Special Issue: False marketing discourses

CONCEPTUALIZING ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY FAÇADE THROUGH AN INTEGRATIVE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Objective: This study aims to conceptualize Organizational Diversity Façade (DF), and its main dimensions through an integrative theoretical framework.

Methodology/Approach: to conceptualize DF a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method was used to analyze the international scientific production on WOS, and SCOPUS databases, between 2011, and 2022, with 52 articles related to false organizational discourses about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

Results: DF (provided by Tokenism) is composed of: 1) internal policies, and processes proforma that would favor the DEI) the so-called Administrative or Internal DF; 2) the conveyance of the DEI in the external communication efforts without ballast, the so-called Communicational or External DF, composed by: 1) Marketing DF when it stimulates the consumption of goods, 2) Institutional DF when it builds or maintains a positive organizational appearance.

Theoretical/methodological contributions: a clear, and up-to-date panorama, a common nomenclature, and theoretical framework about DF that contributes to the appropriation, and consolidation of the research field, and allows guiding communication, and marketing performance to align its communicational efforts in favor of DEI in a coherent, responsible, more effective way, avoiding financial loss, negative media coverage, stakeholder skepticism, and escalating tensions among minority groups.

Relevance/Originality: The theoretical approach combining Façade Theory, and Tokenism contributed to an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates organizational communication phenomena that are distinct and have different nomenclatures but are equally interconnected in the construction of the DF.

Key Words: DEI. Bluewashing. Diversity Washing. Corporate Activism. Woke Washing.

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1 Introduction

Global fierce competition, increasingly heterogeneous societies (different cultures, ethnicities, sexualities, age groups, etc.) put pressure on organizations and their Communication, and Marketing areas to deal with all these differences decoding their norms, values, and languages. Therefore, Diversity, a numerical representation of different types of people in groups (Bernstein et al., 2020; Harris, 2020), can constitute valuable managerial, communicational, and strategic resources (Bendl et al., 2015; Roberson, 2013).

And also a reason for social pressure on organizations for more accountability, responsibility, and inclusion (Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Crisan & Moraru, 2014; do Prado et al., 2010; Lee & Chung, 2022; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Oliveira & Abreu, 2020; Parcha & Kingsley Westerman, 2020; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Ruiz-Mesa, 2022; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Villagra et al., 2021), as a mechanism for inclusion, equality, and justice (Boli & Elliott, 2008; Harris, 2020).

Those facts push organizations to redefine the boundaries and disclosure of their social responsibility (Capizzo & Iannacone, 2023; Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013). Thus, the increasing importance of Diversity for Strategic Management and Communication in organizations (Capizzo & Iannacone, 2023; Ji et al., 2022; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Ruiz-Mesa, 2022) has guided, and intensified the adoption of formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Arsel et al., 2022; Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Harris, 2020; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2022; Suresh, 2020).

As important as its implementation has increased the communicational efforts to disclose them to their stakeholders, which would produce greater internal and external legitimacy, better perception of the organization, and maximization of these strategic benefits (Abrahamson & Baumard, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2020; Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984; Perks et al., 2013; Viererbl & Koch, 2022), including to increase consumers´ willingness to pay more for products and services (Bruhn & Zimmermann, 2017).

And even though symbolic, such measures, directly and indirectly, generate positive impressions on internal and external stakeholders, which would encourage a favorable treatment of the company by its consumers, the local authorities, and the media (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Sterbenk et al., 2021).

Simply put, Andreoli & Nogueira (2021), Berliner & Prakash (2015), Cheney (2000), and Porter & Kramer (2006) note that organizations privilege symbolic, superficial, and cheap

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actions instead of substantial, and costly ones, i.e., they privilege appearance more than behavior itself.

In other words, visible diversity can lead to various strategic benefits (Bergh et al., 2010; Deephouse, 2000; do Prado et al., 2010; Geller, 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Walker, 2010; Zerfass et al., 2018) pointing out an emergent strategy which also depends on organizational competence to strategically manage adverse and complex communicational and marketing conditions such as:

External conditions of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity (VUCA) (Argenti et al., 2005; Belasen & Belasen, 2019; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Zerfass et al., 2018). Besides that, the commoditization of goods, shorter product life cycles, and exhausting organizational messages far behind human assimilation stressing the importance of differentiation (Capriotti, 2013);

As well as more informed, connected, demanding consumers (Capriotti, 2013) engaged in social issues (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021; Villagra et al., 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020) that expect organizations to support these concerns (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021; Small et al., 2019), including DEI ones (Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018), even if it goes against their self-interests (Villagra et al., 2021);

Moreover, the democratization to means of communication and information has blurred different communication genres and channels producing simultaneously media convergence, hybridity, and cacophony of messages (Hallahan et al., 2007; Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013).

So, it´s getting questionable considering that audiences´ experiences are the result of any particular communication, instead of the sum of them, highlighting the importance of integrated, and aligned Communication/Marketing efforts with strategic goals (Hallahan et al., 2007; Oliveira & Abreu, 2020; Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013; Zerfass et al., 2018);

And finally, organizational crises, scandals, disingenuous communication and practices have provoked society and consumer skepticism resulting in the need to increase credibility (Argenti et al., 2005; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019; Lee & Chung, 2022; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013; Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Villagra et al., 2021).

All these circumstances highlight the importance of the role of Communication/Marketing in creating intangible assets such as trust and reputation (where diversity plays an important role) that through integrated, consistent, and purposeful messages capable of meeting different stakeholders' expectations, contribute to strategic goals (Argenti et al., 2005; Belasen & Belasen, 2019; do Prado et al., 2010; Hallahan et al., 2007; Oliveira & Abreu, 2020; Zerfass et al., 2018).

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If, on the one hand, the set of presented factors favored the adoption of more inclusive practices, both administrative and communicational (Ji et al., 2022; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2022), that together would favor the construction of an inclusive, plural, and progressive organizational appearance, on the other hand, these practices are more cosmetic than effective (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Practices that mask organizational homogeneity (Boli & Elliott, 2008), which does not prevent the organization from benefiting from it (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Sterbenk et al., 2021).

At the same time, increased surveillance (Atanga et al., 2022; Bruhn & Zimmermann, 2017; Kunsch, 2014), and consumer (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021; Villagra et al., 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020), social and media pressure (Arsel et al., 2022; Boli & Elliott, 2008; Gulbrandsen et al., 2022; Judd & McKinnon, 2021; Villagra et al., 2021) force organizations to curb false claims, and reports about social, and environmental performance (Bruhn & Zimmermann, 2017; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Muethel, 2013; Perks et al., 2013).

Such practices have not gone unnoticed, even more, when they receive extensive media coverage, with incidents of irresponsible corporate behavior weighing on organizations (Lin-Hi & Müller, 2013; Muethel, 2013), leading to growing skepticism and negative reactions in consumers (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019; Lee & Chung, 2022; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013; Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Villagra et al., 2021).

Once again, this highlights the growing importance of Communication/Marketing professionals to deal with DEI actions while at the same time mediating and dialoguing with minorities (Maiorescu-Murphy, 2022), and ultimately trying to balance the paradoxical effects of communicating them (Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Viererbl & Koch, 2022) t in order to build a sustainable and sustained competitive advantage aligned with strategic goals.

Thus, organizational communication/marketing efforts linked to DEI extensively media-covered, seemingly distinct but intrinsically interconnected, are still emerging phenomena treated separately, whose academic interest has increased (Atanga et al., 2022; Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Bhagwat et al., 2020; Burbano, 2021; Gulbrandsen et al., 2022; Ji et al., 2022; Judd & McKinnon, 2021; Macellari et al., 2021; Park et al., 2022; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Shetty et al., 2019; Sibai et al., 2021; Villagra et al., 2021) but still lack research:

First research is still quite fragmented (Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Macellari et al., 2021; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Sibai et al., 2021). Second, scattered because of 3 different gaps, once they have neither nomenclature (Sailer et al., 2022), classifications, nor a common theoretical

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framework (Boiral et al., 2017) that facilitates the development of a research field and business practice.

Third, little focus on Management and even less on diversity-oriented communication (Allen, 1995; Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019; Ji et al., 2022; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2020; Park et al., 2022). Fourth, research remains poorly multidisciplinary (Belasen & Belasen, 2019; Hallahan et al., 2007; Ji et al., 2022; Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013; Zerfass et al., 2018).

Finally, the need for a richer, more integrative, and strategic approach to organizational communication phenomena (Belasen & Belasen, 2019; Hallahan et al., 2007; Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013; Zerfass et al., 2018).

Therefore, the representation of minorities in organizations involves sociocultural, business, communicational, and ethical dimensions, hence its polysemic, multidimensional, and multidisciplinary character (Bernstein et al., 2020; Lee & Chung, 2022; Macellari et al., 2021; Pope & Wæraas, 2016) which testify to the extent and complexity of a still embryonic research field (Lee & Chung, 2022; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Perks et al., 2013).

These facts justify the exploratory nature of this research which helps to add more knowledge about the subject, formulate more precise problems, and hypotheses for further studies (Martins & Theóphilo, 2009).

Thus, there is a need for more specific and refined theoretical approaches that allow for deeper and more substantial contribution (Unerman, 2008), which is why the Façade theory (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984), and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977) will be combined.

This study will analyze the international scientific production, between 2011 and 2022, related to Organizational Marketing and Institutional DF using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Whose intended contribution is: 1) to systematize, group, and integrate theoretically the academic thinking about DF, its dimensions, and manifestations extensively media-covered; 2) to produce a clear, integrated, and up-to-date overview of these phenomena; 3) to standardize vocabulary; 4) to raise research questions that can, in turn, guide future studies on the subject.

In this context, the question we intend to investigate is: what is organizational DF, and its main dimensions?

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2 Theoretical frame

The word Tokenism initially arose in Martin Luther King's (King, 2000) discussions when he pointed out the illusory practice of using a few black people to create a façade that demonstrated their integration into American society.

According to Façade Theory (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984), organizations and their managers need to justify their actions, obtain access to resources, gain respectability and legitimacy for their decisions, ensure their stability, and survival, which also depend on social and multiple stakeholders approval, resulting in conflicting social demands that can also be met in symbolic or ceremonial ways (easier to implement than substantial and costly measures), the façades, hence the inclination to use them (Brunsson, 2007; Cho et al., 2015; MacLean et al., 2015).

The term façade, albeit incipiently, has been used academically to refer to organizations that promote an artificial appearance of competence, purpose, and consistency that mirrors the norms, and expectations of their stakeholders, allowing organizations to deceive them, and profit from this façade (Abrahamson & Baumard, 2008; Belkania, 2019; Blanc et al., 2019; Boli & Elliott, 2008; Cho et al., 2015; Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Crisan & Moraru, 2014; MacLean et al., 2015; Michelon et al., 2016; Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984; Suresh, 2020).

Abrahamson & Baumard (2008) define Organizational Façades as symbolic fronts erected by their participants, aiming to reassure stakeholders of their management and legitimacy, as they generally lack access to internal, and therefore make decisions based more on these façades than on what happens behind them.
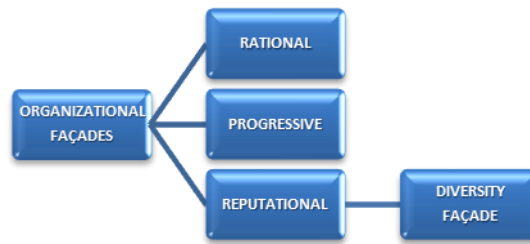
They identify three types of façades designed by organizations: 1) Rational, based on rational and market norms, arguments, and analyses; 2) Progressive, flexible, dynamic, and adapted to contemporary demands and innovations; and 3) Reputational, which displays accountability, and pretentious symbols (codes of ethics, certifications, CSR, etc.) desired by critical stakeholders (Abrahamson & Baumard, 2008) (Figure 1).

The last one is also called the Legitimacy Façade (MacLean et al., 2015). All of them are composed of both operational and discursive actions (Blanc et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2015; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984).

More specifically, the Reputational Façade will include the construction, and projection of a diverse and progressive organizational appearance (Blanc et al., 2019) promoted by Tokenism (Kanter, 1977), which will be called Diversity Façade (DF) (Figure 1).

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Figure 1

Typology of Organizational Façades

Tokenism theory was developed, and initially defined by Kanter (1977) as the phenomenon that occurs within a group when a disproportion in the number of members of two distinct social categories allows the majorities (dominants) to override the minorities, called tokens (since they are seen as representatives or symbols of their group, and not as individuals), whose effects manifest themselves more intensely the greater this difference.

The dominant ones control the group and its culture, while the others, the tokens are stereotyped, discriminated, disadvantaged, face hindered access to mobility and positions of power, and even in the quality of those positions, a theory widely applied to different minority groups and organizational contexts (Dalkiliç & Yilmaz, 2019; Gent, 2017; Kanter, 1977; Laws, 1975; Yoder, 1991, 1994).

Yoder (1991, 1994) notes, however, that the small number of tokens is just one of the factors that explain the difficulties they face in the organizational environment. About this, Laws (1975) identifies important social stratifiers such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, among others, making the dominant, the norm, and the others, deviant, which allows the primacy of one group over another, positions that will affect all of the individual's social interactions.

Most organizations, however, do not exclude minorities explicitly; on the contrary, this discrimination manifests itself in increasingly subtle (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005) and ambiguous (Richard & Wright, 2010) ways. Thus, Wright (2001) defines Tokenism as any intergroup context where organizational boundaries between dominant and token are not closed, but there are severe, not always obvious, restrictions to access advantageous positions.

In short, Tokenism is much broader than simple numerical counting, which must be considered in its analysis (Dalkiliç & Yilmaz, 2019; Yoder, 1991, 1994). Consequently, minorities will face the hegemony and pervasiveness of the values of dominant groups, such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, fatphobia, ageism, etc., as well as the resulting difficulties.

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Hence the more recent definition of Tokenism as the practice of publicly demonstrating laughable concessions to minority groups to avoid prejudice and discrimination accusations (Hogg & Vaughan, 2009), and, more recently, the communicational efforts to take advantage of these concessions (Macellari et al., 2021).

Consequently, there is an increase in communicational initiatives that contribute to the construction and projection of an inclusive, and progressive organizational appearance, but without due ballast (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Boiral et al., 2017; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Sailer et al., 2022).

Either as a response to pressure from their stakeholders (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022; Testa et al., 2018) or to deal with their conflicting expectations (Abrahamson & Baumard, 2008; Cho et al., 2015; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984).

Then, it is understood that Façade Theory and Tokenism, associated under the same theoretical umbrella, encompass and converge: 1) laughable organizational concessions to minorities, whether administrative or internal, communicational or external and 2) the consequent quest to create, design and maintain an artificial inclusive and progressive organizational appearance, resulting in Organizational DF.

3 Methodology

Based on a guiding question, the Systematic Review using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses - PRISMA protocol makes use of planned, systematic and reproducible protocols, reducing the researcher's biases and enabling method verification and replication, which is quite useful when it is necessary to better understand the phenomenon and the available literature which helps to build a relevant research field (Tranfield et al., 2003), as well as theoretical construction as in this article Paul & Criado (2020).

We conducted a review of international scientific production between 2011 and 2022 addressing attempts to represent DEI efforts through organizations' discourse and found no specific review on the topic.

The protocol used consisted of four procedures, namely: 1) Selection of the bibliographic databases; 2) selection, and; 3) exclusion criteria; 4) selection of the definitive corpus.

The first procedure was to select relevant article bases using the two largest, and most comprehensive international peer-reviewed scientific article bases, WOS, and SCOPUS, both of which have citation counts that allow for identifying research relevance (Walker, 2010).

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Then, between 2011, and October 2022, the terms in quotes were searched, initially in the titles of articles only (due to the multiple meanings of some terms), and expanding to all fields whenever the results were limited: Diversity Façade, Tokenism (associated with the terms Diversity, and Washing separately), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Diversity washing, Bluewashing, CSR washing, ESG washing, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) washing, Corporate activism, Brand activism, Corporate Sociopolitical activism, Corporate Social Advocacy, Woke washing., and using the logical or Boolean operator "AND", namely: Advertisement, Advertising, and Publicity systematically associated with the terms Diversity, Inclusive, Inclusion, Minority, Tokenism, and Washing.
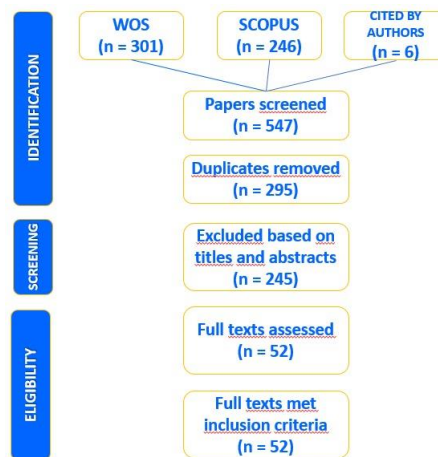
As criteria for the selection of studies, it was established that the study should: 1) contain any of these terms in the title or body of the article; 2) deal with the presence, and absence of minorities in organizational communication resulting in 547 articles, then 295 duplicated articles were discarded.

After that exclusion criteria were applied: 1) articles that mention any of these themes without discussing them; 2) those dedicated to diversity not related to communication; 3) nor that not linked to organizations; 4) those that discussed exclusively a minority or ecological aspects or CEO Activism / Advocacy (for not always representing the Institutional positioning) eliminating 245 of them.

Resulting in 52 eligible articles, all produced from 2015 onwards, with none discarded, using PRISMA guidelines, as summarized below:

Figure 2

PRISMA flow diagram

Source: Prepared by authors based on Prisma protocol.

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4 Results Analysis: Organizational Diversity Façade

From the review, it was found an emerging field of studies considering the low volume of production from 2011 to 2022, with 52 articles in 11 years, as well as its novelty, fragmentation and isolation that make fragile and hasty to identify main authors, production poles and relevance what indicates a need for a detailed bibliometry.
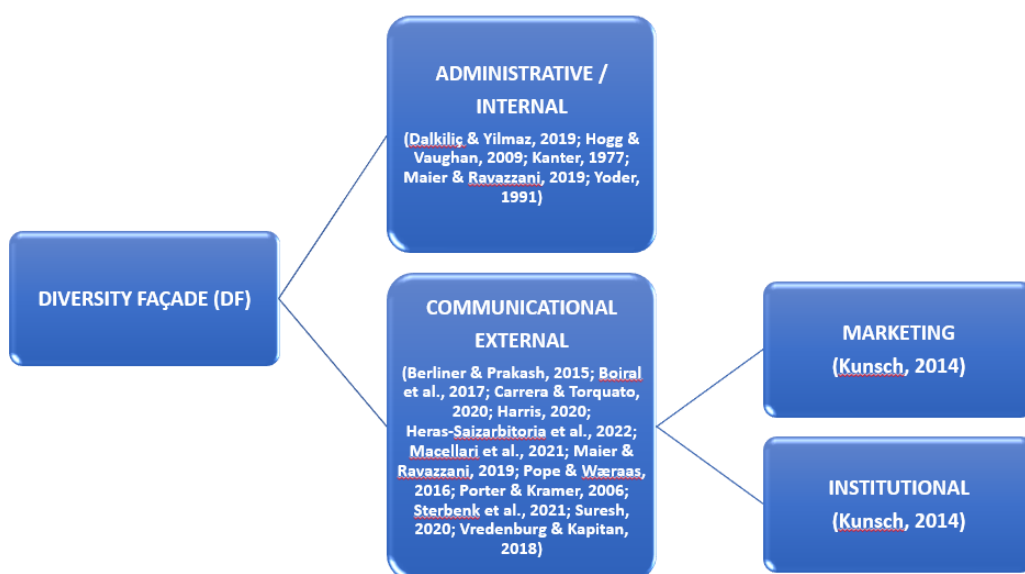
Based on the theoretical umbrella studied, DF can be described as a set of administrative or internal (Dalkiliç & Yilmaz, 2019; Hogg & Vaughan, 2009; Kanter, 1977) and communicational or external (Blanc et al., 2019; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984) proforma and non-ballast actions, coordinated or not, that allows evidencing DEI, with the twofold objective of:

1) protecting themselves from prejudice and discrimination accusations (Boli & Elliott, 2008; Dalkiliç & Yilmaz, 2019; Hogg & Vaughan, 2009; Kanter, 1977; Yoder, 1991);

2) and/or creating, projecting, or maintaining an inclusive and progressive organizational appearance (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Bhagwat et al., 2020; Blanc et al., 2019; Boiral et al., 2017; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Cho et al., 2015; Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Harris, 2020; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022; Macellari et al., 2021; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Suresh, 2020) (Figure 2). Thus, this concept is divided into 2 distinct parts (Figure 3):

Figure 3

Typology of DF

Source: Prepared by authors based on the literature review.

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- Administrative or Internal DF encompasses the purely proforma internal organizational policies and processes linked to DEI dedicated to attracting, hiring, protecting, respecting, retaining, and valuing members of minority groups (Dalkiliç & Yilmaz, 2019; Hogg & Vaughan, 2009; Kanter, 1977; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Yoder, 1991) such as hiring quotas, blind interviews, pieces of training against bias, etc.

- Communicational or External DF encompasses the set of organizational external communicational efforts, Marketing or institutional (Kunsch, 2014), to make explicit, visible or support DEI, but without due internal ballast (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Boiral et al., 2017; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022; Macellari et al., 2021; Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Suresh, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018); (detailed in the next topic).

Together, Administrative, and Communicational DF allow the organization to simultaneously: 1) mask homogeneity in the organization; 2) preserve the hegemonic *status quo*; 3) discriminate without it being noticed by its stakeholders; 4) comply with legislation, and avoid legal confrontations; 5) protect the company against criticism, protests, boycotts, crises, and related situations; 6) benefit from a diverse, and progressive appearance; 7) secure wider support from its stakeholders, including minorities (Boli & Elliott, 2008; Suresh, 2020), and finally attract their buying power (Podoshen et al., 2021).

4.1 Communicational or External DF

Since the 1990s, there have been communicational initiatives aimed at creating, projecting, and maintaining an artificial appearance of good socio-environmental behavior (Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Boiral et al., 2017; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Sailer et al., 2022; Small et al., 2019, Candelon et al., 2021).

Measures that have been labeled by terms to which the English suffix washing is added (Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Cheney, 2000) in the figurative sense of perceived concealment or evident expressive incoherence (Carrera & Torquato, 2020) or even as a commitment that is much more symbolic than substantial (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022),

As well as lately, Bluewashing is used for social claims (Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Berliner & Prakash, 2015; de Freitas Netto et al., 2020; Macellari et al., 2021; Sailer et al., 2022) and Diversity washing (Carrera & Torquato, 2020) when it comes specifically to DEI, especially in advertising.

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Besides that, the social expectation that organizations should play a greater role in the socio-political arena has resulted in a new phenomenon: Organizational Activism (Villagra et al., 2022) (further elaborated in topic 4.1.2).

Both refer to the use of artificial organizational discourses of environmental or social good behavior to promote or enhance the image, reputation, competitiveness, or earnings of an organization, brand, product, or process (Boiral et al., 2017; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Candelon et al., 2021).

When the organization's internal practices are not consistent with these discourses, this inconsistency has been called Woke Washing (Cristobal et al., 2022; Lee & Chung, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Sobande, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018; Warren, 2022) defined as brands that have vague or indeterminate practices linked to social causes (Sobande, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018).
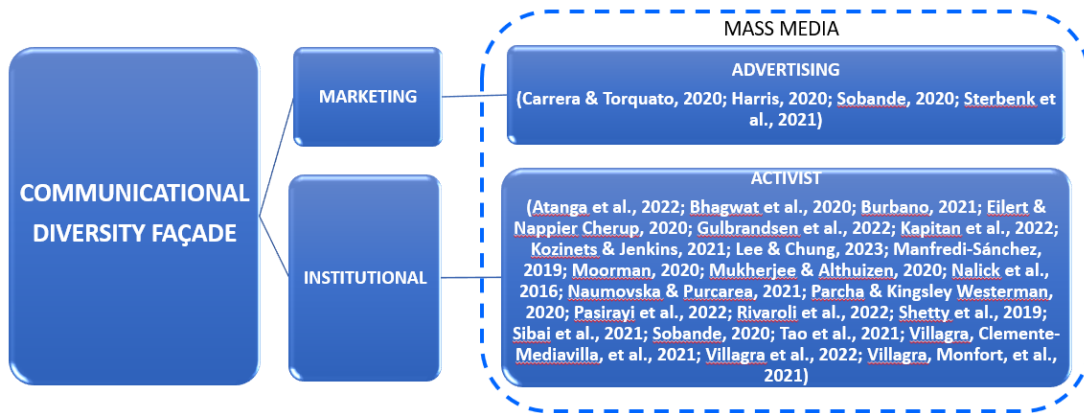
Then, Communicational DF can be defined as the act of making DEI explicit or visible or supporting it in the organization's external communication without actually committing to it in a way that images or discourses use or even highlight minorities (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Bhagwat et al., 2020; Blanc et al., 2019; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Cho et al., 2015; Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022; Macellari et al., 2021; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Suresh, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018) through its communicational efforts categorized as (Kunsch, 2014):

1) **Marketing** when they aim at stimulating the consumption of goods;

2) **Institutional** when they are intended for informational or relational purposes with stakeholders and for building or maintaining a positive organizational appearance (figure 3).

In these two modalities, the extensively media-covered efforts (object of this research) stand out, more effective in disseminating their message (Gulbrandsen et al., 2022): the Advertising and the Activist DF.

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Figure 4

Typology of Communicational DF

Source: Prepared by authors based on the literature review.

The Advertising DF occurs when minorities are included in ads e. g. blacks, gays, fats or seniors' inclusion, and the Activist DF when companies take a public stand supporting them, as seen in #blacklivesmatter, in both cases without being inclusive in internal policies or workforce (both further elaborated in topic 4.1).

If communicational DF ensures minority visibility, even if restricted, it is not aleatory, but mainly marked by the dominant groups' view noticeably: **white** (Batista & Leite, 2011; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Davis, 2017; Hall, 2003; Leite & Batista, 2019), **heteronormative** (Butler, 2020; Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Marchia & Sommer, 2019), **thin** (Bacon & Aphramor, 2011; Carrera & Torquato, 2020), **young** (Carrera & Torquato, 2020) and **without disabilities** (Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Goodley, 2014).

So this view reduces their already scarce presence in Marketing and Institutional initiatives to stereotypes, no matter if they are blatant, when minorities are belittled or ridiculed, with black people in subordinate positions or limited to physical attributes (Davis, 2017; Santos, 2018), LGBTQIA+ (McInroy & Craig, 2016; Rothmann, 2013) and fat people (de Sousa Arruda & Miklos, 2020; Lupton, 2017; Powroznik, 2017) represented as dumb and laughable.

Or even subtle stereotypes manifested, for example, in the predilection for minorities who better conform to the dominant normativity (Carrera & Torquato, 2020), such as black people closer to the white phenotype (Davis, 2017; Santos, 2018; Smith, 2015), heteronormative LGBTQIA+ people (Butler, 2020; Cameron, 2019; Worthen, 2016), and fat people who struggle with their weight (Cameron, 2019).

So, when these minorities are portrayed in such a way in organizational communication and the media, they materialize and crystallize hegemonic views rather than break with them, perpetuating the *status quo*, myths, and dominant norms (Carrera & Torquato, 2020).

If, on the one hand, support for authentic DEI aligns inclusive discourses with practices that contribute positively to: social change (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Moorman, 2020; Villagra, Clemente-Mediavilla, et al., 2021; Villagra et al., 2021; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018), business and company's image/reputation (Moorman, 2020; Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021; Villagra, Clemente-Mediavilla, et al., 2021; Villagra et al., 2021), and even consumer engagement (Atanga et al., 2022; Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Warren, 2022).

On the other hand, DEI, when turned into a mere reputational and commercial advantage, provokes growing skepticism (Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019; Lee & Chung, 2022; Villagra et al., 2021), accusations of Woke washing (Cristobal et al., 2022; Lee & Chung, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Sobande, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018; Warren, 2022) or of Public Relations just as a tool for enhancing reputation (Cho et al., 2015; Warren, 2022).

Besides organizational stigma (Lee & Chung, 2022; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Warren, 2022), irresponsibility (Lin-Hi & Müller, 2013; Muethel, 2013), consumer resistance to corporate persuasive messages including DEI ones (Viererbl & Koch, 2022), even worse its retaliation (Atanga et al., 2022; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Pöyry & Laaksonen, 2022; Warren, 2022), and increased pressure for more detailed DEI reporting (Warren, 2022).

Moreover, organizational crises followed by financial loss, negative media coverage, stakeholder skepticism, and escalating tensions among minority groups (Liu & Pompper, 2012).

This risky conduct, if discovered negatively impacts the stakeholder trust, organization's reputation (Sterbenk et al., 2021), its financial results (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020), and it also contributes to the simplification, impoverishment, trivialization, and commoditization of the cause in question (Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Dowell & Jackson M, 2021; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019).

4.1.1 Marketing DF

Marketing DF is the use of DEI in organizational marketing communication efforts, but without substance, such as advertising, merchandising, and other promotional tools that demonstrate DEI but without being effective in the internal policies or the workforce (Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Harris, 2020; Sobande, 2020; Sterbenk et al., 2021).

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Moreover, as was already observed, the visibility of minorities in organizational communication is marked by the dominant groups' view. Thus, Carrera & Torquato (2020, p. 96) observe in advertising:

A widely mediatized **"normative standard of contemporary existence: white, heteronormative, thin, young, and without disabilities"**, despite being informal, makes everyone else deviant, resulting in a stereotyped representation, limited to the minorities that best meet this normativity, as well as **6 common traits of presence of minorities in ads** (Carrera & Torquato, 2020):

1) Inadequate representations, in which minorities are portrayed from the biased view of the dominant groups resulting in stereotypes, roles, and limiting situations that reinforce this bias rather than eliminate it;

2) Attribution of neutrality, perceived in ads in which certain standards of bodies, usually most of them, are presented as a neutral background or norm to which a few minorities are superimposed;

3) Contradictory backstage, that is, the very essence of DF, in which the organization shows an appearance associated with DEI, but whose backstage does not stand up to public scrutiny, given its incoherence;

4) Limited diversity, manifested in the representation restricted to minorities who best fit the dominant normativity. In other words, the subtle stereotypes identified in the DF as a whole (topic 2.1);

5) Incoherent behaviors, manifested in the incongruence between broadly disseminated advertisements and the company's operational practice;

6) Past life, which makes use of recent inclusive ads with wide positive repercussions that value minorities, as if this were enough to mask a discursive past of discrimination, and that will frequently surface on social networks, always vigilant, until the company consolidates its behavioral, and narrative coherence.

The sum of these 6 behaviors contradicts and delegitimizes the projection of the desired inclusive appearance, which ends up being nothing more than a mere staging whose goal is restricted to the benefits of this marketing positioning (Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2020), thus reducing diversity to a mere marketing tactic (Moorman, 2020; Pope & Wæraas, 2016; Sarkar & Kotler, 2021; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018).

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4.1.2 Institutional DF

Institutional DF concerns the use of DEI in the organization's institutional communication whether aiming at informational/relational objectives with stakeholders or building/maintaining an inclusive appearance, although without the due internal ballast (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019), through:

- publishing **CSR or DEI reports** as tools to manage the perception of their stakeholders (Belkania, 2019; Blanc et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2015; Macellari et al., 2021; Michelon et al., 2016);

- adoption of **CSR certification policies and processes** (Boiral et al., 2017; Ginder et al., 2021; Sayogo et al., 2016);

- **alteration of products or packaging** to support minorities (Atanga et al., 2022; Moorman, 2020);

- **disingenuous Public Relations** (Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022; Macellari et al., 2021; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Testa et al., 2018);

- **organizational activism** on controversial social issues (item that will be detailed due to its wide media coverage) aimed at both end customers and business partners (Kapitan et al., 2022).

The last one has been called Corporate activism (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Gulbrandsen et al., 2022; Sobande, 2020; Villagra, Clemente-Mediavilla, et al., 2021; Villagra et al., 2022; Villagra et al., 2021), Brand activism (Kapitan et al., 2022; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2021; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019; Moorman, 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Shetty et al., 2019; Sibai et al., 2021).

Or variations such as Corporate Sociopolitical Activism (CSA) (Atanga et al., 2022; Bhagwat et al., 2020; Burbano, 2021; Nalick et al., 2016; Pasirayi et al., 2022; Tao et al., 2021) especially in Business and Marketing fields., and inside Communication fields such as Corporate Social Advocacy (Lee & Chung, 2022; Parcha & Kingsley Westerman, 2020).

All of them here are treated as synonyms since they are facets of Organizational Activism that still lack precise boundaries, that is the public manifestation of the organization's positioning towards controversial social issues, and debates disconnected from their main goals aiming to influence public opinion, government, organizations, and authorities through institutional, advertising, financial, etc. support.

These phenomena are still nascent despite their growing adoption by organizations, such as in the case of #blacklivesmatter and #metoo in the US, which is when they gained more supporters (Burbano, 2021; Lee & Chung, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Moorman, 2020;

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Sobande, 2020; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Villagra et al., 2021; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018; Warren, 2022).

It is important to note, however, that when organizations take a public stand on racism, gender equality, LBTQIA+ rights, the environment, etc., these actions are accompanied by wide media coverage and public repercussions in general and for the group they are targeting (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Shetty et al., 2019).

Therefore, these actions cause skepticism on the part of society, which may see only opportunism in these actions, yet another chance for brand exposure (Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019; Lee & Chung, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Sarkar & Kotler, 2021; Villagra et al., 2021; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018).

Even more when the internal practices are not consistent with this discourse, as happened in the #blacklivesmatter case when the support of several organizations to the movement was harshly criticized for having a momentary character and without consistent actions, especially in the upper echelons of these organizations, thus ending up accused of Woke washing (Cristobal et al., 2022; Lee & Chung, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Sobande, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018; Warren, 2022),

So, contrary of what expected, it can cause economic, image, and reputational damage (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018).

For these reasons, some authors consider Organizational Activism as performative, disingenuous activism (Davis, 2017; Sobande, 2020; Suresh, 2020; Watson, 2020), another Marketing (Atanga et al., 2022; Moorman, 2020; Sarkar & Kotler, 2021; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018), or Organizational Communication tactic (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019).

5 Discussions

The theoretical approach of this research contributed with a specific, interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates communicational phenomena that are distinct and have different nomenclatures but are equally interconnected in the construction of the DF.

What sheds light on the importance of Communication/Marketing research and practice to create and reinforce organizational reputation, its sustainable and sustained benefits on strategic positioning (Coombs & Holladay, 2009; Hallahan et al., 2007; Oliveira & Abreu, 2020).

From the review, it was found that this field of study: First, is not only embryonic, considering the low volume of production (51 articles in 11 years), its fragmentation and isolation, but also emerging and in need of further research.

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Second, it was possible to identify that to meet the different and conflicting demands of stakeholders, organizations symbolically build three types of façades: a) Rational; b) Progressive; and c) Reputational. The last one includes the DF provided by Tokenism. All of them generate an artificial appearance to promote/improve the image, reputation, competitiveness or earnings of an organization or brand without substance.

So, answering the initial question of this research, it is understood that DF is composed not only of internal policies and processes proforma that would favor the DEI, the so-called Administrative or Internal DF but also of the conveyance of the DEI in the external communication efforts without ballast, the so-called Communicational or External DF, composed by Marketing, and Institutional DF.

Whether in the Marketing FD marked by Bluewashing or Diversity washing, or in the Institutional FD marked by false Organizational Activism, respectively within them both the Advertising FD and the Activist FD receive broad media visibility, intensifying their effects, as summarized below:

Figure 5

Diversity Façade Conceptual Framework
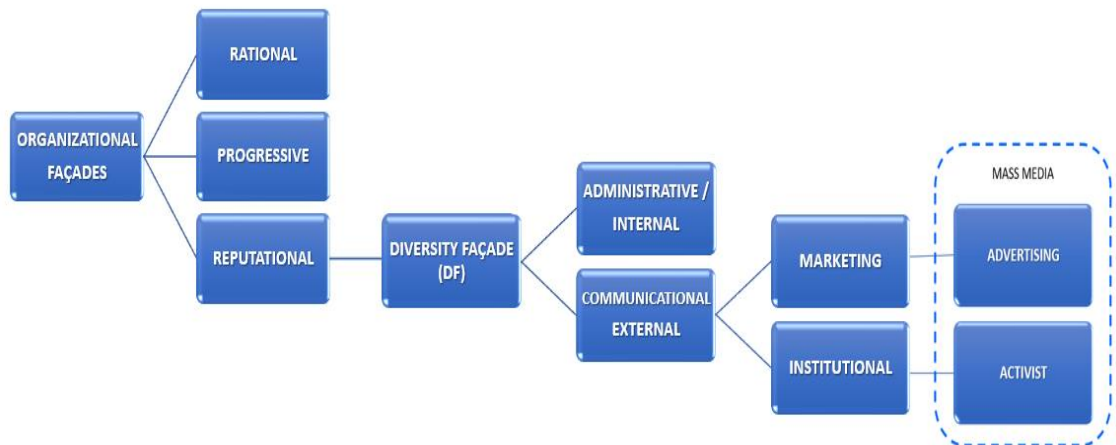
Source: Prepared by authors based on the literature review.

In any case, there will be some diversity, even if limited and stereotyped, which consequently reinforces:

1) the representational hegemony of the dominant groups in organizational communication at the expense of minorities;

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2) the dominant *status quo*, myths, and norms besides being discourses that are inconsistent with what happens in the organization, its operations, and trajectory (Carrera & Torquato, 2020).

Regardless of their differences, it is important to highlight that they are organizational communication phenomena that need to be treated in an integrated and consistent way by Communication/Marketing researchers and professionals.

Together, the Administrative and Communicational DFs allow the organization to mask and preserve homogeneity in the organization while benefiting from a diverse and progressive appearance, that, instead of what is expected, can cause financial, imagery, reputational damage, growing skepticism, and retaliations from consumers.

It is the cohesion between organizational communication efforts and practice that allows the construction not only of a clear and consistent strategic positioning but also of a credible image, organizational brand and product reputation (Argenti et al., 2005; Berliner & Prakash, 2015; Capizzo & Iannacone, 2023; Cho et al., 2015; Kunsch, 2014; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Warren, 2022).

6 Conclusions

Therefore, it is concluded that the diversity of individuals in contemporary societies is a *sine qua non* condition to which organizations need to adapt.

At the same time, neutrality or silence is no longer an option for organizations (Atanga et al., 2022; Capizzo & Iannacone, 2023; Cristobal et al., 2022; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2021; Lee & Chung, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Moorman, 2020; Rivaroli et al., 2022; Sobande, 2020; Vredenburg & Kapitan, 2018; Warren, 2022) since it can be seen as complicity (Moorman, 2020) and the costs of faking commitment and misappropriating social activism in their communication can also be high (Carrera & Torquato, 2020; Dowell & Jackson M, 2021).

Bibliometric research would be crucial to help quantify and connect the scientific production on Communicational DF, research, and experiments on its effects on different stakeholders or even on the reputation of organizations, and research that focuses on less mediatized communicational efforts, aiming to replicate the theoretical DF construct in each minority separately, especially those less researched, or even in different CSR/ESG communicational efforts.

Regarding the limitations of this article, the lack of a common nomenclature about the DEI in organizational communication cannot be neglected as well as the limitations of WOS, and

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SCOPUS coverage, and even the limits of the results due to novelty, fragmentation, and isolation of the field.

Finally, the effort to integrate academic reflection on Organizational DF by generating a clear, and up-to-date panorama, a common nomenclature, and theoretical framework about this phenomenon contributes to the appropriation and consolidation of the research field.

Furthermore it allows guiding business performance to join its communicational efforts in favor of DEI in a coherent, responsible, more effective way, avoiding financial loss, negative media coverage, stakeholder skepticism and escalating tensions among minority groups.

Authors' contribution

Contribution	dos Santos, RMS	Martins de Oliveira, VMO
Conceptualization	X	
Methodology	X	
Software		
Validation		
Formal analysis	X	
Investigation	X	
Resources		
Data Curation	X	
Writing - Original Draft	X	
Writing - Review & Editing		X
Visualization	X	
Supervision	X	
Project administration		
Funding acquisition		

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DATA	AUTHORS	NAME	JOURNAL
2015	BERLINER, D.; PRAKASH, A.	Bluewashing" the Firm? Voluntary Regulations, Program Design, and Meml	Journal of Management
2016	MICHELON, G. *et al*	Behind camouflaging: traditional and innovative theoretical perspectives in	Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal
2016	NALICK, M. *et al*	Corporate sociopolitical involvement: A reflection of whose preferences?	Academy of management perspectives
2016	POPE, S.; WÆRAAS, A.	CSR-Washing is Rare: A Conceptual Framework, Literature Review, and C	Journal of Business Ethics
2016	SAYOGO, D. S. et al	Labeling, Certification, and Consumer Trust	BOOK
2017	BOIRAL, O.; HERAS-SAIZARBITORIA, I.; TESTA, F.	SA8000 as CSR-Washing? The Role of Stakeholder Pressures	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management
2017	DAVIS, J.	Selling whiteness? -A critical review of the literature on marketing and racis	Journal of Marketing Management
2018	VREDENBURG, J. et al	Woke washing: What happens when marketing communications don't matc	The Conversation
2019	BLANC, R. *et al*	Disclosure responses to a corruption scandal: The case of Siemens AG	Journal of Business Ethics
2019	BELKANIA, D. *	Corporate social responsibility in controversial industries or how to fail spec	Chinese Business Review
2019	DHANESH, G. S.; NEKMAT, E.	Facts Over Stories for Involved Publics: Framing Effects in CSR Messaging	Management Communication Quarterly
2019	MAIER, C. D.; RAVAZZANI, S.	Bridging diversity management and CSR in online external communication	Corporate Communications: An International Journal
2019	MANFREDI-SÁNCHEZ, J. L.	Brand activism	Communication & Society
2019	SHETTY, A. S.; VENKATARAMAIAH, N. B.; ANAND,	Brand activism and millennials: an empirical investigation into the perceptio	Problems and perspectives in management
2019	SMALL, F.; MEHMET, M.; MILES, M. P.	Applying a causal ambush marketing framework to social media: The 'Plea	Australasian Marketing Journal
2020	BHAGWAT, Y. *et al*	Corporate Sociopolitical Activism and Firm Value	Journal of Marketing
2020	CARRERA, F.; TORQUATO, C.	Diversitywashing: Brands and their expressive (in) coherences	Comunicacao Midia e Consumo
2020	EILERT, M.; NAPPIER CHERUP, A.	The Activist Company: Examining a Company's Pursuit of Societal Change	Journal of Public Policy and Marketing
2020	DE FREITAS NETTO, S. V. et al.	Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review	Environmental Sciences Europe
2020	GULBRANDSEN, I. T.; JUST, S. N.; ULDAM, J.	S (t) imulating resistance: Corporate responses to the Trump presidency	Organization
2020	MACELLARI, M. *et al*	Exploring bluewashing practices of alleged sustainability leaders through a	Environmental Impact Assessment Review
2020	MAIORESCU-MURPHY, R. D.	Corporate Diversity Communication Strategy: An Insight into American MN	Palgrave Macmillan
2020	MOORMAN, C.	Commentary: Brand Activism in a Political World	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing
2020	MUKHERJEE S.; ALTHUIZEN N.	Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	International Journal of Research in Marketing
2020	PARCHA, J. M.; KINGSLEY WESTERMAN, C. Y.	How Corporate SocialAdvocacy AffectsAttitude Change TowardControversi	Management Communication Quarterly
2020	SOBANDE, F.	Woke-washing: "intersectional" femvertising and branding "woke" bravery	European Journal of Marketing
2020	SURESH, M. S. *	Diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education: a reality or façade?	Thesis University of Oklahoma
2020	VREDENBURG, J. *et al.*	Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing?	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing
2021	ANDREOLI, T. P.; NOGUEIRA, A. C. V. *	Falsos discursos mercadológicos	Revista Pensamento Contemporâneo Em Administração
2021	BURBANO, V. C.	The demotivating effects of communicating a social-political stance: Field e	Management Science
2021	CANDELON, B; HASSE, JB; LAJAUNIE, Q	ESG-Washing in the Mutual Funds Industry? From Information Asymmetry	Risks
2021	GINDER, W.; KWON, W. S.; BYUN, S. E.	Effects of Internal–External Congruence-Based CSR Positioning: An Attrib	Journal of Business Ethics
2021	HERAS-SAIZARBITORIA, I.; URBIETA, L.; BOIRAL, C	Organizations' engagement with sustainable development goals: From che	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management
2021	KOZINETS, R. V; JENKINS, H.	Consumer movements, brand activism, and the participatory politics of mec	Journal of Consumer Culture
2021	MIRZAEI, A.; WILKIE, D. C.; SIUKI, H.	Woke brand activism authenticity or the lack of it	Journal of Business Research
2021	NAUMOVSKA, L.; PURCAREA, I. *	The fall of sexism and the rise of feminism in advertising: brands advocatin	Global Conference on Women's Studies
2021	PODOSHEN, J. S.; EKPO, A. E.; ABIRU, O. "TONI"	Diversity, tokenism, and comic books: Crafting better strategies	Business Horizons
2021	SIBAI, O.; MIMOUN, L.; BOUKIS, A.	Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to	Psychology & Marketing
2021	STERBENK, Y. *et al.*	Is Femvertising the new greenwashing? Examining corporate commitment	Journal of Business Ethics
2021	TAO, W. et al.	Publics' communication on controversial sociopolitical issues: extending the	Journal of Applied Communication Research,
2021	VILLAGRA, N. *et al.*	When polarization hits corporations: the moderating effect of political ideolo	Profesional de la información
2021	VILLAGRA, N.; MONFORT, A.; MÉNDEZ-SUÁREZ	Firm value impact of corporate activism: Facebook and the stop hate for pr	Journal of Business Research
2022	ATANGA, B. A.; XUE, X.; MATTILA, A. S.	The impact of Corporate Sociopolitical Activism (CSA) on brand attitude	International Journal of Hospitality Management
2022	CRISTOBAL, C. *et al.* *	Brand activism: impact of woke advertising on the consumers' attitude	Journal of Business and Management Studies
2022	KAPITAN S. *et al*	Strategic B2B brand activism: Building conscientious purpose for social imp	Industrial marketing management
2022	LEE, S.Y.; CHUNG, S.	Publics' views of corporate social advocacy initiatives: Exploring prior issue	Management Communication Quarterly
2022	PASIRAYI, S.; FENNELL, P. B.; FOLLMER, K. B.	# Activism: Investor Reactions to Corporate Sociopolitical Activism	Business & Society
2022	RIVAROLI, S.; SPADONI, R.; BREGOLI, I.	What Grounds Our Loyalty towards "Authentic Brand Activism" of a Sustain	Sustainability
2022	SAILER, A.; WILFING, H.; STRAUS, E.	Greenwashing and Bluewashing in Black Friday-Related Sustainable Fashi	Sustainability
2022	VIERERBL, B., & KOCH, T.	The paradoxical effects of communicating CSR activities: Why CSR comm	Public Relations Review
2022	VILLAGRA *et al*	Deconstructing corporate activism: a consumer approach	Journal of Management & Organization
2022	WARREN, D. E.	"Woke" corporations and the stigmatization of corporate social initiatives	Business Ethics Quarterly

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