable typographies. In addition, there is an abundance of information in the signage, such as: telephone numbers, social networks, graphic elements, which hinder the message that the establishment intends to give. Likewise, the signage, menus and advertising material of some of the SMEs analyzed are in a precarious state.

Another relevant fact is the misuse of the brand in print or digital advertising, since elements are changed or omitted in signage, retail stores and social networks. In relation to the typology of the brands, the most common in the analysis correspond to the logo and isologo, which are considered preferential to create, through a simple graphic idea, the identity of the brand. It should be mentioned that the symbolic part of the four SMEs is not made with graphic synthesis or abstraction, thus impairing the reproduction in different graphic supports. As for the shape, the most used is the circular, possibly taking reference to companies already

positioned, such as Starbucks, Crepes & Waffles, Burger King, among others. With respect to the use of social networks, it was found that the presence on these platforms is null, which deprives the companies of the attraction and loyalty of customers, which would prolong their commercial relationship with them.

In view of the above, and in response to our research question regarding trends in typology, typography, naming, chromatics and shapes in the use of the elements and parameters of brand construction of gastronomic SMEs in the Selva Alegre neighborhood, we can mention that these SMEs do not give corporate identity the importance it deserves, hindering the main function provided by the brand, which is to facilitate the consumer's choice when purchasing certain products. This may be due to the lack of knowledge, training and budget on the part of the owners, as well as to the lack of training that should be implemented on the subject of branding by municipalities and the different regulatory bodies. It is important to remember that, in order to establish an optimal corporate identity through the same graphic line, it should be implemented in the different graphic supports, creating differentiation and loyalty on the part of the clients, achieving relevance, gaining a place in the consumer's mind and attracting the desired public. Without this graphic line, the brand will look unprofessional, neglected, and it will be more difficult to be remembered.

If all the above is taken into account, it is concluded that, with basic aspects of construction of clear and legible typography, shape, symmetry, harmonious chromatics and according to the line of business, and the use of a graphic synthesis, a corporate identity can be generated that relates to the public to which the brand is addressed, both internal and external, in an optimal way. Therefore, it is suggested to design, take care and define the graphic elements that define the brand concept of gastronomic SMEs to differentiate the business from the competition, giving the brand identity the importance, it deserves.

This research is intended to be a reference for further research, as well as a support to designers and owners of enterprises regarding the generation of an optimal corporate identity. 📌

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