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Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Reputation and Brand Identification with Children

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Abstract

This study aims to understand children's perceptions of **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) initiatives and its effect on the brand, namely **Reputation** and **Identification**. Moreover, it analyzes if the use of **Cartoons** helps to increase these effects. Differences among gender, age and social class, will also be considered.

292 children from the 3rd and 6th grades from 5 schools with different social backgrounds participated in this study. The research made use of a real brand targeting children. Drawings and questionnaires were used as the main research tools. Results suggest that CSR actions have a positive effect on Reputation and Identification and that Cartoons do not lead to greater positive effects.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Children, Reputation, Brand Identification

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are increasingly popular and several studies have already analyzed the effect it has on adults. However, despite the increasing value Children have on the marketplace there is a lack of research regarding Children. This work aims to understand the effect CSR actions have on Children and the possible outcomes it has for the brand, namely in terms of Reputation and Identification. Moreover, it also analyzes to what extent can cartoons increase children's attention to CSR initiatives leading to a greater effect on CSR outcomes.

1. Literature Review and Hypotheses Formulation

1.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR actions are increasingly important and popular since social and political forces encourage firms to act in a more responsible way (Heslin & Ochoa, 2008) and also because it is an important differentiating aspect due to increasing competition and decreasing product differentiation (Peloza, 2005). Nevertheless, there are many definitions since it is an evolving concept (Lai et al., 2010; Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009) but CSR definitions recognize CSR to engage in economically sustainable activities that go above and beyond what firms are legally required to do for communities, the environment and their employees (Heslin & Ochoa, 2008). CSR can be defined as “voluntary activities taken by corporations to enhance economic, social, and environmental performance voluntarily.” (Lai et al., 2010; 458).

1.2 Children

Children are influencers, current and future consumers (McNeal, 1992) and their buying power has increased (Acuff, 1997) which shows that they have great market potential. Children are building relationships with brands for the first time thus it is relevant to build child-brand relationships because it may help firms to gain competitive advantage in the long-term (Ji, 2008). Considering that CSR helps to achieve and

increase customer relationship (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004) it is important to make sure children are aware of CSR initiatives. Moreover, there are several aspects that show that CSR actions will most likely have a positive effect on children: they are willing to take care of the planet (Del Vecchio, 1997); tweens (children from 8 to 12 years old) are trying to fit in, putting into practice what they have learned (Acuff, 1997); and 84% of urban tweens believe that dangerous products to the environment should not be in the market (Lindstrom & Sheybold, 2004). Therefore, since it was proven that CSR has an impact on adults, it is relevant to know whether CSR affects children and how it influences the relationship with brands.

1.2.1 Gender

Females were considered to be more ethical than males but research showed that there are no significant differences (Sikula & Costa, 1994). Gender differences found in some previous ethics literature occurred mainly because women answer in a social desirable way (Dalton & Ortegren, 2011). Thus, when social desirability is taken into account, gender difference in ethics are not significant (Dalton & Ortegren, 2011). Additionally, there are no relevant gender differences concerning environmental behavior and concern (Dietz et al., 2002; Malkus & Musser, 1997). Since environment is one of CSR components and ethics are related with behaving in a social responsible way, it is possible to infer that there are no gender differences in CSR perception among children.

1.2.2 Age

Ethics and age are related (Ruegger & King, 1992; Sikula & Costa, 1994), although the direction of this relationship is not clear yet (i.e. are older people more ethical than younger people?; or vice-versa?). In a study conducted with students between 21 and under and 40 and above, the older ones were more ethical (Ruegger & King, 1992). Sikula & Costa (1994), got a different result, but the authors recognized that older

people tend to be more ethical and that the results could be explained by the fact that there was not a significant age difference between the two groups tested. Therefore, older people are more ethical. Concerning the environment, as children grow up they become more concerned about nature and tend to protect it (Easterling et al., 1995). Therefore, CSR actions will most likely have a greater effect in older children.

1.2.3 Social Class

Children from different social classes have different amounts of consumption experience and children from lower social classes tend to have a smaller exposure to consumption and to be more materialistic than children from higher social classes since material belongings are more available to the latter (Belk et al., 1984). Also, green consumers tend to have higher education and incomes (Paço & Raposo, 2010). Thus, CSR will most likely have a greater effect in children from high social class.

1.3 Reputation

Reputation is one of the most valuable firm's assets since competitors cannot replicate it, has potential for value creation and is linked to positive financial returns (Peloza, 2005; Roberts & Dowling, 2002). Moreover, "good reputation takes considerable time, and depends on a firm making stable and consistent investments over time" (Roberts & Dowling, 2002: 1091), in which CSR investments can be embraced in the concept of "stable and consistent investments over time".

Brand Reputation is linked to how ethical or unethical a brand is perceived to do its business (Brunk, 2010) and is an "attribute that reflects the extent to which external stakeholders see the firm as 'good' and not 'bad'." (Roberts & Dowling, 2002: 1078).

It was proven that CSR actions influence Reputation (Stanaland et al., 2011) and is " a form of reputation building or maintenance" (McWilliams et al., 2006: 4). When CSR is communicated it builds Reputation and credibility (Pfau et al., 2008) which is important

given that maintaining Reputation is considered to be one of the most relevant aspects achievable with CSR actions (Peloza, 2005)

H1: CSR actions have a positive effect on Reputation

H1a: CSR actions have no different effect on Reputation when different genders are considered

H1b: CSR actions have a greater positive effect on Reputation when older children are considered

H1c: CSR actions have a greater positive effect on Reputation when high social class is considered

1.4 Brand Identification

Brand Identification occurs when consumers perceive congruence between their own identity and the attributes they believe define the brand (Dimitriadis & Papista, 2010; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) or when the brand's "attributes are meaningful, attractive and similar to their own characteristics or to characteristics that they aspire to have" (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; 29). Moreover, it cannot be imposed since it arises to satisfy self-definitional questions such as "who am I?" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Brand Identification has a positive effect on customer satisfaction (He & Li, 2011) and works as a customer retention strategy (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Therefore, it is relevant to focus on CSR due to its the strong positive impact on Brand Identification (He & Li, 2011).

H2: CSR actions have a positive effect on Brand Identification

H2a: CSR actions have no different effect on Brand Identification when different genders are considered

H2b: CSR actions have a higher positive effect on Brand Identification when older children are considered

H2c: CSR actions have a higher positive effect on Brand Identification when high social class is considered

1.5 Cartoons

To get the most of CSR initiatives stakeholders must be aware of it (Peloza, 2005).

Since children differ from adults, it is relevant to create awareness of CSR actions in an

engaging manner. Children believe in cartoons, which is positive as long as cartoons have a positive influence on children through its values and personality (Chaves & Dutschke, 2007). Therefore, cartoons can assume one important role, which is to attract children's attention to be aware of social and environmental problems and CSR initiatives that mitigate these issues. Cartoons are effective on influencing children's attention to an ad (Neeley & Schumann, 2004) and when used in print ads lead to a more favorite attitude toward the brand when compared with human spokesperson (Heiser et al., 2008). Therefore, it is expected that cartoons will be effective in influencing children's attention to CSR actions leading to a greater positive effect on CSR outcomes: Reputation and Identification.

H3: CSR actions have a higher positive effect on Reputation when Cartoons are used

H4: CSR actions have a higher positive effect on Brand Identification when Cartoons are used

2. Methodology

2.1 Legal and ethical issues

Ethical and legal requirements were taken into account. To respect and protect children's vulnerability UNICEF's guidelines (2002) were considered. Formal consents were required from the Portuguese Education Ministry, the schools and from children's parents. Authorizations aimed to explain the purpose of the study and to guarantee total confidentiality. The aim of the study was explained to children and confidentiality was guaranteed. Moreover, children were informed that despite their parents' authorization they could participate in the study or refuse to do it (MacNaughton et al., 2001).

2.2 Research Design

Nesquik was the brand chosen since it is a well-known brand targeting children and its cartoon, Quicky, is one of the most preferred cartoons among Portuguese children from 7 to 10 years old (5th position) (Chaves & Dutschke, 2007). Moreover, Nesquik has a

variety of products, increasing the possibility for children to be familiar with the brand, which is relevant since after an exposure, brand attitude will be influenced also by brand familiarity (Machleit & Wilson, 1988). Nesquik CSR actions presented in this study to children were based and adapted from Nestlé Sustainability Report 2010.

Children were divided into 3 groups: for the control group, the brand was presented with no references to CSR actions; for experimental group 1, the brand was presented as having environmental and social CSR initiatives, whereas in experimental group 2 a cartoon presented these initiatives. A small questionnaire was sent to parents in attachment with the consent letter to access social class (measured by the level of education) and brand familiarity (measured by the experience with the brand).

Animated storyboards were used to present the brand (see appendix 1) since it is commonly used among advertising researchers (Laczniak & Palan, 2004) and are appropriate when doing research with children (Bakir et al., 2008).

Taking into consideration children shyness, limited vocabulary and language abilities, and that they still have difficulty in expressing themselves (McNeal, 1992; Wells, 1965), both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to reach more accurate results. After the presentation children were asked to draw a picture about the brand (“Draw what comes to your mind when you think about the brand Nesquik”) and to minimize questions concerning the interpretative subjectivity of the drawings (McNeal, 1992) children were asked to fill a questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaires was to collect children’s demographic data (age and gender), let children choose 3 words that would best describe their drawings and let them state their agreement with 7 statements to test CSR effect on Reputation and Brand Identification.

Drawings were used to understand children’s perceptions about CSR since it is a common practice among marketing research (McNeal, 1992) and one of the most

important and effective ways in which children express themselves (Malchiodi, 1998). Moreover, drawings are an engaging activity (McNeal, 1992) and children take it seriously and always have an interpretation for it (Luquet, 2001).

To analyze the data collected Excel and SPSS 17.0 were used. Regarding drawings, small interviews were conducted to be able to analyze and understand it. Since it is difficult for children to answer questions such as "why?" (Malchiodi, 1998), the main question was "Could you tell me the story of your drawing?".

2.3 Sample

Our sample included children from the 3rd (8/9 years old) and the 6th grade (11/12 years old) which guarantees children full development in John's analytical stage (John, 1999) and in Piaget's concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1972). In this stage children increase their abilities to process information and learn to reason in a more abstract level (John, 1999). Besides, they have a better understanding of the marketplace and when making decisions they start considering more than just one single stimulus (John, 1999).

435 authorizations were sent to children's parents from the 3rd and 6th grade, from one private and four public schools and a 67% response rate was achieved. The sample was constituted by 51% females, 59% 3rd graders and 43% of the children's parents had a degree of some sort, which will be considered as children belonging to high social class (information was not available in 9% of the cases). Control group was formed by 32% of the children and experimental groups 1 and 2 by 34% and 34%, each.

2.4 Measures

To measure Reputation, two studies were used - Stanaland et al. (2011) and Selnes (1993). The first study aimed to analyze CSR from a consumer's perspective, focusing in the antecedents and consequences of CSR and the scale was used to understand if CSR had an impact on perceived reputation. The psychologist consulted considered that

children would not be able to make the appropriate distinction between the words “reliable” and “trustworthy” which constitute two different statements. Therefore, children were presented with 2 of the 3 items: “Nesquik is an honest brand” and “Nesquik is a brand in which I can trust”. Selnes's (1993) goal was to study the relationship between loyalty, satisfaction and brand reputation. The scale accessed the overall reputation (reputation among colleagues/friends and family) and the relative reputation (comparison with competitors). The psychologist suggested the word “reputation” to be replaced by “image” and the word “competitors” by “similar brands” since children are already capable of establishing comparisons without difficulty. Children were exposed to: “My friends and family have a positive image of the brand Nesquik” and “Nesquik has a more positive image when compared with other similar brands”. In both studies, minor wording changes were done to better fit children’s vocabulary and a five-point scale from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5) was used to test children’s agreement with the sentences. Although 7 and 6 point scales were used in these studies, five-point scale is the most appropriate since most children, regardless of age, will not be able to differentiate beyond this level (McNeal, 1992).

To measure Brand Identification, the self-image congruence scale was used (Sirgy et al., 1997). The scale goal was to measure the degree to which the consumer perceives some similarity between his/her self-image and the image held of the product or brand. The scale was used in 3 studies conducted by Sirgy et al. (1997). Study 3 (used 3 items (items 2,3 and 4) out of 5) was considered by the psychologist the most appropriate for children since item 1 was complex to understand and items 4 and 5 were very similar and one should be removed. Children were asked to state their agreement in a five-point scale with the statements: “Nesquik reflects who I am”; “People similar to me drink or eat Nesquik”; "If Nesquik was a person, we would be very similar". In some cases, the

psychologist suggested to give examples in brackets to help to understand the statement (e.g. “Nesquik reflects who I am (for example: a person with energy, happy, etc.)”).

2.5 Pre-test

A pre-test was conducted to 11 children from 8 to 11 years to understand if the questionnaire used appropriate language and if children were able to understand it. A clear outcome was that children did not know the meaning of the word "honest" on a brand context. Thus, children were not able to state their agreement with the sentence "Nesquik is an honest brand". Still, when asked about their agreement with the sentence "Nesquik is an honest brand, that is, a brand that tells the truth", children were able to understand it. This was the main change done in order to obtain the final questionnaire.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 CSR effect on Reputation

Hypothesis 1 predicted CSR actions to have a positive effect on Reputation. Children evaluated Nesquik on a 5-point likert scale according to their agreement to the 4 Reputation items. The means of the 4 items were compared between control group (no CSR initiatives were presented) and experimental groups (social and environmental CSR initiatives were presented). On all the 4 items there was a positive difference when the brand was presented with CSR initiatives (means for control and experimental groups, respectively, 4,11<4,39 for item 1; 4,13<4,40, for item 2; 3,67<4,11 for item 3; and 3,40<4,04 for item 4). A Mann-Whitney test was conducted on these differences and results suggest that there are significant mean differences for a 5% significance level, ($p_1=0,014<0,05$; $p_2=0,036<0,05$; $p_3=0,012<0,05$; $p_4=0,000<0,05$) leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1. This positive effect was also visible on the words chosen by children to describe their drawings: children from experimental groups 1 and 2 used

words such as recycling and environment which tried to portrait their drawings of the CSR activities (see appendix 2 with the top 15 words used by each group).

Regarding drawings, although a time limit was set, the use of color exceed 50% in all the three groups indicating that children participating in the study were motivated. The use of color increased from 55% when CSR was not mentioned to 65% in the 2 scenarios where CSR was mentioned showing that CSR has a positive effect on children. Moreover, there was a decrease in the presence of Nesquik products: 70% in control group to 66% in a CSR context, which may indicate that when the brand was presented has having CSR actions the products were not so relevant, and children focused on elements related with CSR actions. In 35% of the drawings from children exposed to CSR scenarios there were elements, such as recycling bins and sports, showing the positive effect that environmental and social CSR initiatives have on children. Moreover, the presence of sun and smiles increased from 8,5% to 16,2% and from 39,4% to 50%, respectively. After the small interviews it was possible to conclude that in the majority of the cases Quicky and/or people present in the drawings were smiling because Nesquik has nice and tasty products and children like it (see appendix 3.1 - figure 2), or because Nesquik helps the environment and/or people (children exposed to CSR actions) (see appendix 3.2 - figure 4 and 5). These results help to confirm hypothesis 1.

3.1.1 Gender

In sub-hypothesis 1a, it was expected that the effect CSR has on Reputation would not differ according to the child's gender. To confirm this hypothesis, no significant mean differences should occur between genders in the scenarios where the brand was presented has having CSR actions. A Mann-Whitney test with a level of significance of 5% was conducted comparing genders in control group and there were no significant

mean differences for 3 of the 4 Reputation items ($p_1=0,586>0,05$; $p_2=0,281>0,05$; $p_3=0,025<0,05$; $p_4=1,00>0,05$), which indicates that regardless of gender the brand is perceived in a similar manner and equally reputable. A Mann-Whitney test was conducted comparing genders in a CSR context (experimental groups 1 and 2) and results revealed no significant mean differences between genders ($p_1=0,562>0,05$; $p_2=0,896>0,05$; $p_3=0,807>0,05$; $p_4=0,664>0,05$). This indicates that when the brand is presented with CSR actions different genders evaluate the brand similarly and consider the brand equally reputable, meaning that the effect CSR has on Reputation does not differ. Therefore, sub-hypothesis 1a is accepted.

3.1.2 Age

Sub-hypothesis 1b stated that the positive effect CSR has on Reputation would be greater when older children were considered. To test this hypothesis mean differences between the younger and older children were considered. When comparing ages in CSR scenarios (experimental group 1 and 2) there was a greater positive evaluation from the 3rd graders (means for 3rd and 6th grade, respectively: $4,63>4,04$ for item 1; $4,50>4,23$, for item 2; $4,24>3,92$ for item 3; and $4,17>3,85$ for item 4). A Mann-Whitney test was conducted on these differences and revealed significant mean differences between the 3rd and the 6th grade in all 4 items ($p_1=0,000>0,05$; $p_2=0,000<0,05$; $p_3=0,000<0,05$; $p_4=0,000<0,05$), which indicates that age plays a role in the perception of CSR actions. To understand which group age would lead CSR to have a greater positive effect on Reputation a Mann-Whitney test was conducted comparing age groups between control and experimental groups. Results revealed significant mean differences for the 3rd grade in all the 4 items ($p_1=0,000<0,05$; $p_2=0,000<0,05$; $p_3=0,000<0,05$; $p_4=0,000<0,05$) and significant mean differences for only 2 items when considering the 6th grade ($p_1=0,162>0,05$; $p_2=0,045<0,05$; $p_3=0,080>0,05$; $p_4=0,034<0,05$), which indicates that

younger children evaluate a brand that has CSR initiatives more positively than older children. Moreover, in a CSR context mean differences are significant and higher for the 3rd grade. Thus, sub-hypothesis 1b is rejected since the age group that lead CSR to have a greater positive effect on Reputation was the opposite of what was predicted.

The results obtained give some evidence to believe CSR positive effect on Reputation will be greater when younger children are considered. Younger children considered in this study are in the beginning of the rule/role stage (from 8 through 12) which may lead them to put more into practice what they have just learned about the environment, for example. Moreover, in some 3rd grade classes topics such as the environment and good healthy habits have been approached in class, which may have increased their level of awareness. Additionally, the majority (7 out of 9) of 6th grade classes where the study was conducted were performing a motivating task in the class, when the questionnaire was collected, which may have lead to a decrease of attention to Nesquik presentation. After facing this unexpected result, we tried to obtain additional questionnaires to overcome this situation, but due to time constraints it was not possible to do them in schools (end of the Christmas period) and it was too difficult to obtain questionnaires in other settings. A shopping center was used but only 7 questionnaires were obtained after one weekend collecting data, and no relevant information was obtained. Further studies should reanalyze this situation.

3.1.3 Social Class

Sub-hypothesis 1c expect CSR actions to have a greater positive effect on Reputation when high social class was considered. When comparing social classes, in CSR scenarios, there was a greater positive evaluation from high social class (means for experimental groups 1 and 2 for low and high social classes, respectively: 4,25<4,54 for item 1; 4,29<4,56 for item 2; 4,03<4,21 for item 3; 4,01<4,16 for item 4). A Mann-

Whitney test was conducted on these differences and results revealed no significant mean differences between low and high social class, except for the first item ($p_1=0,016<0,05$; $p_2=0,054>0,05$; $p_3=0,366<0,05$; $p_4=0,200<0,05$), which indicates that there are no different perceptions of CSR actions regarding social class. Moreover, a Mann-Whitney test was performed comparing social classes between control and experimental groups and results suggest significant differences in 2 of the 4 items for low social class ($p_1=0,492>0,05$; $p_2=0,320>0,05$; $p_3=0,009<0,05$; $p_4=0,001<0,05$) and in 3 items for high social class ($p_1=0,015<0,05$; $p_2=0,010<0,05$; $p_3=0,081>0,05$; $p_4=0,001<0,05$). These results suggest that there is no clear evidence of the social class effect among CSR actions. However, children from high social class tend to evaluate more positively a brand that has CSR actions leading CSR actions to have a greater positive effect on Reputation. Therefore, sub-hypothesis 1c is accepted.

3.2 CSR effect on Brand Identification

Hypothesis 2 predicted CSR to have a positive effect on Brand Identification. To test this hypothesis, the means of the 3 Brand Identification items were compared between control and both experimental groups. There are positive mean differences in the 3 items (means for control and experimental groups, respectively: 3,93<4,31 for item 1; 3,62<4,04 for item 2; 2,90<3,44 for item 3). A Mann-Whitney test was conducted and results indicate that these differences are statistical significant ($p_1=0,016<0,05$; $p_2=0,016<0,05$; $p_3=0,005<0,05$) leading to the acceptance of hypothesis 2.

Concerning drawings, the same results presented for Hypothesis 1 are valid and help to confirm the results obtained in Hypothesis 2.

3.2.1 Gender

Sub-hypothesis 2a expected the CSR effect on Brand Identification not to be different regardless of child gender. Therefore, mean differences between genders in scenarios

presenting CSR actions (experimental group 1 and 2) should not occur. A Mann-Whitney test was conducted when no CSR actions were mentioned and there were no significant mean differences for all the 3 Brand Identification items ($p_1=0,674>0,05$; $p_2=0,906>0,05$; $p_3=0,062>0,05$), meaning that regardless of gender children identify with the brand in a similar way. A Mann-Whitney test was conducted for CSR scenarios and results revealed again no significant mean differences between genders ($p_1=0,785>0,05$; $p_2=0,831>0,05$; $p_3=0,273>0,05$) meaning that when the brand has CSR actions males and females do not evaluate the brand differently and identify with the brand in a similar manner. Therefore, sub-hypothesis 2a is accepted.

3.2.2 Age

In sub-hypothesis 2b it was stated that CSR positive effect on Brand Identification would be greater when older children were considered. Mean differences for the 3rd and 6th grade were considered. When considering the CSR scenarios, there was a greater positive evaluation from 3rd graders (means for experimental groups for 3rd and 6th grade, respectively: 4,52>3,99 for item 1; 4,31>3,63 for item 2; 3,47>3,40 for item 3). A Mann-Whitney test was performed on these differences and results indicate significant mean differences between the 3rd and the 6th grade for 2 items ($p_1=0,000<0,05$; $p_2=0,000<0,05$; $p_3=0,367>0,05$) which indicates that in a CSR context there are different levels of Brand Identification depending on age. To verify which group age would lead to a greater positive effect on Brand Identification a Mann-Whitney test was conducted comparing control and experimental groups for 3rd and 6th grade. Results revealed significant mean differences in all 3 items for the 3rd grade ($p_1=0,000<0,05$; $p_2=0,000<0,05$; $p_3=0,001<0,05$) and no significant mean differences for the 6th grade ($p_1=0,353>0,05$; $p_2=0,104>0,05$; $p_3=0,871>0,05$). These results indicate that younger children identify more with a brand that has CSR action than older children. Given that

the age group that lead CSR to have a greater positive effect on Brand Identification was the younger group and not the older one as it was predicted, sub-hypothesis 2b is rejected. Explanations given for sub-hypothesis 1b are also valid for these results.

3.2.3 Social Class

Sub-hypothesis 2c stated that the effect CSR has on Brand Identification would be greater when high social class was considered. When comparing social classes in CSR contexts there is a greater positive evaluation from high social class (means for low and high social classes, respectively: 4,13<4,48 for item1; 3,83<4,35 for item 2; 3,15<3,82 for item 3). A Mann-Whitney test was performed on these differences and results revealed significant mean differences between social classes, for items 2 and 3 ($p_1=0,056>0,05$; $p_2=0,002<0,05$; $p_3=0,001<0,05$) which may indicate that children from high social class identify more with social responsible brands than those from low social class. Moreover, a Mann-Whitney test was performed to compare social classes between control and experimental groups and results suggest no significant differences for low social classes ($p_1=0,115>0,05$; $p_2=0,222>0,05$; $p_3=0,143>0,05$), but significant differences for high social class, except for item 1 ($p_1=0,185>0,05$; $p_2=0,036<0,05$; $p_3=0,003<0,05$). This indicates that high social class lead CSR actions to have a greater positive effect on Brand Identification. Therefore, sub-hypothesis 2c is accepted.

3.3 CSR & Cartoon effect on Reputation

Hypothesis 3 stated that CSR actions have a higher positive effect on Reputation when presented by a cartoon. To confirm this hypothesis significant mean differences between experimental groups 1 and 2 should occur. Descriptive statistics comparing means of both experimental groups are presented in table 1 and there is a positive mean difference whenever the brand presents CSR actions, as analyzed in previous hypotheses, but also these differences are greater when CSR actions are presented by a cartoon (experimental

group 2), which may indicate that the use of cartoons when presenting CSR actions among children lead to a stronger positive effect on Reputation.

Table 1: Means for Hypothesis 3

Group Type	N	Item 1	Item2	Item 3	Item 4
Control Group	94	4,11	4,13	3,67	3,40
Experimental Group 1	100	4,32	4,33	4,05	3,84
Experimental Group 2	98	4,47	4,47	4,17	4,24

A Mann-Whitney test was performed on these differences (experimental group 1 vs. 2) and results indicate no significant mean differences for all the 4 items expect on item 4, ($p_1= 0,172>0,05$; $p_2= 0,255>0,05$; $p_3= 0,668>0,05$; $p_4= 0,012<0,05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 should be rejected. We believe that the reason for this lack of result is that Nesquik is a well known brand and already very related to its cartoon. Quicky was depicted in more than 51% of the drawings in all groups which may indicate a strong presence in the children's mind and thus may not create the impact that was expected. Further studies should evaluate if a new cartoon which would be created specifically to present CSR initiatives for umbrella brands would lead to different results.

3.4 CSR & Cartoon effect on Brand Identification

Hypothesis 4 stated that CSR actions presented through the use of a cartoon would lead to a greater positive effect on Brand Identification. To accept this hypothesis significant mean differences between experimental groups 1 and 2 should occur for the 3 Brand Identification items. Descriptive statistics in table 2 indicate a greater positive mean difference when a cartoon is used to present CSR actions (experimental group 2).

Table 2: Means for Hypothesis 4

Group Type	N	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
Control Group	94	3,93	3,62	2,90
Experimental Groups 1	100	4,24	3,91	3,30
Experimental Groups 2	98	4,38	4,17	3,58

A Mann-Whitney test was conducted on these differences and, as for H3, results indicate no significant mean differences ($p_1=0,415>0,05$; $p_2=0,199>0,05$;

$p_3=0,225>0,05$). Therefore, there is sufficient statistical evidence to reject Hypothesis 4. Reasons presented for the rejection of Hypothesis 3 can also be applied in this context.

4. Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to understand if CSR actions have a positive effect on Children and whether does it affect children's relationship with the brand namely in terms of Reputation and Identification. Additionally, it also analyzes to what extent the use of cartoons to present CSR actions would lead to an increase on CSR outcomes.

From this research, it is possible to conclude that CSR actions have a positive effect on children. At a managerial level, this study identified the potential benefits of CSR initiatives for brands targeting children. Since children take CSR actions into consideration when evaluating brands in terms of Reputation and identify more with those that have CSR practices, brands may gain a competitive advantage currently and in the long-term by presenting their CSR efforts to children.

Although the use of a cartoon did not prove to be effective on increasing children's attention to CSR actions it is not a disappointment since CSR proved to have a positive effect on Children by itself. Also, it was perceived that the cartoon was already strongly associated with the brand and therefore was not only conveying the CSR message.

At a social level, this research identified the need to create educative programs that would reach children from all ages and social classes since there were found differences in the perception of CSR actions across different ages and social classes. The aim of these programs would be to educate young consumers to consider relevant social and environmental aspects when evaluating brands in order to help them to become conscious consumers. Nevertheless as we found that younger children give more positive evaluations of CSR actions than older children, the impact of CSR may be different according the age group who is the target of the brand.

To conclude, brands targeting children that have not invest in a CSR strategy yet should seriously consider it. They are not only doing good but will also get a return for it, namely Reputation and Brand Identification.

5. Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations in this study were found and should be considered to improve further research. The first limitation found is related with the sample. Although we had a significant sample, the majority 6th grade classes, 7 out of 9, were performing an interesting task in the class, which may have led a decrease of attention and to different results when analyzing CSR effects across age. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, children from the 3rd grade were extremely motivated and some have covered aspects in class such as the environment or good eating habits, which may have led to the results achieved. Therefore, further research should address this question.

Another limitation is related with the cartoon used. It was used an existent and well known cartoon, extremely attached to the brand and very present in children's mind leading to an increase in children's attention but not sufficient to accept the hypotheses that cartoons in a CSR context will lead to greater positive effects on CSR outcomes. Further studies should test if the use of a new of cartoon created specifically to present CSR initiatives for umbrella brands would lead to greater positive effects, since it would be associated only with CSR actions for a variety of brands.

Further studies should consider the use of a different verbal instruction when asking children to draw (e.g. "Draw an advert for Nesquik"), to understand whether it would lead to an increase presence of concrete elements related to CSR actions (e.g. recycling bins). The instruction used, "Draw what comes to your mind when you think about the brand Nesquik", may have lead children to focus mainly on what they already knew about the brand (e.g. products).

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Appendix 1: Storyboards used to present the brand

Appendix 1.1: Control Group: brand presented without mentioning CSR actions



Appendix 1.2: Experimental Group 1: brand presented mentioning CSR actions



Appendix 1.3: Experimental Group 2: brand presented by a cartoon mentioning CSR actions

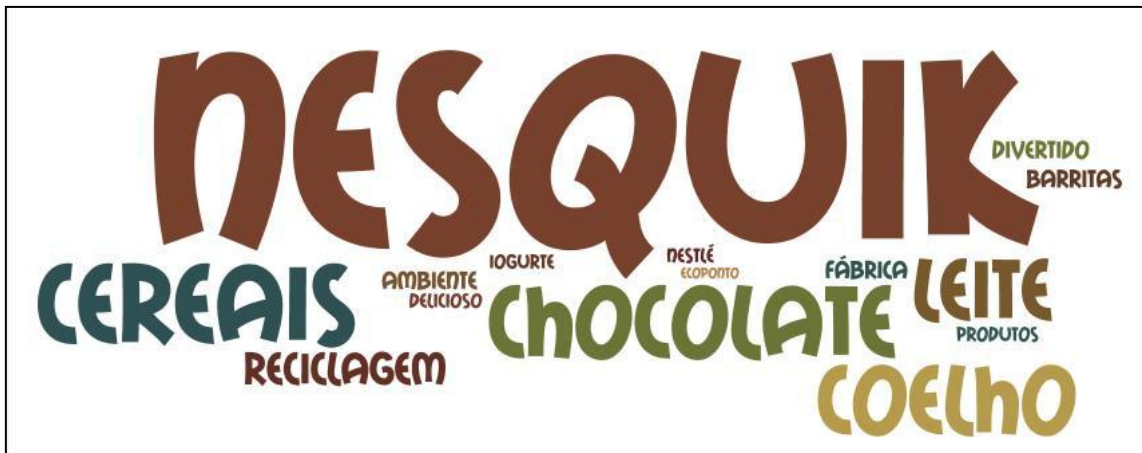


Appendix 2: Top 15 words by children to describe their drawings

Control Group: brand was presented without mentioning any CSR actions



Experimental Group 1: CSR (social & environmental) actions were presented



Experimental Group 2: CSR (social & environmental) actions were presented by a cartoon



Appendix 3: Drawings from children

Appendix 3.1 : Drawings from children belonging to the Control Group

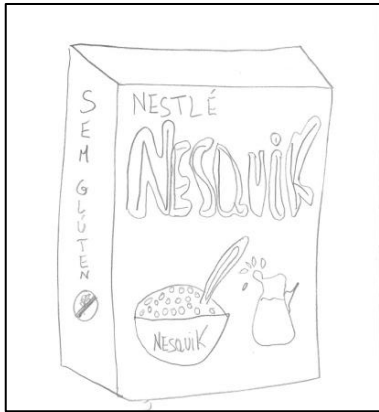


Figure 1: Box of Nesquik cereals



Figure 2: Nesquik products with the presence of Quicky, the cartoon

Appendix 3.2: Drawings from children belonging to the Experimental Groups 1&2



Figure 3: The sun is informing that Nesquik cares about the environment and the girl has a Nesquik product on her hand and is saying that Nesquik uses new lamps and that it cares about people. Nesquik cartoon is also present.



Figure 4: Quicky, the cartoon, says that Nesquik is the best. The child explained that Nesquik is the best because it tells people to practice sports (presence of the ball), to eat healthy (presence of fruit) and also because Nesquik products are good (presence of Nesquik milk and cereal bars)

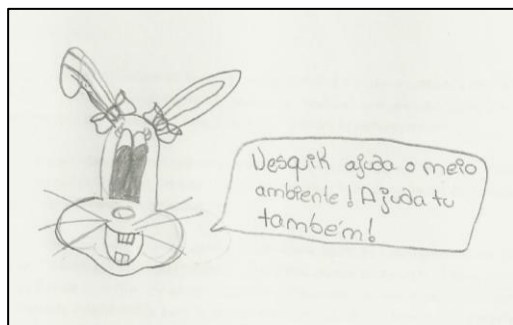


Figure 5: Nesquik cartoon says: "Nesquik helps the environment! Help you too!"

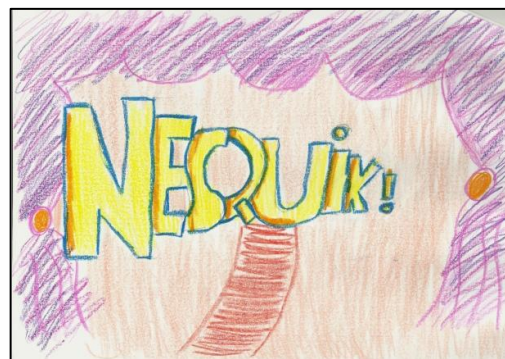


Figure 6: According to the child Nesquik is walking through the red carpet to receive an Oscar (i.e. an award) for having great products and caring about the environment