

Bridging the gap: Understanding Spanish society's perception of purpose-driven companies and their role in sustainable development

Isabel Ruiz-Mora, Daniel Guerrero-Navarro & Ana M. Lucía-Casademunt

University of Malaga, Spain

isabelruiz@uma.es / dguerrero@uma.es / alucia@uma.es

Abstract

This study explores Spanish society's perspective on purpose-driven businesses as a sustainable model. Also, it assesses Spain's commitment to sustainability and aligns corporate expectations with citizen responsibilities for societal and environmental betterment. A survey spanning 2021-2022 gauges citizen knowledge and attitude evolution towards these companies. Results reveal 63% of the population is unaware of such businesses, but 74% deem them necessary upon unders-

tanding. About 64.5% undertake small daily actions for planetary care, but only 12.8% cease purchasing from environmentally harmful companies. This paper provides empirical evidence of the link between corporate purpose and business sustainability in Spain, and citizen perception of this business model's impact and significance. It lays a theoretical and practical groundwork for future in-depth studies on purpose-driven companies.

Keywords: Purpose-driven companies, citizenship, sustainable development, B corporations, Spain.

Introduction

The United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged with the intention of offering opportunities to the population for a sustainable planet (United Nations, 2015). It is the mission of the UN Global Compact to channel actions in support of the SDGs in relation to the ten principles (Pacto Mundial, 2017). In this sense, an imminent reconfiguration is gaining momentum in response to the need for an economic system that implements more inclusive and sustainable models. Here two intrinsically related concepts come into play, i.e. corporate purpose and business sustainability, with very little research on the nature of such a relationship (Gartenberg, 2022). In this attempt to renew approaches, questions such as 'Is the purpose of the corporation to serve shareholders, stakeholders, or the public good in general?' (Gartenberg, 2022), proposals arise such as stakeholder capitalism (Freeman et al., 2007; Losada-Vázquez, 2022) and conscious capitalism (O'Toole and Vogel, 2011). However, it is evident that these labels fail to fully capture the magnitude of the transformations required to confront challenges such as the practically irreversible climate emergency (Pörtner et al., 2022). Further, research beyond this context is necessary.

Data de submissão: 2024-04-14. Data de aprovação: 2024-11-20.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



In the face of the existing and growing debate (Canvas Estrategia Sostenibles, 2023, 2022) on the need to reformulate capitalism towards a more inclusive and sustainable system aligned with the 2030 Agenda, it is crucial for the near future to have a committed society with companies that seek to (re) define their purpose. In this emerging scenario, citizenship assumes a more active and influential role (Theben et al., 2021), encouraging organisations to rethink their purpose and even actively demand a more responsible impact on their environments, beyond their own traditional economic objectives. In fact, this research work investigates this need and analyses how Spanish society perceives the role of companies that have objectives going beyond the merely financial.

In this line, the triple bottom line approach entails a shift from business models that solely pursue economic benefits to models that balance such benefits with a positive impact on society and the environment (Correa et al., 2020). Although this is an area that has not yet been widely explored, studies suggest that there is no negative influence (Horneaux Jr. et al., 2018).

Promoted by the B Lab foundation, which was born in the US (2006), the global movement B certifies companies (about 5.000 companies from 80 countries) in terms of social and environmental impact with its own measurement systems. So, certified B Corps are implicit benefit corporations (Montiel Vargas, 2022). In this context, in Spain, the Congress of Deputies (Law 18/2022, September 28) approved the creation of a new legal concept providing a framework for these new companies, known as 'Benefit and Common Interest Societies' (SBIC). In the year of the creation of the new legal concept, data multiplied. The number of companies with this profile increased by 82%, thus generating a total revenue of 8.2 billion euros in Spain. Globally, there are over 6,200 companies in this category, with a total revenue of 189 billion euros at the year-end (Estébanez García, 2023). According to the annual report published by B Lab Spain, the indicators of revenue growth (31%) and the use of renewable energy sources (70% of all companies) validate the commitment of these businesses to the strategic shift developed by these types of companies.

In this area, there is the conclusion that corporate purpose and business sustainability appear to be intrinsically related ideas, yet there is little research on the nature of this relationship (Gartenberg, 2022). Therefore, there is a strong need for additional research in this area. To bridge this research gap, this study aims to examine the perception that Spanish society has regarding purpose-driven companies, expanding into the role that citizenship plays in the construction of a more sustainable society. Drawing from the aforementioned discussion, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Are purpose-driven companies known by Spanish citizens as examples of ethical and sustainable businesses?

RQ2. What role does Spanish society assume in the transition towards sustainability?

RQ3. Is there alignment between the expectations imposed on corporations and the responsibilities assumed by citizens in fostering societal and environmental improvement?

The main contribution of this paper is intended to spur research among various scholars who will develop this field in the coming years. This research provides practical implications for corporate leaders about society's sensitivity to purpose-driven companies and the role of citizenship in building more inclusive and sustainable systems. Therefore, we proposed an investigation aiming at analysing descriptively the knowledge that the Spanish population has regarding the triple bottom line companies, also known as purpose-driven companies, which operate under an ethical and sustainable approach. Simultaneously, we aimed to assess the level of commitment of the population towards sustainability and understand how Spanish society is addressing this challenge. The empirical results show that 63% of the population is unaware of this new business model, but once they understand, 74% believe that these companies are necessary. As for the role of citizens, 64.5% recognise that they carry out small actions in their daily lives to take care of the planet; however, only 12.8% admit stopping buying products from companies that have a negative impact on the planet on a regular basis. On the other hand, 55.7% would opt for purpose-driven companies when buying and/or recommending them. In this sense, it should be

noted that, although according to the results, citizens are demanding that the organisations coexist and embody ethical, social, environmental, and economic values due to their impact on the people's lives. The reality is that there is a significant gap between expectations and perceptions. According to Rey (2019), only 39% of citizens believe that organisations work hard to improve people's quality of life, and generally, 76% would not mind if brands disappeared. To bridge this gap, a profound transformation in corporate leadership, culture, and behaviour is required. Many are urging CEOs and executives to rethink the role of their companies, their impact, and the legacy they will leave for future generations.

As its exploration has been limited, present efforts have made a novel contribution to the extant literature. Regarding practical contributions, the resulting empirical discoveries have shown how the citizens who know of these companies value its impact and work, so as a consequence this study would be useful for companies that want to move towards more sustainable business models, as well as for policymakers or business groups that want to work on public policies that strengthen the presence of these companies and their positioning in the market. Theoretically, the paper presents a new framework for future in-depth studies on purpose-driven enterprises.

In this paper, Section 2 provides a review of the literature. Then Section 3 describes the methodology used, and Section 4 presents the empirical findings. Section 5 provides a discussion of these findings, followed by the implications of the study. Conclusions and future research directions are given in Section 6.

Theoretical framework: ethics, purpose-driven companies and citizenship

Companies in recent years have increased their power and impact, not only in terms of economic resources but also in their social and political role, which has given them the opportunity to contribute to addressing global economic and socio-environmental problems (Mion & Loza, 2020).

When comparing various concepts like Social Responsibility (SR), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Creating Shared Value (CSV), and Corporate Social Investment (CSI), it's clear that while all aim to enhance corporate ethical practices, purpose-driven companies differentiate themselves by integrating these elements into their core mission, going beyond peripheral activities. SR focuses on a company's obligation to stakeholders but often treats social responsibility as an external consideration, whereas purpose-driven companies embed this responsibility into their operational framework. SDGs provide global objectives, and many purpose-driven companies align with these goals to contribute to broader societal change. ESG, often used by investors, assesses how companies perform in environmental, social, and governance areas. While ESG emphasizes evaluation, purpose-driven companies aim to inherently meet these standards by aligning their business purpose with sustainability and social impact. DEI initiatives focus on creating an inclusive and equitable workforce, which can be part of a purpose-driven company's strategy, but these companies typically pursue wider societal and environmental missions. CSV emphasizes mutual benefits for businesses and society, similar to purpose-driven companies, but the latter prioritize long-term societal impact beyond profitability. Finally, CSI refers to philanthropic efforts, often external to core business activities, while purpose-driven companies integrate social and environmental goals into their business model, ensuring these principles guide their daily operations rather than acting as separate initiatives.

The role of companies is changing. From mere economic agents focused on shareholder profit, they are now assuming a participatory role in society: as an actor that impacts the environment and is impacted by it. With this new role, new responsibilities also arise: managing their impacts on the environment,

respecting human rights, contributing to fair and sustainable economic development, increasing the sustainability behaviours of its employees (i.e. employee sustainability behaviours or ESB), and offering shared prosperity.

As a result, more and more companies are emerging that pay more attention to the notion of having a purpose and a desire to do good for society (Dupret et al., 2022). In this regard, one of the transformations in the business field is the shift from business models that pursue solely economic benefits to models that balance such benefits with a positive impact on society, employees, and the environment (Bhattacharya et al., 2023; Correa et al., 2020). However, this transformation also raises various questions or concerns related to how they are perceived by society regarding the purposes conveyed by companies.

Companies define their good business purposes, but in many cases, they are not prepared for correct digital corporate communication (Bhattacharya et al., 2023; López de Aguilera et al., 2023) or to build their brand so that their mission or vision is really understood by the public (Abdullah et al., 2022). In this line, a study carried out in Spain (Sanahuja-Peris et al., 2023), which analysed the purposes transmitted on the websites of the 100 most reputable companies, showed an uneven implementation as well as terminological confusion and a fixation on the term 'sustainability' as a keyword/concept to be transmitted. As the authors point out, the use of the term 'purpose' in companies' discourse is consolidated, but 'sometimes it is done more for convenience than for a true understanding of its usefulness, which leads us to conclude that it is used as a tendency' (Sanahuja-Peris et al., 2023, p. 713). Given this, depending on the scope of these companies in the lives of the citizens and according to their true purpose or when they combine economic and social purposes, citizens will act in the same way. This is because citizens also have an important role to play.

Citizens – in their role as employees, customers, and investors – could enjoy acting independently and influencing their environment, rather than being acted upon (Edmans, 2023). In this sense, there is a growing demand from citizens for companies to create ethical, social, environmental, and economic value and therefore to have a positive impact on people's quality of life and living conditions. The relationship between citizens' perceptions and organisational commitment has been proven (Peterson, 2004).

In this context, companies are tending to develop a combined purpose, not only private interest (Mion & Loza, 2020). Depending on the degree to which private interests incorporate causes related to the public interest, companies can be classified as traditional companies, those engaged in philanthropic social responsibility activities, and those known as hybrid enterprises (Battilana et al., 2018; Dupret et al., 2022) or social enterprises (Mair & Sharma, 2012). The latter are referred to as 'purpose-driven' or 'purposeful' in contrast to market-driven organisations (Bull & Ridley-Duff, 2019), and include Benefit Corporations or B Corps.

The redefinition of the traditional business model has also gained ground in public, political, and media agendas, emerging as an urgent need that will advance towards a more inclusive and sustainable system, where citizens assume a more active and influencing role (Mata-Benito et al., 2014). Some studies (Barroso et al., 2023; Corporate Excellence & Canvas, 2022; Paeleman et al., 2024) have demonstrated that companies following this model achieve a more positive impact on businesses, society, and the planet and are aligned with the triple bottom line (Elkington, 2020) and stakeholder capitalism (Ferreira et al., 2020; Losada-Vázquez, 2022).

In this study, the term "purpose-driven companies" refers specifically to businesses that are guided by a mission beyond profit maximisation. These companies seek to balance financial performance with positive contributions to society and the environment. Unlike traditional businesses that prioritise shareholder returns, purpose-driven companies integrate social, environmental, and governance goals into their core operations, aiming for a broader societal impact.

It is important to note that, in this context, “purpose-driven” is used exclusively in a business framework, detached from any religious or faith-based connotations that might be associated with the term in other contexts. The use of “purpose” here is aligned with the idea of businesses adopting a social or environmental mission, as opposed to being purely driven by religious or spiritual goals.

The ethical consumption debate and its connection to purpose-driven companies

The discourse on ethical consumption is not a recent phenomenon. Scholars and philosophers have long examined the role of consumers in promoting ethical business practices. One notable contribution is Adela Cortina’s *Por Una Ética del Consumo* (2002), in which she argues that consumption is not merely an economic action but a moral one. According to Cortina (2002), consumers possess the capacity to influence the market by making purchasing decisions that reflect their ethical values, such as environmental sustainability and social justice. She emphasises that ethical consumption can serve as a form of civic engagement, where individuals exercise their responsibility to society through their consumer choices.

Cortina’s analysis is particularly relevant in today’s context, where B Corporations aim to integrate ethical principles directly into their business models. These companies seek to balance profit with purpose, aligning with the ideals of ethical consumption by ensuring that their operations benefit not only shareholders but also society and the environment. However, Cortina’s work also raises critical questions about the effectiveness of ethical consumption. Can consumer choices alone drive systemic change within capitalism, or is ethical consumption merely a way to ease the conscience of consumers without addressing deeper structural problems? Similarly, the rise of B Corporations prompts reflection on whether these companies truly represent a meaningful shift in business ethics or whether they are responding to consumer demand for more responsible companies without enacting substantial changes.

Cortina’s insights suggest that while B Corporations may offer a model for ethical business, their potential to transform the broader economic system should be viewed with caution. Historically, similar initiatives, such as the SA 8000 certification in the 1990s, were met with initial enthusiasm but later criticised for failing to create lasting change. This highlights the importance of ensuring that B Corporations do not simply serve as another “greenwashing” mechanism, but instead offer genuine solutions to the social and environmental challenges of our time.

By integrating Cortina’s perspective, this study aims to critically examine the role of B Corporations within the larger ethical consumption debate, exploring whether they represent a temporary response to shifting consumer preferences or a durable model for driving real change in business practices.

While Cortina’s insights highlight the potential and challenges of ethical consumption, they also underscore the importance of more systemic efforts to foster real change. This is where the role of B Corporations becomes critical. By embedding ethical principles into their core structures, B Corporations present a model that seeks to institutionalise values that go beyond profit. However, to truly address global challenges, it is crucial to reflect on the role of both businesses and citizens in driving this transformation.

Therefore, it is crucial to act accordingly, to reflect on the involvement that citizens have in the development of purpose-driven companies, whether this knowledge and commitment serve as a lever for

1. *Greenwashing* is a term coined by Jay Westerveld (1986) when he observed deceptive practices in the hotel industry, such as the supposed environmental effort to save towels. This concept refers to strategies where companies portray their products or policies as more eco-friendly than they truly are to create an environmentally responsible image for consumers (Parguel et al., 2011, Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015)

change towards daily responsibility to act and clearly contribute to improving the environment (Theben et al., 2021), and simultaneously to understand through the analysis of purpose how these companies contribute to solving global challenges.

B Corps currently represent an emerging phenomenon within this context of new economic DNA (B Lab Spain and Gabeiras & Asociados, 2021). Thus, in 2006, the NGO B Lab emerged in the USA, leading a global movement to promote these companies, with partners in different countries like B Lab Spain, and seeking their regulation and development (Barroso et al., 2020). Fewer than ten countries in the world have such a legal framework, and there is an increasing agreement on the need for companies to create social and environmental value beyond economic benefits.

As enterprises become more innovative and impactful, they argue that they can no longer be governed by traditional corporate law. If the corporation remains the legal cloth for business activities, then its purpose must consider the nature and impacts of these activities. We therefore interpret the new legal forms of purpose-driven corporation as an appropriate framework to restore the enterprise and a collective purpose within corporate law (Segrestin et al., 2022).

The lobbying campaign *#EmpresasConPropósito*,² carried out in 2021 in Spain and led by B Lab Spain, achieved significant mobilisation in this regard, advocating for a legal framework to regulate these emerging business models. As a result of this action, it led to the creation of the business concept *Sociedades de Beneficio de Interés Colectivo (SBIC)*, included in Law 18/2022, dated September 28, on the creation and growth of companies, although its regulatory development is still pending. This law provides legal recognition to triple impact (social, environmental, and economic) companies to protect and recognise them as a key sector for evolving towards a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

It is relevant to address the interconnection between ethics, purpose-driven companies, and citizenship from the basis of social responsibility as a crucial foundation in all of them.

If we briefly recall the concept of business ethics, Nisberg (1988, p. 43) defines it as ‘a set of principles that guide business practices to reflect a concern for society as a whole while pursuing profits.’ In this sense, the concept of ‘concern’ acquires special importance, that is, with the idea of ‘purpose: from the theory to the practice’ (Jones-Khosla & Gomes, 2023, p.90). In this line, it is therefore pertinent to allude to the analysis of the concept of purpose developed in the study by Stubbs et al. (2022) on ecosystem purpose. This study contributes to delving into the emerging phenomenon of the ecosystem of purposes and shows how its different actors support the achievement of the sustainable development objectives by seeking to modify the purpose of companies and integrate the goals and objectives into their operational processes and commitments with stakeholders.

This means that in their global organisational purpose, companies should maintain permanent attention to taking care of the impact that they generate in their environments and society while seeking to obtain profit and material results. These new companies have a clear mission and values that guide their actions and decisions. They strive to contribute to social and environmental well-being while still being financially sustainable. Undoubtedly, the convergence of ethics and purpose-driven companies requires a single objective, along the lines of Cohen's (2021) ‘Impact Revolution’ movement, which aims to end the dichotomy between non-profit companies (that seek social good) and for-profit companies (that seek economic benefit). Through the promotion of the change of paradigm with the ‘revolution’, there is a convergence between the objective of profit and that of producing an impact, an improvement, either for specific groups or for society. In short, we are in a new boom paradigm with what are known as hybrid organisations that gather social (and/or environmental) and economic objectives in the organisational nucleus, that have become the focus of much recent research (for example, Bruneel et al. 2016; Dupret et al., 2022; Mair et al. 2015).

2. Translated as *#Purpose-DrivenCompanies*.

Likewise, citizenship acquires an important role in the context of business, in relation to their responsibilities as corporate citizens in society. Public trust in business is largely understudied (Pirson et al., 2019). These responsibilities involve actively engaging with communities, promoting social justice, supporting local initiatives, and being accountable for the impact of one's actions on various stakeholders, including employees (Gartenberg, 2022), customers, communities, and the environment. The connection between these concepts lies in the idea that ethics and purpose-driven business embrace the principles of social responsibility and act as responsible corporate citizens. By integrating ethical practices and a sense of purpose into their operations, these companies can create a positive impact and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole (Porter & Kramer, 2011), and also improve the levels of engagement and conversation with their audiences (Barroso & Tojar-Hurtado, 2023). For example, companies can use tools like social media channels to explore co-creation values among different stakeholders (Chatterjee & Nguyen, 2020).

Methodology

The working methodology followed a comparative approach. Through the implementation of an online survey, we sought to compare two time periods (2021 and 2022) to identify whether there was an evolution in the knowledge and attitude of citizens towards purpose-driven companies. This comparison was carried out within the framework of the lobbying campaign conducted by B Lab Spain to pass legislation that provided legal coverage for purpose-driven companies. The questionnaire used was structured as follows:

- Sociodemographic data.
- Purpose-driven companies: we enquired about the knowledge of purpose-driven companies and the perception among the population.
- Active citizenship: this section focused on the different citizen profiles in terms of their involvement with sustainability, habits, and the influence of purpose-driven companies on decision-making.

The data validation procedure for the questionnaire was inspired by a previously conducted study (Gómez-Rey et al., 2021). The research instrument underwent expert review to assess the approach and relevance of the questions before data collection. The questionnaire's development followed a formal validation process, including psychometric validity and reliability assessments. This involved a systematic four-step approach: (1) drafting initial items based on existing literature relevant to B-corps, (2) conducting a qualitative content validity assessment to ensure appropriateness and comprehensiveness, (3) quantitatively evaluating reliability and validity, and (4) using non-parametric tests to confirm internal consistency and content validity. Experts from diverse fields, including society, social B-corps, and statistics, contributed to the rigorous validation process.

The data collection phase was conducted in two waves, 2021 and 2022, through online survey methodology. The fieldwork obtained 1,001 valid responses in 2021 and 1,004 in 2022, from a representative sample across Spain; participants in both samples were independent. The study was conducted with women and men between the ages of 18 and 65 from the main regions of Spain. The selection aimed to have a representative sample of Spanish society, and all responses were anonymous. Subsequent data processing and analysis were conducted using Excel. The study is based on levels of confidence and significance of 95%.

The profile of the participants is shown in tables 1 and 2. In both years, there was gender parity. Regarding age, four age groups were created, although there was nearly balanced representation, with the Generation Z group (18–27 years) being the least represented.

Table 1. Gender distribution

Gender	2021 %	2022 %
Women	51,6	48,5
Men	48,4	50,7
Nonbinary	-	0,8
Total participants	1001	1004

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2. Age distribution

Age (groups)	2021 %	2022 %
Generation Z (18-27 years)	13,8	16
Generation Y (28-40 years)	25,8	24,7
Generation X (41-52 years)	31,7	31,2
Baby Boomer (53-65 years)	28,8	28,1
Total participants	1001	1004

Source: Own elaboration.

Findings

Purpose-driven companies and knowledge of them among the citizenship

Regarding the first axis, purpose-driven companies and their recognition by Spanish society, we address our first research question: Are purpose-driven companies known by Spanish citizens as examples of ethical and sustainable organisations? In 2021, 63.1% of the respondents claimed to be unfamiliar with this type of company, and among them, the majority (94%) did not associate it with any specific company. Only 29% had heard of them, and a mere 2% of the individuals had a direct relationship with any purpose-driven company.

In 2022, over half of the population remained unaware of the purpose-driven business model (61.3%), although there was a slight decrease compared to 2021 (63.1%). However, 38.7% of the popu-

lation did have some knowledge of the purpose-driven business model. Only 29% of the citizens had heard of them, even though they admitted (93.6%) that they could not name any examples of companies with these characteristics.

However, when explaining the concept of purpose-driven businesses to respondents, 70.7% (74% in 2021) of the population considered it very necessary for companies to make the move towards more sustainable and responsible business models with which purpose-driven businesses are defined. In 2022, furthermore, 57.7% (56.3% in 2021) agreed that these types of companies were necessary to drive the development of a more sustainable economic and social system.

The proportion of individuals who were familiar with specific examples of purpose-driven companies increased by two percentage points in 2022, representing 7.5% of the population (5.5% in 2021). Furthermore, 2.2% of the citizens acknowledged having consumed products or used services from companies they considered purpose-driven organisations.

In contrast, this type of company was better known among predominantly young generations in 2022 (see table 3). Among Generation Y/Millennials, 45.2% claimed to have heard of purpose-driven companies. They were followed by Generation Z, with a knowledge level of 41.6%. On the other hand, the baby boomer generation had less knowledge about them, with a total of 68% being unaware. Generation Y/Millennials were the ones who were most familiar with the purpose-driven business model, but only 4.4% stated that they had purchased products or services from companies they believed had a purpose. In 2021, it was primarily Generation Z who were the least unfamiliar with this type of companies, with 13% of them stating that they did know companies that had made the transition to this new model.

Table 3. Knowledge of purpose-driven companies (data by generations)

	2021 %				2022 %			
	Gen Z (18-27 years)	Gen Y (28-40 years)	Gen X (41-25 years)	Baby Boomer (53-65 years)	Gen Z (18-27 years)	Gen Y (28-40 years)	Gen X (41-25 years)	Baby Boomer (53-65 years)
Knowledge of purpose-driven companies (by generations)								
I was unaware of this trend towards "Purpose Driven Business" business models.	52,9	63,2	65,6	65,3	58,4	54,8	62	68,1
I've heard about the shift to these business models, but I can't name any company	31,9	27,9	27,8	30,9	26,7	33,9	27,8	27,3
I have heard about this shift towards these business models, and I know of companies that have taken the plunge	13	6,6	3,8	2,8	13	6,9	8	4,3
I have heard of such companies, and I have also had a direct relationship with some of these companies (used/bought).	2,2	2,3	2,8	1	1,9	4,4	2,2	0,4

Source: Own elaboration.

If we consider the gender variable in 2022, 64.8% of women claimed to be unfamiliar with purpose-driven companies, while 32.1% of men had heard of them, although they may not have been able to recall or mention any examples. In 2021, similar percentages were identified, with 64.6% of women being unaware of these types of companies, while 30.4% of men had heard of them.

Although there was no clear understanding of the concept of purpose-driven companies, 74% in 2021 and slightly less in 2022 (70.7%) of the population considered it 'totally' or 'quite necessary' for companies to prioritise the triple impact of social, environmental, and economic aspects.

As seen in table 4, when asked about the importance of companies evolving or transitioning towards purpose-driven models, and the assessment made by the citizens, there was a sense of distrust both in 2021 (44.6%) and in 2022 (40.7%), as they believed that such companies were 'more facade than reality'. Additionally, 49% (in both 2022 and 2021) found it challenging to consider or believe that companies 'go beyond generating economic benefits and also work for social and environmental benefits'. Citizens remained sceptical about the potential social impact of this type of enterprises and doubts about their motivation.

Table 4. Valuing purpose-driven companies

Valuing purpose-driven companies (part 1)	I believe that such companies are more facade than reality		I find it difficult to believe that companies go beyond generating economic benefits and also work for social and environmental benefits	
	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %
TOP 2	40,7	44,6	49	49
Completely agree	12,5	14,4	18,1	15,9
Mostly agree	28,2	30,2	30,9	33,1
Neither agree nor disagree	44,5	39,4	32,6	32,7
Mostly disagree	12	13,2	14,3	14,2
Completely disagree	2,9	2,9	4,1	4,2
BOTTOM 2	14,9	16,1	18,4	18,4

Source: Own elaboration.

In this regard (as observed in table 5), 61.1% of Spanish citizens considered that companies could play a decisive role in sustainable development in 2022, compared to 56.3% in 2021, thus indicating a positive evolution, but minimal. Additionally, 57.1% positively valued the efforts of these companies to have a positive impact on society and the environment.

Likewise, we considered it important to analyse the level of proactivity of those citizens who valued the existence of companies with a purpose and who, however, did not fully trust the real social impact that they could develop. As seen in table 6, the participating citizens in the study expressed their willingness to support purpose-driven companies. In 2022, 53.1% of the population considered buying and recommending products or services from a company that operated under sustainability and responsibility principles (compared to 49.4% in 2021). Furthermore, 50.7% in 2022 (47.1% in 2021) would consider working for a purpose-driven company or recommending it as a career opportunity. According to the table below (table 5), our study shows that one in four (28.4%) were more active with their habits and attitudes in relation to sustainable development, developing activities with a positive impact (Barroso et al., 2023), this is, citizens considered buying and recommending the products/services of purpose-driven companies.

Table 5. Valuing purpose-driven companies (citizen perception about the need and importance)

Valuing purpose-driven companies (part 2)	These types of companies are necessary to foster the development of a more sustainable economic and social system		I believe that this type of company can play a decisive role in sustainable development in the world		I positively appreciate the effort of these types of companies to have a positive impact on the social and environmental sphere.	
	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %
TOP 2	57,7	54,3	61,1	56,3	57,1	50,7
Completely agree	20,6	20,6	26,2	22,3	18,1	15,4
Mostly agree	37,1	33,7	34,9	34	39	35,3
Neither agree nor disagree	28,6	30,7	23,7	26,5	29,1	32,6
Mostly disagree	9,9	10,7	10,2	13	10,6	13
Completely disagree	3,9	4,4	5,1	4,3	3,2	3,8
BOTTOM 2	13,8	15,1	15,3	17,3	13,8	16,8

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 6. Valuing purpose-driven companies (impact of public knowledge and citizen involvement)

Valuing purpose-driven companies (part 3)	Knowing that a company works under these principles can make me consider buying and recommending their products/services.		Knowing that a company works under these principles makes them a good employer and may make me consider working for them or recommend them.	
	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %
TOP 2	53,1	49,4	50,7	47,1
Completely agree	16,7	15,6	16,3	15,1
Mostly agree	36,4	33,8	34,4	32
Neither agree nor disagree	34,6	34	35,1	37,4
Mostly disagree	8,6	12,5	10,1	11,2
Completely disagree	3,8	4,2	4,2	4,4
BOTTOM 2	12,4	16,7	14,3	15,6

Source: Own elaboration.

Analysing this reality from a gender perspective also becomes relevant for the study. In this regard, men expressed more scepticism than women about the role of purpose-driven companies in society, in both periods. On the other hand, women clearly identified how these companies could have a positive impact on society. In a general assessment, both men and women acknowledged the decisive role of these companies in sustainable development, and a positive evolution can be observed between 2021 and 2022. Highlighting the female presence (59.3% were women), more than 84% affirmed that a company with a purpose would influence them when choosing its products or services, or would recommend it.

Similarly, it is pertinent to analyse whether this scepticism was widespread among the general population or dependent on age or generation. In this regard, Generation X continued to be the most

sceptical in 2022 regarding the actual actions taken by purpose-driven companies, although their perception clearly improved within just one year (42.8% in 2022 compared to 48.3% in 2021). Their results aligned with those of baby boomers (42.6% in 2022), and both generations still maintained a level of disbelief regarding the purpose of these companies in working for social and environmental benefits (48.6% and 55.3% respectively in 2022, compared to 49.2% and 51.4% in the previous year). However, both generations were increasingly firm in considering the role of these types of companies as crucial for sustainable development (69.9% for baby boomers and 61.3% for Generation X in 2022). Generation Y did not express their conviction prominently, except for the positive assessment of companies' efforts for positive impact on the environment (56% in 2022, increasing from 46.5% in 2021 in that particular aspect). Generation Z was the least sceptical about the purpose of businesses (33.5% in 2022, down from 42.8% the previous year).

The role of citizenship

Likewise, we provide an answer to research question 2 of our study: What role does Spanish society assume in the transition towards sustainability? By grouping the responses with those from the previous section, we will answer our third research question: Is there alignment between the expectations imposed on corporations and the responsibilities assumed by citizens in fostering societal and environmental improvement?

Once the responses from this section were collected, the different profiles of citizenship were analysed along three dimensions: active, conventional, and inactive, to identify the level at which the population was more sensitised (socially, economically, and environmentally) and how they acted accordingly. This analysis enabled us to identify three profiles of Spanish citizenship:

- a) The most active group of the population, who supported and initiated changes through their habits and decisions, as well as their interactions with companies; they claimed to engage in nine or more sustainability-related actions regularly.
- b) The more conventional or mainstream group, who were aware of the issues faced by society and/or the environment but did not actively participate in their solution; they reported engaging in 2 to 8 sustainability-related actions regularly.
- c) The inactive citizenship group, who were not conscious of these issues and/or did not have access to or desire to become active in another sense; they engaged in one or no sustainability-related actions.

Looking at the data in table 7 on the representation of citizen profiles in both 2021 and 2022, we can see that the mainstream group was the predominant one (with a slight increase in 2022), followed by the active group, which increased by 2% in 2022, and the inactive group, which decreased by 4% in 2022.

In both 2021 and 2022, the active citizenship group was mostly female, the group of inactive women increased in 2022, and the mainstream maintained similar values in 2021 and 2022. In contrast, the male group of active citizens in 2022 increased by 3%, the mainstream male group also increased, and the inactive group decreased.

By age, in 2021 Generation Z was mostly mainstream and had the smallest active population group; Generation Y emerged as the generation with the most inactive group, but with similar values of mainstream and active citizens; while Generation X and baby boomers emerged as the most active groups. In 2022, it was in Generation Z where the inactive group predominated; in Generation Y and Generation X, the three profiles had a balanced distribution, with a difference of less than 1% between categories; on the other hand, it was among the baby boomer generation where the lowest percentage of inactive citizens was identified and where the active ones were the majority.

Table 7. Citizenship profile by gender and age group

Profiles	2022			2021		
	Inactive	Mainstream	Active	Inactive	Mainstream	Active
	%	%	%	%	%	%
	15	57	28	19	56	26
Gender distribution						
Man	57,2	51	40,7	59,5	49,5	37,6
Women	42,8	49	59,3	40,5	50,5	62,4
Age distribution						
Gen Z (18-27 years)	22,4	15	14,7	13,2	16,5	8,2
Gen Y (28-40 years)	25	24,9	24,2	34,2	24,3	22,7
Gen X (41-52 years)	32,2	31,9	29,1	28,4	31,7	34,1
Baby Boom (53-65 years)	20,4	28,2	31,9	24,2	27,5	34,9
Total participants	1004			1001		

Source: Own elaboration.

The population expressed willingness to take action to have a positive impact on society and the planet. However, when it came to daily acts, divergences occurred as the majority claimed to engage in these habits only occasionally. In the social dimension, we observed that ‘occasionally’ was the main response when citizens were asked about the frequency of engaging in actions that directly impacted people (small decisions in day-to-day life, collaborating with NGOs, conscious information about consumed goods and services, advocating for equity, raising awareness among others, etc.). A positive trend was observed from 2021 to 2022 in habits related to small daily actions that contributed to personal care and resource conservation. In 2022, 64% admitted to regularly practising these actions, compared to 42.7% in 2021. Similarly, it is noteworthy that 45.3% of the participants in the second wave consistently advocated for equity and gender equality, actively seeking employment in companies where gender equality was a reality. Occasionally, they sought information on how to be more sustainable or engage in conversations with others about this topic.

Considering habits related to the economic dimension of sustainability (see table 8), both in 2021 and 2022, over 50% stated that they occasionally prioritised local businesses over purchasing from on-line platforms. Similarly, they occasionally shared positive actions of companies in triple impact areas, either among acquaintances or on social media. It is also noteworthy that there was a significant proportion of individuals who never recommended or criticised these actions, across both periods and for both issues. They represented the highest results in these series of questions. In 2022, regarding purchasing habits, they also indicated that they occasionally used technology to buy goods or services based on sustainability criteria, purchased second-hand goods, or paid more for sustainable products.

Table 8. Citizens' habits for sustainability (economic dimension)

Habits for sustainability (economic dimension)									
Frequency	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %
	I prioritise shopping in shops or firms in my district or locality rather than on the big online platforms	I prioritise shopping in shops or firms in my district or locality rather than on the big online platforms	I recommend to acquaintances and on Social Networks positive actions of companies on social or environmental issues.	I recommend to acquaintances and on Social Networks positive actions of companies on social or environmental issues.	Critical on social media and stop buying products/ services from companies that have a negative impact on the environment	Critical on social media and stop buying products/ services from companies that have a negative impact on the environment	I use technology to decide whether to buy or not, based on the information available on sustainable criteria of products / services	I buy and/or sell second-hand goods (furniture, electrical appliances, books, clothes, etc.)	I am willing to pay more for sustainable and responsible consumption
Usually	38,8	42,7	14,5	14,4	12,8	13	25,9	25,2	16,8
Occasionally	51,8	50,6	43,6	37,4	43,4	38,5	52,2	53,9	59,4
Never	9,4	6,7	41,8	48,3	43,7	48,6	21,9	20,9	23,8

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 9. Citizens' habits for sustainability (environmental dimension)

Habits for sustainability (environmental dimension)									
Frequency	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %	2021 %	2022 %
	I choose sustainable transport (public, electric, bicycle, etc.) whenever possible, for my journeys (work or studies) and I look for alternatives for this	I choose sustainable transport (public, electric, bicycle, etc.) whenever possible, for my journeys (work or studies) and I look for alternatives for this	I buy products that have less plastic packaging and that are reusable	I buy products that have less plastic packaging and that are reusable	I read everything on labels of products/ services to be informed about how what I consume is consume	I read everything on labels of products/ services to be informed about how what I consume is consume	I prefer to reuse or repair things I already have before buying new ones (food, clothes, technology etc.).	I take measures to make responsible use of resources (saving energy, water, plastic, etc.) and waste recycling (at home and outside).	I choose to buy green energy, use energy - saving light bulbs and turn off the tap while brushing my teeth or cleaning the dishes.
Usually	35,2	35	40	38	36,3	36,3	55,6	64,1	61,9
Occasionally	44,5	43	49,5	50,5	48	50	53,7	30,4	31,4
Never	20,3	22,1	10,5	11,5	15,7	13,7	7	5,5	6,8

Source: Own elaboration.

Examining the environmental dimension (see table 9), habits that have a positive impact on environmental surroundings are predominantly observed, either occasionally or regularly. These habits are mainly related to the use of public transport, reduction of plastic in packaging, product information, product reuse, and reduction in consumption of resources such as water, energy, plastics, and more.

In the second wave of 2022, a question focusing on the habits and/or behaviours that citizens would like to improve (limited to three options) was included. Regarding the three habits to improve, there was consensus among the three citizens' profiles; they would like to do it periodically: local shopping (over online platforms), making small changes that impacted their day-to-day routine (short showers), and resorting to the second-hand market.

Regarding the level of personal satisfaction among participants, we observed similar results in both waves. Approximately, 31% of the responses stated being quite or very satisfied with their personal involvement in actions seeking a positive impact. In 2022, 51.8% and in 2021, 53.8% stated feeling somewhat satisfied. Conversely, 16.6% in 2022 and 15.2% in 2021 admitted to not feeling satisfied with their personal commitment. The more active population group reported a significantly higher degree of satisfaction with their actions. These profiles show more alignment between saying-feeling-doing, between the level of positive impact habits and the feeling of well-being that their actions bring them. On the contrary, we observe that the most inactive groups said that they were not satisfied with their level of involvement in addressing the challenges facing the planet.

In the second wave of the study, it was also deemed appropriate to inquire about the sources of information used by citizens to learn about a company's policies and its impact on the environment and society. All three population profiles predominantly relied on traditional media such as newspapers and radio. Notably, among the active profiles, the use of forum web pages and review platforms ranked second, indicating a proactive search for insights and feedback from others. Both the inactive and mainstream profiles expressed a lack of engagement in seeking such information.

Finally, in 2022, we included one last question that focused on the influence that purpose-driven companies had when choosing a product/service and making a recommendation. For the active group, it was a determining factor in the purchasing decision and recommendation, as 84.6% expressed being moderately or greatly influenced. Among the mainstream profiles, 49.5% stated the same. In contrast, the inactive group indicated that it would have some influence (54.6%) primarily, although 24.4% acknowledged feeling quite or greatly inclined towards purchasing and/or recommending. Additionally, 21.1% affirmed feeling little or no influence from this type of company when acquiring goods or services.

Discussion and implications

The search to align organisational purpose with achievement of the SDGs may enable a transformation in how businesses are governed, why, and for whom (Stubbs et al., 2022), requiring more 'purposeful' companies to be in line with sustainable development. In other words, their main purpose is not limited to achieving one's own benefit (company), but rather it includes a set of integrated mini purposes (aligned with society demands, including the planet as a stakeholder) that are articulated on the basis of a corporate purpose where prioritising takes second place and balancing becomes the fundamental axis of organisational mission.

In this sense, the most interesting finding of this study stemmed from exploration of the emergence of organisations with a purpose that prioritised 'in addition' for achieving a social and environmental purpose or the 'common good'. With such findings, we want to be the first to move the academic and research community to generate debate on the importance of the existence of purpose-driven companies and how they are perceived by citizens increasingly committed to sustainable development. At

the macro level, boosting purpose-driven businesses could be relevant to contribute to the achievement of the following SDGs established by the United Nations (2015): 1 (*End poverty*, targets 1.2 and 1.4); 8 (*Promote ... decent work and economic growth*, targets 8.1, 8.3, and 8.5); 10 (*Reduce inequalities*, targets 10.1, 10.2, and 10.7); 12 (*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*, with all its targets); and 16 (*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountability systems* with all its targets). At the micro level, our work stands out for the importance of knowing whether citizens are aware of the existence of these SDGs and highlighting how they impact their lives as users and customers of such companies.

Specifically, the importance of these types of companies is becoming increasingly evident. However, on a global scale, there are 6,271 purpose-driven companies operating in 88 countries, with a total of 525,000 employees, generating a total revenue of 189.178 billion euros and an average annual revenue growth of 28%. For example, in 2022, in Spain alone, 200 companies were certified as purpose-driven companies, with a total revenue of 8,260 million euros and a workforce of 14,383 employees, generating a local and global ecosystem for change, according to data provided by B Lab Spain.

This reality is evident to Spanish citizens, so we conclude that seven out of ten people consider it totally or fairly necessary for companies to take the step towards more sustainable and responsible businesses (Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles, 2023). It is time for companies to act beyond corporate voluntarism: society is demanding new ways of doing business. Reactive social responsibility actions, which do not prove to be effective in proposing solutions to the challenges of today's world, are not enough.

Undoubtedly, citizens need to contrast these theories of social responsibility and sustainable development with the creation of positive social and environmental value, and optimise the value for a broader network of interested parties, including society and the environment as a pool of stakeholders, thus optimising value for the system (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). However, creating shared value among stakeholders is difficult to achieve in practice (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and in the end, many companies end up with social responsibility hypocrisy (Steimikiene et al., 2023) rather than CSR.

When we talk about citizens believing in this type of company, corporate reputation comes to mind. It is this reputation that companies are gaining over time through being consistent with their promises for and purposes with society. In this regard, we could say that the so-called 'corporate reputation' (Fombrun, 1996) of purpose-driven companies has not yet been achieved, because the 49% of people in Spain do not trust that companies can also work to generate social and environmental benefits (Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles, 2023, p.49).

This study has several noteworthy implications for managers and policymakers in various fields. Firstly, it contributes to a better understanding that it will be the responsibility of purpose-driven companies to live up to this widespread social demand for ethical and economic solvency, transparency, and social responsibility, which organisations cannot ignore. In this regard, it should be remembered that, as defined by Von Berlepsch et al. (2022), corporate reputation is a unique, intangible status achieved through the perception of stakeholders, including the public, of the commitments acquired by companies and the experiences offered in the past. In this scenario, social enterprises in general today provide an important projection of the future (Cermelli et al., 2019). These types of companies have the appropriate characteristics to meet the needs of the advanced economies of the global economy and to contribute to the creation of sustainable and economic shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2011). This issue can effectively contribute to addressing the economic, social, and environmental challenges of the welfare state crisis, which is taking on increasingly significant dimensions and whose solution seems to be less and less postponing (Nogales & Zandonai, 2014).

Secondly, citizens must also make a commitment in this regard. After analysing the results, the social actions that require the greatest investment of personal resources are those that obtain the least involvement, compared to other simpler actions such as turning off lights or taking shorter showers (see tables 8 and 9). We observe that involvement in both recommending and publicly questioning the

actions of companies with responsible behaviour (good or bad) is at an intermediate level of involvement (see table 8) and is a far cry from the demands made on purposeful companies by respondents in tables 5–7. This can be seen as an area of opportunity, since consumers will abandon brands that do not support their values and will be willing to pay more for those that do align with their concerns (Accenture, 2021). Therefore, it is not so much that we find ourselves with a society that is not very committed, perhaps, as Álvarez-Vergnani (2019, p. 87) points out: ‘what we should question is whether the new patterns of participation (...) are the most efficient (...) to face the new scenarios resulting from climate change’.

We observe that responsible consumption as a form of activism (López-Triana, 2020) can become a potential driver of change in everyday habits that underlie people’s different roles as consumers, employees, clients, suppliers, etc, and this can become a compelling reason for companies to seek to align their purposes with the concerns of their stakeholders.

Another noteworthy finding that this content analysis revealed is that the environmental dimension (table 9) is the one that exhibits the most homogeneous behaviour among participants. This finding could be related to the fact that environmental issues are one of the major concerns for Spanish society (Greenpeace, 2017), and the evidence of the consequences of climate change directly and without mediation impact the population (Sanz & Galan, 2022), which is why citizens are increasingly concerned about these consequences and are beginning to value corporate behaviours that contribute to mitigating these effects.

Practical and theoretical implications

This work primarily demonstrates the perspective of Spanish society on purpose-driven business as an emerging sustainable model, fostering a balance between profit, environmental concerns, and societal welfare. Secondly, the Spanish population has been studied to find out what they are willing to contribute to sustainability as part of the current economic system. It thus innovatively offers an alignment between the expectations placed on business and the responsibilities taken by citizens in promoting social and environmental improvement.

Through an analysis of how informed citizens perceive the impact and significance of these novel business models, the findings can be extrapolated and applied to other stakeholders, including policymakers and conventional companies seeking to transition towards sustainable practices, thereby enhancing their market presence and positioning.

Another practical implication of this study is related to the level of commitment of the population towards sustainability and how Spanish society confronts this challenge. The results of the study highlight the alignment between their expectations of businesses and their individual commitment to enhancing society and the environment, both as consumers and employees, as well as engaging citizens (active/mainstream/inactive). The study shows which habits have been easily acquired by the population and which have a positive impact on the planet, and therefore represent the strategic lines that can be promoted to move towards sustainability, both for educational and market purposes.

Theoretically, we provide empirical evidence regarding the nexus between corporate purpose and business sustainability in the Spanish context. Therefore, this paper presents an initial theoretical framework for future in-depth studies on purpose-driven companies in different countries and sectors, where the study could be replicated or adapted.

Conclusions

Regarding RQ1, 'Are purpose-driven companies known by Spanish citizens as examples of ethical and sustainable businesses?', the data demonstrate that they are, although there is a slight evolution. In 2022, a positive evolution is identified, as 38.7% of the population was already familiar with the concept of purpose-driven companies (compared to 37% in 2021), wider among younger age groups (45.2% for Millennials and 41.6% for Generation Z). The main sectors associated with purpose-driven companies are the energy sector, followed by two consumer-related sectors: fashion and cosmetics, and food and beverages.

For RQ2, 'What role does Spanish society assume in the transition towards sustainability?', we observe that in 2022, 28% of the total population corresponded to a more active profile in sustainability and engaged in nine or more activities with positive impact regularly. Within this active group, the majority were female (59.3%) and committed (over 84% stated that a purpose-driven company would influence their product and service choices). Although the mainstream profile predominates (57%), there are opportunities for a shift towards more sustainability-oriented attitudes among the population.

Therefore, our last question (RQ3), 'Is there alignment between the expectations imposed on corporations and the responsibilities assumed by citizens in fostering societal and environmental improvement?', demonstrates that there is indeed alignment between the demands placed on companies and personal actions taken by the respondents. In 2022, 70.7% of the population considered it either highly or moderately necessary for companies to transition towards more sustainable and responsible business models, which define purpose-driven companies. Additionally, 53% of the Spanish population would be willing to buy and recommend products or services from a company that operates under triple impact and sustainability principles. Furthermore, up to 50.7% would consider working for or recommending such companies as places of employment. Even inactive citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with their own actions in defence of the planet, a gesture of great honesty and an opportunity to implement new actions to help raise awareness among this population group.

We find ourselves in a context where citizens' concerns are calling for a transformation of the economic system towards a more sustainable model connected to the common good. The evidence obtained and the analysis carried out provide keys to face the challenges and opportunities of the transformation we are undergoing on a social and environmental level. We are living in times of dizzying changes, and it is important to broaden our vision in order to understand and position ourselves with a sense of interdependence. The alliance between purpose-driven companies and active citizens may represent the way to achieve an economic system that is fairer to people and the planet, to continue generating opportunities for business without risking our most precious asset: the planet on which we live and its natural resources.

However, it is essential to critically assess whether B Corporations are merely a response to the growing demand for ethical business practices or if they represent a lasting shift in corporate behavior. Historical precedents, such as the SA 8000 certification introduced in the 1990s, provide cautionary examples. Although SA 8000 was initially embraced as a standard for social responsibility, it ultimately faced criticism for being adopted more as a marketing tool than a genuine effort to implement systemic changes. A similar concern applies to B Corporations: while the certification process is rigorous, there is a risk that some companies may use it to bolster their image without enacting meaningful reforms.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that non-certified ethical companies may also deliver substantial social and environmental value, often without the formal recognition that comes with certifications like B Corp. The key challenge for B Corporations is to avoid becoming a passing trend

and instead demonstrate sustained impact. To achieve this, these companies must commit to ongoing transparency, accountability, and structural change that addresses the core issues of global capitalism, beyond consumer-driven demand for greener products.

In conclusion, the true value of B Corporations will ultimately depend on their ability to maintain a long-term commitment to ethical principles and avoid falling into the same pitfalls as previous certification models.

While the sustainability and long-term impact of B Corporations remain subject to scrutiny, one thing is clear: their success, as well as the success of any ethical business model, depends not only on corporate actions but also on the active engagement of citizens. As consumers, employees, and investors, citizens play a pivotal role in shaping the future of purpose-driven companies. Their involvement can serve as a critical force in ensuring that these companies remain accountable and committed to genuine ethical practices, rather than falling into the traps of past certification models.

Based on our empirical findings, we suggest that future research should pay attention to the following questions: Purpose-driven companies are backed by active citizens, but how are citizens involved in the development of this business model? And who are more active and what are their habits?

Without a doubt, as Fontan et al. (2019) underline, these active citizens permanently demand that organisations generate an ethical, social, environmental, and economic value and have a positive impact on the quality and condition of people's lives. It is an ethical citizenship behaviour of high ethical commitment and involvement with society in general, and the economy, environment, and specific groups that are more vulnerable. Even though the reality is different, there is a clear and great difference between the gap between expectations and perceptions of this reality: only 39% of citizens believed that organisations worked hard to improve people's quality of life and, in general, they would not mind if 76% of brands disappeared. Working to reduce this difference requires a major transformation in corporate leadership, culture, and behaviour (Fontan et al., 2019).

Organisational purpose, as part of the social enterprise identity, needs to be built as a result of a new kind of leadership performance, focused on learning processes and driven by individual and organisational communication capabilities. Such a challenge points out, on the one hand, that a more socially concerned enterprise is needed and, on the other, that top management capabilities must be improved in order to play the new role they are compelled to play in order to promote social economy and stakeholder capitalism (Losada-Vázquez, 2022). Therefore, purpose-driven companies can serve to reconsider the role of traditional ones, their impact, and the mark they will leave for the future society.

Limitations

This work reflects only on Spanish society's knowledge of purpose-driven companies, so it will be necessary to carry out similar studies in other countries to be able to draw general conclusions. Likewise, it presents only descriptive data of a phenomenon that is just beginning to be studied, so we propose as a second phase to continue exploring this issue, having experts analyse the results, with purpose-driven companies and with other key stakeholders from academia and the media; also, it would be interesting to know how citizens could have an impact on these companies.

References

- Abdullah, Z., Anumudu, C. E., & Raza, S. H. (2022). Examining the digital organisational identity through content analysis of missions and vision statements of Malaysian and Singaporean SME company websites. *The Bottom Line*, 35(2), 137-158. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bl-12-2021-0108>
- Adams, W. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In K. E. Newcomer, H. P. Hatry, & J. S. Wholey (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (pp. 412-444). Jossey-Bass.
- Álvarez-Vergnani, C. (2019). Participación ciudadana: retos para una ciudadanía activa ante el cambio climático, *UNED Research Journal*, 11(1), 578-588. <https://doi.org/10.22458/urj.v11i1.2325>
- Accenture (2021, June 23). Life reimaged. Mapping the motivations that matter for today's consumers. *Accenture*. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/2021/accenture-report-finds-consumer-values-and-buying-motivations-have-fundamentally-changed-shifting-away-from-price-and-quality>
- B Lab Spain & Gabeiras & Asociados (2021). *Libro blanco de las empresas con propósito* (1st ed.). La Cultivada. <https://bit.ly/404AwnV>
- Barroso, M. B., & Tojar-Hurtado, J. C. (2023). La gestión de relaciones públicas en las empresas con propósito. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, 13(25), 21-40. <https://doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v13i25.801>
- Barroso M. B., Castillo-Esparcia A., & Ruiz-Mora I. (2023). La dimensión medioambiental y los ODS en la comunicación estratégica de las empresas de triple impacto. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 29(1), 27-42. <https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.80708>
- Barroso, M. B., Ruiz-Mora, I. & Álvarez-Nobell, A. (2020). *Propósito, sostenibilidad y conversaciones en empresas de triple impacto. Los ODS en la comunicación digital en las B Corps #BestForTheWorld2019*. Alicante, Spain: Universidad de Alicante, Digital Wall Collection. <https://bit.ly/3qeWJml>
- Battilana, J., Pache, A. C., Sengul, M., & Model, J. (2018). *Combining social welfare and market logics: What drives social performance in socioeconomic hybrids?* Academy of Management Proceedings. Annual Meeting 2018, ESSEC Business School. New York: USA. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2012.13268abstract>
- Bhattacharya, C. B., Sen, S., Edinger-Schons, L. M., & Neureiter, M. (2023). Corporate purpose and employee sustainability behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 183(4), 963-981. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05090-5>
- Bruneel, J., Moray, N., Stevens, R., & Fassin, Y. (2016). Balancing competing logics in for-profit social enterprises: A need for hybrid governance. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 7(3), 263-288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2016.1166147>
- Bull, M., & Ridley-Duff, R. (2019). Towards an appreciation of ethics in social enterprise business models. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159, 619-634. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3794-5>
- Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles (2021). *Propósito y reinención del capitalismo. ¿Qué piensa la población Española y cuáles son las claves para la transformación?* I Edición. Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles. https://www.canvasconsultores.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Proposito-y-reinencion-capitalismo_CANVAS_-Estudio-completo.pdf
- Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles (2023). *Propósito y reinención del capitalismo. La ciudadanía y los nuevos modelos de empresa en tiempos de transformación*. II Edición. Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles. <https://www.canvasconsultores.com/proposito-y-capitalismo-2023/>
- Cermelli, M., Maggio, U. D., Notarstefano, G., & Terzo, G. (2019). Social capital and social entrepreneurship. Cross-country evidence for development and cohesion. *RIEDS–Rivista Italiana di Economia, Demografia e Statistica–The Italian Journal of Economic, Demographic and Statistical Studies*, 73(2), 87-98.

- Chatterjee, S., & Nguyen, B. (2021). Value co-creation and social media at bottom of pyramid (BOP). *The Bottom Line*, 34(2), 101-123. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bl-11-2020-0070>
- Cohen, R. (2021). *On impact: A guide to the impact revolution*. <https://www.onimpactnow.org/>
- Corporate Excellence and Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles (2022). *Approaching the future 2022*. Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles. <https://www.canvasconsultores.com/approaching-the-future-2022/>
- Correa, M. E., Abramovay, R., Gatica, S., & Van Hoof, B. (2020). *Nuevas empresas, nuevas economías: Empresas B en Sur América*. Yopublico.
- Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California Management Review*, 54(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2011.54.1.64>
- Dupret, K., Hansen, A. V., Pultz, S., Pilmark, A., Brander, E., Friberg, B., Tranetoft Nielsen, K., & Eldor, T. (2022). What's the purpose? Employee perspectives on being 'purpose-driven' in hybrid organisations. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 1-20. 10.1080/19420676.2022.2148714
- Edmans, A. (2023). How great companies deliver both purpose and profit. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*, 465-469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14765284.2023.2219439>
- Elkington, J. (2020). *Green swans: The coming boom in regenerative capitalism*. Greenleaf Book Group.
- Estébanez García, D. (2023, February 20). El movimiento B Corp crece en España y mejora el impacto que generan las empresas. *Cinco Días*. <https://cincodias.elpais.com/extras/2023-02-20/el-movimiento-b-corp-crece-en-espana-y-mejora-el-impacto-que-generan-las-empresas.html>
- Ferreira, V., Barreira, A.P., Loures, L., Antunes, D., & Panagopoulos, T. (2020). Stakeholders' engagement on nature-based solutions: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020640>
- Fombrun, C. J. (1996). *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image*. Harvard University Press.
- Fontán, C., Alloza, Á., & Rey, C. (2019). (Re)Discovering organizational purpose. In C. Rey, M. Bastons, P. Sotok (Eds.), *Purpose-driven organizations* (pp. 107-118). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17674-7_9
- Freeman, R. E., Martin, K., & Parmar, B. (2007). Stakeholder capitalism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74, 303-314. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9517-y>
- Gartenberg, C., M. (2022). Purpose-driven companies and sustainability. In G. George, M. R. Haas, H. Joshi, A. M. McGahan & P. Tracey (Eds.), *Handbook on the business of sustainability: The organization, implementation, and practice of sustainable growth* (pp. 24-42). Edward Elgar. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3786823>
- Greenpeace (2017, November 15). *Una encuesta de Greenpeace demuestra que la ciudadanía se encuentra concienciada y preocupada por el cambio climático*. <https://es.greenpeace.org/es/sala-de-prensa/comunicados/el-cambio-climatico-ya-es-la-principal-preocupacion-medioambiental-de-la-sociedad-espanola/>
- Gómez-Rey, P., Barbera, E., Fernández-Navarro, F., Zhang, J., & Moreira, A. (2021). Development and validation of a life skills evaluation tool for online learning based on the framework of the capability approach. *Education Tech Research and Development*, 69, 3029-3049. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-021-10054-z>
- Hourneaux Jr, F., Gabriel, M.L.d.S., & Gallardo-Vázquez, D.A. (2018), Triple bottom line and sustainable performance measurement in industrial companies. *Revista de Gestão*, 25(4), 413-429. <https://doi.org/10.1108/REGE-04-2018-0065>
- Jones-Khosla, L. A., & Gomes, J. F. S. (2023). Purpose: From theory to practice. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 43(1), 90-103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22203>
- Law 18/2022, September 28, On creation and growth of companies, BOE 234. <https://www.boe.es/eli-es/1/2022/09/28/18/con>.
- Lyon, T. P., & Montgomery, A. W. (2015). The means and end of greenwash. *Organization & Environment*, 28(2), 223–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026615575332>

- López de Aguilera, C., Molares, J., & Badenes, V. (2023). El propósito como dinamizador de la cultura corporativa y generador de valor: Análisis de las webs de las empresas españolas del IBEX-35. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, 13(25), 41-54. <https://doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v13i25.797>
- López-Triana, I. (2020, November 27). Del consumismo al activismo ciudadano: una transformación necesaria. *Diario Responsable*. <https://diarioresponsable.com/opinion/30302-del-consumismo-al-activismo-ciudadano-una-transformacion-necesaria>
- Losada-Vázquez, A. (2022). Organizational learning at purpose-driven enterprise: Action–research model for leadership improvement. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1301. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031301>
- Mair, J., Mayer, J., & Lutz, E. (2015). Navigating institutional plurality: Organizational governance in hybrid organizations. *Organization Studies*, 36(6), 713-739. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840615580007>
- Mair, J., & Sharma, S. (2012). Performance measurement and social entrepreneurship. In C. K. Volkman, T. O. Tokarski, & K. Ernst (Eds.), *Social entrepreneurship and social business: An introduction and discussion with case studies* (pp. 175-189). Springer https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-8349-7093-0_9
- Mata-Benito, P., Ballesteros-Velázquez, B., & Gil-Jaurena, I. (2014). *Aprendizaje de la ciudadanía y la participación*. Traficantes de Sueños. <http://e-spacio.uned.es/fez/eserv/bibliuned:500383-III Congreso Etnografía-1040/Documento.pdf>
- Mion, G., & Loza, C. R. (2020). Understanding the purpose of benefit corporations: An empirical study on the Italian case. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 5(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-020-00050-6>
- Montiel Vargas, A. (2022) Las empresas B (B Corps) y la regulación de las sociedades con propósito (benefit corporations) en Derecho comparado. *Revesco: Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, 141(8), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.5209/reve.82253>
- Nisberg, J. N. (1988). *The random house handbook of business terms*. Random House Reference.
- Nogales, R., & Zandonai, F. (2014). L'impresa sociale ei suoi ecosistemi. Una mappatura europea. *Impresa Sociale*, 4(11), 1-6. <https://bit.ly/3IMPMiR>
- O'Toole, J., & Vogel, D. (2011). Two and a half cheers for conscious capitalism. *California Management Review*, 53(3), 60-76. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cm.2011.53.3.60>
- Pacto Mundial (2017). *La misión del Pacto Mundial: 10 Principios + 17 ODS*. Pacto Mundial. <https://www.pactomundial.org/noticia/10-principios-17-ods/>
- Paeleman, I., Guenster, N., Vanacker, T., & Siqueira, A. C. O. (2024). The consequences of financial leverage: Certified B corporations' advantages compared to common commercial firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 189, 507-523. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05349-5>
- Parguel, B., Benoît-Moreau, F., & Larceneux, F. (2011). How sustainability ratings might deter “greenwashing”: A closer look at ethical corporate communication. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 102(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0901-2>
- Peterson, D. K. (2004). The relationship between perceptions of corporate citizenship and organizational commitment. *Business & Society*, 43(3), 296-319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650304268065>
- Pirson, M., Martin, K., & Parmar, B. (2019). Public trust in business and its determinants. *Business & Society*, 58(1), 132-166. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139152389.007>
- Porter, M., & Kramer, M. R. (2011, January–February). Creating shared value. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2011/01/the-big-idea-creating-shared-value>
- Pörtner, H. O., Roberts, D. C., Adams, H., Adler, C., Aldunce, P., Ali, E., ... & Ibrahim, Z. Z. (2022). *Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability*. IPCC. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844>
- Sanahuja-Peris, G., Antón-Carrillo, E., & Mut-Camacho, M. (2023). De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de “propósito”: expresión y análisis discursivo del propósito corporativo en España. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 29(3), 701-715. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/esmp.87208>

- Sanz, M. J., & Galan, E. (2022, February). Impactos del cambio climático en España. *Funcas*. <https://www.funcas.es/articulos/impactos-del-cambio-climatico-en-espana/>
- Segrestin, B., Hatchuel, A., & Levillain, K. (2022). Rethinking the purpose of the corporation with the creative power of the enterprise. In R. E. Meyer, S. Leixnering & J. Veldman, (Eds.), *The corporation: Rethinking the iconic form of business organization research in the sociology of organizations*, pp. 191-207). Emerald. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20220000078010>
- Steimikiene, D., Mikalauskiene, A., & Stanislovaityte, G. (2023). *Corporate social hypocrisy: CSR in the era of global crises*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003391753>
- Stubbs, W., & Cocklin, C. (2008). Conceptualizing a sustainability business model. *Organization & Environment*, 21(2), 103-127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026608318042>
- Stubbs, W., Dahmann, F., & Raven, R. (2022). The purpose ecosystem and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Interactions among private sector actors and stakeholders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(4), 1097-1112. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05188-w>
- Theben, A., Aranda-Juárez, D., Lupiáñez-Villanueva, F., Peña-López, I., & Porcu, F. (2021), Participación y ciudadanía activa de los jóvenes a través de Internet y las redes sociales. Un estudio internacional. *BiD: textos universitarios de biblioteconomía i documentació*, 46(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1344/BiD2020.46.02>
- United Nations (2015). *La Asamblea General adopta la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/2015/09/la-asamblea-general-adopta-la-agenda-2030-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible/> PH
- Von Berlepsch, D., Lemke, F., & Gorton, M. (2022). The importance of corporate reputation for sustainable supply chains: A systematic literature review, bibliometric mapping, and research agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 189, 9-34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05268-x>