

Jerónimo Martins: Consumers and end users

Beatriz Mendes* Carolina Moura* Maria Correia* Renata Freitas* Ruben Passos* Sara Martins* Adalmiro Pereira Tânia Teixeira****

**ISCAP-P Porto*

*** ISCAP-P Porto teacher; CEOS member*

Abstract: In a context where organizations are increasingly held accountable for the impact of their activities on society, social norms take on particular relevance as instruments for guiding and evaluating business performance. The dimension of consumers and end users proves especially pertinent in the food sector, given the direct relationship between business activity and the well-being, health, and safety of the population.

This work presents the standard, as well as its characterization and application to the Jerónimo Martins company/group., proving its importance and relevance in today's business world.

Keywords: Jerónimo Martins; ESG; Consumers and end users; Sustainability

I. Introduction

This study aims to analyze the application of the social norm relating to Consumers and End Users, within the framework of sustainability and corporate social responsibility standards. For the purpose of a practical analysis, Jerónimo Martins, one of the largest food retail groups operating in Portugal and Europe, was selected.

Throughout this work, we will initially frame social standards within the broader context of corporate sustainability, followed by a detailed presentation of the standard applicable to consumers and end users. Subsequently, the company under study will be characterized and the way in which it applies the principles of the standard in its management and operations will be analyzed, with particular focus on the dimensions of product safety and quality, and consumer information and transparency.

The aim is to demonstrate how a food retail organization can integrate the principles of social norms into its strategy and daily practices, contributing to a more responsible, ethical, and sustainable relationship with its consumers.

II. Summary of the Standard

2.1 Social Norms Framework

Social norms are part of a broader commitment by organizations to sustainability and social responsibility, with the main objective of evaluating and guiding the impact of business activities on society and people.

Human rights, working conditions, equal opportunities, social protection, and how companies interact with different stakeholder groups are some of the aspects covered by these standards. It is through these standards that

organizations promote inclusive, ethical, and responsible practices, ensuring social well-being and human dignity. They are fundamental for identifying risks, improving internal processes, and strengthening stakeholder trust.

Among the various norms, the most prominent are the numerous relationships between workers, value chain collaborators, affected communities, and end consumers and users. Given this, collaboration between them is fundamental for the social norm to be guaranteed, respected, and crucial. Therefore, end consumers and users end up being the priority, thus leaving the economic aspect in second place.

2.2 Social Norm - Consumers and End Users

The Consumers and End Users standard aims primarily to ensure that organizations act responsibly and transparently in their relationships with customers, focusing on protecting consumer rights, ensuring the safety of products and services, and promoting more informed and conscious consumption. Using this standard implies recognizing that the decisions a company makes influence the safety, quality of life, and trust of consumers and their relationship with the organization.

We can highlight two important issues in an organization: safety and quality. Therefore, this ultimately implies the use of effective control mechanisms to minimize the risk that any product may have. In this sense, transparency in information is also highlighted because it is crucial for maintaining customer loyalty and fostering loyalty to the organization.

The regulation requires companies to provide truthful, clear, and complete information in an accessible way so that consumers can make informed decisions. This information includes, above all, the product's characteristics, conditions of use, associated risks, composition, and origin, and must be communicated honestly, without misleading advertising or relevant omissions.

The protection of consumer rights is also a fundamental focus of the standard. Organizations should be based on platforms that allow not only contact but also criticism from their target groups. Furthermore, responses should come through effective resolution mechanisms that allow for quick, fair, and appropriate answers. This will consequently lead to a strengthening of the organization's credibility with consumers.

Social norms still emphasize the inclusion of different types of consumers. Therefore, this topic is based on the premise of the need for adaptability; that is, it is essential to consider the age, health, cultural, and economic conditions of consumers and their respective disparities in a multicultural society.

Finally, it is important to highlight the importance of ensuring that consumer privacy is kept confidential. The use of personal data must comply with the law and, consequently, guarantee transparency between an organization and the people who make it visible in a highly competitive environment.

In short, the social norm of Consumers and End Users promotes a balanced relationship between companies and their customers, based on trust, responsibility, and the creation of sustainable long-term value.

III. Company Presentation

Jerónimo Martins is a Portuguese business group founded in 1792, with a strong presence in the food retail sector. Throughout its history, the company has shown strong evolution and growth, starting as a commercial business and now representing a large group with a solid presence in various international markets, playing a prominent role in food distribution at the European level.

As previously mentioned, the company's activity focuses primarily on food retail, where it utilizes different store formats and brands adapted to the specific needs of each market. In Portugal, the most prominent brand is Pingo Doce, within the supermarket segment, and Recheio, in the Cash & Carry format. Internationally, Biedronka is particularly relevant, standing out as one of the largest food retail chains in Poland.

As a business organization of considerable size, the group has a complex structure, with decentralized operations across various markets, but linked by a common strategic coordination.

This structure allows for the reconciliation of the operational autonomy of the numerous brands with the definition of global strategies in order to ensure consistency in the group's actions. Given that it operates in a sector strongly linked to consumers' daily lives, the Jerónimo Martins Group conducts its business in a particularly demanding social context.

IV. Application of Social Norms: Consumers and End Users

4.1 Product Safety and Quality

Product safety and quality are central to the social norms of consumers and end users, especially in the food distribution sector, where the company's activity has a direct impact on the health and well-being of the population. In this context, Jerónimo Martins considers food safety a strategic priority in its management, integrating this principle into its operational and control processes.

In order to significantly reduce risks for stakeholders, it is important for the organization to implement rigorous quality and food safety control systems throughout its entire value chain, from supplier evaluation and selection to the products becoming available at points of sale, ensuring that all marketed products comply with legal requirements.

To enable the identification of the origin of raw materials and, above all, to track the path of products throughout the supply chain, this is an essential element in the product traceability process. This facilitates the early detection of any non-conformities and, most importantly, allows for a quick and effective response whenever a risk to the health of stakeholders is identified. In these types of situations, the company should have certain specific procedures for recalling products from the market, which guarantees the protection of consumers and, more importantly, demonstrates responsible and transparent action.

Additionally, continuous monitoring of product quality allows the company to identify opportunities for improvement, strengthening its internal processes and contributing to increased consumer confidence. In this way, Jerónimo Martins demonstrates the practical application of the standard's principles, promoting high standards of quality and safety, fundamental for responsible management oriented towards the end consumer.

4.2 Information and Transparency for the Consumer

Information and transparency play a crucial role in the relationship between organizations and their consumers, being fundamental elements of the social norm of Consumers and End Users. Jerónimo Martins recognizes above all that clear and accessible communication is essential to enable consumers to make informed, responsible, and conscious decisions.

The company must ensure the provision of clear, complete, and, above all, truthful information in the context of product labeling. This information includes, among other aspects, the composition and origin of the products, their storage conditions, expiration dates, and any risks associated with consuming these products. Once the clarity and legibility of the labels are guaranteed, the company contributes to the protection of consumer rights and the promotion of food safety.

Regarding price and promotional labeling, the Jerónimo Martins Group maintains a firm stance on transparency to avoid misleading consumers and to uphold their trust. Therefore, all displayed campaigns are presented in a transparent and clear manner for easy understanding by consumers. In this way, the Jerónimo Martins Group manages to capture consumer confidence, maintaining the commitment established in 2005 that values relationships built on trust.

In this way, the provision of transparent information plays a fundamental role in management, enabling the company to consolidate its credibility in the market, encourage responsible consumption practices, and ensure compliance with the principles defined in the social standard relating to Consumers and End Users. Through this action, the company demonstrates a consistent commitment to protecting consumer rights and creating sustainable long-term value.

4.3 Complaints Management and Monitoring

Jerónimo Martins places great importance on transparency and consumer opinion, providing various customer support channels and a Customer Ombudsman. The main means of contact is the Ombudsman's website, which is simple and accessible to use and serves as the Group's preferred channel. Additionally, the company offers a telephone support line and, alternatively, contact via email, ensuring multiple ways to communicate with consumers.

After a complaint is submitted, it is analyzed by a specialized and multidisciplinary team, allowing for appropriate action in the face of the diverse situations presented. The team then selects someone to manage the process, overseeing it from submission to resolution. Following this, a detailed analysis of the problem will be conducted to identify its origin and address it as quickly as possible, aiming to find a solution for the consumer.

Finally, once the process is complete, the result will be announced to both the client and the Jerónimo Martins Group, which will then discuss internally what can be improved. This approach allows Jerónimo Martins to monitor its performance indicators related to customer satisfaction, contributing to the continuous improvement of its processes and alignment with the requirements of the ESRS standard relating to consumers and end users.

V. Conclusion

This study sought to analyze the application of the social norm relating to Consumers and End Users, within the broader domain of sustainability and corporate social responsibility, using the Jerónimo Martins Group as a case study. This analysis is relevant as it assesses the social impact of activities and does not focus solely on the economic field.

The analysis developed throughout this work allows us to conclude that social norms play a structuring role in guiding business practices, acting simultaneously as instruments for preventing social risks and as mechanisms for reinforcing organizational legitimacy in the eyes of different stakeholders. It is important to add that their continuous use in the strategic and organizational context is essential.

In the case of Jerónimo Martins, the work demonstrated a set of consistent practices regarding concern for the safety and quality of products. Therefore, this ultimately demonstrates a social concern for consumers; that is, the economic aspect is not the organization's only concern, despite its size and reputation. It is important to add that the size of the group ultimately affects its performance in relation to social norms; in other words, constant updating of processes and constant change are necessary according to the needs of the commercial sector and its consumers.

Regarding information and transparency for consumers, we can highlight that the group seeks to provide information in a clear and accessible way. Communication within the commercial sector, due to high competitiveness, must be transparent. Despite the use of marketing strategies to attract more consumers, these strategies should not encourage excessive consumption. Based on this premise, social norms are respected and utilized in an organization where profit can be considered the priority.

Furthermore, complaint management and customer satisfaction must be guaranteed; in other words, continuous improvement requires customer feedback. The economic aspect cannot be the only source of concern.

Therefore, the social norm of Consumer and End User should be seen as an instrument that goes beyond the immediate protection of consumer rights; that is, organizations should critically reflect on consumption habits, food literacy, and the responsibility of companies in promoting more conscious choices.

In summary, the study concludes that Jerónimo Martins is globally aligned with the principles of the analyzed standard. However, the application of this standard requires a continuous commitment, based on the review of adopted practices and adaptation to social expectations, in order to promote a responsible and sustainable relationship with its consumers.

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