

## Positioning: Plaza Azul, of the Footwear Industry in San Mateo Atenco, State of Mexico

## Posicionamiento: Plaza Azul, de la Industria del Calzado en San Mateo Atenco, Estado de México

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### Abstract

In Mexico, the manufacture of footwear has a history of approximately 400 years according to data published by the Ministry of Economy, little by little it has positioned itself to be a renowned and prestigious commercial activity, the State of Mexico represents 5% of the national value of production, being San Mateo Atenco the most representative municipality of that entity. At present, different strategies must be used to achieve a place that stands out before the different footwear stores and have an image and identification, positioning being a strategy, to build this taking into account the attributes and benefits that are going to be provided. to the consumer, offering something that is different from the competition and with which the customer identifies; this can change according to the needs of the consumer. This research was developed with a mixed approach, identifying how the blue square is positioned in the consumer's mind, considering factors and competition. To carry out this study, documentary, field and descriptive research was used to make a diagnosis of said positioning. In the documentary part, various sources were consulted, such as: books, magazines, articles and the internet.

### Positioning, Attributes, Competence

### Resumen

En México la fabricación de calzado tiene una historia de aproximadamente 400 años conforme a datos publicados por la secretaría de Economía, poco a poco se ha posicionado hasta ser una actividad comercial de renombre y prestigio, el Estado de México representa el 5% del valor nacional de la producción, siendo San Mateo Atenco el municipio más representativo de esa entidad. En la actualidad se deben utilizar diferentes estrategias para lograr ocupar un lugar que sobresalga ante los diferentes comercios de calzado y tener una imagen e identificación, siendo el posicionamiento una estrategia, para construir a esto tomando en cuenta los atributos y beneficios que se van a proporcionar al consumidor, ofreciendo algo que sea diferente a la competencia y con lo cual el cliente se identifique; esto puede ir cambiando de acuerdo a las necesidades del consumidor. En esta investigación se desarrolló con un enfoque mixto, identificando como está posicionada la plaza azul en la mente del consumidor, considerando factores y competencia. Para llevar a cabo este estudio, se utilizó la investigación tipo documental, de campo y descriptiva para lograr hacer un diagnóstico sobre dicho posicionamiento. En la parte documental se consultó en diversas fuentes como son: libros, revistas, artículos e internet.

### Posicionamiento, atributos, Competencia

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## Introduction

San Mateo Atenco is a town located in the State of Mexico, which has been dedicated to the manufacture of shoes as one of its main economic activities. One of its main shoe selling plazas is Plaza Azul, which is an association of artisan manufacturers that provides society with innovative, quality and high fashion footwear at the best prices for consumption and / or by catalog. In this square you can find a variety of models and colors of shoes, tennis shoes, boots that allow you to have comfort and style with really affordable prices.

The Plaza Azul has good facilities where visitors will feel comfortable and safe inside it, taking into account security, emergency exits, meeting points in case of earthquakes and with accessibility to ramps so that wheelchairs can enter, in addition to having several stores to have different shopping options. The opening hours are from Monday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with Saturdays and Sundays being the busiest days for sales in the plaza.

The following is a general description of the content of the research project, taking into account the positioning of the footwear industry in the Plaza Azul de San Mateo Atenco, the following aspects were taken into account: frame of reference, in which the background of the footwear industry, image, identification, customer preference, among other aspects, are made known.

In the theoretical foundation, each aspect was described in detail, such as history, background and situation of the plaza, followed by the problem statement, where the current state and the state to be reached in the research were identified, in order to know how the factors that influence the positioning are rated, considering the following attributes: comfort, price, design, variety, durability, guarantee and customer service. As for the method, the following type of research was used: documentary, field and mixed approach and exploratory scope, then it was described and the diagnosis of this research was reached in terms of positioning, which are described below:

In the qualitative aspect it was sought to describe consumer behavior in terms of preferences and interests according to physical, psychological and functional attributes, to find which are the needs that influence the image and identification that determine the positioning that the footwear has for the customer. In the documentary part, books, magazines, articles and internet were reviewed to obtain information about the history, background and situation of this market and to develop the document in a theoretical way. As for the field research, we went to the Plaza Azul in San Mateo Atenco, for the application of some questionnaires, others were by Facebook, due to the restrictions of the pandemic. Then the results are presented where you can see tables, graphs and analysis and finally the conclusions where the results of this research are presented.

It should be noted that this article is the product of a research project focused on the Plaza Azul footwear industry in San Mateo Atenco, Mexico, which is currently in progress. For this reason, the background of this sector described in the frame of reference was taken from the article Zenteno et al (2019). Strategies of the Marketing Mix of the Footwear Industry in San Mateo Atenco Plaza Azul, because they are the same facts that are reported. Said article is mentioned in the section on sources of consultation.

## Frame of Reference

The earliest records of footwear manufacturing in Mexico date back to the 17th century. In the state of Guanajuato, the oldest data that the Municipal Historical Archive records regarding the manufacture of footwear in the Villa de Leon is from the year 1645. And Andrés González Cabildo is the name of the oldest shoemaker, according to information from the archives of the Chamber of the Footwear Industry of the State of Guanajuato (CICEG).

It is important to review the history and evolution of the footwear industry in Mexico. Some facts from the CICEG archive will be highlighted. In 1719, the first census of the Villa de León was taken, showing the existence of 36 houses in which shoes were made by Spaniards, Indians and mulattos. Later, in 1869, there were 50 "shoe factories", that is to say, workshop houses in which families formed units of artisan production.

The first formal shoe factory on record began operations in 1872. By 1900, 17% of Mexico's economically active population worked in the shoe industry, making it, along with the textile industry, the most important economic activity in León.

Small-scale manufacturing establishments were the pivot for the development of footwear manufacturing in Mexico between 1920 and 1930. The creation of productive workshops began to take place at a dizzying rate due to demand, with local capital acting as the main responsible for those areas becoming the main regions of the national footwear industry from that time on. On May 24, 1926, the Union of Shoe Manufacturers of León was constituted, whose founding president was Mr. Jose Padilla Moreno and the first secretary was Mr. Ignacio L. Hernandez.

"It should be remembered that the spread of small domestic type establishments does not necessarily obey the logic of reproduction, where only the consumption needs of the domestic unit are taken into account, but in many cases, it is also reconstructed from the situation that the storekeeper himself manages in the market. The proximity between productive units that manufacture footwear and productive units or people that manufacture certain processes supports the emergence and reproduction of productive units without a technological base." Iglesias (1998)

The consolidation of the footwear industry in Guanajuato came with World War II, due to the fact that the United States was one of its main consumers. By 1941, 47.39% of the economically active population was dedicated to this activity and the city of León had 1,315 establishments employing a total of 19,940 people.

In the 1950's, the mechanization of the production process began and the technical principles brought from abroad were integrated. Footwear manufacturers promoted their products individually. At the end of the decade, the directors of the National Chamber of the Footwear Industry began to organize a product exhibition, following the example of the North American model of commercial fairs. The first national exhibition was held in Mexico City in 1956.

In 1966, at a time when it was necessary to reactivate the sale of footwear, the X National Footwear Exhibition was held in León, already known as the Mexican Footwear Industry Exhibition, an event that the local press announced as the one that would show "all its industrial potential in the most ambitious exhibition held until then". The event, the result of the efforts of several visionaries, ceased to be held due to differences between the representatives of the different Chambers. However, the model was so successful that the Leonese producers decided to continue it.

The manufacturers of the Footwear Chamber of the State of Jalisco initiated in 1977 their "Spring National Exposition", being the venue the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco. Five years after SAPICA opened its doors in León, ANPIC was born in 1979, the first international supply show.

Thanks to this progress and the structure that was established over the years, the Chamber of the Footwear Industry of the State of Guanajuato planned and programmed the implementation of a special department to support the activities that the committee in charge decided to carry out. Based on this programming, in 1980 the first steps were taken to incorporate human and material resources that would constitute the department in charge of the exposition. Thus, as of the 8th. Thus, from the 8th Leather and Footwear Exhibition (SAPICA), the Chamber already had the foundations to achieve its objective.

It was in 1982 that SAPICA was named the National Footwear Fair. The acceptance of this product in the domestic market was such that the National Chamber of the Footwear Industry (CNIC) reached its historical maximum production level with the production of 317 million pairs of shoes, of which 7.5% were exported to the U.S. market. However, the national crisis that occurred in the eighties irremediably affected this sector and Zarur (1993) comments: "While in 1980 per capita consumption was estimated at 5.6 pairs; in 1989, at the end of the decade it was 2.5 pairs of shoes, due to the loss of purchasing power of consumers, while footwear prices rose significantly, given the increases in production costs".

In 1999, on its 25th anniversary, SAPICA expected 10,000 buyers with visits from 25 countries around the world, and signed an agreement with CUOROMODA, then the first fair in Latin America, in order to make the two fairs known in neighboring countries and in their own.

According to INEGI figures, at the end of the 90's, 70 million pairs of shoes were produced per year and 73,439 workers were directly employed in that sector. In order to position the sector as a globally recognized producer, actions had to be taken to promote it, which were carried out by businessmen, chambers, research centers and the government. Because of this, and because it is a basic consumption item and an important source of employment in the country, the footwear industry was given priority in the National Industrial Development Plan of the Federal Government 2000-2006, during the term of President Vicente Fox Quezada.

The 2009 economic census (INEGI) captured 7,398 economic units dedicated to footwear manufacturing, representing 1.7% of total manufacturing industries. They employed 112,727 people, accounting for 2.4% of total employment in the manufacturing sector. The micro establishments of this sector represented 78.5%, employing 19% of the total personnel and generated 6.2% of the total gross production. In comparison with large companies, which only represented 1%, they employed three out of every ten people employed and generated almost 40% of production. As for the total footwear production, 87% was destined for private consumption and the rest was for intermediate demand (domestic or foreign) referring to commerce, freight transportation, fabric manufacturing, to the manufacture of footwear itself, paint manufacturing, coatings, adhesives and sealants, among others.

In comparison with the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, the footwear industry only generated revenues in the amounts of \$17, 436, \$17, 462 and \$18, 013 (million pesos) and in terms of employed personnel, the figures were 93, 291; 92,877 and 94, 601, respectively. The contribution to the GDP decreased, as it averaged 0.6% in those years. According to data provided by the federal government.

The slowdown in the economic figures generated by the footwear industry is evident, and some situations can be observed that have contributed to this. The first important fact is the entry of the country of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO), at the end of 2001 and the other, the entry of Mexico to the Trans-Pacific Economic Cooperation Agreement on February 4, 2016, called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Referring to China and its incursion into the WTO, this country has managed to make inroads and maintain important advantages in sectors such as footwear, textiles, electronics, toys, information technologies, among others. The strategy generated by this country, according to Kerber (2002) "[...] in the case of labor-intensive industries, was often focused on learning the *modus operandi* to replace foreign producers with domestic producers in the medium term and then displace them from the markets they dominate. This is the case of the footwear industry where Chinese brands have been progressively incorporated." Other data that are highlighted are enunciated below.

Esquivel (2015) "China is the world's leading footwear producer, manufacturing 5.5 billion pairs of footwear and exporting 3.1 billion pairs annually. In order of importance, China ranks first in foreign sales, followed by India with 682 million, Brazil with 520 million, Italy with 425 million, Indonesia with 318 million, Turkey with 270 million and Mexico ranks seventh with 170 million. Ten years ago Mexico imported only 3.0% of its domestic footwear consumption, now that consumption has increased to 20% of the total."

Olvera (2018) "Trade exchange between Mexico and the United States fell from 81 percent in the 1990s to 63 percent in 2016, a year after Republican President Trump issued since the campaign a protectionist speech. In contrast, Mexico's trade with China rose from -1 percent to 10 percent in 2016, according to the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Center for China-Mexico Studies that has researched the trilateral U.S.-China-Mexico relationship." And it adds that in 2017 while China sold us 67 billion 741 million dollars (computer and communication technology products, clothing, footwear, electrical appliances), Mexico only exported 6 billion 61 million dollars to it (computer, electronic, communication and auto parts products).

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It is important to mention the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), whose member countries adopted the Bogor objectives, and whose commitment is that by 2020, the economies of the region should have implemented public policies aimed at the total liberalization of markets in order to achieve free and open trade. Mexico, like China, is a member of APEC.

As for the TPP, the member countries are: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam. They accounted for about 40% of the world's GDP and 25% of international trade and aimed to create a new economic bloc in the Pacific by reducing approximately 18,000 customs tariffs. The objective: to change the rules on the exchange of goods and services. However, at the end of January 2017, the United States withdrew. This led to a rearrangement of the treaty and on March 8, 2018, it was signed again, but under the name of Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with the eleven remaining countries.

In an interview conducted by *Expansión Magazine* in February 2018 with Mr. Alejandro Gómez, executive president of the Chamber of Industry of the State of Guanajuato, he commented "We are much more concerned about the CPTPP, because as it is drafted it will allow Vietnam to produce footwear using inputs from China (which are up to 50% cheaper than those available in Mexico), and export them to the Mexican market free of tariffs. In addition, wages in Vietnam are up to 50% lower than those paid in the sector. We will not be able to compete with this mix of cheap inputs and low wages."

And it is highlighted in the published article that Vietnam is the second largest footwear manufacturer globally, after China. And the bulk of its production is for export. So far, Vietnamese footwear pays a tariff to enter Mexico, which allows it to balance the low costs. But once the CPTPP is signed, Vietnamese footwear will enter a phase of tariff relief. This has Mexican manufacturers worried, as the Asian product could displace the 235 million pairs sold in Mexico.

In view of this scenario, Ernesto Acevedo Fernández, Mexico's Undersecretary of Industry and Commerce, stated in a conference (February 25, 2019) that in view of the adverse situation faced by the footwear economic activity, the following actions were immediately proposed: the signing of two Presidential Decrees that would temporarily establish a 25 percent or 30 percent tariff on footwear imports. This was published in the *Official Gazette of the Federation* on April 10, 2019.

After this background and facts that have impacted the footwear industry, we proceed to describe the object of study, which is composed of 366 footwear manufacturers and traders established in Plaza Azul, which is located in the Municipality of San Mateo Atenco, State of Mexico.

The State of Mexico is divided into 125 municipalities, of which only 6 are in the footwear economic sector and are home to 81% of the establishments and 80% of the employment. These municipalities are Cuautitlán, Cuautitlán Izcalli, Naucalpan, Tlalnepantla, San Mateo Atenco and Toluca, among others, being the most important of them due to the number of companies and the level of employment it generates: San Mateo Atenco. Eighty-seven percent of the companies in the footwear industry in the State of Mexico are classified as micro-companies, almost 7% as small companies, 4.55% as medium-sized companies and 1% as large companies. Most are located in San Mateo Atenco, which is home to slightly more than 40%.

This municipality has a population of approximately 73,000 inhabitants and 75% of the families are dedicated to shoemaking, both artisanal and industrial. The history of the shoe industry in this jurisdiction is divided into three periods:

- 1900-1912, the production was carried out manually.
- 1913-1931, mechanical machines are used: the first one, to sew the cut, the second one, to sew the sole and the third one, a machine with a pedal.
- 1932-1959, electric machines were used and the first shoe factories were established.

San Mateo Atenco has also suffered from the events described above regarding China and treaties with other countries. The impact can be seen in the serious decrease in sales. The president of the San Mateo Atenco Footwear Producers group (Procasma), Mr. Luis Gonzaga González Tapia, at the end of June 2019 has stated to the media that the footwear industry in this municipality is at risk due to flooding in the area and the sale of pirated footwear from China, which has caused the closure of 20% of footwear workshops.

"It has been very complicated to shield a border so that shoes do not enter clandestinely because, with the tariff measures, if they entered legally, prices would rise, but it is contraband and it is unfair competition, because we struggle with the payment of taxes, insurance affiliations and other obligations as taxpayers," said the representative of Procasma.

Pérez, J. (2020) Regarding the contingency situation originated by the SARS-CoV-2 that causes the COVID-19 disease, the representative of Plaza Azul, Ismael Gutiérrez Sánchez pointed out and exposed that, in spite of carrying out all the sanitary measures imposed by the Secretary of Health of Mexico, the business is still not rising because the attendance is "lukewarm" and many visitors arrive and leave without making any purchase in spite of prices that become a bargain.

In addition to this, the leader added: "The situation will not improve in the short term, there is no improvement in attendance of buyers and sale of products", so they are still waiting for the local city council to deposit the money they promised to manufacture 4,500 pairs of shoes for Atenco students of preschool, elementary and high school within the framework of this pandemic to reactivate the economy of shoe workers and other merchants in the municipality.

The Plaza Azul vendors are responsible for the manufacture of these four thousand five hundred pairs of shoes of the almost 10 thousand that the mayor's office requested from other manufacturers at a uniform cost of 350 pesos per pair; however, the prolongation of the start of classes until now indefinitely also originated the postponement of the deposit to the shoemakers. Therefore, the outlook is serious.

To strengthen the study on: Positioning: Plaza Azul, of the Footwear industry in San Mateo Atenco, State of Mexico. Some research and articles on positioning and the type of research that was conducted in each of them were reviewed, which are mentioned below.

As Trout and Ries define the term, "positioning starts with a product, which can be an item, a service, a company, an institution or even a person. Maybe it's yourself. But positioning is not about the product, it's about what you do with the minds of likely customers, i.e., how you place the product in their minds." Ibanez and manzano (2018).

Perez, (2016), in his article "*The importance of product innovation to generate positioning in young people*". presents in a hierarchical manner the innovation factors that consumers accept as valid to improve the processes of positioning and purchase of products offered in the market. In this case, the consumers are young men and women, between 16 and 24 years old, residents of Villavicencio (Colombia) who participated in the quantitative study. In order of hierarchical importance, for the respondents, the highest rating was obtained by the factors of: value of use and perceived quality of the product and the lowest rating corresponds to the price of these, finally there is no evidence of the existence of any correlation associated with the demographic elements of young people in the city and the factors of innovation.

Regarding the hierarchy of the factors that allow product innovation and the importance given to them to generate positioning, it can be analyzed as a whole, including minors and young adults of all socioeconomic levels of the city. This means that the results can be extrapolated to this age group and it is appropriate to speak generically of young people. According to the above results, there are no significant differences that merit a micro segmentation, and the only percentage difference found was by gender, which is less than 10%. Therefore, to generate positioning in the young people of Villavicencio, it is necessary to work on increasing the functional attributes expressed in the factors value of use and perceived quality of the products that were rated by them and classified by the authors in the category of important.

This accompanied by detailed messages about the benefits they will obtain by purchasing a particular brand, highlighting the emotional attributes in its use.

Ortegón (2017) In the research "Brand image and positioning in the agrochemical industry in Colombia," the market of agricultural chemical companies in Colombia was studied in relation to variables of interest such as: the non-existence of a dominant competitor and large market size. An exploratory study was conducted with focus groups in different regions in order to characterize the image and positioning of the brand. The study shows that the presence of consultants, technical support, price perception and good quality are of utmost importance for the brand, among other aspects, concluding that the objective of the study was satisfactory by describing and representing the brand image and positioning of agrochemical companies on a factorial level according to the geographic region. Demonstrating that brand image and positioning are mental processes based on associations such as knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, opinions and brand preferences. And by knowing preferences, it is possible to identify opportunities and plan strategies to carry out positioning in the future.

Apaolaza (2015), in his thesis on "Marketing plan and positioning strategies for a children's lingerie venture", for the company Bellamia, where it was intended to achieve brand positioning through different strategies and actions to achieve sustained and balanced growth. Knowing the conditions of the competition and of the company itself, to conquer existing markets, reach pre-fixed market shares, adjust to the marketing budget; through an exploratory study by means of interviews to executives of the same company, businesses and mothers of girls, to know the attributes that the garments should have such as: quality, price, model, originality and exclusivity. The company sought to achieve its positioning based on its own characteristics of design, quality of fabrics, durability, styles of garments, service (stock replenishment), advice to the buyer and willing staff.

Chedraui (2017) Article "The value of positioning. Caso Nirsa", the importance of generating brand positioning was valued from the case study Nirsa Guayaquil, Ecuador with its canned tuna products of the marca Real, said study was carried out through documentary research and an interview with the sales manager, The presentation of its product was changing until it reached the easy open system in 2013, with this innovation helped the prestige of the brand that emerged in 1997, it was possible to introduce other products such as juices, rice, canned peaches, among others. Therefore, it can be said that positioning is a competitive weapon in an organization. Its strategy consisted of defining the market and target public, analyzing and identifying opportunities, modeling differences and perfecting positioning.

Nirsa managed to stand out and lead in the market with its strategy of difference in the product "easy open", achieving a clear and definitive positioning that became the competitive advantage, so it managed to enter other segments with great ease. through interviews with executives of the same company, businesses and mothers of girls, to know the attributes that the garments should have such as: quality, price, model, originality and exclusivity. The company intends to achieve its positioning based on its own characteristics of design, quality of fabrics, durability, styles of garments, service (stock replenishment), advice to the buyer and willing staff.

Cruz and Gomez (2015) in their thesis on "Consumer behavior and brand positioning: case study in the footwear sector in the city of Manizales", aimed to determine the relationship between consumer behavior and brand positioning of the footwear sector and identify the purchasing decisions of consumers and identify the brand positioning of companies in the footwear sector in the city of Manizales. A mixed exploratory research of mixed type (qualitative and quantitative phase) was carried out, by means of interviews, surveys, from which two types of consumer behavior were concluded, the first one is that their purchase decisions depend on the experience they have with the brands in the search of supplying their needs and the second one affirms that the attitudes about the footwear brands vary according to the positioning they have in the consumer.

Next, some positioning concepts are mentioned, as well as strategies, given by different authors, and the factors, process and advantages of positioning.

This is understood as the place that the brand occupies in the minds of consumers with respect to the rest of its competitors; this gives it an image of its own in the mind of the consumer, which will make it different from the rest of the competition, through an active communication of attributes, benefits or values different from our public or segment. Kotler (2010).

Market positioning must define a long-term strategy that detects the new technology applied by the competition and develops it as well; become its own competition, creating brands that occupy specific positions and allow testing new technologies and creating new technological divisions to investigate new developments in a market and not become obsolete. All this will help the company to define the project it wants to carry out, the competition and achieve a unique positioning. Al Ries and Jack Trout (2001).

Positioning is also defined as the global perception by the buyer of a brand, product line or company, as a result of the impact of the company's marketing on the buyer. This image or state of mind is the result of the marketing actions carried out by the company, such as the product offered, distribution channels, price, advertising and sales force. Premack and Woodruff (1986).

The factors involved in positioning are: core (set of physical, technical or psychological properties that characterize the product and make it suitable to perform certain functions), quality (it is the valuation given to the core according to established standards in order to make a comparison with the competition), price (it is the monetary value given to the product so that it can be acquired by the consumer), design, shape and size (they are the configuration of the product since they allow it to be identified to a greater or lesser degree compared to other products of the same type), brand (promotes and facilitates the identification of the product), service (set of utilities or functions that allow the product to be different from others).

Product image (is the visual and mental representation that the consumer obtains according to the information provided about the product), company image (is the general criterion that the market dictates impacting positively or negatively on the consumer for the acquisition of products). Al Ries and Jack Trout (2001).

The process of market positioning is the position of a given company in the minds of consumers and takes as a reference its direct and indirect competitors, based on the following strategies: a) attribute of the product that is capable of satisfying a desire or need and are classified according to their nature, by their destination, by the reason for purchase and by the relationship with other products.

By their nature they can be tangible or intangible; by their destination they are divided into consumer or industrial; by the reason for their purchase they can be rational or irrational and by the relationship with other products they are known as substitutes, complementary or independent. b) benefits of the product such as design and shape; c) purpose of the product, among some of its characteristics are: presentation, color, shape; d) user which is the person who will use the product, according to the following factors: cultural, social, personal and psychological; in the cultural factors are taken into account the beliefs, values and customs, social factors refer to reference groups, in the personal factors are the characteristics of each individual and in the psychological factors are motivation, perception, learning and aptitude. e) competition, where it is necessary to know who are the competitors, knowledge and evaluation of them, as well as with what type of competitors will interact; f) quality, value and price, quality refers to the characteristics of use that a product reports to a customer, the value is the satisfaction of the product with the customer and the price is the amount of money that is delivered in exchange for the product; g) lifestyle, which will depend on the attitudes and interests of the customer. price where the quality is the characteristics or quality of use of the product reported by the customer. Mintzberg (2007).



The advantages of positioning give a good image of the brand and facilitates the adoption of the product and the customer will recommend it, because it is different from the rest of the competition, connects the customer with the product by having confidence in acquiring it, establishes the value of the product offered, helps to corroborate the price that was defined, communication is better if the appropriate channels have been chosen, improves the design. Blank (2013).

The requirements that a good positioning must have are the following: 1. It must be unique in comparison with the competition, and that this uniqueness brings superiority in the promises it makes. 2. It must be credible for the target audience, both in relation to the proposal it makes, and in its connection with the company that makes it. 3. It must be relevant, not at an absolute level, but for the specific customer segment it is aimed at.

Positioning is concretized and synthesized in the positioning statement that a company develops. This includes the following elements: The first element is the definition of the market where the product competes. It implies defining WHAT we sell. The second element that is integrated in the positioning statement is the target public. It is the result of the segmentation process and includes WHO we are selling to. Finally, the third element defines the specific proposal we make within the defined category, seeking to differentiate ourselves from existing commercial and value proposals. It refers to DIFFERENTIATION. Ibáñez and manzano (2018).

The positioning map is a very useful marketing analysis tool that allows a company to know where it stands in relation to its competitors in the consumer's mind graphically and in relation to various criteria. With this representation, a company will be able to know where it stands at the time of analysis. The most traditional format consists of two axes (horizontal and vertical), with the maximum and minimum values of each element subject to analysis at each end. A positioning map is accurate depending on the data used to prepare it, the easiest way to locate the company and its competitors is with the knowledge of the market even without having very specific data. Kotler (2016).

**Problem statement**

Positioning has become very important not only for the footwear industry, since all brands compete to win a place in the consumer's mind, which is not an easy task since consumer perceptions and attitudes are involved. The objective of this work is to identify how Plaza Azul is positioned, considering seven attributes such as: comfort, price, design, durability, variety, guarantee and customer service, which will allow us to identify which are its best positioned attributes, as well as those that need to improve their positioning.

**Method**

The type of research that was conducted is a mixed approach and exploratory scope, which is used when there is no previous research on the object of study or when the knowledge of the subject is so vague and imprecise.

The first stage of the methodology was to choose the attributes that would be evaluated of the product in this case were: convenience, price, design, variety, durability, warranty and customer service (Table 1).

Justification of variables	
1. Comfort (physical property)	The material used in the manufacturing process provides comfort and convenience
2. Price (psychological and technical property)	Affordable prices for consumers Customers are satisfied with prices Offer prices that allow microenterprises to be more profitable. Prices are competitive
3. Design (physical property)	The design of the footwear is innovative The shoe models handled are up to date.
4. Variety (technical and psychological property)	The variety of footwear (sport, casual and formal) is extensive. There is a range of shoes for all ages.
5. Durability (technical property)	Time of use is balanced with cost
6. Warranty (technical and psychological property)	Companies are liable for product defects
7. Customer service (psychological property)	Attitude of salespeople

**Table 1** Justification of variables  
*Source: Prepared by the author*

In the second stage a survey was conducted through Facebook (due to the restrictions of the pandemic) and some in person, randomly to people who come to buy shoes in San Mateo, made a filter because they had to know the four brands. Considering the positioning mapping method, it was established in the "X" axis the attributes and in the "Y" axis a scale from 0 to 10, it was asked to rate the 7 attributes of each brand and the rating of each one was averaged by attribute, to visualize how the blue square is positioned in the consumer's mind, as well as compared to its competition.

**Sample**

Given the current conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, it was practically impossible to carry out the aforementioned number of surveys. It was decided to work with a confidence level of 87.8% and to accept an error of 12.2%.

The following procedure was developed to determine the sample:

- Infinite population
- Formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{d^2}$$

Where:

- Z: Confidence coefficient for a given confidence level.
- p: Probability of success
- q: Probability of failure.
- d: Maximum admissible error

We have:

Confidence or safety level: 87.8%.

- Z= 1.55
- p= 0.50
- q=0.50
- d= 0.122

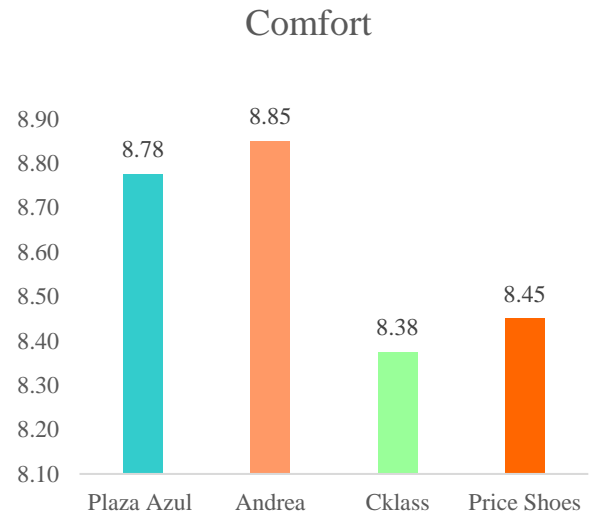
We solve:

$$n = \frac{(1.55)^2(0.50)(0.50)}{(0.122)^2} = 40.3537$$

Therefore, a total of 40 questionnaires were applied.

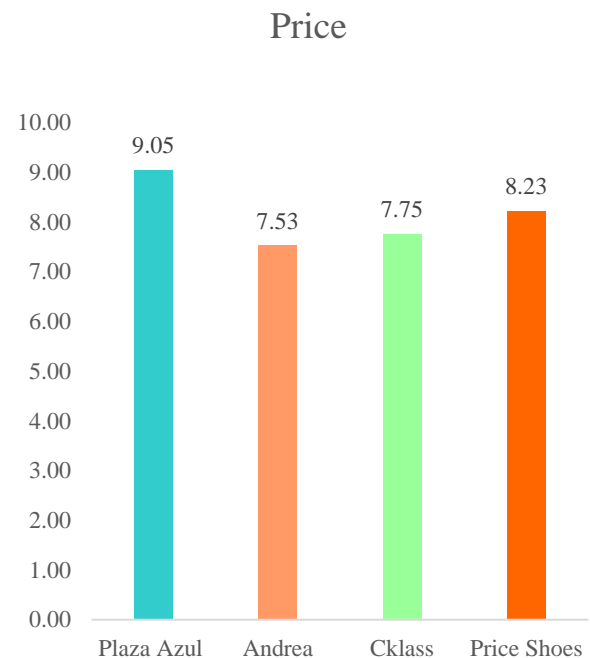
**Results**

Once the questionnaires were applied, the following data were obtained:



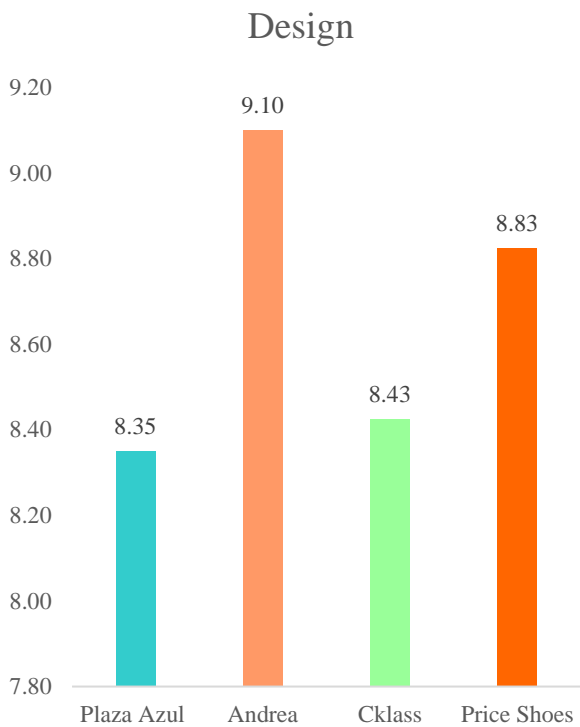
**Graph 1** Attribute confort  
Source: Own Elaboration

The average customer perception of the blue square is 8.78, placing it in second place, an aspect that could be improved.



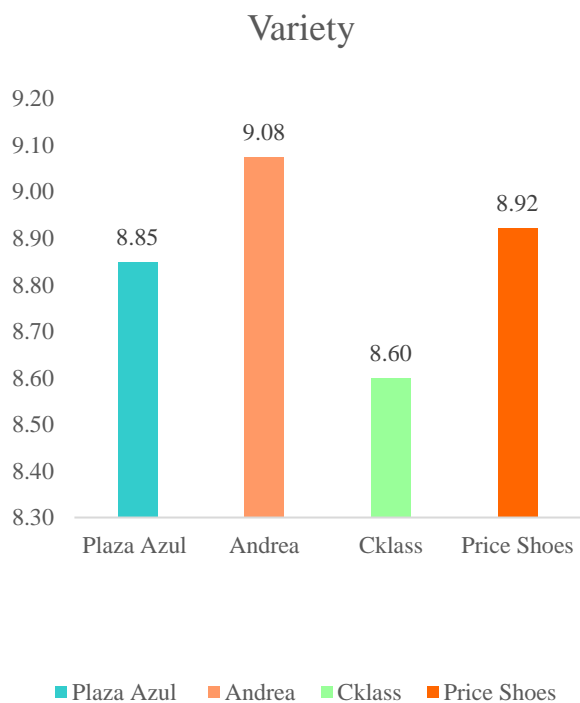
**Graph 2** Price Attribute  
Source: Own Elaboration

Here it can be seen that customers perceive that Plaza Azul has better prices than its competitors, since they rate it with 9.05, which can be considered a strength for the producers and indicates a good positioning.



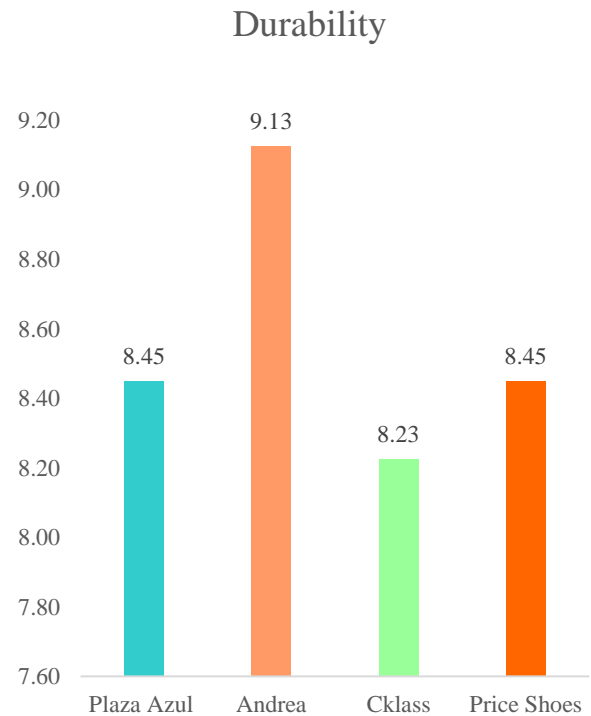
**Graph 3** Design attribute  
Source: Own Elaboration

In this graph we observe that the design attribute is not well perceived, since it is the attribute with the lowest rating compared to the competition, which would be a weakness for the producers of Plaza azul.



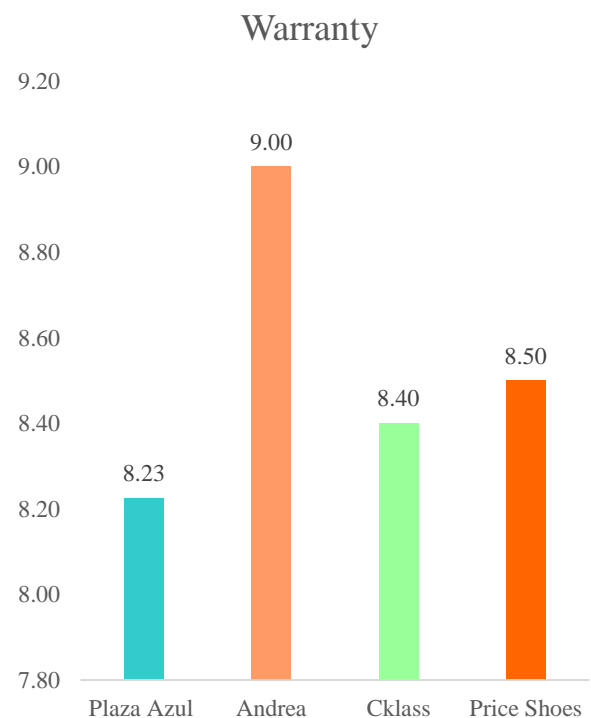
**Graph 4** Variety attribute  
Source: Own Elaboration

This attribute is in third place and should be reviewed in order to improve this aspect.



**Graph 5** Durability attribute  
Source: Own Elaboration

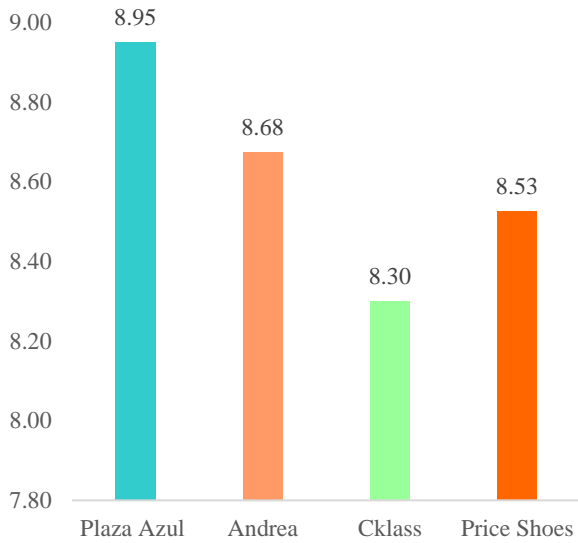
As for this attribute, it is in second place along with another of the brands, which is not adequate, we should check what is happening with the durability and average useful life of the product.



**Graph 6** Attribute Guarantee  
Source: Own Elaboration

The positioning in terms of warranty is an area of opportunity since the respondents place it below the competition, which is a weakness.

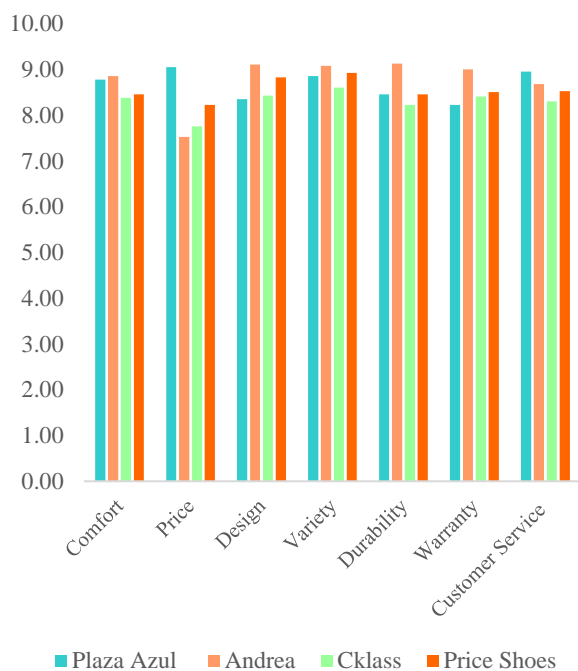
Customer service



Graph 7 Attribute Customer Service  
Source: Own Elaboration

The customer service attribute is well positioned and has the best rating of the four brands, an aspect that can be considered for positioning.

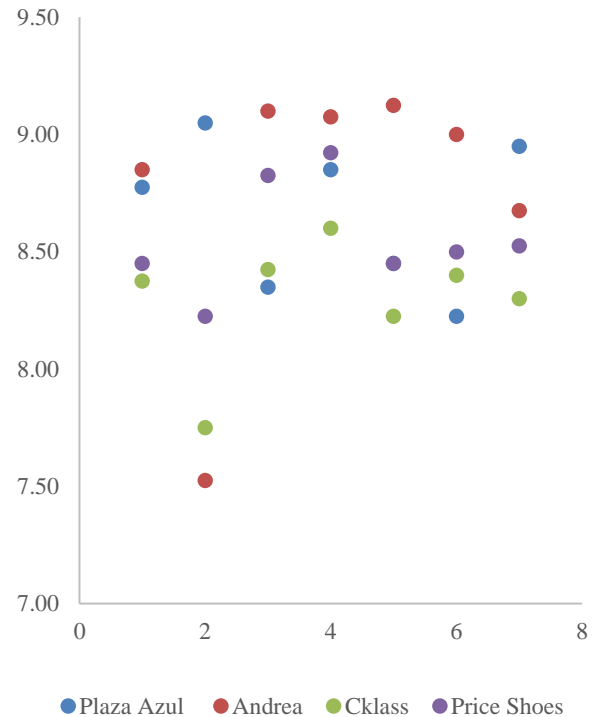
Concentrate



Graph 8 Concentrated Customer Service  
Source: Own Elaboration

Graph 8. It shows as a whole how each of the brands are positioned considering the 7 attributes mentioned and as we can see the best positioned in the brand Andrea, but in terms of price is the blue square aspect that is a strength.

Mapping



Graphic 9 Positioning mapping  
Source: Own Elaboration

Symbology		
Comfort	Price	Design
Variety	Durability	Warranty
Customer service		

Table 2 Symbology  
Source: Own Elaboration

Graph 9 shows how each of the brands is positioned in the consumer's mind considering the 7 attributes.

Conclusions:

- In comfort we identified that it occupies the second place just by .07 tenths so it should be reviewed what aspects should be improved.
- As far as price is concerned, the people surveyed responded that Plaza Azul maintains adequate prices, positioning itself in first place, an important aspect that should be considered as a strength and competitive advantage.

- With regard to design, they perceive it in last place with respect to its competition, a situation that should be paid attention to as this is a weakness.
- Plaza Azul de San Mateo Atenco with respect to variety of footwear offered to its customers is positioned in third place, another aspect that should be reviewed.
- In terms of durability, Price Shoes is positioned at the same level as Cklass.
- Regarding the product warranty attribute, Plaza Azul remains below the averages of Andrea's companies, Cklass and Price Shoes, another area of opportunity for this market.
- Plaza Azul is well positioned in terms of customer service so it can be promoted for positioning.

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