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## **A tool for the interpretation of the organizational totems: Juan Valdez® case**

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### **Abstract**

The totem represents an external and visible expression that constitutes as a symbol of the group. The objective of the study is to propose a tool for organizational management by interpreting totems. This tool is verified in the case of Procafécol –Juan Valdez® owner- that has supported in its totem and in environmental, legal and ethical policies, to transform perception of its stakeholders -being recognized among largest coffee producers (1959), competing with cafeterias (2002) and relaunching its internationalization (2012)-. Showing how management of totem is an intermediate point between reference totem -associated with discredit- and organizational totem -associated with reputation-

**Keywords:** Organizational totem; management of totem; reputation; discredit; Juan Valdez®.

Una herramienta para la interpretación de los tótems organizacionales: Caso Juan Valdez®

### **Resumen**

El tótem representa una expresión externa y visible, que se constituye como símbolo del grupo. El objetivo del estudio es proponer una herramienta para la gestión organizacional a partir de la interpretación

de los tótems. Esta herramienta se verifica en el caso de Procafécol - propietario de Juan Valdez®- que se ha apoyado en su tótem y en políticas ambientales, legales y éticas para transformar la percepción de sus partes interesadas -siendo reconocido entre los mayores productores de café (1959), compitiendo con las cafeterías (2002) y relanzando su internacionalización (2012)-, evidenciando cómo la gestión del tótem es un punto intermedio entre el tótem de referencia -asociado con descrédito- y el tótem organizacional -asociado con reputación-.

**Palabras clave:** Tótem organizacional; gestión del tótem; reputación; descrédito; Juan Valdez®.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Some authors have defended a vision of anthropology as a social space established by concepts and practices of agents that enter and remain (in that space) depending on 'capital' that each one possesses (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1995). This economic vision of anthropology shifts the discussion to business organizations, which certain authors have defined as a social system that can be analysed (Ingersoll & Adams, 1986). In this sense, a possible link between anthropology and organizations is suggested by authors like Buckley (1998) who related anthropology to economics. Jordan (2010) that explained a link between business and anthropology. And Wright (1994) who acknowledged a relation between anthropology and organization by connecting the field of study of anthropology with components of the company such as the organizational culture (Jordan & Caulkins, 2013).

These preliminary observations crystallize the link between anthropology and organizations through aspects such as organizational culture. Culture that is materialized through rituals (Gbadamosi, 2005),

ceremonies (Samier, 1997), tales (Boyce, 1996) and stories (Gabriel, 1991) that exist in traditionally anthropological tools such as the totem (Lévi-Strauss, 1991). Specifically the totem has been linked to the studies on organizational anthropology (Marrewijk, 2010), in which it has been related with elements of the organization (Koot & Sackmann, 1997), the thinking styles (Wallemacq, 1998) and the possible interventions to be implemented (Starr-Glass, 2002, p. 227).

In this context, this study proposes a tool for organizational management by interpreting the organizational totems developed on seven parts. The first one is related to this introduction. The second tries to define the totem and its role in ancient and modern times when it began to be linked to business organizations. The third section focuses on the study of the totem in business organizations through a bibliometric analysis that shows the status of the research suggests possible definitions, types of the totem and ways to analyse them. Then on the fourth section, we propose a conceptual tool to analyses totems in the organizational context. In the fifth section, this conceptual tool is proved and verified in the case study of Juan Valdez® - Colombian coffee. Finally, on the sixth and seventh section, we present the results discussion, future directions, recommendations and conclusions.

## **2. THE TOTEMS**

The word ‘totem’ emerged at the end of the 18th century in the literature on ethnography (Durkheim, 1995, p. 85). Initially, it was

conceived as an exclusive issue for America, and its scope widened to other contexts only half a century later (Durkheim, 1995, p. 85). After its emergence, several authors have addressed this issue. They have followed, mostly, an ethnographic and/or geographic (Durkheim, 1995; Slessor, 1988), while a few others proposed its revision from a multi-generational perspective, where ancestors and descendants are considered (Palmer, Begley, & Coe, 2015).

From a general perspective, some authors like Durkheim (1995) recognized two different expressions for totems. The first one relates totem with an external and visible form of what has been called the totemic principle or God, while the second refers to a symbol of a particular society called clan (Durkheim, 1995, p. Xxxv). Under the first expression (1), the totem-god usually belongs to the animal or plant kingdoms and is represented by a species or variety (Durkheim, 1995, pp. 102-103). In this context, totem-gods are conceived as supernatural beings who have embodied (Cassirer, 2004, p. 50.) or transferred part of their essence with their human descendants (Hayden, 2003, p. 136). The descendants try to look like their God (Durkheim, 1995, P. 114) through individual and personal totems that express their own personality. Their cult is celebrated in private (Hayden, 2003) or through public representations such as sculptures, masks, costumes (Hayden, 2003, p. 153) and, mostly, decorations (Durkheim, 1995, p. 114) that go beyond simple names and emblems to become part of religious ceremonies (Durkheim, 1995, p. 118).

The first expression of the totem-god suggests a link between nature and totem (Durkheim, 1995, pp. 102-103). This relation has been explored by several authors like van Gennep (2008, p. 119) who described the control over nature as the object of totemic practices, while was trying to compare the aggregation rites –e.g. anthro- animal or anthro-vegetal or anthro-planetary- with aggregation family rites. Levi-Strauss (1966, pp. 40-44) examined the totemic classification of animals and plants from the zoology and botany perspective. Durkheim (1995, p. 85) presented animism and naturism as derivative forms or particular aspects of the totemic cult. Abram (1996, p. 106), suggested that geographically rich sites -according to the availability of food, water and/or shelter- could be sacred to several totemic clans at the same time. Campbell (2004, p. 361) related the mythological ancestors of the totems with the primitive hunters. And Harris (1998, p. 29) and Jung (1968, p. 128) suggested the totems as animals not estimated as food (with a very few exceptions), -e.g. primitive clans of Australia and Africa whose totems are birds (crows and weavers), insects (gnats, ants and mosquitoes), or inanimate objects (clouds and sings)-.

Meanwhile, under the second (2) expression the totem is conceived as the elements that serve to collectively designate a clan (Durkheim, 1995). Under this assumption, certain authors explained how groups who share totemic ancestors increase their survival probabilities, as a consequence of the solidarity (Hayden, 2003, page 32); others suggest the totems as a pattern of social organization (Pickering, 2009, p. 114). And others highlight the totem as part of

cultural differentiation since no totem is shared among clans of a tribe (Durkheim, 1995, p. 100).

However, multiple proposals expand the scope of the discussion of the second expression of totems, like Abram (1996, p. 79) who recognized totems as an identification way of human communities in the absence of formal systems of writing. Lévi-Strauss (1991) suggest them as sacred emblems that represent a common identity. Kottak (2015, p. 236) defined totems as a form of cosmology (Durkheim, 1995, p. 141), a religious system that serves to imagine and understand the universe. Cassirer (2004, p. 21) highlighted the desire and the needs of societies to divide, discern, sort and classify the existing elements in their environment while Pickering (2009, p. 114) discussed the difficulty of the primitive man to distinguish between differences. And finally, Campbell (2004, p. 361) that suggests totems as the means through hunter communities identified themselves in front of strange manifestations that represented danger and at the same time sustenance (e.g. the mammoth), contrary to the agricultural communities who identify themselves with different stages of the harvest.

### **2.1. The totems in antiquity**

The etymological origin of the word ‘totem’ refers to the American native expression *ojibwa ototeman*, which means “familiar” in the Algonquin language (Slessor, 1988). Despite its emerging as a

subject of study in the recent centuries (i.e. the eighteenth century), the existence of totems according to archaeological findings goes back to the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods where the concept is linked with the nature of myths (Hayden, 2003, p. 346). A context in which numerous ethnographers (Priyadharshini, 2003, p 257), tries to analyse the mysterious and distant temporal and spatial occurrence of the totem phenomenon, by analysing certain ancestral tribes (Jones, 2005, p. 304).

Among the studied societies, the aboriginal tribes of America (e.g. North American tribes of the north Pacific coast (Kottak, 2015, p. 236)) and those of northern and central Australia (Cassirer, 2004, p. 330) are perhaps the most primitive societies known (Spencer & Gillen, 1899). When referring to these tribes, it is important to note – i.e. despite the near nature of the totem and myth (Hayden, 2003, p. 346)-, how in these totemic societies isn't found a complex and elaborate mythology that worships gods or personifications of the great forces of nature like in Greek, Indian or Egyptian mythology. Instead, specific rituals based on mythical conceptions and beliefs are presented around ancestral animals (Cassirer, 2004) in totemic societies.

## **2.2. The totems in modernity**

After recognizing totems as an archaic issue which began to be studied in modern times, from the eighteenth century, when the term

appears in the literature (Durkheim, 1995; Hayden, 2003). It is important to review the evolution of the concept over time, to identify the status of its discussion. In this context, we selected the proposal of Slessor (1988, p. 278) as a referent. This author analysed how the term totem has been the outcome of considerable debates among anthropologists like McLennan (1865) who linked the totems with the cult of objects. Frazer (1990) that consider totems as the origin of sacrifice. Rivers (2013) who proposed the totem as a combination of social, psychological and ritual elements. Malinowski (2005) that linked totems with the desire to control fertility. Radcliffe-Brown (1986) who emphasized the relationship between social groups and their totem as a symbol of belonging to a group and as a symbol of solidarity, according to Durkheim's (1995) proposal. And finally, the structuralist anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1991, pp. 1-14), who destroyed the concept of totems, arguing that it was an 'illusion' or an arbitrary combination of features, that should be explained in terms of oppositions between human groups and natural species.

In recent times, multiple positions about totems are presented without reaching a consensus, because some definitions focus on community issues, religious perspectives, business perspectives, political topics, and architecture focus. Among these positions is one developed by Naughton (2008, page 188), who refers to the modern digital age, differentiating pets from totems and suggesting the t-shirts, posters and necklaces as possible modernity totems. Baudrillard (1969, p. 206) who links totems with marketing, suggesting the advertising as the final point of a cultural system. McKinnon (2013, p. 17) recognizes

the importance of metaphor in the understanding of contemporary religious life -according to Durkheim (1995) proposal to analysed totems-. Campbell (2004, p. 359) refers to the modern revolution and defines totems as an old and inefficient formula, that divides the planet into factions. And Duch (2015, p. 277) who presents the ‘totemic poles’ (when referring to monuments) as instruments of memory and identity.

### **2.3. The totems in the organization**

Once completed the historical review where the totems are understood as animals, plants or locations associated with a specific social group that considers them as sacred or symbolically important (Kottak, 2015). Below, we conduct a literature review in the main collection of WOS (Web of Science), DII - Derwent innovations index, KCI - Korean Journal Database, RSCI - Russian Science Citation Index, SciELO Citation Index and Scopus. This literature review started on the year 1908 (accumulating 18.779 works oriented to their study as an indexed title) and its aim is to verify the current discussion about totems in the organization. This characterisation is reached after selecting 32 different search equations -i.e. totem\*, effig\*, idol\*, emblem\*, talisman\*, deit\*, progenitor\*, upward\* in business, organization, company and enterprise- reached using the ‘citation pearl growing’ technique (Shute & Smith, 1993).



second (2) refers to the cell, differentiation, genes, tissues, disease, and treatment. These two segments can be synthesized by biological and business categories. The biological category represents the largest proportion of the recent studies and can be discarded, according to the object of the review focused on organizations. Meanwhile, the business category, with the smallest proportion, confirms how different applications of anthropology prevail in companies (Jordan & Caulkins, 2013; Marrewijk, 2010) where researchers have focused on other anthropological issues such organizational rituals (Kamoche, 1995), and suggests the importance of considering new topics about totems related with the problem resolution and the needs satisfaction.

To define the totem in the organizational context different proposals are presented. Some researchers -e.g. Hohe (2002), Kottak (2015) and Morphy (1990)- focus on social organizations, while others focus on the business context. Morphy (1990), for example, centers totems in the context of policies on group relationships. Hohe (2002) relates totems, traditionally indigenous, with the Constituent Assembly elections. Kottak (2015, p. 236) recognizes totems as a current trend to designate clubs, teams, universities and political parties, finding similarities with the Australian totemic religion studied by Durkheim (1995).

On the other hand, the totem definitions that focus on the business context are presented from two different perspectives, ones are based on human resource management (HRM), and others on marketing strategies. Among the first one perspective -i.e HRM- are

researchers like (1) Starr-Glass (2004, pp. 363-364) who links the totem with the organizational culture, when recognizing it as useful in the construction and interpretation of shared meanings. (2) Gbadamosi (2005) who includes the symbols, language, narratives, rituals, totems, and other practices among the components of the organizational culture. (3) Dudézert, Bossard-Préchoux, & Grimand (2017) who explore the so-called metaphor of the totem when referring to the appropriation of information technologies. (4) Kamoche (1995) who poses teamwork as a totemic device conceived to create and legitimize the desired pattern of power and social relations. (5) Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg (2009, p. 110) who define in which way the totems and taboos contribute with the authority. (6) Zaleznik (1989) who, in spite of recognizing the totems as a cohesion tool, highlighted a possible damage effect when it is used to perpetuate the leader's image. And finally, (7) Gracy II (1984) who relates specific professions with animals, that act like a totem.

The second perspective, related to marketing strategies, has been developed by experts like Vangkilde (2016), who relates totems with animism to refer to brand singularities. Urban (2015, page S99) who relates totems with brands, understanding brands as a fetish. Batteau (2013, page 382) who defines the totemic-identity to describe the tribes that have created the world of banking and investment. And Cayla (2013), who integrates both perspectives –i.e. HRM and marketing strategies- to demonstrate that the ‘pets’ of the brand (when they become the basis at collective meetings of employees) become a

tangible manifestation of the uniqueness of the company, improving the identity of the organization.

Meanwhile, when verifying the totem types of the business context, few proposals are found. Among them, are those that relate totems with the management discourse (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009, p. 110), and others for which the totem represents a behavior (Starr-Glass, 2002), a type of image (Portugal, 2011) or a kind of teamwork (Kamoche, 1995).

When referring to the proposals developed for the analysis of the totem in the organization, it can be found some that consider them like a useful technique for data collection, others as a data analysis tool and others as a result. Among the authors that propose the organizational totems as a technique for data collection are Ybema & Kamsteeg (2009, p. 110) who suggest how managers can (1) analyse formal structures by means of 'rationalized myths', (2) portray organizations as savage tribes, (3) describe the processes of socialization of the new members as an initiation ritual and (4) illustrate the management discourse with the observation of totems and taboos. And Portugal (2011) who presents fetishism, totems and idolatry (Rocha, 2000) as a way to analyse the relationship between men and images. Among the authors who recognize totems as a technique for data analysis is Starr-Glass (2004) who, after reviewing the organizational culture from the metaphors (Bisel, Messersmith, & Keyton, 2010), the totemic systems and archetypal images, refers to totemic systems as an inherent component of the logic that allows the

comparison between behaviors (Starr-Glass, 2002). Finally, those authors that consider totems as a result are experts like Kamoche (1995) and Marvin (1994). Kamoche (1995) defines teamwork as a totem to be managed through language games, suggesting the totem perception as a verbal and symbolic construction. And finally, Marvin (1994) who analyses the presidential campaigns in terms of sacrifice and regeneration of totems, to relate the dirty campaigns with the sacrificial parties.

Once completed the review about organizational totems -i.e. definitions, types and analysis. It can be defined as a tool of cohesion between groups, which mediates the relationship between the stakeholders -State, community, Universities, clients, suppliers, employees, shareholders, among others- through specific policies. When we refer to totems typology, it's important to highlight the low number of proposals and the predisposition to relate them to other organizational devices such as discourses, images and teamwork. And finally, among the available proposals for the analysis, it's remarked its application as a technique for data collection (which can be observed), as a data analysis tool (where the totem is perceived as a generator of social structures) and as a result (where totems are managed).

### **3. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL TOTEM ANALYSIS**

In this context, we propose a conceptual model based on the analysis of the organizational totem. Organizational totem that is

understood as a tool to manage the business' reputation, taking into account the stakeholders through environmental, legal and ethical policies (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). In this sense, and trying to structure the organizational totem definition, additional terms must be defined as reputation, discredit and the gap between both. Figure 3 shows the link between these terms with intermediate categories of the organizational totems -i.e. Reference totem and management totem-.

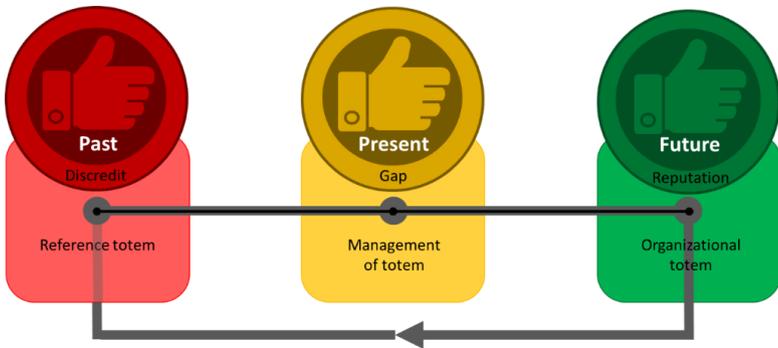


Figure 2 Model for business management based on the organizational totem analysis.

Source: own elaboration.

The described model in Figure 3, can be implemented following the next activities:

- a) **FUTURE:** For this phase, it is suggested to define how the organization wants to be perceived, what reputation expects to have among stakeholders.

b) PAST: During this phase, it should be analysed the reference totem, by following this step by step:

a. Identify possible totems that already exist in the company, looking for a physical representation or a defined structure that rule the relationship with stakeholders. It will be useful to analyse images, symbols, speeches, languages, narratives, rituals and practices of the stakeholders.

b. Inquiry into the stakeholders' perception, in relation to company environmental, legal and ethical policies.

c. Analyse the possible gap between the current stakeholders' perception (discredit) and the way how the organization wants to be perceived (reputation). This phase tries to identify possible structural problems (related to intermediaries, involvement, and actors' involvement) and/or gaps in the environmental, legal and ethical policies that have been implemented.

c) PRESENT: In this phase, it is suggested to manage the organizational totem, through the creation of a new one or the adaptation of the existing. In any case -i.e. creation or adaptation- the company must define and implement environmental, legal and ethical policies that materialize the totems work and mediate the relationship with stakeholders.

d) FUTURE: Finally, it is suggested to restart the proposed cycle as an organizational strategy.

In this context, the totems are conceived as a tool for organizational management that allows the intervention of the reference totem and its consequent perception or discredit. A process

that can be done through environmental, legal and ethical policies that materialize the totems (new or adjust) and mediate the relationship with stakeholders, to finally transform discredit in reputation.

#### **4. Application of the proposed model: The case of Juan Valdez® - Colombian coffee**

Now the proposed model for the organizational totem analysis is verified in the case of Juan Valdez® - Colombian coffee following the next qualitative research protocol (see Table 1).

Table 1 Qualitative research protocol for the case of Juan Valdez® - Colombian coffee

<b>Research protocol</b>	
Research question	How did Juan Valdez® change its reputation among stakeholders?
Research strategy	Case study
Analysis unit	Juan Valdez® reputation
Sample	Juan Valdez® brand owned by Procafécol company
Categories	Meanings and symbolic acts
Data collection	Secondary sources, life stories, government plans and interviews with experts
Results analysis	Proposed model for the organizational totem analysis

Source: own elaboration.

Once the research protocol is defined, the data listed below are collected:

- i. In 1959 the National Federation of Coffee Growers (NFC) called a group of experts to design an advertising campaign, that tried to increase the Colombian coffee demand in a market dominated by the Brazilian coffee (Granados, 2016).
- ii. The winning advertising was developed by Doyle Dane Bernbach®, who tried to embody hundreds of thousands of Colombian coffee farmers (“La verdadera historia de Juan Valdez,” 2004).
- iii. The agency created the character Juan Valdez® (an easy name for the Americans (Granados, 2016)).
- iv. During the first years, Juan Valdez® was characterized by the Cuban actor José Duval. Later, Carlos Sánchez, a Colombian coffee farmer from Antioquia, played the character for 37 years (1969-2006) (“Se jubila Juan Valdez,” 2006). During this period the character image with Conchita (the mule), was successfully positioned in the world (“La verdadera historia de Juan Valdez,” 2004).
- v. In 2002 the NFC (formed by more than 500,000 coffee producing families) decided to found the company Procafécol to compete in the coffee shops market with the brand Juan Valdez® (Granados, 2016).
- vi. In 2006, the NFC selected Carlos Castaño (through simulated tests, specific physical conditions, coffee growing background and experience as a coffee grower) among 406 other candidates, as the new Juan Valdez® (Vanegas, 2014).
- vii. By 2007 there were three Juan Valdez® coffee shops in Spain and an expansion plan that included more than 41 shops in the

- world for the next three years. However, the economic crisis and the poor expansion strategy forced the closure of most of the shops out of Colombia (Granados, 2016).
- viii. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a subsidiary of the World Bank, subscribed 12.1% of Procafelco's shares after paying 21,382 million pesos in 2008 ("Cafeteros vuelven a tener el 100 por ciento de Juan Valdez," 2017).
  - ix. In 2012 Procafeol relaunched the international expansion with a franchise model (Granados, 2016).
  - x. During 2013 the Colombian coffee growers protested - suppliers and partners of Juan Valdez®- because of the increasing of capitalist coffee production and the decrease of available workers (Correa, 2013).
  - xi. While, during the coffee boom of 1975 the value of 125 kg of coffee was ten million Colombian pesos (\$ 10,000,000), by 2013 the sale price did not exceed five hundred thousand Colombian pesos (\$ 500,000), a loss greater than 95% of its commercial value (Correa, 2013).
  - xii. As a result of this crisis, the Colombian government decided to launch the campaign 'Colombia Siembra' (Colombia sows) to increase its acreage. 17.6% of the benefits delivered by the government, was for the coffee producers (Espinosa Forero, 2017).
  - xiii. The national and international community of researchers have tried to understand Juan Valdez®'s phenomenon (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Molleda & Roberts, 2009; Sanín Santamaría, 2010).

- xiv. Carlos Castaño, the current Juan Valdez®, remember positive –i.e. applause, photos, autographs, handshakes- and negative – i.e. indifference, rigorous police inspections- attitudes toward him around the world (Vanegas, 2014).
- xv. The Colombian State, and the NFC as owner of the brand, has earned royalties for more than 75,500 million pesos. Only in 2016, it generated 14,500 million pesos, showing a sustained double-digit rate of growth over the last five years (Gastelbondo, 2017).
- xvi. No matter the rank of the employee, whenever someone asks an NFC employees what they think about the company, everyone answers as if they were in love with it. Among the achievements of the company are: no corruption scandals in 90 years of operation, assistance to improve the living conditions of its suppliers, advices on crops, credits processing and permanent presence in remote and/or in conflict areas (Springer, 2018).
- xvii. Currently, there is a consume trend towards special coffees called the third wave, a segment where it is important to know the origin of the grains, the roasting process and the brewing method (Money, 2015).
- xviii. Procafecol implemented different strategies to educate consumers (Colombia-Inn, 2017), like product innovations -e.g. a tribute to the victims of the Colombian conflict (Tejada Tirado, 2017)- and artistic interventions in the shops (“Secretaría de Cultura y Juan Valdez promueven el arte urbano en Bogotá,” 2016).

- xix. Juan Valdez® appears at different events like Colombian President meetings (Colprensa, 2018).
- xx. Juan Valdez® is listed by international clients as the best coffee in the world (Haye, 2018).
- xxi. In 2017, the NFC bought the IFC's shares. This transaction increased NFC's shareholding to 96.2%, while the other 3.8% are of 18,300 coffee growers ("Cafeteros vuelven a tener el 100 por ciento de Juan Valdez," 2017).

In this context, we analyse the collected data with the previously proposed mode, where three milestones can be identified. The first one marked by a competing interest (1959), the second by the entry into the coffee shops market (2002). And the third by the relaunching of the international expansion (2012).

### **Analysis of the first milestone:**

- a) FUTURE: The objective of this phase is to define how the company wants to be perceived. In this first milestone (1959) the organization decides to venture into the international market to compete against the traditional Brazilian coffee (point i). This decision is based on the needs of its shareholders.
- b) PAST: In this phase, it is suggested to analyse the reference totem from the stakeholders' perspective, however, during this first milestone, the NFC didn't have any reference totems. Therefore, the company decided to create a new one to support the entrance into the American market (point i).

- c) **PRESENT:** During this phase, it is suggested to manage the organizational totem. In the case of Juan Valdez®, the management of the new totem began when the NFC called different experts to create an advertising campaign (point i). Doyle Dane Bernbach® was the winner (point i) and created Juan Valdez® (point iii), a typical Colombian coffee grower with the mule Conchita (point iv). The results of this new strategy came swiftly, the image was positioned globally (point iv) and endured the consolidation of Colombia as one of the largest coffee producers.
- d) **FUTURE:** In this phase, it is suggested to restart the cycle as a business improvement strategy.

### **Analysis of the second milestone:**

- a) **FUTURE:** During this second milestone, the NFC (formed by more than 500,000 coffee producing families) wanted to be perceived among its consumers as a world-class coffee shop (2002) (point 0), so NFC decided to create Procafecol, inspired by partners and consumers needs.
- b) **PAST:** With this new goal in sight, the NFC decided to review its current organizational totem (Juan Valdez®) and the position it had achieved as a raw coffee producer (point i).
- c) **PRESENT:** Once analysed the gap between the expected perception and the obtained one among the different stakeholders, especially between customers and consumers (coffee shops vs. coffee producer). Procafecol decided to open

different shops around the world (point v), while selecting the new Juan Valdez® character (point iv and vi). However, the economic crisis and the poor expansion strategy forced the closure of most of the shops out of Colombia (point v), they even sold the 12.1% of shares to the International Financial Corporation (IFC) (point viii).

d) FUTURE: In this phase, it is suggested to restart the proposed cycle.

### **Analysis of the third milestone:**

a) FUTURE: As a crisis consequence NFC and Procafelco decided to relaunch its international expansion model in 2012 with a franchise model (point ix).

b) PAST: Learning from their previous failure (point v), the NFC decides to keep Juan Valdez® as its organizational totem (point vi).

c) PRESENT: The management of the traditional totem Juan Valdez® became more and more complicated. In 2013 the environment was convulsed by the protests among coffee farmers (point x) and the historical downfall of the prices of grain in the international market (point xi). Finally, the company joint with different stakeholders through environmental, legal and ethical policies. The State created public policies (point xii), the academy became interested in the understanding of the phenomenon (point xiii), the consumers have connected emotionally with the totem (point xiv and xx), the shareholders

obtain dividends (point xv), the employees got involved (point vii) and the suppliers improved their living conditions (point vii). Currently, the NFC and Procafelco are trying to maintain this strategy working with the customers (point xvii), relating with the State (point xix), connecting the brand with the consumers and the community (point xviii), and even recovering the financial control of the company (point xxi).

d) FUTURE: Finally, it is suggested to restart the proposed cycle as an organizational improvement strategy through the management of the organizational totem. In this sense, the usefulness of the organizational totem is recognized -as a strategy to be implemented, a data to be gathered and even as a framework for analysis- and the importance of involving the different stakeholders in its implementation, by means of the formulation of forceful environmental, legal and ethical policies.

## **5. DISCUSSION WITH OTHER AUTHORS**

The proposed organizational totem recognizes the possibility of linking anthropological topics with management issues (Starr-Glass, 2004), classifying it -i.e. the totem- as an organizational component (Gbadamosi, 2005). Specifically, when we linked the organizational totems with discredit and reputation previous position of Campbell (2004, p. 361) -who considers totems as the means through hunter communities identified themselves in front of strange manifestations that represented danger and at the same time sustenance- and

Durkheim (1995) -who defines two possible expressions for the totems, the first one related to an external and visible forms and the second to a particular symbol of a society- are corroborated.

In this sense, the organizational totem can be understood as an external and visible tool (Gracy II, 1984; Kottak, 2015) of cohesion between groups (Zaleznik, 1989), which mediates the relationship between the different stakeholders (State (Marvin, 1994), the community (Hohe, 2002), university or academic institutions (Kottak, 2015), clients (Urban, 2015; Vangkilde, 2016), suppliers, collaborators (Starr-Glass, 2004), shareholders, among others) through specific policies (Morphy, 1990) linked with the collective interests (Kamoche, 1995). Finally, the complementarity of the proposed tool with the previous positions of authors such as Ybema & Kamsteeg (2009) –who consider totems as a data collection technique-, Starr-Glass (2002) - who perceives it as an analysis framework- and Kamoche (1995) –who suggests as a result- is highlighted.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study about totem has been marked by two expressions or symbols that help to synthesize the different approaches. In the first expression, the totem is conceived as a God, an external and visible form (animal, vegetable or planetary) that has transferred part of its power to its human descendants, who try to imitate it in public or in

private. While in the second expression, the totem is understood as a social structure that serves to identify, understand and differentiate yourself in front of strange manifestations that represented danger and at the same time sustenance.

In this sense, the management of the totem as an organizational improvement tool, results from the management of the gap between the expected reputation and the perceived discredit. A process that can be implemented through environmental, legal and ethical policies that materialize the totems. Understanding these totems as an external and visible tool, which serves to mediate the relationship between the stakeholders -i.e., State, community, academia, customers, suppliers, employees and shareholders-.

The next step by step can be followed to analyse the organizational totems: (1) define how the organization wants to be perceived, what reputation expects to have among stakeholders. (2) Analyse the reference totem through images, symbols, speeches, languages, narratives, rituals and practices of the stakeholders. (3) Inquiry into the stakeholders' perception, in relation to company environmental, legal and ethical policies. (4) Analyse the possible gap between the current stakeholders' perception (discredit) and the way how the organization wants to be perceived (reputation). (5) Manage the organizational totem, through the creation of a new one or the adaptation of the existing. In any case -i.e. creation or adaptation- the company must define and implement environmental, legal and ethical policies that materialize the totems work and mediate the relationship

with stakeholders. And (6) restart the proposed cycle as an organizational strategy.

The proposed tool is verified in the case of Procafecol, owner of Juan Valdez® brand, through secondary data gathering, life stories, government plans and interviews with experts. This company has supported in its organizational totem and in environmental, legal and ethical policies, to transform the perception of its stakeholders -being recognized among largest coffee producers (1959), competing with cafeterias (2002) and relaunching its internationalization (2012)-. Showing how the correct management of the totem change the perception and relation with stakeholders.

The empirical verification of the proposed management tool is recommended for the future studies. At the same time, there is a warning about possible delays that may arise -in the totem management- in organizations that have not created their own totem. And finally, it is important to suggest deeper researches that related management issues with anthropology considering, for example cultural change, diversity and intercultural cooperation, at both theoretical and empirical levels.

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