UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

COVID-19: the impact on millennials consumption habits

by

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Católica Porto Business School
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Master's final assignment in the form of dissertation presented to Católica Porto Business School to obtain the degree of Master in Marketing

by

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"Now to Him Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV Bible)

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"Leave it all in the Hands that were wounded for you."

Elizabeth Elliot

Resumo

A pandemia COVID-19, que veio afetar todas as esferas da sociedade, foi marcante para uma alteração de comportamentos e hábitos dos consumidores. Esta pandemia causou mudanças significativas no consumo, quer no tipo de produtos, canais de compra, ou mesmo a preferência por certas marcas. Esta tese de mestrado tem como objetivo averiguar, dentro da geração *millennial*, que hábitos de consumo de produtos de supermercado foram criados com a pandemia e que permanecem até os dias de hoje na vida dos consumidores. A caracterização do conceito de Comportamento do Consumidor, um perfil de consumidor da geração *millennial* e uma análise do impacto da pandemia COVID-19 no Comportamento do Consumidor foram também aprofundados na revisão de literatura.

A metodologia usada neste estudo académico foi a de investigação-ação, através de um estudo qualitativo, sob a forma de três *focus-groups* de millennials distribuídos por anos de nascimento: os *"first-millennials"*, *"middle-millennials"* e *"late-millennials"*. Os resultados mostram que, apesar de a pandemia ter sido potencializadora de uma alteração de diversos hábitos de consumo, os que permanecem depois do seu fim são a preocupação com a higiene e a realização de compras *online* apenas em casos emergenciais ou de comodidade. De acordo com os participantes, todas as outras preocupações na hora de consumir foram-se dissipando ao longo do tempo, com o fim da pandemia.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento do Consumidor, COVID-19, Pandemia, Hábitos do Consumidor, *Millenials*.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which affected all spheres of society, was remarkable for a change in consumer behavior and habits. This pandemic caused significant changes in consumption, whether in the type of products, purchase channels, or even the preference for certain brands. This master's thesis aims to investigate, within the millennial generation, which supermarket products consumption habits were created with the pandemic and remain to this day in the lives of consumers. The characterization of the concept of Consumer Behavior, a consumer profile of the millennial generation, and an analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Consumer Behavior were also further explored in the literature review.

The methodology used in this academic study was action-research through a qualitative study in the form of three focus-groups of millennials distributed by years of birth: first-millennials, middle-millennials, and late-millennials. The results show that, although the pandemic has potentiated a change in several consumer habits, those that remain after its end are the concern with hygiene and making online purchases only in cases of emergency or convenience. According to the participants, all other concerns when it comes to consuming have dissipated over time, with the end of the pandemic.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, COVID-19, Pandemics, Consumer Habits, Millennials.

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Introduction

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant changes in consumption, from the type of products, through the formats of purchase channels to the preference for certain brands. It is known that, for example, electronic commerce has grown and has been maintained (Kirk et al., 2020). As Mair (2020) stated, "One of the things the COVID-19 crisis could be doing, is expanding our economic imagination."

To first understand how to expand, we need to realize what changed with the pandemic. For example, a report by McKinsey & Company showed that when consumers couldn't find their preferred product at their preferred retailer, they changed their shopping behavior and tried a different brand or shopped at a different retailer during the crisis (Charm et al., 2020). Many consumers, according to this document, also agree "that they are being more mindful of where they are spending their money" (Charm et al., 2020). The document states a lot of changes worldwide, but this thesis aims to address the question: "What were the consumption habits that were altered because of the pandemic?", applied to the three age-group categories of focus groups I will recognize further on.

Economically speaking, Mair (2020) understands that "the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are simply the amplification of the dynamic that drives other social and ecological crises: the prioritization of one type of value over others". We all know there are habits from the pandemic we have kept in our daily lives. "What are the changes in consumption habits that have settled and have perdured even after the 'end' of the pandemic?" is what this study will be striving to discover. It is important to understand the value consumers have been attributing to things, in order to "manage the marketing mix, branding and communication more effectively with customers'' (Svajdova, 2021).

Lastly, it is also relevant to acknowledge through this study “What are the changes in consumption habits that have not settled and perdured after the ‘end ’of the pandemic?”, to understand what is not seen as an important consumption habit. As we know, as humans, through our history, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and reimagine our world.

As Roy (2020) states, this pandemic is no different, as it is “a portal, a gateway between one world and the next”. From panic buying and hoarding to opting for online shopping and an emphasis on health products, the pandemic has had a profound impact on the way consumers make purchasing decisions.

By analyzing these alterations, this thesis aims to provide insights into the needs, habits and preferences of consumers and their impact on businesses and the economy. The findings of this thesis can be used by businesses to adapt their strategies and stay relevant in a post-pandemic world.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

1.1. Consumer Behavior

Human behavior can be defined as a response that is observed directly or indirectly, through the several and diverse spheres of human development - physical, perceptual, cognitive, linguistic, personality, and social (Esposito et al., 2017).

The study of consumer behavior started in the 1950's, but in the field of psychology, where initially were developed studies related to attitude, communication and persuasion. Jacoby, Johar e Morrin (1998) note that, later, the works were produced under other constructs, like memory, information processing and decision making. After this, marketing professionals took a dive in understanding these behaviors, especially effects of TV advertisements on consumers, in the works of Colley (1961) and Lavidge and Steiner (1961), as well as the memorable proposition of the 4P model (product; price; promotion and place) carried out by Jerome McCarthy (Kotler, 2000). In the 1960s and early 1970s, there was a strong interest in the concept of consuming without involvement in the consumer behavior process (Krugman, 1965; Ray, 1973).

Consumer behavior has been defined as the "acquisition, consumption and disposition of products, services, time and ideas by decision making units" (Jacoby 1975, p.4). To define consumer behavior broadly is to say it is "the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (Solomon, 2016, p.5). Mowen (1988) defines consumer behavior as the systematic study of purchasing and exchange processes involved in the acquisition, consumption, evaluation and disposal of products, services, ideas, and experiences.

The factors that influence consumer behavior are cultural (culture, subculture, social class), social (groups, family, roles), personal (age, occupation, economic power, lifestyle, personality), and psychological (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes) (Kotler et al., 2022; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

Understanding the stimuli that motivate this selection, purchasing and using behavior requires analyzing Emotion, Attention, Cognition, and Memory (Müller-Oehring & Schulte, 2014). People decide based on habits, personal experience, and simplified practical rules, and seek consistency in their beliefs and perceptions of the world, having in mind that mass behaviors are born from an external influence that provides social cues (Kahneman, 2011; Solomon et al., 2017).

Apart from that, consumer behavior means more than why a consumer decides to buy certain things and why. According to a study on the European perspective of consumer behavior, it "embraces the study about how having (or not having) things affects our lives, and how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and about each other – our state of being" (Solomon, 2016, p.xv).

So, it means that consumer behavior is a process that involves many different actors: "as consumers we can be choosers, communicators, identity-seekers, pleasure-seekers, victims, rebels and activists" (Solomon, 2016, p.6). Having the correct information at the right time about the consumer allows the identification of competitive advantages in business relationships between brand and consumers, identifying and understanding the motivations that arise with indispensable in the current moment (Krzyk & Kunst, 2012). For example, studies have reflected the interest in understanding emotions as an influencing factor in the attitude towards brands (Aaker, Stayman, & Hagerty, 1986; Burke & Edell, 1989). Many companies use the emotional factor to their advantage to stimulate buying behavior from their consumers or create a certain feeling about the brand or at the moment of purchase.

Additionally, there is no doubt this field of study is changing as more people, consumers, and organizations, go online every day. Web and social media have the power to bring people together electronically, and that results in alterations in the speed in which "new trends develop and the direction in which they travel" and a new area of study: online consumer behavior (Solomon, 2016, p.xvi). Another aspect the virtual world allows is the participation of the consumers "in the creation and dissemination of new products" (Solomon, 2016, p.xvi).

Nevertheless, the digital world is not always a favorable place for consumers and companies, as the potential for fraud and exploitation rises simply by providing false product information, for example. The digital world comes with its own warnings (Solomon, 2016). With that in mind, it is difficult to imagine a world without the Web, and it is promoting big changes in consumer behavior and their habits all the time.

Studies have shown how important crises like a pandemic are important for a shift in consumer behavior. In his work about the European perspective on consumer behavior, Solomon already stated that the biggest initiators in changes of Consumer Behavior are, on one hand, economic recession and, on another hand, "the proliferation of new social media interactivity" (Solomon, 2016, p.xvi).

1.2. Consumer Profile of Millennial Consumers

To understand consumer behavior, cultural, personal, and psychological factors are important. Generations, a cohort of people born in the same date range, can share not only the same date of birth but also similar sociocultural experiences that will, eventually, generate a mass behavior that is common to the whole cohort (Edmunds & Turner, 2002; Eyerman & Turner, 1998). The target age group behavior of this study is the so-called 'Generation Y', 'Generation Me' or 'Generation Net', Millennials are described as the generational group who reached adulthood around the turn of the 21st century (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The categorization of the years varies, but the Millennials are placed at being born between 1980-2000 (Stein, 2013). This definition is slightly different from the one originally proposed by Neil Howe and William Strauss, who defined the generation as those born between 1982 and 2004. More recent authors argue that the pure millennials are placed now around 27-42 years old, being born between 1981-1995 (Prakash & Tiwari, 2021).

The concept of Millennial Generation appears in the literature for the first time in the works of Strauss and Howe (1991, 2007), who theorize that the millennial generation is the one that arrived after the "consciousness revolution" (Howe and Strauss, 2007, p.6). In this time, the 1980s and 1990s, the child is seen as a positive and central symbol in social narratives. Adding to this, Debevec et al. (2013) proposes that the Great Recession of 2007-2008 - which started in the United States of America but became global - created two sub-segments within Millennials: the younger millennials, aged 17 and the 23-year-olds at the time of the Great Recession, and the older Millennials, aged between 23 and 35 years old, already independent at the time of the crisis.

Howe and Strauss (2000), in a characterization of the millennial generation, define them as: a). special, vital, and full of promise, not only for you but in the future; b). significantly protected during childhood, lived with plenty of safety rules; c). confident, the result of their confidence and optimism; d). oriented towards teamwork, having grown up playing team sports and integrated into group learning systems; e). focused on achieving results; f). pressured and feel a duty to succeed; g). more conventional than rebellious.

A central component and the most distinctive factors from other generations of the Millennial identity is connectivity, or their relationship with the digital world. They were the first generation born with the advent of accessible internet and have had almost unlimited access to information, digital resources, and cutting-edge technologies (Sessa et al., 2007). Having a formal digital persona has shaped Millennials' mindsets and fueled a thirst for constant learning from diverse and less traditional sources (MacKenzie & Scherer, 2019).

As consumers, Millennials are "critical for growth of consumer-facing businesses" (Finneman et al., 2020). An investigation by McKinsey and Company surveyed 11,000 people in May 2016, including 7,000 millennials, 2,000 Gen Xers, and 2,000 baby boomers about their attitudes, buying preferences, and category behaviors. The research showed that "millennials are a complex cohort with diverse preferences" (Finneman et al., 2020).

According to the results, the investigators were able to organize millennials into three behavioral clusters: value, quality, and image. Value-driven consumers correspond to 40 percent of the millennials in the study, and they are traditionalists in their purchase decisions and "budget-conscious consumers" who go after deals and are "brand agnostic" (Finneman et al., 2020). Also, they trust on advice and recommendations when they make decisions.

On another hand, 22 percent of millennials are quality-driven consumers. This means that they consider brands the main aspect when deciding and show a distinct need for self-control and routine in many aspects of their lives. Because of connectivity, quality-driven millennials care about being informed and are satisfied with their current products. Premium enthusiasts are "highly educated consumers who see products and brands as extensions of themselves" (Finneman et al., 2020. They are willing to pay more to obtain the quality they care about.

Lastly, the authors categorize 38 percent of millennials as "image-driven consumers", a cluster that is divided in three different segments. The experience-driven millennials, or so called "you only live once" millennials (YOLO-ers), that focus on enjoying the present without thinking of the future through their consumption, even if that means living beyond their means. Then, the higher-income millennials that follow trends and show off their purchases on social media, having a quicker consumption pattern. And finally, the explorers, that are available to pay a premium price to be the first to try new products or brands to set themselves apart (Finneman et al., 2020).

1.3. COVID-19 Pandemic and the implications on Consumer Behaviour

The spread of the "Severe Acute Respiratory Coronavirus 2" (SARS-CoV-2), the causal agent of COVID-19, was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 and triggered an international public health emergency (Borges do Nascimento et al., 2021). The COVID-19 period only proved the theory of liquid modernity developed by Zygmunt Bauman (2001), that explains that change is the only permanent thing and uncertainty, the only certainty in life.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis changed routines unexpectedly and quickly, and some of those changes will last beyond the pandemic (Tiago & Veiga, 2021). The crisis generated anxiety and promoted the generalization of "Panic buying" behavior (Chua, Yuen, Wang, & Wong, 2021). Normally, when faced with an unmanageable situation, people try to resolve these manners by understanding their own abilities and limitations (Chua et al., 2021). However, the response and coping mechanism for confronting real and perceived dangers associated with COVID-19 (Billore & Anisimova, 2021) was panic buying.

With this in mind, in a paper by Colleen P. Kirk and Laura S. Rifkin from 2020, where the authors have observed the different aspects of consumer behavior patterns that dominated the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, they talk about the embrace of digital technology in our consumption habits as part of the last phase of the stages that consumers go through after "becoming aware of the potential of a pandemic" (Kirk et al., 2020, p.1). Their insights are based on theory alone and they divided the behaviors and conceptualization into three phases: Reacting to the COVID-19 threat, Consumers' coping behaviors and Adapting: The new normal (Kirk et al., 2020). In the segment where they look at how people learned to cope with the pandemic, the authors understand that digital technology is something we all learned to use to our advantage, including in this pandemic situation. Online search has dramatically impacted the way we consume and look at products and services, for example. But how does that change our habits of consumption and behavior? And why did we adapt to it and consider it a "new normal"?

In a discussion document by McKinsey & Company, that involved tracking consumer sentiment across 45 countries from surveys conducted between June 16 and June 21, 2020, the researchers were able to predict that "many consumers say they plan to continue shopping online even when brick-and-mortar stores reopen" (Charm et al., 2020, p.4). They also found out that global consumers have replaced some of the in-person aspects of their life, work, and healthcare with digital solutions such as "professional video conferencing and telemedicine" (Charm et al., 2020, p.11).

Additionally, Svajdova conducted a questionnaire survey between December 2020 and January 2021 to which there were 424 respondents from the Czech Republic, to "understand evaluation of changings in consumer behavior because of the pandemic of COVID-19" (Svajdova, 2021). All the analyzed sectors - "food, drugstore goods, clothing and footwear, electronics'', showed a growth in sales volumes through online channels (Svajdova, 2021, p.1).

Another interesting fact was that, for drugstore goods and food, there was a change in the structure of purchases and the frequency of purchases. For example, the demand for clothing, footwear, and electronics decreased. As the author states in the end, the main question these results raise is “whether the changes will be permanent, or customers will return to their original shopping habits” (Svajdova, 2021).

In a study about the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behavior in Turkey, 78 Turkish consumers were interviewed online, and results were analyzed through grounded theory with a stimulus-organism-response framework and constant comparative methods. The main findings show that there were changes in consumers' purchases of consumer goods during the pandemic (Güngördü Belbağ, A., 2022).

The most consumed products by the consumers on the questionnaire were related to cleaning and hygiene, such as “colognes, masks, hand gloves, hand soaps, disinfectants, cleaning products, paper towels”, but also “foods and drinks” (Güngördü Belbağ, A., 2022, p.10). The priority of health was seen in the importance attributed to “fresh foods such as oranges to get vitamin C”, when measured to the pre-pandemic era (Güngördü Belbağ, A., 2022, p.10). One informant even declared that after the COVID-19 pandemic, their family prefers “to buy foods that boost our immune system such as fresh foods” (Güngördü Belbağ, A., 2022, p.10). The findings of this study also show that the least consumed products were clothing, cosmetics, home products, and shoes. According to another participant, “Previously, we were buying anything anytime. But now, we gave up on our wants and needs, and our priority is our basic needs” (Güngördü Belbağ, A., 2022, p.11).

A study about the new paradigm of consumer behavior resulting from COVID-19 in relation to local commerce (Tiago & Veiga, 2021) used a quantitative methodology, whose application was a questionnaire to 323 residents in Portugal who were over eighteen years of age. The results show that respondents generally consider that their consumption habits have changed because of the pandemic crisis, and they reflect “a lower use of large supermarkets as a preferred means of purchasing and purchasing essential products and goods in favor of local commerce” (Tiago & Veiga, 2021, p.1). However, they were able to conclude that younger consumers, residing in the Center and Lisbon and Vale do Tejo regions and with higher education were more likely to change their consumption habits.

Chapter 2 - General Objective and Research Questions

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in various aspects of our lives, including our consumption habits. With the outbreak of the pandemic, people had to adapt to a new normal, and many changes in consumption habits were observed.

The general objective of this thesis is to reflect on the consumer habits of the millennial generation and the differences in this behavior between 3 age groups inside the millennial generation, based on their year of birth: "late-millennials "(1994-2000), "middle-millennials" (1987-1993) and "first-millennials" (1980-1986). Therefore, and after the literature review, it was possible to define the research questions. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the consumption habits that were altered because of the pandemic?
2. What are the changes in consumption habits that have settled and have perdured even after the 'end 'of the pandemic?
3. What are the changes in consumption habits that have not settled and perdured after the 'end 'of the pandemic?

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1. Action-Research Method

According to findings from previous studies and confronting that with relevant data from reports, the chosen method to address the research objectives is the action-research method, based on a qualitative study using the focus group technique. The action research method was originally developed by Kurt Lewin, a German American social psychologist, in the 1940s. Lewin argued that social research should be oriented to problem-solving and involve the individuals affected by the problem or matter (Lewin, 1946, p. 35).

The action research method generally follows a four-step cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008, pp. 37-42). This means that the research is conducted iteratively, with each cycle leading to a progressive improvement.

The primary reason for action-research, as Reason and Bradbury (2008) explain, "is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives". In their handbook, the authors explain it as a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), so it means that the knowledge is built through interaction and reciprocity in participation, meaning "the flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

The action research method generally follows a four-step cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This means that the research is conducted iteratively, with each cycle leading to a progressive improvement of the process or solution.

3.2. Qualitative Study

With this, using the focus group technique with interviews, the data will be qualitative, not expressed in numbers, and will be mainly words and testimonies gathered by the researcher (Tesch, 1990). Qualitative research methods involve collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as narratives, interviews, observations, and documents, to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of a particular phenomenon or research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The key strengths of qualitative research rely in its ability to capture the complexity and diversity of human experiences and perspectives. Charmaz (2014) discusses the ability of qualitative research to capture the complexity and richness of human experiences, and to generate new insights and theories based on these experiences.

A qualitative study allows researchers to gain insights into the lived experiences of individuals, groups, and communities, and to explore the meanings and interpretations they assign to their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research also allows for a flexible and iterative approach to data collection and analysis, which can accommodate unexpected findings and emergent themes (Maxwell, 2013).

3.2.1. Focus Groups

Morgan (1996, 1997) defines focus groups as a research technique of gathering data through group interaction on a topic presented by the researcher. This kind of methodology includes three crucial components: focus groups are a research method aimed at collecting data; the interaction in the group is the source of the data analyzed in the study; and, finally, it "acknowledges the researcher's role in stimulating the group's discussion for the purpose of the data collection" (Veloso et al. ,2014). The moderator plays a critical role in guiding the discussion, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging all participants to contribute their opinions and ideas (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 16).

One of the strengths of focus group methodology is that it allows understanding the social and cultural context in which people's attitudes and behaviors are created and develop. However, because focus groups have few participants and are often unrepresentative samples, the results cannot be generalized to the wider population.

In conclusion, focus group is essentially used in investigations that aim to understand the view of the participants in relation to a specific topic, through their words, behaviors, and reactions (Morgan, 1997).

3.2.2. Procedure and Recruitment

The interview script (Appendix I) was prepared with the goal of associating the categories and their topics and respective objectives, motivating points of communicability, and guiding the conversation with the participants to collect information and data that allow obtaining answers from meeting with the research objectives. In this way, the interview script (Appendix I) was prepared considering the placement of these categories combined with the topics and respective objectives (Table 1), proposed for discussion:

Table 1 - Categories and Topics of the focus group

Category	Questions	Objectives
Consumer Self-Description	Opening Questions (1-4)	Introducing the participant. Understand how they would describe themselves as a consumer. Make sense of what is their view on the COVID-19 Pandemic.
General Consumer Habits and Preferences	Introductory Questions (5-9)	- Understand supermarket preferences, online shopping and in-store shopping preferences and the type of products that the participants consume the most. - Understand their agreement with the statement "Our consumption habits have undergone significant changes due to the pandemic "and what were the significant changes for the participants Consumer Behavior
Consumer Behavior, Habits, and Preferences during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Transition Questions (10-14)	- Realize habits that were created with the COVID-19 Pandemic. - Identify supermarket, brand and product preferences. - Perceive the frequency of consumption and preferred shopping channels.

Category	Questions	Objectives
Consumer Behavior, Habits, and Preferences after the COVID-19 Pandemic	Key Questions (15-19)	- Understand the behavior and habits that endure until now, after the end of the COVID-19 Pandemic. - Understand the behavior and habits that haven't endured.
Appreciation and conclusions	Ending Questions (20-21)	- Capture the overall appreciation about the end of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the expectations for the future.

When it comes do recruitment, the procedure was creating a form to disseminate to obtain contacts and information about people who met the necessary criteria for participation in the study. These criteria were:

- To be born between 1980-2000 (to guarantee the person was a millennial);
- To be a resident in Portugal for four years or more (to evaluate the before and after consumption in the pandemic).

3.2.3. Sample Description

The focus groups were carried out with the utilization of the validated script (Annex I), where 18 people, that have been living in Portugal for more than four years, were divided into three groups of six participants each. The three groups were divided by year of birth, and they were called "first-millennials", born between 1980 and 1986; "middle-millennials," born between 1987 and 199; and lastly, "late-millennials", those born from 1994 to 2000.

The sample chosen was non-probabilistic and based on convenience since the group elements were deliberately and pre-defined selected (Malhotra et al., 2012).

The "late-millennials" focus group took part on the 13th of February 2023 via Zoom, and it had the duration of 1 hour and 40 minutes, approximately.

Table 2 - Description of the "late-millennials" sample

Name	Age	Occupation	Civil Status	District of Residence
Bruno Rego	22	Physiotherapist	Single	Porto
Carolina Rocha	25	Junior Product Manager	Single	Porto
Cátia Beato	28	Cinema master's Student	Single	Leiria
Inês Boavista	23	SAP Consultant	Single	Lisboa
Micaela Costa	26	Communication Intern	Single	Penacova
Rui Cunha	24	Financial Analyst	Single	Porto

The "middle-millennials" focus group took part on the 16th of February 2023 via Zoom, and it had the duration of 1 hour and 15 minutes, approximately.

Table 3 - Description of the "middle-millennials" sample

Name	Age	Occupation	Civil Status	Area of Residence
Ana Pereira	32	Civil Engineer	Married	Porto
Bruna Felix	33	Physical Education teacher	Married	Porto
Clara Silva	30	Illustrator and Writer	Single	Lisboa
Genesis González	30	Administrative Assistant	Married	Porto

Name	Age	Occupation	Civil Status	Area of Residence
Matheus Oliveira	34	Bank Officer	Single	Porto
Ricardo Pereira	31	Factory Worker	Married	Porto

The "first-millennials" focus group took part on the 31st of March 2023 via Zoom, and it had the duration of 1 hour and 30 minutes, approximately.

Table 4 - Description of the "first-millennials" sample

Name	Age	Occupation	Civil Status	Area of Residence
Cátia Monteiro	40	Nutritionist	Married	Viseu
Cláudia Mokdisse	43	Teacher	Married	Porto
Gustavo Moura	39	Manager	Single	Coimbra
Marco Sousa	30	Automation Engineer	Single	Aveiro
Paulo Sérgio Santos	41	Communications Manager	Married	Porto
Ricardo José	41	Investigator	Single	Madeira

Chapter 4 - Data Analysis and Discussion

According to the categories previously defined in Methodology, and each of the objectives identified (Table 1), the focus group content was analyzed, framing the participants' responses to the script questions.

4.1. Consumer Description and Perception on the COVID-19 Pandemic

Throughout the different focus groups, it was possible to identify the three behavioral clusters: value, quality, and image previously explored (Finneman et al., 2020). Even if it was not generalized, at least 3 people in each group identified themselves with similar characteristics of each of the different clusters. In the context of inflation and economic crisis, one factor that was mentioned by all groups was the monetary factor, but it is manifested in different ways among each segment.

The “late-millennials” are image-driven consumers. When asked about how they identified as consumers, even though the budget and value was mentioned, half of the participants understood that they don’t mind spending money on trips, restaurants, clothing, and technology products if that implies enjoying themselves and setting themselves apart. Their approach on essential items is different, since all the participants admitted trying to opt for the cheapest option or for promotional items when shopping for groceries.

On another hand, the “middle-millennials” can be labelled as quality-driven consumers. Due to the connectivity of the millennial, the participants used the word quality to say that, when choosing products, they value the durability and performance over the value. “Middle-millennials” showed their care about being informed about the best deals on the brands they are fond of. One participant mentioned the shopping in outlet stores, due to the convenience of combining quality products at a lower price.

On the contrary, 4 out of the 6 participants in the “first-millennials” focus group could be classified as value-driven consumers, as they are the ones more pessimistic and worried about inflation, a topic that was mentioned by all the participants throughout the whole conversation. While “middle-millennials” go to different supermarkets to get the best products in each, according to their brand preference, “first-millennials” do store-hopping to find the best prices in each.

4.2. General Consumer’s Habits and Preferences

The participants were asked about their supermarket preference, and the aspects that mattered the most when choosing where to buy their essential products. The most-valued attributes were proximity to the place of residence, cleanliness and hygiene measures, and quality of the white label products of the supermarket brand. The variety of coexisting brands, the promotional deals, and the possibility of ordering online where also mentioned, the latter being a characteristic most valued by the "first-millennials" during the pandemic.

Table 5 - Supermarket preferences and reasons of the “late-millennials”

Name	Supermarket Preference	Reason of preference
Bruno Rego	Mercadona	Cleanliness and hygiene measures
Carolina Rocha	Mercadona	Quality of white label products of the supermarket brand.
Cátia Beato	Continente	Proximity to place of residence

Name	Supermarket Preference	Reason of preference
Inês Boavista	Mercadona and Mini-Preço	- Quality of white label products of the supermarket brand. - Proximity to place of residence
Micaela Costa	Lidl	Proximity to place of residence
Rui Cunha	Continente	Variety of coexisting brands

Table 6 - Supermarket preferences and reasons of the "middle-millennials"

Name	Supermarket Preference	Reason of preference
Ana Pereira	Continente and Mercadona	- Variety of coexisting brands - Quality of white label products of the supermarket brand
Bruna Felix	Mercadona	Cleanliness and hygiene measures and quality of white label products of the supermarket brands
Clara Silva	Continente	- Variety of coexisting brands - Possibility of ordering online
Genesis González	Continente	Variety of coexisting brands and proximity to the place of residence
Matheus Oliveira	Mercadona and Lidl	Proximity to place of residence
Ricardo Pereira	Continente	Variety of existing brands and promotional deals ("I take advantage of gas discounts coupons on Continente")

Table 7 - Supermarket preferences and reasons of the "first-millenials"

Name	Supermarket Preference	Reason of preference
Cátia Monteiro	Continente	Proximity to place of residence
Cláudia Mokdisse	Mercadona, Aldi and Lidl Continente	- Quality of white label products of the supermarket brand - Promotional deals
Gustavo Moura	Continente	Proximity to place of residence, promotional deals, and possibility of ordering online
Marco Sousa	Continente and Mercadona	- Proximity to the place of residence and promotional deals - Quality of white label products of the supermarket brand
Paulo Sérgio Santos	Froiz, Auchan, Continente	Promotional deals ("I go to Froiz for soy milk because it is cheaper there; I go for Auchan to buy pasta at 0,55€; I go to Continente when they launch the 15% coupon in all of the store")
Ricardo José	Continente	Proximity to place of residence and variety of coexisting brands ("There aren't many big supermarkets to go in Madeira Island")

All participants agreed and argued how the pandemic affected their consumption habits, in the sense of making them consume more through some digital channels, being aware of the hygiene conditions of the places of purchase or the impact that it had on their purchase budget of supermarket goods. The participants who were least affected by this were the "late-millennials", since many weren't, and still aren't, financially independent or able to manage their own homes.

The millennial generation is characterized as being more conventional than rebellious (Howe & Strauss, 2000), and even though most participants admitted shopping online, it is not as frequent as shopping in-spot. Most participants say they prefer to buy in physical channels over online, except in cases where the cost of the product is lower, mainly in technology and clothing products.

As for grocery shopping, some only made online purchases during the pandemic period, occasionally. Those who do so nowadays, and they are a total of 5 out of the 18 who participated in the groups, do so for emergency reasons (missing an ingredient at home and needing it in a hurry) or for avoiding transporting heavier products (gallons of water, for example).

4.3. Consumer Behavior, Habits and Preferences during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the "first-millennials", some interesting key themes of Consumer Behavior in the COVID-19 Pandemic emerged in the discussion. The first habits that were identified in almost all the participants was an increase of the volume of products that were bought in each supermarket trip (whether it was online or to the physical store), but a decrease in the number of times a month that groceries were bought. An episode of panic-buying, the phenomenon of consumers buying large quantities of goods in response to the perceived threat the pandemic brought to their life (Zagorsky, 2020).

Table 8 - "First-millennials" excerpt about panic-buying

Name	Question	Excerpt
Cláudia Mokdisse	How has the pandemic changed your previous consumption habits? What things that you didn't do before, did you start doing and choosing at the supermarket?	"I panicked and thought I had to stock up everything. I was one of the crazy people that storage toilet paper, even if now I look at it and think it was absurd (...) it brought me a feeling of safety."

There was an overall common preference of all focus-groups participants on shopping at Mercadona, because of the "cleanliness of the store", "hygiene measures" and "wide corridors". Only participants that don't have access to this chain of supermarket, because of the regional presence of Mercadona in the north of Portugal, did not mention this chain.

For online ordering, Continente and Auchan where the most mentioned supermarkets, even though not a significant number of participants opted for that way of shopping for groceries. One feature that was praised by the "first-millennial" consumer that expressed his preference for Auchan was the "opportunity to buy online and pick-up in the store's parking lot".

When asked about purchasing essential products in favor of local commerce, this was a preoccupation and preference created with the pandemic in the older and the younger participants of the focus group. While in the "middle-millennials", this consumption option was not mentioned, in the "first-millennials" group the preference for local fruit and grocery stores. Another interest behavior was noticed in the "late-millennials" group, that reflected a preoccupation of a household in favoring local restaurants.

Table 9 - "Late-millennials" excerpt about ordering from local restaurants in the pandemic

Name	Question	Excerpt
Inês Boavista	How has the pandemic changed your previous consumption habits? What things that you didn't do before, did you start doing and choosing at the supermarket?	"When things started to open for takeaway or delivery, my family and I would choose a restaurant every week and order. (...) it was a time to worry about the future of the small businesses around us, but I admit that maybe if we haven't had the monetary possibilities, we wouldn't have done it"

The limitation of the number of times supermarket purchases were made was also observed during the focus group of "middle-millennials". Only one participant, that reported the extreme physical proximity between two large supermarkets, both within a 5-minute walk of his residence, said he went to the supermarket more often. Going every 15 days or every 3 weeks to stock the pantry was the most common for participants in the group.

In this category, it was also asked about specific products the participants started consuming during this period. The preoccupation with the disinfection of hands and surfaces was a habit that is common to all participants of the three focus groups. In the "late-millennials" group, some participants remembered the habit of washing and disinfecting groceries before storing them. Other participants, especially the ones that run households, mentioned an increase in the consumption of bleaches and all-purpose cleaners. That was not something as present in the "late-millennials" group, since two-thirds of the participants still live at home with their parents and admitted not having a very good idea of family consumption during the pandemic period.

The preoccupation with health was expressed in the "mid-millennials" focus group, since 3 participants mentioned the preoccupation of eating fresh fruits and vegetables, and even vitamin C supplies.

4.4. Consumer Behavior, Habits and Preferences after the COVID-19 Pandemic

Most participants identify with the feeling of overlooking or downplaying the difficult that they and others have gone through in the pandemic. The most used phrase when asked about how they think the pandemic affects their consumption of supermarket products to date, most of the participants of the "middle-millennials" and "late-millennials" groups used the expression that they feel like they are "back to normal life".

One habit that was identified is the increase of the number of times supermarket purchases are made. Based on the answers of the participants, weekly trips to the supermarket to buy a smaller number of supplies are more common after the end of the pandemic. The preoccupation about local commerce is, for the participants of the study, something that is not as important to them anymore, when compared to the pandemic. In some cases, that abandonment came associated with some guilt from the participants.

Table 10 - "Late-millennials" excerpt about consuming from local commerce.

Name	Question	Excerpt
Micaela Costa	Which supermarkets do they usually go to? Why these and not others? What do you like and dislike most about these spaces? What makes you decide to go to one supermarket and not another?	"I feel guilty shopping at a large supermarket. I always feel that I should promote local trade, and directly help a family."

Current world circumstances (such as the war in Ukraine, inflation, and economic crisis) were affirmed by the participants as more influential and decisive in the participants' consumer behavior than pandemic factors. The trend of store-hopping and going from supermarket to supermarket in search of the best deal was mentioned by "first-millennials" participants as something they had not done before, as they preferred to buy essentials from one store only to avoid exposure to the virus.

The permanent habit from the pandemic period is the worry about disinfection and hygiene. The "first-millennials" and "middle-millennials" are the categories that still prioritize products and services that prioritize cleanliness and hygiene. The use of hand sanitizer is a common aspect of all focus groups, but consuming masks has been abandoned, except in some cases where its use was mentioned occasionally in a very crowded shopping center or on public transport.

On another hand, the preoccupation with sustainability was also mentioned as a post-pandemic habit on the younger millennials.

Table 11 - "Late-millennials" and "middle-millennials" excerpt about consuming from local commerce.

Name	Question	Excerpt
Bruno Rego	And in relation to the habits you abandoned, what did you do during the pandemic and nowadays you no longer have the same concern when it comes to consuming?	"Thinking about fruit, I preferred to buy fruit in practically closed plastic bags, containing 1 kg of apples, which nobody had touched at the outset. but this is now no longer a reality, but it once was"
Clara Silva	And in relation to the habits you abandoned, what did you do during the pandemic and nowadays you no longer have the same concern when it comes to consuming?	"During the pandemic, we consumed many more plastic bags for safety reasons, but now I avoid this consumption."

Chapter 5 - Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

This dissertation was carried out with the main objective of studying the consumer behavior in the millennial generation and their habits before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, throughout the study, it was possible to verify that the consumer behavior of the millennial generation has very particular characteristics and that, in most cases, are aligned with the literature review, however, within this same generation, the behaviors between the different age groups can vary substantially.

It can be verified by the results that the different age groups value different aspects in the moment of buying, whether they are value, quality, or image. Overall, a millennial consumer can be characterized by a desire for experiences, a commitment to social responsibility, and a reliance on digital technology. Businesses that understand and cater to these preferences are likely to be successful in reaching and engaging millennial consumers.

When it comes to the research questions, the insights of the participants of the focus groups made it possible to infer what were the consumption habits that were altered because of the pandemic. The habits that were adopted were less frequent trips to the supermarket; preference for spaces with hygiene and safety measures; the habit of stocking essential goods and the tendency to panic-buy in a situation of pressure and nervousness; the concern with local trade and economically promoting the region and restaurants; the consuming of disinfection and cleaning products, both for hands and for the house and surfaces; the preoccupation with health and online-shopping for groceries to avoid exposure to the virus, even if online consumption was not an extremely prominent habit in the specific sample.

Based on the focus-group interviews, the habits that have settled after its end are exclusively the preoccupation with hygiene and online-shopping for groceries, even though it is more for convenience and emergency reasons than for protection from the virus. All of the other preoccupations, according to the contributors, have not perdured, and all of the behaviors identified by the participants dissipated over time.

Above all, the analyzed results exceeded the objectives, allowing answers also directed to the theme of millennials as consumers. This observation of the behavior of millennials as consumers, in addition to serving as an introduction to the key issues, also allowed the recognition of the main areas of focus and the necessary maneuvers so that marketing strategies are better implemented.

The limitations of this study are related to the fact that a non-probabilistic sample was selected for convenience, thus preventing the generalization of the study's conclusions, and the fact that there is still little literature on the presented problem, mainly in Portugal. The small size of the groups also means that the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population.

During some times, another limitation came with the prevalence of dominant opinions in the group, leading to a lack of diversity in viewpoints. Some participants were dominators, and their initiative and system of beliefs could sometimes influence the expression of more timid contributors. There also was an immense difficulty in finding participants who were willing and able to attend the sessions, in order for the group to be representative of the large population.

Finally, along with all these limitations, recommendations for future investigations will be presented, also associated with the time limitations of the present study.

– use of a larger sample, using individuals from different parts of the country, so that conclusions can be generalized.

– observation of consumers at the point of sale in direct interaction with the fast fashion consumer object, so that a more in-depth study of consumer behavior can be carried out.

– interview managers of supermarket chains in Portugal, who deal with consumers daily, in order to obtain third-person testimonies regarding consumer behavior.

- carry out a comparison study between different generations of consumers, to obtain another perspective on their behavior.
- determine whether the millennial consumer is impacted and influenced by the marketing and communication strategies carried out by supermarket chains.

A pandemic is "a portal, a gateway between one world and the next" (Roy, 2020), and since the transition of the COVID-19 pandemic to its end it has still been little investigated at an academic level, it can still be explored from different perspectives, in addition to consumer behavior.

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Appendix

Appendix Section 1 - Interview Script

Objetivo da reunião:

Estamos a avaliar a alteração e permanência dos hábitos de consumo que os consumidores millennials têm em relação a compras de bens de supermercado. Gostaríamos de perceber de que forma a pandemia alterou o consumo deste tipo de produtos, bem como que mudanças foram adotadas pelos consumidores até o tempo presente.

O objetivo desta reunião é obter um conjunto de perceções, associações, preocupações e de hábitos que ajudem a perceber um determinado conjunto de comportamentos, dentro desta categoria.

A. Opening questions

1. Por favor, comecem por dizer o vosso nome, idade, estado civil (perguntar sobre filhos), onde moram e qual a vossa profissão.

2. Por favor, falem um bocadinho sobre os vossos passatempos preferidos.

3. Como se definem como consumidores no geral? Como descreveriam a maneira que consomem? Compram por impulso, são muito racionais…

4. Passado este tempo, como olham para a pandemia? Quando pensam na pandemia o que mais está presente nos vossos pensamentos?

B. Introductory questions

5. Vamos falar de supermercados…

A que supermercados costumam ir? Porquê esses e não outros?

O que mais gostam e não gostam nestes espaços?

O que Vos faz decidir por ir a um supermercado e não outro?

Tudo o que quiserem partilhar!

6. Em relação a compras online: fazem compras online, não fazem? Fazem de que tipo de produtos e porque não de outros? Fazem compras online e físicas, na mesma insígnia ou compram online numa marca e depois vão a lojas físicas de outras?

7. Que tipo de produtos costumam comprar com mais frequência? Porquê? Que produtos raramente ou nunca compram?

8. Os nossos hábitos de consumo sofreram significativas alterações por causa da pandemia. Concordam? Que alterações consideram que ocorreram?

C. Transition questions

9. Lembram-se da primeira vez que foi fazer compras para a casa na pandemia? O que precisavam, onde optaram por comprar, o que compraram….

10. Passou a preferir uma rede de supermercados específica na pandemia? Porquê?

11. Como é que a pandemia mudou os seus prévios hábitos de consumo? Que coisas que não fazia antes, passou a fazer e escolher no supermercado?

12. Na pandemia, o que mais importou na hora de escolher os produtos que iam adquirir.

13. Que tipo de produtos optaram por comprar online e que produtos continuaram a preferir adquirir através de meios físicos?

D. Key Questions

14. Tendo em conta tudo o que discutimos, como acham que a pandemia afeta o vosso consumo de produtos de supermercado até hoje?

15. Que preocupações começou a ter na pandemia e perduram até hoje na hora de consumir produtos de supermercado?

16. Que produtos passaram a consumir que até hoje compram? E porquê?

17. Quanto às compras online, com que frequência continuam a fazer e que tipo de produtos consomem mais através de meios digitais?

18. E em relação aos hábitos que abandonaram, o que faziam na pandemia e atualmente já não têm a preocupação na hora de consumir?

E. Ending questions (otimistas, acham que a pandemia já passou)

19. Como se sentem com este fim da pandemia?

20. Quais as expectativas para o futuro?

Obrigado pela vossa colaboração.

Appendix Section 2 – "Late Millenials" Interview Script

<u>Como se definem como consumidores no geral? Como descreveriam a maneira que consomem? Compram por impulso, são mais racionais…</u>

Inês Boavista: "Não sou impulsiva, não gosto de gastar dinheiro, mas depende das coisas. roupa, sou consciente e tenho atenção à qualidade, mas comida e viagens não me importo de gastar dinheiro. Gasto mais facilmente 500€ numa viagem do que 50€ em qualquer outra coisa, por exemplo, um casaco. Mas se for para os outros, gasto mais facilmente. vou às lojas e estou a ver coisas para o meu namorado".

Carolina Rocha: "Eu sou igual à Inês. Se calhar vou ao supermercado e tenho uma lista certinha de coisas para comprar, mas se vejo algo que vai agradar as pessoas que eu gosto, normalmente os meus sobrinhos, fecho um bocado os olhos. sou um bocado mais impulsiva a comprar coisas para outras pessoas do que para mim. para os outros, é passar o cartão e fechar o olho".

Rui Cunha: "Eu também me considero racional no consumo, principalmente depois do aumento de preços devido à guerra da Ucrânia. Os bens alimentares costumo prestar atenção ao preço, mas quando são prendas para os outros sou mais impulsivo e nada racional do que quando compro itens essenciais".

Micaela Costa: "Eu sou parecida com a Inês e a Carolina relativamente a ser consciente, mas por exemplo, quando o Rui falou da comida, eu não tenho a noção do aumento. Eu não me lembro, como ainda vivo com a minha família não tenho bem noção. Para fazer um jantar, vou comprar tudo novo porque não sei o que há em casa. não estou habituada a encher despensa. A nível de produtos de higiene, gosto sempre de ter a mais em casa, não sou poupada. Relativamente a preços de roupa, gosto de procurar achados. Adoro e fico orgulhosa de mim quando consigo encontrar o melhor preço por uma peça, ou pago mais barato por uma peça de roupa que andava à procura. Relativamente a restaurantes, prefiro sair uma vez por semana e ir a um sítio bom e que fique mesmo contente com o que comi, do que ir três vezes por semana e pagar 10€. Gosto de comer diferente, e não ir ao mesmo sítio de sempre".

Bruno Rego: "Partilho a opinião de todos no geral, de ser poupado em determinadas coisas, principalmente por ter deixado de viver à custa dos meus pais, e agora a gastar o meu dinheiro é diferente. Se for para comprar um lanche para mim, tenho mais atenção a isso e não é comprar sem olhar o preço. mas por outro lado, se falarmos em comida, prefiro pagar mais e se calhar ter uma melhor experiência e qualidade. De uma forma geral, diria que prefiro qualidade em relação ao preço".

Cátia Beato: "Partilho da opinião do Bruno e de todos, no geral. A partir do momento que passei a pagar as minhas contas, vou ao supermercado só para comprar certas coisas, compro só aquilo e acabou. Pondero entre os preços e as várias marcas que há. Eu tenho plena noção que não trago o mais barato, nem o mais caro, é no meio entre os dois. Quanto a roupa, gostava de ser mais consciente, há épocas em que compro mais compulsivamente, com os saldos, mas acabo por pensar que prefiro dar mais dinheiro se a qualidade for melhor. Principalmente quanto à tecnologia, peças para o computador ou para a minha câmara, vai-me custar mais caro e vai durar muito mais tempo".

Carolina Rocha: "Eu concordo com a Cátia. Prefiro comprar um casaco da Zara que custe entre os 50 e 100 do que talvez um casaco da Primark que custe 10€. E estou a falar de marcas que as pessoas têm acesso. À medida que amadureço, quando tenho mais opções de compra, acho que em vez de gastar os seus 50€ num casaco, posso gastar muito mais em algo que me vai durar mais também".

<u>Passado este tempo, como olham para a pandemia? Quando pensam na pandemia o que mais está presente nos vossos pensamentos?</u>

Micaela: "Irreal, parece que nunca existiu".

Rui: "Eu tenho uma perspetiva mais pessimista, mas realmente concordo nisso com o Bruno. Quando pensava no Covid, pensava mais no isolamento, e pelo que as pessoas tiveram de passar".

Bruno: "Como profissional da saúde, acredito nas medidas que se mantêm e acho que não devemos opinar muito sobre elas. Mas acho que teve um impacto positivo porque muitas pessoas começaram a fazer atividade física e atualmente mantêm este hábito. Em relação ao isolamento, que o Rui falou, sem dúvida alguma maior parte das pessoas que eu atendo na clínica, são idosos e vão pela parte social, e conversar"

Carolina: "Eu acho que o Covid fez com que surgisse em mim o pensamento que o mundo pode acabar amanhã, mas eu quero ter a certeza de que fiz tudo o que eu quis, que fiz coisas que eu gostava. Eu acho que este é o ano dos concertos. Eu não sei o dia de amanhã, não sei se me vão fechar em casa outra vez como fecharam, por isso quero ir a tudo. Mas sei que foi drástico na nossa saúde mental, já chega de estar sozinho".

Cátia: "Eu tenho uma ideia um bocado contrária. sempre fui uma pessoa que gostou mais de estar em casa, houve esse fechamento e isolamento, mas eu também não comecei logo a fazer tudo de repente. Tive dias aborrecidos, mas ao mesmo tempo tudo o que já fazia, estar com os meus amigos, passou tudo para online, mas não perdi essa ligação total. Sei que me afetou um bocado, mas sei que me adaptei bem no final".

Inês: "Eu sinto que não aconteceu. eu nem sequer me lembro. temos a tendência de esquecer o que é mau. Mas mal as coisas começaram a melhorar, já me passa ao lado"

<u>Vamos falar de supermercados... A que supermercados costumam ir? Porquê esses e não outros? O que mais gostam e não gostam nestes espaços? O que vos faz decidir por ir a um supermercado e não outro? Tudo o que quiserem partilhar!</u>

Carolina: "Mercadona. É clean, limpo, as coisas são organizadas. os produtos são baratos, e normalmente é tudo marca branca. Gosto de comprar de marcas pequenas, de amigas, porque quero ajudar as pessoas que estão a crescer".

Bruno: "Mercadona. Por um preço menor, consegues coisas igualmente boas. A única coisa má é que não há em todo o lado".

Micaela: "Na minha vila, vou só ao Lidl. Um supermercado que gosto também é o Continente, pela variedade. Prefiro o Lidl pela proximidade, mas o Continente pela variedade. Eu sinto-me culpada de comprar numa grande superfície. eu sinto sempre que devia promover o comércio local, e ajudar diretamente uma família".

Inês: "Mercadona. outra coisa boa é que normalmente só há um produto de cada, o que é ótimo, porque não há opções. Para além disso, gosto do Continente e quando quero coisas genéricas, ou prendas, acho que é sítio mais fácil para ir e comprar mais tipos de coisas. Neste momento, por proximidade, vou ao Mini Preço sempre".

Rui: "Continente, pela proximidade. Vejo no Continente o fator confiança e inovação nos produtos. Outra coisa que joga muito a favor são as campanhas de promoções, e promoções com outras entidades. Muitas vezes, as pequenas superfícies acabam por ter produtos de melhor qualidade, mas as grandes superfícies ganham pela variedade e promoções".

Cátia: "Eu só compro no Continente, que é o mais perto de mim. Onde eu moro, faço só compras em comerciantes locais de última hora, por terem pouca variedade. Prefiro juntar-me em grupos com as minhas amigas em taxis e ir fazer uma compra semanal/quinzenal ao Continente. Utilizo pequenos vendedores esporadicamente. Sempre tive apreço pelo Pingo Doce também, mas hoje em dia prefiro o Continente ".

<u>Em relação a compras online: fazem compras online, não fazem? Fazem de que tipo de produtos e porque não de outros? Fazem compras online e físicas, na mesma insígnia ou compram online numa marca e depois vão a lojas físicas de outras?</u>

Micaela: "Eu fazia compras online de roupa, mas de compras de casa nunca foi possível por causa do meu lugar de residência. Por acaso, faço compras no AliExpress ou Primor. Eu não adoro comprar roupa online porque os sites são desorganizados e não consigo encontrar nada".

Carolina: "Eu faço mais compras online do que presencial. A Glovo e a Uber Eats têm aquelas opções de compras de supermercado, e se me falta alguma coisa específica, ou me esqueço de comprar algo, para não estar a sair de propósito, mando vir.

Compras de Natal faço sempre online. Às vezes, vejo online, vejo se está disponível na loja presencial e vou lá comprar".

Bruno: "Eu quase não compro nada online. Tenho medo de não dar certo e ter de passar pelo processo de devolução. Prefiro obviamente comprar fisicamente. A única altura que fizemos compras online foi de mercearia e apenas na pandemia".

Inês: "Eu sou igual ao Bruno. Não costumo fazer compras online, só o faço se quero uma coisa específica ou se estiver mais barato. Supermercado, às vezes compro pela Uber Eats ou Glovo".

Rui: "Cheguei a fazer, para concertos e festivais, mas em termos de vestuário prefiro ir a uma loja experimentar. Vejo utilidade, mas simplesmente nunca precisei".

Cátia: "Eu sou igual à Inês. Recorro a comprar online se a loja for longe, se não existir em Portugal, acabo por comprar tecnologia sempre online. Roupa, prefiro comprar fisicamente, não para experimentar, mas há peças que são exclusivas online, e quando isso acontece, sou obrigada a encomendar também. Fisicamente, compras de supermercado e casa, mais simples e acessíveis, é sempre fisicamente".

<u>Que tipo de produtos costumam comprar com mais frequência? Porquê? Que produtos raramente ou nunca compram?</u>

Bruno: "Comida, frequentemente. Raramente, roupa".

Inês: "Comida. Roupa e tecnologia raramente".

Rui: "Raramente, gastos relacionados com férias. Despesas alimentares com mais frequência".

Carolina: "Raramente, livros. Comida e roupa mais frequentemente".

Micaela: "Compro mais comida e raramente tecnologia".

Cátia: "Comida regularmente. Raramente, maquilhagem e produtos de beleza".

<u>Os nossos hábitos de consumo sofreram significativas alterações por causa da pandemia. Concordam? Que alterações consideram que ocorreram?</u>

Carolina: "Mudou em pouca coisa. a única coisa que reparo em termos de consumos é, comer mais vezes em casa e cozinhar mais, não ir tanto jantar fora. Isto é uma coisa que eu reparo que as pessoas fazem, e jantar cedo. Se os hábitos pós pandemia mudaram muita gente, a partir de agora, com a guerra e a inflação, notamos muito mais. As pessoas estão a deixar de fazer compras grandes de supermercado, semana a semana, comprar menos coisas, e ter mais noção do que está na despensa.

Inês: "A mim também não mudou muito. As pessoas passaram a consumir mais online. Há coisas que compro mais online agora, mas acho que isso veio pela pandemia e pela autonomia que vou ganhando".

Rui: "Aumento das compras online, apesar de não ter sido o meu caso. Talvez a diminuição de consumo de atividades culturais. Presto mais atenção aos preços, tento comprar em promoções".

Bruno: "Não trabalhava antes da pandemia, só agora começo a gastar em coisas. Não tenho um meio de comparação".

<u>Lembram-se da primeira vez que foi fazer compras para a casa na pandemia? O que precisavam, onde optaram por comprar, o que compraram…</u>

Rui: "Lembro-me de comprar muitos produtos de higiene, e de eles estarem em altos preços".

Bruno: "Devo ter ido ao Mercadona por causa da higienização e medidas protetivas que eles tinham. A minha família só ia ao Mercadona por causa disso. E comprávamos sempre em grande quantidade. Evitar ir muitas vezes, fazer compras maiores e mensais".

Micaela: "O único apontamento que posso dar relativo a isso é o facto de comprarmos muitas coisas, em maior quantidade, gastarmos muito mais dinheiro, pra irmos menos vezes às compras".

Inês: "Eu lembro-me, porque era o momento alto, de sair de casa, por diversão. Lembro-me de toda a gente comprar imenso papel higiénico e não haver mais, nada".

<u>Na pandemia, o que mais importou na hora de escolher os produtos que iam adquirir.</u>

Bruno: "Os que estivessem mais baratos. Tentar ver as marcas mais baratas dentro do razoável".

Carolina: "Não só mais baratos, mas que nos trouxessem mais segurança. Marcas que tivessem a garantia de estar dentro da norma Covid, tinham sido revistos. E também, foi uma altura que comprava mais produtos portugueses para apoiar produtores e empresas nacionais".

Inês: "Eu não me lembro de comprar produtos específicos. O que tentávamos fazer em casa era quando os restaurantes abriam para take-away, nós tentávamos mandar vir uma vez por semana, para ajudar restaurantes. Cozinhávamos comidas diferentes, tipo fazer pão em casa".

Rui: "Produtos com mais data de validade, pois duravam mais e não tínhamos de ir tantas vezes. Sardinhas, salsichas, atum. Mais por causa do psicológico impulsivo do consumidor, para termos algo garantido".

<u>A preocupação com saúde manifestou-se na hora de fazer compras?</u>

Micaela: "Em termos de dinheiro, embora pensássemos conscientes, não foi uma grande problemática porque não sofremos corte salarial. A minha mãe é enfermeira, e costuma-se dizer que em casa de ferreiro, espeto é de pau. Na altura da pandemia, bebíamos sumo natural e vitaminas que ela comprou, para aumentar defesas que poderíamos não ter".

<u>Tendo em conta tudo o que discutimos, como acham que a pandemia afeta o vosso consumo de produtos de supermercado até hoje?</u>

Carolina: "Usar desinfetante e comprar regularmente, para usar em todos os momentos das compras, no carrinho, a chegar ao carro, etc".

Inês: "Tenho mais preocupações agora quando vivo sozinha do que com a pandemia, por causa dos preços".

Micaela: "Nós na pandemia consumimos muitos mais sacos de plástico por questões de segurança, mas agora evito fazer esse consumo".

Rui: "Na questão da higiene, deixamos de lavar e higienizar tudo. Perdemos esse hábito e esse cuidado. Mas acho que atualmente as pessoas ainda se preocupam com esse tipo de segurança".

Bruno: "Pensando nas frutas, dava preferência a comprar frutas em sacos praticamente fechados, de 1kg de maçãs, que à partida ninguém andou a mexer. Mas isso agora não é mais uma realidade, mas já foi".

Cátia: "Todos os comportamentos que eu tinha foram desaparecendo ao longo do tempo".

<u>Que produtos passaram a consumir que até hoje compram? E porquê?</u>

Cátia: "Desinfetante".

Bruno: "Desinfetante".

Rui: "Desinfetante".

Micaela: "Desinfetante? Não voltei a utilizar ou comprar".

<u>Como se sentem com o fim da pandemia? E quais as expectativas para o futuro?</u>

Bruno: "Vai só melhorar. O desinfetante é um bom hábito que se vai manter. No futuro, não vai mudar muito para além daquilo que vivemos no momento. As pessoas mais velhas são muito medrosas com o que vai acontecendo, mais pessimistas. Não acho que vai haver, mas já podemos estar a contar e não vai escalar ao nível que escalou".

Carolina: "Poderá haver outra pandemia, mas vamos estar mais aptos pelo que passamos. Poderá haver menos contágio. Máscaras em certos lugares, como lugares e estabelecimentos ligados à saúde, vão sempre permanecer. Se houver uma próxima, vai ser melhor que esta".

Rui: "Aumento do comércio eletrónico. mais cuidados de higiene, por causa da guerra, isso não ajuda muito as famílias. Acho que há uma conjuntura a piorar e é capaz de afetar mais o consumo do que a pandemia".

Inês: "Eu nem penso nisso. Se houver, há. O Covid já passou, nem me lembro do que aconteceu. Não vale a pena estar a pensar em coisas que ainda não aconteceram. Quando houver, houve. Quando vou viajar é a única altura que ainda penso nisso".

Micaela: "Claramente vai haver mais pandemias, mas esta foi ótima para nos proteger e alertar e nos ensinar a como conviver com as próximas. Os hábitos de consumo vão mudar por causa do nosso comodismo enquanto consumidores. O nosso consumo tecnológico vai tendencialmente aumentar e isso vai afetar".

Cátia: "Eu tenho plena noção de que o Covid em si não acabou. Contudo, tenho noção que esta grande pandemia não enfrentaremos mais, não será mais em grande escala. A fase que nos encontramos agora é muito pior, a guerra, a inflação, o aumento dos combustíveis. Para as gerações futuras, não estou otimista".