

CO-BRANDING THE BRAND OF AN NGO AS A SOURCE OF STABLE INCOME AND LEVERAGE FOR THE B CERTIFICATION OF VENEZUELAN COMPANIES: THE CASE OF COROMOTO 2020

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Summary

This paper investigates how an NGO can obtain stable sources of resources by using the *co-branding* approach to create alliances with Venezuelan companies wishing to obtain B certification. B certification has become popular internationally, regionally and nationally to encourage companies to take advantage of market forces to generate a positive socio-environmental impact. The case of the Venezuelan NGO Coromoto 2020 is presented, which can be the vehicle for how such companies can demonstrate that they are complying with their social impact. In order for an NGO to have a relevant and credible brand for this type of company, documentary research was conducted on *co-branding*, B certification, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the NGO sector. We also interviewed executives of the Coromoto 2020 case, experts related to B certification and executives of companies that already have such certification. Finally, a large group of collaborators was consulted using a digital questionnaire about their perception of Coromoto 2020, CSR initiatives and knowledge of B certification. With the results of the research, a brand strategy and digital communications guidelines were proposed for *co-branding* using the NGO Coromoto 2020 as an example, so that they can be used in the communication of companies seeking B certification. This study is part of the research line on Branding and Digital Presence of the Marketing Department of the Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas, Venezuela.

Key words: *Co-branding*, digital communications, B-certification, NGO, CSR.

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Introduction

In Venezuela, the food crisis has worsened in the period 2015-2023, according to figures from the National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCOVI). As a result, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) have emerged to contribute to remedy this crisis, among them is Coromoto 2020. This is a non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen the most vulnerable Venezuelan families¹ in their needs for food and training in values.

For the Coromoto 2020 organization, obtaining stable resources is a continuous effort. In its "report on achievements and goals Coromoto 2020 Dec 2022" (Coromoto 2020, 2022), it presented a drop of more than 10% in donations received with respect to the previous year and of more than 80% in donations of food products. As a result of this situation, it was only able to achieve 51% of the estimated goal. For this reason, the board of directors decided to look for ways to partner with benefactor organizations in order to obtain stable support over time.

It is in Venezuelan entrepreneurship that an opportunity is identified, as Abramovay, Correa *et al.* (2013) point out when they emphasize that the future of communities depends on the transformation of private companies:

It is impossible to move towards sustainable development in Latin America without a profound transformation in corporate behavior. However important public policies, social organizations and the direct expression of citizens' aspirations may be, the fact is that companies exercise direct control over the overwhelming majority of resources and are responsible for a decisive part of employment and employment

The world demands and needs a paradigm shift in the way people consume and how companies produce. Communities and for-profit organizations are needed that are responsible for the impacts they generate in their environments.

¹ "... refers to multiple risk factors that prevent a person or group of people from maintaining or improving their well-being." The concept relates to fragility (Action Against Hunger, 2023).

Change has accelerated as a result of the crisis left by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to initiatives promoting business models in which companies adopt the purpose of taking responsibility for the impact of their operations on society and the environment, as well as on their customers, employees and shareholders.

This concept of purpose-driven companies has gained importance globally. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (2020) defines them as those that seek more than maximizing profits and aspire to sustainability. Huelves (2020) highlights their positive impact on society, overcoming material advantages. Organizations such as the World Economic Forum and B Lab², among others, group these companies, promoting an economy focused on stakeholders (PwC, 2020).

B Lab's Latin American subsidiary, Sistema B (2017), explains that the B certification is a validation at a global level that is given to companies that take a sense of responsibility with society and the environment while remaining profitable. In addition, this endorsement gives a distinction in the market that is expressed with a collective brand identity (Báez & Muñoz, 2016). Examples of internationally certified B companies are Patagonia³, Ben & Jerry's⁴ and TOMS⁵.

B certification is sometimes considered as a demonstration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)⁶, however, they are different concepts. Paez (2023) explains that B companies place positive impact at the core of their business model, encompassing their entire value chain. Unlike CSR, B certification is not parallel to the business model; it is central to the business purpose, seeking a change in the economic system at the local, regional and global levels. Both are ways of producing a significant and valid impact (id.).

Every certified B company has four key aspects: purpose, which drives them to create a positive impact on their environment; certification, where they are evaluated and commit to improve their management standards and transparency; legal statutes adapted to certification, where additional shareholder rights are created so that managers consider the interests of stakeholders and not just shareholders; and interdependence, because they are part of a global community (B System, 2023).

In order to obtain this certificate there are five minimum requirements: to have more than 12 months of operations; to operate in a competitive market; to be able and willing to comply

2 Non-profit network that transforms the global economy to benefit all people, communities and the planet (B Lab, 2023). It is the certifying body at the international level.

3 American company that specializes in creating and selling outdoor clothing and accessories.

4 U.S. company that is part of the Unilever conglomerate and manufactures all types of ice cream.

5 U.S. company specializing in the creation and marketing of footwear.

6 "Support, generally economic, dispensed by companies to causes and organizations of general interest with the aim of improving the image of the former." (Real Academia Española, 2023).

with the legal requirement of Company B⁷, to be a for-profit organization; and to be certified as a whole. (id.).

The certification process consists of: the online Impact Assessment B (IBA) and a negative relations disclosure questionnaire. After achieving at least 80 points in the EIB, certification is initiated and an application fee is paid⁸. The EIB is evaluated and verified. If the company exceeds 80 points, its practices and policies are documented. By staying above that score it becomes a Certified B Company, signing the B Company Agreement⁹, paying an annual fee¹⁰ and modifying bylaws¹¹. (id.)

The EIB is a very valuable tool, as it allows companies to self-assess themselves taking into account governance, community, environment, customers, workers and because it is aligned with the 2030 Agenda¹², the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹³ and the 10 Principles of the Global Compact¹⁴ (Giraud, 2023). Globally, some 29,000 companies make use of the assessment tool to disclose and present their triple bottom line impact; it is also used by academics in Latin America (Páez, 2023).

In Venezuela, five companies have B certification, Leather Heart¹⁵ is one of them and allies with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)¹⁶ as Alimenta la Solidaridad¹⁷ to address the food crisis. These organizations are vehicles with which other private and public companies can positively impact society in a credible and measurable way. Therefore, Coromoto 2020 has the possibility of creating and strengthening alliances with the business sector interested in B certification to achieve stable sources of resources over time.

In this sense, *co-branding* with Coromoto 2020 can provide the opportunity for companies to work on their impact beyond financial profits, meeting the requirements of social contribution for B certification and for Coromoto 2020 to have benefactors that provide stable income and

7 Complying with the legal requirement of a B Company refers to complying with the legal statutes that were modified to become a B Company.

8 Large companies and multinationals that are in the process of certification do not pay this fee.

9 Depending on the characteristics of the companies, the certifying team (B Lab) may require an on-site audit.

10 The annual certification fee is variable and is based on ranges depending on the last fiscal year's turnover.

11 System B offers for Venezuela the ready to be incorporated modifications to the bylaws, these are available at: <https://www.sistemab.org/modificaciones-legales-venezuela/>

12 "Plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, which also intends to strengthen universal peace and access to justice." (United Nations, 2023).

13 "Set of global goals to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda." (United Nations, 2023)

14 The UN Global Compact promotes 10 business principles to drive sustainability and meet the SDGs.

15 First Venezuelan company B that converts textile industry waste into products, which contribute to NGOs such as E-Roq Project and Alimenta la Solidaridad.

16 "Non-profit social entity independent of the public administration." (Real Academia Española, 23rd ed.)

17 NGO that was born in 2016 to contain the food crisis affecting the most vulnerable in the country. (Alimenta la Solidaridad, 2023).

resources, which was the focus of this study. Consequently, this research work proposes to answer the question: Can *co-branding* be a means of stable income for Coromoto 2020 and also leverage the B certification of Venezuelan companies?

Methodology

The research was projective, because its purpose is to establish a brand strategy for Coromoto 2020 that meets the requirements of companies wishing to establish a *co-branding* with it. In this study, proposals were developed to provide a solution to this need, based on the diagnosis of the requirements, trends in the category and the perception of the brand's key audiences.

The research design was field research because the information was collected directly from secondary and primary sources. It was also non-experimental, because it was based on a specific situation and none of the variables were manipulated.

The scope of the study conducted in "Coromoto 2020" included a documentary research and study of benchmark brands in *co-branding*, B companies and corporate social responsibility, focusing on identifying trends in *co-branding* and differentiating characteristics of the competition. Special emphasis was placed on the "Community" section of the B Impact Assessment, highlighting corporate collaboration with NGOs. Key perspectives were gathered from people linked to B certification in Venezuela, which helped formulate a brand strategy for Coromoto 2020, including three distinctive attributes (communication pillars) and a positioning that reflects them. This approach was used to establish guidelines for *co-branding* digital communications with companies aspiring to B certification, highlighting the importance of partnerships in strengthening the certification process and the social contribution of the companies involved.

For the selection of reference brands, we took into account the "competitors"¹⁸ in Venezuela of Coromoto 2020 that were mentioned in the interviews, in addition to an organization that stands out in the food sector that is allied with a B company, Leather Heart. The NGOs analyzed were: Alimenta la Solidaridad, Fe y Alegría¹⁹, and Mano Amiga Venezuela²⁰. However, the international reference was obtained as a result of the documentary research and a globally

18 NGOs seeking the same resources as Coromoto 2020 see themselves as competitors. However, P. Elias Sayegh, L.C. sees this more as a 'coompetencia', underlining the importance of cooperating and contributing positively to an issue.

19 Educational and social movement for children, youth and adults in urban, rural and indigenous sectors, offering educational, community and training programs (Fe y Alegría, 2023).

20 Catholic educational network for disadvantaged children and youth, providing integral formation towards personal success (Mano Amiga, 2023).

renowned NGO was chosen, which has implemented *co-branding* with brands that also have an important global recognition, as in the case of Louis Vuitton²¹ with UNICEF.²²

The five interviews conducted allowed us to inquire about trends in the current reality of partnerships between nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Among those interviewed were: Dr. Loraine Giraud, specialist in urban sustainability, professor at Simón Bolívar University and local coordinator of the B Community²³ in Venezuela; Lic. Daniela García, manager of Danone Iberia²⁴, certified B company; Mr. Roger Martínez, manager of the Venezuelan B company Casa Franceschi²⁵; Ms. Cristina Regueira, communications coordinator of Coromoto 2020; and priest Elías Sayegh Franco, L.C., founder and member of the board of directors of Coromoto 2020.

Based on the analysis of the information collected, a consultation was designed with Coromoto 2020 employees, using a questionnaire that was distributed electronically. The responses made it possible to study the perceptions that employees have of the Coromoto 2020 brand.

Implication of results

Within the B certification, the “Community” section of the B Impact Assessment is key to this research, especially the “Civic Engagement and Donations” subsection. This area evaluates companies’ collaboration with non-profit organizations, serving as a key indicator to measure a company’s ability and willingness to partner with NGOs. Among the aspects evaluated are financial support, investments in communities, employee volunteering in community service, collaborations and partnerships, promotion of sustainable practices in communities and transparency of their social benefit activities.

Within the framework of this work, key ideas (*insights*) were gathered from people linked to B certification in Venezuela and from a manager of a B company, highlighting the value of their perspectives on how alliances, such as the one proposed with Coromoto 2020, could reinforce the certification process in Venezuelan companies.

21 French luxury fashion house that sells accessories, clothing, shoes, jewelry, watches, perfumes and other products.

22 United Nations Children's Fund that works to ensure and promote the rights and well-being of children and adolescents (UNICEF, 2023).

23 "Organization that in 2018 signs the Understanding Agreement with Sistema B to become part of the local B Communities in Latin America, with the purpose of working collectively for a sustainable Venezuela." (Comunidad B Venezuela, 2023).

24 Subsidiary in Spain and Portugal of Danone, a corporation with several water, specialty food and dairy brands (Daniela García, 2023).

25 Cocoa trading company founded in 1830 and part of the San José Group, parent company of Franceschi Chocolate.

Dr. Loraine Giraud underlines the essence of sustainability in business, transcending certification towards an authentic commitment to CSR. This perspective was supported by Mr. Roger Martínez, highlighting the transformation that B certification generated in Casa Franceschi, not only in terms of processes and practices, but also in the culture of his organization. He also mentioned that it is essential for companies to adopt a genuine commitment to change and continuous improvement, recognizing that B certification is a means to achieve a sustainable positive impact. As an example of the collaborative power of B companies, Martínez highlights an alliance between Casa Franceschi and Valrhona²⁶, in which he supported the reconstruction of a school in Cumaná, Venezuela.

Daniela García stressed the importance of adaptability and innovation in the certification and collaboration process. She also suggests that companies must be willing to learn, adapt and evolve in their commitment to sustainability. In addition, she highlights the importance of partnerships with non-profit organizations to enhance the social mission and co-create sustainable solutions to global challenges, thus facilitating their process towards B certification.

Priest Elías Sayegh, L.C. and Cristina Regueira highlighted the growth and impact that Coromoto 2020 has had on low-income Venezuelan families living in marginal areas. They emphasize the importance of having a stable income to respond and support more families in the face of food insecurity in the country.

The incorporation of the B Corporations approach in the context of Coromoto 2020 highlights the importance of partnerships in building sustainable positive impact. Respondents' views underscore that collaboration between companies and NGOs, such as Coromoto 2020, is not only a mutually beneficial strategy, but an essential avenue for amplifying positive change in society. Thus, partnerships will not only facilitate B certification, but also underpin credibility and commitment to social engagement goals in the Venezuelan business environment.

On the other hand, in order for *co-branding* to exist and achieve this endorsement, as stated in this research, "cooperation between partners is essential for the realization of specific relationship objectives." (Hunt & Morgan, 1994).

By aiming for a *co-branding* relationship, the creation of shared value is promoted, benefiting not only the companies and the NGO, but also the *stakeholders* involved. As an example of this integration, expressed through *co-branding* between business organizations and an NGO, which have well incorporated the values of both brands, we have Louis Vuitton and UNICEF. This collaboration is based on the fact that, for every purchase of a product designed exclusively for this partnership, the French fashion house supports UNICEF's mission to provide vital assistance to vulnerable children globally. Launched in 2016, the sale of the Silver Lockit collection has raised over twenty million dollars, renewed annually with new versions of the bracelet. Inspired by the lock created by Georges Vuitton in 1890, the Silver Lockit symbolizes

²⁶ Renowned French chocolate maker founded in 1922.

protection, reflecting Louis Vuitton's promise to aid children in need. In addition to monetary support, Louis Vuitton's corporate volunteers, called "LV for UNICEF Reporters," assist in the NGO's emergency programs on an annual basis (id.).

The collaboration between Louis Vuitton and UNICEF combines the luxury brand's global influence with the NGO's authority on children's rights. This partnership exemplifies the power of brand-NGO partnerships to address global challenges and create meaningful change by engaging consumers in humanitarian causes through products with purpose. The trend reflects the evolution of the business role toward active corporate social responsibility.



Figure 1. Example #1 of the LOUIS VUITTON X UNICEF campaign.

Source: UNICEF (2023).

In the *co-branding* communications in Figure 1, the contributing brands often precede the NGO brand, providing cues for the digital communications guidelines of Coromoto 2020 and its allied company.

NGOs in Venezuela play a fundamental role in addressing various social issues, especially in a challenging environment. These organizations often become the life support for vulnerable communities, providing everything from food, health and education, just to mention a few of the areas in which NGOs support society.

An examination of the NGO alliances studied shows that the communication of these collaborations lacks uniformity. This inconsistency detracts from the value of the participating companies. Therefore, it is important to take this into consideration in the development of

digital communications guidelines for the *co-branding* of Coromoto 2020, in order to present communications with a uniform and coherent strategy.



Figure 2. Alimenta la Solidaridad's 2021 Christmas communication.

Source: Arenas (2021).

As an illustration, we can refer to Figure 2, where Alimenta la Solidaridad announces its partnership with Leather Heart. It is relevant to note that the NGO does not place its own logo in the image, but only that of its partner, in addition, it briefly describes the nature of the company with "Sweet products handmade by Leather Heart Venezuela". Additionally, the NGO incorporates a photograph of the products offered by this company. These details not only suggest that both are allies committed to the same social problem, but also allow Leather Heart to visualize itself as a "solidarity" brand. The main intention of the image is to thank the company for its support and allow the public to identify Leather Heart's contribution to the social impact of the NGO. This communicative approach is a reference for the digital communications guidelines for the *co-branding* of Coromoto 2020.

After examining the relevance of partnerships and how NGOs and companies communicate their partnerships, a questionnaire was conducted to understand the internal perception of Coromoto 2020 employees. Understanding their opinions allows us to know how the brand is perceived by its collaborators.

In Figure 3 the coordinates show on the X axis (ordinate) the words that defined the unassisted perception of the respondents to the characteristic they most valued of Coromoto

2020, and on the Y axis (abscissa) the number of mentions. As can be seen, the attributes ²⁷²⁸ “Solidary”, “Committed”, “Dedicated” and “Charitable” are the ones that are above the average, indicating the importance it has in the positioning of the respondents.

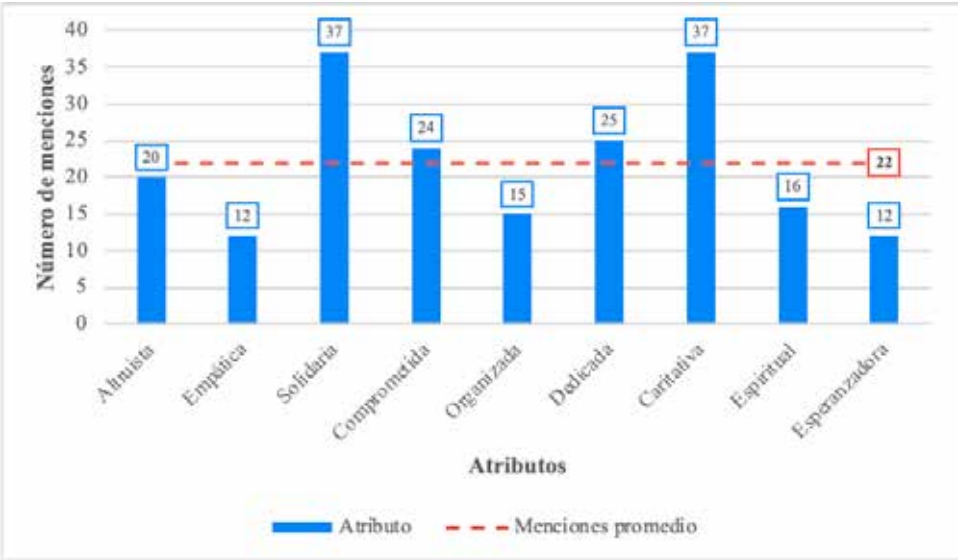


Figure 3. Attributes provided in an unassisted manner and their respective mentions

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

In Figure 4, using the same coordinates as in Figure 3, the collaborators indicated their perception with respect to the attributes provided in an assisted manner, derived from the interviews and the documentary review. It is observed that the attributes that stand out are “Coherent”, “Cooperative”, “Religious”, “Unifying” and “Transparent” as they are above the average of positive perceptions.

27 Attributes are characteristics associated with a brand that describe an aspect valued by the audience. They define and position the brand, making it relevant to consumers (Pacheco, 2020).

28 The glossary of attributes with their respective definitions in the context of this study is included in the Appendix.

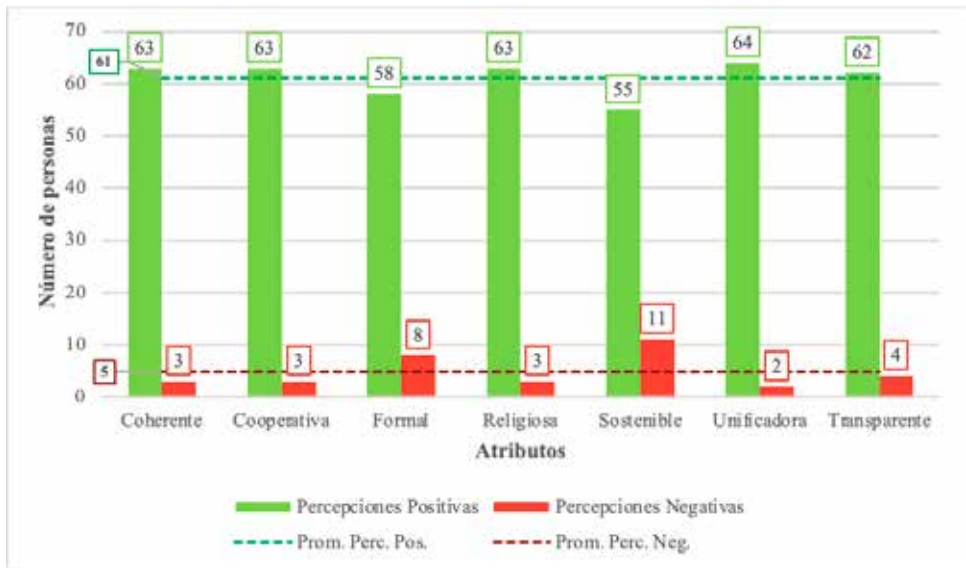


Figure 4. Perceptions of Coromoto 2020 employees on the attributes assisted.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Both findings validate the opinions of the interviewees, which makes them to be considered as relevant aspects to develop the brand strategy for Coromoto 2020. This brand strategy encompasses the communication channel, attributes of distinction, positioning and emotion sheet, which guide the proposed guidelines for digital *co-branding* with companies aspiring to B certification.

According to the concept of brand strategy used by Bello and Ladera (2023), the attributes of the Coromoto 2020 brand were developed based on the findings of the documentary research, the interviews and the results obtained from the questionnaire, previously analyzed. With these attributes, a positioning was developed as a cornerstone of communication, which when used for an alliance with Coromoto 2020 serve as an endorsement of the social contribution of a company to achieve B certification.

Figure 5 shows a spectrum of communication channels for the NGO sector in Venezuela. The communication channels are the different fundamental ideas through which a brand is positioned. It is schematized in a linear diagram that starts from the most rational to the most emotional distinguishing characteristics (Rivero & Torres, 2020).



Figure 5. Communication channels for the NGO sector in Venezuela.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

These proposed pathways are defined as:

- Strategy: focuses on communicating the strategic direction of the organization. Key terms are: mission, objectives, purpose, values, vision and style in its processes.
- Expertise: highlights the organization's capacity and effectiveness, backed by concrete results. Key terms are: adaptability, resilience, results, transparency and track record.
- Empowerment: focuses on communicating how the organization empowers the people it helps and volunteers. Key terms are: development, capabilities, participation and leadership.
- Experience: emphasis is placed on the emotional experiences of the community the NGO serves. The key terms are: community, implementation, execution, testimonies and urgencies.

Mano Amiga Venezuela aligns itself on the “Experience” track because in its communications it highlights stories of current students and success stories, those who have completed their education and have established themselves in college or in the working world. This strategy seeks to generate an emotional connection with its target audience. Alimenta la Solidaridad follows a similar idea, with much of its communications focused on showcasing the communities that benefit from its work. Fe y Alegría takes a different approach, positioning itself on the “Strategy” track, as its communications tend to be more rational, highlighting aspects such as its mission, organizational structure and organizational messages.

As shown in Figure 5, Coromoto 2020 was placed in the “Experience” track. This is justified by its communication to connect with its Instagram followers, making use of testimonials from beneficiaries²⁹ and collaborators. As an example, Figure 6 shows food bag assembly days and in Figure 7 and Figure 8, the delivery of these to beneficiaries.

²⁹ Those people who receive the help given by Coromoto 2020.



Figure 6. June 2023 publication.

Source: @arquidiocesisdecaracas and @coromoto2020_ (2023) [Instagram].



Figure 7. April 2023 publication.

Source: @coromoto2020_ (2023) [Instagram].



Figure 8. May 2023 publication.

Source: @coromoto2020_ (2023) [Instagram].

Figure 9 presents the pyramid of attributes of Coromoto 2020, which is a way of ordering the attributes of the Coromoto 2020 brand to serve as a basis for developing its positioning, as indicated by Damian (2021).



Figure 9. Pyramid of attributes for the Coromoto 2020 brand.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Entry-level attributes are those that every NGO worldwide is certain to possess in order to have credibility in the B-certification arena. This conclusion is derived from the study of the industry and the review of benchmarks. These attributes³⁰ are Reliable, Committed, Fraternal, Participatory, Respectful, Responsible and Supportive.

The intermediate level presents the qualifying attributes, which are those that a Venezuelan NGO must be perceived by a company wishing to be certified B in order to consider having an alliance. These arise from the documentary research of the referent brands and supported by the interviews to experts related to B certification. They were also validated with questions from the questionnaire. The qualifying attributes are: Transparent, Consistent, Formal and Unifying.

Now, as an important contribution of this study, there is the proposal of the key characteristics that will differentiate Coromoto 2020 from similar NGO brands, analyzed as references in the previous section. At the top of the pyramid, these distinguishing attributes are presented as “Humanitarian”, “Helpful” and “Fervent”, which emerge from the documentary research and the grouping of the attributes resulting from Figure 3. These three attributes are the communicational pillars of the brand so that it can attract companies that want to obtain the B certification and thus achieve a *co-branding* that will allow it stable income.

Figure 10 shows how the three proposed attributes of distinction are specified in sub-attributes³¹, which extend the essential characteristics of Coromoto 2020.

For the “Humanitarian” attribute, the sub-attributes “Altruistic”, “Empathetic” and “Caring” are defined as highlighting her genuine intention to help and forge real connections with communities without expecting anything in return. For the attribute “Helpful”, the sub-attributes “Committed”, “Dedicated” and “Organized” are defined as encapsulating her innate vocation for service and the ability to mobilize resources, reaffirming her commitment to her mission. Finally, for the attribute “Fervent”, the sub-attributes “Charitable”, “Spiritual” and “Empathetic” are defined as reflecting Coromoto 2020’s determination to instill values of faith and hope in her community.

30 See the glossary of attributes with definitions in the context of this study in the Appendix.

31 See the glossary of attributes with definitions in the context of this study in the Appendix.



Figure 10. Sub-attributes of the Coromoto 2020 brand.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

The brand idea proposed as a result of the construction of the Pyramid is “To give unconditionally”. This phrase indicates the essence of Coromoto 2020 that serves to be incorporated as part of the brand promises of Venezuelan companies seeking B certification.

Brand positioning represents the promise that the brand makes to its audiences and leads to the reputation that the NGO will have and therefore, the company that wishes to become B certified. The positioning proposed in this work is:

“With Coromoto 2020, you live your unwavering Catholic Faith by actively participating in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable Venezuelan families. In it, you are part of a genuine community of collaborators, having enriching experiences and weaving fraternal bonds that will last a lifetime.

Your contribution is a tangible manifestation of commitment and integration for a better Venezuela for all, promoting a hopeful change in your environment. Together with Coromoto 2020, you will feel how each step you take is an unconditional contribution of solidarity that builds and transforms.

Coromoto 2020, your medium that elevates communities.”

Figure 11 shows images that exemplify the emotions to be communicated by the Coromoto 2020 brand. These emotions are incorporated in the digital communications guidelines, especially in the proposed *co-branding*. The sheet of emotions is a key part of the expression of the communication channel, the attributes of distinction and positioning elaborated in this study, especially in the graphic pieces and the texts of the publications.



Figure 11. Emotion sheet for the Coromoto 2020 brand idea.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Communicating “Humanitaria” conveys empathy towards Venezuelan families in vulnerability, understanding their realities. It acts with compassion, responding in times of need. This understanding and response merge into solidarity, positioning itself alongside those it assists. Communicating “Helpful” is shown by the tireless support she provides and commits herself to the families and communities she serves. Her commitment translates into generosity, providing continuous support. In addition, she values and recognizes communities, creating relationships based on appreciation. By communicating “Fervorosa” she conveys hope, inspiring communities towards a better future. She acts with passion, encouraging a desire to make a difference. Her enthusiasm is contagious, motivating others to join in. Coromoto’s determination reflects an unwavering commitment to overcome challenges, strengthening her mission to make a positive impact.

For the development of guidelines in digital communications, the degree work of Damián, B. (2021) and Pacheco, I. (2020) was taken as a reference. The digital media is Instagram because it is the social network most used to communicate the alliances of the brands of the referent NGOs studied.

The guidelines proposed below are an actionable framework for digital *co-branding* communications between Coromoto 2020 and the certified B allied companies.

- Visibility of the allied brands: it is established that the brand of the allied company must precede the brand of Coromoto 2020, as shown in Figure 1. It is important that the brands always, without exception, be visible in all content that is part of the *co-branding*, so that both brands can be recognized by the recipients of such content. Likewise, it is essential to respect the use of each participating brand in accordance with its corresponding brand and identity manual.
- Communicating key attributes: Damian (2021) points out that, “The communication strategy of a brand should be based on its distinguishing attributes”. Therefore, for the Coromoto 2020 brand, a communication based on “Humanitarian”, “Serving” and “Fervent” is decided, so that a company can be certified as B by showing that they support the achievement of these same attributes.

Within the framework of *co-branding*, where brands cooperate while maintaining their individual identities, but adding mutual benefits, the allied company benefits by reflecting Coromoto 2020’s “Humanitarian”, “Serving” and “Fervent” attributes in its communications. This alignment not only reinforces the identity and mission of Coromoto 2020, but also enhances the reputation and social commitment of the partner company. By highlighting these values, the company not only strengthens its image of social responsibility, but also positions itself as an entity committed beyond economic benefit. This clear alignment with positive values facilitates and strengthens collaboration between brands, offering companies seeking B certification a tangible way to demonstrate their commitment to practices that benefit society as a whole.

In relation to the “Fervent” attribute, it is pertinent to focus on the passion and enthusiasm inherent in the organization’s work. By documenting significant moments, it is possible to illustrate how the organization works with deep love and constant hope, always guided by spiritual values, as illustrated in Figure 12.



Figure 12. Example of the visual content for the attribute “Fervent”.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

In relation to the “Humanitarian” attribute, it is suggested to focus on the process of assembling the bags of supplies, using images and videos. Also share testimonials from those who have received the bags, conveying the effectiveness of the aid provided, as exemplified in Figure 13.



Figure 13. Example of the visual content for the attribute “Humanitarian”.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

In relation to the “Serving” attribute, the work performed for the benefit of others should be emphasized. Using visual or narrative evidence, it is possible to show how the organization connects with real needs and collaborates selflessly, putting human welfare at the center of its actions, as illustrated in Figure 14.



Figure 14. Example of the visual content for the attribute “Helpful”.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Content that requires audiovisual production:

- **Participation in NGO activities:** produce *reels* that highlight the partner company's employees involved in Coromoto 2020 activities, from the organization to the delivery of the bags. These contents show the company's direct commitment to the social impact of the NGO.
- **Corporate testimonials in reels and stories:** create content where employees of the partner company share their experiences working with Coromoto 2020. These testimonials allow the audience to understand the impact of the alliance on the lives of employees.
- **Live broadcasts about the partnership:** highlight the collaboration between the company and Coromoto 2020. These *live* broadcasts not only build trust among the audience, but also act as a reference for other companies seeking partnerships for social welfare.

Content that requires graphic design:

- **Invitations to the assembly days for employees:** send invitations to employees of the partner company to participate in the assembly and organization of the bags in Coromoto 2020. This activity seeks to encourage the integration and commitment of the company with the actions of the NGO. By doing so, not only is the company's participation evident, but it also strengthens the bond between both entities and provides employees with a direct experience of the NGO's work and impact on the community.
- **Report and account of the impact to date:** periodically publish a series of infographics or images detailing numerically the cumulative impact of the collaboration with the partner company in the form of *posts*. These publications should highlight metrics such as the total number of bags delivered, communities or people benefited in figures (for example, "500 bags delivered during the day with [add the partner's logo]"). Visualizing this data in graphical form allows the audience to quickly understand the scope and magnitude of the impact generated by the partnership, reinforcing the value of the collaboration.
- **Strategic use of hashtags:** allows both brands to appear in searches for that word, persist in the exaltation of the brand attributes proposed for the Coromoto 2020 brand and endorse the social impact of a company that wants to be certified as a B company. In this sense, it is suggested that they be concise with a maximum of five words. The hashtags proposed for the *co-branding* communications to be certified as B are: #ImpactoPositivo , #CompromisoSocial , #HaciendoElCambio , #Solidaria , #Servicial , #Fervorosa and #C2020x[marca aliada].
- **Featured Stories:** establish a featured stories section on Instagram for each company partnering with Coromoto 2020. These stories will provide a consolidated view of the collaboration, showing milestones and joint actions. This strategy reinforces transparency and trust towards the audience, evidencing the real commitment of the allied company to social welfare, a central aspect for B certification. Furthermore, by highlighting this partnership, it inspires other companies to consider a similar collaboration, seeing Coromoto 2020 as a partner to fulfill their social impact.
- **Editorial calendar:** implement a collaborative editorial calendar to ensure a regular and active presence on Instagram. This calendar will serve as a guide to schedule publications focused on specific topics, such as humanitarian actions, testimonials and collaborations with companies. By following this calendar, Coromoto 2020 will be projected as a dedicated and committed organization, showing companies how the NGO can support them in their B certification process.

- **Metrics analysis:** monitor metrics on social networks, focusing on *engagement*, general interaction and behavior of the account's followers. Periodic analysis of this data is essential to adapt and refine the communication strategy. This ensures that the content is aligned with the objectives of bringing companies closer to the B certification and that Coromoto 2020 can sustain *co-branding* as a stable source of revenue and recognition.

These guidelines seek to enhance the *phygital* experience³² and thus the tangible or “real world” experience can be taken to the digital world and vice versa. In this way, the attributes and the proposed communication channel are present in an integral way, allowing companies that want to be certified to transmit what it means to team up with Coromoto 2020.

Conclusions

This study shows how *co-branding* can be a tool for organizations striving to “be better for the world”. It highlights the supportive relationship of partnerships between NGOs and businesses, which come together for mutual benefit, reflecting an alignment of social purposes. In particular, it highlights the potential of *co-branding* as a means to obtain sustainable sources of income for the case in example of the Venezuelan NGO Coromoto 2020 and for the process of obtaining the B certification for companies.

In the Venezuelan context, where NGOs play an important role in the face of socioeconomic inequity challenges, the alliance of companies in search of B certification guarantees that Coromoto 2020 can continue its mission to help Venezuelan families in vulnerable situations, offering food, medicine, education and comprehensive support for their well-being.

The perception of the Coromoto 2020 brand among its main collaborators was evaluated by grouping the characteristics identified in three distinguishing attributes: “Humanitarian”, “Helpful” and “Fervent”. These provide what the B certification expects NGOs to comply with in order to endorse their social impact.

The brand strategy proposed for Coromoto 2020 is based on the “Experience” communication channel, seeking an emotional connection. The brand idea “Give unconditionally” and the proposed positioning emphasize the experience of the beneficiaries and collaborators. These brand elements, together with the emotion images developed, provide a focus for Coromoto 2020's brand identity, highlighting its ongoing commitment to create meaningful change in Venezuela.

32 “Trend that consists of elevating the experience of a brand through the mix of physical (offline) and digital (online) aspects, merging the advantages of both schemes to create deeper interactions with customers.” (Gasbarrino, 2023).

Coromoto 2020's digital communication guidelines focus on maximizing the impact of *co-branding* communications by following specific steps. These include communicating the brand's distinguishing attributes, highlighting the visibility of the allied brands, producing audiovisual content that shows active participation in NGO activities, business testimonials and live broadcasts about alliances; generating graphic content, using hashtags strategically, implementing featured stories for each allied company, planning through an editorial calendar and constantly analyzing metrics to adapt the strategy. By focusing communications on experiences and testimonials related to the brand, the *phygital* experience of *co-branding* is enhanced, consolidating the perception of Coromoto 2020. This guide strengthens the identity of Coromoto 2020 and also positions it as a demonstration of the social contribution of certified B partner companies in the networks of these organizations.

Through the use of *co-branding*, the two brands will communicate the materialization of a mutually beneficial relationship: Coromoto 2020 will obtain stable contributions while companies wishing to become B-certified reinforce their social commitment, which is enhanced by the endorsement of a respected external body.

Recommendations

For an NGO, such as Coromoto 2020, to successfully implement the proposed strategies, it is crucial to establish a robust infrastructure and strategic approach, with investment in resources and training. This includes integrating *co-branding* tactics and NGO collaborations into daily operations, aligning them with long-term objectives, and training the team in these practices. It is essential to implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, such as key performance indicators (KPIs), to assess both quantitative results (such as ROI and brand reach) and qualitative results (such as brand perception and social impact), thus ensuring the effectiveness of the strategies.

This paper highlights the importance of Coromoto 2020 in the context of supporting companies in their efforts to obtain B certification in Venezuela. One of the most significant steps would be to forge a strategic alliance with the B Community in Venezuela. Establishing itself within it would allow Coromoto 2020 to have direct access to companies seeking to strengthen their social impact, opening doors to collaborations and *co-branding* opportunities. By strategically positioning itself within the B community, Coromoto 2020 would be reinforcing its value proposition and solidifying its position as a facilitator for companies seeking to obtain B certification in Venezuela. In addition, it would be beneficial to explore the possibility of an alliance with the National Association of Supermarkets and Self-Services (ANSA), given its close ties to the food industry and thus close relevance to the purpose of Coromoto 2020.

For future research, it is recommended to evaluate the progress of an implementation of a *co-branding* strategy between the NGO, e.g. Coromoto 2020, and a specific Venezuelan

company with B certification. Its objective would be to determine and analyze the financial and social return on investment (ROI) of the collaboration.

Another future research is to use information from recognized business associations in Venezuela, such as Fedecámaras, to carry out a detailed analysis of behaviors and decision patterns of the business sector in relation to B certification and their collaborations with NGOs. In addition, the impact of B certification on the perception of the Venezuelan business community can be investigated.

Considering the importance of LinkedIn as a digital platform for *networking* and corporate alliances, the relevance and development of communication guidelines for this social network can be studied to promote cooperation between NGOs and companies wishing to become B certified.

Universidad Metropolitana has distinguished itself by holding the title of Venezuela's leading Sustainable Campus for four consecutive years. This distinction not only underscores its leadership in environmentally sustainable initiatives, but also indicates an opportunity for partnerships with social NGO's and obtaining B certification. Some of the many universities that have achieved certification are the European University (UE) which became certified in 2018, the Peruvian University of Applied Sciences (UPC) in 2017 and the *International Management School Geneva* (Switzerland) in 2023.

Another interesting research would be to know how Venezuelan consumers perceive and value companies that are certified B. Knowing these perceptions, it will be possible to guide companies in seeking B certification and how to communicate them in order to stand out to their customers in an effective way.

Finally, it is essential that companies seeking B certification ensure that their brand genuinely reflects their commitment to social impact. It is therefore crucial to invest in initiatives that raise consumer awareness of the importance of such certification. On this path, it is recommended to establish long-lasting and collaborative relationships with NGOs, always with adaptability, continuous improvement and implementing feedback mechanisms that allow learning from experience and adapting communication strategies.

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Appendix

Glossary of attributes

This section provides the definitions of the attributes used in this work, framed within the context of the study. This allows the reader to accurately understand the specific connotation attributed to each word used.

- a) **Altruistic:** Implies giving and working for the benefit of others without expecting personal rewards. It is the unselfish action motivated by the desire to do good, transmitting an unparalleled dedication and generosity.

- b) **Charitable:** Relates to loving others and helping those in need. It embodies the principle of loving God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself, constantly bringing love to others.
- c) **Coherent:** Congruence between what is done and what is said towards the same purpose.
- d) **Reliable:** You can always count on her, you know she will keep her word, she is backed by the Catholic Church and her help is reliable.
- e) **Committed:** Implies assuming responsibility and obligation towards a cause or task with a clear purpose, showing courage and firmness in the fulfillment of duties and promises.
- f) **Cooperative:** Works in partnership with diverse actors to address the food crisis in Venezuela, achieving results through collaboration between communities and collaborators.
- g) **Dedicated:** Reflects constant dedication, overcoming challenges and perseverance in achieving objectives, maintaining an unwavering behavior over time.
- h) **Empathetic:** Understand and connect emotionally with the needs of others.
- i) **Hopeful:** Conveys a positive outlook even in the midst of challenges, providing confidence in a better future.
- j) **Spiritual:** Incorporates the religious dimension in service and material support, reflecting the importance of serving God and neighbor.
- k) **Fraternal:** Fosters solidarity, establishes meaningful connections with communities (spirit of brotherhood) and promotes collaboration. Nurtures emotional and spiritual well-being, creating an inclusive and supportive environment.
- l) **Fervent:** Deep enthusiasm and passion in their work, providing constant love and hope, rooted in spiritual values that inspire to help others in a meaningful way.
- m) **Formal:** Meets the necessary requirements to fulfill each objective.
- n) **Humanitarian:** Surrender and work for the benefit of others, connecting emotionally with their needs and collaborating unselfishly to help, transmitting a generosity that seeks human welfare.
- o) **Organized:** Efficient and clear structure, with scalability, that allows for effective targeting of assistance, ensuring transparency and unity.

- p) **Participatory:** the organization seeks to encourage community participation in society.
- q) **Religious:** Seeks to share the Catholic faith among those involved.
- r) **Respectful:** Treat all people, regardless of their situation, with courtesy and consideration.
- s) **Responsible:** accountable for assuming a commitment and takes care in all its activities, ensuring efficiency and care for the welfare of others.
- t) **Helpful:** Assume responsibility and obligation towards a cause with courage, firmness, constant dedication and capacity to overcome challenges, guaranteeing transparency and effectiveness in the help offered.
- u) **Solidarity:** It implies working together to help others, showing a constant and disinterested disposition to support those who need it most, sharing and giving the best of oneself in every action.
- v) **Sustainable:** To be able to maintain and grow thanks to the faith we have in the Venezuelan people's capacity to love.
- w) **Transparent:** Openly and clearly discloses financial and operational information, including grants, goals and expenditures, in a manner that is accessible and understandable to all.
- x) **Unifying:** It brings together wills, realities, ages and social classes in collaboration, promoting unity as a Church.