



## Measure of the mining image

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### ABSTRACT

Mining is a very important activity for economic and social development, but traditionally research has centered on its technical and operative aspects, instead of studying the image transmitted to the rest of society. This has originated diverse problems, fundamentally due to the information which the population receives via the mass media and which sometimes creates a current of opinion contrary to the development of this extraction activity. In order to resolve the mining communication problems it is necessary to develop a measure of the mining image based on a reliable and valid scale. This is a useful tool in developing a procedure to connect the society with other mining stakeholders and to analyze whether the real image of mining activity is similar to the image transmitted and perceived by society, since the news about the mining industry usually are focused on extreme situations or catastrophes that monopolize the information in the media. In this study a field research based on an attributes scale is developed, with the aim of measuring the mining image. The surveys were carried out in a mining area, where people have direct and real information about the mining industry and its consequences on society, environment and economy.

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### Introduction

Image is defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2012) as a set of ideas, beliefs and impressions a person mentally has of an object. On the other hand, Santesmases Mestre (2012) considers the “image” as a mental representation of the attributes and perceived benefits of a product or brand. Organizations have to create a suitable image to develop a competitive strategy and a powerful positioning in the market (Aaker, 1995, 1996). Image has been widely studied in the service quality field. Grönroos (2007) considers that in order to increase customer influence a favorable and well-known image is an advantage for any organization. In this context, image has an external impact on customer perceptions of the products and services. Moreover, image is highly related to service quality and customer satisfaction.

In marketing research the concept of image has been studied from different perspectives; such as the brand image (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Dowling, 1986; Rynes, 1991; Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996), the launching of new products (Hem et al., 2001; Ambler and Styles, 1997), retail stores (Peterson and Kerin, 1983; Simmons, 1987; Lewison, 1999; Dickson and MacLachlan, 1990; Severin et al., 2001; Oppewal and Timmermans, 1997; Nevin and Houston, 1980;

Rosembloom, 1983) or tourist destinations (Hunt, 1975; Crompton, 1977; Coshall, 2000; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Etchner and Ritchie, 1993; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Stern et al., 2001). However, the image of the mining sector has not been studied, in spite of news frequently appearing to inform about problems, ecological disasters or dangerous consequences to the population.

The concept of image has been applied to different areas, such as, products, individual and corporate brands, geographical areas, economic activities, events and even specific people who project a commercial image. On this basis, Dowling (1986) establishes that an image is “the set of meaning by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it”. From this perspective, the term “object” opens the idea of image to multiple aspects, beyond that of a product or company. In addition, Keller (1993) considers the perceptions on the brand are mirrored as existing memory links in the consumer, whereby centering this concept exclusively on the end user and, therefore, the image concept only exists in the mind of the consumer (McInnis and Price, 1987). Keller (1993) establishes that the associations can be created through the direct experience with the object, by the information perceived through different mass media and by means of the own personal inferences based on the received information and their scales of values. Fig. 1 shows the theoretical model used for designing and testing a scale of measurement of the mining image. The information can be received from different sources as well as in different forms. Firstly, direct information can

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