

Relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement

Relación entre el principio de reciprocidad y el compromiso del consumidor

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Abstract

The relational perspective of marketing has gained much relevance even in current transition towards an increasingly significant digitization. The objective of this article is to identify the relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement behaviors, in order to present the characteristics that a marketing should have in which the reciprocal links between organizations for profit with their clients are privileged. For this, a bibliographic review was carried out, in which 32 articles (published in academic journals) that studied the subject of consumer brands engagement were consulted and 30 that reference studies related to solidarity and altruistic manifestations in human beings, which are linked to the principle of reciprocity. From this review, it can be indicated that brands with human and hedonic characteristics are much more likely to encourage brand engagement behaviors in their customers, despite this it seems extremely ambitious to establish a relationship like the one that arises between humans, for this reason, many companies use incentives to strengthen ties to their buyers. In this sense, it is considered that a strategy based on the principle of reciprocity would be much more sustainable for this purpose, achieving that customers are linked to organizations based on a shared purpose, that contributes to the common good and that is remunerated in terms of engagement behaviors.

Resumen

El enfoque relacional del marketing ha ganado mucha relevancia incluso en medio de una transición hacia una digitalización cada vez más significativa. El objetivo del presente artículo es identificar la relación entre el principio de reciprocidad y comportamientos de compromiso del consumidor, con el fin de plantear las características que debería tener un marketing en que se privilegien los vínculos recíprocos entre organizaciones con fines lucrativos con sus clientes. Para esto, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica de 32 artículos, publicados en revistas académicas, que abordan el tema del compromiso del consumidor con marcas y de 30 que referencian estudios relacionados con manifestaciones solidarias y altruistas en seres humanos, las cuales se vinculan con el principio de reciprocidad. A partir de esta revisión, se puede indicar que las marcas con características humanas y hedónicas son mucho más proclives a incentivar comportamientos de compromiso en sus clientes, a pesar de esto parece extremadamente ambicioso lograr establecer una relación como la que se da entre seres humanos, por lo que muchas empresas usan incentivos para estrechar los vínculos con sus compradores. En este sentido, se considera que una estrategia basada en el principio de reciprocidad sería mucho más sostenible para tal fin, logrando que los clientes se vinculen con las organizaciones a partir de un propósito compartido, que aporte al bien común y que sea retribuido en términos de comportamientos de compromiso.

Keywords | palabras clave

Reciprocity, consumer engagement, relational marketing, prosocial behavior, organizational philosophy, organizational purpose, civil economy, corporate brand.

Reciprocidad, compromiso del consumidor, marketing relacional, comportamiento prosocial, filosofía organizacional, propósito organizacional, economía civil, marca corporativa.

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1. Introduction

Marketing has traditionally been understood as a set of practices conducted by organizations competing in capitalist contexts, in which the existence of other corporations offering similar goods affects the acquisition and retention of customers. Likewise, this discipline has been closely related to this economic model, based on contracts for the exchange of goods for money. From this perspective, the distant relationship between producers and consumers does not keep in mind the existence of various human motivations in any transaction; therefore, as Pareto explained (1945), the economy has reduced men to *homo æconomicus* only for analytical purposes. In this sense, the rationality of economic actors is nothing more than a scientific assumption, which is not predominantly evident (Kahneman, 2017).

In turn, this logic, based on human selfishness, which is defined as the constant search to maximize personal benefits when faced with economic decisions, does not contemplate that it is possible for people to take into account other factors when dealing with such circumstances. Sen (1989) says “denying that people always behave in an exclusively selfish way is not the same as claiming that they always act in a selfless way” (p. 36). According to theorists such as Bruni (2004), Frank (2005) and Gui (2011), both extrinsic motivations (linked to external incentives to the person and money) and intrinsic ones (which arise from within the subject) affect decisions and the commitment that a human being places in various situations in the economic aspect. For this reason, schools such as the civil economy emphasize the importance of the return of relationality in the economic field from the concept of reciprocity:

[...] in its beginnings, it should be remembered that the market economy was based not only on the principle of the exchange of equivalents (of value) and on the redistributive principle, but also on the principle of reciprocity. With the outbreak of the industrial revolution and the consequent consolidation of the capitalist system, the principle of reciprocity, which disappeared even from the economic lexicon, was lost (Zamagni, 2013, p. 19)

Bruni and Calvo (2009) state that also in contracts, which allow all exchange of goods for money, there is a type of reciprocity named “without benevolence”, because it is based:

In the fact that subjects are not asked to sacrifice something of their own interest: cooperation emerges solely on the basis of interest, desire and convenience, which are added to institutional requirements. (Bruni & Calvo, 2009, p. 106)

However, these authors argue that there are other types of reciprocity, in which certain “dose of sacrifice and risk arise, and the relationship is not only a means of achieving ‘external’ interests to the relationship, but has a value in itself” (Bruni & Calvo, 2009, p. 110).

Calvo (2013) notes that transitive reciprocity proposed by Zamagni has three characteristics that differentiate it from other approaches of reciprocal behavior. The first realizes that the issuer of an act maintains an expectation of a response provided by the recipient, in order to have continuity and consolidate the relationship. The second characteristic indicates that, although this type of reciprocity has traits of unconditionality because the response is always free and voluntary, at the same time it presents conditioning to the extent that if expectations of response are not met, the relationship may be interrupted. Finally, the third characteristic is transitivity, which states that when an agent offers help, he/she expects a response provided by the receiver, even if it is not necessarily directed towards him/her. However, Calvo (2013) argues that this

conception of reciprocity must be complemented by the recognition of dignity of the other as a communicative actor, bearing in mind that:

By attributing the bond between people solely to gratuitousness, the approach seems to be suggesting that it is each other's self-realization functionality and not one's dignity that lies behind the justification of reciprocity. (Calvo, 2013, p. 134)

From this notion, it is possible to find common elements between the principle of reciprocity and what is named in marketing as a consumer commitment to a brand or organization, which manifests itself in behaviors such as the purchase with a high degree of loyalty and the recommendation of products or services through the classic voice marketing a lot used by digital platforms actions that denote a strong relationship between brands and the consumers or users who perform them. From this perspective, the repeated purchase, recommendation and even defense of companies in the face of questions and participation in the improvement and creation of products, now assumed as manifestations of customer engagement, could be observed as acts of reciprocity, to the extent that they are not regulated by contracts and are given free of charge in many cases, as compensation for a strong bond with a brand considered relevant.

In this sense, what is proposed "is that an economic space formed by subjects inspired by the principle of reciprocity" (Zamagni, 2013, p. 21), can be consolidated within the market, in so far as "neither pure selfishness nor pure altruism is capable of making a sustainable human-social order" (p. 245). From this logic, proposing the possibility of marketing consistent with the characteristics of societies such as those of Latin America could be based on this economic principle, which must transcend the notion of utility raised by the European neoclassical school of the late nineteenth century. Therefore, the objective of this article is to identify the relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement behaviors, in order to raise the characteristics that relational marketing should have, in which reciprocal bonds between private for-profit organizations and their audiences of interest are privileged.

2. Criteria for the selection of the corpus

Para dar cuenta del objetivo anteriormente mencionado, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica de artículos académicos publicados en las bases de datos digitales Scopus y Redalyc. Las palabras clave que se usaron para esta búsqueda fueron compromiso del consumidor, compromiso del cliente, compromiso de marca, *consumer brand engagement* y *customer brand engagement*, así como los términos reciprocidad, comportamiento *prosocial*, *reciprocity* y *prosocial behavior*.

A bibliographic review of academic articles published in Scopus and Redalyc digital databases was carried out. The keywords used for this search were consumer engagement, customer engagement, brand engagement, consumer brand engagement and customer brand engagement, as well as the terms reciprocity, prosocial behavior.

At the beginning, 32 articles were selected to address the consumer engagement, these articles were published in scientific journals from 2009 (the date on which academic interest in this category started to boom) until 2019, a situation that shows the relevance of this topic in the field of marketing, due to its relationship with customer retention strategies and promotion of recommendation especially on digital platforms.

At the same time, 30 articles that refer to studies related to solidarity and altruism in humans were selected in academic journals, which are related to the principle of reciprocity. These texts were published between 2001 (date on which emerged studies on this topic) and 2019 and show empirical evidence related to this human characteristic

from various approaches and disciplines, which could be linked to manifestations of consumer engagement.

For the analysis of these documents, bibliographic data sheets were developed, in which, in addition to the identification elements of each publication, the most significant results of the selected studies were highlighted, either from an empirical or theoretical perspective.

3. Discussions of the state-of-the-art

3.1. *Consumer/customer engagement with brands or organizations*

Bowden (2009) defines consumer engagement as a psychological process that creates the mechanisms by which loyalty internalizes in new customers for a brand, as well as by which it can be maintained in the old ones. Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) claim that the intention to foster expressions of consumer engagement is a key issue from a customer-center marketing perspective. According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), while analysis has focused on purchasing, engagement behaviors go beyond these transactions and can be more widely regarded as those manifestations towards a brand resulting from motivational factors. In this regard, Goldsmith et al. (2011) notes that the concept of commitment describes the tendency of consumers to use trademarks to form their identities and to be able to express them to others. Frequent purchases and recommendation of products or services are behaviors associated with a customer's commitment to a trademark (Smaoui & Behi, 2011), which emerges based on a bond formed by interactive and co-creative experiences with it (Brodie et al., 2011). In this sense, Gambetti and Graffigna (2011) state that what seems to characterize this concept is the active role assumed by the consumer, who can be considered as a partner of the company, both in the construction of content for the brand as well as in the creation of a positive reputation through its recommendation.

Previous approaches show that the affective bond is a condition for the emergence of a commitment that can transcend eventual purchases, becoming an active and long-term relationship. In relation to this, if a brand can be modeled by a consumer, it articulates to its life, making part of its daily experiences as a trusted partner (Gambetti et al., 2012), for this reason, consumers are more likely to prefer brands with personality, because they can identify with them and use them to express themselves, for this reason this aspect could lead to brand engagement (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012). In this way, a greater commitment must generate more confidence in relationships, because people perceive that the company has social interests beyond monetary interests (Vivek et al., 2012), in turn, those brands that generate value based on the own benefits of the experience, will probably be considered more hedonic, a feature that could affect their ability to foster commitment in their customers (Hollebeek, 2012). Franzak et al. (2014) argue that hedonic benefits of goods generate more excitement, promoting responses such as emotion, fun and fantasy, for this reason brands have gained a deeper level of commitment from their clients by raising conversations on social issues and topics that are relevant to them, rather than focusing on the promotion of functional benefits of the goods they offer (Venkatesan, 2017).

According to the studies referenced before, brands that have significant anthropomorphic and hedonic characteristics are more likely to stimulate behaviors of commitment by fostering higher levels of loyalty and recommendation, but also by increasing the possibility of being judged by their actions, because the behavior of a brand is a relevant aspect to stimulate engagement in its customers, since it establishes the orga-

nization's relationship with society (Wong & Merrilees, 2015). However, in many cases the strategy of engagement with audiences has occurred from a superficial approach, related to the construction of corporate reputation to avoid issues of sensitive interest to these audiences and a real commitment in a dual way (Biraghi et al., 2017). Guckian et al. (2018) point out that when a scandal happens and affects the reputation of an organization and customers perceive that it was due to individual actions and not as a result of corporate culture, there are more expectations that this company will behave ethically in the future. This is why interaction and close relationships are key factors in developing engagement behaviors in consumers, who engage with brands based on their behavior and marketing actions; in this regard, if commitment marketing conceives the customer as a kind of marketing manager, then the company should be configured as a pseudo employer, which encourages customer work and productivity, translating it into effective engagement initiatives (Harmeling et al., 2017). In this way, successful innovation of the service also depends on novel practices to motivate customer participation and promote their loyalty (Leckie et al., 2017). Therefore, the objectives sought by companies by fostering commitment of their customers relate to direct contributions such as purchases, as well as to indirect such as the recommendation of the products or services that the brand supports, and interactive behaviors with the company (Bleier et al., 2017).

Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed a scale of consumer engagement towards a brand in digital environments, finding that while participation is a precedent for this commitment, own-brand connection and intention to use are its key consequences. Additionally, participation in online brand communities can stimulate consumer engagement, however, a gradual decrease in this participation would negatively impact commitment (Bowden et al., 2017). For this reason, companies must offer opportunities to their customers to participate in the development of brands, why online communities enable communication with the company and other customers, and can reward the most active people in these communities and motivate them so that they can even modify products (Gong, 2017). Domínguez (2017) conceives online loyalty programs as psychological brand communities, to the extent that they are able to generate in members the feeling of sharing the same interest in a brand. In this way, as customers receive tangible and intangible rewards and reach a higher status within these programs, they develop a greater sense of belonging to the brand, achieving a more significant importance due to its quantity and frequency of purchase, but, also by an attitude towards the company, which can be translated into a positive recommendation for attracting new customers, and in a high level of involvement, to improve the goods offered by the organization (Bijmolt et al., 2017). For this reason, digital data can help brands build strong relationships based on the information they collect from their customers (Gómez-Suárez et al., 2017).

Algharabat et al. (2018) found that in contexts such as social media, customers' perception of being interactively immersed in a brand-created virtual world, the ability to allow customers to interact with others as well as participation positively impact on a commitment to a brand, which in turn incentivizes an electronic recommendation. In this way, commitment does not only originate in the interaction between the customer and the brand, for this reason, incentives and bonds with other actors are essential for high levels of engagement (Fehrer et al., 2018). Similarly, Adhikari and Panda (2019) ensure that participation and interactivity contribute positively and significantly to incentivize consumer engagement by trademarks, generating more loyalty and thus, specific strategies to drive engagement to be included in the promotion and monitoring of virtual communities on different social media platforms, as well as incentive-based

strategies. Likewise, Gómez et al. (2019) point out that the participation of a brand in social networks (understood as the relevance that the virtual platform has for a client) is the most decisive precursor of commitment compared to online communication, thus improving the quality of the relationship with customers by incentivizing co-creative actions.

The identification between the self-image of the consumer and the image of the brand and the bond related to it and with other members in digital media are two drivers of commitment, which is the key element in inducing loyalty to a brand (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). Similarly, having a defined positioning, even linked to a specific gender (male or female), can encourage commitment on customers, for this reason it is important to take these characteristics into account when designing pages on social networks and when making posts (Machado et al., 2019), in order to foster greater consumer interaction on these platforms, which in turn influences the creation of more intense emotional bonds with the brand, for which “active listening” can be used, as stated by Pina et al. (2019) who define it as a technique that does not require face-to-face interaction to succeed, so it can be applied via social networks, starting with the establishment of initial relationships and strengthening links with old clients.

From the revision of the concept of consumer/customer engagement with brands or organizations, it can be said that this is a relevant marketing objective, to the extent that it is directly related to greater loyalty, recommendation, defense against questions related to corporate action and participation in the creation or improvement of goods. In turn, brands with anthropomorphic and hedonic characteristics are identified as more likely to stimulate engagement behaviors in their customers; however, it is key that they are supported by behavior consistent with this personality and willing to stimulate dialogue and interaction with their customers, for which virtual communities and data-driven loyalty programs are a great tool.

3.2. Relationships and prosocial behavior

Having presented the findings on consumer engagement, below is a review of studies addressing human propensity for prosocial behavior, which relates to the manifestations described above.

According to Sheldon et al. (2001), having a feeling of closeness with others is one of the most relevant psychological needs for its influence on people's happiness. For this reason, although social relations are not a sufficient condition for great happiness, it does not present itself alone (Diener & Seligman, 2002); thus, the extent that attitudes such as the pursuit of personal growth, the cultivation of interpersonal relationships and the contribution to the community are increased or even supplanted materialistic effort, could become an alternative through which people can feel good about themselves, obtaining protection against existential anxieties related to the human consciousness of mortality (Arndt et al., 2004). In this sense, sociability is an element that can be significant in accounting trends in subjective well-being, so economic prosperity influences well-being, but knowing that it is not obtained in exchange for greater sociability (Bartolini & Bilancini, 2010). Dunn et al. (2008 and 2014), and Aknin et al. (2012 and 2013), carried out a research on how people spend their money, observing that when participants who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced a greater sense of happiness than those who spent money on themselves, so it might be suggested that the reward for helping others may be deeply rooted in human nature.

Nowak (2006) states that the most outstanding aspect of evolution is the ability to cooperate in a competitive world, for this reason it could be added as a third fundamental evolutionary principle, which includes mutation and natural selection. On this matter, Warneken and Tomasello (2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009) found in children of 14, 18 and 20 months a propensity towards altruism, detected in trends of this kind in early human ontogeny that reflect a natural predisposition. In this sense, the social function of empathy relates to the origin of the motivation of cooperative and prosocial behavior, supported by effective social communication (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Thus, the well-being of others presents itself as a human trait that can be observed when reacting to unequal situations that would seek to prevent the emergence of individual dissatisfaction that could have negative effects on long-term cooperation (Brosnan, 2013; Brosnan & de Waal, 2014, Brosnan et al., 2015; and Claidière et al., 2015).

Rodrigues et al. (2017), on a study that measured prosocial tendencies found that participants obtained the highest scores in the altruistic prosocial behavior subscale, which is induced from sympathy towards internalized principles and relates to helping others. From this perspective, it is understandable that being subjected to acts of generosity affects the emotions of human beings, increasing the likelihood of performing similar acts with other individuals (Mujcic & Leibbrandt, 2017). Likewise, Vaish et al. (2018) found in 3-year-olds kids a motivation to act positively with those who demonstrate goodwill towards them, suggesting an early sense of gratitude, which is most intensely presented in certain individuals, who are more generous and have greater confidence towards others (Yost-Dubrow & Dunham, 2018), assuming attitudes of prosocial behavior that are increased over time and reinforced by acts of this kind executed by others (Erreygers et al., 2018).

Additionally, while empirical evidence demonstrates a cooperative human willingness, it is clear that people assume such attitudes in the midst of relational processes, so their behaviors are largely due to the reactions and attitudes that other individuals assume. Snippe et al. (2018) argue that positive moods and prosocial behaviors tend to reinforce each other in daily life, hence greater positive affection produces more prosocial behaviors, strengthening positive affection. For their part, Brush et al. (2018), based on a model of cooperation with three types of agents, found that those call “discriminators” (who use information to determine their cooperative behavior towards others) can cooperate in a group with people without attitudes of cooperation. However, they found that more information on the cooperative attitudes of other actors hinders cooperation in discriminators. Likewise, Futamura (2018) argues that extraordinary prosocial behaviors (understood as those with relatively low situational and sociocultural demands) are highly assessed when those who assume them also engage in ordinary prosocial behaviors, defined as those involving relatively high situational and sociocultural demands, whose need is clear and in which a relatively large number of people are generally involved.

Similarly, some studies suggest that humans over the years tend to value the actions of others differently, which in turn result in their own behaviors. Futamura and Shima (2019) found that most of the young children, older children and young people who participated in their research ensured that they would act prosocially in reciprocal or unilateral emergency situations, regardless of age. However, in older children and young people, there was a more positive assessment of those who helped unilaterally compared to those who did so on a reciprocal basis. In turn, Padilla-Walker et al. (2018) indicate that high-cost prosocial behaviors such as defending and including decrease slightly during the transition to adulthood, however, they claim that adults, who exhibit high levels of the prosocial behaviors also showed high levels of sympathy, values and

self-esteem during their adolescence, which would mean that they are more likely to remain in adulthood if presented from youth.

Finally, it is relevant to discuss whether this human prosocial willingness is determined only by intrinsic motivations or whether external incentives can stimulate it as well. On this issue, Shiraki and Igarashi (2018) argue that satisfying the relationship or affinity need increases intrinsic motivations, so the feeling of gratitude promotes prosocial behaviors such as charitable acts even towards strangers. In this regard, Lee et al. (2019) found that rewards such as monetary incentives encourage people to demonstrate a higher level of prosocial behavior, implying that this is mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and that an effectively designed reward system can work to improve this type of behavior.

Based on this bibliographic review, on the role of relationships and prosocial behavior in human life, it is undeniable that the principle of reciprocity plays a key role in everyday situations, in which a diversity of encounters that determine sociability are established.

4. Contributions to the state-of-the-art

It is possible to identify a relationship between human propensity towards cooperation and behaviors from the commitment to a brand, indicating how the principle of reciprocity can play a key role in understanding these attitudes and how companies, as corporate brands, could establish lasting value relationships with their customers.

According to some research, it is evident that people may assume attitudes of commitment towards a brand, such as more loyalty in their purchases, positive recommendation of the goods, defense against questions for their actions and participation in co-creation processes of products and services. For this to happen, it is essential that the consumer feels a relation with the brand, called brand love. In this sense, while empirical evidence shows that it is possible to have such feelings, it also shows that transcending the functional or useful relationship is very complex, so those brands that have anthropomorphic and hedonic characteristics are more likely to stimulate engagement behaviors in their customers.

The fact of carrying emotions and attributing human traits to trademarks seeks to be perceived by consumers as if they were other people, in order to establish relationships similar to those with relatives, for which it is key that the brand is consistent with their personality, stimulates active customer participation, promotes an interactive dialogue that goes beyond content for commercial purposes and, in turn, also establishes commitment to their consumers.

As can be seen in several of the studies cited, interpersonal relationships are a strong condition of subjective well-being and happiness. In addition, there is an innate tendency of the human being towards cooperation from an early age, also to assume attitudes of help and gratitude and to be emotionally affected by the behaviors of other individuals. Based on this, it is reasonable for trademarks to consider that establishing relationships similar to interpersonal ones with their customers is a good strategy, taking into account that human beings are willing to do so since it generates pleasant sensations and, in addition it allows humans to assume attitudes of cooperation with brands such as those derived from commitment.

In this way, it is clear that a brand with personality will facilitate the emergence of affective bonds that result in possible relationships, however, totally overcoming the utilitarian bond is considered an overly ambitious goal. For this reason, as some authors suggest, incentive-based loyalty programs have been created, seeking to reward

those customers who are more loyal and active with the brand. This strategy is consistent with one of the studies cited, which argues that prosocial behavior is a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, hence a reward system can work to stimulate this type of behavior. This is the reason why the principle of reciprocity emerged, which is linked to the idea that acts of customer engagement such as loyalty, product recommendation, defense against questions and participation in co-creation processes could be considered as responses arising within the framework of a relationship with a brand, and that they are stimulated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

In this regard, Gui (2011) indicates that the effort that people made into a work can be affected by both types of motivations; however, the intrinsic can be displaced by extrinsic, affecting behaviors that were previously set without requiring external incentives, such as money or other material rewards. In this sense, it is much more sustainable for an organization to base the relationship by appealing to the intrinsic motivations of their clients. The question that immediately emerges is how, since it has already been mentioned that these incentives arise due to the difficulty of overcoming the functional relationship with the brand.

Therefore, organizations must perform a real humanization process that allows them to set up a corporate brand that supports their portfolio and that really works as a true ally for a person, making it easier for a relationship to emerge based on the principle of reciprocity. In other words, in order to appeal to the intrinsic motivations of their clients and promote acts of cooperation on their part, it would be significant for companies to present as true allies with shared purposes, allowing the relationship to be based on this aspect, therefore the utilitarian bond could transcend easily.

In this sense, a purpose that links a company with the customers allows to go beyond the fact of only obtaining money but instead to have affinity with the consumers (as an ally who share a purpose of life), and that customers would reward by buying the goods the company offers, recommending them to others, defending their corporate behavior and having bonds of co-creation processes based on gratitude and gratuitousness, typical of the principle of reciprocity. In turn, trademark communication, traditionally based on the Lack-Necessity-Desire triad, could give way to a foundation based on Beliefs-Purpose-Allied triad. From this perspective, corporate brands and their respective product/service brands can establish a genuinely two-way dialogue of key elements of the social purpose assumed as an organization, which is based on a set of beliefs and which help the company (corporate brand) to be an ally with an affective bond.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Relational marketing is a perspective that remains in force and has gained great relevance, even in the midst of a growing digitization of marketing actions. In turn, this approach is importance from the logic of stimulating consumer engagement, who assume extremely significant cooperation behaviors. The key point in this situation is how companies, which are finally the ones profiting from these behaviors, should come up with a sustainable relational strategy for which incentives can play a relevant role, but appealing to reciprocity could be much more strategic in the long term for organizations.

From the literature review, it is evident that it is possible to activate cooperation of clients, because the human being has a propensity towards solidarity, which coexists with the search for his/her personal well-being. In this sense, an organization could propose a relational marketing strategy that is supported by incentives but that should be strongly based on establishing a much deeper bond with its customers, for which

integrating them with a purpose can be an alternative that allows it to transcend the bond from the utility approach.

In this way, private organizations can undertake a transition process from traditional exchange to relationality, based on the concept of reciprocity. What is intended with this approach is that consumption is based on the linkage of people for social purposes and that organizations assume as their *raison d'être*, and which go beyond their lucrative purpose. Corporate brands are profiled as allies, relating themselves to the individual values typical of the lifestyle of their consumers, and inviting them to participate in meetings in which commercial discourse gives way to issues of greater social significance.

This relationship occurs with the contact of the company (presence and virtual), for this reason, collaborators or employees become significantly relevant, since consumers in these contacts experience encounters with people that represent an entity with shared purposes. Organizational action is also key; again this is done by employees and managers of the company, taking into account that the public of the organization will be able to corroborate or question the coherence between the organizational philosophy and the performance, which could affect not only the company reputation but also the demand for the goods that the company offers to the market.

Today many for-profit organizations relate their purposes with social phenomena and problems, even companies such as B Corp and those of the Economy of Communion whose essence is above profit. From these experiences, it would be interesting to carry out studies that investigate the impact of the organizational philosophy of this type of companies on the emergence of engagement behaviors in their clients, in order to identify their relevance in a relational marketing strategy.

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