



## INTERNSHIP REPORT

# EXPANDING A B2B BRAND INTO THE B2C MARKET: THE CASE OF MISTOLIN SOLUTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The rise and spread of the internet have significantly impacted businesses, encouraging new activities and operations for companies, which can now more easily expand their business in terms of clients and geography.

This research focuses on the case of the B2B company Mistolin Solutions, the largest Portuguese distribution network of professional hygiene and cleaning products, which aims to explore the possibility of expanding into the B2C market with the support of its online store. The general research objective is then to analyze the perception of the B2C market towards the online store of the brand.

The study adopts a quantitative survey methodology, resorting to the questionnaire technique. A total of 138 valid responses were collected from end consumers. Findings demonstrate that, among the nine addressed independent variables, only perceived benefits and discount proneness significantly and positively influence the general interest of purchasing in the online store of the brand. Additionally, the kitchen, surfaces and pavements, and ecological products categories were found to be the most attractive ones for end consumers. Lastly, end consumers general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store proved to not be significant enough.

**Keywords:** B2B and B2C convergence, mixed business models, market expansion, consumer perception, Mistolin Solutions





## RESUMO

O crescimento e a expansão da internet tiveram um impacto significativo nos negócios, motivando a novas atividades e operações, permitindo agora mais facilmente expandir negócios em termos de clientes e geografia.

Esta investigação foca-se no caso da empresa B2B Mistolin Solutions, a maior rede portuguesa de distribuição de produtos de higiene e limpeza profissional, que visa explorar a possibilidade de expansão para o mercado B2C com o suporte da sua loja online. O objetivo geral da pesquisa é então analisar a perceção do mercado B2C em relação à loja online da marca.

O estudo adota uma metodologia de inquérito quantitativa, recorrendo à técnica do questionário. Foi recolhido um total de 138 respostas válidas de consumidores finais. Os resultados demonstram que, entre as nove variáveis dependentes abordadas, apenas os benefícios percebidos e a propensão a descontos influenciam significativa e positivamente o interesse geral pela compra na loja online da empresa. Além disso, as categorias de cozinha, superfícies e pavimentos, e produtos ecológicos foram consideradas as mais atrativas para os consumidores finais. Por fim, o interesse geral dos consumidores finais em comprar na loja online da marca provou não ser suficientemente significativo.

**Palavras-chave:** convergência entre B2B e B2C, modelos de negócio mistos, expansão de mercado, perceção do consumidor, Mistolin Solutions



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**B2B** - Business to Business

**B2C** - Business to Consumer

**B2B2C** - Business to Business to Consumer

**BQ** - Brand Quality

**PE** - Perceived Expertise

**IB** - Industry Background

**PC** - Perceived Choice

**PQ** - Product Quality

**IP** - Industrial Product

**PB** - Perceived Benefits

**PT** - Perceived Trust

**DP** - Discount Proneness

**EFA** - Exploratory Factor Analysis

**SPSS** - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

**KMO** - Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

**Df** - Degrees of freedom

**VIF** - Variance Inflation Factor





## INTRODUCTION

Firms are improving and readjusting their e-commerce strategies (Babenko et al., 2019), defining new business rules or disruptive ways to compete for (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015) and focusing on innovation regarding new products, services, and business methods (Costa & Castro, 2021). That is the case of the company addressed in this research, Mistolin Solutions (see logo presented in Appendix 1).

During five months, the author had the opportunity to carry out an internship at MSTN Group. Created in 2001, MSTN Group is the holding company responsible for managing its subsidiaries, companies specialized in different areas of activity, both nationally and internationally (MSTN Group, n.d.). The group, whose capital is 100% Portuguese, directly employs more than 500 people, spread over more than 25 companies located in Portugal, Cape Verde, and Mozambique, and operates in the following areas of expertise: packaging, chemical industry, food industry, technical assistance, specialized trade, services, and trading (MSTN Group, n.d.).

One of the subsidiaries of the group is Mistolin Solutions, the largest distribution network of professional hygiene and cleaning products in Portugal. At the moment, Mistolin Solutions owns 10 physical points of sale, located throughout the country, more precisely in Algarve, Azores, Famalicão, Lisbon, Madeira, Oliveira do Hospital, Paredes, Peniche, Vagos and Viseu (MSTN Group, n.d.). Mistolin Solutions sells more than 100 brands, with solutions for cleaning

and disinfection, professional laundry, food industry, hospitality industry, maintenance and auto, facility services and security (Mistolin Solutions, n.d.).

According to Santos (2019), the brand was, until January 2019, known as M.Deliv, but the firm realized that its consumers did not associate M.Deliv with Mistolin Company – one of the subsidiaries of MSTN Group, as well as a renowned name in the Portuguese market of hygiene and cleaning products conception and production<sup>1</sup>. The same author also states that the brand name was then replaced as a strategy for an increasing national recognition and international expansion. As part of this ambition, an online store for Mistolin Solutions was also created in the beginning of 2021, with the goal of optimizing supply chain processes, increasing brand awareness and generating new leads. The initial focus of this entry into the e-commerce world was still the one market Mistolin Solutions always targeted: the B2B market. However, an opportunity of expansion into the B2C market soon started to stand out for two main reasons.

The first reason was that the presence in the online world, allows reaching out to a wider audience compared to physical stores (Xuhua et al., 2019), especially in the case of Mistolin Solutions. The points of sale of the company are mostly located in very specific areas, meaning that only usual

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<sup>1</sup> Mistolin Company used to commercialize the Mistolin household line of cleaning products, which remains a reference in the Portuguese end consumer cleaning market, being present in most grocery stores and supermarkets. Even though Mistolin Company sold the Mistolin brand to another firm, it continues producing these products in its facilities. An explanatory table is presented in Appendix 2, in order to better clarify the differences between the several different brands previously mentioned.

customers, people contacted by commercial representatives of the company, or consumers influenced by word-of-mouth, go there to buy these professional products. The second reason is the rebranding of Mistolin Solutions that went hand-in-hand with the creation of the online store. Having in mind that the brand is constituted by humans, who communicate with humans, and, therefore, with the aim of repositioning its values and reaffirming itself in the Portuguese market, the company reinvented the slogan and tone of voice of the brand towards a more informal type of communication.

“Soluções de profissional, com discurso local” is the slogan of the brand, which translated means “Professional solutions, with local speech”. The company states that the goal of this rebranding and new slogan is to represent the proximity that Mistolin Solutions is committed to establish with its customers, digitally and physically. Simultaneously, the company also seeks to help customers demystify questions regarding cleaning and hygiene. This new tone of voice can be identified in all social media posts of the brand, which combine the names and features of each product with idiomatic expressions, references to Portuguese songs, and wordplay - elements people can easily relate to. This idea of informality and approachability is itself a way of engaging other audiences beyond the usual B2B customers, in particular final consumers, with whom Mistolin Solutions may have a significant opportunity.

In this way, the proposed general objective for the internship and the present research is the following: **to analyze the perception of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store**. Having in mind this general purpose, the defined specific objectives are the following:

- 1) To understand if brand perception (brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception), product perception (perceived choice, product quality, industrial product perception) and online store perception (perceived benefits, perceived trust, discount proneness) have a positive and significant influence on the general interest of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store.

These factors were chosen, since they are considered by the company and by the author as the ones that mainly address the most important components of this subject: the brand, the products it offers, and the main channel through which it delivers them.

- 2) To define the most attractive product categories sold by Mistolin Solutions for the B2C market.

In order to develop the best strategy to target the B2C market, it is important for Mistolin Solutions to understand which products could more easily answer the needs or pains of end consumers.

- 3) To identify and quantify the general interest of the B2C market in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store.

This analysis may be helpful to interpret research results, as well as for Mistolin Solutions to define its future strategies, including if it wishes to keep exploring this new potential opportunity or not.

Along with the contribution to the adaptation and expansion process that the company Mistolin Solutions aims to achieve, this research will also be useful to the growth of the B2C and B2C convergence, mixed business models,

and market expansion domains of literature, specially the first two subjects, which are areas that are still lacking significant research and practical cases (Gummesson & Polese, 2009; Iankova et al., 2019). In addition, the investigation focuses on the perception of the end consumer towards the B2B brand Mistolin Solutions, its products and its online store, ultimately analyzing their interest in purchasing from this channel, which is a research structure not very common in the studies related to the aforementioned topics, and therefore, potentially bringing new insights to discussion.

This research will be structured as follows. After the introduction to the study is presented, a literature review will be displayed, including the main and most relevant subjects for the investigation. The research methodology approach will then be addressed in a new section. After this, the findings of the investigation will be presented, followed by a discussion related to these results. A set of recommendations to the company will then be displayed, followed by a conclusion on the research. Lastly the presentation of the limitations of the study and opportunities for future research will be presented.



## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review of previous literature considered relevant to the study will follow a defined line of thought, perceived by the author as the clearest and most simple way to present the information. Therefore, the definition of main concepts, as well as background research on important issues will be mentioned first, including topics such as the growing erosion process of the differences between B2B and B2C, mixed business models, market entry and expansion, and brand extension. Lastly, a review on important factors and potential variables for the study will be showcased.

### **1.1. BLURRING THE BORDERS BETWEEN B2B AND B2C**

The strategy that Mistolin Solutions aims to implement implies the coexistence of B2B and B2C, which makes it crucial to address the phenomenon of the increasingly blurring boundaries between these two targets. The traditional dichotomization of markets into B2B and B2C has been put into question in previous research, in both earlier (Cova & Salle, 2007; Dant & Brown, 2008; Fern & Brown, 1984; Gummesson & Polese, 2009; Wilson, 2000; Wind, 2006) and more recent studies (Iankova et al, 2019; Mingione & Leoni, 2019; Nath et al., 2019).

These investigations are mainly based on systematic literature reviews and case studies, with only one quantitative survey-based research, which shows that researchers still display the need to adopt a more exploratory type of study due to a very poor research development on this subject thus far. The literature commonly mentions two main contributing factors for the erosion of differences between B2B and B2C: on the one hand, the growth of information and communication technologies; on the other hand, increasingly sophisticated and empowered customers, a phenomenon strongly linked to the interconnectivity that internet development, and, most recently, social media emergence and relevance, allowed (Gummesson & Polese, 2009; Nath et al., 2019; Wilson, 2000; Wind, 2006).

Fern & Brown (1984) indicated that the distinction between B2B and B2C was unjustified, a controversial statement for that time. Subsequently, Wilson (2000) pondered over whether independent theories were really necessary to translate the behavior of individuals in B2B and B2C contexts, stating that differences are likely to be related to degrees of complexity of the value delivery process, rather than in the individual consumer *per se*.

In connection with this, Nath et al. (2019) raised a pertinent question: why should the buyer “be less conscientious in one context and not the other?” (p.1468). This emphasizes the importance of understanding the individual behavior of consumers within a B2B context, and perceiving them as essential in the performed transactions, a strategy that, according to the same authors, may be crucial for companies to survive in an ever-changing market.



Furthermore, Cova and Salle (2008) address the ability of consumers to exercise their freedom, attributing their own meanings to their experiences with products and services, rather than representing a passive element, conformed with marketing defined meanings and concepts. Therefore, more than the conjunction of organizations with end consumers, managers should understand that a B2B and B2C convergence implies, above all, the aggregation of different individuals, human beings, who, by nature, behave and perceive things in different ways (Cova & Salle, 2008; Nath et al., 2019; Wind, 2006). Thus, Nath et al. (2019), whose study is the most recent article directly addressing the subject, conclude that the B2B and B2C distinction is no longer imperative, and that the increasing importance given to customer-centricity in business interactions contributes to looking at these two paradigms as progressively interrelated.

In spite of these statements, most of the previously mentioned investigations do not fully intend to overlook the existence of traits that are naturally more common in each of the B2B and B2C areas; nor do they discard past findings on these two different fields (Cova & Salle, 2008; Gummesson & Polese, 2009; Nath et al., 2019; Wind, 2006). Instead, various authors suggest that future studies may build on the foundations that have been previously established, while approaching this subject in new ways. Gummesson and Polese (2009) suggest that the complexity and context of specific cases should be welcomed in the literature in order to develop a more general theory, as well as these authors reinforce the need for reconceptualization and constant evaluation of mainstream definitions, having in mind the ever-changing

environment marketing is inserted in. In addition, cross-fertilization is frequently mentioned: Cova and Salle (2008), Nath et al. (2019) and Wind (2006) argue that B2C dynamics may be reflected in B2B relationships, and vice-versa, meaning that insights on one market may complement the understanding of the other.

## **1.2.MIXED BUSINESS MODELS**

If the process of expansion into the B2C market is ultimately implemented, Mistolin Solutions will eventually operate in a mixed business model, delivering value to their business consumers (B2B), as well as to end consumers (B2C), at the same time. In fact, it is common practice for new and fast-growing businesses to optimize their scalability and profitability, by adopting a mixed business model (Suh & Chow, 2021).

Iankova et al. (2019, p.170) refer to mixed business models as “businesses that sell products to both other business and individual consumers”. It differentiates from B2B2C business models in the sense that the latter defines businesses that only sell directly to organizational customers, but that also manage the experience of the clients of these companies, ultimately reaching the end consumer (Wiersema, 2013). Although the mixed business models concept might be perceived as an invention of the market, it has been proved that the traditional target marketing strategy of defining homogenous customer segments within a certain market, which is the case of the distinction

between B2B and B2C, is not a naturally occurring market phenomenon (Quinn et al., 2007).

There are several cases of firms (perhaps unconsciously) applying a mixed business model strategy, even though they may not be aware of that terminology. Wind (2006) provides some examples of these cases: the travel industry, where many booking and travel agencies sell to both end consumers and corporate travelers (through their website or specialized agents); Home Depot, which targets customers ranging from homeowners to contractors; or Staples, which sells office supplies to both students and corporate offices.

However, the topic of mixed business models is significantly lacking research. Literature regarding mixed business model organizations is almost inexistent (only one quality article on mixed business models was found, that did not extend this concept to B2B2C business models), which indicates a considerable research opportunity in this area, including the relationship of social media with mixed business models, a recommendation of Iankova et al. (2019). The same authors also suggest that a way to start tackling this issue may be to resort to the complementarity of traditional B2B and B2C work, which can generate new insights into customer and social media management in mixed business models. Since studies on B2B and B2C convergence are limited, and the context of the research is very specific, the previous proposition is a very important guideline for the evolution of the present investigation.

## **1.3.MARKET EXPANSION AND MARKET ENTRY**

This study involves not only the convergence of two markets, as previously mentioned, but also the entry of Mistolin Solutions into an end consumer environment. Consequently, the themes of market expansion and market entry are essential to describe the strategic decision of the company.

### **1.3.1. Market Expansion**

Market expansion is considered by the author as the one concept which more accurately represents the changes Mistolin Solutions aims to achieve. The term, sometimes also referred to as business expansion (He et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2015), is defined by the literature as a strategic and growth-focused process based on the replication of a firm's existing business model and, in consequence, the sale of existing products, in new markets and for new customers (Ayal & Zif, 1979; González-Benito et al., 2009; McKenzie & Smirnov, 2017; Mishina et al., 2004; Souder et al., 2011). Market expansion is differentiated from product expansion by the fact that the former does not involve the introduction of a new product, while the latter does (Mishina et al., 2004). The market expansion strategy that Mistolin Solutions envisages is, in fact, a much more favorable strategy for the company than product expansion would be. This is explained by the fact that product expansion implies the development, adaptation and management of a whole new set of routines and

processes, representing a higher level of unpredictability and investment (time, research and financially-wise) (Mishina et al., 2004).

In spite of the process of market expansion being very often associated with internationalization, entering foreign markets is only a type of market expansion, meaning that this strategic move can also be represented by the entry into other markets or by the acquisition of new customers in the home country of the company (González-Benito et al., 2009). It is then, as Mishina et al. (2004) state, a way of capitalizing on the knowledge and experience of a firm, by redirecting it to new geographic or demographic contexts. These same authors also suggested four categories for market expansion: “increasing share of existing markets; expanding into new domestic demographic markets with current products; domestic geographic expansion; and international market expansion”. Since Mistolin Solutions is implementing its online store in order to be more attractive to B2B consumers, as well as to enter the end consumer market, the first two presented categories are the ones directly related to the context of the company.

An important subject associated to market expansion is the rise of web technologies and the stimulating role it has been playing in market and business opportunities. As claimed by González-Benito et al. (2009), with company websites and platforms, firms have access to tools that allow establishing new sales channels, overcoming constraints associated with geographical distance, expanding business activities without requiring physical presence, and maintaining brand image and consistency along its different markets. The same authors even mention that, with the help of web

technologies, companies with particularly specialized products, which is the case of Mistolin Solutions, can reach a larger number of potential customers, unlocking access to new business opportunities.

Even though considering the higher fixed costs of opening new stores (in this case, an online shop), as well as the cannibalization of the sales of existing stores (Kalnins, 2004), market expansion has been proving to be a very important and profitable strategy for company growth (González-Benito et al., 2009; Souder et al., 2011), increasing the chance of boosting sales and growing market share (González-Benito et al., 2009). Being this growth the main goal of Mistolin Solutions, within the market expansion choices, the decision of not expanding the business internationally appears to be beneficial for the company, since, according to Mishina et al. (2004), international market expansion is considered the most complicated type of market expansion, entailing a very complex range of processes.

### **1.3.2. Market Entry**

Referred by Aversa et al. (2021) as a crucial factor for corporate strategy, market entry is intrinsically related to market expansion, since it is considered by Markman et al. (2019) an expansion modality, as well as it is present in most of the four market expansion categories suggested by Mishina et al. (2004), previously presented. Market entry is then defined as a projected movement into a new or adjacent market (Aversa et al., 2021; Markman et al.,

2019). Being it a part of market expansion, market entry is usually performed with the goal of growing sales, developing competences, and diversifying the product range or geographical presence of a company, as mentioned by Markman et al. (2019).

These same authors highlight a serious need for a unified theory of market entry in the literature, that is both intuitive and capable of comprehending different entry contexts. In connection with this inconsistent definition of market entry, during literature research and analysis, it was in fact concluded that, as it is also the aforementioned case of market expansion, a meaningful portion of authors addressing the subject focuses on internationalization, which can lead to a misinterpretation of what market entry is.

For each successful market entry, four fail (Horn et al., 2005). Therefore, in order for a company to be as ready as possible, entering a new market requires a vast and complex preparation process, including an in-depth analysis of key stakeholders (including customers, which will be the main focus of this research), along with entry barriers, timing and resource specifications (Markman et al., 2019; Skilton & Bernardes, 2014; Zachary et al., 2015). It is then a decision which will naturally involve investment, strategy adjustments, uncertainty, and unexpected events to a certain extent (Markman et al., 2019).

## **1.4. B2B BRAND EXTENSION INTO THE B2C MARKET**

Aaker and Keller (1990) define brand extension as using the established name of the parent brand to enter a new product category or class. It is seen as a marketing strategy that helps reducing risks when a company chooses to introduce a new product into the market, since the use of a well-established and strong brand name provides customers a sense of knowledge and familiarity towards that brand (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011), as well as possibly contributing to cost reduction regarding distribution and promotion (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

All literature definitions of the brand extension term always imply the launch of a new product or service (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011). As stated before, this is not the case of Mistolin Solutions, which only wishes to enter the B2C market with its existing products. Therefore, one would deduce that this term did not apply to the specific situation of this company. However, some studies (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Park et al., 1991; Tang et al., 2008) have already adapted the brand extension model initially proposed by Keller and Aaker (1990) to the context of the research. Given that the process which Mistolin Solutions aims to go through still signals the need for more theory and literature development (as previously stated and showcased by several addressed topics), the present investigation will also collect insights of some brand extension studies, specifically, those who focus on a B2B brand entering the B2C market (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2021).



Even though the case of B2B companies extending into B2C markets has not yet been highly explored in the literature, the number of end consumer products provided by brands with considerable industry background in the B2B market has been increasing (Zhou et al., 2021). Burnaz & Bilgin (2011) as well as Tang et al. (2008) mention Nokia, Philips, Mitsubishi, Microsoft, Caterpillar and IBM as examples of brands which were founded as solely B2B and that are now renowned end consumer companies, evidencing that this kind of extension is not that unusual.

However, in comparison with B2C companies, since B2B brands usually involve a closer and more familiar relationship with their institutional customers, they are consequently less accessible to end consumers (Homburg et al., 2014). Thus, due to the fact that the awareness of B2B brands in B2C markets is often limited, the use of a B2B brand equity among end consumers, which is exactly the case of Mistolin Solutions, might be substantially more challenging (Zhou et al., 2021), involving more carefully thought-out decisions for the company.

## **1.5. POTENTIAL INFLUENCING FACTORS OF B2C INTEREST TOWARDS MISTOLIN SOLUTIONS**

For its expansion, Mistolin Solutions aims to examine the different aspects and stakeholders that this process will eventually involve. However, the company firstly wishes to understand what might drive the interest and feedback of end consumers towards the online store, which will be the focus of

this investigation. As defined by the literature, in order to explore or determine the viability of a brand extension, one crucial part of the strategy is to analyze customer perception towards this process, since brand extension success is strongly dependent on the way consumers evaluate it (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Klink & Smith, 2001).

Several authors have then been addressing the role of consumer attitude and purchase intention towards brand extension (Boisvert & Ashill, 2018; Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Chen & Bei, 2019; Childs, 2017; Chun et al., 2015; Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2015; Johnson et al., 2019; Miniard et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2017; Yuan et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2021). Based on an extensive literature review, Childs (2017) defined three factors directly influencing brand extension customer feedback: (1) parent brand attributes, (2) brand extension attributes, and (3) marketing efforts. Having in mind these categories, as well as the variables that the company particularly wished to analyze, the factors addressed in this study are the following:

- For the parent brand attributes category: brand quality, perceived expertise, and industry background.

This was one of the categories where Mistolin Solutions wanted to significantly explore its influence, since the brand is already established in the B2B market.

- Regarding the brand extension attributes category: perceived choice, product quality, industrial product perception, perceived benefits and perceived trust.

Alongside the previous category, the company also gave some importance to how the elements representing the expansion (the products, as well as the online store) influenced B2C perception.

- With respect to the marketing efforts category: discount proneness.

Being at a yet early stage for the expansion, the analysis of marketing and advertising measures was not defined by Mistolin Solutions as a priority for the present investigation. However, the company still wished to start unveiling the topic of online promotions, which is increasingly gaining relevance in the e-commerce world (Sheehan et al., 2019).

Considering that other studies, such as the one from Burnaz & Bilgin (2011) have been adapting previously established models to the context of the research, introducing new variables and deciding not to use former ones, the present research will follow the same process, in order to select adequate variables to this specific case.

In addition to other relevant studies and sources, the research variables will strongly be based on some of the aforementioned brand extension studies (especially the ones analyzing extensions from B2B to B2C).

### **1.5.1. Brand Quality**

As indicated in the introduction section, the name “Mistolin” holds significant importance for MSTN Group, in which Mistolin Solutions is inserted. The name is well-known in the market, especially in the end

consumer hygiene and cleaning industry, heavily due to the popularity of the Mistolin degreaser in Portugal (Julião, 2018). Even though the Mistolin brand is not commercialized by MSTN Group anymore, the Mistolin term has been incorporated in the names of some subsidiaries of the group (see Appendix 2). Having this in mind, when addressing Mistolin Solutions in the end consumer market, the association with Mistolin household line might be frequent. The importance and reputation of the “Mistolin” name might then be an advantage when approaching the B2C market, which is why one of the factors addressed in this study is related to the perceived quality of the brand.

Even though (as a way to better distinguish it from other variables) the name “brand quality” (BQ) will be used for this study (based on the same term used by Guzmán and Davis, 2017), this variable is commonly referred to as quality perception (Q), indicating customer perception towards the overall quality of each parent brand, in other words, the overall brand attitude (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Tang et al., 2008). Generally, the literature defends that the influence of perceived quality on the attitude towards the extension should be undoubtedly positive, meaning that if consumers associate the brand with high quality this would benefit the extension, while if the brand is associated with lower quality, the extension should be negatively affected (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Childs, 2017; Dens and De Pelsmacker, 2010). The perceived quality of a brand may be associated with design, price, heritage, among other attributes (Bang et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2011), and it is considered as one of the elements that

constitute brand equity (Beig & Nika, 2019; Chen et al., 2019; Guzmán & Davis, 2017; Sasmita et al., 2015).

Perceived quality does not represent the quality perception of a specific product, but rather it is related to the subjective judgment of customers towards the overall excellence or superiority of a brand, when compared to its competition (Beig & Nika, 2019; Guzmán & Davis, 2017; Zeithaml, 1988). Zeithaml (1998) even states that “perceived quality is at a higher level of abstraction than a specific attribute of a product”. Based on this, and having in mind that, in this case, the brand Mistolin Solutions only sells products from other brands, the study addresses two different variables for quality perception: brand quality and product quality, the latter being mentioned further on.

### **1.5.2. Perceived Expertise**

Being an originally B2B brand, which sells cleaning and maintenance products focused on answering the needs of companies inserted in or associated to the professional cleaning and hygiene industry, Mistolin Solutions frequently addresses the knowledge and expertise of its team. It is indeed essential for companies like Mistolin Solutions to describe its expertise and to showcase it in all customer experiences, while continuously investing in know-how improvement, as a way of conveying consistency and stability (Kim et al., 2020). This aspect, as well as the previously mentioned potential association of

the brand with the well-succeeded Mistolin line of household products, might drive end consumers to perceive considerable expertise towards Mistolin Solutions.

Perceived expertise (PE), or perceived brand expertise, is generally defined by the literature as the ability of a brand to continuously deliver the emotional and functional benefits that are required in a particular market (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Pontes et al., 2017). It is associated with several characteristics such as credibility, ability, skill, knowledge, experience, mastery, competence, and qualification (Lord & Putrevu, 2009; Magnini et al., 2008).

Signs of the importance of perceived expertise might be detected in a frequently explored theme of the brand extension research: brand extension fit, also referred to as brand extension consistency. By measuring the “similarity between the extension category and the parent brand category”, the brand extension fit or consistency factor implies that it is relevant for the brand to maintain and guarantee its expertise and credibility throughout the brand extension process (Osorio et al., 2021). In addition, acquiring expertise requires time, research and development, and staff training, meaning that not all brands can achieve expertise easily (Dane, 2010; Pontes et al., 2017), and making it an even more valuable brand characteristic. Furthermore, in previous literature, the perceived credibility of a company has played an important role in brand extension evaluations, such as in the investigation performed by Keller and Aaker (1992). Thus, these same authors mention that perceived credibility

towards a brand was possibly more positive due to its focus on products that naturally require significant technical orientation, as it is the case of Mistolin Solutions.

### **1.5.3. Industry Background Perception**

Similarly to perceived expertise, industry background perception (IB) evaluates customer perception towards the previous experience of Mistolin Solutions. However, while perceived expertise focuses more on the know-how of the brand towards the professional cleaning products it sells, industry background is more directed to the practical experience of the company in the B2B background it is inserted in. In other words, industry background perception addresses the potential importance given by end consumers to an originally B2B brand, as a consequence of it being a company operating among and towards professionals of the cleaning industry.

Even though it is not an already established variable in the literature, the author and the company considered that it would be beneficial to analyze this factor. Furthermore, the industry background perception variable was also influenced by the study of Zhou et al. (2021), which explores “whether, when, and how highlighting the industry background of a B2B brand in the advertisements of its B2C products influence brand extension evaluation”. This study addresses a few B2B companies which promote their industry background, due to the ideas of superior quality, innovation and competence

that this information might convey to the B2C market. Some examples of companies given by these authors which publicized their industry background in order to more easily create positive perceptions on end consumers are Oracle, Kingston and Huawei.

By highlighting the competence associated with its industry background, brands can positively impact consumer evaluation of the extension (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2021). Additionally, it is suggested by Zhou et al. (2021) that presenting practical examples of prior experience in the B2B market, such as a list of previous industrial clients, which Mistolin Solutions already does, may be beneficial for brand extension evaluation as well. It is worth highlighting once more the fact that Mistolin Solutions does not sell its own products, but rather it gathers several different professional cleaning brands and products. Consequently, the study addresses the impact of an industrial context on the main brand perception – the industry background perception variable – as well as on the products that Mistolin Solution sells – the industrial product perception variable, which will be explained later on.

#### **1.5.4. Perceived Choice**

One aspect that might be beneficial for Mistolin Solutions is the fact that it sells more than 100 brands, as well as it comprises a significant range of cleaning product categories. This study will then analyze the impact of perceived choice (PC), adapted from the study of Wu (2019), in consumer



interest to buy. Literature indicates that consumers tend to experience reduced control during the process of buying new products - which would be the case of the B2C market towards the products sold by Mistolin Solutions - or when selecting from a small variety of product choices, that may, in turn, negatively affect their consumption experience and their perception of the products (Inesi et al., 2011; Wu, 2019). By providing consumers with different options to choose from, they “tend to feel that the outcomes depend on their own behavior, and they have an increased chance to obtain what they want”, having the perception that they are in control of the situation (Wu, 2019).

However, some authors present an opposite approach to this subject, stating that, while a high variety of options may, on the one hand, generate positive emotions like motivation to purchase, excitement and empowerment, on the other hand, it can also transmit the feeling of choice overload, causing consumers to feel overwhelmed, confused or stressed (Ackerman & Gross, 2006; Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Sethuraman et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2017; Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). Thus, this choice paradox embracing both the benefits and costs that a significant diversity of options might entail, represents the complexity and ambiguity of this issue (Tang et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, there is one important conclusion from the study of Chernev (2006), which will guide the construction of the hypothesis associated to the perceived choice variable. This author states that an increase in variety positively influences purchase likelihood when the decision is whether to buy or not to buy, rather than when the decision is associated with making a choice from the presented range of products (Sethuraman et al., 2022). This is

especially important for the present investigation, since it is inserted in a context of brand and product newness for the targeted market, thus being relevant to assess the direct impact of perceived choice on whether to buy, rather than on what to buy.

### **1.5.5. Product Quality**

As previously indicated, the study differentiates perceived brand quality from perceived product quality, since Mistolin Solutions aims to understand the perception of consumers towards its quality, as well as their perception towards the different products from the various brands the company sells. In this investigation, perceived product quality, mainly influenced by the study of Wu (2019), will be referred to as product quality (PQ), and it represents the overall quality perception of end consumers towards the brands and products sold by Mistolin Solutions.

According to Rosillo-Díaz et al. (2021), perceived quality is usually defined as the subjective assessments made by consumers towards the level of excellence and performance of a product or brand. This is also the definition that the author considered to fit best to the meaning attributed to the product quality term in the present investigation. These same authors also state that product quality perception has significantly changed in recent times, due to a rising general adoption of information and communication technologies. The fact that consumers are increasingly resorting to digital platforms to perform their

purchases consequently limits quality evaluation of products, since it is usually not possible to practically and physically test the goods before the acquisition (Rosillo-Díaz et al., 2021).

Zeithaml (1988) classified quality perception attributes into two types: intrinsic attributes, which include more internal and physical aspects of the product, like color, appearance, form, aroma, or taste; and extrinsic attributes, which, as the name suggests, is related to cues that are external to the product, such as price, brand name, packaging, quality stamp, or advertising (Beig & Nika, 2019; Bernués et al., 2003; Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2015). In situations where consumers do not have the opportunity to consume or experience the product and, consequently, its intrinsic cues, they tend to base their quality inferences on extrinsic cues (Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2015). This phenomenon is then likely to occur in the present investigation, since the addressed products are unfamiliar to the B2C market, as well as the sample will not have direct or physical contact with the products at the moment of the evaluation.

The literature highlights several benefits that may derive from favorable product quality perceptions. These include, on the one hand, a positive impact on business performance, namely on profitability, differentiation, and competitiveness (Agarwal and Teas, 2001; Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Gervais, 2015). On the other hand, the aforementioned benefits are also related to significant influence on consumer experience, specifically on reduced perceived risk, consumer loyalty, satisfaction, and trust (Audrain-Pontevia & Vanhuele, 2016; Beig & Nika, 2019; Joung et al., 2016). Considering the context of this

research, it is worth highlighting that perceived product quality has also proved to positively impact willingness to buy (Konuk, 2021) and the success of new products (Sethi, 2000).

### **1.5.6. Industrial Product Perception**

As earlier mentioned, the importance of the industrial context of Mistolin Solutions as a brand will be measured through the industry background variable, explained in one of the previous subtopics. In addition, the impact of the industrial nature of the products sold by Mistolin Solutions will be assessed by resorting to the industrial product perception (IP) variable, one which has not been yet established by any study in particular, but which was, nevertheless, relevant for the author to include. The aim of industrial product perception is to understand the relevance that product characteristics specifically produced to answer the particular needs of an industrial market, in this case, the professional cleaning market, may represent for end consumers.

Identically to the industry background factor, the industrial product perception variable is influenced by the study of Zhou et al. (2021). These researchers highlight how B2B companies have been recently extending into the B2C market, providing end consumers with “cutting-edge” products and solutions. Brand extension studies that focus on B2B brands expanding into the B2C market usually mention that achieving success may be dependent on the consistency of the extension concept with that of the parent brand (Burnaz &

Bilgin, 2011; Smith & Andrews, 1995; Tang et al., 2008), which, in the case of Mistolin Solutions, is expected to be high, since the marketed products are the ones the brand already sells.

Furthermore, literature indicates that promoting the industrial background of a B2B company may emphasize the functional benefits of the product, leading to positive consumer evaluations towards product quality, as well as towards the extension (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2021). These functional attributes are indicated by Zhou et al. (2021) as the qualities consumers usually pay more attention to in utilitarian products, like the ones sold by Mistolin Solutions.

### **1.5.7. Perceived Benefits**

Compared to traditional shopping, online shopping is perceived by consumers as having its own benefits, including: reduced prices, easily comparing and analyzing products from various online retailers, researching and gathering more information with higher convenience and transparency, increased product choice, completing purchases anywhere and at any time, as well as saving time, money and effort (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Arora & Aggarwal, 2018; Chetioui et al., 2020; Forsythe et al., 2006; Pham et al., 2018). The perceived benefits (PB) that customers find on Mistolin Solutions online store will then be analyzed in this investigation. Perceived benefits, which represent the concept of relative advantage in an online shopping context, are

defined by Kim et al. (2008) as “a consumer’s belief about the extent to which he or she will become better off from the online transaction with a certain Website”.

This investigation will follow the approach of Akroush & Al-Debei (2015), which present perceived benefits as mainly including convenience, time saving and cost saving (Choudhury & Karahanna, 2008). The availability of consumers is generally decreasing due to aspects such as increased professional demands, which has been leading to them paying more and more attention to online shopping rather than traditional or physical shopping, guaranteeing more convenience throughout the purchasing process (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018). The effort-saving concept is associated with the reduction of “cognitive, physical, and emotional activities” that are normally implied during the buying process, which makes online shopping a beneficial option for consumers who wish to save time, energy, and ultimately, money (Duarte et al., 2018, p.162).

Perceived benefits are then indicated in the literature as significant predictors of propensity to search and evaluate information in the online channel, as well as of positive consumer attitudes towards online shopping (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Chetioui et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2018). Therefore, it is suggested by Duarte et al. (2018) that companies thoroughly investigate the impacts of the perceived benefits of their online stores, which Mistolin Solutions will do in the present research. Additionally, the literature highlights the strategic and practical implications of this generally positive

influence of perceived benefits, indicating that these are vital elements to compete in the online market and increase the value delivered by the company (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Duarte et al., 2018).

### **1.5.8. Perceived Trust**

Regarding the online store perceptions of end-consumers, in addition to analyzing the aforementioned perceived benefits factor, the research will also focus on perceived trust (PT), also denominated as trust. Because it is a complex, multifaceted and evolving concept (Hassanein & Head, 2007), there are several different definitions of trust in the literature (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015). In short, trust can be defined as the confidence of one party that the other will not exploit its vulnerabilities, complying with the established promises (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Barney & Hansen, 1994; Ganesan, 1994). While building trust is a demanding process, it is also extremely important in influencing consumer attitude (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015).

Due to the dynamism, and volatility of the online market, and, as consequence, the associated risks of this context, trust is generally seen as being highly important in online shopping environments (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; van der Heijden et al., 2003; Lin, 2011). The lack of direct contact and human interaction while purchasing a good online also causes more uncertainty, being another factor contributing for a higher consumer perception of risk (Chetioui et al., 2020; O’Cass and Carlson, 2012). In addition,

privacy and security have been frequently mentioned as substantial constraints to online purchasing adoption (Al-Debei et al., 2015; Chetioui et al., 2020). For an online store to guarantee a higher perceived secured environment, the literature suggests implementing several measures, such as: facilitating the transaction process; investing in a dedicated customer support; having a contact page with phone number, mailing address, and staff e-mail addresses or social media and LinkedIn profiles; and updating the online store blog frequently, with specialized, quality, and reliable content (Chetioui et al., 2020; Sarkar & Khare, 2017).

As previously implied, perceived trust is a factor frequently mentioned by authors as significantly impacting consumer attitudes towards online shopping (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Hassanein & Head, 2007; Lin, 2011). Trust is also influenced by website quality, relative advantage and electronic word of-mouth (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Chetioui et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2013).

### **1.5.9. Discount Proneness**

As stated by Chetioui et al. (2020), in order to increase online shopping perceived benefits for consumers, and, consequently, general customer attitude towards this process, it is essential to offer an efficient and consistent experience, quality products and financial advantages, including “discounts, coupons and other monetary motivators” (p.13). The latter aspect will be



analyzed in this study, by resorting to the discount proneness (DP) variable. Despite the fact that this specific term had not been yet mentioned in the literature, it is an adaptation of the coupon proneness variable, used in the study of Sarkar & Khare (2017). The author of the present research decided to change the name of the variable for it to encompass not only coupons, but other types of discount strategies as well.

Retailers have been increasingly providing promotions to their customers (Carlson & Kukar-Kinney, 2018; Sheehan et al., 2019), such as free shipping, discounts, coupons, or prizes to motivate consumers to visit the online store and, eventually, shop through this channel (Sarkar & Khare, 2017). This practice is one of the most common strategies to encourage purchase (Ailawadi et al., 2001; Sheehan et al., 2019). However, retailers should be careful regarding the way they implement these processes, since, depending on the customers and the context, a discounted product may represent a negative effect on quality perception (Mukherjee et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, previous research has concluded that discounts are usually perceived by consumers as added value, contributing to product differentiation and providing a short-term monetary incentive which may consequently influence the decision and frequency of purchasing the discounted or associated products, including new products (Chandon et al., 2000; Chetioui et al., 2020; Leeflang & Parreño-Selva, 2011; Mukherjee et al., 2017; Sarkar & Khare, 2017; Sheehan et al., 2019). Sarkar & Khare (2017) have also indicated that consumers with high discount or coupon proneness (meaning price-sensitive customers) have a positive perception towards online

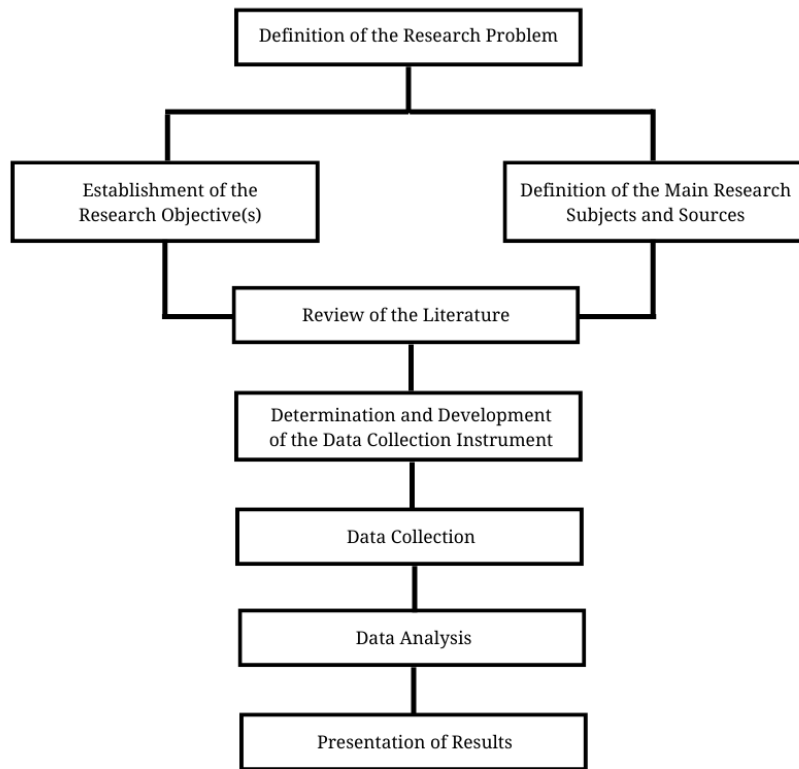
shopping, since it helps them obtain better deals. Additionally, these authors suggest that future research focuses on price perceptions regarding specific product categories, which will be done in this investigation, specifically addressing cleaning products.

## **2.METHODS**

The present section displays the methodological foundations of this investigation. Therefore, it starts with the presentation of the research design and methodological approach, the empirical contextualization of the investigation, as well as the indication of the research objectives, proposed hypotheses and conceptual model. These topics are followed by the presentation of the sources, techniques and data collection instruments of the study. Lastly, a brief introduction to the data analysis processes of the investigation will be carried out.

### **2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

It is important to firstly mention the research design defined for this investigation. A research design is used as a guide for the study, structuring the several steps that the investigation will follow (Trochim et al., 2016). The research design employed in this study is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** – Research Design

Source: Own Elaboration

Having in mind the defined research objectives, the study employed a quantitative methodology. Quantitative research is the most used type of methodology in the market research industry (Mooi et al., 2018), and it is, according to McCusker & Gunaydin (2014), characterized by the analysis of data in the form of numbers or statistics, as well as by the development of statistical models to explain the observed data. These same authors mention that when the goal of a research is to understand the perception of a community or the individuals belonging to it towards a particular subject, qualitative methods are often the most suitable methodology.

Despite having this insight into consideration, the author decided to adopt a quantitative path, due to several reasons. Being still such an early stage of the investigation, in which the company firstly wishes to confirm if further investment in market research is worthwhile, and, if so, in what aspects to invest, the most efficient choice may then be analyzing a larger population than the ones qualitative studies are able to. In case the interest of the B2C market in Mistolin Solutions and its online store is confirmed, a more qualitative approach can be further developed, resorting to the conclusions of the present investigation, as a way to start building a strategy for market entry. In addition, since this research focuses on a company, meaning a more practical context, Mistolin Solutions aimed at obtaining a large number of observations in a prompt and direct way, in order to more easily perform decisions on the strategic future of the business.

Furthermore, the study is based on primary data analysis. Even though it usually involves more time and effort, primary data collection is considered as the most effective choice when performing an investigation that focuses on a very particular environment, since the author is given the possibility to shape the collection instrument and process, according to the specific needs of the research (Mooi et al., 2018).

## **2.2. EMPIRICAL CONTEXT**

The rise and spread of the internet has not only revolutionized lives, but also businesses, encouraging new activities and operations for companies, who can now more easily expand their business in terms of clients and geography (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015, Pham et al., 2018; Sarkar & Khare, 2017). New channels for firms to sell their products have emerged, leading to a generally higher investment of retailers in their online presence (Chetioui et al., 2020) which has also been the case for Mistolin Solutions.

Along with the implementation of its online store and new communication strategy, the company wishes to explore the possibility of entering the B2C market with its existing products. As previously addressed, this type of strategy will then imply the coexistence of B2B and B2C markets, and, consequently, the existence of a mixed business model, which are subjects indicated as lacking research (Gummesson & Polese, 2009; Iankova et al., 2019), and therefore important themes to address in the present investigation.

Furthermore, the earlier discussed concepts of market expansion and market entry are also naturally connected to the process Mistolin Solutions is aiming at, and they have been experiencing an increase in research directed towards internationalization, rather than domestic expansion (González-Benito et al., 2009). A research gap in these subjects is then identified, representing additional relevant topics to approach in this investigation, which focuses solely on the Portuguese market.

Finally, being a significantly more explored subject, especially in the customer perception area, brand extension, which is a similar process to market expansion - being solely different since the first implies the launch of a new product or service, while the latter does not (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011) - will also be useful for the present research. Therefore, most variables and practical insights are based on or adapted from brand extension studies, as seen explained in the literature review section.

### **2.3. OBJECTIVES**

Having in mind that Mistolin Solutions wishes to understand the viability of entering the B2C market, but specifically considering the perceptions of end consumers regarding the brand and its online store, the general research objective is the following: to analyze the perception of the B2C market in towards Mistolin Solutions online store. The specific objectives are the following:

- 1) To understand if brand perception (brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception), product perception (perceived choice, product quality and industrial product perception) and online store perception (perceived benefits, trust, discount proneness) have a positive and significative influence on the general interest of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store.

- 2) To define the most attractive product categories sold by Mistolin Solutions for the B2C market.
- 3) To identify and quantify the general interest of the B2C market in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store.

## **2.4.HYPOTHESES AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

The research will resort to the previously presented literature review, in order to develop a conceptual framework that will further be tested. According to Saunders et al. (2015), this is known as a deductive approach, which is based on the aim to explain causal relationships between variables. The defined conceptual model is constituted by several different hypotheses, which will either be confirmed or refuted (Mooi et al., 2018), through quantitative data analysis (Saunders et al., 2015). To sustain the general objective of this research, but specifically, the first objective, a series of hypotheses were developed. These will be explained in the following paragraphs.

### **H1: Brand quality positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

By analyzing previous literature, the author concluded that researchers generally indicate brand quality as an expected influencing factor of consumer attitude towards the brand extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Childs, 2017; Dens and De Pelsmacker, 2010). Being brand extension and



market expansion such similar concepts, it is also predicted that the same phenomenon will happen in the present context.

**H2: Perceived expertise positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Based on the literature review, the insights regarding expertise are that, in addition to it being an attribute that requires investment in terms of time, research and training, which highlights its value (Dane, 2010; Pontes et al., 2017), consumer perception of expertise has been proved to influence brand consumer evaluation of brand extensions (Keller & Aaker, 1992). The author estimates that this relationship will be verified in the market expansion of Mistolin Solutions as well.

**H3: Industry background perception positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

The literature review allowed to conclude that when brands emphasize their background experience in the industry, consumer evaluation of the brand extension tends to be positively affected (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2021). Therefore, the same relationship is expected to be established in the market expansion context of the present research.

**H4: Perceived choice positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

After performing a review of the literature, the author concluded that, regarding motivation to buy, perceived choice may be seen as both beneficial and unfavorable (Ackerman & Gross, 2006; Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Sethuraman et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2017; Walsh & Mitchell, 2010; Wu, 2019).

However, Chernev (2006) mentions that perceived choice positively influences consumer behavior, when the decision is whether to buy or not, rather than when the decision is linked to making a choice among the presented products (Sethuraman et al., 2022). It then becomes relevant to analyze this relationship in the present context.

**H5: Product quality positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

The literature review showcased that willingness to buy and the success of new products have proved to be positively influenced by the quality perception of consumers towards a product (Konyk, 2021; Sethi, 2000). Thus, the same phenomenon is expected to be identified in this research.

**H6: Industrial product perception positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

From previous research, it was concluded that the promotion of the industrial experience of a company may contribute to highlighting the specialized benefits of its product, impacting consumer perception towards the quality of the good, and towards the brand extension (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2021). It is then estimated that the same process will happen in the present market expansion context, regarding the products sold in Mistolin Solutions online store.

**H7: Perceived benefits positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Through literature analysis, the author verified that perceived benefits are indicated by previous research as being influencing factors of tendency to analyze information in the online store, as well as of favourable consumer attitudes towards purchasing online (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Chetioui et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2018). Based on this, one can predict that a similar relationship will be established in this investigation.

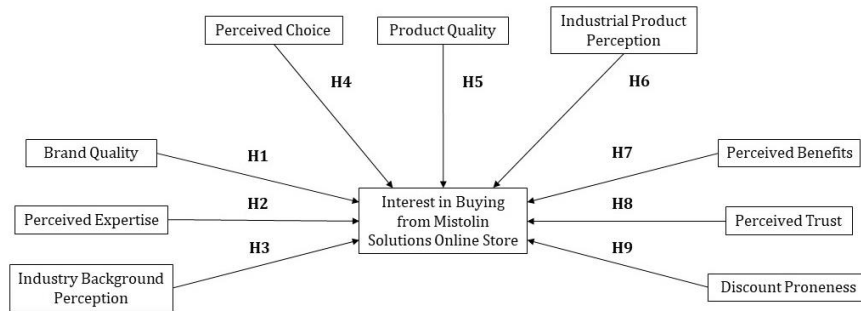
**H8: Perceived trust positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Based on the literature review findings, it was inferred that perceived trust is generally indicated by authors as significantly impacting consumer attitudes regarding online shopping (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Hassanein & Head, 2007; Lin, 2011). It is therefore expected that this phenomenon is equally observed in the present research.

**H9: Online promotions positively and significantly influence the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Insights from the literature review lead to the conclusion that providing discounts to consumers usually influences the decision and periodicity of buying goods online, including new products (Chandon et al., 2000; Chetioui et al., 2020; Leeflang & Parreño-Selva, 2012; Mukherjee et al., 2017; Sarkar & Khare, 2017; Sheehan et al., 2019). Based on this, the author expects to encounter the same relationship in the case of Mistolin Solutions.

The conceptual model gathering all the previously addressed hypothesis is presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 - Conceptual Model**

Source: Own Elaboration

## 2.5. SOURCES, TECHNIQUES AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

In order to understand the interest and perception of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store, this study adopts an exploratory quantitative survey methodology, resorting to the questionnaire technique. This technique aims to collect data directly from a group of people representing the target-population that the researcher aims to study, and it is considered as a useful procedure for exploratory and descriptive research. Saunders et al. (2015) add that, within the survey strategy, it is one of the most popular collection methods. Furthermore, the questionnaire technique was selected for this study, considering that Mistolin Solutions intended to analyze the perception of a significant number of people towards its brand, the products it sells and its online store, in order to confirm if further market research should be developed.

Saunders et al. (2015) indicate that, in order for this instrument to be as reliable and as valid as possible, the design of the research questionnaire should not neglect the following processes: carefully designing each individual question; investing in a clean and pleasing visual presentation; clearly explaining the research purpose; pilot testing; and carefully planning and processing the return of fully answered questionnaires. These stages were all thoroughly followed by the author, as can be observed in the following two subchapters.

### **2.5.1. Questionnaire Development**

The questionnaire was developed using the Google Forms platform. For question formulation, the author had in mind the three specific objectives of the research, the knowledge acquired throughout the literature review process, and the variables defined for the study. Additionally, these questions were all of mandatory response and closed-ended, meaning that participants needed to choose among the pre-defined answer options available. Closed-ended questions are normally quicker and easier to answer, as well as usually simpler to compare and analyze (Saunders et al., 2015). This type of questions was defined to obtain information that would be as precise and quantifiable as possible, and they include: five multiple choice questions - four of them were questions of single answer - meaning that the respondent could only choose one of the options - and one of them was a question of multiple answer - since

the choice was unlimited; five dichotomous questions of “yes” or “no”; and four matrix questions, namely, Likert scales. All the questions were formulated and ordered according to a rationale: the questionnaire started with more general and simple questions, which were followed by increasingly more specific and detailed questions.

Before launching the questionnaire, the author resorted to pre-tests, which are considered a very important stage of the research, contributing to correct and improve the initial version of the form (Saunders et al., 2015). This version was sent to 4 respondents who were considered by the author as people whose characteristics were in accordance with the defined criteria for answering the questionnaire. This pre-test phase was thus crucial for identifying issues related to the misinterpretation of certain questions (such as perceived unrelated or repeated questions); the need for reduction and simplification of introductory texts and questions; the need for distinction between the name “Mistolin” (highly associated with the Mistolin household line of products, which, as explained before, are no longer commercialized by MSTN Group) and the brand “Mistolin Solutions”; as well as the possibility of coming back to the questionnaire and continuing from where the respondent had left off after clicking on the online store link.

Regarding the order of the questionnaire sections, it followed the same line of thought as the questions: from more general to more specific, and from simpler to more detailed sections. The questionnaire was constituted by 4 parts: firstly, a sociodemographic analysis, placed at the beginning of the

questionnaire; secondly, a section related to brand perception; thirdly, a set of questions regarding products perception; and lastly, a section dedicated to analyzing the perception of the respondents towards Mistolin Solutions online store.

The questionnaire (presented in Appendix 3) starts with an introduction to the study and its purpose, followed by the presentation of its four sections. Additionally, a statement concerning the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity of all questionnaire answers is presented, as well as the estimated response time. Lastly, a request for all participants to answer the questions honestly is displayed.

Regarding sociodemographic questions, the age segmentation considered by the author as more logical was forming a new group every 10 years. The only exception was the following: since the ages of the respondents should start at 18, the author considered that this age group is usually similar to the ages that go up to 25 years old – at these ages, people in Portugal usually are not still completely independent (Eurostat, 2021), which means that they probably do not yet have many responsibilities, house managing-wise. Gender, professional situation, and annual income - based on the Portuguese table of government taxes (Economias, 2022) - were also analyzed. There were then two control questions, since, in order to be qualified to proceed with the questionnaire, respondents had to (a) be responsible for cleaning/maintenance tasks at home and/or (b) be responsible for buying cleaning/maintenance products for their homes. As can be seen in Appendix 3, in addition to question 5, that corresponds to criterion (a), the form has a question 5.1 and a question

5.2, which are repeated questions, relating to criterion (b). If a person answers “Yes” to question 5, he or she is redirected to question 5.1, while if the answer is “No” in question 5, the participant is led to question 5.2. This was considered by the author as the most efficient way to screen respondents who fit the research inclusion criteria.

With respect to the brand perception section, respondents were firstly presented with an introduction of the brand and its products (including a visual representation of the company logo and the product categories), followed by the evaluation of 3 variables: brand quality, perceived expertise and industry background. For the product perception part, the variables evaluated were the following: perceived choice, product quality and industrial product perception. Additionally, people were asked to indicate the product categories that sounded more appealing to them. In the online store perception section, 3 variables were analyzed: perceived benefits, trust and online promotions. Finally, the last question of the questionnaire focused on the dependent variable of the study – the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store.

Regarding variable and scale adaptations made from previous research, the wording of certain questions and items was changed to better suit the context, some of the original items were removed and some new items were added, as well as all the questions related to variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5).



Table 1 presents the structure of the questionnaire, associating each question or group of items with one or more specific objectives, subjects or variables, as well as their sources or authors.

Specific Objectives	Subject/Variable	Question/Items	Source/Author	
	<u>Age</u>	18 to 25 years old 26 to 35 years old 36 to 45 years old 46 to 55 years old 56 to 65 years old More than 65 years old	Self-developed	
	<u>Gender</u>	Masculine Feminine Prefer not to say	Self-developed	
	<u>Professional Situation</u>	Student Employed Self-employed Retired Unemployed Other	Self-developed	
	<u>Annual Income</u>	Less than 7 000€ Between 7 000€ and 10 000€ Between 10 000€ and 20 000€ Between 20 000€ and 25 000€ Between 25 000€ and 37 000€ Between 37 000€ and 80 000€ More than 80 000€ Does not apply/prefer not to say	Economias (2022)	
	<u>Control Questions</u>	Do you perform cleaning/maintenance tasks at home? Are you responsible for buying cleaning/maintenance products for your home?	Self-developed	
	<u>Mistolin Awareness</u>	Is the name "Mistolin" familiar to you?	Self-developed	
	<u>Mistolin Awareness Source</u>	Products from the Mistolin household line Media advertising Internet Products of Mistolin Pro Does not apply	Self-developed	
	<u>Mistolin Solutions Awareness</u>	Did you already know Mistolin Solutions?	Self-developed	
	Objective 1	<u>Brand Quality</u>	1. The brand conveys to me higher quality than competing brands 2. In my opinion, the brand has a good reputation	Adapted from Erdem & Swait (2004)

Objective 1	<u>Perceived Expertise</u>	1. I associate the brand with a highly technical and specialized knowledge in the area where it operates 2. I have trust in the team of Mistolin Solutions for their level of technical and specialized knowledge	Adapted from Erdem & Swait (2004);
Objective 1	<u>Industry Background Perception</u>	1. Due to having (until recently) industrial consumers as its main target-audience, the brand has a highly technical and specialized knowledge in the area where it operates 2. The fact that the brand had (until recently) industrial consumers as its main target-audience gives it a good reputation	Self-developed
Objective 2	<u>Most Attractive Categories</u>	Protection Kitchen Laundry Maintenance and Auto Surfaces and Pavements Cleaning Material Equipment Paper Consumables Ecological Products Climate Control and Nebulization Agri-food	Self-developed
Objective 1	<u>Perceived Choice</u>	1. Mistolin Solutions offers a wide range of products 2. Mistolin Solutions covers a large number of different categories	Adapted from Wu (2019)
Objective 1	<u>Product Quality</u>	1. In general, the products sold by Mistolin Solutions are, in my opinion, of higher quality than the average 2. Overall, the brands sold by Mistolin Solutions have a good reputation	Adapted from Konuk (2021); Wu, 2019
Objective 1	<u>Industrial Product Perception</u>	1. In my opinion, because the products are made for professionals of the field, they are of higher quality than the average 2. The fact that the products are made for professionals of the field gives them a good reputation	Self-developed
Objective 1	<u>Perceived Benefits</u>	1. Mistolin Solutions online store can facilitate/simplify the purchasing process of this type of products, regarding saving time	Adapted from Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Sarkar & Khare,

		2. Mistolin Solutions online store can facilitate/simplify the purchasing process of this stype of products, in terms of effort involved in the purchase	2017
		3. Mistolin Solutions online store can permit saving money when buying this type of products	
Objective 1	<u>Perceived Trust</u>	1. I trust in the safety of performing payments through Mistolin Solutions online store 2. I trust that Mistolin Solutions online store protects the financial information of its customers	Adapted from Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015
Objective 1	<u>Discount Proneness</u>	1. The offer of exclusive promotions in Mistolin Solutions online store (such as discount codes) is appealing 2. Exclusive promotions of Mistolin Solutions online store would make it easier for me to buy there	Adapted from Sarkar & Khare, 2017
Objectives 1 and 3	<u>General Interest in Buying from the Online Store</u>	1. I have interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future 2. I plan to buy from Mistolin Solutions online store in the future	Adapted from Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011

**Table 1 – Questionnaire Structure**

Source: Own Elaboration

## 2.5.2.Sampling

According to Mooi et al. (2018), sampling is a selection process of cases within a population, meaning that a research sample is representative of the defined population for the investigation. In turn, these authors define population as “the group of units about which we want to make judgments”. The target-population for this study are individuals not younger than 18 years old, living in Portugal, and who are responsible for at least one of the following activities:

(1) performing cleaning/maintenance tasks at home; and (2) buying cleaning/maintenance products for their homes. Considering that it is not possible to reach all of the elements of this target-population, the study resorts to a non-probability sampling method. Despite the fact that the probability of each case being selected from the population cannot be defined when opting for a non-probability sampling technique, it is common in business research to adopt this procedure (Saunders et al., 2015), due to it being less costly and more easily executed than probability sampling (Mooi et al., 2018).

The questionnaire was spread on Facebook and LinkedIn, through direct message as well as through a post on the profile page of the author.

Convenience sampling, more specifically, the judgmental type of sampling was then used, having as a reference the required characteristics to answer the form. This questionnaire was further diffused through the snowball sampling technique by requesting respondents to disseminate the questionnaire among people corresponding to the defined inclusion criteria. In addition, the questionnaire was posted in a Facebook group related to domestic tasks tips-sharing, called “Dicas Práticas para limpezas domésticas”, as well as spread on an online forum that focused on this same theme, entitled “Fórum da Casa”.

Therefore, the technique used here was also convenience sampling, since these two groups were relatively easy ways to reach elements of the target-population. The online questionnaire was open for 1 month, from the 15<sup>th</sup> of April to the 15<sup>th</sup> of May.

## 2.6. DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Considering the three specific objectives defined for the research, it is concluded that the one that will involve a more thorough approach is the first objective, which will rely on hypotheses testing. The other two objectives are associated with descriptive research, being based on describing certain events or characteristics (Mooi et al., 2018), and, consequently, being much simpler and straightforward to approach. Therefore, most of the procedures described in the next section are related to the data analysis process of the first objective and its conceptual model.

With the aim of examining the relationship between each one of the independent variables and the dependent variable, the study will resort to regression analysis, one of the most widespread techniques in market research, according to Mooi et al. (2018). Before this analysis, a statistical description of the questionnaire data will be performed, followed by an exploratory factor analysis (EFA).



### **3. FINDINGS**

After the performed data collection, the research will focus on its analysis, with the support of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, in the IBM 28th version. This section will then begin with a description of the statistical data identified in the questionnaire responses, followed by an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Lastly, a regression analysis will be displayed, in order to test the hypotheses and the conceptual model of this investigation.

#### **3.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

In this section, descriptive statistical metrics for each of the questionnaire items are showcased, in order to present an overview of the characteristics of the respondents, as well as of their answering patterns.

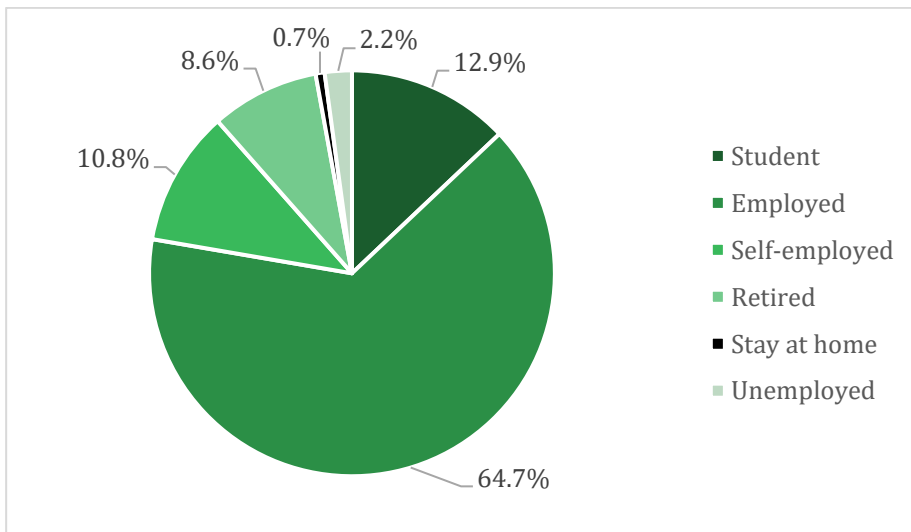
Even though the questionnaire gathered 146 answers, 7 of them were excluded, since they did not correspond to the previously addressed defined criteria. Therefore, 139 valid responses were analyzed, representing individuals who either (1) performed cleaning/maintenance tasks at home and/or (2) were responsible for buying cleaning/maintenance products for their homes. The mean age of the respondents was in the 46 to 55 age group ( $SD = 1.62$ ), and the study involved 96 female participants (69%) and 43 male participants (31%), as presented in Table 2.

		Male		Female	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Age	18 to 25	8	5.8	18	12.9
	26 to 35	5	3.6	7	5.0
	36 to 45	5	3.6	12	8.7
	46 to 55	8	5.8	24	17.3
	56 to 65	13	9.4	28	20.1
	More than 65	4	2.9	7	5.0
Total		43	31	96	69

**Table 2 - Age and Gender of the Participants**

Source: Own Elaboration

Regarding the professional situation of the respondents, by analyzing Graph 1, one can conclude that it is mostly constituted by employed people (64.7%), followed by students (12.9%), self-employed respondents (10.8%), and retired people (8.6%). Unemployed participants (2.2%) and stay at home citizens (0.7%) represent a minor part of the sample.



**Graph 1 - Professional Situation of the Participants**

Source: Own Elaboration



With respect to the annual income of the respondents, as can be seen in Table 3, it is predominantly situated between 10 000€ and 20 000€ - a total of 23% responses, followed by 16.5% of the respondents on the category between 25 000€ and 37 000€, 15.1% of people to which the question does not apply or who prefer not to say, 14.4% situated between 20 000€ and 25 000€, and 12.2% in the 7 000€ to 10 000€ category. 10.8% of the respondents receive less than 7 000€ annually, 7.2% have an annual income between 37 000€ and 80 000€, and, finally, 0.7% of the respondents receive more than 80 000€ per year.

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Annual income		
Less than 7 000€	15	10.8
Between 7 000€ and 10 000€	17	12.2
Between 10 000€ and 20 000€	32	23.0
Between 20 000€ and 25 000€	20	14.4
Between 25 000€ and 37 000€	23	16.5
Between 37 000€ and 80 000€	10	7.2
More than 80 000€	1	0.7
Does not apply/Prefer not to say	21	15.1
Total	139	100.0

**Table 3** - Annual Income of the Participants

Source: Own Elaboration

Regarding the two control questions (which the valid respondents answered “yes” to in one or in both), based on Table 4, the author concludes

that the number of participants who perform cleaning/maintenance tasks at home (98.6%) is higher than the number of participants who are responsible for buying cleaning/maintenance products for their homes (89.9%). In addition, the respondents who answered positively to both control questions correspond to 88.5% of the sample, with only 11.5% of the participants stating that they solely perform one of the two activities.

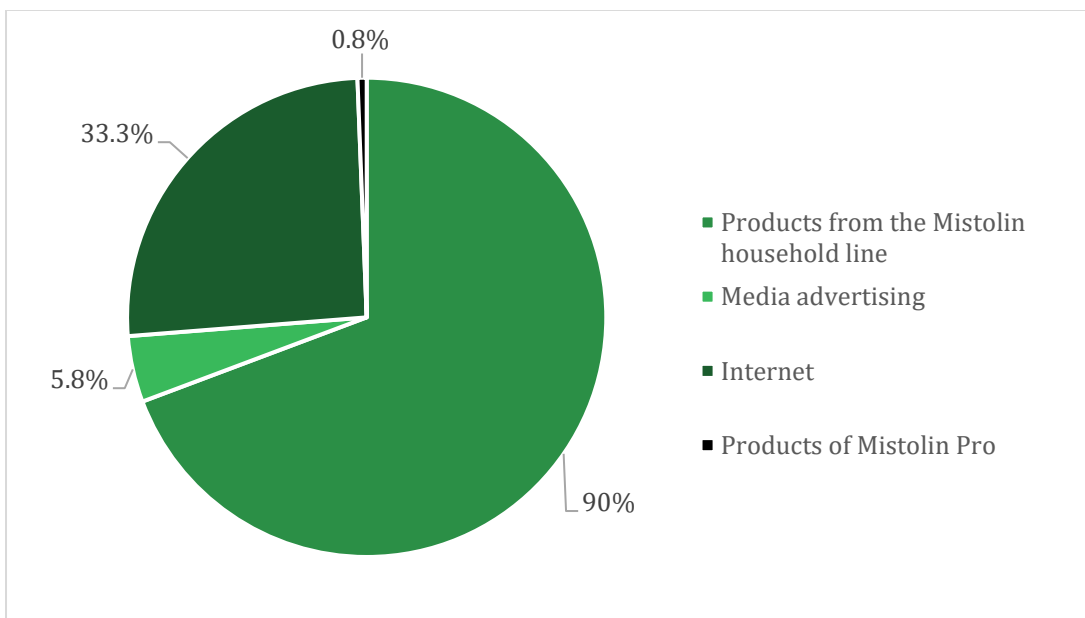
		Are you responsible for buying cleaning / maintenance products for your home?			
		Yes	No	Total	
Do you perform cleaning / maintenance tasks at home?	Yes	<u>n</u>	123	14	137
		<u>%</u>	88.5	10.1	98.6
	No	<u>n</u>	2	0	2
		<u>%</u>	1.4	0.0	1.4
Total		<u>n</u>	125	14	139
		<u>%</u>	89.9	10.1	100.0

**Table 4** - Responses to the Control Questions

Source: Own Elaboration

With respect to the name “Mistolin”, 86.3% of the respondents state that the name is familiar to them, while 13.7% claim to not know the name. Having in mind those who were aware of the name “Mistolin”, by analyzing Graph 2, the conclusion is that the majority (90%) indicates, as a source for this awareness, the products from the Mistolin household line, found in most

supermarkets and grocery stores. 5.8% of the participants assign this name familiarity to media advertising (television, newspapers, magazines, radio), while 3.3% mention the internet (blogs, websites and social media), and 0.8% indicate the Mistolin Pro products. Regarding Mistolin Solutions, the majority of the participants did not know the brand (64.7%), while 35.3% claims to be aware of the name.



**Graph 2 – Mistolin Awareness Source**

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 5 presents the level of interest of the respondents (meaning, the B2C market) in each product category sold by Mistolin Solutions. Having in mind that there was no choice limit for this question: the kitchen category was the most selected one (75.5%), followed by the surfaces and pavements group (56.8%), ecological products (47.5%), cleaning material (37.4%) and the laundry category (36.7%). Additionally, protection products were chosen by 28.1% of the participants, the paper category by 24.5%, the maintenance and

auto group by 18%, and the agri-food category by 11.5% people. Lastly, the equipment category, the consumables group and the climate control and nebulization category were each selected by 8.6% of the respondents.

	<i>n</i>	<u>% (responses)</u>	<u>% (cases)</u>
Protection	39	7.8	28.1
Kitchen	105	20.9	75.5
Laundry	51	10.1	36.7
Maintenance and Auto	25	5.0	18.0
Surfaces and Pavements	79	15.7	56.8
Cleaning Material	52	10.3	37.4
Equipment	12	2.4	8.6
Paper	34	6.8	24.5
Consumables	12	2.4	8.6
Ecological Products	66	13.1	47.5
Climate Control and Nebulization	12	2.4	8.6
Agri-food	16	3.2	11.5
Total	503	100.0	361.8

**Table 5** - Frequency Table of Product Categories Selection

Source: Own Elaboration

Regarding the “Brand Perception” section, as presented in Appendix 4, the mean is higher for items 2, 5 and 6. Most medians and modes are situated in the value 4 (representing the selection of “Agree”). This information matches the one presented in Appendix 5, which exhibits that the level “Agree” had a greater selection percentage in most of the items.

With respect to “Product Perception” (see Appendix 6), items, 1, 4 and 6 are the ones with a higher mean. The majority of the medians is located in the value 4 (which is related to the selection of “Agree”), while the modes are

equally present in the values 3 and 4. These statistics are reinforced by the frequency table of this scale (see Appendix 7), which shows that the levels of agreement with the highest selection percentage are even for “Neutral” and “Agree”.

For the “Online Store Perception” scale (see Appendix 8), most means are higher than those of the other scales, with special highlight to items 1, 2, 6 and 7. In addition, similarly to “Brand Perception”, the medians and modes of the “Online Store Perception” items are mostly present in the value 4. This is proved by the information showcased in Appendix 9, which indicates that the most selected level of agreement in all items but one (item 5), is the level “Agree”.

Lastly, regarding the scale related to the dependent variable (see Appendix 10) – “Interest in Buying from the Mistolin Solutions Online Store” – item 1 represents a higher mean (3.49), median (4.00) and mode (4) than item 2. In Appendix 11, one can confirm that the lowest levels of agreement (“Strongly Agree”, “Disagree” and “Neutral”) have a higher percentage selection in item 2 than in item 1. The mean value of this dependent variable is 3.41.

### **3.2. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS**

In order to evaluate the reliability of the conceptual model and its variables (related to the 1<sup>st</sup> objective of the study), the research resorted to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). EFA seeks the identification of “the smallest

number of hypothetical constructs (also known as factors)” that can explain the correlations between a set of measured variables, with the goal of simplifying the data. Therefore, EFA is not based on “preconceived ideas of the number of factors or how these relate to the variables under consideration” (Mooi et al., 2018, 284), but instead, it searches for underlying relationships between items and variables. This is then considered by the author as the best type of analysis for the present research, having in mind its specifications: by gathering themes that are still in a development stage in the literature, as well as by addressing a particular context which involves specific variables, the conceptual model does not represent an already validated and vastly employed structure.

To guarantee that the investigation is able to resort to factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was applied. As presented by Kaiser (1974, p.35), values in the 0.90s are considered “marvelous”; in the 0.80s, “meritorious”; in the 0.70s, “middling”; in the 0.60s, “mediocre”; in the 0.50s, “miserable”; and below 0.50, “unacceptable”.

Furthermore, another important test that confirms if a sample is appropriate for factor analysis is Bartlett’s test of sphericity, which, according to Watkins (2018), “statistically tests the hypothesis that the correlation matrix contains”. The same author indicates that the significance level of the *p*-value should correspond to a value lower than 0.05 in order to determine if significant correlation between the variables of the study exists, which will consequently allow factor analysis. Having in mind these references, by analyzing Table 6, one can then conclude that the research may proceed, presenting a KMO value

of 0.879, considered “meritorious” (Kaiser, 1974, p.35), and significant variable correlation, with  $p$ -value = 0.000. In addition, in Appendix 12, the table of extracted communalities through principal component analysis can be found.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy		0.879
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2743.960
	Df	171
	Sig.	0.000

**Table 6** - Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity

Source: Own Elaboration

According to Mooi et al. (2018), to define the number of factors for the study, the extracted components should represent at least 50% of the total variance explained, even though 75% or more is recommended. Based on the sample data, the total variance explained matrix extracted three factors, which account for 75.038% of the total variance (see Table 7; a more extensive table can be found on Appendix 13), meaning that this factor extraction is suitable.

<u>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</u>			
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.894	25.756	25.756
2	4.821	25.373	51.129
3	4.543	23.909	75.038

**Table 7** - Total Variance Explained – Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings

Source: Own Elaboration

A factor rotation technique was applied, in order to reach a simpler and easier to interpret solution. More specifically, the Varimax rotation technique was chosen for this investigation, being the most popular factor rotation technique, and having the aim of “maximizing the dispersion of loadings within factors” (Mooi et al., 2018). As previously mentioned, there were three extracted factors (see Table 7), each being associated with at least one of the research items (see Appendix 14), which was possible due to the use of the Varimax rotation technique.

As stated by Mooi et al. (2018), the process of assigning each item to a certain factor or component is based on the identification of the highest factor loading for each item. The same author adds that when very few factors are extracted, which was the case of this research, the loading should be at least 0.50. As can be seen in Appendix 14, all the selected loadings are higher than 0.50, meaning that there was no item that needed to be excluded. It is worth emphasizing that the item distribution among the three factors matches exactly the item grouping that the author intuitively performed (since there was no



other model in the literature which was completely identical to the one used in this study), while developing the questionnaire. Brand quality (BQ1 and BQ2), perceived expertise (PE1 and PE2), and industry background perception (IB1 and IB2), which are variables connected to the perception that end consumers have towards the Mistolin Solutions brand, were grouped together.

Additionally, perceived choice (PC1 and PC2), product quality (PQ1 and PQ2) and industrial product perception (IP1 and IP2), variables that relate to the perception that respondents have towards the products sold by Mistolin Solutions, were gathered in the same component. Finally, perceived benefits (PB1, PB2 and PB3), perceived trust (PT1 and PT2) and discount proneness (DP1 and DP2), which are variables associated with the perception of the participants Mistolin Solutions online store, were brought together into the same factor. The previous information means that this factor extraction can be easily and logically interpreted.

Furthermore, the study resorted to the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, the most popular measure to analyze the internal consistency of scales. This coefficient usually varies from 0 to 1, being acceptable when equal to or above 0.70, except for exploratory studies, in which a value no lower than 0.60 is also permitted (Mooi et al., 2018). Table 8 showcases the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each of the nine values addressed in the study. As can be verified, all the values are above 0.70 and very close to 1, meaning that all research scales are consistent.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Brand Quality	0.874	2
Perceived Expertise	0.855	2
Industry Background Perception	0.924	2
Perceived Choice	0.959	2
Product Quality	0.898	2
Industrial Product Perception	0.893	2
Perceived Benefits	0.917	3
Perceived Trust	0.932	2
Discount Proneness	0.827	2

**Table 8** - Cronbach's Alpha of All Variables

Source: Own Elaboration

### 3.3. HYPOTHESES TESTING

In this subchapter, the hypotheses defined in the previously addressed conceptual model (see Figure 2) will be examined, resorting to parametric tests. Parametric tests are commonly seen as more compelling, since they use numerical data, but they also require the validation of some assumptions, in order to avoid compromising results (Saunders et al., 2015). These assumptions will be validated in the following paragraph.

Firstly, following the central limit theorem, since the sample size is larger than 30, one can assume that it is normally distributed (Mooi et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2015). Secondly, by examining the scatter plot in Appendix 15, the author also validates the linearity between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Thirdly, the inexistence of multicollinearity, in other

words, the absence of a strong relation between the independent variables (Mooi et al., 2018), was confirmed, through the indicated VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values below five, as presented in Appendix 16. The Durbin-Watson test was then performed to corroborate the independence of the model errors, thus, measuring the absence or presence of autocorrelation. The result of this test was 1.799. Having in mind that values can range from zero to four, with a value of two indicating no autocorrelation and a value towards zero or four representing positive and negative autocorrelation respectively (Saunders et al., 2015), the assumption of no autocorrelation is validated. Lastly, the constant variance of errors which is defined by the term homoscedasticity, was verified, through the analysis of a scatter plot.

After validating all assumptions, the study will proceed with hypothesis testing, resorting to multiple regression analysis, since it addresses various independent variables (Mooi et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2015). These independent variables are the following: brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception, perceived choice, product quality, industrial product perception, perceived benefits, perceived trust and discount proneness. The dependent variable is the general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store.

Some of the regression results are presented in Table 9. According to Mooi et al. (2018), if the p value of associated to the F test is lower than 0.05, then the model is significant. By analyzing Table 9, it is confirmed that the regression model regarding this research and its sample is statistically significant ( $F=15.860$ ;  $p=0.001$ ). In addition, it is observed that this model

explains 34.8% of the variance in the data. This variance is determined by the R<sup>2</sup> value, which establishes the likelihood of the multiple regression equation being a good predictor, representing “the proportion of the variability in the dependent variable that can be explained” by the multiple regression model (Saunders et al., 2015). Mooi et al. (2018) state that R<sup>2</sup> value references differ according to the research area, highlighting that values of around 0.30 are commonly seen as satisfactory in cross-sectional studies. The authors also indicate that, in marketing research, the value references can be established as follows: 0.50 represents a substantial value, 0.30 constitutes a moderate value, and 0.10 describes a weak value. Therefore, one can deduce that the model can considerably explain the variance of the dependent variable.

F	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup> value
15.860	0.000	0.348

**Table 9** – Model Summary

Source: Own Elaboration

The results presented in Table 10 indicate that perceived benefits ( $\beta=0.368$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and discount proneness ( $\beta=0.213$ ;  $p=0.002$ ) are the two variables which significantly impact the general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store. The remaining variables – brand quality ( $\beta=-0.024$ ;  $p=0.762$ ), perceived expertise ( $\beta=-0.005$ ;  $p=0.950$ ), industry background perception ( $\beta=0.045$ ;  $p=0.603$ ), perceived choice ( $\beta=-0.029$ ;  $p=0.711$ ), product quality ( $\beta=0.056$ ;  $p=0.539$ ), industrial product perception ( $\beta=0.108$ ;  $p=0.240$ ), and perceived trust ( $\beta=-0.021$ ;  $p=0.768$ ) – do not establish a significantly causal

relationship with the general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store.

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	0.916	0.250		3.656	0.001
Brand Quality	-0.024	0.080	-0.024	-0.304	0.762
Perceived Expertise	-0.005	0.075	-0.005	-0.063	0.950
Industry Background Perception	0.047	0.089	0.045	0.521	0.603
Perceived Choice	-0.028	0.074	-0.029	-0.371	0.711
Product Quality	0.057	0.093	0.056	0.615	0.539
Industrial Product Perception	0.110	0.093	0.056	0.615	0.539
Perceived Benefits	0.335	0.062	0.368	5.416	0.000
Perceived Trust	-0.021	0.070	-0.021	-0.295	0.768
Discount Proneness	0.200	0.064	0.213	3.110	0.002

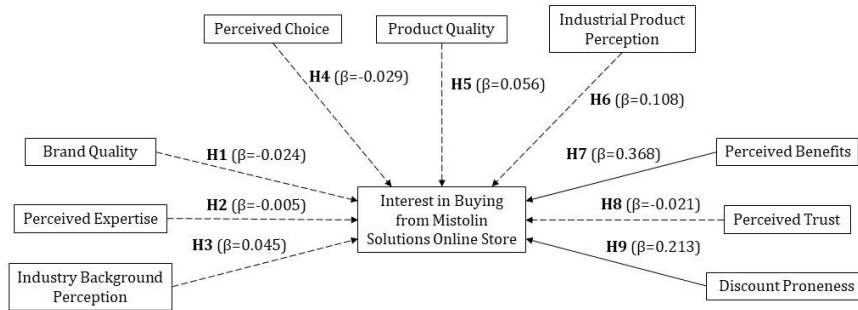
**Table 10 – Coefficients**

Source: Own Elaboration

Therefore, while H7 and H9 are confirmed, being perceived benefits the greatest predictor of general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store, followed by discount proneness, the remaining hypotheses are refuted (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 and H8), since their related independent variables - brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception, perceived choice, product quality, industrial product perception and perceived trust – presented a p-value higher than 0.05, a reference based on the study by Mooi et al. (2018).

Lastly, in order to visually explain the conclusions drawn from the performed multiple regression analysis, the defined conceptual model for this research is presented in Figure 3, including the coefficient values associated to

each independent variable. The dashed arrows represent the rejected hypotheses.



**Figure 3** – Conceptual Model with Confirmed Hypotheses and Coefficients

Source: Own Elaboration

## 4. DISCUSSION

Considering the results presented in the previous chapter, it is essential to discuss and interpret them, while, at the same time, relating them to the objectives and hypotheses of the present investigation. It is important to highlight once more the general research objective: **to analyze the perception of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store**. In order to fulfill this objective in a structured manner, this section will then be divided into three subsections, each of them addressing a specific objective.

### 4.1. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1

Objective 1 is the following: to understand if brand perception (brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception), product perception (perceived choice, product quality, industrial product perception) and online store perception (perceived benefits, perceived trust, discount proneness) have a positive and significative influence on the general interest of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store. This objective is related to the defined conceptual model for this research, and it was completed by resorting to linear regression analysis. Each hypothesis will be individually addressed in the following sections.

**H1: Brand quality positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

As presented in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5, most respondents manifest a neutral attitude towards Mistolin Solutions being of higher quality than its competitors. Nevertheless, the majority agrees that the brand has a good reputation. This opinion, however, was not significant enough to influence the interest in buying from the online store of the brand (see Table 10).

The author predicted a considerable end consumer association of the brand name with the popular Mistolin line of household cleaning products in Portugal (Julião, 2018), which could consequently transmit a sense of familiarity and represent an advantage for the perceived quality of Mistolin Solutions (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011). However, one aspect that might justify the refusal of the present hypotheses is the fact that, as previously mentioned in the literature review, the awareness of B2B brands in end consumer markets is usually reduced, meaning that resorting to B2B brand equity among these customers might represent a considerable challenge (Zhou et al., 2021). In addition, B2B brands normally establish a closer and more familiar relationship with their institutional customers, being, therefore, less accessible to final consumers (Homburg et al., 2014). These phenomena are, in fact, proved to occur in the case of Mistolin Solutions, since only 35.3% of the respondents claimed to be aware of the brand.

Additionally, considering that the majority of the participants (86.3%) indicated that the name “Mistolin” was familiar to them, it might follow that the consumer association of the Mistolin household line with the Mistolin Solutions brand was not significant enough. An alternative justification might be that,



while this association can potentially be strong, the quality transfer of one brand to another was not meaningful enough, either because Mistolin Solutions is an unfamiliar brand to end consumers, or due to it mainly operating in an opposite market to the one of Mistolin.

## **H2: Brand expertise positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

By analyzing Appendix 4 and Appendix 5, it is concluded that, while most of the participants agree that they associate the brand with a specialized technical knowledge in the industry, on the other hand, the majority also presents a more neutral position regarding the specialized technical knowledge of the Mistolin Solutions team. Consequently, consumer perception of expertise was not sufficient to impact their interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store (see Table 10).

As previously stated, literature frequently highlights the importance of addressing and showcasing the expertise of a company (Kim et al., 2020), since it is a valuable and hard to achieve characteristic, requiring time, research, and staff training (Dane, 2010; Pontes et al., 2017). This is something frequently present in the communication strategy of Mistolin Solutions. Additionally, Keller & Aaker (1992) mention that perceived credibility towards a company may be more positive if it focuses on goods which require significant technical orientation. Such is the case of the presently addressed company. Considering these findings, the author estimated that perceived expertise would have a considerable impact on end consumer perception of the purchase in Mistolin Solutions online store, a theory which was ultimately refuted.

One of the possible explanations for this event is the addressed potential lack of consumer association with the B2C Mistolin brand, and little familiarity regarding Mistolin Solutions, which did not give participants the opportunity to realize the technical knowledge of the Mistolin Solutions team. One other justification for this event might be the following: perceived expertise, along with perceived trustworthiness towards a brand are indicated by a part of the literature as the two dimensions that form the brand credibility factor (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Keller & Aaker, 1990; Mandler et al., 2020). This way, and being it an unfamiliar brand for the B2C market, it might have been helpful to evaluate brand credibility with its two components, rather than evaluating perceived expertise alone, possibly leading to more valuable results and insights regarding consumer perception.

### **H3: Industry background perception positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

As seen in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5, most of the respondents agree that they relate the industry experience and background of the company to a significant technical expertise and reputation. However, these assessments were not sufficient to represent a meaningful influence in the interest in buying from the online store of the company (see Table 10).

As earlier referred in the literature review, there are several cases of B2B companies successfully extending into the B2C market, such as Nokia, Philips, Mitsubishi, Microsoft, Caterpillar, IBM, Oracle, Kingston and Huawei (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008). Some of these brands promoted their

industry background, due to the ideas of higher quality, innovation, and competence that this information might transmit, consequently creating more positive perceptions on end consumers (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2021). Having these insights into consideration, it was expected that the same thing would happen in the context of Mistolin Solutions, but this proposition was eventually rejected.

One aspect that might explain this phenomenon is that, while Mistolin Solutions is an already established company in the B2B market, it is practically not known in the B2C market, presenting an awareness of 35.3% among end consumers, as already referred. Therefore, it might happen that end consumers have valued the industry background of the previously exemplified well-known brands because they were already highly popular among them, even if they were not yet targeting the B2C market. Since Mistolin Solutions has not managed to create significant awareness among end consumers thus far, they might not be conscious of its relevance in the industrial market.

#### **H4: Perceived choice positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 exhibit that, on the one hand, most respondents agree that Mistolin Solutions offers a wide range of products, while, on the other hand, the majority present a neutral stance towards the affirmation that the company covers a large number of different categories. Hence, the perceived choice of consumers was not significant enough to influence the interest in purchasing on Mistolin Solutions online store (see Table 10).

The literature review indicates that providing consumers with diverse options to choose from, usually generates a feeling of control and confidence that they have an increased chance of obtaining what they desire (Wu, 2019). This subject is especially important considering the context of the present research, since previous authors address the fact that consumers experience reduced control when buying new products, meaning that offering a larger variety of choices may compensate for that feeling and contribute to the decision to purchase (Farajid-Rad et al., 2017; Inesi et al., 2011; Wu, 2019). In addition, Chernev (2006) indicates that a higher variety positively impacts purchase likelihood when the decision is whether to buy or not, rather than when the decision concerns choosing from a defined range of products (Sethuraman et al., 2022).

Therefore, by selling more than 100 brands, offering cleaning solutions for seven different industries, and comprising 12 different product categories (Mistolin Solutions, n.d.), Mistolin Solutions was predicted to experience a positive and significant influence of consumer perception regarding a large choice of products, and, as a consequence, a favorable purchasing intention towards the online store of the company. Nevertheless, this was not the case, since this hypothesis was rejected.

One justification for this event may be the complexity and ambiguity of this subject (Tang et al., 2017), which was also identified in the literature review: while a high variety of options may lead to positive emotions, such as motivation to buy, excitement and empowerment, it is mentioned by some

authors that it can also generate a feeling of choice overload, consequently leading consumers to feel overwhelmed, stressed or confused (Ackerman & Gross, 2006; Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Sethuraman et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2017; Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). This might have happened in the context of this research, since it is, above all, a brand that sells very specific and, in some cases, unfamiliar products to end consumers, potentially causing them to feel quite confused.

**H5: Product quality positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

As verified in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7, most participants present a neutral attitude towards the products sold by Mistolin Solutions being of higher quality than the average. However, the majority agrees that these products have a good reputation. Nevertheless, this feedback was not sufficient to represent a meaningful influence in the interest in buying from the online store of the company (see Table 10).

As stated in the literature review of this investigation, among other aspects, perceived product quality has proved to positively influence willingness to buy (Konuk, 2021), as well as the success of new products (Sethi, 2000), which are two insights directly related to this investigation. Therefore, the author predicted that product quality would perform a significant and favorable impact on the interest in purchasing on the online store of the company, but this proposition was eventually rejected.

This occurrence may be explained by an equally addressed subject in the product quality section of the literature review: as online shopping increases,

product quality evaluation is thus limited, because it is usually not possible to physically test the products and their intrinsic cues before the purchase (Rosillo-Díaz et al., 2021). This way, customers tend to base their feedback on extrinsic cues (Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2015). In this research, since participants did not have physical contact with the products nor were they familiar to them, the aforementioned phenomenon may be a potential justification for consumer neutral quality insights on the products. An equal result was verified in the study by Burnaz & Bilgin (2011), due to the same reasons.

**H6: Industrial background perception positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Through an analysis of Appendix 6 and Appendix 7, it is concluded that the majority of the respondents are neutral to the statement that the products sold by the company are of higher quality than the average because they are made for professionals of the industry. On the other hand, most respondents agree that the fact that the products are made for businesses of the field gives them a good reputation. However, this opinion was not significant enough to influence the interest in purchasing on the online store of the brand (see Table 10).

The literature review indicates that the promotion of the industrial background of a B2B company usually highlights the functional attributes of the given product, leading to more positive evaluations regarding the quality of the product, as well as the extension (Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; Tang et al., 2008;

Zhou et al., 2021). Additionally, as stated by Zhou et al. (2021), these functional attributes are generally the ones consumers pay more attention to in utilitarian products. Chen (2016) states that this type of products is frequently associated to problem solving and have an instrumental purpose, giving the example of household cleaning agents, which is the case of the products sold by Mistolin Solutions. The industrial nature of the products and their characteristics, which are specifically produced to answer the needs of the professional cleaning industry, were then predicted to influence customer interest in buying from the online store of the company.

However, this proposed relationship was refuted by linear regression analysis. One justification for this may be that end consumers are not interested enough in buying specialized and industry-focused products, either because they do not have sufficient knowledge on their benefits in comparison to household cleaning products, or because they do not feel the need of having this kind of products in their day-to-day household cleaning and maintenance tasks.

**H7: Perceived benefits positively and significantly influence the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

As verified in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7, most of the respondents agree that Mistolin Solutions online store can allow for cost saving, as well as it can facilitate and simplify the purchasing process of this type of products, by saving time and reducing effort. These opinions are reflected by the significant and positive influence that they have in the interest in purchasing on the online store of the company (see Table 10).

As stated in the literature review section, customers have been increasingly paying more attention to online shopping, since it guarantees a series of benefits that traditional shopping does not, including the convenience of purchasing anywhere and at any time, as well as saving time, money and effort (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Arora & Aggarwal, 2018; Chetioui et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2018; Forsythe et al., 2006; Kumar & Kashyap, 2018; Pham et al., 2018). Therefore, these perceived benefits are indicated by several authors as influencing factors of propensity to search and analyze information online, as well as of positive attitudes towards online shopping (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Chetioui et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2018). Furthermore, the present investigation followed the suggestion given by Duarte et al. (2018) and evaluated the impact of the perceived benefits of the online store of the brand, corroborating the previous literature findings, since the hypothesis was confirmed.

Being that perceived benefits represented the greatest predictor of general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store, it might be a useful insight for the company to considerably invest in the attributes of this online channel, in order to attract end consumers.

**H8: Perceived trust positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

As seen in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7, the majority of the participants agrees that they trust in the safety of performing payments through Mistolin Solutions online store. On the other hand, regarding the statement related to



consumer trust that the online store will protect the financial information of its customers, the level of agreement is equally distributed between a neutral position and an agreement stance. Consequently, the level of consumer trust towards online store payments is not sufficiently significant to impact the interest in purchasing on Mistolin Solutions online store (see Table 10).

Based on previous research findings, it was inferred that perceived trust is generally indicated by authors as significantly impacting consumer attitudes regarding online shopping (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Hassanein & Head, 2007; Lin, 2011). This influence is due to the risks associated to the context of dynamism, volatility, and lack of human contact that the online market experiences, which ultimately leads to the need of consumers to feel safe while processing transactions there (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015; Chetioui et al., 2020; Hejden et al., 2003; Lin, 2011; O’Cass & Carlson, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the proposed theory that perceived trust significantly impacted consumer interest in buying from the online store of the company was refuted. One possible explanation for the neutrality in consumer feedback, as well as for the rejection of the hypothesis is once more the lack of end consumer awareness (35.3%) and familiarity towards the brand Mistolin Solutions, which may naturally lead to a not so high confidence in its services. Furthermore, the website of Mistolin Solutions is relatively recent, having been launched in the beginning of 2021, meaning that some more basic features that it may still have (such as reduced information and inconsistency in the frequency of blog posting) can be a cause for limited trust in the processes taking place there (Chetioui et al., 2020; Sarkar & Khare, 2017).

**H9: Discount proneness positively and significantly influences the interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store**

Through an analysis of Appendix 6 and Appendix 7, one can determine that most part of the participants agrees that the offer of exclusive discounts in Mistolin Solutions online store is appealing. Additionally, the majority of the respondents also agrees that the offer of this type of discounts would increase the likelihood of them buying from this online store. This positive feedback matches the regression analysis results, which indicate that discount proneness significantly and positively influences the interest in purchasing on the online store of the company (see Table 10).

As stated in the literature review section, offering financial advantages, including discounts, is essential to increase online shopping perceived benefits for consumers (Chetioui et al., 2020). This is one of the most popular strategies for encouraging purchase (Ailawadi et al., 2001; Sheehan et al., 2019), being that discounts are commonly perceived by consumers as added value, which may influence their purchasing decision and frequency (Chandon et al., 2000; Chetioui et al., 2020; Leeflang & Parreño-Selva, 2012; Mukherjee et al., 2017; Sarkar & Khare, 2017; Sheehan et al., 2019). Nevertheless, Mukhrjee et al. (2017) highlight that this type of strategic decisions should be carefully implemented, since, depending on the customers and the context, a discounted product may represent negative quality perception. The regression analysis results demonstrate that this phenomenon did not apply to the case of Mistolin

Solutions, since the hypothesis was confirmed, therefore, corroborating the findings that discount proneness positively affects purchase intention.

In conclusion, these insights highlight the important role that the offer of discounts and promotions might play in B2C market attraction, being another strategy in which it might be valuable to invest.

## **4.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2**

Objective 2 is the following: to define the most attractive product categories sold by Mistolin Solutions for the B2C market. This objective was fulfilled by resorting to the analysis of one of the multiplechoice questions that participants had to answer.

Table 5 presents the response frequency to each one of the product categories sold by Mistolin Solutions, considering that there was no choice limit for this question. Therefore, by analyzing this data, an order can be defined for respondents' interest level in each category:

- 1 – Kitchen category (75.5%), which includes degreasers, as well as manual and automatic dishwashing products
- 2 – Surfaces and pavements category (56.8%), comprising products directed towards the construction industry, as well as disinfectants, detergents, and products for bathroom and glass cleaning

- 3 – Ecological products category (47.5%), including ecological products from the Mistolin Pro brand for kitchen cleaning, personal hygiene, laundry, and surfaces cleaning
- 4 – Cleaning material category (37.4%), which comprises buckets, cleaning trolleys, mops, squeegees, and brooms
- 5 – Laundry category (36.7%), which includes additives, fabric softeners, bleachers, powder detergents, and liquid detergents
- 6 – Protection category (28.1%), comprising alcohol gel, disinfectants, gloves, face masks, wipes, and uniforms
- 7 – Paper category (24.5%), including toilet paper, hand towels, industrial paper, and napkins
- 8 – Maintenance and auto category (18%), which comprises products for vehicle interior and exterior maintenance
- 9 – Agri-food category (11.5%), which includes acidic and alkaline solutions, detergents and disinfectants
- 10 – Equipment category (8.6%), comprising vacuum cleaners, automatic washing machines, paper and soap dispensers, recycling bins, disinfection mats; consumables category (8.6%), including boxes, cups, as well as aluminum and plastic packaging; and climate control and nebulization category (8.6%).

It can then be concluded that the top three most attractive product categories for end consumers are the kitchen category, the surfaces and pavements category, and the ecological products category. The popularity of

the first two groups of products – the kitchen category and the surfaces and pavements category - might be due to these being the types of products which most easily fit the cleaning habits that household maintenance requires. The high choice of ecological products might be explained by a generally increasing concern towards purchasing products that are as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible.

### **4.3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3**

Objective 3 is the following: to identify and quantify the general interest of the B2C market in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store. This objective was completed by resorting to the general interest scale data.

This dependent variable scale is adapted from the investigation of Burnaz & Bilgin (2011) and Tang et al. (2008), who defined one item regarding attitude and another one concerning purchase intention, as components of the dependent variable for that study. The same idea was developed in this scale, being constituted by the item “I have interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future” and the item “I plan to buy from Mistolin Solutions online store in the future”.

As seen in Appendix 11, most of the participants (46%) agree that they have interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future. However, concerning the statement “I plan to buy from Mistolin Solutions online store in the future”, most respondents (47.5%) adopted a neutral stance.

This discrepancy between the item responses may imply that end consumers have some interest in buying from this online store, but they are not ready yet to commit to it as clients. By calculating the average of the values related to the two items (a technique also adapted from Burnaz & Bilgin, 2011; and Tang et al., 2008), the general interest of the B2C market in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store is quantified. The value of 3.41 on a scale from 1 to 5 (the used Likert scale in the questionnaire) was calculated, as verified in the section of descriptive statistics, demonstrating that this interest in online store purchasing is not considerable nor significant enough: when rounded, it corresponds to the value 3 of the Likert scale, related to a neutral stance.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will be focused on providing some key insights to Mistolin Solutions, by presenting the most relevant results of the study and associate them with some recommendations for the future, in order to contribute to the marketing strategy of the company.

As stated by the literature, B2B brands awareness in B2C markets is usually reduced, which might constitute a considerable challenge (Zhou et al., 2021). This phenomenon is identified in the case of Mistolin Solutions: according to the research, only 35.3% of the respondents claimed to be aware of the brand name. This was also one of the possible reasons why several times respondents answered adopting more neutral stances, maybe due not knowing the brand, and, therefore, having difficulties in expressing their perceptions of it. The fact that the independent variables of brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception and perceived trust did not represent significant influencing factors of the dependent variable, may also have to do with the lack of Mistolin Solutions awareness among end consumers.

Therefore, the first recommendation of the author is that, in case Mistolin Solutions wishes to proceed with this market expansion strategy, it invests in specifically end-consumer focused marketing activities, such as event sponsoring, online advertising, partnerships with other brands or influencers, and increasing social media presence, which is nowadays a very relevant

channel for increasing brand awareness and expanding client base, in a quick and efficient way.

Another observed aspect was that end consumers were not familiarized with the products sold by Mistolin Solutions, nor with their specialized and industry-focused characteristics, developed to answer the needs of the professional cleaning market. Once more, this may have been another justification for a frequently observed high rate of neutral responses, being that participants probably had few references of the addressed products. The fact that perceived choice, product quality and industrial background perception were not determined by the analysis as significant predictors of the dependent variable, probably had to do in part with the lack of product experience and knowledge. This is related to another relevant insight: the importance of the physical and practical contact of consumers with the products, frequently limited by online shopping (Rosillo-Díaz et al., 2021).

Thus, the second suggestion for Mistolin Solutions concerns the physical presence of the team and the products in areas of great end consumer affluence, in order to, on the one hand, establish a closer relationship with this market - which is stated by Homburg et al. (2014) as a challenge – while, on the other hand, giving the opportunity to final consumers to experiment these products and visually understand their differentiation.

In addition, having in mind that online store perceived benefits were identified as the greatest influencing factor of the general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store, a third recommendation is made. It is



suggested that the company invests in the development and sophistication of this online channel, as a way to increasingly attract end consumers. As an example, the company may implement elements of interactivity, gamification or personalized customer experience, which are known for being positively perceived by end consumers. In this case, social media and e-mail communications may also constitute important complementary channels that will eventually lead consumers to the online store.

The other identified predictor of general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store was the discount proneness variable, emphasizing the importance of discounts and promotions in B2C market attraction. Associated with this, a fourth recommendation is made: to invest in promotional strategies, such as exclusive online promotions or influencer discount codes.

Furthermore, data statistics showcased that the most attractive product categories for the B2C market were the kitchen category, the surfaces and pavements category, and the ecological products category, with all of them showcasing considerably high choice percentages. In addition to being a sign that customers are attracted to products that they can use on their daily household maintenance and cleaning tasks (which was an expected phenomenon), it also evidences the concern for purchasing eco-friendly and sustainable goods. This information can be a very valuable insight to consider for the communication strategy of the brand, which may focus more on these products as well as on the aforementioned themes related to household tasks and sustainability – which is the fifth study recommendation.

It is also important to mention that the value representing the general interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store – 3.41 - was not particularly high, but rather, quite average. Additionally, as previously stated, item responses imply that end consumers reveal some interest in buying from the online store of the brand, but they are not yet ready to commit to it as clients. This result may also be explained by the earlier addressed limitations of consumer knowledge and awareness towards Mistolin Solutions and the products it sells.

Finally, as the sixth and last recommendation to Mistolin Solutions, the viability analysis of expanding into the B2C market should also be developed using a qualitative type of research, such as focus groups, which will allow for gathering of new insights and consumer perspectives that this study may have missed. The relevance of this type of approach is supported by McCusker & Gunaydin (2014), who, as mentioned earlier in this investigation, state that when the aim of a research is to understand the perception of a community or the individuals belonging to it towards a particular subject, qualitative analysis is usually the most suitable methodology.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Companies are continuously finding new and disruptive ways to differentiate from the competition (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015), investing on the innovation of products, services and business activities (Costa & Castro, 2021). This is the case of Mistolin Solutions: the largest distribution network of professional hygiene and cleaning products in Portugal. As part of an integrated strategy to increase national recognition and awareness, the company created an online store, which soon started to be seen as an opportunity to expand into the B2C market.

Therefore, the general objective of the present research was to analyze the perception of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store. Having this general objective in mind, the following specific objectives were defined: 1) to understand if brand perception (brand quality, perceived expertise, industry background perception), product perception (perceived choice, product quality, industrial product perception) and online store perception (perceived benefits, perceived trust, discount proneness) have a positive and significative influence on the general interest of the B2C market towards Mistolin Solutions online store; 2) to define the most attractive product categories sold by Mistolin Solutions for the B2C market; and 3) to identify and quantify the general interest of the B2C market in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store.

After performing a literature review regarding the most relevant subjects and variables for the study, a questionnaire was developed and launched, to fulfill the three specific research objectives. This was spread through social media (Facebook and LinkedIn), as well as on a domestic tasks tips-sharing group and an online forum focusing on the same theme, targeting individuals not younger than 18 years old, living in Portugal, and who are responsible for at least one of the following activities: (1) performing cleaning or maintenance tasks at home; and (2) buying cleaning or maintenance products for their homes. The obtained quantitative data, regarding 139 valid responses, was processed with the support of the 28<sup>th</sup> version of the SPSS software, resorting to descriptive analysis and regression analysis. This analysis allowed for the fulfillment of the three defined specific objectives for the research.

Regarding the first specific objective, which was related to the proposed conceptual model for the research, it was concluded that the obtained results were not the ones initially expected. Two hypotheses were confirmed. The first one regards the most significantly influencing variable of the study: perceived benefits of the online store. This result might represent a useful insight for the company to substantially invest in the attributes of its online store, as a form of attracting end consumers and enhancing their convenience experience. The second confirmed hypothesis concerns discount proneness. It then suggests that offering discounts and promotions might play an important factor of B2C market attraction. The remaining hypotheses did not represent a significant

influencing factor of the interest in the online store of the company. This can be explained by the lack of awareness and familiarity of end consumers towards Mistolin Solutions and the products it sells.

The second specific objective was also fulfilled. Data statistics demonstrated that the most attractive product categories for the end consumer are: firstly, the kitchen category, which includes degreasers, as well as manual and automatic dishwashing products; secondly, the surfaces and pavements category, comprising products directed towards the construction industry, as well as disinfectants, detergents, and products for bathroom and glass cleaning; and thirdly, the ecological products category, including ecological products for kitchen cleaning, personal hygiene, laundry, and surfaces cleaning. The popularity of the kitchen category and the surfaces and pavements category may be due to being the kind of products which more easily fit the cleaning habits associated to household maintenance. The significant choice of ecological products might be associated with a general increasing concern with consuming products that are as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible.

Finally, the third specific objective was answered. While most of the participants agreed that they have interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future, most respondents adopted a neutral stance regarding the intention to buy from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future. This discrepancy might imply that despite having some interest in buying from this online store, final consumers are not yet ready to commit to it as clients. The general interest in purchasing from Mistolin Solutions online store was measured by calculating the average of the scale values, producing a

value of 3.41, which, considering a one to five Likert scale, corresponds to a neutral stance, meaning that this interest is not significant enough.

Based on the study results, a set of recommendations is presented, in order to contribute to the Mistolin Solutions marketing strategy. Firstly, to increase brand awareness in the B2C market, the author recommends that the company invests in specifically end consumer focused marketing activities. In order to increase the familiarity and proximity of the brand to final consumers, the second study recommendation is that the company increases the physical presence of its team and the products it sells in areas of great end consumer affluence. As a third recommendation, the author suggests the investment in the development and sophistication of the online store, while as a fourth recommendation, the investment in promotional strategies, such as exclusive online promotions or influencer discount codes is proposed. The fifth suggestion regards focusing on the most attractive products for end consumers, as well as on the associated themes of household tasks and sustainability, while developing the communication strategy of the brand. Lastly, the sixth recommendation given to Mistolin Solutions is to further develop a qualitative type of research when analyzing an expansion viability, which may lead to new end consumer insights and perspectives that might not have been tackled in this investigation.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

After the presentation of the main conclusions of the study, it is important to indicate the limitations of this investigation, to create and propose opportunities for future research. As it would not be feasible for the study to comprise all the aspects and variables that the expansion of Mistolin Solutions into the B2C market would involve, there were several important subjects which were not addressed and that may constitute valuable themes for future research, as in the company context, or as theoretical investigations in general.

The first topic concerns B2B perception towards this market expansion process. The strategy that Mistolin Solutions aims to implement is associated to a convergence of the B2B and B2C markets, being, therefore, relevant to consider both sides in this procedure. In the similar process of market extension, Burnaz & Bilgin (2011) had already addressed the importance of having into consideration the evaluation and perception of B2B customers towards an extension into the B2C market. It is then suggested that future research approaches the market expansion process from the perspective of already existing B2B customers, considering their insights towards the expansion.

Furthermore, end consumer perception towards prices, which usually plays a major role in brand extensions and market expansions, was not an explored subject in this research. This decision was taken due to two main reasons. One of them is the high variety of the products and categories offered

in the online store: on a first contact with this website, final customers may not immediately form an idea on the overall price positioning of the brand, since, by being products with such different purposes and technical characteristics, the variation of prices is naturally present. The other justification concerns the lack of knowledge of end consumers about the professional cleaning industry and the specialized product characteristics associated with it, leading them to not having defined price references that indicate what is a good or bad price for that specific product. It is then suggested that this subject is carefully and thoroughly explored in future studies, possibly under circumstances that mitigate the previously addressed limitations.

Another aspect that this investigation did not directly approach was the identification of B2C target-segments for Mistolin Solutions, based on the characteristics of end consumers who showed interest in purchasing from the online store, which can be analyzed in the collected data. Since this information has already been gathered, it might be of interest for future studies to capitalize on it, either for the suggested segmentation process, or for other relevant insights for the company.

After a more in-depth analysis of the central aspects required by the expansion strategy, such as the stakeholders and key activities that it would involve, it is also suggested to invest in the communication plan of the brand, since advertising such technical products may represent a challenge when targeting the B2C market. Website functionality and design, which was not considered for this study since it would be too time-consuming for the



participants, may be an interesting feature to investigate, as a way of improving overall consumer experience.

Considering the more theoretical and methodological limitations of the research, it should be firstly noted that, as frequently stated throughout the study, the author resorted to previous brand extension literature insights. Although this is a very similar subject to market expansion, it differs in the sense that the former implies the launch of a new product, while the latter does not. This decision was mainly due to an identified gap in the literature, concerning the perception of customers associated to the market to which a company wishes to expand. This may have limited the outcomes of the research since insights of brand extension processes may not be the same as the ones in a market expansion context. It is, therefore, relevant for researchers to develop the market expansion literature, by resorting to both theoretical and practical investigations, namely in the consumer perception area.

Additionally, even though all the independent variable scales proved to be consistent, they were mostly based on two items. Some of them were also constituted by insights gathered from different studies and scales, in order for them to fit the context of this research. It is then suggested that further investigations on this subject may use the exact format and items of reference scales, in order to analyze if different outcomes arise.

The present research was based on quantitative analysis. One of the reasons is for this choice was that, since it is such an early stage of the investigation, analyzing a larger population than a qualitative study would be able more easily to confirm if further investment in market research is

worthwhile for the company. In addition, being a study that focuses on a company, meaning a more practical context, the aim was to obtain a large number of observations in a prompt and direct way, to more easily perform strategic decisions for the business. Thus, being also one of the recommendations given to Mistolin Solutions, the last suggestion for further research on market expansion from B2B to B2C concerns the use of qualitative methodological approaches, such as focus groups, to gather other types of consumer insights and perspectives. McCusker & Gunaydin (2014) highlight that, when the goal of an investigation is to understand the perception of a community or the individuals belonging to it towards a particular subject, qualitative research is usually the most suitable methodology.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Logo of Mistolin Solutions

Source: Company Communication Materials



**Appendix 2 - Differences Between all the Brands with the Name “Mistolin” in the Portuguese**

Market

Source: Own Elaboration

<p><u>MSTN Group</u></p>	<p>The holding company, managing more than 25 companies of different areas of expertise.</p>	<p><u>Mistolin Company</u></p>	<p>One of the subsidiaries of MSTN Group. A company specialized in the conception and production of hygiene and cleaning products. The company used to commercialize the Mistolin brand of household cleaning products, before selling it to another firm. However, Mistolin Company continues producing the Mistolin products in its facilities.</p>
		<p><u>Mistolin Pro</u></p>	<p>One of the subsidiaries of MSTN Group. A company responsible for commercializing professional hygiene and cleaning products. These products are also produced by Mistolin Company.</p>
		<p><u>Mistolin Solutions</u></p>	<p>One of the subsidiaries of MSTN Group. A distribution network of professional hygiene and cleaning products. Apart from selling several different other brands, Mistolin Solutions also sells products from Mistolin Pro.</p>
<p><u>Mistolin</u></p>	<p>A brand of household hygiene and cleaning products. The brand was founded by MSTN Group, more specifically by Mistolin Company, which has since sold it to Brandcare. However, Mistolin products continue being produced in the facilities of Mistolin Company.</p>		

### Appendix 3 - Questionnaire

Source: Google Forms

## Loja Online Mistolin Solutions: Estudo de opinião do utilizador

No âmbito de uma investigação realizada entre o IPAM Porto e a Mistolin Solutions, este estudo tem como principal objetivo entender e explorar o interesse na loja online e nos produtos vendidos pela Mistolin Solutions, uma rede de distribuição de produtos de limpeza profissional (que até recentemente estava maioritariamente focada na venda dos seus produtos a empresas e negócios).

O questionário divide-se em 4 secções:

- Análise sociodemográfica
- Perceção da marca Mistolin Solutions
- Perceção dos produtos vendidos pela Mistolin Solutions
- Perceção da loja online da Mistolin Solutions

É preferível que responda através do computador. Contudo, caso tal não seja possível, certifique-se de que o link que terá de abrir numa das partes deste questionário, é aberto noutra separador, para que as suas respostas não sejam perdidas.

A sua participação nesta investigação é voluntária, podendo decidir participar ou não na mesma.

Todas as suas respostas são anónimas e confidenciais, sendo os dados recolhidos apenas utilizados para fins académicos.

O tempo de preenchimento deste questionário é inferior a 10 minutos. Não existem respostas certas ou erradas, pedindo-se apenas que responda com sinceridade.

A autora do estudo (Sofia Seco) estará disponível para o esclarecimento de quaisquer dúvidas que possam surgir, através do e-mail [9490@ipam.pt](mailto:9490@ipam.pt).

Agradecemos a sua disponibilidade e contribuição para a realização deste estudo!

#### 1. Idade \*

- 18 a 25 anos
- 26 a 35 anos
- 36 a 45 anos
- 46 a 55 anos
- 56 a 65 anos
- + de 65 anos

2. Género \*

- Masculino
- Feminino
- Prefiro não dizer
- Outra: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Situação Profissional \*

- Estudante
- Trabalhador(a) por conta de outrem
- Trabalhador(a) por conta própria/independente
- Reformado/a
- Desempregado/a
- Outra: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Rendimento Anual \*

- Menos de 7 000€
- Entre 7 000€ e 10 000€
- Entre 10 000€ e 20 000€
- Entre 20 000€ e 25 000€
- Entre 25 000€ e 37 000€
- Entre 37 000€ e 80 000€
- Mais de 80 000€
- Não se aplica/Prefiro não dizer

5. Realiza tarefas de limpeza e/ou manutenção do local onde habita? Caso não seja sempre o/a responsável por esta(s) atividade(s), mas a(s) realize por vezes, responda "Sim". \*

Selecionar ▼



#### Compra de Produtos de Limpeza/Manutenção

5.1. É responsável pela compra de produtos de limpeza e/ou manutenção para o local onde habita? Caso não seja sempre o/a responsável por esta atividade, mas a realize por vezes, responda "Sim". \*

- Sim  
 Não

#### Compra de Produtos de Limpeza/Manutenção

5.2. É responsável pela compra de produtos de limpeza e/ou manutenção para o local onde habita? Caso não seja sempre o/a responsável por esta atividade, mas a realize por vezes, responda "Sim". \*

- Sim  
 Não

#### A Marca Mistolin Solutions e os Produtos que Vende

A Mistolin Solutions consiste na maior rede de distribuição de produtos de limpeza profissional em Portugal, contando com 10 unidades de negócio em todo o país: Algarve, Açores, Famalicão, Lisboa, Madeira, Oliveira do Hospital, Paredes, Peniche, Vagos e Viseu.

A empresa possui uma equipa de profissionais com conhecimento técnico e especializado na área da limpeza e manutenção. Vende produtos de várias marcas, incluindo a Mistolin Pro e a EcoX Pro (pertencentes ao mesmo grupo que a Mistolin Solutions), a Tork, a Amoos Professional, ou a Jofel.

Logo da Mistolin Solutions



Demonstração Visual de Alguns dos Produtos Vendidos



Marcas Vendidas Pela Mistolin Solutions



6. O nome "Mistolin" é-lhe familiar? \*

- Sim
- Não

7. Se respondeu "Sim", de onde conhece maioritariamente o nome "Mistolin"? \*  
Caso tenha respondido "Não", assinala "Não se aplica".

- Produtos da linha doméstica da Mistolin, vendidos em mini, super e hipermercados (incluindo o tira gorduras)
- Publicidade nos média (televisão, jornais, revistas, rádio)
- Internet (blogues, websites, redes sociais)
- Loja(s) da Mistolin Solutions
- Produtos da Mistolin Pro
- Não se aplica

8. Já conhecia a marca "Mistolin Solutions"? \*

Note que a marca "Mistolin" e a marca "Mistolin Solutions" são muito distintas. A marca "Mistolin" abrange produtos de linha doméstica (de momento, não é já comercializada pelo mesmo grupo que a "Mistolin Solutions"), enquanto que a Mistolin Solutions é uma marca que vende produtos de limpeza profissionais e, até há pouco tempo, para profissionais.

- Sim
- Não

### ATENÇÃO

Nas perguntas que se seguem, até ao final do questionário, irá ser-lhe pedido que indique a sua perceção da marca Mistolin Solutions, dos produtos que vende e da sua loja online. Mesmo que não conheça a marca, responda às questões tendo em conta a informação que reteve sobre a mesma durante este questionário. Sendo uma análise da perceção do consumidor final relativamente a uma marca que para muitos era anteriormente desconhecida, o sentido é entender a primeira impressão que a marca, os produtos e a loja online transmitem, percebendo se tal faz ou não com que a pessoa tenha interesse em comprar.

Convidamos também a visitar a loja online e a explorar muito brevemente a mesma (por volta de 1 min). A loja já se encontra em funcionamento, mas não possui ainda à venda todos os produtos anteriormente referidos. Ao responder a este questionário, considere, no entanto, que todos os produtos já se encontram disponíveis no website.

Clique aqui (É preferível que preencha o questionário através do computador. Contudo, caso esteja no telemóvel, certifique-se de que abre um novo separador (copiando o link e colando-o noutra separador, por exemplo), para que não perca as respostas anteriormente dadas): <https://www.mistolinsolutions.com/>

9. Perceção da Marca Mistolin Solutions \*

Responda às seguintes questões, tendo em conta o conhecimento que detém sobre a marca, assim como a introdução e explicação da marca anteriormente apresentadas

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
1. A marca transmite-me uma qualidade superior às marcas concorrentes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. A marca possui, a meu ver, uma boa reputação	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Associa a marca a um elevado conhecimento técnico e especializado na área em que atua	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Confio na equipa da Mistolin Solutions, pelo seu nível de conhecimento técnico e especializado	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Por ter (até há pouco tempo) como principal público-alvo clientes industriais, a marca possui elevado conhecimento técnico e especializado na área em que atua	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. O facto de a marca ter (até há pouco tempo) como principal público-alvo clientes industriais, atribui uma boa reputação à marca	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Percepção dos Produtos Vendidos Pela Mistolin Solutions \*

Responda às seguintes questões, tendo em conta o conhecimento que detém sobre a marca, assim como a introdução e explicação da marca anteriormente apresentadas

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
1. A Mistolin Solutions apresenta uma grande variedade de produtos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. A Mistolin Solutions abrange um grande número de diferentes categorias	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. No geral, os produtos vendidos pela Mistolin Solutions são, a meu ver, de qualidade superior à média	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. De um modo geral, as marcas vendidas pela Mistolin Solutions possuem boa reputação	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. A meu ver, por serem produtos fabricados para profissionais da área, os produtos vendidos pela Mistolin Solutions são de qualidade superior à média	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. O facto de os produtos que a Mistolin Solutions vende serem fabricados para profissionais da área, atribui-lhes uma boa reputação	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. De entre as categorias de produtos que a Mistolin Solutions vende, escolha aquela(s) cujo(s) produto(s) mais facilmente compraria (Não existe limite de escolha) \*

- Agroalimentar: ácidos, alcalinos, detergentes desinfetantes
- Manutenção e auto: auto exterior e interior, manutenção
- Cozinha: desengordurantes, lavagem manual e mecânica de loiça
- Produtos ecológicos - marca EcoX Pro: cozinha, higiene pessoal, lavanderia, superfícies
- Consumíveis: caixas, copos, embalagens de alumínio, embalagens de plástico
- Proteção: álcool gel, desinfetantes, luvas, máscaras, toalhitas, vestuário
- Ambientação e nebulização
- Equipamentos: aspiradores, auto lavadoras, dispensadores de papel, doseadores, ecopontos, inseto-caçadores, papeleiras, saboneteiras, tapetes de desinfecção e secagem
- Superfícies e pavimentos: para construção, desinfetantes, detergentes desinfetantes, limpeza WC, vidros
- Lavandaria: aditivos, amaciadores, branqueadores, detergentes em pó, detergentes líquidos
- Papel: papel higiénico, toalhas de mão, papel industrial, guardanapos
- Material de limpeza: baldes, carrinhos de limpeza, esfregonas, mopas, rodos, vassouras

#### A Nova Loja Online

Recentemente, a Mistolin Solutions implementou a sua loja online, com o objetivo de tornar mais conveniente o processo de compra dos produtos que vende.

12. Perceção da Loja Online Mistolin Solutions \*

Responda às seguintes questões, tendo em conta o conhecimento que detém sobre a marca, assim como a introdução e explicação da marca anteriormente apresentadas

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
1. A loja online pode facilitar/simplificar o processo de compra deste tipo de produtos, a nível de poupança de tempo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. A loja online pode facilitar/simplificar o processo de compra deste tipo de produtos, a nível de esforço na realização da compra	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. A loja online pode permitir obter poupança económica na compra deste tipo de produtos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Confio que é seguro efetuar pagamentos através desta loja online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Confio que a loja online protege as informações financeiras dos seus clientes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. A oferta de promoções exclusivas na loja online (como códigos de desconto) é apelativa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Promoções exclusivas da loja online fariam com que mais facilmente comprasse na mesma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



13. Interesse Geral na Loja Online Mistolin Solutions \*

Responda às seguintes questões, tendo em conta o conhecimento que detém sobre a marca, assim como a introdução e explicação da marca anteriormente apresentadas

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
1. Tenho interesse numa futura compra na loja online Mistolin Solutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Planeio futuramente comprar na loja online Mistolin Solutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Appendix 4 - “Brand Perception” Items Statistics**

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
1. The brand conveys to me higher quality than competing brands	3.56	3.00	3	0.918
2. In my opinion, the brand has a good reputation	3.81	4.00	4	0.875
3. I associate the brand with a highly technical and specialized knowledge in the area where it operates	3.60	4.00	4	0.907
4. I have trust in the team of Mistolin Solutions for their level of technical and specialized knowledge	3.47	4.00	3	0.958
5. Due to having (until recently) industrial consumers as its main target-audience, the brand has a highly technical and specialized knowledge in the area where it operates	3.61	4.00	4	0.881
6. The fact that the brand had (until recently) industrial consumers as its main target-audience gives it a good reputation	3.61	4.00	4	0.872

**Appendix 5 - “Brand Perception” Frequency Table**

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The brand conveys to me higher quality than competing brands	2.9%	4.3%	43.2%	33.1%	16.5%
2. In my opinion, the brand has a good reputation	2.9%	2.9%	23.7%	51.8%	18.7%
3. I associate the brand with a highly technical and specialized knowledge in the area where it operates	3.6%	3.6%	36.7%	41.7%	14.4%
4. I have trust in the team of Mistolin	5.8%	3.6%	40.3%	38.1%	12.2%

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Solutions for their level of technical and specialized knowledge					
5. Due to having (until recently) industrial consumers as its main target-audience, the brand has a highly technical and specialized knowledge in the area where it operates	2.9%	3.6%	37.4%	41.7%	14.4%
6. The fact that the brand had (until recently) industrial consumers as its main target-audience gives it a good reputation	2.9%	4.3%	34.5%	45.3%	12.9%

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### Appendix 6 - "Product Perception" Items Statistics

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
1. Mistolin Solutions offers a wide range of products	3.63	4.00	4	0.941
2. Mistolin Solutions covers a large number of different categories	3.55	4.00	3	0.926
3. In general, the products sold by Mistolin Solutions are, in my opinion, of higher quality than the average	3.55	3.00	3	0.894
4. Overall, the brands sold by Mistolin Solutions have a good reputation	3.68	4.00	4	0.868
5. In my opinion, because the products are made for professionals of the field, they are of higher quality than the average	3.56	4.00	3	0.852
6. The fact that the products are made for professionals of the field gives them a good reputation	3.62	4.00	4	0.912

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**Appendix 7 - “Product Perception” Frequency Table**

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Mistolin Solutions offers a wide range of products	3.6%	5.0%	32.4%	42.4%	16.5%
2. Mistolin Solutions covers a large number of different categories	3.6%	5.0%	38.8%	38.1%	14.4%
3. In general, the products sold by Mistolin Solutions are, in my opinion, of higher quality than the average	2.2%	4.3%	46.0%	30.9%	16.5%
4. Overall, the brands sold by Mistolin Solutions have a good reputation	2.9%	2.9%	32.4%	46.8%	15.1%
5. In my opinion, because the products are made for professionals of the field, they are of higher quality than the average	2.2%	4.3%	41.7%	38.8%	12.9%
6. The fact that the products are made for professionals of the field gives them a good reputation	2.9%	4.3%	37.4%	38.8%	16.5%

**Appendix 8 - “Online Store Perception” Items Statistics**

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
1. Mistolin Solutions online store can facilitate/simplify the purchasing process of this type of products, regarding saving time	3.76	4.00	4	0.984
2. Mistolin Solutions online store can facilitate/simplify the purchasing process of this type of products, in terms of effort involved in the purchase	3.75	4.00	4	0.993
3. Mistolin Solutions online store can permit saving money when buying this type of products	3.67	4.00	4	0.855
4. I trust in the safety of performing payments through Mistolin Solutions online	3.65	4.00	4	0.900

store				
5. I trust that Mistolin Solutions online store protects the financial information of its customers	3.61	4.00	3	0.913
6. The offer of exclusive promotions in Mistolin Solutions online store (such as discount codes) is appealing	3.75	4.00	4	0.964
7. Exclusive promotions of Mistolin Solutions online store would make it easier for me to buy there	3.78	4.00	4	0.954

### Appendix 9 - "Online Store Perception" Frequency Table

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Mistolin Solutions online store can facilitate/simplify the purchasing process of this type of products, regarding saving time	3.6%	5.8%	24.5%	43.9%	22.3%
2. Mistolin Solutions online store can facilitate/simplify the purchasing process of this type of products, in terms of effort involved in the purchase	3.6%	6.5%	23.7%	43.9%	22.3%
3. Mistolin Solutions online store can permit saving money when buying this type of products	2.2%	2.9%	36.7%	42.4%	15.8%
4. I trust in the safety of performing payments through Mistolin Solutions online store	2.9%	2.9%	38.1%	38.8%	17.3%
5. I trust that Mistolin Solutions online store protects the financial information of its customers	2.9%	4.3%	38.1%	38.1%	16.5%
6. The offer of exclusive promotions in Mistolin Solutions online store (such as discount codes) is appealing	3.6%	2.9%	31.7%	38.8%	23.0%
7. Exclusive promotions of Mistolin Solutions online store would make it easier for me to	3.6%	2.9%	28.1%	42.4%	23.0%

buy there

**Appendix 10** - "Interest in Buying from Mistolin Solutions Online Store" Items Statistics

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
1. I have interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future	3.49	4.00	4	0.871
2. I plan to buy from Mistolin Solutions online store in the future	3.34	3.00	3	0.921

**Appendix 11** - "Interest in Buying from Mistolin Solutions Online Store" Frequency Table

Source: Own Elaboration

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have interest in buying from Mistolin Solutions online store in the near future	4.3%	4.3%	37.4%	46.0%	7.9%
2. I plan to buy from Mistolin Solutions online store in the future	5.8%	5.0%	47.5%	33.1%	8.6%

## Appendix 12 - Communalities Extraction Through Principal Component Analysis

Source: Own Elaboration

	Initial	Extraction
BQ1	1.000	0.730
BQ2	1.000	0.754
PE1	1.000	0.764
BE2	1.000	0.744
IB1	1.000	0.824
IB2	1.000	0.825
PC1	1.000	0.788
PC2	1.000	0.783
PQ1	1.000	0.823
PQ2	1.000	0.759
IP1	1.000	0.827
IP2	1.000	0.771
PB1	1.000	0.749
PB2	1.000	0.708
PB3	1.000	0.676
PT1	1.000	0.721
PT2	1.000	0.722
DP1	1.000	0.701
DP2	1.000	0.588

## Appendix 13 – Initial Eigenvalues and Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings

Source: Own Elaboration

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.935	52.291	52.291	4.894	25.756	25.756
2	2.623	13.804	66.095	4.821	25.373	51.129
3	1.699	8.943	75.038	4.543	23.909	75.038
4	0.915	4.813	79.852			
5	0.619	3.257	83.109			
6	0.585	3.080	86.189			

7	0.451	2.374	88.562
8	0.355	1.870	88.222
9	0.325	1.709	92.141
10	0.293	1.542	93.683
11	0.267	1.408	95.090
12	0.222	1.170	96.260
13	0.160	0.842	97.102
14	0.147	0.772	97.874
15	0.121	0.635	98.509
16	0.087	0.460	98.970
17	0.085	0.446	99.416
18	0.072	0.381	99.797
19	0.039	0.203	100.000

**Appendix 14 - Research Items Component Matrix with Varimax Rotation Technique**

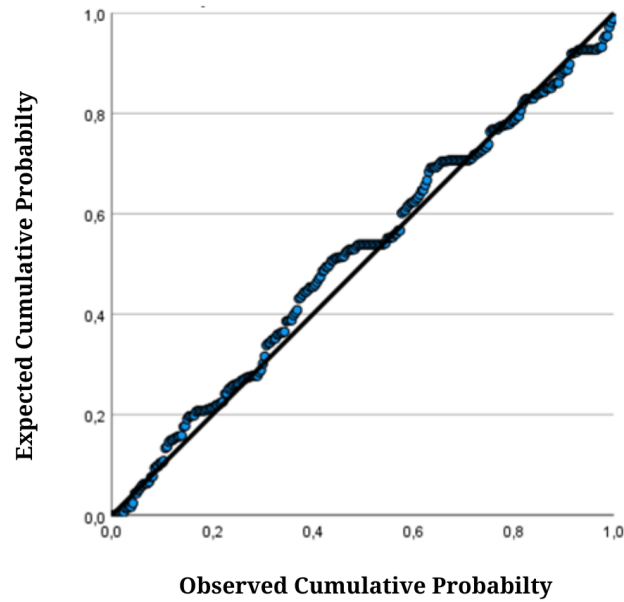
Source: Own Elaboration

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
BQ1	0.083	0.787	0.321
BQ2	0.143	0.817	0.256
PE1	0.222	0.807	0.253
PE2	0.149	0.809	0.259
IB1	0.208	0.865	0.178
IB2	0.227	0.858	0.195
PC1	0.324	0.190	0.804
PC2	0.276	0.214	0.813
PQ1	0.220	0.292	0.830
PQ2	0.255	0.321	0.769
IP1	0.219	0.330	0.819
IP2	0.369	0.313	0.733
PB1	0.790	0.252	0.247
PB2	0.796	0.173	0.209
PB3	0.733	0.345	0.137
PT1	0.821	0.126	0.174
PT2	0.805	0.096	0.254
DP1	0.802	0.060	0.232
DP2	0.677	0.154	0.325



**Appendix 15 - Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual**

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics v.28.0.0



**Appendix 16 - Coefficients Matrix Indicating the VIF Values**

Source: Own Elaboration

	Collinearity Statistics	
	<u>Tolerance</u>	<u>VIF</u>
Brand Quality	0.376	2.661
Perceived Expertise	0.396	2.525
Industry Background Perception	0.321	3.115
Perceived Choice	0.410	2.442
Product Quality	0.290	3.451
Industrial Product Perception	0.292	3.428
Perceived Benefits	0.528	1.894
Perceived Trust	0.492	2.031
Discount Proneness	0.518	1.929