

The impact of political brand activism on corporate reputation: the case of Portuguese brand activism in a war context

O impacto do ativismo de marca político na reputação empresarial: o caso do ativismo de marca português em um contexto de guerra

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ABSTRACT: The phenomenon of brand activism (BA) has been attracting the attention of scholars and businesses as a new and powerful strategy for brands to take a stand on sociopolitical topics and highlight their values, with high potential corporate gains. However, research on this topic is still at an exploratory stage and there are several companies and academics considering BA too risky for brands, especially on sensitive political topics such as war issues. Based on the theoretical perspectives of BA and its corporate impacts, notably in terms of corporate reputation, this article aims to study the impact of political brand activism on corporate reputation, analyzing the political activism of a retail company operating in Portugal—Auchan Retail Portugal (ARP), at the start of a particular war. A quantitative study was carried out, through the application of a questionnaire survey to 1,152 consumers of ARP, with the aim of analyzing the impact of Auchan’s political BA actions regarding a specific war context on its corporate reputation. The results showed that BA has a significant positive impact on the corporate reputation of ARP, thus contributing to a better perception of the potential of this strategy to improve corporate performance, by generating competitive advantages for brands.

Keywords: brand activism; political brand activism; corporate reputation; retail sector; war; sustainable development.

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RESUMO: *O fenômeno de ativismo de marca (AM) tem atraído a atenção de acadêmicos e empresas como uma nova e poderosa estratégia para as marcas se posicionarem em relação a tópicos sociopolíticos, além de evidenciarem seus valores, com elevado potencial de retornos corporativos. No entanto, a investigação sobre esse tema ainda se encontra numa fase exploratória, e existem várias empresas e acadêmicos que consideram o AM muito arriscado para as marcas, especialmente no que concerne a temas políticos sensíveis, como questões de guerra. Com base nas perspectivas teóricas sobre AM e nos seus impactos corporativos, nomeadamente a nível da reputação corporativa, este artigo pretende estudar o impacto do ativismo de marca política na reputação corporativa, analisando o ativismo político de uma empresa de retalho que opera em Portugal — Auchan Retail Portugal (ARP), no início de uma guerra específica. Foi realizado um estudo quantitativo, através da aplicação de um questionário a 1.152 consumidores da ARP, com o objetivo de analisar, em um contexto específico de guerra, o impacto das ações políticas de AM da Auchan na sua reputação corporativa. Os resultados indicam que o AM tem um impacto positivo significativo na reputação corporativa da ARP, contribuindo para uma melhor percepção do potencial dessa estratégia para aprimorar o desempenho corporativo e gerar vantagens competitivas para as marcas.*

Palavras-chave: *ativismo de marca; ativismo de marca político; reputação corporativa; setor do retalho; guerra; desenvolvimento sustentável.*

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the 21st century, several social processes and evolutions have occurred, which forced companies to rapidly adapt to new scenarios and take a leading role in the defense of relevant sociopolitical issues. Brands' better perception about the need to get involved in the defense of sociopolitical causes is indeed largely related to the increased polarization of society, which pushes companies to participate in the political debate, as well as to the new ways of consumption (e.g., SCARABOTO; FISCHER, 2013) and the growing stakeholder's demands for a primary role of brands in addressing social issues, often greater than that attributed to the State (KORSCHUN, 2021). Thus, a new paradigm of brand-stakeholder relationships has been evolving, in which brands are now increasingly understood in terms of the connection between subjectivities, values and personalities, and evaluated and judged markedly by their sociopolitical stances (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020).

In this sense, a new trend has emerged in the markets, in which brands declare their concerns and stances about polarized public issues through communication campaigns and effective actions to promote social change and sustainable development (e.g., SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018). In the literature, this phenomenon is often defined as brand activism (BA), which differs from traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) models and cause-related marketing by being a values-based strategy—it emphasizes the inherent company values relative to the issue addressed, which can be either human rights, environmental issues, political interests, trade policies, workplace problems, among others (e.g., EYADA, 2020).

Though only recently studied, the fact that it involves addressing contested topics, as in the case of war issues, has already led certain scholars to consider BA as a risky strategy (e.g., JUNGBLUT; JOHNEN, 2022), highlighting the potential negative effects it may have on companies, such as backlashes or boycotts (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021). This is

especially true when stakeholders do not agree with the brand's stance or consider the brand's support for the cause as a marketing strategy to make a profit (EYADA, 2020). However, there is also plenty of evidence that BA can bring several positive outcomes for brands that demonstrate a sincere responsibility for improving or resolving important causes, which includes financial and corporate gains such as greater purchase intention (e.g., SHETTY *et al.*, 2019) and greater corporate reputation (e.g., MARTINS; BATISTA, 2020). In fact, corporate reputation is one of the most recognized strategic assets of an organization, given the impact it has on the choices and perceptions of stakeholders in relation to the brand (e.g., RAITHEL; SCHWAIGER, 2014).

Given that BA can have positive but also negative results for brands, it is important to continue studying the impacts of BA on corporate performance, so that companies understand how they can meet the sociopolitical demands of their stakeholders while achieving specific corporate goals, thus justifying the investments in activism campaigns (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021).

In this way, this article aims to contribute to a better understanding of the strategic impacts of BA, bringing together some Portuguese empirical research that demonstrates how political BA campaigns can impact corporate reputation. Specifically, this research analyzes the extent to which the BA of a high-consumption retail company operating in Portugal—Auchan Retail Portugal (ARP)—influenced the company's reputation at the start of a specific war. By conducting a quantitative study in which questionnaires were administered to 1,152 consumers, political BA was analyzed, namely regarding their perception of activism, congruence, authenticity, and decision-making, also analyzing Auchan's reputation through five analytical dimensions (emotional appeal, products and services, workplace environment, social responsibility, and financial performance) and testing the direct impact of BA on corporate reputation through linear regression analysis.

Theoretical foundations

Brand activism

Contemporary society is facing significant social and environmental challenges that have led people to demand a response from all organizations, including companies (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2023). At the same time, factors such as globalization, technological developments, greater market competition and the growing thought on the responsibility of companies towards society have also led to changes in the way stakeholders perceive and evaluate brands, which now depends more on brand values and conduct than on market or economic factors (EYADA, 2020). In particular, consumers from younger generations, such as generations Y and Z, have undergone a transformation in consumption practices, in which the act of consumption goes beyond its utilitarian function to take on symbolic, identity-based and even political meanings (BAUMAN, 2007). In this context, consumption becomes a central sociocultural practice in mediating relationships between individuals, organizations and public issues, reflecting values, beliefs and ethical-political positions and reinforcing the role of the consumer as a political and cultural subject (SCARABOTO; FISCHER, 2013). Thus, today's consumers have demonstrated a growing sensitivity to the social and environmental consequences of consumerism, expressing greater concern for the sustainability and ethics of the brands they interact with (FRANCIS; HOEFEL, 2018), and tend to value conscious consumption practices, in which considerations about social justice, environmental impact and organizational authenticity significantly influence purchasing decisions (WHITE *et al.*, 2019).

The first conceptualization of BA was provided by Sarkar and Kotler (2018, p. 547), who outlined the phenomenon as “the business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic and/or environmental reform with the desire to improve society”, conceptualizing it as a values-driven strategy with a fundamental concern for the biggest and most urgent problems facing society. For their part, Jungblut and Johnen (2022) define this strategy as a brand's public expression of a stance toward

a political issue that is not directly related to the brand's business models. BA thus emerged as an intersection between politics and marketing (JUNG; MITTAL, 2020), where brands take a clear stand on the most varied issues and problems affecting current societies (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021). In this type of strategy, as advocated by Moorman (2020), brands become not only activists, but also educators, contributing to trigger social changes essential for the creation of a more egalitarian and sustainable society. Likewise, by incorporating social and political causes into its communication and actions, brands can help to reconfigure their relationship with consumers, encouraging consumption practices aligned with ideologies and worldviews (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018).

Given the range of sociopolitical issues that a brand can address, the progressive or regressive positions it can adopt in relation to the cause, and the disparate public opinion around controversial problems and events, BA is characterized as a risky and uncertain strategy (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021). This is exactly one of the crucial factors that distinguishes the concept of BA from other social brand strategies, such as CSR, as BA is linked to controversial and debate issues while CSR is primarily concerned with well-accepted prosocial issues that tend to be non-divisive (HOFFMANN *et al.*, 2020). As such, CSR tends to be perceived as a positive strategy, while the response to BA can vary greatly and be extremely polarized, even within the various stakeholder segments (JUNGBLUT; JOHNEN, 2022).

Therefore, the reasons driving a brand's activist actions are doubly scrutinized to identify whether these actions stem from authentic motives or are a marketing move to increase products/services sales and generate profits (EYADA, 2020). If it is not adequately implemented, BA can generate harsh negative corporate effects (MOORMAN, 2020) and financial and economic damage (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020), especially when they are the target of discontent from stakeholders, who can initiate anti-brand actions such as backlashes or boycotts (JUNGBLUT; JOHNEN, 2022). At the same time, when effectively managed, BA can also have major gains for the brand, both financial (e.g., SHETTY *et al.*, 2019) and corporate (e.g., MARTINS; BATISTA, 2020).

Political brand activism

Nowadays brands already carry out activist actions on multiple issues, including social, environmental, legal, economic, workplace, as well as political issues (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018).

The growing economic power of companies has brought them increased responsibilities towards society, especially in scenarios where governments fail in their duty to protect aspects of citizenship or civil rights, assuming an increasingly political role (MATOS *et al.*, 2017). From an early age, companies began to use their power to lobby or apply other pressure tactics to defend their interests, as well as funding campaigns or allying with political parties with common political interests/visions (EYADA, 2020). Political BA places these political pressure actions at the service of society's interests and political consumerism, covering issues such as lobbying, privatization, voting, voting rights, partisanship, policy (gerrymandering, campaign finance, etc.), or political conflicts, with companies using marketing strategies and their economic power to exert political pressure (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018).

An example of political BA occurred in 2022, after the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, when several brands, such as Adidas, IKEA, Airbnb, Jerónimo Martins, Lego, H&M, Google, Microsoft, Volkswagen, Netflix, Apple, Spotify, and Nike decided to stop selling their products/services in Russia, stop selling Russian products or even to withdraw their stores or factories from Russian territory as a form of protest against the invasion and economic pressure on the Russian government to retreat (CNN BRASIL BUSINESS, 2022). In the Portuguese context, companies such as Jerónimo Martins, Sonae SGPS and PRIO also demonstrated their support for Ukraine with political activist communications on their digital platforms, and created several actions to support the Ukrainian people and the Portuguese located in Ukraine at the beginning of the conflict (MARKETEER, 2022).

Corporate reputation

Corporate reputation (CR) is considered one of the most strategic assets of a company's value, given its relevance for a firm to gain competitive advantage

and sustain superior financial performance (QUINTANA-GARCÍA *et al.*, 2021). CR can be defined as the synthesis of stakeholders' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes about a company (POST; GRIFFIN, 1997). For Gotsi and Wilson (2001), this synthesis can be evaluated in a general or specific way, resulting from the stakeholder's direct experiences with the company and other forms of communication and symbolism that lead to an evaluation of the set of organizational attributes conquered over time and compared to those of competitors in the market. Likewise, Lee (2020) adds that, in addition to being the cumulative result of past activities, CR also represents stakeholder perspectives about the organization's current and future positions.

The stakeholders' views of a company's reputation are influenced by a number of factors, related not only to the company's financial and tactical performance, but also to intangible aspects that concern the way the company fulfills the stakeholders' expectations and rights, as well as its obligations to society (e.g., GALLARDO-VÁZQUEZ *et al.*, 2019; SARSTEDT *et al.*, 2023). In the commercial area, for example, Walsh *et al.* (2009) found consumer satisfaction and trust in the company as important antecedents of an organization's reputation. For their part, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) argued that the dimensions affecting CR include product/service quality, corporate performance, citizenship activities, management model, the workplace, innovation, and corporate ethics. In fact, several empirical studies have proven a positive nexus between corporate social actions, such as CSR and BA, and CR, since social actions help stakeholders to create more positive perceptions about how companies are oriented towards stakeholders and respond to societal challenges (e.g., CADEZ *et al.*, 2019; VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, by promoting a good CR, companies can also achieve very favorable results at a financial and corporate level. A positive reputation has strategic value for organizations, as it attracts investors (FELDMAN *et al.*, 2014), motivates employees (DAWIT *et al.*, 2020), and contributes to consumer satisfaction and retention (RAITHEL; SCHWAIGER, 2014). For these reasons, several studies have already determined the great contribution of CR to generating sustained higher

income over time (e.g., CORNELISSEN, 2008). Since CR is sensitive and vulnerable to any shortcomings of an organization, including irresponsible or unethical behaviors, it becomes extremely important for companies to manage and sustain a good reputation, proactively adopting corporate strategies that aim to improve the engagement of stakeholders with the company and to take advantage of the opportunities provided by a favorable reputation (XIANGYU *et al.*, 2020).

The impact of brand activism on corporate reputation

From an early age, corporate social responsibility actions were a factor associated with building a favorable CR (e.g., ABRATT; KLEYN, 2012). This is related to the fact that a company's social and environmental responsibility activities balance the businesses' interests with stakeholders' concerns and expectations, giving stakeholders a better perception of the way the company operates and cares about their needs (SHETTY *et al.*, 2019). Through social activities, businesses are oriented towards their various stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, society, or the environment), fulfilling their economic, social, and environmental responsibilities and showing a commitment to ethical principles and to the interests of all stakeholders (XIANGYU *et al.*, 2020).

Existing literature suggests that corporate social actions, such as BA, may serve as strategic resources for enhancing intangible assets like CR. While some scholars have raised concerns regarding the risks of engaging in social strategies (KEINERT, 2008; MOORMAN, 2020), a growing body of research (e.g., EILERT; CHERUP, 2020; DIRUSSO *et al.*, 2022) contends that, when such actions are strategically managed, they can not only address societal and environmental demands but also provide a source of competitive advantage. Empirical evidence (e.g., BRAMMER; MILLINGTON, 2005; GALLARDO-VÁZQUEZ *et al.*, 2019; MIRANDA; MIGUEL, 2022) supports a positive association between socially responsible corporate behavior and CR, particularly when companies demonstrate a genuine commitment to societal well-being. In the context of BA specifically, scholars argue that

its reputational benefits are contingent on the perceived authenticity and altruistic motivation of the campaigns (KOTLER *et al.*, 2021; JOHNSON *et al.*, 2022), reinforcing positive brand-cause associations. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that BA, even when addressing politically sensitive issues such as armed conflict, can exert a positive influence on corporate reputation.

H1 – Political brand activism has a positive influence on corporate reputation.

Materials and Methods

To assess the impact of its political BA actions regarding a specific war context on the reputation of a major retail company operating in Portugal (ARP), a quantitative study was conducted. ARP is a French multinational retail group operating in Portugal for over 50 years by selling food products, hygiene and beauty products, home and garden products, technology, clothing, among others. The brand is governed by values of trust, open mind, and excellence, focusing on product quality, selected offerings, discounted prices and excellent customer experience. ARP also has a vast history of policies and actions in terms of social responsibility and activism, notably related to its main business area (food sector) and the field of sustainability (AUCHAN RETAIL PORTUGAL, 2025).

Questionnaire surveys were administered to ARP's consumers. The evaluation of BA was based on the scales of Eilert and Cherup (2020) and Lim and Young (2021), measuring dimensions such as perception of activism, perception of congruence, perception of authenticity, and decision-making. Items related to CR were assessed using the Fombrun *et al.* (2000) Reputation Quotient, grouped into five analytical dimensions: emotional appeal, products and services, workplace environment, social responsibility, and financial performance.

The questionnaire consists of 42 questions. Response options are based on a five-point agreement scale (1 – completely disagree; 5 – completely agree). Surveys were conducted online through a snowball sampling method, utilizing the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The surveys were in circulation from May 1st to June 30th,

2023. Ethical criteria were considered during the questionnaire administration, including the application of informed consent and the assurance of data confidentiality.

The sample consists of 1,152 subjects who are consumers of the brand under study, ARP. The majority are female (53%), with the remaining participants being male. Regarding age distribution, 45% are between 18 and 34 years old, 41% are between 35 and 54 years old, and 14% are 54 years old or older. A considerable portion of the sample has up to secondary education (45%), and 55% have completed undergraduate or postgraduate studies.

Results

Brand activism

By observing Table 1, it is concluded that, in general, individuals have a positive perception of ARP's BA, with an average (*m*) of 3.48 and a standard deviation (*s.d.*) of 1.10. The question that had the highest mean was "ARP is attentive to social issues" (*m* = 4.10; *s.d.* = 0.83). On the other hand, the question that obtained the lowest value was "ARP advocates for social issues by exerting pressure on institutional actors" (*m* = 2.81; *s.d.* = 1.19), where individuals showed some indifference in their responses, placing themselves in the midpoint of the response scale— "neither agree nor disagree."

Regarding the dimension of stance, it is observed that the perception of ARP's stance on the analyzed war context is positive, with an average of 3.72 (*s.d.* = 1.21).

Table 1. Descriptive analysis: Brand Activism (Auchan Retail Portugal).

Dimensions	Mean	SD
Activism	3.48	1.10
Stance	3.72	1.21
Perception of Congruence	3.40	1.09
Perception of Authenticity	3.62	1.05

SD: standard deviation.

Concerning the dimension “perception of congruence”, the average is 3.40 (s.d. = 1.09), indicating that respondents generally have a positive perception of the congruence of ARP’s BA actions. The highest average was obtained with the proposition “It is common for organizations like ARP to advocate for issues such as the analyzed war” ($m = 3.81$; s.d. = 0.99), with respondents agreeing with this statement. The item “The issue of the analyzed war is logically connected to ARP” had the lowest mean ($m = 2.50$; s.d. = 1.26).

With regard to the perception of authenticity, the mean of the grouped variable is 3.62, and the standard deviation is 1.05. Overall, respondents demonstrated a positive perception of the authenticity of ARP brand activism actions and messages. The highest-rated question is “ARP is staying true to itself with the stance taken on the analyzed war” ($m = 3.85$; s.d. = 1.08). On the other hand, the less highly rated options ($m = 3.28$) relate to the consistency of actions and communication by ARP.

Corporate reputation

Regarding the analysis and evaluation of CR, the scale used encompasses five dimensions: emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, social and environmental responsibility, and financial performance.

Table 2 presents the variable “corporate reputation”, which aggregates the five aforementioned dimensions. The mean is 3.61, and the standard

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis: Corporate Reputation (Auchan Retail Portugal).

	Mean	SD
Corporate Reputation	3.61	0.90
Emotional Appeal	3.60	1.03
Products and Services	3.91	0.84
Vision and Leadership	3.59	0.87
Social and Environmental Responsibility	3.52	0.88
Financial Performance	3.45	0.90

deviation is 0.90. In a general overview, respondents demonstrated a positive perception of ARP corporate reputation after being informed about the actions taken by the organization in response to the analyzed war context.

Apropos the emotional appeal dimension, the mean is 3.60 (s.d. = 1.03), indicating that the majority of respondents have a positive emotional appeal towards the organization. Particularly noteworthy is the item “I have a positive feeling about ARP” ($m = 3.76$; $s.d. = 0.98$).

In the case of the products and services dimension, the mean is 3.91, and the standard deviation is 0.84, indicating a positive perception among respondents regarding the products and services offered by the organization. Particularly noteworthy is the item “ARP offers products and services with a good quality-price ratio” ($m = 4.14$; $s.d. = 0.83$).

As for the variable vision and leadership, the mean obtained ($m = 3.59$; $s.d. = 0.87$) is slightly lower than the dimensions presented earlier. There is a positive perception that ARP has a clear vision for the future and seizes market opportunities ($m = 3.72$).

In the case of the social and environmental responsibility dimension, the obtained mean was 3.52 ($s.d. = 0.88$), indicating an overall positive perception among respondents. The item that had the lowest mean and differed from the others was “ARP is environmentally responsible” ($m = 3.06$; $s.d. = 0.91$), with the majority of individuals expressing a “neither agree nor disagree” stance. The remaining questions had a higher mean, indicating agreement with the responses. The highest mean was obtained for “ARP supports good causes” ($m = 3.95$; $s.d. = 0.84$).

Regarding financial performance, the mean is 3.45 ($s.d. = 0.90$), indicating a positive perception among respondents regarding the organization’s financial performance. Notably, respondents highlighted the strong profit track record ($m = 3.69$; $s.d. = 0.81$) and the robust prospects for the company’s future growth ($m = 3.65$; $s.d. = 0.81$). The least pronounced value ($m = 2.97$; $s.d. = 1.05$), revealing respondent indifference, pertains to whether ARP tends to outperform the competition.

Brand activism vs. corporate reputation

It can be concluded that the independent variable, BA, also exhibits a linear relationship with the dependent variable, corporate reputation ($\text{sig} < 0.001 < 0.05$). The relationship between the variables is considered strong ($r = 0.73$), indicating that 53% of ARP corporate reputation is explained by its brand activism ($r^2 = 0.53$), thus validating the theoretical working hypothesis—political BA has a positive influence on corporate reputation.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results suggest that surveyed consumers have a positive perception of ARP's BA, particularly highlighting the company's attention to social and political issues and the expressed intention to support marginalized groups. However, participants believe that, despite the company's interest in social and political matters, it could play a more active role in exerting pressure on institutional and political actors and have a more pronounced impact beyond organizational boundaries. These findings align with the discussions in the literature, as argued by Sibai et al. (2021) and Howarth (2022), emphasizing the growing demand for organizations to play a more active and interventionist role in public affairs and socio-political causes.

Specifically, regarding ARP's stance on the war context, the perception of this position is positive, indicating that consumers value the company's decision to take a stand on a politically and socially divisive issue. Consumers validate the congruence between the company's values, actions, and the authenticity of the messages communicated in this regard, which contributes to the positive assessment they make regarding ARP activism. This highlights the fact that consumers not only expect companies to take stances on sociopolitical issues but also evaluate these actions based on their authenticity, transparency, and effectiveness, with BA communications and actions being understood as a form of symbolic power which depends on altruistic motivations and an alignment with the values

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defended by the brand over time to be able to positively impact the brand's relationship with consumers, for example in terms of corporate reputation (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020). In this case, Auchan Retail's action, based on the slogan "every bit of support counts," involved the collection of vouchers and monetary donations to associations directly providing humanitarian aid in the context of the war, as well as the integration of refugees into the Portuguese job market. Despite being consistent and valid, consumer responses suggest that the communication of these actions and activities could have been more effective, highlighting an area with potential for improvement in Auchan Portugal's BA management. It is essential for an organization's involvement in BA to be based on its basic assumptions and intrinsic values for it to be positively perceived by its audiences (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018). Additionally, the organization must develop planned strategic communication (DIRUSSO *et al.*, 2022), emphasizing authenticity and alignment between the organization's beliefs, statements, and concrete actions (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020).

The corporate reputation, assessed in its different dimensions, received an overall positive evaluation, particularly emphasizing emotional appeal and a clear vision for the future. This indicates that respondents harbor positive feelings toward ARP and that the company can establish a positive emotional connection with them—a crucial aspect for building a solid reputation. This is underscored by the strong correlation established between BA and corporate reputation, suggesting that BA significantly influences how the company is perceived, felt, and experienced by consumers. The importance of this variable in Auchan Portugal's image construction is highlighted. From a consumption studies perspective, this connection is particularly relevant, as corporate reputation shapes not only consumer trust (SAFDAR *et al.*, 2020) but also the symbolic and emotional value attributed to brands that distinguish them from its competitors (DAWIT *et al.*, 2020). In contemporary consumer culture, in which the perceived ethical and political stance of a company becomes a key criterion in purchase decisions (SCARABOTO; FISCHER, 2013), BA can be a differentiator, enhancing brand reputation in an increasingly

value-driven market. The findings are in line with those obtained by Miranda and Miguel (2022), who concluded that CSR and BA could be recognized as significant predictors of corporate reputation.

In conclusion, the results of the present article reinforce the growing importance of BA as a communicative and strategic practice capable of shaping corporate reputation in a meaningful way. In the case of ARP, consumers evaluated the company's activism positively, recognizing its willingness to engage with politically and socially divisive issues, particularly in the context of war and humanitarian crisis. The findings also highlighted the value consumers place on authenticity and congruence between corporate values, actions, and communication, factors that foster emotional connection and contribute to increasing corporate reputation.

Several implications and avenues for further research emerge from this. On one hand, the perceived congruence, especially regarding the war, is noteworthy, indicating that Auchan's actions are perceived as relevant and acceptable by consumers. However, consistency between actions and their communication can be enhanced to strengthen the company's position in the market and improve its public perception. On the other hand, the knowledge generated indicates that organizations should strategically plan and act on social and political issues, recognizing that such positions can positively influence their corporate reputation.

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