MARKETING, SOCIETY AND CONSUMER RESPONSIBILITY: SHIFTING THE FOCUS?

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Resumo
For decades, marketing was committed to satisfying customers in the short run and avoiding making moral or ethical judgments. Companies were not so much concerned with the long-term well-being of consumers until society started questioning firms' responsibilities. Through the evolution of marketing thought, several concepts and definitions have attempted to understand and explain the complex relationships between marketing and society. Amid this context, this paper first attempts to differentiate the concepts of social marketing, societal marketing, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Next, consumer social responsibility (CnSR) is defined as the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices based on personal and moral beliefs" (DEVINNEY et al. (2006, p. 3). By bringing the CnSR construct into the discussion, it is argued that consumers play a key role in the implementation of CSR programs. It is argued that for corporate social responsibility to flourish, it needs to be accompanied by CnSR. Similarly, if the relationship between CSR and CnSR is truly proportional and of prominent interdependence, the debates over CnSR are worthy of more academic attention.

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ABSTRACT

For decades, marketing was committed to satisfying customers in the short run and avoiding making moral or ethical judgments. Companies were not so much concerned with the long-term well-being of consumers until society started questioning firms' responsibilities. Through the evolution of marketing thought, several concepts and definitions have attempted to understand and explain the complex relationships between marketing and society. Amid this context, this paper first attempts to differentiate the concepts of social marketing, societal marketing, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Next, consumer social responsibility (CnSR) is defined as the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices based on personal and moral beliefs" (DEVINNEY *et al.* (2006, p. 3). By bringing the CnSR construct into the discussion, it is argued that consumers play a key role in the implementation of CSR programs. It is argued that for corporate social responsibility to flourish, it needs to be accompanied by CnSR. Similarly, if the relationship between CSR and CnSR is truly proportional and of prominent interdependence, the debates over CnSR are worthy of more academic attention.

Keywords: social marketing; societal marketing; corporate social responsibility (CSR); consumer social responsibility (CnSR).

1. INTRODUCTION

In a recent special edition, the Journal of Marketing (JM), seen as the leading publication in the field, has reflected upon the role of marketing in building a better world (see CHANDY *et al.*, 2021). The editorial recovers excerpts published in JM some five decades ago. At that time, the external environment for organizations was rapidly changing, and the world of marketing was called to start engaging with social issues, such as poverty, racism, unemployment, and environmental contamination (WILKIE; MOORE, 2003).

For decades, marketing was committed to satisfying customers in the short run and avoiding making moral or ethical judgments. Sometimes, however, that commitment meant doing more harm than good (e.g., junk food, cigarettes, or alcohol). Until the second half of the twentieth century, companies were not so much concerned with the long-term well-being of consumers, until consumers and societies more broadly started questioning firms' responsibilities in supplying such potentially harmful goods. At the same time, it was claimed that profits were (and would continue to be) vital to the survival of companies. On that occasion, a paradox was already in place: how could companies be profitable while contributing to the well-being of society?

Over the years, the connections and repercussions between marketing and society increasingly incited managerial attention and academic interest. In the meantime, through the evolution of marketing thought, several concepts and definitions have attempted to understand and explain these complex relationships between marketing and society. Among them, one notes the well-debated concepts of social marketing, societal marketing, and corporate social responsibility, which, however, are still confused to date (BARTELS, 1974; LAZER, 1969; SCHNEIDER; LUCE, 2014).

Amid this context, this paper first attempts to differentiate such concepts related to marketing in society. Next, it is argued that all of those concepts are discussed from the perspective of the firm (VITTEL, 2015). Society's expectations, in general, are thus based on the performance of companies. Little is said, however, about the role of consumers as "entities" also responsible for social welfare and social development. In this sense, this paper brings consumer social responsibility (CnSR) to the debate. Through CnSR, the focus leaves

organizations and is transferred to consumers, who become responsible for social issues based on their consumption attitudes. This idea, however, remains largely unexplored in the literature (CARUANA; CHATZIDAKIS, 2013; DEVINNEY *et al.* 2006; PAPAOIKONOMOU; RYAN; VALVERDE, 2011) and perhaps, when one finally does it, one might argue that the very company's social role can only be understood in line with the customer's social roles taken into account.

To fulfill these goals, this paper is divided as follows: following this introduction, the broad topic of marketing and society is addressed. Next, the key differences between the concepts of social marketing and societal marketing are highlighted. Subsequently, and still on the "firms' front", corporate social responsibility is discussed. Next, the paper draws attention to corporate social responsibility and its potential contributions to marketing thought. Finally, some concluding remarks are drawn.

2. MARKETING AND SOCIETY

In their substantial body of studies addressing the development of marketing thought, Wilkie and Moore (2003; 2012) draw a clear picture regarding 4 specific "eras". During the first one (Founding the Field of Marketing, 1900–1920), marketing separated itself from Economics and was seen as a function responsible for civilization's progress through the provision of staple needs. Next, in Era II ("Formalizing the Field", 1920–1950), marketing operated within mass production, mass distribution, and mass demand context, and soon became a flourishing, vibrant academic field. Here, marketing became responsible for economic prosperity and for accomplishing indispensable social ends.

During Era III, entitled "A Paradigm Shift: Marketing, Management, and the Science" (1950–1980), the world witnessed a large number of new baby boomer consumers (e.g., some 76 million in the U.S.). As mass markets were booming, so were the managerial problems and challenges. Marketing thus started to devote itself to solving managerial problems and was often seen through the perspective of managers. Not surprisingly, one noted a sharp increase in university business programs. In order to meet the demands of expanding companies, marketing was also responsible for stimulating customer's demands. Ever since, there has been a great deal of attention towards the actions and performance of corporations, that is, the suppliers/sellers in the exchange framework.

It is claimed that a clear relationship between marketing and society did not start to be noted until this very Era III (WILKIE; MOORE, 2012). In the 1960s, the social responsibility of businesses was brought into discussion, and topics such as social change, recycling, vulnerable groups, wiser consumer purchases, ecology, and better health, became relevant for marketers and also received greater academic attention.

In one of the first texts dealing with marketing as an activity that goes beyond business, Lazer (1969) advocates for a broader concept of marketing, especially focusing on more "macro" issues rather than on the "micro" dimension present in the field. In this rather optimistic account, the author sees marketing's role beyond the realm of profit. He suggests that marketing ought to be responsible for the social, intellectual, and moral development of consumers through increasing expenditures and opening them up to new experiences and buying opportunities. According to Lazer, some of the tasks of marketing would include the searching for peace, the elimination of poverty, the renewal of urban areas, the preservation of natural resources, and the building of a broader sense of community.

In the same year, Kotler and Levy (1969a), in a paper that was impactful at the time, suggest an expanding understanding towards the "P" related to "product". That is, "products" could be started to be seen as things beyond the tangible/physical realm, and therefore compatible with offerings coming from churches, education, banks, museums, governments, countries (e.g., tourism). In other words, and under this broader concept of marketing,

organizations could therefore provide products, services, people, ideas, and even "sell" the organization itself. All of them make use of marketing tools (offer improvement, pricing, distribution, communication), relate to customers' needs and wants, occupy space in the media, and affect people's lives. To think about customer orientation (and product orientation) already has a social purpose in itself. This task is intrinsically related to the quest for satisfying people. Consistent with this account, it becomes clear that marketing has a broader social meaning.

Of course, Kotler and Levy's paper generated criticism in the academy. Possibly the most famous critic of that broader proposal was the one of Luck (1969). In a nutshell, he states that marketing must "mind its own business", that is, should be restricted to market transactions. Luck suggests that marketers feel guilty because for-profit activities may not be socially beneficial, and criticizes Kotler and Levy when they state that some "isolated facts" that go beyond the profit-seeking activity cannot be considered marketing. Kotler and Levy (1969b) responded, arguing that every discipline periodically faces challenges to its traditional form, reinforcing the idea that marketing must serve the needs of customers with several "types" of offerings. Thus, market transactions may not necessarily be pecuniary. A few years later, Kotler (1972) expanded the concept of marketing even further, arguing that transactions between organizations and all their publics (stakeholders) should also be accommodated under the concept of marketing.

Notably, at this point, marketing thought leaders were entangled in discussing the actual boundaries of marketing Wilkie and Moore (2003). Lazer (1969), for instance, argues that consumers are not exclusively concerned with satisfying their wants and needs, but also care about societal well-being. Thus, organizations should face this changing environment and start contemplating societal demands.

Bartels (1974), for instance, points to an "identity crisis" in marketing and lists some pros and cons of broadening the concept of marketing. Finally, he concludes that if it broadens itself as far as to include non-economic fields, perhaps it should change its name. Indeed, thought leaders at the time diverged around the nature, scope, and boundaries of marketing (see, for example, BARTELS. 1974; HUNT, 1976; KOTLER; LEVY, 1969b; LUCK, 1969). Could the principles of marketing also be applied away from the business domain? Can corporations fulfill social demands? Is there such a thing as marketing done solely for social reasons? To engage with these questions, the next section addresses the main ideas revolving around social marketing and societal marketing.

3. SOCIAL MARKETING OR SOCIETAL MARKETING?

For decades, marketing was committed to satisfying customers in the short run, with no moral or ethical judgment, even if that meant doing more harm than good (e.g. junk food, cigarettes, or alcohol). Until the second half of the twentieth century, companies were not so much concerned with the long-term well-being of consumers, until consumers and societies more broadly started questioning firms' responsibilities in supplying such potentially harmful items.

A typical company, simply put, delivers products/services to society and interacts with society in many ways. Through such processes, marketing has helped raise the standard of living by providing society with products, and services and increasing the power of purchase (LAZER; KELLEY, 1973). Hence, the intersections between marketing and society are too meaningful to be ignored.

Although it would be naive to think that marketing alone can solve all of society's problems, it can surely contribute immensely. Lusch (2007), for instance, would argue that marketing per se is a societal activity, that is, one that transcends the individuality of the human being. Marketing operates within societies, and societies, at least to some extent, rely on marketing processes and tools. Marketing policies and decisions have social consequences. It

is amid this understanding that a usual conceptual problem flourishes: the concepts of social marketing and societal marketing are often confused between themselves in academic debates.

To better characterize the marketing climate of their time, Lazer and Kelley (1973) question whether the natural evolution of marketing would indicate the emergence of a new discipline. In their detailed account, they seek to draw a comparison between managerial marketing and social marketing. For the authors, approaches comprise a marketing mix formed by products/services, communication, and distribution. Furthermore, both encompass opportunity identification, planning, organizing, and controlling. However, there seems to be a substantial difference between the two approaches: while "traditional" marketing attempts to guide organizational actions aimed at the market and consumers, social marketing addresses ethical concerns, quality of life, and the implications of the marketing mix. (LAZER; KELLEY, 1973).

The origin of the term "social marketing", however, appears to have emerged before Lazer and Kelley's work. It is often linked to a study published by Kotler and Zaltman (1971). In this paper, the authors argue that social marketing reaches far beyond the selling of an isolated social cause. The concept could thus be seen as "the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research" (KOTLER; ZALTMAN, 1971, p. 5). It comes clear, therefore, that this notion of social marketing refers to the appropriation of marketing tools and knowledge to ultimately conceive, promote and disseminate social causes. Social marketing, then, should provoke or deliver a greater goal than profit: social change. Invariably, it should improve quality of life.

Soon, this Kotler and Zaltman account would raise certain academic disagreements. Some, such as Luck (1974), would argue that the differences between the traditional marketing models and this new so-called social approach were not clearly defined. In addition to that, another issue emerged: how could one define what was a proper social marketing practice? In other words, what if companies were to act in self-interest under the social marketing veil?

Andreasen (2002) also proposed a greater application of social marketing principles to the public agenda, confirming the possibility of applying marketing in any exchange process. For this author, the practice of social marketing could provoke a behavioral change that would benefit society as a whole (ANDREASEN, 2002). This becomes the main feature and distinctive characteristic of social marketing: the use of marketing tools by non-profit organizations to achieve social goals. For-profit companies, therefore, should operate under another concept: societal marketing.

For Kotler (1978), societal marketing is a consumer-oriented approach aimed at generating consumer satisfaction as well as long-term consumer well-being, while, at the same time, achieving organizational goals. Through this notion, the distinction between social marketing and societal marketing. While both are concerned with society and the impacts caused by organizational initiatives, societal marketing is aligned with profit-seeking activities. It is, at least to some extent, an improvement of the marketing concept. Summing up, it is now proposed in Table 1 a brief comparison between the two discussed concepts.

Table 1 - Comparison between social marketing and societal marketing

	Social marketing	**Societal marketing**
Main goal	Social change and welfare of society	Consumer satisfaction with goods/services and welfare of society
Typical problem	A specific social problem	Societal issues
Main target (audience)	Citizens	Consumers

Used by	Corporations	Non-profit organizations
Origin/source	Expansion of "traditional" marketing	Incorporation of social considerations into companies' businesses strategies
Recent example / application	Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) campaigns	Recyclable packaging in fast-food chains

Source: the author, based on El-Ansary (1974), Kotler (1978), Andreasen (2002), and Kotler and Zaltman (1971).

Whereas social marketing can be seen as a new set of applications to traditional marketing that addresses large, common social goals, societal marketing is seen as the incorporation of social considerations into companies' set of business goals. The latter is, therefore, closely linked with the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

4. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a frequent theme in recent decades. The role of companies as being responsible for social problems (such as poverty, unemployment, diversity promotion, income distribution, among others), has been increasingly debated in academic forums and among the general public. The CSR premises suggest that organizations should see beyond profits and must help to promote social well-being. In other words, it is argued that the CSR movement proposes the (re)insertion of ethical aspects within the firm (in its "internal environment"), but especially in the firm' relationship with its stakeholders (consumers, customers, suppliers, the media, investors, and so on). As Creel (2012) indicated, CSR initiatives can be related to the environment (e.g. reduce energy use), social causes (e.g. diversity promotion), and the community (e.g. buy supplies from local sellers).

CSR poses a dilemma in organizations. On the one hand, they need to be innovative, differentiated, and profitable to compete in increasingly fierce markets. On the other hand, and given the growth of social and environmental problems, these same companies are challenged to behave in socially responsible ways, by investing money to contribute to social well-being, using "greener" resources, treating employees fairly, helping to solve a vast number of social issues, obeying laws, respecting ethical norms, protecting the environment, and contributing to charities (MOHR; WEBB; HARRIS, 2001).

It is noted, at the same time, that the concept of CSR has gone through a transformation: one has moved from a previous conception based on charity and altruism, towards an association between social responsibility and business strategy. As markets and consumers started to pay attention to firm's social initiatives, it is natural that the betterment of society as a whole started to be seen by companies as an important source of competitive advantage. According to Porter and Kramer (2006), CSR initiatives, when well planned, can be seen as a source of innovation and competitive advantage and can result in a win-win relationship between the company and society. Once seen as a strategy, it can be inferred that the main goal of CSR is to increase the company's reputation before a specific audience. This improved reputation, for instance, allows the company to charge higher and to attract investments.

However obvious the notion that companies should practice CSR, there is no equal consensus on what constitutes an attitude of CSR. Conceptually, CSR is rather complex and dynamic, exhibiting different meanings in different contexts. Among these, the definition offered by Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) is often cited. For the authors, CSR is "a company's commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society" (p. 47). Kotler and Lee (2005), by their turn, define CSR as "a

commitment to improving community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources" (p. 3).

In their influential study, Becker-Olsen, Cudmore and Hill (2006) investigate customer's perception of brand compatibility with the social cause and argue that the impacts of companies' social initiatives on consumers depend on the consumer's perception of the company as a whole. That is, the effect goes beyond evaluating the action in isolation. Furthermore, such business initiatives conducted in the name of social welfare will have a positive impact on consumers if they are proactive rather than reactive and also congruent with the company's broader stance on social issues (BECKER-OLSEN; CUDMORE; HILL, 2006). This notion is shared by Green and Peloza (2011) when they argue that consumers experience CSR in different ways.

Similarly, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) found that consumers rated companies that presented prosocial actions more positively when they perceived congruence with their values and attitudes, thus demonstrating that CSR initiatives can act at a deeper level of significance for the consumer's self. Consumers believe that companies should engage in social initiatives (BECKER-OLSEN; CUDMORE; HILL, 2006) and seem to have a positive attitude towards CSR-promoting companies, especially when CSR actions engage with local causes and hedonic products (NAN; HOO, 2007).

Researchers suggest that CSR initiatives can generate a change in consumer behavior. Sen and Bhattacharya (2001). Creel (2012), similarly, argues that organizations associated with CSR have a greater brand value by promoting credibility among their stakeholders and a stronger relationship with their consumers. Thus, it can be argued that one would not truly achieve CSR without customer's participation. In other words, as proposed by Vittel (2015), the most feasible way to advance CSR may be to make consumers demand goods and services that are socially responsible. Along these lines, maybe it is time we gave more attention to the social responsibility customers possess. It is time we highlighted the concept of consumer social responsibility (CnSR).

5. FROM A CONSUMER STANDPOINT: DEFINING CONSUMER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CnSR)

One could argue that the idea of a "conscious consumer" is not a new development. Webster (1975, p. 188) indeed contends that

> "The socially conscious consumer can be defined as a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change".

Webster, in this study, seeks to predict the psychological, social, demographic, and socioeconomic aspects that may depict this socially conscious consumer. With the "climate of that time" in mind, the author suggests that a socially conscious consumer is probably a "she" more than a "he". Also, she is likely a member of the "upper-middle-class counterculture", and someone whose purchase behaviors, although not necessarily popularly accepted, are consistent with her own standards of responsibility.

Over the last decades, our understanding of what characterizes a responsible consumer has certainly undergone changes. More than belonging to a certain class or gender, it is understood that responsible consumption is directly related to ethical issues (FREESTONE; MCGOLDRICK, 2008). And what does it mean to be an ethical consumer? Does this ethics take place when, for example, one notifies the seller if the change received on a purchase was greater than the amount due? Or if one simply avoids purchasing products that pollute the environment? Or, perhaps, when a consumer stops purchasing products from companies that

do not adequately remunerate their workforce? As one explores the relevant literature, it can be argued that we may have to take into account a combination of all these aspects. After all, on what could be considered an effectively responsible consumption/ethical consumer behavior, different authors approach different aspects.

Antil (1984), for example, addresses responsible consumption behavior related to the preservation of the environment beyond personal needs. That also involves concerns with the possible environmental consequences of these behaviors. Francois-LeCompte and Roberts (2006), in turn, claim that the socially conscious consumer has the power to express their dissatisfaction against a certain product or firms through boycotts. Conversely, when one seeks to positively promote a product, they can practice "*buycott*", that is buy additional units and/or boost positive word-of-mouth. Lastly, it is important to bring forward the work of Vitell (2003). In this broader account, he suggests that the ethical judgments of consumers are based on whether or not: (i) the purchase damages the supplier; (ii) consumers actively or passively participate in the process; and (iii) the activity may be perceived as illegal.

In their contribution, Muncy and Vitell (1992), define the consumer social responsibilities as being the moral standards that orient the behaviors of individuals as they buy, use and dispose of goods and services. Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) acknowledge Webster's (1975) contribution, though they go further and advocate for the concept of "socially responsible consumer behavior" (SRCB). For these authors, SRCB implies that a given individual will ground their acquisition, usage, and discard of goods in a way that maximizes the positive impact on society, and, at the same time, reduces or suppresses any harmful effects on society. A consumer implementing SRCB would, for example, prefer items marketed by firms that help society and avoid goods coming from businesses that harm society. Finally, the authors argue that SRCB calls for the adoption of CSR as one of the key aspects shaping the customer's buying patterns.

A few years later, Devinney *et al*. (2006, p. 3) define consumer social responsibility (CnSR) as "the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices based on personal and moral beliefs". According to the authors, CnSR includes two basic components: (1) an 'ethical' component relating to the underlying importance of the non-traditional and social components of a company's products and business processes; and (2) a 'consumerism' component that implies that the preferences and desires of consumer segments are partially responsible for the increasing influence of ethical or social factors (DEVINNEY *et al*., 2006, p. 3). For the same researchers, CnSR is visible in three possible ways: (i) through activities related to specific causes, such as donations, protesting or boycotts; (ii) in terms of purchasing or non-purchasing behavior; and (ii) in opinions obtained through market research. They conclude by arguing that CnSR is often overlooked in CSR initiatives.

More recently, Quazi, Amran and Nejati (2016) have defined CnSR as "the individual and collective commitments, actions and decisions that consumers consider as the right things to do in their interactions with producers, marketers, and sellers of goods and services" (p. 49). The authors also argue that consumers play a pivotal role in the implementation of CSR programs and that customers must act in a reciprocal way towards the firms. If businesses are to act ethical and cautious towards the well-being of customers and communities, the least customers could (must) do is to support those very CSR initiatives by becoming actual clients, therefore "consummating" those firms' CSR. Hence, if firms carry an obligation towards customers, customers also carry an obligation towards firms.

Similarly, Caruana and Chatzidakis (2013) also argue that, regardless of the debate as to what CSR precisely means, CnSR should be seen as an important force for CSR. It is stated that customers play a key role in activating CSR programs. Their main contribution to the CnSR literature comes to light in a multidisciplinary view of CnSR. Here, a multi-level, multi-agent conceptualization of CnSR is drawn, going beyond the usual micro dimension (consumers and

their boycotts and protesting) and towards a macro level that includes actors such as governments, lobbyists, law makers, policy makers, and so forth.

The quest for CnSR includes social aspects such as sustainability, fairness and rights, and that adds new elements to the package of attributes typically valued by consumers (i.e., such as price, quality, availability, etc.). These "new" attributes indicate a predisposition of consumers to entrust their purchases to companies that do not violate human rights, do not carry out tests on animals, do not harm the environment, and do not apply means of production that violate moral and ethical codes, very in line with what the basic assumptions of CSR suggest (CARUANA; CHATZIDAKIS (2013).

Despite the existence of these relevant studies on CnSR, one realizes that many definitions of CnSR are still confused with ethical consumer behavior or responsible consumption. Papaoikonomou, Ryan, and Valverde (2011) comment that studies on CnSR are scarce and fragmented, not therefore yet constituting a coherent body of knowledge. Furthermore, pertinent research lacks conceptual models and empirical tests (CARUANA; CHATZIDAKIS, 2013). In any event, it is noted that CSR researchers are more and more engaged in exploring this feasible orientation shift (MOHR; WEBB; HARRIS, 2001; QUAZI; AMRAN; NEJATI, 2015).

Studies have shown that consumers are more inclined to associate themselves with companies that help good causes and condemn those that do not act responsibly (SEN; BHATTACHARYA, 2001). Similarly, Vittel (2015) argues that the "exchange unit" for the responsible behavior of a firm is the approval and support of customers. It is the premise of the current paper that it may be difficult for corporate social responsibility to succeed without the assistance of consumers.

For corporate social responsibility to flourish, it needs to be accompanied by CnSR. However, this relationship may not necessarily be a "win-win" situation. On that, Green and Peloza (2011) highlight that, in order to articulate CSR and CnSR, consumers need to perceive value in their exchanges with companies. Therefore, it is important that companies are able to deliver this value demanded by consumers, especially in terms of functional value. In some cases, consumers will easily associate CSR and functional value (e.g., high quality clothing that does not rely on underpaid labor). However, in other cases, this perception will not be as immediate (e.g., fair-trade coffee) (GREEN; PELOZA, 2011).

Finally, it is argued that companies will only continue to maintain unethical/ socially irresponsible behavior if there are equally irresponsible consumers. In other words, if consumers are not fully exercising their CnSR and continuing purchasing products or services of irresponsible firms, these organizations may not feel pressured enough to modify or abandon their inadequate practices. Here, two considerations emerge: the study of CnSR itself deserves more academic attention, at least equal attention as CSR has received. Besides that, it is suggested that companies need to deeply understand the elements that materialize CnSR in order to dialogue more adequately with consumer purchasing practices. Amid this context, marketing should contribute to educate consumers so that they practice their CnSR more vehemently. Based on their consumption patterns, consumers will ultimately encourage companies to adopt more socially responsible initiatives for building a more adequate environment, in which the long-term well-being of society is sought.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

The interactions between marketing and society have been discussed for decades, and have triggered a number of concepts and theoretical frameworks. Ever since the middle of the last century, most attention has been given to organizations (whether they are non-for-profits or for-profits) and their implicit power to bring about social change. Often, one goes as far as

discussing corporate social responsibility as a viable strategy to increase the financial results of companies.

Amid this context, the key concepts regarding marketing and society still compound confusion. Among the main ones, this paper has discussed the concepts of social marketing, societal marketing and corporate social responsibility. Up to this, one debated the adoption of marketing tools to serve purely social purposes (i.e., social marketing) or to indeed improve corporate performance. Next, this study sought to add a new conceptual dimension to this debate, while arguing that consumers in the marketing sphere are directly related to companies' attitudes through their consumption practices. If the relationship between corporate social responsibility and consumer social responsibility is truly proportional, the debates over CnSR are worthy of more academic attention.

Both Marketing and Business Management literature are profuse with studies and theoretical accounts that emphasize the importance of ethical and socially adequate corporate practices. Indeed, the vast majority of these papers are drawn from a firm's perspective, indicating that greater attention is given to the entity that makes the offer in the exchange system. Few studies, if any, discuss the consumer's role in achieving social gains by "helping" firms to achieve their CSR (DEVINNEY et al., 2006; VITTEL, 2015).

Based on the premise that consumers reward responsible practices, many companies have adopted societal programs. While some consumers may be wary about offers from companies conducted under the CSR veil, and perhaps don't see them as "sincere" (SEN; BHATTACHARYA, 2001), it is argued that consumers have the power to drive corporate social responsibility through their consumption patterns. They can, as discussed, boycott brands or spread negative comments regarding socially irresponsible corporate practices in order to provoke social change themselves.

These societal premises can no longer be viewed unilaterally. In practice, it is the consumers themselves who dictate the design and specifics of this corporate societal program. In this dual and interdependent relationship, it is noted that the attention given to the organizational apparatus is disproportionate in relation to consumers. Further research could, firstly, contribute to the understanding of the CnSR construct. Researchers should also attempt to measure CnSR and test it empirically. Amid this debate, the following questions may also arise: can consumers act solely in ethical terms? Will they sacrifice other sought-after aspects (e.g., price or quality) to ensure that their purchases are responsible?

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