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DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE PETROL DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRY: IS A LOW-COST STRATEGY ALIGNED WITH PRIO´S GENERAL BRAND PERCEPTION?

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Abstract

This research aims at understanding the effectiveness of the Digital Marketing Strategy designed for the client Prio, an Oil and Gas Distribution company, that focuses on increased loyalty card subscription volume. As follows, the impact of perceived quality and price on high expenditure customers ´brand preference and loyalty card satisfaction was analyzed. Regarding data collection, the study uses a mixed-methods approach with both qualitative (6 interviewees) and quantitative (203 responses) data gathering. It was concluded that quality has a statistically significant impact on the sample´s brand preference, while the price seems inconsequential in a consistent manner.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Customer Experience, Communication Strategy

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1. Introduction

This study was completed within the scope of my internship as a Digital Marketing Consultant, for the client Prio, an Oil and Gas Distribution company.

In the second half of the twentieth century, mass production procedures and marketing escalated product availability and production capabilities, reinforcing the competitive landscape in the retail industry (Chen and Popovich 2003). As follows, most twentieth-century products became highly commoditized, including Petrol. Customers generally characterize commodities such as petrol by the absence of perceived differentiation between competing offerings (Chernatony and MacDonald 2003). Hence, price and high volatility tendencies enhanced the already existing rivalry in this sector. Furthermore, In the last two decades, the Oil distribution Industry has occupied increasingly strategic importance in the Portuguese economy and the country´s Gross Domestic Product. Regarding the competitive landscape, the supply of oil comes entirely from imports of crude oil through downstream activities. Hence sector power is concentrated to the largest players in refinery and distribution activities, namely Galp Energia. Including Galp, other relevant players are BP, Repsol, CEPSA, and Prio holding a collective market share of approximately 95% (Marketline 2021). Despite the high concentration of oil supply in the sector in a small number of players, several factors strongly contribute to heavy competition in this sector. Furthermore, In the last two decades, the Oil distribution Industry has occupied increasingly strategic importance in the Portuguese economy and the country´s Gross Domestic Product. Regarding the competitive landscape, the supply of oil comes entirely from imports of crude oil through downstream activities. Hence sector power is concentrated to the largest players in refinery and distribution activities, namely Galp Energia. Including Galp, other relevant players are BP, Repsol, CEPSA, and Prio holding a collective market share of approximately 95%. Despite the high concentration of oil supply in the sector in a small number of players, several factors strongly contribute to heavy competition in this sector.

Additionally, Food Retail companies expanded into the Oil Retail business, introducing extremely low-cost offerings, due to evident cost synergies from their core business commercial surfaces. This way, differentiation became increasingly relevant. As a result, companies with low-cost offerings, like Cepsa and Prio were pushed into repositioning and greater price alignment with Food Retail operators. As well as further distancing from operators with pricing strategies based on more competitive commercial offerings. Flagship Oil Companies ensure market supremacy and customer loyalty by investing in product differentiation, offerings with additional services, gas station location, coverage, and loyalty programs, which enable discounts over base prices (e.g: Fleet Card Program) (Dias, et al. n.d.). Recently, the practice of discount policies intensified due to the magnified competitive dynamics of the market – namely with the penetration of alternative operators with more aggressive pricing strategies. Prio, a relevant player in the market, and client in my company during my internship, faces precisely these challenges. Specifically, Prio´s goal with my company is to grow their Fleet Card Business through a Digital Marketing approach, in terms of client acquisition. This refers to a B2B business model, which targets audiences as Micro, Small Business Owners, and TVDE CFO´s, COOs, and CEOs. Hence, this project aims at understanding if the communication of Prio´s main USP, their low-cost strategy, is aligned with Prio´s general brand perception. Or if instead, the consumer is aware of the company´s price offerings. This would suggest that there are more important contributing factors (perceived quality, service, and others) to consumer behavior and choice, that would enhance the success of our Digital Strategy if communicated properly and integrated with the proposed plan.

In the next few sections, I delve into the existing body of literature surrounding the connections of digital marketing with customer relationship management and define the research questions developed in the study. Then, the methods section will explain what was put in place in order to collect findings and structure the data analysis. In this sense, the analysis and discussion section uncovers the insights gathered from qualitative, as well as quantitative research. Finally, the last chapter considers the academic contribution herein, as well as making recommendations for managers in the field, and advises on limitations and further research.

2. Literature Review

In this section, research was conducted to explore the existing theory and studies of the concepts explored throughout this study.

2.1. Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management is a term that was first conceptualized in the 1990s and builds mainly on the principles of relationship marketing and customer experience, the formal study of which can be traced to the early 1970s. CRM can be generally defined as "the management of mutually beneficial relationships from the seller's perspective" (LaPlaca 2004). In the beginning, it was a lot more operational rather than strategic, being regarded as a union of people and processes that aim at understanding a company's customers. "It is an integrated approach to managing relationships by focusing on customer retention and relationship development" (Chen and Popovich 2003).

In fact, facilitated data extraction, mining and storage, and further technology advancements shaped the opportunity to integrate data in CRM plans, which developed its strategic potential. As follows, current definitions of CRM incorporate this notion. CRM has progressed as a result of developments in information technology and changes in customer-centric procedures inside organizations. CRM is a technology or software that tracks data and information about customers to allow for improved customer service. Other businesses regard CRM as a sophisticated marketing or customer service tool tailored to one-on-one interactions (Peppers and Rogers 2004). Customer relationship management connection to the customer experience is strikingly evident across all industries despite different impacts and specificities. In the retail sector customer experience is directly correlated with service quality. The concept of service quality is formed by the comparison and judgment between a customer expectation about service and perception of actual service performance, accounting for the influence of a brand´s image (Caruana 1999).

Customer experience creates and strengthens sustainable brand preference, satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Hence, a rising number of firms capitalize on these favorable benefits by applying the principles of customer experience to neutralize the pressure of the highly commoditized and competitive retail environment (Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Ber 2006). Branding emerged to offset this perception of being like all competitors establishing itself as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. As a result, the topic of branding escalated into major importance for retail and service companies in the twenty-first century as a mechanism to reinforce customer experience and relationships. Customer experience is recognized as a significant part of the building of brand equity and in the creation of brands (Kapferer 2008); (Keller 2001). Brands are formed through the ongoing interactions between an organization's value proposition, as expressed via its offerings, and consumers' experiences as a consequence of their interactions with these value propositions. (Iglesias e Bonet 2012). As follows, successful CRM programs start with business strategy, aligning processes and initiatives with customer base segmentation to build loyalty with lucrative customers and increase differentiation (Rigby, Reichheld and Schefter 2002). This provides increased customization within big corporations enabling personalization of service experience, which elevates consumer experience, associations and strengthens CRM initiatives (Peppers and Rogers 2004).

Within the Petrol Distribution Market, best practice cases of CRM in business are related to loyalty programs. Regarding, return on investment, market research suggests that potentially loyalty programs increase total customer market share and revenues. These programs can directly support the value proposition of the service offered to the customer, building on brand equity, or offer rewards designed to simply motivate loyalty through a more indirect route. (Reichheld and Sasser 1990). Loyalty programs fit better with the purpose of loyalty marketing when they support the positioning and value proposition of the target product (Dowling and Uncles 1997).

BP´s case study is one of particular success. BP-me rewards is a general campaign for specific customer segments based on loyalty points multiplier for promoted products (food, fuel…). For the duration of the promotion period, customers receive triple the number of loyalty points when buying premium fuel, stimulating conversion during that period. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, BP developed a special multiplier for NHS workers in the United Kingdom, pioneering the joint venture between brand image, as well as positive associations and loyalty initiatives (Dziadkowiec 2021). Moreover, partnerships are strategic decisions that promote the success of Loyalty Programs, on account of cross-buying reinforced behavior. Strategic alliances positively influence future consumption, as well as customers ‘relationship with the core service (Lemon and Wange 2009). In the case of Prio, their Fleet Card for Companies is a loyalty program, CRM initiative that has not gained the desired traction. Our company opted by proposing a strategy highly focused on Prio´s main competitive advantages in the digital sphere. Including several forms of media, Search Engine Marketing on relevant keywords, and Search Engine Optimization on landing pages and membership forms, to boost conversion.

2.2. Digital Marketing

Digitalization is a transformational reality that alongside the emergence of new communication technologies and the sharp increase in internet usage has been disruptive and radically changed how companies relate to their customers. Digital marketing is a technology-enabled, flexible and adaptive process in which businesses collaborate with consumers and partners to build, express, deliver, and sustain value for all players. (Kim, Kang and Lee 2018).

DM is a marketing channel, being an integral part of a firms´ multichannel strategy. The development of a marketing strategy entails the alignment, integration, and interaction between digital and traditional channels (Todor 2016). DM offers new methods to communicate with, inform, and engage customers, as well as offer and sell items and services to them. (Consuegra, et al. 2018). It is a concept defined as "The practice of promoting products and services innovatively, using primarily database-driven distribution channels to reach consumers and customers in a timely, relevant personal and cost-effective manner" (Wsi 2013).

In fact, DM follows an inbound business methodology as it captivates customers through the development of valuable content and custom experiences tailored to them at different stages of the purchase channel. These marketing activities generate website traffic - visitations - to convert that traffic into qualified leads – potential customers - and clients. For instance, their purpose is to shape preferences, promote brands and maximize sales by drawing users´ attention, optimizing accessibility, and generating stimulating content, (Halligan and Shah 2009). This way, return on investment (ROI) from digital campaigns is highly dependent on the firm´s strategic goals. Campaigns based on performance are conventionally measured by lead generation, click-through, conversions, and conversion rates (Safko and Brake 2009).

Content marketing is a topic of increased relevance for DM, given that a firm´s online communication encompasses the presence of content marketing, this way the success or failure of digital strategy is largely determined by the quality of its content marketing. (Baltes 2015). Relevance is key for digital communication and the scope of this study indeed addresses the relevance of our proposed digital strategy for Prio´s Fleet Card program.

In terms of the project designed for Prio´s the main objective was to increase Fleet card subscription by lead and customer acquisition. This conversion action is measured either through the completion of the membership form on Prio´s website or through a lead-gen form via Facebook and posterior external contact from Prio´s commercial team to finalize details.

Hence, the Facebook and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) - Google ads - campaigns are optimized for that behavior. SEO is a structured approach used to maximize the position of a firm or its products for selected keywords or phrases in search engines organic results listings (main body of the search results page) (Chaffey and Chadwick 2019). In this case, both campaigns rely heavily on the communication of Prio´s low-cost offering and discount value in an effort to communicate the firm´s cost-leadership as their main source of competitive advantage. According to purchasing behavior studies organizations shouldn't depend exclusively on price-inferiority to be their main selling proposition as it may entail higher consumption risks in the mind of consumers. Customers' perception of product effectiveness and perceived service risks strongly influences consumers 'buying behavior (Zhang and Yu 2020).

On the other hand, our intended strategy integrated the elaboration of a landing page that would facilitate lead capture, improve ease of subscription, leverage customization/personalization, and communicate main selling propositions. The concept of a Landing page refers to a destination page from a user´s click on a link from or an ad. Possibly a homepage, however more commonly and desirable the messaging is specific and centered on the offer in the ad. This page cultivates brand favorability and maximizes conversion rates (Chaffey and Chadwick 2019).

Regarding the connection of DM and CRM, the information acquired from customer data held on a typical CRM database is of increased importance to optimize digital campaigns. The linkage of this attitudinal information (customer ID, surveys) and behavioral data, when uploaded to the platform and processed by the algorithm, identifies the characteristics of the leads with the highest probability to convert, thereby enhancing targeting and performance. Besides providing a much more solidified qualitative base for audience and strategy building than using transactional data to infer attitudinal preferences that are not related to customer behavior (Webber 2013).

2.3. Research Questions

Our team indeed prescribed a plan for our customer, Prio, that at the start of this study had not yet produced results. This digital strategy was mainly focused on the advertisement of Prio´s main selling proposition, which is their superiority in terms of pricing. In order to create and maintain strong customer relationships, it is necessary to distinguish needs (Peppers and Rogers 2004). The main goal of the communication strategy developed for the client was indeed to increase the volume of subscriptions to their Fleet Card B2B. However, considering the significant proximity and as a base for further projects, it is relevant to explore the general public perception of Prio Discount Card B2C, what the general public values in a Gasoline Discount Card, and how that translates into subscription amount.

In this sense, perception and associations are crucial for a positive customer experience. As follows, my study is centered around two main research questions:

- RQ1: Is the perception of the general public in terms of Prio´s associations consistent and aligned with the digital strategy that we have prescribed?
- RQ2: What else could Prio do to the consumer side of the business to boost customer experience and customer relationship management?

3. Methodology

In terms of methodology, firstly the research philosophy was defined, secondly, the research methodology was established, then the approach to theory development was determined and the data collection process designed.

Upon further reflection on my personal ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions regarding this study´s research philosophy, I concluded this project would follow a critical realism research philosophy. Ontologically I consider a stratified social reality layered in the empirical, the actual, and the reality of external and independent nature. In addition, following Saunder's views on epistemological realism, my focus is on uncovering objective structures and finding causal mechanisms for what we see and experience, leading to the production of credible and meaningful data. Social facts, according to epistemological relativism, are social creations agreed upon by people rather than existing independently (Bhaskar 2008).

Axiologically, since the social entities and social actors exist simultaneously and influence each other, I recognize that our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning and cannot be interpreted independently (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012).

Additionally, upon consideration of the research questions formulated in the initial data analysis, as well as determination of the nature of the problem and research methodologies adopted by similar customer association and CRM-related literature, an exploratory mixed-methods research design was determined to be the appropriate way to conduct this study. In this sense, the study follows an inductive approach set up to explore Prio´s general public and specific audience associations, to uncover the effectiveness of the digital communication strategy outlined to boost their Fleet card subscription volume, using findings from qualitative research and hypothesis testing with quantitative research.

This research design is developed using mixed methods, with the analysis of secondary and primary data, as well as cross-sectional data. Data collection is structured into two main stages. The initial stage is a qualitative exploratory data analysis, intending to pursue and investigate consumption and expectation patterns among high consumption audiences, regarding the different Portuguese oil distribution companies and the concept of the Discount Card product as a CRM initiative that spikes loyalty. The second stage, quantitative research, targets a broader audience and is based on the findings from the first stage, it aims at testing, corroboration or refuting, the hypothetical associations and theories constructed in the exploratory phase. The quantitative conclusions gathered were then subjected to univariate and multivariate statistical techniques to analyze the plausibility of the results.

3.1. Qualitative Research: In-Depth Interviews

There are many approaches from which to choose when conducting a qualitative research study, being in-depth interviews one of the most widely selected. This source of information from one-on-one interviews with individuals who have experienced an action, interaction, or process, allows the collection of significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide a deeper knowledge of the process (Creswell, et al. 2007). The analysis of these transcripts and observations results in a set of proposed facts, corresponding to an inductive approach. This way, the first stage of data collection was operationalized through 6 individual semi-structured interviews with a research population that matched a specific profile. The target profile of the interviewed sample was circumcised to high expenditure consumers of fuel. Namely, individuals that are subscribed to a Fuel Discount card from one of Prio´s main competitors, to explore the reasoning behind their purchasing decision, as well as interviewees that despite spending a considerable percentage of their income in fuel are not subscribed to a Fuel Discount card.

The goal of these interviews and qualitative research was to explore respondents' experience and opinions on the subject, to calibrate the questionnaire developed for the surveys with general public respondents. Interviewees were recruited through profile matching on Google and Instagram public posts, via my network. The vast majority of the interviews were conducted in Portuguese, to ensure ease of expression and conversation and to diminish language barriers that could negatively impact and limit the collection of data. The duration of the sessions was typically 30 minutes approximately, they were in the same proportion held through face-to-face conversations and online meetings, using GoogleMeet tool due to Covid-19 restrictions, as well as time and mobility constraints from the respondents. The interview guide was structured into 6 main sections detailed in Appendix 1. The starting point was an opening question about the interviewee's experience in subscribing or considering subscribing to a Fuel Discount card program. From that point, onwards the script focused on 6 stages depending on the depth of the first response. The initial stages covered category insights, consumer needs, and perceptions about several Oil Distribution companies, following more specific questions about Prio in the mind of consumers, as familiarity and associations. The final stage was increasingly technical and referred to questions regarding the success of a loyalty program, such as a discount card, some factors that contributed to the success of these initiatives, and their perceived connection and relationship with companies that provided those services. Posterior to the interviews the responses were transcribed to a content grid, to enable further analysis and conclusion drafting, an excerpt of the content grid can be found in Appendix 2.

3.2. Quantitative Research: Online Surveys

The second stage of data gathering was operationalized through a survey using the XM software Qualtrics, to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was based on the findings from the interviews to validate the hypothesis previously created with statistically significant data and answer the research questions. There was no target profile pre-determined for the surveys, being that they were a general population perception study, there were no requirements. The questionnaire was distributed via social media, with emphasis on WhatsApp group messaging, through my network, as well as snowball sampling by asking the respondents to send the questionnaire to people that fit the requirements.

The survey was built to explore several variables and measure their impact on the several dimensions of the project, using multiple-choice questions, binary questions, ranking questions, scale questions, and open text questions, to collect quantitative data and some qualitative insights. The questions were focused on the factors that influence the loyalty card subscription process and satisfaction and on the general evaluation of the main gasoline distribution companies in terms of those same factors, specifically price, quality, and quality-price relationship. Data collected was then exported into the software IMB SPSS in order to perform a descriptive analysis and inferential statistical analysis. The questionnaire can be found in its entirety in Appendix 3.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The following chapter will describe in-depth the main findings generated during both phases of the data collection, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The discussion of the implications of these significant hypotheses to the research questions, along with the final conclusions will be further addressed in Chapter 5.

4.1. Exploratory Stage: Qualitative findings

The exploratory phase consisted of 6 interviews conducted with high expenditure consumers from different academic backgrounds, therefore different occupations, as well as age groups. Specifically, 3 people were female and 3 were male. The interviewees were aged between 23 and 61. The current employment situation of the interviewees varied, in order to be representative of high and low-income individuals, whose 2 were students, 1 was currently employed for less than 3 years and 3 were currently employed for more than 10 years. Appendix 4 summarizes the profiles of the interviewees. Regarding consumption, all interviewees consumed 100 or more liters of fuel during the past month and were currently subscribed to a Loyalty card program, including a Gasoline Loyalty program, except for interviewee number 1. However, all confirmed that no research was conducted prior to subscription.

"I haven't yet got a gasoline discount card despite it making a difference on my monthly expenditure because I haven't been bothered" (I1 Female, 42, private).

"No, to a certain degree I didn't do any research because honestly, it was not relevant enough for me" (I4 Male, 23, private).

Drawing from these results, one can assume that despite being initially attracted by the pricing offer, even high-expenditure consumers tend to be uncommitted to subscriptions if the process is not easy and simple. This way, quantitative data validates our prescribed strategy to create an optimized landing page as facilitating the subscription process is highly relevant for the consumer. These insights obtained from the interviews go in line with McKinsey´s research on e-commerce consumers, specifically, the subscription phase (Chen, et al. 2018), who support that convenience is imperative for successful subscription in e-commerce, which is also supported by theory on petrol fuel as low involvement commodity.

When analyzing how each interviewee described the best loyalty cards, all of them referred to some sort of price reduction as the main benefit. This reference to discount and price was mentioned at several stages during the interview from describing the best loyalty cards to discount card priorities, to even reasons to choose a Gasoline brand for company fleet card – loyalty card for companies.

"BP´s partnership with Pingo Doce is the best because it offers exclusive discounts for cardholders, it converts money spent in points to use in BP and vice versa" (I3 Male, 35, private). *"It depends on discount, some cards are more worth using than others, if the value is not significant, I won't go through the trouble of using it"* (I2 Female, 29, private).

Although, interestingly price or discounts was not mentioned as a reason for choosing their current gasoline loyalty card or satisfaction. Instead, respondents tend to associate preference and satisfaction with factors such as quality, ease of use, accessibility, and convenience.

"I usually pump gas in BP, given that they have many gas stations across Lisbon, where I live, which increases the chances of finding one. Also because of their partnership with my supermarket chain of choice" (I6 Male, 57, private).

"Because Galp in terms of gas stations is the one with more locations, better quality, and facilities. I know it's more expensive, but quality pays off" (I2 Female, 29, private).

This emphasizes and confirms that consumers are indeed at a first stage motivated and responsive towards discounts. This, on the other hand, contradicts what most respondents identified as being their main deciding factor, the value of the discount. Unconsciously pointing out how perceived preference and actual preference are two separate constructs and are evaluated by distinct parameters. Actual preference and satisfaction seem to be heavily influenced by factors such as quality, ease of use, accessibility, and convenience.

When looking at questions related to top-of-mind presence and company superiority, every interviewee mentioned the same companies, suggesting that consumers tend to be more likely to recall the top companies in the industry (except I5). The entirety of interviewees mentioned Galp and BP as superior companies, positioning both at a premium level.

"*I don´t differentiate between BP and Galp. Unconsciously I think they are both superior in terms of quality due to their more premium and higher prices, which are reflected in their investment in the number of gas stations and facilities*" (I3, Male, 35, private).

Additionally, more than half of respondents connected this superiority and differentiation to reputation, market coverage, and reliability.

"Long term presence in the market, size, renown brand name, and reliable image. Proven quality because I never had problems with the petrol" (I5, Female, 61, private).

Looking at brand perception-related questions, interviewees, in general, appeared to distinguish each company very clearly. When asked to use three words to describe their top companies versus Prio respondents tended to converge in opinion, (5/6) used Quality, (2/6) Reputation and Tradition and (2/6) used the word Premium to describe Galp, while (4/6) used Cheap, (3/6) Small (3/6). This shows that consumers are typically aware of the different price offerings and positioning of the several corporations in the market, recognizing that Prio indeed carries highly competitive low-cost offerings versus other premium offers.

Another interesting trend in the replies has to do with price and quality perception, being that for the most part, the sample appears to have an incredibly specific brand hierarchy concerning cost and quality. Jointly, with the fact that no respondent was subscribed to Prio´s loyalty card or were frequent Prio customers. This reinforces the idea that customer perception does not match customer behavior as regardless of being aware of Prio´s low-cost offerings other factors are prioritized in the buying and decision-making process. Besides the collected responses indicate that low-cost offerings entail higher perceived risk in the buying process.

"Galp is more expensive than Repsol and last BP. Usually, I think about price, but when I need to pump gas, I end up in the closer located gas station" (I1 Female, 42, private).

"Galp is better than Repsol because the service is more personal but also has the option to get the fuel and pay immediately, becoming a very fast option with more gas stations and better service. BP is a close second" (I4 Male, 23, private).

Regarding the stage of the interview dedicated to Prio´s brad familiarity answers varied with respondents being very familiar with the brand or not familiar at all, finding common ground in the observation of the company´s low-cost positioning.

"I'm not very familiar, but I know it is a low-cost gas station" (I3, Male, 35, private).

"Very familiar, by chance I have one nearby where I live but I actually end up not going there as often because I have a Galp near work" (I1 Female, 42, private).

Finally, when asked about what initiatives the companies mentioned throughout the interviews could do to their consumer side of the business to boost customer experience and customer relationship management half of the sample suggested partnerships, while 2 respondents suggested initiatives targeting a younger audience to engage consumers. This is aligned with CRM theory on segmentation, targeting, and personalization of service experience.

“Having advantageous partnerships with strong and useful companies (supermarket chains are a good option), launching frequent campaigns to remain in customers mind and create curiosity and expectation on the next ones” (I3, Male, 35, private). *“They could do a challenge similar to MbWay to win more discounts in gas or money to incentivize consumption within the card or an app. Something more dynamic and interesting for the younger public”* (I2 Female, 29, private).

4.2. Quantitative findings

The questionnaire accumulated a total of 203 responses with a very balanced sample in gender with 47% of respondents identifying themselves as male and 53% as females. In terms of nationality, the vast majority of respondents were Portuguese (96%), a small percentage were foreign Master students living in Portugal (4%), having a limited perception of the Portuguese Oil distribution market. Regarding age groups, respondents were distributed mainly within the over 50 years old faction (42%) and between 18 and 35 years old (44%), while the remaining located themselves between 35 and 50 years old (14%). No element of the representative sample was under 18 years old, meaning every respondent was over the legal age to acquire a driving permit in Portugal. Overall, most of the respondents are currently working professionals with 3 or more years of professional experience (47%) or students, including high school, bachelor, master, or Ph.D. graduates (34%). In addition, the sample was represented by working professionals with less than 3 years of professional experience (5%), as well as Other occupations, namely Self-Employed (4%). When comparing these occupation labels to the diminished percentages of non-active society members, Unemployed (4%) or Retired (7%) one can understand the significance of the sample gathered.

The demographic analysis also revealed that the representative sample is symmetric in regards to purchasing power as the sample is equally distributed within high-income age groups/professions and considered limited-income age groups/occupations, which means that the insights gathered, if consistent, will be significant for both types of consumers.

Referring to loyalty cards general observations a predominance of the sample had a loyalty card (74%) and an even higher percentage confirmed discount cards have a positive impact on their relationship with a company (91%), through improved loyalty, improved brand image, increased consumption or the creation of positive associations with the brand, confirming the outcomes observed in qualitative data and the importance of Loyalty Cards as a CRM initiative that builds positive and long-lasting customer relations. When analyzing the open questions through the word-cloud method, data shows that the majority of the respondents have supermarket loyalty cards (Continente and Pingo Doce), followed by a significant presence of gasoline discount cards from Galp, BP, and Repsol. This way, respondents characterized the best Loyalty cards as being the ones with the higher and more immediate price reductions, supported by the fact that the most frequent words used were discount, savings, accumulate, direct, supermarket, gasoline, and shopping, this observation is consistent with the qualitative inputs gathered. The following stage of the survey inquired about consumption patterns and specific insights regarding gasoline discount cards. This way, about the frequency of fuel consumption, more than half of survey respondents consume fuel "Often" (55%) and a considerable share of respondents "Daily" (18%), suggesting the significance of the data gathered as for the most part the sample is represented by high-expenditure consumers. Hence, their feedback is of increased relevance to the study.

Furthermore, survey respondents were partially subscribed to a gasoline loyalty card/program (54% - yes), mentioning with frequency galp, continente, bp, Repsol. When analyzing how respondents justified their preference/choice, through the word-cloud method, the most used word was discount. On this topic of perceived preference, respondents consider "price - discount value" (58%) and "service quality" (17%) the main factors influencing subscription, whilst to a decreased extent respondents chose "quality of the product" (7%), "recommendation (8%) and "card offerings" (10%), as the deciding factor. These findings corroborate the qualitative hypothesis that perceived preference is associated with price reduction. In terms of subscription experience, most of the respondents did not conduct any type of research or comparison between Gasoline Loyalty card offerings prior to subscription (88%), which is aligned with the quantitative data insights and theoretical literature that considers car fuel a low involvement product.

Going into the next stage, more in-depth questions were developed referring to Gasoline Oil Distribution companies' general perception and its influence on purchasing behavior.

In terms of evaluating preference, the variable was measured on a rank from 1 to 5, one being the number one choice in the mind of respondents in terms of gasoline station to pump fuel in and five being the least preferred choice. On the other hand, perceived quality evaluation was on a scale from 1-Very low to 5- Very High, while perceived price evaluation was on a scale from 1- Very Low to 5-Very High. Comparing preference, quality, and price indicators from both companies with low-cost positioning, Prio and Cepsa, quantitative data seems to hold the hypothesis that emerged during the qualitative phase. In fact, in terms of quality both were identified as the lowest quality companies (mean = 2,86 vs 2,88, SD = 1.01 vs SD = 1.19). Moreover, in terms of preference/choice both, Prio and Cepsa, were the least preferred by survey respondents (mean = 3,52 vs 3,84, SD = 1,57 vs 1,19). Lastly, when it comes to price evaluation consumers are highly aware that both companies have a more competitive pricing strategy (mean = 2,78 vs 3,22, SD = 1,03 vs 0,89).

Additionally, a statistically significant negative correlation was identified between the preference of Prio and its perceived quality ($r = -,389^{**}$, p-value $< 0,01$), meaning the lower the perceived quality the lower the preference (high in quantitative terms), however, no correlation with the price was identified. Besides, price perception shows that in terms of price

Prio is the lowest quality brand, as well as one of the least preferred companies despite consumers being aware of Prio´s low-cost offerings. This suggests that perceived preference differs from actual preference possibly validating the hypothesis that low-cost offerings entail higher perceived risk in the buying process.

Consistently, preference of CEPSA presents a moderate yet consistent negative correlation with perceived quality (r = -,408**, p-value < 0,01). Similarly, preference of Repsol is negatively correlated (r = -,383**, p-value < 0,01) with perceived quality and positively correlated with Repsol´s perceived price (r = 0,196*, p-value < 0,05).

Furthermore, there were also noteworthy differences when analyzing the preference for Galp between sub-samples. Those that consider Galp a company with superior quality prefer the brand above all competitors (mean of 3.78 vs. 2.19, SD of 0.99 vs. 1.21), meaning Galp´s scores for quality and preference indicate that the company is the number one choice of respondents, both in terms of quality and preference. Additionally, as the expected preference of Galp is negatively correlated with perceived quality (r = -,414**, p-value < 0,01) and is not correlated with Galp´s perceived price, meaning people indeed value the company for its quality, while still being aware that its offer is the most expensive. Preference of BP is also negatively correlated with perceived quality (r = -,273**) at a 99% confidence level and is not correlated with BP´s perceived price. BP´s case is one of the apparent similarities with Galp´s positioning as consumers tend to characterize both companies in the same way, which is supported by qualitative findings *"I think both companies are comparable in their quality and superiority. They transmit confidence through their image and visual assets as well as written communication"* (I1, Female, 42, private).

In a final step, to analyze how communication and marketing impact the perceived success of this CRM initiative, a structural question inquiring the respondents about the factors that justify a general Gasoline Loyalty Card´s high subscription volume was developed. This way, discount offered was awarded the highest score (mean = 79,96, SD = 24.47) from 1 to 100, followed by perceived price-quality relationship of the company (mean = 67.72, SD = 25.40), proceeding an effective communication strategy (mean = 57.89, SD = 25.61) and finally perceived quality of the company (mean = 56.26, SD = 27.77).

The sampled population repeatedly reinforces the importance of price for overall preference and discount-value for loyalty cards subscription, specifically fuel loyalty cards. However, results suggest that price is not statistically significant for the sample´s brand preference, which is not in line with what the respondents believe. On the other hand, the relevance of quality in influencing the preference of gasoline companies became evident throughout the quantitative analysis as all the latent brand-preference variables showed negatively statistically significant intercorrelations with each brand-quality variable.

In answer to *RQ1- Is the perception of the general public in terms of Prio´s associations consistent and aligned with the digital strategy that we have prescribed.* To contextualize, the proposed strategy was heavily based on the communication of Prio´s loyalty card discount and low-cost identity. Quantitively and qualitatively data demonstrated that the general public is indeed aware of Prio´s low-cost offerings, which means that a strategy focused on the dissemination of that material will not be necessary to inform consumers of Prio´s low-cost positioning. Along with it, a discrepancy was identified between perceived and actual preference as consumers consider price the main indicator of preference. Yet, data revealed that other factors influence more heavily choice and purchasing patterns in fuel consumption, namely quality, convenience, and accessibility. Notwithstanding, the communication of discount value as a selling proposition is strikingly relevant as consumers tend to be captivated and responsive towards price in general, in the first stage of the buying process.

Overall, quality was revealed to have an increased influence on purchasing decisions and a tendency to associate low-cost offerings with higher perceived risk was identified in the purchasing process analysis. Accordingly, to address quality concerns and counteract this trend, it's relevant to complement the digital marketing strategy with selling propositions that confer confidence and features of the product, especially considering the B2B aspect of the Fleet Card Program. From the general public results gathered, one can deduct that the relevance of quality in determining preference intensifies for the previously identified fleet card consumers. In fact, this audience will take advantage and value card offerings, such as online invoices prepared for accounting and a control/management dedicated platform.

In addition, convenience and accessibility proved influential in consumption behavior, not only on account of the gas station location and availability but also for subscription behavior. Consumers tend to be uncommitted to subscriptions if the process is not optimized. This way, ease of subscription and personalization are imperative, which is aligned with e-commerce and CRM theory. As follows, the development of an e-commerce landing page dedicated to the fleet card product, improving ease of subscription and communication of main selling propositions, is highly relevant for the success of our prescribed strategy.

Regarding *RQ2- What else could Prio do to the consumer side of the business to boost customer experience and customer relationship management,* we would conclude that consumers, as expected, prioritize personalization. Hence, segmentation and targeting are recognized as invaluable mechanisms to approach consumers 'needs and expectations in contemplation of personalization. Segmentation enables differentiation and characterization of a business customer base, identifying who its customers are and building a deep understanding of them and their actions. Targeting accesses, the segments previously identified based on their characteristics, needs, and expectations, to establish which customers are currently more valuable and which offer more value in the long run. The essence of managing customer relationships is to treat each customer differently, being that distinct customers have different needs and represent different values to the enterprise. This way, a formal segmentation analysis of Prio´s customer base and forecasted lifetime-value, through the LTV model method, would have to be conducted to appropriately acknowledge the second research question, techniques that go beyond the scope of this study. Inductively, quantitive and qualitative data suggest that focusing on younger audiences and initiatives that entail value-added, as per partnerships with other businesses, might be beneficial for Prio to boost customer experience and relationship management. Interviewees and survey respondents emphasized that expanding the purpose of the product through partnerships consists of a compelling incentive to usage as it spikes relevance and satisfaction for consumers. In fact, this hypothesis is validated by research observations as the majority of both samples were subscribed to either Galp or BP´s loyalty card program and consistently mentioned the brands 'associations. These players are known for their strategic alliance to Continente and Pingo Doce, respectively, the two dominant organizations in the Portuguese food retail market.

On the other hand, respondents alluded to curiosity and dynamicity as factors that spike relevance and satisfaction for younger audiences, being regarded as incentives to consumption. Consequently, marketing campaigns consisting of challenges or raffle schemes to gain extra prizes for the loyalty card in-app are initiatives that tackle these concerns. The implementation of this project implies the enlargement of our prescribed strategy in the digital territory.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Academic Implications: This mixed-methods project shows that three main factors proved to significantly influence preference and purchasing behavior from the results in this sample. Perceived quality proved to have a direct and indirect influence on choice, making it the most influential indicator in this context and supporting Zhang's study on the impact of perceived risk on consumers' buying behavior in the sense that these seem to affect consumers' purchase behavior across platforms. Thereby, this research suggests more emphasis on implementing national regulations, ensuring product quality, and developing effective publicity that provides consumers with positive brand associations, generates positive word-of-mouth and establishes a good corporate image.

Additionally, following Singh´s research on consumer perceptions and behavior towards branded commodities this study suggests that rather than a continual proclivity for a set of brands from which to buy, consumers chose a certain brand for a variety of reasons on each particular purchasing occasion. This project deepens these insights by pointing out that accessibility and convenience, meaning gas-station location, are among the main reasons for the choice. As follows, loyalty programs tend to offset this tendency by promoting customer satisfaction, commitment, and trust. On the other hand, this study goes against Singh´s statements that companies should singularly focus on constant communication to reinforce brand-recall, rather than establish initiatives that develop loyalty or establish differentiation.

Finally, this study results also provided ample proof that personalization and ease of subscription are determinants to customer and purchasing behavior, this goes in favor of the argument presented by Peppers and Rogers on the relevance of customization for service experience, which intensifies with e-commerce subscription expectations as explored by McKinsey´s research article.

Managerial implications: From the results obtained in this study, two main aspects seem central to Prio´s business. Primarily, the risk associated with a cost-leadership strategy was emphasized throughout the research. Thus, the reassessment of the company´s strategy may be invaluable for increased market coverage and sustained competitive advantage. Based on these results, a value-for-money strategy seems to carry the benefits of a low-cost strategy, while attending to customer needs and expectations and addressing customer buying patterns. This follows the idea presented by Porter that cost leadership must confer proximity or parity in the foundations of differentiation. Otherwise, “if its product is not perceived as comparable or acceptable by buyers, a cost leader will be forced to discount prices well below competitors to gain sales", leading to a sharp decline in profitability margin (Porter 1985). This means, above-average performance won´t be achieved and the benefits from the competitive advantage induced by this favorable cost position may be nullified. On the other hand, this disputes Porter´s case that pursuing both strategies simultaneously might lead to average performance. Contrarily it supports Pitelis´s arguments in favor of this multi-generic corporate strategy, value-for-money, in hypercompetitive environments (Pitelis and Taylor 1996). Secondly, establishing strategic alliances was identified as a decision of absolute importance to match competitors 'product offerings and remain relevant as a loyalty program initiative and boost customer experience and customer relationship management. This favors the arguments of Lemon regarding the reinforcing effects of loyalty program partnerships.

Limitations: In terms of limitations, a sample of increased socio-demographic variability would have been preferred. Regarding quantitative data, a larger sample would also be preferable as it would more accurately represent the research population, which could have been skewed according to the sampling method used. Additionally, incorporating focus group studies jointly with qualitative data would have been valuable as this technique would enable the development of deepened insights and potentially the addition of further topics through participants' interactions and discussions. As follows its suggested that when the Covid-19 pandemic is no longer a constraint a study following this frame is conducted.

Further Research: Regarding future research, more accuracy in the sample in terms of fleet card consumers would improve knowledge on the impact of perceived quality and price on subscription and consumption patterns. Regarding the hypothesis developed, it would be particularly fascinating to further explore through focus groups discussions, how brand associations (quality, price, satisfaction) and external factors (convenience and accessibility) – particularly in the case of Prio - influence preference interrelationships and their impact on subscription and consumption. In addition, a conventional segmentation of Prio´s customer base and lifetime-value analysis, applying the LTV model, would be pertinent to deepen the recommendations on optimized customer experience and relationship management.

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Appendix 1: Interview Script

Discussion Guide (Explain confidentiality and rules of the road)

The following discussion guide serves to **outline the subject areas** I envision covering during the interviews. It **does not function as a script.** While the interviewer will try to approximately structure the discussion, the ultimate order in which respondents bring up subjects is unpredictable and will vary from individual to individual. Broadly speaking, however, all the following topic areas will be addressed by the conclusion of the interviews.

Introduction

Good morning / good afternoon / good evening. My name is Carolina Paramés and I’m a Masters's student at Nova SBE, currently researching the alignment between customer relationship management initiatives with brand perception and associations in the Oil distribution industry, specifically in the Digital Sphere. To carry out this research, I’m conducting interviews such as this one, in which I ask several questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You are free to say absolutely everything that comes to your mind.

For the purpose of analyzing these interviews later, I will record them in audio format. When I transcribe them, though, all data will be anonymized, meaning no one will be able to track any answers to you. That being said, I'll ask one introductory question to register your consent.

Do you consent to record this interview?

- Yes
- No (finish the interview)

Thank you very much! Let's get started:

Section 1: Consumption and Subscription Patterns

1. Do you use your car often? What is your average monthly consumption of fuel?
2. Do you have a loyalty card?
3. What Loyalty card? OR Why don't you have a loyalty card?
4. Which are in your opinion the best loyalty cards?
5. Which companies come to mind when you think of Gasoline Distribution companies?

Section 2: Subscription Experience/ Consumer needs/Satisfaction

6. Can you tell me if any, what Gasoline loyalty program you are subscribed company to?
7. And why did you choose that program?
8. Did you conduct any research or comparison between card offerings, prior to the subscription?
9. Were you targeted with any manner of marketing from the brand before subscribing/considering?
10. What type of priorities do you hold when choosing a discount card?
11. Out of the following options what would be your main reasons to choose a specific Oil Distribution Company brand in terms of company fleet card?

a. Price, promotion-discount value

b. Service quality (simple subscription process)

c. Perceived quality of the product (gasoline, diesel...)

d. Recommendation

e. Card offerings and if so, which ones?

- Online Receipts
- Credit in order to pay later
- Automatized VAT Reimbursement
- Online platform to manage your fuel spending
- Specialized management team

12. Are you satisfied with your choice?

Section 3: Brand Perception

13. In your opinion which are the top three Oil Distribution companies in Portugal?

14. What differentiates these brands, meaning where does their superiority derive from?

15. Use three words to characterize each of those brands

16. What is your perception regarding each of the mentioned brands, in terms of communication/Marketing?

17. What is your perception regarding each of the mentioned brands, in terms of Quality?

18. What is your perception regarding each of the mentioned brands, in terms of Price?

19. What is your perception regarding each of the mentioned brands, in terms of the Quality/price relationship?

Section 4: Brand Familiarity

20. How familiar are you with the company Prio and why?

21. If you haven´t mentioned Prio has one of your top brands in the industry, please use three words to describe it now.

Section 5: Additional Questions

22. In your opinion, what are the main contributing factors to a company's loyalty program effectiveness and increased subscription volume?

23. And how much of that do you think is related to an effective communication strategy

24. Please outline the most impactful selling factors for a Fleet card program designed for companies, in your opinion.

25. Finally: based on your own experience and knowledge of how the world works so far what do you think companies, such as the ones we talked about during the interview, could do to their consumer side of the business to boost customer experience and customer relationship management?

The interview has come to an end, it has been very interesting to listen to you share your experience and views on this subject. Thank you!

Appendix 2: Content Grid Excerpt

Q/I	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5
Q1	Yes around 400 euros, average 260 liters more or less	Yes, around 120 liters	Yes I do and use it almost everyday. 1 gas tank a month meaning around 100 liters, it dependends on the car I use	I do and use it a lot. My average consumption I would say is liters around 200 euros, 120 liters	Yes and the monthly consumption estimate is close to 500 euros or 400 litres.
Q2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q3	Books and supermarket, ie Bertrand and Intermarche	Bertrand, Farmácia, Galp +	Supermarket(Poupa +), BP, Springfield	Womens Secret, Continente, Galp +, Tap Milhas, 5àSec	Cartão Santander que dá desconto na Repsol
Q4	The supermarkets ones because they are the majority and daily consumption, being possible to accumulate greater discounts	It depends on the discount, there are cards that pay more than others if I think it doesn't pay I don't bother to use them effectively and efficiently	Poupa Mais from Pingo Doce, because it offers exclusive discounts for card holders, it converts money spent in points to use in BP and vice versa.	Continente, supermarket because it gives direct discounts on the supermarket products at the end I see immediatly the impact and even discounts on BP	I don't know many, but for me this one makes a difference
Q5	Galp, BP, Intermarche	Galp, Bp, Repsol	BP, Galp, Repsol	Galp, BP,	Galp, Repsol, Intermarche
Q6	I don't have it because I haven't bothered to subscribe yet, but it clearly makes a difference in my monthly spending.	Yes, Galp +	BP	Sim, Galp +	Cartão Santander que dá desconto na Repsol
Q7	-	I travel a lot, I use the car a lot and as I still don't have a very fixed salary, so its very useful. Because Galp, in terms of pumps, has the best quality, most presentable, despite being one of the most expensive, it compensates for the quality. And by name, Galp's reputation for me is far superior.	Because I usually pump gas in BP, given that they have many gas stations across Lisbon, where I live, which increases the acessibility. Also because of its partnership with my supermarket chain of choice.	Its the more known and popular, has the gaoline station closer accessibility in terms of location, the otheers are located at the exit of lisbon is not convinient for city commutes	Because I happened to be a Santander client and they told me they had this partnership and so I automatically joined, they took care of the process. Basically, it's a credit card that gives me a liter discount of around 6 cents at any pump at any time, it's constant and accumulates with the pump's discounts.
Q8	-	I didn't do research, I asked for feedback from my family and people closest to me, I hadn't thought of anything before.	No, because it was not relevant enough for me	No	No I didn't, I basically didn't subscribed the Santander debit card has this automated service
Q9	-	I knew they had that card through word of mouth but I did not see na actual advertisement	No	No, just went to the one that was more known and older in the market	Yes, but I'm not very sensitive to that, deep down, passes me by
Q10	The biggest benefit is in terms of discount, without a doubt	It depends on discount, some cards are more worth using than others, if the value is not significant, I won't go through the trouble of using it	The price and overall discount and useful partnerships and exclusive benefits and offers. The card it has to call my attention otherwise I wont go through the trouble of subscribing and using it	Bigger discounts, no costs associated and even gives offerings like Continente (supermarket) as initiatives that give other products for the consumption (set of knives)	Price, it's the discount you give me
Q11	I would say final price	First the price, then the quality of the product and the advantages last because they end up having less visibility	Price and promotion value, and service quality being the simplicity of the subscription proccess, but also a big emphasis on the quality of the petrol	Discount value, payment method-weekly credit and specially the quality pf the product for increased comsumption. I would say it is a lot to do with quality price relationship	Also the price, then perhaps the question of consumption management platform.
Q12	-	Yes tremendously, it's simple to use and doesn't require anything.	Yes because I really use it. However I would like it to provide discounts not only in Pingo Doce, but also in the product itself when I get fuel, because BP credits are in Pingo Doce and Pingo Doce credits are discounted in BP	Yes, good discount value and service quality and accessibility to the gas stations its convenient	Yes, that's enough for me, because I usually try to fill up my deposit at Intermarché because it actually has a big impact on my consumption, otherwise I go to Repsol.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Nova SBE Welcome to this survey! Thank you for your participation! This survey was developed in the context of a Master Thesis and explores Loyalty cards' effectiveness. The research focuses on the relationship between company associations and the success of customer relationship management initiatives, such as Loyalty cards, in the Gasoline Distribution Industry. For questions please contact at any time: 32085@novasbe.pt

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Important notes: a loyalty card is an identity card issued by a retailer to its customers as part of a consumer incentive scheme, whereby credits are accumulated for future discounts every time a transaction is recorded. These types of cards can be Supermarket discount cards, Book Stores discount cards, and several others.

QA What pronouns do you use?

- ○ She/Her (1)
- ○ Him/He (2)
- ○ They/Them (3)
- ○ Other (please specify): (4) ____

QB What is your nationality?

- ○ Portuguese (1)
- ○ Spanish (2)
- ○ Other European country (3)
- ○ Non-European country (4)

QC Which age group do you belong to?

- Between 18 and 20 (1)
- Between 20 and 35 (2)
- Between 35 and 50 (3)
- Over 50 (5)

QD What is your occupation?

- Student (High School, Bachelor, Master, Ph.D.) (1)
- Working professional (under 3 years of professional experience) (2)
- Working professional (3 years or more professional experience) (3)
- Unemployed (4)
- Retired (5)
- Other (please specify): (6) ________________

Page Break

Q1 Do you have a Loyalty card? (Discount cards)

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Skip To: Q5 If Do you have a Loyalty card? (Discount cards) = No

Q2 What Loyalty cards do you have?

____

Q3 What are, in your opinion, the best loyalty cards and why?

____

Q4 Do you think loyalty cards have a positive impact on your relationship with a company? (e.g: improve loyalty, improve your image of the brand, increase consumption, create positive associations with the brand...)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Page Break

Q5 How often do you consume Gasoline or Diesel in a month?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Often (4)
- Daily (5)

Q6 Are you subscribed to any Gasoline Loyalty card/program?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: Q10 If Are you subscribed to any Gasoline Loyalty card/program? = No

Q7 What Gasoline loyalty card/program are you subscribed to?

____

Q8 Why did you chose that program?

____

Q9 Did you conduct any research or comparison between Gasoline Loyalty card offerings, prior to subscription?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q10 What factors/ offerings would influence your Gasoline Loyalty card subscription the most? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Price, promotion-discount value (1)
- ☐ Service quality (simple subscription process) (2)
- ☐ Perceived quality of the product (gasoline, diesel...) (3)
- ☐ Recommendation (4)
- ☐ Card offerings and if so, which ones? (Online receipts, credit, specialized management team...) (5) ____

Q11 What would make you if anything switches companies, in terms of Gasoline Loyalty Card?

____

Page Break

Q12 Please rank, in terms of preference, these portuguese oil distribution companies
______ Cepsa (1)
______ BP (2)
______ Galp (3)
______ Prio (4)
______ Repsol (5)

Q13 Please evaluate, in terms of Quality, these Portuguese oil distribution companies

	Very Low =1 (1)	Low = 2 (2)	Medium= 3 (3)	High =4 (4)	Very High=5 (5)
Cepsa (1)	○	○	○	○	○
BP (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Galp (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Prio (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Repsol (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q14 Please evaluate, in terms of Price, these Portuguese oil distribution companies

	Very Low =1 (1)	Low = 2 (2)	Medium= 3 (3)	High =4 (4)	Very High=5 (5)
Cepsa (1)	○	○	○	○	○
BP (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Galp (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Prio (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Repsol (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 Please evaluate, in terms of price-quality relationship, these Portuguese oil distribution companies

	Very Bad =1 (1)	Bad = 2 (2)	Medium= 3 (3)	Good =4 (4)	Very Good=5 (5)
Cepsa (1)	○	○	○	○	○
BP (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Galp (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Prio (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Repsol (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 How much of a general Gasoline Loyalty Card´s high subscription volume do you think is related to each of these factors?

None at all | A little | A moderate amount | A lot | A great deal

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Effective communication strategy (1)	
Perceived quality of the Company (2)	
Discount offered (Price) (3)	
Perceived price-quality relationship of the Company (4)	

Page Break

Q17 Finally: based on your own experience and knowledge of how the world works so far what do you think companies, such as the ones mentioned during this survey, could do to their consumer side of the business to boost customer experience and customer relationship management?

____

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix 4: Interviewees Profiles (Gender, age, occupation, estimated average consumption)

Interviewee Code Name	**Profile (gender, age, occupation, monthly estimated average consumption)**
I1	Female, 42, Master Student Average Consumption 260 liters
I2	Female, 29, Strategy Consultant, Average Consumption 120 liters
I3	Male, 35, Hotel Director, Average consumption 100 liters
I4	Male, 23, Master Student/ Intern, Average Consumption 120
I5	Female, 61, Judge, Average Consumption 400
I6	Male, 57, Orthopedic Surgeon, Average Consumption 130 liters