

Authenticity and the Non-Endorsement of the Coca-Cola Brand: The Alethurgic Manifestation of a Parrhesiast?

A Autenticidade e o Não Endosso da Marca Coca-Cola: A Manifestação Aletúrgica de um Parresiasta?

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Abstract

Purpose: In the scenario of the information age, we focus on a public incident that occurred at the opening of the Euro Cup, between the celebrity and the sponsoring brand, seeking to reflect critically in the light of the Foucauldian concept of alethurgy about the contemporary challenges posed to the management of brand authenticity.

Methodology/approach: Assuming the form of a theoretical reflection, we aim to elucidate the potential and complexity of a social phenomenon in the age of digital information, its ambiguities, and discontinuities.

Research, Practical & Social Implications: The results of this critical reflection can impact the field by elucidating how the information age has promoted significant changes in the relational modes between partners, indicating how authenticity is established and linked to the very condition of existence/continuity.

Originality/value: The proposal's originality lies in its reflexivity and in the observation of the relationship made from the endorser's perspective, demonstrating the indispensability of conducting a political experience based on ethics. Despite being on the same side commercially, this endorsement was publicly rejected by one of the brand's representatives, in favor of parrhesiastic speech, guaranteeing the existence of those who speak and practice the truth, as they are morally guided.

Keywords: Celebrity behavior. Foucauldian alethurgy. Sponsor brand.

Resumo

Objetivo: No cenário da era da informação, focamos um incidente público ocorrido na abertura da Eurocopa, entre a celebridade e a marca patrocinadora, buscando refletir criticamente à luz do conceito de aleurgia foucaultiano acerca dos desafios contemporâneos colocados à gestão de autenticidade de marcas.

Método/abordagem: Assumindo a forma de uma reflexão teórica, objetivamos elucidar o potencial e a complexidade de um fenômeno social na era da informação digital, suas ambiguidades e descontinuidades.

Contribuições teóricas/práticas/sociais: Os resultados dessa reflexão crítica podem impactar o campo ao elucidar de como a era da informação promoveu mudanças significativas nos modos relacionais entre parceiros, indicando como a autenticidade se estabelece vinculada à própria condição de existência/continuidade.

Originalidade/relevância: A originalidade da proposta está na sua reflexividade e na observação da relação efetuada a partir da perspectiva do endossante, demonstrando a indispensabilidade de se conduzir uma experiência política baseada na ética. Apesar de se encontrarem comercialmente do mesmo lado, esse endosso foi publicamente rechaçado por um dos representantes da marca, em prol da fala parrhesiástica, garantindo a existência de quem fala e pratica a verdade, por ser moralmente dirigido.

Palavras-chaves: Conduta de celebridade. Aleurgia foucaultiano. Marca patrocinadora.

Introduction

The Coca-Cola brand was recently one of the sponsors of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League, which began in June 2021 and will end in May 2022, being considered the largest organized club competition in Europe. At the press conference, held on June 14, 2021, before the match between Portugal and Hungary, the football player Cristiano Ronaldo, one of the world's most important celebrities, was invited to take the bench, and his first action was to replace the two bottles of the product, which were in front of him, for a bottle of water, commenting: "water! Coca-Cola..." accompanied by a gesture to the cameras in which he highlighted his preference, water in detriment of soda bottles, the main product of the sponsoring brand. This position immediately unleashed huge damage to the brand, since on that day the New York Stock Exchange shares plummeted, presenting a 1.6% devaluation and causing the company to lose about four billion dollars (Cocctrone, 2021).

Considering that sports are part of contemporary culture and generate integration between individuals, along with providing collective identity and, consequently, consumer engagement with brands and products, sponsoring sporting events has become an excellent marketing strategy. Closely linked to mass consumption, sports have become an economically powerful industry and, naturally, investing in sponsorship

generates positive association and value for companies, promoting high visibility in communication actions (Szuster et al., 2014; Zucco et al., 2015).

Being considered the most popular sport in the world, football holds great social value and promotes identification and high involvement of consumers with its stars: the players. Athletes become idols, and role models for children and adults, and are associated with strong values that are consistent with social and cultural norms. However, with the advent of the internet, such idols naturally assumed the role of celebrities, becoming even more powerful vehicles for communication actions in a globalized economy (Szuster et al., 2014). Scholars consider that contemporary celebrities play the role of heroes (Lunardo et al., 2015; Moraes et al. 2019). Szuster et al. (2014) add that, in both cases, these stars took on this role: as athletes, they are admired for their sporting virtues, but as celebrities, their recognition is on account of fame, or as Sibilía (2015) would say, their existence depends on conquering and maintaining visibility, a culture which is specific to this environment.

For Sibilía (2015), digital technologies in the information and communication era have taken on a transforming role in the way we exist and relate to each other, reconfiguring the subjectivities linked to the phenomenon - now visible and connected, beyond what we understand by intimacy and the private sphere. In the passage to the 21st cen-

tury, many beliefs and social convictions were transformed, but we cannot only blame the new technologies in the communicational field for this, as it is a complex and historically gestated movement. The author states that it would be simply a symptom of the issues that strongly affected the ways of being in our societies. Thus, guided by the logic of the spectacle and the logic of the market, in order to be and exist in this medium it is necessary to gain visibility, which is done by self-promotion and publicity that guarantees several followers, likes, and comments.

Furthermore, with the communicational advent of the internet and amid realities negotiated through consumption, authenticity has become an increasingly desirable and well-known concept in management studies (Müller, et al., 2021). However, according to the authors, authenticity needs to be systematically certified by marketing techniques and recognized by consumers in symbolic exchanges. Furthermore, although they establish a distinction between the concepts of brand authenticity and the authenticity of a celebrity in their field of action, in this study we consider that both are part of the communication field, being strongly linked to marketing and, therefore, in both cases authenticity involves sincerity, genuineness, and trust. Understanding that celebrity endorsement and its persuasive power seems to have become a hegemonic mode of advertising, being of great im-

portance for brands, we propose to reflect on Cristiano Ronaldo's actions, acknowledging that everyone in social media is impelled to seek authenticity. The issue is relevant to products, services, influencers, and celebrities, as all internet participants produce and disseminate information of interest to them on digital platforms (Cova & Dalli, 2009) and since everyone has easy access to intimate details, topics of interest and personal tastes, which their idols and favorite brands publish.

Although his actions were contrary to what is expected of an endorser, Cristiano Ronaldo is a celebrity with 402 million followers on Instagram who advocates for a lifestyle that we interpret as healthy. Thus, based on what has been presented, we propose to reflect on the player's actions based on the Foucauldian concept of alethurgy, a process in which the individual manifests their truth, takes a stance, leads others, and transforms themselves (Foucault, 2014). Clearly, the player chose to defend what he practices as a celebrity, being authentic, that is, we understand that it was a real act of a parrhesiast. After all, a celebrity is the result of a production (Turner, 2014), a track that shapes the image that an idol's followers have of them (Simões, 2014), highlighting the morals and rules of conduct that guide their way of existing, marking subjectivity. However, we emphasize that an alethurgy is not reduced to a subject, as the truths of this position can inspire and affect other subjectivities (Cavalcanti, et al., 2021).

Therefore, we hope that our examination can contribute to the expansion of the concept of authenticity, considered to be a strategic imperative for organizations, and thus the focus of many studies (Charlton & Cornewell, 2019; Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018; Gundlach & Neville, 2012; Kapitan, et al., 2021, Müller, et al., 2021). Specifically, we hope that such expansion somehow contributes to actions that generate positive impacts on how investors and consumers evaluate sponsorship (Eshghi, 2021). Finally, we hope to generate insights for future studies on how acts of truth should compose the conduct of everyone who makes their presence felt in digital social networks: brands, products, services, and subjects, considering that speech and action are easily accessed by everyone, anywhere on the planet.

Literature Background

Sports sponsorship through players endorsement and social media culture interactions

Sponsorship of sporting events was once considered by investors as a positive thing, but this reality has changed over the years, since, mainly, from the 1990s onwards, risks, costs and market saturation have been increasing, resulting from the massive investment of companies in developing this marketing strategy, which negatively impacts the way consumers and investors eval-

uate sponsorship (Eshghi, 2021). However, the author warns, the effectiveness of sponsorship depends on taking into account the role of contingent factors, such as the characteristics of the company and congruence (functional and geographical) between the sponsor and sponsored. Still, he warns that it is important that the sponsored teams understand their importance, after all, this is one of the main sources of revenue.

Cristiano Ronaldo's attitude had an immediate repercussions for the Coca-Cola brand on the stock exchange (Fig. 1). The brand, at least publicly, seems to us to have a respectful attitude when answering that "everyone is entitled to their drink preferences" and that people have different "tastes and needs", even having lost the great opportunity to associate themselves with the image of one of the main players in the competition (Martins, 2021).

Perhaps the brand's mild response follows the same precepts as the player's action: in the social media culture, it is necessary to reveal their intimacy, that is, to speak and act by what they preach and believe, under penalty of losing congruence, affecting their authenticity and thus losing the loyalty of followers (Müller, et al., 2021), harming their condition of existence, since existence in this medium depends on visibility (Sibilia, 2015).

Although Müller, et al. (2021) establish the difference between influencers and celebrities and emphasize that, while influencers build their narratives

based on self-exposure and self-branding, and therefore their authenticity is the result of a negotiation in this environment, we understand that, like brands, celebrities rely on strategies and manage their images in digital media, their strong appeal being of interest

to various cultural fields (Lunardo et al., 2015). We believe that the very existence in digital media depends on the authenticity of the speaker, whether a brand or an individual.



Figure 1. Graph of the fall in the stock market after Cristiano Ronaldo's action.

Source: <http://www.lance.com.br>

Coca-Cola's mission is: "to refresh the world. To make a difference" and its vision is:

"[...] to create the brands and offer the drinks that people want, to refresh them in every way. And to do this through a more sustainable business, building a better future for everyone, which makes a difference in the lives of people, society, and the planet".

It is about having a passion for people and seeking a better future for everyone,

according to the company's official website in Portugal. Thus, it responded by what it claims, representing a strategic condition of managing image and authenticity. However, we can infer the same about the player, since, on social networks, he stands as a defender of physical exercise and body care practices, which include a regulated and adequate diet, and a healthy life.

The player has chosen to be true to his celebrity position and has disre-

garded and/or taken the risk of the possible negative effects of an action that does not endorse the brand; on the contrary, it disallows the association of the sponsor of the event with his image as an athlete. To reflect on this subject, we will first address the phenomenon of celebrities, then the concept of alethurgy and, finally, we will conclude the study in the light of this concept.

Celebrities as a phenomenon

Over the past few decades, the celebrity phenomenon has risen sharply in popularity and endorsement (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). Mass media and cultural developments have led to the prominence of celebrities, making them increasingly influential (Yu et al., 2014). In addition, celebrities have already become a phenomenon of attention in several areas, such as sociology, semiology, and even economics. However, without receiving the due importance on the part of historians, the concept is translated into confused understandings, which classify it, on the one hand, as the terrain of the new elite, holder of capital and privileges that are made visible to the public, and, on the other hand, as an instrument of alienation that submits celebrities to the auspices of a tyrannical public (Lilti, 2018).

Under this scenario, Antoine Lilti (2018) proposes that the concept of celebrity be conceived beyond the fact that someone is well-known in a Western society and, for that purpose, evokes the distinction between the meaning of glory (when someone has

posthumous and widespread recognition for their work) and reputation (referring to the respect gained by someone, within a community, in the opinion of others), which are considered forms of notoriety. The author also defends a third form of notoriety, present in celebrities, represented by a broad reputation, since the famous person is known by people beyond their circle of friends and family, reaching strangers. The quantity of strangers reached by the celebrity indicates their capturing ability, generating curiosity about their private life and causing strangers to develop a unilateral affective relationship with the celebrity. Celebrities have the ability to be known even by people outside their audience (Lilti, 2018).

Turner (2014) argues that, even if a person obtains visibility through their skills and notorious achievements, it is the public's interest in their personal life and identity that turns them from a public figure into a celebrity with a public personality. Both authors argue that a celebrity is not constituted by innate skills or the like, but that they are the result of a process that is directed towards an objective, supported by the work of publicity, training, appearance, media endorsement in general, etc.

In turn, Simões (2014) characterizes the celebrity through the notion of an event, as an occurrence that gives meaning to the lives of subjects, since the celebrity's existence creates a milestone between past and future and since their relationship with the sub-

jects happens in a way that the emergence of an idol, in a given context, causes identifications, projections, recognitions and counter-identifications, and thus the celebrity becomes a source of constitution and redefinition of identities, a source of meaning for others' conceptions of the world, as well as a source of understanding of the field in which the celebrity is situated in society.

In these terms, we place Cristiano Ronaldo as a complete example of a celebrity, considering that, in addition to his talent and brilliance as a football player, he had his image polished to become the celebrity he is now, with fame that expands beyond the football audience. Along with this celebrity apparatus, an important change emerges in the current limits and definitions of the spheres of what is public and what is private in the lives of individuals, since this change has been undergoing redefinitions since the 20th century, with an intensification in the 21st century. In fact, given the nature of this phenomenon, it would only be possible to conceive of it in terms of its limits and discontinuities, understanding that there is a continuous expansion of the private sphere into the public one, which involves the display of oneself and others, famous or not, in aspects of morality, leading to polemics and debates, so that later these changes can be assimilated, fertilizing the ground for new redefinitions (Sibilia, 2015).

Alethurgic manifestations and the construction of the subject

Before approaching the concept of alethurgy, we propose to understand that, according to Foucault, the subject is the result of a daily construction, which happens intertwined with ethical and political realities. Since the subject's existence is moldable and always under construction, self-care is imperative, which is done through daily practices and exercises, capable of reaching others (Nunes & Caminha, 2014).

Foucault (2014) questions the practices by which we become subjects. He assumes that a subject is a form, it appears as an effect of a constitution (Castro, 2009), and it is a subjectivity that involves a process of subjectivation, a morality, and presupposes the adoption of certain behaviors. Subjectivity is constituted through an experience, entailing historical and particular ways of experiencing the self, and depends on discursive and power practices (Cardoso Jr., 2005). Thus, for the construction of this position, a manifestation of truth must be fundamentally based on the social construction of knowledge, being capable of revealing "the truth that links a subject to the systems of truth with which they have contact" (Cavalcanti et al. al., 2021, p.2). In turn, as truths do not exist without the exercise of power, they are legitimized through alethurgic processes.

The notion of alethurgy reveals the reconfiguration carried out by the philosopher in the way of understanding

the relations between power and individuality, involves government actions, and is situated on the relational threshold between ethics and politics (Adverse, 2018). From 1979 to 1980, Foucault (2014) highlights his shift from the concept of knowledge-power to that of government by truth and discusses the term “alethurgy” as a practice of “manifestation of truth” or “veridiction”, which is presented as a political action which demonstrates the truth that necessarily accompanies the exercise of power as a whole. The government dimension encompasses domination techniques (disciplinary and biopolitical) and techniques of self (Lorenzini, 2020). Alethurgy refers to the “[...] set of possible procedures, verbal or non-verbal, through which what is given as true is revealed in opposition to what is false, to the hidden, to the unspeakable, to the unpredictable, to forgetfulness [...]” (Foucault, 2018, p. 8). Therefore, alethurgy is the way of speaking the truth, it is the act by which truths are manifested (Pinheiro, 2008), involving a set of procedures and different manifestations (Cavalcanti et al., 2021).

For Foucault (2020), relationships between individuals happen through government practices, carried out with the self and with others. Alethurgy would be the process by which “the subject manifests the truth contained within themselves to take a stance for themselves and for others”; the act of affirmation is also the object of practice, it marks subjectivity as from the revelation, evidencing rules of conduct that

govern a given way of being (Cavalcanti et al., 2021, p.2). The authors explain that, for Foucault, truth forms a symbolic guideline which sustains the moral code that guides individual conduct.

Thus, acts of truth happen with commitment to saying the truth, revealing at the same time the purpose about oneself, the truth about oneself (Cavalcanti et al., 2021). However, as it is not possible to deal with oneself without having a relationship with others, a technique used to transmit true discourses is called parrhesia. Its purpose is for others to establish a full relationship with themselves, given through a pact between those who speak and act, since the subject who speaks is committed to doing what they say in the face of the truth they formulate (Foucault, 2010a). Thus, “parrhesia is a virtue, duty and technique that we must find in those who direct the conscience of others and help them to establish their relationship with themselves” (Foucault, 2010b, p.43). Therefore, according to Foucault (2010b, p.44). The notion of parrhesia refers to the ethics of telling the truth and “[...] is at the crossroads of the obligation to tell the truth, the procedures and techniques of governmentality and the constitution of the relationship with oneself”. Saying the truth is the condition for government actions and for building an adequate relationship with oneself. A parrhesiast is one who practices parrhesia within a political scene and faces the risk to assert

their freedom of speech (Foucault, 2010b).

Being a veridiction carried out in the public space, the individual, when stating their point of view, shows themselves both committed to what they said and prepared to bear the consequences of the act. The parrhesiast puts themselves at risk by speaking frankly (Adverse, 2017), since the commitment they assume is the condition of possibility of their speech (Nunes & Caminha, 2014). They produce and manifest a truth and through it take a stance for themselves and others, associating such production with subjectivity and delimiting possible rules of conduct. Thus, the alethurgic practice shows how "[...] operations with the truth happen in social contexts" (Cavalcanti et al., 2021, p.4).

Parrhesia can be considered the most exquisite technique of the self, a way of demonstrating the truth that has an effect on those who hear and on those who speak, being at the same time veridiction and lifestyle and taking place in the culture of caring for the self and for others. The courage of the truth can be understood through parrhesia and askesis, which is a sort of training that is repeatedly applied to oneself, and which makes saying the truth a way of being a subject (Nunes & Caminha 2014).

Finally, for parrhesia to occur, Nunes and Caminha (2014) indicate that the act of truth must fulfill two conditions: manifesting the link between the uttered truth and the speaker's

thought; and questioning of the bond between the two interlocutors – who utters it and to whom it is addressed. Thus, the manifestation of truth involves the relationship between alethurgic procedures and a subject who chooses to affirm the truth and, therefore, is implicated as an operator, witness or object of practice (Barros, 2021), but its effects are not limited to this subject, since such truths added to this subjectivity can "[...] inspire and encourage the manifestation of other alethurgies, therefore, of other subjectivities" (Cavalcanti, et al., 2021, p.2).

In this way, subjectivity is constituted from the practices of the subject with themselves and with others (Foucault, 2010a) and, when the subject is associated with certain games of truth, dynamic processes of subjectivation occur. From this flow of truths, ideas and understandings become accessible to individuals so that they become subjects, a collective process that involves interaction (Cavalcanti et al., 2021, p. 2). For Adverse (2017), understanding alethurgy as a process of subjectivation reveals the reconfiguration carried out by Foucault in the way of understanding the relationship between the exercise of power and individuality, involves government actions and is situated on the relational threshold between ethics and politics.

Reflecting the event in the light of the Foucauldian concepts of truth

On his social media, although Cristiano Ronaldo claims that all his hard work, focus and dedication is aimed at making his supporters proud, in this case, he did not. But his position does not refer only to a matter of personal taste, or untimely action, as it disallowed the association of the sponsor of an important sporting event with his image as an athlete, promoting, on the contrary, a huge loss in the company's shares on that day. His motives are unknown to us, but, understanding how he builds his image on social networks, we propose to reflect on his position as a political experience of the self.

The posts on his social networks are mostly football related, showing his performance in games, his great plays or his hard training. Maintaining his physical shape is the result of a great and constant effort, which is publicized along with his results in terms of focus, performance and physical shape. His healthy lifestyle, however, appears subtly, and it is not seen in the form of indications of eating fruits, vegetables, or replacing soft drinks with water. His athletic and healthy body is evidenced, with the display of specific treatments to achieve it. Family meals are also shown, with the presence of a regulated and balanced diet (See Fig.2).

However, regarding products he endorses, Cristiano makes indications and posts on social media more effectively, revealing his own consumption. Such products include food supplements and beauty and relaxation treatments. We can also see natural products

(with environmental and/or healthy value) associated with his image (See Fig. 3).

Thus, when building his social identity in digital media, Cristiano preaches a lifestyle while occupying a political space, indicating that his success is due to his focus and his performance; reveals his many body care habits and the hard work to maintain it. On the occasion of the partnership with Herbalife Nutricao, for example, he was direct: "I feed my performance". On a recent occasion, in thanks to the greetings for his birthday, he affirms his values: "Life is a roller coaster. Hard work, high speed, urgent goals, demanding expectations... But in the end, it all comes down to family, love, honesty, friendship, values that make it all worthwhile". His post, as always, got thousands of comments, likes and shares.

The defense of these ideas on social networks produces the celebrity's image, akin to the image of a hero, and if they do not practice what they preach, they're at risk of suffering dysfunctional behaviors such as cyber hatred (Ghaffari, 2020), or just discrediting themselves in front of their followers, since follower's loyalty depends on the celebrity's authenticity (Müller, et al., 2021). In the meantime, the celebrity maintains alternative sources of income and, in order to exist in this space, they depend on followers, likes and shares (Sibilia, 2015). It is due to this aspect that we propose to reflect on how Cristiano's conduct, in that scene, can be

thought of as an alethurgic manifestation, an act of truth by a parrhesiast, who decides to demonstrate his truth, as a celebrity or hero, to thousands of

followers in the interior of a political scene, facing risk in order to assert his freedom of speech (Foucault, 2010b).



Figure 2. The lifestyles disclosed in Cristiano Ronaldo's Instagram

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/>

Assuming this subject form as a continuous experience, as authenticity is, it depends on veridiction as a political action that demonstrates the truth, that is, it depends on alethurgic acts (Foucault, 2014), essential for manifesting the truth of the self and for taking a stance for others, always re-elaborating the self, as truth underlies the moral code that defines individual conduct (Cavalcanti, et al., 2021). Thus, we can think of his action as an act of courage of the truth (parrhesia technique) and,

at the same time, a training of the self in face of it (áskesis), so that saying the truth becomes a way of being a subject (Nunes & Caminha, 2014). Thus, the frank speech of this parrhesiast served to constitute a way of being, a subjectivity with which thousands of followers identified, within a political imaginary (Branscomb, 2021) in which it is imperative that what is said is consistent with the ideas of the speaker (Nunes & Caminha, 2014).



Figure 3. Products endorsed by Cristiano Ronaldo on his Instagram

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/>

The way the subject conducts themselves and other links what they narrate with what they practice, and this process Foucault (2010a) calls government. Although governing the self and others is an operation carried out in the domain of truth, since saying the truth is a condition for government action (Foucault, 2010b), it does not specifically imply coercion. It is an action of complementarity established between techniques of coercion and a process in which the self is self-constituted and self-improved, techniques of conduct of self and others that do not aim at resisting power, but at neutralizing, as much as possible, the effects of its domination. They are practices of self that involve ethics and politics (Lorenzini, 2020).

The qualification exercise carried out by Cristiano demonstrates self-knowledge and a critical attitude towards truth, making the alethurgic subject emerge as a correlate of the problem of government (which is of self and others) regarding truth. As stated by Lorenzini (2020), it is up to the parrhesiast to actively govern themselves, shape

their bios, in order to strengthen themselves as a critical subject (a virtue) and be able to speak the truth, even if it is uncomfortable for others. In the parrhesiast performance, they put themselves at risk, but decide to manifest themselves as a moral subject, and this truth constitutes the subjectivity of everyone who embodies such an ethical system (Branscomb, 2021). The risk taken by Cristiano Ronaldo crossed the professional field, since it was an endorsement by a sponsor, but the risk he took was the condition of possibility of his own discourse (Nunes & Caminha, 2014).

Thus, according to Foucault (2010b), we understand parrhesia as a posture similar to a virtue, capable of reflecting a way of being. Finally, we cannot forget that revealing the truth (alethurgic process) always goes along with making it true (Branscomb, 2021). Therefore, we understand that exposed to the rules of the culture proper to digital media (visibility and cancellation), companies, products, services and individuals must be especially concerned with the issue of authenticity. Our brief

reflection shows how subjects' existence, exposed in social media, impels us more and more to speak publicly with parrhesia, guaranteeing our own existence in this culture.

Final Considerations

The information age has made the publicizing of the private a socially required spectacle, boosting the strategic relevance of authenticity management and requiring commitment in terms of monitoring one's own conduct and that of others with whom one is commercially associated, in order to maintain the necessary congruence between doing and saying. Considering the scenario, we focus on a public incident that took place at the opening of the Euro Cup between a celebrity and the sponsoring brand, to critically reflect, in the light of the Foucauldian concept of alethurgy, on the contemporary challenges that are posed for the management of brand authenticity.

It is not new that authenticity has emerged as a strategic imperative for organizations, and expanding the understanding of the concept has become the object of the most diverse studies. However, in general, they focus on analyzing consumers' perceptions of the authenticity generated by marketing communication (Gundlach & Neville, 2012), since, as these tools are known to be effective for this achievement, scholars evaluate, for example, the importance of investments in this area (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018), which

sometimes involves analyzing the endorsers' impact on consumers' purchase decisions.

However, with the communicational advent of the Internet and in the midst of negotiated realities in consumption, authenticity seems to have expanded its relevance to management studies (Müller, et al., 2021). Studies indicate that consumers are motivated and engaged when they perceive influencers and/or celebrity endorsers as credible or authentic (Kapitan, et al, 2021). However, in a market where the adoption of sponsorship strategies is multiplying, as in the field of sports, evaluating the effectiveness of this type of action is essential, as they involve consequences for sponsors and affect the very continuity of the sponsored ones. The need for an analysis that goes beyond traditional comparisons of authenticity with brand attributes (congruence, similarity, etc.) has been indicated, such as assessing the authenticity of the relationship between commercial partners (Charlton & Cornewell, 2019). Now, relationships are processes that are always under construction, which, although this is still a timid initiative, indicates the search for new ways of analyzing the concept, which has been recognized for its strategic importance.

Our study proposes an understanding of authenticity in another way: showing how the existence of brands, sponsors, celebrities and individuals in the contemporary world depends on their presence in digital social networks and on knowing how to deal with the

visibility rules, the culture of this medium. In this sense, instead of focusing on the application of the concept, in attempts to measure perceived authenticity, or understand how authenticity is managed, we propose to think about what authenticity means, or rather, the relevance it acquires inserted in a culture in which the existence is publicly exposed and the continuity of a brand or celebrity depends on mutual endorsement, being brought to immediate collective judgment. Thus, by relying on a critical approach to the scenario, we not only reiterate the importance of authenticity management, but also highlight the complexity that involves such a task in the information age.

In fact, here we are dealing with two brands, one of which is the greatest representative of capitalism, that is, both support each other in pursuit of achieving their own goals, which happens by involving their consumers. However, in the consumption relationship between producer and consumer, the brand and the celebrity are on the same side: the production side, which presupposes that they should be mutual endorsers in their positions. However, the celebrity, supposedly the most vulnerable part in this sponsorship relationship, faced the centrality of the brand's power, in order to safeguard the ethical principles that guide the conduct of a subjectivity designed for themselves.

Sport, its mega-events and the image of athletes, due to their social im-

portance, are a fruitful field for promoting and publicizing brands. It is possible, for example, to associate its image with the value, credit and trust attributed by the consumer to the "heart" team. But, bearing in mind that, in this culture, our speech and action can be accessed by everyone, and we believe that never before has it been so necessary to demonstrate our truth (alethurgy), govern the self and others and speak with the parrhesiast's commitment, that is, to do as we say in the truth we formulate. In the agreement, sponsor and sponsored must get to know each other and voluntarily associate in the search to contemplate the goals of each part. Trust has never been more important in establishing a business relationship.

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