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Master Degree in Management from the NOVA – School of Business and Economics

The Impact of Cultural Factors on E-Commerce

A study on differences in online wetsuit buyer behavior between Portugal and Italy

in collaboration with SRFACE

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Online buying behavior in Portugal and Italy has been steadily increasing over the past years, fueled by the current global pandemic. This Work Project analyzed the key drivers behind online wetsuit buyer behavior in the two countries and investigated the influence of cultural dimensions on the latter. A comprehensive approach was developed, including a literature review as well as primary qualitative and quantitative research, allowing to understand the key drivers behind the wetsuit buying behavior of Portuguese and Italian surfers in correlation with the respective cultural dimensions. The obtained insights supported SRFACE, a wetsuit company that sells its products exclusively online, in pursuing the objective of increasing its market share in Portugal and Italy. Additionally, the findings emphasized the impact of cultural values on e-commerce, particularly in Portugal and Italy.

Keywords: Marketing Research; E-commerce; Cultural dimensions; Digital; Brand management; Brand strategy

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1. Introduction

Over the past months, the world as we knew it has shifted due to a global pandemic. While several countries enforced temporary strict border controls, a place where such geographic borders and physical contact are rather insignificant has flourished. The internet is booming, and with it, e-commerce. Unable to shop in regular stores, many customers have resorted to ordering online, which has fueled global e-commerce. While the activity of buying or selling products electronically is nothing new - online sales have generally been increasing during the last decade already - there is little current literature on the topic of how the mentioned geographic borders, hence our geographic and cultural background, might impact our online shopping behavior. Since most businesses had to shift towards selling entirely online, this topic is highly relevant.

One company that has been operating exclusively online from the start and has been profiting from the current e-commerce trend is the Dutch-based company SRFACE, which designs and sells neoprene wetsuits for watersports directly to consumers (D2C) through its website. Founded in 2017, the relatively young company established itself on the market by identifying a lack of affordable, yet high-quality wetsuits for surfers and catering directly to that need. Instead of advertising and selling wetsuits in surf shops as most competitors do, SRFACE sells exclusively through its own website and advertises solely online. A marketing strategy of working with surf micro-influencers, localized and targeted paid campaigns on social media and search engines, and reviews and articles published by international and local surf media has so far propelled the company to a 5% market share in The Netherlands (Beens, 2020). Additionally, SRFACE places high emphasis on a “flawless customer experience” and “continuously updated products” (SRFACE, 2021) to reach a market share of 10% by the end of 2022 (Beens, 2020). The latter, set as a goal and researched by M. Beens in his bachelor thesis in 2020, has been exclusively focused on the Dutch market. However, as SRFACE sells

its products Europe-wide, this paper investigates two other countries to which the company is already selling, to explore the key drivers behind online wetsuit buyer behavior to further improve the companies' online marketing strategy. The countries chosen for this research by the company in correspondence with the student are Portugal and Italy. Hence, it is the research objective of this paper, to understand how SRFACE can increase its market share through responding to the key drivers behind online wetsuit buyer behavior in Portugal and Italy, by investigating the key reasons behind the online wetsuit shopping behavior and analyzing the influence of cultural dimensions on the latter (Hofstede, 2001).

Addressing this objective will not only benefit SRFACE through increasing the company's market share in the respective countries but is also a relevant contribution to the scientific community regarding the applicability and relevance of the Hofstede model to today's e-commerce market. A starting point for this research has been a literature review, which is followed by an in-depth analysis with qualitative research methods. Afterwards, a quantitative study contributes to a better understanding of possible improvements for the existing strategy of SRFACE in the researched countries, as well as potentially support the company in future decisions on which geographic areas are most suitable for an expansion due to their cultural profile. During the research process, which has been conducted independently from the company, lasted for four months, and has been part of a remote internship, SRFACE supported the former through regular meetings and feedback on the Work Project. Exchanges between the student and the company have been held through e-mail as well as face-to-face via online video chats and voice calls.

2. Contextual background

The contextual background describes a first outlook on the e-commerce and surf market context in combination with a brief exploration of the potential differences in influential factors and personal values across European countries, in particular of Portugal and Italy. It also considers previous research conducted about SRFACE and data collected by the company itself.

2.1 Online shopping behavior across different European countries

As mentioned in the introduction, online sales have been increasing rapidly over the last decade while there is still an even larger potential for growth in the e-commerce market (Lima et al., 2015). While this finding focused mostly on members from “Gen Y”, people born between the early 1980s and 1990s (Douglas, 2017), the current COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown as well as social distancing mandates have disrupted consumer habits across all age groups (Sheth, 2020). Recent studies agree, that due to offline shopping restrictions new habits have established and will keep evolving even after the pandemic has passed (Sheth, 2020). The increase in online shopping that has been established during the pandemic will become the new normal (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). In addition to the pandemic, not the technological know-how, but rather factors of trust and economic conditions are driving factors for online shopping behavior (Clemons et al., 2016). However, despite this drastic trend towards e-commerce, the underlying, deeply engrained roles of cultural and social norms shaping societal behavior should remain. Therefore, these factors of cultural norms, as well as the level of trust and economic conditions in Portugal and Italy are further examined.

2.2 The European surf market

According to a personal communication with SRFACE, the pandemic appears to have increased wetsuit sales, possibly due to surfing being an individual outdoor sport while it has also been suggested that sports in nature can improve the capacity to cope with fears and anxieties in everyday life (Arnould & Price, 1993; Celsi, Rose & Leigh, 1993). Active surfers

live a unique lifestyle around riding waves, which forms the reputation of an authentic identity of the sport (Reese, 2009). “Surfing; you can’t bottle it, you can’t package it, and it’s not about the money, because you can’t sell what it really is. What it really is, is all the beautiful things that happen to you when you’re riding a wave” (Dixon, 2002). Yet, big surf brands such as Billabong, ROXY, and Rip Curl which produce surf gear and apparel, have created a multi-billion-dollar industry around the sport. Their success began through catering gear solely to active surfers, but their exponential growth has been gained through surf apparel (Reese, 2009). While the big surf brands are struggling today, their initial success has been achieved through “lifestyle branding”, which entails “creating a brand personality and image that's emotional” (Murphy, Karimzadeh, & Wicks, 2007) while complying with core customer values (Hill, 2008), catering to individual perceptions gained from familial, cultural, and societal influences (Michman et al., 2003), and creating trust, which aligns with the previously mentioned finding of Hofstede (2001) and Clemons et al (2016). Consumers want to buy products that realize and display their own personal values (Michman et al., 2003; 5WPR, 2020), which highlights the importance of brands mirroring such values authentically. Regarding the surf industry, such values entail representing a laid-back, counter-cultural lifestyle (Warren & Gibson, 2017). As the mentioned big surf companies expanded rapidly, they began to estrange themselves from the rebellious youth culture which were their core consumers. Since 2013, the brands attempt to reconnect with their origins through several marketing initiatives, sponsorships, and references to their original roots. Despite their efforts, however, new and much smaller surf-related businesses are on the rise, since they are perceived as more ‘authentic’ and represent values of credibility and localism (Sherman, 2014; Warren & Gibson, 2017). Ultimately, the counter-cultural values of surfing appear to favor small, local and authentic brands which reinforce trust and familiarity.

2.3 Differences in personal values across European countries

To understand how SRFACE is currently operating within its most prominent market, The Netherlands, previous research about the company has been considered. The research conducted by M. Beens for his bachelor thesis concluded, that SRFACE should have a broader range of wetsuit products, and place pop-up stores at several surf locations. Beens' findings are a relevant point of reference for this research since it has yet to be understood whether they are applicable across different European countries. As mentioned before, shopping behavior appears to relate to personal values, which might differ due to a variety of cultural backgrounds. A study on the transformation of advertising strategies according to cultural values concerned with the example of Coca-Cola suggests that the company went from a marketing approach of "Think Global, Act Global" to "Think Globally, Act Locally", reflecting a trend of addressing the target audience according to its personal values to increase sales (Zeynalov, 2011). Such values can be related to the native language, various purchase expectations, and living locations through small details such as expressing different emotions through different symbols and colors, as well as broader cultural norms (Talug, 2018). The Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede found substantial differences in such "deep drivers", cultural and social norms shaping societal behavior when comparing different countries. His model, despite receiving some criticism for its simplicity, provides researchers with a universal and repeatedly tested model to potentially analyze the interplay between e-commerce and cultural characteristics (Soares et al., 2007; Taras et al., 2012). Therefore, this model will be explained further in the next section.

2.4 The Hofstede model

The Hofstede dimension theory, first developed in 1980 by the Dutch management researcher Geert Hofstede, is one of the central theories of cross-cultural management studies. Despite its year of origin, Hofstede's theory has persisted in international management and is still applied

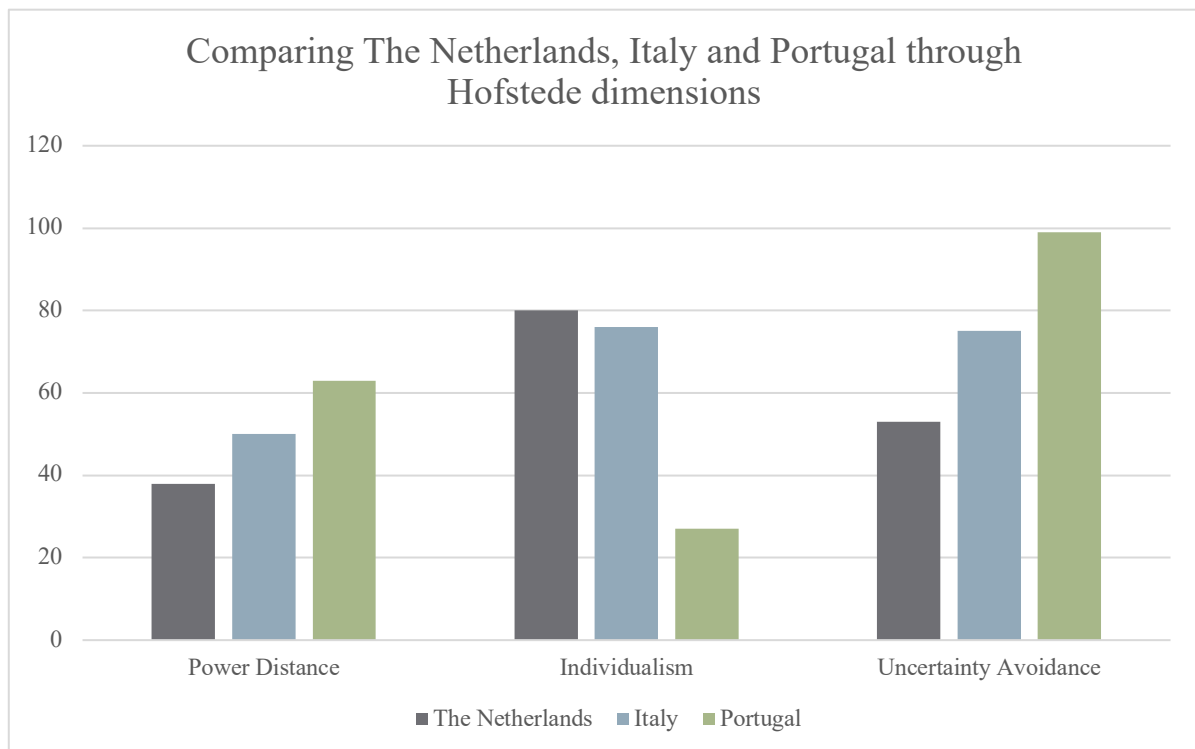
today due to its ability to categorize the complex reality of our social world (Hofstede, 2011; Jackson, 2020). It allows researchers to categorize complex cultural conditions into six categories, called “dimensions”, which make them researchable and applicable. Therefore, to understand how personal values of Italian and Portuguese surfers impact their online wetsuit shopping behavior, it is relevant to apply the Hofstede dimensions. While the updated Hofstede model is structured in six of such cultural dimensions, this research considers the ones that are most relevant to SRFACE’s marketing strategy due to their applicability to e-commerce and the customer’s personal values: Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Those three dimensions are further detailed in table 1 below.

Dimension	Description	Impact
<i>Power Distance Index</i>	“The extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.” (Hofstede Insights, 2021)	This concept is relevant to understand the role of brands in society. In large power distance cultures, a person’s social status must be displayed, so that others can show proper respect (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).
<i>Individualism versus Collectivism</i>	“In individualistic cultures, one’s identity is in the person. People are ‘I’-conscious and self-actualization is important. Individualistic cultures (...) are low-context communication cultures with explicit verbal communication. In collectivistic cultures, people are ‘we’-conscious. Their identity is based on the social system to which they belong.” (Hofstede Insights, 2021)	In the sales process in individualistic cultures, consumers want to get to the point fast, whereas in collectivistic cultures it is necessary to first build a relationship and trust between the parties. This difference is reflected in the different roles of advertising: persuasion versus creating trust (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance Index</i>	“The extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations.” (Hofstede Insights, 2021)	In cultures facilitating high uncertainty avoidance, there is a need for rules and formality to structure life. This translates into the search for truth and a belief in experts. Societies with high uncertainty avoidance are less open to change and innovation than societies of low uncertainty avoidance. This explains differences in the adoption of

		innovations and new brands (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).
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Table 1: Hofstede model explained, based on Hofstede (2001), Hofstede Insights (2021) and De Mooij & Hofstede (2010), compiled by the author

When comparing The Netherlands to Italy and Portugal through a Hofstede model simulator online, accessed through Hofstede Insights (2021), relevant differences become apparent as can be seen in graphic 1.



Graphic 1: Comparing The Netherlands, Italy and Portugal through Hofstede dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2021), compiled by the author

According to this model, Portuguese and Italians score, for example, much higher in Uncertainty Avoidance than the Dutch, meaning that the members of both cultures are far less willing to take risks and emerge themselves in unknown situations than their Dutch counterparts (Hofstede, 2010). Ordering a product online from a foreign brand might be such an uncertain factor, that an investment in a greater product range could not be useful for the Portuguese and Italian markets and a different strategy should be used there.

Of course, such cultural profiling is generalizing a complex context and interplay of various factors, which is a potential counterargument against the use of the former (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017) especially in a relatively small European surf scene. Therefore, it needs to be further researched how applicable a rather general cultural concept is to particular brands and what impact it might have on online shopping behavior across different European countries.

2.5 E-commerce in Portugal

Portugal appears to lack behind in the growth of e-commerce when compared to The Netherlands. Especially the relatively high financial cost of internet access for Portuguese households in combination with a general mistrust in online shopping has been identified as the most relevant factors impeding the regional online shopping behavior (Oliveira et al., 2020). Additionally, Portugal is a relatively small market in general, when compared to other European countries such as Spain for example. In recent years, however, a steady increase in online shopping has been reported (OECD, 2021), underlining a growing interest in online purchasing (Oliveira et al., 2020). On the other hand, a different study suggests that only six percent of all Portuguese enterprises sold products online between 2015 to 2019 and there appears to be no increase (Statista, 2019). However, reports from the Portugal Digital Summit 2020 concluded, that the Covid-19 crisis accelerated digital progress for companies of all sizes in Portugal (ACEPI, 2020). The president and CEO of UNICRE, a Portuguese payment service provider, added that contactless and online payments increased from 6% to 30% within 2020, and Oracle Portugal agreed that even Portuguese companies which did not sell online before transitioned within a few days towards e-commerce as a rapid reaction to the pandemic (ACEPI, 2020). This shows potential for developments in the Portuguese online market (ACEPI, 2013; Netsonda and ACEPI, 2014; Oliveira, 2020). Apart from the logistical aspects of e-commerce in Portugal, a driving reason for hesitation to shop online which is mentioned frequently in numerous articles on the topic is a lack of trust in online vendors due to bad

experiences in the past (Kim et al., 2016; Lee & Rha, 2016, Oliveira, 2017). This finding aligns with a lower individualism/higher collectivism for Portugal, as the Hofstede model suggested. Trust in the context of e-commerce has been defined as “one's attitude of confident expectation regarding an online situation of risk whereby one's vulnerabilities will not be exploited” (Beldad et al., 2010). The latter means the feeling of confidence of the customer towards the online vendor fulfilling its made promises, for example delivering the ordered goods and treating the customers' personal information confidentially. This finding aligns with suggestions of the Hofstede model regarding the relatively high Uncertainty Avoidance in Portugal.

2.6 E-commerce in Italy

According to multiple studies, Italy appears to be one of the fastest-growing e-commerce markets in Western Europe (Ecommerce News Europe, 2018; International Trade Administration, 2020; JP Morgan, 2020). Big online retailers such as Amazon and eBay have designated Italian platforms to meet the growing demand (International Trade Administration, 2020). In the past, similar to Portugal, the volume of Italian e-commerce used to lag behind when compared to other European countries such as The Netherlands. However, a steady growth in online users reported by the OECD is even slightly higher than in Portugal. In the long-term, the Italian e-commerce market is predicted to continue its steady growth and shows potential for international companies (International Trade Administration, 2020; Statista, 2020). Additionally, again similar to Portugal, the Covid-19 pandemic fueled online purchases across the country. However, as Italy has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, high unemployment rates, and a struggling economy are still hindering e-commerce growth today. These developments are leading to Italians seeking purchases from international, more developed e-commerce markets (JP Morgan, 2020), which could be an opportunity for international, well-developed brands such as SRFACE.

Regarding online payment methods, numerous cases of fraud have made Italians skeptical of online transactions, which results in an increased need for “anti-fraud protection measures” during an online buying process (JP Morgan, 2020). The most popular preference for an online payment method amongst Italian shoppers is PayPal with 47%, followed by Debit/credit card with 31%. Important to note in this context is, that the Italian company “CartaSi” is a relevant credit card provider next to “Mastercard” and “Visa” on the Italian market (Ecommerce News Europe, 2018). Apart from the logistical aspects of e-commerce in Italy, there appears to be a lack of recent data concerning the mentioned cultural factors which are driving factors to shop online for the Italian market. Therefore, more research must be conducted to understand the impact of cultural dimensions on the shopping behavior of the relatively small Italian surf scene.

3. Methodology

To understand how SRFACE can increase its market share through responding to the key drivers behind online wetsuit buyer behavior in Portugal and Italy, several research techniques were used to triangulate insights.

1. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews <i>Semi-structured in-depth interviews are relevant to understand the reasons for the decisions that research participants have taken, as well as to understand the reasons for their attitudes and opinions. (Saunders et al., p. 394, 2016)</i>	Details: A total of 28 interviews, 14 per selected country, are conducted remotely via phone or video call. The participants are male and female active surfers, meaning that they have surfed within the past 24 months, who have bought a wetsuit before. Collection period: April 2021 Objective: To identify the key reasons behind the local wetsuit shopping behavior, including the influence of cultural and social norms shaping societal behavior.
2. In-Depth Research Analysis <i>The analysis describes the process in which parts of the collected data are</i>	Details: The interview recordings are partially transcribed, according to their relevance to the research objective. Those transcripts are summarized to generate a structured overview of the main findings. Analysis period: April 2021

<i>condensed, coded and categorized, to group them into themes that provide a structure to make sense of the data, hence find an answer to the research objective. (Saunders et al., p. 569, 2016)</i>	Objective: To lay out the identified key reasons above in a structured manner, to summarize them and provide answers to the research objective.
3. Online Quantitative Questionnaire <i>Questionnaires provide an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample of participants. (Saunders et al., p. 439, 2016)</i>	Details: An online questionnaire is sent out to 275 research participants, which resulted in 68 Italian respondents and 109 Portuguese respondents who match the same target group as the interviewees. Collection period: April 2021 Objective: The questionnaire quantifies the findings which became apparent in the in-depth research analysis, to increase their reliability.

Table 2: Methodology, based on “Research Methods for Business Students” by Saunders et al. (2017), compiled by the author

4. Insights and discussion

Through the previously discussed research methods, several general insights concerning the online wetsuit buyer behavior in both Portugal and Italy as well as certain specific insights that expose differences between the two nationalities became apparent. Additionally, insights on the influence of cultural dimensions according to Hofstede (2001) on the online wetsuit shopping behavior have been validated.

4.1 Differences and similarities based on cultural dimensions

Concerning some of the similarities between Portuguese and Italian surfers’ wetsuit shopping behavior, as well as some differences which became apparent during the research, a relation to the Hofstede model has been laid out below.

Indicator	Hofstede Dimension	Research Results
Brand loyalty	<u>Uncertainty Avoidance</u> Scored relatively high in both Italy and Portugal when compared to The	According to the research results, Italian and Portuguese surfers prefer to buy wetsuits from brands that they know already, from personal experience, or

	Netherlands. Societies with high uncertainty avoidance are less open to change and innovation than societies with low uncertainty avoidance (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).	because others in their community wear them. One 43-year-old Portuguese surfer stated about buying wetsuits from the brand "XCEL": "I get it from around when I was 15 years old. For me, it's the perfect wetsuit" and he would not want to change XCEL for a different brand for any reason (Portuguese male, 43, personal communication, 06.04.2021).
<i>Recommendations of friends and seeing a brand on other surfers</i>	<u>Individualistic versus Collectivistic theory</u> Italy is rather individualistic, comparable to The Netherlands, while Portugal is rather collectivistic. In the sales process in individualistic cultures, consumers want to get to the point fast, whereas in collectivistic cultures it is necessary to first build a relationship and trust between the parties (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).	Both indicators appeared to be significantly more important to Portuguese surfers than their Italian counterparts during the interviews. One Portuguese surfer stated: "Probably the brand I would go for because a lot of my friends have it and they're super happy with it, is Deeply." (Portuguese female, 26, personal communication, 01.04.2021). This could be related to the need for trust in a brand in collectivistic cultures such as Portugal, while Individualistic cultures such as Italians are rather focused on the facts of a product that a brand displays.
<i>Sponsored surfers and wetsuit design</i>	<u>Power Distance</u> Scored particularly high in Portugal when compared to Italy and The Netherlands. In large power distance cultures, a person's social status must be displayed, so that others can show proper respect (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).	While the appearance, either simple and all black or with a certain color and design, was rated to be of medium importance during the survey, it has been mentioned several times during the interviews as being rather important. One Portuguese surfer mentioned regarding the design of the wetsuits: "My favorite surfer is Julian Wilson, John John Florence, Filipe Toledo. All those surfers, also Kolohe Andino, were wearing Hurley. So, I had a boardshorts of Hurley, and I really liked the design of the brand. It looked cool. You want to look as cool as your heroes, you know. You can put a garbage can on your hero, and it looks cool. So, more than the design itself, it's about who wears it."

		(Portuguese male, 43, personal communication, 01.04.2021).
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Table 3: Hofstede dimensions (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010) applied to the research results, compiled by the author

Such a relation between the online wetsuit shopping behavior and the discussed Hofstede dimensions means, that the model is potentially applicable to assess marketing strategies for SRFACE beyond Portugal and Italy. If, for example, the company was to expand to Spain, it could use the Hofstede model as an evaluation tool to understand what characterizes the new market and therefore how it is best approached. While further research is needed to define to what extent these findings apply to other cultures, this research is a first step to validating the models' relevance in two European countries regarding the online shopping behavior of wetsuit buyers, hence e-commerce. Furthermore, this finding underlines the influence of cultural dimensions on the latter, which makes taking it into account a significant part of increasing SRFACE's market share in both Italy and Portugal.

4.2 Tangible wetsuit features and affordability

For both Portuguese and Italian surfers, the most important factor when purchasing their last wetsuit has been identified as the tangible features of the wetsuit and the affordability of the latter. Tangible features define the performance, hence the material, quality, and other related aspects of a wetsuit. Rated as most important by the survey participants were warmth, flexibility, and durability. A full list and rating of these features can be found in the appendix. This insight underlines that the main key driver behind wetsuit buyer behavior in Portugal and Italy is price and performance-related, meaning that no matter how good an online advertisement might look, what ultimately counts as most important is how warm a wetsuit keeps the surfer in the water and how much value the consumer perceives to get for his or her money. But how do Italian and Portuguese surfers know which brand offers the best tangible features for the best price? According to the interviewees, the quality of the wetsuit features is

identified through word-of-mouth: recommendations from friends, a surf shop salesman, a surf teacher, and online reviews. This highlights the importance of building a relationship between a brand and the local surf community, to increase a brands' market share through such word-of-mouth marketing. Concerning the affordability of a wetsuit, one interviewee stated: "I was looking at different brands and prices online. I did not want to spend like 400€ on a suit." (Portuguese female, 26, personal communication, 01.04.2021). In total, a third of all Italian and Portuguese interviewees mentioned that they have bought a specific wetsuit brand because they received a discount deal either through a friend or relative, or a specific discount deal online. Such price sensitivity aligns with findings from the survey, as the availability of a discount deal was rated as more important than most of the intangible features which will be discussed in the next paragraph. Therefore, a new brand entering the Portuguese and Italian wetsuit market must consider pricing and discount deals in comparison to its competitors in addition to building a relationship with the local surf community to increase its market share. Both of these insights represent opportunities for SRFACE and therefore discussed further in the recommendations.

4.3 Intangible wetsuit features

Following the tangible wetsuit features and affordability, both Italian and Portuguese research participants rated some of the intangible features of a wetsuit as the next important aspect when purchasing their last wetsuit. Intangible features describe for example services from the brand as well as their sustainability. A full list of intangible features can be found in the appendix. Summarizing the most relevant findings, the survey found that a free repair service for the wetsuit was the most important intangible feature for both nationalities, which can also be related to sustainability. Sustainability has been repeatedly mentioned during the interviews as a positive aspect of new wetsuit developments and has also been positively associated with SRFACE, which shows that both the Italian and Portuguese surf market has an interest in such

new developments. Therefore, this insight supports SRFACE's current strategy of introducing an "eco wetsuit" which is made of sustainable rubber instead of neoprene and underlines its potential on the two new markets. However, while a free repair service and sustainability appeared to be of similar importance for Portuguese and Italian surfers, other features regarding the shopping experience are also of relevance and will be discussed in the following section.

4.4 The shopping experience

According to the research results, the third important element for both Italian and Portuguese participants' last wetsuit purchase is related to aspects of their shopping experience. While a full list of these aspects can be found in the appendix, the three most relevant ones were to connect with other surfers outside of the water, to feel the material of the wetsuit in a shop to determine its quality and the concern about finding the right size when shopping online.

The former, connecting with other surfers outside the water, has been further described by an Italian surfer: "I like to visit the surf shop. I used to go there after school to hang out and go skating. It's cool because it's kind of, you know, what's around the surf world, the surf culture. If you order something online, it's just boring (laughs)." (Italian male, 36, personal communication, 04.04.2021). Again, this highlights the importance of building a relationship between a brand and the local surf community, possibly through events or other initiatives which are further explored in the recommendations. Such events or initiatives can also be combined with an opportunity for potential customers to feel the material of the wetsuit and to determine the right size, as the importance of those two aspects has also been highlighted by the research participants. Ultimately, all the mentioned three aspects can also be described as fears and barriers when transitioning from shopping offline to shopping online. Overcoming these should therefore be an essential part of increasing the market share of SRFACE in both countries.

One other element regarding the shopping experience that has been considered during the survey was where participants bought their last wetsuit, either in a shop or online, and whether this is related to the distance of their living location to the closest surf shop. According to the results of a contingency analysis which can also be found in the appendix, H_0 has been rejected with a significance of 0.95, meaning that how close the participants in both Italy and Portugal live to a surf shop has no impact on whether they bought their last wetsuit online or in a shop. Therefore, the proximity of living to a surf shop cannot be considered as a key reason behind the online wetsuit shopping behavior.

4.5 Impressions of SRFACE

Finally, the feedback through the forced questions towards the end of the interviews as well as direct questions during the survey produced insights directly related to SRFACE. More than a third of all research participants had heard of SRFACE before and the majority of them stated that they had not bought a wetsuit from the brand yet because they “did currently not need a new wetsuit”. This is profoundly positive feedback for the brand since it shows that most people that had heard of SRFACE are compelled to try the brand if they would need a new wetsuit, hence underlining the potential of the Portuguese and Italian market. An overview of how those participants have heard of SRFACE can be found in the appendix.

Concerning the research participants who had never heard of SRFACE, the overall response to the screenshots of the website and the video, as seen in appendix A.1., have been positive, too. Especially the quality and design of the wetsuit were rated repeatedly as looking “really good, very high quality” (Italian male, 46, personal communication, 09.04.2021), which has been confirmed by the findings of the survey as can be seen illustrated in the appendix. The price of the wetsuits was a “wow” factor and perceived as “amazing” (Italian male, 36, personal communication, 09.04.2021), while the sustainability and eco-consciousness of SRFACE were also liked by several interviewees and survey participants. As these points align with several

of the previously described most important aspects when purchasing a wetsuit, SRFACE appears to have a good initial positioning for both the Italian and Portuguese wetsuit market. However, most interviewees who saw SRFACE during the research for the first time stated that they would not buy a wetsuit from the brand because they did not know anyone who wears it, which aligns with the relatively high Uncertainty Avoidance in both Italy and Portugal. Additionally, some Portuguese interviewees stated that the website looks “anonymous” since they did not see an actual person wearing the wetsuit on neither the landing page nor in the video, which again aligns with the insight that Portugal is a rather collectivistic culture. Accordingly, the video shown in the survey has been changed to a clip showing more people which resulted in the majority of both Italian and Portuguese survey participants being interested in buying the wetsuit. This is a highly relevant insight for further recommendations on the design of online advertising to increase SRFACE’s market share, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Furthermore, regarding the direct feedback on SRFACE, most research participants of both nationalities emphasized that they would like to feel the wetsuit material of SRFACE to assess the quality themselves, which aligns with the previous general finding and highlights its importance. Additionally, aligning with another previous finding on the price sensitivity in combination with Uncertainty Avoidance, particularly the Portuguese surfers emphasized the comparison of SRFACE to Deeply during the interviews and preferred the latter due to “knowing the brand already” (Portuguese female, 26, personal communication, 01.04.2021) and getting it at a similar price point. Therefore, the pertinence of Deeply as the most relevant competitor of SRFACE in Portugal must be considered when recommending a strategy in the next chapter.

Another interesting insight that arose from the interviews regarding SRFACE confirmed the impact of a higher Power Distance, hence the need to display one’s status, in Portugal: "My

impression (of SRFACE) is that it's a good idea and a good product, not so much for the hard-core surfer like me, but for the intermediate surfer that doesn't want to spend that much money on a wetsuit and that is probably not as aware of the surf industry and the surfers. He just wants to go out and surf and is not that interested in surf culture. I prefer to go to the top-of-the-line wetsuits, and I don't know if these are top-of-the-line wetsuits because I don't see top-of-the-line surfers using these wetsuits. They are not formula 1 quality. If Filipe Toledo was wearing it, I guarantee you that I would go to the store, I would look at it, I would try it on, and then it would have caught my attention.” (Portuguese male, 37, personal communication, 01.04.2021). This insight underlines the Power Distance as one of the key drivers behind online wetsuit buyer behavior in Portugal.

Lastly, for the majority of both Italian and Portuguese surfers, the introduction of the 30-day trial opportunity with SRFACE was either a game-changer or increased their interest to buy a wetsuit from the brand. A visualization of the responses can be found in the appendix. As this was neither directly visible on the screenshots of the landing page, nor in either of the videos, the information was given at a later stage during the interviews and survey. It made SRFACE immediately more “interesting”, as the regular wetsuit buying process entails the risk of not knowing how a suit will perform in the water (Italian male, 24, personal communication, 11.04.2021). Therefore, this aspect has also been considered during the recommendations.

4.6 SWOT analysis

To summarize the overall impact of the insights on the research objective of increasing SRFACE's market share in Portugal (PT) and Italy (IT) through responding to the key drivers behind online wetsuit buyer behavior, the latter are laid out in a SWOT analysis. The insights apply to both countries unless indicated otherwise, according to varying cultural influences.

<i>Helpful</i> <i>to achieving the objective</i>	<i>Harmful</i> <i>to achieving the objective</i>
Strengths • SRFACE’s mission “the ultimate wetsuit made affordable”: high quality for an affordable price • Sustainability: eco-wetsuits and limestone neoprene • 30-day trial opportunity • No correlation between proximity to a surf shop and online shopping behavior	Weaknesses • People want to “feel the material” in-person to determine the quality and therefore prefer offline shopping • SRFACE’s advertisements have been perceived as “anonymous”, especially in PT • People do not know anyone who wears SRFACE in their community, hence do not trust the brand and prefer one they know, which is related to a high Uncertainty Avoidance in IT and PT, and Collectivism particularly in PT
Opportunities • Building a relationship, hence trust, with local surf communities • Offering discount deals • Offering a free repair service • Creating advertisements in which people are wearing the wetsuit, to allow potential customers to see it on others • Highlighting the 30-day trial	Threats • Competitors, particularly “Deeply” in PT • Brand loyalty to other brands • Concern of customers about finding the right size online • Online shopping does not allow to “connect with other surfers outside of the water” during the shopping experience • High Power Distance cultures such as PT want to display their status, hence wear the same as professional surfers, which SRFACE is currently not focusing on

Table 4: SWOT analysis of the research findings, compiled by the author

4.7 Limitations

The main limitations during the overall research process were the time frame, number of research participants, and the language in which the research has been conducted. As the time frame for this paper was set to be four months, a limited number of members of the target group was researched. The distribution method led to a total of 97 out of 275 respondents of the survey not fitting into the target group criteria, which therefore could not be considered for this research. This particularly affected the number of Italian survey respondents, which led to a relatively small Italian sample of only 68 survey responses. Due to the combination of a small

Italian surf scene, when compared to the Portuguese, with the time frame of the research it has not been possible to gather more Italian responses. Additionally, the research has been conducted in English, which might have caused some Italian and Portuguese surfers not participating due to the language barrier.

5. Recommendations

This final chapter suggests strategic recommendations which elaborate on interventions needed to meet the goals of SRFACE. Upon assessing the key reasons behind the online wetsuit shopping behavior and analyzing the influence of cultural dimensions on the latter through the research insights with regards to the objective to increase SRFACE's market share in Portugal and Italy, several major opportunities are considered. The latter are an essential part of meeting SRFACE's objective, according to the research results. As the recommendations address multiple cultural dimensions as well as threats and weaknesses at once, the recommendations are made for both the Italian and Portuguese market unless indicated otherwise.

5.1 30-day trial

As the insights revealed that a 30-day trial is a unique selling point for SRFACE, especially when compared to competitors such as Deeply, it is recommended that the company highlights this feature directly in online advertisements and on the website to increase its market share in Portugal and Italy. This can also increase trust in the brand, hence tackle the impact of a relatively high Uncertainty Avoidance in both countries, as it allows customers to avoid the risk of not being able to test the wetsuit in the water.

5.2 Relationship with local surf communities

According to the research and confirmed insights from the Hofstede model, Portuguese and Italian surfers prefer brands that they know either through personal experience or because they know someone within their local community who wears the brand. Particularly in Portugal, it

is also important what other surfers in the community wear according to the collectivistic culture. Additionally, the quality of the wetsuit features, which is a strength of SRFACE, is identified mostly through word-of-mouth in both countries. Therefore, building a relationship with local surf communities is an important factor to increase SRFACE's market share in Portugal and Italy. Such a relationship can be established through online influencer marketing. According to several studies on the latter, consumers perceive influencer marketing as more organic, authentic, and trustworthy while feeling a personal connection with the influencer, which is comparable to the level of trust they hold for their friends (Swant, 2016). Particularly "micro-influencers", social media personalities with a relatively small number of followers who are locally involved in the Portuguese and Italian surf scene, could be most beneficial in that respect as they are a direct part of the community and perceived as more relatable and honest (Kay et al., 2020).

5.3 Local events

In addition to the previously discussed influencer marketing, holding local events in combination with a pop-up store or van at surf spots can support the relationship with the local surf community, while also addressing threats and weaknesses. As discussed in the insights, Portuguese and Italian surfers enjoy connecting with other surfers outside of the water and want to feel the material of a wetsuit in person to determine its quality, while also being concerned about finding the right size. Therefore, holding local events at surf spots in combination with the opportunity for people to feel and try SRFACE wetsuits would have a positive impact on SRFACE's market share in Portugal and Italy.

5.4 Free repair service

As a free repair service has been rated as the most important intangible feature when purchasing a wetsuit by both Italian and Portuguese surfers while also supporting sustainability since it is better for the environment to fix a wetsuit rather than replace it, it is recommended that

SRFACE introduces the former. Such a free repair service also aligns with the company's mission to "surf consciously" (SRFACE, 2021). It should be highlighted on the website and through influencers. Additionally, such a repair service could be a part of local events and could also be open to wetsuits from other brands to underline the company's mission.

5.5 Discount deals

A threat to SRFACE's objective that became apparent through the research is related to the price sensitivity in Portugal and Italy. While SRFACE does offer an affordable price already, several participants stated that they bought a certain brand due to the availability of discount deals. Additionally, SRFACE's most relevant competitor in Portugal offers such discount deals on several occasions each year. Therefore, offering discount deals for SRFACE, which could be combined with the micro-influencer approach through discount codes, could be an interesting aspect for the company to increase its market share especially in Portugal but also in Italy.

5.6 Advertisement design

Finally, an important insight that concerned the advertisement design of SRFACE's online marketing became apparent. While the video which was shown during the interviews featured no people wearing the wetsuit and resulted in participants being hesitant about purchasing the latter, the video which was shown during the survey and did feature people wearing and surfing in the wetsuit has been perceived much more positively by both Italian and Portuguese participants. Therefore, this is an important aspect to keep in mind when designing advertisements for the Portuguese and Italian markets. Especially in Portugal, aligning with the cultural dimension of Power Distance according to Hofstede, the positive impact of such advertisements can be increased by involving professional surfers in the videos and images.

6. Conclusion

The conducted research has shown that the key drivers behind online wetsuit shopping behavior in Portugal and Italy are, amongst other features, influenced by cultural values. Thereby, the findings confirm that parts of the Hofstede dimension theory are applicable to e-commerce, particularly to the online wetsuit shopping behavior in Italy and Portugal. This indicates the relevance of the Hofstede model for further research on online buying behavior in other countries, as well as emphasizes its importance for marketing strategies of brands such as SRFACE especially in times of an increasing e-commerce market.

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A Work Project presented as part of the requirements for the Award of an International
Master Degree in Management from the NOVA – School of Business and Economics

The Impact of Cultural Factors on E-Commerce

A study on differences in online wetsuit buyer behavior between Portugal and Italy

in collaboration with SRFACE

APPENDICES

Antonia Hinz, 43346

A Project carried out on the International Master in Management Program,

under the supervision of:

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20.05.2021

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Section A: Methodology Appendices

A.1. Interview guide with surfers in Portugal / Italy

Pre-Recruiting Criteria:

- Have you been living permanently in Portugal/Italy during the past five years? (Yes → continue; No → thank you for your participation)
- Have you gone surfing in the past 24 months? (Yes → continue; No → thank you for your participation)
- Have you purchased a wetsuit in the past three years? (Yes → continue; No → thank you for your participation)
- Are you currently sponsored by any wetsuit brand? (No → continue; Yes → thank you for your participation)
- Which of the brands listed below **do you know at least by name** and from which of the brands listed below have you **purchased a wetsuit**?

Brand	Know by name (x)	Purchased a wetsuit from (x)
 GlideSoul		
 VOLCOM		
 VANS		
 Rhythm.		

QUIKSILVER 		
SRF ACE		
Hurley)(		
patagonia		
need essentials		
 TRIBORD DESIGNED BY WATER  OLAIAN WAVE IT EASY		
JANGA		
 MADNESS		
tiki		
JOBE 		
 RIP CURL		
ZZ BILLABONG.		
 ROXY		
 O'NEILL		
WILDSUITS		

		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
<i>Other (please specify)</i>		

Table 1: Extended wetsuit brand list, compiled by the author

- Are you willing to be contacted for a short interview by video or voice call?
(→ Leave contact info please: insert e-mail/phone number)

Interview Introduction: “Hello, I am Antonia Hinz and I am a master’s student at the Nova SBE in Lisbon. Thank you for agreeing to this interview today. Your answers help me to understand the impact of cultural factors on e-commerce, particularly in the local surf scene, about which I am writing my master thesis. The interview structure might seem slightly unusual to you. I will ask you one open question in the beginning, and then you can tell me whatever comes to your mind about the topic. There are no right or wrong answers, please add anything that comes to your mind on the subject. I am curious to hear as much as possible about your personal perspective on the topic. In total, our interview will last for about half an hour to 45 minutes, and I will record it for research purposes. I hope that is okay with you.”

Opening question: Tell me about the last time you purchased a wetsuit. Which brand did you buy and why?

Topics	Sub-Topics	
General Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior and Prospective Purchase Decisions (Cham et al., 2018; Victor et al., 2018)	• Shopping experience • Pricing • Word of mouth • Competitors • Brand image • Perceived product quality	
Influence of Surf Culture	• Perception of the local surf scene • Connection with other surfers • Prominence of certain surf brands • Importance of environmental impact/sustainability	
Online versus Offline Shopping Behavior	• Fears and barriers when shopping online/offline • Advantages of shopping online/offline • Frequency of purchasing online/offline • Perceived trustworthiness of online/offline shops • Preference for certain payment methods	
	<i>Power Distance Index</i>	• Importance of visible design features

Hofstede Dimensions	<i>Individualism versus Collectivism</i>	• Tendency of buying from a trusted source versus being persuaded by new information • Amount of time spent researching before a purchase
	<i>Uncertainty Avoidance Index</i>	• Belief in experts • Openness to change and innovation
	<i>Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Normative Orientation</i>	• Relevance of traditions • Tendency to invest in the future, through higher quality and long-lasting products
	<i>Indulgence versus Restraint</i>	• Importance of leisure and fun in everyday life

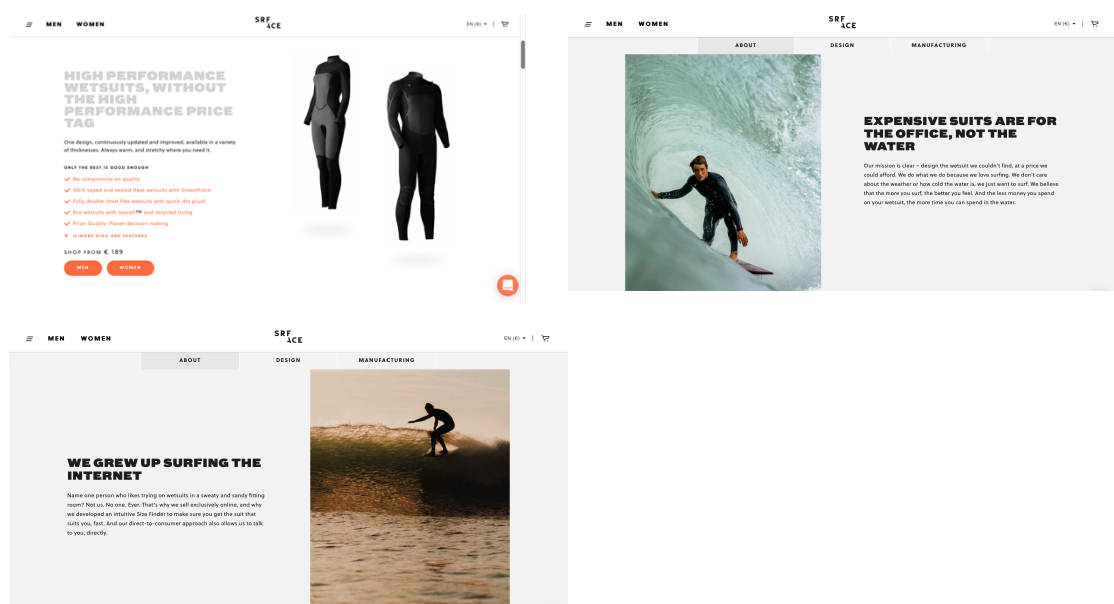
Table 2: Topics and Sub-Topics, compiled by the author

Forced questions:

- Do you know this brand?

→ show short video and images of SRFACE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72jNhO-HTcU>



Screenshots retrieved on 23.03.2021 from <https://srface.com>, compiled by the author

What do you think about it? Why would or wouldn't you buy a wetsuit from this brand online?

- How do you usually access the internet?

Respondent's profile

Factor	Category
Gender	Male/Female/Divers male
Age	(insert number)
Living location	(insert town/city)
Occupation	(insert short text)
Highest level of formal education	Primary/Secondary/Bachelor's degree/Master's degree/Doctoral degree
Proximity to surf shop(s)	(insert km number)
Activity on social media	Several times a day/About once a day/Several times a week/About once a week/Once every few weeks/Less often/Never

Table 3: Respondent's profile, compiled by the author

A.2. Online questionnaire

Part 1: Introduction

Hi there,

by filling in this survey you can win a (discount/wetsuit/etc.) while also contributing to valuable research on the influence of cultural factors on e-commerce. Yay!

Please also share this survey with your Portuguese and Italian friends to give them a chance to win as well! Your answers will be used anonymously for research purposes by Antonia Hinz, a master's student at the NOVA SBE in Lisbon. Thank you for participating!

1. Are you of Portuguese or Italian nationality?
 - a. Yes, Italian
 - b. Yes, Portuguese
 - c. No (→ Thank you for your participation. Unfortunately, your profile does not match with our target group for this survey.)
2. Have you gone surfing in the past 24 months?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (→ Thank you for your participation. Unfortunately, your profile does not match with our target group for this survey.)
3. Have you purchased a wetsuit in the past three years?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (→ Thank you for your participation. Unfortunately, your profile does not match with our target group for this survey.)
4. Are you currently sponsored by any wetsuit brand?
 - a. Yes (→ Thank you for your participation. Unfortunately, your profile does not match with our target group for this survey.)
 - b. No

Part 2: Concerning the last wetsuit purchase

CONCERNING YOUR LAST WETSUIT PURCHASE

5. Please think of the last time you purchased a wetsuit. How important were the following criteria for the choice of the wetsuit brand?

Please rate their importance on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (very important).

The following statements have a scale from 1 to 7 beneath each of them in the online survey.

- The wetsuit keeps me warm.
- The wetsuit is flexible.
- The wetsuit is durable and will last for at least more than one year.
- The wetsuit dries quickly.
- The seams are glued / fully taped.
- The outside seams are taped with liquid seams.
- The “smooth skin”, a windbreaker shield, on the front and back.
- The seams are double stitched.
- The wetsuit has a “plush” material inside.
- The wetsuit is made of more eco-conscious materials, such as Limestone neoprene.
- The wetsuit is made of sustainable materials, such as the natural rubber “Yulex”.
- The wetsuit has a front zip (if applicable).
- The wetsuit has a back zip (if applicable).
- The wetsuit is zipless (if applicable).
- The wetsuit is affordable in terms of pricing.
- The wetsuit has better technical features than other brands.
- Whether or not there is a discount deal available for the wetsuit.

- Whether or not I get a discount through a friend or relative of mine.
- The wetsuit is from the same brand which I always buy my wetsuits from (if applicable).
- Whether or not my friends recommended this brand (if applicable).
- Whether or not the surf shop salesman recommended this brand (if applicable).
- Whether the wetsuit received positive or negative online reviews (if applicable).
- My previous personal experience with the brand (if applicable).
- I have seen the wetsuit brand multiple times, prior to the purchase.
- I like the advertisements of the wetsuit brand.
- The environmental impact of the packaging and shipping process of the wetsuit (if applicable).
- The extraordinary design of the wetsuit (colors/patterns).
- The simple design of the wetsuit (all black).
- Whether or not my friends wear the same brand.
- I like the surfers that this brand sponsored at the time.
- The wetsuit looks similar to the other surfers' wetsuits in the line-up.
- The wetsuit looks different to the other surfers' wetsuits in the line-up.
- The brand is well accepted in my local surf scene.
- The option to try the wetsuit it on in a shop, to see if it fits.
- The option to feel the wetsuit material in a shop, to feel the quality.
- The option to buy the wetsuit locally to support a surf shop.
- I like the surf videos/movies that the wetsuit brand produced/sponsored at the time.
- I could easily find the most important technical details about the wetsuit by myself, for example online or in an advertisement.

- My favorite professional surfer wears the same brand.
- The brand had the best materials and newest wetsuit technology at the time.
- I could use my preferred payment method for the purchase.
- Being able to test the wetsuit while surfing.
- Having a free repair service available.
- Seeing the wetsuit brand on other surfers online, through images and/or videos.
- Other: _____

Part 3: Concerning cultural factors IN GENERAL (according to the Hofstede dimensions)

6. Please rate the following statements according to the extent they apply to you, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely).

The following statements have a scale from 1 to 7 beneath each of them in the online survey.

- I enjoy connecting with other surfers outside of the water.
- It is important to me to support the local surf shop(s).
- I order various items online regularly.
- When ordering online, I am concerned about not being able to find the right size (if applicable).
- My local surf community is important to me.
- I enjoy reading offline surf magazines regularly.
- I do like to shop online in general.
- Leisure and fun are important to me.
- I use social media multiple times per day.

- I enjoy following my favorite professional surfer(s) online.
- I regularly read surf blogs and online surf magazines.

How often have you ordered surf related products online in the past 24 months?

(Drop down menu)

Part 4: Questions related directly to SRFACE

7. Have you ever heard of the wetsuit brand SRFACE before?

- a. Yes (Continue to question 8)
- b. No (continue to question 12)

8. How have you heard of SRFACE?

- a. Through a friend
- b. Social Media advertisement
- c. Saw it on other people while surfing
- d. Saw it on a surfer I follow online
- e. Saw it in a surf magazine/blog/website
- f. Saw it in an online advertisement
- g. Other:

9. Have you ever bought a wetsuit from SRFACE?

- a. Yes (Continue to question 11)
- b. No (Continue to question 10)

10. Since you indicated “No” in the last question, why not? You can indicate as many reasons as you like.

- a. I did not need a new wetsuit.
- b. SRFACE was too expensive.
- c. None of my friends wear this brand.
- d. I don’t know whether I can trust this brand or not.
- e. None of the professional surfers I know wear this brand.
- f. I don’t think that SRFACE produces high quality wetsuits.
- g. I did not like the design (appearance) of the wetsuits.
- h. I was not sure about finding the right size for me.
- i. I did not want to order a wetsuit online, but rather buy it in a shop.
- j. I have been using a different wetsuit brand, and do not want to change.
- k. I did not like the advertisements of SRFACE.
- l. Other...

11. Since you indicated “Yes” in the last question, why did you decide to buy a wetsuit from SRFACE in particular? You can indicate as many reasons as you like.

- a. A friend recommended the brand to me.
- b. I saw SRFACE online on social media and liked their internet appearance.
- c. The online recommendations convinced me.
- d. I received a discount code.
- e. SRFACE was cheaper than the competitors for the value I got.
- f. One or more surfers that I follow online wear the brand as well.
- g. I liked the design (appearance) of the brand.
- h. The 30-day trial opportunity convinced me.
- i. I liked that I could order the wetsuit online and try it on at home, rather than buy it in a shop.
- j. The sizing of SRFACE suited me better than from other brands.
- k. I have seen the brand on other surfers in the water.
- l. I wanted to try a new, innovative wetsuit brand that I did not know before.
- m. Other...

Continue to part 5.

12. (Insert SFRACE video “<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdYTEEI9QJw>” & website screenshots from A.1) What is your first impression of the wetsuit shown in the video and on the website? You can indicate multiple answers below.

- a. It looks like a high-quality wetsuit.
- b. I like the design (appearance) of the wetsuit.
- c. I would like to know how the wetsuit looks on a person.
- d. I do not like the design (appearance) of the wetsuit.
- e. I would be interested to buy this wetsuit.

- f. I am not interested to buy this wetsuit.
- g. The price of the wetsuit is appropriate.
- h. This is a wetsuit for beginner/intermediate surfers, but not for advanced surfers.
- i. I would want to feel the material and try this wetsuit on in a store.
- j. The wetsuit is too expensive.
- k. If a friend of mine would wear this wetsuit and be happy with it, I would try it, too.
- l. If there were more online reviews, I might try the wetsuit, too.
- m. If a professional surfer was wearing this wetsuit, I might try the wetsuit, too.
- n. Other:

13. The wetsuit brand SRFACE sells their products exclusively online, but offers a 30-day trial period, meaning that you can test the wetsuit you saw in the video for 30 days even while surfing in the water. If you do not like the wetsuit for any reason, you can return it for free and get a full refund.

- a. That is a game-changer. I was not interested before, but now I would consider buying the wetsuit due to the 30-day-trial opportunity.
- b. I was already interested to buy the wetsuit after seeing the video and website.
- c. I am still not interested to buy this wetsuit for various reasons.
- d. Other:

Part 5: Respondent's profile

14. What is your age?

a. (Dropdown Menu)

8. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Non-binary
- d. Prefer not to say

9. How long have you been surfing?

- a. Less than one year
- b. 1 to 2 years
- c. 3 to 4 years
- d. 5 to 10 years
- e. More than 10 years

10. How would you rate your surf level?

- a. Beginner – I catch whitewater and/or am beginning to catch green waves.
- b. Intermediate – I am doing simple turns and reading the ocean to understand the conditions.
- c. Advanced Intermediate – I am doing advanced maneuvers (e.g. snaps, cutbacks, barrels, nose riding) and am confident in most conditions.
- d. Pro – I compete nationally or make a living of surfing.

11. Where did you purchase your last wetsuit?

- a. Online
- b. In a shop
- c. In an outlet
- d. Through a friend
- e. It was a gift
- f. Second hand
- g. Other:

12. From which brand did you purchase your last wetsuit?

Please indicate the brand below. (Insert *Table 1: Extended wetsuit brand list*)

13. How far away do you live from the closest surf shop in kilometers approximately?

- a. Walking distance
- b. Less than 5km
- c. 6 – 10km
- d. 10 – 15 km
- e. 16 – 20 km
- f. 21 – 30 km
- g. 30 – 40 km

- h. 41 – 50 km
- i. More than 50 km

Part 5: End of the survey

Thank you so much for your participation! (*IF APPLICABLE*: To enter for a chance to win a (discount/wetsuit/etc.), please leave your e-mail address below. It will neither be directly associated with your answers, nor used for marketing purposes.

A.3. Survey feedback

Francisco (PT): “Hey. So, I already answered the survey, and it took me 13 minutes to do everything. Regarding the questions, they were super clear and easy to understand. The survey format was super cool and not boring at all.

The questions made sense and were all topics of concern when buying an wetsuit. I liked how the topics are different, it’s not just about quality and price but also the experience, the store, the reviews, the surfers that represent the brand...

I really liked the video as well as it appears that the wetsuit is comfortable and warm. As for the surfing in the video, maybe if the waves were better and with better surfing it would improve even more the idea of performance for the wetsuit.

I hope this helps.”

Alberto (IT): “Nice Survey. About the question with “The wetsuit has a “plush” material inside”, maybe add a photo because some people might not know what you mean. About “What

factor did you consider when you bought your last wetsuit”, people can forget that topic because there are so many questions. Maybe repeat that in between.

Number 19, idea: for kids wetsuits especially give a discount if old one is brought back

Number 23, question might need to be rephrased because it was a little confusing

Number 34, define “accepted”, I was not sure what you mean by that”

Gwinny (PT): “Took 10minutes. Questions were clear, all good, did not have any questions about it.”

Goncalo (PT): “I would say that I took more than 7 minutes but I don’t know precisely. Yeah the questions were clear I just felt like some questions were kinda duplicate or at least “asking the same thing”. I think most stuff you were able to cover 🙌🙌”

Tiago (PT): ”It was a bit confusing, some questions seemed like were double like same meaning, different question. But it was okay, I answered everything. I’m not sure how long I needed. Maybe around 10 minutes.”

Sophie (PT): “I think it’s very complete. The only think that I thought “oh there’s no the answer I’ll pick” is the one after you show your add. In this case my experience was: I learn something more with every question little by little, I started to be really interested about the wetstuit, I see the ad and I am impressed. Then your question about the 30 days trial comes and I am VERY interested at this point. But couldn’t find the answer that would fit my current thoughts: I really like the wetsuit and I am interested and after this offering I am more convinced in giving in a try. Maybe you included and I didn’t properly capture the meaning

but that was my only comment. I hope it helps!! I think it's very complete and fun to navigate. I LOVED the motivational hints throughout the survey, it feels personal and engaging - never thought about that but it's very important to connect with the respondent on a deeper level. I have forwarded it to surfers Italian friends"

Gianmarco (IT): "Hi, I just finished. It was quick and easy, getting completely the thoughts and feelings behind the wetsuit's choice. Didn't understand actually how to share the survey."

Francesca (IT): "Just did the survey, I think it was very clear and I could understand where you were going with the research. It's clear, the purpose of the research, easy to understand of course. And how long I needed: I would say like 10 minutes more or less. It's a bit long for a normal survey, a normal survey would take like 8 minutes. And also seeing the number of the questions below was like "oh my god", 72 questions. (laughs) So, that was my first impression. But apart from that it was very clear and the questions were interesting. Also the information you provided about the brand you work for, cool."

Roberto (IT): "It took me like 10 minutes to finish the survey and everything was clear. I don't think there was anything missing."

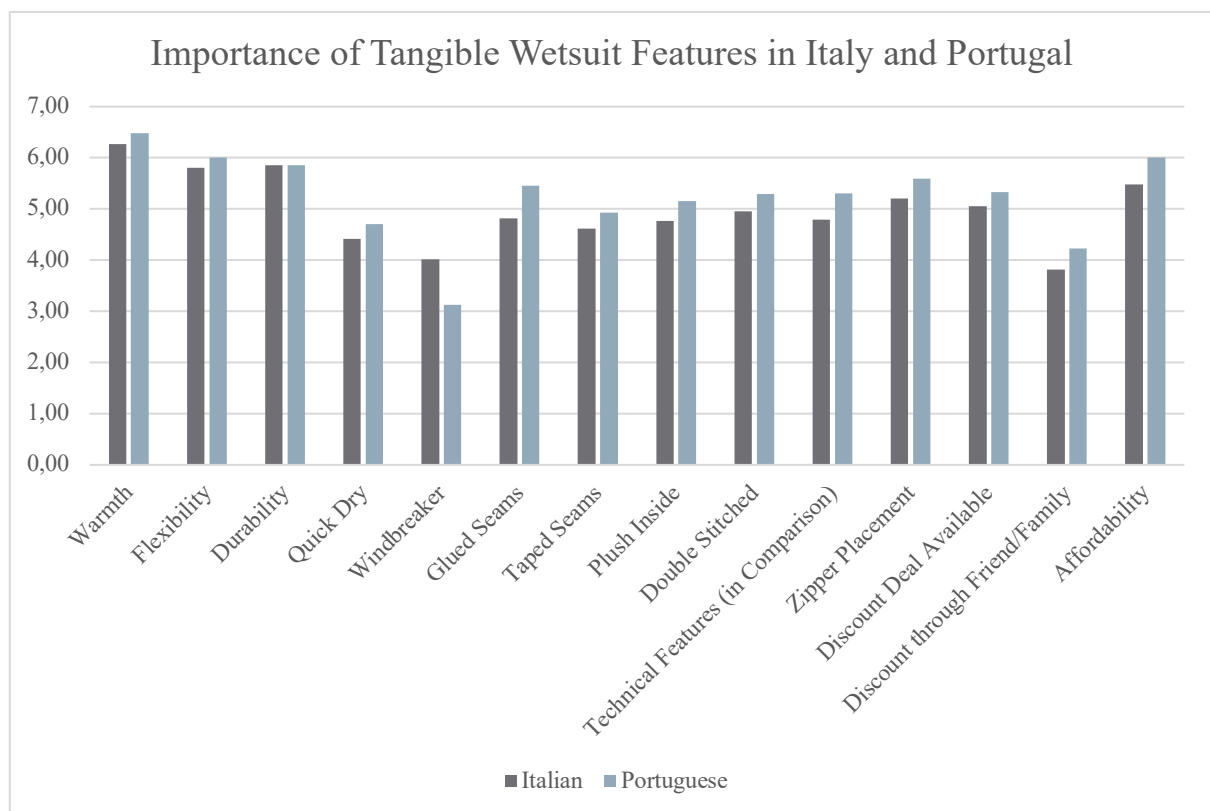
Maria (PT): "Hello! For sure the survey was interesting with the wetsuit brand. I think it was very easy to understand. For the time it took me like 12 minutes. I don't think there was anything missing, you really covered like everything, and I also liked that there were some pictures in the questions and you used like motivation in between. 😊"

After the feedback has been incorporated where necessary, the survey has been sent out to more than 200 research participants, as can be derived from the methodology.

Section B: Survey Appendices

B.1. List of importance of tangible wetsuit features in Italy and Portugal

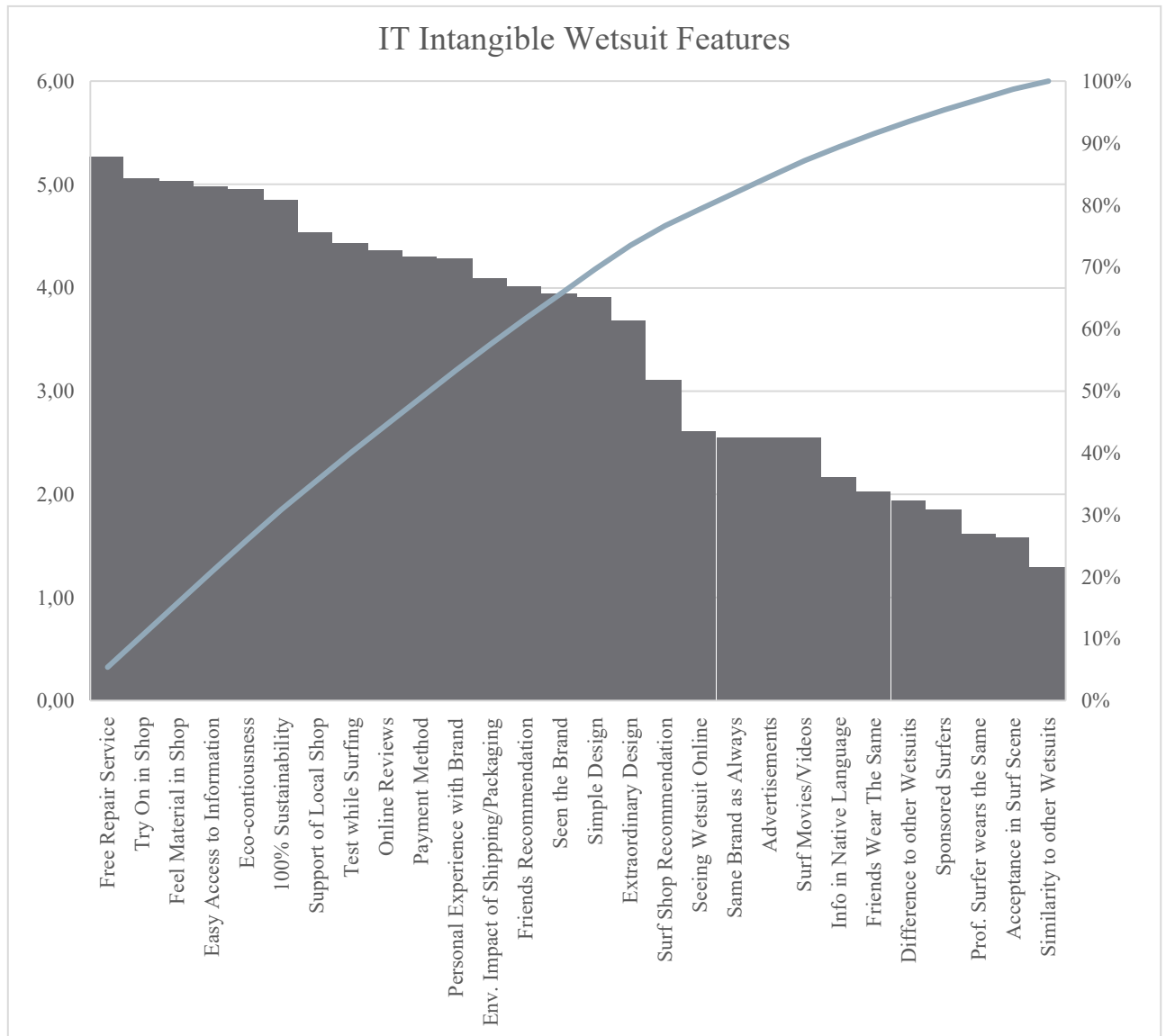
Survey participants were able to rate the wetsuit features on a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 7 (very important). The average of the tangible wetsuit features was 4.99 in Italy and 5.25 in Portugal, making them the most important features when purchasing a wetsuit.

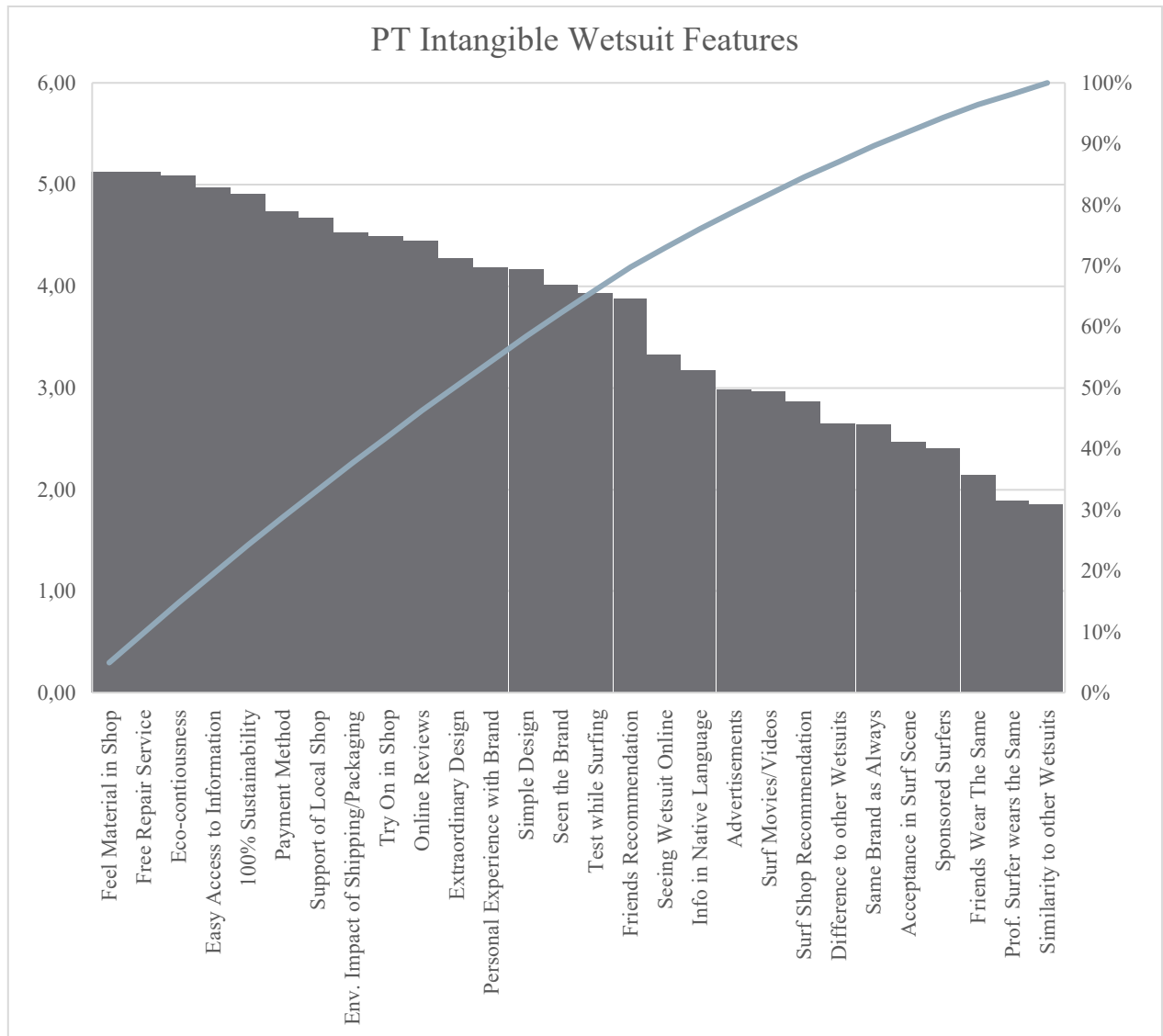


B.2. Lists of importance of intangible wetsuit features in Italy and Portugal

Again, Italian (IT) and Portuguese (PT) survey participants were able to rate the importance of the intangible wetsuit features on a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 7 (very important).

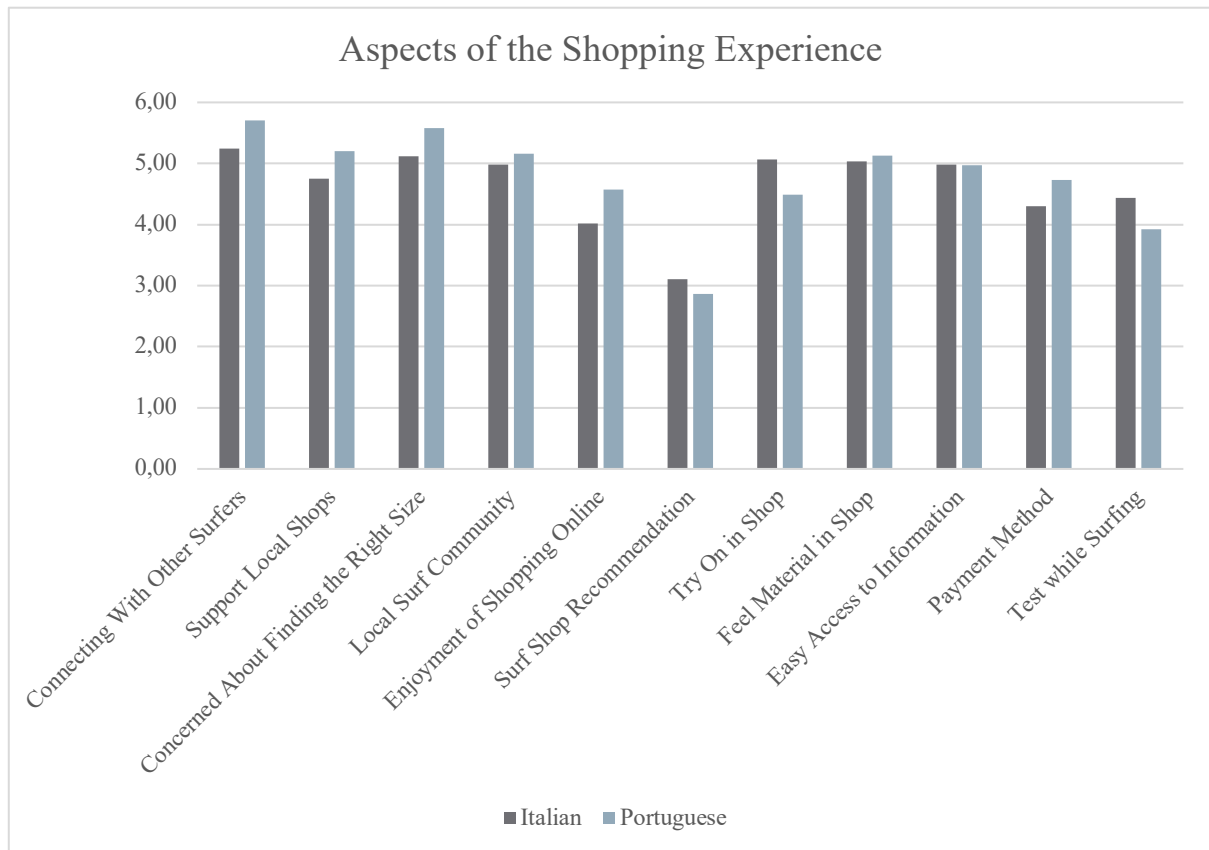
The average of the intangible wetsuit features was 3.37 in Italy and 3.61 in Portugal.





B.3. Aspects of the shopping experience in Italy and Portugal

Italian and Portuguese survey participants were able to rate the importance of the shopping aspects on a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 7 (very important). The average of the shopping experience was 4.49 in Italy and 4.35 in Portugal.



B.4. Contingency analysis in regard to proximity to surf shops

Proximity to Surf Shops in Relation to Last Purchase in Italy and Portugal

Actual Numbers	In a shop	Online	Through a friend	In an outlet	It was a gift	Second hand	TOTAL
Walking distance	18	12	3	1	0	2	36
Less than 5km	20	19	3	1	2	1	46
6 – 10km	17	16	2	1	1	1	38
10 – 15 km	8	8	0	0	0	1	17
16 – 20 km	2	5	1	1	1	0	10
21 – 30 km	4	3	2	1	0	0	10
31 - 40 km	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
41 – 50 km	2	3	0	0	1	0	6
More than 50 km	6	4	1	0	0	1	12
TOTAL	77	70	12	5	6	6	176

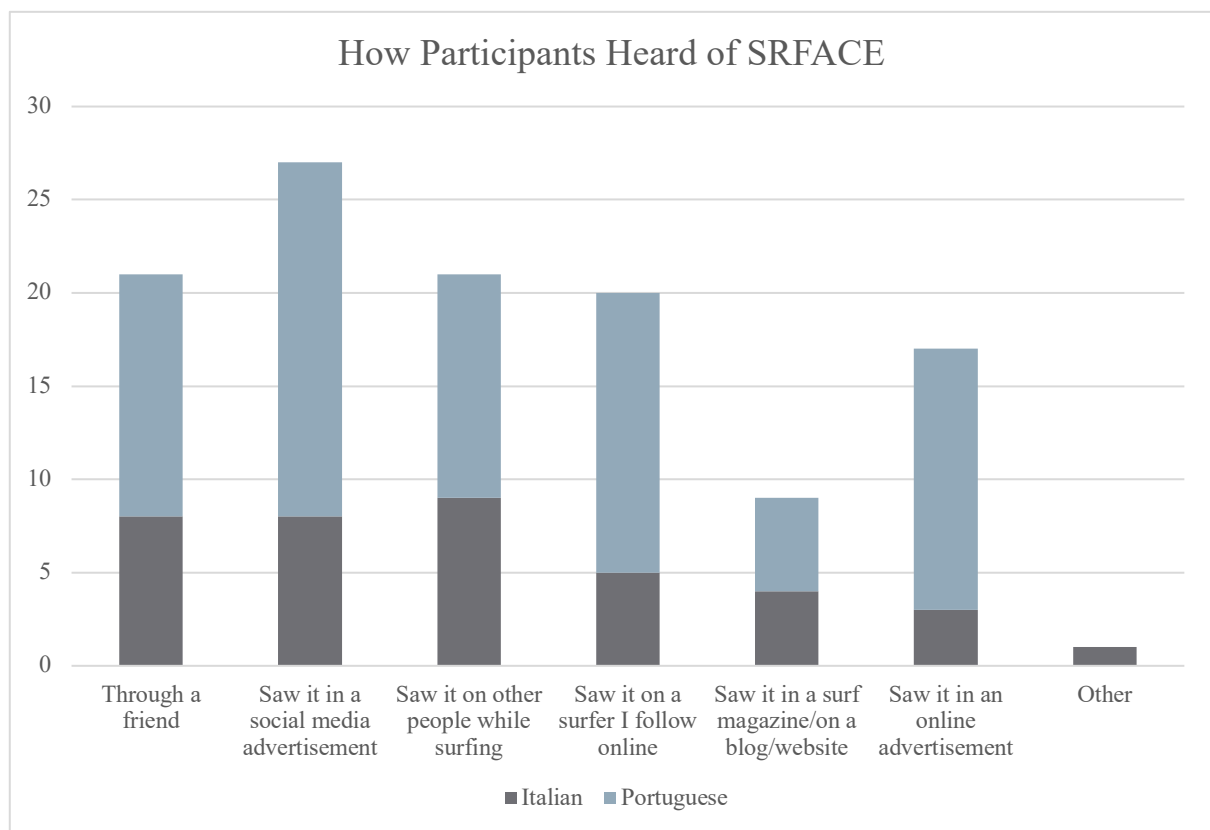
Simplified Table	In a shop	Online	TOTAL	IF Ho IS TRUE	In a Shop	Online	TOTAL
Walking distance OR				Walking distance OR Less than			
Less than 5km	38	31	69	5km	36,14	32,86	69,00
5 - 20 km	27	29	56	5 - 20 km	29,33	26,67	56,00
21 - 40 km	4	3	7	21 - 40 km	3,67	3,33	7,00
More than 40km	8	7	15	More than 40km	7,86	7,14	15,00
TOTAL	77	70	147	TOTAL	77,00	70,00	147,00

Q_Table	In a shop	Online
Walking distance OR		
Less than 5km	0,09542631	0,104969
5 - 20 km	0,18560606	0,204167
21 - 40 km	0,03030303	0,033333
More than 40km	0,0025974	0,002857

Q = 0,66
df = 3
 $\alpha = 0,05$
Chi score = 7,815

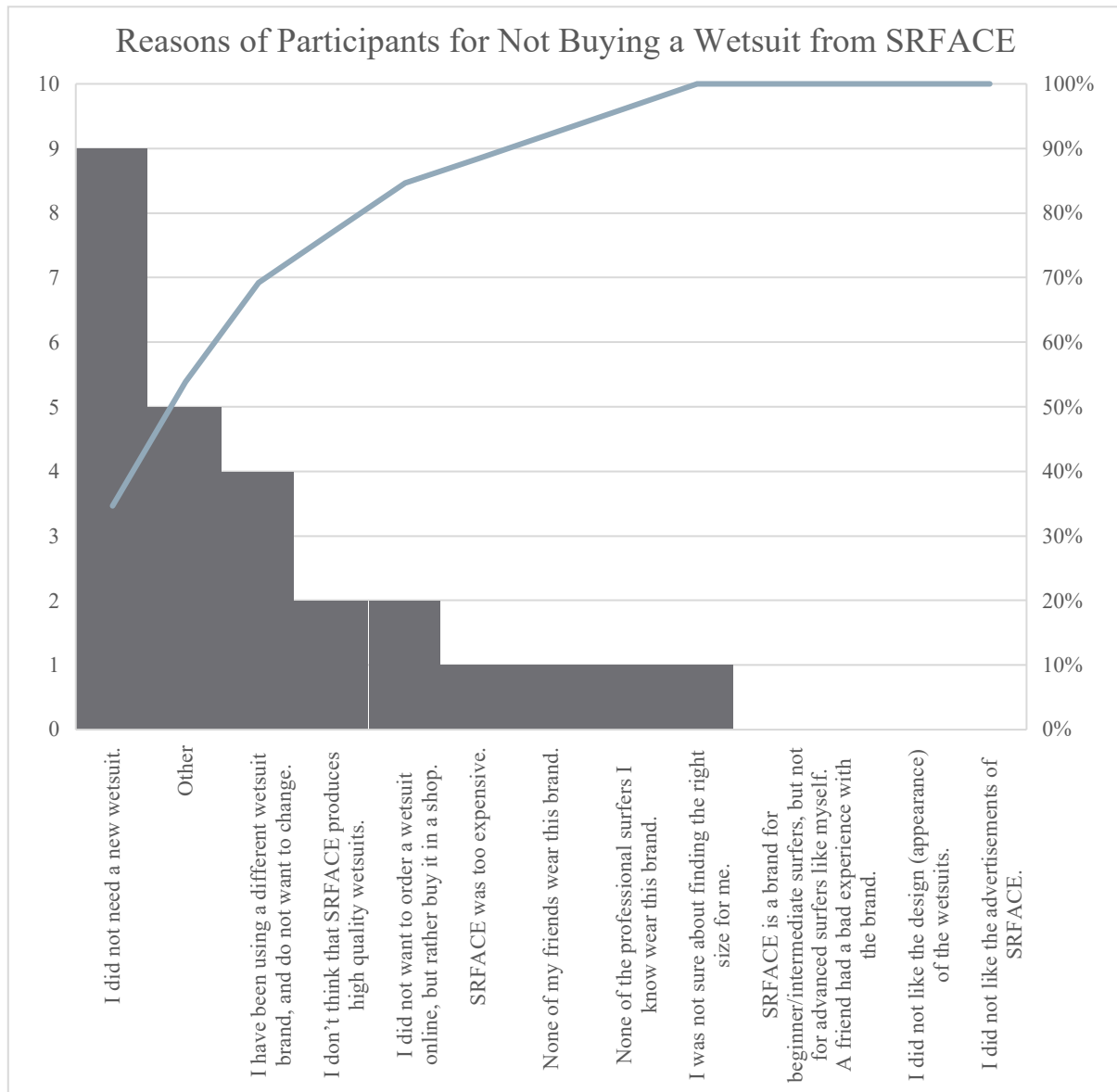
>> REJECT H0

B.5. How survey participants heard of SRFACE



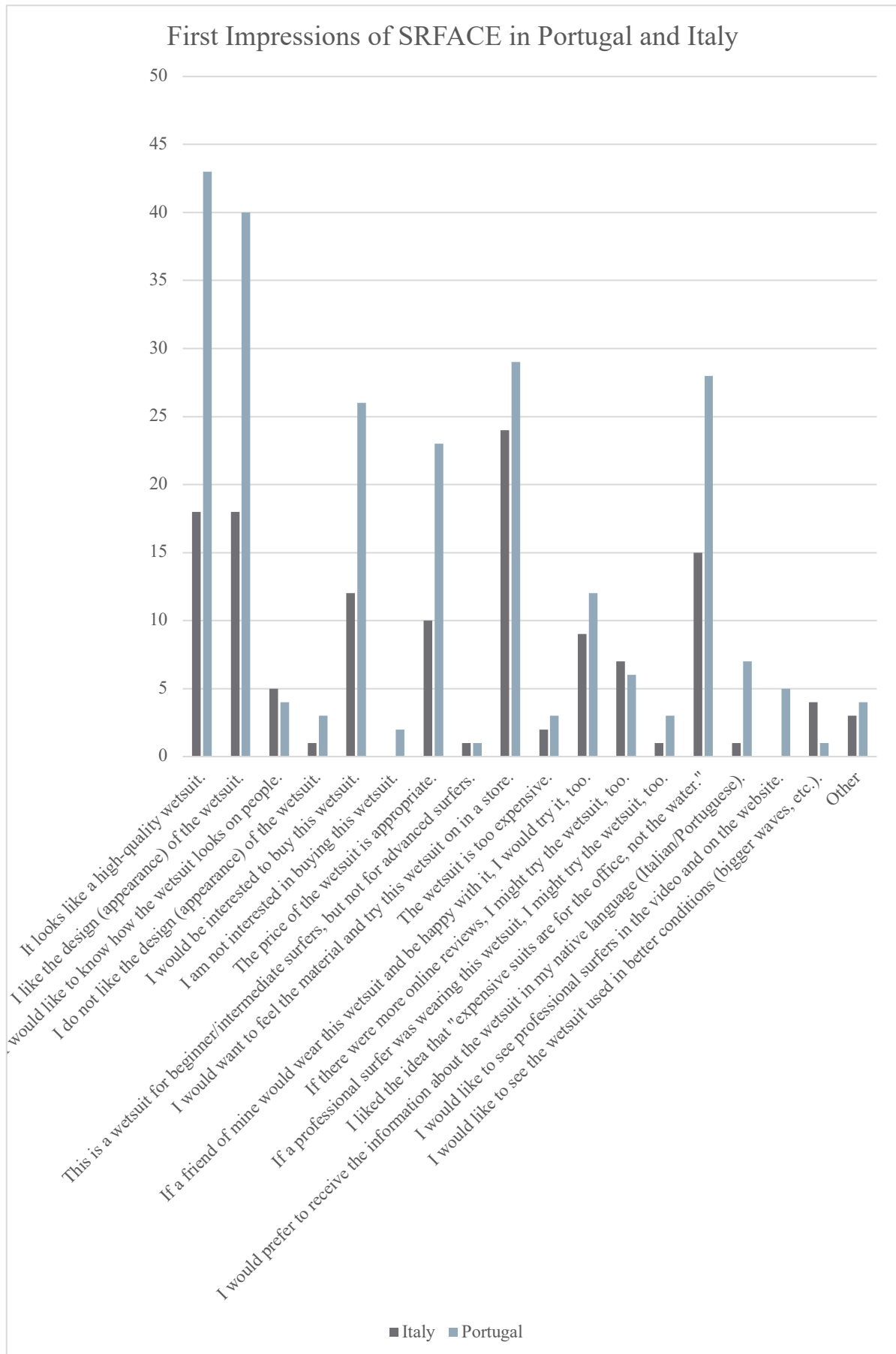
B.6. Reasons why survey participants have not bought a SRFACE wetsuit

The following graph shows a list of reasons why survey participants who had heard of SRFACE before have not bought a wetsuit from the company.



B.7. First impressions of SRFACE

The following graph shows a list of first impressions that survey participants had to the images and videos shown. The latter can be found in the appendix A.2.



B.8. Impact of the 30-day trial opportunity

The graph below shows the response of the survey participants to the 30-day trial opportunity which SRFACE offers.

