A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Masters Degree in Management from the NOVA – School of Business and Economics.

Management Consulting Labs – Galp Social Media

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1. **Brief Context: Client & its industry, its situation and complication**

Galp Energia is a Portuguese integrated multi-energy company and is present in thirteen countries. Its operations are divided in three business segments: exploration and production of oil and natural gas; refining and marketing of petroleum products; gas and power. In the refining and marketing segment, which accounts for 46%\(^1\) of the company’s operating income, Galp processes oil crude into refined products which are distributed to Portugal, Spain and Africa. Relatively to Portugal the company is leader in the fuel retail market with approximately 35%\(^2\) of market share.

Recently the fuel retail market has been facing several challenges, mainly due to the impacts of changes on socio-economic context. The global financial and economic crisis has been causing a significant change on households’ behavior by lowering their purchasing power and consumer confidence index\(^3\). Therefore, this has been reflected on their price sensitiveness and consequently it has been affecting their purchasing behavior not only in fuel sector but also in many others\(^4\).

Furthermore, Galp Energia is also suffering with the intensification of the competition due to the swift entrance of private labels in the market. These new competitors are able to charge, in average, lower prices and so they have been gaining market share since their entrance\(^5\). Considering these facts mentioned above it is understandable that this new market paradigm influences Galp’s performance on fuel retail market.

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\(^1\) Galp Energia, Annual Report 2010
\(^2\) Galp Energia <www.galpenergia.com>
\(^4\) ECSI Portugal, Divulgação de Resultados Nacionais 2010
\(^5\) Kantar Worldpanel Portugal <www.kantarworldpanelportugal.com>
Summarizing, Galp as leading brand has to adapt its marketing strategy in order to reengage customers and reinforce their relation with the brand. It was in this context that Galp Energia requested NOVA to develop a consultancy project in order to analyze a potential presence of the company in Social Media.

2. Reflection on the content done for the client

2.1. Problem definition

The importance of social networks has been increasing exponentially and it is expected that in this year the number of users exceeds 1000 million\(^6\) people. When applied to our project’s perspective it is important to refer that 50\(^%\)\(^7\) of Portuguese Facebookers utilize this network to receive information and interact with brands.

Taking into consideration the context referred above, Galp perceived that a possible presence in Social Media can be an opportunity to reinforce and rebuilt its relationship with customers.

The client defined that a presence in Social Media would aim to establish a more operational and specific contact with their customers and at the same time to create online value for customers by generating attractive content. Additionally, the client has considered that addressing issues of general and institutional nature would be an underlying concern of the company during the development of this project.

After having carefully examined the proposal set for the project, we realized that the objectives and priorities set by the client were not the most appropriate to the problem.

\(^6\) McCann Social Media Study 2010
\(^7\) Netsonda 2011 <www.netsonda.pt>
Furthermore, it is risky to integrate Social Media without having clearly defined goals at the outset.

Hereupon, in order to properly establish the priorities to be set for the progress of the project, we start by analyzing the current situation of the company at Social Media.

The official presence of Galp Energia at Social Media is fragmented and residual, a Facebook page “Portal Energia Positiva” (only to promote Galpshare initiative) and a channel on Youtube. However, through a quick search, for example in Facebook, it is perceptible that Galp’s unofficial presence is created by users’ publications, in which terms used are very often negative (see exhibit 1).

Therefore, there is an urgent need to address topics of general and institutional nature and thus create an official perspective from the brand in social networks. Apart from anything else, this fact takes on greater relevance when considered in the context previously referred.

So, what the client considered as a latent concern, we perceive as a priority issue since if the company is not strategically well prepared on this topic, an entrance at Social Media may be critical due to the risks associated.

Considering the hypothesis of a more operational and specific contact with customers, pointed as Galp’s main priority for this presence, it is important to mention that establish this type of interaction with the customers through social networks is recognized in best practices for companies. However, although it is essential enclose this approach in social networks in order to create value for customers, when applied to the case of Galp is expected that such interactions would not be the most frequent. First, the company already
has a prestigious system of direct and specific contact with customers. Second, due to the type of products and services offered by Galp, the resolution of customers’ problems require in most cases confidentiality and privacy, so customers may not be willing to solve it online. Hereupon, we can perceive that although this is a crucial approach to create value for customers, will not be the main reason why Galp should build this presence at Social Media.

As a result, we defined as top priority develop a structural approach to address issues of general and institutional nature and at the same time consider as fundamental requirement the creation of value for customers.

After we had clarified the proposed objectives, it was defined two macro questions that should be addressed in order to better approach the problem:

I. What are the internal implications for Galp
II. How should this presence *look and feel* (visible to users)

In order to better assess the first macro question we established *a priori* that three main topics should be analyzed. First of all, it was crucial decide what should be the most appropriate method for Galp’s presence in order to address issues of general and institutional nature. The second topic, as referred above, relies on how the company should integrate in Social Media the current system of direct and specific contact with customers. And finally as evidenced during the project, it was fundamental define how the company’s culture should be adapted to fit in this new “field”.
The second macro question is related to the appearance and functionality expected for this presence, which will in part reflect and integrate the work elaborated on the first macro question. Additionally, it was important define and evaluate what should be the content and tools developed to generate users’ interest.

Summarizing, in the beginning this was the approach defined for the course of the project with the final purpose of developing a sustainable long-term strategy consistent with Galp brand values.

2.2. **Hypothesis, analysis and work**

2.2.1. **Hypothesis and analysis**

After define all macro and micro questions we knew what key issues should be addressed in order to develop a complete and successful output. Therefore, we started to structure our work-plan, which was prepared considering four work-fronts, which were divided among the team members:

1. Definition of an in-depth and structured approach to address issues of general and institutional nature

2. Assessment of areas for improvement in the system of direct and specific contact with customers in order to articulate the existing system for Social Media

3. Definition of adaptation strategies for Galp’s corporate culture to fit this new “field”

4. Development of potential appealing content and tools to create online value for users

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Additionally, two other work-fronts were defined (Desk research and Market research) to be transverse to the other four during the project in order to sustain and test our hypotheses.

Regarding the first work-front described, we perceived that we should follow a different approach from the one adopted in the company. Therefore, instead of an institutional and theoretical tone when dealing with customers concerning issues of general and institutional nature we developed an approach characterized by an educational and intuitive dialogue. In a first stage, we made a detailed analysis of all issues raised by customers, through which we were able to group it in few clusters in order to enable us to develop an easier and systematic approach. Afterwards we had to support each one of the issues with an internal and external research. Although initially the client did not completely comply with the methodology used, after we presented our approach in the first progress review the mindset clearly changed. Despite the long discussion in the progress review, this was a decisive moment for the course of the project. We felt that presenting our approach in a “tangible mode” was crucial to make the client realize how this structure would work in reality. Therefore, despite the initial skeptic perspective of the client they were able to perceive what would be the impact of our approach on customers and so they realized its added value for the project.

Additionally, when we tested our approach through focus-group we were able to achieve an important goal by getting people to have the desired reaction.
Concerning the management of specific and personal issues, which represents the second work-front, it is important to refer that is considered in best practices an essential area to create value for customers in social media. Through the evaluation of the existing databases we were able to segment and categorize customers’ interactions. Afterwards, we prioritized these interactions considering volume and complexity of solving as variables in order to identify critical areas that require internal procedural improvements. In the second progress review, we presented to the client our output through a top five sample of critical issues, which was useful for them to realize that despite a prestigious system there is still a way to go to ensure the necessary level of readiness. Furthermore, given the higher exigency and specificities to manage specific and personal issues in Social Media, it is crucial to have an efficient support system. Moreover, we changed our approach during the course of the project since we have moved from an exhaustive approach to one more focused on specific topics, mainly for two reasons. First, since it is a large scope of issues to address we considered that a deep exploration of priority topics should add more value to the client. Second, in the first progress review we realized the client did not perceive what would be the final goal of this work-front, so we understood we should anticipate our approach in order to present them a more advanced and realistic perspective. Once again we perceive that instead of the detailed and exhaustive explanation of what we had done, the client was more interested in a “forward-looking output”.

The subsequently work-front analyzed was related with the necessity of an adaptation of the company’s corporate culture to this new “field”. Our initial approach to this work area

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8 Social Media Today <http://socialmediatoday.com/>
was not the most appropriate since we developed our recommendations not taking into account the company’s business area or even its culture and values. Consequently, we developing an incomplete and unsuitable output based on general guidelines that cannot be applied to all companies. Therefore, after the client’s feedback we recognized the holes in our approach and we started defining a strategy aligned with the corporate culture.

Finally, the last work-front was defined in order to answer the second macro question on how would the company create customers’ online engagement through the combination of interesting content and tools. During the course of the project we adjust our initial approach in this work-front since in the final output we delivered a broader end portfolio of topics than originally anticipated. Through brainstorm team sessions we were able to get innovative ideas to integrate in Social Media in an appealing manner to customers. Moreover, I believe the team felt that we could not go beyond high-level suggestions in this work-front once we were not able to create more value to the client due to resources limitations.

Furthermore, with the purpose of creating client’s awareness regarding how this presence should look and feel we decide to anticipate the materialization of all work-fronts. Through this decision, the client was able to perceive the representation of the project’s final output regarding its dynamic content and static structure. Moreover, this anticipation allowed us to have a perspective of what would be the input of each approach done and so avoid unnecessary developments that could not be integrated in the final output.
2.2.2. Methodology

After this reflection regarding the changes in the original approach of each work-front, it is useful to analyze if we complied the established timeline for the work-plan. The following diagram represents the original timeline as proposed to the client.

Table 1. Original work-plan before the official kick-off

In overall the initial approach proposed underwent some changes during the project, since some work-fronts required more dedication and commitment than others. Furthermore, the evolution of work-fronts was also subject to the requests and suggestions presented by the client during progress review sessions.

Table 2. Work-plan followed during the course of the project

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9 Source: Project’s initial proposal (illustration adapted by the author in order to keep confidentiality)
10 Source: author’s illustration
As we can observe several work-fronts were extended until the end of the project. First of all, the work-front related with “addressing issues of general and institutional nature” required an additional and demanding work that was not foreseen at the beginning. The reason for this was partly due to the positive feedback in the first progress review, where the client realized the added value that this area could bring.

Moreover, since this work-front requires a deep knowledge of the industry and the company, it was necessary a great involvement of the client. This dependence on the client in obtaining data and information seriously influenced the progress of this work-front. In this case the work developed could have been more precise and complete if we had full access to inside information. In my point of view the client was not expected that we needed access to specific confidential information and so nobody wanted to be responsible for lending it. Furthermore, promptly we realized that only few people in the organization had access to this information which made it even more difficult to get. Therefore, we followed a different approach, instead of being waiting we decide to start developing backup plans in order to get the necessary information through other sources, even if it was not the most accurate information it is better to have it “approximately right than entirely wrong”.

Therefore, despite being our top priority during the course of the project, this work-front was also considered as our main challenge. At the same time some work-fronts were sacrificed due to the previous one, since we had to reallocate team members among work-fronts in order to meet the established objectives for this work-front.
Hereupon, the work-front concerning the “creation of appealing content for users” was interrupted during the project mainly for two reasons: first, when compared with other work-fronts this one was secondary for the success of the project, since it would create less value for the client; second, due to the reason pointed above, regarding the reallocation of resources to other work-fronts.

Additionally, the work-front “development of adaptation strategies for Galp’s culture” also demanded more time to be complete. Despite this work-front was also affected by the prioritization of work-fronts, the difference between the client perspective and the team concerning this topic was the main reason for this delay. This last fact is important to highlight since it was a topic in which the team was not aligned with the client point of view. In this topic the team faced an important challenge since the rigidity of the company’s culture critically influenced the design of an adaptation strategy. Furthermore, an additional lesson that we took from this situation was that it is fundamental to adapt best practices to specific companies and its culture, since these guidelines cannot be prescriptively implemented. Therefore, we were able to understand how important is to adjust the final output to the company values and culture even if the team has a significantly different perspective regarding the topic.

Another important part of our project was the market research which consisted of three focus-group sessions and allowed us to directly test our hypotheses and ongoing work. Since it was dependent from the progress of the other work-fronts, the delays previously mentioned were reflected on this work-front. However, in the first two sessions we were able to get relevant customer insights that were critical for the progress of several work-
fronts. Through this approach we easily realized how customers interact with companies in social media and what they feel about a direct and specific contact with the company on these networks.

Furthermore, we knew from the beginning that the preparation of these sessions had to be started in advance but still the team did not manage the process well enough due to a misalignment between the team and the client regarding to the format and content. This divergence was regarding the fact that the client did not perceive our proposal as the most perceptible and forceful to consumers.

However, despite some valuable insights, I considered that the allocation of time for this work-front was greater than the necessary for its success. Since these sessions were prepared through an intermediary company, the client had a major influence in the process which made it difficult for the team to coordinate it. Furthermore, the process was also delayed due to different perspectives between the team and the client which demanded countless meetings in order to ensure the sessions’ content and format was aligned with our proposal.

Regarding to the work-front related with the system of specific contact with the client, as we can observe in the timeline it has been concluded faster than expected due to the ease of access to data and information.
2.3. **Recommendations**

An important key message the team transmitted to the client is that through a solid preparation it is possible to mitigate the risks associated with a presence in Social Media\(^{11}\), which fact is true for all companies. However, as it was mentioned along the report we consider that there are several adaptations required to accomplish the right level of preparedness. Hereupon, the team presented a structured plan along each work area explaining all the probable risks and expectations concerning this presence in Social Media. Therefore, in order to efficiently implement our recommendations we suggested that it is essential to allocate specific work areas among the members of Galp’s Social Media workforce which was previously defined to be responsible for executing the project. Hereupon, it is important to plan who will be in charge of each part and what should be the next key-tasks to perform in each work area. Moreover, according to our proposal for a possible entry into Social Media is noticeable that advance preparedness is necessary. Therefore, the team suggested that as first step the work-force should do a holistic projection of how much time will be expected until to achieve the necessary level of preparedness.

 Nevertheless, there are specific aspects that can condition the project implementation. Many aspects of our recommendations implied structural changes, not only in terms of processes and resources but also organizational culture, which always take time to implement and genuinely adhere on a daily basis.

Concerning the work area concerning an adaptation of the company’s culture the main challenge will be related with the difficulty of implementation of this strategy to a company

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\(^{11}\) Social Media Today <http://socialmediatoday.com/>
with a mature culture. Since Galp’s employees work all over the three business segments and are geographically spread, it will involve an additional effort to design and implement a transverse strategy to the organization.

3. **Reflection on learning**

3.1. **Previous knowledge**

Throughout my Master’s in management I was able to develop an useful and complete background, however I can highlight three courses from which I directly applied the knowledge I acquired.

In the course of Global Business Challenges I learned about how a company’s culture is built and how this influences the company’s business strategies. As it was mentioned before, one of our main challenges during the project was first to understand how is Galp’s culture and what could be its implications on the project and second how could we adapt best practices taking into consideration the company’s culture. Therefore, I consider that having a deep knowledge regarding corporate culture helped me to better understand the client’ needs and requirements.

The course Statistics for Managers helped me to improve my analytical capabilities since we learned how to analyze databases and interpret statistical data. Moreover, I also learned on how to reach and draw conclusions about the previous analysis. In order to analyze the Galp’s current customer support system I had to apply several techniques acquired in the statistics course.
During the course of Marketing in a Dynamic World I developed a project about KFC consisting in defining a marketing strategy to recover brand’s public perception. In this project we realized a benchmark analysis in order to understand how fast food companies were dealing with bad reputation issues. I was also able to realize the importance of designing a brand wheel framework on building a brand’s reputation and credibility with customers. This assignment was very useful to understand how companies adapt its strategies to changes in customers’ purchasing behaviors.

Nevertheless, I felt there are some areas in which I need to improve my knowledge and capabilities. First of all, it would be important that during the Master we had some courses focused on how to manage and use the existing wide range of excel tools.

Second, I also felt a lack of preparation concerning on how to perform on formal top-management presentations. It would be useful to have some modules based on communication strategies in order to teach and train students for these moments of their professional life.

3.2. New Knowledge

3.2.1. Tools, methodologies and frameworks

During the project, Professor Gustavo Brito taught us important tools and methodologies that contributed to develop our problem solving capabilities.

The 80/20 rule: This principle is based on the premise that 80% of the outcomes come from 20% of our efforts. Through conducting our analyses based in this rule we were able
to develop a more effective output since we had time constraints and limited resources. Therefore, this principle was always present in our teamwork dynamics.

**MECE:** Using this framework to organize information that is mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, allowed us to avoid delivering an extensive output with repeated information. Due to this framework we understood that is possible to categorize and segment information without losing important facts. Furthermore, in consulting projects it is important to have this principle in mind, since we have to present a large amount of information in a short time.

**Issue Trees:** This methodology is a systematic approach used to breakdown a complex problem. Through an analogy of a tree we split the problem into several issues by branches and after that we design hypothesis to each issue. After defining hypotheses is necessary to establish which approach to take in each one concerning the analyses required and information needed. This methodology can be applied in several situations but it was very useful when we had to organize and plan each work-front.

**3.2.2. Communication**

The progress review sessions, in which we present to the client our advancements, were crucial moments for the success of the project. Therefore, we knew that even if we had an outstanding output to present it was essential to have a forceful communication strategy in order to convince the client to believe and implement it. Hereupon, Professor Gustavo Brito taught us several procedures to use in order to develop a more effective presentation.
**Pyramid Principle:** This technique is used to develop an efficient communication strategy, not only to orally present information but also to exhibit it on power points. According to this principle the most powerful structure to communicate is to first refer the key messages and subsequently a brief explanation on how we got there. This technique proved to be very important when presenting to the client since they are more concerned with our final recommendations.

**Master Document:** Our approach when constructing the document to present in progress review sessions started by designing a hand written document in which we defined the structure and the content for each slide. During this first process the team decided what should be presented to the client and what should be the slides sequence. Following this approach allowed us to have a holistic vision of the document and we were able to save time by first doing it in paper. Furthermore, it was also a useful tool to the division of the slides among the team members. The team leader was responsible for the master document in paper and was also in charge to incorporate the subsequent changes in the document. This methodology was for me one of the most valuable learning during the project. Despite it seems an evident approach, I always had begun developing documents using power point.

**Action Titles and “so what”:** The first is a strategy for power point presentations based on the premise that when we are presenting we are telling a story to the audience. Therefore, this idea is transmitted through the slides’ headers – storyline headers - which are written in sequential order relating all slides. Hereupon, in our project this method helped the client, who is not present in our day to day work, following the story that we were telling in progress review sessions. The second concept is used to summarize the main message of
each slide which is an important tool to highlight conclusions. These two strategies combined allow the audience to easily absorb the content presented.

**Wordsmithing:** Is a technique used to clarify and simplify texts. It is very useful on power point presentations to convey information in a direct and clear way so that the audience is willing to read. Therefore, is an easier technique to bring people to retain the main ideas of what was presented.

### 3.2.3. Team & Client management

During the course of the project I realized the importance that our relationship with the client has in the success of the project. Therefore, it was essential to create and maintain a good relationship with the client.

**Trust Equation:** In order to efficiently manage our relation with the client in the beginning of the project the Professor Gustavo Brito taught us a formula to explain how we could build client’s trust.

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\text{Trust Equation} = \frac{([\text{Empathy} + \text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability}) / (\text{Self – interest})]}{(1)}
\]

We soon realized that this would be a main challenge for us, since for the client we were just students without any sense of business reality. Therefore, it is perceptible that we did not have any credibility or even reliability to the client when we started the project.

Moreover, we were also able to understand that the client may have different perspectives. On one hand, there is the client that is aware that we have no experience in these projects.
but believes that we can add value to the company through our unbiased point of view and innovative thinking. On the other hand, there is a different perception that considers that instead of helping we are disturbing them or even jeopardizing their work.

However, during the course of the project we were able to increase our credibility through progress review sessions in which we presented our advancements and conclusions. Therefore, by presenting a quality output that managed to overcome client’s expectations, we were able to increase our credibility and consequently our reliability by complied the deadlines set. Regarding the creation of empathy with the client it was a process that had to be sustained throughout the project.

**Team Rules:** Since we did not know each before the kick-off of the project, Professor Gustavo Brito suggested that we should start by defining a team rules page that would be updated along the project. In this page we stated each member role in the team (team leader, accountant, note taker etc.), our self-assessment (strengths and development needs) and our lifestyle (impossibilities and preferences). Therefore, through this page we were able to better know each other concerning each member’s personal and professional character.

**Divide to conquer:** Since the beginning of the project we had this concept in our mind-set. As a team we had to distribute the pre defined work-fronts among team members so that each member was responsible for a work-front. This approach allowed us to enhance team’s productivity and effectiveness since each member was responsible for controlling the contents and the deadlines of his work-front. Furthermore, after the first progress
review we perceived that we were not being sufficiently efficient due to an inequitable work-fronts division, therefore we had a team meeting in order to better allocate team members’ responsibilities.

**Feedback:** When working in teams it is essential to maintain a good and sustainable work environment, so the Professor Gustavo Brito suggested in the beginning of the project that we could have team feedback sessions. Therefore, we defined in the team rules that we would have a weekly feedback session in order to disclose our main concerns and difficulties. These sessions were divided in two parts: self-assessment, in which we expose our feelings concerning our weekly performance and then peers evaluation, in which we explicate the positive and negative points of our peer’s performance. However, there are some guidelines that must be followed in order to guarantee a constructive feedback session. Therefore feedback should be: specific, with supporting examples “I observed that...”; objective, by transmitting what was the impact in the person giving feedback “The way it made me feel was...”; and development oriented, by giving suggestions to overcome “Going forward I suggest...”. Looking back now I realize how essential these feedback sessions were to better know each other and even more important we were able to improve team’s general performance through maintaining wellness.

### 3.3. Personal Reflection

Regardless of all the technical and academic learning, this project was also important to better know myself. The 360° feedback method used in the end of the project consisted on an assessment of my strengths and development needs taking into consideration the
 supervisor, peers and client evaluation. Despite this assessment come to confirm what I already knew, it allowed me to understand how I can enhance my strengths and how to improve my weaknesses.

Therefore, the evaluators highlighted the following strengths: First of all, my organizational skills once my structuring skills are translated into a good capacity to organize processes and resources, not only in my individual work but also in team setting. Other strength that was pointed out was my autonomy since I was able to single-handle the completion (from the beginning to end with great output) of the work-front related with the customer support system. Finally, my proactivity and entrepreneurial spirit once I always prefer to be involved in challenging situations from which I feel I can learn the most of it. Moreover, I usually go beyond what is suggested or prescribed and explore new areas of the problem and ways to solve it, for example the entire materialization approach resulted from an initiative that started on my work-front.

Concerning my development needs the evaluators pointed out my assertiveness once my good persuasion ability in team settings tends to result in the eyes of my colleagues that I am imposing my perspective and consequently undercutting their contributions. I tend to have this type of attitude in higher pressure situations in which it is necessary to deliver more in less time possible. I recognize that this is a serious issue when working in teams and that this affects the team spirit needed to maintain a good work environment. Hereupon, I need to make a constant effort to improve this weakness through developing genuine active listening with others.
Other important development need stated was my difficulties in oral communication. I only get across orally a small portion of what I am capable of putting in words and diagrams in power point and this was reflected in progress review sessions, in which I was comfortable with the content of the presentation but I was not able to clearly expose it to the client. Despite the project significantly helped to improve this weakness there is still a long way to go. Therefore, I need to develop a more in-control posture during important presentations, establish eye contact with everyone and speak slowly but firmly in order to guide the audience step-by-step throughout the presentation.

3.4. Future as business consultant

I see myself as future business consultant for three main reasons. First, I am always interested in challenging situations so as a consultant I would have the chance to develop my expertise regarding a wide-range of industries and constantly deal with complex problems. Second, I would have the opportunity to improve my capabilities, since consultancy firms strongly invest in intellectual property. Once it is a dynamic and complete job I will be able to develop not only my analytical and technical skills but also my interpersonal skills. Finally, since it is one fastest growing industries in the business world I would have the opportunity to promptly reach top management positions.

Furthermore, my enthusiasm for consulting was also triggered during this project since I was able to understand more closely how consultancy projects work and what are the demands of a project like this.
4. **Exhibits**

Exhibit 1 – Examples of Facebook pages representing Galp’s unofficial presence

Source: Facebook.com