

TRABAJO DE INVESTIGACIÓN FINAL

Internationalization Strategies for Latin American Traditional Products Through Influencer Marketing: The Case of Cósmico in the Global Yerba Mate Market

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Abstract.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze influencer marketing as a potential internationalization strategy for traditional Latin American products, using Cósmico, an Argentina-based yerba mate brand, to examine its expansion into the United States market. Specifically, it evaluates the effectiveness of this strategy in reaching and engaging consumers in the United States market.

Methodologically, the study contrasts influencer marketing with traditional marketing strategies, including television, radio, printed media, and outdoor advertising. Furthermore, research explores the transmission of Argentine cultural identity and the impact of South American public figures on consumer adoption. To achieve this, a mixed-method research approach was used, combining quantitative surveys carried out among the target audience and qualitative interviews with industry experts, such as Cósmico's founder, a yerba mate sommelier, and a licensed customs broker.

Ultimately, the findings indicate that the role of influencer marketing in Cósmico's expansion into the United States, and evaluates its effectiveness as an internationalization strategy, particularly in building brand awareness and shaping consumer perception of yerba mate. While some hypotheses were validated and others partially validated due to limitations, the evidence suggests that combining influencer marketing with a cultural identity narrative, can play an important role in the internationalization of traditional Latin American products.

Resumen.

El propósito de esta investigación es analizar el *influencer marketing* como una posible estrategia de internacionalización para productos tradicionales latinoamericanos, utilizando a Cósmico, una marca Argentina de yerba mate, como caso de estudio para examinar su expansión en el mercado de Estados Unidos. Específicamente, evalúa la efectividad de esta estrategia para aumentar el conocimiento de marca, el engagement y la intención de compra entre los consumidores estadounidenses.

Desde el punto de vista metodológico, el estudio contrasta el *influencer marketing* con estrategias de marketing tradicionales, incluyendo televisión, radio, diarios, revistas y publicidad en la vía pública. Asimismo, la investigación explora la transmisión de la identidad cultural Argentina y el impacto de las figuras públicas sudamericanas en la adopción del producto por parte de los consumidores. Para ello, se utilizó un enfoque de investigación de método mixto, combinando encuestas cuantitativas realizadas al público objetivo con entrevistas cualitativas a expertos de la industria, como el fundador de Cósmico, una sommelier de yerba mate y un despachante de aduana.

Finalmente, los hallazgos indican que el *influencer marketing* desempeñó un papel importante en la expansión de Cósmico en los Estados Unidos y demostró ser efectivo como estrategia de internacionalización, particularmente en la construcción de notoriedad de marca y en la formación de las percepciones de los consumidores sobre la yerba mate. Si bien algunas hipótesis fueron validadas y otras parcialmente validadas debido a las limitaciones de la investigación, la evidencia sugiere que la combinación del *influencer marketing* con una narrativa basada en la identidad cultural, puede desempeñar un papel importante en la internacionalización de los productos tradicionales latinoamericanos.

Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts.

Active social media users: In the context of this research, they are individuals who use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or X (formerly Twitter) on a daily basis, with a minimum frequency of at least once per day. Additionally, active users are those who regularly engage with content through actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, or viewing posts, particularly those related to influencers and branded content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Chaffey, 2015).

Brand awareness: The extent to which consumers are able to recognize or recall a brand within a specific product category. Brand awareness represents one of the first stages in the consumer decision-making process and is considered essential for influencing future purchase behavior (Keller, 1993). In digital environments, exposure through social media and influencer marketing can contribute significantly to increasing brand awareness among target audiences.

Consumer perception: The process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret information related to products, brands, and marketing in order to form a meaningful understanding of them. It is influenced by personal factors, cultural background, and external inputs such as advertising and social media (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of this research, consumer perception plays a key role in shaping attitudes and purchase intentions towards yerba mate when it is promoted through influencer marketing.

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM): Any positive or negative statement made by consumers about a product, service, or brand through digital platforms and online communities. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, eWOM spreads rapidly through social media, reviews, comments, and online interactions, influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Engagement: The level of interaction, participation, and emotional connection that consumers develop with brands or content in digital environments. Engagement can be reflected through actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, saving, or discussing content on social media platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In influencer marketing, higher engagement often indicates stronger audience involvement and interest in the promoted product.

Influencer: A person with credibility, authority, and a loyal audience on social media, capable of influencing the purchasing decisions or perceptions of their followers. They act as brand ambassadors in specific niches, sharing authentic content (Freberg et al., 2011).

Influencer marketing: A digital marketing strategy that involves collaborations between brands and influencers to promote products or services to a targeted audience. It relies on the influencer's credibility, reach, and relationship with their followers to generate brand awareness, engagement, and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ohanian, 1990).

Information sharing: The process through which individuals exchange information, opinions, experiences, or recommendations with others. In digital environments, information sharing occurs through social media platforms, online communities, reviews, and user-generated content, influencing consumer perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making processes (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Nation branding: A strategic and coordinated process by which a country develops, manages, and communicates its national identity, image, and reputation to international audiences. Its purpose is to influence global perceptions and create favorable associations that can enhance the country's attractiveness in terms of exports, tourism, investment, and cultural influence (Anholt, 2007).

Parasocial relationships: One-sided emotional relationships that audiences develop

with media personalities, influencers, or public figures through repeated exposure to their content. Although the interaction is not reciprocal, consumers may feel emotionally connected to influencers and perceive them as familiar or trustworthy figures (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In the context of this research, these relationships can strengthen persuasion and increase the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

Purchase intention: The likelihood or willingness of a consumer to buy a product or service after being exposed to information, recommendations, or marketing stimuli. It is commonly used as an indicator of potential consumer behavior and can be influenced by factors such as trust, brand perception, and social influence (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of influencer marketing, authentic recommendations and repeated exposure may positively impact consumers' intention to purchase yerba mate products.

Social media: Digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content, as well as to participate in social networking. For the purpose of this study, social media specifically refers to Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), where influencer marketing activities take place and where users are exposed to branded content related to yerba mate (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Traditional marketing: Conventional promotional strategies that do not rely primarily on digital platforms, such as television, radio, printed media, and outdoor advertising. It is typically characterized by one-way communication from the brand to the consumer, with limited interaction or personalization (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Traditional products: Products that are strongly associated with the cultural identity, heritage, and traditions of a specific country or region, carrying meanings that extend beyond their functional attributes (McCracken, 1986). In international markets, traditional products may require adaptation and communication strategies to facilitate consumer understanding

while preserving their cultural significance.

U.S. consumers: In the context of this research, U.S. consumers are defined as individuals residing in the United States of America, aged between eighteen (18) and thirty-five (35) years old, who are potential or current consumers of yerba mate products. This includes both individuals who have previously consumed yerba mate and those who may be exposed to the product through marketing strategies.

U.S. market: The economic and consumer environment of the United States of America, characterized by high purchasing power, cultural diversity, and strong competition across industries. It is considered a key target market for international expansion due to its size, influence on global trends, and openness to new products and consumption habits (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Yerba mate: The dried and ground leaf of the *Ilex Paraguariensis* plant, used to prepare the infusion known as *mate*. It is a tree native to the Paranaense rainforest, fundamental in the culture of the Southern Cone (Heck & de Mejia, 2007).

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1 Introduction.

1.1 Research Context.

The increasing globalization of consumer markets has created new opportunities for traditional products to expand beyond their countries of origin. Within this context, influencer marketing has emerged as a relevant tool for introducing culturally embedded products to new audiences. This research examines the case of Cósmico and its efforts to position yerba mate in the United States through digital communication strategies.

Despite the growing relevance of influencer marketing in international markets, limited academic research has examined its role in the internationalization of traditional Latin American products. This study seeks to contribute to that discussion through the analysis of Cósmico in the United States.

1.2 General and Specific Objectives.

Based on the research context outlined above, this study establishes a general objective and a set of specific objectives that guide the investigation.

The general objective is to analyze how influencer marketing functions as an internationalization strategy for traditional Latin American products, using Cósmico's yerba mate as a case study, and to evaluate its effectiveness in reaching and engaging consumers in the United States.

The scope of the study is defined as follows: the research focuses on U.S. consumers aged eighteen (18) to thirty-five (35) years old, who are active social media users, with particular attention to both current consumers of Cósmico yerba mate and potential Cósmico consumers who have been exposed to the product through influencer marketing. To ensure clarity, “active social media users” are defined as individuals who use platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or X (formerly Twitter) on a daily basis, with a minimum

frequency of at least once per day. Furthermore, “effectiveness” refers to the extent to which influencer marketing contributes to brand awareness, consumer engagement, purchase intention, and consumption frequency among U.S. consumers.

To support the achievement of this general objective, the following specific objectives were proposed:

1. To identify the strategies used by Cósmico to position yerba mate in the U.S. market.
2. To examine U.S. consumer perceptions of yerba mate when it is promoted through influencers in the U.S. market.
3. To compare the effectiveness of influencer marketing versus traditional marketing strategies in international contexts, focusing on the U.S. market.
4. To assess how cultural elements from Argentina are communicated in the U.S. market through influencer marketing campaigns.
5. To measure the impact of South American public figures –specifically athletes– on the consumption of yerba mate, by using indicators such as purchase intention, brand awareness, and self-reported consumption frequency among U.S. consumers.
6. To explore the contribution of Cósmico’s market entry to the visibility and development of yerba mate within the U.S. market.

1.3 Research Questions.

In order to address the objectives of the study, a series of research questions were formulated. These questions provide direction for the investigation and help structure the analysis:

1. What strategies does Cósmico use to position itself in the U.S. market?
2. How do U.S. consumers perceive yerba mate when it is promoted through

influencer marketing?

3. To what extent is influencer marketing more effective than traditional marketing strategies in supporting the expansion of traditional products into the U.S. market?
4. How are Argentina's cultural values and identity transmitted through Cósmico's influencer marketing campaigns?
5. To what extent do South American athletes affect U.S. consumers' purchase intention, brand awareness, and consumption frequency of yerba mate?
6. How has the visibility and awareness of yerba mate evolved in the U.S. market after Cósmico's entry?

1.4 Research Hypotheses.

Based on the objectives and research questions, a set of hypotheses was developed. These hypotheses represent the expected relationships between the main variables under investigation and will be examined throughout the study:

1. Influencer marketing is an effective strategy for introducing traditional Latin American products, specifically yerba mate, into the U.S. market.
2. U.S. consumers are more likely to try yerba mate when it is endorsed by influencers than through traditional marketing.
3. Influencer marketing generates higher engagement and brand awareness compared to traditional marketing strategies in the U.S. market.
4. The communication of Argentina's cultural identity through influencers positively impacts consumer perception of traditional products such as yerba mate in the U.S. market.
5. Exposure to South American athletes has a positive and significant effect on U.S. consumers' purchase intention, brand awareness, and consumption frequency of

yerba mate.

6. The entry of Cósmico into the U.S. market has contributed to increasing the visibility and awareness of yerba mate among U.S. consumers.

1.5 Chapter Summary.

This chapter establishes the foundations of the study by presenting the research context, objectives, questions, and hypotheses. Together, these elements provide a clear direction for the investigation and support the development of the subsequent chapters, which focus on the theoretical framework, methodological design, and empirical analysis necessary to examine the role of influencer marketing in the internationalization of yerba mate within the U.S. market.

2 Literature Review.

2.1 Chapter Overview.

The purpose of this chapter is to review and summarize the existing academic literature relevant to this study, focusing on the intersection between social media, influencer marketing, and consumer behavior in international contexts. Given the growing importance of digital platforms in shaping brand-consumer relationships, the chapter examines previous research on how online environments influence communication processes and purchasing decisions.

2.2 Selection Criteria.

The academic sources included in this literature review were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. The selection process prioritized long-standing theories, journal articles, academic books, and recent empirical studies that address key topics such as influencer marketing, social media communication, consumer behavior, and international marketing strategies.

Accordingly, both foundational and more recent contributions were considered. Classic theories, such as the two-step flow of communication (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), are included to provide a theoretical basis for understanding how influence operates. These are complemented by more contemporary studies that focus on the role of social media influencers, digital engagement, and electronic word-of-mouth in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors.

In addition, special attention was given to literature that examines the effectiveness of influencer marketing in international contexts, particularly when dealing with culturally embedded products and new consumption trends.

2.3 Key Concepts.

Based on the selection criteria, this section introduces and develops the main concepts that support this study. In order to better understand the role of influencer marketing in international contexts, it is important to first look at the digital environment in which these strategies operate, as well as the key ideas related to consumer behavior, communication processes, and cultural influence. The following subsections present the main contributions from the literature that frame the research and provide theoretical support for the proposed hypotheses.

2.3.1 Digital environment and social media.

The development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the way companies communicate with consumers. One of the most relevant changes is the arrival of social media platforms, which have altered traditional communication models. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. These platforms allow users not only to consume information, but also to actively participate in its production and diffusion.

In this context, communication is no longer limited to a one-way process in which firms send messages to passive audiences. Instead, it has become increasingly interactive, dynamic, and participatory. Chaffey (2015) explains that digital environments allow for continuous interaction between brands and consumers, facilitating feedback, engagement, and real-time communication. As a result, consumers play a more active role in shaping brand perceptions and influencing the opinions and behaviors of other users.

This transition from unidirectional to interactive communication provides the foundation for the emergence of new marketing strategies. Within this environment, the role of individuals as content creators and opinion leaders becomes especially relevant, creating

the conditions for the development of influencer marketing.

2.3.2 Influencer marketing as a strategy.

Within the digital environment, influencer marketing has emerged as a communication strategy that relies on individuals with an established online presence to promote products and services. Unlike traditional marketing approaches, which are generally based on mass communication through channels such as television, radio, or print media, influencer marketing operates through more personalized and interactive forms of communication, allowing brands to engage with consumers in a more direct manner.

Strategic marketing has been defined as the process through which firms analyze market conditions, identify opportunities, and design strategies to achieve long-term competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Within this framework, companies must determine how to position themselves in specific markets, particularly when entering international environments characterized by different consumer behaviors, cultural contexts, and competitive dynamics. In such situations, the process becomes more complex, as companies must evaluate not only market attractiveness and competitive intensity, but also the degree of adaptation required to effectively communicate with target audiences.

Previous research highlights that introducing products into foreign markets requires more than market analysis alone. It also involves the development of effective positioning strategies that align with consumer expectations and perceptions. Positioning plays a central role in this process, as it aims to create a distinctive image of the product in the consumer's mind based not only on functional attributes, but also on symbolic and emotional associations. This becomes especially relevant in competitive environments, where differentiation is essential for achieving visibility and consumer recognition. The challenge is often greater for traditional products, whose meanings and consumption practices may be unfamiliar to foreign consumers.

Within this context, influencer marketing has become an increasingly relevant strategic tool for companies operating in digital environments. Its rapid growth has led organizations to incorporate influencers into their marketing activities as a means of increasing visibility, generating consumer interest, and facilitating market penetration.

An important distinction between influencer marketing and traditional advertising relies on the nature of the communication process. Traditional marketing is generally characterized by one-way communication channels such as television, radio, and print media, where consumers play a more passive role (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In contrast, influencer marketing enables interaction, feedback, and engagement. This interactive aspect allows brands to establish closer relationships with consumers and creates opportunities for more immediate responses. Research suggests that the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on the interaction of multiple factors, including influencer attributes, content strategies, and audience-related characteristics (Sporl-Wang et al., 2025).

From the consumer perspective, influencer marketing operates through mechanisms such as social influence, perceived similarity, and emotional connection. These relationships are often reinforced through repeated exposure and interaction, which can increase perceived closeness and familiarity over time. As a result, these dynamics contribute to the development of stronger relationships between influencers and their audiences, ultimately affecting marketing outcomes.

In this sense, influencer-generated content can facilitate the introduction of unfamiliar products by increasing consumer understanding, reducing uncertainty, and shaping consumer perceptions. This becomes particularly relevant in contexts where cultural differences and limited product knowledge are present, as influencers can contribute to translating product meaning, reducing perceived risk, and enhancing consumer acceptance within new markets.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is commonly evaluated through key

outcomes such as customer engagement, brand awareness and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Previous research identifies several factors that influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Among the most frequently cited are credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and authenticity (Ohanian, 1990). The role of credibility and trust as persuasive mechanisms is examined in greater detail in the following subsection.

Within this framework, influencer marketing can be understood as a persuasive communication process in which consumers rely on various social cues (such as perceived similarity, trust and connection) when evaluating products and brands. At the same time, it may also function as a form of word-of-mouth, which is often perceived as more credible than traditional advertising, particularly when consumers have limited knowledge of a product category (Migkos et al., 2025).

A key element of this process is the way influencers present products through everyday experiences and consumption situations, since audiences are more likely to engage when the content feels real and spontaneous. Rather than relying exclusively on product descriptions, influencers often integrate products into their daily routines, allowing audiences to observe how they are used in practice. This approach can generate curiosity, facilitate understanding, and make unfamiliar products appear more accessible to potential consumers.

Visual content also plays an important role within influencer marketing strategies. Through videos, images, and storytelling techniques, influencers can communicate rituals, habits, routines and consumption experiences in ways that are easy for audiences to understand. Consistent exposure to this type of content helps consumers become more comfortable with the product and reduces resistance toward new consumption practices. Visual storytelling strengthens this process by showing context, emotions, and experiences, making the product more tangible for the audience.

Contemporary digital environments are characterized by increasing competition for

consumer attention, resulting in shorter attention spans and a growing preference for easily consumable content formats. Industry trends suggest that influencers need to balance authenticity with immediacy, since effectiveness often depends on the ability to attract audience attention quickly and communicate information in a concise and accessible manner. This tendency is particularly visible on social media platforms, where users are continuously exposed to large volumes of content and make rapid decisions regarding what to watch, engage with, or ignore.

Thus, brands and content creators increasingly adapt their communication strategies to these evolving consumption patterns. The demand for immediacy can be observed across multiple industries and digital platforms, where audiences are exposed to a high volume of content and attention is very limited. For example, streaming services such as Netflix allow users to consume content at accelerated playback speeds, reflecting broader changes in media consumption habits and audience expectations. These developments suggest that contemporary consumers increasingly value efficiency, accessibility, and flexibility in the way information and entertainment are delivered. Consequently, communication strategies, including influencer marketing, must adapt to these dynamics while maintaining audience engagement and preserving message clarity.

From this perspective, influencer marketing extends beyond the simple transmission of information. Consumers are not only exposed to product attributes, but also to the broader experiences, contexts, and lifestyles associated with product consumption. This creates a stronger emotional connection, which can positively impact brand perception and recall.

As a result, influencer marketing can contribute to the creation of more meaningful consumer-brand interactions and facilitate the introduction of products into markets where familiarity and understanding remain limited.

2.3.3 Source credibility, trust and persuasion.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing can be better understood through the concept of source credibility. Early research by Hovland and Weiss (1951) suggests that the impact of a message depends largely on the perceived credibility of its source. This includes factors such as expertise and trustworthiness, which influence how information is received and interpreted by audiences.

Consumer perceptions are influenced by various cultural, social, and psychological factors, which shape how individuals interpret marketing messages and evaluate products (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Consequently, the perceived credibility of a communication source becomes an important element in determining how persuasive a message will be.

Influencers act as the source of communication, and their perceived authenticity and expertise play a central role in shaping consumer responses. Indeed, more recent studies have expanded on this idea: Liu & Zheng (2024), in a study published in *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, found that credibility, authenticity, and perceived similarity between influencers and their audiences positively influence brand perception and purchase intention. Similarly, a study conducted by Wang (2026) shows that influencer authenticity and expertise play a significant role in shaping readiness to buy, following its close association with higher levels of brand credibility and loyalty.

These findings indicate that persuasion in digital environments is not only based on the content of the message, but also on the characteristics of the individual delivering it. In this context, credibility becomes a key driver of effectiveness, as consumers are more likely to rely and act upon recommendations from sources they perceive as knowledgeable and genuine.

Empirical research reinforces this perspective: Freberg et al. (2011) show that influencers are generally perceived as accessible and relatable sources of information, which strengthens their persuasive capacity. Likewise, Ooi et al. (2023) highlight that influencer

marketing is an effective strategy for shaping consumer attitudes and increasing their willingness to buy through social influence mechanisms.

While traditional marketing can generate brand awareness, it often lacks the interactivity, personalization, and perceived authenticity associated with digital marketing strategies (Chaffey, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As a result, digital approaches, particularly those involving influencers, tend to be more effective in engaging consumers and shaping their perceptions in contemporary markets (Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Overall, the literature suggests that persuasion in digital environments depends not only on the content of a message, but also on the credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness of the source delivering it. As a result, influencers may be particularly effective in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions, as audiences are more likely to accept recommendations from sources they perceive as credible, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. This relationship helps explain why source credibility has become one of the central mechanisms through which influencer marketing affects consumer decision-making.

2.3.4 Parasocial relationships in digital environments.

Another important aspect of influencer marketing relates to the type of relationship that audiences develop with influencers in digital environments. In their Parasocial Interaction Theory, Horton and Wohl (1956) introduced the concept of *parasocial interaction* to describe one-sided, friendship-like relationships in which individuals feel a sense of familiarity or closeness toward media personalities, despite the absence of any real reciprocal interaction.

Although the concept was originally developed in the context of traditional media, it has gained renewed relevance with the emergence of social media platforms, which are characterized by frequent and informal interactions between content creators and audiences. Unlike television or radio personalities, influencers share aspects of their daily lives, personal

experiences, opinions, and routines through continuous and direct communication with their audiences. As a result, followers may develop a stronger sense of connection and perceived intimacy with these individuals.

The interactive nature of social media further reinforces this process. Through features such as comments, likes, live streams, and other interactive functions, audiences are able to engage with influencers in ways that create the impression of a more personal relationship. While these interactions are often limited and asymmetrical, they contribute to the perception that influencers are more accessible and relatable than traditional media personalities.

This idea is closely related to the concept of opinion leaders developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955). Their work highlights how certain individuals play a key role in shaping the opinions and behaviors of others through interpersonal communication processes. In contemporary digital environments, influencers act as a modern form of opinion leader, given their ability to shape attitudes, preferences, and consumption-related decisions among their followers.

From this perspective, and in line with the concepts of credibility and trust discussed in the previous subsection, parasocial relationships can be understood as a mechanism that helps explain the effectiveness of influencer marketing. As audiences develop stronger perceptions of familiarity and connection with influencers, they may become more receptive to the messages they communicate and the products they endorse. Consequently, parasocial relationships contribute to strengthening the influence that content creators can have on consumer perceptions and attitudes within digital environments.

2.3.5 Consumer behavior and engagement in digital environments.

Consumer behavior has become a central topic in the study of digital marketing, as technological developments and social media platforms have transformed the way individuals

search for information, evaluate products, and interact with brands. In digital environments, consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages. Instead, they actively participate in communication processes by creating, sharing, and responding to content, influencing both brand perceptions and the decisions of other users.

Given this context, engagement, brand awareness, and information sharing represent three important dimensions of consumer behavior: Engagement refers to the level of interaction, participation, and emotional connection that consumers develop with brands or content in digital environments. It can be reflected through actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, saving, or discussing content on social media platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Brand awareness is understood as the extent to which consumers are able to recognize or recall a brand within a specific product category, while information sharing describes the process through which individuals exchange information, opinions, experiences, or recommendations through digital platforms, online communities, reviews, and user-generated content, influencing consumer perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making processes (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Understanding consumer behaviour in the context of influencer marketing requires a broader perspective grounded in *consumer behavior theory*. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), consumer decisions are influenced by a combination of cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Essentially, individuals do not make purchase decisions entirely based on product attributes, but rather on evaluations shaped by social influences, prior experiences, and environmental conditions. As digital media increasingly forms part of consumers' daily lives, online interactions have become an important component of this decision-making process.

One of the most relevant contributions to understanding consumer behavior in digital environments is the concept of *electronic word-of-mouth* (eWOM), introduced by

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). eWOM refers to the exchange of opinions, experiences, and recommendations about products or brands through online platforms. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, digital communication allows information to spread rapidly across large audiences and remain accessible over time. As a result, consumers are able to influence one another's perceptions and purchasing decisions beyond the limitations of face-to-face interactions.

The concept of eWOM is closely related to the earlier work of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), who proposed that information often flows through opinion leaders rather than directly from media sources to audiences. In contemporary digital environments, influencers frequently perform a similar role by interpreting information, sharing experiences, and facilitating communication between brands and consumers. Through content creation and audience interaction, influencers contribute to the dissemination of information and encourage the sharing of opinions among users.

The growing relevance of social media platforms has significantly transformed the relationship between brands and consumers. Digital environments allow organizations to move beyond simple message transmission and establish continuous communication with audiences. Through social media platforms, consumers can actively participate in conversations, provide feedback, express opinions, and engage directly with both brands and content creators. This increased level of participation contributes to the development of stronger consumer-brand relationships and creates opportunities for organizations to better understand consumer needs and preferences.

In this context, engagement has become one of the most important indicators of marketing effectiveness in digital environments. Unlike traditional communication approaches, which often provide limited opportunities for interaction, digital platforms enable consumers to actively participate in communication processes. Consumers can react to

content, share it with others, comment on their experiences, and contribute to discussions surrounding products and brands. These forms of interaction not only increase exposure to marketing messages but also strengthen consumers' involvement with the brand.

Research suggests that influencer-generated content can be particularly effective in encouraging engagement because it is often perceived as more relatable and less commercial than traditional advertising. Integrating conventional advertising with influencer marketing may allow organizations to reach broader audiences while simultaneously strengthening consumer loyalty. Marketing is rapidly and constantly evolving, requiring businesses to select promotional strategies that best align with their brand while remaining up to date with current marketing trends. When brands are focused on building strong relationships with their consumers, influencer marketing shows a higher level of effectiveness compared to conventional advertising. Influencers communicate through personal experiences, narratives, and everyday situations, which may increase audience interest and participation. As a result, consumers exposed to influencer-generated content are more likely to interact with marketing messages and develop favorable perceptions of the promoted products or brands. Ooi et al. (2023) emphasizes that influencer marketing can be an effective approach for increasing engagement and influencing consumer behavior, particularly in online environments where interaction and visibility play a central role in communication effectiveness.

However, influencer marketing does not have the same level of effectiveness across all consumers. Demographic factors such as age, income, and occupation influence how individuals respond to different marketing strategies. Previous research suggests that younger consumers, who tend to be more active on social media platforms, are generally more receptive to influencer marketing because they are accustomed to consuming digital content and relying on influencers' recommendations. In contrast, older consumers may rely relatively more on conventional advertising channels, such as television, print media and

direct mail. This shows that marketing strategies should be tailored depending on the target audience, since all approaches do not suit all demographic segments.

Beyond engagement, digital communication strategies also contribute to the development of brand awareness. Repeated exposure to content increases consumers' ability to recognize and recall brands, particularly when products appear consistently across different digital platforms. Increased visibility can be especially important for products entering new markets, where consumers may initially have limited knowledge of the product category. In such situations, continuous exposure through social media content can contribute to greater consumer understanding and awareness.

Digital communication may also influence consumer loyalty and long-term relationship building. Research suggests that consumers increasingly rely on recommendations, reviews, and user-generated content when evaluating products and brands. When consumers perceive communication as authentic and relevant, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand. Positive consumption experiences, combined with consistent engagement and exposure, may contribute to repeat purchase behavior and stronger consumer-brand relationships over time.

Furthermore, research indicates that influencer marketing can influence important behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention. Consumers who perceive influencers as credible and trustworthy may be more willing to consider the products they recommend. This can reduce uncertainty and facilitate decision-making processes, particularly when consumers are unfamiliar with a product, a brand, or a specific consumption practice. Consequently, influencer-generated content may contribute not only to attracting new consumers but also to encouraging product adoption.

Nevertheless, the literature suggests that traditional advertising and influencer marketing may serve complementary functions rather than acting as substitutes. Traditional

advertising is often effective for generating broad brand awareness and reaching large audiences, whereas influencer marketing may be particularly useful for strengthening consumer relationships, encouraging engagement, and facilitating feedback. It is important to adopt a strategic and data-driven approach, but it is not recommended to rely solely on one method. Organizations frequently combine both approaches within integrated communication strategies in order to address different marketing objectives and consumer segments. As digital environments continue to evolve, selecting the appropriate combination of communication tools remains an important strategic consideration.

Overall, the literature suggests that consumer behavior in digital environments is strongly influenced by engagement, information sharing, and social interaction. Digital platforms have transformed consumers from passive recipients of information into active participants in communication processes, increasing the importance of eWOM, engagement, brand awareness, loyalty, and purchase intention. Together, these concepts help explain how influencer marketing can affect consumer perceptions and behaviors, making them particularly relevant for understanding the adoption of products in contemporary digital markets.

2.3.6 Cultural identity and global consumer culture.

In international marketing contexts, consumer behavior is strongly influenced by cultural factors. Cleveland and Laroche (2007) introduce the concept of *global consumer culture*, which refers to the extent to which individuals adopt consumption patterns, values, and lifestyles that transcend national boundaries. According to this perspective, globalization has contributed to the emergence of shared consumer preferences across markets. However, this process does not imply complete standardization, as local cultures continue to influence how products are interpreted and consumed.

At the same time, cultural identity remains an important factor shaping consumer

behavior. Consumers often attach symbolic meanings to products that reflect their values, traditions, and social identities. From a branding perspective, the *cultural branding theory* developed by Douglas Holt (2004) highlights the importance of cultural meaning in shaping consumer preferences, arguing that brands create value not only through functional attributes but also through their association with meaningful cultural narratives. According to this approach, consumers do not purchase products solely based on functional attributes, but also on the cultural narratives, meanings, and identities associated with them.

This relationship between globalization and cultural identity becomes particularly relevant when analyzing traditional products entering foreign markets. While global consumer culture may facilitate openness toward products from different countries, local cultural frameworks continue to influence how consumers interpret those products. Consequently, organizations must often balance adaptation to local market conditions with the preservation of authenticity and cultural meaning.

The case of yerba mate illustrates this dynamic. In Argentina, yerba mate is not only a beverage but also a cultural symbol deeply embedded in everyday life. It represents a social ritual, a daily habit, and a form of connection that is present in a variety of contexts, including work, university, family gatherings, and social interactions. Therefore, its value extends beyond its functional characteristics and incorporates strong symbolic and cultural dimensions.

This perspective is consistent with the concept of *nation branding* proposed by Anholt (2007). Nation branding can be understood as a nation's strategy to capitalize on its reputation in international markets. In other words, countries leverage products and cultural symbols to build a recognizable image abroad. Traditional products can therefore function as cultural ambassadors, representing not only a product category but also aspects of a country's identity, heritage, and lifestyle.

However, when culturally embedded products enter foreign markets, their symbolic meaning is not always immediately understood. International consumers are often unfamiliar with the traditions, rituals, and values associated with such products. As a result, a gap may emerge between the cultural identity of the product and the way it is perceived by foreign audiences. Consequently, marketing plays an important role in communicating cultural meaning and making it more accessible to consumers in different cultural contexts.

Different organizations address this challenge through different positioning strategies. The case of Guayakí Yerba Mate, a company that has operated in the United States for several years, provides an example of a more adaptive approach. Guayakí positions yerba mate primarily as a functional product associated with energy, focus, and as a natural alternative to coffee or energy drinks. By connecting the product to familiar consumption habits, this strategy reduces barriers to understanding and facilitates market acceptance. Although cultural elements are still present, they are not the central focus. As a result, the company's approach brings a clearer perspective on how cultural elements can be communicated, transmitted, adapted, and transformed depending on the market context.

Other brands, such as Cósmico, place greater emphasis on cultural identity and authenticity. Rather than focusing exclusively on functional benefits, communication strategies often highlight traditional preparation methods, social rituals, and everyday consumption practices associated with Argentine culture. Through this approach, consumers are introduced not only to the product itself but also to the cultural context in which it is consumed.

These examples illustrate two alternative approaches for introducing the same product into an international market: adaptation versus cultural transmission. While adaptation focuses on making products easier for foreign consumers to understand by linking them to familiar consumption patterns, cultural transmission emphasizes the preservation and

communication of cultural meaning. Both approaches influence how consumers perceive the product, its meaning, and its value, and reflect the importance of those differences in how a cultural identity is seen and adapted in foreign countries.

Globalization has increased the circulation of products and consumption practices across markets, but cultural identity continues to play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. Traditional products carrying symbolic meanings make the communication of cultural narratives an important aspect of international marketing strategies. The success of them in foreign markets may depend not only on product characteristics, but also on how their cultural significance is communicated to new audiences.

From a consumer behavior perspective, emotional responses play an important role in decision-making processes. Cultural content, particularly when communicated through storytelling, can generate emotional reactions that influence how consumers perceive, interpret, and remember a product. Elements such as tradition, rituals, heritage, and identity provide symbolic meaning that may strengthen consumer engagement and increase the likelihood of brand recall. Hence, communication strategies that emphasize cultural narratives can contribute to the creation of stronger associations between products and consumers.

The communication of cultural meaning becomes especially relevant when consumers have limited familiarity with the product and its cultural background. Literature related to neuromarketing and consumer behavior suggests that familiarity can reduce resistance toward unfamiliar products and consumption practices. Repeated exposure to content allows audiences to gradually become more comfortable with both the product and the cultural context associated with it. Over time, consistent communication may contribute to greater understanding, acceptance, and recognition of culturally embedded products.

Storytelling becomes key in this sense. By presenting products within everyday

situations, social rituals, and culturally meaningful experiences, organizations can make unfamiliar cultural elements more accessible to foreign consumers. At the same time, cultural communication requires balance. Excessive emphasis on authenticity without sufficient contextualization may create confusion among audiences who are unfamiliar with the product, while excessive adaptation may weaken the cultural meaning that differentiates the product from competing alternatives. Therefore, effective international marketing strategies often combine both elements, maintaining authenticity while ensuring accessibility.

Within this context, influencer marketing may serve as an effective mechanism for communicating cultural meaning. Influencers contribute to the interpretation and transmission of cultural narratives by selecting which aspects of a product to emphasize and how they are presented to audiences. Depending on the positioning strategy adopted, yerba mate may be portrayed primarily as a source of energy and focus, or alternatively as a symbol of tradition, social connection, and cultural identity. These different representations influence how consumers interpret, evaluate, and assign meaning to the product (La Fábrica, 2024).

Broadly speaking, literature suggests that cultural identity remains an important factor shaping consumer perceptions despite the growing influence of global consumer culture. Traditional products often derive value not only from their functional attributes but also from the cultural meanings associated with them. In this context, storytelling and influencer marketing can facilitate the transmission of cultural narratives across markets, contributing to how consumers interpret, evaluate, and ultimately adopt culturally embedded products in international environments.

2.3.7 Consumer acculturation and cross-cultural adaptation.

While cultural identity explains the symbolic meaning attached to products, consumer acculturation literature focuses on how individuals learn to interpret and adopt products originating from different cultural contexts. As consumers become increasingly exposed to

foreign products and lifestyles, they often encounter unfamiliar consumption practices that require adaptation and learning.

Consumer acculturation literature suggests that adaptation to foreign products is not a simple process of acceptance or rejection. Rather, it involves a gradual process through which consumers acquire new knowledge, interpret unfamiliar meanings, and integrate selected elements of foreign cultures into their consumption behaviors. According to Luedicke (2011), acculturation should be understood as a dynamic and socially embedded process in which consumers continuously negotiate between different cultural influences while maintaining aspects of their existing identities.

This perspective is particularly relevant for traditional products associated with specific cultural identities and symbolic meanings. According to McCracken (1986), consumer perceptions are shaped not only by product attributes but also by the cultural meanings attached to products. In this sense, products such as yerba mate are not consumed solely because of their functional benefits but also because of the social practices, rituals, and values attached to them. Consequently, when such products enter foreign markets, firms face the challenge of communicating cultural significance in ways that are understandable and relevant to consumers who may not share the same cultural background.

Research on cross-cultural consumer behavior demonstrates that consumer responses vary significantly across cultural contexts. Cultural frameworks influence how individuals process information, evaluate alternatives, develop trust, and form purchase intentions (Timokhina et al., 2018). Similarly, de Mooij (2011) argues that culture affects the interpretation of products and consumption practices, suggesting that products may acquire different meanings depending on the cultural environment in which they are introduced. As a result, marketing strategies that are effective in one market may not generate the same outcomes in another, reinforcing the need for context-specific marketing approaches. This

challenge is also reflected in international marketing strategy, where firms must balance global integration with local adaptation when entering foreign markets (Petrov, 2025).

Although globalization has increased exposure to foreign products and lifestyles, it has not resulted in complete standardization of consumer behavior. Instead, consumers tend to interpret products through existing cultural reference systems and adapt them according to local values, practices and norms. Therefore, organizations introducing culturally embedded products into culturally distant markets must consider not only functional product attributes but also the cultural meanings associated with them.

The adaptation process is often influenced by product familiarity. When consumers have limited knowledge about a product, they experience greater uncertainty and may find it difficult to evaluate its attributes. Under such circumstances, they rely more heavily on external informational cues and simplified decision-making processes. Low familiarity is frequently associated with higher levels of perceived risk, which may act as a barrier to product adoption, particularly during the early stages of market entry.

One of the most influential external cues identified in the literature is *country of origin* (COO). Research suggests that the perceived country of origin affects evaluations of quality, authenticity, and reliability, particularly when consumers possess limited prior knowledge about the product (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Han (1989) explains that country image may operate as a “halo effect” when familiarity is low, shaping consumer perceptions through general associations with a country. As consumers gain experience, country image may evolve into a “summary effect” based on accumulated product knowledge. Consequently, country-related associations can play an important role in reducing uncertainty and facilitating product evaluation.

In digital environments, consumer acculturation is increasingly supported by online interactions. Social media platforms enable consumers to access information, observe

consumption practices, and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. According to Kizgin et al. (2017), these interactions facilitate the exchange of cultural knowledge and consumption-related information, helping consumers develop familiarity with products originating from foreign cultures. Through continuous exposure and interaction, consumers acquire the symbolic meanings necessary to interpret unfamiliar products and reduce uncertainty associated with their adoption.

Within this context, the successful adaptation of traditional products often depends on consumers' ability to understand the cultural meanings associated with them. When such products enter foreign markets, their symbolic significance may not be immediately apparent to local consumers and therefore needs to be effectively communicated.

Influencers can play a significant role in facilitating cross-cultural adaptation since they often function as cultural intermediaries who translate unfamiliar products and practices into content that audiences can easily understand. Through storytelling, personal experiences, and product demonstrations, they provide consumers with contextual information that facilitates interpretation and learning. Rather than simply promoting products, influencers may help audiences understand how culturally embedded products fit into everyday consumption situations.

Overall, consumer acculturation provides an important framework for understanding how individuals adapt to products associated with foreign cultural environments. The process is influenced by cultural frameworks, product familiarity, country-related associations, social interactions, and digital communication. In international markets, these mechanisms contribute to reducing uncertainty and facilitating the adoption of culturally embedded products among consumers who may initially be unfamiliar with their meanings and consumption practices.

2.3.8 Influencer marketing in the internationalization of traditional products.

The concepts discussed throughout this chapter become particularly relevant in the context of international marketing, where firms often face the challenge of introducing products that are unfamiliar to foreign consumers. When entering new markets, organizations must not only compete against existing alternatives but also overcome differences in consumer habits, cultural expectations, and product knowledge. As a result, the success of a product depends not only on its functional characteristics but also on how it is understood, interpreted, and incorporated into local consumption practices.

These challenges are especially evident in the case of culturally embedded products. Unlike purely functional goods, traditional products often carry symbolic meanings associated with specific cultural identities, social practices, and consumption rituals. Consequently, their internationalization involves more than product distribution; it also requires the communication of cultural meanings that may be unfamiliar to consumers in foreign markets.

Yerba mate represents a relevant example of this phenomenon. Traditionally consumed in countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, yerba mate has long been associated with social interaction, cultural identity, and everyday rituals. At the same time, its functional characteristics, including its caffeine content and antioxidant properties, have contributed to its growing visibility in international markets, particularly among consumers seeking natural alternatives to coffee, tea, and energy drinks.

Despite these opportunities, yerba mate faces important challenges when entering foreign markets. Many consumers outside South America possess limited knowledge about the product, its preparation methods, and its cultural significance. Consequently, product awareness does not necessarily translate into product understanding or adoption. This situation creates a need for communication strategies capable of reducing uncertainty,

facilitating learning, and helping consumers understand how the product fits within their everyday lives.

Within this context, influencer marketing emerges as a particularly relevant international marketing strategy. As discussed in previous sections, influencers can facilitate consumer learning by demonstrating product usage, providing social proof, and communicating information in accessible and relatable ways. More importantly, in the case of culturally embedded products, influencers may contribute not only to the communication of functional benefits but also to the transmission of cultural meanings associated with consumption practices.

Digital platforms further strengthen this process by allowing consumers to observe products in authentic consumption contexts. Through repeated exposure, audiences become increasingly familiar with both the product and the cultural narratives surrounding it. As a result, influencer marketing may contribute simultaneously to awareness generation, consumer education, and product adoption.

The case of Cósmico illustrates the practical application of these principles. Since entering the U.S. market, the company has relied heavily on digital communication and influencer marketing to increase awareness of yerba mate among consumers who may be unfamiliar with the product. By presenting yerba mate through accessible narratives and everyday consumption situations, the brand seeks to reduce barriers to understanding while maintaining connections to the product's cultural origins.

In summary, the internationalization of yerba mate demonstrates how the introduction of culturally embedded products requires more than traditional promotional efforts. Successful market development depends on consumers' ability to understand, interpret, and adopt unfamiliar consumption practices. In this context, influencer marketing represents a valuable mechanism for bridging cultural distance, facilitating consumer learning, and

supporting the adoption of traditional products in international markets.

2.3.9 The role of influencers and public figures in cultural transmission.

As discussed in previous sections, consumers frequently rely on external sources of information when evaluating unfamiliar products and consumption practices. In culturally distant markets, public figures can serve as influential sources of information that facilitate product understanding, reduce uncertainty, and shape consumer perceptions. Their role becomes particularly relevant when products are associated with cultural meanings that are not immediately understood by foreign audiences, making them potential intermediaries in the process of cultural transmission.

Marketing literature has extensively examined the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior. Celebrity endorsement refers to the use of well-known public figures to promote products, services, or brands. Given that celebrities are often perceived as credible, successful, and aspirational individuals, their associations with brands can positively influence consumer attitudes and evaluations.

Within this context, athlete endorsement has emerged as a particularly effective marketing strategy. Sports figures often develop strong emotional connections with audiences, generating admiration, identification, and trust among consumers. Research suggests that consumers are more likely to pay attention to, remember, and positively evaluate brands associated with athletes they admire, making athlete endorsement particularly relevant in markets where brand familiarity is still developing.

When consumers observe athletes or other well-known personalities using or recommending a product, they often transfer positive perceptions associated with the endorser to the brand itself. This process can strengthen brand image, increase perceived credibility, and encourage positive word-of-mouth communication.

In fact, one of the most frequently reported outcomes of celebrity endorsement is

increased brand awareness. The visibility and popularity of athletes allow brands to reach broader audiences and accelerate consumer recognition. This effect can be especially valuable when introducing products that are relatively unfamiliar within a particular market, as celebrity exposure helps attract attention and stimulate initial consumer interest.

Beyond generating awareness, celebrity endorsement can also influence purchase intention. Consumers who hold favorable attitudes toward a public figure may transfer those positive associations to the endorsed product. As a result, they become more willing to consider, try, or purchase products recommended by that individual. This effect tends to be stronger when consumers perceive a meaningful connection between the public figure and the product being promoted.

In essence, public figures may contribute to long-term product adoption. Repeated exposure to endorsed products through social media content and everyday consumption situations can normalize consumption behaviors and encourage repeated use. Consequently, celebrity endorsement may affect not only purchase intention but also the frequency with which consumers incorporate products into their daily routines.

The growth of social media has amplified these effects by enabling continuous interaction between public figures and their audiences. Digital platforms allow consumers to observe products within authentic and recurring consumption contexts. Through regular exposure, followers become familiar with both the product and the lifestyle associated with it, strengthening perceived credibility and engagement.

Public figures may also contribute to the transmission of cultural meanings. By incorporating products into their everyday routines and sharing consumption practices with their audiences, they can make unfamiliar cultural behaviors more visible, understandable, and socially acceptable. In this way, they function not only as product endorsers but also as cultural intermediaries who facilitate the interpretation of foreign consumption practices.

This dynamic may be particularly relevant in the case of yerba mate and South American football players. Because yerba mate is deeply embedded in the everyday culture of countries such as Argentina and Uruguay, football players from these countries often consume and display the product naturally in their social media content. Rather than functioning exclusively as commercial endorsers, they may also act as cultural representatives who expose international audiences to both the product and its associated cultural practices. Consequently, repeated exposure to South American football players consuming yerba mate may contribute to increasing consumer awareness, purchase intention, and consumption frequency among audiences who were previously unfamiliar with the product.

Overall, existing literature suggests that public figures can influence consumer behavior through multiple mechanisms, including increasing brand awareness, strengthening brand evaluations, stimulating purchase intention, and encouraging product adoption. In digital environments, these effects may be particularly relevant for culturally embedded products such as yerba mate, where public figures can simultaneously function as endorsers and cultural transmitters. Consequently, exposure to South American football players may contribute not only to greater awareness of yerba mate among U.S. consumers, but also to stronger purchase intentions and higher levels of consumption, providing a theoretical foundation for the hypotheses developed in this study.

2.4 Chapter Summary and Research Gap.

To conclude, this chapter reviewed the main concepts that support the development of this research, focusing on the relationship between social media, influencer marketing, consumer behavior, cultural identity, and international marketing. The literature shows that the rise of digital platforms has transformed the way brands communicate with consumers, creating more interactive environments in which engagement, social influence, and

user-generated content play an essential role.

Within this context, influencer marketing has emerged as a relevant strategy for shaping consumer perceptions and facilitating communication between brands and audiences, and concepts such as electronic word-of-mouth and parasocial relationships help explain why influencers are capable of affecting consumer attitudes and behavioral responses in digital environments.

The literature also highlights the importance of cultural factors in international marketing. Although globalization has increased the circulation of products, information, and consumption trends across borders, cultural identity continues to influence how consumers interpret products and assign value to them. This becomes particularly relevant in the case of traditional products, whose significance often extends beyond their functional attributes and is linked to symbolic, social, and cultural dimensions.

Despite the evidence on influencer marketing and consumer behavior, limited information was found related to the role of influencer marketing in the internationalization of traditional Latin American products. Furthermore, there is a lack of research examining how cultural meanings can be communicated through digital platforms to facilitate the adoption of culturally embedded products in foreign markets. The specific case of yerba mate in the United States remains relatively underexplored, particularly regarding the role of influencers in shaping consumer perceptions and increasing product visibility.

Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap by analyzing the case of C3smico and its use of influencer marketing as part of its internationalization strategy. By integrating the different perspectives discussed throughout this chapter, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how traditional products can be introduced, communicated, and positioned in foreign markets through contemporary digital approaches.

Methodology.

3.1 Chapter Overview.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological framework adopted for this research. Building upon the literature review discussed in the previous chapter, this section explains the procedures used to investigate the relationship between influencer marketing, cultural transmission, and the internationalization of yerba mate in the United States.

Given the nature of the research problem, a mixed-methods approach was selected in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative insights. The quantitative component focuses on U.S. consumers' awareness, purchase intention, and consumption frequency of yerba mate, while the qualitative component seeks to provide contextual understanding through interviews with relevant stakeholders involved in the industry.

This chapter also addresses issues related to validity, reliability, ethical considerations, and the criteria used to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. Together, these elements provide the methodological foundation for answering the research questions and achieving the objectives established in Chapter 1.

3.2 Conceptual Framework.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 provides the conceptual basis for understanding how influencer marketing may contribute to the internationalization of culturally embedded products.

From a marketing perspective, the study analyzes how Cósmico has used influencer marketing as part of its internationalization strategy to introduce yerba mate into the U.S. market. Strategic marketing and market entry decisions will be examined through qualitative interviews with company representatives and industry experts.

At the consumer level, the study focuses on concepts such as positioning, cultural meaning, consumer acculturation, country of origin, and product familiarity. Positioning will be reflected through variables including brand awareness, perceived image, and differentiation. Cultural meaning will be examined by exploring whether consumers associate yerba mate with South American culture or perceive it mainly as a functional beverage. Consumer acculturation will be understood as the process through which consumers become familiar with and potentially adopt a product from another culture.

Social media will be considered the primary channel of exposure to yerba mate, while influencer marketing will be examined as the main mechanism through which consumers encounter the product. Concepts such as source credibility, parasocial relationships, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and social proof will help explain how influencer content may affect consumer perceptions and behavior.

Collectively, these concepts provide the basis for examining three key outcome variables: brand awareness, purchase intention, and consumption frequency. These outcomes are used to assess the potential influence of social media influencers and South American athletes on the adoption of yerba mate among U.S. consumers.

3.3 Research Approach.

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to investigate both consumer responses to influencer exposure and the strategic decisions underlying the internationalization of a culturally embedded product.

The quantitative component examines U.S. consumers' perceptions and behaviors related to yerba mate. This approach enables the identification of patterns and relationships between exposure to influential public figures and key consumer outcomes, including brand awareness, purchase intention, and consumption frequency.

The qualitative component complements these findings by providing contextual and

managerial insights into the internationalization process. Through semi-structured interviews with representatives of Cósmico and other industry experts, the study explores how influencer marketing is implemented in practice, how market entry decisions are made, and how the cultural meanings associated with yerba mate are communicated to foreign consumers.

The integration of both approaches provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem than either method could achieve independently. While the quantitative findings offer measurable evidence of consumer perceptions and behaviors, the qualitative evidence contributes a deeper understanding of the strategic, cultural, and managerial factors that shape the adoption of yerba mate in a foreign market.

3.4 Research Design.

The research design was developed to ensure consistency between the study objectives, research questions, and hypotheses presented in Chapter 1. Table 1 summarizes the logical relationship among these elements and illustrates how each specific objective is operationalized through a corresponding research question and hypothesis. This structure guided both the data collection process and the subsequent analysis.

Specific Objective	Research Question	Hypotheses
SO1: To identify the strategies used by Cósmico to position yerba mate in the U.S. market.	RQ1: What strategies does Cósmico use to position itself in the U.S. market?	H1: Influencer marketing is an effective strategy for introducing traditional Latin American products, specifically yerba mate, into the U.S.

		market.
SO2: To examine U.S. consumer perceptions of yerba mate when it is promoted through influencers in the U.S. market.	RQ2: How do U.S. consumers perceive yerba mate when it is promoted through influencer marketing?	H2: U.S. consumers are more likely to try yerba mate when it is endorsed by influencers than through traditional marketing.
SO3: To compare the effectiveness of influencer marketing versus traditional marketing strategies in international contexts, focusing on the U.S. market.	RQ3: To what extent is influencer marketing more effective than traditional marketing strategies in supporting the expansion of traditional products into the U.S. market?	H3: Influencer marketing generates higher engagement and brand awareness compared to traditional marketing strategies in the U.S. market.
SO4: To assess how cultural elements from Argentina are communicated in the U.S. market through influencer marketing campaigns.	RQ4: How are Argentina's cultural values and identity transmitted through C�smico's influencer marketing campaigns?	H4: The communication of Argentina's cultural identity through influencers positively impacts consumer perception of traditional products such as yerba mate in the U.S. market.
SO5: To measure the impact of South American public	RQ5: To what extent do South American athletes	H5: Exposure to South American athletes has a positive

figures –specifically athletes– on the consumption of yerba mate, by using indicators such as purchase intention, brand awareness, and self-reported consumption frequency among U.S. consumers.	affect U.S. consumers’ purchase intention, brand awareness, and consumption frequency of yerba mate?	and significant effect on U.S. consumers’ purchase intention, brand awareness, and consumption frequency of yerba mate.
SO6: To explore the contribution of Cósmico’s market entry to the visibility and development of yerba mate within the U.S. market.	RQ6: How has the visibility and awareness of yerba mate evolved in the U.S. market after Cósmico’s entry?	H6: The entry of Cósmico into the U.S. market has contributed to increasing the visibility and awareness of yerba mate among U.S. consumers.

Table 1. Relationship between the SOs, RQs, and Hypotheses. **Source:** Self Made.

3.5 Population and Sampling.

3.5.1 Target Population.

The target population for the quantitative component of this study consists of individuals residing in the United States between eighteen (18) and thirty-five (35) years of age who are active social media users. This age group was selected because it represents a segment that is highly exposed to digital communication, influencer marketing, and social media content, which constitute the central focus of this research. A survey was conducted among one hundred and ten (110) in order to assess their familiarity with yerba mate, perceptions of the product, awareness of the Cósmico brand, purchase intention, and

consumption behavior.

For the qualitative component, the study focuses on key informants with professional expertise related to yerba mate, internationalization processes, digital marketing, and international trade. The objective of these interviews was to obtain in-depth insights into the strategies used to introduce yerba mate into the U.S. market, the challenges associated with consumer adoption, and the role of influencer marketing in the internationalization process.

The qualitative sample included:

- *Hernán Regiardo*, Co-Founder of Cósmico Yerba Mate.
- *Diego Torres*, Commercial Director of Cósmico Yerba Mate.
- *Aldara Gómez Salazar*, Yerba Mate Sommelier and specialist in yerba mate culture and consumption.
- *María Poplawski*, Communications Director and expert on digital strategies.
- *Horacio Rossi*, Customs Broker with expertise in export procedures and international trade regulations.

The inclusion of these participants was intended to provide multiple perspectives on the research problem, combining managerial, commercial, cultural, logistical, and marketing expertise.

3.5.2 Sampling Procedure.

The quantitative component employs a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method. Participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey. This approach was considered appropriate due to time and resource constraints, as well as the exploratory nature of the research.

The survey was distributed through online channels, allowing access to respondents residing in different regions of the United States. Although convenience sampling does not allow for statistical generalization to the entire U.S. population, it provides valuable insights

into consumer perceptions and behaviors related to yerba mate and influencer marketing.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to identify participants with relevant knowledge and experience regarding the internationalization of yerba mate. Interviewees were selected based on their involvement in the industry and their ability to provide information directly related to the objectives of the study.

3.6. Data Collection Methods.

3.6.1. Survey.

The primary quantitative data collection method used in this study was an online Google Forms survey administered to U.S. consumers. The primary quantitative data collection method employed in this study was an online survey administered through Google Forms to U.S. consumers who met the target population criteria described in the previous section. A total of seventy-four (74) valid responses were collected out of the original 110 respondents.

The questionnaire was designed to gather information regarding respondents' familiarity with yerba mate, brand awareness, purchase intention, consumption frequency, social media usage, and exposure to South American culture and athletes. These variables were selected based on the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2 and the hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1.

The survey consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and frequency-based items. This format facilitated the collection of standardized data and enabled comparisons across respondents, supporting the subsequent quantitative analysis.

Prior to its distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed and pre-tested to ensure that the wording of the questions was clear, consistent, and aligned with the research objectives.

Minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and reduce potential ambiguity.

The survey was distributed electronically through digital channels, primarily WhatsApp, allowing participants to complete the questionnaire voluntarily, remotely, and anonymously.

3.6.2. Semi-Structured Interviews.

The qualitative component of the study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in the yerba mate industry and the internationalization process. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide a balance between consistency and flexibility, allowing the researcher to address predefined topics while also exploring emerging themes in greater depth.

An interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and the concepts identified in the literature review. Topics included market entry strategies, the role of influencer marketing, consumer education, cultural communication, and the challenges associated with introducing yerba mate into the U.S. market.

Interviews were conducted individually and recorded when permitted by participants. The information collected was transcribed and translated to English through artificial intelligence and subsequently organized for qualitative analysis.

The interview findings were used to complement the survey results by providing contextual explanations and managerial perspectives regarding the internationalization of yerba mate and the use of influencer marketing strategies.

3.7. Data Analysis Procedures.

3.7.1 Quantitative Analysis.

The quantitative data obtained through the survey were analyzed using descriptive

statistics and cross-tabulations. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics and identify general patterns. Cross-tabulation analysis was used to explore relationships between key variables. This analysis allowed for the identification of trends and differences across respondent groups.

The results are presented through tables, percentages, and graphical representations to facilitate interpretation and comparison.

3.7.2 Qualitative Analysis.

The qualitative data collected through interviews were analyzed using thematic coding. Following the transcriptions, interview responses were reviewed and organized into categories reflecting the main concepts explored in the research.

The coding process focused on identifying recurring themes related to influencer marketing, market entry strategies, cultural communication, consumer education, and the internationalization of yerba mate. Similar responses were grouped together in order to identify common patterns, while unique perspectives were also considered when relevant to the research objectives.

The themes emerging from the interviews were subsequently compared with the quantitative findings. This process contributed to methodological triangulation and enabled a more comprehensive interpretation of the research results.

3.8. Validity and Reliability.

Ensuring validity and reliability is important to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the research findings. Given the mixed-methods design adopted in this study, different procedures were applied to enhance both components of the research.

For the quantitative component, content validity was addressed by developing the survey instrument based on the theoretical concepts identified in the literature review. The

questionnaire was designed to ensure that each concept was represented through relevant and clearly formulated questions. Prior to distribution, the survey was pre-tested with a small number of respondents to identify potential issues related to wording, clarity, and question interpretation.

Reliability in the quantitative component was enhanced through the use of standardized questions and response scales throughout the questionnaire. This approach helped reduce measurement inconsistencies and facilitated the comparison of responses across participants.

For the qualitative component, validity was strengthened through the selection of key informants with professional expertise in areas directly related to the research topic, including digital strategies, international trade, yerba mate culture, and the internationalization process of C3smico Yerba Mate. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while also exploring relevant topics in greater depth.

Furthermore, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing findings obtained from multiple sources of evidence. Survey results were contrasted with interview findings and secondary sources reviewed throughout the research process. This approach contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and increased the credibility of the conclusions.

Finally, transparency was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process. The use of clearly defined procedures for survey analysis, cross-tabulations, and thematic coding contributes to the reliability and consistency of the research findings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations.

This research was conducted in accordance with general ethical principles applicable to academic research. Participation in both the survey and interview stages was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed about the academic purpose of the study before

providing their responses.

Survey respondents participated anonymously and were not required to provide personally identifiable information. All responses were collected exclusively for academic purposes and were analyzed in aggregate form to protect participant privacy.

For the qualitative component, interview participants were informed about the objectives of the research and their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time. Prior consent was obtained before conducting interviews and recording responses when applicable.

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Any business-related information shared by participants was used exclusively for academic analysis and reporting. Data collected during the study were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher.

By implementing these measures, the study aims to protect participants' privacy, ensure informed consent, and maintain the ethical integrity of the research process.

3.10 Criteria for Hypothesis Evaluation.

The hypotheses proposed in this study will be evaluated through the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings. Given the exploratory nature of the research and the mixed-methods design adopted, hypothesis assessment will be based on the overall consistency of evidence obtained from survey responses and semi-structured interviews rather than on statistical significance testing alone.

The hypotheses may result in one of four possible outcomes:

Validated: A hypothesis will be considered validated when both the quantitative and qualitative findings consistently support the proposed relationship. In this case, the observed evidence aligns with the theoretical expectations established in the literature review.

Partially Validated: A hypothesis will be considered partially validated when the evidence supports the proposed relationship only to a certain extent or under specific

conditions. In such cases, the findings suggest that the hypothesis captures part of the phenomenon, but requires refinement, qualification, or contextual interpretation.

Deemed Inconclusive: A hypothesis will be considered inconclusive when the available evidence is insufficient, mixed, or contradictory, preventing a clear assessment of the proposed relationship. In this situation, the results neither confirm nor refute the hypothesis.

Invalidated: A hypothesis will be considered invalidated when the findings consistently fail to support the proposed relationship and, in some cases, suggest evidence contrary to the theoretical expectation.

Table 2 summarizes the criteria used to evaluate the study's hypotheses.

Outcome	Evaluation Criteria
Validated	Quantitative and qualitative findings consistently support the proposed relationship.
Partially validated	Evidence supports the relationship only partially, conditionally, or suggests the need for refinement.
Deemed inconclusive	Evidence is insufficient, mixed, or contradictory, preventing a clear conclusion.
Invalidated	Findings do not support the proposed relationship and may indicate evidence in the opposite direction.

Table 2. Criteria for Hypothesis Evaluation. **Source:** Self Made.

This evaluation framework allows for a clear interpretation of the results and is consistent with the exploratory and mixed-methods nature of the present study.

3.11 Chapter Summary.

This chapter presented the methodological framework adopted for the study. It described the research design, target population, sampling procedures, and data collection methods employed. Quantitative data were collected through a consumer survey administered to U.S. consumers, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders involved in the yerba mate industry and the internationalization process.

The chapter also outlined the procedures used to analyze the data, including descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and thematic coding. In addition, measures related to validity, reliability, and ethical considerations were discussed, together with the criteria that will be used to evaluate the study's hypotheses.

Having established the methodological procedures guiding the research, the following chapter presents the empirical findings obtained from the investigation.

4 Analysis and Discussions.

4.1 Chapter Overview.

This chapter presents the analysis of the information collected throughout the research process. The objective is to examine the evidence obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative stages of the study and identify the most relevant findings related to the internationalization of Cósmico and the introduction of yerba mate into the United States market.

The chapter is organized according to each source of information gathered during the research. First, the interviews conducted with key stakeholders are analyzed, including representatives of Cósmico, industry specialists, and other relevant actors associated with the yerba mate sector and its international expansion. Subsequently, the results obtained from the consumer survey are examined in order to identify patterns regarding awareness, perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions among U.S. consumers.

Rather than drawing final conclusions, this chapter focuses on presenting and discussing the most significant findings that emerged from each interview and from the survey responses. The analysis highlights recurring themes, relevant insights, and relationships between the information collected and the concepts previously discussed in the literature review.

The evidence presented in this chapter serves as the basis for the following chapter, where the findings will be integrated and interpreted in relation to the research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses proposed in this study.

4.2 Interview With Hernán Regiardo and Diego Torres – Co-Founder and Commercial Director of Cósmico Yerba Mate.

All findings in this section are based on a personal interview conducted with Hernán Reggiardo and Diego Torres, Co-Founder and Commercial Director of Cósmico respectively (H. Reggiardo & D. Torres, personal communication, June 3, 2026).

Key Findings

1. Brand Identity. The name "Cósmico" comes from Sam's childhood horse. As Hernán explains, "it was associated with rural life, with happy personal experiences, and it also conveyed a sense of freedom and adventure" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The brand consciously avoids pure nostalgia: "we didn't want to build a brand based solely on nostalgia or folklore, but rather to reinterpret those elements in a way that feels more accessible to a global audience" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The packaging is cleaner and more accessible than traditional yerba brands and includes mate preparation instructions on the side panel, something competitors do not include because they "assume the consumer already knows" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026).

2. Internationalization. Cósmico was not a local brand that later decided to expand. As Hernán describes it, the brand "was born after Sam and I met in Indonesia and decided to move to the United States," where they founded Mate Society, a marketing and content agency (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). It was through that agency, working with companies like Nestlé, that they "observed a growing trend of influencers launching niche products that generated significant sales impact" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The decision to bring that model to Argentina and apply it to mate means the U.S. market was part of the brand's logic from the very beginning.

3. Amazon Functions as Both Sales and Communication Channel. In the U.S. market, Cósmico does not rely on traditional influencer partnerships. As Hernán states

clearly, "Amazon functions not only as our main sales channel but also as our primary communication channel" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The brand invests in advertising within the platform so that Cósmico appears when consumers search for "yerba mate" or herbal infusions, and uses banners featuring Sam's messages about the product. Communication and purchase happen in the same environment.

4. The Product Was Not Adapted for the U.S. Market. "The product itself remained exactly the same. We did not modify the yerba mate, its formulation, or its core presentation" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The only changes made for the American market were an English-language label and FDA certifications.

5. Consumer Education Is a Central Part of the Strategy. Because mate is an acquired taste, the brand actively teaches new consumers how to enjoy it. Hernán acknowledges that "to attract U.S. consumers, it is necessary to move beyond the traditional image of bitter mate" and show alternative ways of preparing it (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). Sam's content focuses on sweetened mate, mate in a cup, and mate prepared like tea with a strainer. Flavored varieties are used as an entry point for first-time buyers.

6. Public Figures Generate Interest. Hernán identifies two distinct ways in which athletes like Messi and Colapinto drive consumer interest. The first is aspirational consumption: "fans often want to consume the same products as their idols" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The second is curiosity: "when an American consumer sees figures like Lionel Messi or Franco Colapinto carrying a thermos and a bombilla, the natural reaction is to wonder what they are drinking" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). Both paths lead to different types of consumers and require different follow-up strategies from the brand.

7. Argentine Origin Is the Main Competitive Differentiator. In markets where Uruguayan, Brazilian, and Paraguayan yerba brands compete for the same buyers, Hernán frames Argentine origin as the brand's main argument: "our strategy is to position Cósmico as a premium Argentine yerba mate, emphasizing the product's Argentine origin as a symbol of quality, authenticity, and cultural heritage" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). Locally, the main competitor is La Merced, another premium brand in the same segment.

8. Ready to Drink Brands Grow the Category but Dilute Brand Value. Hernán describes this dynamic directly: RTD beverages "expand overall awareness and consumption of yerba mate because the ingredient remains at the core of the product," yet they "dilute the value of individual yerba mate brands" because their producers "purchase yerba mate in bulk directly from Brazilian suppliers without emphasizing the source or cultural significance of the product" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026).

9. Market Acceptance Is Measured Through Amazon Behavior Data. The main indicators of success in the U.S. are the purchase cycle and the rate of repeat purchases. As Hernán explains, "under our previous importer model, purchases were typically made twice a year through full-container shipments. With Amazon, that cycle was reduced to approximately three months" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). Alongside that, "consumers who tried the product frequently returned to buy it again, suggesting strong customer satisfaction and loyalty" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026).

10. The World Cup Strategy Avoids AFA and Focuses on Individual Athletes. Cósmico declined an AFA sponsorship. As Hernán explains, "the internal dynamics surrounding the Argentine Football Association have led many Argentine brands to avoid becoming official sponsors of the national team" (H. Reggiardo, personal communication,

June 3, 2026). The brand is instead pursuing partnerships with individual players such as Enzo Pérez, Rodrigo De Paul, and potentially Messi, as well as activations at fan events surrounding the tournament.

Limitations

Bias of the Source. Hernán is a co-founder of the brand. His account is the most detailed available, but it naturally tends toward presenting the brand's trajectory in a positive light. Challenges, failed decisions, or internal tensions are unlikely to have come up with the same openness as the successes.

Self-Reported Data. The figures shared during the interview, including the Amazon sales ranking, the change in purchase cycle, and the repeat purchase rates, could not be verified through this source. They are treated here as useful reference points rather than confirmed facts.

Moment in Time. The interview captures the brand at an early stage of its international expansion. The dynamics Hernán describes may change significantly as the brand scales and the U.S. yerba mate market continues to develop.

Sam's Absence. Since Sam is the person primarily responsible for the brand's content and consumer communication in the United States, her absence as a direct interviewee is a real gap. Her perspective is present here only through Hernán's account of it.

4.3 Interview With Aldara Gómez Salazar – Certified Yerba Mate Sommelier.

All findings in this section are based on a personal interview conducted with Aldara Gómez Salazar, a certified yerba mate sommelier (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026).

Key Findings

1. Market Classification Based on the Drying Process. In the professional sommelier world, yerba mate is not categorized according to brand positioning or market segment, but rather by its industrial drying method. Gómez Salazar classified it into three main production processes: Barbacué, the primitive system inherited from the Guaraní people, characterized by its distinctive smoky flavor profile; Cinta, the modern conveyor-belt system that reduces processing time to approximately five or six hours to produce a more standardized flavor; and Despalada, which refers to yerba produced with little to no stems (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). Understanding these three categories is essential for product differentiation, as the drying process directly affects the final flavor. Plants from the exact same crop can yield completely different flavor profiles depending on the drying process applied.

2. Outsourcing Production Shifts the Focus to Branding. According to Gómez Salazar, Cósmico's founders have developed their core competency in advertising, marketing, and storytelling, rather than in the technical aspects of yerba mate production. Since they are based in Buenos Aires and do not own yerba mate plantations in Misiones, they decided to outsource all production, milling, and drying processes to Piporé, one of the largest cooperatives in the region (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). The sommelier emphasized that, exclusively from a product perspective, Cósmico is similar to other traditional yerba mate brands, such as Playadito and Taragüí, produced through the cinta drying process. Therefore, its main differentiator does not rely on its production methods, but rather on the brand's communication and positioning.

3. Emotional and Identity-Driven Communication Drives Mass Volume. The interviewee highlighted that Cósmico's impact relies on approaching the market from a different angle, specifically targeting younger consumers. The brand has built its communication strategy around a strong sense of shared national identity, enabling the

creation of a powerful emotional connection with consumers while promoting their yerba mate as part of their lifestyle. The sommelier praised the company's communication strategy, stating that "their external communication is excellent because their product reaches people and sells heavily" (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). They communicate through relatable content focusing on everyday habits, as stated by the sommelier: "they just shared their lifestyle and customs in a simple way," making mate more appealing to younger audiences (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). She further noticed that "seeing a streamer or an influencer drinking mate is highly appealing to people nowadays," highlighting how important the role of influencer marketing was for the brand's growth (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026).

4. Global Production Dynamics Strengthen Argentina's Competitive Position.

"There are only three yerba mate-producing countries in the world: Argentina, the largest producer and exporter, holding 50% of global production, Brazil with 30%, and Paraguay with 20%" (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). The sommelier also noted that Uruguay, despite being one of the largest consumers, does not produce yerba mate because its soil does not allow it. As the world's largest yerba mate producer, Argentina provides local brands with a competitive advantage in international markets.

5. Influencer-Driven Consumption Increases Global Interest in Yerba Mate. The interviewee believes that influencer marketing can be highly effective in encouraging foreign consumers to try and adopt yerba mate consumption while it continues to expand in the United States. According to Gómez Salazar, Cósmico is "one step ahead" in recognizing the growing global interest in yerba mate and in communicating it through digital channels (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). The sommelier also noted:

Recently, news broke that Donald Trump's son launched his own brand of a yerba mate-based energy drink or soda, and now he is moving into traditional loose-leaf yerba. This

shows that yerba mate can be exploited in many ways: infusions, candy, cosmetics, etc. A massive boom is coming over there. (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026)

This observation suggests that yerba mate is gaining visibility beyond its traditional forms of consumption, particularly in international markets such as the United States.

6. How "Casitas de Yerba Mate" Help Consumers Learn. Over the last decade, the emergence of "Casitas de yerba mate" has changed the way in which consumers learn about and purchase yerba mate. According to Gómez Salazar, "about 10 years ago, the phenomenon of 'casitas de yerba mate', specialty boutique shops independent of supermarkets, began, which brought deeper knowledge to the masses" (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). This phenomenon increased the visibility of both yerba mate culture and the sommelier profession, as "we had to step up and explain what we do, why we do tastings, and teach people that every yerba is different, even if they come from the exact same plant" (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). These spaces have also supported the growth of smaller brands not usually found in traditional supermarkets. When asked for personal recommendations beyond mainstream brands, the sommelier suggested "looking for barbacuá or certified agroecological yerbas. Brands like Lapacho Rosa or Las Tunas are excellent" (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026).

Limitations

Anonymity and Potential Proximity Bias. The interviewee provided relevant insights as a yerba mate expert, but the name of her husband's family-owned yerba mate company was not disclosed. Since he comes from a family of traditional yerba mate

producers, additional information about the company would have provided greater context for understanding her perspectives on the industry.

Lack of Direct Information From Piporé. The sommelier explained that Cósmico does not produce its yerba mate in-house, but rather outsources the entire production process to Piporé, one of the largest yerba mate producers in Misiones, Argentina. However, no representative from Piporé could be interviewed for this research. As a result, information regarding quality standards, production decisions, and manufacturing processes could not be obtained directly.

Limitations of Retail Observations. Some of the sommelier's observations about consumer behavior were based on "casitas de yerba mate," specialty boutique shops located in specific areas of Buenos Aires, particularly Pilar. These insights may not fully represent consumer behavior or product availability in other Argentine regions.

4.4 Interview With María Poplawski – Communications Director & Expert, Círculo DirComs

All findings in this section are based on an interview conducted with María Poplawski, Communications Director and member of Círculo DirComs (M. Poplawski, personal communication, June 25, 2026).

Key Findings

1. Influencers and Traditional Advertising Serve Different Strategic Purposes.

Poplawski explained that influencer marketing and traditional advertising should not be viewed as competing alternatives, but rather as complementary tools. While traditional advertising remains effective for generating brand awareness, influencers create closer relationships with consumers and foster engagement. As she explained, influencers provide "a level of closeness and engagement that is difficult to achieve through traditional media" (M. Poplawski, personal communication, June 25, 2026).

2. Authenticity and Cultural Adaptation Determine Influencer Effectiveness.

According to Poplawski, the effectiveness of influencer marketing in foreign markets depends primarily on cultural adaptation. She emphasized that brands must understand local habits, values, and expectations, while influencers serve as cultural mediators who translate products to their audience. She also stressed that "effectiveness is not determined solely by audience size, but by the alignment between the creator's values, the brand, and the target audience" (M. Poplawski, personal communication, June 25, 2026).

3. Consumer Trust Is Built Through Genuine Recommendations.

Poplawski argued that consumers trust influencer recommendations more than those of traditional advertising because audiences value authenticity and personal experiences. Influencer communication builds trust through transparency and consistency over time. As she noted, "audiences increasingly expect transparency and consistency," and when influencers incorporate products into their lifestyle, their recommendations appear to be more trustworthy (M. Poplawski, personal communication, June 25, 2026).

4. Influencers Play an Educational Role for Traditional Products.

Poplawski highlighted that influencer marketing is highly valuable for introducing products, such as yerba mate, that require consumer education. Traditional products need to communicate their functional benefits as well as their cultural significance. She described Sam's content as "an excellent example" because she "successfully translates a practice that is deeply rooted in Argentine culture into content that is both understandable and appealing to international audiences" (M. Poplawski, personal communication, June 25, 2026).

5. Reducing Uncertainty Is More Important Than Driving Immediate Purchase.

When discussing yerba mate, Poplawski explained that the primary challenge is reducing the uncertainty when trying an unfamiliar product. Repeated exposure to influencers consuming yerba mate helps consumers become more comfortable with the product. As she

stated, "the primary challenge is not the purchase itself but reducing uncertainty" (M. Poplawski, personal communication, June 25, 2026).

Limitations

Single Expert Perspective. The interview reflects the professional experience and opinions of one communications specialist. Additional interviews with professionals from other communication agencies or international brands could provide a broader range of viewpoints.

Focus on Communication Rather Than Business Performance. The discussion concentrated primarily on communication strategy and influencer effectiveness. It did not explore metrics such as return on investment or campaign budgeting. As a result, it offers limited evidence regarding financial performance of influencer marketing.

Qualitative Nature of the Interview. As a qualitative interview, the findings are based on professional judgment rather than measurable evidence. Although the insights help explain how influencer marketing may influence consumer behavior, they cannot be generalized or interpreted as statistically representative.

4.5 Interview With Horacio Rossi – Licensed Customs House Broker.

All findings in this section are based on an email exchange with Horacio Rossi, a licensed customs house broker operating in the United States (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026).

Key Findings

1. Required Documentation. The documentation required to accompany any shipment of yerba mate to the United States consists of four core documents: a commercial invoice, a packing list, a certificate of origin, and the corresponding transport document, either an air waybill in the case of air freight, or a bill of lading for maritime shipments (H.

Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026). These documents serve as the main basis for customs clearance and must accurately reflect the contents, declared value, and country of origin of the merchandise. Incomplete or inconsistent documentation is one of the most common causes of delays or detentions at U.S. ports of entry.

2. Pilot Shipment Strategy. Before committing to a large maritime shipment, Rossi recommended beginning with a smaller pilot shipment sent by air (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026). This approach allows both the importer and the exporter to become formally registered with U.S. Customs and the FDA under real operating conditions, and establishes an initial record with both agencies. Once a track record of several shipments exists, Customs and the FDA tend to physically inspect approximately one out of every five to eight shipments, as the agencies progressively become familiar with both the importer-exporter pair and the product being imported. However, Rossi was clear that the first shipment is most likely to be physically inspected, which makes a smaller pilot load a practical way to absorb that initial scrutiny without significant financial exposure (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026).

3. Labeling Requirements. While product labels may be written in Spanish, an additional label in English must be firmly attached to each unit, meeting the standards set by U.S. Customs and the FDA (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026). At a minimum, this label must include the country of origin stated as "Made in Argentina," a product description, the gross and net weight expressed in both grams and ounces, nutritional information covering fat content, caloric value, and sugar content, the names of both the manufacturer and the importer, with the importer's phone number specifically required and the brand name. Rossi noted that whether yerba mate is classified as a food or as a dietary supplement does not alter these requirements, as the same standards apply regardless of

classification, and the distinction carries no practical regulatory consequence at the labeling level (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026).

4. Prior Notice Requirement. One of the most critical steps in the entire import process is the submission of a Prior Notice to the FDA, which must occur before the merchandise physically leaves Argentina (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026). If this step is omitted, the shipment will not be admitted into the United States under any circumstances. The Prior Notice requirement exists to allow the FDA to review incoming food shipments before they arrive at a U.S. port, and its omission, regardless of the reason, results in automatic denial of entry. Rossi recommended that this notification be handled by a licensed customs broker or freight forwarder at origin, as they are equipped to manage the process accurately and within the required timeframe (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026).

5. Cost Structure Beyond the Tariff. Beyond the 10% import tariff currently applied by the United States to all imported products, Rossi mentioned a set of additional costs that must be considered when planning any import operation (H. Rossi, personal communication, June 4, 2026). These include broker fees for the nationalization process (approximately USD 120 per shipment), a customs bond calculated at a minimum of USD 60 or USD 6 per thousand dollars of the commercial invoice value, a messaging fee of USD 30, an FDA processing fee of USD 70, an ISF Bond of USD 75, and an ISF filing fee of USD 55. In the case of maritime shipments, the Import Security Filing (ISF) must be submitted to U.S. Customs before the vessel departs from the port of origin, and requires specific information such as the bill of lading number, the name of the vessel, the shipper's name and location, estimated departure and arrival dates, and the identities of the exporter and the importer. Taken together, these costs represent a significant operational expense that must be

considered from the beginning when evaluating the financial viability of entering the U.S. market.

Limitations

Email Format as a Constraint. Because the exchange took place over email rather than in a live interview, the ability to probe answers in real time or request immediate clarification was not possible. Some responses were concise and did not elaborate much on the reasoning behind certain recommendations, which leaves room for ambiguity that a live conversation would have resolved more easily.

Scope Limited to the U.S. Import Side. Rossi is a licensed customs broker operating on the U.S. side of the transaction, meaning that his insight into the Argentine export side, including documentation preparation and SENASA compliance requirements, was not explored in depth. A complementary source based in Argentina with export experience would help fill that gap.

Lack of Florida-Specific Information. No state-specific information regarding Florida was obtained from this source. Rossi indicated that FDA labeling standards are federal and apply uniformly regardless of the destination state, but did not address whether any local Florida regulations might apply to the sale or distribution of yerba mate once it clears customs. This remains an open question for the research.

4.6 Consumer Survey Analysis.

Key Findings

1. Word of Mouth, Not Social Media, Is How Most People First Learned About Yerba Mate. Of the 70 U.S. respondents, 47 said they first heard about yerba mate through friends or family. Social media came second with 9, and influencers third with only 5. This

means that even in a product category where influencer content is increasingly visible, personal relationships remain the primary discovery channel. The implication for brands like Cósmico is that influencer content may function more as reinforcement than as first contact for most consumers. Although word of mouth was the main discovery channel, this does not reduce the importance of influencer marketing, as influencers may reinforce awareness after the first contact.

2. Yerba Mate Is Almost Universally Associated With Argentine and Latin American Culture. Among respondents who answered this question, 57 out of 60 either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I associate yerba mate with Argentine or Latin American culture." Only 2 selected a neutral position and none disagreed. This is one of the strongest signals in the entire survey. It suggests that the Argentine origin positioning Cósmico uses is not just a brand decision: it reflects how U.S. consumers already think about the product. This supports Consumer Acculturation theory, suggesting that consumers are not only attracted to the product, but to the culture associated with it.

3. More Than Half of Respondents Have Heard of Cósmico. 38 out of 70 U.S. respondents said they had heard of the brand before taking the survey. For a product in a niche category sold primarily through Amazon, this level of recognition is notable. Among those who had heard of the brand, social media and influencers were listed most frequently as the source, with 29 and 28 responses respectively (respondents could select more than one). One respondent from Virginia specified "Sam's ads on TikTok" as how they first encountered the brand, offering a direct data point linking Cósmico's content strategy to consumer awareness.

4. Cultural Curiosity Is the Main Reason People Would Buy Yerba Mate. When asked what factors would motivate them to purchase yerba mate, 43 respondents chose cultural curiosity. Family and friends recommendation came second with 32, followed by

energy boost and health benefits tied at 22 each. Influencer recommendation ranked fifth with 16. This ordering matters: the product's appeal is driven more by what it represents than by what it does. Functional messaging around caffeine or wellness appears less motivating than the cultural story behind the drink. When comparing these results with respondent's association between yerba mate and Argentine culture, it suggests that cultural identity directly affects consumer purchase intention. This reinforces the idea that consumers are attracted not only to the product, but to the cultural experience it represents.

5. Influencer Marketing Is Accepted, but Only When Trust Is Present. 47 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising for discovering new products. When asked specifically about yerba mate, 38 said they would be more interested in trying it if promoted by someone they follow online. However, the responses shift when the word "trust" is removed from the question: fewer respondents agreed that influencers simply make products seem more trustworthy in general. The data suggests that the effectiveness of influencer content depends heavily on the credibility consumers already assign to the person promoting the product, not just their reach. These findings are consistent with parasocial relationships, as consumers were more willing to try products when recommendations came from influencers they already know and trust, suggesting that the relationship between influencers and their audience is more important than solely exposure. However, the results present limitations. Nearly one third of respondents selected a neutral response, suggesting that influencer marketing is not equally persuasive to all consumers.

6. The Product Is Seen as Underpromoted and Misrepresented in the U.S. Open-ended responses about how yerba mate is currently promoted in the United States paint a consistent picture. Multiple respondents described it as "barely promoted," "almost not promoted," or "not promoted at all." Several noted that when it is visible, it appears as an

energy drink rather than as a cultural product. One respondent wrote: "I think yerba mate is mainly promoted as a healthy energy drink in the United States. Most advertising focuses on its caffeine content and wellness benefits rather than on the traditional social and cultural aspects." Another added: "Only promoted as canned beverages, not in traditional form." This gap between how consumers perceive the product culturally and how it is commercially positioned in the market is a recurring theme across the survey. Consumers appear to be interested in learning about the traditional aspects of yerba mate, which explains why cultural curiosity ranked above benefits as a purchase motivation.

7. Argentine Soccer Figures Are a Known but Informal Entry Point. Several respondents mentioned Messi by name, without being prompted, when asked what comes to mind when they think about yerba mate. One wrote "Argentina and Messi," another "soccer," and another said: "only few people know about it and it's because of Argentine soccer players." None of these respondents came through a formal sponsorship or campaign. The association appears to have formed through organic media exposure, which aligns with the mechanism Hernán described in his interview (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026): public figures generating curiosity without the brand needing to orchestrate the contact. This supports source credibility, since figures such as Messi appear to generate curiosity and awareness through repeated exposure, without directly promoting a specific yerba mate brand.

8. Among Those Who Have Tried Yerba Mate, Regular Consumption Is Not the Norm. 52 respondents said they had tried yerba mate. Of those, 16 drink it rarely, 3 never drink it despite having tried it, and 13 drink it sometimes. Only 13 drink it always and 7 often. This means that converting a first-time consumer into a regular one is not automatic. The taste and preparation barrier Hernán described (H. Reggiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026) appears in the data: trying the product does not consistently produce habit.

Although most respondents had already tried yerba mate, regular consumption remained low. This suggests that first time trials do not automatically generate product adoption. Taste preferences and preparation habits may continue to represent barriers for new consumers.

Limitations

Sample Composition Is Not Representative of the General U.S. Population. Most respondents appear to have some connection to Latin American culture, either through family, friendship networks, or origin. The familiarity with yerba mate reflected in the data is far higher than what a nationally representative sample of U.S. consumers would likely show. The findings describe how Latin-connected consumers in the U.S. perceive yerba mate, not how the average American does.

Florida Is Heavily Overrepresented. 29 of 70 respondents listed Florida as their state of residence. Florida has a large Argentine and broader Latin American population, which makes it the natural starting point for Cósmico's U.S. expansion, but also limits the geographic scope of what the survey can say. States like California, New York, and Texas appear with far fewer respondents, and most of the country is not represented at all.

The Sample Was Likely Reached Through the Team's Own Networks. The survey was probably distributed through personal and social media channels connected to the researchers, which means respondents self-selected based on an existing awareness of or interest in yerba mate. People with no knowledge of or connection to the product were unlikely to complete the survey, which inflates the awareness and familiarity figures.

The Sample Size Limits the Weight of the Quantitative Findings. With 70 U.S. respondents, the numbers are useful as directional indicators but do not carry statistical significance. Percentages and comparisons between groups should be read as tendencies rather than conclusions.

5 Results.

5.1 Chapter Overview.

This chapter presents the results of the research, based on all the evidence collected throughout this study, including the interviews conducted with Hernán Regiardo and Diego Torres from Cósmico, the yerba mate sommelier Aldara Gómez Salazar, the customs broker Horacio Rossi, and the consumer survey. This chapter evaluates the extent to which the research was able to address what it originally set out to investigate.

5.2 SO1 → RQ1 → H1.

Specific Objective 1	Research Question 1	Hypotheses 1	Status
To identify the strategies used by Cósmico to position yerba mate in the U.S. market.	What Strategies Does Cósmico Use to Position Itself in the U.S. Market?	Influencer marketing is an effective strategy for introducing traditional Latin American products, specifically yerba mate, into the U.S. market.	Validated.

Table 3. Relationship between SO1, RQ1, H1. **Source:** Self Made.

The interview with Hernán provided clear and detailed information on how Cósmico has approached the U.S. market. The brand's main strategy revolves around Amazon, which is both its sales and communication channel. Through paid advertising within the platform, Cósmico appears when consumers search for yerba mate or herbal infusions. Beyond that, the brand positions itself as a premium Argentine product, using Argentine origin as its main differentiator against Uruguayan, Brazilian, and Paraguayan competitors (H. Regiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). Consumer education is also a central part of the

strategy, with content focused on teaching American consumers how to prepare mate in different ways, particularly through Sam's social media presence. The visual identity was designed to be cleaner than traditional Argentine yerba brands, and the packaging includes preparation instructions on the side panel specifically for consumers who are new to the product.

Taken together, these strategies confirm that influencer marketing and digital communication, rather than traditional advertising, were the foundation of Cósmico's U.S. entry. The results Hernán described, including reaching the second best-selling position on Amazon in approximately six months and a significant increase in repeat purchases suggest this approach worked (H. Regiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). Hypothesis 1 is therefore validated.

5.3 SO2 → RQ2 → H2.

Specific Objective 2	Research Question 2	Hypotheses 2	Status
To examine U.S. consumer perceptions of yerba mate when it is promoted through influencers in the U.S. market.	How do U.S. consumers perceive yerba mate when it is promoted through influencer marketing?	U.S. consumers are more likely to try yerba mate when it is endorsed by influencers than through traditional marketing.	Partially Validated.

Table 4. Relationship between SO2, RQ2, H2. **Source:** Self Made.

The survey provided useful data on how U.S. consumers perceive yerba mate and how influencer promotion shapes that perception. Among respondents, the product is almost universally associated with Argentine and Latin American culture, with cultural curiosity

ranked as the main reason people would consider buying it, above functional benefits like energy or health. Regarding influencer promotion specifically, 38 respondents said they would be more interested in trying yerba mate if promoted by someone they follow online, and 57 agreed that influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising for discovering new products. Trust, however, emerged as a key condition, since respondents answered they were more willing to try the product when promoted by someone they already follow and trust, meaning that the relationship between the influencer and their audience matters more than reach alone.

These findings partially support Hypothesis 2. The data points in the right direction, but because the survey sample was mostly concentrated among individuals with Latin American connections, it is difficult to apply these conclusions to the broader U.S. consumer population with full confidence.

5.4 SO3 → RQ3 → H3.

Specific Objective 3	Research Question 3	Hypotheses 3	Status
To compare the effectiveness of influencer marketing versus traditional marketing strategies in international contexts, focusing on the U.S. market.	To what extent is influencer marketing more effective than traditional marketing strategies in supporting the expansion of traditional products into the U.S. market?	Influencer marketing generates higher engagement and brand awareness compared to traditional marketing strategies in the U.S. market.	Partially Validated.

Table 5. Relationship between S03, RQ3, H3. **Source:** Self Made.

The evidence gathered allows for some comparison between both approaches, though not in a complete or precise way. From the survey, 57 respondents agreed that influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising for discovering new products. The interview with Hernán also showed that Cósmico's strategy in the U.S. does not rely on traditional advertising channels at all, which on one hand makes a direct comparison within Cósmico's own case difficult to establish, but on the other hand reflects a deliberate choice that produced measurable results in terms of engagement and brand awareness, such as reaching the second best-selling position on Amazon in approximately six months (H. Regiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The sommelier also noted that social media visibility has been central to the category's growth in recent years (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026).

These findings are consistent with the information provided by Diego Torres, Commercial Director of Cósmico, who confirmed that Florida is the company's largest Amazon market in the United States, followed by California, Massachusetts, Texas, and New Jersey. He also noted that Texas is the second-largest market for Cósmico's yerba mate tea bags, suggesting differences in consumer preferences across product formats (D. Torres, personal communication, June 2026).

Overall, the evidence points in a consistent direction and partially supports Hypothesis 3. Higher engagement and brand awareness do appear to be associated with influencer and digital strategies rather than traditional advertising in this case. However, a definitive conclusion would have required data specifically designed to test this difference in a more controlled way.

5.5 SO4 → RQ4 → H4.

Specific Objective 4	Research Question 4	Hypotheses 4	Status
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To assess how cultural elements from Argentina are communicated in the U.S. market through influencer marketing campaigns.	How are Argentina's cultural values and identity transmitted through Cósmico's influencer marketing campaigns?	The communication of Argentina's cultural identity through influencers positively impacts consumer perception of traditional products such as yerba mate in the U.S. market.	Validated.
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Table 6. Relationship between SO4, RO4, H4. **Source:** Self Made.

Both the interview with Hernán and the sommelier's account confirmed that cultural communication is at the core of Cósmico's strategy. The brand emphasizes Argentine origin, rural imagery, and the social ritual of mate as the foundation of its identity (H. Regiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The sommelier described Cósmico's approach as very nationalistic, built around the "Argentina, Argentina, Argentina" narrative (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026). Sam's content plays an important role here, presenting the everyday consumption of mate in a way that communicates cultural meaning without requiring the audience to already know what mate is.

The survey confirmed that this transmission is working on the consumer side. 86 out of 110 respondents associated yerba mate with Argentine or Latin American culture, and cultural curiosity ranked as the top motivator for purchase, above functional benefits like energy or health. This suggests that the cultural framing Cósmico uses is not only reaching consumers but is actively shaping how they perceive the product and why they would consider buying it. Hypothesis 4 is therefore validated.

5.6 SO5 → RQ5 → H5.

Specific Objective 5	Research Question 5	Hypotheses 5	Status
To measure the impact of South American public figures –specifically athletes– on the consumption of yerba mate, by using indicators such as purchase intention, brand awareness, and self-reported consumption frequency among U.S. consumers.	To what extent do South American athletes affect U.S. consumers’ purchase intention, brand awareness, and consumption frequency of yerba mate?	Exposure to South American athletes has a positive and significant effect on U.S. consumers’ purchase intention, brand awareness, and consumption frequency of yerba mate.	Partially Validated.

Table 7. Relationship between SO5, RQ5, H5. **Source:** Self Made.

The evidence suggests that South American athletes, particularly Messi and Colapinto, do generate awareness and curiosity around yerba mate among U.S. consumers. In the survey, several respondents mentioned Messi when asked what comes to mind when they think about yerba mate, without being prompted. Hernán also described two specific mechanisms through which athletes drive consumer interest: aspirational consumption, where fans want to try what their idols consume, and curiosity, where seeing a well-known figure with a termo and a bombilla leads people to wonder what they are drinking (H. Regiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026).

However, measuring the actual impact on purchase intention, brand awareness, and particularly consumption frequency in a formal and precise way proved difficult. The survey was not specifically designed to isolate the effect of athlete exposure on these variables, and the sample's strong connection to Latin American culture makes it harder to generalize the

findings to the broader American population. The effect appears positive but cannot be confirmed as significant based on the available data, which is why Hypothesis 5 is only partially validated.

5.7 SO6 → RQ6 → H6.

Specific Objective 6	Research Question 6	Hypotheses 6	Status
To explore the contribution of Cósmico's market entry to the visibility and development of yerba mate within the U.S. market.	How has the visibility and awareness of yerba mate evolved in the U.S. market after Cósmico's entry?	The entry of Cósmico into the U.S. market has contributed to increasing the visibility and awareness of yerba mate among U.S. consumers.	Partially Validated.

Table 8. Relationship between SO6, RQ6, H6. **Source:** Self Made.

There is evidence suggesting Cósmico has contributed to growing awareness of yerba mate in the U.S., mainly through Amazon and Sam's content. Out of 110 respondents, 57 had already heard of the brand before taking the survey, which is remarkable for a niche product sold primarily online, with social media and influencers being the most frequently cited sources of that recognition. Hernán also pointed to indicators like the shortened purchase cycle from roughly twice a year to every three months, and a high rate of repeat purchases as signs of market acceptance (H. Regiardo, personal communication, June 3, 2026). The sommelier also noted that a significant boom in yerba mate consumption is developing in the U.S., driven by social media visibility and the growing presence of the ingredient across different product formats (A. Gómez Salazar, personal communication, May 28, 2026).

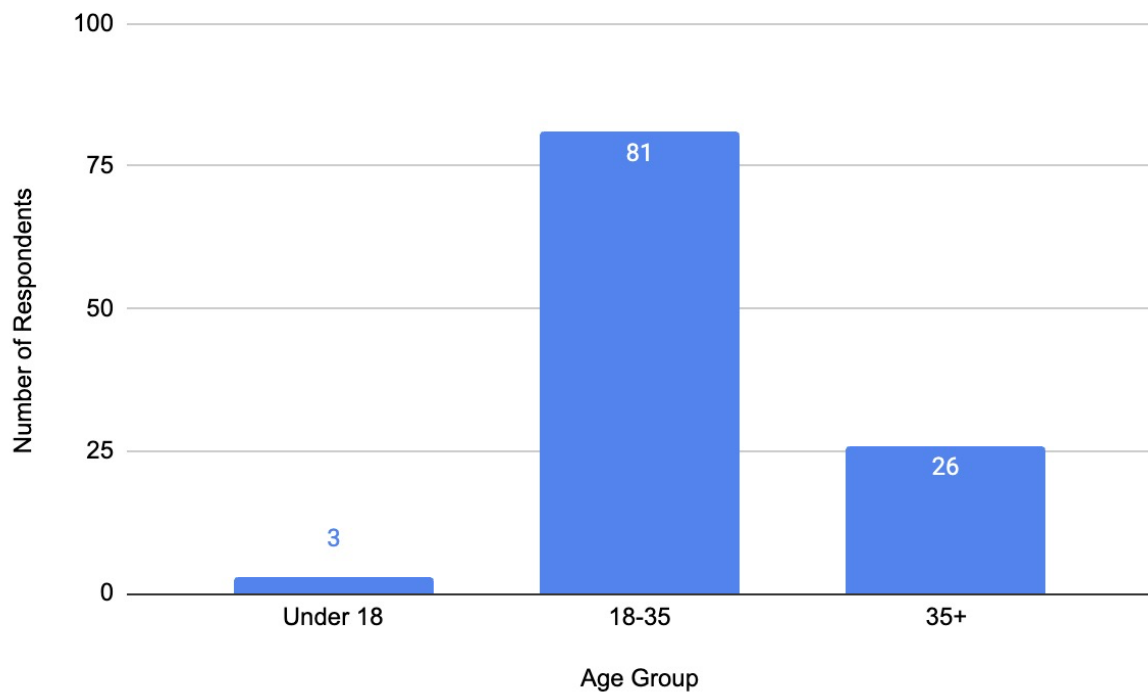
However, establishing a direct causal link between Cósmico's entry and broader category growth is difficult, since the yerba mate market in the U.S. was already expanding through Ready to Drink brands and organic cultural exposure through athletes before Cósmico arrived. The contribution is visible, but cannot be measured in isolation, which is why Hypothesis 6 is only partially validated.

5.8 Survey Results.

In order to address the quantitative dimension of the study, a survey was conducted among 110 individuals residing in the United States. The purpose of this questionnaire was to capture consumer perceptions regarding yerba mate and evaluate the impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness and purchase intention. The study approached individuals residing in the U.S. with diverse levels of product familiarity, and the data was collected through digital channels. The following section details the primary findings.

5.8.1 Demographic Profile.

The first set of questions was designed to establish the demographic profile of the respondents. Of the 110 participants, 81 were between 18 and 35 years old, 26 were 35 or older, and 3 were under 18 years of age.

Age Distribution of Survey Respondents (n=110)**Figure 1 Age Distribution Note.** Source: Self-Made.

Regarding place of residence, 74 of the 110 respondents confirmed they currently live in the United States. The remaining were excluded from the questions specific to the U.S. market. Among those living in the United States, Florida was by far the most represented state, followed by California, Texas, New York, Virginia, and Massachusetts, among others.

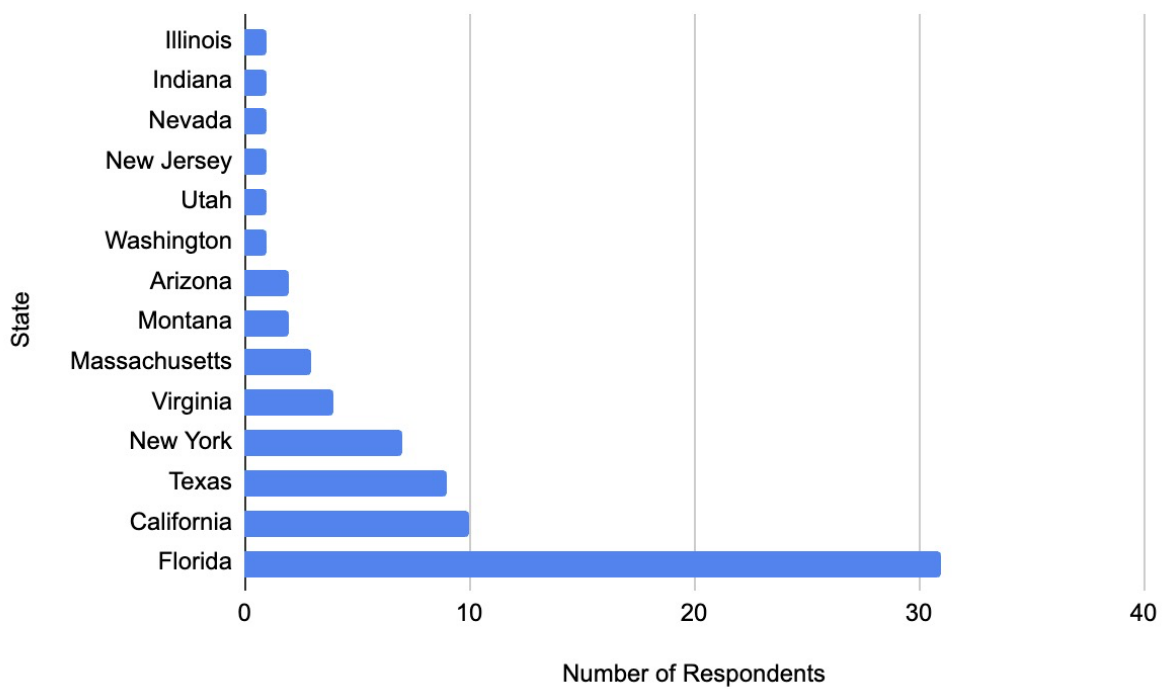
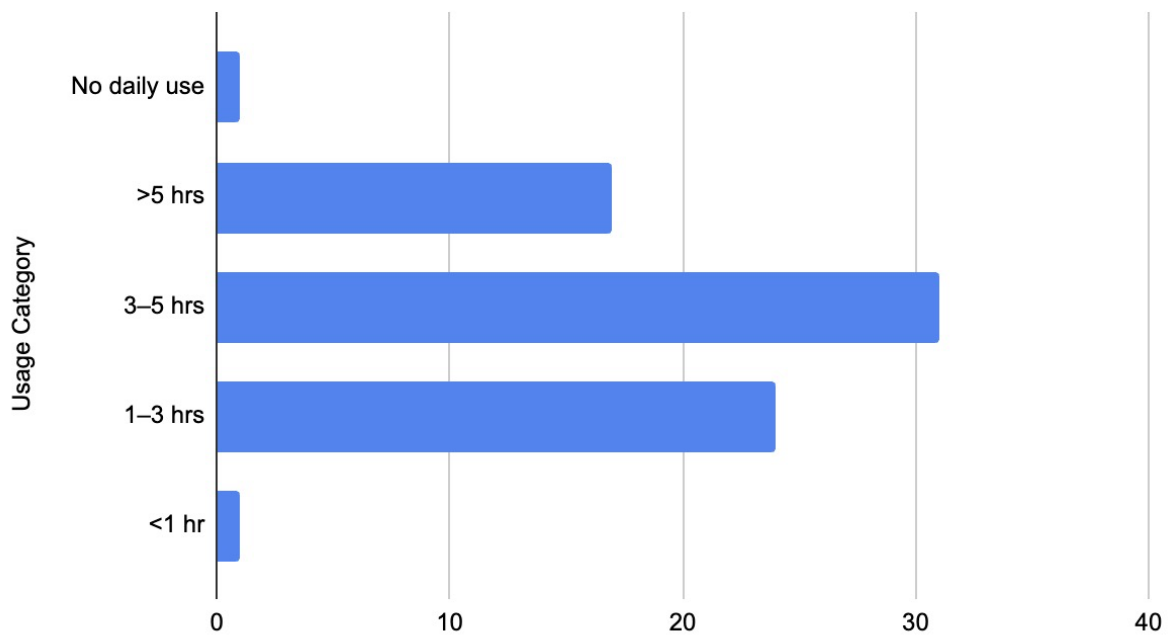
Geographic Distribution of U.S. Respondents (n=74)

Figure 2. Geographic Distribution. Source: Self Made

Because digital communication paradigms are foundational to this research, the survey explored the social media engagement patterns of the participants. Data indicates that most individuals dedicate between one (1) and five (5) hours daily to these platforms, while a segment of seventeen (17) respondents spends even more time online. These findings validate that the study group consists of active social media users, a critical demographic for evaluating the persuasive power and effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

Daily Social Media Usage Among Respondents (n=74)**Figure 3. Social Media Usage. Note: Self Made**

When investigating the specific social media channels used by respondents, Instagram and TikTok were identified as the primary digital environments, with X/Twitter and YouTube following in relevance.

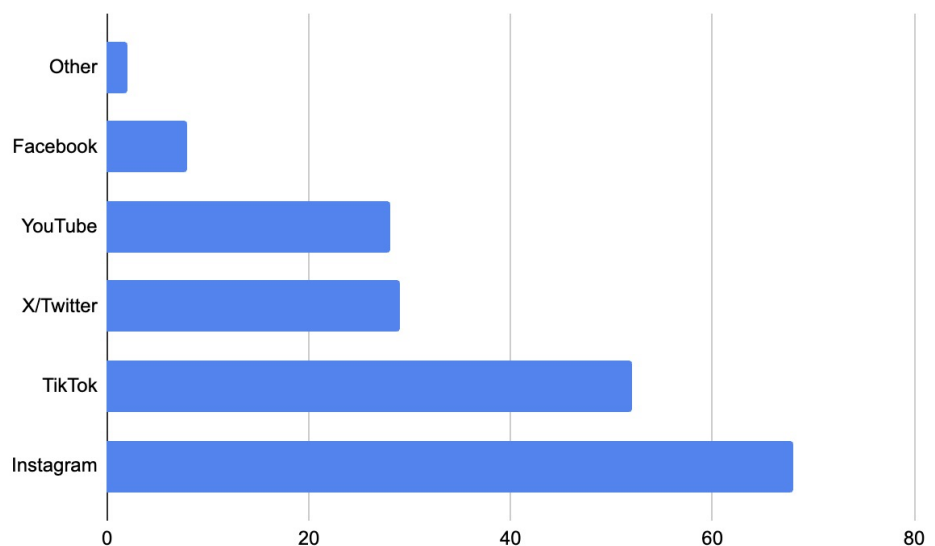
Most Used Social Media Platforms (n=74)

Figure 4. Platforms. Source: Self Made.

Participants were questioned regarding their familiarity with yerba mate prior to participating in the study. Among the 74 individuals residing in the United States, a significant majority of 67 respondents confirmed previous knowledge of the product, while 7 indicated they were unaware of it, suggesting a robust level of awareness within the analyzed group. For those initially unfamiliar with yerba mate, the research evaluated their willingness to try the infusion following the presentation of a concise product overview.

Prior Awareness of Yerba Mate (n=74)

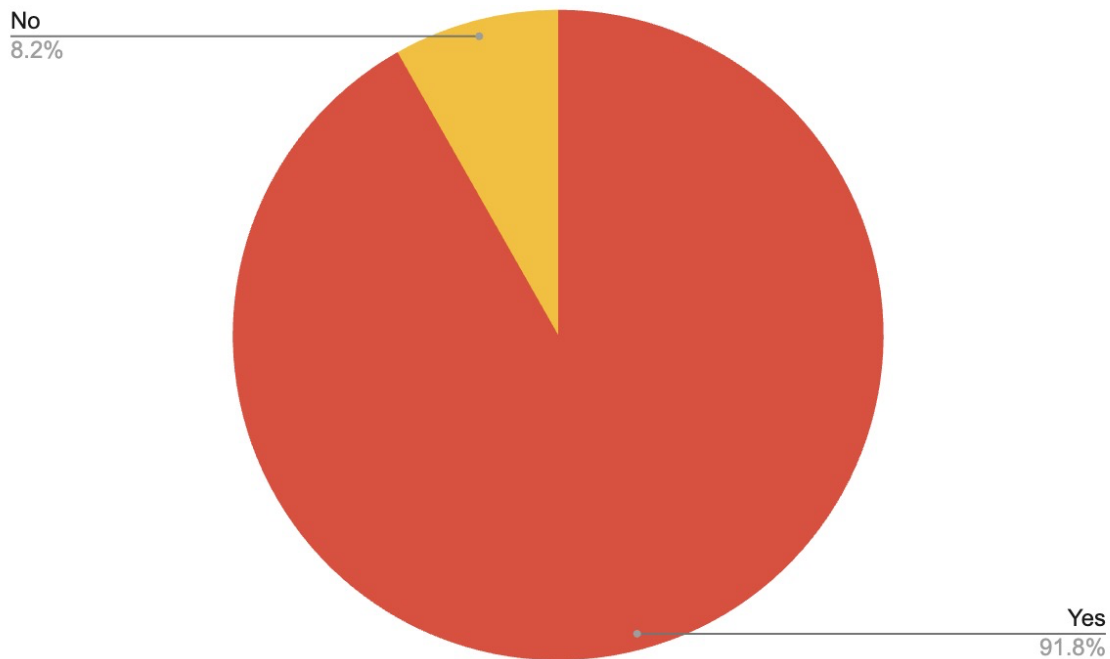


Figure 5. Yerba Mate Awareness. Source: Self Made.

Among those with no prior awareness, the responses leaned towards neutral or positive, suggesting their openness to the category even among those with no previous

exposure.

Likelihood to Try Yerba Mate – Previously Unaware Respondents (n=5)

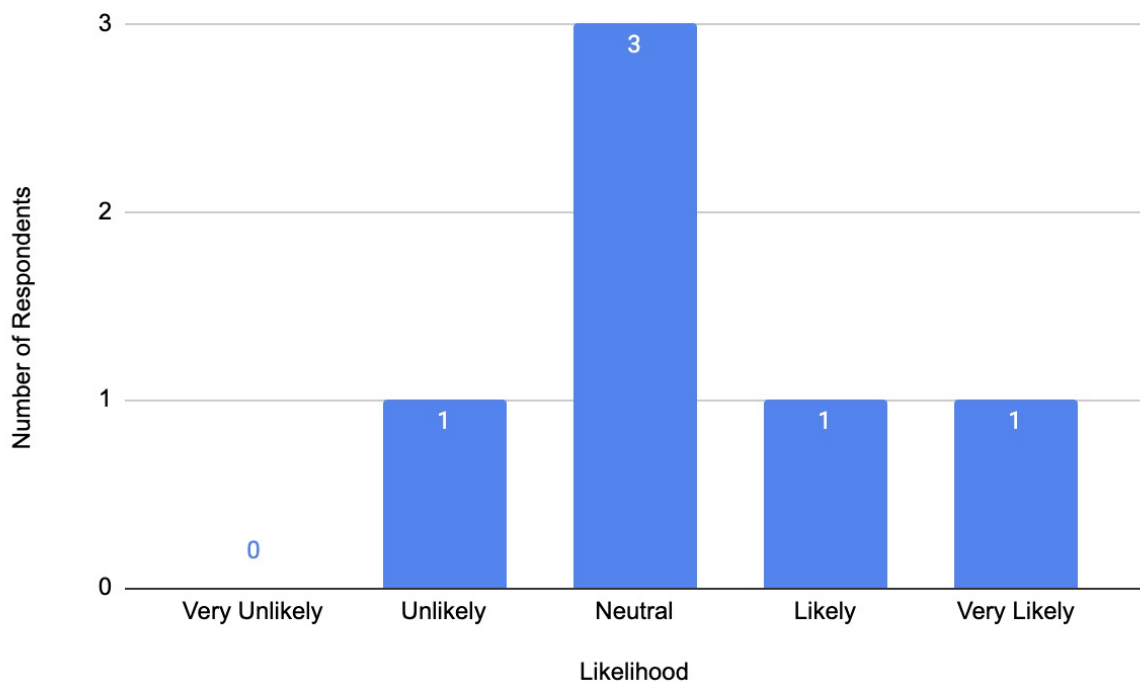


Figure 6. Likelihood to try. Source: Self Made

The respondents that were aware of Yerba Mate were then asked whether they had ever tried it. 54 out of 67 U.S. respondents confirmed they had, reflecting a high trial rate within this sample.

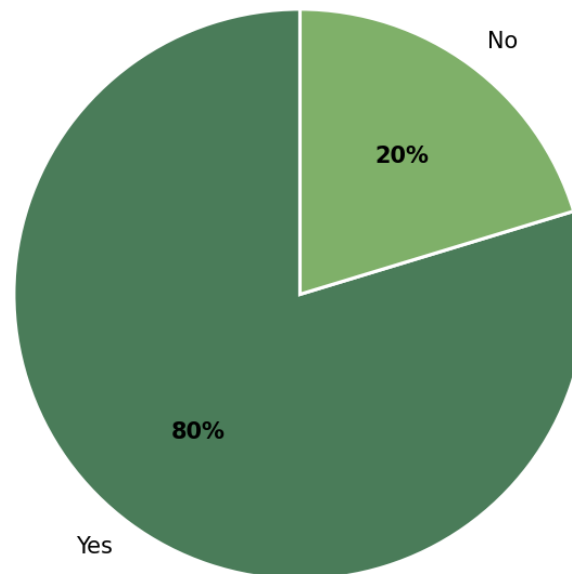
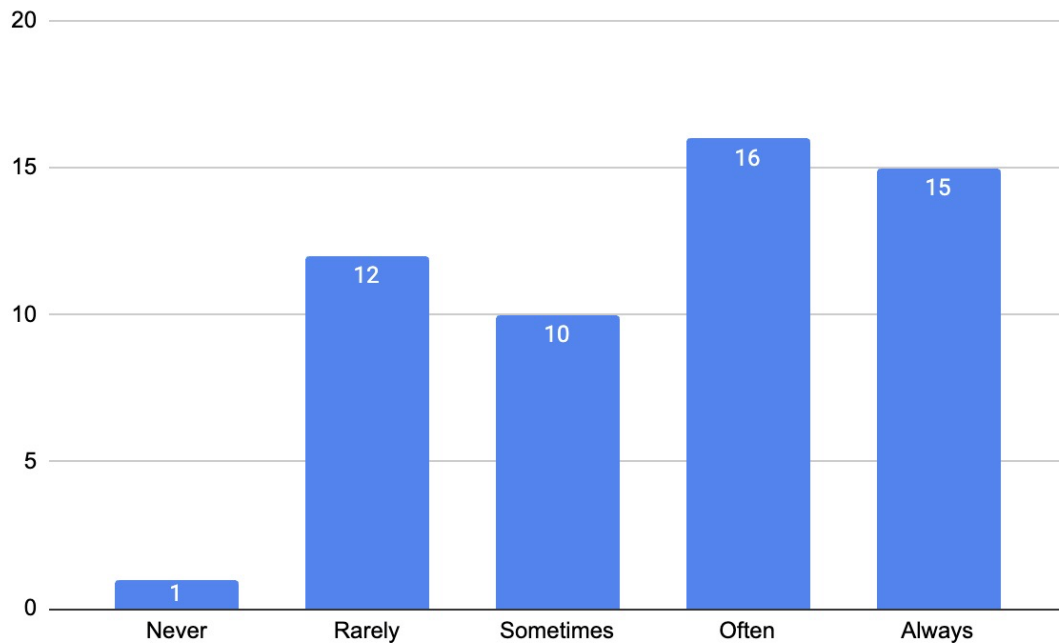
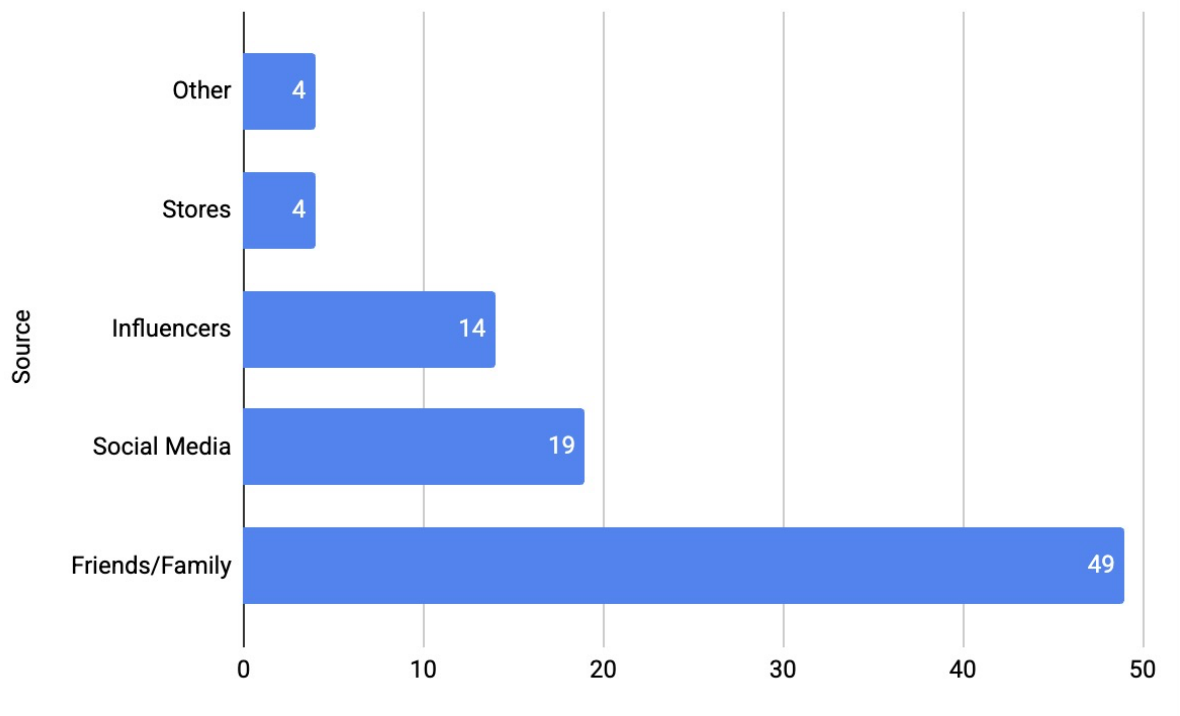
Have You Ever Tried Yerba Mate? (n=69)

Figure 7. Previously Tried. Source: Self Made

Among those who had tried Yerba Mate, the survey explored how frequently they consume it. Often consumption was the most common pattern, followed by “always” and “rarely”. This suggests that once consumers try Yerba Mate, most tend to incorporate it into their routine, with frequent or habitual consumption being far more common than occasional use.

Consumption Frequency Among Those Who Have Tried Yerba Mate (n=55)**Figure 8: Consumption. Source: Self Made.**

Participants with prior exposure or knowledge of yerba mate were questioned regarding their initial discovery of the product. Data indicates that personal relationships remain the primary discovery channel, as word-of-mouth through friends and family was the most frequent response with 49 mentions. Social media followed with 19 responses, while influencers were identified by 14 individuals. These findings suggest that within this category, interpersonal networks still precede digital content as the leading source of information sharing.

How Respondents First Heard About Yerba Mate (n=69)**Figure 9. Product Discovery. Source: Self Made**

Upon being asked to define yerba mate, participants predominantly identified the infusion as a "traditional or cultural beverage." Nevertheless, a portion of the sample also characterized the product as either a "healthy drink" or an "energy drink", demonstrating a dual perception where cultural heritage and functional utility concurrently shape consumer associations.

How Respondents Describe Yerba Mate (n=69)

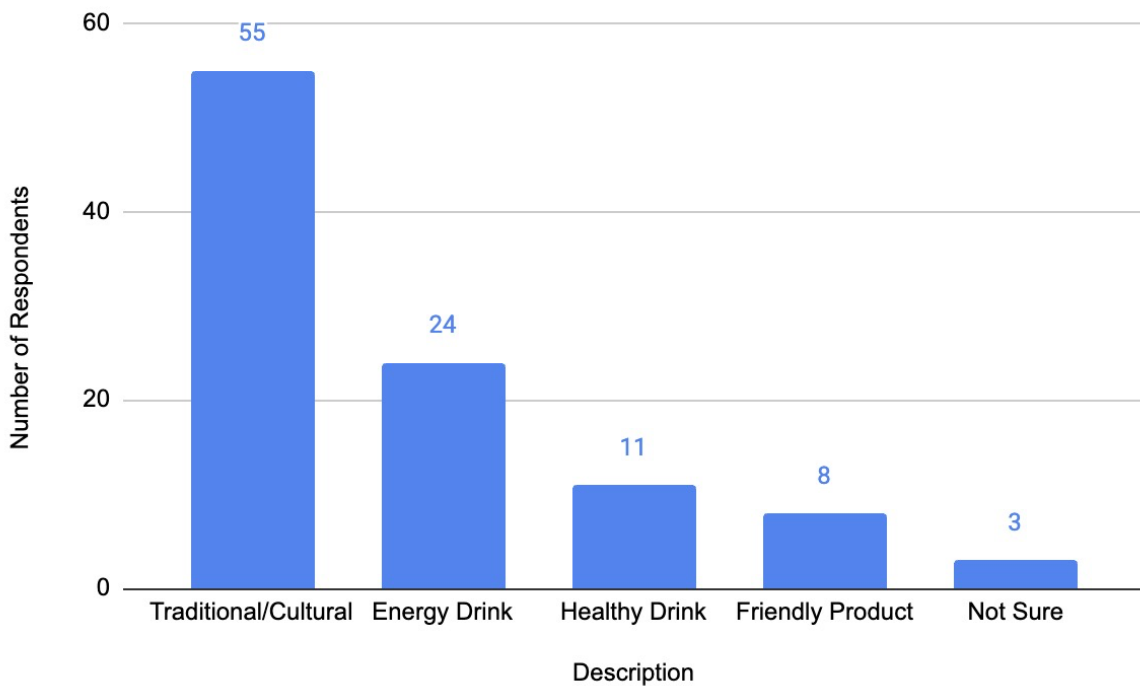


Figure 10. *Participant Product Description.* **Source:** *Self Made*

Respondents were also asked whether they associate yerba mate with Argentine or Latin American culture. The response was nearly unanimous: 52 respondents strongly agreed and 15 agreed, with only 1 selecting a neutral position and none disagreeing.

Cultural Association With Argentina or Latin American Culture (n=74)

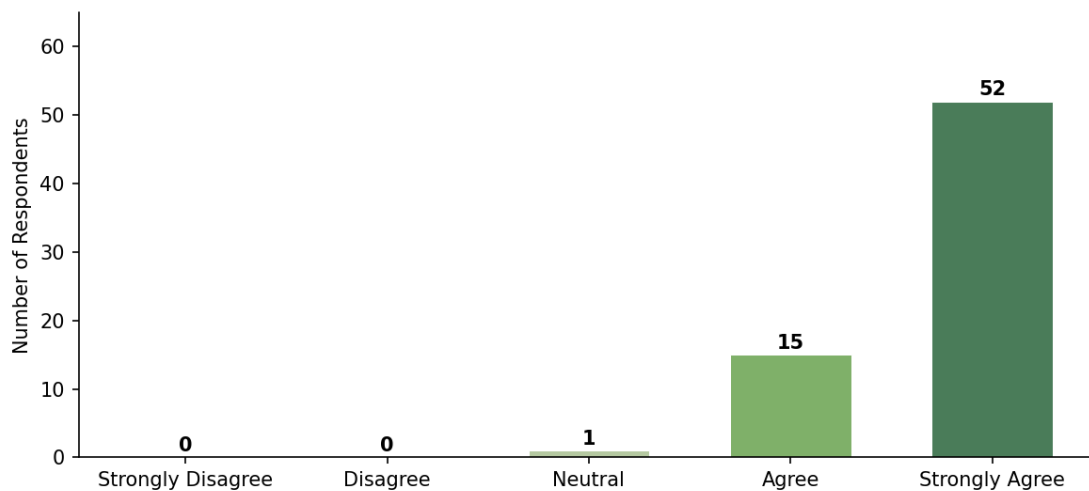


Figure 11. Cultural Association. Source: Self Made

In terms of how attractive the product seems, responses were more mixed. 15 respondents rated it as neutral, while 50 found it attractive or very attractive. Only 2 considered it slightly unattractive and only one rated it as fully unattractive.

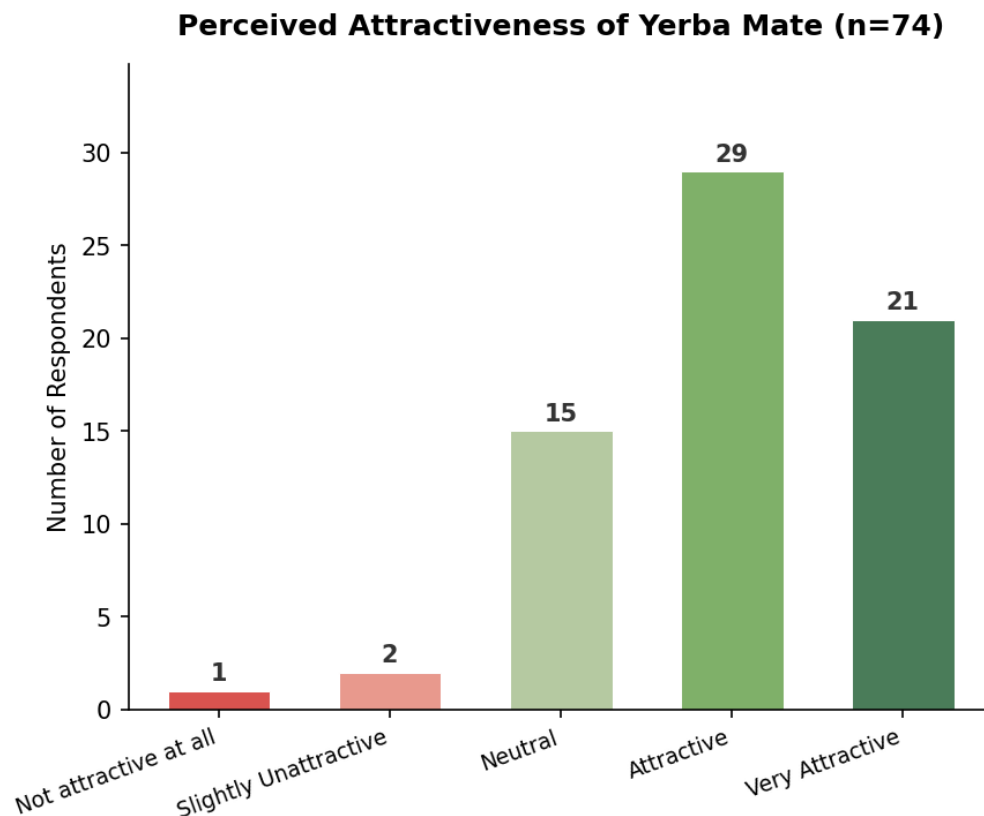
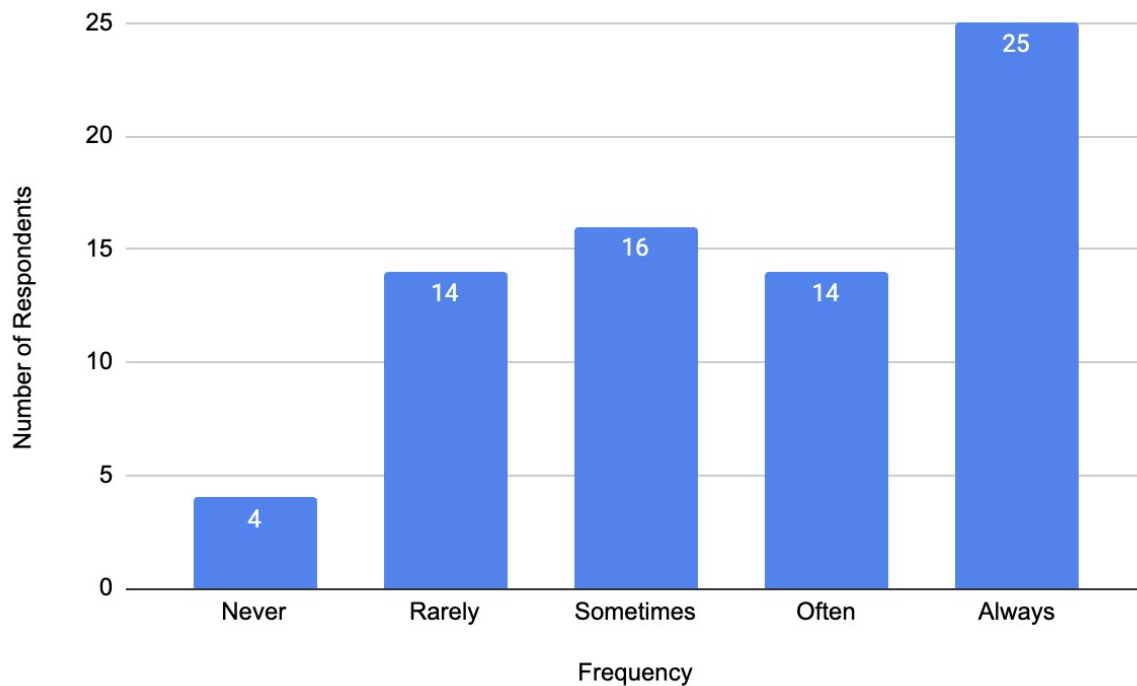


Figure 12. Product Attractiveness. Source: Self Made

An important section of the survey was dedicated to understanding how respondents perceive influencer marketing. When asked how often they see influencers promoting products on social media, most respondents answered “sometimes” or “always”, indicating regular exposure to this type of content.

Frequency of Exposure to Influencer Promotions on Social Media (n=74)**Figure 13. Influencer Exposure. Source: Self Made.**

Respondents were then presented with three Likert-scale statements. The first asked whether they would be interested in trying a product recommended by an influencer they trust. 50 respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed”, while 21 selected “neutral” and 2 “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

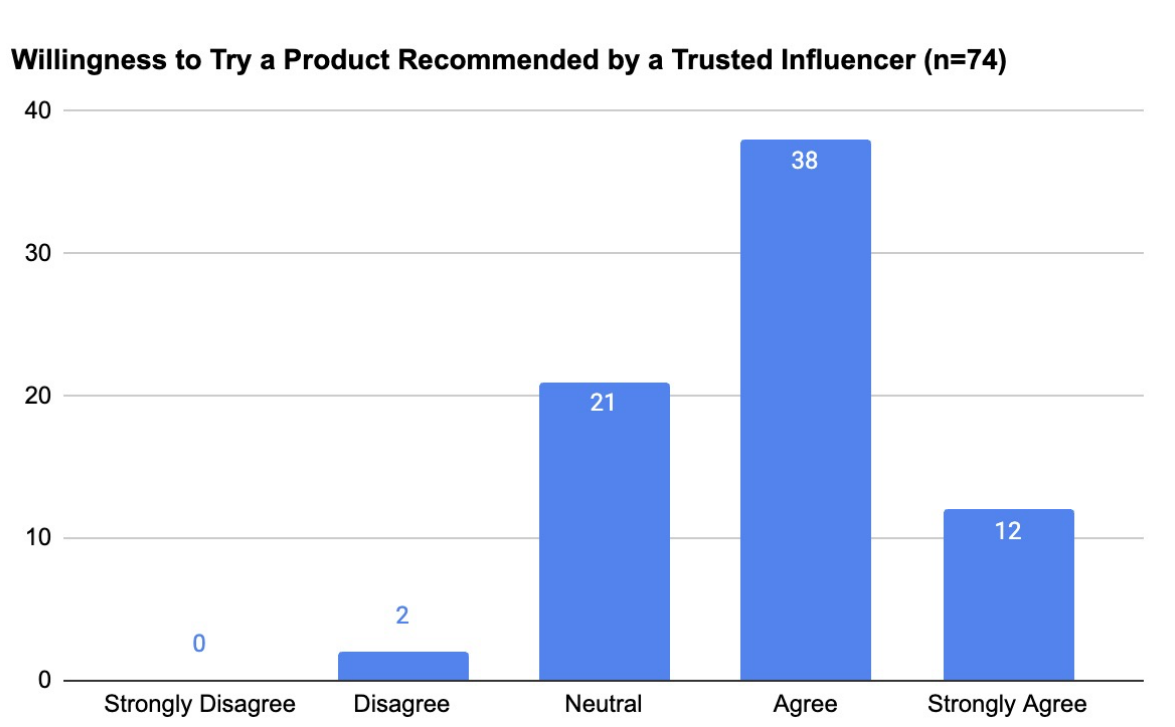
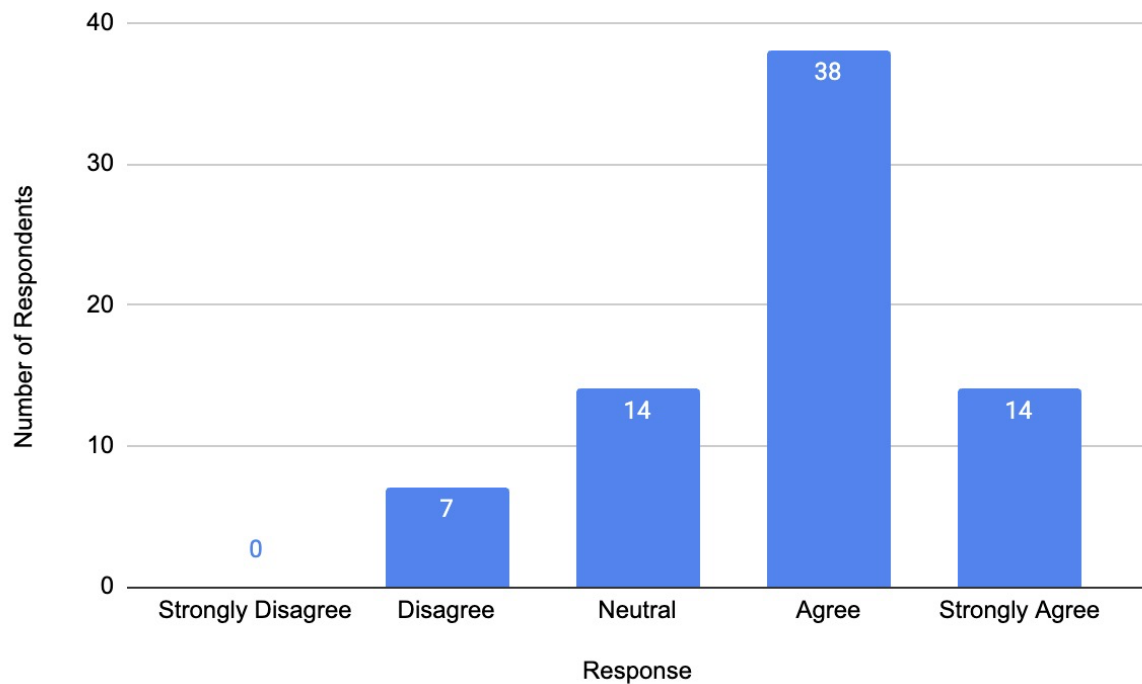
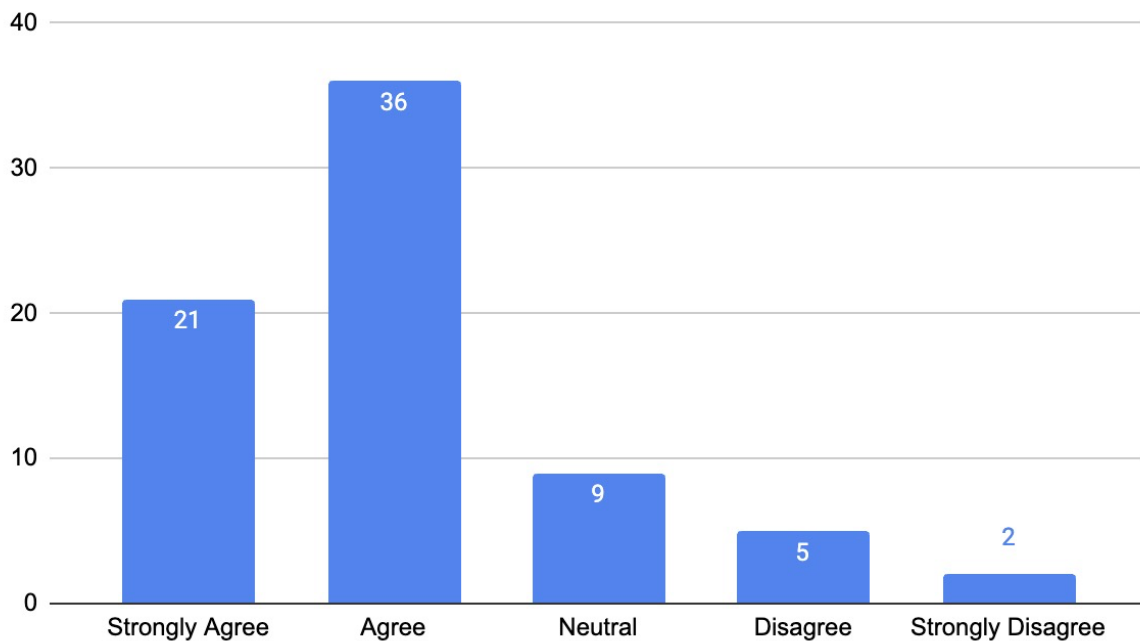


Figure 14. *Influencer Trust.* **Source:** *Self Made.*

The second statement asked whether influencers make products seem more trustworthy in general. Responses were more cautious: 52 agreed or strongly agreed, 14 were neutral, and 7 disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that trust in influencers is conditional and varies significantly across respondents.

Perception That Influencers Make Products More Trustworthy (n=74)**Figure 15. Influencer Trustworthiness. Source: Self Made.**

The third statement asked whether influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising for discovering new products. This produced the strongest agreement of the three: 57 respondents agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 7 who disagreed.

Perceived Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing vs. Traditional Advertising (n=74)**Figure 16. *Influencer Effectiveness.* Source: *Self Made.***

Finally, respondents were asked whether they would be more interested in trying yerba mate if promoted by someone they follow online. 48 agreed or strongly agreed, 19 were neutral, and 5 disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result suggests that influencer endorsement can meaningfully increase purchase intent for the product, particularly among those who already have a positive attitude toward influencer content.

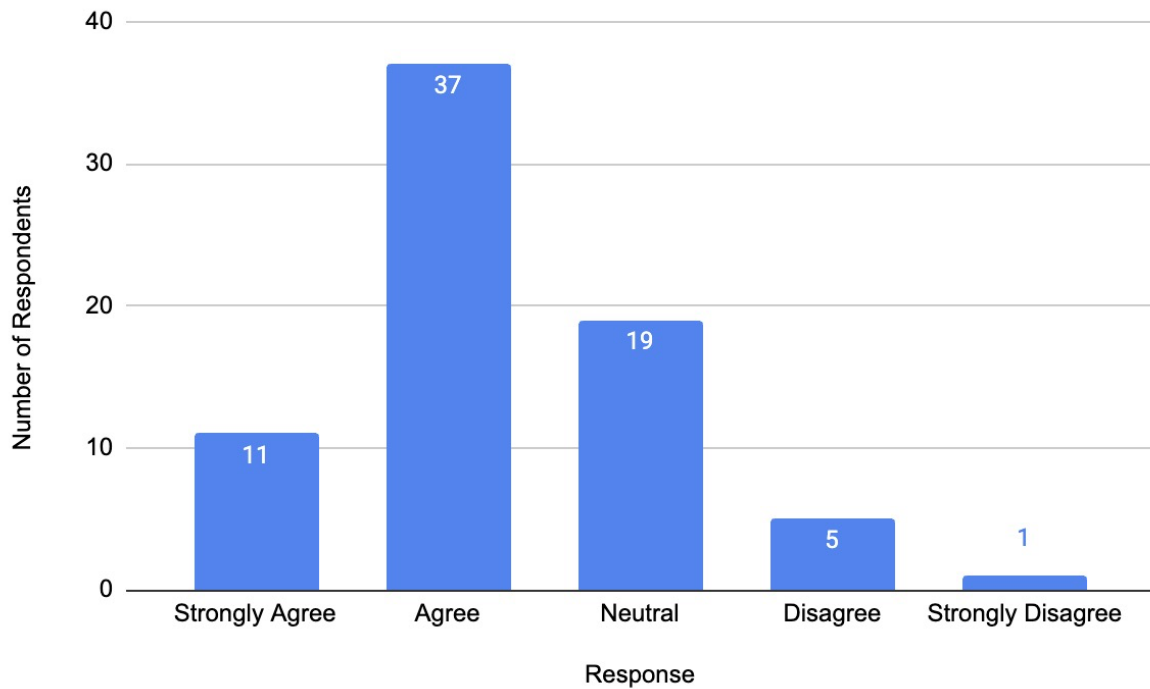
Interest in Trying Yerba Mate if Promoted by a Followed Influencer (n=74)

Figure 17. *Interest in trying Yerba Mate.* **Source:** *Self Made.*

The final section of the survey focused specifically on the brand Cósmico. Respondents were asked whether they had heard of it before. 50 out of 74 U.S. respondents said “yes”, which represents a notable level of recognition for a brand operating primarily through Amazon and social media content.

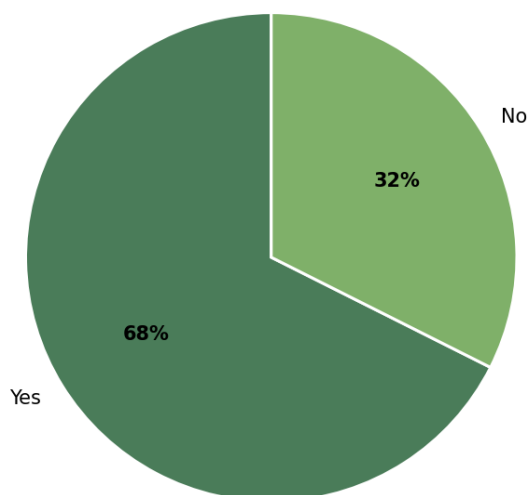
Brand Awareness of Cósmico Among U.S. Respondents (n=74)

Figure 18. *Cósmico Awareness.* Source: *Self Made.*

Among those who had heard of the brand, social media and influencers were the two most cited sources, with 35 and 39 mentions respectively, reflecting the effectiveness of Cósmico's digital communication strategy in building awareness within its target audience.

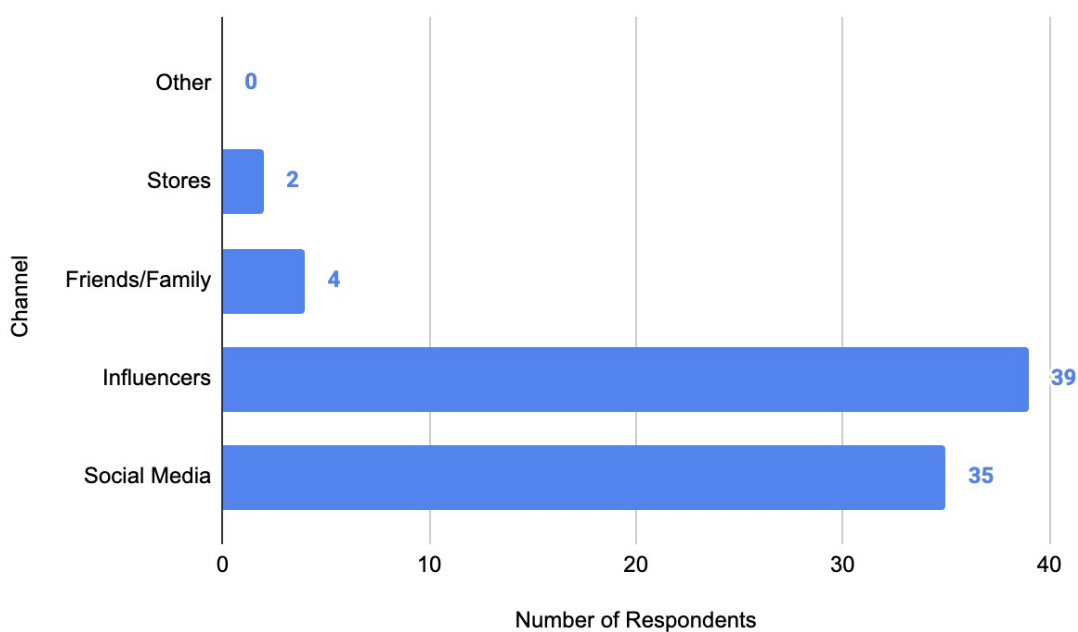
Channels Through Which Respondents Heard About Cósmico (n=74)

Figure 19. *Cósmico Source. Source: Self Made.*

When asked how likely they would be to purchase Cósmico in the future, responses leaned positive: the combined likely and very likely categories outnumbered those who expressed low purchase intent. A significant portion selected neutral, consistent with the overall pattern of openness without strong commitment observed throughout the survey.

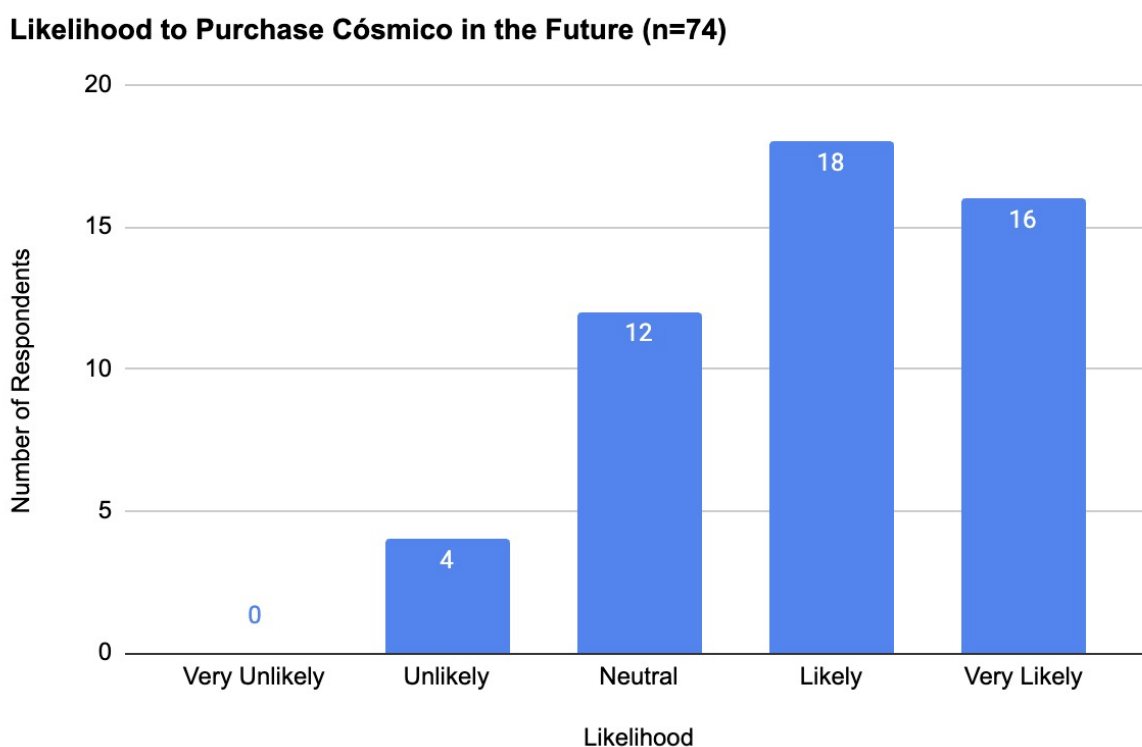


Figure 20. *Cósmico Purchase. Source: Self Made.*

Respondents were asked which factors would motivate them to buy yerba mate. Cultural curiosity ranked first with 46 mentions, followed by family and friends recommendation (31), energy boost (27), health benefits (19), and influencer recommendation (21). This ranking highlights that the cultural dimension of the product is its primary commercial driver, ahead of functional benefits.

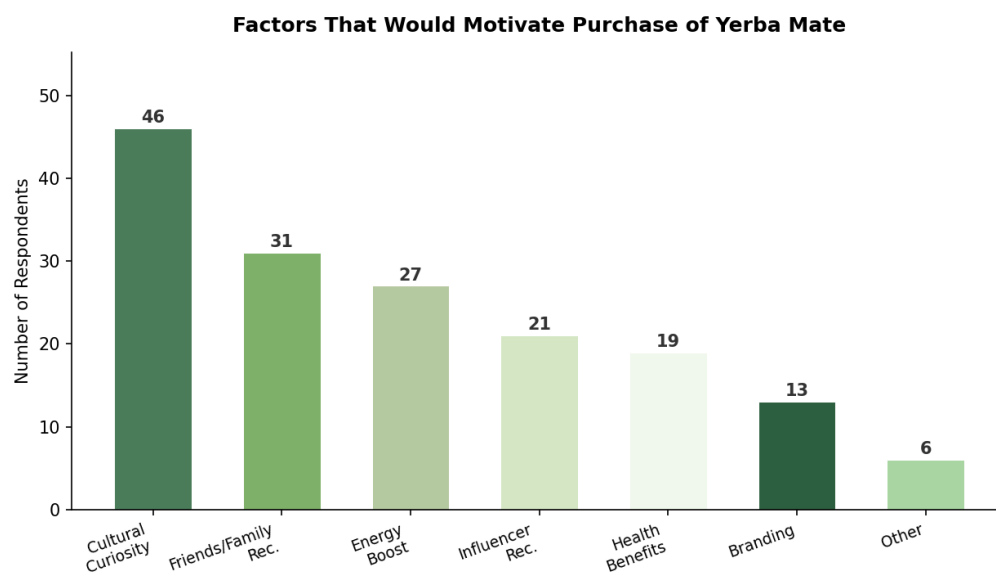


Figure 21. *Purchase Motivation.* **Source:** *Self Made*

6 Conclusions.

6.1 Chapter Overview.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the entire project. To do so, the chapter was divided into the following subsections: Introduction, Main Conclusions and Final Words.

6.2 Introduction.

The main area of interest covered throughout this research was understanding how influencer marketing can function as a viable internationalization strategy for traditional Latin American products, with Cósmico's yerba mate serving as the central case study. The thesis explored whether a brand rooted in Argentine cultural identity could successfully enter the U.S. market by relying primarily on digital content and influencer-driven communication rather than conventional advertising.

The architecture of the thesis was organized around Research Objectives, which established what the study was trying to understand about Cósmico's strategy, its reception among U.S. consumers, and the broader role of cultural identity in international brand positioning. Research Questions then gave those objectives a testable direction, asking how the brand positions itself, how consumers respond to influencer endorsement, and how athletes and cultural framing affect awareness and purchase intent. Research Hypotheses translated those questions into six specific predictions about the relationship between influencer marketing and market performance. These were then tested against the evidence collected through a Literature Review covering internationalization theory, digital marketing models, and the global yerba mate market, as well as a qualitative stage with three in-depth interviews, a co-founder of Cósmico, a certified yerba mate sommelier, a licensed customs broker and a consumer survey distributed to 75 individuals residing in the United States.

6.3 Main Conclusions.

The most consistent finding across all sources was the central role of cultural identity in shaping how U.S. consumers perceive and engage with yerba mate. Of the 60 respondents who were aware of the product, 57 associated it with Argentine or Latin American culture, and cultural curiosity ranked as the top reason people would consider purchasing it, ahead of health benefits, energy, or influencer recommendation. This was not accidental. Cósmico was built from the ground up around a nationalistic narrative, and the evidence confirmed that this framing reaches consumers and actively shapes their relationship with the product.

A second relevant pattern was how effectively Amazon functioned as both a distribution and communication channel. Reaching the second best-selling position on the platform within approximately six months, and seeing the purchase cycle shrink from roughly twice a year to every three months, suggests that the combination of paid search visibility and Sam's content output produced real commercial results. The brand did not rely on traditional advertising at any point during its U.S. expansion, and the outcomes speak to the viability of that choice.

On the consumer side, the survey data pointed in a consistent direction: 47 respondents agreed that influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising for discovering new products, and 38 said they would be more interested in trying yerba mate if promoted by someone they follow. Trust emerged as the decisive variable, respondents were more receptive to endorsements from people they already followed, which suggests that audience relationships matter more than pure reach when promoting a niche cultural product.

The role of South American athletes, particularly Messi and Colapinto, appeared significant in generating curiosity and aspirational interest around yerba mate, though measuring that contribution with precision proved difficult. Similarly, establishing a direct causal link between Cósmico's entry and the broader growth of the category in the U.S. was

not possible given the data available, as the market was already expanding through ready-to-drink formats and organic cultural exposure before the brand arrived.

This case also challenges some of the assumptions behind classical internationalization theory. Cósmico did not expand gradually or through traditional intermediaries, it entered the U.S. directly, scaled through a single platform, and built brand awareness without any physical retail presence. That trajectory suggests that when a brand has a strong cultural narrative and the right digital infrastructure, the conventional logic of international expansion simply does not apply in the same way. The case also shows that cultural origin can work as more than a positioning choice, so in this instance, it was the primary reason consumers engaged with the product at all, which has implications for how traditional products from emerging markets think about going global.

6.4 Final Words.

This research represented an opportunity to apply four years of academic training to a real and evolving case. The combination of primary qualitative sources, a consumer survey, and an ongoing brand trajectory gave the study a level of concreteness that purely theoretical work cannot replicate. The interviews in particular were invaluable, the perspectives shared by Hernán Regiardo, Aldara Gómez Salazar, and Horacio Rossi added texture and nuance that no secondary source could have provided.

Several limitations of this study are worth acknowledging openly. The survey sample leaned heavily toward people with Latin American backgrounds, which means the findings reflect a specific segment rather than the average U.S. consumer. Someone with no cultural connection to yerba mate would likely respond very differently. Beyond that, the digital environment this thesis analyzes moves fast, what works on TikTok or Instagram today may not produce the same results in two years, as algorithms shift and audience attention changes. The study also captures Cósmico at a single point in time, early in its international growth, so

it cannot say much about whether those first-time buyers became loyal customers. Finally, the commercial figures mentioned in the interviews were taken at face value since there was no way to verify them independently.

Regarding future academic inquiries, several research trajectories warrant further investigation to extend the scope of this study. First, a comparative study evaluating influencer-driven market entry against traditional distribution channels, such as retail partnerships and industry trade shows, would clarify if digital-first strategies yield superior effectiveness or simply accelerated initial momentum. Second, implementing the cultural branding framework within European markets, such as Spain or the United Kingdom, would assess the cross-cultural resonance of Argentine identity beyond the Americas. Furthermore, research focusing on longitudinal consumer retention following influencer exposure is necessary to determine whether initial product trials translate into established consumption habits. Finally, contrasting the impact of athlete endorsements against lifestyle influencers regarding trust and purchase conversion rates would provide organizations with actionable evidence for strategic marketing investments.

Cósmico's case leaves open a question worth pursuing: whether the cultural strategy that has driven its early success in the U.S. can scale as the brand moves beyond the Latin American diaspora and into a broader American consumer base. The conditions for that expansion appear to be forming. What happens next is a research question for another thesis.

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8 Appendix.

Appendix A. Consumer Survey: Yerba Mate Perception.

Note. The following pages reproduce the complete questionnaire administered during the quantitative stage of this research. The survey was distributed digitally to individuals residing in the United States and consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice and Likert-scale items, with a small number of open-ended questions included at the end to collect additional qualitative insights.

For transparency and reproducibility purposes, the original Google Forms questionnaire and the corresponding survey results are available below:

A.1. Original Survey Instrument (Google Forms).

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd9Qzlgfx6q7diXapsM7jgihGKot51aK3KtAp174f6zfJXbgA/viewform>

A.2. Survey Questionnaire (Full Transcription).

Section 1: Demographic Filters

1. What is your age?

- Less than 18
- 18–35
- 35+

2. Do you currently live in the United States?

- Yes
- No

3. If you currently live in the United States, in which state do you reside?

(Open answer)

Section 2: Social Media Behavior

4. How often do you use social media?

- Less than 1 hour per day
- 1–3 hours per day
- 3–5 hours per day
- More than 5 hours per day
- I do not use social media on a daily basis

5. Which social media platforms do you use the most?

- Instagram
- TikTok
- YouTube
- X / Twitter
- Facebook
- Other

Section 3: Yerba Mate Awareness

6. Before this survey, had you ever heard about yerba mate?

- Yes
- No

7. Based on what you know now, how likely would you be to try yerba mate in the future?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very Likely

Section 4: Yerba Mate Consumption

8. Have you ever tried yerba mate?

- Yes
- No

9. How often do you consume yerba mate?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Section 5: Yerba Mate Perception

10. How did you first hear about yerba mate?

- Social Media
- Influencers
- Friends or Family
- Supermarkets or Stores
- Cafés or Restaurants
- Other

11. What comes to your mind when you think about yerba mate?

(Open answer)

12. How would you describe yerba mate?

- A healthy drink
- An energy drink
- A traditional/cultural beverage
- A friendly product

- I am not sure

13. I associate yerba mate with Argentine or Latin American culture.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. How attractive does yerba mate seem to you?

- Not Attractive at All
- Slightly Unattractive
- Neutral
- Attractive
- Very Attractive

Section 6: Influencer Marketing

15. How often do you see influencers promoting products on social media?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

16. If an influencer I trust recommended a product, I would be interested in trying it.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree

- Strongly Agree

17. Influencers make products seem more trustworthy.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. Influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising for discovering new products.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

19. I would be more interested in trying yerba mate if it was promoted by someone I follow online.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Section 7: Cósmico Brand

20. Have you ever heard about the yerba mate brand Cósmico?

- Yes
- No

21. Where did you hear about Cósmico?

- Social Media
- Influencers
- Friends or Family
- Stores
- Other

22. How likely would you be to buy Cósmico in the future?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very Likely

Section 8: Purchase Motivation

23. What factors would motivate you to buy yerba mate?

- Health Benefits
- Energy Boost
- Cultural Curiosity
- Influencer Recommendation
- Family/Friends Recommendation
- Product Design / Branding
- Other

Section 9: Final Questions

24. Do you have any additional thoughts or opinions about yerba mate?

(Open answer)

25. What do you think about how yerba mate is promoted in the United States?

(Open answer)

A.3. Survey Data and Results (Google Sheets).

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1U1yj016rL6nvlBDIxUs7CJyyD3NF_1NwuFUquYPNGCg/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix B. List of Interviews.

#	Interviewee	Implication	Organization	Date
1	Hernán Regiardo	Co-founder	Cósmico Yerba Mate	June 3rd, 2026
	Diego Torres	Commercial Director		
2	Aldara Gómez Salazar	Yerba Mate Sommelier	@sommelierdeyerba mateymaridaje (Instagram account)	May 28th, 2026
3	María Poplawski	Communications Director & Expert	Círculo Dircoms	June 25th, 2026
4	Horacio Rossi	Customs Broker	ALH Rossi Entreprises	June 4th, 2026

Table 9. List of Interviews. **Source:** Self Made.

B.1. Interview with Hernán Reggiardo (Co-Founder) and Diego Torres (Commercial Director), Cósmico Yerba Mate.

Note. This interview was conducted in Spanish by the researchers on June 3rd, 2026. The original transcript was reviewed and edited by the researchers. The English version presented in this appendix is a translation of the original Spanish interview produced with the assistance of generative artificial intelligence tools (Google Gemini and Anthropic Claude) and subsequently reviewed by the researchers for accuracy and consistency with the original meaning. Any remaining translation errors are the responsibility of the researchers.

The original Spanish transcript is presented first, followed by the English translated version used for data analysis and citation purposes throughout this thesis. "Q" refers to the word Question and "A" refers to the word Answer.

B.1.1 Original Interview Transcript (Spanish).

Q: Sabemos que el nombre "Cósmico" surge a partir del caballo de Sam. ¿Podrías contarnos la historia detrás de ese nombre y explicar cómo se relaciona con la identidad y los valores de la marca?

A: Cósmico era el nombre del caballo de la infancia de Sam. Cuando pensamos en nombres para la marca, nos gustó porque tenía personalidad y era memorable. Estaba asociado a lo rural, a experiencias personales felices, y además transmitía una sensación de libertad y aventura. Con el tiempo, el nombre también pasó a representar nuestra forma de ver el mate, ya que conecta personas, culturas e historias más allá de las fronteras. Yendo a lo literal, algo cósmico refiere a un todo interconectado. Y cuando nos conocimos y enamoramos en Indonesia, una de las primeras cosas que compartimos fue un mate.

Q: ¿Qué significado tienen este tipo de símbolos para ustedes? ¿Buscan transmitir aspectos de la tradición y la cultura argentina, o están más relacionados con la historia particular de “Cósmico”?

A: Diría que hay una combinación de ambas cosas. Por un lado, los caballos y ciertos elementos rurales están conectados con la historia detrás del nombre y con experiencias personales de Sam. Pero también representan valores que asociamos mucho con Argentina, con el interior de nuestro país... por ejemplo con la conexión con la naturaleza, la tradición y una forma de vivir más simple y auténtica. No quisimos construir una marca basada únicamente en la nostalgia o el folclore, sino reinterpretar esos elementos de una manera más accesible para una audiencia global.

Q: ¿Cuándo y por qué decidieron que Estados Unidos podía ser un mercado clave para la expansión de Cósmico? ¿La idea de internacionalización se pensó desde los inicios de la marca?

A: Cósmico como empresa nació a partir de que nos conocimos con Sam en Indonesia y decidimos irnos a vivir a los Estados Unidos. Allí creamos Mate Society, una agencia de marketing y contenido. Trabajando con marcas grandes como Nestlé, observamos el fenómeno de influencers lanzando productos de nicho con gran impacto en ventas. Fue entonces que decidimos replicar ese modelo en Argentina con un producto de consumo masivo como lo es el mate. La internacionalización hacia EE.UU. se potenció principalmente gracias a Sam, pero también gracias al fenómeno Messi con el Inter de Miami, y la gran comunidad latina allá. El proceso fue desafiante por cuestiones de normativas y certificaciones. Arrancamos con un único importador ubicado en Florida, pero el crecimiento fue bastante lento hasta que Sam tomó las riendas del e-commerce en Amazon, enseñando a los americanos cómo preparar mate y comunicando sus beneficios. Hoy somos la segunda yerba más vendida en Amazon, logrado en aproximadamente seis meses.

Q: Al comparar Cósmico con marcas tradicionales de yerba mate argentina, se observan

diferencias significativas en la identidad visual. ¿Qué motivó esa elección?

A: Cuando analizábamos la categoría, sentíamos que muchas marcas hablaban principalmente al consumidor que ya conocía el mate. Nosotros queríamos abrir la puerta a personas que nunca habían tenido contacto con este producto. Por eso apostamos por una identidad visual más limpia y estéticamente universal.

Nos ayudó una diseñadora gráfica argentina, que interpretó perfecto nuestra visión de crear algo estético pero que mantenga lo criollo del ritual. De hecho, en el packaging de nuestra yerba, tenemos en el lateral la explicación de cómo preparar un mate, cosa que muchas otras marcas dan por hecho que el consumidor sabe.

Q: ¿Hubo algo del producto, packaging o presentación que tuvieron que adaptar específicamente para vender en Estados Unidos?

A: El producto es exactamente el mismo. El único cambio fue agregar una etiqueta tipo sticker con el idioma del país y cumplir con las certificaciones FDA requeridas para comercializar allá. Nada más.

Q: Y más allá del packaging, ¿cuáles consideran que son los principales elementos que diferencian a Cósmico de otras marcas de yerba mate?

A: Más allá del packaging, creo que nos diferencia la experiencia completa. Desde cómo contamos la historia de la marca hasta la forma en que presentamos el producto. También trabajamos mucho en el perfil de sabor para que sea agradable tanto para consumidores habituales como para quienes prueban mate por primera vez.

Esa identidad criolla pero con foco en la estética, sumado a los productos y la experiencia que ofrecemos, nos permitió consolidarnos como una marca que va más

allá del mate. En definitiva, hablamos de compartir momentos: desde una ronda de mates con amigos hasta una reunión familiar con un Estanciero de por medio. Ese espíritu de conexión es lo que buscamos transmitir.

Q: ¿El buyer persona estadounidense es alguien curioso por probar algo nuevo o alguien de cultura latinoamericana que ya conoce el mate?

A: El mate es un gusto adquirido, como el vino o la cerveza, y eso aplica a cualquier consumidor nuevo, no solo al americano. Para captar al yankee hay que romper la estructura del “mate amargo y tradicional” y mostrar otras formas de consumirlo: en taza, en vaso, como mate cocido con colador, endulzado, con yuyos... Sam usa mucho ese tipo de contenido. Aunque en Argentina endulzar el mate sea casi un sacrilegio, para el mercado americano es una puerta de entrada necesaria.

Q: ¿Trabajaron con influencers u otras colaboraciones para llegar al consumidor estadounidense?

A: Con influencers argentinos locales sí, pero en Estados Unidos el canal principal es la propia plataforma de Amazon. Invertimos en publicidad dentro de la app para que Cósmico aparezca primero cuando alguien busca “yerba” o “infusiones”. También usamos banners con los mensajes de Sam sobre los beneficios del mate y las distintas formas de prepararlo. Tanto el canal de venta como el canal de comunicación es fundamentalmente Amazon.

Q: ¿Qué indicadores mostraron que el producto estaba siendo aceptado por el consumidor estadounidense?

A: Como te comentaba, el indicador más claro fue Amazon. Con el importador anterior hacíamos compras semestrales con contenedores enteros. Con Amazon ese

ciclo se redujo a tres meses. Además, se observó un fenómeno de recompra muy interesante: la misma gente volvía a comprar repetidamente, lo que indica fidelización. A eso se sumó la entrada constante de consumidores nuevos, señal de que la comunicación estaba funcionando y generando curiosidad.

Q: ¿Compiten principalmente contra otras marcas de yerba mate o contra categorías como el café, el té o las bebidas energizantes?

A: Competimos dentro de la categoría de yerba mate, no contra el café o el té, ya que no son productos sustitutos reales. En Argentina, nuestra competencia principal es La Merced, una marca de segmento premium similar. En el mercado externo, donde La Merced tiene poca presencia, la estrategia es diferente: competimos contra yerbas de Uruguay, Brasil y Paraguay, posicionando Cósmico como una yerba argentina de mayor calidad. El eje de la comunicación es el origen argentino del mate como diferencial de calidad y autenticidad.

Q: Me gustaría indagar también en marcas como Guayakí que popularizaron la yerba mate en formatos enlatados y listos para consumir entre consumidores estadounidenses que quizás nunca habían probado un mate tradicional. ¿Creen que esto beneficia a toda la categoría o existe el riesgo de que la yerba mate quede asociada únicamente a una bebida energizante y no a la experiencia cultural que representa el mate?

A: Ambas cosas a la vez. Estos productos expanden el consumo de yerba mate en general porque siempre tienen yerba mate como materia prima. Pero perjudican a las marcas específicas porque al productor de bebidas energizantes no le importa qué marca de yerba usa, solo la materia prima, y generalmente la compran a granel directamente de Brasil. Te voy a dar un ejemplo concreto, el hijo de Trump lanzó recientemente una bebida energizante a base de yerba, Soros se llama, y la compran

en Brasil sin importarles la marca ni el origen argentino. Entonces: agranda la categoría, pero diluye el valor de marca.

Q: Sabemos que Cósmico se encuentra disponible en más de 60 puntos de venta en el sur de Florida, ¿el foco de la internacionalización a los Estados Unidos está ahí o apuntan a todo el país?

A: El importador anterior solo cubría Florida por su enfoque en mercados latinos. Amazon cambió eso completamente: permite llegar a todo el territorio estadounidense desde el depósito en Miami. Esa expansión nacional es justamente la ventaja que el importador no podía dar.

Q: Cambiando de tema, me gustaría preguntar sobre Messi y otros deportistas internacionales como Colapinto. Figuras sudamericanas como ellos que andan con el mate por todos lados, ¿influyen en la intención de compra del consumidor estadounidense?

A: Sí, por dos vías. Primero el consumo aspiracional: el fan quiere consumir lo que consume su ídolo, igual que pasa con Sam o conmigo siendo también influencers. Nuestros seguidores quieren los productos que nosotros mismos creamos. Segundo, la curiosidad: el americano ve a Messi o a Colapinto con un termo y una bombilla y se pregunta qué están tomando. Esa curiosidad abre la puerta. El desafío después es que esa primera prueba sea agradable, por eso las yerbas saborizadas juegan un rol clave en el e-commerce para captar nuevos consumidores. Nos pasó investigando el mercado de Chile que encontramos por ejemplo que CBSé logró penetrar el mercado metropolitano de Santiago justamente con saborizantes, porque el mate amargo no entraba.

Q: Por último, ¿tienen estrategias vinculadas al Mundial que empieza ahora?

A: Sí, pero con cuidado. La política dentro de AFA hace que ninguna marca argentina quiera ser sponsor de la selección, a nosotros nos lo ofrecieron pero dijimos que no. De hecho, el sponsor actual es Baldo, una empresa brasilera. La tendencia es trabajar directamente con futbolistas individuales, desvinculados de AFA, como hacen McDonald's o Mostaza con jugadores específicos. Cósmico tiene conversaciones actualmente con Enzo Pérez, Rodrigo De Paul y también con Messi, aunque este último es muy costoso. Además estamos evaluando acciones en la Fan Fest y otros eventos por fuera del Mundial en sí.

B.1.2 English Translation of the Interview.

Q: We know you chose the name “Cósmico” because of Sam’s horse, can you tell us the story behind the name and explain how it connects with the brand identity and values?

A: Cósmico was the name of Sam's childhood horse. When we were thinking of names for the brand, we liked it because it had personality and was memorable. It was associated with rural life, with happy personal experiences, and it also conveyed a sense of freedom and adventure. Over time, the name came to represent our way of seeing mate, as it connects people, cultures, and stories across borders. Literally speaking, something cosmic refers to an interconnected whole. And when we met and fell in love, one of the first things we shared was a mate.

Q: What meaning do these kinds of symbols hold for you? Are you looking to convey aspects of Argentine tradition and culture, or are they more closely tied to the particular story of "Cósmico"?

A: I'd say it's a combination of both. On one hand, horses and certain rural elements are connected to the story behind the name and to Sam's personal experiences. But

they also represent values we strongly associate with Argentina — with the interior of our country — such as a connection to nature, tradition, and a simpler, more authentic way of living. We didn't want to build a brand based solely on nostalgia or folklore, but rather to reinterpret those elements in a way that feels more accessible to a global audience.

Q: When and why did you decide that the United States could be a key market for Cósmico's expansion? Was internationalization part of the brand's vision from the beginning?

A: Cósmico was born after Sam and I met in Indonesia and decided to move to the United States. There, we founded Mate Society, a marketing and content agency. While working with major brands such as Nestlé, we observed a growing trend of influencers launching niche products that generated significant sales impact. That inspired us to replicate the model in Argentina with a mass-consumption product: mate. Our expansion into the U.S. was largely driven by Sam, but it was also supported by the "Messi effect" following his arrival at Inter Miami CF, as well as the large latin community in the country. The process was challenging due to regulatory requirements and certification procedures. We initially started with a single importer based in Florida, but growth was relatively slow. Things accelerated when Sam took over our Amazon e-commerce operations, focusing on educating American consumers about how to prepare mate and communicating its benefits. Today, we are the second best-selling yerba mate brand on Amazon, a position we achieved in approximately six months.

Q: Compared to traditional Argentine yerba mate brands, Cósmico's visual identity is noticeably different. What drove that choice?

A: When we were analyzing the category, we felt that many brands were speaking

primarily to consumers who already knew mate. We wanted to open the door to people who had never had any contact with this product. That's why we went for a cleaner, more universally appealing visual identity.

We were helped by an Argentine graphic designer who perfectly interpreted our vision of creating something aesthetic while preserving the criollo spirit of the ritual. In fact, on the side panel of our yerba packaging, we include an explanation of how to prepare a mate — something many other brands simply assume the consumer already knows.

Q: Did you have to adapt anything about the product, packaging, or presentation specifically for the U.S. market?

A: The product itself remained exactly the same. We did not modify the yerba mate, its formulation, or its core presentation. The only adjustments we made were adding a sticker label in English to comply with local language requirements and obtaining the necessary certifications from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to legally commercialize the product in the United States.

Q: And beyond the packaging, what do you consider to be the main elements that set Cósmico apart from other yerba mate brands?

A: Beyond the packaging, I think what sets us apart is the complete experience — from the way we tell the brand's story to how we present the product. We also put a lot of work into the flavor profile so that it's enjoyable both for regular mate drinkers and for those trying it for the first time.

That criollo identity with a focus on aesthetics, combined with the products and the experience we offer, has allowed us to establish ourselves as a brand that goes beyond mate. Ultimately, we're talking about sharing moments: from a round of mates with

friends to a family gathering with an Estanciero in the mix. That spirit of connection is what we aim to convey.

Q: Is the U.S. buyer persona someone who is curious to try something new, or someone from a Latin American background who is already familiar with mate?

A: Mate is an acquired taste, much like wine or beer, and that applies to any new consumer, not just Americans. To attract U.S. consumers, it is necessary to move beyond the traditional image of bitter mate consumed in a gourd and demonstrate alternative ways of enjoying it. This can include drinking it from a cup or glass, preparing it as mate tea with a strainer, sweetening it, or adding herbs and other ingredients. A significant part of Sam's content strategy focuses on presenting these alternative consumption methods. While sweetening mate may be considered almost sacrilegious by some consumers in Argentina, it serves as an important entry point for American consumers who are unfamiliar with the product and its traditional preparation.

Q: Have you worked with influencers or other collaborations to reach U.S. consumers?

A: In Argentina, we have collaborated with local influencers. In the United States, however, our primary channel is Amazon itself. We invest heavily in advertising within the platform so that Cósmico appears prominently when consumers search for terms such as "yerba mate" or herbal infusions.

We also use Amazon banners featuring Sam's messages about the benefits of mate and the different ways it can be prepared. As a result, Amazon functions not only as our main sales channel but also as our primary communication channel for educating consumers and building brand awareness.

Q: What indicators showed that the product was being accepted by U.S. consumers?

A: As mentioned earlier, Amazon provided the clearest indicators of market acceptance. Under our previous importer model, purchases were typically made twice a year through full-container shipments. With Amazon, that cycle was reduced to approximately three months, reflecting a substantial increase in demand. Another particularly encouraging sign was the high level of repeat purchases. Consumers who tried the product frequently returned to buy it again, suggesting strong customer satisfaction and loyalty. At the same time, we continued to attract new consumers, indicating that our communication strategy was successfully generating awareness and curiosity about mate among people who had not previously been familiar with it.

Q: Do you primarily compete against other yerba mate brands, or against categories such as coffee, tea, and energy drinks?

A: We primarily compete within the yerba mate category rather than against coffee or tea, as we do not consider them to be direct substitutes. In Argentina, our main competitor is La Merced, a premium yerba mate brand that targets a similar market segment. In international markets, where La Merced has limited presence, the competitive landscape is different. There, we compete mainly against yerba mate products from Uruguay, Brazil, and Paraguay. Our strategy is to position Cósmico as a premium Argentine yerba mate, emphasizing the product's Argentine origin as a symbol of quality, authenticity, and cultural heritage.

Q: Brands such as Guayakí have popularized yerba mate among U.S. consumers through ready-to-drink canned beverages. Do you believe this benefits the entire category, or is there a risk that yerba mate becomes associated only with energy drinks rather than with the cultural experience of mate?

A: In our view, both outcomes occur simultaneously. On one hand, ready-to-drink mate beverages expand overall awareness and consumption of yerba mate because the ingredient remains at the core of the product. They introduce new consumers to yerba mate and help grow the category as a whole.

On the other hand, these products can dilute the value of individual yerba mate brands. Producers of energy drinks are generally concerned with sourcing yerba mate as a raw material rather than promoting a particular yerba mate brand or origin. In many cases, they purchase yerba mate in bulk directly from Brazilian suppliers without emphasizing the source or cultural significance of the product.

As a result, while ready-to-drink beverages contribute to category growth, they may also reduce consumers' awareness of the traditions, origins, and brand identities associated with traditional mate consumption.

Q: We understand that C smico is currently available in more than 60 retail locations across South Florida. Is the focus of your U.S. internationalization strategy concentrated there, or are you targeting the entire country?

A: Our previous importer focused primarily on Florida because its business model was centered on serving Latino communities. However, the introduction of Amazon fundamentally changed our growth strategy. Through Amazon's logistics network, we are able to distribute products from our Miami warehouse to consumers throughout the United States. This nationwide reach is precisely the advantage that our previous importer could not provide. As a result, our objective is no longer limited to South Florida but extends to the entire U.S. market.

Q: Changing topics slightly, I'd like to ask about Messi and other international athletes such as Colapinto. Do South American figures like them, who are frequently seen carrying mates

everywhere they go, influence U.S. consumers' purchase intentions?

A: Yes, in two different ways. First, there is the aspirational consumption effect. Fans often want to consume the same products as their idols. The same dynamic applies to influencers such as Sam and myself: our followers are interested in the products that we personally use and create. When consumers see admired public figures drinking mate, they become more inclined to try it themselves. Second, these athletes generate curiosity. When an American consumer sees figures like Lionel Messi or Franco Colapinto carrying a thermos and a bombilla, the natural reaction is to wonder what they are drinking. That curiosity creates an entry point for the product. The challenge, however, is ensuring that the first experience is enjoyable. This is why flavored yerba mate products can play an important role in e-commerce channels when targeting new consumers. During our research on the Chilean market, for example, we found that CBSé successfully penetrated the metropolitan Santiago market largely through flavored varieties, as traditional bitter mate proved more difficult for new consumers to adopt.

Q: Finally, do you have any strategies linked to the upcoming World Cup?

A: Yes, although we are approaching the opportunity carefully. The internal dynamics surrounding the Argentine Football Association (AFA) have led many Argentine brands to avoid becoming official sponsors of the national team. We were offered that possibility but ultimately decided against it. In fact, the current sponsor is Baldo. The prevailing trend is to work directly with individual players rather than through the national federation. This is the same approach used by brands such as McDonald's and Mostaza, which often collaborate with specific athletes instead of official teams.

At the moment, Cósmico is exploring potential partnerships with players such as Enzo Pérez and Rodrigo De Paul, and has also considered opportunities involving Lionel Messi, although such a collaboration would require a substantially larger investment. In addition, we are evaluating promotional activities at fan festivals and other events surrounding the World Cup, rather than focusing exclusively on the tournament itself.

B.2. Interview with Aldara Gómez Salazar, Yerba Mate Sommelier.

Note. This interview was conducted in Spanish by the researchers on May 28th, 2026. The original transcript was reviewed and edited by the researchers. The English version presented in this appendix is a translation of the original Spanish interview produced with the assistance of generative artificial intelligence tools (Google Gemini and Anthropic Claude) and subsequently reviewed by the researchers for accuracy and consistency with the original meaning. Any remaining translation errors are the responsibility of the researchers.

The original Spanish transcript is presented first, followed by the English translated version used for data analysis and citation purposes throughout this thesis. “Q” refers to the word *Question* and “A” refers to the word *Answer*.

B.2.1 Original Interview Transcript (Spanish).

Q: ¿Cómo suelen clasificar a la yerba mate dentro del mundo de los sommeliers? ¿Existen muchas diferencias?

A: *Sí, existen muchísimas diferencias, por eso existe la especialización de sommelier de yerba mate. En el mundo de la yerba tenemos una variedad enorme y en este último tiempo se han hecho más notorias las diferencias. Si nos enfocamos en las yerbas argentinas (porque las brasileñas y paraguayas son otro campo), nuestras características siempre son la mezcla de hoja, palo y polvo.*

Estas se dividen principalmente por su proceso de secado: “Barbacuá”, “Despalada” y “Cinta”. Por ejemplo, la yerba Cósmico, por la que me preguntás, es una yerba tradicional con hoja, palo y polvo que pasa por un proceso de cinta.

Q: ¿Qué significa el proceso de "cinta" y en qué se diferencia de la "barbacuá"?

A: El proceso de cinta es, por así decirlo, el estándar. Es el sistema que fue evolucionando con el tiempo. Consiste en un proceso de calor que no dura más de cinco o seis horas. Se le llama cinta porque la yerba va pasando por unas cintas transportadoras que la van cargando.

Por otro lado, el sistema de barbacuá es el proceso primitivo, el que usaban los guaraníes. Hoy en día todavía quedan empresas que lo utilizan (como la de mi marido). La barbacuá pasa por un proceso de calor mucho más largo y complejo porque el objetivo es que la yerba adquiera ese característico sabor ahumado. Tu paladar lo recibe inmediatamente.

Q: Mencionas que Cósmico es una yerba simple de proceso de cinta, pero ¿cómo llegó a tener tanto impacto?

A: Cósmico llega desde otra mirada, pensando en un público joven. En cuanto al producto en sí, no tiene nada que no tenga una Playadito, una Taragüí, una Lapacho Rosa o una Primicia. Es una yerba común de hoja y palo.

La diferencia clave es que ellos tercerizan toda la producción. Se la produce Piporé, que está en el centro de la provincia de Misiones y es una “señora” empresa, de las más grandes. Los chicos de Cósmico no tienen su propia chacra de yerba mate; ellos le pagan a una empresa privada para que haga todo el proceso de secanza y molienda. Si les preguntás sobre el proceso técnico específico de la producción, probablemente no lo sepan al detalle porque no lo viven acá en Misiones, ellos viven

en Buenos Aires. Ellos se ocupan de la mirada hacia afuera: la publicidad, el marketing, contarte historias y venderte por ese lado emocional.

Q: ¿Qué opinás sobre la estrategia de comunicación que ellos tienen? ¿Afecta o beneficia al producto?

A: Creo que tienen una comunicación excelente hacia afuera porque su producto llega y vende mucho. Tienen una mirada muy nacionalista, muy enfocada en el "Argentina, Argentina, Argentina", lo cual funciona bien. No nos olvidemos que solo hay tres países productores de yerba mate en el mundo: Argentina, que es el mayor productor y exportador con el 50% de la producción, Brasil con el 30% y Paraguay con el 20%. Uruguay no produce porque su suelo no lo permite, aunque consuman un montón.

Cósmico lo hizo muy bien porque mostraron su vida, sus costumbres y las pusieron en práctica de forma simple. Ver a un streamer o a un influencer tomando mate es muy atractivo para la gente hoy en día.

Q: ¿Cómo creés que impactará esta forma de comunicar en los consumidores extranjeros ahora que se están expandiendo a Estados Unidos?

A: Lo están haciendo muy bien. De hecho, van un paso adelante. Hace poco circulaba la noticia de que el hijo de Donald Trump lanzó su propia marca de bebida energizante o gaseosa a base de yerba mate y ahora va por la yerba tradicional. Esto demuestra que la yerba mate se puede explotar por todos lados: en infusiones, golosinas, cosmética, etc. Se viene un boom muy grande allá.

Q: Como sommelier, ¿sentís que el fenómeno de las redes sociales y la expansión internacional ayudó a darle visibilidad a tu profesión?

A: *Totalmente. Hoy en día, si no estás en las redes, no vendés. Yo soy profesora de historia y mi marido viene de familia de productores de yerba de toda la vida. Antes, la yerba llegaba a la góndola de otra manera. Hace unos 10 años empezó el fenómeno de las "casitas de yerba mate", tiendas boutique independientes de los supermercados, y eso masificó el conocimiento. Nosotros, como sommeliers, tuvimos que salir a explicar qué hacemos, por qué catar una yerba, y enseñar que cada yerba es diferente, aunque salgan de la misma planta.*

Q: Tomando en cuenta que consumo Playadito, ¿qué otra yerba me recomendarías probar que pueda conseguir?

A: *Playadito y Cósmico son marcas masivas. Si querés probar algo diferente, con más personalidad y que no se "lave" tan rápido, te recomiendo buscar yerbas de sistema barbacuá o aquellas catalogadas como agroecológicas. Marcas como Lapacho Rosa o Las Tunas son excelentes. No las vas a encontrar fácilmente en un supermercado común, pero sí en las casitas o tiendas especializadas en yerba mate que hay en Buenos Aires, como en Pilar. Buscá las que tengan procesos más artesanales y naturales.*

B.2.2 English Translation of the Interview.

Q: How is yerba mate usually classified in the sommelier world? Are there many differences?

A: *Yes, there are a lot of differences, which is why there is a specific specialization for yerba mate sommeliers. In the world of yerba, we have a huge variety, and lately, these differences have become much more noticeable. If we focus on Argentine yerbas, since Brazilian or Paraguayan productions belong to a different field, our main characteristics always involve a blend of leaves, stems (palo), and dust (polvo).*

These are mainly divided by their drying process: “barbacuá”, “despalada”, and “cinta”. For example, Cósmico, the one you are asking about, is a traditional yerba with leaves, stems, and dust that goes through the cinta process.

Q: What does the "cinta" process mean, and how does it differ from "barbacuá"?

A: The cinta process is, so to speak, the standard. It is the system that evolved over time. It consists of a heat process that lasts no more than five or six hours. It is called “cinta” because the yerba moves along huge conveyor belts during processing.

On the other hand, the barbacuá system is the primitive process, the one used back in the day by the Guaraní people. Today, there are still companies that use it, like my husband’s company. Barbacuá undergoes a much longer and more complex heat process because the goal is to give the yerba a distinctive smoky flavor. Your palate notices it immediately.

Q: You mentioned that Cósmico is a simple yerba made through the cinta process, but how did it achieve such a huge impact?

A: Cósmico approaches the market from a different angle, targeting a younger audience. As far as the product itself is concerned, it doesn't have anything that a Playadito, a Taragüí, a Lapacho Rosa, or a Primicia doesn't have. It is a standard yerba with leaves and stems.

The key difference is that they outsource the entire production. It is processed by Piporé, which is located in central Misiones and is a massive, top-tier company. The creators of Cósmico do not own a yerba mate farm; they pay a private company to handle the entire drying and milling process. If you ask them about the specific technical details of production, they probably won't know them thoroughly because they don't live here in Misiones, they live in Buenos Aires. They take care of the

external side: advertising, marketing, storytelling, and selling the product through that emotional connection.

Q: What is your opinion on their communication strategy? Does it affect or benefit the product?

A: I think their external communication is excellent because their product reaches people and sells heavily. They have a very nationalistic approach, deeply focused on the "Argentina, Argentina, Argentina" identity, which works well. Let's not forget that there are only three yerba mate-producing countries in the world: Argentina, the largest producer and exporter, holding 50% of global production, Brazil with 30%, and Paraguay with 20%. Uruguay does not produce because its soil doesn't allow it, even though they consume a lot.

Cósmico did a great job because they just shared their lifestyle and customs in a simple way. Seeing a streamer or an influencer drinking mate is highly appealing to people nowadays.

Q: How do you think this communication style will impact foreign consumers now that they are expanding into the United States?

A: They are doing great. In fact, they are one step ahead. Recently, news broke that Donald Trump's son launched his own brand of a yerba mate-based energy drink or soda, and now he is moving into traditional loose-leaf yerba. This shows that yerba mate can be exploited in many ways: infusions, candy, cosmetics, etc. A massive boom is coming over there.

Q: As a sommelier, do you feel that the social media phenomenon and international expansion helped give visibility to your profession?

A: Absolutely. Nowadays, if you are not on social media, you don't sell. I am a history teacher, and my husband comes from a lifelong family of yerba producers. Before, yerba reached supermarket shelves differently. About 10 years ago, the phenomenon of "casitas de yerba mate", specialty boutique shops independent of supermarkets, began, which brought deeper knowledge to the masses. As sommeliers, we had to step up and explain what we do, why we do tastings, and teach people that every yerba is different, even if they come from the exact same plant.

Q: Considering that I usually drink Playadito, what other yerba would you recommend I try that I can actually find?

A: Playadito and Cósmico are massive brands. If you want to try something different, with more personality, and that doesn't lose its flavor too quickly, I recommend looking for barbacuá or certified agroecological yerbas. Brands like Lapacho Rosa or Las Tunas are excellent. You won't easily find them in a regular supermarket, but you will find them in specialty yerba mate shops, "casitas de yerba" in Buenos Aires, for example in Pilar. Look for those that offer more artisanal and natural processes.

B.3. Interview with María Poplawski (Communications Director & Expert), Círculo DirComs.

Note. This interview was conducted in Spanish by the researchers on June 25th, 2026. The original transcript was reviewed and edited by the researchers. The English version presented in this appendix is a translation of the original Spanish interview produced with the assistance of generative artificial intelligence tools (Google Gemini and Anthropic Claude) and subsequently reviewed by the researchers for accuracy and consistency with the original meaning. Any remaining translation errors are the responsibility of the researchers.

The original Spanish transcript is presented first, followed by the English translated

version used for data analysis and citation purposes throughout this thesis. "Q" refers to the word Question and "A" refers to the word Answer.

B.3.1 Original Interview Transcript (Spanish).

Q: Desde tu experiencia profesional, ¿cómo compararías la comunicación de influencers con las estrategias de comunicación tradicionales en términos de generación de engagement y conocimiento de marca?

A: Ambas herramientas cumplen funciones diferentes dentro de una estrategia de comunicación integral. La publicidad tradicional es muy valiosa para generar alcance y construir notoriedad de marca, especialmente cuando se busca llegar a audiencias masivas. Lo que tienen los influencers, es que aportan un nivel de cercanía y engagement que difícilmente pueda lograrse mediante los medios tradicionales. Los creadores de contenido generan conversaciones con sus comunidades y construyen relaciones basadas en la confianza. Esto hace que el mensaje no sea percibido como una publicidad, sino como una recomendación dentro de un contexto cotidiano. En ese sentido, cuando el objetivo es introducir una marca o un producto nuevo, comunicar a través de influencers suele acelerar el conocimiento y la interacción con la audiencia.

Q: ¿Qué factores consideras que hacen que los influencers sean más o menos efectivos que la publicidad tradicional para conectar con consumidores en otros países?

A: La clave está en la autenticidad y en la adaptación cultural del mensaje. Cuando una marca ingresa a un mercado extranjero, debe comprender los códigos, hábitos y expectativas de los consumidores locales. Los influencers pueden actuar como mediadores culturales porque conocen profundamente a sus comunidades y saben

cómo presentar un producto de manera natural. Por supuesto, la elección del influencer es determinante. No se trata únicamente del tamaño de la audiencia, sino de la afinidad entre los valores del creador, la marca y el público objetivo.

Q: En tu opinión, ¿los consumidores tienden a confiar más en las recomendaciones realizadas por influencers que en los mensajes transmitidos a través de canales publicitarios tradicionales?

A: En términos generales, sí. Hoy los consumidores valoran especialmente las experiencias personales y las recomendaciones percibidas como “genuinas”. Esto no significa que la publicidad tradicional haya perdido efectividad, sino que la confianza se construye de manera diferente. Las audiencias esperan transparencia y coherencia. Cuando un influencer incorpora un producto de manera consistente dentro de su estilo de vida, la recomendación suele generar mayor credibilidad que un anuncio publicitario convencional. De todas formas, la confianza siempre depende de la autenticidad con la que se construye esa relación.

Q: ¿Considerás que comunicar a través de influencers es una estrategia efectiva para introducir productos culturalmente asociados a la Argentina en mercados extranjeros?

A: Sí, especialmente cuando el producto requiere un proceso de educación del consumidor. Muchos productos tradicionales no solo deben explicar sus beneficios funcionales, sino también el contexto cultural que los rodea. Los influencers permiten mostrar cómo ese producto se integra en una rutina diaria, cuál es su significado y cómo puede formar parte del estilo de vida del consumidor. Además, el contenido generado por creadores suele humanizar la experiencia y reducir las barreras de entrada frente a productos desconocidos. Lo que hace Sam es bárbaro en ese sentido, porque logra traducir una práctica profundamente arraigada en la cultura argentina

a un lenguaje que resulta comprensible y atractivo para audiencias internacionales.

Q: Pensando específicamente en la yerba mate, ¿qué oportunidades y desafíos identificás para posicionar este producto entre consumidores extranjeros?

A: Al proporcionar energía de manera natural, la principal oportunidad es que la yerba mate responde a tendencias globales muy relevantes, como lo es el “wellness” y los hábitos saludables. Por otro lado, el desafío más importante es que se trata de un producto con una fuerte carga cultural. Para muchos consumidores extranjeros no resulta evidente cómo se prepara, cómo se consume o cuál es su valor diferencial frente al café o al té. Por eso creo que la estrategia de comunicación debe combinar dos dimensiones: por un lado, explicar los beneficios funcionales del producto, y por el otro, transmitir su valor cultural.

Q: Comparado con las estrategias tradicionales, ¿creés que las recomendaciones de influencers tienen una mayor capacidad para incentivar a los consumidores extranjeros a probar yerba mate por primera vez? ¿Por qué?

A: Sí, porque el primer desafío no es la compra, sino reducir la incertidumbre. Como te comentaba, cuando un consumidor observa repetidamente a un creador de contenido incorporando la yerba mate de manera natural en su rutina, comienza a percibir el producto como algo familiar y accesible. En ese sentido, los influencers cumplen un rol muy importante en la etapa inicial del proceso de adopción, ya que generan curiosidad, muestran cómo utilizar el producto y disminuyen la percepción de riesgo asociada a probar algo completamente nuevo. La publicidad tradicional puede generar notoriedad, pero los influencers suelen ser más efectivos para transformar ese conocimiento en una primera experiencia de consumo.

B.3.2 English Translation of the Interview.

Q: From your professional experience, how would you compare influencer communication with traditional communication strategies in terms of generating engagement and brand awareness?

A: Both tools serve different purposes within an integrated communication strategy. Traditional advertising is highly valuable for achieving broad reach and building brand awareness, particularly when the goal is to reach large audiences. What influencers bring to the table is a level of closeness and engagement that is difficult to achieve through traditional media. Content creators foster conversations with their communities and build relationships based on trust. As a result, their messages are often perceived not as advertisements, but as authentic recommendations shared within an everyday context. In that sense, when the objective is to introduce a new brand or product, influencer communication can significantly accelerate both brand awareness and audience engagement.

Q: What factors do you believe make influencers more or less effective than traditional advertising when connecting with consumers in foreign markets?

A: The key factors are authenticity and cultural adaptation. When a brand enters a foreign market, it must understand the local consumers' values, habits, and expectations. Influencers can act as cultural mediators because they know their communities well and understand how to present a product in a way that feels natural and relevant. Of course, selecting the right influencer is essential. Effectiveness is not determined solely by audience size, but by the alignment between the creator's values, the brand, and the target audience.

Q: In your opinion, do consumers tend to trust recommendations made by influencers more than messages delivered through traditional advertising channels?

A: Generally speaking, yes. Today's consumers place a high value on personal experiences and recommendations they perceive as genuine. This does not mean that traditional advertising has lost its effectiveness; rather, trust is built differently. Audiences increasingly expect transparency and consistency. When an influencer consistently incorporates a product into their lifestyle, the recommendation tends to carry greater credibility than a conventional advertisement. Ultimately, however, trust always depends on the authenticity of that relationship.

Q: Do you consider influencer communication to be an effective strategy for introducing products that are culturally associated with Argentina into foreign markets?

A: Absolutely, particularly when the product requires consumer education. Many traditional products need to communicate not only their functional benefits but also the cultural context behind them. Influencers can demonstrate how a product fits naturally into everyday routines, explain its cultural significance, and show how it can become part of a consumer's lifestyle. In addition, creator-generated content humanizes the experience and lowers the barriers to trying unfamiliar products. What Sam does is an excellent example of this. She successfully translates a practice that is deeply rooted in Argentine culture into content that is both understandable and appealing to international audiences.

Q: Focusing specifically on yerba mate, what opportunities and challenges do you see in positioning this product among international consumers?

A: Because it provides natural energy, yerba mate is well aligned with major global

trends such as wellness and healthy lifestyles, which represents a significant opportunity. At the same time, its strongest challenge lies in its cultural roots. For many international consumers, it is not immediately clear how to prepare it, how to drink it, or what differentiates it from coffee or tea. For that reason, I believe the communication strategy should combine two key dimensions: on the one hand, explaining the product's functional benefits, and on the other, conveying its cultural significance.

Q: Compared to traditional marketing strategies, do you believe influencer recommendations are more effective at encouraging international consumers to try yerba mate for the first time? Why?

A: Yes, because the primary challenge is not the purchase itself but reducing uncertainty. As I mentioned before, when consumers repeatedly see a content creator naturally incorporating yerba mate into their daily routine, they begin to perceive the product as familiar and accessible. In this sense, influencers play a crucial role during the initial stage of the adoption process by generating curiosity, demonstrating how to use the product, and reducing the perceived risk associated with trying something completely new. Traditional advertising can certainly build awareness, but influencers are often more effective at turning that awareness into an initial trial experience.

B.4. Interview with Horacio Rossi, Licensed Customs Broker.

Note. This interview was conducted via email exchange in Spanish on June 4th, 2026. Contact with Horacio Rossi was established following a referral from the Consulate of Miami, as a relevant source of information on customs and import procedures. The English version presented in this appendix is a translation of the original Spanish email



Horacio Rossi

para ALBA, Jose, mí ▾

BUENOS DIAS LUCA,

Te paso a continuacion la informacion requerida:

Los documentos para enviar con la mercaderia son: Factura Comercial; Lista de empaque; Certificado de Origen y la guia aerea o conocimiento de embarque.

Sugerimos antes de hacer un embarque grande (via maritima) de enviar uno via aerea en menor cantidad como embarque piloto. De esa manera, ya quedarian

Registrados con Aduanas y la FDA.

Aduanas y FDA una vez que hay varios embarques en registro de importacion, lo revisan uno cada 5 u 8 embarques, porque ya van conociendo al importador/exportador y al producto.

Es muy probable que el primero quieran revisarlo fisicamente.

Las etiquetas pueden venire n castellano, pero debe tener una adicional bien pegada con lo que pide Aduanas y FDA, como:

PAIS DE ORIGEN (Made in Argentina)

Descripcion

Peso grueso y neto (en Gramos y Onzas)

Informacion alimenticia (contenido graso, calorías, azucar, etc.)

Nombres del fabricante y del Importador (este ultimo con numero de telefono)

Marca

Esta informacion es la basica y mas importante. Sugiero para mas informacion pueden entrar (On Line) en la pagina de la FDA "requisitos para etiquetas" por si falta algo mas.

La yerba como alimento /suplemento dietario no cambia nada. Aplica los mismos requisitos.

Los gastos , en general serian:

Broker (nosotros)...Nacionalizar :\$ 120,- por embarque

Fianza Aduanal :Minimo \$60,- o \$ 6,- por cada mil del valor de la facture comercial.

Mensajeria :\$ 30,-

FDA \$70,-

ISF Bond \$75,-

ISF \$55,-

Si vendria marítimo: agregar ISF (Import Security Filing) este tramite debe hacerse antes que salga el barco desde origen. Nosotros transmitimos toda la informacion del envio a Aduanas.

Deberan proveernos con la informacion tgal como: Nro. Del conocimiento de embarque, nombre del barco, lugar y nombre del embarcador, fechas de salida y llegada, quien exporta e importa, etc.

Por otra parte , sugerimos contraten un despachante de aduana alli o freight forwarder para que les prepare el embarque , pues deben notificar ANTES DE SALIR el embarque, a la FDA lo que se Conoce como 'PRIOR NOTICE'. Es imprescindible que este paso se haga antes que salga la mercaderia , de lo contrario no la van admitir en USA.

Cualquier duda, nos avisas por favor. Gracias y saludos,

B.4.2 Original Email Exchange (Spanish).

Q: ¿Cuáles son los documentos que se necesitan para enviar la yerba mate a EE.UU.?

¿Factura comercial, certificado de origen, packing list, algún otro?

A: Los documentos necesarios para enviar con la mercadería son la Factura Comercial, la Lista de Empaque, el Certificado de Origen y la guía aérea o conocimiento de embarque. Sugerimos, antes de realizar un embarque grande por vía marítima, enviar uno por vía aérea en menor cantidad como un embarque piloto. De esa manera, los exportadores ya quedarían registrados ante las Aduanas y la FDA (Food and Drug Administration).

Q: Respecto al registro en la FDA, en tu experiencia con envíos desde Argentina, ¿qué tan frecuente es que la aduana haga una inspección física en un primer embarque de yerba mate?

A: Las Aduanas y la FDA, una vez que ya existen varios embarques en el registro de importación, revisan la mercadería aproximadamente uno cada 5 u 8 embarques,

porque ya van conociendo al importador/exportador y al producto. Sin embargo, es muy probable que en el primer embarque quieran realizar una revisión física completa.

Q: ¿La yerba entra como alimento o como suplemento dietario ante la FDA? ¿Eso cambia algo en los requisitos?

A: *Que ingrese como alimento o como suplemento dietario no cambia nada en absoluto. Aplican exactamente los mismos requisitos regulatorios para ambas clasificaciones.*

Q: ¿Qué información debe llevar la etiqueta? ¿Hay alguna diferencia según el estado de destino, por ejemplo Florida?

A: *Las etiquetas pueden venir originalmente en castellano, pero obligatoriamente deben tener una etiqueta adicional bien pegada que cumpla con lo que solicitan las Aduanas y la FDA. La información básica y más importante que debe contener es:*

- *País de origen (Made in Argentina)*
- *Descripción del producto*
- *Peso bruto y neto (en Gramos y Onzas)*
- *Información alimenticia (contenido graso, calorías, azúcar, etc.)*
- *Nombres del fabricante y del importador (este último obligatoriamente con su número de teléfono)*
- *Marca comercial.*

Esta es la información básica y más importante. Para mayor detalle, sugiero entrar de forma online en la página de la FDA, en la sección de "requisitos para etiquetas", por si llega a faltar algo más específico.

Q: Más allá del 10% de arancel, ¿qué otros costos hay que contemplar en destino (flete, seguro, handling, broker fees, etc.)?

A: *Los gastos generales a considerar en destino serían los siguientes:*

- *Broker: \$120 USD por embarque para realizar la nacionalización.*
- *Fianza Aduanal: Un mínimo de \$60 USD, o en su defecto, \$6 USD por cada mil dólares del valor de la factura comercial.*
- *Mensajería: \$30 USD.*
- *FDA Fees: \$70 USD.*
- *ISF Bond: \$75 USD.*
- *ISF Filing: \$55 USD.*

Si el envío se realiza por vía marítima, se debe agregar obligatoriamente el trámite del ISF (Importer Security Filing). Este trámite debe realizarse antes de que el barco zarpe desde el puerto de origen. Nosotros nos encargamos de transmitir toda la información del envío a las Aduanas, pero para ello, deberán proveernos con datos precisos tales como: número del conocimiento de embarque, nombre del barco, lugar y nombre del embarcador, fechas estimadas de salida y llegada, y los datos de quién exporta y quién importa. Por otra parte, sugerimos que contraten un despachante de aduana o un freight forwarder en Argentina para que les prepare el embarque, ya que se debe notificar a la FDA antes de la salida de la mercadería mediante lo que se conoce como Prior Notice. Es de vital importancia que este paso se realice antes de que salga la mercadería; de lo contrario, no será admitida en los Estados Unidos.

B.4.2 English Translation of the Interview.

Q: Regarding documentation, what are the documents required to ship yerba mate to the U.S.? Commercial invoice, certificate of origin, packing list, any others?

A: The required documents to accompany the merchandise are the Commercial Invoice, Packing List, Certificate of Origin, and the Air Waybill or Bill of Lading. Before executing a large shipment by sea, we highly suggest sending a smaller quantity by air as a pilot shipment. This way, the exporters will already be registered with U.S. Customs and the FDA (Food and Drug Administration).

Q: Regarding FDA registration, in your experience with shipments from Argentina, how frequent is a physical customs inspection on a first shipment of yerba mate?

A: Once there are several shipments recorded in the import registry, Customs and the FDA inspect the merchandise approximately once every 5 to 8 shipments, as they become familiar with the importer, exporter, and the product. However, it is highly probable that they will want to conduct a physical inspection on the very first shipment.

Q: Does yerba mate enter as a food product or as a dietary supplement before the FDA? Does that change any of the requirements?

A: Whether it enters as a food product or as a dietary supplement changes absolutely nothing. Exactly the same regulatory requirements apply to both classifications.

Q: What information must the label carry? Is there any difference depending on the destination state, for example, Florida?

A: The labels can originally be in Spanish, but they must have an additional, firmly attached label that complies with Customs and FDA requirements. The basic and most important information it must include is:

- Country of origin (Made in Argentina).*
- Product description.*

- *Gross and net weight (expressed in Grams and Ounces).*
- *Nutrition facts (fat content, calories, sugar, etc.).*
- *Names of the manufacturer and the importer (the latter must include a phone number).*
- *Brand name.*

This is the baseline information. For further details, I suggest visiting the FDA website online under the "labeling requirements" section, in case any additional specific item is required.

Q: Beyond the 10% tariff, what other costs should be anticipated at destination (freight, insurance, handling, broker fees, etc.)?

A: *The general expenses to consider at destination are usually:*

- *Broker Fees (Customs Clearance): \$120 USD per shipment for customs clearance.*
- *Customs Bond: A minimum of \$60 USD, or otherwise, \$6 USD for every thousand dollars of the commercial invoice value.*
- *Courier/Messenger Services: \$30 USD.*
- *FDA Fees: \$70 USD.*
- *ISF Bond: \$75 USD.*
- *ISF Filing: \$55 USD.*

If the shipment is sent by sea, the ISF (Import Security Filing) process must be added. This procedure must strictly be completed before the vessel departs from the port of origin. We transmit all shipment data to Customs, but to do so, you must provide us with specific information such as: Bill of Lading number, vessel name, location and name of the shipper, departure and arrival dates, and details of who is exporting and importing.

Furthermore, we strongly suggest hiring a local customs broker or freight forwarder in Argentina to prepare the shipment, because the FDA must be notified before the cargo departs through what is known as a Prior Notice. It is absolutely imperative that this step is completed before the goods leave; otherwise, they will not be admitted into the United States.

Appendix C. Complementary information provided by the interviewees.

C.1. FDA Official Guidance.

During the interview with the customs broker, he suggested reviewing the FDA's official website directly to confirm the labeling requirements and ensure nothing was missing. Following that recommendation, the FDA's published guidance on importing human foods was reviewed, and the findings are summarized below.

The findings are consistent with the official guidance published on the FDA's website, which covers the requirements verified at the time of importation, including prior notice, food facility registration, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), and food labeling. Imported foods must be pure, wholesome, safe to eat, produced under sanitary conditions, and accompanied by truthful labeling in English. All establishments that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food intended for the U.S. market must register with the FDA, a requirement in place since December 2003, later expanded under FSMA, which also requires facilities to renew their registration every two years. This applies directly to Cósmico's production partner in Argentina and is one of the administrative steps that must be completed before any shipment can legally enter the country. Incorrect labeling can lead to warning letters, product recalls, or shipment detentions at U.S. ports of entry.

C.2. Amazon Sales Data.

Additional information was obtained through direct communication with Diego Torres, Commercial Director of Cósmico: Although the company did not provide screenshots from its Amazon dashboard, Torres shared the ranking of the U.S. states where the brand records the highest concentration of Amazon sales.

According to the information provided, Florida is the company's largest market, followed by California, Massachusetts, Texas, and New Jersey. Torres also noted that Texas ranks second, after Florida, in sales of Cósmico's yerba mate tea bags ("mate cocido"), suggesting differences in consumer preferences across product formats depending on the state.

This information provides additional evidence of Cósmico's market penetration in the United States and highlights the importance of regions with both strong Latin American communities and growing consumer interest in functional and wellness-oriented beverages.