

**ONLINE BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS PERSONALISED AND INTERACTIVE
CONTENT COMMUNICATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ONLINE
RELATIONSHIP**

The case of the reseller market in the IT sector in the Portuguese context

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of online personalised content and interactive content communication on online relationship through trust, satisfaction and commitment as affective mediator dimensions in a Business-to-Business (B2B) context.

Methodology: This study was conducted in the B2B reseller market of information technology (IT) in Portugal. A quantitative research approach was conducted using structural equation modelling in order to estimate the conceptual model and test the hypotheses.

Findings: The findings indicated that online communication influence positively online relationship through trust and satisfaction. Interactive content has a strong influence on affective dimensions underlining trust with the highest direct effect. Whereas, the personalised content revealed a weak relationship with trust, satisfaction and online relationship (via indirectly). Additionally, personalised content is not related with commitment.

Originality/value: From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes with insights such as interactive content is more influential than personalised content in building and maintaining online relationships in B2B reseller market.

Keywords: B2B; Personalised content; Interactive content; Online relationship.

RESUMO

Proposta: O principal objetivo deste estudo é analisar, no contexto Business-to-Business (B2B), a influência da comunicação online, nomeadamente o conteúdo personalizado e o conteúdo interativo, no relacionamento online, tendo como mediadores os paradigmas de confiança, satisfação e compromisso.

Metodologia: O estudo foi realizado no âmbito do B2B, mais especificamente no mercado revendedor das tecnologias de informação em Portugal. Foi usada uma abordagem de investigação quantitativa baseada no modelo de equações estruturais, com o fim de estimar o modelo conceptual e testar as hipóteses de investigação.

Resultados: No geral os resultados indicaram que existe uma influência positiva entre a comunicação online e o relacionamento online. A confiança e a satisfação assumem relevância como mediadores nessa relação. O conteúdo interativo demonstrou ter uma forte influência direta sobre as três dimensões afetivas, nomeadamente na confiança. Por sua vez, o conteúdo personalizado revelou ter uma fraca influência sobre a confiança, satisfação e o relacionamento online (indiretamente). Adicionalmente, os resultados demonstraram que o conteúdo personalizado não apresenta uma relação significativa com o compromisso.

Originalidade /valor: Numa perspetiva teórica, este estudo contribui para uma melhor compreensão, particularmente no facto de que o conteúdo interativo demonstrou ter mais influência do que o conteúdo personalizado na construção e manutenção das relações online no mercado revendedor B2B.

Palavras-chave: B2B, Conteúdo personalizado, Conteúdo Interativo, Relacionamento online.

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I was brought up listening to my mother saying a well-known proverb “knowledge does not take up any space”. It could sound a little bit at first, but in fact, it had a significant impact on my life choices. Therefore, my first and foremost thanks go to her for the encouragement to pursue my studies and all the sacrifices that she made to provide me with a good education. Another person who played an important role in this pathway was my husband Jorge Ricardo who never let me give up on finishing this academic degree, to him I am very thankful for all the support over this last tough, challenging year.

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Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

Nelson Mandela

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adaptability to a swiftly shifting business environment is essential. Companies need the capacity to adjust their messages so that they are aligned with customers demands and adjust technological systems to ensure success. (Teece, 2007; Makkonen & Sundqvist-Andberg, 2017). A significant disruptive technology which has been described to alter the face of B2B exchange relationships is the Internet (Cousins & Speakman, 2003). As a channel medium, the Internet provides unique exchange-enhancing features. First, its the interactivity and connectivity nature stimulates the development of online relationships. In such an environment, exchanges in B2B may bring more durable relationships (Ellis & Ching, 2006). It is evident that the appeal of doing online business on the Internet by automating transactions brings together large numbers of suppliers and customers. Besides that, the Internet enables markets to grow, adds choices for customers to search for information as well as give suppliers access to new customers. At the same time, using the Internet in a B2B environment reduces costs for all intermediates in the distribution channel (Kaplan & Sawhney, 2000; McIvor & Humphreys, 2004).

Using online channels to obtain information before purchasing is currently the most common pattern of customers' behaviour (Rosenbloom, 2007). Similar to the conventional distribution channels, the Internet is a medium quite capable of communicating information and leading transactions (Webb, 2002). With the expansion of the Internet, one of the major changes undergone in B2B was undoubtedly in the relationships between the different stakeholders. A one-to-one relationship has emerged, and communication has been assuming an important role as the "heart" of B2B channel in regards to build and maintain online relationships (McIvor & Humphreys, 2004; Fill & Fill, 2005; Palmatier et al., 2006). Today, trust, satisfaction and commitment are placed at the centre as key factors in the online environment to create and reinforce online relationships (Taylor et al., 2001; Briones et al., 2011).

This new reality required a rethinking of communication strategies to entice, build and reinforce online relationships (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2015). Simplifying the search and the access of content may increase value to the customers (Picard, 2000). Personalised content emerged as a key to solve the overload of online information, providing an accurate recommendation of relevant content to the customer (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011; Liang et al., 2014). Moreover, interactive content has been shown to be helpful for a customer who needs immediate

assistance. The power of real-time facilitates the reciprocal relationship, and the quality of the message has demonstrated a positive impact on customer (Song & Zinkhan, 2008).

These changes have triggered interest in studying how relationships are built and maintained in the B2B online environment. However, previous studies related to the personalised content or interactive content are a focus on content message or satisfaction as an outcome of purchase intention. Song & Zinkhan (2008) encompasses the interactivity theory to predict relationship where communication content of quality assume an important determinant. Thongpapanl & Ashraf (2011) empirically investigated the effect of personalised content on customer satisfaction and purchase intention. Liang et al. (2014) study the personalised content, and its effect on user satisfaction whereas Murphy & Sashi (2018) research is based on how interactive dimension including content links to relationship satisfaction.

Although, factors such as trust, satisfaction and commitment have been widely discussed as contributors to the relationship. The fact is that few studies recognised them as characteristics of relational exchanges as well as its importance as outcomes to build and maintain online relationships in B2B context (Ellis & Ching, 2006; Barret et al., 2007; Barry et al., 2008). Furthermore, both communication approaches – personalised and interactive contents - are not considered. Thus, the extant literature provides little evidence of how the online relationship in B2B context is created and reinforced by both communication-based strategies.

The present study attempts to bridge this gap identified in the literature, bringing together the fragmented body of research. At base, the influence of personalised and interactive contents communication on online relationship, examining more precisely the contribution of trust, satisfaction and commitment as affective drivers are explored to build and maintain an online relationship in B2B context.

To this end, the study structure is composed of three main sections. The first presents a theoretical base found in the literature from previous academic and scientific studies related to the study topic. Also, embodies a conceptual proposal model and hypothesis articulated and developed from the literature review evaluation. The second section addresses the research methodology, including data collection tool and the measurement technique adopted. Finally, the third section comprises analyses results, discussion, conclusions as well as limitations and suggestions to future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 B2B and Multichannel Distribution

B2B is defined by the products and services which are sold from one company to another company. It is also viewed as a complex purchasing system, due to the length of the decision-making process (Jensen, 2000; Holliman & Rowler, 2014; Kärkkäinen, Jussila, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014; Brennam et al., 2017; Zimmerman & Blythe, 2017; Hall, 2017). Such a complex environment stems from a complex network of stakeholders that play a part in a distribution channel.

According to Hastings (2011:7) the distribution channel is “a river of products or services that run from the seller or manufacturer to the end user”. It includes all the companies that participate in the process, designated as intermediary organisations that are between the manufacture of the product or service and the customer (Murphy & Sashi, 2018). In a B2B context, and depending on the type of industry (e.g. very specialise or technical/industrial), the distribution channel environment may be even more complex in some industries (Webb, 2002; Dibb et al., 2012). Other intermediates characteristics, such as the company size, level of relationships established, prices and regulations, may also affect such complexity (Chircu et al., 2015). The relationships between intermediates assume an important role because it occurs in quite a few different levels and with distinct individual goals (Dwyer & Jr, 2009).

Along with traditional purchase decision-making, a variety of decision-makers may be part of the decision-making process. In some cases a procurement buying team can be established, integrating the highest level of management. Within the decision-making process, the characteristics of the customer and the purchase situation may influence the decision (Fill, 2013; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011; Ata, 2018). This set means that the decision-making process could be lengthy and highly sensitive (Lemon et al., 2001; Hristova, 2013). Besides, there is no room for emotion, and the rational side prevails in the B2B context (Jensen, 2000; LaPlaca & da Silva, 2016; Hall, 2017; Zimmerman & Blythe, 2017) because a decision based on emotion could impact negatively on business performance (Hall, 2017).

Various changes in the B2B environment have been observed such as homogeneity of product quality, the complexity of products and services, and the increase of online interaction (Baumgarth, 2010; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011). B2B customers pursue detailed, quality information which may support them in their decision-making when selling the products to their

final customers (Boyle & Alwitt, 1999; Hall, 2017). Indeed, changes have recently occurred in the decision-making process in the B2B field. A large number of new skilled players in the B2B environment the so-called “digital natives”, are using the web to search for and compare information, and asking questions to salespeople (human representatives) only when they see a clear advantage in doing so (Rosenbloom, 2007; Zeferino, 2017). For example, an online search before contacting a supplier gives the opportunity for the buyer to conveniently select the necessary information and identify the best supplier before making the commercial contact (Spínola, 2011; Hollimann & Rowley, 2014; Clark et al., 2016). The online search process enhances the feeling of confidence. When customers have information access, they will have a better clear idea of product or service (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011; Rose et al., 2012).

The B2B market is divided into three different types of distribution channels: the reseller or commercial channel, the governmental and public sector channel, and the social institution's channel. Another feature that must be taken into account is the nature of distribution channel interactions with the various elements and its operation according to the distribution channel strategy (Fill & Fill, 2005; Rosenbloom, 2007)

The focus of the current study is on the reseller market based on the relationship between distributor and reseller. In this distribution channel products and services are acquired by the resellers with the purpose of reselling for profit. This partnership may add value by improving revenues and profits for both sides (Weber, 2001; Hutt & Speh, 2014). Resellers as a participant in the intermediate range are served mainly by the independent distributor (Rosenbloom, 2007).

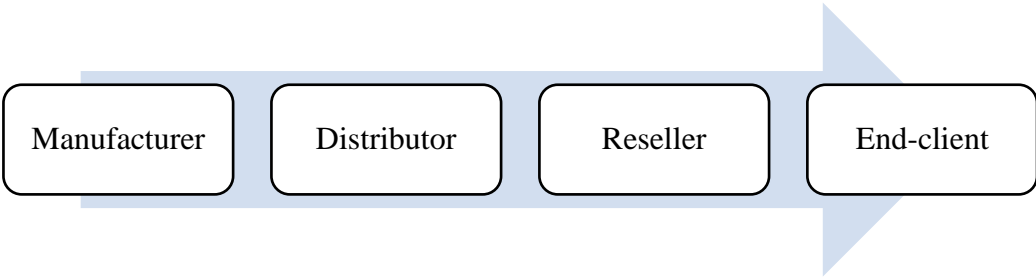


Figure 1: Reseller market channel intermediates (Fill & Fill, 2005)

It is a particularly highly restricted and selective market with regards to sharing information which may contribute to business process optimisation, for instance, sales forecast and production statistics (Jelassi et al., 2014). Collaboration and partnership between the

distribution channel intermediaries are key success factors in such exchange because the players understand that they will sell the products and services more efficiently if they work together than if they try to work separately. A collaboration relationship exists when some form of cooperation is involved such as cost reductions (Klein et al., 1990; Park, 1996; Weber, 2001; McIvor & Humphreys, 2004; Fill & Fill, 2005; Boeck et al., 2009). Competitive collaboration ensure that each player benefit from the relationship minimising the infrastructure costs, maximise the access for every partner and facilitate knowledge and exchange of products and services simultaneous to all partners (Hamel et al., 1989; Kandampully, 2003)

In the reseller market, the distributor as a supplier figure plays a significant role because the manufacturer grants authorisation to the distributor for him to commercialise its products and services on their behalf. Also, they assume important responsibilities for supplying the product or service manage, delivery time, grand credit to resellers, and technical support which may include assembling the manufacturer products. The distributor can value for their partners by adapting to changing market conditions. Besides, is committed to planning marketing communication activities aimed at the reseller market and even for including the end-client market (Khác, 2014; LaPlaca & da Silva, 2016).

In addition, the reseller market channel requires a direct and indirect relationship as well as quality information before purchase. The complexity of product and service features leads customers to search for reliable information, demanding a higher flow of logic communication (Kärkkäinen et al., 2014; Habibi et al., 2015).

2.2 B2B Relationship Strength

Handling and maintaining relationships in B2B have been a priority. The capacity for establishing and preserving relationships has the advantage of being difficult for competitors to understand and therefore replicate (Leonidou, 2004; Hutt & Speh, 2007; Saura et al., 2009).

However, previous research suggests that not all B2B customers need or desire a long-term relationship with their suppliers (Dabholkar et al., 1994; Day, 2000 & Cannon & Perreault, 1999 in Zimmerman et al., 2017). From the customer's perspective, the connection can be seen in the short-term, focusing on one or some transactions. It is centre on individual gain with a short-term perspective. Contrarily, a long-term relationship that involves flexibility to overcome issues, engaging in two-way communication, understand culture difference,

displaying a willingness to explore alternative solutions and may prevail in which the purchase is repeated. (Dabholkar et al. 1994; Boeck et al., 2009).

Different types of B2B relationship strength have been proposed in the past (Pavlou & El Sawy, 2002; Boeck et al., 2009). The relationship categories range from a more transactional type of relation to a more relational type of exchange (Archer & Yuan, 2000; Anthony et al. 2011; Hall, 2017) from opportunistic to collaborative (Cousins & Speakman, 2003) or from a relationship with less intimacy to a partnership (Saki, 1992, Dyer, 2000 in Boeck et al., 2009). As a general rule, a settled relationship depends on the product or service transacted (Dabholkar et al., 1994; Pavlou & El Sawy, 2002). However, all relationships classifications are established on the basis of cost and benefit (Gadde, 2004). Suppliers and customers may engage in a series of relationships, which differ by the peculiar characteristic of alternative purchasing situation (Leonidou, 2004)

In the B2B reseller market, companies are mostly dependent on long-term relationship development over time and based on cooperation (Pavlou & El Sawy, 2002; Coughlan et al., 2016). Such effect occurs because the market has few players, and therefore customers have a big bargaining power due to such concentration. The tendency is to generate and sustain long-term relationships that may improve sales performance (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2005; Saura & Frasquet, 2009), and lead to mutual benefits and profits for both the supplier and the buyer (Kandampully, 2003; Strauss & Frost, 2012). However, despite this need for relationships to endure over time, such relationship strength is dependent on key issues such as trust, satisfaction and commitment (Lancastre & Lages, 2005; Saura, Frasquet, & Taulet, 2009; LaPlaca & da Silva, 2016).

2.2.1 Online B2B Trust

Trust is a fundamental driver of online relationship (Srinivasan, 2004; Lancastre & Lages, 2005; Saura et al., 2009). In the online environment, trust is fundamental in establishing a good relationship between B2B stakeholders (Benbasat et al., 2006). Trust is a beneficial action for the user (Lucassen et al., 2013; McLean; 2017). However, online nature such as the lack of physical presence of product and the lack of physical interaction between supplier and customer may slow progress of trust development (Ellis & Ching, 2006; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). Trust also is relating to an emotional state of vulnerability which is intensified by the online environment (Rose et al., 2012). The absence of trust is known to inhibit the online procurement effort (Gefen, 2002; Coughlan et al., 2016).

Therefore, maintaining trust in the relationship is paramount to expand loyalty over time (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Sahadev & Purani, 2008; Chung et al., 2010). Known drivers of trust in B2B relationships that include the company's size and reputation, the level of transaction risk, the company's social media presence, culture, willingness to purchase and concerns about information privacy (Hwang & Kim, 2007).

In the B2B context, it is vital for companies to rely on their business partners, as relationships involve confidential company interactions, in regards to integrity, reliability and forecast outcomes (Moorman et al., 1993; Barry, 2008). Indeed, consistency, competency, honesty, fairness, responsibility, support and benevolence are the basis of the definition of trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Benbasat et al., 2006; Barret et al., 2007; Dwyer & Jr, 2009).

2.2.2 Online B2B satisfaction

Satisfaction is formed during the interpersonal relationships and experiences established between the supplier and the customer during the purchase decision process (Storbacka et al., 1994; Leonidou, 2004; Ellis & Ching, 2006; Barry et al., 2008).

The literature conceptualised online satisfaction depending on various factors, such as web characteristics and design, the perception of value, purchase convenience, security, communication and content (Chung & Shin, 2010). Thus, communication mediated by technology (Murphy & Sashi, 2018) and the availability of online content with relevant and detailed information contribute to growth satisfaction (Lancastre & Lages, 2005). Moreover, satisfaction as an outcome of online communication as a progressive effect on purchase intention (MacDonald & Smith, 2004; Murphy & Sashi, 2018)

In a B2B context, satisfaction is an important health assessment indicator of customer relationship (Ata & Toker, 2012). It is also an emotional state which stems from a general appreciation of the established supplier relationship. Satisfaction is a component which is interpreted from the viewpoint of specific transactions or perspectives accumulated over the sales process (Saura et al., 2009; Rose et al. 2012).

2.2.3 Online B2B Commitment

Commitment is the “desire to continue in the relationship and to work to ensure its continuance” (Barry et al., 2008: 119). It is a prime indicator of durability in a relationship (Ellis & Ching, 2006). Commitment only exists when the relationship is considered important. Successful

relationships involve commitment as an indispensable ingredient (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Barret et al., 2007).

As a gauge of cooperation, it is a psychological outcome of a stronger long-term relationship, meaning that it is an effective predictor of profit. From a more behavioural approach, the partner's intention to remain in the relationship is key (Barret et al., 2007; Swaminathan & Raddy, 2001 in Egan, 2008; Saura & Frasquet, 2009).

Commitment requires a relationship maturity that solely exists in long-term relationships and depends on additional effort and investment (Egan, 2008; Chang et al., 2012). It is a concept quite often associated with investment because it is linked to risk and vulnerability. However, companies only do business with trustful partners, meaning those with low risk and low vulnerability (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Ellis & Ching, 2006; Glowik & Bruhs, 2014).

Communication influences trust that leads to commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Geysken et al., 1999; Murphy & Sashi, 2018). One of the key possible components of it, it is sharing information at the proper moment (Egan, 2008). In the online environment, commitment is recognised to be driven by trust in the exchange, which is characterised by privacy concerns, security and shared values (Lancastre & Lages, 2005). Willingness to engage and other behavioural intentions such as word of mouth communication are also driven by the commitment-trust relationship between both parties involved (Lemon et al., 2001; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007; Briones et al., 2011; Ramaseshan et al., 2013). Finally, in a B2B context, commitment refers to the willingness of trading partners and simultaneously establish a degree of relationship continuity (Lin et al., 2005).

2.3 Online B2B Communication

With the rise of the Internet, new ways of fostering business relationships have developed (Meents et al. 2003). The concept of online B2B market is seen as a virtual business hub where suppliers and customers trade products and services by way of technological infrastructure. This online structure gives access to the services provided by the B2B company to support each distribution channel intermediate, and information exchange in real time is integrated (Meents et al., 2003; Zeng & Pathak, 2003). Hence, online platforms have created a more integrated information system between organisations with the advantage of enabling more straightforward interaction amongst the distribution channel intermediates (Kalakota & Robinson, 1999 in Samanta, 2011).

The relevance of B2B online information collection has been highlighted in numerous research studies. The study presented by Focus in TechTarget (2010) shows that 90% of buyers have a preference for searching information online. This tendency is more evident amongst IT companies (Spínola, 2011). The Corporate Executive Board has also conducted a study of more than 1.400 B2B companies, and the conclusion was that the majority of the participants thoroughly believe in the online information, and 60% of purchase decision-making occurs during the searching information phase (Adamson et al., 2012 in Järvinen et al., 2015). Another study conducted in 13 countries by Accenture with the aim of understanding the B2B customer's experience, determined that nowadays business customers behaviour in B2B is very similar to the ordinary customer, especially in the way that they relate to, interact with and purchase products and services from suppliers (Fonseca, 2014).

Today, from the customer's perspective, it is increasingly necessary to obtain detailed online information (both technical and commercial) such as prices, with the expectation of reaching the highest quality level compared to the traditional B2B channel (Lee & Lin, 2005; Gómez et al., 2017). Online content information is exceptionally relevant before purchase because the more informed customers are, the less risk and uncertainty is perceived, increasing reliance in the procurement decision-making (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011; Baltes, 2015).

Communication is a key element which sustains relationships in both social and business environments (Fukuyama, 1995 & Luhmann, 1979 in Gefen, 2002; Rowley, 2008). In the B2B context, communication influences the development of positive attitudes, which may lead to more focused information search and, therefore, may influence purchase behaviour (Gilliland & Johnston, 1997; Hänninen & Karjaluoto, 2017).

Today, B2B customers are more conscious of buying power and therefore demand information to be detailed and aligned with their needs (Silverstein, 2002). Therefore, B2B companies are continually optimising personalised communication, disseminated through online channels (Silverstein, 2002) with the purpose of facilitating the ability to cope with a large quantity of data, reducing complexity emerging from excess of information (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). Simultaneously, they are also seeking to be interactive, based on a dynamic dialogue that meets an individual's expectations (Laudon & Traver, 2014).

2.3.1 B2B integrated online communication

Integrated online communication is a very important concept in sales support due to its ability to enhance business relationships (Karjaluo et al., 2015). The decision-making period, on a B2B relationship, is demanding (Cohen et al., 2012), and therefore, having multiple channels with a single unified voice is paramount. In the B2B reseller market, information exchange between the supplier and the customer tends to be done through a diverse set of channels and types of medium (Jelassi et al., 2014). Information exchanges may depend on sharing documents, opinions, multimedia information about products and services, updating content and providing instantaneous information to the business partners (Boyle & Alwitt, 1999; Griffith & Palmer, 1999; Samanta, 2011).

Another important benefit of having an integrated online communication is the ability to share resources and skills on inter-organisational network infrastructure (Zhao et al., 2010). For example, in the channel network, organisations with the same goals may cooperate directly between themselves (Fill, 2009; LaPlaca & da Silva, 2016).

On top of the online communication channels, the companies' website appears as the principal medium (Chaffey et al., 2003). According to Miller (2012:6) the website "is the online face of your company, organisation, brand, or products. It must reflect what you are, what you do, and how you do it; it is how current and potential customers view you and, in many cases, interface with you". The principal goal of the website is to entice customers who are seeking information (Smith et al., 2013 in Holliman, 2014). The website should allow an easy to use navigation experience throughout the purchase decision-making based on valued, current and relevant content that meets the customers' needs (Chaffy et al., 2001; Eid et al., 2002; Santos, 2003; Hutt & Speh, 2007; Halligan & Shah, 2010 in Holliman, 2014).

The following most-important online platform for fostering business relationships between B2B stakeholders is through e-commerce which is integrated on the website, providing information into the reseller network (Lin et al., 2005; Hutt & Speh, 2007). It is defined as a private business network model where the suppliers and customers allocate information that contributes to business. For example, production plans, product stock or prices (Laudon & Traver, 2014). E-commerce platforms offer an excellent support experience in real time to the customer in the purchasing process (Laudon & Traver, 2014)

Another efficient online medium for building and developing B2B relationships is through email (Silverstein, 2002). When email was first created, it was used as an internal communication tool between two people inside of specific networked departments. Later, companies such as America Online, CompuServe and Prodigy expanded the use of emails as a communication vehicle for newsletters, digital magazines and promotions, for instance. Email allows for easy, personalised communication at a reduced price, replacing the traditional physical presence and the use of salespeople for relationship interactions (Calvin et al., 2009; Karjaluoto et al., 2015). Once the relationship is created, email assumes the principal role in the interactive dialogue (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwich, 2012). Research conducted by MarketingProfs and Forrester has shown that email in B2B context is the most used communication tool for spreading information (word-of-mouth) as well as being a buzz tool integrated within social media. For example, an article sample is sent by email, and if the receiver links through social media, they can have full access to the article (Strauss & Frost, 2012).

Social media is also a powerful medium tool for B2B. Social media includes social and professional relationship platforms online, where content is created, managed and modified. Such platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Instagram, as well as commercial communities such as Amazon, discussion forums and blogs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Habibi et al., 2015). The first and foremost mission of social media is to communicate functional information demanded by the customer. Social media is useful for exchanging tailored information that fits in a customer needs. The big difference between the traditional seller conveyed information, and social media information is that in the traditional relations based on salespeople may be more emotional-driven and more personal, while social media communication is usually more focused on sharing functional information (Habibi et al., 2015).

However, using social media as a platform to engage with customers may help B2B companies to not only implement a more unified message that stems from its global strategy but also provide an important source for understanding customers' behaviour. Social media is also helpful to establish a new dialogue with customers via interactive content produced by active and influential users (Hoffman et al., 2016; Habibi et al., 2015; Keinänen et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2012; Huotari et al., 2015).

According to the study developed in Europe and the USA about decision-making in the IT area, 55% of B2B companies interacted on social media, while 29% only used it to activate or maintain the already established network (Bernof, 2009; Ramos, 2009 in Keinänen et al.,

2015). In general, companies use social media to understand and collect complementary information about competitors such as, product features, supplier's details and references that could support decision-making. It is seen as an opportunistic strategic (Karjaluo et al., 2015). Social media communication in B2B, adds value, stimulates and builds online relationships (Chaffey et al., 2009 in Huotari et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Content in Online B2B Communication

“Organizations create tremendous volumes of content to support their products, services, and business processes. Getting content out to the right customer at the right time and in the right format is critical to an organisation's success” (Cooper & Rockley, 2012:3).

Online technology allows companies to create, publish, access or consume content instantaneously and effortlessly (Baltes, 2015; Alagöz & Ekici, 2016). Using such information the customer may have low information costs while being able to compare products and services before purchase or during the procurement process. “Knowledge is power”, and online technology empowers the customer (Calvin & Ryan, 2009).

Online content consists of all that the user accesses on the web including reading, learning, watching or experiencing (Halvorson & Rach, 2012 in Holliman & Rowler, 2014; Alagöz & Ekici, 2016). Online content may be every part of information uploaded to the Internet and be distinguished between static content, which is inserted on a webpage or as dynamic content when is on rich media presence (Handley & Chapman, 2011 & Rose & Pulizzi, 2011 in Holliman & Rowler, 2014). According to the Content Marketing Institute, content marketing is “a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Hristova, 2013; Egan, 2015).

Frazier & Summers, (1984) suggested a distinction between direct content which implies a behaviour change, for instance, recommendations, and indirect content which refers to business questions based on expectations contributing to the decision-making process. It is evident that content influence the receiver attitudes and online search efforts may change behaviour (Kantrowitz, 2014 in Brennan et al., 2017). Today online content is much more focused on catching attention via exciting publications (Halligan & Shah, 2009). A new dynamic in online communication based on an ongoing dialogue and an active content creation participation is essential (Taiminen & Karjaluo, 2015).

In B2B online content may be used to explain complex products and services (Hristova, Gergina, 2013). According to Kandampully (2003) and Jefferson & Tanton (2013 in Holliman & Rowler, 2014) the message conveyed in the B2B environment need to change from a “sale-generalist” paradigm philosophy to one of “support-specialist”. Product or service manuals and online support are examples of this mentality change (Cooper & Rockley, 2012).

Silverstein (2002) argued that the web is dominated in general by the written text supported by audio, video and animation to reinforce message. The combination of text and multimedia images may increase the comprehension of content (Jo & Kim, 2003). For the B2B market, reports and video contents providing information and learning are essential (Smart Insights, 2011 in Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwich, 2012).

Additionally, the message content should reflect a balance between information need and reading pleasure (Fill, 2009), at the same time aimed at resolving issues and not only restricted to the promotion of products and services (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Järvinen & Taiminen, 2015). In a B2B context, the message content tone is vital to creating credibility, conveying a company’s technical competency (Habibi et al., 2015). Content must be relevant, stimulating and generating a positive experience, emphasising the reputation and the identity of the company (Fill & Fill, 2005).

2.3.2.1 Personalised and Interactive Content

A business transaction between a customer and supplier implies content exchange. In common conditions, transactions will have dense information and economic content in regards to product or services in return of payment. There may also have a little social exchange regarding experiences or meanings shared by the parties (Ellis & Ching, 2006). A successful online relationship stems from a positive experience throughout communication channels (Rowley, 2008), and especially driven by personalisation and interactivity of online content (Rose et al., 2012).

Information overload affects decision-making. The high volume may do unable find relevant content on time leading to inefficient decision-making (Liang et al., 2014). Personalised content has a notable power on customers’ decision-making which may be described through the customer believes that system of personalisation understand and represents its personal preferences (Tam & Ho, 2005; Tam & Ho, 2006; Xiao & Benbasat, 2018).

In B2B, customers rely on personalised content for their decision-making process and personalisation allows companies to share information based on the customers' individual needs and at the same time fosters trust relationships (Jackson, 2007; Spínola, 2011; Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). Even though, personalised content system, capture user preferences providing a new relevant recommendation, user feedback in the personalisation process is not major (Liang et al., 2014; Xiao & Benbasat, 2018).

Content personalisation may have privacy issues that have been addressed in recent years. In the B2B context its adoption is inevitable and should vary according to the different stages of the relational cycle and growing more intimate as it matures (Hwang & Kim, 2007; Fill, 2013; Liang et al., 2014).

Content interactivity is also another known influencer of customers' perceptions (Song & Zinkhan, 2008). Although the Internet contributes to intensified interactivity, this phenomenon is not merely technological. The objective of interactivity is to start an informative dialogue over time (Chaffey et al., 2006; Dibb et al., 2012) based on back and forth dialogue to reach the most accurate and relevant information for B2B customers (Song & Zinkhan, 2008). However, it is not only a concept that occurs between supplier and customers but could also be extended amongst customers. The closeness between the intermediates enables to establish a relationship, online communities such as blogs are an example of it (Deighton & Barwise, 2001).

Interactivity dialogue to create a more fine-tuned content is one of the most important drivers of online B2B relationship. A two-way communication or feedback leads to a mutual agreement (Murphy & Sashi, 2018) and the ongoing conversation is necessary and extremely valuable for suppliers to understand the customers' needs for addressing the market demands (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwich, 2012).

2.4 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Communication has an enormous impact on customers' perceptions. It is required from the supplier a communication initiative, and a precise content conveyed, in order to generate a positive effect on the customer relationship (Hänninen & Karjaluoto, 2017). An ongoing communication relationship may contribute to customer security and minimizing risks (Grönroos, 2004).

Personalised content is known to reduce the complexity caused by increasingly available information (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). It is a concept that contributes to reducing

messages sent to the customers, by targeting different customers with different information aligned with their needs (Ho & Kwok, 2003; Hänninen & Karjaluoto, 2017). Also, a more fine-tuned message that is easily accessible, easy to process and search may reduce uncertainty and risk in the relationship (Lancastre & Lages, 2005; Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). Personalised content communication as an outcome contributes to enhancing relationship (Hänninen & Karjaluoto, 2017)

In fact, studies suggest that personalised content not only influences relationship strength directly but may be an important factor in explaining trust and satisfaction (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2015). When customers are in contact with personalised content, the tendency is to seek less information during the purchasing process, making the experience easier and increasing the feeling of trust (Chang et al., 2005; Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). Therefore, the trust may act as a mediator between personalised content and relationship behaviour, and thus the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1a): Online communication of personalised content has a positive influence on trust.

Mukherjee & Nath (2007) in their research findings supported that personalisation has a positive influence on commitment. They considered the affective nature of commitment as well as Davis-Sramek, Droge, & T. Mentzer (2009), whose research, on the other hand, disclosed that satisfaction dimension also impacts the affective commitment. Probably, as the literature has shown, personalisation has effect in commitment which is a positive result from the trust in the creation of a link with an online relationship. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1b): Online communication of personalised content has a positive influence on commitment.

Content is an important tenet of communication, and poor valuable content may result in customer disinterest (Sam & Tahir, 2009). The level of trust that customers have in producers of content is an important factor that distinguishes suppliers who merely possess information from that use it efficiently (Lancastre & Lages, 2005). Thereby, virtual advisers, impartial and comprehensive information, and also an online content creation that facilitates interaction for feedback, may contribute to create and reinforce trust in customer. Such characteristics promote an interactive dialogue, access to content information, transparency, and understanding of risk-benefits that increase trust in the customer-seller relationship (Urban et al., 2009). Thus, this allows to formulate:

H2a): Online communication of interactive content has a positive influence on trust.

Saffer et al. (2013 in Shin et al., 2015) argued that more interactive communication in the online context might demonstrate commitment in the relationship. Moreover, relationship implies interaction and the intermediaries in the distribution channel may well contribute to developing it. A dialogue between supplier and customer indicate a value-enhanced in the relationship. This process encompasses willing to share information and knowledge with their business partners (Grönroos, 2004). Commitment may act as a mediator between interactive content and B2B relationship by providing effective communication in real time and depth information. Communication quality may ensure a long-term commitment between supplier and customer (Ramaseshan et al., 2013). Therefore,

H2b): Online communication of interactive content has a positive influence on commitment.

Prior research revealed that interdependence and correlation between trust and commitment are central amongst the partnerships' relations (Morgan & Hunt 1994; Lostakova & Pecinova, 2014; Lin et al., 2005; Fill, 2009; Saura & Frassetto, 2009). According to Lancaster & Lages (2005), the central factors of customer cooperation rely mainly on trust and commitment. Moreover, commitment requires trust as a precursor. A highly trustworthy relationship is usually positively correlated with commitment (Ellis & Ching, 2006; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007; Saura et al., 2009;). More recently, Al-Hawari (2011) also confirmed that trust has a significant influence on commitment. Given the evidence of linking between the dimensions of trust and commitment, it is hypothesis that:

H3): There is a positive relationship between online trust and online commitment.

According to Barry et al., (2008) customers usually base their commitment decisions on subjective perceptions of trust, feelings of satisfaction and relational bond. The reliability of content influence trust and low perceived risk contribute to support customers decisions, in turn, influence satisfaction (McIvor & Humphreys, 2004)

Personalised content acts as an exclusive communication channel, and customers perceive the company as being "closer". The accurate content recommendation which reduces the search effort for relevant information may increase user satisfaction (Pappas et al., 2016).

Promoting a dialogue via regular interactive communication may contribute to increasing satisfaction as an outcome of accumulative experience (Lancastre & Lages, 2005; Rose et al., 2012). The degree of satisfaction depends on bidirectional communication frequency (Mohr & Sohi, 1995 in Fill & Fill, 2005) and the time of interactive response (Song & Zinkhan, 2008). Trust and satisfaction are not independent regarding building online relationship (Pavlou et al., 2002; Bachmeier-Feuerhahn & Eichenlaub, 2010). At the same time, commitment is associated with satisfaction in a B2B relationship (Tuten & Urban, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). Additionally, former research revealed that satisfaction is a key factor in the customers' decisions for continuing the relationship with the supplier (Chung & Shin, 2010). Therefore the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4): Trust as a result of online communication positively influence satisfaction.

H5): Commitment as a result of online communication positively influence satisfaction.

Communication is seen as a fundamental coordination mechanism in B2B relationships (Meents et al., 2003; Stanko et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2018). As a tenet of communication content must assume a relevant role aiming to build and cultivate online relationships (Holliman & Rowler, 2014; Bastles, 2015). Online communication offers an advantage in B2B relationships (Murphy & Sashi, 2018). Relevant and reliable content communication at a suitable time will result in trust (MacDonald & Smith, 2004). Customer satisfaction is achieved by messages with content that make available facts, figures, and logic for making a decision (Murphy & Sashi, 2018) and commitment will provide to the customer more on-time product or service content as well as useful market content (Lancastre & Lages, 2005). Karampela et al. (2018) argued that the relationship paradigm in B2B includes a different viewing and perceiving of the relationship between customers and sellers. Therefore, the current study contains in an online relationship the theories of relationship strength and relationship value.

According to Barry et al. (2008) relationship strength in B2B implies the dimensions of willing to invest, share of purchase and search reluctance. Moreover, in their findings trust, satisfaction and commitment from an affective perspective explain relationship strength. The acknowledgement of these three attributes within the business interactions generates a mutual dependence on the relationship as partners (Tuten & Urban, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). Thus, the literature suggests that relationship strength is influenced by content communication across the effects on affective dimensions.

The relationship value is formed on expectations, and mainly because of it, it is considered a subjective concept. The value factors perceived in business can be monetary or non-monetary. The investment expenses perception on one side and the other side the relationship aspects such as time, effort or energy put in business (Makkonen et al., 2017). Saura et al. (2009) suggested that B2B relationship value regarding the supplier is associated with a positive response from the combination of trust, satisfaction and commitment. Although previous literature shows different meanings of the concept, the research of Saura et al. (2009) was developed in line with the idea that relationship value is an outcome of trust, satisfaction and commitment in an affective connotation. The present study flows in the same conception. Therefore, by the above, it leads to point to the last following hypotheses:

H6): Trust positively influences online relationship.

H7): Commitment positively influences online relationship.

H8): Satisfaction positively influences online relationship.

2.4.1 Research framework model

Accordingly with the literature review and the research hypotheses defined, the conceptual model presented in figure 2 is proposed. Therefore, the relationships between personalised and interactive contents and the online relationship will be analysed throughout the affective mediator's trust, commitment and satisfaction. The figure also shows the hypotheses relating to each relationship.

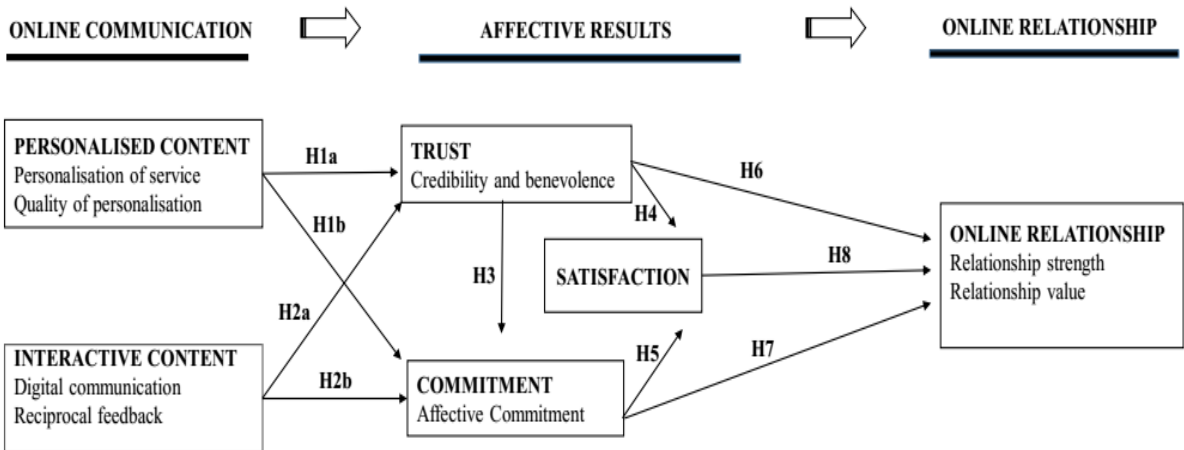


Figure 2: Research model and hypotheses

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and data collection procedure

Although the B2B population size definition is smaller than business-to-consumer (B2C), account must be taken of the vast number of decision-making elements that intervene throughout the process and whose relevance depends on the size of the company (Bradley, 2013). Therefore, the present research population is characterised by all resellers companies' collaborators in B2B distribution channel in the information technology (IT) field, interacting in a daily base with a distributor through the use of online platforms.

According to the last INE data, 14,208 companies operate in information technology and communication sector in Portugal, and on average each company has 5,4 employees (INE, 2011). However, the IT represents 62% of the companies in the whole sector (Banco de Portugal, 2016), which mean 8,809 companies, resulting in a total population of 47,568 collaborators of resellers companies.

To collect data for the sample, it was used a structured web-questionnaire which was written in Portuguese. It was distributed online via email and LinkedIn connections. The participants were selected using convenience sampling technique, more precisely the snowball method (Singh, 2007; Malhotra, 2008; Bradley, 2013). The final sample was composed of 358 responses representing an effective sample to be used for further analysis (Azman, 2017).

3.2 Development of measures and questionnaire

The web - questionnaire was structured into three parts (Malhotra, 2008). The first incorporated the introductory questions based on the research topic in order to characterise the respondents. This part simultaneously aims to obtain the involvement and collaboration of the respondents to answer the questionnaire. The second part included questions to measure the various constructs identified in the literature review. Appendix 2 presents a summary of the original sources and the sentences adaptation to this context. This part consisted of 54 items to measure the respondent attitudes regarding each construct: personalised content (Ho & Kwok, 2003; Pappas et al., 2016), interactive content (Murphy & Sashi, 2018), trust (Saura et al, 2009; Barry et al., 2008), satisfaction (Barry et al, 2008; Murphy & Sashi, 2018), commitment (Davis-Sramek et al.2009; Barry et al, 2008) and online relationship (Barry et al, 2008; Saura et al, 2009).

The items were measured by asking the participants to select the response that best indicated their experience or attitude on each statement, using a 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1= strongly disagree; 2= somewhat disagree; 3= I do not agree or disagree; 4= somewhat agree, and 5= strongly agree (Malhotra, 2008; Field, 2009). Furthermore, reversed-phrased items were incorporated to be considered important to reduce bias responses (Field, 2009). Finally, the third part considered questions on the demographic characteristics of the sample. Nominal scales were applied, to perform classifications and to describe the attributes (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Morais, 2005).

The questionnaire was tested to ascertain aptness in actual field conditions (Singh, 2007). Two pretests were performed to assess the reliability of construct for each adapted scale. A small sample between 15 and 30 participants (Malhotra, 2008) “as similar as possible to who will respond to the questionnaire” (Hill & Hill, 2008:18) was considered for each pretest. The first pretest group was composed of 22 participants, and incongruences were identified such as language style and misspellings. The reliability statistics Cronbach's alpha also revealed a low result for the initial five items of personalised content construct ($\alpha= 0.662$). Underlining that 0.8 is seen as a good value, but between 0.7 and 0.8, it is necessary to take into consideration the number of items (Field, 2009). Hence, the issues were corrected, the language style was enhanced, and three more items were added to the personalised content construct (Pappas et al., 2016). A second pretest with a different panel of persons, encompassed by 20 participants was conducted. Finally, coefficient Cronbach's alphas indicated a strong internal consistency of the questionnaire scales (see Table 1).

Table 1: Reliability estimates for the model constructs (second pretest)

| Construct | Cronbach's alphas |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Online Relationship | |
| Relationship Strength | 0.78 |
| Relationship Value | 0.87 |
| Personalised Content | 0.89 |
| Interactive Content | 0.92 |
| Trust | 0.97 |
| Satisfaction | 0.97 |
| Commitment | 0.95 |

3.3 Data analysis

The collected data was input into statistical packages SPSS version 25 for analysis. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to estimate the conceptual model and test the hypotheses. A two-stage modelling process was considered (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the first stage, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in order to assess the convergent validity of the measurement scales and the discriminant validity of the constructs (Gefen et al., 2000). In the second stage, the structural model was estimated to test the hypothesised relationships amongst the latent constructs. AMOS 25 was used to estimate the model (Field, 2009).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Sample characterisation

Of the 358 total participants, 84.1% were male, ranged in age mainly from 35 to 60 years old (83.0%). Additionally, the majority were from Lisbon (54.0%), Porto (18.4%) and Litoral (18.1%). In terms of professional area, most of the respondents were from sales department (52.4%), followed by after-sales (17.2%) and pre-sales (13.9%); they are also characterised by having a very high (36.2%) or entire autonomy (36.8%) of decision-making. Regarding the online relationship with the distributor taken as a reference to respond the questionnaire, 70.7% of the participants kept a long-term online relationship (>5years), and 39.1% of the respondents make quite often online purchases in the same distributor. Details of the sample profile are provided in Appendix 3.

4.1.2 Hypotheses and model testing

Results from the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are presented in Table 5. Nine items with low estimated standardised factor loadings were removed. Relationship Strength only kept with one item that was grouping to the items of Relationship Value. Therefore the resulting construct was considered as Online Relationship. Standardised factor loadings for all the measurement items are significant and greater than 0.5 which indicates that there is item reliability. All constructs exhibit convergent validity, as can be seen by composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values. In addition, there is evidence of discriminant validity, since the Fornell & Larcker's (1981) criterion is verified for the constructs (see table 4). The overall fit indices indicate an acceptable model fit ($X^2 = 2156.816$; $df = 891$; $CFI = 0.893$; $TLI = 0.883$; $RMR = 0.088$; $RMSEA = 0.064$ 90% CI = (0.061;0.068). Figure 3 presents the path diagram of

structural model including the significant standardised path estimates. Table 3 shows the standardised total effects amongst construct, and Table 2 complements these results.

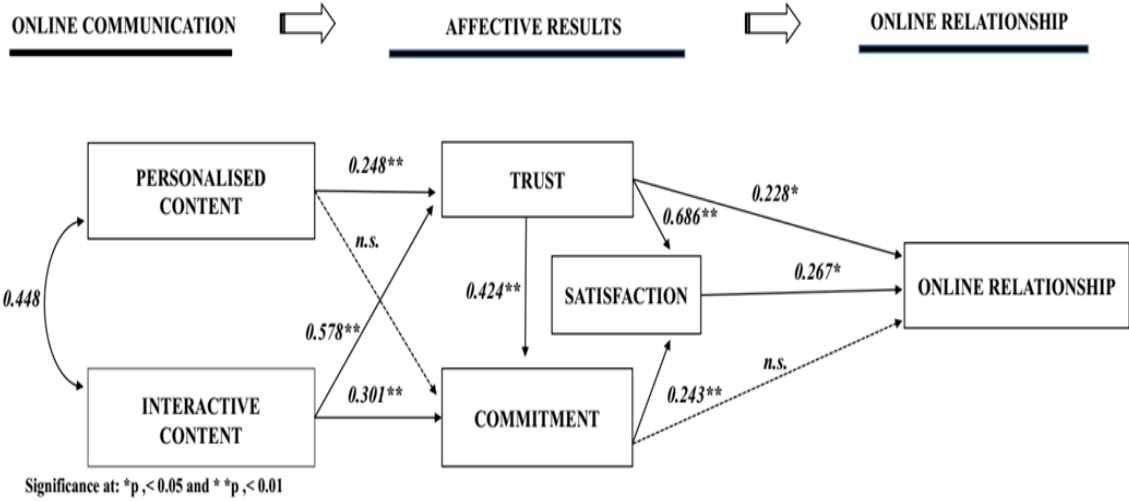


Figure 3: Standardised estimates for the structural model

Table 2: Standardised estimates of coefficients

| Hypotheses: Structural Paths | Estimate | Significance | Result |
|---|----------|--------------|----------------------|
| H1a) content personalisation → trust | 0.335 | 0.000** | supported |
| H1b) content personalisation → commitment | - 0.052 | 0.375 | not supported |
| H2a) content interactivity → trust | 0.420 | 0.000** | supported |
| H2b) content interactivity → commitment | 0.163 | 0.000** | supported |
| H3) trust → commitment | 0.316 | 0.000** | supported |
| H4) commitment → satisfaction | 0.302 | 0.000** | supported |
| H5) trust → satisfaction | 0.637 | 0.000** | supported |
| H6) trust → online relationship | 0.306 | 0.001* | supported |
| H7) satisfaction → online relationship | 0.268 | 0.013* | supported |
| H8) commitment → online relationship | 0.157 | 0.063 | not supported |

Significance at: *p, < 0.05 and **p, < 0.01

Results show that not all hypotheses are supported. There is no relationship between personalised content and commitment (H1b) and also between commitment and online relationship (H8) since the path coefficients are not significant. The interactive content has a strong effect on the affective constructs, as the high direct effect on trust (0.578; $p < 0.01$) and the high total effects on commitment and satisfaction (0.545 and 0.529, respectively) (see Table3). In contrast, personalised content has a weak effect on the affective constructs, trust and satisfaction, and also on the online relationship. Trust has the strongest influence on the online relationship (total effect of 0.592), as well as on the interactive content (total effect of 0.400). Results also show that trust and satisfaction are mediators of online communication and online relationship.

Table 3: Standardised total effects

| | Trust | Commitment | Satisfaction | Online relationship |
|----------------------|-------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Personalised content | 0.248 | 0.054 (<i>ns</i>) | 0.183 | 0.137 |
| Interactive content | 0.578 | 0.545 | 0.529 | 0.400 |
| Trust | – | 0.424 | 0.789 | 0.592 |
| Commitment | – | – | 0.243 | 0.190 (<i>ns</i>) |
| Satisfaction | – | – | – | 0.267 |

Note: all the values are significant at 1%, except those that are identified by *ns* (= not significant)

Table 4: Correlation values between constructs

| | Personalised Content | Interactive Content | Trust | Commitment | Satisfaction | Online Relationship |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------|------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Personalised content | 0.751 | | | | | |
| Interactive content | 0.493 | 0.707 | | | | |
| Trust | 0.533 | 0.720 | 0.739 | | | |
| Commitment | 0.335 | 0.590 | 0.633 | 0.784 | | |
| Satisfaction | 0.464 | 0.541 | 0.834 | 0.669 | 0.857 | |
| Online Relationship | 0.356 | 0.448 | 0.618 | 0.512 | 0.621 | 0.778 |

Note: Diagonal values represent the square root of AVE value

Table 5: Descriptives and validity assessment for items of the overall measurement model

| Latent Construct | AVE | Construct Reliability | Item | Mean | SD | Factor Loadings |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Online Relationship | 0.605 | 0.858 | | | | |
| Relationship Strength | | | The online relationship that my company has with this distributor deserves to be invested in its maintenance My company's business volume is higher in this distributor than in other distributors in the market. It is unlikely to do business online with this distributor in the next few years. (reverse) I'm continually looking for a distributor who can replace this distributor online. (reverse) I consider it necessary to exercise some prudence with this online distributor. (reverse). In general, this distributor adds value to the established online relationship. The online relationship with this distributor is more valuable. This distributor adds more value, taking into consideration the comparison of costs and benefits of the online relationship established. | 4.16 3.71 1.63 1.93 1.91 3.86 3.93 3.79 | 0.88 1.14 1.02 0.98 1.03 0.93 0.89 0.89 | 0.585 *** *** *** *** 0.743 0.842 0.775 |
| Relationship Value | | | | | | |
| Personalised content | 0.564 | 0.898 | ...allow me to locate useful and relevant information easily. ...help me not to waste time on irrelevant content. ... reduce the search time of the intended contents. ... invade my privacy (reverse). ** ... satisfy my need for information. This distributor can provide me with online content with personalised business opportunities according to the context of my business areas. This distributor can provide me with a higher flow of online promotional content relevant to my personal business needs and preferences. This distributor can provide me with online content with business opportunities that may interest me. | 3.61 3.59 3.73 3.82 3.65 3.73 2.07 3.60 | 0.98 0.93 0.93 0.90 0.95 0.94 1.05 0.91 | 0.601 0.592 0.58 0.84 0.819 0.842 *** 0.76 |
| Interactive content | 0.499 | 0.874 | I often interact online with this distributor. I usually share information online with this distributor through the interactive channels. I have enough online contact with this distributor. I often collaborate with this distributor through the interactive channels. I rarely establish an interactive online communication with this distributor (reverse). This distributor makes available to me whenever requested online content information. ** This distributor provides enough feedback on my performance at the level of technical or commercial knowledge. This distributor often maintains bi-directional online communication. This distributor regularly has an online dialogue with me. | 3.66 2.94 3.59 3.11 2.59 3.73 2.89 3.24 3.01 | 1.05 1.18 1.12 1.16 1.29 0.87 1.12 1.09 1.22 | 0.714 0.777 0.69 0.792 0.55 0.571 0.646 0.798 0.797 |

Descriptives and validity assessment for items of the overall measurement model – Cont.

| Latent Construct | AVE | Construct Reliability | Item | Mean | SD | Factor Loadings |
|---|-------|-----------------------|---|------|------|-----------------|
| Trust | 0.546 | 0.939 | This distributor is sincere and honest in established online communication. | 4.09 | 0.80 | 0.722 |
| | | | This distributor keeps the promises communicated online. | 4.12 | 0.80 | 0.655 |
| | | | This distributor honestly informs me of a problem that may affect the business. | 3.79 | 0.95 | 0.721 |
| | | | This distributor is concerned about my interest in having access to online content. | 3.74 | 0.96 | 0.727 |
| | | | The online communication that the distributor provides is reliable. | 4.08 | 0.77 | 0.764 |
| | | | This distributor demonstrates in its online communication to be specialist in the products and services that it commercialises. | 4.07 | 0.80 | 0.723 |
| | | | This distributor understands the importance of communicating online contents, of a technical or commercial nature, to my business. | 3.93 | 0.88 | 0.766 |
| | | | When making decisions, this distributor considers my business, just as it does for your business. | 3.57 | 1.00 | 0.736 |
| | | | This distributor is genuinely concerned about the success of my business. | 3.41 | 1.01 | 0.708 |
| | | | This distributor has spent a great deal of his time understanding the method my company uses to do business. | 2.93 | 1.08 | 0.584 |
| Satisfaction | 0.734 | 0.951 | I can trust that this distributor considers the impact of the decision making and the actions that develop in the business of my company. | 3.21 | 1.04 | 0.626 |
| | | | I believe in online communication that the distributor. | 3.94 | 0.78 | 0.748 |
| | | | This distributor sincerely cares about the online content needs that contribute to my business | 3.50 | 0.98 | 0.738 |
| | | | The distributor's online performance meets my expectations. | 3.87 | 0.82 | 0.838 |
| Commitment | 0.614 | 0.901 | The average response time for online information generally corresponds to my expectations | 3.84 | 0.88 | 0.742 |
| | | | Online content provided by the distributor usually matches what is intended. | 3.88 | 0.80 | 0.748 |
| | | | Concerning quality and performance, this distributor meets my expectations better than the competition. | 3.79 | 0.82 | 0.724 |
| | | | I am quite satisfied with this distributor. | 4.05 | 0.80 | 0.902 |
| | | | You would choose this distributor if you had to do it again | 4.10 | 0.84 | 0.804 |
| | | | I am satisfied with the relationship I have with this distributor | 4.10 | 0.76 | 0.87 |
| | | | I am dissatisfied with this distributor. (reverse)** | 1.89 | 1.23 | *** |
| | | | I have been developing a closer business relationship with this distributor than with the other distributors in the market. | 3.73 | 0.92 | 0.838 |
| | | | I have a preference for doing business with this distributor than with other distributors in the market. | 3.75 | 0.86 | 0.905 |
| | | | I am more inclined to place orders on this distributor than on other distributors in the market. | 3.80 | 0.86 | 0.934 |
| I have a higher preference in remaining a customer of this distributor than with the other distributors existing in the market because I appreciate the relation established with this distributor. | 3.71 | 0.88 | 0.824 | | | |
| Loyalty is the main reason to continue working with this distributor. | 3.49 | 1.00 | *** | | | |
| I want to be associated with this distributor due to established loyalty. | 3.58 | 1.00 | 0.554 | | | |
| I intend to continue working with this distributor because I feel he is "part of the family". | 3.23 | 1.11 | 0.525 | | | |

Note: *** Item removed in the measurement purification process

5. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to examine how online communication content strategies contribute to build and maintain an online relationship in a B2B context. Taken into account that content assumes an important element of online communication (Sam & Tahir, 2009; Holliman & Rowler, 2014; Bastles, 2015) the conceptual model of study was based on reviewed theories relating to personalised content and interactive content as well as the key affective mediators, trust, satisfaction and commitment that drive to an online relationship.

Consistent with the literature the findings of this study support in general that online communication influence online relationship, corroborating the importance of communication in the online environment to build and reinforce online relationships in B2B context (Meents et al., 2003; Stanko et al., 2007; Murphy & Sashi, 2018).

Firstly, the study found that personalised content contributes to nurturing trust, in line with Järvinen & Taiminen (2015) findings. This result reinforces the notion that in first instance customers rely on personalised content as a reference to their decision-making (Jackson, 2007; Spínola, 2011; Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). However, personalised content demonstrated not to have a relationship with commitment, which contrasts with the suggestion of Mukherjee & Nath (2007). Even though this dimension had not shown in the study a link with personalised content; this evidence indicates that using the affective nature of commitment was not enough to disclose the relationship between the constructs. Therefore, the results of the study demonstrated, maybe to be more in line with the affective commitment interpretation research of Davis-Sramek, Droge, & T. Mentzer (2009), where personalised content depends on satisfaction generated and then impacts on commitment.

Second, the interactive content theory of Urban et al.(2009) fits with the assumption that interactive content influences trust. The results demonstrated a strong association between both constructs. Indeed, the study confirmed that interactive content creation that facilitates access to information and dialogue including feedback increase trust in the B2B online environment. Furthermore, the study corroborated that interactive content has a quite significant influence on commitment. The findings are consistent with Saffer et al. (2013) and Grönroos (2004) argument that more online interactive communication based on sharing information and knowledge, and also with the suggestion of Ramaseshan et al., (2013), that effective communication in real-time and detailed information indicate commitment in an online B2B relationship.

The findings further support the notion that trust and commitment are related, demonstrating that a dependency between both constructs is needed to achieve a partnership relation. Thus, the study outlined that a highly trustful online relationship in B2B depends on a strong association between trust and commitment (Sauraet et al., 2009; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007; Al-Hawari, 2011). Also, satisfaction as a third dimension regarding building an online B2B relationship confirmed a strong dependence on trust (Pavlou et al., 2002; Bekmeier-Feuerhahn & Eichenlaub, 2010). This finding is in accordance with the argument of McIvor & Humphreys (2004) that reliable online content drive to customer satisfaction. Although commitment and satisfaction in a B2B relationship according to Tuten & Urban (2001) and Lin et al. (2005) theory imply a significant association, the fact is that the findings suggested a fragile relationship between commitment and satisfaction. A possible reason for that result, once again, maybe the commitment affective connotation.

To end, the findings confirmed a positive relationship between trust and online relationship as well as satisfaction and online relationship in B2B. On the other hand, no influence between commitment and online relationship was supported. In contrary to results obtained by Barry et al. (2008) and Saura et al. (2009) that considered the three combinations of affective dimensions (trust, satisfaction, and commitment) as a positive outcome on the relationship. This finding may relate to the fact that the link between commitment and online relationship, in the research model, was measured indirectly via satisfaction. Highlighting that commitment in B2B is associated with satisfaction that is of paramount importance to customer engage in an ongoing relationship with the supplier (Tuten & Urban, 2001; Lin et al., 2005; Chung & Shin, 2010). Secondly could be explained by a different view and perceive of the relationship in B2B (Karampela et al., 2018) plus a long-term relationship between customer-supplier is not always needed or desired (Day, 2000; Cannon & Perreault, 1999 in Zimmerman et al., 2017) and commitment requires a relationship maturity that only exists in long-term relationships (Egan, 2008; Chang et al., 2012). As a final consideration, the customer may engage in a relationship (short-term or long-term) depending on its individual goals or purchasing situation (Leonidou, 2004; Dwyer & Jr, 2009).

6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides meaningful insights into how content communication strategies may contribute to build and reinforce online relationship in a B2B context. Interestingly, a key

finding is that interactive content emerges as a significant strategy to build and maintain an online relationship instead of personalised content. Thus, it is evident that a real-time communication based on back and forward dialogue, providing relevant and useful content is on the top of interest.

A balanced conclusion, then, seems to be that the complex nature of product and service in the IT field and the end-client sometimes demanding a quick answer require easy and faster support provided by the distributor, and at the same time, the content must be reliable and useful. That may clarify the results of trust and satisfaction as an outcome to establish and develop an online relationship. All in all, trust in the content provided and satisfaction in the prompt online response are two features extremely necessary since they may compromise the reseller reputation and efficiency.

Although the data generally support the proposed model, this study should be interpreted bearing in mind some limitations, of which opportunities for future research may arise. First, the nonprobability sampling technique deployed in this study may affect external validity (Sarstedt e Mooi, 2014). However, the results are useful and relevant. Providing ideas exploration and identifying findings which may lead to understanding and knowledge (Hill & Hill, 2008), opening new tracks to future research. Second, the web-questionnaire, accordingly with a few participants feedback, was a little extensive which may perhaps make them at a certain point lose interest, answered at random or misinterpreted the affirmations. Therefore, such an effect may have biased some responses particularly the reverse phrases that were needed to be removed in the estimation stage. Third, the study was developed based on the concept of affective mediators. In future research should include in the model more specific functional or operational aspects of online communication such as the speed of processing orders, billing or price quotation. Finally, the focus on the reseller relationship with the distributor in the reseller market and also the characteristics of the sample may limit the study to generalise to another B2B scenario. Despite the literature point out that the reseller market is mostly dependent on the long-term relationship, they are also established by cost and benefit. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the reseller market in the Portuguese IT sector, where the study was conducted, is quite heterogeneous, work in a fast pass and is more focused on price and margins.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Este questionário insere-se no âmbito do desenvolvimento de uma tese de mestrado, no campo de investigação de Marketing para o ISCTE, que tem como objectivo estudar a contribuição da comunicação online entre distribuidores e revendedores no sector das TI.

O questionário é anónimo e os dados serão tratados de forma totalmente confidencial, sendo utilizados apenas para fins meramente académicos.

Não existem respostas certas ou erradas. Responda, por favor, de forma espontânea e sincera.

O seu preenchimento tem um tempo estimado de 10 minutos.

No final, por favor, caso tenha oportunidade pedia-lhe que partilhasse o questionário com colegas que na sua empresa também mantenham contacto com a distribuição, através do seguinte link: <https://goo.gl/forms/6CQEPoebrE5GJlc13>

Muito obrigada pela sua colaboração!

SECÇÃO 1

Antes de iniciar o respectivo questionário, por favor, pense no último distribuidor com quem teve contacto online

PARTE I - RELACIONAMENTO ONLINE

Com base no distribuidor que pensou, por favor, responda as seguintes questões:

Há quantos anos mantém relacionamento online com este distribuidor?

- > 5 anos
- 3-5 anos
- 1-3 anos
- < 1 ano

Qual o grau de frequência de compras online neste distribuidor, feitas pela sua empresa?

- nunca
- raramente
- ocasionalmente
- alguma frequência
- bastante frequência

SECÇÃO 2

Das afirmações que se seguem em relação ao distribuidor que pensou, indique a sua opinião, considerando a seguinte escala: 1 = discordo totalmente; 2=discordo parcialmente; 3= não concordo nem discordo; 4= concordo parcialmente; 5=concordo totalmente

A relação online que a minha empresa tem com este distribuidor merece que se invista na sua manutenção.

1 2 3 4 5
discordo totalmente concordo totalmente

O volume de negócio da minha empresa é superior neste distribuidor do que em outros distribuidores existentes no mercado.

1 2 3 4 5
discordo totalmente concordo totalmente

É pouco provável fazer negócio online com este distribuidor nos próximos anos.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Estou constantemente à procura de um distribuidor que possa substituir este distribuidor ao nível online.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Considero ser necessário ter alguma prudência com este distribuidor ao nível online.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

No geral, este distribuidor acrescenta valor na relação online estabelecida.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

O relacionamento online com este distribuidor é muito valioso.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

O relacionamento online com este distribuidor é muito valioso.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

PARTE II - COMUNICAÇÃO ONLINE

Continue a pensar no último distribuidor com que teve contacto online e com base nesse mesmo distribuidor, indique a sua opinião acerca das seguintes afirmações, considerando a seguinte escala:

Bloco I - Conteúdo Personalizado

Considere como exemplo de conteúdos personalizados online: sugestões de compra, promoções e notificações de actualizações de produtos ou serviços, comunicados pelo distribuidor.

Este distribuidor pode fornecer-me conteúdos online com oportunidades comerciais personalizadas de acordo com o contexto das minhas áreas de negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor pode fornecer-me um maior fluxo de conteúdos online promocional relevante para as minhas necessidades e preferências pessoais de negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor pode fornecer-me conteúdos online com oportunidades de negócio que me podem interessar.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Os conteúdos personalizados online, tais como: sugestões de compra, promoções e notificações de actualizações de produtos ou serviços, comunicados pelo distribuidor,...

....permitem-me localizar facilmente informação útil e relevante,

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

....ajudam-me a não perder tempo com conteúdos irrelevantes,

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

...reduzem o tempo de pesquisa dos conteúdos pretendidos,

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

...invadem a minha privacidade,

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

...satisfazem a minha necessidade de informação.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Bloco II - Conteúdo Interactivo

Considere como conteúdo interactivo, a troca de comunicação realizada nos canais online, tais como: Website - chat, email, forúns, social media, plataforma de ecommerce, etc ...

Mantenho frequentemente uma interacção online com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Geralmente partilho informação online com este distribuidor através dos canais interactivos.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Tenho bastante contacto online com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Frequentemente colaboro com este distribuidor através dos canais interactivos.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Raramente estabeleço uma comunicação interactiva online com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor disponibiliza-me sempre que é solicitado informação de conteúdo online.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor providencia bastante feedback sobre a minha performance ao nível de conhecimento técnico ou comercial.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor mantém frequentemente uma comunicação online bidireccional.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor tem regularmente um diálogo online comigo.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

PARTE III - RESULTADO AFECTIVO

Bloco 1 - Confiança

Este distribuidor é sincero e honesto na comunicação online.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor mantém as promessas comunicadas estabelecida online.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor informa-me, de forma honesta, algum problema que possa afectar o negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor demonstra preocupação com o meu interesse em ter acesso a um conteúdo online.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

A comunicação online que o distribuidor disponibiliza é fiável.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor demonstra na sua comunicação online ser especialista nos produtos e serviços que comercializa.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor entende a importância da comunicação de conteúdos online, de natureza técnico ou comercial, para o meu negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Na tomada de decisões este distribuidor tem em consideração o meu negócio, da mesma forma que tem pelo seu negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor é genuinamente preocupado com o sucesso do meu negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor tem dedicado uma grande parte do seu tempo a compreender o método que a minha empresa usa para fazer negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Posso confiar que este distribuidor considera o impacto das tomadas de decisão e das acções que desenvolve no negócio da minha empresa.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Acredito na comunicação online que o distribuidor disponibiliza.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Este distribuidor preocupa-se sinceramente com as necessidades de conteúdos online que contribuem para o meu negócio.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Bloco II - Satisfação

A performance online do distribuidor corresponde às minhas expectativas.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

O tempo médio de resposta da informação online geralmente corresponde às minhas expectativas.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Os conteúdos online disponibilizados pelo distribuidor normalmente correspondem ao pretendido.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Em termos de qualidade e performance, este distribuidor corresponde melhor às minhas expectativas do que a concorrência.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Estou bastante satisfeito com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Escolheria este distribuidor se tivesse que o fazer novamente.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Estou satisfeito com a relação que tenho com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Estou insatisfeito com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Bloco III - Compromisso

Tenho vindo a desenvolver uma relação de negócio mais próxima com este distribuidor do que com os outros distribuidores existentes no mercado.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Tenho preferência em fazer negócio com este distribuidor do que com outros distribuidores existentes no mercado.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Estou mais inclinado para colocar encomendas neste distribuidor do que em outros distribuidores existentes no mercado.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Eu tenho uma maior preferência em permanecer como cliente deste distribuidor do que com os restantes distribuidores existentes no mercado, porque aprecio a relação estabelecida com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

A lealdade é a principal razão para continuar a trabalhar com este distribuidor.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Pretendo estar associado a este distribuidor devido à fidelidade estabelecida.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

Pretendo continuar a trabalhar com este distribuidor porque sinto que ele "faz parte da família".

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| discordo totalmente | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | concordo totalmente |

SECÇÃO 3

Caracterização do respondente

Idade

- <25 anos
- 26-34 anos
- 35-44 anos
- 45-60 anos
- > 60 anos

Género

- Feminino
- Masculino

Área profissional

- Pré-venda
- Comercial
- Pós-venda
- Marketing

Grau de autonomia na tomada de decisão

- Nenhuma
- Pouca
- Moderada
- Muita
- Total

Região geográfica a que pertence

- Grande Lisboa
- Grande Porto
- Litoral
- Interior Norte
- Interior Sul
- Ilhas: Madeira e Açores

Appendix 2: Summary of adapted items scale

| Constructs | | Adapted items scale | | Authors |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| Personalised content | Service personalisation | <p>...allow me to locate useful and relevant information easily.</p> <p>...help me not to waste time on irrelevant content.</p> <p>... reduce the search time of the intended contents.</p> <p>... invade my privacy (reverse). **</p> <p>... satisfy my need for information.</p> | | (Ho & Kwok, 2003) |
| | Quality of personalisation | <p>This distributor can provide me with online content with personalised business opportunities according to the</p> <p>This distributor can provide me with a higher flow of online promotional content relevant to my personal business</p> <p>This distributor can provide me with online content with business opportunities that may interest me.</p> | | (Pappas et al., 2016) |
| Interactive content | Digital communication | <p>I often interact online with this distributor.</p> <p>I usually share information online with this distributor through the interactive channels.</p> <p>I have enough online contact with this distributor.</p> <p>I often collaborate with this distributor through the interactive channels.</p> <p>I rarely establish an interactive online communication with this distributor (reverse). **</p> | | (Murphy & Sashi, 2018) |
| | Reciprocal feedback | <p>This distributor makes available to me whenever requested online content information. ***</p> <p>This distributor provides enough feedback on my performance at the level of technical or commercial knowledge.</p> <p>This distributor often maintains bi-directional online communication.</p> <p>This distributor regularly has an online dialogue with me.</p> | | |
| | | <p>This distributor is sincere and honest in established online communication.</p> <p>This distributor keeps the promises communicated online.</p> <p>This distributor honestly informs me of a problem that may affect the business.</p> <p>This distributor is concerned about my interest in having access to online content.</p> <p>The online communication that the distributor provides is reliable.</p> <p>This distributor demonstrates in its online communication to be specialist in the products and services that it commercialises.</p> | | |
| Trust | | <p>This distributor understands the importance of communicating online contents, of a technical or commercial nature, to my business.</p> <p>When making decisions, this distributor considers my business, just as it does for your business.</p> <p>This distributor is genuinely concerned about the success of my business.</p> <p>This distributor has spent a great deal of his time understanding the method my company uses to do business.</p> <p>I can trust that this distributor considers the impact of the decision making and the actions that develop in the business of my company.</p> <p>I believe in online communication that the distributor.</p> <p>This distributor sincerely cares about the online content needs that contribute to my business.</p> | | (Barry et al., 2008) |
| | Credibility and benevolence | | | |

Summary of adapted items scale – Cont.

| Constructs | | Adapted items scale | | Authors |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Satisfaction | | <p>The distributor's online performance meets my expectations. The average response time for online information generally corresponds to my expectations Online content provided by the distributor usually matches what is intended. Concerning quality and performance, this distributor meets my expectations better than the competition.</p> | | (Barry et al., 2008) |
| | | <p>I am quite satisfied with this distributor. You would choose this distributor if you had to do it again I am satisfied with the relationship I have with this distributor I am dissatisfied with this distributor. (reverse)**</p> | | (Murphy & Sashi, 2018) |
| Commitment | Affective commitment | <p>I have been developing a closer business relationship with this distributor than with the other distributors in the market. I have a preference for doing business with this distributor than with other distributors in the market. I am more inclined to place orders on this distributor than on other distributors in the market. I have a higher preference in remaining a customer of this distributor than with the other distributors existing in the market because I appreciate the relation established with this distributor.</p> | | (Davis-Sramek et al., 2009) |
| | | <p>Loyalty is the main reason to continue working with this distributor. ** I want to be associated with this distributor due to established loyalty. I intend to continue working with this distributor because I feel he is "part of the family".</p> | | (Barry et al., 2008) |
| | | <p>The online relationship that my company has with this distributor deserves to be invested in its maintenance. My company's business volume is higher in this distributor than in other distributors in the market **</p> | | (Barry et al., 2008) |
| | | <p>It is unlikely to do business online with this distributor in the next few years. (reverse) ** I'm continually looking for a distributor who can replace this distributor online. (reverse) ** I consider it necessary to exercise some prudence with this online distributor. (reverse) **</p> | | (Barry et al., 2008) |
| Online Relationship | Relationship strength | <p>In general, this distributor adds value to the established online relationship. The online relationship with this distributor is more valuable. This distributor adds more value, taking into consideration the comparison of costs and benefits of the online relationship established.</p> | | (Saura et al., 2009) |
| | Relationship value | | | |

Note: ** Items removed in the CFA phase

Appendix 3:: Sample characterisation

| Age | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| <25 years | 5 | 1.4% |
| 26-34 years | 49 | 13.7% |
| 35-44 years | 143 | 39.8% |
| 45-60 years | 155 | 43.2% |
| > 60 years | 6 | 1.7% |
| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
| Female | 55 | 15.3% |
| Male | 303 | 84.1% |
| Professional area | Frequency | Percent |
| pre-sales | 50 | 13.9% |
| sales | 188 | 52.4% |
| after-sales | 62 | 17.3% |
| marketing | 11 | 3.1% |
| other | 45 | 12.5% |
| Autonomy of decision-making | Frequency | Percent |
| none | 1 | 0.3% |
| few | 11 | 3.1% |
| moderate | 84 | 23.4% |
| very | 130 | 36.2% |
| entire | 132 | 36.8% |
| Geographical region | Frequency | Percent |
| Lisbon | 194 | 54.0% |
| Porto | 66 | 18.4% |
| Littoral | 65 | 18.1% |
| Inland North | 17 | 4.7% |
| Inland South | 12 | 3.3% |
| Islands(Madeira & Açores) | 3 | 0.8% |
| How many years do you keep an online relationship with that distributor? | Frequency | Percent |
| < 1 year | 28 | 7.8% |
| 1-year | 34 | 9.5% |
| 3-5 year | 43 | 12.0% |
| > 5 year | 253 | 70.7% |
| How often you usually make an online purchase from this distributor? | Frequency | Percent |
| never | 7 | 2.0% |
| rarely | 22 | 6.1% |
| occasionally | 72 | 20.1% |
| some | 115 | 32.1% |
| quite often | 140 | 39.1% |

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