The Bittersweet Truth: Corporate Social Responsibility in Online Communication Between a Coffee Company and its Customers

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ABSTRACT

With the increased use of the internet, social networks have acted as a relationship channel between consumers and companies. This paper aims to analyze the communication between an organization and its customers in a Brazilian online community, based on corporate social responsibility (CSR) criteria VBA model, which is composed of the elements of value, balance, and accountability. Netnography was applied to the Facebook fan page of a company brand that manufactures and sells coffee machines and capsules. The results demonstrated that the elements of the VBA model do not meet the expected criteria in the social network analyzed, showing a discrepancy between what the organization intends to deliver and what is delivered to customers. These findings have implications for the theory and practice of organizations, broadening the discussion about CSR practices and consumer behavior. It also highlighted the need to investigate deeply the constructs that built the VBA Model contributing to develop the field.

KEYWORDS

Online community, corporate social responsibility, communication, consumer behavior, netnography

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of technology, social networks have increasingly signaled their role as communication channels between companies and consumers. Over the internet, organizations can establish direct relationships with their stakeholders (Kent et al., 2003).

In Brazil, according to research conducted by IBGE (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics) in 2019, it is estimated that more than two thirds of the country's population, around 79,9%, had an internet connection at home, mainly through cell phones. These figures represent an increase of almost 10% compared to the 2018's IBGE survey. This growth points to a trend that has been gradually absorbed by the companies, which is to use the internet and social networks as a relationship strategy with their audience.

In the same scenario, online (or virtual) communities, identified as forums and spaces for discussion on the internet that have real meaning for their participants and determine consumer behavior (Kozinets, 2002; 2010), allow the identification of trends and directions for the market through people communication. Noble, Noble and Adjei (2012) affirm that customers will take advantage of these environments to talk freely, and that they are at their most open and honest state when sharing product opinions and consumption experiences in online communities.

In fact, the act of interacting and sharing information between people is the main activity in social media platforms (Quinton & Wilson, 2016). Facebook, the social network created in 2004, achieved almost 2.5 billion monthly active users in 2019, becoming the biggest social network worldwide. Data from Deloitte's 2016 survey highlighted that over 3 million companies globally use Facebook communities as a marketing tool. In addition to stimulating new business, these communities allow companies to strengthen relationships already established in the market, since consumers prefer to visit a Facebook page of an organization rather than its official website (Haigh, Brubakera & Whiteside, 2013).

This environment of relationships between companies and consumers has also become an accessible tool for customers to transmit their grievances regarding a company or brand, its products and services. Thus, ethical issues emerge from this context, encouraging companies to work for the preservation of value they offer to their customers in order to meet their needs in a transparent and responsible manner (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008). Therefore, Wang et al. (2016) indicate that there is an urgent need to investigate CSR practices and outcomes through the lens of different stakeholders, as consumers. In this context, companies should use corporate social responsibility strategies which allow organizations to engage with social and environmental issues, going beyond the legal, and having, as their central argument, issues like moral obligation, sustainability, license to operate, and reputation (Carroll & Brown, 2018).

Given the strategic role of social networks and knowing the importance of the relationship between company and customers for the development and even the survival of organizations, this paper aims to investigate the application of CSR by the company in communicating with consumers in a Facebook fan page or brand online social networking (BOSN), as stated by Lim and Kumar (2019).

After, we used the VBA Model by Schwartz and Carroll (2008) to support the study, which explores the concept of value, balance, and accountability as practiced by the companies. These concepts reflect what society expects allowing the organization to achieve a degree of corporate citizenship, causing discussions and respect for economic, legal, and ethical aspects with the same intensity and importance (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008).

For such, a Netnography was applied to the page of a company that sells coffee machines and capsules. Therefore, it sought to describe how communication occurs between business and

consumers in social networks and to identify the compliance of CSR criteria by the company regarding to the relationship with stakeholders, in particular, with consumers.

The paper is structured to conceptualize online communities and their role in business, in addition to explaining Schwartz and Carroll´s (2008) VBA model; to describe the method used to operationalize the research; as well as to analyze the most relevant aspects of the research proposal and provide deeper understanding of the relationship between business and consumers in online communities, especially regarding to ethical issues.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this paper comprises concepts related to online communities and their role in organizations. In addition, it explores the VBA model by Schwartz and Carroll (2008) as part of an appropriate strategy of corporate social responsibility of companies.

2.1. ONLINE COMMUNITIES

The internet is constantly growing in the world as well as in Brazil. According to research provided by Statista, in 2018 the number of people with social media access in the country reached 95.2 million, representing a growth of almost 5% compared to the previous year. The internet now has an average access time per user of more than 2 hours a month, between home and work usage (Statista, 2018). Social networks have been gradually growing in the last years. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), the concept of social media is strengthened among executives of large companies, seeking, along with consultants and professionals, to identify new ways of use for online communities like YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, making them increasingly lucrative for organizations.

Kent and Taylor (1998) studied the dialogic communication between organizations and consumers, and even before the emergence of various social networks, there are rules that continue to be applied. In their paper, the authors present some actions to follow, from basic principles in this regard to the inclusion of useful information on the site as follows: the page should be updated constantly, there should be generation of new content that encourage visitors to return, as well as easy access and usability and, finally, efforts should be made to ensure that visitors are interested in the site.

In fact, ever since sites like MySpace and Facebook have opened space for companies to create profiles and to turn into online communities of active members, organizations have begun to incorporate strategies related to these means (Waters et al., 2009). Online communities allow direct contact of consumers with businesses and response power in real time. Noble, Noble and Adjei (2012) posits that online brand communities bring benefits for companies through customer-to-customer solutions, but also imply risks in unregulated online communities, such as the harmful impact of spreading information with negative bias concerning the company.

As defined by Kozinets (1998; 2002), online communities are forums based on the internet. The author differentiates online communities from virtual communities, because they constitute groups that have a "real" existence for their participants, generating consequences for their behavior as consumers. The idea of online communities is to bring another way of approaching and engaging consumers, without requiring time or travel, and being present in everyday media. These communities facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge, and experience, contributing to the personal and professional development of their members.

2.1.1. Facebook as online community

Facebook has immense popularity among users and companies in the context of online communities. Created in 2004, with the initial aim of developing relationships between students at an American university (Phillips, 2007), the platform only encouraged organizations to join it for business after 2007, whether through advertising or fan pages, which disseminate information about the organization.

With more than 2.5 billion active users with daily access, with over 85% coming from outside the United States (Facebook, 2019), the website focuses consumers and businesses in a virtual location of common use, combining the interests of different groups of individuals. These groups coexist in the Facebook environment, establishing relationships as both stakeholders of organizations and using the system for leisure purposes.

Vorvoreanu (2009) emphasized the importance of understanding which public relations efforts are appropriate and effective on the network, since Facebook represents, as a communication channel, several peculiarities around cultural and social norms. The author conducted a series of focus groups with students and found that, although participants assigned the possibility of contact with friends and acquaintances as the main objective for using this social network, organizations efforts to communicate with users are perceived and identified to maintain loyal customers.

By "liking" a Facebook page, the user has access to all updates and shared content and can interact and take it to other Internet users. The secret is for the organization to know its audience and identify the best way to meet their needs. Lim and Kumar (2019) analyzed the variation in consumer's use of brand online social networking (BOSN) and identified that information, incentives, entertainment, and connectedness are major BOSN motives for customers to be active in fan pages at Facebook.

Farquhar (2012) studied about identity and imagery on Facebook. The authors emphasized that when people engaged in online communication, the performance of their identity tends to be exaggerated to overcompensate the lack of nonverbal or visual cues. They also pointed out that Facebook users try to achieve social acceptance through the network, managing their profile updates and community interactions. On the other hand, Haigh, Brubaker and Whiteside (2013) showed that companies usually disclose services offered, awards earned and other victories on their Facebook pages.

The main strategy employed on the platform is corporate ability, in which interactions with the firms' fan page increases the perception of consumers regarding public relations, corporate social responsibility and purchase intent. Following this point of view, we then present the literature in CSR.

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility is a construct originated in the 1930s (Carroll, 1999) and is widely used in business literature and society with its focus broadening over time. CSR is increasingly present in the day-to-day operations of companies, with its studies starting initially from concern with negative social influences and evolving to a current general notion of doing good for society (Schwart & Carroll, 2008).

Carroll (1991) states that the concept involves social or societal responsibilities to outline the specific groups that a business should consider when conducting their actions. Studies of O'Riordan and Fairbrass (2008), in turn, have proposed that, in seeking to fulfill its obligations

of corporate social responsibility, companies should engage directly with stakeholders. The term stakeholder takes on different interpretations in the literature. Freeman (1984, p.91) explains that its broad sense consists of "any identifiable group or individual who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives". In other words, they represent distinct parts that affect the value of the company and actively participate in business development. Examples of stakeholders are suppliers, employees, consumers, governments, and society (Certo & Certo, 2005).

Parmar et al. (2010) consider that any set of company shares involves moral and financial consequences for stakeholders. In their paper, the authors showed a new understanding of Freeman's stakeholder theory and criticize the dichotomy between corporate social responsibility policies disseminated by organizations, and denial in coping with ethical issues adequately, which negatively affects the value of the company before the other constituencies involved.

Schwartz and Carroll (2008) introduced the Stakeholder Theory as one of the five constructs considered in the VBA model, along with Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Business Ethics, and Corporate Citizenship. The authors state that managing relationships with stakeholders adequately provides a powerful tool for organizations seeking to establish corporate strategies.

Carroll and Laarsch (2020) affirm that the fundamental element that underlies the field of business and society is the generation of value. They also explain that, through the years, the VBA model added three other constructs: Creating Shared Value, Conscious Capitalism, and Purpose Driven Business. All of them include the core concepts of value, balance and accountability. Although the concept of a company's stakeholders encompasses many groups, this research is limited to understanding the relationships of communication between the company and the interest group represented by its consumers, under the VBA model approach by Schwartz and Carroll (2008).

2.2.1. The VBA Model

According to Schwartz and Carroll (2008), all organizations and individuals operating in the organizational context have a responsibility (CSR) to be good citizens (Corporate Citizenship), to contribute to sustainable social value (Sustainability), to appropriately balance the interests of stakeholders (stakeholder Theory) and to act according to moral standards (Business Ethics), while demonstrating sufficient transparency of their actions to society.

Schwartz and Carroll (2008) developed the VBA Model, which is the theoretical foundation for this article's analysis. In their study, the authors propose the integration and unification of the five main constructs in the Business and Society Field: corporate social responsibility, stakeholders' management, sustainability, business ethics and corporate citizenship.

The authors suggest a new approach that allows the definition and connection among the five concepts by claiming competitiveness and confused conceptualization of the constructs. Through the VBA Model (the acronym for Value, Balance and Accountability), which corresponds to value creation, balance, and transparency, the objective is to define the proper role of the constructs for success of businesses in society (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008).

The value proposition is observed, according to Schwartz and Carroll (2008), when business goals meets society needs, through the production of goods and services efficiently while avoiding unnecessary negative externalities. To better illustrate this, value is perceived when the firm shows concerns about the efficiency and quality of its products and services as well as its brand, and the company's image towards the market.

Balance comes from the company's concern in directing and meeting the interests of stakeholders and social moral standards. A firm that guarantees the total satisfaction of stakeholders' needs and demands, and tries to prevent possible conflicts among them, is an organization working under the balance principle.

Finally, accountability refers to the need for business to be engaged in correct and verifiable activities, while likely to affect those involved in the process. Exemplifying, the firm ought to report its organizational goals, activities, and results to all interested groups, through social reports, newsletters, or any kind of informative tool, so that stakeholders can be properly informed about the firm's operations in society.

Recently the five main constructs were updated with three other concepts: Creating Shared Value, Conscious Capitalism, and Purpose Driven Business. However, all of them continue to serve as a basis to the original VBA model, which meant the value, balance, and accountability of a specific business (Carroll & Laasch, 2020).

As it is commonly believed that, in order to obtain results with a positive impact for companies and their stakeholders, businesses must meet corporate social responsibility requirements, as indicated by the VBA model, this paper aims to analyze the fulfillment of these parameters from the communication between company and consumer in an online community.

In fact, Lyra and Souza (2015) stated that there is a need to formulate further research to test the applicability of the VBA model proposed by Schwartz and Carroll (2008) and its relations with CSR in order to contribute to better practices among organizations, which is proposed by this paper.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is characterized as qualitative and uses netnography as the method, which is a technique developed by Robert V. Kozinets in the 90s. In his work, the author identifies netnography as an ethnography adapted to study online communities, and it is considered as marketing research in a virtual environment, so as to provide insights into consumers (Kozinets, 2002; 2010). Thus, through adjustments to the research techniques used in ethnography, it is possible to study cultures and communities emerging from Internet mediated communications.

Netnography differs from other digital enquires by its emphasis on online traces, interactions between people and organizations, and socialities (Kozinets, 2019). It stands by the cultural analysis of a community or social media in a virtual environment and follows a range of guidelines, as we present at the end of this section.

Costello, McDermott and Wallace (2017, p.3) pointed that "netnography is particularly well suited to dealing with personally or politically sensitive topics or illegal acts, which are discussed in online communities by individuals who prefer to conceal their off-line identities and welcome the anonymity offered online". By saying that, the authors posit that the netnographic method is widely used to work with delicate issues in multiple research environments. Kozinets (2015) also explains that the method is being used in different academic fields through time, when researchers decide to analyze personal narratives, interaction styles, innovative forms of collaboration, and online rules, practices, and rituals as well.

Dholakia and Zhang (2004) also advocated the use of netnography in scientific research for its temporal and spatial flexibility. Time flexibility refers to the ability to be generated through asynchronous communication, enabling researchers to access the data at any time; and spatial flexibility is with respect to its permissiveness to the field and cultures, much more comprehensive than in other qualitative methods. However, netnography demands rigor in its application,

although it is performed in a virtual environment and often analyzed through data with informal language like forums, chats and comments from social networks.

Considering it, Kozinets (2010) divided the netnographic process into six steps: 1) defining research questions, social websites or topics of study; 2) identification and selection of the online community to be analyzed; 3) participant observation of the community through immersion and data collection through ethical procedures; 4) data analysis and interpretation of results; 5) the writing and presenting of the research results report, as well as theoretical and practical implications. Following this sequence, it was possible to operationalize the netnographic research proposed in this study.

3.1. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The website utilized as the online community of the netnography is a Brazilian fan page for a company that produces coffee machines and capsules. For ethical reasons, the company name was withheld in the development of this study.

We collected the data published on the brand´s Facebook page from October 29 to November 29, 2018, considering posts and comments published until November 28, 2018. For Kozinets (2010), what sets the analysis period in netnography is the presence of several interactions and exposures over time that provides a sense of community. The period of the research made possible the collection of 3.352 comments extracted using the software ExportComments to export text data to Microsoft Excel and Atlas.ti for research coding. The software excludes comments from private users as well as any spam it detects.

Members of the company fan page on Facebook, which today surpasses one million users, despite having a common interest in the brand´s products, are characterized by their heterogeneity in terms of age, gender, and profession. Although it is not possible to say how many of them are, in fact, customers, their participation on the page suggests engagement, interest, or future purchase intention.

3.2. IMMERSION, COLLECTION AND PREPARATION OF DATA

One of the authors of this paper has been a consumer of this brand for five years, has a coffee maker, and regularly consumes capsules of flavors displayed by the company on the market. It is well known as a requirement in netnographic research a vast involvement coming from the researcher regarding the subject of study. Kozinets (2019) explains that participation, in this context, means to take part and to share in.

Thus, the research author has been participating in the fan page as a member for more than three years, eventually engaging on posts of interest, such as releases of new flavors and promotions from the official website that are shared through Facebook. Costello et al. (2017) posits that, depending on the involvement of the researchers, netnography ranges from nonparticipatory to participatory approaches.

Also, Heinonen and Medberg (2018) point out that the majority of netnographic marketing studies adopt a passive participant observation in online spaces. This is considered the most unobtrusive research approach and has already been applied in other studies that used the netnographic method, as in Schaap (2002), in which the author followed and participated actively in the group even before he started his data collection. This position allowed us to perceive the daily dialogue between consumers and the firm, with an emphasis on complaints about delivery service and prices, highlighting a problem that has stimulated the research on the topic.

Kozinets (2019) explains that netnography is centered on the research of online traces. In his work, he accentuates that some netnographies exclusively collect and analyze online traces, but others extend beyond these traces to other forms of data collection and creation. This study is limited to process the observation of online traces into our data set, without any form of co-creation between the researchers and the community members or the company. In addition, we sought to protect the members of the fan page by using pseudonyms, and to not expose the company's name. Due to the assumed position, the consumers' comments are presented with a label of "U" (for "user") followed by numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on.

After a preliminary analysis, we decided to divide the observations collected by their respective posts and comments through the analysis software Atlas.ti, for qualitative research. This program is widely used in netnographic studies (Belz & Baumbach, 2010; Kozinets, 2010) and allows text encoding for classification, acting as a support to conducting content analysis.

The coding of the data involved categorizing pieces of comments according to specific attributes by using keywords (Kozinets, 2010) and after that, the codes were combined in related code families. Thus, the units of analysis were the words quoted in excerpts of comments to answer the questions of this study, within the users' discussion context and response posts made by the company.

Therefore, with the help of Atlas.ti and Microsoft Excel for handling qualitative data, we carried out a content analysis of the collected material, which, according to Bardin (1977), constitutes a set of communication analysis techniques that allow the acquisition of knowledge about the conditions of sending / receiving messages, considering categories. For this reason, it was considered as the most relevant data analysis method for this specific research.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

During the period considered for data collection, the company we investigated published five posts and received 3.352 comments in these publications, considering in this number the total of community users' comments plus company answers. The data was collected from the fan page and organized in Microsoft Excel, following a general reading performed considering each post published by the company and all related comments as well as the replies given by the organization.

Then, according to the assumptions of netnography, we tried to identify the main topic explored in the company's published posts. It was found that the posts' subjects were all the same. The five posts emphasized different coffee capsule flavors offered in the company's website, inviting users to try and savory these products. Considering the many content topics that could be used strategically by the company to develop this social media channel, such as promotion of sponsorship and partners, discounts and promotions, information about the coffee market, recipes using their products as an ingredient and others. It highlights a short investment from the company's side to make interesting and engaging content to the community users.

Further, we analyzed the comments made on the posting content and found that the overall comments in the posts of the fan page were divided into three broad categories: 1) praises to the product/company; 2) diversified claims; and 3) the company's responses. Within these parameters, subcategories were created from units of analysis: 1a) praise for the product / company, 1b) friend tagging 2a) complaints about the price of products and shipping, 2b) complaints about the lack of information, product availability and delivery delay, 3) company responses to users' comments.

Thus, based on the assumptions made by the model VBA by Schwartz and Carroll (2008), which considers the concepts of value, balance and accountability made by socially responsible companies, we followed a sequence of analysis procedures (Chart 1), considering the posts and comments from the fan page.

Chart 1

Relations between VBA Model and the Research Analysis

VBA Model Elements	Schwartz e Carroll (2008) definitions	Procedure of Research Analysis
Value	Doing business that meets the needs of society through the production of goods and services efficiently, while avoiding unnecessary negative externalities.	Identifying elements of communication between business and consumers that demonstrate concern on creating value for the product and the brand.
Balance	Company concern in directing and meeting the interests of stakeholders, as well as social moral standards. In the case of one stakeholder, to meet all the needs of it.	Identifying elements of communication between company and consumer showing correspondence and respect for the interests of customers.
Accountability	Searching for business engagement in correct and verifiable activities, while likely to affect those involved in the process, avoiding committing recurring errors	Identifying elements of communication between business and consumers that demonstrate transparent, honest, fair and proper attitude from the company.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

To clarify the identification of the VBA model factors with respect to the content of the messages of the company's Facebook page, Figure 1 presents a theoretical scheme, which divides the comments subcategories identified by its approach to each element.
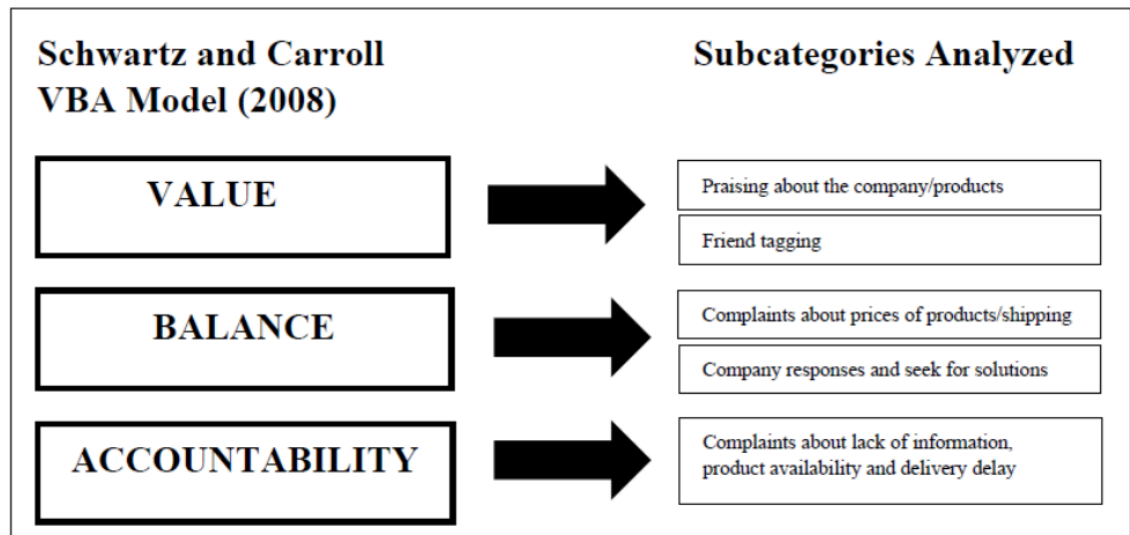

Figure 1. Research Theoretical Scheme
Source: Elaborate by the authors.

5. DISCUSSION

From the division proposed by the theoretical framework presented earlier, the communication mediated in the company's social networks between consumers and the firm is analyzed according to the value, balance and accountability elements of the VBA model.

The **value** criterion that causes an organization to succeed in their operations, respecting the CSR assumptions by Schwartz and Carroll (2008), comprises the implementation of the product offering and efficient services over time, supplying the societal needs. Considering this factor, the content of the comments that had praise for the product of the firm was analyzed.

Based on the words of quotes like "love", "adore", and "great" in the comments it was possible to identify positive feedback from consumers in the posts, especially concerning specific coffee flavors. Although some community users demonstrate to endorse the company products and actions, like U1: *"I love it (heart emoji)!"* and U2: *"Love it!! I always buy it on the website and the capsules always arrive fast (smiling emoji)!"*, others even feel "lucky" in their purchase experiences, as U3 posits: *"Delicious! We are lucky, we bought two machines and many capsules without a problem, everything was fine (smiling emoji)"*.

Numerous comments refer to the high prices charged by the company's goods, and the cost of shipping. Keywords like "price", "value", "cost", "shipping" and "cheap" (in a negative context, as in "not cheap") are constantly in the users' complaints, as well as complaints about negligence in product delivery. Many users emphasized higher prices in the products available at the website store in comparison with local markets, as well as deceptive practices concerning pricing. U4 said: *"Don't buy anything from this website, guys! They don't deliver the products and after that they send a promotional ticket and change the products price in the store! Total deception! They don't respect the customers!!! (original text in caps lock)"*.

The use of comments to complain about unrelated posts' content draws attention. U5 posits: *"Promote sales but also respect the demand. I bought capsules on Black Friday and I didn't receive my products until now. This is absurd. I was planning to use it as part of a coffee table in my father's birthday, but it didn't arrive on time"*. As U5, many other users complained about the Black Friday sales. It seems that the company couldn't deliver what they promised at first.

Carroll and Laasch (2020, p.5) explained that the "V" for value of the VBA model "is created when business meets society's needs by producing goods and services in an efficient manner while avoiding unnecessary negative externalities". The construct validity is mainly concerned about business generating value or benefit to society. The prior examples clearly did not meet these criteria. Even if it is known that a company's CSR can't be measured only through their social networks, it is evident that social media platforms play a strong role in firm's communication and brand positioning nowadays.

Still in regard to the creation of value for the organization, the user manifestations based on tagging friends in the comments were also considered. In this kind of comment, the user marks the name of a Facebook friend, calling attention to the post, in a way to attract interest to what the organization is communicating in the post or to some specific user comment.

Netto et al. (2016) explain that consumers frequently look for the experiences and opinions of other people concerning a product when they want to achieve knowledge about its quality. Although some tags come along by terms such as "look!" or "look at that!" the vast majority is only the friend's name marked as a comment without any other information. U6 calls to a friend in a bad comment about the customer service saying *"Look at that, U7! We are screwed"*, pointing out that purchasing something from the company was a big mistake.

Through the manifestations studied, we found that some users still sympathize with the company, mainly exposing their "brand love". Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) explained that it is usual between brands that require frequent and ongoing purchasing rather than one-time-only products. The authors also suggested the development of loyalty programs to increase the "power" of love in this type of firm. However, the coffee company already has a loyalty program - which fails frequently, as per our analysis. Thus, the value component is widely compromised by the lack of efficiency from the company to handle problems, as well as the fragilities in the process being often exposed by the community members.

The balance element relates to the concerns about all stakeholders' interests, as well as the rights to equality and organizational respect for its pairs, constantly obeying social and moral standards (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008). As previously mentioned, in this study, the authors limited the stakeholder analysis to customers only. Carroll (2020) points out that a degree of balance is essential in addressing and responding appropriately to potentially conflicting stakeholder interests or ethical standards that may come up. In other words, it means that every company should follow closely any movement from their customers in order to successfully manage expectations and requirements from them in an ethical way.

It is true that the company shows some concern for answering comments and complaints from the community users, using polite language, but that which is somewhat informal, as in:

> *"Hi, U8! Since our sales were a huge success, we are out of stock for some products. But don't worry, it will be solved soon! Stay tuned in our fan page and website to follow the news. I'll be here (coffee emoji)!"* (The company, in response to a question about the lack of products available in the website store).

> *"Hey, U9! Please know that I have been working hard to give you best shipping price options. Right now I can offer a monthly subscription with free shipping and product discounts. Anyways, I wrote your complaint as a suggestion to get even better. Stay with me (coffee emoji)!"* (Company, in response to a complaint about shipping prices to different regions in Brazil).

However, the recurrence of standard answers from the company to the same complaints directly affects the balance element, which supports the need for the company to respond to conflicts of interest or ethical conflicts in the company regarding its stakeholders, as Schwartz and Carroll (2008) stated. It is considered essential for business development that companies comply with CSR criteria, and it does not seem to be met by the organization in the scenario under discussion.

Noble et al. (2012) found that comments about the core products, like functionality, value, overall durability and others, are most critical, and must be addressed to avoid damage to company sales and profitability. According with the authors, the social nature and visibility of online communities amplifies worries about the core product and, if deemed credible, these can scare off other potential customers. This is the main point that should be considered by firms in social media and it is fully connected with the balance concept.

Even emphasizing the balance in the research analysis, it only reinforces that the other elements (value and accountability) also end up being compromised in many situations, since they are also related to value, considering that the company does not show a major concern in providing what customers and society really need and expect from the firm.

In addition, the coffee company is not presenting enough solutions for the problems faced by the clients, which can be easily understood as neglect from the firm in the matter of consumers' complaints. In the end, as Carroll and Laasch (2020) stated in their work, balance is strongly

related with the business urgency to take active steps to achieve the interests and claims of their stakeholders.

Finally, the **accountability** element emerges in the content analyzed through comments that refer to lack of responsibility and accountability for the deadlines in the delivery of products purchased through the company's website, often available for access on the fan page through links. According to Schwartz and Carroll (2008), this element refers to transparency concerning the honesty and integrity of the company in their actions and cannot be neglected by their managers.

In this context, U10 comments about a failure to deliver the purchase:

> *"I am extremely unsatisfied with customer service. The post office returned my coffee machine due to a shipper's mistake. The company didn't do anything according with a phone contact. They steal the client that paid an extra price to get the product in a short deadline and can't solve their own problem. It is so sad to see my money going down the drain (…)."* (User U10)

The company answered to the client that they will be contacting her through personal inbox. After some days, another customer asks U10:

> *"U10, was your problem solved through the company's inbox contact?"* (User 11)

In the same way, U12 commented:

> *"I purchased a coffee machine three months ago and it broke. I am trying to get in touch with technical support but no answer yet".* (User 12)

Then, the company notified the user to check his inbox. In the meantime, another user (UX13) joined the conversation, saying:

> *"Mine broke only 15 days after purchasing and until now no solution or technical support from the company".* (User 13)

After that, U12 replied back to U13:

> *"U13, this was a huge deception. Expensive products and unfortunately not very good. My machine made a water pression so strong that burned me. Dangerous."* (User 12)

The company reaches out to U12 again, saying that they "felt worried by the comment" and asking for some personal information like name, phone number, and e-mail. However, after a couple days, U12 wrote in the same conversation:

> *"Unfortunately, I didn't receive any manifestation from the firm or even interest to understand what happened with my machine (…). I do not recommend this product."* (User 12)

In comments like that, it seems clear the disappointment of some community users, demonstrating that the company failed to take responsibility for their actions by committing recurring errors that take time to be rectified or are not handled properly. Carroll and Laasch (2020) affirm that accountability refers exactly to firms taking responsibility for their actions and decisions, and taking steps to rectify failures, ensuring that they won't happen again.

These previous dialogues between the consumer and the firm occur repeatedly and are available to other users of the online community at any time. We noticed that although the company's concern is visible to respond to criticism almost instantly, there is a gap between what the organization wants and what is delivered, impacting on their social responsibility duties.

Whereas, the three elements of the VBA model must be balanced and present for the full operation of a corporation that values CSR and serves its consumers and stakeholders properly. Thecompany we studied should pay attention to the multiple aspects that permeate their businesses to harmonize their strategies for the well-being of society, and consequently, its own survival in the market.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The exercise of communication between the organization and the stakeholder (in specific, the consumers) in social networks, the curiosity towards the fulfillment (or not) of social responsibility principles of the company and the possibility to analyze these relationships through a dynamic method as netnography were the impulses which triggered concern and curiosity about this research problem.

Understanding the relationships and connections articulated in a brand´s online social networking through Facebook, by analyzing a popular coffee company fanpage, enables several theoretical and empirical contributions, both to organization management and to their consumers.

Considering the theoretical implications, the article extends the discussion of the VBA model proposed by Schwartz and Carroll (2008), bringing contributions to the research in this field. By analyzing the reality of a coffee companies Facebook community, we found that the value component showed ambiguous nuances. At first, we recognized some praise regarding the products and the brand by the clients and the good response from the company. However, there was a constant presence of negative comments even in positive contexts, such as customers who felt "lucky" just for having a purchase delivered on time or a friend tagging to emphasize other people' problems with the firm. It showed that the whole communication was biased by user active participation and shared opinions.

In social networks theory, this may be attributed to reciprocity, which involves matched behaviors from those participating in a network or relationship for mutual benefit over a period (Quinton & Wilson, 2016). According to the authors, the shared content has potential value to the creator, distributor, and recipient at both individual and company level. In other words, it seems that not only in the subcategories of value, but of all three main VBA concepts from Schwartz and Carroll (2008), the content was "flooded" by negative user comments.

As a theoretical advance, we believe that the research opened new doors toward connecting topics such as CSR and Sustainability in the context of social network, highlighting the consequences of online interactions in this matter. This research also highlights the need for new studies related to other stakeholders beyond consumers, and to other constructs linked by the constructs of value, balance, and accountability, helping to develop the knowledge frontier of the field. In addition, it enlarges the qualitative approach by using netnography, that, although validated and quite useful, is still incipient in Brazilian academic studies.

From an empirical point of view, the research results reinforce the importance of the manifest of customers to express and claim their rights over online channels, such as the practice of fair prices in the market and the demand for product diversification. However, the consumers

voice is still not heard loudly enough. Even with many brands facing boycott through cultural movements nowadays, the tensions within consumers and companies' relations remain diffuse and should be unfolded. The adoption of co-creation practices could be a reasonable way to solve issues between both sides.

For businesses, we highlight the need not only to interact responding to criticism and complaints online, but to solve the problem appointed by the consumer quickly and effectively. For that, the strategic marketing and decision-making team should listen to the demands of the audience in virtual environments in real time, as was suggested before, using co-creation strategies. As previously stated by Noble et al. (2012), firms can harvest value from online communities by encouraging and generating product ideas using contests, rewards, and public recognition as incentives to members. These topics were not addressed in any of the fan page posts analyzed.

Finally, considering the consumer-driven view adopted by the market nowadays, corporate social responsibility is a major issue, and companies must be held accountable for their poor performance and behavior towards society. By using the VBA premises, a firm could check all the boxes to a healthy relationship and good communication with their consumers.

6.1. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study has some limitations. Due to the use of qualitative research covering observation techniques with content analysis, some information may not have been captured through the eyes of researchers. We strongly recommend to researchers to apply quantitative or mixed approaches to investigate these constructs as well, expanding the results we obtained.

Also, due to the large amount of data available in the brand fan page, we limited our analysis to a short period. It is believed that further studies can be applied into the same company, this time considering a longer period that would allow the generation of further knowledge about the subject studied.

Regarding the social network and brand communities' sphere, we suggest extending the studies about the consequences of tensions between companies and consumers on this environment, considering the VBA model as a theoretical basis. As a complement, we suggest the research of CSR guidelines into BOSN using different products/services as subject. By knowing how the phenomenon unfolds in multiple categories, managers will be able to understand their audiences needs regarding social responsibility indicators.

Finally, we suggest exploring the VBA model proposition by analyzing all eight constructs individually, approaching different corporate sectors and through other online communities, such as Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.