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ARTICLE

Audit marketing system: an analysis of the roles of trust, based on macromarketing and governmentality studies

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Abstract

This essay analyzes trust and power relations in the audit marketing system. Using macromarketing theory on marketing systems and sociological studies on governmentality, the role of trust as a social mechanism, governmentality technique, and market object is analyzed. The context of the phenomenon can be seen in the services offered by auditing companies, with an emphasis on accounting statements, which generate confidence in the markets, thus interfering in strategic processes and the consequent modeling of marketing systems. Being so strategic in power relations, which operate within marketing systems, trust permeates its intrinsic factor and social mechanism and becomes a scarce instrument for the governance of systems, becoming an asset of estimated value within the market. Finally, it is expected that the contributions of the different roles of trust may be potential for other studies in the field of macromarketing.

Keywords: Marketing system. Audit. Trust. Governmentality. Legitimacy.

Sistema de mercado de auditoria: uma análise a respeito dos papéis da confiança baseada nos estudos do macromarketing e da governamentalidade

Resumo

O presente ensaio traz uma análise a respeito da confiança e das relações de poder no sistema de mercado de auditoria. Utilizando a teoria do macromarketing sobre sistemas de mercado e os estudos sociológicos sobre governamentalidade, analisa o papel da confiança como técnica de governamentalidade, mecanismo social e objeto de mercado. O contexto do fenômeno se verifica nos serviços ofertados pelas empresas de auditoria, com ênfase nos demonstrativos contábeis, que geram confiança nos mercados e, dessa forma, interferem nos processos estratégicos e na modelagem dos sistemas de mercado. Estratégica nas relações de poder nos sistemas de mercado, a confiança perpassa o fator intrínseco de mecanismo social e se torna um escasso instrumento para a governança dos sistemas, transformando-se num atributo de estimado valor no mercado. Por fim, espera-se que as contribuições dos distintos papéis da confiança sejam relevantes para outros estudos no campo do macromarketing.

Palavras-chave: Sistema de mercado. Auditoria. Confiança. Governamentalidade. Legitimidade.

Sistema de mercado de auditoría: un análisis de las funciones de la confianza basado en los estudios de macromarketing y gubernamentalidad

Resumen

Este ensayo proporciona un análisis de las relaciones de confianza y poder en el sistema de mercado de auditoría. Utilizando la teoría del macromarketing sobre sistemas de mercado y estudios sociológicos sobre gubernamentalidad, se analiza el papel de la confianza como mecanismo social, técnica de gubernamentalidad y objeto de mercado. El contexto del fenómeno se puede ver en los servicios que ofrecen las empresas auditoras, con énfasis en los estados contables, que generan confianza en los mercados, interfiriendo así en los procesos estratégicos y el consecuente modelamiento de los sistemas de mercado. Al ser tan estratégica en las relaciones de poder, que operan dentro de los sistemas de mercado, la confianza permea el factor intrínseco de mecanismo social, y se convierte en un instrumento escaso para la gobernanza de los sistemas, convirtiéndose en un activo de valor estimado dentro del mercado. Finalmente, se espera que los aportes de los diferentes roles de la confianza sean relevantes para otros estudios en el campo del macromarketing.

Palabras clave: Sistema de mercado. Auditoría. Confianza. Gubernamentalidad. Legitimidad.

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INTRODUCTION

In markets, numerous transactions are solely based on trust relationships, usually involving highly qualified intermediary agents, who ensure the accuracy of essential information, thus minimizing the risk of losses for market participants. Behind the scenes of these transactions between market agents, there is always a social dimension involving a trust relationship (Baker & Jones, 2011; Crepaldi, 2013; Zanini, 2016), which is based on social bonds between people with regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, as well as on norms and beliefs that are shared among market participants (Fukuyama, 1996; Layton, 2014; Peyrefitte, 1999).

The central discursive element in the audit market is the certainty that independent auditors are legitimized to attest to the veracity of company accounting criteria. In this context, auditing companies provide their services by offering opinions based on the trust that is legitimized by the governmental legality that is granted to them, and by social actions derived from internal institutional rules that arise from a type of custom that leads to the so-called legitimate order (Almeida & Lemes, 2013; Crepaldi, 2013).

Trust is recognized as a basic attribute in the audit market (Mueller et al., 2015). The first article in the Mind the Gap series, published in 2023 by the Institute of Independent Auditors of Brazil (Ibracom, s/d), opens with the narrative that independent auditing adds trust and credibility to the market. This statement has been reinforced over time by information users – investors, regulators and all stakeholders – who need audit opinions for decision-making guidance.

A few studies have been conducted to measure the degree of confidence in accounting statements since accounting began to be internationalized (Maia et al., 2012; Qaid et al., 2022). Some argue that the largest independent auditing companies, known in the economic arena as the big four – Ernst Young (EY), KPMG, Delloite and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) – have achieved a high level of information quality when compared to smaller audit firms, besides being more competitive in the market due to the higher trust they provide to clients (Braunbeck, 2010; Dehkordi & Makarem, 2011).

The audit market may be considered a system when analyzed from a theoretical, macromarketing perspective, with macromarketing being defined by Hunt (1981) as the field that studies marketing systems and their relationships with society, which can be summarized as the goods, services, and meaning systems that act for the cohesion of the system as a whole (Kadirov & Varey, 2011; Layton, 2019; Sauerbronn et al., 2022).

Trust as a social mechanism is present in the market, in the multiple discourses used to express some type of ethics. In the audit services marketing system, power relations are fundamental, and trust is what constitutes it (Mueller et al., 2015). Companies that provide audit services compete with each other, utilize social mechanisms, and are anchored in structures. These characteristics suffice to evidence the existence of an audit marketing system (Dixon, 1984; Layton, 2015) in which trust determines the degree of legitimacy of companies providing the service. This trust is shared not only between the client, the audit firm, and the agent, but also between the client and all its publics, based on an opinion contained in a report.

The report is essentially the document where the auditor issues their opinion on how adequate the audited company's financial statements are to the applicable financial reporting structure as assessed by the audit conclusions (Almeida & Lemes, 2013; Crepaldi, 2013). Based on the degree of confidence in this report, agents in the marketing system will make their strategic decisions.

Regarding these marketing system dynamics, a relevant contribution from macromarketing research is MAS theory, proposed by Layton (2014, 2015). As a result of his studies on the behavior of marketing systems, the author proposes a division into three areas: (M) refers to the social mechanisms that establish relationships between agents in the market; (A) describes these agents' fields of action, where markets are sites for change and transaction; and (S) corresponds to the structures created to organize and stabilize systems. The idea characterizes representative models as systems that can produce economic functionality in macromarketing.

Through the marketing system, social mechanism, audit market, and power game contexts, which work according to the communication between agents, this essay analyzes trust and power relations in the audit services marketing system, a system that is relevant both economically and socially, given the expectations placed on independent auditing. It is divided into five sections.

Immediately after the introduction, a discussion is presented regarding the concepts of governmentality and governance, which highlights how trust serves as a governmentality technique and is capable of shaping markets. The third section presents MAS theory and highlights the importance of social mechanisms for the stable functioning of marketing systems. In the fourth, the role of trust is analyzed as a social mechanism that provides stability to the audit marketing system, affording it a license to operate other marketing systems. Finally, the fifth section provides its final considerations.

TRUST AS A GOVERNMENTALITY TECHNIQUE AND GOVERNANCE

The concept of governmentality emerged during Foucault's classes in 1978 and 1979. At that time, he was concerned with detailing a political government, in order to deepen the discussion about ways of governing. He expanded the meaning of the word "governmentality" to define it as an art of governing according to a set of techniques that are essential for exercising power. This theme of Foucault's analysis encompasses subjectivity and the formation of state as the only perspective, in order to deal with the structures that organize the social field (Lemke, 2017).

Around the mid-18th century, governmentality was analyzed by Foucault from a liberal perspective, which some authors called a liberal governmentality. The market was now seen as the place and mechanism that can shape the truth about the state and the art of governing. There was a decline in state intervention in the market, so as to establish truth as a governmental practice rule and enable the market to form the natural price of things. Thus, the notions of governmentality and art of governing are synonymous for Foucault (Alcadipani, 2008, p. 101), and are applicable to all agents in the system.

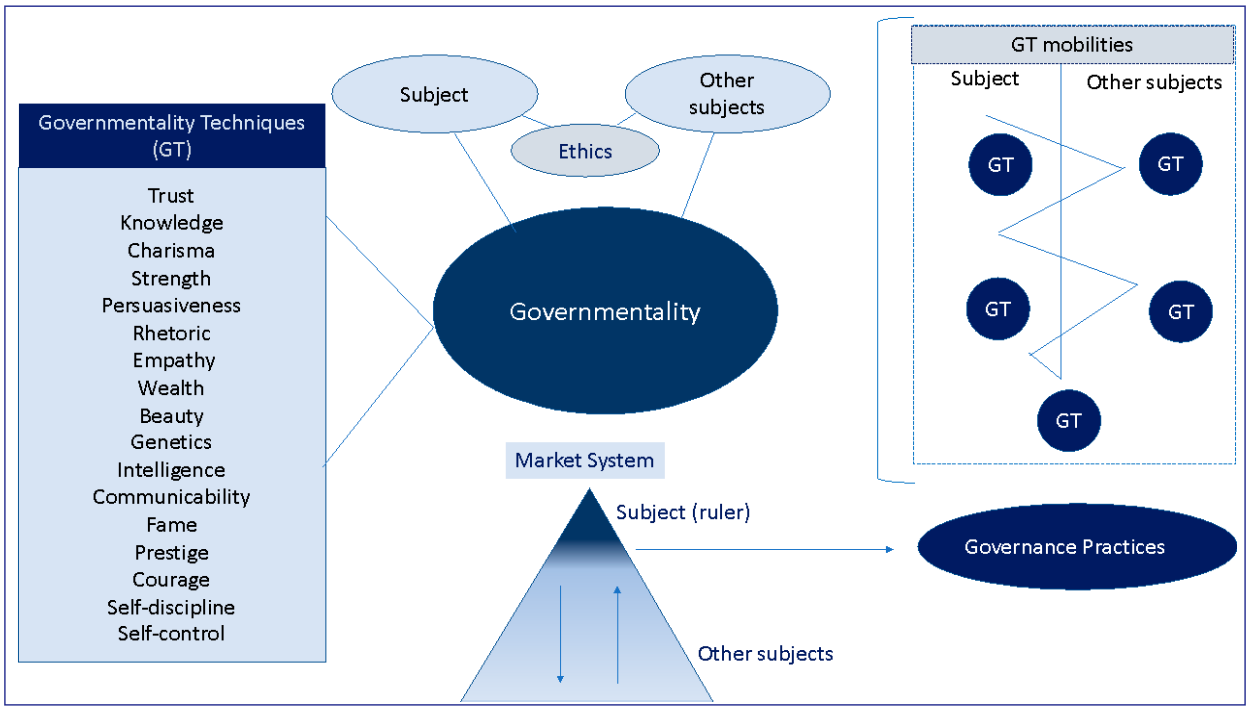
Forms of power are absorbed among members of the social body as an indispensable antidote to corporate and professional well-being. The present study highlights sovereign power, which is pyramidal and can be identified as a hierarchical power, and disciplinary power, which is responsible for defending society with training to produce efficient and effective individuals (Foucault, 2010). Power does not act according to the binary logic of dominators versus dominated (Foucault, 2022; Lemke, 2017), but rather as a relationship between agents.

Power consists in relationships between individuals, which can guide the conduct of others (Foucault, 1980, 2010). This is a government exercise, in the broadest sense of the term. One can govern a society, but also a person, by determining their conduct. This is governmentality, understood as a set of techniques that allow power to be exercised (Castro, 2021; Foucault, 2010, 2022). Participants in the marketing system use governmentality techniques (GT), which are shaped and reshaped according to the ethics and actions of the subject/agent. In this game, the subject (ruler) is the person holding the most GT and, consequently, power (Figure 1).

To say that the greater one's GT, the greater one's power capacity, is to imply that each GT carries within it some type of power, which, combined with others, creates an expansion. Trust is considered a GT because market relationships are based on it, in the sense that the absence of trust implies a dissolution of transactions. Thus, whoever has trust has power. If more GT is added to it, then its power will be expanded. Governance practices (Layton, 2015) are built based on the subject already holding power, the subject at the top of the pyramid (Figure 1). These practices are related with the managing of power acquired in the form of governmentality.

In this context, if there is a relationship between agents, and if these relationships unfold in a place defined by social mechanisms with the help of structures created specifically to organize the markets into systems, then Foucault's and Layton's connections make sense in history because they both describe an art of governing. For Layton, governance. For Foucault, governmentality.

Figure 1
Governmentality techniques and governance practices



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

According to Foucault (1980, 2000, 2002, 2010, 2022), the functioning of power relations in the social field is anchored in a force relationship established at a given moment. Thus, two premises are presented to create this relationship. The first is the form of repression, with power being something that represses nature, feelings, a group, a class, and people in general. The second comprehends power as a combat, confrontation, or war relationship, with politics being analyzed "as a continuous war" by non-war means.

For governmentality to be an effective form of government, legitimacy plays a supportive role for subjects, as it is an interactive system of beliefs and values occurring between institutions and society. According to Weber (2022, p. 67), legitimacy can be recognized in two forms: legal, arising from law, and conventional (customs). The latter, in turn, can be subdivided in three manners: affectively, through sentimental devotion; axiologically-rationally, through belief in its absolute validity as an expression of binding, supreme values – for example, moral and aesthetic values –; and religiously, through faith in the dependence between possessing a salvific good and observing it.

This view by Weber (2002) shows clearly how GT stimulate power relations. Legitimacy conveys trust, which generates legitimacy. As GT, both are interconnected, though they have different meanings. Analyzing the following aphorism can help this comprehension: "A woman's beauty lies in her slender body, long hair, and bright smile." Suppose that, in this example, legitimacy occurs by convention. It would be plausible for this standard of female beauty to become predominant, thus becoming the model desired by most women and therefore affecting the marketing system.

Thus, the marketing system could undergo mutations and be remodeled, mainly in micro aspects, such as an increased consumption of beauty treatments, weight-loss medications, hair treatment supplements, teeth whitening, among others. Whoever holds the power to define the beauty standard defines the products that will be demanded. For Foucault (2022, p. 40), human nature is something that underlies and pervades governmentality's very exercise. In short, it is its substantial hypodermis or the other side of something visible to rulers only, which is their own action.

The notion of docility that adds to the analyzable body the manipulable body (Foucault, 2002, p. 134) observes the exercise of power critically, to capture whether it exists by chance or whether a subject does something in its name unfoundedly (Lynch, 2018). The production of a docile and moldable subject is more present in governance because it is concerned with knowing how power is exercised. However, governmentality as a technique of power is an intrinsic attribute of the subject or developed during social construction. So, from governmentality, from the subject's soul, power is constituted – relationships that, in macromarketing, are treated by MAS theory as social mechanisms.

MAS THEORY AND SOCIAL MECHANISMS

Voluntary exchanges practiced since the most primitive stages of humanity are carried out in order to improve quality of life. Similarly, improvements in the forms of work – task division and specialization – brought about the rise of productivity at a more efficient level, culminating in an expansion of the goods and services available to consumers (Layton, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019). Thus, marketing systems emerge as a result of exchange relationships linked to the social norms that set limits and practices capable of causing a behavioral ordering among different actors (Hutt et al., 1986; Layton, 2007).

Regarding marketing systems, Layton (2007, p. 230) presents this concept:

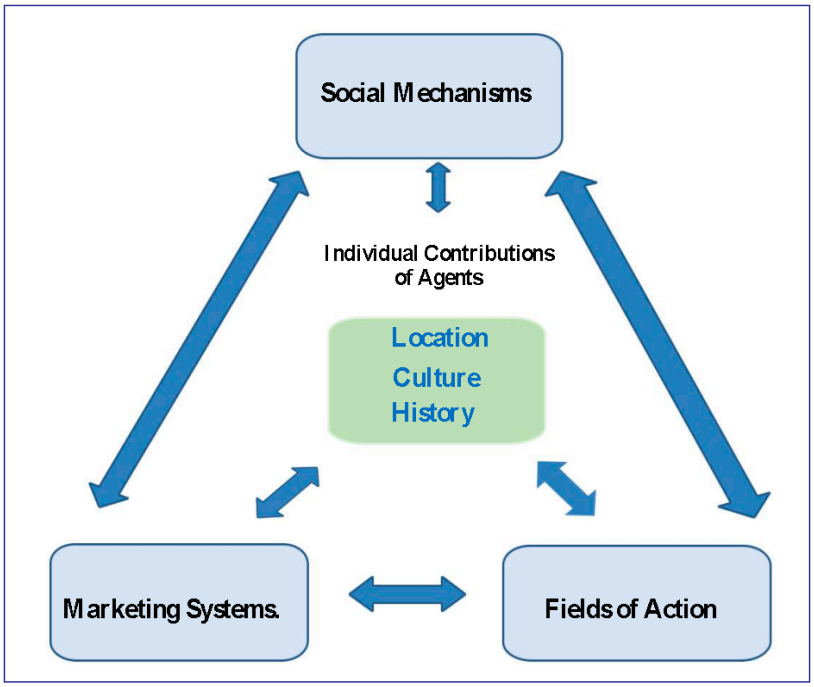
> A marketing system is a network of individuals, groups and/or entities, embedded in a social matrix, linked directly or indirectly through sequential or shared participation in voluntary exchange of value, which jointly creates, assembles, transforms, and makes available assortments of products, services, experiences, and ideas, provided in response to customer demand.

Marketing systems are adjusted by governmental and political instruments that define norms and limits of action (Hutt et al., 1986). One may observe that markets have been shaped based on the power relations expressed by their agents. This perspective brings together Foucault's (2021) approaches on understanding power relations with those of Layton (2014), who deals with social mechanisms for defining marketing systems, and those of Shultz et al. (2017), who explains the role of catalytic institutions (government, companies, and NGOs). In practice, the functioning of markets is not completely explained by economic theories (Cochoy, 2014).

Social mechanisms work as a guiding thread for agents' interaction to share needs, cooperate on functionalities, and compete with each other. These power relations are often exercised to obtain power in coopetitive hierarchical disputes when common understandings and communication between agents are necessary for voluntary exchanges (Layton, 2008, 2014, 2015).

Finally, as a result of all these dynamics, the system may evolve or regress, to the extent that agents are well or poorly served by the way the system was shaped. If the marketing system fails to meet agents' expectations, they will abandon it, and the system may collapse (Müller et al., 2023). The social mechanism can be understood as the relationship between market participants, which can be one of power, defining their action in the social field. Therefore, thinking that trust increases agency power in the audit market explains why there are few companies offering these services and the great competition for that power.

Figure 2
Training, growth and adaptation in marketing systems



Source: Adapted from Layton (2015, p. 563).

Force and power relations occur in these systems in view of the assumption that everything is interconnected (Müller et al., 2023). The explanation of MAS theory is based on the idea that each participant, individually, carries an ethics of instincts, formed by evolved skills, language, and communication; a complex set of beliefs that arises from life experience and based on culturally established, acceptable, or imposed understandings, norms, principles, and social practices; behavior patterns that reproduce survival instincts and a sense of usefulness, empathy for others, intellectuality, competence in planning, awareness of the impositions of the socioeconomic environment and history; and, finally, discernment of the progressive emergence of physical infrastructures that are tangible and intangible, figurative and generated by the functioning of social systems over time (Layton, 2015, p. 564).

For the author, it is in this diversity of participants, through the actions of agents involved in economic exchange, that marketing systems emerge at all levels, from micro to macro, in social communities, as shown in Figure 2.

The functioning of social mechanisms is observed by agents in the marketing system, and the transformations occurring within it often bring benefits to agents, such as advantages in economic exchanges, specializations, growth and scale, in addition to strategic innovation and risk management (Layton, 2014). In order to improve benefits and instigated by intrinsic interests, agents come into operation, and political, social, and economic powers are remodeled as the market and social structures emerge as a consequence of these agents' actions (Hunt, 1981; Layton, 2015; Müller & Sauerbronn, 2022).

The marketing system is stable when relationships between participants are established, when rules and internal or external governance are known, and when business networks have been agreed on. In this scenario, participants are grouped into holders, i.e., those who hold power and are beneficiaries of things; competitors, i.e., those who seek ways to compete with incumbents; and governance entities, which seek to maintain the status quo both internally and externally (Layton, 2015).

Collapse, however, is a real possibility when understandings, rules, and often institutions begin to tumble due to external pressures, thanks to internal forces linked to political, social or religious areas. Layton (2015) points to parallel markets in post-war Germany as an example of this.

While there are structural and functional similarities in marketing systems, each of them differs in its details. In a historical context, given the diversity inherent to marketing systems, it is essential to carefully identify the participants, groups, and entities that make up the systems, the varieties offered, the value propositions made, the understandings, the norms, the rules, institutions, infrastructure, and artifacts that comprise their system and environment (Layton, 2015), making them unique and identifiable.

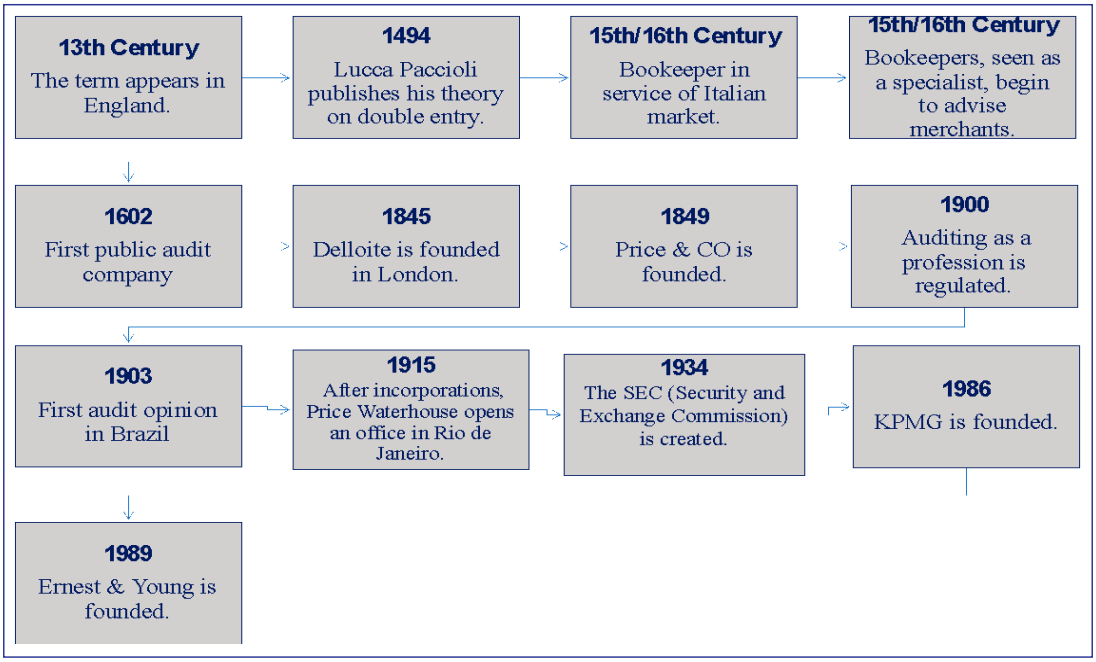
AUDIT MARKETING SYSTEM AND TRUST

The first auditor was probably a proficient bookkeeper in the service of the Italian market in the 15th or 16th century who, due to his reputation for wisdom, began to be consulted by others regarding the bookkeeping of their transactions. The term "audit" is believed to have appeared at the end of the 13th century, in England, during the reign of Edward I. The word "audit" comes from the Latin audire, which means "one who listens" (Crepaldi, 2013; Martins et al., 2012).

Audit services are associated with a marketing system and are built under social mechanisms whose function is to promote interaction between participants (Layton, 2009, 2014, 2015). Thus, trust is considered a social mechanism with an important characteristic: granting power to a market participant. Agents are therefore engaged in disputes to obtain it. Their actions are based on social relationships, especially through discourses that establish personal interactions or compel the establishment of relationships that generate trust.

Layton (2015) says that social mechanisms aim to explain the foundations of a marketing system and the interconnected fields of action in various categories (Peterson, 2013), which aim to address the co-evolution of social ideas, actions, and practices responsible for the functioning of a marketing system and for giving life to its participants' field of action. Actions in the field occur through variations that may be random or planned in social ideas, behaviors and practices subjected to individual or group selection processes, followed by replication and sharing (Layton, 2015). In particular, some categories are trust-generating mechanisms that lead to the development of group understandings – for example, legitimation, collective action, and the emergence of leaders (Layton, 2014; 2015).

Figure 3
Development of audit services



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The elementary social mechanisms that generate a marketing system necessarily encompass the following: a Darwinian ethics composed of belief, norms and institutionality; communication that is capable of producing trust or cooperation between participants; the clear beneficiaries of the power relations, i.e., those at an advantage in the value exchange, in the specialty, in the hierarchy, in the strategic decision, and in prudence over risks and network infrastructure and the environmentalism of emerging complex systems (Layton, 2014, 2015). These mechanisms are responsible for changes in market dynamics and, in many cases, can generate unpredictable complications and present market gaps (Layton, 2014; Redmond, 2018). Thus, trust is one of the social mechanisms that can shape and reshape the audit marketing system through its discourse, which is disseminated in the social field. Companies trust the auditor's opinion and make decisions based on that opinion, which is embodied in a report regulated by auditing standards.

Layton (2019) shows the path trodden since he presented MAS theory, observing some factors that require diligence: the rise of economic interest in the creation of complex exchange networks, the social mechanisms that favor growing network organizations, and continuously exercised power, which influences the agents' fields of action and their consequences for the improvement of markets. In this scenario, the quality of audit work seems adequate.

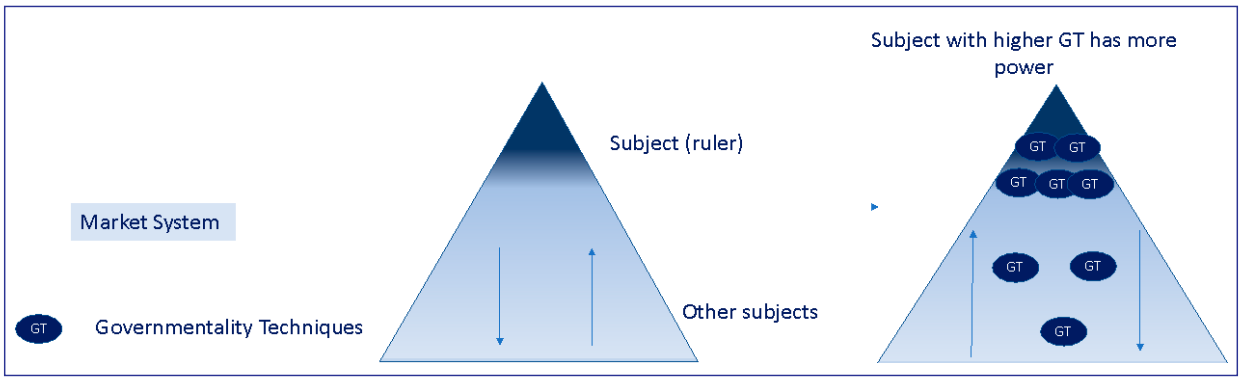
The audit market serves as a kind of parachute, in a far-sighted sense, granting clients a reasonable level of confidence to make decisions based on in-depth examination of financial statements, decreasing the possibilities of imminent financial losses in the economy. Furthermore, it is assumed that this trust becomes cyclical when competence is demonstrated to the corporate body in its demands by obtaining loans from the most reputable credit institutions, resulting in potential partnerships for joint investments (Barker & Jones, 2011; Bhaskar & Flower, 2019; Gow & Kells , 2018).

The auditor's opinion contained in the report does not hinge on any authorization from the audited company, so the auditor does not need the entity's permission to disagree with its financial statements and say so in the report. In many cases, the auditor may even suggest that the entity modifies its financial statements, and the company may agree to make these suggested changes. The auditor's opinion is not supposed to attest to the company's good or bad management practice, its performance, its managers' ethical commitment, or other circumstances, but rather to attest to its financial statements' reliability, so as to increase the degree trust by the users of this information (Almeida, 2012; Crepaldi, 2013; Marion & Ribeiro, 2017).

Regarding social mechanisms, Foucault (1999, 2019, 2022) shows intense concern about things, subjects, and how they can live in domination environment as a result of constant force and power relations in government spheres, in institutions, and therefore in the economy. Layton (2014, 2015) notes that people cohabit marketing systems and that these systems are operated by agents responsible for defining human behavior, giving people directions, shaping their orientations about who they are, what they do, and how they should lead their lives. Given this argument, we resort to Dixon (1984), who points out that the marketing system works as a complex social mechanism formed by structures and roles arising from demand, satisfaction, and the supply of goods and services.

This mechanism coordinates the production network and the internal and external dynamics supported by the market, emphasizing a different way of being and thinking that is part of a market ontology. In this respect, this mechanism is less a technique of rulers in relation to the ruled than a type of relationship between rulers and ruled (Foucault, 2022, p. 278). As Peterson (2013) noted, there are no major barriers between marketing and social systems; they are interconnected because social mechanisms are inherent elements of market participants.

Figure 4
Audit marketing system, legitimacy, and governmentality



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Currently, audit services have been the most efficient and effective means of disclosure to ensure confidence levels in business management control systems, as they are capable of providing greater assurance to investors and the government. According to the Brazilian Accounting Standard for Independent Auditing (NBC PA 01), auditor characteristics are founded on impartiality, professional skepticism, integrity, professional secrecy, and trust, making auditors regularly qualified to examine firms' accounting processes – and administrative ones, when necessary – and eventually issue an opinion through a comprehensive report. The main advantages offered by auditing companies are independence and confidence in the information provided, as there is no employment relationship between auditors and the audited companies (Almeida, 2012; Almeida & Lemes, 2013; Arnold, 2012; Crepaldi, 2013; Homero, 2015; Marion & Ribeiro, 2017; Niyama, 2005).

As an audit examines all operations of a firm that impact its financial and accounting areas, identifying the best way to conduct fiscal and tax planning and management, providing opportunities for managing the risks inherent to operating in the market, this activity can be said to have consolidated as a strategic instrument in decision-making processes, in order to enhance organizations' profits and activities (Almeida & Lemes, 2013; Padoveze, 2006).

By law, all institutions that earn profits above R$12 million per year are required to have their accounting and financial statements examined by an independent auditor or auditing company. These characteristics aim to reinforce the relevance of trusting the audit marketing system and the other markets, given the premise that they are all interconnected (Layton, 2014; Müller & Sauerbronn, 2022; Peterson, 2013).

Thus, legitimacy contributes crucially to institutions, as it demonstrates the applicability of, and compliance with scripts, rules, norms, procedures, values and internal security models. For investors and suppliers, legitimacy works as a security mechanism regarding the information published by companies, as well as advising the decision-making process, despite the real uncertainty about the organization's future financial performance (Zimmerman, 2002). It is an operational resource that organizations use to gain competitiveness (Schumann, 1995).

Depending on the system of beliefs and values in force in the environment where these organizations operate, certain practices can help increase or decrease the degree of legitimacy, affecting their ability to raise funds for their survival. Therefore, they tend to strive to be perceived as socially responsible organizations. In the case of auditing companies, the regulatory system has granted them a high level of legitimacy, but the market itself has absorbed them, making them social (Weber, 2022).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Trust is a cohesion factor for marketing systems, one of the main social mechanisms of formation and stability. The symbiotic relationship between trust and legitimacy also makes it a very strong GT when it comes to the power relations that exist in the hierarchical fields of marketing systems.

By means of a discursive act, i.e., the auditor's comprehensive opinion, trust is granted, more specifically, in the audit services market. Trust transactions are very difficult because trust holders possess a degree of power. Given the scarcity of GT, forming exchange networks is possibly an option for markets to interact and shape themselves. This means that, besides being a social mechanism and a GT, trust also becomes a market object in which auditing companies operate sovereignly.

The structure of the observed phenomenon allows deeper insights into ideas and beliefs that are studied in macromarketing, though with an emphasis on the role of trust as a market object, in the form of a discursive mechanism. Companies' investment decisions take into account audit reports, in view of the trust these are granted. Investors use the trust granted to independent auditors through regulation to determine their management strategies. These investors employ capital in companies belonging to various marketing systems. It is worth thinking about trust's ability to influence other marketing systems, since trust is the future expectation that is established in social relations currently available in the market.

By analyzing trust from three different perspectives – social mechanism, GT, and market object –, this study underscored dynamics in marketing systems, in which social relations can no longer be separated from market relations. Sociology, represented in this article by the analysis of GT, joins market studies in macromarketing to better understand the construction and stabilization of marketing systems, following all the interests and capabilities of the agents involved. If trust is necessary in social relationships, let it be built; if it is needed in markets, let it be built or bought.

Audit companies, represented by auditors, as argued by the Brazilian Accounting Standards (NBC), were legitimized to examine the whole of accounting statements because they possess knowledge and are educated in ethics founded on truth. Is that enough for them to be trusted? What dimension of power does auditing companies' trust displays when issuing an opinion on clients' financial and accounting information? Given the power game and governmentality practices, how do they work in the market? What is aimed through these questions is that they might inspire other researchers to continue studies in this area.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study was published in the article itself.

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