TRACKING THE BRAND REPUTATION IN LITERATURE FROM 1991 TO 2021: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing study offers some important insights into the branding research domain by examining brand reputation by pinpointing and scrutinizing past publications. A considerable amount of literature has been published on branding elements since its classical debates (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Butler, 1914; Kapferer, 1995; Keller, 1993; Keller, 1993; Milewicz & Herbig, 1994), yet little attention has been paid to the conceptualization and the evolution of the construct of brand reputation. This work follows Origgi (2019), who points out that reputation represents a force social role in shaping our knowledge. "Reputation is more than pure information: it is evaluated information – a shortcut of the many judgments and interpretations that people have cumulated about an actor", says Origgi (2012, p. 402). Therefore, "the development of brand reputation means more than keeping consumers satisfied, it is something a company earns over time and refers to how various audiences evaluate the brand" (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009, p.315). Aligned to this paper' rationale: "…brands can be visualized as repositories of reputation" (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994, p. 46) and "reputation is the estimation of the consistency over time of an attribute of an entity" (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994, p. 40). Moreover, a brand needs to have a good reputation to be successful and profit-making in the market (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995).

On the other hand, recent evidence suggests that hidden impacts and effects of brand reputation can be investigated as reported by renowned researchers in branding mentioned in Table 1. Brand Construct in Past Publications. By employing narrative review, we attempt to illuminate researchers and practitioners engaged with branding-related issues and brand reputation topics. Thus, the significant findings and prospective issues can be useful and insightful by our work. This research agenda on the brand reputation' construct provides a starting theoretical point from a well-structured definition offered by significant methodological perspectives for several market conditions towards a more valuable and updated branding scenario.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Recently, researchers have shown an intensified interest in applying 'brand reptation' into their studies. However, brand reputation has been discretely disclosed in classical past studies (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Mu & Zhang, 2021) even though the construct represents a leading perceptible driver of a brand (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; de Chernatony, 1999). Due to the relevance of such strategical relevance of the reputation for an industry, a corporation, its products, and the brand knowledge itself, this study attempts to advance on the understanding of this fundamental construct. In the theoretical and methodological perspectives, once the brand reputation construct is clearly understood, it can be better measured and related to other constructs, or it can be better interpreted in relation to other dimensions. In this study, the construction of knowledge in the branding area can advance when this construct is better structured and understood.

Therefore, the purpose of this research in progress is to consider the theoretical definitions of brand reputation in the existing literature according to the scientific orientations and substantial conditions in the formation of the construct itself, by proving a future agenda. By doing that, we attempt to unpack the 'brand reputation black box' and advance to its construct development and conceptualization.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION
Our Introduction section is structured in two theoretical subsections as presented next.

THE CONCEPTUAL LINKS BETWEEN BRAND AND REPUTATION

Historically, brand-related themes are considered as a robust marketing research domain in academia becoming its research domain of branding (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2008). Additionally, in a historical bibliometric study about marketing publications over the last 50 years by (Martínez-López, Merigó, Valenzuela-Fernández & Nicolás, 2018), 'brand' is in the third position as the most published keyword internationally, followed by 'brand management' in the tenth position, and 'brand equity' in the fourteenth position, and 'brand image' in the eighteenth position. However, no brand reputation was considered. Attending this call, it is relevant to verify the co-occurrences of such a core keyword that portrays the conceptual or knowledge structure of the classical literature in brand knowledge (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1992; Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 1993; Keller, 1993). The lexicon 'brand' entered marketing literature in 1922 (Stern, 2006), as a combination expression such as the brand name, by meaning a trader or commercial terminology. One of the primary studies was by Butler (1914) who signposted the brand strategy for the consumer choice as a possibility to dispute among producers, manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers that by advertising its brand could conquer more potential supply. Brand means a complex entity, and an intangible market asset that is multi-dimensional and multi-functional (Bastos and Levy, 2012; Wheeler, 2019).

Evolutionary conceptualizations of 'brand' can be noticed debated in literature throughout the years, as the value of its name (Aaker, 1991), touchpoints of the brand and its legitimate conception (Kapferer, 1995), the relevance of creating and managing brands (Aaker, 1996), personality characteristics of brands (Aaker, 1997). Brand perceptions (de Chernatony, 1999). Then, it comes the urgent demand for the strategical management of a brand (Kapferer, 1995, 2012). Aligning strategy principles to the strengthening of a brand, Frost, and Cooke (1999) wrote a foremost publication on the interrelationships between brand and reputation to tenaciously manage them as an intangible asset. As they admitted that both the brand and the reputation management require more than communication, image, or identity management: "Performance, customer service, ethics, and business practices are becoming increasingly important in building and sustaining a strong brand and reputation and all these elements require a recognition of responsibility at board level" (p. 81). Later, brand satisfaction shows dominance in service marketing literature Grönroos (2007), the importance of consistency in the behavior and expression of the brand following decades of the brand and customer relationship-phenomena (Veloutsou, 2007).

Another leading viewpoint is related to the brand relationship itself with its consumers as brand tribes or brand communities expand to share with others their feelings preference to specific brands (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2008), as the reputation is the outsider's impression on the significant attributes of corporations (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009), reinforcing brand engagement (Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016), customers' sensitivities regarding their private and their public self-concept by using certain brands (Moliner, Monferrer-Tirado & Estrada-Guillén, 2018), social media relationships (Choi & Burnham, 2021). However, brand reputation may be seen not only by companies' abilities in delivering quality offers but also as their capacity in building societal obligations through corporate responsibility (Johnson *et al.*, 2019). So, corporate reputation also comes to the scientific argument that the reputation of a corporation represents the cumulative perceptions of the public on the outstanding characteristics of companies (Dowling, 2004; Dowling, 2006; Fombrun & Rindova, 2000) or brands (Corkindale, & Belder, 2009; Harjoto, & Salas, 2017; Munteanu, Florea, & Pagalea, 2014) as products and corporate images are identified as outcomes of consumers' experience with the brand (Corkindale, & Belder, 2009). Also, brand reputation may be

considered beyond customers' satisfaction and involve their social status intentions (Choi & Bumham, 2021).

Therefore, "Reputation is an intangible yet precious asset that reflects the level of respect and credibility an organization receives from its various stakeholders" (Corkindale, & Belder, 2009, p.249). Likewise, "Reputation is commonly seen as the informational trace of our past actions: it is the credibility that an agent or an item earns through repeated interactions (Origgi, 2019). As pointed out by Harjoto and Salas (2017, p.545) "A company's image can affect its brand value and reputation". Moreover, it is recognized that the elements of corporate responsibility and irresponsibility behaviors are key drivers for corporate reputation and vice versa (Tench, Sun, & Jones, 2012). Following this logic, the responsibility of a brand and its reputation management should not be far away from purposes/functions according to each stakeholder's relationship (e.g., shareholder, employee, customer, prospect, etc.). According to Frost and Cooke (1999), by maximizing the power of corporate brand and corporate reputation management, some internal factors require strategic responsibilities to build, evaluate, and insert an integrated brand reputation strategy.

According to Choi and Bumham (2021), studies on reputation move around economics, social psychology, evolutionary anthropology, and theory of strategic interaction, as "The notion of reputation in social sciences has been mainly treated in economics", affirms Origgi (2012, p. 402). As delineated by Mariutti and Giraldi (2019, p.4), "previous studies from different fields of knowledge have discussed 'reputation' from different theoretical angles and methodological approaches, such as sociology (as prestige), law and economic (as goodwill), accounting (for balance sheets), finance (calculated as an intangible asset), public relations (in crisis management) and, international business and international marketing (in-country branding)".

Therefore, not only 'reputation' (as above) but also 'brand' implies an interdisciplinary concept as represents the 'backbone' of marketing (Bastos & Levy, 2012). Especially considering that: "Reputation is more than pure information: it is evaluated information – a shortcut of the many judgments and interpretations that people have cumulated about an actor", says Origgi (2012, p. 402). Literature shows that brand reputation represents a conceptual variable of the brand equity as it conveys to an evident construct of brand (Mariutti & Giraldi, 2019).

THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE BRAND REPUTATION CONSTRUCT

Classical literature points out that both the reputation and the image of a brand are associated with brand knowledge (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1992; Keller, 1993; Keller, 1998). "The power of reputation for a brand is strongest when the competitive products all look alike or cannot be seen, for example, commodities, similar goods (hair spray, mouthwash, etc.) or services." (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994, p.45). We will also draw on another conceptual illustration of Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis's (1986) when mentioning that the brand image acts because of its reputation and should be managed over the brand's existence, through the variety of the brand countenance, it is launching in the market and its further development, protection, and administration over time (Park et al., 1986).

Pondering the temporality characteristic of brand reputation and its progressive evaluation needed over time (Selnes, 1993), Milewicz and Herbig (1994, p.40) highlight three key conditions to enlighten this research domain as: "Reputation is an aggregate composite of all previous transactions over the life of the entity, a historical notion, and requires consistency of an entity's actions over a prolonged time for its formation", as "Brand names can often be repositories for a firm's reputation" (p.39) and "As reputation goes, profits follow" (p.46). Moreover, when evaluating brand extension using a model of reputation building, Milewicz and Herbig (1994) pointed out that, "Reputation and

credibility are familiar concepts" (p. 39) as "Reputation is one of the primary contributors to perceived quality" (p. 41).

Significantly, the accurate attributes of brand reputation can improve brand reputation by the stakeholders' perceptions (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Chatzipanagiotou *et al.*, 2019; De Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 1995; 2002). However, brand reputation does not only bring quality perception to the company, but also improves the marketing effectiveness and enables higher prices strategies (Corkindale, & Belder, 2009). In agreement with Johnson *et al.* (2019) that implies that reputation captures consumers' perception of a quality offering from the firm.

Postmodernist researchers are expanding latent impacts and potential influences of brand reputation. For instance, in retail, brand reputation was found significant affecting purchase chances for choosing shirts and shoes (Park-Poaps, & Kang, 2018). Another theoretical perspective relates to the brand equity appreciation that brand reputation is composed in terms of interconnected dimensions intertwined with the brand itself such as brand associations, country image, country reputation, and corporate reputation (Mariutti & Giraldi, 2019). Brand reputation dimensions (Rose and Thomsen, 2004; Walsh and Beatty, 2007) or the unique associations of a brand (Low and Lamb, 2000).

According to results about image and reputation regarding a country (Mariutti and Giraldi, 2020, p.11), a few citations can be added here: "There is a reasonably clear cut between these two concepts", "Reputation is dense, stronger, more serious, it is also more difficult to be changed" while "an image is instantaneous, is always evolving, and it is easier to be changed", so "Country reputation has to do with the result of the accumulative assets in a long term, involves historical and physical properties", consequently, "Country reputation captures the image while the country brand is the core construct communicating the country". Choi and Burnham's study (2021) implies that higher inner-self and social-self expressive perceptions resulting from strong brand reputations expand consumer knowledge sharing and social influence behaviors. The authors concur that when stakeholders perceive that a brand retains a favorable reputation, they prefer to contribute to it.

Moreover, both researchers and practitioners agree that brand reputation is becoming progressively more valuable in the market as it can be an important construct to better understand branding effects. However, studies concerning a brand reputation domain are still lacking in the current literature. There is a lack of both a widely accepted definition and constructs that can effectively measure perceptions of reputation - especially the perception of different stakeholders (Rust et al., 2021).

Drawing from the above justifications and following applications of the concepts in the "brand" literature, we present a narrative evaluation based on a bibliometric in the forms of both descriptive and conceptual examinations. Yet, the business researcher's society lacks contributions to the literature through the accomplishment of narrative review (NR) as an effective data-driven approach (Endenich & Trapp, 2018).

METHOD

It was adopted a longitudinal narrative review (NR) to analyze and classify bibliographic data by framing representative outlines on the brand reputation of the extant literature. Narrative reviews predominantly adopt a qualitative approach, and the inferences are usually based on the papers' conclusions (Collins & Fauser, 2005; Mendes-Da-Siva, 2019). The main types of its applications are the following: general debates, discussion of previous work, and current gaps in the field of knowledge; they can also bring rationales for future research, according to previous authors (Collins & Fauser, 2005; Mendes-Da-Silva, 2019, Rother, 2007). However, NRs are still seen as the basis for the synthesis of the literature, with different functions and applications than

Systematic Reviews (SRs). The preparation of NRs can benefit from the application of the methodological rigor of the SRs. While a historical NR may be unique to accompany the development of a scientific principle or economic concept, otherwise in the SR the narrative may become empty given the restrictive rules typical of this type of revision Mendes-Da-Siva, 2019). The longitudinal NR adopted in the current study is a relevant method to reveal how a construct has been used and defined (Grønning & Fosstenløkken, 2015).

The superiority of NRs could be improved by narrowing the focus on well-defined issues, establishing clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature searches, focusing on a specific set of studies, and establishing relevant selection criteria (Ferrari, 2015); based on this logical condition scheme, this current study refined these two criteria by narrowing the construct exploration. Therefore, as the main criteria for this existing search, we contemplated publications with brand reputation in their title and/or keywords. The two terminologies "corporate brand reputation" and "corporate reputation" were rejected from this study.

Scientifically, a narrative is a discourse on an event, phenomena, or construct of interest, that can establish in the use of, and the blend of linguistic sequences (Adam, 1992): the injunctive one; the argumentative one; the explanatory one; on the descriptive one (neither interpretation nor value judgment), the dialogical one (exchange between interlocutors), and finally the storytelling one. This existing in-progress study focuses on the construct of impact "brand construct" by applying the argumentative description of its conceptual meanings from previous scientific studies.

Firstly, the two most well-recognized academic journals regarding brand studies, guiding the research domain for almost 40 years, were considered as follows the "Journal of Product and Brand Management" (JPBM) and the "Journal of Brand Management" (JBM). The scientific scopes of both journals are specific and limited to brand-related themes and branding-oriented strategies. They publish original, peer-reviewed, and non-empirical, and empirical works that convert theory developed from updated research to actual business practices and plans. According to Scimago Journal & Country Rank 2021, their h-index are, respectively, 75 and 44, which means that this number of articles received at least the same number of citations from authors other than their own contributors. While JPBM was launched in 1992 by its copyright holder Emerald Publishing Limited, after being merged from the journal "Pricing Strategy and Practice"; its ISSN number is 1061-0421 and is presented online; its impact factor displays the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) as 0.84 and represents Q1. Regarding its Scopus 4.1 (CiteScore) in 2019 and Clarivate Analytics 1.832. JBM's copyright holder is Palgrave MacMillan Limited, which launched the journal in 1993 and it is online since 2008; its ISSN numbers are the following: 1350-231X (print) and ISSN: 1479-1803 (electronic); its impact factor is 1.795 and the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) is 0.69 and represents Q2.

Secondly, we also accessed bibliographic data for this study from the Web of Sciences database from 1991 to 2021, one of the largest multi-disciplinary and international databases of peer-reviewed literature in social science research. The secondary data collection displays publications from 1991 to May 2021 gathered as of these datasets.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By searching for publications with brand reputation in its title and/or keywords at the Web of Sciences, we identified 36 publications, however, 24 with a proper and exact definition aligned to the scope of this study. Most of them have undertaken a quantitative approach, five used experiments, three of them non-empirical (two of them were historical essays and one was a conceptual paper), and one adopted a qualitative approach.

Regarding the "Journal of Brand Management", three publications were identified with brand reputation at the title. However, the total of 562 publications contained the word "reputation" either at the title, as a keyword, and/or at the abstract. Among the three studies, each one had a different approach: qualitative, quantitative, and experiment.

As for the "Journal of Product and Brand Management", this publication displayed 156 publications with "reputation" at the publication, yet only one quantitative study with brand reputation at the title of the publication. Concerning the title, keywords, and abstract, the outcomes were the following: only two publications appeared with brand reputation; 14 with "corporate reputation", "corporate brand reputation", and 7 with "reputation".

Observing these data in their magnitude and nominal form, it is possible to conclude that few publications rely on the construct of brand reputation as the main element, expressed in the title and keywords. The main journals in the area show that the topic has been gaining relatively little attention in discussions about branding. This may be due to the lack of depth in studies involving these constructs, which would require work to strengthen the construct; or because there are gatekeepers on this subject in the area, who prevent the insertion of the subject because it is not mainstream in the area. More likely, both are the reasons for this absence of a larger body of brand reputation studies.

In addition, some of the publications articulating or discussing "reputation" from both journals are directly or indirectly cited in this work as fundamentals in terms of theoretical resonances and characterizations of our construct of interest.

Below, some of the influential studies identified from the Web of Sciences search and both brand journals (JPBM and JBM) are displayed, followed by its journal and its foremost definitions of brand reputation at Table 1, next.

Table 1. Brand Reputation in Past Publications

Definition	Journal	Authors
Brand reputation is a viable strategy to lead customers to share their knowledge with the firm and their experiences with other customers	JOURNAL OF PRODUCT AND BRAND MANAGEMENT	Choi & Burnham (2021)
This research also paints a more nuanced view of brand reputation in e-commerce platform environments and illustrates nuanced U-shaped effects of brand reputation on consumer journey outcomes. These findings provide implications for brands and sellers on e-commerce platforms	JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF MARKETING SCIENCE	Mu & Zhang (2021)
Positive CSR associations are a source of competitive advantage and critically affect overall brand reputation as perceived by consumers	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	Bartikowski, Fastoso, & Gierl (2021)
Brand reputation is formed by the accumulation of past brand performance and is a comprehensive and subjective evaluation criterion [62]. When evaluating a brand, consumers tend to recognize the inherent brand reputation and make purchasing decisions based on it [16,17]. As such, brand reputation can be used as an external clue of product quality, providing consumers with additional value for the product in purchasing decisions [63]	SUSTAINABILITY	Kim & Oh (2020)

Brand reputation encloses individual recognition of the other's perspective of a brand	JOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS	Iqbal, Malik, Yousaf, & Yaqub (2000)
A certain reputation of the corporation/brand is created, and customers choose the brand with the image that best fits with their self-image Brand reputation is an immediate picture of a brand based on the aggregated multiple images held by both its internal and external stakeholders over the years	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT	Foroudi (2019)
A company may charge premium if it possesses competitive advantage in terms of superior brand reputation A well-reputed company attracts more qualified personnel and that, in turn, brings about valuable transactions from customers Corporate reputation plays a vital role in the success and in being a profitable brand in almost every industry and business.	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	Mahmood & Bashir (2020)
Brand reputation means how a brand is reviewed or evaluated by others, which can be developed through advertising, public relations, or product quality	BRITISH FOOD JOURNAL	Ngo, Liu, Moritaka, & Fukuda (2020)
Two distinct types of brand reputation: a reputation for social responsibility built through commitments to societal obligations, versus a reputation for ability developed by delivering quality offerings	JOURNAL OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY	Johnson, Mao, Lefebvre, & Ganesh (2019)
Brand reputation is one of the components of brand understanding, in addition to brand awareness and brand associations	JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CONSUMER MARKETING	Mariutti & Giraldi (2019)
A more accurate and precise level of assurance, which detects errors and omissions in sustainability reports, is positively influenced by the brand reputation of the Big 4 firms and by the industry specialisation of the assurance providers	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	Martinez-Ferrero & Garcia-Sanchez (2018)
Brand reputation' is defined as a collective. Consistent representations should reveal a brand's reputation, whereas incoherent current and past associations are not recognized as long-term brand reputation and instead reveal current "brand image" Brand reputation developed from a set of multiple images remains associated with traditional stereotypical representations	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MARKET RESEARCH	Pich, Armannsdottir, & Spry (2018)
Brand image and brand reputation function as critical external cues, as they can guide consumers when evaluating a product, which in turn can affect purchase intention	JOURNAL OF RETAILING AND CONSUMER SERVICES	Ryan & Casidy (2018)

Brand reputation was found significant affecting purchase chances for choosing shirts and shoes	JOURNAL OF BRAND MANAGEMENT	Park-Poaps, & Kang (2018)
Brand reputation can rely on the tangible characteristics of products such as performance or design, or on intangible characteristics such as imagery, identity, and core values	BUSINESS HISTORY REVIEW	Lopes (2016)
Brand reputation impacts the customers' expectations of service performance	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	Sengupta, Balaji, & Krishnan (2015)
"Brand reputation can be viewed as a distinctive construct separated from corporate reputation, but interdependent"	AMFITEATRU ECONOMIC	Munteanu, Florea, & Pagalea (2014)
Retailer's image to manipulate brand reputation The impact of a value product on a premium product from the same brand is not restricted to store brands and is moderated by brand reputation	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF MARKETING	Palmeira (2014)
Brand reputation is likely to play a more dominant role in consumers' quality perceptions relative to other cues that are low scope Brand reputation moderates the effect of warranty on quality perception	PSYCHOLOGY & MARKETING	Akdeniz, Calantone, & Voorhees (2013)
Brand reputation as an important factor influencing customer brand relationships deserve a special attention and should be properly nurtured by marketing activities	JOURNAL OF BRAND MANAGEMENT	Jurisic, & Azevedo (2011)
The name as a major brand component It seems that home university professors might also play role in the formation of the recommended foreign B-schools' brand reputation	JOURNAL OF BRAND MANAGEMENT	Priporas, & Kamenidou (2011)
Brand reputation makes its own unique impact on firm performance of multinational restaurant companies in addition to brand recognition	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT	Koh, Lee, & Boo (2009)
The more positive the brand reputation, the stronger the relationship with the brand	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	Veloutsou & Moutinho (2009)
A unique brand that is positioned as superior in one or more distinguishing attributes from its competitors will gain greater brand reputation over other brands and also lead to superior brand outcomes	JOURNAL OF ADVERTISING RESEARCH	Chaudhuri (2002)
Brand reputation as result of past performance	RAND JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS	Cabral (2000)
Brand reputation as a competitive asset	CAMBRIDGE JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS	Paba (1991)

Source: developed by the authors

Thus, as can be noticed previously at Table 1. Brand Reputation in Past Publications, there is no widely accepted definition of the term brand reputation in the literature. The use of the term is produced without an in-depth approach in several and diverse areas of knowledge. In addition to this identified drawback, there are theoretical and practical losses in the potential of this strategical-based construct for building knowledge on the branding research domain. In this direction, firstly, we recommend prioritizing empirical studies towards the development and conceptualization of the construct brand reputation *per ser* as this research work recognizes issues that merit further findings.

The first relevant observation is that the studies, in general, and in the majority, do not bring an in-depth discussion about what the brand reputation construct is. Nor are there deep efforts that seek to understand conceptualizations to promote important typologies, conceptualizations, and conceptual divisions for the construct. Some studies reserve to mention that there is no widely accepted definition and that, therefore, they prefer to choose, without great support for the objective of the study, a specific author. The ideas of theoretical lines and schools of thought about brand reputation are not mentioned. There is an issue regarding the fact that most identified studies do not settle an accurate definition of brand reputation, yet they aggregate concluding insights, remarkable conditions, and influences of the construct.

We also noticed also that there are key elements related to brand reputation that were mentioned by the number of studies: three studies related to premium products; four related to profits; six to brand names; six considering time or past issues; eight relating strategy; ten considering the brand reputation as a firm's asset; thirteen considering the term under the offering quality perspective.

It is also noticed that the theme of brand reputation is not, for the most part, belonging to a specific area of knowledge. There are various journals scopes involved in this set of publications. They are from various areas other than Marketing and Consumer Behavior such as Hospitality, Economics, Services, Sustainability, and Ethics. This is reflected when there are several journals, under different thematic areas, publishing on brand reputation and using different ways of measuring the construct. Each study to its specific interest, without major commitments in respecting and following in-depth definitions of the term/construct. The absence of a study from a core area such as Sociology or Psychology that defines the term and applies it to the organizational reality leads to a great diversity of areas that use the term, even if in less depth.

Brand reputation definitions are found to be based on measurements with consumers or on aggregated secondary data from non-academic companies, reinforcing Rust et al. (2021) argument. It is necessary to understand how this measurement (which reflects its respective definition) is applied from the perspective of each stakeholder. There is no concern with defining the brand's reputation according to the vision of different stakeholders. Thus, the definition is commonly biased towards the consumer or in an aggregated form, which is not known about weightings or even which stakeholders were considered.

In addition, the construct is still used from several perspectives. On the one hand, this shows the versatility of the topic and its need to unveil findings from various areas. However, on the other hand, this shows the latent demand for a conceptual organization of the term. One should look not for a universal term that serves all areas uniformly, but for brand reputation typologies that can address all these interests without compromising the real concept behind brand reputation. Without that, the construct ends up being multifaceted and lacking robustness. It ends up being used in order to absorb several branding elements that respond to immediate research needs, without major constructions and discussions about the term and the construct. This does not lead to a robust academic

community dedicated to understanding the topic and building solid foundations that can serve as a platform for further knowledge construction.

We believe that unpacking the black box of brand reputation construct may drive us to conceptual descriptions to accurately update its understanding or its consequential discussion by specifying the following components of our concluding understandings (as shown in Figure 1):

Figure 1. Black Box of the Brand Reputation Construct

BRAND REPUTATION CONSTRUCT
The phenomenon of interest: related to the brand.
The corporation's asset: linked to the power of the its name.
Attributes of reasoning: associated with mental images, beliefs and/or evaluations of the brand.
The construct's historical and contextual journey: attached to the assessment of the reputation over time and past legacy.
The conceptual anchor-theme: attached to the scope of the industry, market, or localization.
The impactful strength during crises: – whether knowledge of the brand itself is expected to diverge across products, stakeholders, geo-contextual instances (country or place of origin), and time (such as during a pandemic or punctual crises).

Source: developed by the authors.

Next, the final conclusions of this work in progress.

FINAL REMARKS AND CONTRIBUTION

The main objective of this study was to study the theoretical definitions of brand reputation and the substantial orientations and conditions in the formation of the construct itself in the existing literature. The first – and most expressive – results show that brand reputation is still a construct under construction. In addition to not having a widely accepted definition among researchers in the area, publications on the subject are still few and dispersed. This dispersion of publications means that the term, yet, not a construct, is used in areas other than branding studies in a more superficial way and without support in articles that have made significant efforts to unveil this construct.

The second concluding point of the study refers to the fact that there is no exhaustive evolution on the subject in the area. This entails the absence of discussions and the elaboration of widely accepted constructs. This lack of robustness makes it weak to support definitions and constructs on the subject in the area. Therefore, there must be efforts directed towards initial and exploratory studies to define what brand reputation is, define possible typologies and propose different measurements according to the stakeholder involved in this perception of reputation. While these conceptual and theoretical bases are vague and fragile in their discussions, it will hardly be possible to proceed with robustness and wide dissemination for descriptive empirical studies on the subject.

Third, there are studies that already seek to understand the causal effects of brand reputation without robust previous studies and much discussion in the area about what brand reputation is and how it is measured. In other words, there is a development in the area without the proper evolutionary support of knowledge that can harm the continued use and acceptance of the brand reputation. And excluding this construct from branding

discussions would certainly limit the research domain – as it has already been constraining it – the full development of theories in the area.

Thus, we trust that the management and the conceptualization of the brand reputation is, respectively, strategically relentless, and sophisticated conceived theoretic-methodologically. From this, it is proposed as a study agenda for advancing into the understating of the brand reputation as a construct:

- Elaboration of exploratory studies with experts: it is important to understand the definitions and typologies not only from literature reviews but in the next step, approaching relevant scholars in the area and seeking consensus and disagreement between them so that there is an organization and definition conceptual of the area. This should be done primarily through qualitative methods through interview strategies, focus groups, or the Delphi method.
- Conceptualization of brand reputation considering the perception of different stakeholders: reputation can have very different ways of being considered, especially from the point of view of the consumer, the market, or comparatively by competitors. Therefore, the definitions obtained, in addition to signifying the construct, must also understand its distinctions before its audience. Therefore, conducting studies with different stakeholders to define brand reputation should be carried out in order to develop specific scales. Scale development using techniques such as content analysis, semantic analysis, factorial analysis, and that can understand the effects of the relationship power of scales as antecedent and/or consequent are recommended according to the respective stakeholder perspective.
- Effectiveness of scales: it would be prudent to develop studies that could understand brand reputation scales. This could be seen from quantitative studies competing for scales and the identification of effects - strong, weak, or non-existent.
- Descriptive studies: elaboration of studies that can relate the brand reputation, under a construct well defined by the previous recommendations, serving as antecedent or consequence of other elements. For this type of suggestion, the recommendation is to employ quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling and the use of regressive models.
- Causal models: With the maturity of robust descriptive studies on brand reputation, the next step would be to develop causal models that would identify causes and effects of that reputation. In addition to being able to measure the effects of "brand reputation more accurately", it would also be possible to understand its real effects not only on strategic marketing but also on consumer behavior. For this, the use of techniques such as experiments is suggested.

Therefore, this research agenda on the brand reputation' construct provides a starting theoretical point from a well-structured definition offered by significant methodological perspectives for several market conditions and contextual macro impacts towards a more valuable and updated branding scenario. Brandings researchers and strategists can benefit from our suggested statements and recommended revealed schemes. Nevertheless, this ongoing study is matter to at least three limitations. Firstly, as a limitation, this data gathering could include other databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar. Secondly, due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a more comprehensive and well-refined narrative review of the gathered data. Thirdly, it should be acknowledged that the two journals search device do not apply the same exploration requirements and possibilities.

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