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## THE HUMANIZATION OF BRANDS AS A VALUE-OBJECT IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC<sup>1</sup>

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1. Paper presented to the Working Group GT2 - Communication, Consumption and Organizations, part of the XV ABRAPCORP - Brazilian Scientific Congress on Organizational Communication and Public Relations - Communication, Public Health and Organizations - 2021.

**Abstract:** This article proposes to draw a parallel between the marketing targets of companies, as maintained at the height of the 60s and 70s - when the value-object was the maximum profitability in business -, and the dictates of contemporaneity, when the concern with humanitarian and social responsibility issues have become the new value-object for advertisers from any segment, especially in pandemic times. Using theoretical assumptions known by Zygmunt Bauman about the ephemerality of human behavior in Post-Modernity, the work converges to the analysis of two chosen topics: the first questions whether organizations are in fact adapting to a real change in values aimed at commitment with social causes, or if they remain just camouflaged in their standard conduct, which prioritizes profit; the second refers to the role of the so-called 'new consumer', which today exerts a strong influence on the regulation of the market.

**Keywords:** Value-object, Profit, Social responsibility, Humanization, Brands.

## PROFIT AS A VALUE-OBJECT OF ORGANIZATIONS

*'Marketing is becoming more of an information-based battle than a sales-power battle'.*

(Philip Kotler)

About fifty years ago, the American economist Milton Friedman (1912-2006), a graduate of the prestigious Chicago School and winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize in Economics, wrote a controversial article in *The New York Times Magazine* (Ed. 13- 9-1970), widely celebrated at the time, which ended up making history. This is the famous essay 'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits', in which the author bluntly defends

2. Full article 'A Friedman doctrine - The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits' is available online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/09/13/archives/a-friedman-doctrine-the-social-responsibility-of-business-is-to.html> Accessed 2-3-2021.

the objective thesis that companies and their leaders must focus exclusively on the potential consumption of their products and on maximizing profits - or financial return from its shareholders. Initiatives aimed at Social Responsibility, as it is officially recognized, would, in his view, be a final mission not under the purview of business organizations, but strictly one of specific and isolated corporations, such as hospitals and schools with philanthropic purposes.

In the long text, interspersed with statements as frank as they are bold, such as:

=> 'Discussions of "corporate social responsibility" are notable for their analytical lightness and lack of rigor. What does it mean to say that "companies" have responsibilities? Only people can have responsibilities. A corporation is an artificial person, and in that sense it may have artificial responsibilities, but it cannot be said that "companies" as a whole have responsibilities, even in this vague sense.'

=> 'In a privately owned free enterprise system, an executive is an employee of the company's owners. He has a direct responsibility to his employers. This responsibility is to lead the company in accordance with their wishes, which will generally be to profit as much as possible.'

=> 'This is the only truth that any economist or manager can guide themselves with these days.'<sup>2</sup>

... and equivalent ones, Friedman, forgoing euphemisms, strips off the sharper face of Capitalism and evokes unrestrained applause. In that given context, the manuscript, as blunt as it might seem, echoed reasonableness, pertinence and was in line with the then prevailing market logic.

As a persuasive agent and effective arm of that system, Advertising, in turn, boosted this logic, collaborating and playing a decisive

role in that modus operandi and providing feedback on the relationship between its two main cores under the rule that: the flow of stocks ó / objective of the productive nucleus / depends on the intensity of consumption ó / objective of the social nucleus/, being the main function of /Advertising/ mediating the relationship between these interdependent poles, assimilating the demands of both to translate them appropriately to society.

The same thesis was didactically illustrated in one of Prof. Everardo Rocha (1995). In the anthropologist's understanding, Advertising is a neuralgic bridge that unites two key poles of Capitalism, the ones he named: Sphere of Production and Sphere of Consumption.

The endorsement of the dominant discourse by the pitch proper to the advertising discourse enables the interaction between two platforms that feed back and perpetuate the ordering of the capitalist system, giving it breath and ensuring its maintenance: the Sphere of Production and the Sphere of Consumption, which dialogue between itself through Advertising. (ROCHA, 1995, p. 27).

The agreement so reiterated by the market, as described: Promise / Offer, Adhesion / Purchase, in uninterrupted

running, until recently elaborated as a precise mathematical calculation and based on the infinite benefits associated with products, (LINDSTROM, 2016) today, however, in a world radically different from that of the 60s, 70s, does not exhibit the same power of persuasion. Rather, it suggests a certain degree of distrust, it is largely anachronistic and, in its worst sense, it sometimes sounds far-fetched and disconnected from reality for the overwhelming majority of so-called conscious or engaged consumers, an expansive and increasingly strident core in the contemporaneity, especially in this fateful course of the Coronavirus pandemic, as the following punctual excerpts informally register:

Today's consumers do not only take into account the characteristics and quality of the products and services offered, but also take into account the positioning, values and principles adopted by brands as institutions. Social, environmental and diversity causes are among some of the important factors taken into account when choosing consumers. No wonder that, in recent years, organic, sustainable, eco-friendly, cruelty free brands, which value the labor of their employees and others, have gained ground.



Esfera de produção = Production sphere

Publicidade = Publicity

Esfera de consumo = Sphere of consumption

A study by Alison Angus and Gina Westbrook, carried out by Euromonitor International in 2019 prior to the explosion of COVID-19, identified the following positions in the main global consumption trends for 2020: “we are open to other skills”, “we want to use better existing resources” and “we are fighting for fresh air”. Also according to the study, “companies are redesigning their products and services to be more accessible to everyone, representing individuals beyond the mainstream and helping to reduce prejudices around diversity and differences.” In addition, the study points to greater awareness of consumers who are more concerned about reusing products, supporting sustainable and environmentally conscious businesses.

A recent market survey, analyzed by the Institute of Research & Data Analytics Cromia Insights with the purpose of verifying the behavior of Brazilians in the pandemic, showed that, of those interviewed, “89% say that the impact of brand attitudes during the pandemic is positive and 62% say this makes them want to consume products or services from these brands, indicating possible post-pandemic loyalty.” (Media & Mensagem Magazine, 2020).

The spreading of free access to the virtual environment and communication carried out on social networks, a means that acts as a privileged space for the vocalization of current society in its claims, can be pointed out as the central vector of this remarkable change in behavioral pattern by the consumer public. (CASTELLS, 2009).

The Covid-19 worldwide crisis not only demanded isolation from the population, thus increasing the time of interaction on social media, but also forced brands and their businesses to go online under the threat of not surviving. The HootSuite report (April 2020) indicates that, in Brazil,

we had a 58% increase in the use of social media by individuals, and a survey by the Brazilian Society of Retail and Consumption indicates that 61% of consumers increased their volume of online purchases (46% of those increased by more than 50% of their purchase volume).

With regard to changes in behavior, it is possible to observe the concern of brands to communicate in an increasingly transparent way all the care they are taking, not only in providing services/products to their consumers and customers, but also in showing what I do. I call it ‘empathy’ with the ‘Covid-19 cause’. (ABRANTES-BRAGA, 2020).<sup>3</sup>

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A VALUE-OBJECT OF ORGANIZATIONS**

‘Focusing on engagement can provide organizations with the means to support sustainable competitive advantage’.

(Ryan Hollenbeck – Vice-Presidente de Global Marketing Verint).

Thus, shaken by the emerging world redesign and aware that it is time to turn not only to their particular interests, but mainly to their role in society, brands from the most varied segments pay attention to each movement of their targets, they take steps in towards this new positioning of indistinct consumers and rehearse actions which, more than simply extolling the virtues of products and services, redirect their focus to major causes, to palpating social problems, to universal banners, making, in this sense, much more Propaganda do that Advertising - specialties that differ substantially from one another in meaning, despite being commonly confused or regarded as synonymous.<sup>4</sup>

3. Fragment extracted from the interview ‘Pandemia influences the behavior of brands in social media’, given by Prof<sup>fa</sup>. Farah Diba Abrantes-Braga to the INSPER website, on 5/26/2020. Available online at: <https://www.insper.edu.br/noticias/midias-sociais-pandemia-marcas/> Accessed 4/2/2021.

4. Despite the fact that there is no closed universal consensus on the breadth of the broad sensu definitions of the terms Advertising and Advertising, and a certain liberality regarding the use of both in the view of many reputable authors is accepted,

(PEREZ & BARBOSA, 2007). Urgently conforming to the contours of the present moment, at the beginning of 2020, logos and headlines of major advertisers are re-presented in redesigned graphic formats and contextualized to the health requirements proposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, emitting infra-liminal messages of proximity, comfort and support to your targets.



Figure 1: Announcement of the Free Market - May / 2020.

Available online at: <https://propmark.com.br/anunciantes/marcas-mudam-logos-para-conscientizar-publico-sobre-coronavirus/> Accessed 4/3/2021.



Figure 2: Announcement by SBT Television Network - May / 2020.

Available online at: <https://epocanegocios.globo.com/Empresa/noticia/2020/03/covid-19-marcas-mudam-logos-para-conscientizar-sobre-distanciamento-social.html> Accessed 4/4/2021.



Figure 3: Volkswagen logo - March / 2020.

Available online at: <https://epocanegocios.globo.com/Empresa/noticia/2020/03/covid-19-marcas-mudam-logos-para-conscientizar-sobre-distanciamento-social.html> Accessed on 3/29/2021.



Figure 4: Facebook Network 'Force' button, created specifically for the quarantine period.

Available online at: <https://portaldacomunicacao.com.br/2020/04/redes-sociais-e-influenciadores-crescem-na-pandemia/> Accessed 4/6/2021.

Verbo-visual evocations to the imperious demand for the use of masks, social distance and discreet greetings spread quickly and become the keynote of communication, in theory, in the eagerness to touch hearts and minds, to collaborate with public health, and indirectly, to calibrate the image of advertisers in such a delicate moment.

this work establishes a functional distinction between the modalities., as also admitted by several authors of equal respectability. Such differentiation here is consolidated according to the following pre-definitions:

=> **Pubcity** is a specialty that acts on a concrete plan of actions and lends itself to the dissemination of tangible or intangible goods, as long as they are commercially accessible. Advertising initiates and expects a commercial action.

=> **Advertising** is the dissemination and/or dissemination of ideas, causes, behaviors and attitudes; it aims to obtain adherence to ideologies, maintaining its role, therefore, in an abstract sphere of human thought. Propaganda introduces and expects behavioral action. (PEREZ, C. & BARBOSA, I. [orgs.], 2007, Vol. II - Cap. X, p. 343).

## INDIVIDUALISM VS. EMPATHY: PANDEMIC ALTERS THE VALUE- OBJECT OF ORGANIZATIONS

*'More than ever, consumers are digitally restless.'* (Yuval Ben-Itzhak - CEO da Socialbakers)

Also emphasizing the basic principle that both Advertising and Advertising are specialties that do not launch trends, but follow market trends, it is opportune to mention that, in order to provide a structured assessment of the current daily life, in which the pandemic COVID-19 takes the world hostage, Deloitte, a company renowned for supporting CMOs and anticipating market trends, recently released the Report:2021 *Global Marketing Trends: Find your focus*, document the result of a research carried out with 16,000 people. Feedback gathered during the beginning and consolidation of the pandemic - the first quarter of the year 2020 - was primarily intended to provide C-Level executives with tools to help and guide these times of growing global insecurity.

The final objective of the enlightening work was to submit to this wide range of individuals several Marketing Trends, so that they could choose those that, in their opinion, would in fact cooperate to drive the growth of brands in the current year of 2021. Among the seven trends then enumerated, one of them, the so-called 'Human Experience', which is confirmed in the response of more than half of the total of 16,000 respondents, an expressive portion that revealed the desire to obtain a more humanized experience with the brands, especially in a virtual environment.

Such unequivocal result denotes that we are facing an opportune time stage for business organizations to reassess their values, operating methods and infrastructure. Instead of sheltering themselves in the traditional recipe of exalting promises of satisfaction to customers via products and promoting mere

profitability, they must dedicate themselves to initiatives that align with the real human concerns and needs that are now imposed, (expressed vehemently in the research) and, at the same time, implement actions to improve the connection between entities of production and entities of consumption, both just mentioned in this Article. In this list of priorities, the issue of how a given company stands in the face of basic issues of the present time stood out, not only with regard to the devastating and persistent pandemic, but also relevant social topics, currently nuanced in the wake of the inevitable : gender diversity; racism; animal protection; environmental Conservation; water economy; domestic violence; logging; ocean preservation; urban cleaning; equal salary conditions between men and women (...) to mention just a few.

As the main conclusions of the Report, Deloitte basically describes that nowadays, a phase in which there is a common pain combined with a consequent and widespread desire for engagement, for connectivity, for sharing and solidarity, it is extremely important to understand the ways in which brands & consumers are dealing with this traumatic, difficult period, of enormous uncertainties, and the need for actions with an emotional focus on human beings solidifies as a determining factor for the composition of the Marketing Trends for the coming year. (Deloitte, 2021).

Remembering a famous Philip Kotler maxim that pontificated: 'Profit is a by-product of things well done', the watchword to be followed to govern desirable actions of brands and pave their reputation in 2021, a year in which, for a number of reasons, the The biggest national problem, the pandemic, is spreading uncontrollably to all regions of Brazil, is: empathy.

It is no longer new for organizations the need to build a solid reputation and strong brands that reflect attributes, business

benefits and help in the relationship with customers and other stakeholders. A clear and valuable brand identity, in addition to associations that make its values and image tangible, are significant steps in the creation of competitive advantages and assets for valuation.<sup>5</sup> (NOGUEIRA, 2020).

Inspired by the systemic reconfiguration established today, large companies engage, innovate and reinvent themselves amidst the calamity, each in its own way, according to what can be seen in the following collection of headlines, leads, brief openings of media reports on marketing decisions of some brands operating in Brazil, on the occasion of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. The operational shift they demonstrate is clear through immediate and concrete actions, all with altruistic streaks, in an apparent deviation from their original focus and in the search for convergence with the current high value-objects: approximation, solidarity and humanized relationship with the public, with the country, with the planet.

*AMBEV's unmoderated tactic*

*Largest brewery in Latin America allocates BRL 110 million to the plan to fight the pandemic. In addition to transforming beverage factories into production lines for alcohol gel and protective masks, the company helps restaurants and bars that are closed — and helps build a hospital.<sup>6</sup>*

*AMBEV adapts brewery and will produce hospital oxygen for donation in SP*

The cylinders will be donated to hospitals and health units in the state of São Paulo, where ICU bed occupancy has already exceeded 90%<sup>7</sup>

*LATAM will transport health professionals free of charge to help fight the pandemic*

The company will also take medicines and equipment needed to support the fight against the spread of Covid-19<sup>8</sup>

*Ford, GM and Tesla can produce mechanical fans used to treat coronavirus*

*Medical equipment is in short supply because of the sudden increase in demand caused by the pandemic<sup>9</sup>*

*Covid-19: Bradesco, Itaú and Santander will buy 5 million tests*

In addition to tests, medical equipment such as CT scanners and respirators will also be donated<sup>10</sup>

5. *Valuation* is a term of English origin, which, translated into Portuguese, means: Business Valuation; Valuation of Companies; or Value Arbitration. It is basically an estimate of the value of a company in the market where it operates. By working with the company's perceptions of investors and customers, Valuation involves judging the position it occupies in the market and forecasting the return on investment in its shares.

6. Article published by IstoÉ Dinheiro magazine on 24/04/2020. Available online at: <https://www.istoedinheiro.com.br/a-tatica-sem-moderacao-da-ambev/> Accessed on 2-4-2021.

7. Material shown by CNN Brasil on 3/22/2021. Available online at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/business/2021/03/22/ambev-adapta-cervejaria-e-vai-produzir-oxigenio-hospitalar-para-doacao-em-sp> Accessed on 3-23-2021.

8. Article published on the LATAM Press Releases Press Room website. Available online at: [https://www.latam.com/pt\\_br/sala-de-imprensa/imprensa/LATAM-COVID19-transporte-gratuito-profissionais-saude/](https://www.latam.com/pt_br/sala-de-imprensa/imprensa/LATAM-COVID19-transporte-gratuito-profissionais-saude/) Accessed on 3/31/2021.

9. Article published in Jornal O Globo – Edition of 3/20/2020. Available online at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/economia/ford-gm-tesla-podem-produzir-ventiladores-mecanicos-usados-no-tratamento-do-coronavirus-24318674> Acessado em 27-3-2021 Accessed 4-4-2021.

10. Article published in Jornal Correio Braziliense – Edition of 3/25/2020. Available online at: <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/brasil/2020/03/25/interna-brasil,836642/covid-19-bradesco-itaue-santander-vao-comprar-5-milhoes-de-testes.shtml> Accessed on 4-9-2021.

Inditex and Hering are making uniforms and masks for medical teams

Inditex, owner of Zara and other famous brands, has already donated more than 10 thousand masks and has another 300 thousand in production<sup>11</sup>

Faced with the overwhelming number of nearly 400,000 deaths from Coronavirus cataloged in Brazil by the Consortium of Press Vehicles - an index reached in the first three months of 2021 -, the tragic scenario that buried the formerly preferred business model, (ratified in Friedman's Article, above mentioned, in which companies aimed solely at making a profit), is now outdated and requires something beyond decanted empathy (a momentous term, which in itself already carries a certain weariness, typical of hyper-use) and deepens the urgency for radical change of vision and guidelines.

In the premonitory statement by one of the most respected Brazilian advertising professionals, Alexandre Gama, owner of the new Creative Holding, InovNation, what is currently expected from companies in their communication and public action is defined as follows:

The 'new normal' will require companies to develop empathy with consumers and customers more than ever. Brands will have to look for actions that go beyond the meaning of selling. It will involve understanding, attending and finding a way to help, including. Compassion and business will have to meet.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly, given the circumstances, the time to demonstrate with a greater sense of realism the importance of compassion in the

face of collective suffering, the much-vaunted time for the humanization of brands, was introduced in the organizational environment.

## **SINCERITY OF PURPOSE VS. MARKETING STRATEGY: ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S THOUGHTS**

*'Just talking about the product is not very interesting. It is necessary for companies to learn to tell intriguing and authentic stories'.*

(David Aacker)

At this point in the analysis of the theme presented here, an uncomfortable question arises as a theoretical background: the contextualized actions of Marketing, like some observed in this Article, implemented by practically all brands throughout this fateful moment of pandemic crisis, would they be truly demonstrating the meaning of a *Prosopopeia*?<sup>13</sup> Would they be sincere, convinced and zealous of the need for their humanization, of the integrity of their relationship with the public, with the system, and convincingly directed towards the collective good? Or is it just another hooded way to obtain commercial advantages, to format a good market image under the guise of an alleged social engagement, in place of the old practices, inapplicable now, but used until the recent past?

In theoretical terms, a possible vocative of the central presuppositions of the work of one of the most celebrated philosophers of the last century, the Polish Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017), could be detected at this point. If this is evaluated as an exemplary sequence of facts, illustrative to some extent of the author's contributions regarding the concept

11. Article published in the Rock Content Blog – Edition of 3/31/2020. Available online at: <https://rockcontent.com/br/blog/iniciativas-covid-19/> Accessed on 3-29-2021.

12. Excerpt from the article 'Alexandre Gama and the marks in the pandemic: Empathy is the watchword' published in Exame In Magazine – Edition of 6/15/2020. Available online at: <https://exame.com/exame-in/alexandre-gama-e-as-marcas-na-pandemia-empatia-e-a-palavra-de-ordem/> Accessed 3-4-2021.

13. *Prosopopeia* is a Figure of Semantic Language that consists in the transformation of inanimate beings and animals into human beings.



he attributed to Post-Modernity, there is a credible link here. It must be noted that, from Bauman's perspective, the expression Post-Modernity would not accurately portray the period in which we live today, having preferred to name this phase as Liquid Modernity (BAUMAN, 2000) - an expression that has consecrated him worldwide - in counterpoint to Solid Modernity, or Modernity itself.

What's the big difference? One can start with the end of utopias. Liquid society, unlike what happened during the 20th century, does not think in the long term, cannot translate its desires into a long-term project of hard and intense work for humanity. The great projects of new societies have been lost and the strength of society is no longer geared towards achieving a goal. (SIQUEIRA, 2014).

Zygmunt Bauman's most notable contribution to studies on the profile of contemporary society is the unveiling of its most eloquent characteristics, according to him, volatility, ephemerality, substitution and behavioral instability, traits he associates with the concept of liquidity, as defined by Chemistry. Exacerbated individualism would be the central touch that summarizes the list of these characteristics, governing factor of a life without fixed references, without creating / maintaining close bonds, without commitments, collective interests, in other words, a liquid life.

For the sociologist, who ended his days as Professor Emeritus at Leeds University - UK, today's society is totally deregulated, which prevents an individual from recognizing himself as such, from building his existence through a personal project, to live as a wandering being, serving only the market, an entity that, for Bauman, would dictate all the rules of human conduct. The liquidity (or fraying) of the social fabric would occur, then, due to man's difficulty in stabilizing himself, in taking a fixed form, transforming himself

indefinitely and acquiring the forms that the market forces him to acquire.

In the postmodern world of freely competing styles and standards of living, there is still a severe test of purity that must be passed by anyone applying to be admitted there: he must show himself capable of being seduced by infinite possibility and constant renewal. promoted by the consumer market, to rejoice in the luck of dressing and undressing identities, to spend life in the endless hunt for increasingly intense sensations. And an increasingly intoxicating experience. (...) Since the criterion of purity is the ability to participate in the consumer game, those left out as a 'problem', as the 'dirt' that needs to be removed, are flawed consumers - people unable to respond to attractions of the consumer market because they lack the required resources, people incapable of being 'free individuals' according to the sense of 'freedom' defined in terms of the consumer's power of choice. (BAUMAN, 1998 - p. 23, 24).

The following table outlines the main characteristics and basic differentials of the Modernity and Post-Modernity temporal spectra, in accordance with the ideas of Zygmunt Bauman.

Bauman advances, stating that the Cartesian market rules, even if eventually made up, are guided - never by the social good -, but always by /capitalist economic calculus/ /the annihilation of competitors/ and /the good success with consumers/. This thesis is supported by the predominant characteristics of Post-Modernity, the period of non-relations, the inability to form lasting bonds, the constant change of identity, the option for non-commitment, the non-affectedness with other people's problems.

The concept, in full definition, denotes agreement with the cold statements of Milton Friedman, discussed herein, and a clear dissonance with the noble predictions and expectations of visionaries, such as Alexandre Gama, of responses obtained in recent surveys

Modernity	Post-Modernity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Modernity, the problem of identity was limited to the way to build it and keep it solid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Post-Modernity, the problem of identity arises in how to avoid fidelity and maintain a variety of options.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main intention =&gt; Fixation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main intention =&gt; Transience.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keywords =&gt; Maintenance, continuity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keywords =&gt; Replacement, discontinuity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in stability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in non-commitment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status =&gt; Durability, permanence, adoption.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status =&gt; Ephemerality, impermanence, disposition.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tendência =&gt; Perpetual routine.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tendência =&gt; ceaseless innovation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traços marcantes =&gt; Engagement, filling, individualized behaviors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remarkable traits =&gt; Indifference, emptiness, mass behavior.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cornerstones of the modern life strategy are the construction of identity and the formation of stable and lasting bonds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cornerstones of the postmodern life strategy are identity change and fostering casual relationships.</li> </ul>

Table 1: Descriptive profiles of the Modernity and Post-Modernity periods.

and professionals that foreshadow a greater model. humanitarian sense in business for years to come.

Strictly speaking, one can, this way, register an insidious paradox, if not a moral impasse. On the one hand, Bauman's postulations about Post-Modernity would confront, so to speak, the supposed altruism and personal disinterest of companies in their actions with consumers, especially during the pandemic, and define it as a momentary, transient modus operandi, (liquid) navigator in the direction of the winds that blow in the market. On the other hand, however, they would be refuted by the attitudes of the so-called 'new consumer', an emerging, proactive entity that today shows strength to guide market actions with greater effectiveness than that of the companies themselves. Purchasing only products with a reputation of being socially involved and certified responsible, the so-called 'new consumer' wants to be perceived

as an agent, and not as coerced in the social sphere in which they live. He doesn't want to be subservient, he wants to understand. It is a subject, not a subject.

## LAST CONSIDERATIONS

*' The fundamentals of building brands, of listening and learning from customers to meeting their needs in a relevant way, are amplified in a world of digital communications and empowered consumers '.*

(Allen Adamson - Brand Digital).

It can be admitted, in light of the above, even though the entire arsenal of statements of the philosopher urged here as a theoretical basis for analysis reverberates, that the presence of an influencing element contrasting with the volatility and lack of commitment that characterizes the Post-Modernity, as proclaimed by Bauman: the so-called 'new consumer'. There is a consensus on the idea

that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, 'the new' is being experienced in many ways. There is talk to exhaustion about the 'new normal', the 'new business model', the 'new work environment' (...) although with a bias as avant-garde as it is imprecise.

Among all the 'news' of the present, however, the 'new consumer' embodies the element that proves to be the most clear and influential in the scenario that is now unfolding. It reveals the most notable change by giving space to activity or, in many cases, activism instead of the chronic passivity that characterized it, more specifically in the last decades of the 20th century, when it accepted the pro-consumption discourse, imposed by the media on companies, products, services and brands – with docile obedience and no contestation.

Nowadays, the 'new consumer' values more subjective aspects of products and the subliminal information that their decision to purchase a particular good will transmit to other members of the community where they live. He aims to make his act of consumption a gesture to be perceived as engaged in ethical values and principles of economic efficiency, environmental preservation and social equity, which characterize the principles of sustainability. Generally speaking, the profile of this valued character who currently dominates the market scene is consolidated in certain traits:

- It has a constant, not negligible relationship with brands.
- It shapes how companies are perceived (expectations of how they must behave and how they fare in relation to their expectations).
- It is multiplatform, active, participative and values brands that excel in authenticity..<sup>14</sup>

14. Adapted excerpt from the article 'The main differential of AG: the Engaged Consumer' published on the website Fleishman Hillard. Available online at: <https://fleishmanhillard.com.br/2019/10/o-principal-diferencial-do-ag-o-consumidor-engajado/> Accessed on 3/30/2021.

15. The term *ZeitGeist*, freely translated from the German language, means 'Spirit of a time'.

In this moment as atypical as it is stormy and, in a sense, refreshing, understand and respect the key factors of the current: *ZeitGeist*<sup>15</sup> ⇔ / object-value/ that emerge and motivate this 'new consumer', embodied in the / concrete adhesion of brands to multifaceted social demands/ can represent a company's longevity and promising future. Ignore them in /simulated conviction of brands in the face of multifaceted social causes/ ⇔ can seal your end.

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