

# COVID-19 as a gender market issue: is it a call for action against vulnerability?

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## Abstract

Gender-based domestic violence has increased considerably in Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic. This alarming situation has affected the market and has inspired individuals and organizations to create initiatives to tackle the issue. This article seeks to understand how the links between market practices prompt discussions on social issues such as women's vulnerability in the face of domestic violence. The methodological path was built around an initiative by Magazine Luiza (a major Brazilian retailer): the panic button in the Magalu app. A corpus was formed, gathering news about the initiative and analyzed afterward. Although Magalu's market practices can be seen as influential in the fight against gender violence, there is imminent danger of relegating the defense of women to the market sphere, whereas in contrast, the creation of resilience is, without a doubt, the result of joint action by society as a whole.

**Keywords:** COVID-19. Gender. Marketing. Vulnerability.

## COVID-19 como uma questão de gênero no mercado: uma chamada para ação contra a vulnerabilidade?

### Resumo

Em plena situação de pandemia, além do aumento de casos da COVID-19, também houve um crescimento considerável de ocorrências de violência doméstica baseada em gênero no Brasil. Observamos que tal situação alarmante inspirou alguns indivíduos e organizações a criarem iniciativas para lidar com esta realidade, que também afetou o mercado. Assim, o presente artigo busca compreender como as relações entre as práticas de mercado podem gerar discussões sobre questões sociais, tais como, a vulnerabilidade de mulheres frente à violência doméstica. Nosso caminho metodológico começa a partir da iniciativa da Magazine Luiza (que é uma das maiores varejistas brasileiras): o botão de pânico no aplicativo da Magalu. Construímos um corpus a partir de uma notícia que deu visibilidade a essa prática de mercado. Embora as práticas de mercado do Magalu possam ser vistas como influentes na luta contra a violência de gênero, existe um iminente perigo de relegar somente à esfera do mercado a defesa das mulheres, quando a criação da resiliência é, sem sombra de dúvida, resultado da ação conjunta da sociedade como um todo.

**Palavras-chave:** COVID-19. Gênero. Marketing. Vulnerabilidade.

## COVID-19 como una cuestión de género en el mercado: ¿Un llamado a la acción contra la vulnerabilidad?

### Resumen

En plena situación de pandemia, además del aumento de casos de COVID-19, también hubo un aumento considerable de casos de violencia doméstica de género en Brasil. Observamos que esa situación tan alarmante ha inspirado a algunos individuos y organizaciones a crear iniciativas para enfrentar esta realidad que también ha afectado al mercado. Por lo tanto, este artículo busca comprender cómo las relaciones entre las prácticas del mercado pueden generar discusiones sobre cuestiones sociales como la vulnerabilidad de las mujeres a la violencia doméstica. Nuestro camino metodológico comienza con la iniciativa de Magazine Luiza (que es uno de los mayores minoristas brasileños): el botón de pánico en la aplicación de Magalu. Construimos un corpus basado en noticias que dieron visibilidad a esta práctica de mercado. Si bien las prácticas de mercado de Magalu pueden verse como influyentes en la lucha contra la violencia de género, existe el peligro inminente de relegar la defensa de las mujeres solo al ámbito del mercado, cuando la creación de resiliencia es, sin duda, el resultado de la acción conjunta de la sociedad en su conjunto.

**Palabras clave:** COVID-19. Género. Marketing. Vulnerabilidad.

Article submitted on March 15, 2021 and accepted for publication on December 10, 2021.

[Original version]

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120210051x>

## INTRODUCTION

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In this study, we assume that marketing goes beyond a set of techniques that help regulate exchange. However, it also constitutes a set of practices that contributes to the construction of markets and other economic orders, and it is constantly undergoing a process of construction (“market-ing”) (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009). Moreover, these practices establish an intense relationship with the social processes of reality formation that are shaped by agents through a network of human and non-human subjects (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005). We understand that markets are built, altered, molded, and remodeled over time. Therefore, markets are performed through the practices of consumers, organizations, and society as a whole (Araujo, Finch, & Kjellberg, 2010).

Although market practices can be seen in terms of their positive consequences, such as income and employment generation, markets can also promote exclusion and create vulnerability (Baker & Mason, 2012; R. O. Silva, Barros, Gouveia, & Merabet, 2021). Moreover, this vulnerability not only applies to the parties directly involved in market transactions, such as producers and consumers. It also applies to market agents in general, such as workers and society. Thus, we have decided to observe how market practices can influence aspects of social life and, reciprocally, how social problems can interfere with market plasticity. More specifically, we pay attention to how a particular market practice can be created from how agents interpret and act in relation to social issues.

Studies in the market practice literature commonly follow actors to observe market formation. In this study, we propose using the model suggested by Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007b) with a focus on the links established between practices (not the practices themselves) to understand social problems. The theoretical framework of vulnerability has been especially relevant during what can be viewed as a gendered pandemic. We understand that this can be considered a contribution, and we will discuss one of the most pressing social issues in the world today: violence against women - which in Brazil is even more urgent due to its high rate of incidence.

In crisis situations, it is expected that negative consequences may worsen and affect the entire scope of society. The economic crisis that has followed the epidemiological crisis caused by the new coronavirus pandemic is considered unprecedented (Moreira, 2020), and it has caused various forms of problems in all spheres. Some groups have been more severely affected by the new coronavirus. They are not biologically or physiologically more susceptible, but rather they have a history of social and economic vulnerability that is exacerbated by any health problem and/or disaster. This disease can attack anyone, but there are more severe and long-lasting social, economic, and psychological effects on women (Lancet, 2020; Paz, Muller, Boudet, & Gaddis, 2020). Although the pandemic has brought numerous problems of various types, what interests us here is domestic violence against women. This form of violence is not exclusive to a particular social class or geographic location, and it is found throughout society, including in its most serious form femicide.

The marketing literature in general does not deal with such topics with a few occasional exceptions (Ayrosa & Oliveira, 2018; Capella, Hill, Rapp, & Kees, 2010; McVey, Gurrieri & Tyler, 2021; Varman, Goswami, & Vijay, 2018). Expectations derived from gender performance put women in positions of subordination, making them more subject to the harmful effects of domestic violence, as noted by Joy, Belk, and Bhardwaj (2015), in the context of sexual violence against women in India.

The small number of studies on violence against women may be due to the difficulty of finding comprehensive statistics for these crimes. Despite the difficulty in finding specific indicators, the media has already been reporting an increase in violence against women in Brazil (Bragon & Mattoso, 2020). Previous research indicates that violence against women is greater during holidays and weekends. During periods of forced isolation, the situation only gets worse. The Brazilian Public Security Forum points out that during the first two months of social isolation, there was a 22.2% increase in lethal violence against women. On the other hand, the same document indicates a reduction of about 30% in police reports of bodily injury derived from domestic violence and rape reports involving women and vulnerable people (a legal category that includes children, adolescents, and/or disabled people). The reduction in police reports stems from the victims’ difficulty in reporting these crimes, because they are confined with their attackers.

We have observed that this alarming situation has inspired some individuals and public and private organizations to create initiatives to deal with this grim reality. In this study, our starting point for following this network began with a company that is one of the major Brazilian retailers, Magazine Luiza. Founded in São Paulo in 1950, Magazine Luiza - or Magalu, as it is popularly called, has a wide digital platform and 1,113 physical stores spread over 819 cities in 21 states throughout Brazil. The company's total revenue in 2019 exceeded 27 billion reais (5.5 billion dollars) (Magazine Luiza, 2020).

Magalu's initiative expressly intends to reduce female vulnerability to domestic violence by including a 'panic button' in its cell phone app. This feature consists of a shortcut that dials the Call Center for Women in Situations of Violence service, also known as "Call 180", which is a free and confidential public service. Its release gained notoriety in the media and inspired action by several other agents, including politicians. Within this context, we aim to understand how the links between market practices can prompt discussions on social issues such as women's vulnerability in the face of domestic violence. To accomplish this, we first analyzed Magalu's initiative and its connections from the perspective of market practices (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006, 2007b). We used the "follow the network" imperative from ANT (Actor-Network Theory) and used news articles, the company's app, and relevant legislation on the subject as data sources.

This article is divided into five sections, including this introduction. In the second section, we will present our theoretical discussions, addressing topics regarding the gender dimension of the pandemic and then market practices and consumer vulnerability. In the third section, we will describe our methodological procedures, and in the fourth section, we will develop our data analysis. In the fifth and last section, we present the implications for vulnerability and our final considerations.

## COVID-19 - A gendered pandemic

Since the pandemic's beginning, there has been an urgent concern regarding the physical integrity of women and the United Nations has termed it an invisible pandemic (UN Women Brazil, 2020). This fact cannot be seen as surprising, given that researchers point out that worldwide, some groups such as women are more severely affected by the new coronavirus. In Brazil, COVID-19's first fatal victim was a black woman, who was a domestic worker (Melo, 2020), and since then, the press has reported the high mortality rate of women, who make up the massive majority (85%) of nursing professionals, whose performance on the front line has been indispensable (Alessi, 2020). According to the Federal Nursing Council (Conselho Federal de Enfermagem [COFEN], 2021), Brazil already accounts for 30% of the deaths of these professionals worldwide. In addition to their high mortality rate, stress and the risk of contamination weighs heavily on these women. Such a burden is not just an occupational risk. Women are historically more economically and socially vulnerable to crises and natural disasters (McLaren, Wong, Nguyen, & Mahamadachchi, 2020), and now, during this pandemic, one of the most prestigious journals in medicine says:

Inequities disproportionately affect their wellbeing and economic resilience during lockdowns. Households are under strain, but child care, elderly care, and housework typically fall on women. Concerns over increased domestic violence are growing. With health services overstretched and charities under-resourced, women's sexual and reproductive health services and prenatal and postnatal care are disrupted (Lancet, 2020, p. 1168).

Chandan et al. (2020) point out that previous epidemics have also registered an increase in violence against women. The pandemic has had more severe consequences for women in three main areas: (1) economic conditions, (2) health and education, and, finally, (3) agency (World Bank, 2020). Agency - being able to have a voice, make decisions, and act accordingly - has plummeted in severity and frequency. The total or partial closure of protection institutions is the main cause for the impunity of aggressors, followed by the underreporting of cases of violence. Confinement then acts, worsening the situation of gender-based violence by making women more vulnerable to it when they are less able to protect themselves from its effects. The same document points out that many women's groups are more vulnerable, because they are unaware of how to protect themselves from domestic and gender violence. Emphasizing the stigma associated with women who suffer domestic violence is another reason for them not to make a report (Moreira, Borges, & Venâncio, 2011).

The burden of domestic and family work also takes its toll in times of COVID-19. Recent research indicates that academic women, especially black women, and mothers, regardless of race, pay most of the bill for the impact of the pandemic (Staniscuaski et al., 2020).

This scenario indicates the need for changes in legislation and measures to reduce domestic violence in general and especially of women and the vulnerable, such as children and the elderly (whose care is generally the responsibility of women). While violence against women is known to have increased during isolation, some figures for violence have fallen during the pandemic.

The Public Security Institute of Rio de Janeiro has monitored domestic and family violence against women during this period of social isolation. As a result, this institution has recorded a reduction in several types of crimes: Physical Violence (22%), Sexual Violence (18%), Psychological Violence (30%), Moral Violence (31.5%), and Patrimonial Violence (29.2%). Among these crimes, the number registered under the Maria da Penha Law<sup>1</sup> has also decreased by 21.9% (Instituto de Segurança Pública [ISP], 2021). The Institute of Public Security of Rio de Janeiro attributes this decrease both to the restriction of locomotion and the difficulty of people leaving home and, especially the difficulty of women and vulnerable people of getting out from under the control of their aggressors during this period. As a result, we now have federal law No. 14,022, of July 2020, which expands the possibilities for making notifications of violence, which ensures greater protection and coverage.

Greater protection is needed given that serious crimes at home (where notifications often come from neighbors) have increased significantly. For example, Physical Violence, increased from 59.8% in 2019 to 64.1% in 2020. Sexual Violence has experienced an even greater jump: from 57.8% in 2019 to 65.9% in 2020.

## MARKET PRACTICES

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In this study, we see markets as undergoing a constant process of formation (“market-ing”), being a set of practices that help perform and build markets and other economic orders (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009). In this sense, markets are not defined *a priori* but are rather built, altered, molded, and remodeled over time, and markets are performed through the practices of consumers, organizations, and society as a whole (Araujo et al., 2010). Moreover, this approach “is not limited to the issue of how markets are shaped but is concerned more generally with how economic orders emerge, including markets, firms and households” (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007a, p. 863). Thus, it can be said that normally the economic order is merely a function of its social context (Polanyi, 1962). In other words, an economic system is not separate from society (Polanyi, 1962; Machado, 2011).

Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007a, p. 877) point out that there are “methodological benefits of examining economic ordering in the making” (e.g., as in Callon’s studies). Furthermore, “a practice approach emphasizes that economic organizing and the emergence of economic orders are closely connected to the constitution of economic agencies” (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009, p. 8).

Production, distribution, purchasing, and consumption activities can be performed by several agents (manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, unions, governments, associations, regulatory agencies, consumers, and sellers, among others). So, a market itself results from the practices developed by the agents that operate within it (Hagberg & Kjellberg, 2010). “Attending to how economic agencies are configured in practice rather than what they might be in principle, challenges ideas about those who act in markets” (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009, p. 8). Thus, “several agencies contribute to shaping a particular economic order” (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009). Existing economic orders are comprised of many collective investments made by various agents, which are usually resistant to change. In this sense, “implementing changes may involve complementary investments in new tools, performance metrics, ways of collecting and analyzing data, etc” (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009, p. 22).

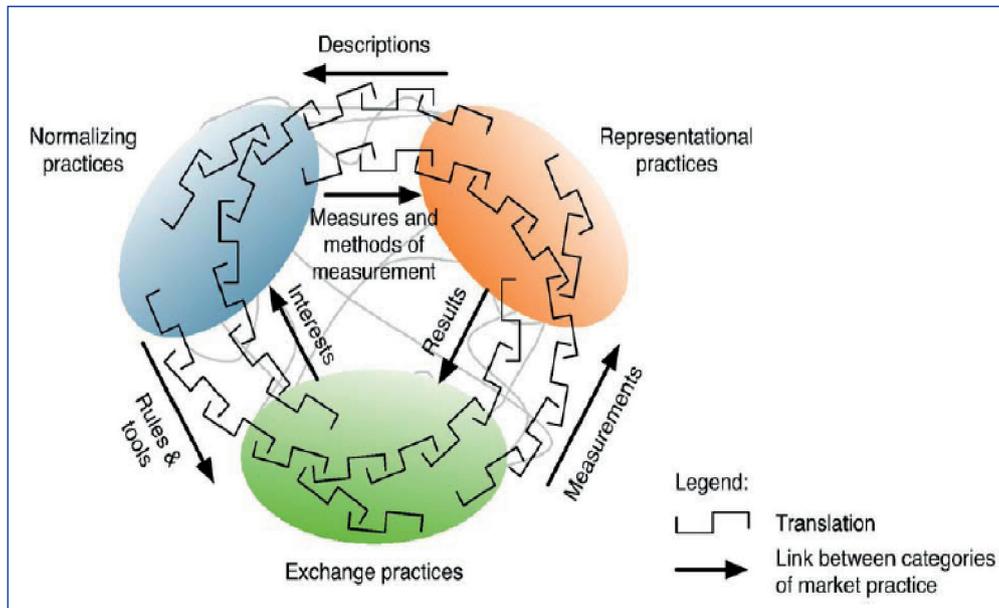
The concept of market practices takes a broad form, emphasizing the importance of the activities that contribute to constituting markets, which are continuously created and recreated through the interaction of these practices (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup>The Law is named after Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes a domestic violence victim who became a prominent women’s rights activist.

According to Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007b), markets are continuously constituted by three types of interconnected practices: (1) normalizing practices (activities that establish guides and rules on how the market should be (re)shaped or function according to some actor or group of actors); (2) exchange practices (all the concrete activities for the consummation of individual economic exchanges); and (3) representational practices (all the activities that contribute to describing the market itself and/or how it works). Each of these can influence the others through the ‘translation’ process. Therefore, markets are constituted by a continuous process of translations that interconnect various types of practices in intersecting semi-cyclical and reversible chains that interfere with each other, as shown in Figure 1 (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006, 2007b).

**Figure 1**  
**Translations and Intermediaries in Market Practices**



Source: Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007b, p. 151).

Although the model presents different categories of market practices separately, they are interconnected by the processes depicted in the model. These practices are linked through translations (Latour’s concept of a basic social process through which something spreads across time and space). Looking at the links is important to understanding how market practices can be entangled (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007b).

Representational practices can influence normalizing practices through descriptions and influence exchange practices through results. Exchange practices, in turn, influence normative practices through interests, and influence representational practices through measures. Finally, normalizing practices can influence exchange practices through rules and tools, and can influence representational practices through measures and measurement methods. This occurs in such a manner that together these practices contribute to the construction of markets and other economic orders (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009). In the model, we see six types of links, and “such links are central in the process through which various practices constitute markets” (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007b, p. 45).

In this way, all of the practices of agents that form a market in a given time and geography can promote or hinder situations of vulnerability in production and consumption through the interconnections between them. The next section is dedicated to presenting how vulnerability is discussed in marketing and consumer studies. Based on previous reflections, we propose that consumer vulnerability can extend across an entire market, affecting different agents in different ways.

## VULNERABILITY AND THE MARKET

According to Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg (2005), although the first book on the subject, *The Poor Pay More* by David Caplovitz was published in 1963, it was only in the 1990s that there was an increase in interest in research on vulnerability in marketing. Still, despite efforts made in the 1990s, studies tended to replicate the legal understanding of vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005): “[the] weak side of an issue or issue [...] where someone can be attacked or offended” (Lima, 2011, p. 245) unrelated to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics present in consumption phenomena.

The volume of research on consumer vulnerability has increased over the past few decades, especially after Baker et al. (2005) (Commuri & Ekici, 2008; Rittenburg & Lunde, 2016). Although today there are many definitions for consumer vulnerability, the definition by Baker et al. (2005) is the one most often cited:

[...] a state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions or the consumption of marketing messages and products. It occurs when control is not in an individual’s hands, creating a dependence on external factors (e.g., marketers) to create fairness in the marketplace. The actual vulnerability arises from the interaction of individual states, individual characteristics, and external conditions within a context where consumption goals may be hindered, and the experience affects personal and social perceptions of self (Baker et al., 2005, p. 134).

Consumers may be more susceptible to vulnerability because of individual characteristics<sup>2</sup> and/or transitory states<sup>3</sup> in the face of uncontrollable external factors such as discrimination, stigmatization, physical and logistic elements, and environmental conditions (Baker et al., 2005).

In this sense, market practices can create and/or reinforce vulnerability (Hill & Sharma, 2020; Shultz II & Holbrook, 2009; R. O. Silva, 2018). Marketing professionals are sometimes accused of taking advantage of consumer vulnerabilities (Schultz II & Holbrook, 2009) through organizational practices (J. O. Silva, Abreu, & Mano, 2015). Hill and Sharma (2020, p. 554) assert that groups are not vulnerable per se: “they are vulnerable when they are susceptible to damage from the market due to some combination of their control of resources” (e.g., a physical handicap or limited knowledge, “which restricts their access to and control of resources”).

Recently, Silva et al. (2021) have focused on three different groups within these definitions: (1) conditions that lead to vulnerability, (2) ethical issues, and (3) consumer vulnerability as a result of marketing systems. In addition, these authors present a broader concept of vulnerability, which goes beyond the consumption relationship: “vulnerability is a state of fragility of individuals when confronted with market practices, which may be manifested during different phases of the production, commercialization and consumption processes” (Silva et al., 2021, p. 91).

When expanding the scope of action of vulnerability, the complexity of different experiences and what it means to be in a position of vulnerability are also recognized (Baker, LaBarge, & Baker, 2016). When proposing three methodological approaches for the analysis of vulnerability, the authors indicate that one can “isolate particular populations based on their biophysical or psychosocial characteristics such as age or race,” or “isolate specific environmental conditions such as poverty or recovering from community disasters,” or even “focus on the significance and experience of vulnerability, which thus permits variations in biophysical, psychosocial and environmental conditions.” This perspective may be especially relevant to the study of various types of crises, given that it is known that disasters and pandemics affect social groups such as women and particularly black women in a variable manner (McLaren et al., 2020). In this sense, according to Baker and Mason (2012), domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence can be considered to be triggering events for vulnerability and stigma in the form of pressure.

Baker and Mason (2012) state that vulnerability is the result of 1) several overlapping pressures of an individual nature (e.g., psychosocial and/or biophysical characteristics), 2) interpersonal pressure (e.g., family and social networks, normative models), 3) community pressure (e.g., infrastructure, resources support, collective identity and involvement), or 4) pressure due to macro-forces (e.g., poverty, distribution of resources and economic forces, inequality, stigmatization) that can be

<sup>2</sup> e.g., D. L. T. D. Carvalho (2012); Berg (2015); McKeage, Crosby, and Rittenburg (2015); Faria, Casotti, and J. L. Carvalho (2018).

<sup>3</sup> e.g., Gentry et al. (1995); Coelho et al. (2017).

enhanced by triggering events in one or more dimensions of pressure (e.g., unemployment, illness, family breakdown, and natural disasters). To the authors, the combination of one or more types of pressure and a triggering event makes vulnerability latent and hinders the individual's capacity to be resilient.

However, Baker and Mason's model (2012) proposes the idea of resilience as a desirable output of the system. For the authors, "consumer vulnerability induces resiliency behaviors, individuals and communities are resilient when they transform their material, social, or ecological environments to reduce the negative impact and/or improve their quality of life" (Baker & Mason, 2012, p. 580). In this sense, "resiliency behaviors reflect the capacity of individuals and/or collectives to adjust to threats or change" (Baker & Mason, 2012, p. 580). According to the authors, "previous studies have shown that in many situations, individuals do not passively accept their powerlessness but, instead, actively and constructively resist their constraints" (Baker & Mason, 2012, p. 580).

So, resilience is a practical condition created through information, training, and the protection of individuals in the market based on an increase in choices, and the ability to access and/or use resources, "resulting in greater absorption of future pressures" (Baker & Mason, 2012, p. 589). Since trigger events and pressures that lead to vulnerability are of various orders, it is virtually impossible to avoid them completely, and creating a cycle that produces protection and responsiveness to vulnerability is critical. A resilience cycle can be built from the intentional action of companies, consumers, NGOs, and regulatory and governmental entities in promoting social actions to reduce the pressures that contribute to vulnerability.

Mckeage, Crosby, and Rittenburg (2015, p. 71) emphasize that "marketers hold power in relation to vulnerable consumers" and "their actions can have both positive and negative ramifications for these individuals far beyond the marketplace." These authors also emphasize the market's influence on consumer agency with gender variations. Therefore, they understand that examining how these variations can intersect with market issues is important. The Voice Group (2010, p. 384), for example, concludes that "the market does not always provide the best answers to uncertainties people may experience and that macromarketers and public policy makers have a particular responsibility to identify alternative solutions." This is because they have identified that pregnant women have become more vulnerable to market actions, which heightens their vulnerability.

Although there is a reluctance to understand vulnerability as something *a priori* (Baker et al., 2005) and, therefore, dependent on the individual, it is recognized that some groups may be more exposed to situations of vulnerability than others (Commuri & Ekici, 2008). This is the case, for example with women, the elderly, and children in situations of natural or human-caused disasters (Mason & Pavia, 2016). This is also what health and disaster experts tell us about COVID-19's burden on women.

Under law, women who suffer domestic violence are considered within the context of hyper-vulnerability. This social situation aggravates the individual consumer's vulnerability due to personal characteristics that are apparent or known to the providers (Schwartz, 2016). Therefore, they are vulnerable in terms of the market and consumption.

Thus, domestic violence suffered by women can be understood as an individual state that leads to vulnerability in the market and consumption (Baker et al., 2005) because this violence creates vulnerabilities (D'Cruze & Rao, 2004). When women experience certain problems (e.g., illnesses and violence), they lose control (Pavia & Mason, 2004). Their lack of support from many market agents (Baker & Mason, 2012), especially in cases where there is social isolation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Usher, Bhullar, Durkin, Gyamfi, & Jackson, 2020), and a tendency towards a state of lasting vulnerability (McLaren et al., 2020) due to the pandemic and domestic violence, make this problem worse.

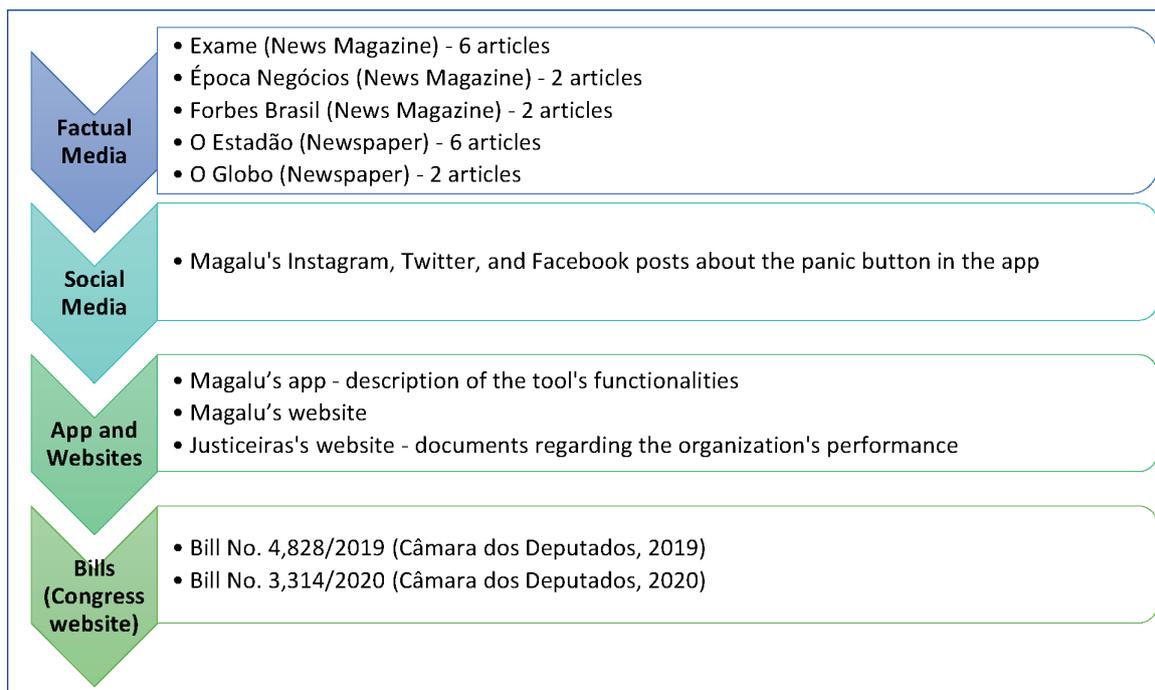
## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

We have discussed how the pandemic can be seen as a gendered phenomenon and how much it has amplified the vulnerability of some groups. Several organizations have sought to minimize such problems. NGOs have created booklets, civil society associations have carried out collective financing and distributed various resources, governments have created specific actions, but it was a market initiative that gained notoriety in this scenario. Thus, our methodological path begins with Magalu’s initiative. In order to understand how the links between market practices (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006, 2007b) can prompt discussions on social issues such as women’s vulnerability in the face of domestic violence in a pandemic context, we have built a corpus based on the news that gave visibility to a market practice prior to the pandemic: the panic button in the Magalu app.

This feature was released on March 8, 2019 - International Women’s Day - before the current pandemic. It was only with the coming of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, that it gained notoriety (Calais, 2020). This practice also inspired another movement in this direction, which was the creation of Bill No. 3,314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020), which requires all e-commerce websites and apps across the country to make a “panic button” available for use by women in the event of domestic violence.

Following this network required the creation of a survey of news from newspapers and magazines that led us to records of parliamentary discussions of bills and the application itself and the company’s website, as can be seen in Figure 2, in which we detail the sources of this research. In addition, we collected articles from some of the most widely circulating and important Brazilian news and business outlets between March and December of 2020 using the keywords “Magazine + Luiza” / “Magalu” and “Violência + Doméstica”.

**Figure 2**  
**Sources and Data**



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Thus, from our data collection, and guided by the conceptualization of market practices developed by Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006, 2007a) which is in line with other studies that have adopted the same epistemology (e.g., Azimont & Araujo, 2010; Geiger & Kjellberg, 2021; Hagberg, 2010; Kjellberg & Olson, 2017; Merabet, 2021), we follow the actors, starting from an

actor who acts (Hagberg & Kjeelberg, 2010; Merabet & Barros, 2021), as shown in Figure 2. In addition, we identify exchange, normative and representative market practices but focus on the links between these practices and, finally, analyze their implications for vulnerability. The next sections present the results of our analysis.

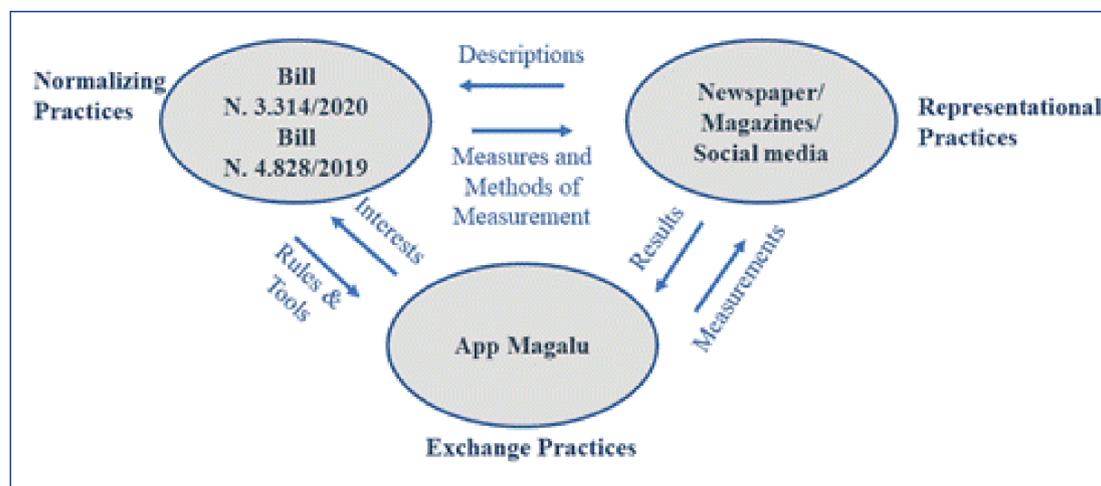
## THE LINKS BETWEEN MARKET PRACTICES AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON VULNERABILITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

As mentioned above, we use the Kjellberg and Helgesson model (2007b) to analyze the market. There are three types of market practices (normalizing, exchange, and representational practices) which are linked through translation processes. From this, we classified the data collected in this research and identified practices that have influenced a set of actors not only in the retail market but also the relevant social aspects related to consumer vulnerability issues.

Among the normalizing practices, we can point out two bills (Bill No. 4,828/2019 and Bill No. 3,314/2020) since their recent creation established rules on how the market should be reshaped, and they have had an impact on the performance of the Brazilian retail market as a whole. Furthermore, regarding representational practices, we found articles in newspapers, magazines, and social media publications (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) that influenced the reach of this retail company’s initiative in the national market and contributed to helping solve this issue by describing how it works. Finally, among the exchange practices, we identified the retail app as a central point in this scenario of concrete activities within the consummation of individual economic exchanges.

The practices we identified are essential to understanding the market formation process and - although they are highlighted in the model - in this work, we focus on the links established between them (Figure 3) through translation processes, which enable us to realize how these various instances of market practices are interconnected.

**Figure 3**  
**Links between the Practices Market – the Magalu app and the panic button**



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the Kjellberg and Helgesson’s model (2007b, p. 151).

Looking at the theoretical framework after this analysis, we settled on the following categories: (1) Links between Normalizing and Exchange Practices: Rules and Tools (bills and panic buttons in apps) + Interests; (2) Links between Exchange and Representational Practices: Results + Measurements; (3) Links between Normative and Representational Practices: Descriptions + Measures and Measurement Methods. We understand that the relationships between market practices can influence the notion of vulnerability in the face of domestic violence.

## Links between normalizing and exchange practices: rules and tools (bills and panic buttons in apps) + interests

Markets are not like stabilized entities but are constantly changing performances, so interrelationships are necessary to understand the market as continuous (re)shaping (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009). We see the submission of Bill No. 3,314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020) on June 15 as an example of this. The document seeks to oblige e-commerce sites and applications to provide a panic button to be used by women in the event of domestic violence (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2020). According to the Representative, the author of the proposal mentioned above, Bill No. 3,314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020) was prepared to use the exponential growth of e-commerce sites and applications, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2020). This bill establishes a guide on how the market should be (re) shaped to work according to a group of actors (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007b).

The app has included the panic button since 2019. Through the concrete activities for the consummation of economic exchanges (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007b), the agent in question has already influenced normative practices of the market that relate to gender violence.

With the reported increase in violence, as a direct consequence of the pandemic, the store chain has consistently used social networks to reinforce the possibility of using this channel and recently announced a new version of its reporting button. In addition to giving access to public protection systems, such as the police hotline, the Magalu application button offers the possibility of reporting the situation (via chat) to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, as well as contacting the Justiceiras (Vigilantes) NGO, formed by female volunteers of various specialties (legal, medical, assistance...) to help other women who are victims of domestic violence).

Figure 4  
Magalu App



Source: Magazine Luiza company app.

It is worth mentioning that the so-called 'panic button' is a dialing shortcut to the Call Center for Women in Situations of Violence. This type of service, also known as 'Ligue 180' [Call 180], is a free and public service that preserves anonymity, which has been offered by the National Policy Secretariat since 2005 and which, since March 2014, has been used as a service hotline that can be called anywhere in Brazil and 16 other countries (Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos [MMFDH], 2018). In addition, the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, on the Ministry's website, provides ways to communicate complaints (MMFDH, 2021). As for the Justiceiras organization, it was created during the COVID-19 pandemic (Justiceiras, 2021).

It has been pointed out that one of the premises of the bill mentioned above concerns complaints of violence made through 'Ligue 180', which increased 35.9% in April 2020 compared to the same month of the previous year (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2020). In addition, Magazine Luiza's initiative is related to Bill No. 3,314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020) and is cited by the House of Representatives news agency as an "existing experience" (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2020). In this sense, it acts as a form of justification for implementing a market practice that has previously been adopted.

It is important to highlight that for the company the inclusion of this mechanism in the Magalu app and the respective launching of the idea of the reporting button in addition to being a tool to combat violence against women is related to the company's strategy of developing a 'super app' - uniting both e-commerce and access to private and public utility services (Época Negócios, 2019).

Given its similarities with another bill in progress, in December 2020, Bill No. 3,314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020) was combined with Bill No. 4,828/2019 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2019), the text of which makes it mandatory for companies that manufacture cell phones and tablets to introduce permanently (both in newer and older models - the latter through operating system updates) an application to call the police in case of violence against women. It should be noted that this bill was presented on September 3, 2019, and there has been no movement associated with it since September 16 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020).

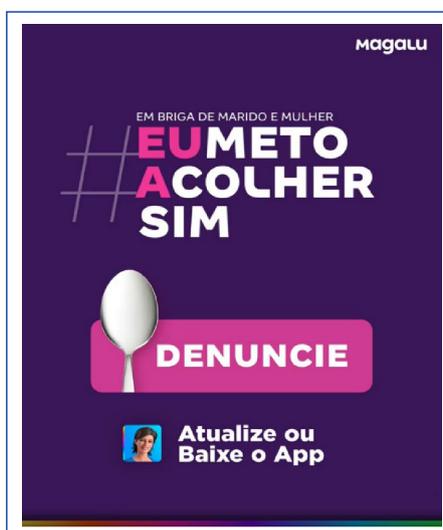
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the public has confirmed its preference for 'active companies,' and in Brazil, Magazine Luiza appears among the companies most remembered and recognized by consumers (Rodrigues, 2020).

### Links between exchange and representational practices: results + measurements

In the relationship between the exchange practices that occur in the Magalu app and some of the practices adopted by Magazine Luiza that fall into the category of representational practices, we found some results and measures that we highlight below. It is noteworthy that these representational practices include activities that contribute to describing the market and/or how it works. Thus, they refer to how representations of the market influence its performance (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007b).

The widespread popularity of the so-called "Accusation Button" during the pandemic came after the company's campaign on the social networks. The use of this resource quickly became one of the most talked-about subjects on Twitter and was reported in the media outlets. The president of Magazine Luiza reported an increase in the use of the app of approximately 400% in May 2020, as compared to the previous year (Agrela, 2020).

**Figure 5**  
**Advertising the Magalu app on Facebook**

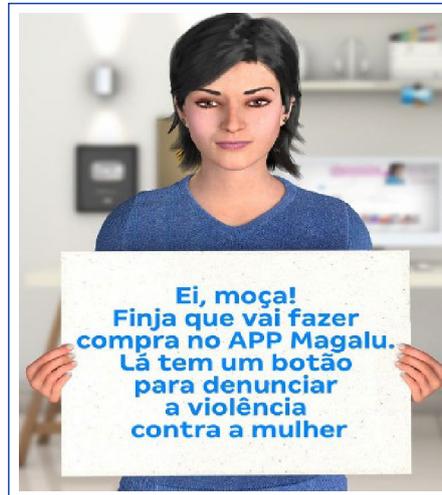


Source: Magazine Luiza's Facebook page (May 25, 2020).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=250663496039983>

As part of its marketing strategy, the company used the already existing 3D digital image of a virtual woman named Lu who presents offers and explains how to make a purchase. During the pandemic, Lu has appeared in a new campaign presented by the company to the brand's more than 3 million followers on Instagram (Calais, 2020), holding a sign that reads: 'Hey, girl! Pretend you're going to make a purchase on the Magalu app. It has a button to report violence against women.' According to the company's social media manager, it's Instagram account has an 80% female audience, and creating a character who resonates with women is important. The debut campaign on the topic presented a past story of harassment experienced by the Lu character, who quite seriously says she had to take a stand (Calais, 2020).

**Figure 6**  
**Advertising the Magalu app on Instagram**



Source: Magazine Luiza Instagram feed (May 26, 2020).<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, as another form of measuring the results of this relationship between the application and the initiative against domestic violence, the company announced the launch of a R\$ 2.5 million fund to combat violence against women, dedicated to supporting entities and organizations devoted to this cause (Época Negócios, 2020).

### Links between normalizing and representational practices: descriptions + measures and measurement methods

The relationship between normalizing and representational practices in the context presented here gives rise to some descriptions, measures, and measurement methods that demonstrate how other market agents are influenced by going beyond the Magalu app and the bills mentioned above.

Given the importance of the "in the making" idea within this market concept (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006), it is worth noting that Magazine Luiza's tool has undergone some modifications. In addition to the shortcut to Call 180, the app's accusation button also began to be redirected to the Ministry of Human Rights chat service and 190 emergency calls (this is the phone number of the Military Police) and more recently the Justiceiras [Vigilantes] hotline. Regarding the first change, the company clarified the difference between the two channels for calls (180 and 190) and stated that it changed the interface and imitated the image of a shopping cart to make an accusation (Calais, 2020).

All of the activities that contribute to constituting markets are interconnected and are in a constant process of movement. Thus, the markets themselves are created and recreated continuously through the interaction of these practices (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.instagram.com/p/CAqH\\_Gg327/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/CAqH_Gg327/?utm_source=ig_embed)

In this sense, we note that the description of the initiative adopted by Magazine Luiza is portrayed in the publications repeatedly as an example to be followed by other companies. For example, in *Exame*, it is placed in a compilation of 'four initiatives taken during the pandemic to inspire other businesses to do the same' (Exame, 2020). Alternatively, it is even mentioned on the consultation page for Bill No. 3314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020) in a link that explains the bill's purpose (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2020).

This movement of representation and its constant repetition in publications that describe Magazine Luiza's practices in its app results in the normalization of Magazine Luiza's initiative. Representational practices describe the reality of the market, and thus they can assist in formatting norms and rules within the market (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007b). Even before the approval of the bill in question, other companies had adopted representation as a model (rule or norm) to be followed, and this has already been reflected in market practices.

With this, we see that other initiatives have also appeared within this market scenario, such as the Avon Institute's campaign *#isoladassimsozinhasnao* (*#isolatedyesaloneno*) in which the company shares through WhatsApp a video with a makeup tutorial, for example, and during the exhibition, information is displayed on how to combat aggression, complete with emergency telephones and support for victims as well as a chat box in partnership with Uber (Chiara, 2020).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR VULNERABILITY AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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After discussing market practices, we will now discuss the implications of these practices for consumer vulnerability. Although examples of marketing practices that can contribute to vulnerability abound as Shultz II and Holbrook (2009), Hill and Sharma (2020) among others have pointed out, the practices of different agents can not only shape markets (Araujo & Kjellberg, 2009), but they can also contribute to reducing vulnerability. According to Baker and Mason (2012), the action of organizations, groups, and individuals can be part of a kind of 'resilience cycle' which causes social changes that reduce the pressures that contribute to vulnerability and mitigate the events that trigger it, thus strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities. According to the authors, a trigger event is a trigger for vulnerability. In this study, domestic violence can be considered a trigger and stigma as a form of pressure, as well as an individual state of vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005). Therefore, market devices can contribute to victim resilience, although we know that the market is not (and will not be) capable of resolving, per se, the complex and multifaceted issue of gender violence.

In the first place, it is worth mentioning that the state's actions in relation to domestic violence can be considered its obligation, since, according to the provisions of Paragraph 8 of Article 226 of the Federal Constitution, it is up to the state: [...] to guarantee assistance to the family of every person, creating mechanisms to curb violence in the context of their relationships (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988). However, restraining and avoiding speech that reinforces gender-based violence is also the responsibility of the market, especially because women in this context are hyper-vulnerable in terms of the market and consumption (Schwartz, 2016).

It is important to note that the market and marketers have power over vulnerable consumers, and their actions may have repercussions beyond the market (Mckeage et al., 2015). The market can also facilitate or prevent control over what concerns vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005; Baker & Mason, 2012). In this sense, the resilience cycle can only be created when there is involvement and commitment from various agents (Baker & Mason, 2012).

Isolated bills do not have the potential to reduce the vulnerability of women and domestic violence in such a way that women can face their vulnerabilities and not suffer from them in the future. In the same way as in the consumer environment, this is mainly because there is a trigger event - domestic violence - and a stigma associated with the victims (a form of pressure). Nevertheless, the bills mentioned in this study can be important initiatives and, therefore, we should consider boosting other initiatives to begin the resilience cycle (Baker & Mason, 2012) by involving other agents.

However, it is important to note that preexisting forms of protection can be undermined in certain ways, which can be seen as part of the marketing sphere. However, as both bills have not yet been approved, there is no way to know the impact that they will have in combating domestic violence, reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience.

Concerning the exchange and representative practices of Magazine Luiza, some aspects should be observed. First, the panic button is not as easy to use as it looks. It would not be possible for the woman to pretend that she is making a purchase and report any form of violence. When making the call, the woman has to speak, and thus she is exposed to the aggressor, there being no way to “pretend” in this circumstance. The existence of other forms of violence communication in the app, such as the chat with the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights and the recently created direction to fill out a form for Justiceiras (Vigilantes), reinforces the fact that the company has implemented other efforts to support initiatives aimed at combating violence domestic. We also note that this company’s initiative is drawing attention to a problem that has existed as long as humanity has.

Most importantly, this application can contribute to other existing initiatives, such as the Public Security Institute of the State of Rio de Janeiro, which created the Monitor for Domestic and Family Violence against Women during isolation, since this can help in terms of the complaints of violence already monitored by this institute in Rio de Janeiro and other states. Among the important forms of information that the application can provide is the number of women who have reported violence, the locations of these women, and what professional help has been requested (in the case of access to Justiceiras). Furthermore, research has shown that gender violence is not exclusive to lower classes and/or groups with less education and/or certain ethnicities, which could configure vulnerable groups *a priori*. However, future research can investigate how intersectionality can hinder the cycle of resilience (Baker & Mason, 2012).

The location of the device, when activated and employing a geo-positioning feature, enables the Assistance Center for Women in Situations of Violence to know where the request is coming from (since the location of the device must be sent to this center) as set out in Bill No. 3,314/2020 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020), and this is a step forward, as it allows women to ask for help more discreetly. It has also been pointed out that the bills mentioned in this study can be understood as public policies that aim to contribute to consumer resilience (Baker & Mason, 2012). However, the consolidated bill needs to be approved to determine the extent to which it has helped reduce the vulnerability of women who suffer from domestic violence.

In terms of Magazine Luiza, despite its success in developing a ‘super app’ that combines e-commerce with access to private and public utility services - as highlighted by an article in *Época Negócios* (2019) - we can say that this action, as well as the company’s financial support for combating domestic violence, are ways of strengthening the resilience of women who suffer from domestic violence. Furthermore, its marketing campaign in the social media has clearly been important in letting many women who suffer from domestic violence know that they are not alone and that they can build their individual resilience (Baker & Mason, 2012).

However, it is important to show in effective numbers how much this tool has helped combat domestic violence and reduce vulnerability (e.g., how many women have used it and how many were helped). In order to establish a ‘resilience cycle’ (Baker & Mason, 2012), other agents need to get involved. Public and governmental actions cannot be seen as secondary to market practices.

It is noteworthy that the actions of Magazine Luiza may have a practical effect on women who are suffering from domestic violence, despite the need for more information. Nevertheless, it is clear that Magalu’s cause-related marketing practices also have had a practical effect on the company - especially in terms of brand equity, publicity, and positive word-of-mouth.

Certain initiatives against domestic violence, when taken by private organizations, may appear to constitute actions that have preceded governmental actions. However, this impression may be a result of the representational practices related to these initiatives. Market initiatives related to the fight against domestic violence may be a way of recognizing the vulnerability of women. They can represent an opportunity to change social or individual reality. In this sense, even though market practices can be central to vulnerability, these practices can also contribute to the discussion of vulnerability as a social issue beyond consumption.

We also find the creation of Mulheres do Brasil (Women of Brazil) by the company’s president Luiza Helena Trajano in 2013 to be a significant event in terms of resilience. Today this organization has more than 80 thousand participants. The group’s objective is to engage civil society in improving the country and it positions itself as a “supra-party political group” (Grupo Mulheres do Brasil, 2020).

In general, public policies are developed after the recognition of certain social problems by the state. Within the context of this study, initiatives designed to combat domestic violence were already implemented before the pandemic, such as the Maria da Penha Law (Lei nº 11.340, de 07 de agosto de 2006) - and 'Ligue 180' - a service currently offered by the National Ombudsman's Office of Human Rights within the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (MMFDH).

Market practices can be vehicles of vulnerability for various agents, but they can also act as moderators and/or mitigators of situations of vulnerability. In this respect, Magazine Luiza's actions and the possibility of creating individual resilience through these actions as well as influencing retail and other adjacent markets with this market participation in the resilience cycle is a very positive event which can have a direct impact on the vulnerabilities of women who suffer from domestic violence.

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