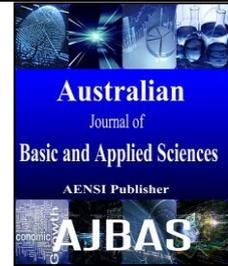




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A Study about the Mall's Image Configuration

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ABSTRACT

Background: The consumers' mental image about the mall is relevant to direct their strategies, reflecting in their positioning and competitiveness.

Objective: The purpose is to check how the process of mall's image configuration in study on the perception of local consumers, based on the image configuration method, that enables a permanent image monitoring, also its influence on communication planning for each year. **Method:** By means of the Image Configuration Method, it was identified, along with 400 consumers, the mall collective image located in the South of Brazil. **Results:** The results figured in the Image Configuration Graphic show the attributes, levels and image dimensions that make up the mall images a multidimensional construct, which can be configured from the cognitive, emotional, functional and symbolic dimensions, furthermore, findings research indicates that the functional elements are more related, are relevant, and symbolic elements orientate their market positioning. **Limitations:** Research limitations show a single cross sectional research, with sample for convenience and eminently qualitative approach; also it may have a bias in the analysis and interpretation of the contents/ data by researchers. **Conclusion:** The Image Configuration Method detects problems and opportunities for an organization's image. Also, this method allows constantly monitor the organization in each year. This research unravels how to understand the organization image to allow correct positioning due to the constant changing of attitudes by consumers. Moreover, the authors used the latest Method of Image Configuration.

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INTRODUCTION

Images have an important effect on people and customers lives (Moscovici, 2000; Finn and Louviere, 1996; Goss, 2010). Researches about image have focused on images related to brands, products, services and organizations (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Barich and Kotler, 1991; Stern *et al.*, 2001). In turn, managers seek an understanding of which mental images their customers have about their companies and offers, thereby to Boulding (1956) the human behavior comes from the product of the images that each man perceives, in other words, the behavior is not produced only by a particular stimulus, but from the whole image created in a person's mind. For Dichter (1985) it is the total impression interpreted through the mind of each individual. In this context, we have sought to identify the image that customers have of a mall and how it is formed and organized in their minds.

It is known that the entertainment linked to customer experience with a mall's image may influence in his or her intention to return to attend it

(Hart *et al.*, 2007; Ibrahim and Wee, 2002; Goss, 2010), as well as the importance of their external physical characteristics, also the internal features and support facilities (Turley and Milliman, 2000; Abaza, 2001; Kusumowidagdo *et al.*, 2012). Certain attributes of his or her image may cause an impingement on satisfaction and customer loyalty (Theodoridis and Panopoulos, 2012; Martinez-Ruiz *et al.*, 2010). Thus, the experience of consumption related to a mall's image may be seen as a transformative experience, involving both positive and negative feelings and perceptions (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008).

The image of an enterprise is complex by nature and consists of the combination of tangible and intangible factors, and functional and psychological factors that the customer perceives (Lindquist, 1975), so a vast complexity of values and meanings is summarized in simple symbolic images (Boulding, 1956), which for the mall's image environment may be configured in dimensions. Some tangible ones, related to physical and functional attributes, such as size, location and layout; and other intangible ones,

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related to the cognitive, symbolic and psychological customer links, that pertain to attributes which may be observed or experienced by customers, as, for example, attention and sympathy of sellers, attractive decoration, feeling of comfort, welfare and feeling of belonging to the place (Reynolds and Gutman, 1984; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Finn and Louviere, 1996; Stern *et al.*, 2001; Manhas, 2010; Kusumowidagdo *et al.*, 2012).

In this context, image is part of the intangible values, therefore, if some company tries to imitate its rivals, it will not be able to copy it since the image is not under the control of the company but in the perception of customers (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Manhas, 2010). The communication skills of an enterprise can create a favorable image before its customers and position it ahead of the rivalry about the preference thereof (Marken, 1990; Hooley *et al.*, 2003; Attia and Hooley, 2007), for such image comprises a perception of the enterprise as a whole, supported by different types of customers (Berens, 2004; Finn and Louviere, 1996).

Thus, it is important to understand the mall's image configuration because a mall includes a number of different types of stores and it is essential that their images fit together and that they grow together (Martineau, 1958). Also, the mall spaces have inspired urban sociologists to re-evaluate the notion of environments to communication and meetings (Abaza, 2001). Moreover, it is a leisure safe place (Bauman, 1996), in a particular Brazilian context, many indicators direct to significant growth of malls represented by the built and leased area, foot traffic and new projects with inauguration of areas. Also, Brazilian people shop for leisure, so they visit the mall two or three times a week (National Bank for Economic and Social Development, 2014; Chase, 2011).

The main aim of the research is to check how the process of mall's image configuration in study is formed on the perception of local customers, based on the image configuration method (Schuler *et al.*, 2014). The study also aims to identify attributes related to mall's image, check the internal organization of attributes related to the levels of the image (central image, the first and second intermediate images and periphery), analyze the image composition as the whole of dimensions and respective attributes, and put forward a graphical display of results through the image configuration graph (ICGraph). Therefore, this paper contributes with the image configuration method in a mall's image context.

In the following sections, the theoretical framework is presented, with the definitions and dimensions of the image, then, the method of image configuration as the instrument of collection and mensuration. The results are presented and exemplified in tables and figures in the context of an empirical study.

Theoretical Framework:

Image: Assumptions, Definition and its Organization in Consumer's Mind:

Images consist of one of the most important intellectual materials of human being, influencing and directing people's behavior. The grasp of images that different publics form about a particular object emerges as an asset to the targeting of competitive edge, marketing strategies, as well as for communication and better performance of the company in the market (Schuler *et al.*, 2014). Given customer's complex behavior, this fact surrounded by multidisciplinary ways, in a holistic way, in which body, mind, emotions and spirit can be considered (Zaltman, 1996; 2000), studying image is a multi and interdisciplinary effort (Finn and Louviere, 1996; Du Preez *et al.*, 2008).

Customers are individuals, therefore they are not identical. Their cognitive skills differ, thus some of them need less time to make a decision than others do (Boom, 2011). Therefore, to contextualize the individual in society, images have been considered as mental representations of an individual (customer) about a mall's image. Among the different perspectives of understanding how images are arranged in the customer's mind, two theoretical assumptions should be highlighted: the image as social representations and from the central nucleus of its representations.

Social Representations Theory (SRT), approached by Moscovici (1961), is one of the main theories that explain processes of social influences and how individuals acquire and organize their mental models (Breakwell, 2001). The SRT presents the formation of mental models as a socially mediated process. The social group in which the individual lives and interacts, his or her behavior, the organizational context and information channels are strongly influential agents in forming individuals' images. To Moscovici (2000), social representations are a set of convictions, beliefs, values and knowledge widely shared by people. These social representations are intended to make the events familiar, ensuring the possibility of sharing the network of meanings that is assigned to them. The advantage that customers acquire from the use of some product or service, and the decision between adopting this product or not, depends greatly on customers' social environment and on the number of other customers using compatible products or services (Katz and Shapiro, 1986; Timmor and Katz-Novon, 2008). This relationship with products, which constitutes a research scope in marketing, is the focus of this work. In this case, the object in question is a mall's image.

Thus, social representations are pictures of a phenomenon and a creative expression of human subjectivity. They are characterized by a dubious nature, being simultaneously a perception and a concept. Although social representations are related

to other forms of social knowledge, such as science, politics and technological knowledge, they are usually distinct for their wide spread in the population and its practical function in everyday social relations (Tsoukalas, 2006). Social representations can be seen as a functional view of the world, allowing the subject to give meaning to his or her conduct, and to understand the reality from his or her own system of references, allowing the person to adapt, defining his or her place (Abric, 1994).

The SRT suggests that mental models relating to any object will be determined by the inclination of the individual to a particular form of anchoring and objectification. Anchoring seeks to classify new experiences and perceptions with the objects of the world, making familiar what is not familiar, giving a place to the object newly perceived within the network of information organized and shaped by the individual. It tries to find out, for such an object, the answer to the question "what is it?" allowing this object to be used, mentally, as it has already been transformed into a sign. When a sign is provided in the repertory of the subject, it is categorized, creating close links with the signs that were already present in the repertory, so as to approach it, either by similarity, or by various other operations of meaning (e.g. metaphor and analogy). Thus, the sign of the new perception is anchored to categories of signs previously acquired to expand its meaning. In other words, the sense that it will do for the individual in his or her upcoming decisions about his or her relationship to this object. However, in order to clarify the meaning of any word, we have to use another word which may replace or complement the previous one. Therefore, the objectification seeks to make concrete something that is abstract, facilitating their understanding and integration within the individual's information network. In this process, it seeks to link a concept to an image, transforming the word that replaces the thing, into the thing that replaces the word (Moscovici, 1984, 2000).

In turn, the *Theory of Central Nucleus* (TCN) suggests that human being organizes and processes information, dynamically, evolving around a central core and a set of peripheral elements (Abric, 1984; Sá, 1996). According to the French researcher Jean-Claude Abric (1984, 1994), any representation is organized around a central core, consisting of one or more elements, which give the representation of their meaning, and such elements occupy, in the structure of this representation, a privileged position. Every thought must ensure the identity and continuity of the social group to which it relates, a number of beliefs, collectively engendered and historically determined, that are "non-negotiable", and that cannot be called into question, as to it, they constitute the foundation of the way of life and value system of the group. One can only say that two or more groups that have the same representation of an object are homogeneous, if

they share the same core. The core has three key functions: generating, which is to create or transform a representation; organizing, which determines the nature of the connections between the elements of a representation; and stabilizing, which is to keep the core concepts and resist to changes (Abric, 1993, 1994).

Attributes that make up the central nucleus are marked by collective memory, are stable and resistant to change. Its function is to generate meaning to images. Around the central system image, there is the peripheral system (first and second intermediate images and periphery), composed of attributes most sensitive to the immediate context. Its function is to allow adaptation to reality, as well as the differentiation of content and protection to the central system. The peripheral system is close to practices of everyday life and subject to changes (Sá, 1996). The core is historically marked, consistent and stable. The peripheral system is adaptive, flexible and relatively heterogeneous concerning its content (Abric, 1993).

Therefore, images are organized as a network of meanings, or associated schemes, and arranged around a few core elements that are socially accepted and shared. Depending on this, from a review of the literature on the organization of images in memory, one can realize that people organize their images around some central concepts, which will give meaning to the object in question and compose the central nucleus of their representations.

Image Dimensions:

Images are multidimensional constructs (Haedrich, 1993; Du Preez *et al.*, 2008), organized in dimensions, being some tangible or intangible, changeable or unchangeable, measurable or not measurable (May, 1974). Thus, Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), Stern *et al.* (2001) emphasize the existence of different dimensions in the study of images. In this direction, it has been found that the image of an enterprise, such as a mall's image, can be better directed from four dimensions: cognitive, emotional, functional and symbolic.

The *cognitive dimension* refers to the mental constructs of the object, since the individual evaluates the image as a print and a set of attitudes and perceptions about the building. It is as a mental, rational and logical construct that customers use to evaluate an object, because the cognitive system creates knowledge networks that organize and connect various kinds of information, bringing meaning to it. This mental construct is directly influenced by the beliefs and prior knowledge of the customer in relation to the object. In this dimension lies the set of ideas, feelings, perceptions, judgments and attitudes that customers have about this specific object (Martineau, 1958; Dichter, 1985; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). This dimension is influenced by motivational factors and potentially conflicting

emotional one, many of which can be in action at the same time (Eysenck and Keane, 2010).

The *emotional dimension* refers to inner experiences that motivate and organize images to guide customers in their actions (O'Neill and Lambert, 2001). This dimension refers to positive or negative affective state that customers associate with an object. It is emphasized that this state of positive and negative emotions is related to customer behavior and satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, with an object (Reynolds and Gutman, 1984; Poiesz, 1989). In other words, positive emotions (e.g. joy) are associated with proactive customer behavior, approach or activation. On the other hand, negative emotions (e.g. fear) are associated with passive behavior, to avoid something or inhibition (Peine *et al.*, 2009; Zielke, 2011).

The *functional dimension* is composed of tangible elements and it is translated as a series of physical characteristics of a particular object, such as location, size, architecture and layout, which pervade the functionality of the object analyzed by the customer. It expresses the quality and benefits of a given object by means of its tangible elements (Stern *et al.*, 2001; Finn and Louviere, 1996). This dimension constitutes the physical characteristics perceived and valued by customers about the object. In a mall, for example, the customer evaluates its image from the external and internal physical characteristics, of the available spaces, shops and tangible aspects associated with services (Finn and Louviere, 1996; Kusumowidagdo *et al.*, 2012).

Finally, the *symbolic dimension*, related to significance that the object represents for the customer, dealing with the object abstractly, because what people buy has a personal, hedonic and social significance beyond its utilitarian functions. It is noteworthy that a symbol is something that represents or expresses something else for the customer, strengthening his or her self-image, and it may have multiple roles (functions) as it represents their personal attributes, social objectives, etc., and it serves as a communication device between the customer and its reference sign. Therefore, symbolic value is in enhancing the feelings, values and goals of the customer, in other words, his or her own image (self-esteem) and the image that is transmitted to others (status) (Martineau, 1958; Dichter, 1985; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Stern *et al.*, 2001). When an individual attends a mall, he or she takes into account the symbolic attributes of the place, what the mall's image is for him or her and the other individuals (Ibrahim and Wee, 2002; Hart *et al.*, 2007).

Research Method:

A sample of mall customers was analyzed in the south of Brazil, using an image configuration method (Schuler *et al.*, 2014) that is presented in more detail as follows.

Research Environment:

The research was applied in a mall located in the country side of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Brazil, opened in 1996. Since its inauguration, this ambience became the main center for shopping and entertainment for customers of 56 cities that comprise the region. In 2009, its expansion occurred, being that this project represented a conceptual renovation. Its mix of stores has been increased from 110 to 140 stores (anchors and satellites), bringing national and internationally recognized brands, which stand for sales and public flow they generate. The new structure creates relationship with the city through the open spaces and also it uses natural overhead lighting to transform aisles in internal "streets".

From 15.000 m² of Gross Leasable Area (GLA), the mall went to 29.000 m², which, added to the area of a hypermarket, totalizes more than 50.000 m². The circulation of customers shows an average of 750 thousand customers per month. Each year, there are about 9 million customers who attend the mall. Thereof, 90% are local customers. Customers belong to medium-high socioeconomic and cultural status. The data show that 79% of them belong to classes A and B and 61% are high school and university graduates. Also, it has been found that 52% of the customers are young people, aged between 17-34 years.

Instrument:

Concerning the research method, the Image Configuration Method (ICM) has been used, which is based on developed and validated methods for accessing the configuration of images in the minds of customers, such as the methods of Customer Window developed by Arbor Incorporation (Sherry, 1987) and Framework for Marketing Image Management (Barich and Kotler, 1991), as well as methods developed by other researchers to access the configuration of social representations (Abric, 1984; Moscovici, 1984, 2000; Vergès, 1992; Sá, 1996). The ICM and its adaptations have been improved and developed through the work of many scholars, with validity and reliability tests. After twelve years of development, this method represents a valid and trustworthy procedure that gives a permanent monitoring of image to companies, products and brands. It can also help on communication planning for each fiscal year, in other words, ICM detects problems and opportunities for the image of an organization (Schuler, 2004; Schuler *et al.*, 2014).

The method involves the following steps: identification of the target publics (segmentation and segment profile), content configuration of the organizational image (it identifies the image's salient attributes), data processing (groupings configuration of the organizational image), graphical representation of results (it displays the results), and it provides the mall's image from this sample of customers.

Identifying the publics' image is the first step, so that each group of customers presents common characteristics, it is essential to survey the related image of the mall next to the target audience attributes. The survey of image attributes was implemented through individual interviews, and respondents were asked to answer the basic script questions designed to offer a free spontaneous way without tensions or obligations, criticism or judgment, about their perceptions (Guimelli, 1994, Schuler *et al.*, 2014). For data collection, the technique of individual in-depth interviews has been implemented, the interviews have been conducted through a semi-structured approach (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; King and Horrocks, 2010; Hennink *et al.*, 2011) with the implementation of a

Basic Script Issues, encouraging free evocation of attributes belonging to the dimensions that make up the images in the view of respondents. The technique of free evocation is based on the concept of free association, in which the respondents are prepared to reveal the first idea that comes to mind (Guimelli, 1994).

After structuring the Basic Script Issues, a pretest was performed to correct problems of understanding and assessing its application time. The list of questions was applied, then, to ten customers of the mall. In the application of the pretest, an average of seven minutes was necessary for each interview, and the respondents did not present any doubts. The ten interviews concerning the pretest were not included in the final sample (Figure 1).

Image Dimensions	Basic Script Questions
Top of mind attributes	1. When I say Mall ("brand"), what is the first thing that comes to your mind? 2. What other ideas come to your mind when you listening Mall ("brand")?
Cognitive	3. How do you describe the Mall ("brand")?
Affective	4. Which feelings come to your mind when I say Mall ("brand")?
Functional	5. Which benefits the Mall ("brand") offers for you?
Symbolic	6. What is the meaning of Mall ("brand") for you?

Fig. 1: Structured interview for attribute survey.

For tabulation and data processing, some procedures have been adopted. The first stage consisted of a content analysis on the responses of the interviews, when the ideas mentioned by respondents were listed, generating pertinent attributes to the image related to the mall in study (inductor term). The content analysis had an effect on the qualitative assessment of all the interviews, allowing the proper interpretation of the questions raised (Gibbs, 2007; Boeije, 2010; Schreier, 2012). The second stage was to classify the identified attributes into pre-defined categories. All ideas have been listed, coming to a first list with 130 attributes. To further validate the content, attributes were categorized based on the analysis of two researchers with knowledge on the subject, following the method of judges to minimize the biases caused by subjective interpretation (Malhotra, 2012), resulting in a final list of 40 attributes. At this point, image is considered as a multidimensional holistic event (Schuler *et al.*, 2014).

Subsequently, the third stage, which identified the attributes of centrality. The distances of attributes in relation to inductor term were determined, raising differentiated areas of attributes, which resulted in four levels of image: Central Image, First and Second Image, Intermediate Image and Peripheral Image. Attributes have been analyzed for frequency and order of evocation. With these two criteria, the attributes were analyzed with the use of software EVOC® (Vergès, 1992), which allowed the analysis of evocations, seeking, from the combination of frequency of evocations and average order of evocation of each word, to identify the attributes with

higher probability to belong to Central Image and other levels of the image.

In ICM, only the first five attributes cited by the respondents received order values (*the first one cited = 5; the second = 4; the third = 3; the fourth = 2; and the fifth = 1*) and all attributes cited during the interview received a frequency value (*=1 per respondent*). Following, they received the Value of Order (VO), the Value of Frequency (VF), their total values (TV = VO + FV), and the Value of Average Order (VAO), which was calculated by the total frequency of attributes cited, divided by the number of different attributes. So, these attributes were arranged in four quadrants or levels. The first cited corresponds to Core Image or Central Nucleus; the second, to the First image Periphery; the third, to the Second Periphery; and the fourth, to the Image Margin. According to Vergès (1992), the classification criteria are: Core Image: Attributes are cited in the first place; this indicates a strong connection to the mental image of the object in that particular respondent's view; First Periphery Image: considering attributes to the interval with the next highest values; Second Peripheral Image: corresponding to the interval with third higher values; and Image Margin (Schuler *et al.*, 2014).

To assign zones of proximity to the inductor term, the criterion of Total Value (TV = OV+FV) of attributes was adopted. From the TV, the procedure of dividing by quartiles has been applied, creating four intervals. The interval generated by the fourth quartile, corresponding to highest values, accepted attributes belonging to the Central Image; the third and second quartiles, with the interval of the second and third highest values, the First and Second

Intermediate Images; and the first quartile, with the range of lower values, the Peripheral Image. Attributes identified also have been categorized in the respective dimensions for the judgment of three judges, who performed the division of attributes in their dimensions. Attributes have been presented in a disorderly manner to three researchers, requesting that they were grouped in accordance with their respective dimensions (Schuler *et al.*, 2014).

Results:

Sample and Profile of Respondents:

400 customers that were arriving at the mall were interviewed, although they were approached for convenience, the characteristics (profile) of customers taken as the target audience of the mall were considered. Regarding the gender of the respondents, the female gender prevailed, represented by 58,25% of respondents, while male customers accounted for 41,75% of the sample. With respect to age, it was perceived a predominance of young people, being 32,75% of respondents between 18-25 years old, while 25,75% were between 26-35 years old, 17,25% between 36-45 years, 22,25% between 46-65 years and 2,0% of customers surveyed were over 65 years old.

On the level of education, more than half of the respondents (63,25%), have higher education (45,25% with incomplete higher education ,and 18% with complete higher education). Only 1,25% of respondents have incomplete primary education, while 3% have completed primary; 3,5% have an incomplete secondary school, and 13,75% have complete high school; 3,25% of them have an incomplete post-graduation, and 12% of the sample a complete course of postgraduate study. As for

individual monthly income ranges, predominated \$250,00 to \$498,00 (27.75%) and \$499,00 to \$830,00 (26.75%). Compared to the average frequency of going to the mall, 29.25% of the respondents attend less than once a month, 57,25% go to the mall one to three times a month and 13% four or more times a month.

Identification of Attributes Related to Mall's Image:

From the content analysis, 40 attributes have been identified; Table 1 presents the identified attributes, its Value Frequency and its representativeness (%).

Organization of Identified Attributes in Relation to Levels of Mall's Image:

Attributes related to the mall's image, Values of Order (VOs), the Values Frequency (VFs) and their total values (TVs), and their respective division into areas of proximity to the inductor term (levels of Mall's Image) are shown in Table 2.

The Central Image of Mall is composed by attributes of shopping, entertainment, cinema, places to stroll, food, commodity, stores, variety, people and spending. Such attributes are more stable in the memory of customers and resistant to change and they help to give meaning to the mall. They are related to basic aspects of a mall (shopping, food, fun and socializing with people). One aspect that can be "delicate" to the image and positioning of the mall is the attribute of spending. The origin of this evocation may be linked to shopping, food and entertainment, among other attributes, which may be related in a mall and that, consequently, reflects on costs to customers.

Table 1: Identification of attributes related to the Mall's Image

No.	Attributes Identified	VF	(%)
1	Entertainment	577	14,41
2	Shopping	443	11,06
3	Commodity	327	8,16
4	Cinema	246	6,14
5	Place to stroll	234	5,84
6	Food	206	5,14
7	Variety	197	4,92
8	Stores	154	3,85
9	Joy	140	3,50
10	People	123	3,07
11	Security	104	2,60
12	Spending	87	2,17
13	Large (infrastructure)	81	2,02
14	Parking lot	78	1,95
15	News	78	1,95
16	Something good	75	1,87
17	Modernity	74	1,85
18	Meeting point	74	1,85
19	Pleasant environment	68	1,70
20	Beautiful place	64	1,60
21	Touristic point	49	1,22
22	Fashion	46	1,15
23	Consumption	45	1,12
24	Tranquility	42	1,05
25	Satisfaction	39	0,97
26	High price	36	0,90

27	Luxury	32	0,80
28	Quality	32	0,80
29	Convenience	30	0,75
30	Commerce	30	0,75
31	Family	28	0,70
32	Economic growth	24	0,60
33	Carrefour (Hypermarket's brand)	23	0,57
34	Services	21	0,52
35	Differentiated Infrastructure	21	0,52
36	Good brands	18	0,45
37	Good prices	16	0,40
38	Organization	15	0,37
39	Cleaning	15	0,37
40	Promotions	13	0,32
Total Frequency		4.005	100

Note: VF = Value Frequency.

The First Intermediate Image comprises the attributes of joy, news, large infrastructure, security, something good, modernity, meeting place, beautiful place, fashion and pleasant environment, while the Second Intermediate Image, attributes of parking lot, high prices, consumption, Carrefour (Hypermarket's brand), luxury, tourist point, quality, commerce,

tranquility and convenience. Whereas, the Peripheral Image, comprising for the less salient attributes on customer perception, is formed by: good brands, satisfaction, good prices, family, services, differentiated infrastructure, economic growth, promotions, cleanliness and organization.

Table 2: Levels of Mall's Image and the respective attributes.

Level of Image	VF	VO	TV	
1	Shopping	443	1.001	1.444
2	Entertainment	577	715	1.292
3	Cinema	246	602	848
4	Place to stroll	234	495	729
5	Food	206	444	650
6	Commodity	327	241	568
7	Stores	154	330	484
8	Variety	197	216	413
9	People	123	267	390
10	Spending	87	200	287
11	Joy	140	50	190
12	News	78	104	182
13	Large (infrastructure)	81	97	178
14	Security	104	66	170
15	Something good	75	95	170
16	Modernity	74	88	162
17	Meeting point	74	75	149
18	Beautiful place	64	81	145
19	Fashion	46	98	144
20	Pleasant environment	68	76	144
21	Parking lot	78	63	141
22	High price	36	98	134
23	Consumption	45	63	108
24	Carrefour	23	74	97
25	Luxury	32	57	89
26	Touristic point	49	35	84
27	Quality	32	46	78
28	Commerce	30	32	62
29	Tranquility	42	14	56
30	Convenience	30	26	56
31	Good brands	18	30	48
32	Satisfaction	39	7	46
33	Good prices	16	25	41
34	Family	28	10	38
35	Services	21	16	37
36	Differentiated infrastructure	21	15	36
37	Economic growth	24	4	28
38	Promotions	13	14	27
39	Cleaning	15	6	21
40	Organization	15	4	19

Note: VF = Value Frequency;

VO = Values of Order; TV = Total Values.

Table 3: Grouping attributes in their respective dimensions.

Dimensions/ Attributes	TV (Total Value)	%
Cognitive		
Spending	287	2,87
High price	134	1,34
Consumption	108	1,08
Quality	78	0,78
Good prices	41	0,41
Organization	19	0,19
Subtotal	667	6,68
Emotional		
Commodity	568	5,69
Joy	190	1,90
Meeting point	149	1,49
Pleasant environment	144	1,44
Tranquility	56	0,56
Satisfaction	46	0,46
Subtotal	1.153	11,55
Functional		
Shopping	1.444	14,46
Cinema	848	8,49
Food	650	6,51
Stores	484	4,85
Variety	413	4,14
Large (infrastructure)	178	1,78
Beautiful place	145	1,45
Parking lot	141	1,41
Carrefour (Hypermarket's brand)	97	0,97
Touristic point	84	0,84
Commerce	62	0,62
Convenience	56	0,56
Good brands	48	0,48
Services	37	0,37
Differentiated Infrastructure	36	0,36
Economic growth	28	0,28
Promotions	27	0,27
Cleaning	21	0,21
Subtotal	4.799	48,06
Symbolic		
Entertainment	1.292	12,94
Place to stroll	729	7,30
People	390	3,91
News	182	1,82
Security	170	1,70
Something good	170	1,70
Modernity	162	1,62
Fashion	144	1,44
Luxury	89	0,89
Family	38	0,38
Subtotal	3.366	33,71
Sum of TVs	9.985	100

Grouping of Attributes in Image Dimensions of Mall:

The attributes identified have also been classified in their respective dimensions (Table 3).

As shown in Table 3, in two columns on the right, TVs associated with each attribute and the percentage (%) that represents the sum of all TVs have been found. Furthermore, it brings the TV associated with each dimension and the percentage (%) of TV general attributes of each dimension (subtotals).

The functional dimension has been the most salient, with 48,06% of TV. This demonstrates that the mall's image is characterized as a more functional place (tangible elements that the mall offers and/or transmits to the customer), with more

rational characteristics and linked to practical aspects. The second dimension has been more representative of the symbolic one (33,71%). In this case, the respondents related the meanings that the mall transmits to them when attending it. The third most cited was the emotional dimension (11,55%), in which the manifested attributes arouse feelings of pleasure, or not, and well-being. It is relevant to note the prevalence of the feeling of commodity, in this Central Image (Table 2), specifically characterized by the third most cited attribute (commodity). Finally, the fourth dimension, having a smaller representation of the image of the respondents, has been the cognitive one (6,68%).

Perception of Mall's Image through ICGraph:

To exhibit the graphical layout of the research results, briefly, the ICGraph of mall's image in this study has been developed, which is presented in Appendix 1. This graph allows checking levels and dimensions of the image, besides respective attributes identified from the viewpoint of customers surveyed, and that relate to the way that the mall's image is perceived, targeting for a better understanding of their market positioning.

In other words, the ICGraph expresses how the Central Image and other levels of the image are formed by a set of attributes, responsible for supporting the image, which is shared by the group of customers; and the positioning of the mall, emphasizing that such content can result in a differentiate relative alternative which, perhaps, the customer has available in the market (Finn and Louviere, 1996; Manhas, 2010; Burke, 2011; Kusumowidagdo *et al.*, 2012; Theodoridis and Panopoulos, 2012).

Conclusion:

The survey results illustrate that as important as identifying images of an object of research in relation to a specific audience, it must be understood how images are configured. The image of an enterprise, in this case, the mall's image, is composed of a set of networks of representations, perceptions and meanings stored in the mind, in the memory of customers, which can be configured from a set of elements (dimensions) cognitive, emotional, functional and symbolic ones, organized around some central and/or peripheral elements.

A positive image among the target audience, and sustained by the most relevant attributes from a customer perspective, can help managers build an image and an appropriate market positioning, increasing its sales volume, market share, profit and profitability. Thus, it is possible to establish a competitive advantage and differentiate themselves from the competition (Hooley *et al.*, 1998; Villafañe, 2002; Hooley *et al.*, 2003; Francoeur, 2004; Attia and Hooley, 2007; Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010; Ingenhoff and Fuhrer, 2010; Burke, 2011).

Thus, customer behavior in choosing a mall can be influenced by images that are formed in their minds regarding it (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Finn and Louviere, 1996; Hart *et al.*, 2007; Theodoridis and Panopoulos, 2012). Therefore, the identification of these images constitutes an important opportunity to better understand perceptions and customer behavior, allowing the implementation of strategies and actions to maintain or modify the existing image and positioning. Comparing the assumptions of managers and perceptions of customers (De Chernatony *et al.*, 1994; Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010) it would be clearer which decisions should be made, directly influencing the construction of their marketing plan (Greenley *et al.*, 2004; Piercy, 1998).

As relevant as identifying mall's image is understanding how these images are configured. In this sense, there has been a research effort employing the MCI, as a method to generate techniques of images configuration, which proved to be a suitable method for the purposes of this research. Checking the relevance of the theme and the opportunity for applied studies to the context of malls, the work fulfilled the proposed objectives by configuring images that local customers have regarding the Mall's Image Study.

From the Central Nucleus Theory it has been possible to identify how customers of malls organize their images around central, intermediate and peripheral elements. Evidences allow concluding that the Mall's Central Image consists of ten attributes that give it meaning. For customers, the mall can be considered as a place of shopping and entertainment, which gives people an option to stroll with comfort, offering a variety of aspects related to entertainment and shopping, both in the cinema (fun), as in the food court and shops, all of which benefits generate, as a consequence, spending or consumption. Thus, it was observed that the mall is considered as well as a space for shopping, a place of leisure and recreation (entertainment), which is corroborated by other studies (Abaza, 2001; Ibrahim and Wee, 2002; Hart *et al.*, 2007; Goss, 2010; Theodoridis and Panopoulos, 2012; Kusumowidagdo *et al.*, 2012).

Another revelation has been the understanding that the mall's image is multidimensional (Haedrich, 1993; Finn and Louviere, 1996; Du Preez *et al.*, 2008) and that it can be configured from the cognitive, emotional, functional and symbolic dimensions. Research findings indicate that, for respondents, four dimensions are part of the Central Image of Mall, whereas the most salient dimensions were the functional dimension (48,06%) and the symbolic one (33,71%), representing over than 80% of TV's most remembered and readily evoked attributes. From this result, one may think that these two dimensions are the most representative attributes of the common understanding of the respondents about the mall's image.

The mall's image is more linked to tangible elements, such as the number of physical features that it offers (shopping, cinema, food, stores, variety, infrastructure, parking lot) and the meaning it conveys and represents customers who attend (entertainment, stroll, people, news, security). From this, the work brings useful contributions towards identifying the Images Configuration relating to a mall, both with regard to the composition of its core elements (levels image) as the composition of its dimensions (cognitive, emotional, functional and symbolic), reflecting in its positioning and competitiveness.

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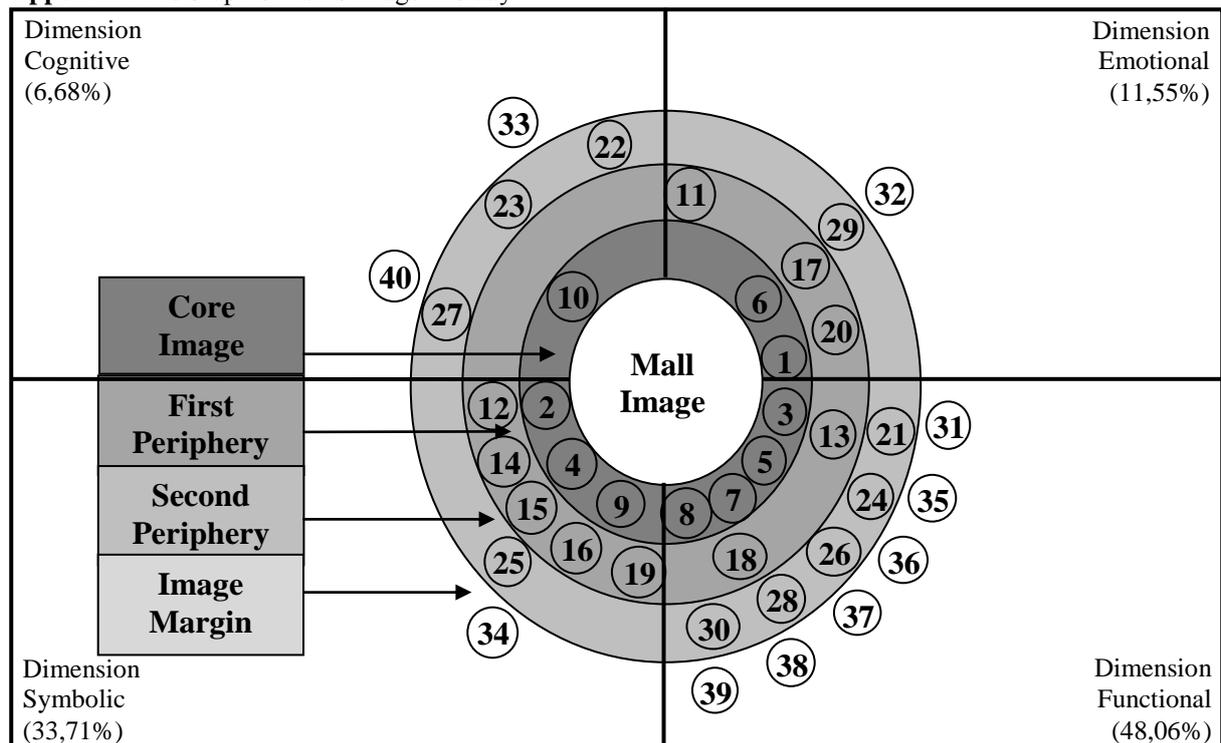
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Appendix 1: ICGraph's Mall's Image in study



No.	Attributes	No.	Attributes	No.	Attributes	No.	Attributes
1	Shopping	11	Joy	21	Parking lot	31	Good brands
2	Entertainment	12	News	22	High price	32	Satisfaction
3	Cinema	13	Large (infrastructure)	23	Consumption	33	Good prices
4	Place to stroll	14	Security	24	Carrefour (Hypermarket)	34	Family
5	Food	15	Something good	25	Luxury	35	Services
6	Commodity	16	Modernity	26	Touristic point	36	Differentiated infrastructure
7	Stores	17	Meeting point	27	Quality	37	Economic growth
8	Variety	18	Beautiful place	28	Commerce	38	Promotions
9	People	19	Fashion	29	Tranquility	39	Cleaning
10	Spending	20	Pleasant environment	30	Convenience	40	Organization