A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

UNDERSTANDING AND REACHING THE NEW GEN Z & MILLENNIAL PET PARENTS: PROFILING THE NEW DOG PARENTS AND THEIR DECISION JOURNEY

Giovana de Beaurepaire Crispino da Silva

Work project carried out under the supervision of:

Prof. Dr. Sofia Kousi

20/12/2023

Abstract

The pet care sector has expanded rapidly in the last several years, partly because of COVID-19 and new dietary trends, with several Gen Z and Millennials becoming pet parents for the first time. Realising the opportunity ahead, Mars Iberia, which owns Pedigree and Whiskas, realised the need to understand these understudied demographics that make up the new wave of pet parents. As such, the project focuses on creating a profile of the new pet parents and understanding their customer journey, their behaviours and perceptions of the brands mentioned above, while examining the key distinctions that set them apart from the prior pet parents. The analysis is based on in-depth consumer interviews, online surveys, store observations, and social listening. As a result, this paper delivers insights into the dog and cat categories, while understanding people's perceptions of Whiskas and Pedigree, two keystones of the Mars brand.

Keywords: Pet Care, Mars Iberia, Segmentation, Consumer Decision Journey, Brand Management, Brand Perception, Brand Awareness

Acknowledgements

The group would like to thank Professor Dr. Sofia Kousi for her insightful guidance, as well as Nicole Caballero and Clara Amorim from the Mars team, who were indispensable sources of information and feedback.

This work used infrastructure and resources funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (UID/ECO/00124/2013, UID/ECO/00124/2019 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209), POR Lisboa (LISBOA-01-0145-FEDER-007722 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209) and POR Norte (Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209)

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 3
  1.1. Background 3
  1.2. Project Objectives 4
2. Theoretical Background 5
3. Industry Analysis 8
  3.1. Pet Market Overview 8
    3.1.1. Market Size and Growth 9
    3.1.2. Segmentation 10
  3.2. Pet Food Market Overview 12
    3.2.1. The Case of Portugal and Spain 13
    3.2.2. Key Players in the Pet Food Market Globally and Locally 15
4. Company Analysis 20
  4.1. Mars Overview 20
5. Methodology 39
  5.1. Interviews 40
    5.1.1. Procedure and Sample 40
    5.1.2. Limitations of Qualitative Research 41
  5.2. Online Survey 42
    5.2.1. Procedure and Sample 42
    5.2.2. Statistical Significance Analytical Approach 44
    5.2.3. Limitations of Quantitative Research 44
  5.3. Store Observations 45
    5.3.1. Procedure and Sample 45
    5.3.2. Limitations of Store Observations 46
6. Overview of the findings 46
  6.1. Profiling the New Pet Parent: Dogs (Giovana de Beaurepaire) 47
    6.1.1. Significance in Preferences and Behaviours 47
    6.1.2. Awareness and Perceptions on Pedigree brand 52
    6.1.3. Segmentation & Personas 55
  6.2. Consumer Decision Journey: Dogs 58
10. References 61
11. Appendix 74

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Mars Incorporated was established in 1911 by Frank C. Mars when he started crafting and selling buttercream candies from his home in Tacoma, Washington (Murtoff 2023). For over a century and through more than five generations, Mars has manufactured products and services that have earned a spot in the hearts of people and their pets. Today, the company operates across the realms of Petcare, Snacking, and Food & Nutrition. This project's research is dedicated to the Petcare segment, as the group collaborated with Mars Iberia – more specifically the Pedigree and Whiskas brands – to analyse the behaviours and consumption patterns of the emerging audience known as "new pet parents", who are individuals belonging to the Gen Z and Millennials age group (aged 18-40) who live in Portugal or Spain for at least two years.

According to "The State of the Pet Nation Report 2021" by Mars Petcare (Mars, Incorporated 2021), pet ownership has surged during the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase in demand can be attributed to the health benefits associated with owning a pet (Johns Hopkins Medicine n.d.). Furthermore, data provided by Mars Iberia highlights a notable increase in pet ownership in 2023. When compared to the previous year, there was a 5% rise in cat ownership and a 4% increase in dog ownership. This spike in pet companions can be assigned to the influence of younger generations, such as Gen Z and Millennials, who are the drivers of this trend. Another remarkable observation made by Mars Iberia is the growing trend of pet humanization. Pets are being viewed as integral members of the family, leading to a shift in the needs and demands of pet parents to healthier lifestyles and habits.

1.2. Project Objectives

As previously mentioned, this project is focused on Portuguese and Spanish Gen Z and Millennial pet parents of both dogs and cats and has two principal objectives. The first revolves around profiling and segmenting the new pet parent and getting a comprehensive understanding of their customer journey, while exploring the pivotal differences between them and the older pet parents. This includes aspects such as habits, brand perceptions, and preferences, with a particular emphasis on pet food and oral care, by an in-depth understanding of Mars' principal pet care brands, focusing on Pedigree for dogs and Whiskas for cats. In this context, the group aim to point out what has changed in the dynamics of pet parents over time and with different levels of experience on the topic. The second objective is to determine the optimal marketing strategy that effectively engages and captures the attention of new pet parents. This involves the examination of the most effective methods and moments to captivate them to create an integrated marketing communications plan and critically review the marketing mix strategies to establish meaningful connections with the target audience.

In this sense, this research is dedicated to the purchasing habits of pet care consumers, with a particular emphasis on the brands of Pedigree and Whiskas. The report begins with a review of the theoretical background, aiming to establish a foundation for the theoretical models used in the analysis. These models include the McKinsey Consumer Journey, the Graveyard Model, and Segmentation theory. Following this, a comprehensive background into the pet care industry is presented, with a focus on the pet food industry and pet oral care. This detailed analysis aims to provide readers with insights into current industry trends, the awareness and image of the focus brands in comparison to competitors, as well as the perceptions Portuguese and Spanish consumers have of them. Subsequently, delving into the methodology used to collect and analyse the data, which originates from various sources, encompassing both secondary and primary data. The primary data sources include qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, consumer observations in-store, and social media listening. The results section begins by focusing on the Dog segment, offering insights into segments, buyer personas, and their consumer decision journey. The same approach is then applied to the Cats segment. Concluding the report, recommendations are provided separately for Dogs and Cats, recognizing their inherent differences. These recommendations cover all four Ps of the marketing mix, with a particular emphasis on the communication aspect of the promotion P, driven by specific reasons such as improving brand perception in quality and emphasizing its benefits to the pets.

2. Theoretical Background

To analyse and interpret the results obtained in this research, the group utilized different frameworks and theoretical concepts.

McKinsey Consumer Decision Journey: The McKinsey Consumer Decision Journey (*see appendix 1*) stands out as an initial framework for comprehending and dissecting the nuanced dynamics of present-day consumer behaviour. Introduced in 2009 by the renowned consulting firm McKinsey, the model presents a comprehensive portrayal of the consumer's journey from initial consideration to post-purchase loyalty. This model encompasses pivotal stages, starting with the triggering of awareness regarding a need or problem, followed by the consideration of an initial set of brands influenced by recent touch points and brand perceptions. The active evaluation phase is where consumers gather information and make decisions, with the Consumer Journey underscoring the pivotal moment of purchase, where consumers choose a specific brand based on their evaluation. A crucial aspect of the Consumer Decision Journey lies in its acknowledgement of the post-purchase experience. Subsequent to the purchase, consumers develop expectations that shape subsequent decision journeys. The level of satisfaction with the product or service becomes a determinant of whether consumers enter the loyalty loop, reinforcing the bond between the consumer and the brand (McKinsey 2009). The significance of the model is further underscored by the firm's 2015 update, reflecting the evolving landscape of consumer behaviour. This update streamlines or eliminates the consideration and evaluation phase, as consumers directly enter the loyalty loop. Factors such as automation, proactive personalization, and journey innovation instigated this modification, underscoring the model's adaptability to contemporary trends (McKinsey 2015).

Brand Recall and Brand Recognition: Brand recall refers to a consumer's ability to remember a brand with minimal prompts (Kalin 2021). Unaided recall occurs when a consumer is asked to name a brand from a certain category, and spontaneously responds with a specific brand in mind, which is expressed without any guidance. The significance of whether a consumer remembers the brand in question lies in its potential impact on their decision to purchase the product and the likelihood of being included on the consumer's shopping list (Kalin 2021).

Brand Recognition refers to the linkage and the familiarity towards the brand created from past exposure when the brand is given as a cue (Superside 2023). Brand recognition is occasionally termed aided recall, representing a subset of brand recall. For instance, when a product name is linked to a specific logo, attribute, or tagline (such as safety with Volvo or "Just do it" with Nike), it demonstrates brand recognition (Aaker 1996).

Graveyard Model: The contrast between the effectiveness of recall and recognition is illustrated in the Graveyard model (*see appendix 2*), formulated by Young and Rubicam Europe. Brands within a product category typically adhere to the curved line depicted in the plot, representing recognition (aided) versus recall (unaided). However, there are two notable exceptions to this pattern, both underscoring the significance of recall. The first exception pertains to niche brands with a health-focused positioning, positioned below the curved line. Despite having limited overall recognition, these brands exhibit high recall among their dedicated customer base. In this context, low recognition does not correlate with subpar performance. The second exception is situated in the top-left corner, identified as the graveyard area, where brands have substantial mass recognition but low recall. Brands in this position face significant challenges, primarily attributed to mindset constraints (Aaker 1996 11-15).

Segmentation: Buyers vary across different dimensions, such as their needs, wants, geographical locations, buying attitudes, and attributes. To effectively determine the target audience for companies, it is crucial to consider these variables and define the segments where they will operate. According to the book "Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning and Control" (Kotler 1984), one approach to identifying relevant variables is to interview a sample of consumers and uncover the hierarchy of variables influencing their purchase decisions— a method employed by the group. Of the four variables mentioned in the book—geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behaviouristic—only the first was omitted, as it was observed that Portuguese and Spanish consumers exhibit minimal differences.

Buyer persona: Developed by Alan Cooper, the formulation of a buyer persona is indispensable once a company has delineated the segments it will operate within. This strategic tool is essential for businesses to comprehend the audience's needs, opinions, pain points, and challenges, facilitating effective communication with them (Curi 2023).

Brand Identity: A brand's identity is made up of several elements that distinguish it from competitors, such as a name, design, set of pictures, slogan, writing style, typeface, or symbol (Kotler 2009). A clearly defined brand identity helps a company stand out from competitors and leave a lasting impression on customers, making it a strategic instrument for differentiation in the market.

Positioning: The way a brand or product is viewed by customers in relation to its competitors is known as positioning. It involves giving a brand a unique and significant presence in the minds of the audience. The deliberate process of defining a brand's distinct value proposition and setting it apart from competing products in the market is known as positioning. According to Jack Trout, consumers use positioning as a mental tool to make information inputs simpler and store new information logically. Trout noted that given the overwhelming exposure to unwanted advertising and the inclination of the average consumer to dismiss information that does not instantly fit into their mind, positioning is a mental device that consumers use (Trout 1969).

3. Industry Analysis

3.1. Pet Market Overview

The pet market refers to all the firms that turn a profit by offering products for people's pets, which includes a vast spectrum of food-related goods and supplies to healthcare (Queen 2023).

Breaking these categories down, one can describe food and nutrition as a keystone since all pets need to be fed, according to different dietary needs. The importance of pet food in the sector is unquestionable, as the production and distribution of pet food items for a wide range of pets, including fish, small mammals, birds, and reptiles are the main factors for continuous growth. As such, the pet food business frequently produces goods that are geared at certain animals or even various animals at different stages of their life. Despite the large number of animals included in the industry, cats and dogs still hold the largest percentage of a market that has more than 3.000 distinct items available to pet owners (Graham 2023). In fact, it includes a variety of product formats that incorporate dry food, wet food, and specialist products like a variety of snacks. Consequently, the popularity of the pet snack category is also shown in the large range of items available, from biscuit pieces to jerky snacks, which represent the always-evolving preferences of pet owners in providing the best for their pets. Overall, the pet food business is still growing and is a vital part of the Petcare sector (Precedence Research 2023).

Moreover, an important part of the pet sector is pet supplies, which may be considered necessities, while others may be considered indulgences, such as dog beds (Queen 2023). Lastly, pet-focused healthcare is one important aspect of the pet industry, which is mainly composed of veterinary services and health-related products (Ais 2023).

3.1.1. Market Size and Growth

Recent data has revealed that the pet industry has been growing rapidly in recent years. In 2021, the size of the worldwide pet care industry was estimated to be 150.67 billion USD (Grand View Research 2022). In 2022, numbers continued to grow, showcasing an increasing trend in market size, at the time valued at around 235.3 billion USD. As of 2023, the projections determine an even higher valuation, which is to be set at 246.66 billion USD. The expectation is for constant growth, since by 2030 a pet market valuation of around 360 billion USD is expected (Fortune Business Insights 2023).

The rise of internet shopping and technology, along with lifestyle changes accelerated by COVID-19, have fuelled shifts in pet ownership. Increased time at home led to a surge in pet adoptions and fostering. Yet, a significant part of this change is driven by Gen Z and Millennials embracing pet ownership, now constituting about 60% of pet-owning households, while baby boomers make up around 30% (Grand View Research 2022). Additionally, pet owners are showing a growing interest in pet health, promoting preventive care and responsible ownership. This trend is boosting Petcare product sales and the Petcare industry (Grand View Research 2022). The senior biopharmaceutical analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence, Ann-Hunter Van Kirk, stated: "Increased pet nutrition is resulting in longer pet lifetimes all around the world. This results in a greater requirement for spending on costly veterinary treatment for ageing pets, and we predict that this spending on pets' long-term health will grow during the coming ten years." (Bloomberg 2023).

The market for pet care among veterinary services and others is unquestionably dominated by the pet food segment. Due to the overwhelming demand from owners for savoury and nourishing food products to meet their pets' daily nutritional demands, the pet food market has the highest share.

3.1.2. Segmentation

The global pet care industry may be segmented into “product type” (food, care and services), “pet type” (dog, cat, fish and others), “geography” (North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific and rest of the world), and “distribution channels” (offline vs. online) (Mordor Intelligence 2023).

Regarding pet type, the dog segment is the largest and most profitable of all pets: in 2021, it reached a revenue share of over 39% (Grand View Research 2022). With the biggest market share in 2022, the dog category is expected to grow significantly over the next several years. As such, dogs are the most common pets in the United States, with almost 69 million families owning that pet, according to a Forbes ADVISOR article (Verified Market Research 2023). In the case of Europe, cats dominate the market, as in 2022, there were more than 127 million cats in Europe, with the largest concentrations of cats being seen in France and Germany (Statista 2023). Furthermore, increased pet care expenses are expected to have a beneficial effect on market growth, as of recent years American dog owners spend over 1000 USD a year on prescription drugs, vet care, and medical supplies. Additionally, the cat category is also expected to have a growth in the following years: in the United Kingdom, cats were the second most popular pet, with over 12.2 million households having at least one cat (Verified Market Research 2023).

When dealing with product type, the market is also split into different parts: products, such as pet grooming products, fashion, toys and accessories; food, which includes dry and wet food; and care, composed by oral cat, vet assistance and more. In 2021, the food category had the larger share within the segment, in which owners have been reported to be more conscious when dealing with their pet's food, including more vitamins and supplements to attain higher quality food (Fortune Business Insights 2023). However, in 2022, products had a larger share in the segment, some of the reasons being attributed to rising awareness among pet parents. Consequently, more environmentally friendly and sustainably made pet products are coming to market as a result of an increased understanding of climate change, and this is expected to fuel the pet care industry's development throughout the projected period. Regarding care, vet services have increased from 4.5% to 6.5% between 2020 and 2021, mainly allocated to a rise in awareness for health care (Verified Market Research 2023).

Within distribution channels, they can be divided into online and offline retail channels. Due to the greater availability of supermarkets and further expansion of pet stores, the offline channel led the industry in 2022 and is expected to expand in the following years. Nevertheless, the online channel category is set to increase rapidly at the same time as e-commerce expands, particularly in developed and emerging countries.

Lastly, the market is also divided into four regions: North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and the rest of the world. In terms of revenue share in 2021, North America held the highest part, almost

43%. The demand for pet care goods and services is being driven by the region's growing pet ownership rate and high disposable incomes. The American Pet Products Association (APPA) conducted the National Pet Owners Survey 2021/2022, which found that over 70% of American homes had a pet in 2020, a significant rise from 67% in 2019. Consequently, it is expected that North America, which has been leading the market, will continue to rise significantly (Grand View Research 2022). In recent years, pet ownership rates across Europe have been rising significantly, and there has been an increasing trend toward humanizing pets, as pets receive greater consideration and care and are regarded as a part of the family (Future Market Insights 2023). Moreover, it is projected Asia-Pacific will expand profitably in the following years, which is explained by the growing influence of several important countries like China and India. As such, increasing pet ownership, rising disposable income, and quick economic growth are a few other important aspects that are anticipated to propel the industry in the area (Verified Market Research 2023). This project has a special focus on pet food and health care, namely the dental health of animals, meaning these topics will be explored in greater depth below.

3.2. Pet Food Market Overview

Producing food specially made for dogs, cats, birds, and other animals is the main goal of the pet food market. A trend toward more nutrient-dense and scientifically prepared pet diets that cater to the unique life phases and health problems of pets, along with a decrease in fat content and a rise in protein-rich ingredients, has been a hallmark of the pet food industry's expansion. The growing humanization of pets, where individuals view their animals as essential members of their families, is one significant contributing element. As such, there's an increased need for premium, speciality, and nutrient-dense food for animals (Maximize Market Research 2023).

Consequently, in 2023, the pet food market is set to reach a total revenue of 143.60 billion USD, with an anticipated annual growth of 5.32% from 2023 to 2028 (CAGR 2023-2028). Per capita, this equates to 18.69 USD in revenue generated in 2023. By 2028, the volume of the Pet Food market is predicted to reach 59.47 billion kilograms, with a projected growth of 2.1% in 2024. The average volume per person in the pet food market is expected to be 6.7 kilograms in 2023 (Statista n.d.). Data provided by the European Pet Food Industry Association (FEDIAF) indicates that sales of pet food products in Europe reached 10.2 million tons and 27.7 billion USD in 2021, respectively. Additionally, the diversity of animal feeding products is easily accessible, which leads to a higher level of income creation from such a market (Fortune Business Insights 2023)

3.2.1. The Case of Portugal and Spain

When looking into Portugal, this market has grown annually by 13.7% since 2013 and was ranked number 15 in 2021 in Europe. Pet food imports are expected to reach 225.6 million kilograms by 2026, increasing at a 1.6% annual rate from 204 million kilograms in 2021. The annual volume of sales of the top nine pet food firms in Portugal is estimated to be 61.3 million USD, a 470% growth from 2010 (ReportLinker 2023).

In retrospect, the situation was not always so positive in the Portuguese industry. The economic downturn resulted in a rise in the unemployment rate and a decline in the average disposable income of those in employment (PetRelocation 2017). The apparent result of this was a shift in consumer behaviour, as pet owners became extremely cost-sensitive and refused to spend the premium prices for high-end items, opting instead to focus on the base necessities (PetRelocation 2017).

Nonetheless, the Portuguese market is thriving. One of the most important and popular categories of pet care and feeding items is still dog and cat food (Research 2023). Products linked to pet care for dogs and cats account for more than 80% of the total retail sales value. Even while there was a small decline in the cat population, there was also a simultaneous rise in the dog population, so ultimately everything balanced out. Along with ongoing innovation and product refinement, the top pet care product manufacturers also made significant efforts in the Portuguese market by providing advice on crate training and other topics. A number of innovations were made that were finally welcomed by Portuguese pet owners (PetRelocation 2017).

The Spanish pet food market is one of the largest and is expected to make 1.71 billion USD in 2023 (Mordor Intelligence n.d.). The country was reported to have 17.8 million pets in 2021, making it the fourth-largest pet population in all of Europe. As reported by the FEDIAF European Pet Food 2021, in 2020 the number of cat and dog owners in Spain totalled an amount of around 8 million individuals.

The recovery of the Spanish economy and the growing disposable incomes of customers continue to help the pet food industry. Price is, in fact, becoming less of a deciding factor for pet owners as they have more money. Moreover, and according to the ANFAAC (National Association of Manufacturers of Food for Pets), the important role played by e-commerce and specialist pet channels emerged as a driving force behind the remarkable expansion witnessed in the Spanish pet food market during the year 2022. This statement highlights a shift in consumer behaviour, with the digital realm and specialized outlets becoming key channels for accessing pet nutrition products (Kerwin 2023). Also, COVID-19 had a vital contribution to pet increase, particularly dogs, in Spanish homes.

As such, it is expected that the dog food segment will continue to develop over the projection period as a result of the rising dog population. Given their popularity, dog food holds the largest share in the country. In 2021, there were 9.31 million dogs, a number that was greater than 6.73

million in 2020 (Mordor Intelligence n.d.). Dog food sales increased 12.5% to 1.12 billion USD in 2022, with dry dog food leading the way with a 799.7 million USD gain. Both wet dog food and dog treats grew by 13.8% and 9.5%, respectively (Kerwin 2023).

While dog food items continue to dominate the Spanish pet food and treat market, cat food goods saw a larger growth rate (Mordor Intelligence n.d.). Sales of cat food products reached 735.3 million USD in 2022, a 17.6% rise in turnover. In the feline nutrition market, dry cat food accounted for the largest portion of sales, rising 16.6% to 399.2 million USD. Sales of wet cat food rose 17.6% and reached 282.7 million USD. Cat treats had a staggering 25.7% increase in sales, reaching 53.3 million USD (Kerwin 2023).

3.2.2. Key Players in the Pet Food Market Globally and Locally

The players in the market include Mars Incorporated, Nestle Purina PetCare, The J.M. Smucker Company, Blue Buffalo Co., Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc., Ltd., Spectrum Brands Inc., SCHELL & KAMPETER, INC, and Ancol Pet Products Limited (Verified Market Research 2023). Nonetheless, there also emerging businesses entering the industry. Some of the most prominent names include Fromm Family Foods LLC, Lafeber Co., Champion Petfoods., 4Legs Pet Food Company, and Betagro Public Company Limited. (Vijay 2022).

Since the existence of multinational corporations, the pet care industry has been very concentrated. These corporations engage in a variety of strategic activities, such as acquisitions and growing their production facilities internationally in an effort to boost product sales. Also, introducing new pet care products, in order to solidify their market positions and increase their market shares. Most companies are concentrating on creating high-end, nutrient-dense pet foods in order to broaden their product offerings (Mordor Intelligence, n.d.).

As of 2021 in the Portuguese market, Royal Canin comes first as the most consumed brand for dogs (34.3%), followed by private label brands (31.4%) and Pedigree (25.5%). When it comes to cats, Whiskas is the most popular brand (41.3%), with Purina Friskies completing the podium, as shown by 23.9% of cat owners, which gathers the same popularity as private label brands (Marketeer 2021). That said, one can conclude that Mars Incorporated, which owns Royal Canin, Pedigree and Whiskas, and Nestlé Purina PetCare, which contains Purina Friskies in its portfolio, are the major players in the Portuguese market.

In the Spanish market, key businesses are also strongly unified: some prominent companies in the Spanish pet food industry include Mars Incorporated, Affinity Petcare SA, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Nestlé Purina PetCare, and Saturn Petcare GmbH. As for Mars, the company built a new facility in Spain in May 2021, increasing its pet food business and helping boost its total output in Arevalo from 26,000 tons to 50,000 tons by 2024 (Mordor Intelligence n.d.).

Within the Iberian market, Mars Incorporated encounters formidable competition from key rivals, particularly across various product categories. In the dog food industry, competitors such as Purina One, Friskies, and Ultima present significant rivalry. For oral care products, Mars contends with contenders like Purina Dentalife, Affinity, and Ultima. In the dog snacks segment, competition is with the presence of brands like Affinity, Vitakraft, and Nestlé. Meanwhile, in cat food and snacks, Mars faces competition from prominent names such as Felix, Gourmet, Purina One, and Affinity (Mars 2023). To strengthen its position, Mars Incorporated purchased Champion Pet Foods, a well-known international pet food producer, in November 2022. Over time, this calculated action strengthened Mars Incorporated's product line and greatly expanded its market share (Fortune Business Insights 2023)

3.3. Dental Care Subcategory

In recent years, the healthcare category, with special emphasis on the dental care segment, has reported an increase in sales worldwide. Globally, the use of pet dental care has been increasing significantly between 2018 and 2022. During the COVID-19 outbreak, pet owners were found to have more time at home, which increased the need for dental treatment for pets in general. Therefore, it is anticipated that in the next years, the market for pet oral care will be driven by rising expenditure on pet cleanliness as well as ongoing innovation in oral pet care products. A portion of the causes may be attributed to the increasing awareness of the advantages of dental hygiene, which has benefited pet owners and is thus anticipated to influence market trends in the years to come. Moreover, pet owners' desires for organic, painless, and enjoyable products have caused consumers in the pet dental care industry to refocus. Pet oral care products with organic ingredients and flavour extracts are gaining market dominance. Aside from this, market players are focusing their efforts on creating and providing a range of flavours and organic components, utilizing appealing claims like natural, organic, and paraben-free to entice pet owners (Future Market Insights 2023). Some popular oral care snacks include Dentabites by Whiskas, Dentalife by Purina and Dentastix by Pedigree (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Major Players' Oral Care Products

3.4. Market Latest Trends

Despite all the changes that have occurred in recent years, many of the same tendencies continue to dominate the Petcare sector. The intertwined trends of premiumization and humanization have strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic. While consumers were stranded at home, the trend to e-commerce accelerated. At the same time, natural substances with high nutritional value are becoming increasingly popular. The concern for the health of ecosystems seen in other markets is no exception here, where the demand for more sustainable products is evident. Several countries, such as the United States and Australia, play a prominent role in the global industry and may indicate what will drive the Iberian market soon.

As pet owners become aware that their animals have specific needs based on their breeds and sizes, they are moving away from a "one size fits all" approach and toward customized solutions. ADM (Wall 2023) stated that the industry is adopting a new strategy that takes a deeper look at how dogs and cats behave throughout their lives to better tailor products to the various needs of individual pets. According to FMCG Guruz, 63% (Wall 2023) of consumers are interested in personalized goods, thus companies must match these expectations, by developing customized recipes and ingredients for each pet. But also, by utilizing technology to offer experiences and services that assist pet owners in finding the ideal life for their companions. One example is the rise of customized pet food subscription services, which intensified during the pandemic due to orders for pet owners to stay at home and lockdowns. (Wall 2022). Although digital avenues to buy have increased, particularly among younger generations, physical purchases remain the most common among all age groups (Wall 2023). Because of the convenience and quality of these options, custom-tailored plans for pets delivered at home are becoming more popular. Pet feeding kit deliveries in Australia are predicted to increase from $2.2 billion in 2020 to slightly over $9 billion in 2030 (Nicasio 2026). Pet owners around the world are on a global trend where they are expecting more and more from their animals, just as they do from themselves, and this is definitely affecting the way they shop.

The humanization tendency is related to this. One of the key trends driving the industry because most pet parents consider their pets as treasured family members (nearly 80% in the Americas and around 60% in Europe) (Wall 2023) and are willing to spend extra to obtain more organic and quality items. "Premium, luxury, healthy, and functional foods are moving into the mainstream as owners seem more focused on their pet's diet.", as the European pet food industry stated, FEDIAF (FEDIAF n.d.). In the upcoming years, there's a good chance that pet health and wellness products like vitamins, snacks with CBD, and massages for pets will become more popular. Pet owners value useful wellness ideas and information at the same time, so businesses are trying to educate pet owners by focusing on their problems and areas of discomfort.

As already stated, the growing trend of pet humanization has also fuelled demand for premium and more organic pet food. Premium pet food is high-quality pet chow made with natural ingredients and minimal fillers. While organic pet food is created with products that have not been treated with pesticides or other chemicals. In 2017, premium pet food sales totalled $34.9 billion worldwide. That figure might rise to 59.2 billion USD by 2027 (Wall 2023). Supporting this, pet parents are increasingly seeking digestive health benefits in their pets' food, with 60% wanting it to support overall wellness (Mintel's Supplements Can Support the Wellness Trend for Pets 2021 report) (Kerwin 2023). To offer these benefits, manufacturers are launching health supplements and diets with biotics and other solution-based ingredients. Pet food formulas and treats are also popular for functional benefits, including digestion, muscles, joints, skin, coat, and immune system. While younger pets want products that promote long-term well-being, older pets prefer customized solutions. Additionally, based on FMCG Gurus' Petcare Health in 2022 report, two-thirds of pet owners worldwide are drawn to unusual flavours and forms. (Kerwin 2023).

On the other hand, there is a growing demand for environmentally friendly pet food, biodegradable waste bags, and other sustainable and eco-friendly products from pet owners. This trend keeps pets safe from dangerous chemical exposure while also helping the environment. Around 42% of pet owners desire sustainably sourced pet food formulas, and 20% base their purchase decisions on environmental considerations, according to FMCG Gurus (Kerwin 2023).

Overall, because they view their pets as members of their families, pet owners are generally becoming more conscious of the needs for the health and wellness of their animals. This, combined with increased disposable income, a growing need for convenience, and environmental concerns, leads to changes in how people shop for their pets, with a preference for more organic and premium products. The search for more convenient and tailored pet food purchasing experiences also resulted in a surge in e-commerce.

4. Company Analysis

4.1. Mars Overview

Mars is "*inspired to make A Better World For Pets, a world where they're healthy, happy and welcome*" (Mars Petcare 2023). This is done by positioning Mars in different sectors of the market. Starting with nutrition (*see appendix 3*), including brands such as Pedigree and Whiskas, but also with medical care services. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on larger causes, like pet homelessness and debt relief for veterinary students. At the same time, their Waltham Petcare Science Center works every day to innovate pets' health and Kiship to provide support for animals and their owners.

The Petcare market represents more than half of the overall company, a 20$ billion business, and Mars is committed to double this value by 2025. So, given the importance of this sector for the company, it is essential to keep investing and innovating to secure its podium spot on the market. To achieve this consistency, Mars positions itself as having a distinct personality, being bold, energic, optimistic, and brave (Mars Petcare Academy 2023). Overall, it´s an irreverent brand willing to take risks to meet its purpose (Mars Petcare Academy 2023) and position itself as a trustworthy brand in the market.

Brands Portfolio

Drawing information from the official Portuguese and Spanish websites of Mars (Mars Petcare 2023), it was possible to explore the spectrum of pet care brands offered in each respective country. An initial observation revealed that the Portuguese market features a more concise selection of brands compared to its Spanish counterpart. However, all the brands present in Portugal are equally represented in Spain. Also, it was noticed that among the vast options of pet care brands under the Mars umbrella, not every brand is available in both online and in-store channels.

Firstly, Cesar Canine Cuisine stands as a versatile option, widely accessible both online and in-store in both countries, specializing in gourmet wet dog food and delectable treats.

NUTRO, an exclusive offering in Spain, and available in online and offline channels, has pioneered a line of specialty natural pet food and treats.

Meanwhile, Royal Canin enjoys a global presence, available not only in Portugal and Spain but worldwide in both channels, solidifying its status as a leading authority in pet nutrition and health.

SHEBA Cat Food entices feline palates in both countries and channels with purposefully crafted recipes. FROLIC, a traditional and well-known Mars brand, is available in both nations, online and in-store, presenting a well-balanced main meal with a meaty-juicy nature. GREENIES, unique to Spain – but available in stores and online –, focuses on high-quality, purposeful treats that tantalize taste buds and promote oral health. Catisfactions offers a delightful range of cat treats, accessible in both countries and channels with diverse flavour varieties. KiteKat, available only online in both Portugal and Spain, provides a wholesome meal with quality ingredients and essential nutrients. PERFECT FIT, accessible both online and in-store in both countries, is specially formulated to meet the individual needs of cats, aligning with their lifestyle and character by delivering the right nutritional balance.

Lastly, the renowned Pedigree and Whiskas, available in both Portugal and Spain, take centre stage in this report and will be further discussed.

Figure 2 displays the pet food brands available in the Portuguese and Spanish, respectively, markets for both dogs and cats, providing a comprehensive overview of the offerings in each region.

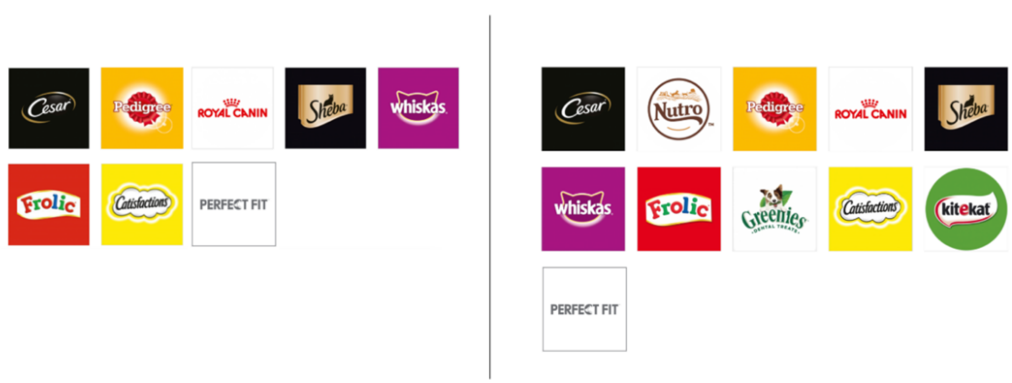


Figure 2: Mars Petcare brand portfolio Portugal vs. Spain

4.2. Pedigree

Pedigree is nowadays one of the most recallable and recognizable brands dedicated to pet care and pet nutrition (TGM Pet Care Report 2023). It has always stood up from other competitors by being passionately devoted to healthy nutrition, high-quality ingredients, accessibility to every pet parent, and inclusivity of all dogs, besides of their breed, age, and health condition. The brand has long been on a mission to make the world a better place for dogs with a strong focus on quality and extensive research, not only into food but also into much more impactful problems in pets' lives. Pedigree strongly believes that dogs have a huge impact on the world and that all have valuable life lessons to learn through their innocence and lovely behaviour. So, while dogs bring out the good in us, Pedigree works every day to bring the good in them, by enhancing their lives and improving the connection between pets and their parents.

Brand Positioning

Any brand's basic feature is its positioning; it is the position that a product has in consumers' perceptions in relation to its rivals (Kotler 1984). According to Aaker (1996), brand positioning is the aspect of the brand identity and value proposition that has to be actively conveyed to the target market in order to provide the company an edge over rival brands. According to Kapferer (1997), positioning is the process of connecting with the target market and segment to draw in customers while also emphasizing the unique qualities that set it apart from the competition. In addition, Kapferer (1997) says that while developing a positioning strategy, three questions should be asked: "Against Whom," which refers to the primary rivals; "For Whom," which refers to the target audience; and "Why," which refers to the brand promise and consumer benefit element.

Diving into the current positioning of Pedigree, the brand aims to connect with individuals who view their dogs as cherished members of the family. The brand stands out through its commitment to well-being, as it is not only a brand that sells pet food, but it is a dedicated partner in ensuring the overall health and happiness of dogs (Pedigree Portugal 2023). Also, it leverages on its trusted heritage and long-standing success that reinforces its reliability and quality. Dogs may be encouraged, supported, strengthened, and given the fuel to be their healthiest and happiest selves at every stage of life by using this brand's dry and wet dog food and treats. Another essential component of Pedigree's value offer is its commitment to covering all dog types and sizes.

Pedigree targets a diverse range of customers who share a common love and responsibility for their pets. The brand addresses pet owners across different age groups, from young adults to seniors, acknowledging that the joy of having a pet has no age bounds. The brand is designed to be inclusive, appealing to individuals from various demographic backgrounds, including diverse ethnicities, income levels, and geographical locations. Given Pedigree's commitment to supporting shelter dogs, the brand actively targets individuals who advocate for and support shelter and rescue organizations (Pedigree Foundation 2023). This audience values the importance of providing loving homes to dogs in need. Renowned for its reliability and commitment to quality, Pedigree stands as the preferred choice for individuals seeking optimal care for their pets. Beyond being a provider of pet food, Pedigree acknowledges the profound emotional connections between humans and dogs, positioning itself as the brand of choice for those who seek a meaningful and enriching relationship with their canine companions. This emotional aspect is a key element in Pedigree's advertising and communication strategies.

Pedigree operates in a fragmented and highly competitive market. Several key players compete for market share, each offering a range of pet food and care products. Notable competitors in the

Portuguese and Spanish markets include well-established brands such as Acana, Purina, Royal Canin, and Advance. Additionally, store brands and private labels, such as Continente and Pingo Doce brands also contribute to competition, offering more affordable alternatives.

Brand Personality

Consumers often choose and use a brand which has a personality that they can relate to. Additionally, they might select a brand according to how they want other people to perceive them and how they want to see themselves (Kotler 1984). Personality factors may encourage the target group to perceive the brand as an active to enter into a long-term relationship with it (Aaker 1996). Kapferer (1997) created a model, the Brand Identity Prism, which reflects the different aspects of brand personality. The prism includes physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image (Kapferer 1997).

Physique: when developing Pedigree's brand personality, it is essential to define its physical aspects by addressing what it is concretely, what it does, and what it looks like. Pedigree's physics is characterized by its distinctive logo featuring the brand name in bold, red seal, with a yellow background. The packaging design typically includes images of happy, healthy dogs and clear indications of the product's nutritional benefits.

Personality: every brand has its own personality. The way it communicated shows what type of person it would be if it was a human. Pedigree communicates warmth, reliability, and a genuine concern for the well-being of dogs. The brand's messaging often reflects qualities such as trustworthiness, responsibility, and a commitment to fostering a strong bond between dogs and their owners.

Culture: every brand has its own culture, from which every product derives. The cultural dimension of Pedigree revolves around values like pet health, happiness, and overall well-being. Pedigree believes in providing dogs with nutritious and delicious meals, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to pet care. The brand also values the emotional connection between dogs and their owners.

Relationship: Pedigree establishes a relationship with its consumers by actively engaging in educational campaigns about pet nutrition. The brand fosters a sense of community among pet owners, offering resources and advice to ensure the best care for dogs. Through social media and events, Pedigree builds a strong connection with its pet parents.

Reflection: Kapferer (1997) states that a brand is a reflection. Consumers often use brands to create the personality that best fits themselves. Pedigree reflects the image of responsible and caring pet ownership. Consumers who choose Pedigree see themselves as dedicated pet parents who prioritize the health and happiness of their dogs.

Self-Image: if reflection targets the outward mirror, self-image is about consumer's internal mirror and their inner reflection. Pedigree's consumers view themselves as individuals who take their role as pet caregivers seriously. They are committed to providing their dogs with the nutrition and care necessary for a healthy and happy life. Consumers who choose Pedigree likely see their pets as integral members of the family. The brand's messaging that emphasizes the familial bond between pets and their owners aligns with the self-perception of individuals who consider their dogs as cherished family members.

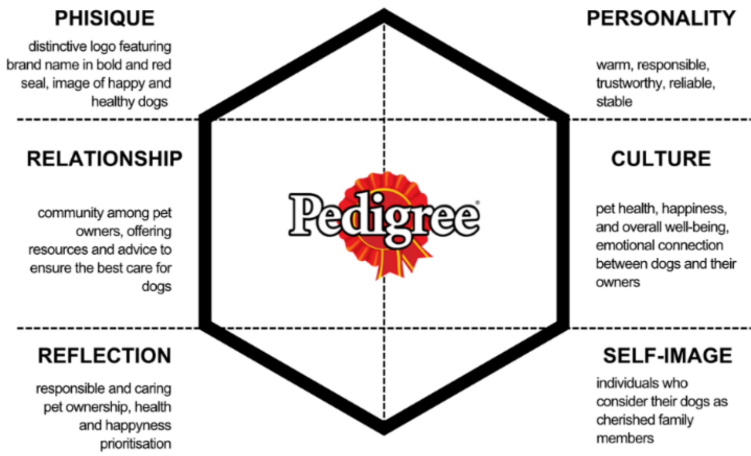


Figure 3: Pedigree’s Kapferer Brand Identity Prism

Marketing Mix

The term “Marketing Mix” was firstly used by Neil Hopper Borden from Harvard Business School to explain the set of activities that a firm uses to develop its marketing strategies. According to the American academic, companies blend the various elements of the marketing mix into a marketing strategy that helps them compete and differentiate in the market. The model, initially composed by 12 elements, was subsequently updated by Jerome McCarthy into a more simplified framework, the 4Ps of Marketing Mix, composed by solely of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. The team made use of the 4Ps to explain Pedigree’s current marketing strategy in the market.

Product: Pedigree offers a diverse and comprehensive product portfolio designed to satisfy the nutritional needs of dogs at every stage of their lives. The brand's product range encompasses both dry and wet dog food, as well as an assortment of treats, all meticulously formulated to support dogs' health and well-being. In the dry dog food category, Pedigree offers a variety of options tailored to different life stages and dietary requirements. From puppy food specially crafted to support the growth and development of young dogs to adult formulations that address the nutritional needs of fully grown canines, Pedigree ensures an efficient and well-rounded approach to canine nutrition. The brand also provides specialized formulations for senior dogs, recognizing the unique dietary requirements associated with ageing. The brand has also recently launched the PRO line, premium products developed with specialized nutritionists and vets, and “Mother and Baby Dog” line, containing all nutrients to support the growth of puppy dogs. Complementing its dry dog food offerings, Pedigree's wet dog food range provides dogs with a delectable and moisture-rich dining experience. These wet food options come in various flavours and formulations, catering to different taste preferences and dietary considerations. Pedigree's commitment to dog health extends beyond standard meals to include a range of treats that serve as rewards or occasional snacks. These treats are crafted to align with Pedigree's nutritional purpose, promoting not only taste but also contributing to dogs' overall well-being.

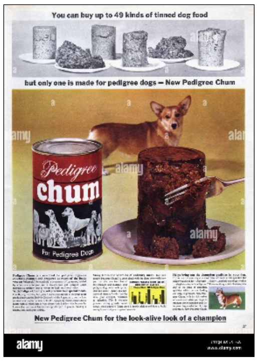
Price: Pedigree adopts a strategic pricing approach that aligns with its commitment to providing high-quality pet food and care products while maintaining affordability for a broad consumer base. Pedigree positions its products competitively within the pet food market. The pricing strategy is designed to be in line with or slightly below competitors offering similar quality and nutritional value. This approach aims to attract cost-conscious consumers while emphasizing the brand's commitment to delivering value. To cater to the diverse needs of pet owners, Pedigree offers various packaging sizes for its products. This includes different quantities of dry dog food, treats, and other items. The availability of multiple size options enables consumers to select the most suitable pack based on factors such as the size of their dog, budget constraints, and purchasing frequency.

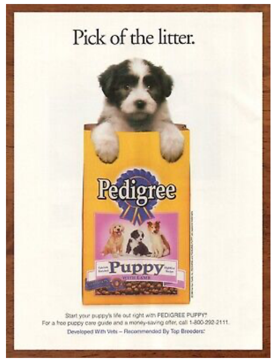
Place: Pedigree's efficient distribution channels leverage the extensive network of its parent company (Mars Inc.) to ensure the widespread availability of its products in the consumer market. This robust network encompasses a spectrum of services, including wholesalers, retailers, and distributors, facilitating the seamless flow of Pedigree's offerings to end consumers. The brand strategically positions itself in diverse retail environments, including supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores, discount stores, and specialized pet care outlets. Through this multifaceted distribution strategy, Pedigree not only taps into the mainstream retail landscape but also targets specialized outlets, ensuring that its products are readily accessible to a diverse consumer base worldwide. Pedigree strategically employs a multi-faceted distribution approach, seamlessly integrating both traditional and contemporary channels to ensure the widespread availability of its products. While maintaining a robust presence in brick-and-mortar outlets, Pedigree has significantly expanded its reach through online channels. Leveraging the popularity of e-commerce platforms, Pedigree products are readily accessible through major online retailers and the brand's official website. This online presence facilitates convenient purchasing for tech-savvy consumers, allowing them to browse, compare, select, and order Pedigree products from their homes. The brand has also embraced digital marketplaces, ensuring its visibility on popular online platforms where pet owners frequently shop. Additionally, Pedigree employs targeted digital marketing strategies to enhance its online presence, engaging with consumers through social media, online advertisements, and e-newsletters. This comprehensive distribution strategy underscores Pedigree's commitment to meeting the evolving preferences of consumers in the digital age while maintaining a strong foothold in traditional retail channels.

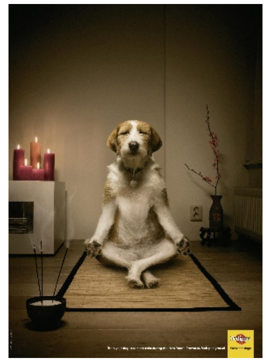
Promotion: Pedigree adopts an emotionally driven communication approach that revolves around the core themes of pet health, happiness, and the unconditional bond between dogs and their owners. The brand's communication strategy is characterized by a holistic view of pet care, emphasizing not only the nutritional aspects but also the emotional and well-being dimensions of pets. The brand consistently emphasizes its commitment to the well-being of all dogs, irrespective of their breed, age, or health condition. Pedigree actively supports shelter and rescue organizations, aligning its communication with a social cause that reinforces the brand's dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of dogs.

Pedigree's visual elements, including its distinctive logo, colour palette, and symbols, play a crucial role in reinforcing its communication messages. The use of bright and warm colours, coupled with imagery of happy and diverse dogs, contributes to the positive and joyful associations that consumers make with the brand. In addition to storytelling, Pedigree employs various media channels for communication, including online platforms such as social media, influencer marketing, newsletters, and emails. These channels enable Pedigree to reach a wide audience and tailor its messages to different segments, including families, pet parents, and health-conscious consumers. Concerning advertising, the brand has launched uncountable campaigns focusing mainly on dogs' emotional and health issues. The personification of dogs and their tenderness are often the strategies used to make this advert more endearing (Figure 4). These campaigns are present everywhere, from television to magazines, billboards, and stores. Pedigree also uses social media to emphasize its commitment to pet health and well-being in promotional materials, reinforcing its positioning as a holistic pet care provider.

1970 1991 2007







2014 2015 2021

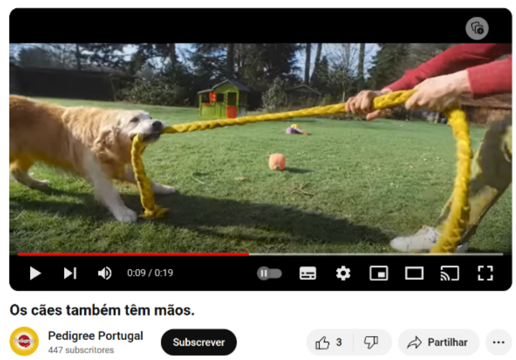


Figure 4: Pedigree's Captivating Add Campaigns Over the Years

The brand communicates its commitment to health through various means. Some of the current most interesting tools that the team has identified are the informative packaging displaying what are the signs of good health for a dog that the pet parent should be careful of (namely soft and shiny coat, strong muscles, good digestive health, healthy bones and teeth, better immunity), the interactive pop-ups on the company website that offers several kinds of creative and helpful services, like the ability to chat with an advisor and find the perfect product given the dog's special needs, or the ability to find the right breed depending on someone's home, lifestyle, and family, filling up an online quiz. Also, Pedigree often makes references to specialists and health organizations, like referencing the Waltham Centre, the world's leading authority in Pet care and

Nutrition, showing a sense of reliability and scientific approach. The “Taking care of my dog” website section is also a great way for the brand to provide informative content with the users of the website and to share its commitment to knowledge and pets’ wellbeing.

4.3. Whiskas

With over 60 years of experience, Whiskas aims not only to create delicious cat food but also to contribute to the health and happiness of cats. The core mission of Whiskas is to help all cats, by providing them with nourishing and delightful food (WHISKAS UK n.d.). The brand is driven by a love for cats and a dedication to enhancing their lives. Whiskas believes in understanding cats for who they truly are – independent spirits that still crave nurturing, love, and care. Whiskas recognizes the profound bond between cat owners and their cats. The brand is devoted to helping owners care for their cats by offering tasty and nutritious food. This commitment goes beyond just filling cat bellies; it's about strengthening the unique connection between owner and cat. The brand takes pride in collaborating with the Waltham Petcare Science Institute for Pet Nutrition. This partnership underscores Whiskas' dedication to continually improving the nutrition, taste, and overall care provided by its products. Whiskas ensures that every meal is filled with the natural goodness that cats deserve, maintaining a promise of being 100% nutritionally complete and balanced (WHISKAS UK n.d.).

Brand Positioning

Whiskas, a key player in the pet food industry, strategically positions itself to occupy a distinctive space in the minds of consumers. Following Kotler's principles (2005), the brand ensures that it is not just cat food but a comprehensive solution tailored for feline well-being. Whiskas positions itself as more than a mere product; it's a promise of nutrition, taste, and overall health for cats.

Aaker's perspective (1996) reinforces the importance of effective communication in brand positioning. Whiskas communicates its unique selling propositions—Nutritional excellence, and a commitment to the well-being of cats. Taking cues from Kapferer's framework (1997), the brand communicates with cat parents, emphasizing the "Why" by delivering a brand promise centred on superior cat care. Whiskas strategically navigates the "For Whom" and "Against Whom" considerations. When examining the "For Whom" aspect, Whiskas, as a cat food brand, tailors its appeal to individuals responsible for the well-being of one or more cats. Demographically, the primary target is adults aged 25 to 55, as this age group typically represents individuals in the life stage of responsible pet ownership. These individuals are likely to have a home environment suitable for pets, and a genuine interest in the well-being of their cats. Within the context of the Portuguese and Spanish markets, Whiskas strategically positions itself to resonate with cat owners seeking convenient and nutritious options at an affordable cost.

Conversely, in the "Against Whom" context, Whiskas faces competition from various cat food brands in the Portuguese and Spanish markets. Notable competitors may include Purina, Royal Canin and store brands. Whiskas positions by consistently delivering a product that strikes a harmonious balance between nutrition and delectable taste, and affordability.

Brand Personality

Consumers often select brands with personalities that resonate with them, influencing their self-perception and how they wish to be perceived by others (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism offers a comprehensive model encompassing various facets of brand personality, such as physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image (Kapferer, 1997). These components will be further explored below.

Physique: Whiskas pays meticulous attention to the physique of its brand. The packaging with playful images of cats and the use of high-quality, clear graphics on their website contribute to its brand physique. The vibrant packaging, the texture of the food, and the overall presentation reflect a commitment to both aesthetic allure and nutritional excellence. For instance, on Whiskas' official website, the colourful depiction of their product range showcases a commitment to creating visually appealing cat food.

Personality: The brand personality of Whiskas radiates through its communication channels. On social media platforms, Whiskas shares content that exudes playfulness, love for cats, and the joy of pet companionship. For instance, engaging posts featuring adorable cat videos or heartwarming stories reinforce Whiskas as a brand with a friendly and caring personality.

Culture: Whiskas aligns itself with the culture of cat lovers who consider their pets as integral family members. The brand's emphasis on the well-being and happiness of cats resonates with the broader cultural shift towards responsible and loving pet ownership. This is evident in Whiskas' support for initiatives promoting cat adoption and care.

Relationship: Whiskas fosters a strong relationship with its consumers, particularly cat parents. Interactive features on their website, such as forums or expert advice on cat care, contribute to building a community. Additionally, the inclusion of user-generated content, like cat photos shared by customers, further strengthens the bond between the brand and its consumers.

Reflection: Whiskas reflects consumers' desires to provide the best for their cats. For example, their online presence showcases content that aligns with the aspirations of cat parents who seek nutritional excellence and delightful dining experiences for their feline companions. This is evident in Whiskas' online campaigns emphasizing the brand as a choice that reflects a commitment to superior pet care.

Self-Image: Choosing Whiskas becomes a reflection of consumers' self-image as responsible and caring pet owners. The brand's emphasis on nutritional excellence and palatability aligns with the self-perception of cat parents who prioritize their pets' health and happiness. Consumers may share images of their cats enjoying Whiskas products on social media, reinforcing the self-image of being conscientious pet owners.

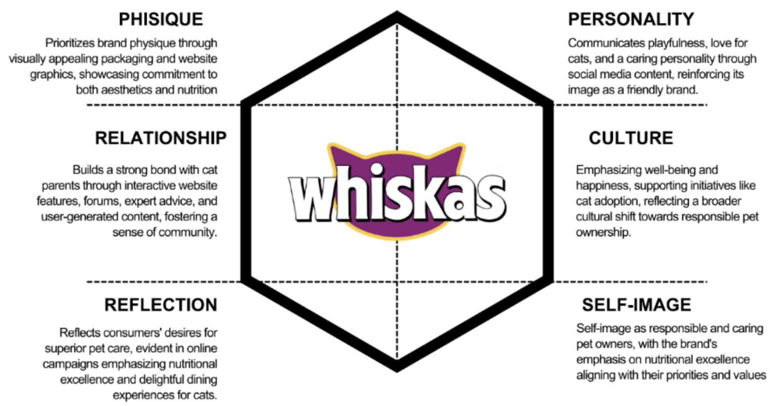


Figure 5: Whiskas' Kapferer Brand Identity Prism

Marketing Mix

The 4Ps, also known as the marketing mix, constitute a fundamental framework to formulate and implement effective marketing strategies. These elements encompass Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, each playing a distinct role in influencing consumer behaviour and shaping success. The team employed the 4Ps framework to dissect Pedigree's current marketing strategy.

Product

Whiskas, renowned for its commitment to feline nutrition, presents a comprehensive product portfolio tailored to meet the specific needs of cats throughout their various life stages. This diverse range includes WHISKAS Casserole Sachets, WHISKAS Sachets, and WHISKAS Dry Feed, strategically formulated to address the evolving dietary requirements of kittens, adult cats (1+ years), and seniors (7+ years). Each category incorporates precise ingredients to support the overall health and well-being of cats at different life stages. Specifically, the kitten food within the Whiskas portfolio is meticulously crafted to provide essential nutrients crucial for the growth and development of young cats. The adult cat food range maintains optimal weight and energy levels while addressing additional aspects such as coat health, dental care, and digestive function. Recognizing the changing nutritional needs of senior cats, Whiskas offers tailored products. Beyond life stage-specific formulations, the brand diversifies its product line to include an array of flavours and textures, accommodating the unique taste preferences of individual cats. This careful curation ensures pet owners can find options that resonate with their feline companions. Whiskas recognizes the importance of oral health in cats and incorporates specialized dental care products into its portfolio, offering not only flavourful treats but also promoting dental hygiene. WHISKAS Snacks Trio, WHISKAS Temptation Snacks, DENTABITES, and Ani-hairball Snacks are part of the brand's offerings (Whiskas 2023). In summary, Whiskas strives to cater to the diverse needs of cats considering various life stages, individual preferences, and cultural nuances. The brand ensures that cats receive optimal nutrition and care through Whiskas' thoughtfully curated product portfolio.

Price

Whiskas adopts a strategic pricing approach that resonates with the diverse preferences and economic considerations of consumers. Acknowledging the variances in consumer inclinations, the brand ensures accessibility by offering budget-friendly alternatives alongside premium cat food recipes. In markets like Portugal and Spain, where cost-conscious decisions heavily influence choices, Whiskas positions itself as an appealing option. Understanding the priorities of cat owners who seek both flavour and affordability, the brand strikes a balance between providing wholesome nutrition for cats and accommodating budget constraints. This pricing strategy aligns Whiskas with the practical needs of consumers, reinforcing its commitment to delivering value without compromising quality.

Place

Whiskas employs a comprehensive distribution strategy to make its products accessible to a wide audience in Portugal and Spain. The distribution channels chosen by Whiskas are designed to efficiently deliver their cat food products to retailers and, ultimately, into the hands of consumers. The primary distribution channel for Whiskas involves partnerships with major retail outlets in Portugal and Spain, including renowned supermarket chains such as Mercadona, Carrefour, Continente, Auchan, and Pingo Doce. Supermarkets stand out as a primary distribution channel for Whiskas, given their widespread accessibility to a broad consumer base. By partnering with these retail giants, Whiskas ensures that its cat food products are conveniently located on the shelves of stores where consumers routinely shop for their household needs. This broadens the brand's reach and visibility among cat owners who may not exclusively visit pet-focused outlets. Additionally, Whiskas has embraced the online retail space to cater to the evolving preferences of consumers in the Iberian Peninsula. The brand makes its products available through various e-commerce platforms, including popular online retailers such as Amazon.es, Worten.pt, and Alcampo.es. Whiskas employs a multi-faceted distribution approach, utilizing traditional retail channels and online platforms to make its cat food products widely available in the Iberian market. This strategic distribution network ensures that Whiskas meets the diverse preferences of consumers in Portugal and Spain and maintains a strong presence in the competitive pet food market in these regions.

Promotion

Whiskas has earned significant brand recognition largely due to its substantial investments in advertising. The brand has consistently employed a strategy of infusing humour into its promotional efforts, aiming to enhance appeal and memorability among its audience. An illustrative example is the "WHISKAS – BLA BLA BLA" campaign (*see appendix 4*) which achieved iconic status in certain countries, including Portugal. Typically, Whiskas advertisements focus on underscoring the convenience of their products and the alluring nature of their various flavours and textures for feline companions. Moreover, these promotional materials often seek to highlight the emotional bond between cat owners and their pets, aiming to evoke a heartfelt response from the target audience. This approach ensures that Whiskas resonates with a broad spectrum of cat owners, acknowledging the diverse needs and preferences within the feline community. Through this strategy, Whiskas not only promotes its products but also establishes a meaningful connection with its audience, fostering a sense of understanding and relatability in the realm of cat care.

5. Methodology

The project is designed to help MARS Iberia understand how the new generations (i.e., Generation Z, Millennials) behave in relation to the Petcare industry when compared to the previous target and what is the best approach to grab their attention as customers. In particular, the research has the following objectives: (1) profile and segment the new pet parents and their customer journey, and (2) understand how and when to reach them. The research relies on primary data, involving a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches; in particular, *In-depth Interviews*, *Store Observations,* and *Online Surveys* have been conducted. Secondary data from industry studies, market research, company reports, social listening and business articles was also taken into consideration when developing the script for the interviews and the questions for the online survey.

In this analysis, a "*new pet parent*" is defined as an individual caring for a pet independently for the first time, meaning being the primary caretaker of the pet. This demographic is anticipated to predominantly consist of Generation Z and Millennials, encompassing those born between 1997 and 2012 and 1981 and 1996, respectively. Consequently, "*old pet parents*" are considered individuals born in 1980 or earlier (Brunjes, 2023).

5.1. Interviews

5.1.1. Procedure and Sample

Regarding the interviews, the group conducted 25 in-depth interviews averaging 30 minutes each. The sample included a total of 20 Portuguese (80%) and 5 Spanish (20%) participants. Among the interviewees, the great majority lived in metropolitan centres, and it was noted that cat owners made up most of the sample: 60% owned cats, and 40% owned dogs. With regards to age, 64% of the individuals interviewed belong to Generation Z, while Millennials compose 32% of the total sample. To have a means of comparison, the group interviewed a member of Generation X (4%), who certainly has other experiences and behaviours that can help bridge the gap between past and current trends. Regarding gender, the largest portion of participants were female (72%), meaning 28% were male.

Animal type	Quantity
Dog	40%
Cat	60%
TOTAL	100%

Generations	Quantity
Gen Z	64%
Millennial	32%
Gen X	4%
TOTAL	100%

	Dog	Cat
Gen Z	24%	40%
Millennial	12%	20%
Gen X	4%	-

Figure 6: Table of Interviews' Demographics Information

The interviews aimed to uncover and delve into consumers' preferences, experiences, and different behaviours concerning the Petcare environment. As such, the interviews were carefully structured to understand consumers' involvement in the category, social media influence on decision-making, and shopping experience behaviours, as well as their perceptions of Pedigree and Whiskas brands and other competitors in the snack bar market (*for the complete discussion guide, please see appendix 5*). This interview style also allowed for spontaneous follow-up inquiries, as it offered better control over the interviewing process while allowing for the exploration of new insights as they arose during the conversations.

The great majority of the interviews were conducted via video call or face-to-face, which proved to be valuable as it enabled the observation of participant's gestures that conveyed emotions that would not have been possible to observe over the phone. It also allowed for a better understanding of the quality of the interviews, since the group was able to perceive during the interviews whether the participants were comfortable and how to get around these challenges in real time, which proved to be easier when the interviews were conducted in person.

The group strived to create a sample that was balanced in terms of the types of the pets participants had, and diverse in relation to their geographical locations and personal backgrounds. To ensure the relevance of the insights gathered, interviewees had to meet three pre-screening criteria, which included age and location confirmation and family situation. As such, the selected group comprised individuals belonging to the Gen Z and Millennial age range, specifically those aged 18 to 40, and who are taking on the role of pet ownership for the first time. Regarding the location, the criteria was based on whether the participants had lived in Portugal or Spain for 2 or more years. Having resided in one of those countries for over two years and having bought pet food, snacks, or oral care products in the 3 months were essential factors in ensuring that the interviewees possessed sufficient knowledge of the Petcare market in Portugal and Spain.

5.1.2. Limitations of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, although advantageous for gaining comprehensive insights, is accompanied by some constraints. Social desirability bias, for instance, describes the inclination of research participants to select responses they perceive as socially desirable or acceptable, rather than opting for answers that genuinely reflect their true thoughts or emotions (Grimm, 2010). This is especially relevant, since the topic of pet health care was mentioned during the interviews and many interviewees might have had a tendency to exaggerate the care they take with their pets. Moreover, sampling bias and, consequently, limited generalizability, potentially restrict the relevance of the findings, which omit some social and demographic categories. Some interviews may offer detailed insights into a particular person, yet the results may lack generalizability to a wider audience. To overcome some of the limitations, the qualitative was complemented with a survey, which provided quantitative data and included a better split between generations.

5.2. Online Survey

5.2.1. Procedure and Sample

Drawing from the initial findings of the in-depth interviews, the next stage of the methodology involved running an online Qualtrics survey. It played a crucial role by allowing the examination of insights acquired from qualitative research, while also enabling the collection of additional data regarding the brand recall and recognition of Pedigree and Whiskas among competition. As such, the survey was divided into sections, which included pet ownership, food preferences, shopping behaviour, information sources, social media engagement, pet care expenses, oral care, challenges, new services, as well as demographic questions *(see appendix 6)*

The online survey had a duration of approximately 6 minutes and remained available online for about one week. It involved some sampling criteria which included having lived in Portugal or Spain for 2 years and owning cats or dogs. In total, the online survey obtained a total of 97 responses: 42.27% belonging to Gen Z, 30.93% belonging to Millennials and the remaining 26.80% to Gen X (Figure 7).

Generations	Quantity
Gen Z	42.27%
Millennial	30.93%
Gen X	26.80%
TOTAL	100%

Figure 7: Table of Survey's Demographics Information

Regarding dogs, the survey obtained 52 responses from dog owners. Generation Z constitutes most of the sample, making up approximately 40.38%, followed by Millennials at 32.69%. A total of 26.92% represented older pet parents.

Within the cats' sample, the survey captured 45 responses from individuals who own cats: among this total, Generation Z constitutes most of the sample, comprising approximately 44.44% of participants, followed by Millennials at 28.29%. A total of 26.67% represent older pet parents (included for comparative analysis). Please consult the table below for a better representation of the information.

Dogs

Generations	Quantity
Gen Z	40.38%
Millennial	32.69%
Gen X	26.92%
TOTAL	100%

Cats

Generations	Quantity
Gen Z	44.44%
Millennial	28.89%
Gen X	26.67%
TOTAL	100%

Figure 8: Table of Survey's Demographics Information - division between dogs and cats

5.2.2. Statistical Significance Analytical Approach

Statistical significance pertains to determining whether observed differences between studied groups are genuinely meaningful or if they could be attributed to mere chance or coincidence. If a result is deemed statistically significant, it implies that the likelihood of it occurring by chance or random factors is low (Priest 2005). Even when data suggests a robust relationship, it is crucial to consider the possibility that the apparent correlation might be a result of random chance or sampling error (Qualtrics 2022). As such, it is of extreme importance that one is able to determine how accurate the are the behaviours indicated in the survey by both old and new pet parents. As such, the group analysed the results by looking at the proportions and averages, soughing to establish statistical significance within the results.

5.2.3. Limitations of Quantitative Research

One potential source of bias are the elements that make up the sample, which may be influenced by selection and sample bias. The use of social media and online platforms for distributing the surveys may have resulted in the exclusion of certain socio-demographic groups. Also, individuals who hold literacy skills and internet access, as well as those with an inclination or bias towards the subject of pet care, are the ones likely to participate in online surveys (Wright 2005). Moreover, online surveys eliminate the need for respondents to venture outside their homes or encounter uncomfortable questions; they can participate from any location with internet access. However, although accessibility tends to result in high response rates, obtaining precise results can be challenging, as some individuals opt not to respond due to finding surveys intrusive or inconvenient, rather than being uninformed about the subject matter (Maione 2023).

5.3. Store Observations

5.3.1. Procedure and Sample

The third phase of primary research involved Store Observations. Such method allowed the researchers to directly watch and study consumers behaving in natural environments, as it measures behaviour directly, rather than relying on consumers', sometimes inaccurate, self-reporting (Writer, 2009). The research has been conducted with no interaction with the consumers and it relies solely on observer's inspections and considerations. To harmonize and standardize the data collection, and simplify the subsequent analysis of results, a common observation grid had been developed and used (*see appendix 7*). The common template includes information such as the time of the day the observation took place, the name of the store, the typology of store, the store atmosphere, the store placement, as well as information on the consumers' evaluation criteria and purchase decision making. Assumptions and deductions were also made to determine consumers' demographics and psychographics details (gender, age, emotional state).

In total, 28 consumers, spread across 7 store locations in Portugal, have been observed (*see appendix 8*). Differently to the other methods, no specific socio-demographic variable was targeted. Indeed, the sample observed is composed by 23 female and 5 male shoppers: 5 were considered to be between 18 and 25 years old, 8 between 26 and 35 years old, 8 between 36 and 50 years old, 6 between 51 and 65 years old, and 1 above 65 years old (Figure 9)

Generations	Quantity
Gen Z	17.86%
Millennial	28.57%
Gen X	53.57%
TOTAL	100%

Animal type	Quantity
Dog	32%
Cat	64%
Both	4%
TOTAL	100%

Figure 9: Table of Store Observations Demographics Information

To ensure the representativeness and randomness of the sample, observations took place in different times of the day (morning, afternoon, evening), in the two major Portuguese retail stores (Continente and Pingo Doce) and at the pet store ZU, Kiwoko, and Agriloja.

5.3.2. Limitations of Store Observations

Although Store Observations are a great way to get real time and unobtrusive insights on consumers' behaviours and preferences, they also face several limitations that could compromise the conclusions. First, the subjectivity of the observers needs to be considered, as different observes may come up with different interpretations of the same subject. Also, there is the inability to go beyond consumers' actions and investigate their intentions and motivations, as no follow-up question was done to capture additional data. This is especially because of the oversimplification error, which means that data is so simplified that it provides a wrong solution or impression as data recorded explains the perspective of action instead of in action. Also, since none of the group members are Spanish, it was not feasible to observe pet shops and supermarkets in Spain. Consequently, the findings obtained from Portuguese pet stores and supermarkets should be generalized to encompass the entire Iberian Peninsula.

6. Overview of the findings

The research findings have been carefully examined and presented separately, emphasizing the distinctive characteristics of pet parents. This focused approach provides a detailed insight into the different dynamics of each group, allowing for an understanding of their preferences and behaviours. In this sense, a segmentation strategy was developed for both markets, resulting in the identification of six distinct segments. This refined segmentation provided a practical framework to better understand the diverse landscape of pet ownership and subsequent customer journeys.

6.1. Profiling the New Pet Parent: Dogs (Giovana de Beaurepaire)

Understanding the evolving relationship between pet owners and their dogs is crucial for developing marketing strategies that align with the changing needs of today's pet care landscape. This section is dedicated to profiling *new pet parents*, elucidating the relevant and unique factors that shape their approach to pet care, and the distinctions from older generations. Furthermore, an exploration of their opinions and perceptions regarding Pedigree and competitors' brands was conducted, offering valuable insights into their preferences and attitudes within the context of the pet care market.

6.1.1. Significance in Preferences and Behaviours

When analysing the consumption behaviour of the new pet parents it is crucial to underscore the notable differences brought up by mostly the results of the quantitative survey that set them apart from the older pet owners – individuals from older generations who have had a dog for an extended period. Understanding this will give us insights into evolving trends and preferences within the pet owner demographic. To assess the significance of these differences, two-tailed t-test and z-test analysis with the significance level of .05 were made to analyse the data found on the quantitative surveys.

First, when considering the reasons and motives expressed by individuals in the interviews for having a dog, there is a consistent theme across all interviewed individuals. Whether it is because of a long-standing desire or companionship, the underlying motivations consistently revolve around emotional factors rather than rational ones – all the interviewed individuals mentioned they whether had a long-standing desire or have always been around dogs, 70% of them mentioned the companionship factor. Even though the team was only able to interview one older pet parent, this alignment in motivations is an indication of the profound connection and emotional bond people seek with dogs, recognizing them as sentient beings rather than mere products. Additionally, it was noticed on the qualitative interviews that 30% of the individuals choose food without cereals and 40% of them have concerns about dog's overweight.

Now, looking at the dogs' oral care market, z-test analyses were conducted to assess whether new pet parents exhibit a greater level of concern for their pet's oral care compared to the older ones.

Recent research highlights an existing problem, revealing that a substantial 90% of cats and dogs aged 1 year or older grapple with dental diseases (Royal Canin 2023). This concern is further emphasized by the fact that 25% of older pet parents and 13.89% of new pet parents have reported never brushing their dog's teeth.

An insightful observation emerges when comparing the oral care habits of old and new pet parents, indicating that Generation Z and Millennials owners are more actively involved in these activities. Regarding regular dental care, 50% of new pet parents reported brushing their pet's teeth at least once a month, a significant contrast to the 6.25% engagement among older counterparts ($z = 3.02$; $p = .003$; the result is significant at $p < .05$) (*see appendix 9*).

A significant generational difference is noted in the provision of toys or snacks for their pet's oral health — 63.89% for new pet parents compared to 31.25% for old pet parents. This divergence affirms the hypothesis, and the result is statistically significant at $p < .05$ ($z = 2.18$; $p = .03$;) (*see appendix 9*).

However, when considering the commitment to scheduling at least annual cleanings at the veterinarian, while the percentages are higher for the younger generation (83.33% compared to

62.50% for old pet parents), upon analysis, there is no statistical significance at $p < .05$ ($z = 1.65$; $p = .099$) (*see appendix 9*). Hence, this data alone does not provide statistically significant evidence to affirm a distinct generational difference in the commitment to professional dental care for their pets.

Based on the results, it is evident that new pet parents exhibit heightened awareness and greater involvement in dental hygiene for their pets compared to older generations. This finding suggests a positive trend toward increased attention to oral care within the newer demographic of pet owners.

Then, to assess the impact of social media engagement on pet owners' decision-making processes, z-test analyses were also conducted, and insights have emerged.

A total 34.62% of respondents revealed that they follow pet-related accounts on social media. Further analysis, taking generational differences into account, reveals that 30.56% of the new pet parents and 43.75% of the old ones follow pet-related accounts. It's important to note that this data does not reach statistical significance at $p < .05$ ($z = -0.92$; $p = .358$) (*see appendix 9*), suggesting that the observed trend in following pet-related accounts is not markedly different between younger and older generations.

Upon examining the subset of individuals who engage with pet-related content, only 22% reported making a pet food purchase based on a social media recommendation. This proportion – which relates to four people – is equally divided between the generational groups. After conducting a z-test analysis, the outcome did not achieve significance at $p < .05$ ($z = -0.52$; $p = .603$) (*see appendix 9*), indicating that there is no substantial difference in the influence of social media recommendations between the two groups.

To evaluate the distinctions in purchasing and attribute preferences between new and old pet parents, it was considered various factors, including the frequency of online versus offline shopping and various attributes which influence the selection of pet food. These attributes encompassed price, quality, brand reputation, ingredients, recommendations from veterinarians or peers, special dietary needs, packaging, and advertisement.

In exploring the preferred points of purchase among dog owners, a z-test analysis was employed to compare the proportions of individuals who consistently chose specific outlets — i.e. people who selected "always" —, including online platforms, pet shops and supermarkets.

Notably, while 30.56% of new parents expressed a consistent preference for online purchases, a lower proportion of old pet parents, only 6.25%, shared the same sentiment. This difference in percentages is not statistically significant ($z = 1.92$; $p = .055$; the result is not significant at $p < .05$) (*see* appendix 9) to conclusively assert that younger generations favour online shopping over their older counterparts.

For pet shop preferences, percentages between the two groups were quite similar, with 30.56% for the younger generation and 25% for old pet parents. This evidence did not provide sufficient grounds to affirm a clear difference in preferences for this selling point ($z = 0.41$; $p = .682$; the result is not significant at $p < .05$) (*see* appendix 9).

However, a statistically significant difference was observed in preferences for buying at supermarkets, with 27.78% for new pet parents and 68.75% for old ones ($z = -2.78$; $p = .005$; the result is significant at $p < .05$) (*see* appendix 9). In this context, the hypothesis is supported, suggesting that old pet parents exhibit a preference for purchasing at supermarkets.

In summary, while pet shop preferences showed similarity between the two groups, with no clear distinction, a statistically significant difference emerged in preferences for buying at supermarkets, indicating a distinct inclination among old pet parents, which is not shared among the younger generations. Although no statistically significant preference for online shopping was found, the higher proportion of new pet parents choosing this option suggests a potential emerging trend. This aligns with the anticipated growth in e-commerce revenue in Portugal and Spain (Statista 2023), signalling a potential change in pet owners' purchasing behaviour in the future.

Continuing the discussion on pet-related purchases, it was observed that while 55.56% of new pet parents find it difficult to choose the best food for their dog, 64.29% of the old ones share the same challenge. Given the notably high percentages in both groups, it is unsurprising that there is no statistically significant difference between them ($z = -0.56$; $p = .575$; the result is not significant at $p < .05$) (*see* *appendix 9*).

Now looking at the attributes, the t-test analysis indicates that eight out of nine attributes exhibit no statistical significance at $p < .05$ to establish a distinction in preference between the two groups of pet parents. These attributes include quality ($t(50) = -0.11$, $p = .46$), brand reputation ($t(50) = 0.82$, $p = .21$), ingredients ($t(50) = 1.1$, $p = .14$), veterinarian recommendation ($t(50) = -1.59$, $p = .06$), peer recommendation ($t(50) = -0.37$, $p = .36$), special dietary needs ($t(50) = -1.58$, $p = .06$), packaging ($t(50) = 0.76$, $p = .225$), and advertisement ($t(50) = -1.11$, $p = .14$) (*see* *appendix 10*).

On the other hand, the analysis revealed that only the importance of price when selecting pet food demonstrated statistical significance ($t(50) = 2.11$; $p = .02$; the result is significant at $p < .05$) (*see* *appendix 10*) when comparing new pet parents ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.2649$) with old ones ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 2.097$) (*see* *appendix 11*). Consequently, this supports the hypothesis that new pet parents care about price more than the older ones. This finding aligns with MarketWatch's article, "Pet Spending Trends of 2023: Older Americans Spend More on Pets" (Zagame 2023), indicating that, on average, Gen X spends the most in absolute values on their pets, followed by the Baby Boomers, spending $949 and $842 annually, respectively. Furthermore, the article mentions that Baby Boomers allocate almost 20% more of their annual budget to their pets than to personal care products and services, which can be attributed to their higher net worth.

In conclusion, while most attributes did not exhibit significant differences between new and old pet parents, the emphasis on the importance of price stands out as a notable distinction, highlighting the evolving consumer behaviours within the pet care industry over the generations.

6.1.2. Awareness and Perceptions on Pedigree brand

As previously highlighted, Pedigree stands as a well-established and renowned brand in the pet food industry, particularly in Portugal and Spain. Insights into the brand's perception were taken from surveyed individuals, including both old and new pet parents.

First, it is crucial to mention the key attributes associated with the Pedigree brand. These include being perceived as **premium (42.31%), healthy (30.77%), trendy (26.92%), expensive (26.92%) and artificial (23.08%).** Additionally, sustainability and lack of brand awareness collectively were only mentioned once, indicating minimal relevance. The seemingly conflicting percentages for the attributes "artificial" and "healthy" become clearer when examining demographics. "Artificial" was mentioned a few times by the older generations (ages 45 and above), who are categorized as the old pet parents, accounting for 6.25%. Even though, this percentage had a significant increase to 30.56% among the new pet parents (ages 18 to 44), this difference is not significant to state that the newer generations think that Pedigree food is indeed artificial ($z = 1.92$; $p = .055$; the result is not significant at $p < .05$) (*see [appendix 9](#)*). Not surprisingly, the attribute "healthy" shows a reverse and significant trend, with 68.75% corresponding to the old pet parents and 19.44% to the new pet parents ($z = 3.45$; $p = .001$; the result is significant at $p < .055$) (*see [appendix 9](#)*). This nuanced shift in perception sheds light on the change in perspective over the generations, showing that Pedigree's perception is not improving among pet owners.

Following the analysis, it was discovered that among all dog owners, Pedigree's brand recall stands at 21.43%. Within this percentage, three out of ten people stated that they would probably not buy the Pedigree brand in the next six months. Delving deeper into the nuances of brand recall between the new and old pet parents, the percentages are not significant to showcase a contrast between the generations, with 25% for the new pet parents and 14.29% for the old ones ($z = 0.80$ $p = .424$; the result is not significant at $p < .05$) (*see [appendix 9](#)*).

Despite this, the **brand's overall recognition** scored impressively at 84.62%, ranking second only to Royal Canin (92.31%) (*[see appendix 12](#)*). The percentages among the new pet parents is 86.11% and among the old ones is 81.25%, with no significance at a $p < 0.05$ ($z = 0.45$; $p = .653$) (*see [appendix 9](#)*) which confirms the widely known fact that Pedigree is indeed a highly recognized brand in the industry among all generations.

When analysing and contextualizing the brand recall and recognition values – corresponding only to the new pet parents – within the Graveyard Model (Aaker 1996), three distinct clusters of brands emerge (Figure 10). Initially, the Royal Canin brand showcases a robust position in the model, attributed to its elevated levels of brand recall and recognition, solidifying its status as a leading brand within the healthy market landscape. In contrast, the majority of brands are categorized as graveyard brands, with a brand recall value markedly lower than the corresponding brand recognition value. This category encompasses notable entities, whose brand recall and recognition were also examined (*see appendix 12*) and scores can be seen in Figure 10. These include the white labels from Continente and Pingo Doce (Active Pet), Hill's, Libra, Purina One, Advance and even Pedigree. Furthermore, the niche brands, notably Purina Friskies and ACANA exhibit a comparatively higher brand recall value within their specific customer base.

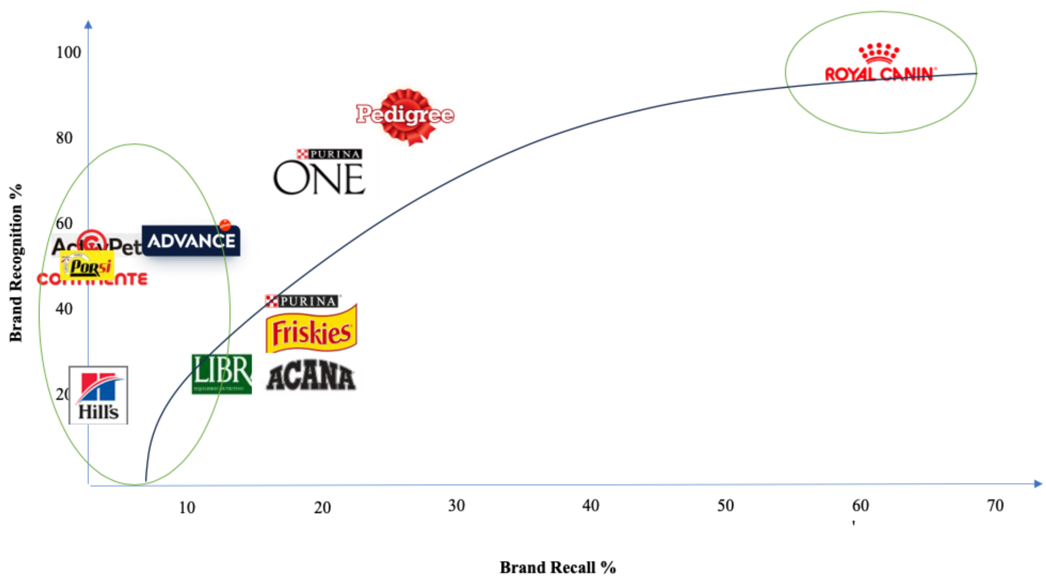


Figure 10: Graveyard Model Dog Food Brands

Lastly, the brand's purchase rate was noteworthy at 23.08% – 22.22% of new pet parents and 25% of the old ones buy the Pedigree brand –, securing the second-highest position after Royal Canin (34.62%). In a fiercely competitive market with numerous options available to consumers, it is important to emphasize that Pedigree maintains a favourable position, showing that there is no statistical significance between the generations who buy the brand ($z = -0.22$; $p = .826$; the result is not significant at $p < .05$) (*see appendix 9*).

6.1.3. Segmentation & Personas

Considering market trends and insights gathered after analysing the answers of the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey, it was possible to identify three key segments within the Portuguese and Spanish markets for dog owners: Health Conscious, Brand Loyal, and Tight Budget. To effectively categorize individuals in each segment, factors like purchasing frequency and points, monthly average spending on pet products, and the significance of various variables (such as price/promotion, quality, ingredients/nutritional value, special dietary needs, brand recognition and vet recommendation) were analysed. These factors played a crucial role in distinguishing consumption habits among dog owners in these markets.

Health Conscious: this represents the largest segment among the three, encompassing 50% of the surveyed individuals, with 77% being Millennials and the remaining 33% belonging to Generation Z. Within this segment, consumers prioritize factors like ingredients and quality, demonstrating a deep concern for their dog's overall well-being and health. Additionally, health-conscious customers tend to make more frequent purchases compared to those in other segments - outlined below – and they tend to buy more online (44%) than at pet shops (28%) or at supermarkets (22%), when analysing the percentage of people who said that always purchase at these places. Moreover, they exhibit a higher average spending on pet products, driven by their lower price sensitivity. According to the article "Millennials and Health Care Benefits" (Test 2022) from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Millennials exhibit a proactive concern for their well-being compared to older generations. In an era where healthcare costs are increasingly unpredictable, Millennials have cultivated an approach which counts on research before making decisions. This resonates strongly with the behaviour of the health-conscious pet parents who are well-informed individuals adept at researching and seeking information to ensure the well-being of their dogs.

In this sense, the health-conscious segment persona, Diogo, was created. He is a 30-year-old web designer who lives in a spacious studio apartment in Lisbon, sharing his space with Maya, his 3-year-old Akita. Diogo provides the optimal care for Maya, prioritizing her health and well-being. He actively engages in outdoor activities with her and invests time in understanding her health and nutritional needs. Despite his commitment to researching for Maya's welfare, Diogo sometimes finds it challenging to navigate the huge amount of information available online. Balancing the desire to ensure the best for his dog with the abundance of online resources can be a daunting task.

Brand Loyals: they stand out as unique among the three identified segments for the dogs' market due to its exclusive composition of Generation Z. Representing 14% of the surveyed dog owners, the brand-loyals' purchasing frequency is at a monthly basis on average and they tend to prefer buying pet food on pet shops rather than supermarkets or online platforms.

According to the text "Move Over Millennials, Generation Z is Here" (Hubbard 2021) from Alvaria, Generation Z is accustomed to accessing instant information at any time. Their expectation for instant results and gratification is a natural extension of this behaviour. Technological advancements have facilitated this immediacy, shaping their expectations. In alignment with this, it was observed that most consumers in this segment tend to rely solely on veterinary recommendations, finding it more convenient than taking the time to independently research information. Consequently, this reliance contributes to the higher loyalty to specific brands. Additionally, it was observed that 60% of the brand-loyals always buys at pet shops, which is a huge difference from the ones who said online (20%) or at the supermarket (0%).

Consequently, Johana was created. Johana is a 28-year-old singer who lives in a one-bedroom apartment in a suburban area of Lisbon with her boyfriend and her beagle, Hardin. As a brand enthusiast, she revels in the variety of logos and colours but typically remains loyal to only a select few. Balancing pet care expenses within her budget is extremely important for her and she aims to enhance her knowledge and awareness of pet health and nutrition, ensuring that Hardin gets the best care while staying mindful of financial considerations.

Tight Budget: accounts for 36.11%, is mostly represented by the Generation Z (77%) with Millennials constituting the remaining 33%. This demographic breakdown aligns with insights from Kerwin's (2023) article, "Younger Generations Decrease Pet Product Spending," highlighting a generational trend of declining average spending, particularly due to the limited disposable income among younger individuals, as they are in the early stages of establishing a stable income.

Despite financial constraints, consumers within this segment have a genuine concern for the quality and ingredients of the products they purchase for their dogs. Their purchasing strategy centers around getting the best cost-benefit option within their budgetary constraints. Notably, they are inclined towards discounts and promotions, which are more frequent at supermarkets, their preferred shopping destination over pet shops or buying online. Over 46.15% of these individuals mentioned that they always buy at supermarkets and only 23.08% and 15.38% buy at pet shops and online, respectively.

In this context, the persona created to represent this segment is named Tiago, a 22-year-old recently graduated engineer residing in a one-bedroom apartment in Lisbon with his girlfriend and their poodle, Max. Despite the fact of his first full-time job is at a significant company, Tiago's income remains limited. While he is committed to ensuring Max's well-being and strives to be a responsible pet owner, financial constraints limit his capacity to spend on his pet's essentials.

6.2. Consumer Decision Journey: Dogs

Utilizing the McKinsey Loyalty Loop Model, it was possible to depict three distinct decision journeys (health-conscious, brand-loyal and tight-budget) by analysing the collected data for each of the identified segments.

For the **health-conscious** segment (*see appendix 13*) they initially engage in research to find brands to consider which pet foods align with their health and wellness demands. Online resources and recommendations from trusted veterinarians play a crucial role in this information-gathering stage (67% of them stated that vets' recommendations affect their purchase's decision). The active evaluation phase is when these consumers carefully compare products, emphasizing quality by diving into product reviews, scrutinizing ingredient lists, and studying nutritional labels. The usual brands considered by these customers are Advance, Royal Canin, and Purina. During the moment of purchase, the health-conscious consumer prioritizes quality nutrition and is willing to spend a bit more to prevent potential future health issues for his pet – the most frequent brand chosen is Royal Canin. Their preferred shopping destination is the pet store, where it is more likely for them to find the premium products they seek. In the post-purchase experience phase, individuals tend to monitor their pet's response to the chosen product and observe improvements in overall well-being. They maintain a regular schedule of veterinary visits and remain open to trying new products that are highly recommended by the trusted veterinarians. The health-conscious' loyalty loop is highlighted by a continuous prioritization of their pet's well-being.

Now, for the **brand-loyal** (*see appendix 14*), they initially consider a predetermined set of few trusted brands (the one mentioned 4 out of 5 times by these individuals on the quantitative survey was Royal Canin), minimizing consideration of alternatives, which are recognized for the perceived quality from former experiences. For the active evaluation, consumers will not (or might rarely) look for new brands. Although they may occasionally explore other options out of curiosity, their strong brand loyalty generates a typically brief evaluation process, often choosing trusted brands. At the moment of purchase – which is usually always, but can be also physically –, loyalty rewards programs and special offers become extremely important. They take advantage of these programs to decide which of the few trusted brands they will purchase, knowing exactly what to expect from the chosen one. In the post-purchase experience, loyalty extends to brands that resonate with their pets. Consistency is key, as these consumers maintain a reliable pet care routine, valuing stability over experimentation to come up with a decision. The well-being and contentment of their pets are crucial to solidifying the loyalty loop for this segment's decision journey.

Lastly, the decision journey of the **tight budget** segment (*see appendix 15*) begins (initial consideration phase) with a set of familiar brands known from previous purchases and recommendations, such as ActivPet, Continente's brand and Royal Canin. Following this, in active evaluation phase, their primary focus is on price and promotions. Unlike other personas, they remain open to considering new brands if the cost-benefit is favourable - price and promotion are the key determinants at this stage. The moment of purchase is when individuals select the brand based on the best deal available in-store – usually in supermarkets –, aligning with their budget-conscious approach. Finally, in the post-purchase experience, consumers' loyalty will depend solely on the appeal of pricing and promotions. A consistent and attractive cost-benefit can transform them into frequent and loyal customers. However, if the price and promotion dynamics change unfavourably, they will opt for another brand without hesitation. This decision journey is characterized by a prudent approach to pet food purchases, and the ultimate choice is not made until the moment of purchase, with a willingness to explore new brands if the cost-benefit or discounts are appealing.

10. References

"7 Major Benefits of Strong Branding | Frontify." 2018. June 14, 2018. https://www.frontify.com/en/blog/7-major-benefits-of-a-strong-brand/.

Aaker, David. 1996. Building Strong Brands. 1 st ed. London: Simon & Schuster

Advanced Care. 2022. "Everything You Need to Know about Cat Dental Care." March 31, 2022. https://www.advancedcareanimalclinic.com/site/blog/2022/03/31/everything-to-know-about-cat-dental-care.

Ais, Team. 2023. "9 Types of Pet Care Services and Professions." Advantage Insurance Solutions. February 17, 2023. https://www.teamais.net/blog/9-types-of-pet-care-professions/.

"Alimentos húmidos ou secos - como alimentar um gato." n.d. Royal Canin PT. https://www.royalcanin.com/pt/cats/health-and-wellbeing/wet-or-dry-food-what-to-feed-a-cat.

"Alimentos para cães de acordo com a raça." n.d. Royal Canin PT. https://www.royalcanin.com/pt/dogs/products/breed-health-nutrition.

"An Analysis of the Pet Food and Pet Treats Industry." 2021. Studylib.Net. November 13, 2021. https://studylib.net/doc/6759542/an-analysis-of-the-pet-food-and-pet-treats-industry.

Aramayis, Dallakyan. 2014. "Yogurt Market Analyisis In Armenia Using Hedonic Price Model And Perceptual Mapping Method." American Economic Association (AEA) Annual Meeting. http://www.aea.am/files/papers/w1402.pdf.

BDC.Ca. 2023. “The 5 Most Common Pricing Strategies,” October 19, 2023. https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/marketing-sales-export/marketing/pricing-5-common-strategies.

Berry, Donna. 2022. “Visual Purchasing: How to Use Colour to Appeal to Pets and Owners.” */Images/Favicons/*, October 26, 2022. https://www.petfoodprocessing.net/articles/16320-visual-purchasing-how-to-use-colour-to-appeal-to-pets-and-owners.

Brunjes, Kathy. 2023. “Age Range by Generation - Beresford Research.” Beresford Research. October 30, 2023. https://www.beresfordresearch.com/age-range-by-generation/.

Camilleri, Mark Anthony. 2017. “Market Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning.” In *Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management*, 69–83. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49849-2_4.

Chadha, S. K., and and Deepa Kapoor. 2008. "An attribute based perceptual mapping of the selected private life insurance companies: An empirical study in Ludhiana." VISION-The Journal of Business Perspective 12 (3): 53-60.

Crusta, Mallory. 2023. “Unbiased Whiskas Cat Food Review in 2023 - Cats.Com.” Cats.Com. April 11, 2023. https://cats.com/whiskas-cat-food-review.

Curi, Rod P. 2023. “Buyer Persona: A Step by Step Guide to Build the Perfect Persona for Your Business.” Rock Content. July 19, 2023. https://rockcontent.com/blog/buyer-persona/.

De Pelsmacker, Patrick, Maggie Geuens, and Joeri Van Den Bergh. 2021. *Marketing Communications: A European Perspective*.

Dhiman. 2023b. “What Is a Perceptual Map and How to Build One (Template) - LogRocket Blog.” LogRocket Blog. April 24, 2023. https://blog.logrocket.com/product-management/what-is-a-perceptual-map-how-to-build-template/#:~:text=Perceptual%20maps%20indicate%20how%20customers,a%20positioning%20map%20represents%20reality.

Dog Food Advisor. 2023. "Dog Food Reviews and Ratings | Dog Food Advisor." November 29, 2023. https://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/.

"Dog Multivitamins | PEDIGREE® UK." https://www.uk.pedigree.com/dog-multivitamins.

"Dogs Can't See Colours, so Why Use Them in Dog Food | Purina" n.d. https://www.purina-arabia.com/contact-us/faq/ingredients/colours-in-dog-food.

"Europe Pet Care Products Market." 2023. June 5, 2023. https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/europe-pet-care-products-market.

"European Pet Population by Animal 2022 | Statista." 2023. Statista. September 5, 2023. https://www.statista.com/statistics/453880/pet-population-europe-by-animal/.

Example: Becker, Gary S. 1993. "The Evidence against Blacks Doesn't Prove Bias." Business Week, April 19. http://bwarchive.businessweek.com/index.jsp.

"Facts about PEDIGREE® Dog Food." https://www.uk.pedigree.com/about-us/facts-about-our-food.

Fadul, Adriana. 2021. "Ração Whiskas é Boa? Confira os Prós & Contras - Amor aos Pets." Amor Aos Pets. February 9, 2021. https://amoraospets.com/racao-whiskas-e-boa/#google_vignette.

"FEDIAF | Pet Food Trends." n.d. https://europeanpetfood.org/pet-food-facts/pet-food-trends/.

"Feeding Calculator." https://www.pedigree.com.au/feeding-calculator.

"Global Pet Industry To Grow To $500 Billion By 2030, Bloomberg Intelligence Report Finds | Press | Bloomberg LP." 2023. Bloomberg L.P. April 13, 2023. https://www.bloomberg.com/company/press/global-pet-industry-to-grow-to-500-billion-by-2030-bloomberg-intelligence-finds/.

Graham, Rachel. 2023. "The Pet Food Industry's Future, from Plant-Based to Cultivated Meat." Sentient Media. September 15, 2023. https://sentientmedia.org/pet-food-industry/#:~:text=What%20Industry%20Is%20Pet%20Food,fed%20to%20livestock%20and%20poultry.

Grimm, P. (2010). Social desirability bias. Wiley international encyclopedia of marketing.

Hanlon, Annmarie. 2023. "STP Marketing: The Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning Model." Smart Insights. May 24, 2023. https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/customer-segmentation-targeting/segmentation-targeting-and-positioning/.

"Higiene dental para cão - Petness Portugal." n.d. Petness. https://petness.pt/caes/s_higiene-dental#q=pedigree.

Hubbard, Maddy. 2021. "Move Over Millennials, Generation Z Is Here | Alvaria Blog." Https://Www.Alvaria.Com. May 1, 2021. Accessed November 21, 2023. https://www.alvaria.com/blog/using-gamification-to-motivate-millennials-gen-z#:~:text=Generation%20Z%20is%20accustomed%20to,and%20recognized%20for%20their%20accomplishments.

"Informação | Whiskas" n.d. https://www.whiskas.pt/sobre-nos.

Janiszewska, Karolina, and Andrea Insch. 2012. "The Strategic Importance of Brand Positioning in the Place Brand Concept – Elements, Structure and Application of the Positioning

Statement." *Journal of International Studies* 5 (1): 9–19. https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2012/5-1/2.

Johns Hopkins Medicine. "The Friend Who Keeps You Young." Johns Hopkins Medicine. https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-friend-who-keeps-you-young.

Kapferer, J. (1997) Strategic Brand Management. Kogan Page, London.

Kerwin, Nicole. 2023. "Spanish Pet Food Market Exceeds $1.8 Billion in 2022." /Images/Favicons/, July 6, 2023. https://www.petfoodprocessing.net/articles/17159-spanish-pet-food-market-exceeds-18-billion-in-2022.

Kerwin, Nicole. 2023. "Younger Generations Decrease Pet Product Spending." /Images/Favicons/, May 31, 2023. https://www.petfoodprocessing.net/articles/17042-younger-generations-decrease-pet-product-spending#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20Gen%20X%20pet,spending%20the%20least%20at%20%2436

Kerwin, Nicole. 2023. "Wellness, Personalization and Sustainability: Trends Driving Pet Nutrition." */Images/Favicons/*, March 7, 2023. https://www.petfoodprocessing.net/articles/16722-wellness-personalization-and-sustainability-trends-driving-pet-nutrition.

Kick off meeting with Mars, 2023

Kotler, Philip. 1984. *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning and Control*. 5th ed. Prentice/Hall International, Inc., London.

Kotler, Philip, Donald H. Haider, and Irving Rein. 1994. "Marketing Places : Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations / P. Kotler,..." ResearchGate, January. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31644669_Marketing_Places_Attracting_Investment_Industry_and_Tourism_to_Cities_States_and_Nations_P_Kotler_DH_Haider_I_Rein.

Kwak, Min-Kyu, and Seung-Eun Cha. 2021. "A Study on the Selection Attributes Affecting Pet Food Purchase: After COVID-19 Pandemic." *International Journal of Food Properties* 24 (1): 291–303. https://doi.org/10.1080/10942912.2021.1879133.

Maione, Ines. 2023. "What Is Primary Data Collection? Types, Advantages, and Disadvantages." Resonio. November 2, 2023. https://www.resonio.com/blog/primary-data-collection-types-advantages-and-disadvantages/. .

"Marcas Rendem-se aos Patudos." Animais de Estimação – Caderno Especial, Fevereiro. https://marketeer.sapo.pt/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/MKT_Animais_Fevereiro.pdf

Mars, Incorporated. 2021. "Mars Petcare - The State of the Pet Nation Report 2021." Mars, Incorporated. https://gbr.mars.com/sites/g/files/jydpyr521/files/2021-11/Mars%20Petcare%20-%20The%20State%20of%20the%20Pet%20Nation%20Report%202021_0.pdf.

Mars Petcare. "Feito pela Mars - Petcare." Mars, Incorporated. Accessed November 29, 2023. https://prt.mars.com/feito-pela-mars/petcare

Mars Petcare. "Made by Mars - Petcare." Mars, Incorporated. Accessed November 29, 2023. https://esp.mars.com/en/made-by-mars/petcare?language_content_entity=en%20accessed%20on%20november%2029th%202023

Mayer, Aliza. 2023. "Sampling Marketing — The Complete Guide." *Hubspot*, March 2, 2023. https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/sampling-marketing.

MAXIMIZE MARKET RESEARCH. "Pet Food Market: Industry Analysis and Forecast (2023-2029)," November 22, 2023. https://www.maximizemarketresearch.com/market-report/global-pet-food-market/21009/

Molenaar, Koba. 2023. "29 Statistics on Gen Z Spending Habits You Should Know in 2023." Influencer Marketing Hub. October 18, 2023. https://influencermarketinghub.com/gen-z-spending-habits-stats/.

Murtoff, Jennifer. 2023. "Mars, Incorporated | Candy, Pet Care, Food, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. September 28, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mars-Incorporated.

National Merchants Association. 2017. "Gen Z Purchases Largely Influenced by Social Media | National Merchants." August 11, 2017. Accessed November 26, 2023. https://www.nationalmerchants.com/gen-z-purchases-largely-influenced-social-media/.

"Newsletter." n.d. https://www.pedigree.com.au/register.

Nicasio, Francesca. n.d. "5 Pet Market and Pet Food Trends Shaping the Industry | Tracksuit." https://www.gotracksuit.com/blog/5-pet-market-and-pet-food-trends-shaping-the-industry.

Noel, Michelle. 2022. "Understanding and Implementing Brand Positioning Models." Studio Noel. November 23, 2022. https://studionoel.co.uk/understanding-brand-positioning-models#:~:text=More%20than%20anything%2C%20positioning%20models,for%20everything%20that's%20to%20follow.

Pedigree. (2023). Pedigree Portugal. Retrieved December 2, 2023, from https://www.pedigree.pt

Pedigree Dog Food Reviews & Comparisons." n.d. Dog Food Insider. https://www.dogfoodinsider.com/tag/pedigree-dog-food-reviews/.

Pedigree Foundation. (2023). Home - Pedigree Foundation. Retrieved December 2, 2023, from https://www.pedigreefoundation.org

PEDIGREE. n.d. "Alimentamos o bem nos cães de todas as idades e todas as raças | PEDIGREE®." https://www.pedigree.pt/sobre.

"Perceived Value: The Link between Price Sensitivity and Consumer Perception - FasterCapital." n.d. FasterCapital. https://fastercapital.com/content/Perceived-Value--The-Link-Between-Price-Sensitivity-and-Consumer-Perception.html#The-Importance-of-Perceived-Value-in-Brand-Loyalty.

Percy, L., & Rosenbaum-Elliott, R. (2016). Strategic Advertising Management. (5. ed.) Oxford University Press.

"Pesquisar | Goldpet" n.d. https://goldpet.pt/pesquisa?controller=search&s=pedigree.

"Pesquisou por pedigree - Petoutlet. Petoutlet." n.d. https://petoutlet.pt/loja/?s=pedigree&post_type=product.

"Pet Care in Portugal | PetRelocation." n.d. https://www.petrelocation.com/blog/post/pet-care-in-portugal.

"Pet Care Market Insights." n.d. https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/pet-care-market.

"Pet Care Market Size, Share, Scope, Opportunities & Forecast." 2023. Verified Market Research. July 20, 2023. https://www.verifiedmarketresearch.com/product/pet-care-market/.

"Pet Care Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Pet Type (Dog, Cat, Fish, Bird), By Type (Product, Food), By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2022 - 2030." n.d. https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/pet-care-market.

"Pet Oral Care Market." 2023. July 27, 2023. https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/pet-oral-care-market.

"Pet Snacks And Treats Market Size To Hit USD 123.2 Bn By 2032." n.d. https://www.precedenceresearch.com/pet-snacks-and-treats-market.

Portugal, Kitchen. n.d. "Henrique Sá Pessoa." https://www.24kitchen.pt/chefs/henrique-sa-pessoa.

"Portugal Pet Food Industry Outlook 2022 - 2026." n.d. https://www.reportlinker.com/clp/country/5704/726376#:~:text=Key%20Market%20Indicators,%E2%82%AC50.6%20million%20in%202021.

Priest, Ronda. 2005. "Statistical/Substantive, Interpretations and Data Limitations." In Elsevier eBooks, 671–74. https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-12-369398-5/00180-8.

"Produtos | WHISKAS®." n.d. https://whiskas.pt/os-nossos-produtos.

"Quality versus Price? We Have the Lowdown on the Pedigree Dog Food Brand." n.d. https://www.mypetneedsthat.com/pedigree-dog-food-review/.

Queen, Jacob. 2023. "What Is the Pet Industry?" WiseGEEK. November 9, 2023. https://www.wisegeek.net/what-is-the-pet-industry.htm.

Quinns_News. 2022. "Colour Your Brand." January 14, 2022. https://www.quinns.com.au/blog/legal-news/colour-your-brand/.

Research, Industry Expert. 2023. "Pet Food Market Analysis Report 2023-2030 | 118 Pages Report." September 19, 2023. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/pet-food-market-analysis-report-2023-2030-118/.

Rossiter, John R, Larry Percy, and Lars Bergkvist. 2018. *Marketing Communications: Objectives, Strategy, Tactics*. SAGE.

Rossiter, J. R., and Percy, L. 1998. *Advertising Communications and Promotion Management*.

Rossiter, J. R., Percy, L. & Bergkvist, L. 2018. *Marketing Communications: Objectives, Strategy, Tactics*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Rossiter, J. R., Percy, L., & Donovan, R. J. (1991). A better advertising planning grid. Journal of Advertising Research, 31, 11-21.

Sadique Hussian, Saadat ali, Muhammad Ibrahim, Amna Noreen, Sayed Ahmad "Impact of Packaging on Consumer Perception and Purchase Intention", Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research, Issue (2015): 10, 234693879.pdf (core.ac.uk)

Son, Katelyn. 2023. "Pedigree Dog Food Reviewed: Pros, Cons, and Ingredient Analysis." Veterinarians.Org. August 15, 2023. https://www.veterinarians.org/pedigree-dog-food/.

"Spain Pet Food Market Insights." n.d. https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/spain-pet-food-market.

Statista. n.d. "Pet Food - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast." https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/food/pet-food/worldwide.

Statista. 2022. “Global Daily Time Spent on Online Networks 2021, by Generation.” September 16, 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1314973/global-daily-time-spent-on-social-media-networks-generation/.

“Statistical Significance Calculator | Qualtrics.” 2022. Qualtrics. October 20, 2022. https://www.qualtrics.com/uk/experience-management/research/statistical-significance-calculator/.

Statista. n.d. “Pet Food - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast.” https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/food/pet-food/worldwide.

Statista. 2022. “Global Daily Time Spent on Online Networks 2021, by Generation.” September 16, 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1314973/global-daily-time-spent-on-social-media-networks-generation/.

Superside. 2023. “What Is Brand Recall and Brand Recognition?” What Is Brand Recall and Brand Recognition? - Superside (blog). November 30, 2023. https://www.superside.com/blog/brand-recall-recognition#What-is-Brand-Recall.

Test, Steven. 2022. “Millennials and Health Care Benefits.” Harvard Pilgrim Health Care - HaPi Guide. July 27, 2022. https://www.harvardpilgrim.org/hapiguide/millennials-health-benefits/#:~:text=Millennials%20are%20more%20proactive%20and,food%2C%20and%20self%2Dcare.

TGM Research. (2023). TGM Global Pet Care Report 2023: Pet Food Brand & Breed. Retrieved from https://tgmresearch.com/tgm-global-pet-care-report-2023-pet-food-brand-breed.html

Todorova, Gergana. 2015. “Marketing Mix.” *Investopedia* 13 (Suppl.1): 368–74. https://doi.org/10.15547/tjs.2015.s.01.063.

"Todos os produtos | WHISKAS®." n.d. https://www.whiskas.pt/os-nossos-produtos/todos

Van Haaften, Ronald. n.d. "Brand Awareness." https://www.van-haaften.nl/branding/corporate-branding/114-brand-awareness.

Vaughn, Richard. 1980. *How advertising works: A planning model.* Journal of Advertising Research. 20(5): 27–33.

Vijay. 2022. "Competitors in Pet Food Market, Global Pet Nutrition Market." Ken Research. November 1, 2022. https://www.kenresearch.com/blog/2022/11/global-pet-food-market-revenue/.

Wall, T. (2023) *Personalization of pet food trending in 2023*, *Petfood Industry*. Available at: https://www.petfoodindustry.com/news-newsletters/pet-food-news/article/15540766/personalization-of-pet-food-trending-in-2023

Weilkiens, Tim; Weiss, Christian; Grass, Andrea; Duggen, Kim Nena (2016). "Frameworks". OCEB 2 Certification Guide. Elsevier. pp. 149–169.

WHISKAS. n.d. "ABOUT THE WHISKAS® BRAND." https://www.whiskas.co.uk/about-us.

"Whiskas Slogan - Slogans of Whiskas - Tagline of Whiskas - SloganList." n.d. https://www.sloganlist.com/household-slogans/whiskas-slogans.html.

"Who We Are – Mars Petcare Academy." n.d. https://www.marspca.com/who-we-are.

Wicknertz, Bodil. 2023. "How Is Generation Z Shopping? - Voyado." Voyado. June 27, 2023. https://voyado.com/resources/blog/generation-z-online-shopping-habits/.

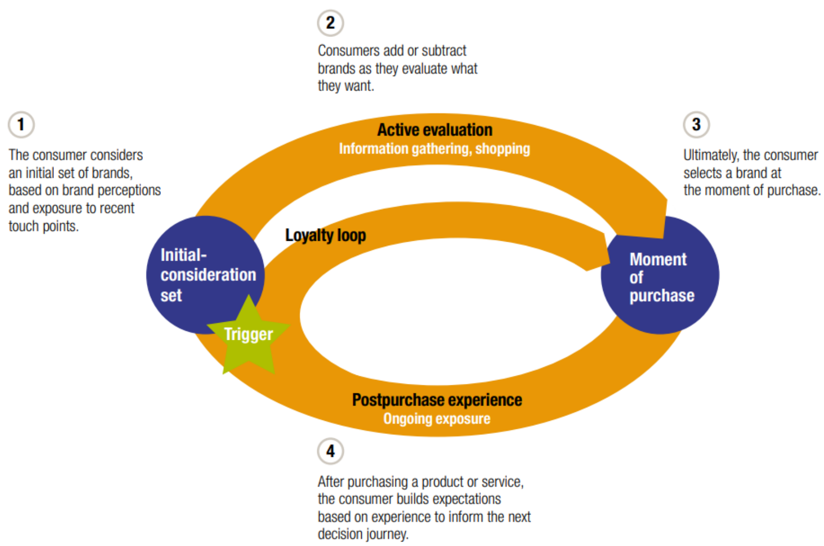
Wright, K. B. (2005). Researching Internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. Journal of computer-mediated communication, 10(3), JCMC1034.

Writer, S. (2009) Retail research: The Power of Observation, Talking Retail. Available at: https://www.talkingretail.com/opinion/talking-points/retail-research-the-power-of-observation-16-11-2009/ (Accessed: 20 November 2023).

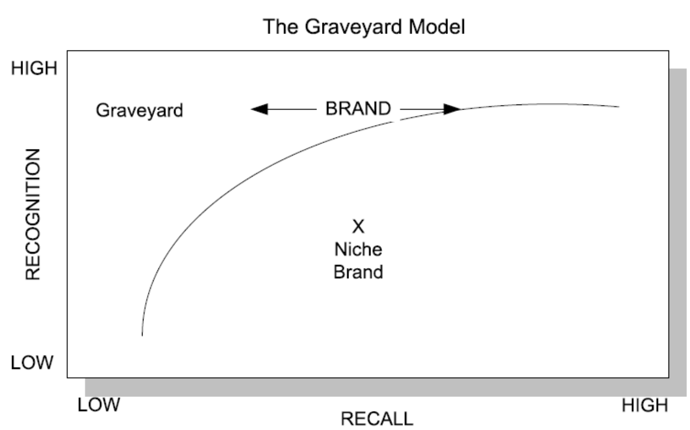
Zagame, Kristina. 2023. "Pet Spending Trends of 2023: Older Americans Spend More on Pets." MarketWatch. November 22, 2023. https://www.marketwatch.com/guides/pet-insurance/pet-spending-trends/.

11. Appendix

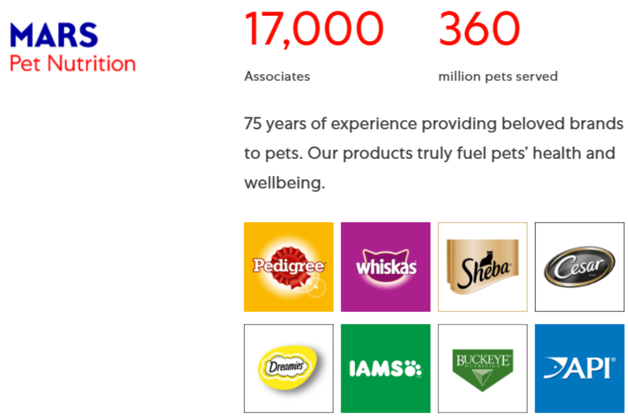
Appendix 1: McKinsey Consumer Decision Journey



Appendix 2: Young and Rubicam Europe's Graveyard Model



Appendix 3: Mars Pet Nutrition



Appendix 4: Screenshots of Bla Bla Blah Whiskas classic commercial ad

Bla Bla Blah Whiskas classic commercial ad

Appendix 5: Interviews: Research Questions

1. Introduction: Welcome and introduction to the interview. Explain the purpose of the interview and its significance to the research. Ensure informed consent from participants regarding recording and data usage.

Good morning/afternoon/evening,

My name is ____________, and I am a student at Nova School of Business & Economics. Together with four other colleagues, we will be working this semester on a project group work regarding the pet care industry in Portugal and Spain. Therefore, we would like to ask you some questions to understand your preferences, consumer behaviour, and experiences.

For this reason, I would like to conduct a qualitative interview that will take around 30/45 minutes. I will ask open questions and feel free to answer them with all your thoughts and ideas. There are no wrong answers.

If you are fine with it, I would like to record our conversation so I can review it afterward. It will stay anonymous, will not be published, and will be deleted after the analysis.

Again, thank you very much for your availability and participation.

2. Warm-up: type of pets, details, pet ownership, relationship…

- Can you tell me a bit more about your pet(s) and your relationship? (What do you call your pet? "Baby"? "Child"? & What do you usually do with your pet? Do you walk your pet? Do they socialize with other pets?
- What breeds or types are them, and what are their ages?
- What motivated you to become a pet parent in the first place? Was it a long-standing desire, a family decision, or another reason?
- In what ways has your life changed since becoming a pet owner?
- What do you enjoy about having a pet? What worries you?

3. Behaviour & Involvement in the category

Involvement:

- Do you make your own pet food, or have you ever considered making your own pet food or snacks? Or do you always rely on **commercial** food?
    - If you rely on commercial food, do you feed the pet with dry or wet food?
- What kind of products do you usually buy for your pets?
- How often do you buy pet food and snacks? Is it "scheduled" or when you see that the food is finishing?
- Do you participate in any events or activities related to pets, pet food, etc., such as seminars or exhibitions?

Health:

- Are there any specific **health or dietary concerns** for your pets, when you decide to buy any pet food? (to find and attribute the reason for the interest in the pet food)
- What are some **preventive measures** you take in order to ensure your pet's health and well-being? (Specific diet, premium quality, ordinary vet checks…)
- **How often** do you purchase functional products (such as hair hygiene products, bones, etc.) and why?
- Do you actively study the **nutritional needs** of your pets? Or do you stay updated on the latest **trends** in the pet food market? If so, where do you find the information?
- On the topic of pet dental health, do you feel that you are an **informed** person? What do you **know** about dental snack food?
    - What are some preventive measure you take in order to ensure the oral care of your pet? (Brushing teeth, using dental gums, oral care products, dentastix…)
- What **barriers or challenges** do you face when trying to make informed decisions about your pet's dental health?
- What would be a better way to get your pet to consume snacks for dental care?
- Are you open to trying new pet health products or services if they come highly recommended or are backed by scientific research?
- Are there any specific topics within pet health and nutrition that you believe require more attention or education in the pet owner community?

4. Shopping Experience

- **Where** do you buy pet care products (in which type of store)? Online vs. Offline

    - If in-store:
        - Where do you look inside the store?
        - Tell me about the **last time you were at the store**. Which store was it? What did you buy?
        - How important is i**n store customer service** or assistance when you shop for pet food? Apart from in store help, who else influences or helps you in the search for the best product? (vet, WOM, influencer,…)
- When buying pet care products, which **factors** do you consider?
    - How do you **balance** factors like price, quality, and brand reputation when choosing pet food? How does the **price** influence your decision-making?
    - How do you assess the **quality** of pet food products? Are there any particular labels or certifications you look for?
- Have you ever faced any **challenges or difficulties when buying pet food**? If yes, how did you address them?
- If you could make the ideal product for your pet, what would that be?

5. Brand image and perception of competitors and focal brand

- Could you please **name 3 brands** of pet care that come to your mind?
    - How would you describe those brands in 3 adjectives each?
- Which **brands** do you usually buy?
- What do you associate **Pedigree and Whiskas** with? (this depends on whether we're talking with a cat vs. dog owner)
- What **sources of information** have shaped your perception of these brands, Pedigree & Whiskas? (e.g., advertising, recommendations from friends, online reviews)
- Do you perceive any differences in the **quality or value offered by these brands** (Pedigree & Whiskas) compared to their **competitors**?
- Are you **loyal** to a specific brand?
    - What makes you trust a brand, whether it's in the oral care, snacks, or food category?
    - Are you subscribed to any Loyalty Program? (if not, mention some and see if they recognize)

6. Social Media and Influence on decisions

- Does your pet have a social media account?
- Do you post pictures of your pet?
- Do you follow any pet care **brand** on social media?
    - What are the main reasons that made you follow these brands on social media? (Is it because of its engaging content, the information it provides about the products, or because you really like the brand and want to keep updated…?)
- Do you follow any **pet influencer?**
    - Who? What are the main reasons for following that person?
    - In your point of view, what would the ideal pet influencer talk about (which topics would he/she cover)?
- How much do you think **advertising influences** your decision-making?
    - Advertising in social media vs. organic reach (influencers & pet brand's content)
- Have you ever got advice from **fellow pet owners** on social media regarding pet food brands or feeding practices? Do you trust this information and reviews shared by other pet owners when making pet food choices, or do you rely more on official brand channels and websites?

7. Demographics: (If not clear during the interview ask the following questions)

- How old are you?
- Gender
- What do you do for a living? (working/studying)
- Which is your country of origin?
- How big is your household?
- Are you living in an urban, suburban, or rural area?
- Do you have children? If yes, does this affect your pet ownership experience?

8. Conclusion and Wrap-Up: Thank the participant for their time and valuable insights.

Appendix 6: Online Survey: Research Questions

English

Welcome

Welcome!

As part of our master's thesis at Nova School of Business & Economics, we are conducting a survey in the Marketing – consumer behavior field lab for a petcare brand. Hence, we'd like you to spend roughly 6 minutes answering the following questions. Thank you very much for your involvement!

This is an anonymous survey intended for any Portuguese or Spanish pet parent resident in neither these countries for at least 2 years. The results obtained from the survey will be analyzed and reported in aggregate with your consent. By answering this survey, you automatically agree with all the data collected from your answers and that you voluntarily agree to participate. Finally, all data collected and analyzed will be anonymous and not retraceable to any individual.

If you have any questions about our master thesis, the survey, or data privacy, please contact us: 53715@novasbe.pt , 53520@novasbe.pt , 53401@novasbe.pt, 52957@novasbe.pt or 40392@novasbe.pt.

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand new pet parents' preferences and behavior. Please choose the response that best represents your opinion.

Pet Ownership

Have you lived in Portugal or Spain for more than 2 years?

- Yes
- No

What type(s) of pets do you own?

- Dog
- Cat
- Both cat and dog
- Other
- None

How long have you had your pet(s)?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3+ years

Pet Food Preferences

Write down the brands of pet food that come to your mind.

Of the following dog food brands, which ones are you familiar with?

- Royal Canin
- Advance
- Acana
- Activ Pet
- Gosbi
- Naturea
- Pedigree
- Purina One
- Purin Friskies

- ☐ Libra
- ☐ Hill's
- ☐ Marca Continente
- ☐ Marca Pingo Doce
- ☐ Por Si
- ☐ Dia
- ☐ ________ Other

Of the following cat food brands, which ones are you familiar with?

- ☐ Royal Canin
- ☐ Whiskas
- ☐ Purina One
- ☐ Purin Friskies
- ☐ Brekkies
- ☐ Activ Pet
- ☐ Acana
- ☐ Advance
- ☐ Libra
- ☐ Hill's
- ☐ Avenal
- ☐ Ultima
- ☐ Marca Continente
- ☐ Marca Pingo Doce
- ☐ Por Si
- ☐ Dia
- ☐ Coshida
- ☐ ________ Other

Which brand(s) of dog food do you usually purchase? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Royal Canin
- ☐ Advance
- ☐ Acana
- ☐ Activ Pet
- ☐ Gosbi
- ☐ Naturea

- ☐ Pedigree
- ☐ Purina One
- ☐ Purin Friskies
- ☐ Libra
- ☐ Hill's
- ☐ Marca Continente
- ☐ Marca Pingo Doce
- ☐ Por Si
- ☐ Dia
- ☐ ________ Other

Which brand(s) of cat food do you usually purchase? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Royal Canin
- ☐ Whiskas
- ☐ Purina One
- ☐ Purin Friskies
- ☐ Brekkies
- ☐ Activ Pet
- ☐ Acana
- ☐ Advance
- ☐ Libra
- ☐ Hill's
- ☐ Avenal
- ☐ Ultima
- ☐ Marca Continente
- ☐ Marca Pingo Doce
- ☐ Por Si
- ☐ Dia
- ☐ Coshida
- ☐ ________ Other

Which type of food do you usually buy?

- ☐ Wet food
- ☐ Dry food
- ☐ Raw food

☐ Home Cooked

To what extent are the following factors important when choosing a pet food?

Price/ Promotion

Quality

Brand Reputation

Ingredients/nutritional value

Veterinarian recommendation

Peers recommendations

Special dietary needs

Packaging

Advertisement

Others [ ]

Pedigree

What do you associate with Pedigree?

[ ]

Which of the following attributes do you associate with Pedigree? Select all that apply.

☐ Healthy/ Organic
☐ Premium/ High Quality

- ☐ Sustainable
- ☐ Trendy
- ☐ Artificial
- ☐ Expensive
- ☐ Don´t know the brand

How would you like to find out about a new Pedigree product? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Social Media Communication
- ☐ In-store Deconstrations
- ☐ In-store Promotions and Pop-ups
- ☐ Peers Recommendations
- ☐ Vet Recommendations
- ☐ ________ Other, please specify.

What do you associate Pedigree with? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Wet food
- ☐ Dry Food
- ☐ Snacks
- ☐ Dental Care Products
- ☐ ________ Other, please specify.

How likely are you to buy a Pedigree in the next six months?

- ○ Definitely not
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Might or might not
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Definitely yes

Whiskas

What do you associate with Whiskas?

[ ]

Which of the following attributes do you associate with Whiskas? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Healthy/ Organic
- ☐ Premium/ High Quality
- ☐ Sustainable
- ☐ Trendy
- ☐ Artificial
- ☐ Expensive
- ☐ Don´t know the brand

How would you like to find out about a new Whiskas product? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Social Media Communication
- ☐ In-store Deconstrations
- ☐ In-store Promotions and Pop-ups
- ☐ Peers Recommendations
- ☐ Vet Recommendations
- ☐ [ ] Other, please specify.

What do you associate Whiskas with? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Wet food
- ☐ Dry Food
- ☐ Snacks
- ☐ Dental Care Products
- ☐ ________ Other, please specify.

How likely are you to buy a Whiskas in the next six months?

- ○ Definitely not
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Might or might not
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Definitely yes

Shopping Behavior

How frequently do you buy pet food in the following places?

	I never shop there	Once a year	Once every 6 months	Once every 3 months	Always
Online	○	○	○	○	○
Pet stores	○	○	○	○	○
Supermarkets	○	○	○	○	○

How often do you buy food for your pet?

- ○ Weekly
- ○ Bi-weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Less often

How often do you buy snacks for your pet?

- ○ Weekly
- ○ Bi-weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Less often

How often do you buy dental snacks for your pet?

- ○ Weekly
- ○ Bi-weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Less often

Information Sources

How do you usually research pet food products?

- ☐ Online reviews/websites
- ☐ Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- ☐ Recommendations from friends/family
- ☐ Veterinarian advice
- ☐ ________ Other

Pet care expenses

Approximately, how much do you spend monthly on pet care items?

	<50€	51€-100€	101€-200€	201€-300€	>300€
Food	○	○	○	○	○
Toys	○	○	○	○	○
Grooming	○	○	○	○	○
Health Care	○	○	○	○	○

Social Media Engagement

Do you follow pet-related accounts or groups on social media?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Which ones?

____

Have you ever made a pet food purchase based on a social media recommendation?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Oral Care

Related to oral care, how frequently do you engage in these?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	Never
Give Chew Toys and Treats That Promote Oral Health	○	○	○	○	○	○
Feed Your Pet Appropriately	○	○	○	○	○	○
Brushing your pets' teeth	○	○	○	○	○	○
Schedule Regular Cleanings	○	○	○	○	○	○

Challenges in Pet Parenting

To what extent are you concerned about the following challenges ?

	It´s not challenging at all	Rarely it's a challenge	Sometimes it's a challenge	Often it's a challenge	It´s very challenging for me
Managing pet expenses	○	○	○	○	○
Finding the right pet food	○	○	○	○	○
Balancing work/life responsibilities with pet care	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with behavioral issues	○	○	○	○	○
Store pet food at home	○	○	○	○	○
Other ______	○	○	○	○	○

New services

How much are you willing to pay for these options from your monthly pet care budget?

	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
Subscription fee to have your pet food delivered to your home on a set date (apart from the price of the products)												
Subscription fee of a service that allows you to have personalised pet food delivered based on your pet's specific requirements												
Subscription fee of a vet service that offers grooming, nail clipping, and hair trimming												

Demographic Information

Age

- A) 18-24
- B) 25-34
- C) 35-44
- D) 45-54
- E) 55+

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Do you have children or other dependents in your household?

- Yes
- No

Feedback

Do you have any specific comments or suggestions that could make your pet happier?

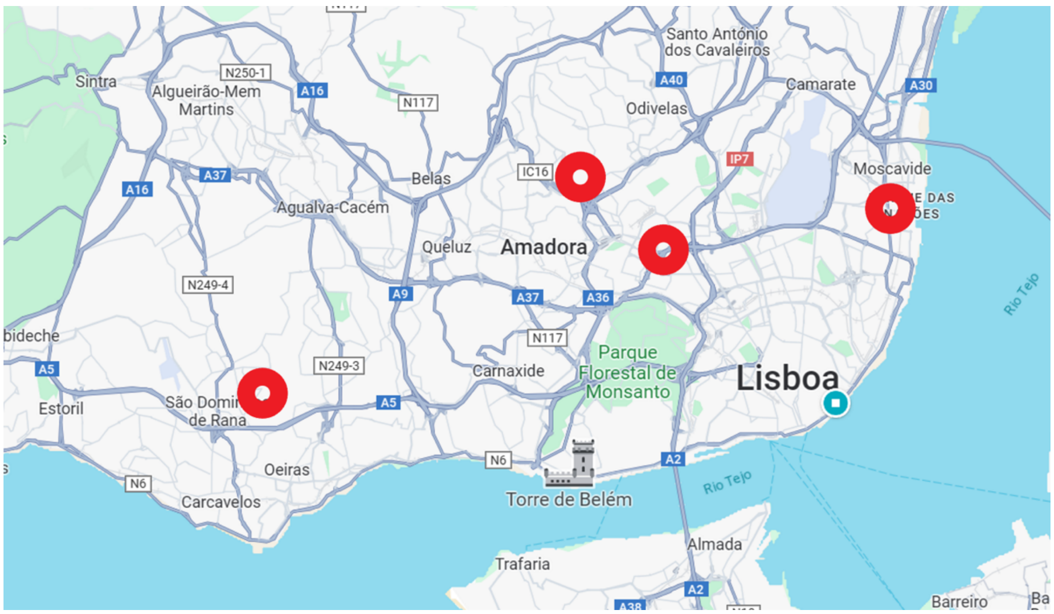
Powered by Qualtrics

Appendix 7: Store Observations: Observation Grid

	Location								Demographic Information							
										Age						
	Date	Time of the Day	Store	Typology	Store Atmosphere	Placement	Aisle	Planned? Spontaneous?	Gender	18-25	26-35	36-50	51-65	> 65	Alone? Family? Friends?	Emotional State
		Morning, Lunch Time, Afternoon, End of the Day		Supermarket, Hypermarket, Pet Store, ...	Music, High trafic, Bright, ...	Shelf, Next to the cachier, ...	Pets Zone, Dogs Zone, Healthy Zone, Promotions Zone	Planned, Spontaneous	M, F							Decisive, Normal, Hurry/ Stressed, Relaxed, Tired, Happy/ Energetic...
1																
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																
8																

Evaluation Criteria								Purchase Decision										
										Product Details								
Labelling (Frontside)	Labelling (Backside)	Price*	Promo**	Decision Time (in min)	Changed First Option (Y/N)	Price Comparison (Y/N)	Checked the ingredients (Y/N)	Purchase (Y/N)	Pet (Dog/Cat)	Brand	Product type	Price	Single? Multi Pack?	Quantity	Placement (Top / Middle / Bottom)	Promo Type	Details of Promo	Annotations

Appendix 8: Store Observations: Location details



Appendix 9: Dogs: z-test values

Factor	***z-score***	***p-value***
Teeth Brushing	3.02	.003
Oral Health toys/snacks	2.18	.030
Annual Cleanings	1.65	.099
Social Media	-0.92	.358
Purchased based on Social Media	-0.52	.603
Buy Online	1.92	.055
Buy at Pet Shops	0.41	.682
Buy at Supermarkets	-2.78	.005
Difficulty in choosing brand	-0.56	.575
Artificial	1.92	.055
Healthy	3.45	.011
Brand Recall	0.8	.424
Brand Recognition	0.45	.653
Brand Purchase	-0.22	.826

Appendix 10: Dogs: t-test values

Factor	***t-score***	***p-value***
Quality	-0.11	.46
Brand Reputation	0.82	.21
Ingredients	1.1	.14
Veterinarian Rec.	-1.59	.06
Peer Rec.	-0.37	.36
Spec. Dietary Needs	-1.58	.06
Packaging	0.76	.225
Advertisement	-1.11	.14
Price	2.11	.02

Appendix 11: Dogs: calculations on the t-test of price

Difference Scores Calculations

Treatment 1

N_1: 36
$df_1 = N - 1 = 36 - 1 = 35$
M_1: 3.69
SS_1: 153.64
$s^2_1 = SS_1/(N - 1) = 153.64/(36-1) = 4.39$

Treatment 2

N_2: 16
$df_2 = N - 1 = 16 - 1 = 15$
M_2: 2.5
SS_2: 24
$s^2_2 = SS_2/(N - 1) = 24/(16-1) = 1.6$

T-value Calculation

$s^2_p = ((df_1/(df_1 + df_2)) * s^2_1) + ((df_2/(df_2 + df_2)) * s^2_2) = ((35/50) * 4.39) + ((15/50) * 1.6) = 3.55$

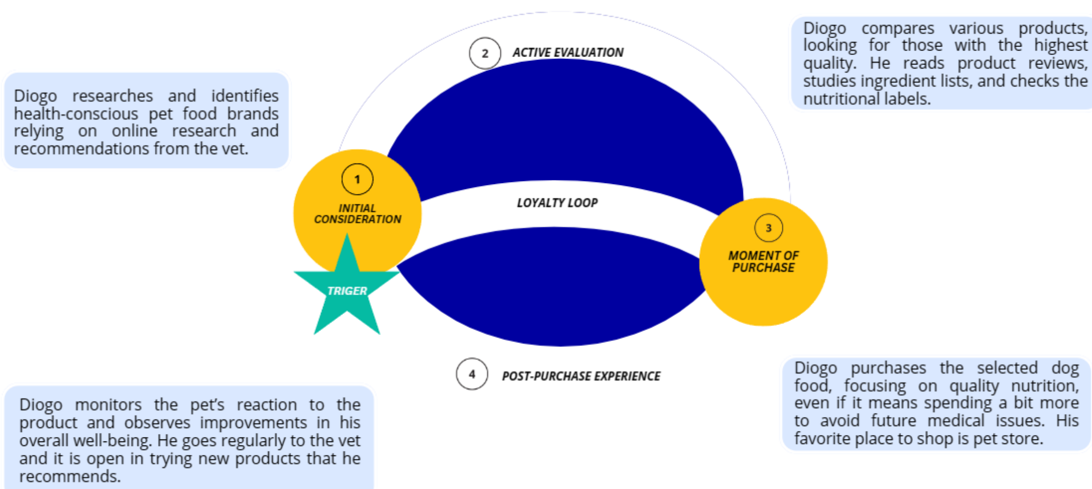
$s^2_{M_1} = s^2_p/N_1 = 3.55/36 = 0.1$
$s^2_{M_2} = s^2_p/N_2 = 3.55/16 = 0.22$

$t = (M_1 - M_2)/\sqrt{(s^2_{M_1} + s^2_{M_2})} = 1.19/\sqrt{0.32} = 2.11$

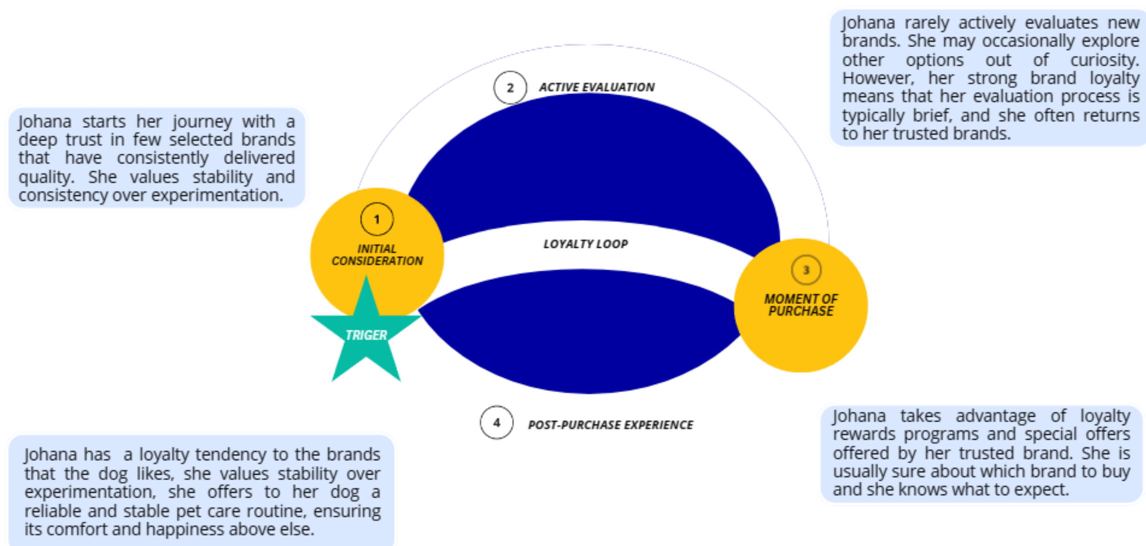
Appendix 12: Brand Recall and Brand Recognition of the most mentioned brands on the survey (new pet parents)

GRAVEYARD MODEL	BRAND RECALL	BRAND RECOGNITION
Royal Canin	64.29%	97.22%
Pedigree	25.00%	86.11%
Purina/purina one	21.43%	69.44%
Friskies	17.86%	33.33%
ACANA	17.86%	22.22%
Libra	14.29%	22.22%
Advance	7.14%	58.33%
activepet	0.00%	50.00%
Marca continente	0.00%	50.00%
PorSi	0.00%	50.00%
Hill's	0.00%	19.44%

Appendix 13: Dogs Consumer Decision Journey: Health-conscious segment



Appendix 14 Dogs Consumer Decision Journey: Brand Loyal segment



Appendix 15: Dogs Consumer Decision Journey: Tight Budget Segment