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Rebuilding the Made in Peru brand

By Beatrice Ciabatti



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Beatrice Ciabatti.

I remember that when I first started working as a marketing manager, many years ago, it was better not to relate the products with the phrase "made in Peru" and usually it was advised to keep it hidden.

This happened because during the '70s and '80s, Peru's government banned imports or discouraged them by raising protectionist taxes; local industry, encouraged by the lack of competition, took advantage of consumers and offered poor quality products and overpriced services. As a consequence of this mistreatment, Peruvians looked for imported brands that assured good quality products, however hard to find, expensive, and usually black market. Thus Peruvian brands in most cases became a synonym of bad, ordinary and expensive products.

When imports were opened again in the '90s, consumers took revenge by rejecting Peruvian brands and so, these companies ended up in bankruptcy. I remember advertising would always use the phrase "imported good" as a synonym of good quality. This was the time when Peruvian brands were lowered into "brand hell" and the road to get our costumers' trust back was long.

Then began the period when, with great effort, Peruvian brands started to recover our lost costumers. We managed to get their attention through many strategies and finally we were allowed into "brand purgatory" — we were given another chance. Customers carefully scrutinized the benefits of Peruvian brand products against those of the imported brand. The next step was the test period when we were allowed — only if we offered the same quality and price ratio as our competitors — to get our products sold. This period was fruitful for Peruvian brands because we learned to try harder, become competitive and establish emotional links with our customers.

And finally we made it to the current times, when Peruvian brands are back into Peruvian costumers' households. Some have even made it into the "brand paradise," such as Inca Kola, Bambos, D'Onofrio, Gloria and Wong, which are stronger than ever and tell a lot about the regained self-esteem. But the most important element is that a sense of Peruvian pride has become one of the most powerful values for brands, because the emotional connection is strong.

Feeling proud of what is ours is strong encouragement to develop new Peruvian brands. These brands let us see a different country: one as responsible, hard-working and business-orientated. That is the reason why so many Peruvian brands are managing to become international and placing their products in shelves around the world, something we could not have dreamed of years ago. We will have to keep working hard, creating lasting relationships with our costumers. Only then can we reap the ultimate benefit: that the "made in Peru" brand becomes recognizable throughout the world and contributes not only with our identity, but also with the economic development and the image of our country.

Beatrice Ciabatti is Marketing director of ILARIA-PERU.

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