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Evaluating a tool for the practice of corporate social innovations: a survey of Brazilian companies

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Abstract: To help reduce inequality, businesses are turning to corporate social innovations (CSI) to achieve both business results and social value. This study aims to evaluate and validate the CSI framework proposed by Mirvis and Googins as a tool for practicing CSI. We based our study on a survey conducted with Brazilian companies that participate in the UN Global Compact, the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world to mobilise companies and stakeholders to do business responsibly, including 142 answers out of a sample of 609 companies. The data were analysed through a structural equation modelling (SEM) conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the CSI framework to confirm the correlation between the five constructs, therefore establishing the validity of this framework as a tool for the practice of CSI. We expect to offer both a theoretical and a practical contribution by reinforcing the relevance of the CSI concept along with testing and validating the CSI framework as a tool to help evaluate, analyse, and implement CSI initiatives, advancing its practice and promoting the CSI concept.

Keywords: corporate social innovation; CSI; survey; LinkedIn; social innovation; structural equation modelling; SEM; confirmatory factor analysis; CFA.

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1 Introduction

The world faces many pressing and potentially destabilising challenges such as slow economic growth, increasing wealth gap, a warming planet, high youth unemployment, and above all, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis that is expected to produce a huge economic recession, causing significant social and environmental costs in both developed and emerging economies (Barki et al., 2020; Mirvis and Googins, 2017; Schwab and Malleret, 2020). This scenario has demanded a profound change in the role of firms, resulting in an increased awareness that companies must consider societal needs, not just short-term profit, especially considering that they are perceived as not only responsible for these problems, but also to be prospering at the expense of the broader community (Mirvis et al., 2016; Porter and Kramer, 2011; Serafeim, 2020). Companies are expected to rethink the concept of the corporation itself to become one imbued with a social purpose based on a deeper understanding of social value creation with a focus on innovations and a more robust approach to social problems. They should recognise new and better ways to develop products and serve markets, reconnecting business and society (Mirvis and Googins, 2017; Porter and Kramer, 2011; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990).

In this scenario, a group of local and multinational companies are turning to corporate social innovations (CSI) as a novel way to address unmet social needs while achieving business results. These initiatives allow companies to act in cross-collaboration with social innovators, social enterprises, and governments to provide a sustainable solution to social issues, rethinking the way stakeholders relate (Mirvis and Googins, 2017; Mirvis et al., 2016). Considering that CSI is still an under-explored topic where little is known about its practice (Murray et al., 2010; Van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016) and answering a call for more quantitative studies to contribute to their ongoing conceptual development (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Phillips et al., 2019; Tabares, 2020b), we suggest that the CSI framework proposed by Mirvis and Googins (2017) be used as a tool to help close this gap and promote an increased comprehension of how to transform business models to efficiently address the needs of modern society. This framework emerged as a roadmap for companies towards the practice of CSI based on research studies and the practical experience of corporate ‘early movers’, suggesting that five key elements – purpose, strategic intent, partnerships, and process – should be considered as companies move into CSI. This framework proposes that the implementation of social innovations (SI) be based on reorganising current business models or in some cases designing entirely new ones based on the presence of each of these five key elements.

We based our study on a survey conducted with Brazilian companies that participate in the UN Global Compact, the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world to mobilise companies and stakeholders to do business responsibly, aligning their strategies and operations to advance broader societal goals such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (<https://www.pactoglobal.org.br/>). Brazil, however, ranks number nine in the list of the most unequal countries in the world with huge social challenges and persistent institutional voids (WPR, 2022). Using LinkedIn, we contacted more than 3,000 people out of a list of 609 companies and obtained 513 new connections from which we achieved 142 valid answers, each one representing a company for our analysis. This is a novel approach to collecting data as there is still a considerable debate about the validity of using social media in social science research (Jewitt et al., 2017). Our survey is based on a questionnaire we developed to evaluate how organisations perceive their SI based on each element of the CSI theoretical framework, providing insights on the types

of SI, their targets, and how they are being implemented. The results are analysed through a structural equation modelling (SEM) conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the CSI framework to confirm the correlation between the five constructs.

Although we do not intend to introduce any particular cultural aspect to this research, examining the consequences of perceived CSI initiatives on UN Global Compact Brazilian companies expands the boundaries of previous research, allowing us to validate the practical application of the CSI framework and offer both a theoretical and a practical contribution with our study by reinforcing the relevance of the CSI concept along with testing and validating the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017), which advances its practice based on our findings and observations.

This article is structured as follows: after this introduction, Section 2 offers a literature review on CSI where we propose our hypotheses, detail the research method, and then present the results with a discussion, followed by conclusions, limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

2 Literature review

CSI has derived from the concept of SI, a construct that aims to offer a potential solution to address existing social needs that have not been fulfilled by existing players such as government, enterprises, non-profit organisations, and the civil society (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Canestrino et al., 2015; Păunescu, 2014). The concept of SI emphasises the reduction of economic inequalities and aims to answer social market failures, especially considering the acceleration of global crises, the failure of modern state welfare systems and conventional market capitalism, the impacts of climate change, growing cultural diversity within and across countries, growing inequality, and most recently the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dionisio, 2021; Murray et al., 2010; Nicholls et al., 2015; Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). SI cuts across all sectors of society, proposing new logic in the relationship of private, public, and civil society with a focus on new forms of entrepreneurship, organisational management, urban development, eco-social relationships, governance, and the third sector (Moulaert et al., 2017; Nicholls and Dees, 2015). Once adopted at the corporate level, SI receives the denomination of CSI, a different concept based on the initiatives of existing business organisations to create both shareholder and social value by using all corporate assets and a managerial approach to alter the structure of innovation systems, improve employee motivation, change corporate identities and strategies to increase competitive advantages, and to bring solutions to societal needs (Canestrino et al., 2015; Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Herrera, 2015; Mirvis et al., 2016).

Mirvis and Googins (2017, p.2) defined CSI as “a strategy that combines a unique set of corporate assets (innovation capacities, marketing skills, managerial acumen, employee engagement, scale, etc.) in collaboration with other sectors and firms to co-create breakthrough solutions to complex economic, social, and environmental issues that bear on the sustainability of both business and society.” Still considered a new and under-explored topic (Caroli et al., 2018; Tabares, 2020b), the CSI concept first appeared in 1999 suggesting the development of strategic alliances between companies and civil society, promoting sustainable changes that would powerfully stimulate their development (Kanter, 1999). It further developed building on traditional Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) activities that alone seemed to have reached their potential to connect business and society (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Visser, 2014). In this scenario, literature foresees CSI as a broader concept, moving from philanthropy to corporate strategy and from Public Relations to an initiative embedded at all levels of companies, demanding more engagement from employees and promoting the development of new partnerships and processes to create economic and social value through a managerial approach (Gutierrez and Vernis, 2016; Herrera, 2015; Mirvis and Googins, 2017; Tabares, 2020b). Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that CSI is not considered the next CSR or a replacement term for CSR (Carberry et al., 2019; Domanski et al., 2017). Literature agrees that CSI is expected to be an alternative practice that will help businesses provide an improved answer to current needs of modern society by considering novel designs and new ways to engage with stakeholders, connecting ‘unconnected’ partners with the common goal to generate both social and economic results (Phillips et al., 2019).

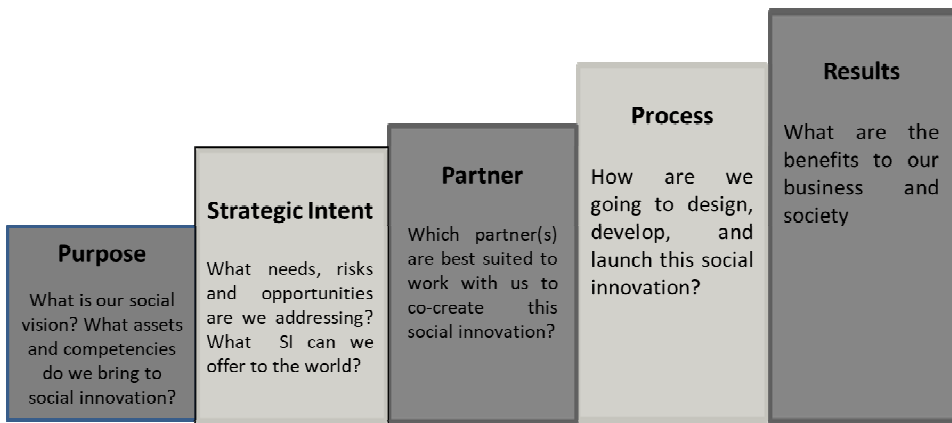
This novel concept connects with all sorts of businesses, although it happens differently among existing and new ventures. In existing, traditional business, CSI activities imply in a change of existing paradigms and adapting to a new mindset, while new business models such as hybrids such as B Corps represent new organisations that are born to solve social and environmental problems through the management and power of business (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020, 2022; Herrera, 2015; Stubbs, 2017). We posit that social innovative concepts such as CSI, shared value (CSV), and Hybridism are necessary evolutions as businesses are put under a microscope for their own sometimes uncomfortable activities concerning environmental harm or human rights violations, which has caused legitimate businesses to fall to levels not seen before (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2016). These changes are also associated with a shift in how stakeholders perceive and respond to the business relationships with society due to a rising number of conscious consumers seeking more conscious buying decisions along with a new generation of employees that pursue personal fulfilment from working for a sustainable business with the opportunity to give back to society and to build attitudes and behaviours that set them apart from older generations (Cohen et al., 2017). To tackle these challenges, large, small, domestic, and multinational leading firms are turning to CSI by investing in new innovative sources and methods, including partnerships with social entrepreneurs and employee ‘intrapreneurs’ for generating new products, unlocking markets, and engaging in creative philanthropy that address both social and business goals (Mirvis et al., 2016; Mirvis and Googins, 2017).

As enterprises become increasingly more engaged in developing and scaling up initiatives to help solve persisting social problems, a growing number of publications about CSI can be observed, mostly in the past decade, revealing that the subject is gaining scientific relevance and moving towards its consolidation as an independent research field (Tabares, 2020b). The development of the CSI theory focuses on topics such as the role of multinational corporations (MNCs), partnerships, and stakeholder engagement along with the evolution of CSI with other actors such as small and mid-size enterprise (SMEs), start-ups, organisations, and national and transnational actors (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Pol and Ville, 2009; Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018). Therefore, it is urgent to close the gap between theory and practice, especially considering that social initiatives can still be accused as being ‘greenwashing’ or ‘window dressing’ with a remaining skepticism and mistrust from civil society about

businesses and their practices, which can impair the transforming power of SI concepts (Gutierrez and Vernis, 2016).

In this sense, we suggest that the CSI framework (Figure 1) proposed by Mirvis and Googins (2017) could be used as a tool to help close this gap and promote an increased comprehension of how to transform business models to efficiently address the needs of modern society. This framework emerged as a roadmap for companies towards the practice of CSI based on research studies and the practical experience of corporate ‘early movers’ suggesting that these five key elements should be considered as companies move into CSI. This framework proposes that implementing SI is based on reorganising current business models or in some cases the device of entirely new ones based on the presence of each of these five key elements.

Figure 1 CSI framework (see online version for colours)



Source: Mirvis and Googins (2017)

Based on this premise, we will discuss each of the elements from this framework and establish a hypothesis to verify the positive correlation between each element – purpose, strategic intent, partner, process, and results – and thus validate the practical use of the framework, assuming that these positive results, once achieved, would represent the correct implementation of CSI initiatives, providing a valuable tool for both theory and practice to promote the CSI concept.

3 CSI and purpose

Society’s expectations of corporations have changed dramatically over the last decades, compelling businesses to examine their organisational purpose since being a socially responsible and ethical organisation has become a demand, and a lack of purpose in this area would probably hinder the firm’s competitive advantage (Jensen, 2000; Mion and Loza Adauí, 2020; Shared_Impact_Lab, 2016). Society’s needs are growing and consumers expect brands to commit to society and employees, while a new generation of young people are asking for more meaningful jobs, thus leading companies to also begin to realise that a meaningful purpose is becoming a path towards reaching improved performance. A study observed that brands centred around human benefit saw a growth

three times higher over competitors (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Shared_Impact_Lab, 2016). Mirvis and Googins (2017), suggesting that a compelling corporate vision establishes conditions favourable for nourishing CSI, thus motivating employees, enabling leaderships to invest in SI, and encouraging a longer-term and often more intangible payoff compared to traditional and strictly commercially-driven innovation programs. Thus we hypothesise:

H1 CSI practices have a positive and significant impact between purpose and the other elements of the CSI framework.

3.1 CSI and strategic intent

Mirvis and Googins (2017, p.6) claim that “strategic intent translates purpose into the direction for innovation.” The theory considers that to achieve a successful strategy, a company must create a distinctive value proposition that meets the needs of its target customers and that they must sense and respond strategically to opportunities and threats to enhance this competitive advantage (Herrera, 2015; Porter and Kramer, 2011). Therefore, when adopted as a strategy, CSI becomes embedded in all levels of a company and thereby promoting more engagement from employees; developing new partnerships and processes to create economic and social value through a managerial approach; integrating market and non-market conditions into strategic planning to fully use the business considerable resources, expertise, and insights; promoting social and economic results; and improving the competitive advantage (Herrera, 2015; Porter and Kramer, 2006). Thus we hypothesise:

H2 CSI practices have a positive and significant impact between strategic intent and the other elements of the CSI framework.

3.2 CSI and partner

Businesses need a diverse set of competencies and skills to efficiently address society’s pressing needs that usually are not part of their regular know-how. In some cases, companies even lack the legitimacy with local communities to implement their intended initiatives, so in this case they must resort to partnerships (Mirvis and Googins, 2017). The relationship between for-profit, non-profits, and governments has observed remarkable changes in the last decades with an increased partnership built to promote social impact (Berger et al., 2004; Holmström Lind et al., 2018; Shumate et al., 2018). These partnerships, also called cross-collaborations, are viewed by academics and practitioners as an inescapable and powerful vehicle for implementing and achieving social and economic missions by powerfully spanning across multiple sectoral, community, and organisational boundaries (Austin and Seitanidi, 2012; Phillips et al., 2019). The promotion and development of partnerships are also important to build the SI ecosystem and foster relationships that are still considered adversarial, but that offer a large potential to combine resources and diverse expertise to address stakeholder interests (Berger et al., 2004; Cotterlaz-Rannard et al., 2017; Hussler and Payaud, 2019; Huybrechts et al., 2017; Mirvis and Googins, 2017). Thus we hypothesise:

H3 CSI practices have a positive and significant impact between partners and the other elements of the CSI framework.

3.3 CSI and process

The CSI concept is based on identifying unmet societal needs and the consequential development of solutions that usually require changes in processes, operating procedures and practices, business models, systems, and thinking (Jayakumar, 2017). Companies moving toward CSI need to link innovation and sustainability through new organisational processes, ideas, materials, or methodologies so that they will be able to build a new organisational identity grounded on these new processes (Tabares, 2021).

This practice focus on identifying processes and activities that are differentiated and integrated into the company's business model to sustain organisational hybridity. These processes normally involve stakeholders in value creation, promoting co-creation that generates rewarding and engaging experiences, and open innovation that accelerates and deepens innovations, making the entire process less costly, less risky, and faster (Chesbrough, 2011; Klein et al., 2021). Thus, we hypothesise:

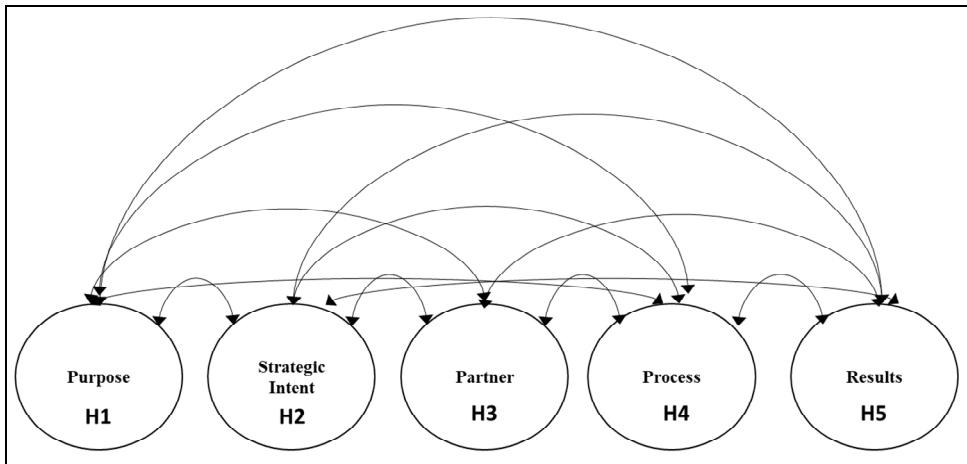
H4 CSI practices have a positive and significant impact on the process and the other elements of the CSI framework.

3.4 CSI and results

Ideally, CSI would allow businesses to achieve results that are beneficial to both the business and society, and literature has identified various cases where creative solutions are turning this idea into reality where on the one side companies achieve results such as increased motivation and productivity of employees and growth in market share in areas they impact, while on the other side we observe initiatives that promote social inclusion and fight against poverty in vulnerable communities (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2022). The key benefit of CSI should be perceived as its ability to create social impact, improve social results, and its potential to improve the quality of life of a particular community (Caroli et al., 2018). It is vital in the CSI success for companies to establish measurable social and business impacts they expect and to define tools and metrics to successfully measure innovation outcomes and impacts, governance, and accountability in changing processes or systems in flux (Mion and Loza Adauí, 2020; Nicholls and Dees, 2015; Tabares, 2020a). Thus we hypothesise:

H5 CSI practices have a positive and significant impact between results and the other elements of the CSI framework.

Our five hypotheses are illustrated in our conceptual model (Figure 2) that establishes the connection between the five elements that we expect to observe in our study and allow us to validate its application as a practical tool for the implementation, evaluation, and analysis of CSI.

Figure 2 Conceptual model

4 Research method

The goal of this study is to evaluate the practice of CSI considering that several studies have taken a regional or national approach to map SI, but were not fully able to obtain a clear picture of how it works at the organisational level (Andries et al., 2019). We also consider that the literature identified a small number of quantitative studies on CSI, averaging between 14%–18%, leaving a gap for the introduction of quantitative methodologies and the proposal of new measurement mechanisms for exploring the field (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Tabares, 2020a, 2020b). Therefore, we developed a survey based on the framework proposed by Mirvis and Googins (2017) that proposes that to achieve CSI; companies should abide by five building blocks – purpose, strategic intent, partnerships, process, and results. We aim to establish the correlation between the different elements of this framework to validate the framework as a tool to evaluate the practice of CSI. The reason we chose a survey is that this is a method to gather experiences, opinions, and other characteristics that are not available elsewhere from a significant number of respondents that can be used to accurately describe the characteristics of the respondents, allowing the generalisation of findings (Fowler, 2014; Rea and Parker, 2014).

4.1 Scale and sample

The survey aims to evaluate the practice of CSI based on analysing the relationship between each element of the CSI theoretical framework and also to get insights into the types of activities they are developing, their targets, and how they are being implemented. At this point we were not able to find in the literature an existing scale to evaluate CSI practices, so we developed our own scale (see appendix) that would allow the further development of studies and the practice of CSI at the organisational level. Scales are a tool to analyse latent constructs by measuring behaviours, attitudes, and hypothetical

scenarios that are expected to exist and support a theoretical understanding that cannot be assessed directly (Boateng et al., 2018).

The questionnaire was developed with the use of QuestionPro, a free online survey platform that offers many tools to develop scales and apply surveys. The questionnaire we designed is divided into two parts. The first part aims to get overall information about the companies and most specifically to get information about the social impact initiatives they practice, the target group they impact, the number of people impacted, and why and how they did these initiatives. The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017) and is comprised of five questions for each of the elements of the framework – purpose, strategy, partner, process, and results (see Table 1). These questions followed a seven-point Likert scale ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘totally agree’ with the intention that each statement would represent different aspects of the same construct (Brace, 2018).

Table 1 Sample of questions from our CSI scale

<i>Part 1: overall information of the companies and initiatives</i>	
	What is the target audience for these social impact activities?
	How many people on average were impacted by the social impact initiatives developed by your company?
	How does your company implement its social impact initiatives?
<i>Part 2: elements of the CSI framework (Likert 7 points)</i>	
Purpose	The purpose (or mission) of my company includes initiatives that seek to solve social problems.
Strategic intent	
a	I believe it is possible to balance social impact initiatives with company’s strategies.
Partner	
a	In my company, we use partnerships and collaborations to help serve people in socially vulnerable situations.
Process	
a	At my company, we develop innovative processes to develop social impact initiatives.
Results	
	It is possible to measure the results of social impact initiatives for both business and society.

Following Babbie and Roberts (2018), we conducted three rounds of face validity with 55 students from doctorate and MBA classes from our business school and then by ten expert professors who performed the construct and content validity. This validation process led us to revise the number of questions for each construct, reducing the second part of the questionnaire from 25 questions to 21 questions based on the evaluation of the specialists who ended up with 90% validity of questions. Even though some authors considered that more items may produce higher reliability estimates and generalisability (Cohen, 1988), we opted to follow Hair et al. (2018) that claim that this change should have no negative impact on our analysis.

The survey was conducted with companies that participate in the UN Global Compact, which amounts to a total of 1229 members in Brazil. The UN Global Compact is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world to mobilise companies and

stakeholders to do business responsibly, aligning their strategies and operations to advance broader societal goals such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (<https://www.pactoglobal.org.br/>). The list of members presents various filters, so as we focused on SI performed by businesses, we adopted criteria to use commercial participants that were active signatories of the program, thus filtering the type of participant by 'company' and 'SME' with an 'active' status and tier as 'signatory', leading to a total of 609 members (UN Global Compact, 2021).

Due to a lack of a common set of contact information that would allow us to directly and efficiently contact our target group, we chose to use LinkedIn, a business platform mainly used for professional networking, which we considered to be the one place where we could find all potential respondents for our survey together, allowing us to search for potential respondents for each company in our sample group. We assumed the criteria to pursue one respondent for the company, thus we searched contacts and sent a short message explaining our objectives and asking for a connection. We focused on CEOs and on CSR, sustainability, and/or HR executives. We then sent further messages to the contacts that accepted our connection request until we reached one answer per company up to the necessary number of respondents to answer the survey. The data collection was conducted between November 30th, 2020 and March 7th, 2021. During this process we contacted more than 3,000 people and obtained 513 new connections from which we achieved 142 valid answers, representing a 23% rate of response (out of the 609 original lists of UN Global compact companies), suggesting an adequate sample size for the analysis (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2018). Despite the large number of contacts and slightly low rate of response (valid answers/total = 4.1%), LinkedIn demonstrated to be an easy and valid tool to identify participants and contact potential participants that would best fit for our study, avoid repetition, and ensure the adequacy of respondents.

4.2 Statistical model measures

The latent variables for our hypothesis are a measure of the constructs from the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017) where we expect to establish a correlation among each construct and validate the framework as a tool to analyse and evaluate the practice of CSI. The survey asked respondents to indicate their perception of the relevance of each construct (purpose, strategy, partnership, process, and results) based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 (totally agree to totally disagree), where each statement would identify the representation of different aspects of the same attitude (Brace, 2018). The analysis was conducted with the open-source software R with lavaan, a package for SEM. R is an integrated software that includes an effective data handling and storage facility, a suite of operators for complex calculations, an integrated collection of tools for data analysis, and a simple and effective programming language (R_Core_Team, 2013; Rosseel, 2012).

5 Results

In this study we aim to gather insights on the type of social impact generated by Brazilian companies part of the UN Global Compact and thus validate the practical application of the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017) and thus verify if we could classify their initiatives as SI, getting a picture of how they are perceived and what are their social

impacts in order to verify in practical terms if these companies are generating results that are positive to both business and society.

5.1 Insights on the practice of CSI in Brazil

The survey established that each respondent represented one of the UN Global Compact firms, offering a very diverse group of respondents that included 12 Brazilian states out of 27 with both local and multinational companies comprising different sectors, sizes, and positions who promote SI in key areas that benefit diverse groups with different levels of vulnerability (see Table 2). We observed that 45% of the social impact activities focus on the main Brazilian social problems: hunger, health, education, and unemployment followed by 25% of the initiatives related to recent demands from society: gender equality and social inclusion. These initiatives were concentrated into two groups, one external that focused on vulnerable communities and groups, and another internal that focused on employees, customers, and supply chains. This is important as it balances the benefits promoted by the company that ideally needs to first equalise its internal structure to then motivate and engage teams, demonstrating the large scope of SI.

Concerning the elements of the CSI framework, the survey indicated that they comply with the results observed. Since they take part in the UN Compact, we assumed that these companies already have a strong purpose, which was confirmed by their answers, as these companies perceived SI as part of their mission and strategy. They confirmed the need to establish partnerships to develop social projects, they identified the creation of new products and processes to support SI, and finally they were able to identify and measure outcomes and results that benefited both the business and society, which allows us to infer that they could be considered to be practicing CSI and promoting SI.

Based on the data from the survey, we detected that 59% of their activities impact more than 100 people in the different communities they operate, 53% of the companies develop social impact initiatives beyond legal requirements, and an average of 83% of the respondents considered this type of activity as part of their company's vision, strategy, and culture where more than 80% of firms promote volunteerism and employee engagement.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the informants

1	Type of companies	
	Commerce	4%
	Industry	22%
	Services	75%
2	Size of the company (revenues)	
	Micro \leq US\$ 70 k	7%
	Small $>$ US\$ 70 k \leq US\$ 1 MM	25%
	Medium $>$ 1 MM \leq 60 MM	30%
	Large $>$ US\$ 60 MM	39%
3	Different sectors covered	25
4	Location of companies (out of 27 states)	12

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the informants (continued)

5	Type of capital	
	National	80%
	Multinational	20%
6	Profile of respondents	23%
	Owner	4%
	President/CEO	15%
	Director	24%
	Manager	35%
	Others	
7	Social impact activities	
	Hunger and food insecurity	9.6%
	Clean water	5.8%
	Housing	3.0%
	Energy	7.0%
	Transportation	3.0%
	Education	14.3%
	Job creation	10.6%
	Poverty	7.0%
	Health	10.6%
	Gender equality	10.3%
	Social inclusion	14.5%
	No social impact activities	1.0%
	Others	3.3%
8	Beneficiaries of social impact activities	
	Employees	24.2%
	Supply chain	7.4%
	Costumers	13.9%
	Group in vulnerable situation	20.7%
	Community	31.3%
	Others	2.7%

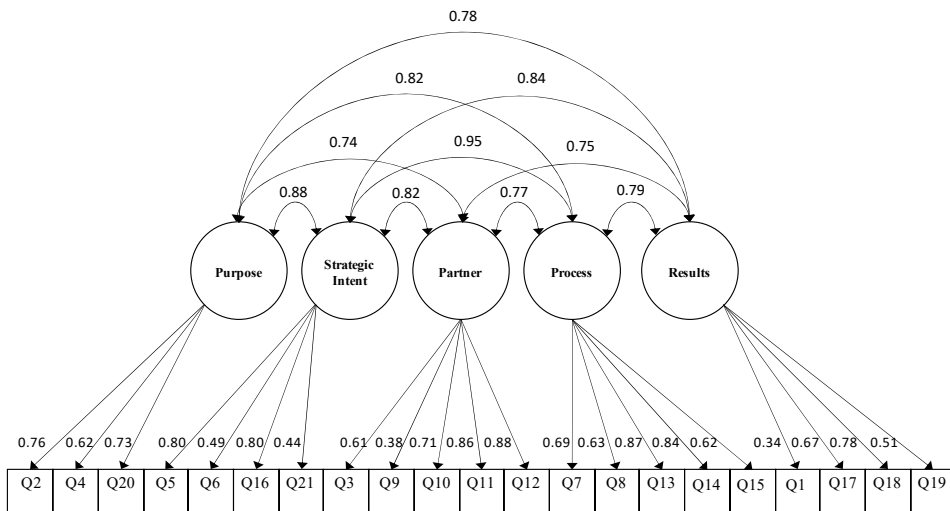
5.2 *Quantitative analysis*

To test our hypotheses and validate the practical application of the CSI framework by confirming the correlation between its five constructs, we applied a SEM by conducting a CFA. SEM is a technique that allows the assessment of relationships among a set of concepts simultaneously rather than in separate analysis in what is considered the best multivariate procedure for testing a construct validity. When SEM is applied, the researcher can assess the contribution of each dimension associated with a construct and measure how well their combined set represents this construct – reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2018). CFA enables us to test how well the variables measured represent a set

of constructs, offering the advantage of analytically testing a conceptually grounded theory demonstrating the quality of the theoretical measurement model (Hair et al., 2018), which allows us not only to validate the CSI framework, but also to validate our scale. SEM is often thought to require a larger sample compared with other multivariate approaches, but since this was not the case, we used bootstrapped estimates with 100 samples at a confidence level of 0.95 to determine their statistical significance without applying distributional assumptions. To infer internal consistency and verify how closely related the questions are as a group, we measured the Cronbach's alpha coefficient with a confidence interval of 95% and a bootstrap based on 1,000 samples to limit potential discrepancies that alpha may produce (DeVellis, 2017). We obtained a coefficient of 0.932, which is above the agreed-upon lower threshold of 0.70, confirming the consistency of the scale (Hair et al., 2018).

In the CFA graphic model we developed (Figure 3); each construct represents the latent variables and their respective questions that measure variables or indicators. This model demonstrates the covariance between each construct and among them all.

Figure 3 CFA graphic model



We consider that a relationship is positive whenever the results are higher than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2018), which we observed in all connections among the different elements, which overall validates our hypotheses.

6 Discussion

Our study sets out to investigate the practice of CSI in companies from the UN Global Compact in Brazil and thus validate the CSI framework proposed by Mirvis and Googins (2017) centred on five key elements – purpose, strategic intent, partnerships, process, and results – as a tool to analyse the practice of SI. We analysed the types of existing activities, their targets, and how they are being implemented in order to assure that they can be associated with the CSI concept. Thus we proposed that for CSI to happen, all five

constructs must be positively correlated, hence expecting to find a statistical significance between all elements.

We started our study by developing a scale specific to our needs. Scales are developed when we want to measure phenomena that we believe to exist based on existing theory, but that we cannot assess directly (DeVellis, 2017). In this case it was useful to assess the different elements of the framework through a carefully developed and validated scale that involves thought on the part of the respondent and allows us to better understand the object of our study. We expect that this scale may serve as a guide for the research of CSI and practitioners willing to implement SI. The survey results showed a diverse group of companies covering the most important Brazilian states and impacting the most relevant social needs of the market, which makes us believe that we may generalise our results. We observed activities that target both internal and external engagement such as CSI centres on advancing employee engagement, developing new processes and new business models, and developing supply chains (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2022). These activities focus on key social problems such as hunger, health, education, and unemployment along with more recent society demands such as gender equality and social inclusion and vary from the support of local small businesses, income generation for small communities, promotion of inclusion and diversity, the urban development of local communities, promotion of volunteer work, and programs to improve the living conditions of Amazon communities. The inclusion of SI in the purpose and strategy of businesses and the development of new processes and partnerships to promote both economic and social results places these initiatives at a different level especially compared to traditional CSR initiatives that focus on goodwill and corporate reputation. We infer that these changes reflect a new way companies perceive their role in society and how the development of SI should become part of their business models, answering the expectations of stakeholders and the general public who increasingly demand a larger role of businesses in addressing troubling social, economic, and environmental issues (Mirvis et al., 2016; Mirvis and Googins, 2006; Porter and Kramer, 2011; Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018; Zhang et al., 2020). By turning to CSI, businesses aim to produce new sources of revenue, but also to generate a more socially relevant innovation system that can be a source of competitive advantage, placing CSI as a more complete approach to solving social and economic problems (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2022, 2020; Mirvis et al., 2016).

This study provides theoretical and practical contributions concerning the practice and management of CSI as we were able to identify and establish a positive covariance between the different dimensions, statistically corroborating our hypotheses along with identifying initiatives, which are important findings that contribute to the development of the concept and therefore validate the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017) as a tool to analyse and evaluate the practice of CSI.

It is relevant to mention that we observed that SI impacted a high number of people (+42%), a high number of companies are developing social impact initiatives beyond legal requirements (53%), and a high average of respondents considered SI as part of their company's vision, strategy, and culture (+80%) with more than 80% respondents supporting volunteerism and employee engagement. These findings allow us to posit that there is consistency within a company's practices and a true commitment to social purposes, which answers with data the existing demand for a better understanding of how corporations adopt and integrate SI into strategy and operations, reinforcing the relevance of SI as a way to answer society's demand that corporations must be socially responsible

and balance global corporate purpose, reputation, and strategy with the communities they operate (Herrera, 2015; Polman and Bhattacharya, 2016). This commitment reinforces the potential of CSI to generate social impact, which in our point of view is vital to provide solutions to key social problems in both developed and emerging economies that face continuing challenges in a more connected world. We thus expect that we can offer a practical contribution by validating the CSI framework and present how it may be used to analyse, evaluate, and implement SI, and therefore spread the concept and practice of CSI as an alternative to solving social problems, while reaching business results. This is particularly relevant considering that CSI still needs further institutionalisation, which is necessary to influence and facilitate the diffusion of business practices and innovations in corporations, promoting the homogenisation that would support the growth and evolution of the concept as a response to institutional pressures to enhance their legitimacy, reputation, and competitive advantage (Ntim and Soobaroyen, 2013; O'Connor and Gronewold, 2012).

7 Conclusions

The objective of this research is to investigate the practice of CSI and validate the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017) centred on five key elements – purpose, strategic intent, partnerships, process, and results – as a tool to analyse, evaluate, and implement SI in different types of businesses. Our study is based on a survey performed on a population of 142 companies from the Brazilian UN Global Compact already promoting SI, and we propose that to be considered CSI, all five constructs must be positively correlated. Our study allowed us to conclude that the CSI framework is a valid reference for the practice of CSI and that its elements are a valuable guide to permit the efficient development of SI in business strategies where companies must adapt and reconfigure their capabilities to pursue social and financial results. The survey results and the analysis of the different SI validate the CSI framework as a tool to analyse the practice of CSI and support our theories.

Our study offers a theoretical contribution as it reinforces the relevance of the CSI concept along with the test and validation of the CSI framework (Mirvis and Googins, 2017) that advances its practice based on our findings and observations. The focus of this research on Brazilian companies may raise questions about generalisations, but considering the social needs and demands that the country offers along with its institutional void in comparison to the varied types of companies, including some MNCs, we believe that this study offers a relevant contribution to the literature and advances the practice of the CSI concept.

These results also suggest some practical implications. We expect that our scale may offer other researchers a tool to explore the practice of CSI in different markets and contexts. We believe that the increasing understanding of CSI is beneficial to decreasing the existing levels of skepticism about businesses motivations both from its employees (internal) and stakeholders (external), allowing us to reconcile the existing gap between business and society and reassure that social impact can be part of the corporate strategy (Cotterlaz-Rannard et al., 2017; Porter and Kramer, 2011). The development of further studies on the practice of CSI is crucial for the institutionalisation of the concept, which is of great importance for its consolidation, especially considering the increasing

demands from different stakeholders for institutional changes that could improve the diffusion of business practices and SI in corporations, improving the perception and relationship with stakeholders, society, governments, and communities.

This research is not without some limitations. The replication of this study in different markets and groups for further validation of our scale is necessary for developing additional quantitative studies. We also strongly suggest more quantitative studies, necessary for a better comprehension of the practice and relevance of CSI, which could enable the concept to gain scientific relevance and consolidate it as an independent research field.

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