



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

# Content Marketing:

How product presentation and search engine optimization techniques can improve the online customer experience – case study of Mercado.

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Católica Porto Business School  
Abril 2022



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Marketing

por

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# Abstract

The e-commerce market's growing competitiveness forced companies to stand out with strategies that meet consumers' needs. In fact, the online channel is still not well accepted by many as it involves some challenges related to the "need to touch" products. With that in mind, this work seeks to understand the relevance of content marketing strategies to consumers' online experiences, proposing two research questions: "How product presentation can influence the online customer experience?" and "How SEO techniques can influence the online customer experience?".

To address these, case study research was carried out based on Mercadão's activity and, to understand the e-commerce market and the company's activity, some data was collected by direct observation, considering my internship at the company. Quantitative studies were developed that allowed to acquire important knowledge on the brand responses and the importance consumers attach to online product presentations and SEO techniques.

Studies' results showed that consumers identify product presentation and informative product descriptions as important and decisive factors in their online shopping experiences. They also demonstrated to be sensitive to brands that appear in 1st in search engines and considered important to have easy and efficient access to websites.

These outcomes allowed to conclude how crucial it is for online companies to consider those strategies to meet consumers' needs, developing better online customer experiences.

**Keywords:** Online customer experience; Content marketing; Product presentation; Product description; Search engine optimization

**Number of words:** 9958



# Resumo

O crescente aumento da competitividade no mercado do e-commerce, obrigou as empresas a diferenciarem-se com estratégias que vão ao encontro das necessidades dos consumidores. De facto, o canal online não é ainda aceite por muitos, pois envolve vários desafios relacionados com a “necessidade de toque” dos produtos. Assim, este trabalho pretende compreender a relevância de estratégias de *content marketing* para as experiências online dos consumidores, propondo duas questões de investigação: “Como é que a apresentação de produto pode influenciar a experiência online dos clientes?” e “Como é que as técnicas de SEO podem influenciar a experiência online dos clientes?”.

Para responder às questões, foi desenvolvido um caso de estudo baseado na atividade do Mercado e, para melhor compreender o mercado do e-commerce e a atividade da empresa, alguns dados foram recolhidos através de observação direta, ao longo do meu estágio na empresa. Três estudos quantitativos foram desenvolvidos que permitiram obter informações cruciais em relação à marca Mercado e à importância que os consumidores atribuem à apresentação online de produtos e às técnicas de SEO.

Os resultados dos estudos demonstraram que os consumidores identificam as apresentações e descrições informativas dos produtos como fatores importantes e decisivos nas suas experiências de compras online. Para além disso, demonstraram ser sensíveis às marcas que aparecem em 1º nos motores de busca e consideraram importante o acesso fácil e eficiente aos websites das marcas.

Assim, concluiu-se o quão importante é que as empresas considerem estas estratégias para responderem às necessidades dos consumidores, melhorando as suas experiências de compras online.

**Keywords:** Experiência online do consumidor; Marketing de conteúdos; Apresentação e Descrição de produto; Otimização de motores de busca.





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# Introduction

Online shopping and e-commerce platforms have seen strong growth in recent times, evolving into a global phenomenon becoming increasingly a buying trend and the preferred channel for many consumers (Dhanapal et al., 2015; Hewawalpita & Perera, 2017). As mentioned by Jaiswal & Singh (2020) we have been assisting a rapid growth of digital business opportunities, resulting in the rise of internet-based services being offered. Technological transformations, namely, mobiles and information technologies have allowed everyone to sell their products/services online, changing the way business is done as they evolved to enable retailers to sell all kinds of products and services for everyone, everywhere, at any time (Dudhela, 2020; Dhanapal et al., 2015). According to Kahar et al. (2012), the concept of online shopping entails the process of purchasing goods and services sold through the internet. This concept is presented by Dhanapal et al. (2015) as an electronic device for direct purchasing that does not require intermediary services.

The strong growth of the online channel can be explained by the numerous benefits and advantages that this channel has to offer. According to Dudhela (2020), online platforms allow a more convenient and easily available transaction where buyers can search and purchase goods and services whenever and wherever they like. Actually, online stores overcame distance and times constraints as they are available 24h per day and 365 days per year so customers can visit these stores «from the comfort of their homes», (Kahar et al., 2012; Hewawalpita & Perera, 2017). Vidgen et al. (n.d.) add that the internet became an easy and efficient channel that offers easier access to a greater range of products and services, from which consumers can benefit from. With an expanded geographic reach, consumers can buy from every part of the world and visit as

many sites as they like before purchasing, having access to more purchase opportunities and information for better purchase decisions, for example, for price comparison (Dhanapal et al., 2015; Jaiswal & Singh, 2020; Kahar et al., 2012; Barari et al., 2020; Dudhela, 2020). From a business perspective, the online channel also offers many advantages. For example, Vidgen et al. (n.d) remark on the reduction of the time required for service development. In addition to the reduction of inventory costs, the online channel has allowed companies to reach consumers from any part of the world, “from both the metro cities and remote areas”, at a reduced cost (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020). Moreover, as presented by Dhanapal et al. (2015) several companies have moved to the online channel to cut down marketing costs, reduce prices, and survive within an increasingly competitive market.

Despite the several benefits of the online channel there are still some obstacles that online companies still must cope with. Purchases through the internet, namely for tangible products, can imply some challenges (Kahar et al., 2012). Bleier et al. (2019) referred that when compared with the traditional form of physical stores, online shopping can involve some uncertainties that may influence some experience’s dimensions and, consequently, influence purchases. One of those challenges is related to the lack of sensory cues in the online environment, especially the sense of touch since people cannot touch, feel, and manipulate the products being offered which, consequently, can affect people’s products evaluation before a purchase (Rathee & Rajain, 2019; Hewawalpita & Perera, 2017; Bleier et al., 2019). Although the human senses have a crucial role in creating perceptions for either products or brands, in an online context, there is a complete lack of touch during the purchase process (Rathee & Rajain, 2019). Based on another study, Rathee & Rajain (2019) highlight the fact that there are still many consumers going to physical stores to explore and review products before buying them online, which can demonstrate how the need for touch

represents a great challenge for online brands. Other online shopping obstacles are related to consumers' lack of trust in online sellers which often decreases consumers' willingness to shop online (Kahar et al., 2012). Besides, customers have shown a significant concern regarding the product status, if it can be damaged or spoiled or even its freshness, which is related to their inability to evaluate products in a sensory way (Kahar et al., 2012).

Even though studies have been focused on factors such as the website's usability, security, reliability to evaluate the quality of online services, the concept of customer experience is recently becoming more discussed in academic literature, as customers evaluate businesses based on that overall perspective (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020). Considering the global online trend and increasingly competitive market with innumerable options for the customer, researchers point out that companies should focus on creating positive customer experiences as a key strategic differentiator for developing sustainable competitive advantage and contributing to the online retailer's success (Bhattacharya et al., 2019). Therefore, efficient management of the customer experience on digital platforms can be a crucial way for companies to achieve a competitive advantage (Palmer, 2010; Jaiswal & Singh, 2020). For firms within the digital world to succeed they should focus on developing strategies to improve their online customer experiences.

With that being said, it becomes clear that there is still a path for online companies to be able to guarantee the same customer experience that is provided through traditional shopping methods (Hewawalpita & Perera, 2017). In this sense, it is crucial to study and analyze strategies that could reduce or attenuate these obstacles, namely, through the development or improvement of the online shopping experience of the customer. With that in mind, this project proposes an analysis of the role of content marketing in improving the online customer

experience focusing on two strategies: product presentation and descriptions, and SEO techniques.

To accomplish an in-depth analysis of how these strategies can influence the online customer experience, this research will be conducted based on the case study of the Portuguese marketplace, Mercadão, where I carried out my master's internship. More precisely, it will be analyzed how consumers react to product presentations and SEO techniques applied by online retailers, extended to Mercadão's portfolio of brands and categories. Therefore, this paper begins with a detailed analysis of the company under study through the Triatic Brand Model which includes the brand object, brand identity, and brand response. Then, a literature review is presented to introduce some prior knowledge about the subject under study - online customer experience, content marketing, product presentation, and search engine optimization. After the conceptualization of the problem to be addressed, establishing objectives, and defining the main research questions, three questionnaires are developed, whose results are then presented and discussed.

# Chapter 1

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 Online Customer Experience

According to literature, a customer experience consists of a subjective response or interpretation of a customer's contact, with a company or with the service's elements, for example, the provider, the offering, the brand, the setting or even the process (Rose et al., 2012; Barari et al., 2020). Another study conducted by Bleier et al. (2019) adds that an online customer experience consists of a subjective, multidimensional, and psychological response of a customer towards an online product presentation. Other authors refer to online customer experience as a "psychological construct" that results from customers response to their contact with the retailer or even the customer motivation and sense of "seamless online navigation, intrinsic enjoyment, and lack of self-consciousness" (Rose et al., 2012; Bhattacharya et al., 2019).

Prior research about online customer experience shows that this concept includes different components or dimensions. Some authors defend the existence of cognitive and affective dimensions of a customer experience (Barari et al., 2020; Rose et al., 2012). Others add that it involves, not only the cognitive (or informativeness) and the affective (or entertainment) dimensions, but it includes the social and sensory dimensions as well (Bleier et al., 2019). As mentioned by Barari et al. (2020) that during a shopping experience the customer has cognitive and affective objectives, whether he is shopping physically or through online platforms (Barari et al., 2020). The cognitive component of the customer experience, also referred to as the informativeness dimension, is based on an efficient acquisition of products/services as well as the website's capability of providing "resourceful and helpful information". The affective or entertainment

dimension is related to the customer's personal and subjective results when shopping, for example, the pleasure within an experience evoked when the customer interacts with products online (Bleier et al., 2019; Barari et al., 2020). The social dimension regards the sense of warmth, sociability, and human contact when shopping online, which can lead to feeling psychologically and emotionally closer to a product and, consequently, the increase of pleasure, arousal, purchase intention, and loyalty (Bleier et al., 2019). Finally, the sensory component of the customer experience, as the name implies, involves the sensory stimulus of sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch (Bleier et al., 2019). Also, Rose et al. (2012) mentioned, that online customer experience entails six components: sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relational. However, both cognitive and affective constructs are considered important components as they have some influence on customer behavior and experience (Rose et al., 2012).

In the past few years, the number of services offered on the internet has been increasing with online shopping becoming one of the most relevant services available on the internet (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020). Several companies transferred their businesses to online, and online shopping became a global trend with numerous advantages such as information, convenience, and overcoming time and place limitations (Barari et al., 2020). With that phenomenon, today's e-commerce environment is more competitive than ever and requires that companies find strategies to provide unique and compelling customer shopping experiences (Bilgihan et al., 2016). Furthermore, academic research points to the importance of creating or improving the customer experience in the online context, as a crucial differentiator for developing sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly overcrowded environment (Bhattacharya et al., 2019). Therefore, the concept of online customer experience became extremely relevant in both academic and business contexts as a powerful strategy for



companies (Bilgihan et al., 2016). Besides, the evolution and growth of online shopping make it more challenging for online retailers to guarantee consumer “stickiness” on their websites, which makes creating positive customer experiences through their websites a crucial factor for the overall value creation process (Bhattacharya et al., 2019). Considering that the online channel allows consumers to have more facilitated access to different options to compare, as different authors suggested, it became simpler for a customer whose expectations were failed to be satisfied to be encouraged to move or look for other retailers (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020; Barari et al., 2020). Additionally, consumers now have easier and faster access to multiple online channels where they can spread their negative experiences with others (Barari et al., 2020). As a result, online retailers need to focus on managing the overall online customer experience by developing strategies to guarantee positive experiences.

## 1.2 Content Marketing

According to the Content Marketing Institute (2020), content marketing can be defined as a strategic marketing approach that aims to attract and gain a specific target audience through the development and distribution of “valuable, consistent, and relevant content” to transform this target audience into actual customers. Dudhela (2020) adds that it involves creating valuable content for potential clients with the purpose of making them pursue a certain action. This concept is also presented as a process that involves the identification, analysis, and satisfaction of customers’ demands, in a profitable way, using electronic channels to share digital content (Rowley, 2008). Therefore, good quality content has the capability to attract, inform, persuade specific target audiences, and answer customers’ questions or needs (Dudhela, 2020). Moreover, literature shows that digital content can be presented in the form of images, text, multimedia, music, and others, or it can reach the target audience through blogs,

videos, email, social media posts, visual content, search engine optimization techniques, etc. (Dudhela, 2020). The digital evolution made digital marketing become an important marketing strategy increasingly adopted by companies, making good quality content marketing a crucial requirement for the success of online businesses' communication (Patruti Baltes, 2015). Despite being an increasingly current topic, digital content marketing still lacks further research that focuses, for example, on specific sectors, associated challenges, specific characteristics, or types of content (Rowley, 2008).

As previously mentioned, the online channel restrains customers with the sense of touch, smell, and other human senses which makes product information presented through the retailer's website extremely necessary to assist in customer's purchasing decisions (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020). Moreover, today's consumers are becoming smarter than ever, demanding more relevant information as they become increasingly aware of how important information is for making good purchase decisions (Wong et al., 2015). Especially in digital channels, information is a key element for marketing exchange, which makes marketing communication and products as information as well (Rowley, 2008). Besides, good quality content can encourage customers to purchase, and on other hand, it can help in developing and maintaining relationships with the company's target audience (Wong et al., 2015). This idea is supported by Bouchra et al. (2020) who mentions the importance of relevant content for its value or informational utility and the ability to create a "trusting consumer relationship".

### 1.2.1 Product Presentation

Compared with traditional commerce, when customers shop online, they are not allowed to physically interact with products being unable to "feel, touch and manipulate the products", consequently, having restricted access in exploring and evaluating those products before purchasing them (Bleier et al., 2019;

Hewawalpita et al., 2017). Instead, they can only count on verbal and visual features or design elements such as product descriptions or pictures on the website (Bleier et al., 2019). In fact, considering that the human senses are limited in the online environment it may affect consumers' confidence in purchasing online, thus, the information presented on the website about the product can help clients in their purchasing decisions (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020). Thus, it's possible to recognize that there is an intrinsic challenge to the online channel in providing the same customer experience as in physical stores, showing how important it is to conduct more in-depth analysis regarding effective strategies for a better e-commerce offering (Hewawalpita et al., 2017).

As already mentioned, the online customer experience includes different components, namely, the cognitive and affective dimensions that customers try to follow during their online shopping experiences (Barari et al., 2020). The cognitive dimension is related to the quality of the information provided to customers on websites to help them in their purchase decision, while the effective dimension involves the pleasure and entertainment within an experience (Bleier et al., 2019). Since online customers have both cognitive and affective dimensions as their main objectives towards an online shopping experience, companies must try to satisfy both (Barari et al., 2020).

According to Bleier et al. (2019) customers evaluate products through a product web page which is part of the online customer experience, and that includes verbal and visual elements, for example, product descriptions or images, directly related to product presentation. Considering the strong online competition, a company's success will depend on its ability to develop design elements to create an effective product web page that can transform visitors into buyers (Schlosser et al., 2006). The strategic selection of those design elements for a product web page it's essential for creating a customer experience which makes it important to carefully produce and publish images, videos, and copywriting

of high quality (Bleier et al., 2019). Park et al. (2005) claim that when consumers are shopping online and are confronted with a product presentation, an emotional response may be triggered, and for that reason, the way the product is visually presented, such as its attractiveness or interest, can affect the customer's online purchase intention positively.

Also, when customers are looking for products on a company's website it is usually revealed a brief product description which can be an essential indication for customers, helping them with their decisions (Mou et al., 2020). According to Jaiswal & Singh (2020) when customers have access to product information it can facilitate customers' purchase decisions. Hence, online sellers must focus on developing efficient product descriptions because it can make it easier for customers to understand the product itself and its features, and it can eliminate barriers between online brands and customers and, consequently, create more positive results (Mou et al, 2020). Including product information can be a pivotal marketing strategy that helps consumers in their product evaluation process for better purchasing decisions (Khare & Rakesh, 2011). Several authors concluded that different features of the product description, such as the type, price, and images of a product, may increase customers' purchase intention (Park et al, 2005; Khare & Rakesh, 2011; Moon et al., 2008). When customers are presented with high-quality descriptions of a product their positive feelings about the product may increase and, on the other hand, their uncertainties about the product may decrease (Mou et al., 2020).

### 1.2.2 Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine consists of software that collects data from websites, including website URLs, keywords or groups of keywords being part of a website content, code structure, and links of the web page (Yalçın & Köse, 2010). According to Jain

(2013), a search engine involves internet software that looks for keywords and then shows the website results that include those same keywords.

Nowadays, we have been assisting a rapid growth of the internet services leading to a large community that includes millions of users creating an intense competition which makes search engines an important tool that helps websites to reach consumers based on reaching higher rankings (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020; Yalçin & Köse, 2010; Egri & Bayrak, 2014).

Every time someone writes in a search engine, it shows up a list of several web pages, consisting of all the results that contain the words entered in the search engine and, most of the time people select those websites with better rankings and that, therefore, appear first in that list (Jain, 2013). According to Yalçin & Köse (2010) when people are searching online for information about a subject, they generally look on the first page of the search engine and, for that reason, the pages that are found last, may not be considered, or evaluated by customers. In this sense, and considering the current growing number of web pages and online business competition, it is important that companies try to move their web pages to the top of the list, thus, SEO would be an effective strategy for companies that aim to be in first in search engines (Jain, 2013; Yalçin & Köse, 2010).

Dudhela (2020) refers that to create original content, SEO is one of the best techniques that companies can adopt, using specific keywords to help businesses to reach many users. Search engine optimization can be defined as a set of techniques that enable websites to augment their ranking in search engines, therefore, enabling companies to upgrade their website's visibility in the search engines (Jain, 2013). SEO boosts the research to achieve better results in search engines rankings (Egri & Bayrak, 2014).

Considering the increasing existence of web pages, Yalçin & Köse (2010) claimed that the usage of search engines allows online consumers to have access to relevant and desired data. Bearing in mind the growth of the "electronic

communities” and how significant it is for search engines to give responses to that amount of consumers, SEO proves to be a strategy to be adopted by companies (Yalçin & Köse, 2010). Bilgihan et al. (2016) also mentioned the importance of a positive online shopping experience for consumers to easily locate a website, highlighting the fact that customers’ online experiences begin when potential customers use search engines to find a product/service. Therefore, easy access for consumers to access an online site, an effective and well-presented web page, as well as the use of original content and relevant keywords for users, are important approaches to be adopted by online companies (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Yalçin & Köse, 2010).

# Chapter 2

## 2. Mercado

### 2.1 Company's Contextualization

Mercado is a Portuguese fast deliveries marketplace created in 2018 by 3 business partners, Gonalo Soares da Costa (CEO), Ricardo Monteiro (COO), and Elísio Santos, who worked together in Fonte-Online (Mercado's mother-enterprise), a company whose business focused on creating digital solutions to improve people's lives. Based on their professional knowledge and inspired by international practices, the platform was created to allow customers to shop online in different stores, and receive their orders on the same day, thanks to a team of trained personal shoppers who make purchases for the customer.

Over the last 4 years, the company has grown to have more than 100 Portuguese areas covered by its service, including Madeira and Azores, and aiming to expand even further. Moreover, the company has been adding more stores to its portfolio, including retailers such as Pingo Doce, Ornimundo, LEV, Decathlon, Odisseias, and many other brands. The company's growth can also be seen through its impressive sales volume evolution: 1M€ (2018), 3M€ (2019), 28M€ (2020), 60M€ (2021).

Last year, Mercado was acquired by the Spanish company Glovo, specialized in small quantities deliveries, having as main objective the extension of its business to the larger grocery delivery market. Nonetheless, Mercado maintains its operations independently and maintains its leadership with its current CEO. As the main shareholder, Glovo's objective is to replicate Mercado's business model in other countries where Glovo currently operates, such as Italy and Poland.

## 2.2 Brand Model

### 2.2.1 Brand Object

#### 2.2.1.1 Core Object

The core object incorporates the mission, vision, and core values that guide the company. The vision statement that represents Mercadão's desired future consists of: "To be a reference in the delivery market in Portugal". As for the company's purpose, Mercadão states that its mission is "to provide a convenient service for those looking to save the time they would spend on things they actually love". Besides the mission and vision, it is also important to refer to the organization's shared beliefs incorporated into its defined core values. Analyzing the company's history and having had the opportunity to get to know the company, the team, the processes, and accompany some of its challenges they had to face, as well as its successes and growth, it allowed me to recognize some important values that guide the company's behavior, namely: customer-focus, convenience, personalization, ambition, transparency, and proximity.

#### 2.2.1.2 Actual Object

The marketplace under study offers an online shopping and fast deliveries service that allows customers to shop from different retailers and brands, and then their orders are purchased and delivered by a trained personal shopper. The "Click and Collect" service is also available, in which the personal shopper prepares the order and then, the customer collects it at the store.

Mercadão's delivery service is currently available around Portugal in more than one hundred cities, including Madeira and Azores. The company serves several markets and offers different types of products from groceries, health,



intimacy, sports, and stationery, among others. In Figure 1 are presented all the currently available stores at Mercadão's platform.

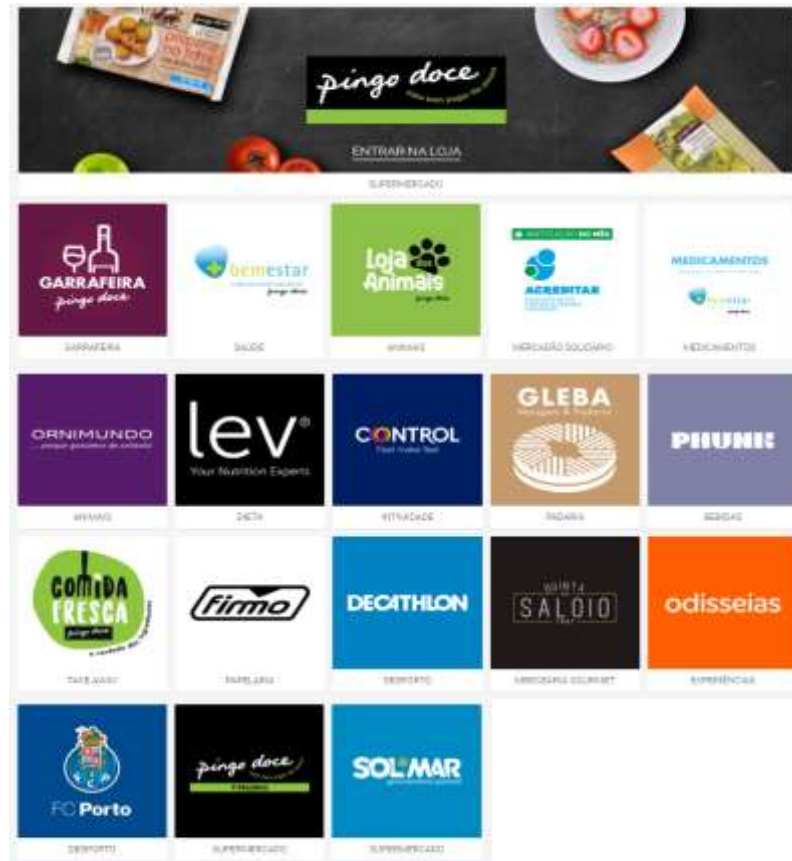


Figure 1 - Available stores at Mercadão

### 2.2.1.3 Augmented Object

#### Service

Mercadão offers a convenient and personalized service based on a valuable team of personal shoppers who are the heart and foundation of Mercadão's core service, and who make the clients' purchases from the different retailers and brands gathered on its platform. According to the customer's decision, the orders are either delivered to the customers' home or collected at the store, at the agreed time. Those retailers and brands available on Mercadão's website, have been

accompanying the growth of the enterprise, looking to guarantee a complete offer with a wide range of product categories, such as groceries, sport, stationary, health, animal products, etc.

To guarantee a more convenient and personalized shopping experience Mercadão's service introduced a substitution policy. This policy guarantees that it will always be the client who decides their product's substitutions, in case of stock out or any other problems concerning the product, in the physical store. When that happens, if the customer accepts the substitution policy, the personal shopper contacts the client to decide any replacement. Replacements are always decided by the customer, being therefore customized, in which the only limit for the substitution is the total amount paid for the order.

### **Price**

The company seeks to ensure the prices charged are similar to the prices in the physical stores. Only in unusual circumstances, some prices may be slightly lower or higher, compared to the physical store. Besides, the prices established by Mercadão are always included in the current VAT rate.

Therefore, the company's price strategy is mainly related to delivery service fees. The definition of the charged fees varies according to the stores selected by clients. If the customer submits an order from different stores at the same time, it will be charged the delivery value associated with each of the selected stores, except for orders over €100. The delivery fee is always free for all orders placed above 100€. This amount may vary depending on whether there are free delivery campaigns in place. Below, Table 1 is presented to demonstrate all delivery fees associated with the home delivery service, by stores.

DELIVERY FEES	
<b>Pingo Doce</b>	Express Orders – 5€
	Super-Express Orders – 6,5€
<b>Comida Fresca Pingo Doce</b>	Express Orders – 2,5€
<b>Other partner stores</b>	Express Orders – 3,5€
	Super-Express Orders – 5€
*Express Orders – to receive the order from 4 hours after the order has been placed	
** Super-Express Orders – to receive the order in 2 hours after ordering	

Table 1 - Mercadão's delivery fees by store.

## Place

Being a growing fast deliveries marketplace, Mercadão's service it's only available online through the company's website: [www.mercadao.pt](http://www.mercadao.pt). As mentioned before, the service is available in different areas across the country including Madeira and Azores. More precisely, the company's delivery service covers currently more than 50 Portuguese areas (see Table 2). As for the "Click and Collect" service option, it's only available in 10 stores in different locations (see Table 3).

Nevertheless, these locations demonstrate the company's constant search to meet its customers, expanding over the last 4 years of existence to the most requested locations. On the company's website, it is possible to find a form where the customer can request to take Mercadão's service to a desired location. The request will be then analyzed and evaluated considering the company's capabilities and other requirements.

SERVICE LOCATIONS					
Abrantes	Águeda	Albergaria-a-Velha	Albufeira	Alcanena	Alcobaça
Alcochete	Aldoar	Alenquer	Algés	Aljustrel	Almada
Almancil	Almeirim	Amodôvar	Alverca	Alvor	Amadora
Amarante	Amora	Anadia	Arcos de Valdevez	Arcozelo	Armação de Pêra
Arouca	Arrifana	Arruda dos Vinhos	Aveiro	Avintes	Azeitão
Barcelos	Barreiro	Batalha	Beja	Benavente	Borba
Braga	Bragança	Cacém	Caldas da Rainha	Caminha	Caníço
Carcavelos	Carnaxide	Cartaxo	Cascais	Castelo Branco	Chaves
Coimbra	Costa da Caparica	Covilhã	Elvas	Entroncamento	Ermesinde
Espinho	Estarreja	Estoril	Estremoz	Évora	Fafe
Faro	Fátima	Felgueiras	Figueira da Foz	Funchal	Fundão
Gandra	Gondomar	Guarda	Guimarães	Ílhavo	Lagoa
Lagos	Lamego	Leça da Palmeira	Leiria	Lisboa	Lordelo
Loulé	Loureiro	Loures	Lourinhã	Lourosa	Lousada
Machico	Mafra	Maia	Malveira	Mangualde	Marco de Canaveses
Marinha Grande	Matosinhos	Miranda do Douro	Mirandela	Montemor-o-Novo	Montijo
Moura	Nazaré	Óbidos	Odivelas	Oeiras	Olhão
Oliveira de Azeméis	Oliveira do Bairro	Oliveira do Hospital	Ovar	Paços de Ferreira	Palmela
Penafiel	Peniche	Peso da Régua	Pombal	Ponta Delgada	Ponte de Sôr
Portalegre	Portimão	Porto	Porto de Mós	Porto Moniz	Póvoa de Lanhoso
Póvoa Santa Iria	Póvoa de Varzim	Queluz	Reguengos Monsaraz	Resende	Ribeira Grande
Rio Maior	Rio tinto	Santa Comba Dão	Santarém	Santiago do Cacém	Santo Tirso
Seia	Seixal	Serpa	Sesimbra	Setúbal	Sines
Sintra	Tarouca	Tavira	Tomar	Tondela	Torres Novas
Torres Vedras	Trofa	Vale de Cambra	Valença	Valongo	Valpaços
Vendas Novas	Viana do Castelo	Vila do Conde	Vila Franca de Xira	Vila Nova Cerveira	Vila Nova Famalicão
Vila Nova de Gaia	Vila Real	Vila Real St António	Vila Verde	Viseu	Vizela

Table 2 - Mercado's service covered areas

## Promotion

Within its marketing program, the company under study presents a promotion strategy based on different communication actions established to promote its brand, service, and activities among its target customers. Being a digital and modern company, Mercado seeks to monitor and keep up with trends evolution, and mostly the needs and desires of its target audience.

Therefore, the company is digitally present on different social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The company's social media tools

are used to interact with the public, promote new stores, share campaigns, promotions, free delivery surprise coupons, partnerships with other brands or influencers, but also to be contacted by clients and potential clients, for questions and clarifications, or to solve unforeseen situations. Mercadão also uses its social media to display news regarding the company, its service updates, such as the opening of new stores on the website.

Being more business-oriented, LinkedIn is mostly used to advertise job vacancies in the company or other corporate matters, namely interesting articles related to the business or content created on current topics, explanations of company processes or monitoring of activities of each department, etc. When it comes to Instagram and Facebook, it is possible to recognize how its strategy has been following the growth and evolution of the company itself, since it has been also evolving. This evolution is seen not only through its contents, but also visually, in its presentation, aesthetics, with the feed's greenish look, and communication tactics, for example, by speaking with their public in the first person, aiming for a more direct, simple, and personal dialogue, which are all brand's intrinsic characteristics.

Besides social media, Mercadão's promotion strategy also focuses on the company's website, where people can find "Revista" a digital magazine where some recipes, tips, and news related to Mercadão are shared. Email and newsletters are also direct marketing tools adopted by Mercadão as a form of communication with its clients, to strengthening their relationship, generating leads, boosting sales, and achieving positive return of investment rate. Through this strategy, the company can directly advertise its products, promotions, and campaigns, create loyalty, and reward its regular customers.

Furthermore, to increase the impact of its communication, the company has recently adopted TV and radio marketing, joining forces with Pingo Doce, a very

important partner, to develop TV commercials, to increase brand awareness, and reach a larger audience.

### **Process**

Mercadão's service work as follows: by accessing the website, the customer can order from all available stores, where products are priced the same as in physical stores; After the customer completes their order, a personal shopper will go to the stores to make the client's purchases. The personal shopper assigned to that order has a system included in his/her cell phone, which allows access to the shopping list and customer data (name, address, cell phone number), and in this same system the collected products are registered through the QR code system that reads the EAN codes of the products. After having all the products in the shopping cart, the shopper goes to the cashier where he makes the payment with a specific card, prepares the car with the packaging, and follows directly to the client's address to make the delivery, at the agreed time. As mentioned before, if the client agrees with substitution policy, the shopper contacts the client in case of products stock out or other problem, to together decide their products replacements. At the end of having the products collected in-store, the shopper contacts the client to let them know that they are on their way, or in case there is any situation to clarify regarding the order or even in case of any unforeseen delay. Besides, through the website, the customer can always follow the entire process and contact the personal shopper or be contacted in case of any unforeseen circumstances.

As for the "Click and Collect" option which is also available in Mercadão in some stores, customers after adding all products to their shopping cart, just need to choose the day and the time and then go to the selected store to collect their order, which is previously and carefully prepared by the personal shopper. In this case, customers are asked to notify the shopper when they are heading to the

store through a phone number that is sent to the customer at the end of placing his order so that everything is ready for the collection.

To shop at Mercadão, customers only need to access the website ([www.mercadao.pt](http://www.mercadao.pt)) and choose the stores from which they want to buy and select the products to add to the virtual shopping cart. Although registration on the site is not mandatory, if customers create an account at Mercadão, they can have benefits such as using discount coupons, earning a balance on a Poupa Mais (Pingo Doce) card that can be used at BP gas stations, contacting the shopper assigned to your order, subscribe the newsletter, and have access to exclusive news and features. On the website, the search for products can be done in different ways: use the search list, typing in the search bar the name of the products or using the list of categories presented, where customers can select products, entering each category and sub-categories and adding the products they need.

If customers are registered on the platform and have logged in, they have the possibility to create a list of their favorite products, by clicking on the heart-shaped symbol placed in the upper right corner of the products, which allows customers to save their favorites for consultation or later purchases. Even more, to facilitate the purchase process for customers, with faster, more efficient, and frequent purchases, there is the option to "repeat order", which allows filling the virtual shopping cart with the products of the customer's last order.

### **Physical Evidence**

Regarding the visible cues of the company's service quality, they are presented in personal shoppers' uniforms and their shopping accessories such as their cooling backpacks (see Figure 2). In both uniforms and accessories, Mercadão's green color and logo are always present (see Figure 2). Those who come across a personal shopper on the street and, especially in Mercadão's partner stores, can

distinguish a Shopper, by his green vest, his big blue cooling backpack, and the most organized shopping cart in the store.

The company's modern and relaxed style, as well as its inspirational and ambitious attitude, can also be indirectly represented by its workspace which the team has recently moved to, an office located at the top of *Edifício Transparente*, in Porto, with an inspiring view to the sea. The office concept and design can also be associated with the mood of the team that integrates Mercadoão, being an open space, which can demonstrate the company's values of transparency and proximity.



Figure 2 - Mercadoão shopping accessories

## People

This platform allows customers to receive their orders at home on the same day, within 2 hours, with no additional costs on the products. This is possible thanks to a team of trained personal shoppers distributed around different areas of the covered cities, who guarantee a reliable, fast, and personalized shopping and delivery service. These personal shoppers are trained to choose, handle, and transport the products in the best way possible, to guarantee the best conditions for the products and ensure the best choice of products. Following the company's growth, the number of shoppers has also increased, with currently more than



1000 shoppers distributed throughout the country. To become a personal shopper there are certain requirements to meet such as: having open activity in finance, work accident insurance, a car, Smartphone with mobile data, and a call package. The company looks for people who enjoy shopping, are comfortable with technologies, have communication skills, a sense of responsibility, motivation, and empathy. To join the team of shoppers, it is necessary to carry out both in-store training, and online training, with recorded classes, with the support of the recruitment team and experienced personal shoppers.

Currently, it has more than 1000 personal shoppers and around 60 workers in the other support departments. It is crucial to mention other people involved and the departments that support Mercadão's service. Starting with the operations department, this is the team that coordinates, manages, and motivates the Shoppers, which involves quality assurance, operations planning, shoppers onboarding, and shoppers' happiness monitoring. A quality control team was created at Mercadão, to support shoppers with the main objective of improving quality and helping to comply with procedures and processes. The company also includes a customer experience-focused team which gives customer support and responds to questions, concerns, complaints, and customer feedback and suggestions, as well as issues that may arise during the ordering or delivery process. About the financial team, they are the ones who are mainly dedicated to planning and controlling, payroll, accounting, and other administrative issues, providing essential support to all other business areas. The data and analytics department are dedicated to analyzing customer and market data, giving important assistance in the decision-making process, whether in terms of business, partnerships, campaigns, or product offerings, among others. The commercial department team focuses on the contact and management of partnerships and sales of advertising space on the website, working very closely with the marketing department. Finally, the marketing department is dedicated

to content management, design, and communication, allowing the management of products in Mercado stores, and the creation of content for social networks, newsletters, campaigns, and promotions, among others.

## 2.2.2 Brand Identity

### 2.2.2.1 Core Identity: Name

Several marketing researchers have identified essential characteristics to take into consideration in the creation of an effective brand name such as simplicity, ease of pronunciation, spelling, reading, and understanding, but mostly how it is so important for a brand name to be meaningful and to be able to communicate the company's product/service, its characteristics, and benefits (Klink, 2003; Wanke et al., 2007).

The company's name comes from the word "mercado (market)", a public place that brings together different traders for the purchase and sale of products, reflecting the company's intrinsic characteristics and main purpose as being a public online market where everyone can go and where people can find a differentiated and extended offer of retailers, brands, and products. Besides, the fact that an augmentative noun "Mercadão" was chosen, indicates its enlarged size which can be associated with its enormous offer as well as the dimension that the company has always aspired to. Also, it is possible to say that the name, in Portuguese, can be simple, easy to pronounce, and understand, and for that reason, it is easier to memorize which enhances brand awareness. Yet, it can be more difficult to be pronounced by foreigners and it can often be confused with Mercadona, a Spanish supermarket chain with a strong presence in Portugal.

#### 2.2.2.2 Actual Identity: Logo

The choice of a brand's logo is crucial to preserve the corporate image developing a corporate visual identity which, in turn, is an essential differentiation strategy for companies (Hynes, 2008). By analyzing Mercadão's logo, it is possible to identify in its design, the lettering used which is a round typeface, which, according to the company, intends to convey proximity.

The logo color is also extremely important for brand recognition and recall, to convey information, and create a strong identity (Hynes, 2008). Mercadão's logo includes three different colors - white, dark blue, and green. The use of different colors in branding can help the logo and the brand to stand out and to appeal to a more creative target. According to Lundberg (2020) colors have meanings and symbolisms: green is connected to nature, action, growth, prosperity, and stability, with a relaxing influence; blue is a popular, modern, and universally liked color, appreciated by both genders, associated with calm, professionalism and trust; as for the white, used in the outline of the letters, is the most neutral color, is simple and modern, and it can be used as a foundation for using other colors.

In Mercadão's logo, the symbol of a green leaf is also visible, which is used in replacing the “~” in the second “a”. The leaf chosen by the company represents freshness and, therefore, the quality of the service.



*Figure 3 - Mercadão's logo*

### 2.2.3 Brand Response

To better understand Mercadão's brand response and to perceive the brand awareness, recognition, and main associations, and how people perceive and keep the brand in their memory, a questionnaire was developed whose results and data analysis are further on presented.

## 2.3. Internship Activities

At the beginning of September 2021, I had the opportunity to join the curricular internship program at Mercadão and, with great enthusiasm and curiosity, integrated the team of Content Management. As a trainee, my functions were mainly related to product management, for example, the introduction of new products on the website, price updates, creation of campaigns, having as focus the website content and assortment management. Within the marketing department, the content management team provides support in content marketing and product management, development of promotion campaigns, social media publications, newsletters, and Mercadão's magazine articles, among others.

# Chapter 3

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Questions

The current e-commerce evolution and the increasingly competitive online market made it crucial for companies to focus on creating strategies that allow favourable shopping experiences for customers, considering the challenges and people's resistance and concerns, that this channel still faces. In this sense, this study seeks to address the relevance of content marketing strategies, namely, product presentation and search engine optimization techniques, in order to improve the online customer experience, taking as a starting point the following research questions:

RQ1: How product presentation can influence the online customer experience?

RQ2: How SEO techniques can influence the online customer experience?

### 3.2 Method

To carry out this project it was used a qualitative methodology developing case study research, in the sense that it sought to execute an in-depth analysis of content marketing strategies, based on Mercadão's activity.

The development of this case study implied qualitative data collection from direct observation, throughout my involvement in Mercadão's business activity, as a content management intern. This internship allowed me to directly observe and collect important information regarding the company's operations and its use of content marketing techniques, concluding the relevance that this topic has in the e-commerce market.

A quantitative method it was also used in this work, through the development of three questionnaires with different research purposes, shared through social

media networks. The first questionnaire aimed to answer one of the points of Mercado's brand model - the brand response. The second was mainly focused on evaluating online platforms' consumers, regarding the attributes that they most value in this channel, to understand how much online product presentations influence the shopping experience of those consumers. The last survey aimed to comprehend how people perceived SEO techniques in their online shopping experiences.

# Chapter 4

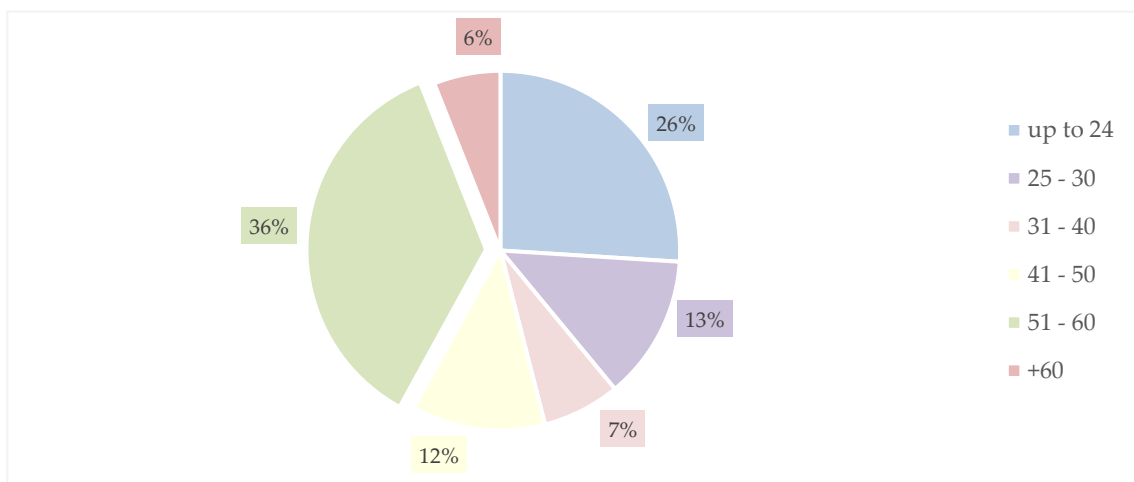
## 4. Data Collection and Analysis

### 4.1 Quantitative Study 1

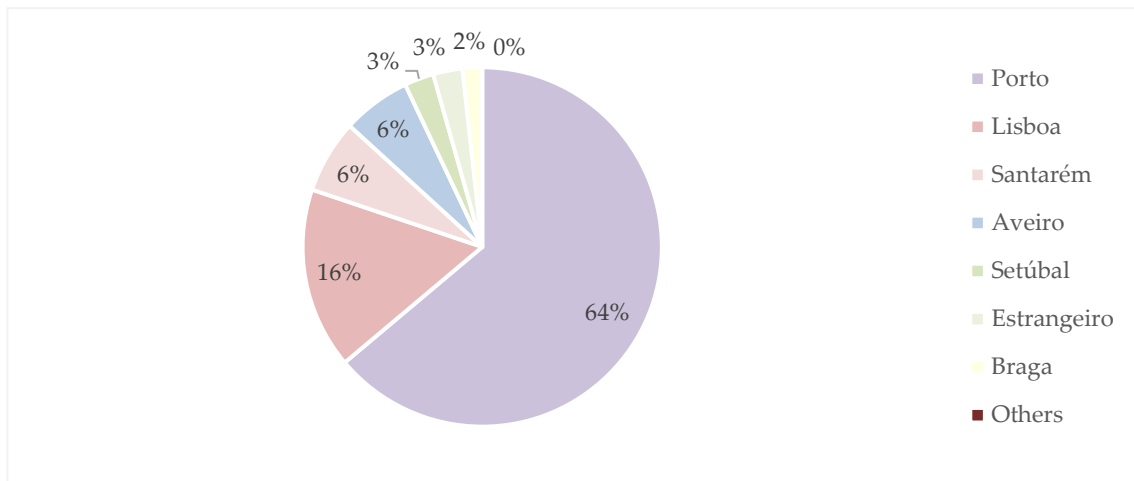
#### 4.1.1 Sample

This study obtained about 242 responses, mostly from Portuguese people, with an age range between 15 and 80 years old. About 63% of the respondents were women, which meets the company's main target audience, considering that 75% of purchases made at Mercadoão are made by women. The responses obtained had an interesting age distribution, as seen in Graphic 1. Nevertheless, the largest number of responses were concentrated in the ages of 51 and 60 years.

It was also possible to see a geographical variety of answers, however, they were more concentrated in Porto, followed by Lisboa, Santarém, and Aveiro (Graphic 2). As for respondents' occupations, the most given answer was "full-time employee", with approximately 60% of the answers obtained, as seen in Graphic 3.



Graphic 1 - Age distribution



Graphic 3 - Geographic distribution



Graphic 2 - Occupation

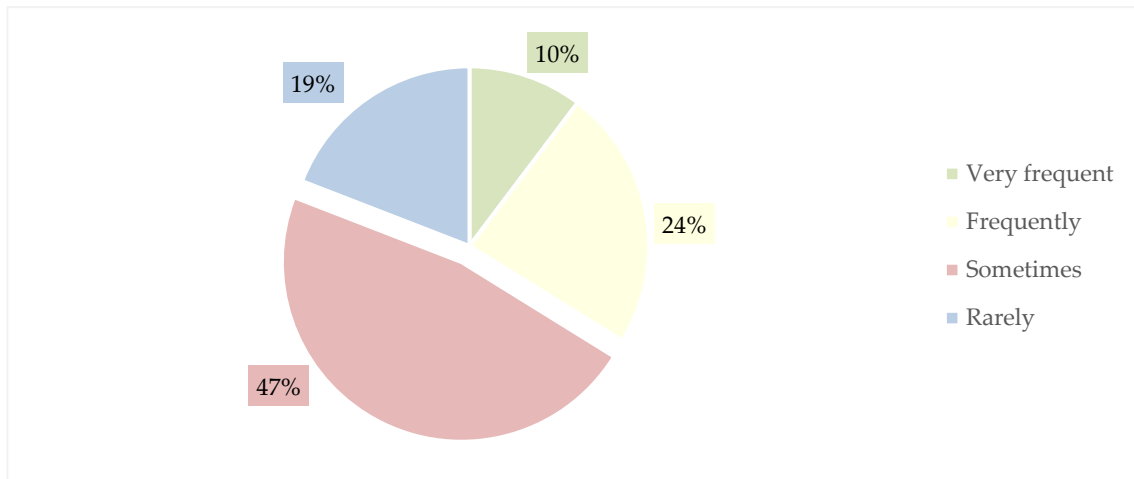
#### 4.1.2 Procedure

The first questionnaire (appendix 1) was created through Google Forms and was spread through WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Besides, respondents were asked to share it to reach the widest number of responses. The questionnaire was online between the 4th and 12th of March and then the results were collected and analysed using Microsoft Office Excel.



### 4.1.3 Data Analysis

Considering the main subject of this paper, the questionnaire started by asking if respondents were online buyers, and therefore in case of a negative answer, the questionnaire ended there. With that being said, about 85% responded affirmatively and from those about 47% do it “sometimes” and 23% “frequently”.



*Graphic 4 - Online shopping frequency*

### Top of Mind Platforms:

The purpose of this study was to analyze Mercadão's brand response starting by asking what was the first brand that comes to respondent's mind when thinking about online shopping platforms. This question allowed to conclude the top-of-mind online shopping platforms: Amazon, Zara, and Continente. The remaining answers were quite diversified and distributed among the other brands, nevertheless, Mercadão reached 5% of responses.

ONLINE SHOPPING PLATFORMS						
Adidas	Ali Express	Alibaba	Amazon	<u>Asos</u>	Benfica	Booking
Cider	Clube Fashion	Continente	<u>Cortefiel</u>	CP	<u>Dott</u>	<u>Ebay</u>
Ecco	El Corte Ingles	<u>Farfetch</u>	<u>Fnac</u>	<u>Glovo</u>	<u>Kuanto Kusta</u>	<u>La Redoute</u>
Lefties	Leroy <u>Merlim</u>	Mango	Massimo Dutti	Mercadão	Nespresso	Nike
OLX	<u>Prozis</u>	Pull & Bear	Ralph Lauren	Ryanair	Salsa	Scalpers
<u>Shein</u>	<u>Spartoo</u>	Staples	<u>Thomas</u>	Tienda Animal	Uber	Uber Eats
Uniqlo	<u>Uterqüe</u>	Vinted	Wish	<u>Wook</u>	<u>Worten</u>	Zara

Table 3 - Top of mind: online shopping platforms mentioned by the sample

### Brand Awareness:

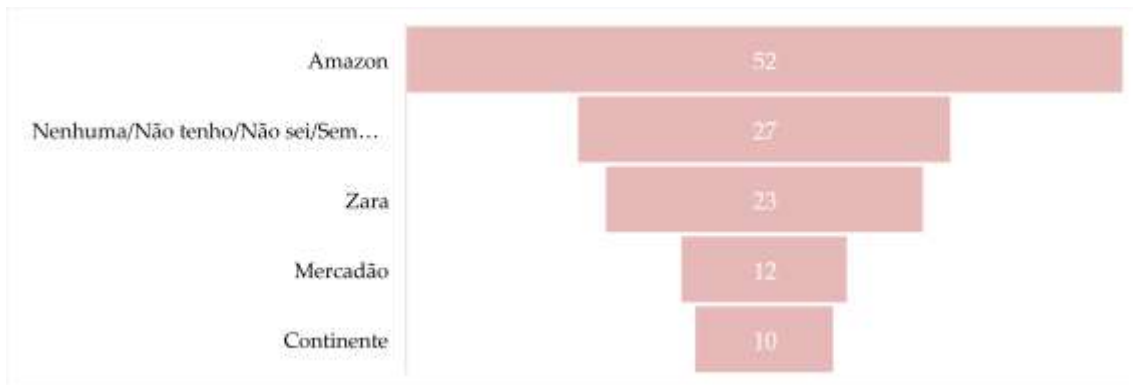
By asking what other online platforms people know, it was evaluated spontaneous brand awareness in relation to online shopping platforms, where a Top 3 brands stood out: Amazon, Continente, and Ali Express. As for Mercadão, the brand improved its results in relation to the previous question, presenting 10% of responses. However, it is still a brand that does not have a strong positioning in people's minds.

ONLINE SHOPPING PLATFORMS						
360 Hyper	About You	Adidas	Airbnb	Ali Express	Alibaba	Amazon
Apple	<u>Asos</u>	Auchan	<u>Bershka</u>	Bertrand	<u>Bimmer-Tech</u>	Bolt
Booking	Clube Fashion	Continente	CP	<u>Custo Justo</u>	Decathlon	<u>Dott</u>
Do Zero	Easy Jet	<u>Ebay</u>	<u>Edreams</u>	El Corte <u>Inglês</u>	Etsy	<u>Farfetch</u>
<u>Fnac</u>	Frederica	Gap	<u>Gearbest</u>	<u>Glovo</u>	H&M	Houzz
IBM	<u>Idealista</u>	IKEA	Inditex	Instagram	<u>Jcrew</u>	<u>Joom</u>
<u>Kiko</u>	<u>Kinda</u>	Kroger	Leroy <u>Merlim</u>	Loja <u>Farmácia</u>	Look Fantastic	Mango
Massimo Dutti	Mercadão	Mind the Trash	Nespresso	Nike	Nordstrom	<u>Notino</u>
Nude Project	OLX	On Wine	<u>Paez</u>	<u>PC Diga</u>	Perfumes Club	<u>Pingo Doce</u>
<u>Poshmark</u>	<u>Primor</u>	<u>Prozis</u>	Pull & Bear	<u>Rádio Popular</u>	<u>Sapo</u>	<u>Shein</u>
Shopify	Showroom <u>Prive</u>	Skin	<u>Sklum</u>	<u>Spartoo</u>	Sports Direct	Sport Zone
<u>Standvirtual</u>	<u>Stardivarius</u>	Tap	Target	<u>Tiffosi</u>	Uber	Uber Eats
Uniqlo	Vinted	<u>Waifair</u>	<u>Wallmart</u>	Wish	<u>Wix</u>	<u>Wook</u>
<u>Worten</u>	<u>Yoox</u>	Zalando	Zara	<u>Zooplus</u>		

Table 4 - Brand awareness: online shopping platforms mentioned by the sample

### Preferred Online Shopping Platforms:

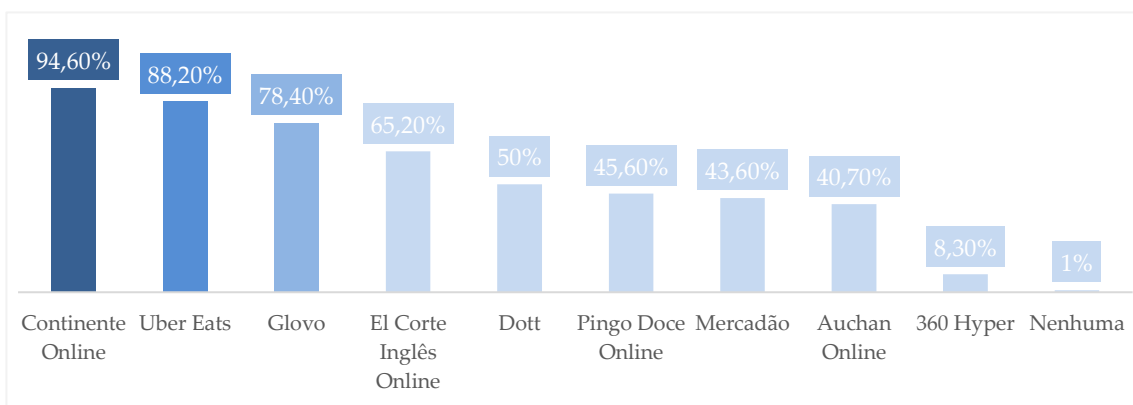
Regarding the preferred online shopping platforms, it was possible to define a Top 5 of the most given responses (graphic 5), where Mercadoão stands out as being now ranked 4th. Nonetheless, is important to underline the fact that both in this question and in the previous one, the results included several that are not exactly within the segment of the brand under study.



Graphic 5 - Preferred online shopping platforms: Top 5

### Brand Recognition:

To assess brand recognition in relation to online shopping platforms, it was asked participants which of the presented platforms they knew. The most recognized brands were: Continente Online, Uber Eats, and Glovo. As for Mercadoão, it obtained 43.6% of responses, and Pingo Doce Online surpasses it with another 2 percentage points.

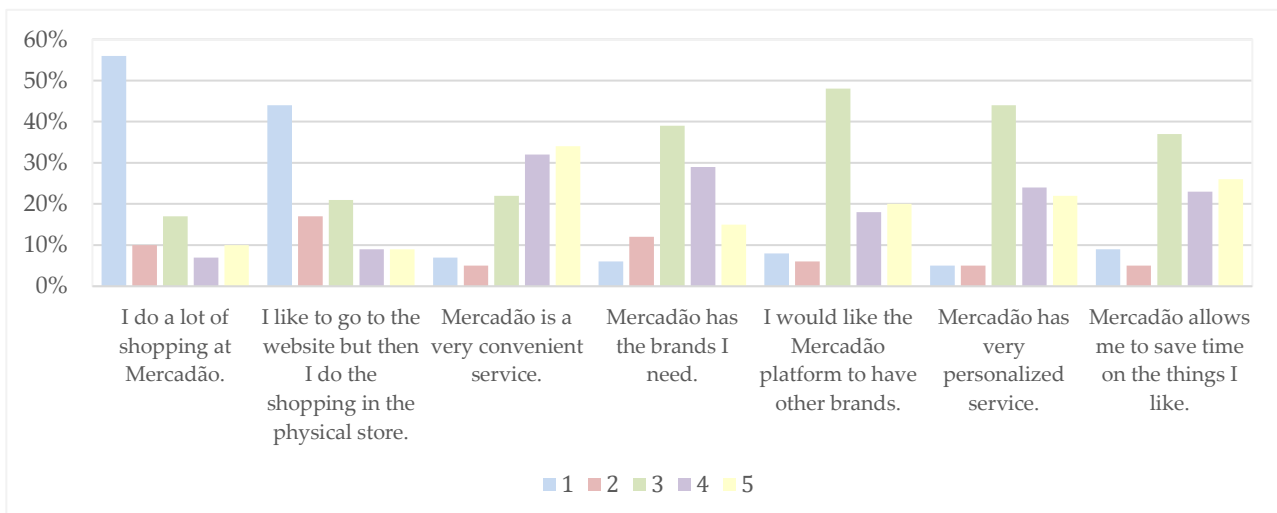


Graphic 6 - Brand recognition: online shopping platforms known by the sample

### Brand Associations:

The questions that followed focused on analyzing Mercado's brand associations among those respondents who said they knew the brand (50,5%). The results showed that the most common words or expressions used were mainly related to "Pingo Doce online", "online supermarket", "ease", "convenience", "utility", and "efficiency". Most of the expressions mentioned were in line with the mission, vision, and values of Mercado, earlier addressed on the brand's core object. In this sense, although the answers also showed that Mercado's service is still gaining recognition, it is noticeable how the company's values and service objectives are being well perceived.

Using a Likert scale, respondents indicated their level of agreement regarding specific statements presented, allowing to evaluate participant's attitudes, emotional attachments, and responses towards Mercado's brand (graphic 7).



Graphic 7 - Brand associations: level of agreement with specific statements

Analyzing the statements that elicited the highest degree of agreement, the following stood out:

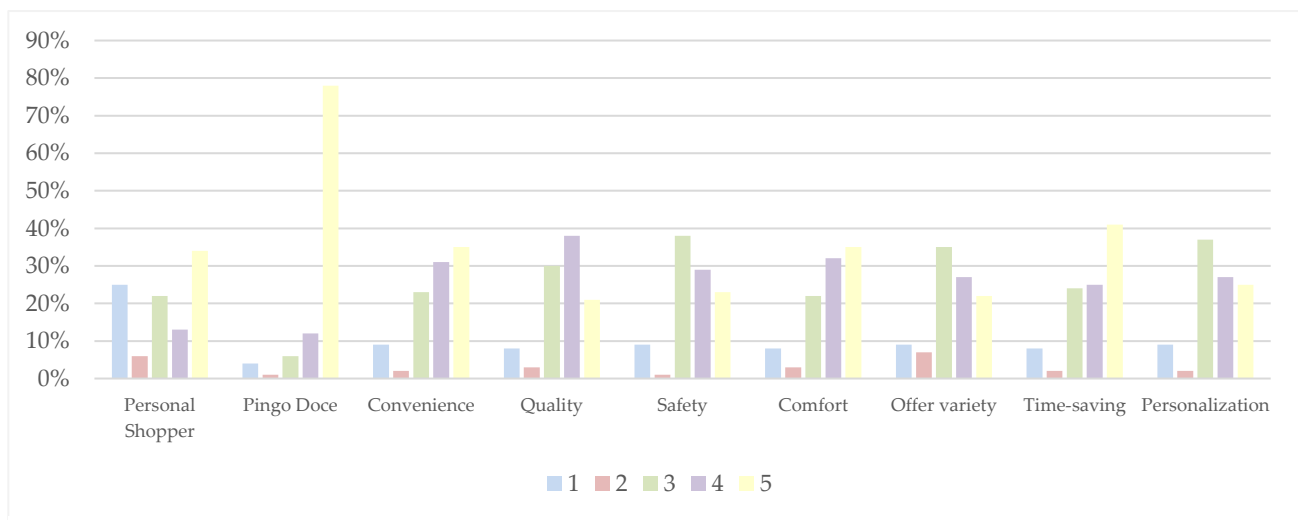
- Mercado is a very convenient service. (34%)
- Mercado allows me to save time on the things I like. (26%)

These results are aligned with the data previously obtained regarding individuals' top of mind associations with the brand, since “convenience” was, in fact, one of the main attributes that were mentioned more often by respondents. It is important to point out that both statements are part of the mission of the company. Moreover, the statement - “I do a lot of shopping at Mercadão” - showed not very favorable results for Mercadão, considering that 56% of respondents answered they “strongly disagree” which may explain the high outcomes of neutral answers for the remaining statements.

It was also evaluated respondents' level of association between certain attributes, benefits, or brands presented and Mercadão's service (Table 5). The attributes with higher results in their degree of association were: Pingo Doce, timesaving, convenience, comfort, and personal shopper (Graphic 8).

ATTRIBUTES	BENEFITS	BRANDS
Personal Shopper	Convenience	<i>Pingo Doce</i>
Offer Variety	Quality	
Personalization	Timesaving	
	Comfort	
	Safety	

Table 5 - Attributes, benefits, and brands



Graphic 8 - Brand associations

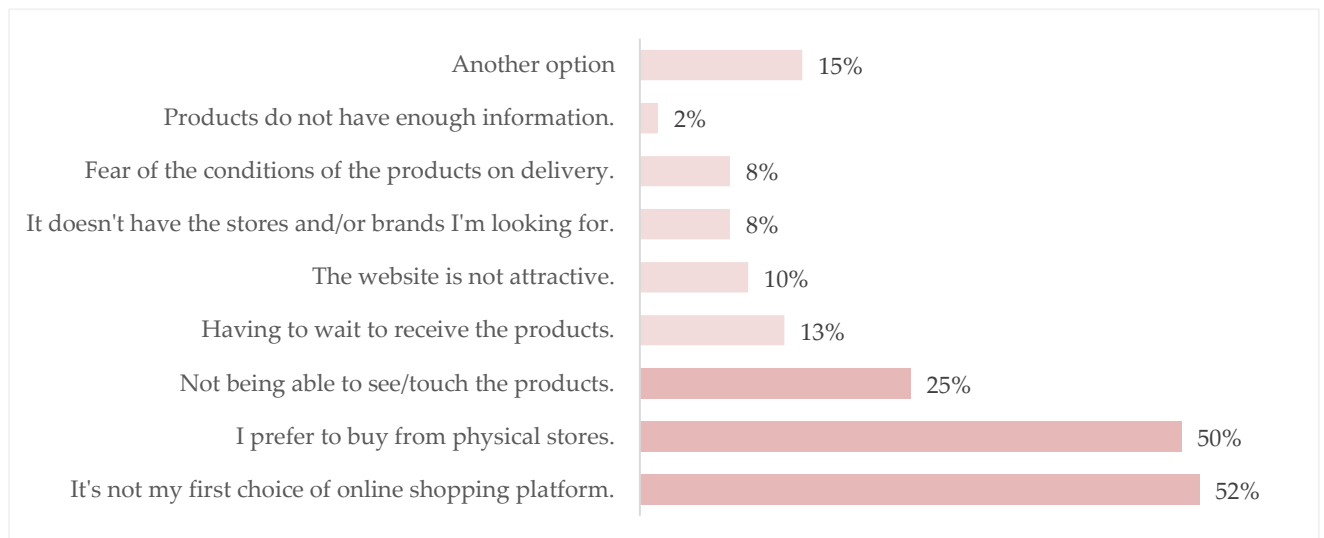
### Behavioral Dimension:

To finalize the analysis of Mercado's brand response, it was followed an assessment of the behavioral dimension of respondents towards Mercado's brand, asking if those who knew Mercado, if they ever shopped on this platform, and if so, how often they do it. About 42% answered affirmatively and of those more than half do it "occasionally". As a matter of fact, all of those who said they had already used the shopping platform agreed that they would recommend this experience.

On the other hand, the questionnaire looked to understand the main reasons of those who never did it, and three of the reasons stood out (Graphic 9):

- "It's not my first choice of online shopping platform"
- "I prefer to buy from physical stores"
- "Not being able to see/touch the products"

Curiously, these results were aligned to the issues addressed in the first chapter and the main reasons that led to the research questions that guided this project.

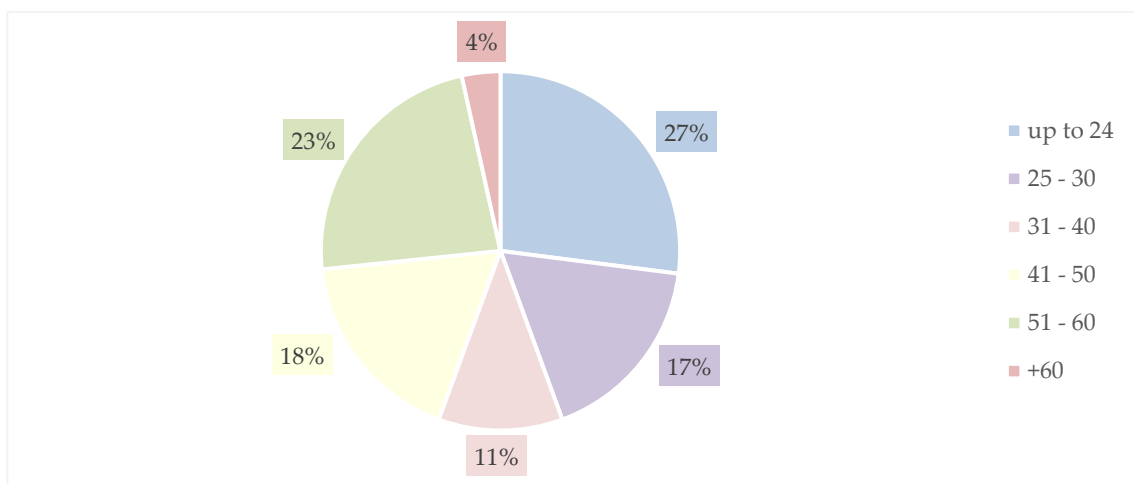


Graphic 9 - Reasons not to buy at Mercado

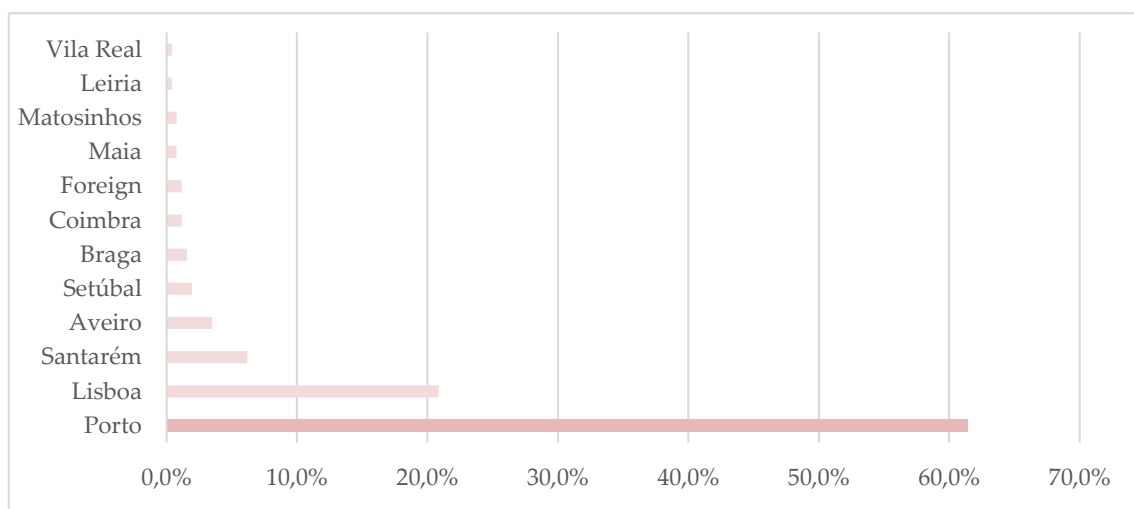
## 4.2 Quantitative Study 2

### 4.2.1 Sample

The second questionnaire reached 259 responses of those only 2% who weren't Portuguese. The questionnaire covered different age groups, from 17 to 80 years old, with 70% of respondents being more than 25 years (Graphic 11). The sample returned to meet the target audience of Mercadão, with 63% of female respondents. Regarding respondents' district of residence, they are mainly concentrated in the Porto region (Graphic 10).



Graphic 11 - Age distribution



Graphic 10 - Geographic distribution

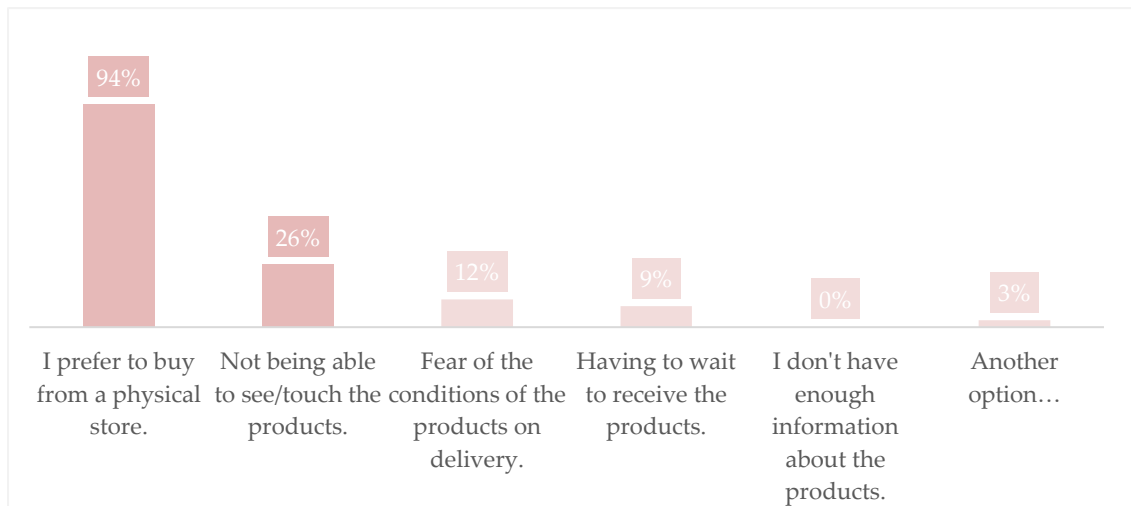
## 4.2.2 Procedure

This survey (appendix 2) was also created through Google Forms and shared through: WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Responses were accepted from 29th March to April 2nd and after that, the results were collected and analyzed through excel.

## 4.2.3 Data Analysis

To collect the desired data, it was necessary to obtain answers from people who were familiar with the online channel, so the questionnaire started by asking if respondents shop online. From this question, it was concluded that 87% of the sample make online purchases and 13% do not. Those identified the following main reasons not to shop online (graphic 12):

- “I prefer to buy from a physical store.”
- “Not being able to see/touch the products.”

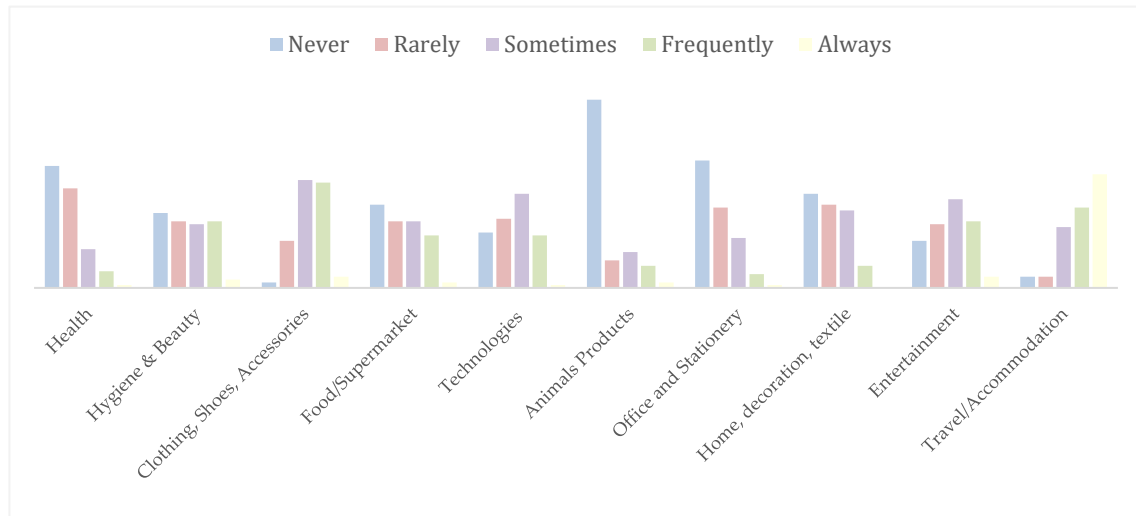


Graphic 12 - Reasons not to buy at Mercadoão

The questionnaire also tried to understand which are the main product categories that people buy more often through the online channel. As seen in Graphic 13, 30% said they never shop “Food/supermarket” online, and 24% do it “rarely”. It is also possible to see that the product categories with the highest

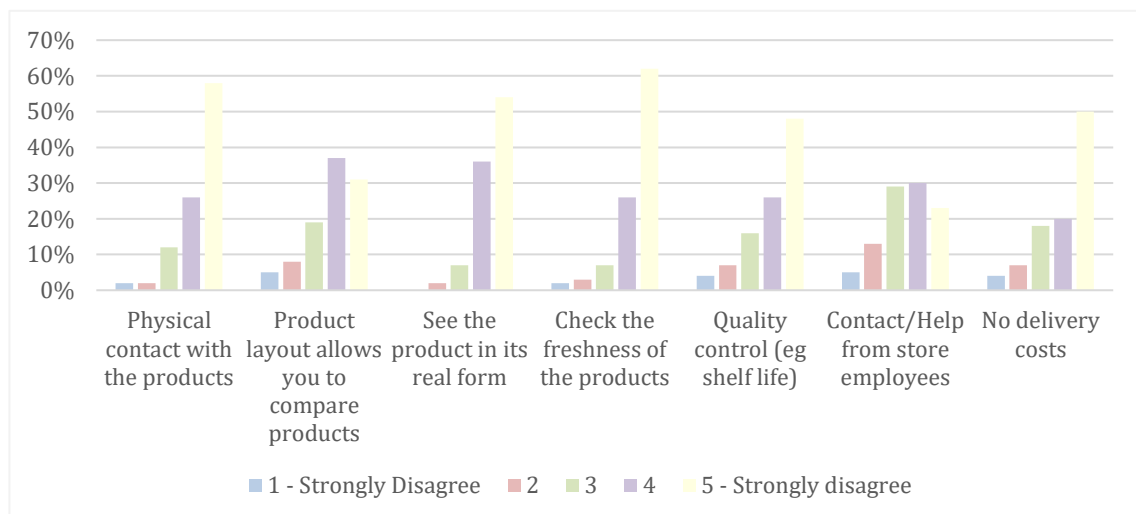


levels of online purchase frequency were “travel and accommodation” and “clothing, shoes and/or accessories”.

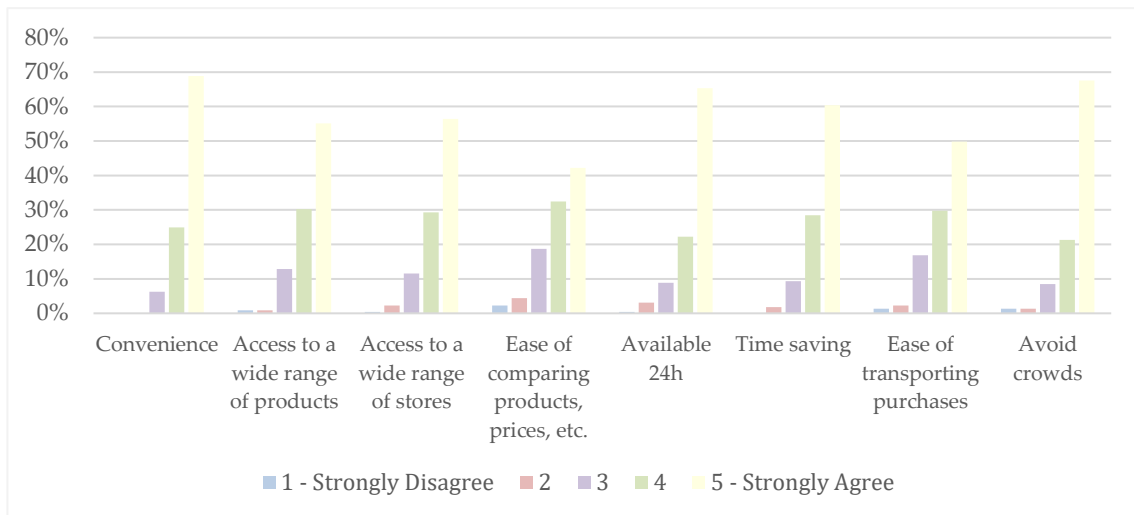


Graphic 13 - Online shopping frequency by product category

To analyze the benefits people attach to both physical and online stores, some advantages were presented to respondents, asking them to state their level of agreement with each one. Regarding physical stores, the 3 main reasons were: “check the freshness of the products”, “physical contact with the products”, and “product layout allows you to compare products” (Graphic 14). The top 3 benefits of online stores were: “convenience”, “avoid crowds”, and “available 24h” (Graphic 15).

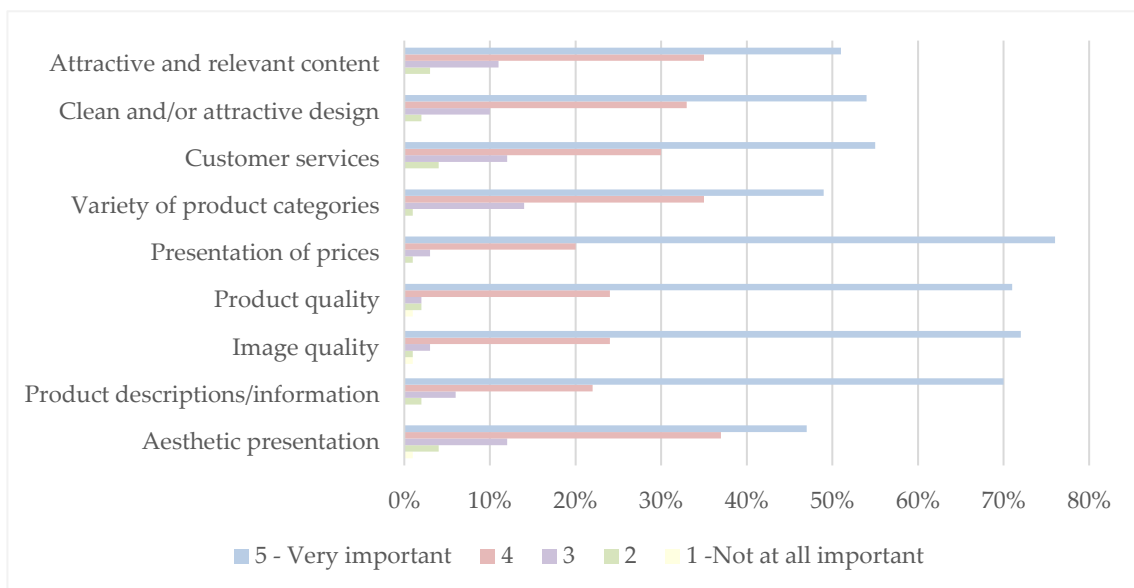


Graphic 14 - Benefits of physical stores



Graphic 15 - Benefits of online stores

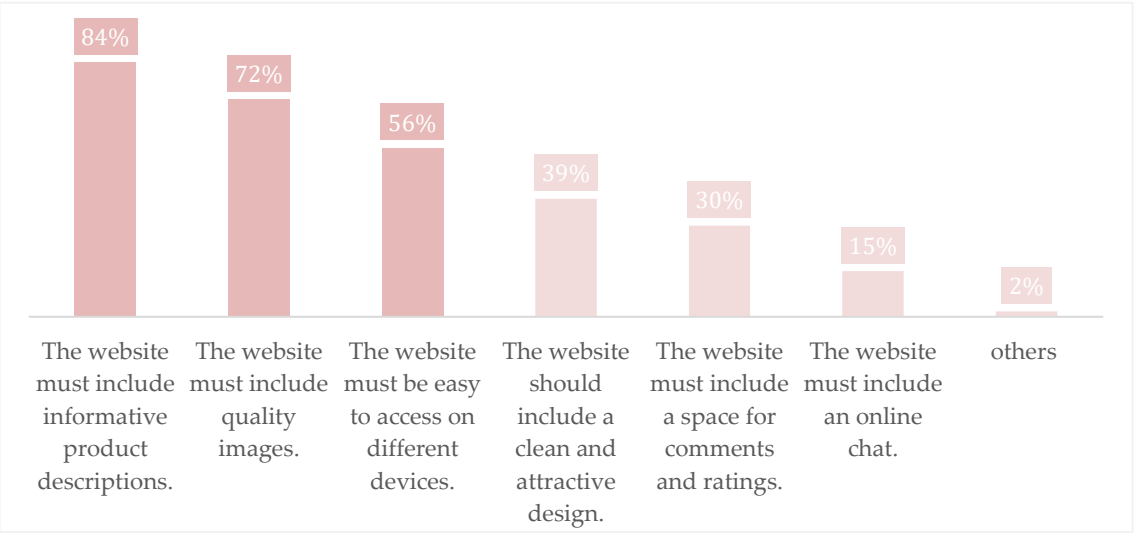
The survey followed a question to perceive how important certain attributes are to people on online shopping platforms. A Top 4 attributes stood out where the answer “very important” had responses above 70%, as shown in Graphic 16.



Graphic 16 - Attributes valued in online shopping platforms

For a more focused question on the online customer experience, it was asked to respondents select 3 factors that they consider most decisive in their online shopping experience. The answers revealed that informative product

descriptions and quality images must be included on the website and that the site must be easy to access on different devices (Graphic 17).



Graphic 17 - Decisive factors in consumers' online shopping experiences

Regarding product presentation, respondents were asked the 3 attributes that they consider most relevant in the online product presentation. After the presentation of prices, the description of the products stood out with 71% of the sample considering this attribute as one of the 3 most relevant. Focusing on product descriptions, a question was asked aiming to understand which kind of product information people value most. Results show that after price, images quality, brand, ingredients, and mode of use/consumption, are relevant product information to be considered in product descriptions, online.

For a more complete understanding of the consumer attitude towards product presentation and product description in their online shopping experience, 4 comparisons of online product presentations were demonstrated, trying to understand which presentations respondents value the most.

The first presentations - A and B - intended to understand the importance people attach to the presentation of additional information (presentation B) about the product, besides the name, brand, image, and price (presentation A). About 69% of the sample chose the second presentation. Most of the comments left

regarding the reasons for their choice focused on the importance of a more complete product description, however, not so prominently, for a cleaner presentation, suggesting the hypothesis that this information appears only if the person clicks on an option to obtain this information.

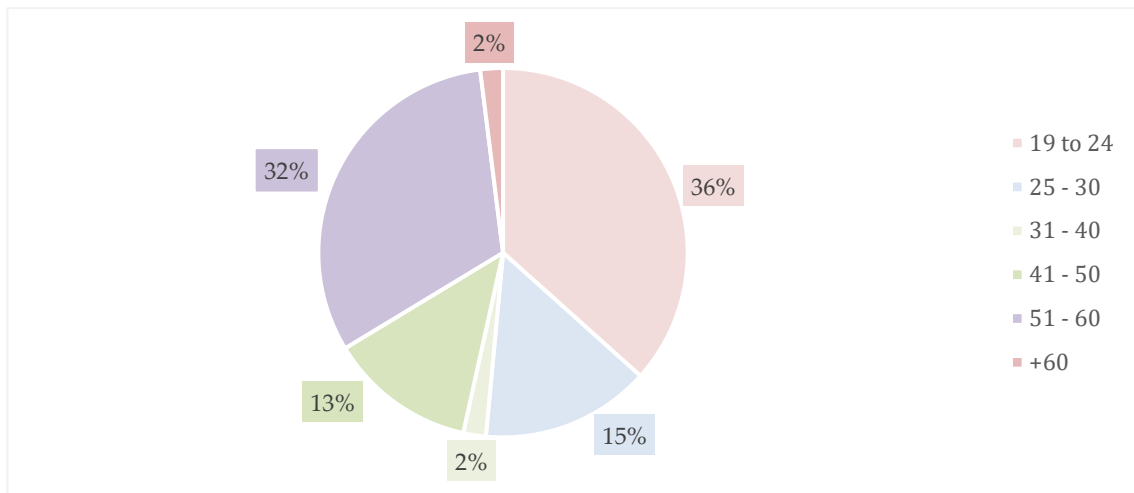
The objective of presentations C and D was to understand if people value the written product description or product information through images. The results show that 91% of the sample prefer presentation C (written description), and their comments revealed that this kind of presentation was, in their opinion, cleaner and easier to read.

The next presentations aimed to see how relevant image quality is for people. Regarding presentations E and F, 95% of the sample chose the second one, and for presentations G and H, 96% chose presentation H. Both results evidence the relevance of a quality image that, according to some comments, represents a more appealing and professional presentation.

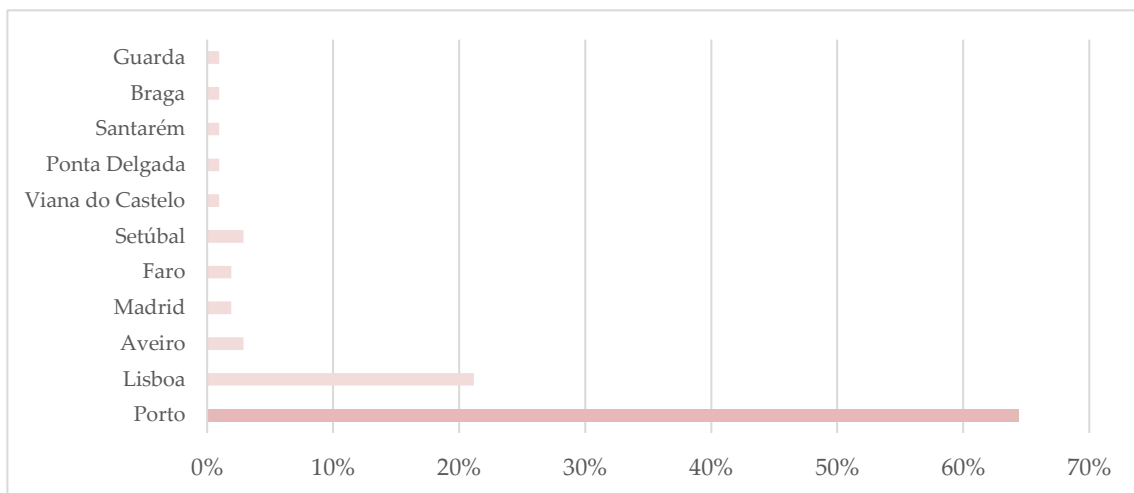
### 4.3. Quantitative Study 3

#### 4.3.1 Sample

The sample of last questionnaire was smaller as it obtained 104 responses from mainly Portuguese people. Regarding age distribution, the range between 19 and 24 years old stands out with 37% of responses, followed by the age group between 51 and 60 years old, which resulted in 32% of responses. As in the previous questionnaires, the female gender stands out, representing 65% of the responses. The results of this questionnaire were even more concentrated in the Porto region.



Graphic 18 – Age distribution



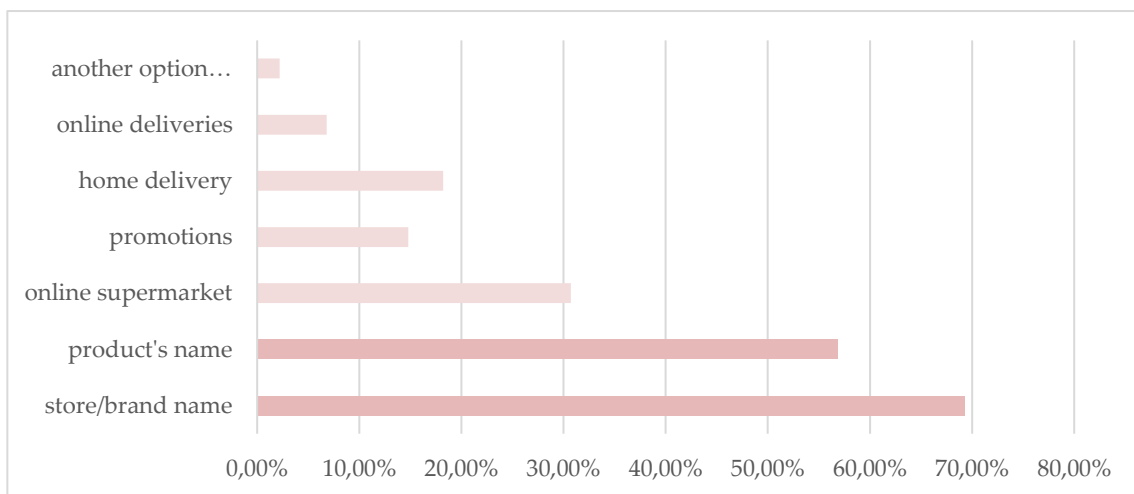
Graphic 19 - Geographic distribution

### 4.3.2 Procedure

The last quantitative study (appendix 3) followed the same logic as the previous two, being also created through Google Forms and shared through social media networks. Responses were accepted from April 2nd to April 5th, and results were collected and analyzed through Excel.

### 4.3.3 Data Analysis

As done in the first questionnaires, the initial question intended to understand who makes use of the online shopping method, concluding that 85% of the sample makes online purchases. After this, it followed a question to see what kind of keywords people insert in search engines when doing online research in the food retail area. Of the results listed, the name of the store/brand and the products name stood out, with higher percentages of responses (Graphic 20).



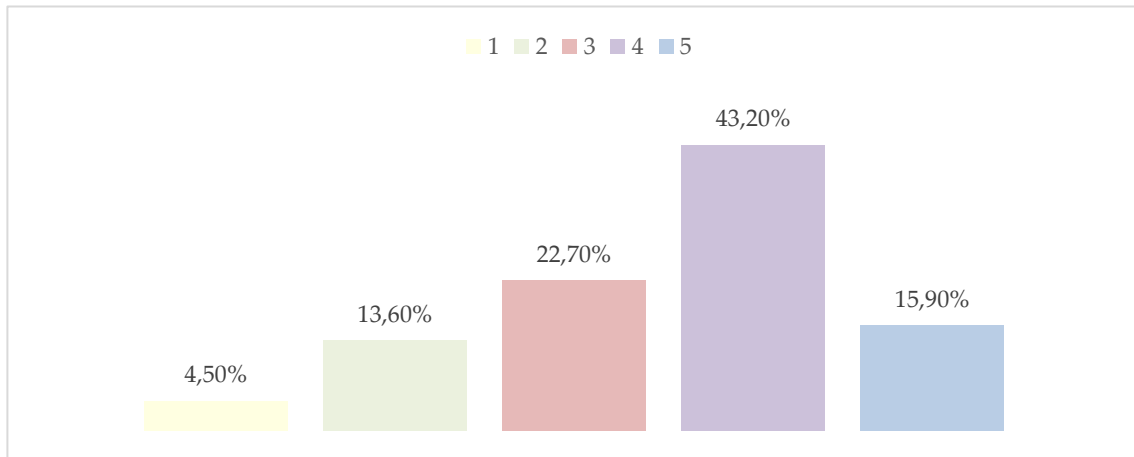
Graphic 20 - Keywords

To realize people's sensibility to brands that appear in 1st place in the search engine, when doing online searches, it was used a Linker scale, from "1- Not at all sensitive to 5 - Very sensitive". The fourth level was the most answered, with about 43% of the answers (graphic 21). With that, the questionnaire ended by asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement with specific statements to draw some conclusions regarding the importance they attach to their experience with SEO techniques. The results highlighted the following statements, which showed higher percentages in the highest levels of agreement:

- "Easy and efficient access to a website is very important."
- "It is important for you when you do an online search that the desired and relevant results come up."

- “You consider that the appearance of a brand in the first place in your search engine demonstrates greater brand awareness.”

The overall showed that people agree with the importance, convenience, and benefits of applying SEO techniques, presented in the statements.



Graphic 21 - Sensibility to brands that appear 1st in search engines

# Chapter 5

## 5. Discussion

This study sought to focus on improving the consumer experience, analyzing two content marketing strategies to understand their relevance in the online market, based on the case of Mercadoão.

Thus, the project started by analyzing Mercadoão's brand, based on the Brand Model, and evaluating the response of consumers to the brand, after 4 years of the company's existence. The results showed that despite the brand it's not at the top of mind of online shopping platforms, online shoppers manifested positive opinions and the brand seems to be gaining recognition. In addition, the company's values, mission, and objectives seem to be well understood by consumers, considering the associations they made to the brand, whether in terms of benefits, attributes, and associated brands. However, this first study results demonstrated how the online channel still represents obstacles and insecurities for some consumers, mainly related to consumers' preference for physical stores also associated with the need to touch and see products in real time as referred by Rathee & Rajain (2019).

These issues end up proving the need to consider strategies for online companies to stand out to face these obstacles and attempt to create experiences that meet customer needs, reducing the discrepancy mentioned by Hewawalpita & Perera (2017), regarding consumer experiences in online stores in comparison with traditional shopping.

Focusing on content marketing strategies to improve online customer experiences, the second quantitative study tried to understand how relevant product presentations and product descriptions represent to customers, in the online environment. Firstly, the results obtained confirmed the hesitation of



some customers in relation to the online channel, who prefer to go to physical stores and who consider the need to touch the products as the main reasons for not shopping online. On the other hand, the results obtained were very much in line with the literature review regarding the benefits that people find in online shopping platforms presented by Barari et al. (2020), referring to convenience, 24-hour availability, and the possibility of avoiding crowds.

Furthermore, the results of the second study carried out allowed to recognize that product presentation on websites of brands and retailers is, in fact, significant for consumers, namely, informative product descriptions and quality images. Thus, this study allowed to confirm the ideas presented by Park et al. (2005) regarding how the visual presentation of product, its attractiveness, can affect customer's online purchase intention. Therefore, as mentioned by Schlosser et al. (2006), it is crucial for companies' success and their ability to transform visitors into buyers, to develop effective design elements for product's web pages. More precisely, the results showed that quality images and complete informative product descriptions, two design elements whose importance is also mentioned by Bleier et al. (2019), should be considered in companies' strategies.

The final quantitative study confirmed that people agree with the importance and convenience of finding their wanted results when searching online, proving that, as mentioned by Bilgihan et al. (2016) and Yalçın & Köse (2010) consumers value easy access to websites, effective and well-presented web pages, original content and relevant keywords, therefore being important strategies to be considered by companies.

# Chapter 6

## 6. Conclusions and Further Research

The current evolution of e-commerce strongly impacted both businesses' and consumers' lives. In one hand, the growing competitiveness in this market forced companies to stand out with differentiating strategies that meet consumers' needs. On another hand, the discrepancy between physical and online customer experiences is still considerable. In this sense, companies need to adopt strategies that not only allow them to stand out from their competitors, but also that try to mitigate the obstacles, uncertainties and insecurities still associated with the online channel, providing positive online customer experiences.

Through an in-depth analysis of the e-commerce market and the online customer experience, this project proposes two content marketing strategies that are still little mentioned and valued by previous literature, product presentation (product descriptions) and SEO techniques. The quantitative studies developed allow to conclude that product presentation and, more precisely, quality images and complete and relevant informative product descriptions are decisive factors in customers online shopping experiences, that companies should be take into consideration in their businesses' strategies to transform their website visitors into buyers.

Moreover, it was possible to recognize that consumers are sensitive to brands that appear first in their search engines, as they value not only an easy but also efficient access to websites, that presents desired and relevant search results, to which consumers associate greater brand awareness. Therefore, online companies should invest in SEO techniques, improving their contents and keywords, to reach better website ranking results, and be the most accessible platform, and to be considered at first.

Despite the study results, this project faced some limitations, namely regarding the size and geographical distribution of the samples, beside the fact that the samples in each study were not the same, which doesn't represent consistency in the results obtained. Also, in the second questionnaire, the product presentations revealed to respondents were not professionally developed, therefore, they may not express the exact details as in a real website.

With that in mind, for further investigations, it is suggested to be developed a different research technique, where customers could evaluate real time website presentations, to better understand the details and the differences between each one.

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# Appendix

## Questionnaire 1

This questionnaire was prepared within the scope of my final thesis of the Master's in Marketing at UCP - Católica Porto Business School and whose main objective is to study techniques to improve the online experience of consumers.

In this sense, I invite you to participate in this research work, answering this questionnaire, which will take less than 5 minutes.

There are no right or wrong answers, the important thing is that you answer honestly and according to your opinion. All responses and data obtained will remain anonymous and will only be used for this investigation.

Your answers are very important for the development of this work and, therefore, I thank you for your availability and participation in this study.

### **Demographic data**

- Age (in numbers)
- Gender
  - Feminine
  - Masculine
  - Rather not answer
- Nationality (Short Answer)
- District of Residence (Short Answer)
- Occupation
  - Full-time employee
  - Part-time employee
  - Intern
  - Student



- Unemployed
- Retired
- Another option ...

### **Online Shopping**

- Do you shop online?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the person responds negatively, the questionnaire ends here.*

*If the person answers yes:*

### **Online Shopping Platforms**

- How often do you shop online?
  - Very Frequent
  - Frequent
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
- What is the first brand that comes to mind when you think of online shopping platforms? (Short answer)
- What other online shopping platforms do you know? (Short answer)
- What is your favorite online shopping platform? (Short answer)
- From the following online shopping platforms, select those you know.
  - Dott
  - Continente Online
  - Mercadão
  - 360 Hyper
  - Auchan Online

- Glovo
- Uber Eats
- El Corte Inglés Online
- Pingo Doce Online
- None
- Another option...
- On which of these platforms do you purchase, or have you ever purchased?
  - Dott
  - Continente Online
  - Mercadão
  - 360 Hyper
  - Auchan Online
  - Glovo
  - Uber Eats
  - El Corte Inglés Online
  - Pingo Doce Online
  - None
  - Another option...

### **Mercadão**

- Do you know Mercadão?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the person responds negatively, the questionnaire ends here.*

*If the person answers yes:*

- For you, Mercadão is... (Short answer)

- Please indicate the degree of agreement (1- Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree) with the following statements:
  - I do a lot of shopping at Mercadão.
  - I like to go to the website but then I do the shopping in the physical store.
  - Mercadão is a very convenient service.
  - Mercadão has the brands I need.
  - I would like the Mercadão platform to have other brands.
  - Mercadão has very personalized service.
  - Mercadão allows me to save time on the things I like.
- Please indicate which stores you can find in Mercadão's platform:
  - Sport Zone
  - Auchan
  - Arcádia
  - Celeiro
  - FC Porto
  - Decathlon
  - Firmo
  - Ambar
  - Ornimundo
  - Gleba
  - Odisseias
  - Control
  - Pingo Doce
  - LEV
  - Mercadona

- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - I don't associate at all and 5 - I associate a lot), indicate your level of association between Mercadoão and the following words/expressions.
  - Personal Shopper
  - Pingo Doce
  - Convenience
  - Quality
  - Security
  - Comfort
  - Offer Variety
  - Time-Saving
  - Personalization
- Have you ever shopped at Mercadoão?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the person answers no:*

- From the following, please indicate 3 reasons not to buy at Mercadoão:
  - I prefer to buy from a physical store.
  - It doesn't have the stores and/or brands I'm looking for.
  - Not being able to see/touch the products.
  - Fear of the conditions of the products on delivery.
  - Having to wait to receive the products.
  - The website is not attractive.

*If the person answers yes:*

- How often do you shop at Mercadoão?
  - Weekly

- Biweekly/every fifteen days
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Do you recommend shopping at Mercadoão?
  - Yes
  - No

*End of the quiz!*

## Questionnaire 2

This questionnaire was prepared within the scope of my final thesis of the Master's in Marketing at UCP - Católica Porto Business School and whose main objective is to study techniques to improve the online experience of consumers.

In this sense, I invite you to participate in this research work, answering this questionnaire, which will take less than 10 minutes.

There are no right or wrong answers, the important thing is that you answer honestly and according to your opinion. All responses and data obtained will remain anonymous and will only be used for this investigation.

Your answers are very important for the development of this work and, therefore, I thank you for your availability and participation in this study.

### **Demographic data**

- Age (in numbers)
- Gender
  - Feminine
  - Masculine
  - Other
  - Nationality (Short Answer)

- District of Residence (Short Answer)

### **Online Shopping**

- Do you shop online?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the person responds "No":*

- What are the reasons?
  - I prefer to buy from a physical store.
  - Not being able to see/touch the products.
  - Fear of the conditions of the products on delivery.
  - Having to wait to receive the products.
  - I don't have enough information about the products.
  - Another option...

*End of the quiz!*

*If the person responds "Yes":*

- Please indicate how often you buy the following product categories online? (1 – Never; 2 – Rarely; 3 – Sometimes; 4 – Often; 5 – Always)
  - Health
  - Hygiene and Beauty
  - Clothing, Shoes and/or Accessories
  - Food / Supermarket
  - Technologies - home appliances, mobile phones, computers, etc.
  - Animals - food, accessories, toys, etc.
  - Office and Stationery
  - Home, Decoration and Textile

- Entertainment - Toys, Books, Music, Movies
- Travel and Accommodation
- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1- strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree), please indicate your level of agreement regarding the benefits that you value the most in the traditional shopping method (physical stores).
  - Physical contact with the products
  - Product layout allows you to compare products
  - See the product in its real form
  - Check the freshness of the products
  - Quality control (eg shelf life)
  - Contact/Help from store employees
  - No delivery costs
- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1- strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree), please indicate your level of agreement in relation to the benefits you most value in the online shopping method.
  - Convenience
  - Access to a wide range of products
  - Access to a wide range of stores
  - Ease of comparing products, prices, etc.
  - Available 24h
  - Time saving
  - Ease of transporting purchases
  - Avoid crowds
- Of the following online shopping platforms, please how often do you use the following online shopping platforms. (1 – Never; 2 – Rarely; 3 – Regularly; 4 – Often)
  - Auchan Online
  - El Corte Inglés Online

- Dott
- Mercado
- Pingo Doce Online
- Glovo
- Uber Eats
- Continente Online
- 360 Hyper
- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - Not at all important to 5 - Very Important), please indicate the degree of importance you attribute, in an online shopping platform, to the following attributes.
  - Aesthetic presentation
  - Product descriptions/information
  - Image quality
  - Product quality
  - Presentation of prices
  - Variety of product categories
  - Customer services
  - Clean and/or attractive design
  - Attractive and relevant content
- Indicate 3 factors that you consider most decisive in your online shopping experience.
  - The website must include quality images.
  - The website must include informative product descriptions.
  - The website should include a clean and attractive design.
  - The website must be easy to access on different devices.
  - The website must include an online chat.
  - The website must include a space for comments and ratings.



- On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 - Not at all important I value to 5 - Very Important), please indicate the degree of importance you attribute to the different types of product information presented in the online store.
  - Price
  - Brand
  - Weight/capacity
  - Ingredients
  - Nutritional declaration
  - Mode of use/consumption
  - Usage advice
  - Packaging materials
  - Conservation mode
  - Image quality
- Taking into account the presentation of the products in an online store, select the 3 attributes that you value the most.
  - Presentation of prices
  - Image quality
  - Product Description
  - Organization of product categories
  - Design/aesthetics/colors
  - Variety of products
  - Variety of stores/brands
  - Another option...

### **Product Presentation**

Consider the two ways of presenting the same product, of the same brand and with the same price, from a fictitious online store.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Presentation

### a) Presentation A



### b) Presentation B



- Taking into account the images above, which product presentation do you value the most?
  - Presentation A
  - Presentation B
  - Indifferent

- Presentation A vs B: If you wish, leave a comment regarding the reason for your choice. (Short answer)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Presentation

### a) Presentation C



**Vinho Tinto Grande Reserva  
Adega de Pegões**

75 CL (15,99 €/L)

**14,99€**

 CARRINHO

**INFORMAÇÃO ADICIONAL:**

**CLASSIFICAÇÃO:** Vinho Tinto Regional Península de Setúbal

**CASTAS:** Syrah, Touriga Nacional, Aragonez, Alicante Bouschet

**MODO DE SERVIR:** 16 - 18°C

**CONSERVAÇÃO:** Local fresco, escuro e garrafa deitada.

**TEOR ALCOÓLICO:** 14,5% volume

**ACIDEZ TOTAL:** 5,5g de ácido tartárico

**pH:** 3,60

Este vinho é uma produção única de uma vindima extraordinária que apenas será elaborado em anos excecionais.

**NOTA DE PROVA:**

- **Cor:** Granada
- **Aroma:** Frutos vermelhos e pretos bem maduros, amarelos, complexa, evoluindo para especiarias e chocolate ao longo dos anos
- **Prova:** Taninos macios, boa estrutura, final longo

**SERVI-LO COM:** Pratos de carne, caça e queijos intensos.

### b) Presentation D



**Vinho Tinto Grande Reserva  
Adega de Pegões**

75 CL (15,99 €/L)

**14,99€**

 CARRINHO

**Vinho de Pegões  
Grande Reserva Tinto**

Este vinho é uma produção única de uma vindima extraordinária que apenas será elaborado em anos excecionais.

**CLASSIFICAÇÃO:** Vinho Tinto Regional Península de Setúbal

**CASTAS:** Syrah, Touriga Nacional, Aragonez, Alicante Bouschet

**MODO DE SERVIR:** 16 - 18°C

**CONSERVAÇÃO:** Local fresco, escuro e garrafa deitada.

**TEOR ALCOÓLICO:** 14,5% volume

**ACIDEZ TOTAL:** 5,5g de ácido tartárico

**pH:** 3,60

Este vinho é uma produção única de uma vindima extraordinária que apenas será elaborado em anos excecionais.

**NOTA DE PROVA:**

- **Cor:** Granada
- **Aroma:** Frutos vermelhos e pretos bem maduros, amarelos, complexa, evoluindo para especiarias e chocolate ao longo dos anos
- **Prova:** Taninos macios, boa estrutura, final longo

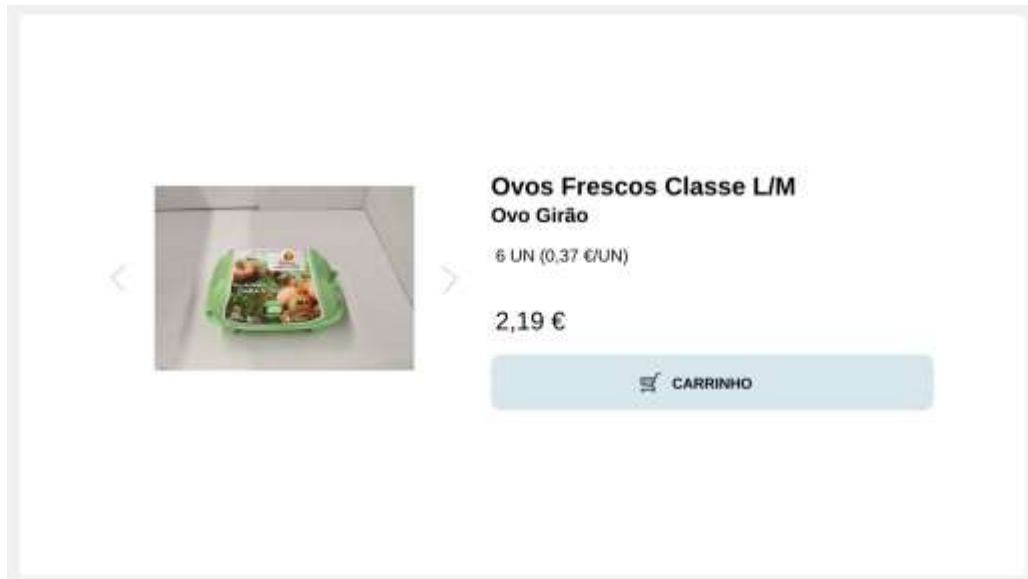
**SERVI-LO COM:** Pratos de carne, caça e queijos intensos.

- Taking into account the images above, which product presentation do you value the most?
  - Presentation C
  - Presentation D

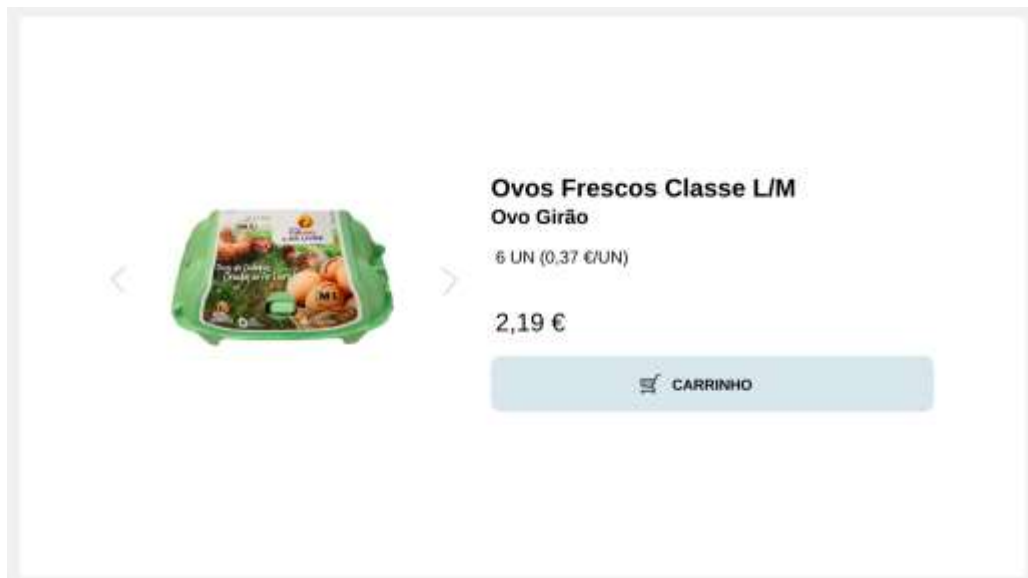
- Indifferent
- Presentation C vs D: If you wish, leave a comment regarding the reason for your choice. (short answer)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Presentation

a) Presentation E



b) Presentation F



- Taking into account the images above, which product presentation do you value the most?
  - Presentation E

- Presentation F
- Indifferent
- Presentation E vs F: If you wish, leave a comment regarding the reason for your choice. (short answer)

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Presentation

a) Presentation G



b) Presentation H



- Taking into account the images above, which product presentation do you value the most?

- Presentation G
- Presentation H
- Indifferent
- Presentation G vs H: If you wish, leave a comment regarding the reason for your choice. (short answer)

Considering your choices above from online product presentations, please answer the following question.

- On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, taking into account the reasons for your decisions in choosing the presentations shown above (1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree).
  - Bearing in mind that in an online store I cannot touch/see the product, having complete information about the product can help in my purchase decision.
  - The type of product, the brand, price, and capacity are the essential information for my purchase.
  - Product information increases my confidence in online shopping.
  - The type of additional product information presented is not relevant to my decision.
  - Additional relevant product information reduces my uncertainties/insecurities regarding online shopping.
  - Product information increases my confidence in the online shopping platform.
  - Bearing in mind that in an online store I cannot touch/see the product, the presentation of quality images is very important in my purchase decision.

- The quality of the images in the product presentation increases my confidence in the online purchase.
- A product presentation with quality images reduces my uncertainties/insecurities regarding online shopping.
- The product image increases my confidence in the online shopping platform.

*End of the quiz!*

## Questionnaire 3

This questionnaire was prepared within the scope of my final thesis of the Master's in Marketing at UCP - Católica Porto Business School and whose main objective is to study techniques to improve the online experience of consumers.

In this sense, I invite you to participate in this research work, answering this questionnaire, which will take less than 5 minutes.

There are no right or wrong answers, the important thing is that you answer honestly and according to your opinion. All responses and data obtained will remain anonymous and will only be used for this investigation.

Your answers are very important for the development of this work and, therefore, I thank you for your availability and participation in this study.

### **Demographic data**

- Age (in numbers)
- Gender
  - Feminine
  - Masculine

- Other
- Nationality (Short Answer)
- District of Residence (Short Answer)

### **Online Shopping**

- Do you shop online?
  - Yes
  - No

### **Keywords**

Note: Keywords are words or phrases entered in the search engine to look for something online.

- When you do online research in the food retail area, what keywords do you usually use?
  - store/brand name
  - product's name
  - online supermarket
  - promotions
  - home delivery
  - online deliveries
  - another option...
- Please indicate your degree of sensitivity (1 - not at all sensitive to 5 - very sensitive) in relation to the following question:
  - When starting your online search, are you sensitive to the brands that appear in the 1st place in the search engine?
- Please indicate your degree of agreement (1 - I don't agree to 5 - I totally agree) with the following statements:



- When you are doing an online search and are intercepted by a brand reference, you easily change your purchase option.
- When you're doing an online search, you don't like to see options other than the one you're looking for.
- It is important for you when you do an online search that the desired and relevant results come up.
- You like to search by keywords and not by brands in order to understand the brands with greater notoriety.
- You are not sensitive to ratings and comments posted on platforms.
- In your opinion, the brands that appear in a search in 1st place is only because they pay to get it.
- You find the immediate appearance of tags when entering a keyword to be very convenient.
- You consider that the appearance of a brand in the first place in your search engine demonstrates greater brand awareness.
- You value more the brands that appear in 1st place in its online searches.
- When you search online, you only consider the first brands that appear in the search engine.
- Easy and efficient access to a website is very important.

*End of the quiz!*