



# The Occasion Matters: How Preference for Hedonic over Utilitarian Products Changes as a Function of the Gift-giving Occasion

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Dissertation written under the supervision of professor João Niza Braga.

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the MSc in Management with Specialization in Strategic Marketing, at Universidade Católica Portuguesa, January 2023.

## **Abstract**

**Title:** The Occasion Matters: How Preference for Hedonic over Utilitarian Products Changes as a Function of the Gift-giving Occasion

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Do our gift purchase decisions differ when they are made for us and when they are made for others? How are these differences when the choice is between utilitarian and hedonic products? What if there is no special occasion? And what if there is a special occasion? In this research, these questions are explored where a new perspective regarding self-others differences is proposed.

While past research has suggested that there are asymmetries when purchasing for others and for us, in the present study, it was observed that these differences were not so evident in the context of gift-giving. In fact, differences were rather observed between distinct gift-giving occasions – celebratory or non-celebratory -, where the decisions made for others and for us revealed to be similar. It was found that, on non-celebratory occasions, individuals have a tendency to purchase more utilitarian gifts whereas, on celebratory occasions, they purchase more hedonic gifts. Additionally, the role of self-expression was also explored, where it was concluded that its impact mediated the effect that gift-giving occasion has on purchase intention. This way, when there is a celebratory occasion, individuals increase their levels of self-expression which, consequently, increases their purchase intention for hedonic products.

The present research adds on to the literature of gift-giving, which has an increased importance for distinct fields in the business area, as understanding consumers' psychology and behavior is complex, but crucial for companies to thrive. Lastly, it offers a new perspective concerning self-others differences.

**Keywords:** Gift-giving; Celebratory occasion; Non-celebratory occasion; Self–others decision making; Hedonic; Utilitarian; Self-expression.

## Resumo

As nossas decisões de compra de presentes diferem quando são feitas para nós e quando são feitas para os outros? Como são essas diferenças quando a escolha é entre produtos utilitários e hedónicos? E se não houver nenhuma ocasião especial? E se houver uma ocasião especial? Neste estudo, estas questões são exploradas onde uma nova perspectiva em relação às diferenças eu-outros é proposta.

Enquanto pesquisas anteriores sugeriram que existem assimetrias ao comprar para os outros e para nós, no presente estudo, observou-se que essas diferenças não eram tão evidentes no contexto de oferecer presentes. De facto, observaram-se diferenças entre ocasiões distintas de oferta de presentes – celebratórias ou não celebratórias -, onde as decisões tomadas para os outros e para nós se revelaram semelhantes. Verificou-se que, em ocasiões não celebratórias, os indivíduos tendem a comprar presentes mais utilitários enquanto que, em ocasiões celebratórias, compram presentes mais hedónicos. Adicionalmente, o papel da auto-expressão também foi explorado, onde se concluiu que o seu impacto mediou o efeito que a ocasião tem na intenção de compra. Desta forma, quando há uma ocasião celebratória, os indivíduos aumentam os seus níveis de auto-expressão o que, consequentemente, aumenta sua intenção de compra de produtos hedónicos.

A presente pesquisa complementa a literatura sobre oferecer presentes, que tem uma importância crescente para diferentes áreas, sendo que entender a psicologia e o comportamento do consumidor é complexo, mas crucial para o sucesso das empresas. Por fim, oferece uma nova perspectiva sobre as diferenças entre nós e os outros.

**Palavras-chave:** Oferecer presentes; Ocasião celebratória; Ocasião não celebratória; Hedónico; Utilitário; Auto-expressão

## **Acknowledgements**

To begin with, I am deeply thankful for all the support my family has always given me. The last year and a half would not have been the same without their constant love and support, especially during this last semester. Their unconditional support has always shown how much they believed in me, and it always pushed me forward to reach all my goals.

I would also like to express my thankfulness to my friends, whose support has also been particularly important throughout this journey. Their positive attitude was fundamental to lift me up on some stressful days, helping me believing in myself and in the dissertation I was developing.

Lastly, I would like to show my appreciation to my thesis' advisor João Niza Braga, whose help was crucial for the completion of my academic path, by sharing his knowledge, motivating me, and by always encouraging me to take one step further.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Topic**

Gifts have the ability to straighten social bonds between the giver and the receiver (Schwartz, 1967). While sometimes they impose an expectation of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960; Mauss, 1925) other times, they are simply altruistic and generous expressions of love (Belk, 1979; Belk & Coon, 1993). Every year, consumers spend a considerable amount of money on gifts (National Retail Federation, 2021). Because of this, marketing efforts are pursued when it comes to products' promotions, such as commercials, free samples, or billboards, before celebratory occasions like Christmas or Valentine's Day, for instance. Despite this, a great deal of gift returns happen every year which, consequently, has a negative impact on several retailers' profits (DiChristopher, 2015).

Due to its increased importance, many scholars from different fields have been studying the concept of gift-giving. For instance, it has been an important topic for consumer psychologists, due to its social impacts on consumers' lives, as a great gift can either strengthen or weaken relationships (Aknin & Human, 2015; Chan & Mogilner, 2017; Dunn, Huntsinger, Lun & Sinclair, 2008). Besides, from a theoretical perspective, studying this phenomenon is also crucial for consumer psychologists, in order to broaden the existing knowledge regarding consumers' judgments and decision-making processes (Steffel & LeBoeuf, 2014), how they comply with social norms (Kupor, Flynn, & Norton, 2017), among others. Lastly, gift-giving also has economic implications for both firms and consumers (DiChristopher, 2015), since consumers often spend a considerable amount of money on gifts every year, which has further implications for companies.

As a result, there is nowadays an extensive gift-giving literature that addresses several subjects, such as the givers' motivations, giver's input towards a gift, the giver-recipient mismatches, the gifting occasion, to name a few (Givi et. al., 2022a).

Research has also addressed self-others differences in the context of gift-giving. For instance, Liu & Baskin (2021) have recently explored this subject, by analyzing how consumers choose a gift when they are faced with a quality versus quantity trade-off, when purchasing for themselves and for others. In this study, it was concluded that, due to self-presentational concerns, consumers choose quality over quantity when purchasing for others, as they are concerned about conveying a poor taste.

The present dissertation aims to contribute to the gift-giving literature, by exploring how individuals make gifts purchasing decisions – either for others, or for themselves – when they must choose between utilitarian and hedonic products as gifts. Nonetheless, contrarily to previous research conducted regarding self-others differences, the present study proposes that these differences can potentially be lessened when two different gift-giving contexts are observed.

Research also conducted regarding self-others differences (Lu et al., 2016) has explored the impact that anticipatory guilt has on consumers when they purchase hedonic and utilitarian products, either for themselves or for others. It was further concluded that individuals feel higher levels of anticipatory guilt when purchasing hedonic products for themselves rather than when purchasing for others.

As so, two different gift-giving occasions will be explored – celebratory and non-celebratory occasions. Recent research (Givi & Galak, 2022b) suggests that givers tend to choose gifts that are appropriate for the occasion under which they are given. This way, it will be further investigated whether hedonic or utilitarian gifts are perceived to be more appropriate, given the if the occasion is celebratory or non-celebratory.

Lastly, according to Schwartz (1967), gifts express something about the giver, and Belk (1979) demonstrated that the choice of the gift is firstly congruent with the giver's *ideal* self-concept, secondly with the giver's *real* self-concept and, lastly, with the perceptions regarding the recipient. Thus, this raises the question of what role self-expression has when individuals decide between hedonic and utilitarian gifts - either when purchasing for themselves and for others, but also in different occasions. As a result, the present study also aims to identify the role of self-expression, in order to determine if this arises as an explanation of the choice between hedonic and utilitarian products.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The present dissertation aims to study the differences regarding how consumers behave when purchasing gifts for themselves and for others, in different occasions – i.e., celebratory or non-celebratory occasions. To narrow down the scope of this research, this study will be focused on the purchase of utilitarian and hedonic products as gifts. Furthermore, it will also be assessed if

self-expression will mediate the effect of occasion on purchase intention between hedonic and utilitarian products. Therefore, the main research questions for this research are:

**RQ1:** How do consumers' purchase intention change when purchasing utilitarian and hedonic gifts for themselves and for others?

**RQ2:** How do consumers' purchase intention change when purchasing utilitarian and hedonic gifts under different occasions?

**RQ3:** Can self-expression mediate the effect of the occasion on purchase intention between utilitarian and hedonic gifts?

### **1.3 Dissertation Structure**

This thesis will be composed of 7 chapters. In Chapter 1, a brief explanation of the research topic and the research problem are exposed. Chapter 2 will present the literature review, which served as the theoretical support to answer the research questions, and to further develop the hypotheses of this dissertation. In Chapter 3, the research methodology is presented, explaining how the studies were conducted. In Chapter 4, a thorough analysis of the main results was explored. Moving on to Chapter 5, a discussion of the previous results was exposed. Chapter 6 presents the managerial implications of these results and, lastly, Chapter 7 highlights the limitations faced throughout this dissertation, while providing suggestions for future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Utilitarian and Hedonic Consumption - a Self-others Differences Approach**

Consumers often have to choose between utilitarian and hedonic products. The difference between the two types of goods is relative and subjective, meaning that it depends on individual, context, and even motivation dimensions. Consumers perceive a product to be more hedonic, whenever it is perceived to bring more pleasure, excitement, fun and sensorial stimuli, or more utilitarian, when products are helpful, rational, functional and necessary (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Voss et al., 2003).

Specific products can present both utilitarian and hedonic features. When this is the case, the perceived quality distinction between hedonic and utilitarian is not bounded to the product level, but rather to an attribute level (Chernev, 2004; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Furthermore, each

dimension will have distinct weights, taking into consideration whoever is evaluating them (Batra & Ahtola, 1990).

Normally, consumers consider that hedonic consumption is not entirely necessary, when compared to utilitarian (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Since utilitarian consumption is predominantly tied to the idea of being a necessity and hedonic consumption is mostly linked to luxuries (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a, 2002b), engaging in hedonic consumption will thus trigger higher levels of guilt than engaging in utilitarian consumption (Kray & Simonson, 2002b; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2016). This way, consumers will less likely purchase hedonic products if they experience a strong feeling of anticipatory guilt (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2016) and, due to this guilt, it will be more difficult to justify purchasing a hedonic rather than a utilitarian good (Prelec & Loewenstein 1998).

However, consumers not only make purchase decisions for themselves, but also for others (Baskin, Wakslak, Trope & Novemsky, 2014; Steffel & Le Boeuf, 2014). When making decisions for others, consumers consider a greater number of choice sets (Polman, 2012), and favour options that are more ideal (Danziger, Montal & Barkan, 2012), and higher in desirability rather than feasibility (Lu, Xie & Xu, 2013) than they would if they were purchasing for themselves. Nonetheless, research regarding whoever is the recipient - self or others - and the preference for either utilitarian or hedonic goods has been scarcely explored. Lu et al. (2016) addressed this subject, by studying the impact that anticipatory guilt has on individuals when purchasing hedonic versus utilitarian goods, both for oneself and for others. In this study, it was concluded that individuals experience higher levels of anticipatory guilt when buying hedonic products for themselves, rather than when buying it for others.

This can be partially explained since individuals assign distinct expenditures to different mental accounts. In the same way, products that are bought for oneself and for others - generally as a gift - are also assigned into two separate accounts, and the money in each account is spent in different ways (Thaler, 1985, 1999). For instance, mental accounting will suppress the urge to engage in hedonic consumption, regarding the money in the account of making expenditures for oneself (Cheema & Soman, 2006; Kivetz, 1999). Thus, considering engaging in hedonic consumption will induce higher levels of anticipatory guilt, as previously mentioned, since it is not essential. On the other hand, purchasing hedonic goods will induce lower levels of anticipatory guilt, for the money in the account of paying for another person (Kivetz, 1999).

Consequently, the choice for utilitarian and hedonic products will vary depending on the decision targets - this is, if it is made for oneself or for others.

## **2.2. Gift-giving: Differences and Similarities According to the Recipient**

In our society, gift-giving has an important social and cultural role (Belk et al., 1989; Fischer & Arnold, 1990; Dalakas & Shoham, 2010; Davies et al., 2010). As a multidimensional phenomenon, the act of gift-giving can be characterized by social, economic, personal and cultural factors. Additionally, it depends on the characteristics of the giver, the gift, the recipient, and the occasion under which it occurs (Belk, 1979).

As suggested by Cheal (1996), gifts present to be a way to initiate and nurture social relationships in different manners: they give material support for recipients, create mandatory commitments between individuals and groups, represent a symbol of the relationship and the social identities of both the giver and receiver, as well as the communication of personal feelings.

Belk (1979) separates gift-giving into four different functions - it can be an act of communication, social exchange, economic exchange, and socialization. It can be a form of *communication* between the giver and the receiver, as a gift can represent a symbolic message, and it can be seen as an act of expressing emotions (e.g., love), thankfulness, or even an apology. This way, givers ought to choose an appropriate gift in order to avoid the risk of being misunderstood or even to avoid sending the wrong message to the recipient (Scammon, Shaw, & Bamossy, 1982). Regarding the *social exchange* function, a gift initiates, develops and nurtures interpersonal relationships (Laroche, Saad, Cleveland, & Browne, 2000). To what concerns the *economic exchange* function, the gift will have a market value corresponding to the time, effort, and money spent in the procurement (Belk & Coon, 1993). Moreover, economists state a “deadweight loss” during the gift exchange (Waldfogel, 1993) when the giver pays more than the recipient would have for the same product or service - considering they would hypothetically purchase it for themselves. Finally, the *socialization* function acts as a child’s identity generator. This way, gifts given by parents, family members, and even friends will have an impact on the socialization of a child, as these gifts will shape a child’s learning and development processes, interests, the way the child looks at the world, and basic values (Banks, 1979).

Nonetheless, in the same way that gifts can be purchased for others, they can also be bought for oneself. Self-gifting consumer behavior represents an individual and symbolic self-communication through unique indulgences that are usually planned, and occasion-bound (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). This way, self-gifts can appear to be in the form of products, services and experiences, which are distinct from other personal purchases, due to their situational and motivational contexts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a; Davies et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Mick and DeMoss (1990b) suggest three parallel dimensions between interpersonal gifts and self-gifts. These dimensions are 1) communication, 2) exchange, and 3) specialness.

Regarding the *communication* dimension, and to what concerns interpersonal gift giving, it is a representation of messages - varying from affection, congratulations, get better or even regret (Belk, 1979) - and it also includes the giver's effort to match the gift qualities not only to his or her own personality features, but also to the receiver's. Additionally, Belk (1979) empirically studied this matter and found that the *ideal* self-concept of the giver was mainly reflected in the chosen gift's qualities, followed by the giver's *real* self-concept and, lastly, the perceived characteristics of the recipient. Hence, in interpersonal gift giving, the communication dimension includes the individuals' expression of feelings and thoughts, while involving the employment of identities. On the other hand, concerning self-gifting, self-communication is also a crucial function, since it is with these personal acquisitions that one will create, modify and display one's self-attitudes (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). In this situation, the consumer has both the giver and receiver roles, as the gifts are embedded in symbolic messages that possess cognitive and possessive meanings with further consequences for the self (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). The importance of the self-gift derives from a combination of arbitrary and distinctive connotations for the self, representing a personal symbolism. Hence, one's self-concept can be developed and maintained through self-gifts, as this element of the communication dimension depends on a perception of self-distinctiveness (Belk, 1988; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984).

Within the *exchange* dimension, interpersonal gift giving has been distinguished by an ongoing cycle of reciprocity, where individuals are obligated to "give, receive and repay" (Belk, 1979). This way, gift giving initiates, sustains, and clarifies interpersonal relationships (Belk, 1979). On the other hand, from an individual perspective, self-gifts can appear as a form of self-contract, where personal effort and achievement will work as the reciprocity of the gift (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). This way, the exchange dimension of self-gifts is mostly portrayed by this

worthy and deserving matter, which exemplifies one's psychological investment to create meaningful purchases (Csikszentmihalyi & Halton, 1981). Thus, intended self-gifts (i.e., gifts one has envisioned and longing to purchase) will act as a motivation and will provide behavioral instructions, while their acquisition may contribute to self-efficacy and self-satisfaction (Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Furthermore, when individuals achieve a goal (e.g., successfully finishing a work project) and reward themselves with a gift, it may motivate them to attain higher levels of performance (Bandura & Perloff, 1967). In this case, the exchange dimension will function as a self-regulatory role that strengthens both achievement behavior and multiple self-concepts (e.g., the disciplined self).

Regarding the *specialness* dimension, interpersonal gifts are unique, gathering individuals through a "ritual communication of cultural values and deeply felt emotions" (Belk et al., 1989). According to Mick and DeMoss (1990b), self-gifts are special and unique from ordinary personal acquisitions.

Even though purchasing a gift to oneself and for others present similar dimensions, these can be two distinct purchasing situations (Scammon et al., 1982). Consumers devote more time choosing and picking up a product when it is for others rather than when it is for themselves (Clarke & Belk, 1979). When purchasing for others, consumers will regard a greater number of options, as well as they will visit more stores to help make their decision (Grønhaug, 1972). In addition, purchasing a gift for others is a more emotionally engaging situation than purchasing for oneself (Belk, 1975; Clarke & Belk, 1979). This occurs since purchasing a gift is often an emotional act, as it can induce certain levels of anxiety (Moreau, Bonney & Herd, 2011) originated by the unawareness and unfamiliarity regarding the recipient's preferences, as well as the desire of making a good impression (Wooten, 2000).

### **2.2.1 Type of Gift**

Previous research (Caplow, 1984; Cheal, 1986; Gino & Flynn, 2011) suggests that givers generally make an effort to ensure that the gifts they purchase will be both relevant and pleasant for the recipient, while at the same time these gifts should "surprise and delight" (Belk, 1996). As suggested by Baskin et al. (2014), the psychological distance between the giver and the recipient has an influence when it comes to deciding which gift to purchase and, due to this, givers often tend to choose desirable over feasible products. Research previously conducted by Trope & Liberman (2010) regarding the Construal Level Theory has demonstrated that high psychological distance evokes individuals to adopt abstract representations that focus on the

main attributes of an item or activity. On the contrary, low psychological distance will lead to more concrete representations, whose focus is rather on the secondary and peripheral attributes. As an example, past research regarding temporal distance found that individuals make more abstract representations about a distant future event, rather than a near future event (Liberman, Sagristano & Trope 2002) and, in the same line of thought, when making choices for a distant future, individuals will tend to choose desirability over feasibility (Liberman & Trope 1998).

Regarding the gift-giving context, research has also been conducted where the comparison of decisions made for oneself and others revealed that, decisions made for oneself are indeed made from a lower psychological distance than when making the same decision for others. To illustrate, central attributes are favoured when the decision is made for others (Kray, 2000; Kray & Gonzalez, 1999), whereas when making a decision for oneself, secondary features - such as convenience - were preferred (Kray, 2000).

In recent research conducted by Givi & Galak (2022b), the authors demonstrated that givers tend to choose high over low quality products as gifts, thinking that recipients will be more satisfied with the former than with the latter. In this study, quality was either evaluated from a *quantitative* perspective – i.e., a gift with a higher price (e.g. a gift card of \$50 versus \$5) or with higher quantity (e.g. one rose versus a whole bouquet) - and from a *qualitative* perspective – i.e., tied to how a gift is associated to the recipient's interests (e.g. a simple and plain mug versus a mug with a logo of the recipient's favourite band) or even the personalization of a product (e.g. a simple and undecorated journal versus a journal adorned with the recipient's name).

This way, as previous studies in the gift-giving context have addressed how individuals choose between different types of products (e.g., feasible versus desirable, low versus high quality, quality versus quantity, among others), the present study aims to add on to the gift-giving literature, by analyzing how individuals will choose between utilitarian versus hedonic gifts, either for others or for themselves. Even though previous research has demonstrated that, individuals tend to choose hedonic products for others rather than for themselves, due to anticipatory guilt (Lu et al., 2016), in the present it is proposed that, in the context of gift-giving, these self-others differences will be lessened, especially when individuals have to make these decisions in two different gift-giving occasions.

### 2.2.2 Occasion

Gifts can be bought under different contexts. Even though much qualitative research has been conducted regarding the occasion in gift-giving literature (e.g., Belk, 1996; Belk & Coon, 1993; Larsen & Watson, 2001), there is still a gap regarding quantitative research yet to be explored. Moreover, previous research has mainly focused on the *occasion-based* contexts (i.e., special and celebratory occasions, such as Christmas), since these are more common and frequent to occur, than on *nonoccasion-based* contexts. Thus, the present study aims to add on to the literature of both occasions, with the purpose of finding significant differences between the two.

Givi & Galak (2022b) distinguish the gifting context in “occasion-based” and “nonoccasion-based” which, for the purpose of this study, will be respectively designated as “celebratory” and “non-celebratory” occasions. The former is tied to a special and celebratory moment, such as Christmas, birthdays, Valentine’s Day, among others. On the other hand, the latter occurs when an individual purchases a spontaneous gift, in order to surprise, for instance, a significant other, a friend, or a family member.

Moreover, Givi & Galak (2022b) had examined the differences between the two contexts, and suggest that even though, most of the times gifts are given on a special occasion, offering a gift on a non-special occasion is usually simpler, as recipients are not expecting to receive anything at all and, therefore, will be delighted with the minimum level of gift quality. Additionally, when selecting a gift, givers usually select gifts that are appropriate for the occasion, and thus, try to avoid gifts that are unusual for that specific context (Givi & Galak, 2022b).

On celebratory occasions, individuals often experience the need to comply with social norms, and, consequently, feel the need to purchase a gift, otherwise they can experience negative emotions like embarrassment and guilt (Givi, 2022a; Ruffle, 1999; Wolfinbarger, 1990; Wolfinbarger & Yale, 1993). Moreover, gifts that are bought under special occasions are often good quality gifts (Givi & Galak, 2022b), due to the high standards that social norms impose on these occasions. In addition, since recipients usually expect to receive a gift on special occasions, it may not be clear for them if the giver is offering a gift mainly due to the social obligation or from an altruistic motivation. Consequently, givers tend to choose high quality products as gifts, in order to convey a signal of care towards the recipient.

Alternatively, when there is no special occasion, the giver’s motivation is rather voluntary, and the recipients are not expecting to receive any gift. Therefore, there is a reduced need to comply

with social norms, and thus, the quality of the gift that is necessary to communicate care towards the recipient will be lower (Givi & Galak, 2022b), since the act of giving in these circumstances is enough to suggest that the giver cares about the recipient.

It is noteworthy to mention that, in the present study, hedonic and utilitarian products are not being qualified as higher or lower quality products, but rather according to their perceived characteristics (fun, exciting, and bringing more pleasure versus conventional, ordinary, and functional).

Lastly, for the present research, it is believed that the gifting occasion will have a higher effect on purchase intention, than the self-others differences will. The following sub-chapter will introduce the role of self-expression, by presenting an explanation of how its role will affect the impact of occasion on purchase intention.

Taking these findings into account, and considering that utilitarian products are conventional, ordinary, and functional, whereas hedonic products are fun, exciting, and bring more pleasure, it is proposed that, on *celebratory* occasions, individuals will purchase more hedonic than utilitarian products as gifts, and this effect is expected to be the same for both decision targets. When purchasing for *others*, there is a higher need to convey care, given the social norms imposed by the special occasion. Hence, it is proposed that hedonic products will be perceived as more appropriate, due to their perceived qualities (fun, excitement, pleasure). On the other hand, when purchasing for *themselves*, individuals will also perceive hedonic products as more appropriate, since these purchases can be justified by the occasion.

On *non-celebratory* occasions, utilitarian products will be perceived as more appropriate as, without a special occasion, hedonic purchases cannot be easily justified. Hence, it is proposed that individuals will purchase more utilitarian than hedonic products as gifts, but this effect will be more evident when purchasing for themselves rather than when purchasing for others. This way, when purchasing for *themselves*, since there will be higher levels of anticipated guilt, hedonic purchases cannot be easily justified (as suggested by Lu et al. (2016)) and, therefore, individuals will purchase more utilitarian products as gifts. On the other hand, when purchasing for *others*, individuals will also purchase utilitarian products, since without the presence of a special occasion, recipients' expectations are rather lower (Givi & Galak, 2022b) and, thus, there is a reduced need to convey care with the chosen gift. As so, it is proposed that the utilitarian qualities of the gift will be perceived as enough to convey care.

### **2.3. The Role of Self-expression**

Self-expression can be described as a cognitive process that allows oneself to externalize and present one's invisible self-identity, this is one's personality traits, preferences, values, beliefs, opinions, or attitudes (Aaker, 1999; Kim & Sherman, 2007).

Additionally, according to the Self-image/Product-image Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1982), individuals tend to value the products and brands that are consistent with their own self-image. As means for self-expression, possessions not only illustrate one's unique personal qualities and value systems, but they also communicate one's personal history (Dittmar, 1992). This way, one's possessions integrate with one's self-concept, being a contributor and a mirror of one's identity (Belk, 1988).

Moreover, individuals are motivated by basic human needs, and self-expression presents to be a cognitively-driven process that can be used to fulfil these needs. Previous research has identified the necessity to create and sustain a consistent self-identity as essential (Aaker, 1999; Belk, 1988; Oyserman, 2009; Reed et al., 2012). As products and brands have their own symbolic value that individuals can use to express their self-identity, consumers will purchase both products and brands, in order to communicate their self - either to themselves and/or to others (Aaker, 1999; Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1986; Richins, 1994; Berger & Heath, 2007; Bodner & Prelec, 2003). To illustrate this, an individual who recognizes himself as rugged might acquire a product from Patagonia, as a means to express a rugged identity, either to himself and/or to others (Aaker, 1999).

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Maimaran & Simonson (2011), it was concluded that hedonic products have the ability to allow individuals expressing themselves more than utilitarian products do, as hedonic options were perceived as more self-expressive and less conventional, whereas utilitarian options were perceived to be the default option, more ordinary and others-expressive. As previously stated in the first sub-chapter of this research, the utilitarian option is usually the default and most common choice, which is simpler to justify, and less prone to receive criticism. Therefore, individuals tend to engage less in hedonic experiences (Kivetz & Simonson 2002b; Kivetz & Zheng 2006). On the other hand, prior research suggests that the hedonic option reflects the expression of one's desires and tastes, and usually represents an expression of an eagerness to engage in fun and pleasurable experiences,

which are restrained whenever an individual chooses the utilitarian option (Kivetz & Simonson 2002b; Kivetz & Zheng 2006).

According to the Eudaimonistic Identity Theory, by undertaking activities that induce self-expressiveness, individuals will more likely experience higher levels of overall life satisfaction and happiness. Also, by engaging in self-expressive activities, individuals are more expected to experience a stronger feeling of being alive and fulfilled, since these activities are more significant and essentially rewarding for one's personal development (Waterman, 1990, Waterman, 1993; Waterman et al., 2008).

To what concerns the literature of gift-giving, Schwartz (1967) suggests that gifts have the capacity of transmitting the perceptions others have of us in their minds. Nonetheless, gifts also express something about the giver, meaning that individuals validate who they believe they are by what they offer. As previously mentioned, Belk (1979) demonstrated that the choice of the gift was more correlated with the giver's *ideal* self-concept than the giver's *real* self-concept and, lastly, the perceptions he has regarding the recipient.

Taking the role of self-expression into consideration, it will be assessed how it will have an impact on the chosen gift – either utilitarian or hedonic. Additionally, as different gifting occasions elicit different levels of recipients' expectations which, have an impact on the perceived appropriateness of the gift, the present research aims to explore all these effects. Moreover, although self-others differences will be assessed, the main purpose of this research is to find significant differences between the two gift-giving occasions.

Hence, it is proposed that, when purchasing a gift for *others*, individuals will tend to express themselves in some way that will be reflected on the chosen gift and, consequently, they will more likely purchase a hedonic rather than a utilitarian product as a gift, as the first are perceived as more self-expressive than the latter. Similarly, when purchasing a gift for *themselves*, it is also proposed that individuals will choose hedonic products, since these will allow themselves to better express their individualities. However, it is believed that the levels of self-expression will vary according to the occasion, and so will the purchase intention.

This way, it is proposed that the self-expression will mediate the effect of occasion on purchase intention, in such a way that, on *celebratory* occasions, individuals' celebratory mindset will increase their levels of self-expression, and thus, they will likely purchase more hedonic than utilitarian products as gifts, for both decision targets. On the other hand, it is proposed that, on

*non-celebratory* occasions, the levels of self-expression will be lower due to the non-celebratory mindset. As so, individuals will likely purchase less hedonic products as gifts on these occasions.

Furthermore, according to the Eudaimonistic Identity Theory, and given that hedonic products are more self-expressive than utilitarian products (Maimaran & Simonson, 2011), it is thus proposed that individuals will feel higher levels of anticipated happiness when purchasing hedonic products.

Lastly, one of the consumers' basic motivations is either the need of conformity or feeling of belonging – *by finding a way to be identical to others* - and the need to be distinctive – *by expressing unique opinions and behaviors* - (Brewer, 1991). The uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1980) states that both motivations – to conform or to be unique – differ according to personalities and contexts. Therefore, to measure one's tendency to be unique and different from others, the NFU scale (Need for Uniqueness) was developed (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). Although past research concerning hedonic versus utilitarian choice has implemented this scale without finding it as an explanatory variable of the results (Maimaran & Simonson, 2011), the present study will not formulate any hypothesis, but it will control for its effect, in order to analyse if individuals that score high on the NFU scale will make more self-expressive purchases.

## **2.4 Hypothesis Formulation**

Taking these findings into account, it is known that past research has found self-others asymmetries in many different perspectives. While these studies show that there are indeed self-others differences, the occasion under which these occur was never controlled for. It is possible that, when asked to purchase utilitarian or hedonic products for others and for themselves, individuals might have confounded it with a celebratory and non-celebratory occasion, respectively. When purchasing for *others*, individuals might have immediately thought about a celebratory occasion – this is, when asked to purchase for someone else, they might have acquired a celebratory mindset, which led them to prefer hedonic products. On the other hand, when asked to purchase for *themselves*, the opposite effect happened – this is, they did not have

the celebratory mindset, which might have been the reason that led them to prefer utilitarian products for themselves.

Hence, the present study aims to test whether it is indeed the occasion that will have a stronger effect that will determine the choice between hedonic and utilitarian products, where self-others differences will no longer be so evident.

Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H1:** The gift giving occasion influences the purchase intention of hedonic and utilitarian gifts:

**H1a:** On *non-celebratory* occasions, for both decision targets, individuals will purchase more utilitarian than hedonic gifts, and this effect is stronger for oneself rather than for others.

**H1b:** On *celebratory* occasions, for both decision targets, individuals will purchase more hedonic than utilitarian gifts.

**H2:** The gift-giving occasion influences the perceived appropriateness of hedonic and utilitarian:

**H2a:** On *non-celebratory* occasions, utilitarian gifts are perceived as being more appropriate than hedonic gifts.

**H2b:** On *celebratory* occasions, hedonic gifts are perceived as being more appropriate than utilitarian gifts.

**H3:** When purchasing hedonic gifts for *oneself*, there will be lower levels of anticipated guilt on *celebratory* than on *non-celebratory* occasions.

**H4:** Self-expression will mediate the effect of occasion on purchase intention, such that when the occasion is celebratory, there will be higher purchase intention of hedonic rather than utilitarian gifts, as the levels of self-expression are higher.

**H5:** There will be higher levels of anticipated happiness when purchasing hedonic than utilitarian gifts, regardless of the decision target.

### **3. Methodology and Data Collection**

In order to complement the data previously gathered in the literature review, primary data was also collected. Thus, one focus group was initially conducted, in order to gather useful insights to implement on the following research. Additionally, one experimental study was conducted to understand consumers' decision-making process regarding purchasing hedonic or utilitarian gifts for themselves and for others, under different occasions - non-celebratory and celebratory -, which is proposed to be mediated by self-expression. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2017), quantitative research can be described as a social research, where empirical methods and statements are employed. Moreover, according to Creswell (2009), this type of research has the purpose of explaining phenomena, by gathering numerical data that can be further analyzed, with the application of mathematical methods, more specifically statistical procedures. This way, as quantitative research, one online survey was conducted. A more thorough explanation of the research method can be found in the Appendices section (see Appendix 1).

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research**

##### **3.1.1 Participants**

A total of 6 individuals - 4 female and 2 male, aged between 21 to 25 - voluntarily agreed to participate in the focus group.

##### **3.1.2 Materials and Procedure**

In the introduction, participants were explained the aim of the focus group, where it was highlighted that the gathered data would be used for research purposes only (see Appendix 2).

Since this focus group had the purpose of selecting the adequate stimuli that would be further used in the experimental study, each participant was presented with two products at a time – a scarf and a toaster. For each product, participants would first be asked if they would purchase those products as a gift, both for themselves and for a close friend, and under different occasions (celebratory and non-celebratory occasions). Additionally, two images were presented, and participants were asked to indicate which option (A or B) they perceived as more hedonic or utilitarian (see Appendix 2).

### **3.2. Pre-test**

Before launching the online survey, a pre-test was developed in order to ensure that all the questions were written in a clear and understandable way. Since the pre-test served as a test version of the quantitative research that was further conducted, it followed a 2 x 2 between subjects and a 2 within subjects design (a thorough explanation of the research design can be found in the next sub-chapter).

In the introduction section, the main purpose was briefly explained, stating that the answers would be used for a study being conducted for a Master's Thesis in Management with a Specialization in Strategic Marketing, in Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Participants were asked to both answer and assess the whole questionnaire, in order to provide insights regarding how the questions were structured and grammatically written. Lastly, they were informed of the anonymity of their answers.

As participants had been asked to give their input regarding the questions, they would find an open box in every question, where they could write their feedback and recommendations, aiming to improve the quality of the survey. Moreover, at the end of the whole questionnaire, they would also find another box, in order to write any final comments of the overall survey's quality and structure.

Overall, there was positive feedback among the participants, where only a few questions needed adjustments regarding the way they were written. Moreover, one of the respondents also brought to attention that a few words were not correctly translated into Portuguese in one of the questions, ending up being perceived in another way when compared to the English version. Afterwards, the due changes were made before sharing the survey.

### **3.3. Quantitative Research**

#### **3.3.1 Participants**

A total 121 people voluntarily completed the questionnaire. Participants were randomly selected, by finding the survey via different social media platforms - such as Facebook and Instagram -, as well as through word-of-mouth. Respondents were mostly aged from 18-25 years old (30.6%), and 81% were Portuguese. Out of all the respondents, 76% were female, 21.5% were male, and 2.5% did not want to disclose their gender

### 3.3.2 Materials

#### 3.3.2.1 Independent variables

The study was designed with three **independent variables**, each one including two levels: the **Decision Target** (Self versus Others), the **Occasion** (Celebratory versus Non-celebratory) and, lastly, the **Product Type** (Utilitarian versus Hedonic). This way, this study followed a 2 (Decision Target) x 2 (Occasion) between-subjects and a 2 (Product Type) within-subjects design. To manipulate the variable “Decision Target”, participants would be randomly assigned to either the “Self” condition, where they made purchase decisions for themselves, or to the “Others” condition, where they made purchase decisions for a close friend. As to manipulate the variable “Occasion”, participants were also randomly assigned to either a “Celebratory” condition, where there was a special occasion under which they were purchasing the products for, or to a “Non-celebratory” condition, where there was no special occasion associated with those purchase decisions. Lastly, since “Product type” followed a within-subjects, all participants were exposed to both utilitarian and hedonic products.

In the “Self” condition, participants were asked to imagine if they were purchasing a gift for themselves. If they were answering in the “Celebratory” condition, participants were told they had a good week where they accomplished something they were waiting for a long time, and therefore wanted to purchase something to celebrate that accomplishment. On the other hand, in the “Non-celebratory” condition, participants were told they were at the mall and they wanted to purchase two products they have been longing for, and were told there was no special occasion for those purchases.

Regarding the “Others” condition, participants were told they were purchasing a gift for one of their closest’s friends, and that they knew this friend had wanted to purchase two products for a very long time. This way, in the “Celebratory” condition, participants were told that it was their close friend’s birthday, and therefore they were purchasing something to celebrate that. In the “Non-celebratory” condition, participants were told there was no celebratory occasion, and that they just wanted to purchase something for their friend, in order to surprise him or her. (See Appendix 3).

Additionally, participants were asked to imagine the context they were assigned to, with both text and products’ images (see Appendix 3). This way, participants were presented with 2 sets of products – a scarf and a toaster - that were previously evaluated in a focus group. Each set

of products presented two options: option A - possessing mainly utilitarian attributes - and option B - possessing mainly hedonic attributes (Table 3.1), following the same strategy employed by Lu et al. (2016).

*Table 3.1 - Products used as stimuli in the experimental study*

| <b>Product</b> | <b>Utilitarian Option (A)</b>                                                        | <b>Hedonic Option (B)</b>                                                          |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Scarf</b>   | Mainly made from acrylic                                                             | Cashmere blend                                                                     |
|                | Made with an innovative technology that provides a warm feeling and water resistance | Made with soft texture that provides a warm feeling, but it is not water resistant |
|                | Doesn't require a lot of care, easy to wash in all temperatures and programs         | It requires a lot of care, and it can be easily damaged                            |
| <b>Toaster</b> | Traditional design and it comes in 1 colour                                          | Sleek design and it comes in many colours                                          |
|                | 8 different functionalities                                                          | 4 different functionalities                                                        |
|                | Power of 1200W                                                                       | Power of 800W                                                                      |

### 3.3.2.2 Dependent variables

**Purchase intention** was measured by assessing which option - option A or option B - participants would be more willing to purchase, through a 7-point scale measure (1 – Definitely option A to 7 – Definitely option B). Independently from their previous answer, participants were further asked to evaluate each option separately.

**Anticipated happiness** was measured, as an adaptation from Givi and Galak (2022b), by asking how happy participants would feel to purchase that option (either hedonic or utilitarian).

This variable was measured on a 7-point likert scale (1 – Not happy at all to 7 – Completely happy).

Next, to evaluate the extent to which participants thought that the option was appropriate as a gift, given the occasion they were assigned to, **appropriateness** was measured on a 7-point likert scale (1 – Not appropriate at all to 7 – Completely appropriate).

Adding on, in order to assess the mediator **self-expression**, an adaptation of the established brand self-expressiveness measure by Carol and Ahuvia (2006) was implemented. This scale is originally composed of eight statements in total - four items assessing brands that have an ability for inner self-expression and four items assessing brands that have an ability for social self-expressiveness. In the present study, only four were implemented, and they were adjusted to the product level. Therefore, respondents were required to state their level of agreement regarding four self-expressiveness statements (“This product reflects my personality”, “This product reflects my personal opinions and taste”, This product is an extension of my inner self”, “This product tells others who I really am”), through a 7-level scale (1 – Strongly disagree to 7 – Strongly agree).

Further one, to evaluate guilt, one questions was adapted from Dahl et al. (2003), and participants were asked how **guilty** they would have felt if they had purchased that option - either utilitarian or hedonic - on a 7-point likert scale (1 – Not guilty at all to 7 – Completely guilty).

### **3.3.2.3 Control Variables**

To measure one’s tendency to guilt and shame, an adaptation of the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP) (Cohen et al, 2011) was used. This scale is originally composed of 16 questions, with a 7-point scale with labels in each point. Nonetheless, only 4 out of the 8 questions concerning the guilt assessment were implemented, due to its considerable length.

As to measure one’s individual tendency for uniqueness, the Need for Uniqueness scale (NFU) was implemented, as an adaptation from Snyder and Fromkin (1977). This scale originally consists of 32 items, measured in a 5-point likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree), and for the present study, 4 items were adapted and measured in a 7-point scale.

By measuring these control variables, the collected data can be more appropriately investigated and, thus, better conclusions can be drawn.

#### **3.3.2.4 Manipulation Checks**

In the questionnaire, two questions were developed to assess if the manipulation of the independent variables had the desired outcome on participants' answers, meaning that it would assess if the respondents correctly understood the context manipulation.

First, participants were presented with a brief explanation of what utilitarian and hedonic products are, and afterwards were asked to choose which option (A or B) they thought was more utilitarian or hedonic, through a 7-point scale (1 – Completely utilitarian to 7 – Completely hedonic), in order to assess if they understood the manipulation of the product type.

Additionally, another manipulation check question was implemented to evaluate the occasion the participants were making the products' decisions and evaluations for, by asking "In which context were you buying the products for?". Consequently, participants in the celebratory occasion must have answered "Celebratory" and the participants that were given the non-celebratory occasion must have answered "Non-celebratory". This manipulation check served as an elimination factor, meaning that if the participants had chosen the incorrect answer, this would reflect that they did not utterly understand the manipulation and, therefore, their answers to the whole questionnaire would not be considered valid for the present study.

#### **3.3.3 Procedure**

The survey was composed of 4 sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Manipulation, (3) Control Variables, and (4) Demographics.

In the introduction, participants were informed that the study aimed to understand the effect of decision targets on preferences for different types of products, given different contexts, and how that would influence other variables. Moreover, participants would read a consent declaring that the collected data was strictly destined for research purposes, being used under a Master's Thesis in Management with Specialization in Strategic Marketing, by Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Therefore, the respondents were informed that all the data would be treated anonymously.

Afterwards, respondents would be randomly assigned to one condition the "Decision target" - either to the "Self" or "Others" condition -, and to one condition of the "Occasion" - either to a "Celebratory" or "Non-celebratory" condition.

As previously explained, respondents would be presented with 2 products as a stimulus - a scarf and a toaster -, and each product was manipulated with a utilitarian option (option A) and a hedonic option (option B). Each product was presented separately, meaning that the first product participants would see was the scarf, followed by the toaster. Additionally, regardless of the condition participants would be answering for, the stimuli and the questions that measured the dependent variables, manipulation checks, and the control variables were all the same for each condition.

When a product was introduced, both options (option A and option B) with the same price would be presented as well, and participants were immediately asked which option they were more willing to purchase, given the occasion they were assigned to. Afterwards, participants would evaluate each option (utilitarian and hedonic) individually, with 5 questions each, in order to assess the dependent variables and one of the manipulation checks, to evaluate if the participants understood the manipulation of the product type. After answering the 5 questions for each product option, another manipulation check was presented, to assess the context participants imagined they were buying the product for. Further on, two control variables were assessed, where participants evaluated their level of guilt regarding potential topics that can induce it, and their need for uniqueness. Lastly, demographics were collected and, after completing the survey, participants were informed about their answers' recording and were thanked for their participation.

### **3.3.4 Design**

The study followed a 2 (Decision target: Self versus Others) x 2 (Occasion: Celebratory versus Non-celebratory) x 2 (Product type: Hedonic versus Utilitarian) between-within subjects' design. This is, "Decision target" and "Occasion" followed a between-subject design, which were randomized to each participant. In each condition, the variable "Product type" followed a within-subject design, meaning that, in each condition, all participants would be exposed to both types of products - hedonic and utilitarian.

## 4. Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Prior Analysis

As previously stated in the Methodology section, the present study followed a mixed-subjects design. Therefore, in order to properly analyze the collected data, the answers regarding each product were merged into one, by calculating their averages. Additionally, a recoding of the necessary variables was executed (Table 4.2).

*Table 4.2 - Variables Recoded*

| <b>Variables</b>          | <b>Values</b>                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Decision Target</b>    | 0 = “Others”; 1 = “Self”                                                                                                  |
| <b>Occasion</b>           | 0 = “Non-celebratory”; 1 = “Celebratory”                                                                                  |
| <b>Gender</b>             | 1 = “Female”; 2 = “Male”; 3 = “Other”; 4 = “Prefer not to say”                                                            |
| <b>Nationality</b>        | 1 = “Portuguese”; 2 = “European”; 3 = “Non-European”                                                                      |
| <b>Age</b>                | 1 = “18-25”; 2 = “26-35”; 3 = “36-45”; 4 = “46-55”; 5 = “56-62”                                                           |
| <b>Occupation</b>         | 1 = “Student”; 2 = “Working Student”; 3 = “Part-time employed”; 4 = “Full-time employed”; 5 = “Unemployed”; 6 = “Retired” |
| <b>Income</b>             | 1 = “<705”; 2 = “706-1000”; 3 = “1001-2000”; 4 = “2001-3000”; 5 = “3001-4000”; 6 = “>4001”; 7 = “Prefer not to say”       |
| <b>Manipulation Check</b> | 0 = “Non-celebratory”; 1 = “Celebratory”                                                                                  |

After the recoding was concluded, the manipulation check results were analyzed. Respondents who failed to answer the question that assessed if they understood the context they were answering for, were eliminated, since their responses to the whole questionnaire would not

correspond to the occasion they were answering for. This way, out of 154 responses, 33 were not valid. Thus, the further analysis of the results will consider 121 valid responses (Table 4.3).

*Table 4.3 - Frequencies Table ( Manipulation Check on Occasion)*

| <b>Manipulation Check on Occasion</b> |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Right</b>                          | 78.6% |
| <b>Wrong</b>                          | 21.4% |

To what concerns participants' evaluation of the products regarding if they were perceived as utilitarian or hedonic, a paired samples t-test was performed (Table 4.4).

*Table 4.4 - Paired Samples T-test on "Product Type"*

| <b>Paired Samples Statistics</b> |                     |                  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>Product</b>                   | <b>Product Type</b> | <b>Mean (SD)</b> |
| <b>Scarf</b>                     | Utilitarian         | 2.17 (1.502)     |
|                                  | Hedonic             | 4.84 (2.021)     |
| <b>Toaster</b>                   | Utilitarian         | 2.01 (1.676)     |
|                                  | Hedonic             | 4.33 (2.256)     |

---

| Paired Samples Test |        |          |
|---------------------|--------|----------|
| Product             | T      | <i>p</i> |
| Scarf               | 11.685 | .001     |
| Toaster             | 8.992  | .001     |

---

The results show a significant difference between the means of both pairs of products (both *p*'s = .001). Regarding the scarf, participants assessed option A to be more utilitarian and option B as more hedonic ( $M_{\text{ControlVariable\_Scarf\_Utilitarian}} = 2.17$  and  $M_{\text{ControlVariable\_Scarf\_Hedonic}} = 4.84$ ). As for the toaster, the respondents also assessed option A to be more utilitarian and option B as more hedonic ( $M_{\text{ControlVariable\_Toaster\_Utilitarian}} = 2.01$  and  $M_{\text{ControlVariable\_Toaster\_Hedonic}} = 4.33$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that, for both products, participants correctly regarded the options as utilitarian and hedonic, confirming a successful manipulation of the product type.

Since the present study included questions that had more than one item that measured a certain variable, it is crucial to assess their reliability, in order to ensure trustworthy results. Moreover, considering that in this study, the number of items of each variable were always above 3, a Cronbach's alpha analysis was further developed to properly assess their reliability. According to George & Mallery (2003), the Cronbach's alpha value should be over .700, in order to ensure an acceptable reliability of the items. After conducting this analysis, it is possible to observe that all items were reliable (see Appendix 4), as shown from Table 4.5 to 4.10.

*Table 4.5 - Reliability Analysis on "Self-expression - scarf utilitarian option"*

---

| Reliability Statistics |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | Number of items |
| .921 > .700            | 4               |

---

*Table 4.6* - Reliability Analysis on “Self-expression - scarf hedonic option”

| Reliability Statistics |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha       | Number of items |
| .925 > .700            | 4               |

*Table 4.7* - Reliability Analysis on “Self-expression - toaster utilitarian option”

| Reliability Statistics |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha       | Number of items |
| .940 > .700            | 4               |

*Table 4.8* - Reliability Analysis on “Self-expression - toaster hedonic option”

| Reliability Statistics |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha       | Number of items |
| .948 > .700            | 4               |

*Table 4.9* - Reliability Analysis on “Guilt Tendency”

| Reliability Statistics |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha       | Number of items |
| .765 > .700            | 4               |

*Table 4.10 - Reliability Analysis on “Need for Uniqueness”*

| <b>Reliability Statistics</b> |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>       | <b>Number of items</b> |
| .898 > .700                   | 4                      |

## **4.2 Sampling Characterization**

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were required to answer demographic questions regarding their gender, nationality, age, occupation, and income (see Appendix 3).

Out of 121 respondents, 76.0% were female, 21.5% were male and 2.5% did not want to disclose their gender. Regarding nationality, 81% of respondents were Portuguese, 17.4% were European, and only 1.7% were non-European.

Regarding age, 30.6% were aged between 18-25, followed by 28.1%, with an age between 26-35, and 17.4% with an age between 46-55. Additionally, participants aged between 36-45 accounted for 14.9%, and, lastly, only 9.1% were aged between 56-62.

Regarding their occupation, most of the respondents were full-time employed (71.9%), followed by students (14%), and working students (9.9%). Only a few were unemployed (1.7%), part-time employed (1.7%), and retired (0.8%).

As for income, most participants stated to have a monthly income between 1001-2000€ (33.9%), followed by an income of 706-1000€ (22.3%). Participants that have an income of less than 705€ and comprehended between 3001-4000€ both accounted for the same percentage (6.6% each), followed by an income of 2001-3000€ (9.1%), and a minority of an income above 4001€ (3.3%). However, 18.2% of the respondents preferred not to share their income.

Besides demographic questions, there were also control variables in the questionnaire in order to assess participants’ characteristics and personality traits that may have an influence regarding how participants answered the questions.

Regarding participants’ guilt tendency, a factorial ANOVA was performed (see Appendix 5) where it was possible to conclude that participants answering in the condition (Self, Non-

celebratory) revealed less guilt tendency ( $M_{\text{Self\_Non-celebratory}} = 5.41$ ), when compared to the other groups ( $M_{\text{Self\_Celebratory}} = 6.36$ ;  $M_{\text{Others\_Celebratory}} = 6.39$ ;  $M_{\text{Others\_Non-Celebratory}} = 6.16$ ). According to the literature review, this is not the expected result, since guilt levels tend to be higher when purchasing something for oneself, rather than when purchasing for someone else. This difference between groups can potentially reveal incongruent results on the analysis of the further variables, and therefore, it will be controlled for the following analysis.

Additionally, a factorial ANOVA was performed to evaluate participants' need for uniqueness (see Appendix 6). Since there is no statistically significant difference between the groups of the four conditions, as all p-values are higher than .05, the need for uniqueness will not explain the further results of this study, and therefore it will be excluded from the following analysis.

### 4.3. Main Results

#### 4.3.1 Effect of Decision Target, Occasion and Product Type on Purchase Intention

In order to draw conclusions for H1a and H1b, a factorial ANOVA was performed (Table 4.11 and Figure 4.1).

*Table 4.11 - Factorial ANOVA (Purchase Intention)*

| Descriptive Statistics |                 |             |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Decision Target        | Occasion        | Mean (SD)   |
| Others                 | Non-celebratory | 3.82 (1.82) |
|                        | Celebratory     | 4.44 (2.00) |
|                        | Total           | 4.12 (1.92) |
| Self                   | Non-celebratory | 3.76 (1.39) |
|                        | Celebratory     | 4.71 (2.09) |

|                                         |                 |                 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                         | Total           | 4.14 (1.75)     |
| Total                                   | Non-celebratory | 3.79 (1.61)     |
|                                         | Celebratory     | 4.55 (2.02)     |
|                                         | Total           | 4.13 (1.84)     |
| <hr/>                                   |                 |                 |
| <hr/>                                   |                 |                 |
| <b>Test of Between-Subjects Effects</b> |                 |                 |
| <b>Source</b>                           | <b><i>F</i></b> | <b><i>p</i></b> |
| <b>Decision_Target</b>                  | 0.099           | .753            |
| <b>Occasion</b>                         | 5.421           | .022            |
| <b>Occasion*Decision_Target</b>         | 0.247           | .620            |

According to the tests of between-subjects effects, it is possible to observe a significant main effect of Occasion on Purchase Intention ( $F(1,121) = 5.421, p = .022$ ). In fact, there is an overall preference for utilitarian products on *non-celebratory* occasions, and a preference for hedonic products on *celebratory* occasions ( $M_{PI\_Total\_Non-celebratory} = 3.79$  and  $M_{PI\_total\_Celebratory} = 4.55$ ), as it can also be observed in Figure 4.1. Therefore, H1b can be supported.

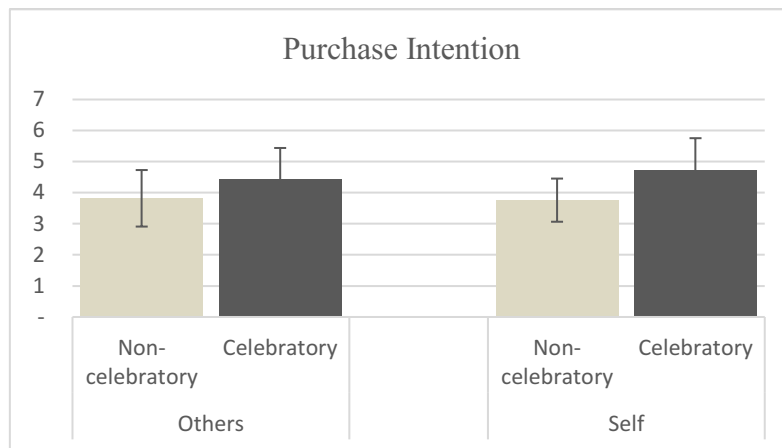


Figure 4.1 - Factorial ANOVA (Purchase Intention)

To properly analyze H1a, this is, if on *non-celebratory* occasions, individuals would purchase more utilitarian products for themselves than for others, an independent samples t-test was conducted (Table 4.12), where the variable occasion was pre-selected as *non-celebratory*. Even though the results showed a slightly higher purchase intention of utilitarian products, when purchasing for *oneself* than when purchasing for *others* ( $M_{PI\_Self\_Non-celebratory} = 3.76$  and  $M_{PI\_Others\_Celebratory} = 3.82$ ), this difference was not statistically significant ( $p = .878$ ). Therefore, H1a can be partially supported, as individuals revealed higher indeed levels of purchase intention towards utilitarian products, on *non-celebratory* occasions, but no self-others differences were verified.

Table 4.12 - Independent Sample T-Test for “Purchase Intention” depending on “Decision Target” for the Occasion “Non-celebratory”

| Group Statistics   |                 |      |                |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
|                    | Decision Target | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| Purchase Intention | Others          | 3.82 | 1.817          |
|                    | Self            | 3.76 | 1.384          |

| <b>T-test of Equality of Means</b> |          |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                                    | <i>T</i> | <i>p</i> |
| <b>Equal variances assumed</b>     | .154     | .878     |
| <b>Equal variances not assumed</b> | .157     | .878     |

#### 4.3.2 Effect of Decision Target, Occasion and Product Type on Appropriateness

A mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) 2 (Occasion) x 2 (Decision Target) x 2 (Product Type), with repeated measures on the last factor, was conducted to measure the levels of Appropriateness (Table 4.13, 4.14, and Figure 4.2).

*Table 4.13 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Appropriateness)*

| <b>Descriptive Statistics</b> |                        |                 |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Product Type</b>           | <b>Decision Target</b> | <b>Occasion</b> | <b>Mean (SD)</b> |
| <b>Utilitarian</b>            | <b>Others</b>          | Non-celebratory | 5.40 (1.26)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 4.56 (1.74)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 5.00 (1.56)      |
|                               | <b>Self</b>            | Non-celebratory | 5.36 (1.03)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 4.55 (2.04)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 5.03 (1.55)      |

|                |               |                 |             |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Hedonic</b> | <b>Total</b>  | Non-celebratory | 5.38 (1.15) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 4.56 (1.84) |
|                |               | Total           | 5.01 (1.55) |
|                | <b>Others</b> | Non-celebratory | 5.11 (1.32) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 5.29 (1.31) |
|                |               | Total           | 5.20 (1.30) |
|                | <b>Self</b>   | Non-celebratory | 4.31 (1.41) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 5.31 (1.48) |
|                |               | Total           | 4.71 (1.51) |
|                | <b>Total</b>  | Non-celebratory | 4.74 (1.41) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 5.30 (1.36) |
|                |               | Total           | 4.99 (1.41) |

---

| Test of Within-Subjects Effects        |          |          |
|----------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                                 | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Product Type                           | 0.035    | .851     |
| Product Type*Decision Target           | 0.830    | .364     |
| Product Type*Occasion                  | 12.743   | .001     |
| Product Type*Decision Target *Occasion | 0.320    | .320     |

| Test of Between-Subjects Effects |          |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                           | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Decision Target                  | 1.372    | .244     |
| Occasion                         | 0.425    | .516     |
| Occasion*Decision Target         | 1.429    | .234     |

By observing the within-subjects effects table, it is possible to conclude that there is a significant interaction effect between Product Type and Occasion, as the p-value is lower than .05 ( $F(1,121) = 12.743, p = .001$ ).

To further investigate this effect, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction were further examined (Table 4.14). The results show that, on *non-celebratory* occasions, utilitarian products are perceived as more appropriate than hedonic ones, and this difference is statistically significant ( $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Utilitarian}} = 5.38$  and  $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Hedonic}} = 4.71$ ; p-value = .012). On the other hand, on *celebratory* occasions, hedonic products are perceived as more appropriate than utilitarian ones, and this is also statistically significant ( $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Utilitarian}} = 4.55$  and  $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Hedonic}} = 5.30$ ;  $p = .014$ ). Thus, H2a and H2b can be supported.

Table 4.14 - Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction (Appropriateness)

| Pairwise Comparisons |              |              |          |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Occasion             | Product Type | Mean (SE)    | <i>p</i> |
| Non-celebratory      | Utilitarian  | 5.38 (0.185) | .012     |
|                      | Hedonic      | 4.71 (0.167) |          |
| Celebratory          | Utilitarian  | 4.55 (0.211) | .014     |
|                      | Hedonic      | 5.30 (0.191) |          |

As suggested in the literature review, and by observing the results of this analysis, the self-others asymmetries are lessened when two different occasions are observed. In fact, for both decision targets, the results showed a similar pattern of attitudes (Figure 4.2).

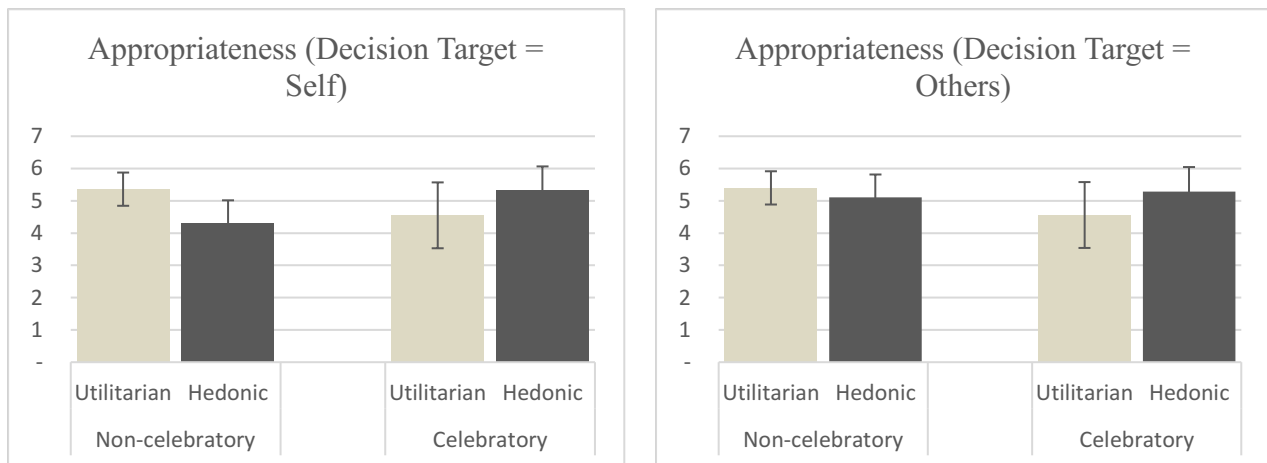


Figure 4.2 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Appropriateness)

#### 4.3.3 Effect of Decision Target, Occasion and Product Type on Anticipated Happiness

A mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) 2 (Occasion) x 2 (Decision Target) x 2 (Product Type), with repeated measures on the last factor, was conducted to measure the levels of Anticipated Happiness (Table 4.15, 4.16, and Figure 4.3)

*Table 4.15 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Anticipated Happiness)*

| <b>Descriptive Statistics</b> |                        |                 |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Product Type</b>           | <b>Decision Target</b> | <b>Occasion</b> | <b>Mean (SD)</b> |
| <b>Utilitarian</b>            | <b>Others</b>          | Non-celebratory | 4.74 (1.46)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 4.77 (1.57)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 4.75 (1.50)      |
|                               | <b>Self</b>            | Non-celebratory | 5.10 (1.11)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 4.26 (1.85)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 4.76 (1.49)      |
|                               | <b>Total</b>           | Non-celebratory | 4.90 (1.31)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 4.57 (1.69)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 4.76 (1.49)      |
| <b>Hedonic</b>                | <b>Others</b>          | Non-celebratory | 4.83 (1.36)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 5.53 (1.18)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 5.17 (1.31)      |
|                               | <b>Self</b>            | Non-celebratory | 4.61 (1.63)      |

|  |              |                 |             |
|--|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
|  |              | Celebratory     | 5.26 (1.47) |
|  |              | Total           | 4.88 (1.59) |
|  | <b>Total</b> | Non-celebratory | 4.73 (1.49) |
|  |              | Celebratory     | 5.43 (1.29) |
|  |              | Total           | 5.04 (1.44) |

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| Test of Within-Subjects Effects       |          |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                                | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Product Type                          | 2.651    | .106     |
| Product Type*Decision Target          | 0.162    | .688     |
| Product Type*Occasion                 | 6.486    | .012     |
| Product Type*Decision Target*Occasion | 0.957    | .330     |

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| Test of Between-Subjects Effects |          |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                           | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Decision Target                  | 0.910    | .342     |
| Occasion                         | 0.668    | .415     |
| Occasion*Decision Target         | 1.883    | .173     |

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By observing the within-subjects effects table, a significant interaction effect between Product Type and Occasion arises, as its p-value is lower than .05 ( $F(1,121) = 6.486, p = .012$ ), meaning that there are differences regarding the levels of Anticipated Happiness towards hedonic and utilitarian products, and given the occasion under which they are purchased (Figure 4.3).

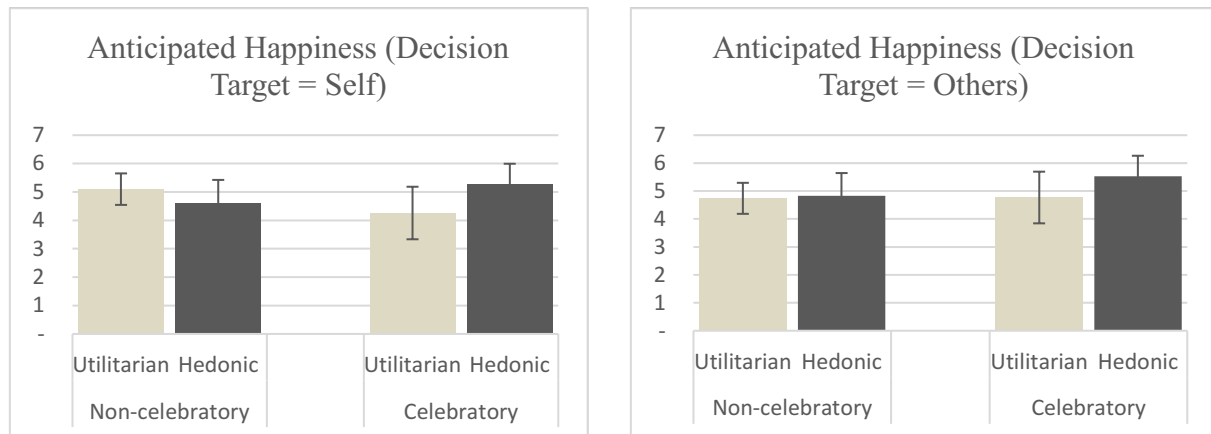


Figure 4.3 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Anticipated Happiness)

To analyze this effect, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction were further examined (Table 4.16). When the occasion is *non-celebratory*, even though there are higher levels of Anticipated Happiness towards the utilitarian option, there is no significant difference ( $M_{\text{Happiness\_Utilitarian}} = 4.92$  and  $M_{\text{Happiness\_Hedonic}} = 4.73$ ;  $p = .488$ ). On the other hand, when the occasion is *celebratory*, there is a significant difference between the Anticipated Happiness towards both products. Indeed, participants showed higher levels of Anticipated Happiness towards hedonic products ( $M_{\text{Happiness\_Utilitarian}} = 4.52$  and  $M_{\text{Happiness\_Hedonic}} = 5.40$ ;  $p = .006$ ).

Table 4.16 - Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction (Anticipated Happiness)

| Pairwise Comparisons |              |              |          |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Occasion             | Product Type | Mean (SE)    | <i>p</i> |
| Non-celebratory      | Utilitarian  | 4.91 (0.182) | .488     |
|                      | Hedonic      | 4.72 (0.173) |          |

|                    |             |              |      |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------|
| <b>Celebratory</b> | Utilitarian | 4.52 (0.207) | .006 |
|                    | Hedonic     | 5.40 (0.197) |      |

Even though it was initially hypothesized that the levels of Anticipated Happiness would be higher when purchasing hedonic rather than utilitarian products, regardless of the occasion, the results of this analysis show that this effect is only observable on a *celebratory* occasion. Therefore, H5 cannot be supported.

#### 4.3.4. Effect of Product Type, Decision Target and Occasion on Anticipated Guilt

A mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) 2 (Occasion) x 2 (Decision Target) x 2 (Product Type), with repeated measures on the last factor, was conducted to measure Anticipated Guilt (Table 4.17 and 4.18).

*Table 4.17 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Anticipated Guilt)*

| Descriptive Statistics |                 |                 |             |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Product Type           | Decision Target | Occasion        | Mean (SD)   |
| Utilitarian            | Others          | Non-celebratory | 2.11 (1.12) |
|                        |                 | Celebratory     | 2.03 (1.03) |
|                        |                 | Total           | 2.07 (1.07) |
|                        | Self            | Non-celebratory | 1.95 (1.10) |
|                        |                 | Celebratory     | 1.50 (0.91) |
|                        |                 | Total           | 1.77 (1.04) |

|                |               |                 |             |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Hedonic</b> | <b>Total</b>  | Non-celebratory | 2.04 (1.11) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 1.82 (1.01) |
|                |               | Total           | 1.94 (1.07) |
|                | <b>Others</b> | Non-celebratory | 3.00 (1.57) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 2.56 (1.65) |
|                |               | Total           | 2.79 (1.61) |
|                | <b>Self</b>   | Non-celebratory | 2.48 (1.49) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 2.86 (1.80) |
|                |               | Total           | 2.64 (1.62) |
|                | <b>Total</b>  | Non-celebratory | 2.76 (1.54) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 2.68 (1.70) |
|                |               | Total           | 2.72 (1.61) |

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| Test of Within-Subjects Effects       |          |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                                | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Product Type                          | 28.737   | .001     |
| Product Type*Decision Target          | 0.580    | .448     |
| Product Type*Occasion                 | 0.571    | .451     |
| Product Type*Decision Target*Occasion | 3.677    | .058     |

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| Test of Between-Subjects Effects |          |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                           | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Decision Target                  | 1.278    | .261     |
| Occasion                         | 0.554    | .458     |
| Occasion*Decision Target         | 0.302    | .584     |

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By observing the within-subjects table, it is possible to observe a main effect of Product Type on Anticipated Guilt. The results confirm what was previously stated in the literature review, and participants felt indeed higher levels of Anticipated Guilt when purchasing hedonic rather than utilitarian products ( $M_{\text{Guilt\_Utilitarian\_Total}} = 1.94$  and  $M_{\text{Guilt\_Hedonic\_Total}} = 2.72$ ;  $p = .001$ ).

Nonetheless, it was also hypothesized that, when purchasing hedonic products for *oneself*, individuals would feel lower levels of Anticipated Guilt on *celebratory* than on *non-celebratory* occasions. Contrarily to what was expected, the results showed the opposite effect ( $M_{\text{Guilt\_Hedonic\_Self\_Non-celebratory}} = 2.48$  and  $M_{\text{Guilt\_Hedonic\_Self\_Celebratory}} = 2.86$ ) and, therefore H3 cannot be supported. Even though these results were not as expected, it is worth to remember that the results previously found by the control variable that measured participants' guilt

tendency were also not congruent between the groups of participants and, therefore, it might have influenced the levels of Anticipatory Guilt.

Interestingly, and for the first time in this study, the interaction effect of the three factors arises as marginally significant ( $F(1,121) = 3.677, p = .058$ ). Therefore, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction were further analyzed (Table 4.18). The results show that, when purchasing for *others*, individuals felt higher levels of anticipated guilt when purchasing hedonic rather than utilitarian products on both occasions, but these results were only statistically significant on non-celebratory occasions ( $p = .002$ ). On the other hand, when purchasing for *oneself*, individuals also revealed higher levels of anticipated guilt towards hedonic products on both occasions, and these differences were only statistically significant on celebratory occasions ( $p = .001$ ).

Table 4.18 - Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction (Anticipated Guilt)

| Pairwise Comparisons |                 |              |              |          |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Decision Target      | Occasion        | Product Type | Mean (SE)    | <i>p</i> |
| Others               | Non-celebratory | Utilitarian  | 2.11 (0.176) | .002     |
|                      |                 | Hedonic      | 3.00 (0.269) |          |
|                      | Celebratory     | Utilitarian  | 2.03 (0.184) | .069     |
|                      |                 | Hedonic      | 2.56 (0.281) |          |
| Self                 | Non-celebratory | Utilitarian  | 1.95 (0.190) | .077     |
|                      |                 | Hedonic      | 2.48 (0.290) |          |
|                      | Celebratory     | Utilitarian  | 1.50 (0.231) | .001     |
|                      |                 | Hedonic      | 2.86 (0.352) |          |

#### 4.3.5. Effect of Decision Target, Occasion and Product Type on Self-expression

A mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) 2 (Occasion) x 2 (Decision Target) x 2 (Product Type), with repeated measures on the last factor, was conducted to measure the levels of Self-expression (Table 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, and Figure 4.4).

*Table 4.19 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Self-expression)*

| <b>Descriptive Statistics</b> |                        |                 |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Product Type</b>           | <b>Decision Target</b> | <b>Occasion</b> | <b>Mean (SD)</b> |
| <b>Utilitarian</b>            | <b>Others</b>          | Non-celebratory | 3.38 (1.59)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 3.22 (1.59)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 3.30 (1.58)      |
|                               | <b>Self</b>            | Non-celebratory | 3.58 (1.56)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 2.63 (1.73)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 3.19 (1.68)      |
|                               | <b>Total</b>           | Non-celebratory | 3.47 (1.57)      |
|                               |                        | Celebratory     | 2.99 (1.66)      |
|                               |                        | Total           | 3.26 (1.62)      |

|                |               |                 |             |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Hedonic</b> | <b>Others</b> | Non-celebratory | 3.83 (1.59) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 4.27 (1.73) |
|                |               | Total           | 4.04 (1.66) |
|                | <b>Self</b>   | Non-celebratory | 3.23 (1.56) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 4.30 (1.45) |
|                |               | Total           | 3.67 (1.88) |
|                | <b>Total</b>  | Non-celebratory | 3.55 (1.59) |
|                |               | Celebratory     | 4.28 (1.89) |
|                |               | Total           | 3.88 (1.76) |

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**Test of Within-Subjects Effects**

| <b>Source</b>                                | <b><i>F</i></b> | <b><i>p</i></b> |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Product Type</b>                          | 10.751          | .001            |
| <b>Product Type*Decision Target</b>          | 0.039           | .844            |
| <b>Product Type*Occasion</b>                 | 9.163           | .003            |
| <b>Product Type*Decision Target*Occasion</b> | 2.696           | .103            |

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| Test of Between-Subjects Effects |          |         |
|----------------------------------|----------|---------|
| Source                           | <i>F</i> | P-value |
| Decision Target                  | 1.123    | .291    |
| Occasion                         | 0.213    | .645    |
| Occasion*Decision Target         | 0.034    | .855    |

According to what was stated in the literature review, the results show that hedonic products lead to higher levels of Self-expression than utilitarian products ( $M_{\text{Self-expression\_Hedonic\_Total}} = 3.88$  and  $M_{\text{Self-expression\_Utilitarian\_Total}} = 3.26$ ), and this difference is statistically significant ( $F(1,121) = 10.751, p = .001$ ).

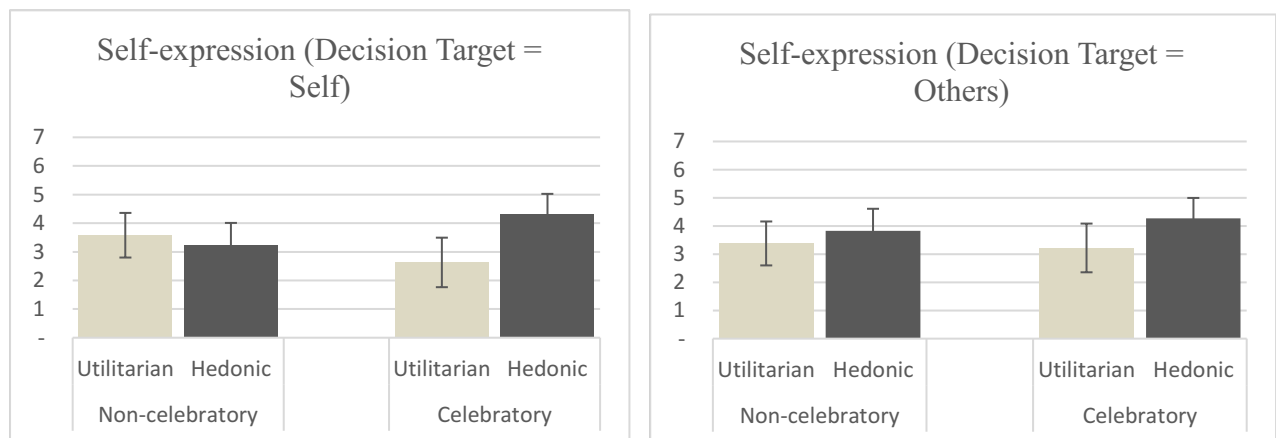


Figure 4.4 - Mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Self-expression)

Additionally, the interaction effect between Product Type and Occasion arises as statistically significant ( $F(1,121) = 9.163, p = .003$ ). To further analyze this effect, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction were examined (Table 4.20). The results show that, on *non-celebratory* occasions, the difference is not statistically significant ( $p = .849$ ). This might be explained by the effect illustrated in figure X and Y. In fact, on *non-celebratory* occasions, it is possible to observe a contradictory effect between both decision targets which, consequently, cancelled the effect. On the other hand, on *celebratory* occasions, there were higher levels of

self-expression towards hedonic than utilitarian products ( $M_{\text{Self-expression\_Hedonic}} = 4.29$  and  $M_{\text{Self-expression\_Utilitarian}} = 2.93$ ), and this difference is statistically significant ( $p = .001$ ).

*Table 4.20 - Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction (Self-Expression)*

| Pairwise Comparisons |              |              |          |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Occasion             | Product Type | Mean (SE)    | <i>p</i> |
| Non-celebratory      | Utilitarian  | 3.48 (0.197) | .849     |
|                      | Hedonic      | 3.53 (0.212) |          |
| Celebratory          | Utilitarian  | 2.93 (0.225) | .001     |
|                      | Hedonic      | 4.29 (0.241) |          |

Additionally, as the results from the test of within-subjects suggest a marginally significant interaction effect of the three factors ( $F(1,121) = 2.696$ ,  $p = .103$ ), pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction were also examined (Table 4.21).

*Table 4.21 - Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction (Self-Expression)*

| Pairwise Comparisons |                 |              |              |          |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Decision Target      | Occasion        | Product Type | Mean (SE)    | <i>p</i> |
| Others               | Non-celebratory | Utilitarian  | 3.38 (0.268) | .246     |
|                      |                 | Hedonic      | 3.83 (0.288) |          |
|                      | Celebratory     | Utilitarian  | 3.22 (0.280) | .011     |
|                      |                 | Hedonic      | 4.27 (.301)  |          |

|             |                        |             |              |      |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------|------|
| <b>Self</b> | <b>Non-celebratory</b> | Utilitarian | 3.58 (0.289) | .413 |
|             |                        | Hedonic     | 3.23 (0.311) |      |
|             | <b>Celebratory</b>     | Utilitarian | 2.63 (0.351) | .001 |
|             |                        | Hedonic     | 4.30 (0.378) |      |

---

Interestingly, the results show that, on *non-celebratory* occasions, there was no significant difference between the levels of self-expression towards hedonic and utilitarian products, for both decision targets. However, on *celebratory* occasions, there were higher levels of self-expression towards hedonic products, and this effect was statistically significant for oneself ( $p = .001$ ) and for others ( $p = .011$ ).

These results suggest, once again, the similarity of patterns of attitudes for both decision targets, where the only differences are verified depending on the occasion.

#### 4.3.6. Effect of Occasion on Purchase Intention, with the mediation of Self-expression

To assess if Self-expression arises as a mediator between Occasion and Purchase Intention, a bootstrapping method was used by employing Process by Andrew F. Hayes (2018), with Model 4 (Table 4.21 and Figure 4.5).

*Table 4.22* - Mediation analysis of “Occasion” on “Purchase Intention”, mediated by “Self-expression”

| <b>Total Effect Model (Outcome Variable: Purchase Intention)</b> |                    |                 |                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                                                  | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b><i>t</i></b> | <b><i>p</i></b> |
| <b>Occasion</b>                                                  | .4102              | 2.2821          | .0243           |

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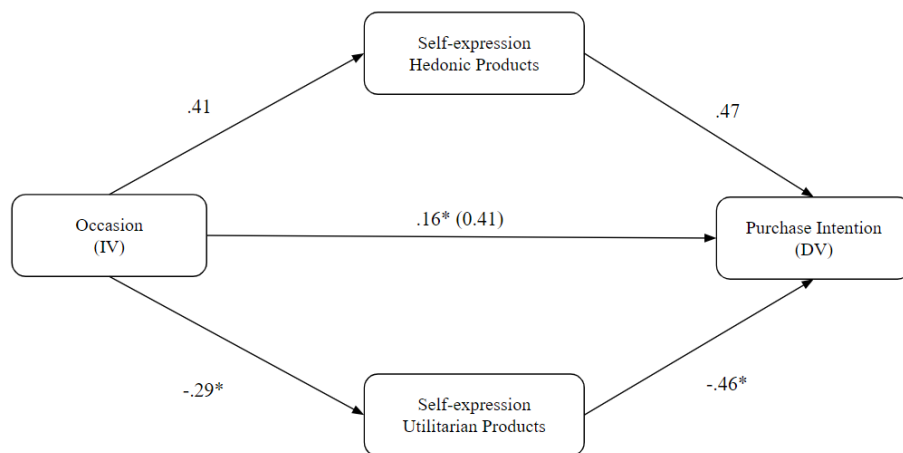
| <b>Model (Outcome Variable: Self-expression Utilitarian)</b> |                    |                 |                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                                              | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b><i>t</i></b> | <b><i>p</i></b> |
| <b>Occasion</b>                                              | -.2948             | -1.6231         | .1072           |
| <b>Model (Outcome Variable: Self-expression Hedonic)</b>     |                    |                 |                 |
|                                                              | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b><i>t</i></b> | <b><i>p</i></b> |
| <b>Occasion</b>                                              | .4147              | 2.3080          | .0227           |
| <b>Direct Effect of X on Y</b>                               |                    |                 |                 |
|                                                              | <b>Coefficient</b> | <b><i>t</i></b> | <b><i>p</i></b> |
|                                                              | 0,1595             | 0.6008          | .5491           |
| <b>Indirect Effect of X on Y</b>                             |                    |                 |                 |
|                                                              | <b>Effect</b>      | <b>BootLLCI</b> | <b>BootULCI</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                 | 0.3236             | 0.0908          | 0.5614          |
| <b>Self-expression Utilitarian</b>                           | 0.2444             | -0.0551         | 0.5845          |
| <b>Self-expression Hedonic</b>                               | 0.3514             | 0.0433          | 0.7004          |

The parallel mediation analysis indicates that, Self-expression elicited by hedonic products is a mediator of the effect of Occasion on Purchase Intention, as the range between the bootstrap interval does not contain zero. This is, when the occasion is celebratory (non-celebratory), the levels Self-expression for hedonic products increase (decrease) and, consequently, the levels of

Purchase Intention for hedonic products also increase (decrease). Regarding the Self-expression elicited by utilitarian products, the same effect was not observed, as the bootstrap contains zero.

Therefore, H4 can be partially supported.

These results suggest that, when individuals are purchasing on a celebratory occasion, their mindset is also celebratory and, therefore, their self-expression levels are increased. As a consequence, and since hedonic products shown to elicit more levels of self-expression, individuals end up purchasing more hedonic products. On the other hand, on non-celebratory occasions, the individuals' mindset is not on a celebratory mood anymore, and their levels of self-expression are lower. Consequently, individuals purchased less hedonic products.



*Figure 4.5* - Parallel mediation by Self-expression (Hedonic Products) and Self-expression (Utilitarian Products) on effect of Occasion on Purchase Intention. Standardized coefficients are reported. The total effect of Occasion on Purchase Intention is reported in parentheses

Note: IV = Independent variable; DV = Dependent variable; \* denotes  $p > .05$

## 5. Conclusions and General Discussion

According to the variable that controlled for participants' guilt tendency, it is known that the sample of this study did not reveal all the expected results. As previously concluded, participants responding in the (self, non-celebratory) condition presented the lowest levels of guilt tendency, which further impacted the results of the Anticipatory Guilt levels. Contrarily

to what was expected, when purchasing hedonic gifts for themselves, individuals felt higher levels of anticipated guilt on non-celebratory than on celebratory occasions.

Furthermore, the results found in this study serve as a proof that, when different variables are gathered and not observed alone, different outcomes can be observed. In fact, when the self-others differences regarding hedonic versus utilitarian products were explored in the context of gift-giving, and in different occasions, distinct conclusions were found.

Past research suggested that individuals are more willing to purchase hedonic products for others, rather than for themselves (Lu et al., 2016). In the present research, it was concluded that these differences are not so evident, and individuals revealed the same pattern of attitudes, for both decision targets. In fact, the variable occasion revealed to have a stronger impact on these decisions. As so, when the occasion is *non-celebratory*, individuals revealed a preference for utilitarian products, whereas on *celebratory* occasions, there was a preference for the hedonic products, and these effects were similar for both decision targets.

Regarding the appropriateness of the product type, the results showed similar patterns of attitudes for both decision targets (although not statistically significant). It was observed that, when purchasing for *oneself*, utilitarian products were perceived as more appropriate on a *non-celebratory* occasion, rather than on a *celebratory* occasion ( $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Utilitarian\_Self\_Non-celebratory}} = 5,36$  and  $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Utilitarian\_Self\_Celebratory}} = 4,55$ ). Nonetheless, hedonic products were perceived as more appropriate, when the occasion was *celebratory* ( $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Hedonic\_Self\_Non-celebratory}} = 4,31$  and  $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Hedonic\_Self\_Celebratory}} = 5,31$ ). This effect can be explained by the lack of justification for purchasing hedonic products when there is not a special occasion, and therefore it can be perceived as less appropriate. Contrarily, on celebratory occasions, purchasing hedonic goods is seen as more appropriate, since this purchase can be justified given the occasion under which it occurs.

On the other hand, when purchasing for *others*, the same pattern of attitudes was observed. In this case, it can be explained as the utilitarian option might be perceived as more appropriate on *non-celebratory* than on *celebratory* occasions ( $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Utilitarian\_Others\_Non-celebratory}} = 5,40$  and  $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Utilitarian\_Others\_Celebratory}} = 4,56$ ), as this option might be enough to signal care towards the recipient when the gift is bought as a surprise, or without a specific reason. However, on *celebratory* occasions, the hedonic product presented to be the most appropriate

( $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Hedonic\_Others\_Non-celebratory}} = 5,11$  and  $M_{\text{Appropriateness\_Hedonic\_Others\_Celebratory}} = 5,29$ ) as, on these occasions, purchasing utilitarian products may signal less care than hedonic ones towards the recipient.

Nevertheless, the results also showed that hedonic products elicit higher levels of anticipated happiness rather than utilitarian products, on *celebratory* occasions. Even though this hypothesis was developed according to the Eudaimonistic Identity Theory, it was interesting to observe that these findings might be related to the perceived appropriateness of the product type, given the occasion. To illustrate, it was concluded that utilitarian products were perceived as more appropriate on *non-celebratory* occasions, whereas hedonic products were seen as more appropriate on *celebratory* occasions. In the same way, it was observed that the levels of anticipated happiness were higher when purchasing hedonic than utilitarian products, on *celebratory* occasions. Hence, it suggests that these two variables could have been related somehow.

Regarding self-expression, the results were according to the previous literature: there were higher levels of self-expression towards hedonic rather than utilitarian products. Additionally, the effect of self-expression was further analyzed considering the occasion, where the results revealed that, on *celebratory* occasions, there were higher levels of self-expression than on *non-celebratory* occasions. This can be partially explained by the celebratory mindset that individuals have on special occasions. Since these occasions serve as justification for indulgences, where the choices are less criticized, individuals feel more open to express their individuality and, thus, easily engage in hedonic consumption.

Lastly, even though not hypothesised, the effect of self-expression was also explored regarding differences between self and others, where it was possible to conclude that, once again, similar patterns of attitudes were observed.

## **6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

Theoretically, the present dissertation adds on to the previous literature of gift-giving, by assessing how consumers choose between utilitarian and hedonic products as gifts, under

different occasions. It also addresses how consumers make these decisions for others and for themselves, while highlighting the role of self-expression.

The results found in this study bring a new perspective regarding self-others differences, more specifically when it comes to make purchase decisions between hedonic versus utilitarian products. It was found that, in the context of gift-giving, and when two distinct occasions are observed, the asymmetries between the two decision targets are not so evident, and the occasion revealed to have a stronger impact in these purchase decisions. The interesting results found in this study demonstrate that theories found in different literatures are not constant nor always observable in all samples and contexts.

From a managerial perspective, the present research reveals implications for companies and, more specifically, to marketers. As it was concluded, the preferences for both types of products are rather similar between both decision targets, instead of what was previously known. Taking this into consideration, companies can promote and sell their products in the same way for both decision targets. Therefore, they do not need to differentiate their strategy for the two groups making their efforts more efficient. Furthermore, when customers are purchasing a gift for a friend (e.g., a scarf), companies could incentivize them to purchase the same product for themselves. Consequently, the customer that was only going to purchase a gift for a friend, ends up purchasing a gift for himself as well.

Furthermore, around celebratory occasions, companies should advertise more hedonic than utilitarian products. More specifically, as hedonic products are more self-expressive, companies should also elicit their customers' self-expression - e.g., by offering a product where a customer can choose their favourite colour, print their names, among others -, in order to increase the purchase intention.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

As limitations occur in all academic research, this chapter states the ones faced in the present study. To begin with, by using an online survey, it was not possible to answer participants' queries regarding the questions that were asked throughout the questionnaire. Despite this, and even if participants did not have any concern or doubt, it was still not possible to control for their real motivation, honesty, and what they are surrounded by, which could have potentially

affected their answers. Moreover, multiple responses were not considered valid, due to the loss of results caused by technical issues with the survey software (Qualtrics).

Additionally, the sample size was not large enough to reach more meaningful conclusions, and to verify a greater accuracy of the results. Moreover, the sample was mainly composed by Portuguese participants, with an age between 18 and 25 years old. Therefore, for future research, it is important to 1) gather data from a broader sample, 2) that includes participants from more countries, 3) and from more generations, in order to have a more robust sample.

It is also proposed for future research to include other variables in the study. Instead of utilitarian and hedonic products, the same study could be conducted while including different brands, as some brands can potentially be more self-expressive than others (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Thus, it would be interesting to evaluate how consumers choose between brands when making gift purchase decisions for themselves and for others, in different occasions. Besides this, the same study can be conducted, where participants are the recipients of a gift. This way, it is possible to assess if the results found in this study, will be congruent from a receiver perspective.

Lastly, since the present research included and studied psychological concepts, the author's limited knowledge of the subject may have subsequently affected the outcome of the results. For instance, the way that the products were presented, or how the way questions were asked, might have not been presented in the most correct form, in order to elicit all the desired outcomes.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Research Method**

As previously stated, an experimental study was conducted, in order to test the hypotheses. With this study design it was possible to manipulate the variables, by influencing the independent variables, and aiming to achieve a feasible effect on the dependent variables. In addition, the experimental research was conducted through an online survey, as by choosing this data collection method, it is seamless for participants to access the questionnaire, it is easy to complete, it guarantees reliability, it ensures the participants' anonymity, as well as it improves the response rate (Carbonaro & Bainbridge, 2000; Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Lefever et al., 2007). Additionally, participants are allowed to start, pause, as well as restart the questionnaire whenever it is convenient for them (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). Lastly, researchers can potentially reach unique populations, at a low-cost (Wright, 2005).

To develop the online survey, the Qualtrics Survey Software was chosen. This is a data collection software that allows one to easily create a questionnaire, where it is possible to develop different types of questions, apply different stimuli, and with the option to employ randomization of the questions. Besides, it is possible to bridge this software with SPSS, which is the statistical software program, where the collected data was further analyzed.

The survey was developed in English and in Portuguese, in order to reach a greater deal of respondents. Moreover, it was shared on multiple social media channels (such as Facebook and Instagram), and through word-of-mouth, aiming to reach a more diverse population. In the end, it was possible to collect 154 responses to the survey.

### **Appendix 2: Focus group**

#### **Introduction**

Hello everyone and welcome to today's session about gifts, and how individuals perceive different options as utilitarian and hedonic.

This session will last about 30 minutes and during that time I will ask you some questions. I am very interested in listening to what everyone has to say and, in order for the discussion to run smoothly, one person should talk at a time. Then, after someone has finished giving their

insights, another person can answer. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers, so I kindly ask you to express your thoughts and feelings in the most honest way possible.

I remind you that this session will be recorded only for my own analysis, which will provide useful insights for a research project I am currently developing.

Now, I will give you a consent form and a pen for you to sign it.

To begin with, please present yourselves, so we get to know everyone.

As you know, today we will be talking about gifts and how consumers perceive utilitarian and hedonic products. The session will have the following structure: I will begin by introducing one product, where I will ask general attitudes you have towards it, and next I will present two pictures for you to evaluate them. After this, another product is presented, where the same structure of questions is applied.

## **1. Scarf**

### **1.1 General Attitudes**

- Would you consider purchasing this product for yourself?
- Would you consider purchasing this product for one of your closest friends?
- Do you consider this product to be a good gift?
- Would you purchase this product on celebratory and non-celebratory occasions?
- What attributes do you associate with utilitarian scarves?
- What attributes do you associate with hedonic scarves?

### **1.2 Among the two images, which one do you perceive as more utilitarian and hedonic?**

#### **Option A**



## Option B



## 2. Toaster

### 2.1 General Attitudes

- Would you consider purchasing this product for yourself?
- Would you consider purchasing this product for one of your closest friends?
- Do you consider this product to be a good gift?
- Would you purchase this product on celebratory and non-celebratory occasions?
- What attributes do you associate with utilitarian toasters?
- What attributes do you associate with hedonic toasters?

2.2 Among the two images, which one do you perceive as more utilitarian and hedonic?

## Option A



## Option B



## Appendix 3: Survey

### *Introduction*

Dear participant, I would like to thank you in advance for your participation and for taking some time to complete this survey. The present study aims to understand the effect of decision targets on preferences for different types of products, given different contexts, and how that will influence other variables.

This study is being conducted under a Master's Thesis in Management with a specialization in Strategic Marketing, by Universidade Católica Portuguesa. All the collected data will be treated anonymously, and it will only be used for research purposes. This survey will take you 6 minutes to complete. Please take in consideration that there are no right or wrong answers. Therefore it is extremely important to answer all the questions as honestly as possible, so I kindly ask you to read each question very carefully.

If you have any questions or interest in knowing the final results of the study, please send an email to [s-carosantos@ucp.pt](mailto:s-carosantos@ucp.pt)

Thank you very much.

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In the next section, you will be exposed to one scenario. Therefore, I kindly ask you to carefully read all the instructions, in order to better help project yourself in that specific context.

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### 1) Condition Self/Celebratory

Imagine that you had a very good week where you accomplished something you have been waiting for for a long time. For this **celebratory occasion**, you found **two** products you want to buy.

Imagine that for each product you reached the point where you are deciding between two options: **option A and option B**. Both options have the same price, but they differ in other features.

Please take a moment to consider each option, and further answer all the questions.

### 2) Condition Self/Non-celebratory

Please imagine there are **two** products you have been considering purchasing for a long time.

Imagine you are at the mall and you found some options of those products. It is a regular day and you don't have a specific reason to purchase them, meaning that **there is no special or celebratory occasion** to purchase them (e.g., it is **not** your birthday, Christmas, or any other celebratory occasion).

Imagine that for each product you reached the point where you are deciding between two options: **option A and option B**. Both options have the same price, but they differ in other features.

Please take a moment to consider each option, and further answer all the questions.

### 3) Condition Others/Celebratory

Imagine it is one of your closest friend's birthday. Because of this **celebratory occasion**, you are going to purchase something to offer as a gift. There are **two** products your friend has

been wanting for a long time. Therefore, you went to the mall and you are now considering some options for each product.

Imagine that for each product you reached the point where you are deciding between two options: **option A and option B**. Both options have the same price, but they differ in other features.

Please take a moment to consider each option, and further answer all the questions.

#### **4) Condition Others/Non-celebratory**

Imagine you want to purchase something for one of your closest friends. There is **no special or celebratory occasion** to purchase anything (i.e., it is not your friend's birthday, Christmas, or any other celebratory occasion), but you still want to surprise your friend with a gift.

You know your friend has been wanting to purchase **two** products for a long time. Imagine you are at the mall and found some options of those products.

Imagine that for each product you reached the point where you are deciding between two options: **option A and option B**. Both options have the same price, but they differ in other features.

Please take a moment to consider each option, and further answer all the questions.

#### ***Questions***

##### **First Product (Scarf)**

*Self* condition: With the cold days coming, you have been considering purchasing a black scarf.

*Others* condition: Your friend told you he/she wanted a black scarf.

You found two options.

**Option A** is a scarf mainly made from acrylic and it incorporates an innovative technology that provides both a very warming feeling and offers a great water resistance, which can be practical

for the cold and rainy days. Moreover, it has an advantage of not requiring a lot of care, being easy to wash it in all temperatures and programs, without the trouble of getting damaged.

**Option B** is a cashmere blend scarf, which provides a very soft texture and a lightweight feeling, which can be very pleasant to wear. Due to its delicate and fine composition, it is not water resistant and it requires extra care when it comes to laundry. Hence, it can be easily damaged.

Please consider that both products have the same price.



1. Given the occasion, which product are you more willing to purchase?

☐ 1 (Definitely option A)

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7 (Definitely option B)

### Manipulation - Utilitarian option

Please answer the following questions considering only option A.

Option A is a scarf mainly made from acrylic and it incorporates an innovative technology that provides both a very warming feeling and offers a great water resistance, which can be practical for the cold and rainy days. Moreover, it has an advantage of not requiring a lot of care, being easy to wash in all temperatures and programs, without the trouble of getting damaged.

### Questions

2. How happy would you be to purchase this product? (1 = Not happy at all; 7 = Completely happy)

- ☐ 1 (Not happy at all)
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7 (Completely happy)

3. How appropriate for the occasion do you believe this product would be? (1 = Not appropriate at all; 7 = Completely appropriate)

- ☐ 1 (Not appropriate at all)
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7 (Completely appropriate)

4. Please indicate your level of agreement regarding the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree)

|                                                      | Strongly<br>disagree  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       | Strongly<br>agree     |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                                                      | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |
| This product reflects my personality                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This product reflects my personal opinions and taste | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This product is an extension of my inner self        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This product tells others who I really am            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5. How guilty would you feel by purchasing this product? (1 = Not guilty at all; 7 = Completely guilty)

☐ 1 (Not guilty at all)

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7 (Completely guilty)

*Manipulation check*

6. Products possess more or less utilitarian or hedonic attributes, and they can be purchased for utilitarian or hedonic reasons. Therefore, they can be categorized as either utilitarian or hedonic.

Utilitarian products are: effective, helpful, functional, necessary, and practical, whereas hedonic products are: fun, exciting, delightful, thrilling, and enjoyable.

Taking this into consideration, how do you classify option A? (1 = Completely utilitarian; 7 = Completely hedonic)

☐ 1 (Completely utilitarian)

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7 (Completely hedonic)

#### Manipulation - Hedonic option

Please answer the following questions considering only option B.

Option B is a cashmere blend scarf, which provides a very soft texture and a lightweight feeling, which can be very pleasant to wear. Due to its delicate and fine composition, it is not water resistant and it requires extra care when it comes to laundry. Hence, it can be easily damaged.

(Same 5 questions as presented for the utilitarian option)

#### **Second Product – Toaster**

*Self* condition: Your toaster broke last month. Therefore, you have been wanting to purchase another.

*Others* condition: Your friend's toaster broke last month, and therefore you are considering purchasing him/her a new one. You found two options:

You found two options:

**Option A** has a traditional design, and it only comes in one colour. It has 8 different functionalities and a power of 1200W.

**Option B** has a sleek design and you can choose between different colours to match your other kitchen appliances. This option offers 4 functionalities and has a power of 800W.

Please consider that both products have the same price.



12. Given the occasion, which product are you more willing to purchase?

☐ 1 (Definitely option A)

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

o 7 (Definitely option B)

### Manipulation - Utilitarian option

Please answer the following questions considering only option A.

Option A is a scarf mainly made from acrylic and it incorporates an innovative technology that provides both a very warming feeling and offers a great water resistance, which can be practical for the cold and rainy days. Moreover, it has an advantage of not requiring a lot of care, being easy to wash in all temperatures and programs, without the trouble of getting damaged.

### Questions

13. How happy would you be to purchase this product? (1 = Not happy at all; 7 = Completely happy)

o 1 (Not happy at all)

o 2

o 3

o 4

o 5

o 6

o 7 (Completely happy)

14. How appropriate for the occasion do you believe this product would be? (1 = Not appropriate at all; 7 = Completely appropriate)

o 1 (Not appropriate at all)

o 2

- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7 (Completely appropriate)

15. Please indicate your level of agreement regarding the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree)

|                                                      | Strongly disagree     |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       | Strongly agree        |  |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                                                      | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |  |
| This product reflects my personality                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |  |
| This product reflects my personal opinions and taste | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |  |
| This product is an extension of my inner self        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |  |
| This product tells others who I really am            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |  |

16. How guilty would you feel by purchasing this product? (1 = Not guilty at all; 7 = Completely guilty)

- ☐ 1 (Not guilty at all)
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7 (Completely guilty)

### *Manipulation Check*

17. Products possess more or less utilitarian or hedonic attributes, and they can be purchased for utilitarian or hedonic reasons. Therefore, they can be categorized as either utilitarian or hedonic.

Utilitarian products are: effective, helpful, functional, necessary, and practical, whereas hedonic products are: fun, exciting, delightful, thrilling, and enjoyable.

Taking this into consideration, how do you classify option A? (1 = Completely utilitarian; 7 = Completely hedonic)

- ☐ 1 (Completely utilitarian)
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7 (Completely hedonic)

### Manipulation - Hedonic option

Please answer the following questions considering only option B.

Option B is a cashmere blend scarf, which provides a very soft texture and a lightweight feeling, which can be very pleasant to wear. Due to its delicate and fine composition, it is not water resistant and it requires extra care when it comes to laundry. Hence, it can be easily damaged.

(Same 5 questions as presented for the utilitarian option)

*Manipulation check*

23. In which context were you buying the products for?

- o Celebratory
- o Non-celebratory

*Control*

24. You will read about situations that people are likely to encounter in day-to-day life, followed by common reactions to those situations. As you read each scenario, try to imagine yourself in that situation. Then indicate the likelihood that you would react in the way described. (1 = Very unlikely; 7 = Very likely)

- After realizing you have received too much change at a store, you decide to keep it because the sales clerk doesn't notice. What is the likelihood that you feel uncomfortable about keeping the money?

- You secretly commit a felony. What is the likelihood that you would feel remorse about breaking the law?

- At a coworker's housewarming party, you spill red wine on their new cream-colored carpet. You cover the stain with a chair so that nobody notices your mess. What is the likelihood that you would feel that the way you acted was pathetic?

- You lie to people but they never find out about it. What is the likelihood that you would feel terrible about the lies you told?

25. Please indicate your level of agreement for each of the statements below. (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)

- I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.

- I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.
- I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.
- Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.

### ***Demographics***

26.What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

27.What is your nationality?

28.How old are you?

29.What is your current occupation?

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Working Student
- ☐ Part-time employed
- ☐ Full-time employed

o Unemployed

o Retired

30. What is your gross monthly income?

o < 705€

o 706-1000 €

o 1001-2000€

o 2001-3000€

o 3001-4000€

o > 4001€

o Prefer not to say

#### **Appendix 4: Reliability analysis**

In order to assess the variable self-expression, 4 items were implemented. Moreover, since the study included 2 sets of products, with 2 options each, the analysis of this variable is composed of 4 different reliability tests, where two are related to the utilitarian options and the other two are related to the hedonic option. This way, the reliability tests were performed, where it is possible to observe that all Cronbach's Alpha values were higher than 0,700, suggesting a good reliability of the items.

To measure respondents' guilt tendency, 4 items from the GASP scale were used. Its Cronbach's Alpha was 0,765, confirming its reliability.

Lastly, when assessing respondents' need for uniqueness, 4 items were also adapted from the Need For Uniqueness scale. Its Cronbach's Alpha was 0,898, meaning that this measure is reliable.

## Appendix 5: Factorial ANOVA (GASP)

| Descriptive Statistics           |                 |             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Decision Target                  | Occasion        | Mean (SD)   |
| Others                           | Non-celebratory | 6.16 (0.84) |
|                                  | Celebratory     | 6.39 (0.79) |
|                                  | Total           | 6.27 (0.82) |
| Self                             | Non-celebratory | 5.41 (1.58) |
|                                  | Celebratory     | 6.36 (0.74) |
|                                  | Total           | 5.80 (1.38) |
| Total                            | Non-celebratory | 5.81 (1.29) |
|                                  | Celebratory     | 6.38 (0.76) |
|                                  | Total           | 6.06 (1.12) |
| Test of Between-Subjects Effects |                 |             |
| Source                           | <i>F</i>        | <i>p</i>    |
| Decision_Target                  | 3.932           | .050        |
| Occasion                         | 8.940           | .003        |
| Occasion*Decision_Target         | 3.364           | .069        |

## Appendix 6: Factorial ANOVA (NFU)

| Descriptive Statistics |                 |             |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Decision Target        | Occasion        | Mean (SD)   |
| Others                 | Non-celebratory | 3.88 (1.76) |
|                        | Celebratory     | 4.30 (2.02) |
|                        | Total           | 4.08 (1.89) |
| Self                   | Non-celebratory | 4.02 (1.73) |
|                        | Celebratory     | 4.64 (2.06) |
|                        | Total           | 4.27 (1.88) |
| Total                  | Non-celebratory | 3.94 (1.73) |
|                        | Celebratory     | 4.43 (2.03) |
|                        | Total           | 4.16 (1.88) |

| Test of Between-Subjects Effects |          |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Source                           | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Decision_Target                  | 0.505    | .470     |
| Occasion                         | 2.211    | .140     |
| Occasion*Decision_Target         | 0.285    | .777     |