



How can consumer engagement serve as an effective differentiation strategy? A Craft Beer Case Study

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To my brother,

“Fica pela sombra”

Abstract

Title: How can consumer engagement serve as an effective differentiation strategy? A Craft Beer Case Study

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Customer engagement serves as a strategic differentiation strategy for Praxis in the Portuguese craft beer market by converting product quality and local heritage into a multidimensional, experience-based brand relationship, thereby enhancing authenticity, advocacy, and perceived uniqueness.

This study examines how craft beer brands utilise customer engagement to achieve and maintain differentiation, with a focus on Praxis, and evaluates the effectiveness of engagement-based initiatives as strategic tools to strengthen brand positioning and competitive advantage in the Portuguese craft beer sector.

The research adopted a qualitative single-case study design, including semi-structured interviews with Praxis's CEO, a focus group with habitual craft beer consumers, and in-depth interviews with Praxis customers.

The results suggest that Praxis primarily relies on experiential engagement initiatives (e.g. cultural events, sports sponsorships, festivals and venue) to foster cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social bonds, solidifying its positioning as "the beer of Coimbra". Customers perceive them as value-amplifying drivers, enhancing brand image, authenticity, community belonging and word-of-mouth, despite loyalty remaining predominantly dependent on perceived product quality, venue experience and intergenerational attachment.

This research contributes to the understanding of engagement-based differentiation in fragmented, resource-constrained FMCG markets and provides actionable guidance for craft breweries seeking to translate customer engagement into sustainable competitive advantage.

Key Words: Customer Engagement, Differentiation, Craft Beer

Sumário

Título: Como o envolvimento do cliente pode servir como uma estratégia eficaz de diferenciação? Um estudo de caso de Cerveja Artesanal

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O envolvimento do cliente serve como estratégia de diferenciação para a Praxis no mercado português da cerveja artesanal, ao converter a qualidade do produto e o património local numa relação multidimensional com a marca, baseada em experiências, melhorando assim a perceção de autenticidade e a fidelização.

Este estudo examina como as marcas de cerveja artesanal utilizam o envolvimento do cliente para alcançar e manter a diferenciação, com foco na Praxis, e avalia a eficácia destas iniciativas como ferramentas estratégicas para fortalecer o posicionamento da marca e a vantagem competitiva no setor português da cerveja artesanal.

A investigação adotou uma abordagem qualitativa de estudo de caso único, incluindo entrevistas com o CEO e clientes da Praxis e um *focus group* com consumidores habituais de cerveja artesanal.

Os resultados sugerem que a Praxis aposta sobretudo em iniciativas de envolvimento experiencial (por exemplo, eventos culturais, patrocínios desportivos, festivais e restaurante) para fomentar laços cognitivos, emocionais, comportamentais e sociais, solidificando o seu posicionamento como “a cerveja de Coimbra”. Os clientes percecionam-nas como fatores que amplificam o valor, reforçando a imagem da marca, a autenticidade, o sentimento de pertença à comunidade e o *word-of-mouth*, apesar de a fidelização continuar a depender predominantemente da qualidade percebida do produto, da experiência no espaço e da ligação intergeracional.

Esta investigação contribui para a compreensão da diferenciação baseada no envolvimento em mercados de bens de grande consumo fragmentados e com recursos limitados e fornece orientações práticas para marcas que procuram traduzir o envolvimento dos clientes numa vantagem competitiva sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Envolvimento do cliente, Diferenciação, Cerveja Artesanal

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The following pages do not begin to explain the last year, yet they conclude the past five years living away from home, working towards an unwavering ambition. The goal was, and still is, to work on something I feel passionate about and, at the end of the day, I am proud of.

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On a personal note, I would like, firstly, to dedicate this work to my brother. I know not everyone grows up with a built-in best friend, but I did. I grew up striving to show him that no challenge is hard enough not to try it, and he showed me that we can still enjoy the process. Thank you for listening to me talk for hours and days on end, but most of all for sharing life with me.

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Introduction

The rise of competitive consumer markets has made differentiation strategies essential for organisations aiming to establish a unique market presence and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023a). At the core of this strategic approach is the need to deliver distinct value, whether through innovative products, unique brand experiences or personalised customer interactions, to stand out from commoditised offerings (Rachmad, 2023). Since product characteristics and prices are becoming increasingly homogeneous due to mass production and globalisation, brands feel the need to pull new levers for distinction (Smith & Keller, 2021).

Fostering meaningful interactions and relationships between brands and consumers, otherwise defined as customer engagement, is currently one of the most compelling forms of differentiation (Brodie, Hollebeek, et al., 2011; Rachmad, 2023). Engagement encompasses direct forms of communication and fosters emotional, cognitive, and social bonds that go beyond the mere transaction. Existing literature highlights an evident connection between engagement, experience, and loyalty, and describes how customers' wants and needs go beyond just functional benefits, as they desire unique experiences, personalisation and a sense of belonging (L. Hollebeek, 2011).

Sectors facing intense competition reflect relevant environments for studying how customer engagement supports differentiation. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), specifically, leverage brand communities, word-of-mouth marketing and personalised product offerings to stand out from the competition (Leahy, 2011). Specifically, the beer industry portrays a vibrant context for this study of engagement-based differentiation. This sector, dominated by mass-market lagers, has undergone fast segmentation and specialisation over the last few years. In particular, craft beer emerges as a fast-growing segment distinguished for its innovation, diversity, and high consumer involvement (Durán-Sánchez et al., 2022). In Portugal, this deviation has led to the emergence of several independent breweries such as Praxis (2002) and Musa (2014) competing on authenticity, quality, creativity, and local identity. Additionally, this expansion has led to larger societal shifts, with millennials and younger consumers seeking unique flavours, new experiences, and stronger brand connections, resulting in greater differentiation and reduced emphasis on price as the primary purchasing factor.

Beer marketing has historically evolved from mass campaigns highlighting product attributes to nuanced engagement efforts, encompassing digital storytelling and community events.

While macro breweries worked toward appealing to the masses, craft brands stand out through creative flavours, collaborative events, unique packaging, and genuine narratives. In response to growing competition and demand for authenticity, Portuguese craft beer brands became an experience-driven product.

In this environment, customer engagement emerges as a pivotal lever, by attracting customers, building lasting relationships, enhancing loyalty and supporting brand differentiation amid both local and global pressures, hence the vitality of customer engagement initiatives for craft beer brands to compete for visibility and consumer mindshare.

The present dissertation aims to analyse how craft beer brands utilise customer engagement strategies to foster and sustain differentiation in this dynamic market and to disclose how engagement-based practices strengthen their market position. Therefore, the objective of this research is to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of customer engagement strategies as differentiation tools, specifically in the context of the craft beer market.

Craft breweries endure rising pressure to differentiate themselves in a crowded environment, with creative competitors and commoditised retail channels, despite the accelerated growth and segmentation of the market. Consumers seek authenticity, innovation and meaningful brand experiences, while price and product features play lesser roles in purchase decisions.

Although differentiation strategies no longer solely emphasise product uniqueness (Appendix 1), but instead increasingly revolve around effective customer engagement across diverse touchpoints, craft breweries strive to leverage these initiatives as strategic differentiators. Thus, a gap persists in identifying engagement actions effectively contributing to sustained brand differentiation and competitive advantage, understanding how these shape consumers' perceptions and brand preference, and finally assessing how these can be enhanced in the Portuguese craft beer market. Despite existing research focusing on packaging, product characteristics and marketing communications separately, fewer studies were conducted highlighting this holistic framework, leveraging customer engagement as a tool for strategic differentiation in craft breweries. Hence, an academic and practical need to clarify how engagement-driven strategies can help breweries defend and enhance their position amid intensifying competition.

The primary purpose of this study is to critically examine how craft beer brands employ customer engagement to differentiate themselves from the competition in the Portuguese market, highlighting the strengths and limitations of this approach. This research will situate

brands' experiences within broader theoretical perspectives, drawing actionable insights for other craft breweries.

Moreover, the study proposes to address customer engagement strategies currently employed by the players in the market and their effective contribution to brand differentiation, as well as customers' perceptions and responses to the initiatives, their impact on customer loyalty and brand image and, finally, further recommendations for craft beer brands to optimise their customer engagement practices to defend and enhance differentiation in this rapidly evolving marketplace.

Academically, this research fills the gap concerning effective engagement-based differentiation strategies within fragmented, experience-centric markets, drawing together customer engagement, differentiation theory and brand management, addressing a deep understanding of how relational strategies foster competitive advantage.

Managerially, this study highlights best practices for craft breweries looking to build loyalty and distinctiveness through targeted customer engagement, and helps brands optimise resource allocation, marketing investments and community-building efforts. By showcasing the connections between engagement activities and brand outcomes, the project can assist managers in designing more effective loyalty programs, digital touchpoints, and in-person experiences tailored to the Portuguese market.

Regarding methodology, this dissertation will focus on conducting a case study to capture the complexity of craft breweries' customer engagement strategies and their differentiation outcomes. This qualitative research approach encompasses semi-structured interviews with craft breweries' management teams, and loyal customers to explore experiences, perceptions, and strategic insights; content analysis of craft beer brands' digital efforts, loyalty programs, event promotions, and public communications.

Sub Research Questions:

1. What customer engagement strategies are currently employed in the craft beer market, and how do they contribute to brand differentiation?
2. How do customers perceive and respond to engagement initiatives (e.g., loyalty programs, events, digital platforms), and what is their impact on customer loyalty and brand image?

3. How might craft beer brands further develop or optimise their customer engagement practices to defend and enhance differentiation in a rapidly evolving marketplace?

1. Literature Review

1.1 Customer Engagement

1.1.1 Customer Engagement Conceptualisation and Theories

Customer Engagement (CE) has emerged as a crucial construct in marketing and service management, highlighting a shift from solely transactional exchanges to relational, experiential value co-creation. This section focuses on coherently explaining the theoretical evolution of CE, its multidimensional nature, and its distinction from related concepts, specifically participation, loyalty and involvement.

1.1.2 Conceptual foundations

Building on Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, Service-dominant (S-D) logic and relationship marketing (RM) concepts led to the early definitions of CE. Specifically, the S-D logic explains how value is co-created through interactive experiences between customers and firms, highlighting service, dialogue, and networks of relationships instead of one-way transactions. Traditional relationship marketing has a primary focus on transactional value exchange and short-term profitability measures, namely customer lifetime value and customer equity (Bolton, 2011; Reinartz et al., 2005). Thus, CE can be described as a dynamic, iterative process where customers manifest cognitive, emotional and behavioural connections with focal brands/organisations (Hollebeek et al., 2011). With the accelerated growth of digitalisation and social media, the former transactional perspective failed to explain customer behaviours extending beyond purchase, specifically word-of-mouth, online reviews, and brand advocacy. Authors such as Verhoef et al. (2010) and Vargo (2009) recognised how technology-enabled interactivity was transforming consumers who were once passive recipients into active participants and co-creators of value in networked environments. Moreover, Brodie et al., 2011 formalised this concept further by emphasising five fundamental propositions, defining CE as a multidimensional state emerging from interactive, co-creative experiences, embedded in a network of relational exchange, and subject to context-dependent variations.

Vivek et al., 2012 extend this framework, explicitly linking CE to relationship marketing's attraction and retention objectives and integrating cognitive and social psychology into the construct. Their theoretical and experiential work conceptualised CE as "intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organisation's offerings and/ or organisational activities, which either the customer or the organisation initiate" and argue it comprises cognitive, affective, behavioural, and social elements. Furthermore, they build CE

on RM's evolution and defend that engagement extends the relational focus to include both prospective and non-customers who interact with brands through experiences beyond purchase. Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Kumar et al. (2010) developed both quantitative and behavioural frameworks where CE is considered a measurable antecedent to firm performance via non-transactional behaviours such as recommendations and feedback.

Brodie & Hollebeek (2011) consolidated CE theory and positioned CE as a middle-range theory, between S-D logic and Customer Culture Theory, as well as empirical measurement models. This perspective emphasises the importance of theorising CE as a mechanism for understanding the interactive creation of value, rather than treating it merely as an extension of loyalty or satisfaction.

Thus, CE can be summarised as a dynamic iterative and motivational process guided by interaction among multiple stakeholders. Heimers (2019), identified 5 core characteristics recurring across the literature: initially, CE is a clear two-way interaction, transitioning from one-directional marketing to interactive exchanges between firms and customers (Kozinets et al., 2010), however it still extends beyond firm-customer dyad to include brand communities, peer groups and digital network, highlighting multi-actor involvement (Dessart et al., 2016); then, CE is rooted in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) therefore customers engage based on expected mutual benefit, showcasing motivational grounding; as engagement levels vary across individuals, segments, and contexts (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012), CE is characterised for its variability and contextual dependence; lastly the concept evolves through iterative interactions and its intensity fluctuates over time (Bowden, 2009; L. Hollebeek, 2011). Hence, CE is a continuing relational state that evolves alongside the customer's life cycle with the brand.

1.1.3 Customer Engagement as a multidimensional construct

Revised authors consistently define CE as a multidimensional construct. Whereas Brodie et al., (2011) empirically reinforced its three primary dimensions, specifically cognitive, emotional, and behavioural, Vivek et al. (2012) added a social component, highlighting the interactive nature of customers. The tripartite structure is correlated with attention and processing (cognition), enthusiasm and affect (emotion), and energy and interaction (behaviour) (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011). The fourth proposed dimension expands how emotional bonds, trust, and identity link consumer communities with brand activity (Vivek et al., 2012).

So et al. (2014) focused on operationalising CE in the tourism and hospitality sector, built on five factors, such as enthusiasm (vigour), attention, absorption, interaction, and identification, which showcase CE's hybrid psychological-behavioural nature since it encompasses internal states (absorption and enthusiasm) and external manifestations (interaction and advocacy). Specifically, enthusiasm (vigour) explains the emotional excitement toward the brand, attention showcases a sustained cognitive focus, absorption reveals consumers' deep immersion in the brand experience, interaction showcases behavioural participation in online/offline environments, and finally identification focuses on the sense of belonging/unity with the brand.

Roberts and Alpert (2010) operationalise CE as a strategic organisational alignment mechanism, rather than solely a consumer psychological state, by approaching the construct from a managerial perspective. The "Total Engagement Model" suggests that engagement emerges from harmonising brand, culture, customer experience, and value proposition. When these four internal drivers are consistent, employees and customers become engaged, cultivating advocacy and growth. Different from solely conceptual works, their focus is on actionable integration, bridging internal culture and customer interactions, thus anticipating later service ecosystem perspectives.

1.1.4 Importance of Customer Engagement

CE is strategically crucial from both a theoretical and managerial standpoint. It provides a cognitive connection between value co-creation and operational metrics of advocacy, co-innovation, and loyalty (Brodie & Hollebeek, 2011). Empirically, CE yields substantial benefits for brand loyalty, mediated by trust and satisfaction in tourism experiences (So et al., 2014) and drives non-transactional behaviours, namely community participation and advocacy, critical in sport and entertainment (McDonald et al., 2022).

Adopting a managerial perspective, engaged employees and customers mutually reinforce each other (Roberts & Alpert, 2010). According to the total engagement model, alignment between brand promise, employee culture, and customer experience produces advocacy and long-term growth and engagement is both an internal alignment mechanism and a customer relationship outcome. CE has an important logical role as well in bridging the gap between firms and prospective and existing customers (Vivek et al., 2012), broadening the strategic scope beyond sales, by considering public communication, digital community building and experiential marketing.

1.1.5 Differentiation from related constructs

Revision of the current literature explained thoroughly the conceptual differences between CE and involvement, participation, and loyalty. Involvement refers to perceived personal relevance and is primarily a cognitive or motivational state (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Vivek et al. (2012) and Brodie, Hollebeek, et al. (2011) both describe it as an antecedent to engagement, in this case, a necessary but insufficient condition for CE, since engagement not only involves perception or interest, but also an active connection and emotional intensity (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Participation is defined as customers' contributions to service production or delivery (Dabholkar, 1990), so it entails interaction but does not include the affective and cognitive depth of CE (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Similarly to involvement, it is likewise positioned as an antecedent. Loyalty, on the other hand, is considered a behavioural outcome (Vivek et al., 2012), characterised by repeat purchase and psychological commitment (Jacoby et al., 1978). CE then precedes and predicts loyalty as it cultivates affective commitment and trust, fostering advocacy, and stimulating co-creative behaviours. Thus, CE rests on an intermediary position between antecedents, namely involvement and participation, and outcomes, trust, loyalty and word-of-mouth, mirroring an experiential, evolving relationship between stakeholders.

Furthermore, value co-creation emerges as well, but as CE's theoretical foundation rather than a synonym. Brodie, Hollebeek, et al. (2011) regard engagement not only as an outcome but also as a means for co-creation, since interactive experiences generate value, and, consequently, value-rich experiences expand engagement. While co-creation explains the joint production of value in the interaction between firms and consumers, engagement refers to the degree and quality of customer involvement in co-creation processes (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Vivek et al. (2012) and So et al. (2014) factually justify this reciprocal loop, showcasing how engaged customers co-create brand meaning, advocate, and contribute content through social interaction and word-of-mouth. Brodie & Hollebeek (2011) formalise this into the circle of scientific inquiry (Brodie, Saren, et al., 2011) where value co-creation and engagement reciprocally evolve within service ecosystems.

1.1.6 Customer Engagement as a Marketing Strategy

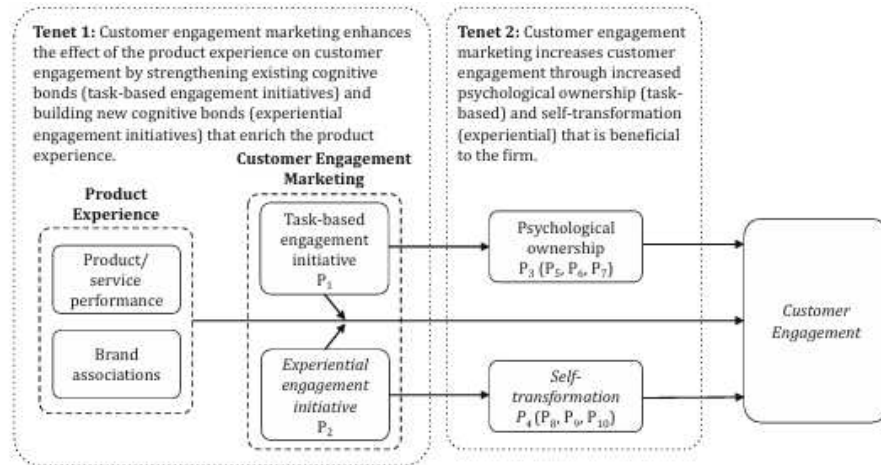
Customer influence on marketing functions, including acquisition and retention, product innovation, communications, and merchandising, has increased significantly (Malthouse et al., 2013); Nambisan, 2002). Customers now often act as pseudo-marketers (Kozinets et al., 2010). However, many firms lack effective strategies to guide customer engagement for improved performance. Harmeling et al. (2017) distinguish customer engagement (CE) from customer

engagement marketing. CE is conceptualised as a customer outcome, while customer engagement marketing is described as an extended form of relationship marketing (Brodie, Hollebeek, et al., 2011). Customer engagement marketing represents a firm's intentional effort to guide customers' pseudo-marketer roles for organisational benefit (Harmeling et al., 2017). This approach is deliberately initiated and actively managed, in contrast to the organic occurrence of CE. Consequently, customer engagement marketing transfers some control over marketing functions from the firm to the customer and relies on the firm's ability to identify and leverage customer-owned resources. Formally, it is defined as a firm's deliberate effort to motivate, empower, and measure customers' voluntary contributions to marketing functions beyond core economic transactions (Harmeling et al., 2017).

Customer engagement marketing focuses on encouraging customers to participate and contribute to marketing functions actively, and its effectiveness relies on a firm's capacity to recognise and leverage customer-owned resources (Hollebeek et al., 2016). As engagement marketing recognises customer value beyond financial patronage, it provides a more holistic view of the customer than either promotion or relationship marketing (Chung et al., 2016). Whereas promotion marketing often explains how firms use special offers to boost customers' interest and influence the purchase of the focal product over the competition ((Wierenga & Soethoudt, 2010)) and relationship marketing focuses on retaining the focal customer and motivate future, repeat transactions, encompassing all marketing activities to establish, develop and maintain successful relational exchanges (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 22) engagement marketing illustrates a shift in focus, in which economic transactions with the focal customer are key, to address customer contributions beyond the economic transactions (Harmeling et al., 2017). Compared to promotion and relationship marketing, information flows differently in engagement marketing. Specifically, it is through networked communication among customers, others and the firm (Kumar & Pansari, 2016), such that groups and communities hold prominent positions (Kozinets et al., 2010). Furthermore, engagement marketing forces firms to educate customers on their contributions to marketing functions, versus teaching them how to buy or use products. Finally, it requires a shift in value creation in certain marketing functions, from the firm to the customer, because they influence the content and outcomes of many marketing functions, potentially influencing the broader customer population (Hollebeek et al., 2016) In sum, engagement marketing differs not only in its objectives, but also in assessment of customer value, information flows, customer education focus, and level of customer control.

According to Harmeling et al. (2017) firms can employ two types of engagement marketing initiatives: task-based and experiential initiatives, both outside the core, economic transaction, yet the first focuses on structured tasks to guide voluntary customer contributions to marketing functions, while the second focuses on shared, interactive experiences to promote voluntary, autonomous customer contributions (see the conceptual model in Figure 2).

Fig. 2 Conceptual model of the effects of customer engagement marketing on customer engagement



The proposed conceptual model by Harmeling et al. (2017) is built on two principles: Customer engagement marketing strengthens existing cognitive bonds (task-based engagement initiatives) and builds new cognitive bonds (experiential engagement initiatives), enriching product experience and enhancing its effect on customer engagement; Through increased psychological ownership (task-based) and self-transformation (experiential) customer engagement marketing increased customer engagement, benefiting the firm. The authors argue that, while feelings of psychological ownership mediate the impact of task-based customer engagement marketing initiatives on long-term customer engagement, self-transformation mediates the impact of experiential customer engagement marketing initiatives. Furthermore, task-based initiatives with greater control over the outcome, facilitating deeper learning and encouraging self-investment, increase psychological ownership and ultimately customer engagement, and experiential initiatives testing participants' abilities, involving spontaneous events and shared by the community, increase self-transformation and ultimately Customer Engagement.

1.1.7 Measuring Customer Engagement

Vivek et al. (2014) address the need for a robust, generalisable empirical scale for customer engagement, formerly only explored conceptually. Through comprehensive qualitative and quantitative processes, including interviews, focus groups, ethnographic studies, and survey

validation, researchers identify and confirm three core dimensions of CE, namely, conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection. The ultimately validated scale encompasses 10 items reflecting these dimensions and demonstrates strong reliability and validity. Furthermore, the study's nomological validation links customer engagement to four key outcomes: value perceptions, benevolence perceptions, future patronage intent, and affective commitment. The Customer Engagement Scale (CUE scale) operationalises CE through three distinct dimensions. Firstly, Conscious Attention, which measures the extent to which individuals actively pay attention, seek information, and show interest in a brand or activity. Secondly, Enthused Participation, which captures the level of emotional involvement, passion, and time investment customers devote to engaging activities or brand experiences. Finally, Social Connection, which assesses the degree to which engagement involves, is enhanced by, or creates connections with others, for example, enjoying an activity more in groups or valuing shared experiences. The dimensions are evaluated through a five-item Likert Scale, which allows managers to measure overall engagement and its sub-dimensions, track how engagement influences customer outcomes, such as loyalty, commitment, intent to patronise and perceived value, and adapt engagement strategies for different segments or offerings.

1.2. Customer Experience

Customer experience (CX) and customer engagement (CE) have an interdependent and sequential relationship, since CX sets the foundational condition upon which engagement is built, with positive experiences fostering deep emotional, cognitive, and behavioural investment in the firm (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As previously demonstrated, engagement involves voluntary actions, going beyond purchase, and encompassing advocacy, participation and co-creation (van Doorn et al. 2010; Hollebeek et al. 2014). Hence, customer experience acts as an antecedent, as well as a contextual driver of customer engagement (Vivek et al., 2014), shaping how customers interpret, internalise, and respond to their interactions with firms. As a consequence, integration of the CX and CE framework highlights the transactional marketing shift toward relational and experiential strategies, which prioritise sustained, meaningful interaction between firms and their customers.

In the contemporary marketplace, CX is a central construct for understanding customer engagement, though it is thoroughly defined through different perspectives. Meyer & Schwager (2007) conceptualise CX as the customer's internal and subjective response to direct and indirect organisational interactions. On the other hand, Schmitt (1999) frames it as a

multidimensional construct involving diverse dimensions, such as sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioural, and social identity. Furthermore, Brakus et al. (2009) refine this concept and highlight brand-related stimuli as a foundation evoking subjective sensations, feelings and cognitions. Keyser et al. (2015) delineate CX as a comprehensive process encompassing emotional, cognitive, physical, sensory, and social experiences that shape customers' perceptions and outcomes across interactions within a broader service ecosystem.

1.2.1. Roots and theoretical evolution of Customer Experience

Customer experience originated in foundational marketing and consumer behaviour theories from 1960s and onwards. Authors such as Haines et al. (1970) and Lavidge & Steiner (1961) explained decision-making as a process culminating in purchase, setting up a foundation for future journey-based conceptualisations of CX. Afterwards, Richard L. Oliver (1980) and Bolton (1998) outlined satisfaction as a cognitive comparison between expectations and outcomes, influencing subsequent CX measurement frameworks. Later, A. P. Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model, introducing the idea of evaluating service encounters and providing methods for mapping customer journeys through blueprinting (Bitner et al., 2008). This model describes the development of a 22-item instrument (Appendix 2, 3, 4) utilised to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retail organisations (A. P. Parasuraman et al., 1988). The items represent 10 service-quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer, and access (A. Parasuraman et al., 1985). Each item was recast into two statements, one to measure expectations and the other to measure perceptions, and a seven-point scale was used, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (7). In the 1990s, research shifted towards emotional and relational aspects, highlighting trust, commitment, and relational quality, which clearly enriched the affective dimension of CX (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995). In the 2000s and 2010s, the focus was evidently on customers. Firstly, the goal was to optimise customer lifetime value through data, linking customer interactions with firm outcomes (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016; Rust et al., 2000), and secondly, management teams started to adopt firm-wide customer-centric strategies emphasising personalised service (Sheth et al., 2000; Gulati & Oldroyd, 2005). Finally, the growth of digital and social media refocused attention on customers as active co-creators of value and experience (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012).

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) identified the main theoretical streams underpinning CX research: firstly, process-oriented theories expand on how customer decision-making and journey models

conceptualise CX as a process spanning prepurchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases (Haines et al., 1970). Secondly, they highlight outcome-oriented theories and focus on models of satisfaction and service quality, viewing customer experience as a determinant of behavioural outcomes such as loyalty, repurchase, and WOM (Oliver, 1993); (Homburg et al., 2015), Finally, customer-centric and relational theories are emphasised as well to explain CX management as an organisational process requiring cross-functional integration and a focus on long-term engagement (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Chandler & Lusch, 2015).

This theoretical evolution showcases CX as an integrative framework rather than a new concept, synthesising previous theories into a dynamic, multidimensional view of buyer-firm interaction.

1.3. Definitions of Brand Positioning and Differentiation

Brand positioning can be described as the “act of designing a firm’s offer and image to occupy a distinct and valued place in the target customer’s mind”. Therefore, competitive brand positioning is about creating brand superiority in the minds of consumers. Fundamentally, positioning encompasses convincing consumers of the brand’s advantages vs. competitors, otherwise known as points of difference (POD), while mitigating concerns regarding potential disadvantages, therefore establishing points of parity (POP) (Keller et al. (2012)). Furthermore, PODs are characteristics or benefits which create a connection between the buyer and the brand, with respect to which they believe they will not find any such within the competition and are then considered unique for the brand by buyers. POPs, on the other hand, are associations with the characteristics or benefits which can be found with other brands within the same category as well (Brzaković & Brzaković, 2021).

As an academic and practical construct, differentiation is conceptualised as the process by which firms distinguish their products, services or brand in meaningful formats to target consumers so that it holds unique value. Differentiation comprises the development and communication of singular features, characteristics or experiences which encourage customer preference and loyalty. However, first definitions highlighted tangible product qualities. The theoretical foundation emerges from Fouraker & Chamberlin (1957) Theory of Monopolistic Competition and was then formalised by (Porter, 1990) as a standard strategy for competitive advantage, referring to an organisation’s ability to develop products/services with characteristics perceived as distinct and valuable by consumers. (Azila et al., 2023) illustrate differentiation as an attempt to foster uniqueness grounded in a Unique Value Proposition

(UVP), showcasing benefits difficult to replicate by competition. Their framework establishes differentiation as a mechanism for survival and as a strategic approach to command premium pricing and customer loyalty in hypercompetitive markets. This concept is aligned with Newton et al. (2015), who situate differentiation as a resource-based tactic in small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) aiming to outperform competitors by leveraging internal capabilities (innovation, quality and niche segmentation). The authors explain how cost leadership alone cannot secure competitive advantage in mature industries, rather, value must be created through distinct branding, superior production processes, and personalised customer relationships.

Furthermore, differentiation is not only defined as uniqueness but also as the delivery of value deeply resonating with specific customer segments, thus supporting premium pricing and sustained competitive advantage (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023b). The progressive competitive landscape requires ongoing innovation in differentiation so it can adapt to dynamic market conditions and customer preferences (Azila et al., 2023). Therefore, differentiation is inherently connected to a firm's own ability to innovate, communicate value distinctively, and deliver an exceptional customer experience.

1.3.1. Differentiation Strategies

Azila et al. (2023) showcased a comprehensive typology of differentiation strategies, identifying product innovation, brand storytelling and customer experience design as key mechanisms.

Product innovation involves leveraging technology and market research to develop functional improvements to respond to evolving customer preferences. By contrast, brand storytelling emphasises emotional differentiation, transforming brands into symbols of identity and aspiration. Research shows that storytelling fosters emotional resonance and authenticity, critical factors in building consumer trust and engagement. Customer experience design focuses on creating memorable and immersive interactions across touchpoints and emerges as a holistic differentiation strategy. Azila et al. (2023) argue that in experiential economies, differentiation through customer journey customisation has become indispensable.

1.3.2. Differentiation in SMEs and FMCG sector

Research conducted in Norway, analysing the differentiation strategies of small service firms, demonstrated how these organisations implement differentiation under the constraints of limited resources (Pham, 2015). The study highlights effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001), hypothesising that entrepreneurs actions are based on available means and stakeholder

collaborations, contrary to predictive planning. Conclusions drawn from qualitative data from Norwegian entrepreneurs led to the identification of two primary differentiation strategies: first movers in new markets and a focus on service quality and satisfaction in established markets.

Furthermore, in the case of the FMCG sector, literature highlights distinctive challenges and opportunities related to these rapid consumption cycles, product commoditisation, and diverse consumer preferences. Therefore, differentiation appears as critical for sustaining competitiveness in this market, characterised by minimal entry barriers and high imitation rates. Soomro et al. (2023) developed a case study on Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) and concluded that differentiation strategies substantially enhance organisational performance in the FMCG sector by fostering uniqueness, loyalty, and premium market positioning. The study's findings corroborated that differentiation based on innovation, brand strength, regional adaptation, and sustainability leads to profitability and market share growth. Yet, sustaining these strategies requires continuous investment in R&D, data-driven insights, and agile adaptation to consumer trends. The research conclusions further support the findings of Al-Surmi et al. (2020) and Gentile et al. (2007), affirming that firms adopting comprehensive differentiation frameworks outperform those relying solely on cost competition.

1.4. Beer History and Market Overview

Beer is considered one of the oldest beverages in history and is evidently linked to socio-cultural and economic evolution. The origins of this beverage go back to the Neolithic period (Cabras et al., 2016) with its production and consumption reflecting not only cultural tradition but also technological progress. In ancient times, around 10.000 B.C., alcoholic beverages resulting from the fermentation of cereal immersed in water were already consumed. Despite no documented records, remains of malted barley and bowls with beer residue have been found, presumably left over from a naturally fermented cereal porridge with wild yeast (Brewer & Teeter, 2004). The Sumerians and Babylonians were the first to leave a recipe for beer brewing (Daniels, 2000). According to these records, dating back to 6.000 B.C., these people mastered the production process of approximately 20 different types of beer (Nelson, 2012). This beverage is then believed to have spread rapidly from the Mesopotamian region to Egypt, where beer began to be produced on a large scale (Hartman, 2013). It was then the Egyptian people who first documented the fermentation process on papyrus scrolls around 5.000 B.C, and this beverage was prepared with pomegranates and other native herbs. Thus, beer became the common drink of the Egyptians (Hornsey, 2003).

Furthermore, it made its way through the Mediterranean to Europe and became an integral part of the daily lives of Europeans, especially in northern regions, valued for its nutritional value and for being a safe alternative to drinking water (Bamforth, 2004). During the early Middle Ages, modern beer was born (Colen & Swinnen, 2010). Brewers used “pure malt” as the main source of fermentable sugar for hundreds of years, yet the use of hops as a bittering and flavouring agent only became common around the 12th century, as before herbs and spices were used to balance the sweet flavours of the malt in beer (Damerow, 2012).

Around 1150, German monks began using wild hops in beer, and this ingredient quickly became a success. Brewers discovered that hops added a very pleasant bitterness, quenching thirst, and prolonged the life of this beverage, since it acted as a natural preservative (Poelmans & Swinnen, 2011; (Van Kerckhoven et al., 2020).

Later, the Industrial Revolution led the way for mechanisation, refrigeration, pasteurisation, and bottling, which enabled large-scale production as well as extended geographic reach (Christian Garavaglia & Johan Swinnen, 2018). With the industrialisation in the late 19th century and the development of lager yeast strains, the traditional ale dominance was replaced with lighter lagers appealing to mass markets (Pokrivcak et al., 2018). Yet, this transition led to a homogenisation of beer flavour profiles and set the stage for future reactions against industrial standardisation.

In the 20th century, globalisation shaped the beer industry, and multinational firms emerged through mergers and acquisitions (Colen & Swinnen, 2016; Madsen et al., 2011). Pokrivcak et al., (2018) identified Anheuser-Busch InBev, Heineken, SABMiller, and Carlsberg as the four largest brewing conglomerates by 2010, controlling approximately half of the global beer market, and driven by economies of scale and the pursuit of global brand consistency. Furthermore, their research highlighted the combined results of homogenisation and globalisation, which led to uniform products oriented toward efficiency rather than diversity and to the gradual disappearance of traditional, region-specific brews. Despite technological efficiency and distribution improvements, consumers’ perceptions of beer shifted toward industrial uniformity, specifically in mature markets such as Europe and North America (Pokrivcak et al., 2018).

The previously mentioned transformations corresponded with changes in consumption: although beer volumes increased globally, specifically in developing countries, developed nations witnessed stagnation and decline in consumption, which presented opportunities for

new market segmentation, particularly in premium and niche categories (Colen & Swinnen, 2016).

As a concept, beer can be defined as any fermented beverage made with a cereal grain, specifically made from four ingredients: grains, primarily malted barley; hops, which are grown in many different varieties; yeast, which is responsible for fermentation; and water, which represents up to 95% of beer's content (Nachel & Ettlinger, 2011). Grains provide beer with its colour, flavour, maltose, proteins and dextrin. The colour of the grains utilised evidently influences the colour of beer itself. Its flavour is primarily that of malted barley, although the characteristics of hops and yeast play a secondary role. Maltose is the fermentable sugar resulting from malted grain. Yeast converts these sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide. Grain proteins help form and maintain foam in beer. And finally, dextrins are the components of grains helping create a mouthfeel (the sensation of fullness or viscosity) in beer). Hops, on the other hand, provide beer with bitterness, flavour, aroma, and stability. Bitterness is critical for the balance of beer flavour and compensates for the sweetness of the malt. Hops have a distinct bitter taste and this increases the overall complexity of the beer. The spicy aroma of hops, which reflects its flavour, is a result of the essential oils of the hops. And hops help not only to give stability and shelf life to beer, but also their acids prevent bacterial contamination (Unger, 2004).

Even though beer is often characterised for its simplicity, it is in fact a complex beverage which can be categorised into several types and styles as a result of a wide range of ingredients and brewing process (Wunderlich & Back, 2009). The different types of beer derived from the fermentation process utilised, therefore there are two types of beer: Lager and Ale. Lagers, which are bottom-fermented, use certain yeasts (usually *Saccharomyces pastorianus*) and Ales, which are top-fermented, use other yeasts (such as *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) (De Keersmaecker, 1996). Lager beers are the most widely consumed type in the world and undergo a fermentation process at low temperatures, between 6 °C and 15 °C, using refrigeration techniques. In contrast, ale beers undergo a process that occurs between 16 °C and 24 °C, making them top-fermented beers (Moura-Nunes et al., 2016). The yeast stays low, so Lagers are sometimes called bottom-fermented beers, while in Ales the yeast floats, and therefore they are called top-fermented beers. For consumers, however, the flavour is the main distinctive factor, because Lagers tend to be crisp and dry, with a special ability to quench thirst, such as Pale Lagers, Pilsners, Dark Lagers, and German-Style Bocks. On the other hand, the flavour of Ales cannot be generalised, since many ale yeasts add different sorts of flavours, from fruity

to tart, which contribute to a wide variety of options to be explored, including Brown Ale, Pale Ale, India Pale Ale (IPA), Porter, Stout, Belgian Style Beer and Wheat Beer (Mendes, 2021).

1.5. Craft Beer

The modern craft beer movement started in the USA due to consumer dissatisfaction with the uniformity of beer and the pressure to legalise activities of home brewers, which took place in 1979, a few years after the creation of the first microbrewery, the New Albion Brewery in California (1976) (Pokrivcak et al., 2018). Craft Beer conceptualises an ideology rooted in independence, authenticity, and innovation, going beyond production scale. The Brewers of Europe, (2024) characterise craft breweries as “small, independent, and traditional”, encompassing an annual production under nine million hectolitres, less than 25% ownership by an alcohol industry member, and using traditional or innovative ingredients for flavour diversity (Pokrivcak et al., 2018; McLaughlin et al., 2014; Kleban, 2011). Furthermore, craft beer differs from industrial beer due to its artisanal production methods, small batches, and high flexibility for experimentation (Machado, 2019). Brewers can develop unique styles, bridging tradition with innovation, and so craft beer represents more than a mere beverage category; it highlights a cultural movement, emphasising craftsmanship, locality, and authenticity (Machado, 2019).

The economic and sociocultural dynamics were critical in the evident acceleration of the craft beer movement. Consumption patterns increasingly reflected experience-driven purchasing behaviour, contrasting with the previous purely functional consumption in developed economies. Thus, consumers sought products representing identity, values, and artisan quality. Craft beer, hence, thrived in the context of monopolistic competition, with differentiation leading the way towards profitability, versus volume production (Pokrivcak et al., 2018).

The “homogenisation by efficiency”, described by (Elzinga et al., 2015), has led to the success of small and medium-sized breweries worldwide, as local entrepreneurs identified an unmet need for diversity and quality, and consequently redefined brewing traditions through locally adapted recipes, innovative flavours, and sustainable practices.

1.5.1. Craft Beer in Portugal

The production and consumption of craft beer in Portugal is currently in an expansion phase, with a market share of 8%, according to Marketest and Cervejeiros de Portugal (2018), though its market presence fails to compete on equal terms with industrial beer. Yet, its objective is not to compete for the market, but rather to establish itself through differentiation in specific market

niches. According to the Nielsen consultancy, the beer market in Portugal is controlled by two major players, Super Bock Group and Sociedade Central de Cervejas (SCC), with a turnover reaching 42,7% and 41,9%, respectively, of the domestic market in the first three months of 2018. According to The Brewers of Europe (European non-profit association bringing together national brewers' associations from 29 European countries and representing the united interests of Europe's 11.000 breweries), the annual beer consumption per capita in Portugal was 53 litres in 2018, a low figure considering the European panorama, where the average per capita was 71 litres. However, it was above wine at 46 litres, and Portugal is the 24th European country in per capita beer consumption (Eurostat, 2019).

In the Portuguese context, the segment of craft beer gained traction in the 2010s, with the number of breweries growing from seven in 2011 to over 120 in 2017. Microbreweries prioritised artisanal production, and consumers' interest simultaneously shifted to novelty, authenticity, and aesthetic appeal (Machado, 2019). Early pioneers are recognised as trailblazers who opened the domestic market to artisanal production. These initial ventures faced bureaucratic and legislative challenges, including restrictive regulations and a business environment historically unfavourable to small, independent brewing initiatives. Nonetheless, by focusing on authenticity, variety, and quality, these brewers gradually demonstrated how craft beer could succeed even in a market long conditioned by mass production and narrow consumer expectations. Brands such as Sovina, Praxis, Vadia, Letra, Rolls Beer, Dois Corvos and Musa, expanded the scene from its infancy.

Research on Portuguese craft beer consumers highlights how this phenomenon combines tradition and innovation, showcasing how consumers associate this beverage with high quality and prestige, rather than intoxication, viewing it as a cultural artefact. Furthermore, their motivations for consumption include curiosity, perceived authenticity, and design aesthetics; however, barriers for broader adoption encompass sensitivity and limited availability (Machado, 2019).

Similar to the international craft beer phenomenon, in Portugal, craft breweries operate independently of major beverage groups, with low annual production volumes and strong hands-on engagement from founders, and they focus heavily on quality and natural ingredients, rather than pure profitability. Furthermore, the Portuguese market values creativity, experimentation, and collaboration, evident through labels and brands' designs.

1.5.2. History of Craft Beer in Coimbra and Praxis

The beer manufacturing process was founded in Coimbra in 1920, with Cerveja de Coimbra Lda corporation, which evolved to Companhia de Cerveja de Coimbra in 1924. The society's purpose was the production of malt and the manufacture and sale of beer, ice, carbonated drinks, and soft drinks. Between February 1922 and 1924, the firm invested in construction and started to build the first factory and witnessed the beginning of production between June and August 1924. The company was especially famous for its Topázio and Onix beer brands, and critics claimed that the beer produced in Coimbra had special characteristics due to the quality of the water in the city. However, the factory was permanently closed in 2002.

At the same time, Praxis – Cervejas de Coimbra Lda was born, the first craft microbrewery to appear in Portugal. Praxis started only with experimental production, and in 2006 started to produce higher quantities only for friends and family. It was later, in 2007, that Praxis was formally constituted, with 3 partners. Additionally, in 2009 the brand expanded to a physical space for its customers, and Praxis was no longer just a craft beer brand, but also a restaurant.

2. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology chosen for the investigation, which is based on insights from the literature review. This research aims to understand how customer engagement practices foster differentiation in the craft beer segment and follows a qualitative research methodology to provide an in-depth understanding of both a corporate and consumer perspective. This includes analysing what customer engagement initiatives are currently employed by Praxis as well as customers perceptions and responses to these initiatives and their impact on loyalty and brand experience. This methodology is particularly useful to explore complex, context-dependent phenomena and generate rich, further understandings of participants' experiences, meanings and social realities otherwise not adequately captured through numerical indicators (Oranga & Matere, 2023).

2.1. Qualitative Approach

According to Corner et al. (2019) this approach involves observing the population and conducting in-depth interviews or focus group discussions and specifically answers “why” and “how” questions, instead of “how much” or “how many” (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Cleland (2017) contends that respondents have the opportunity to respond freely in their own words instead of having to choose from a fixed set of responses, as with quantitative methods, providing rich and explanatory answers. Additionally, qualitative methods are more flexible, allowing for greater modification, adaptation and spontaneity in the interaction between the participant and the researcher. Moreover, they are less formal than quantitative studies, and participants can respond in greater detail than is usually the case with quantitative methods (Tong et al., 2019). Finally, qualitative studies allow the researcher to meet the respondents and document other non-verbal cues, which, with the verbatim, help make the right interpretations and conclusions (Oranga & Matere, 2023).

Under qualitative research, there are five main designs: grounded theory, ethnographic design, phenomenological design, narrative design and case study design (Oranga & Matere, 2023). This dissertation adopts a case study design exploring Praxis craft beer customer engagement strategies and ultimately explaining how craft beer brands can further develop and optimise their CE practices to defend and enhance differentiation in a rapidly evolving marketplace. For data collection, the three most common methods in qualitative research are in-depth interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Palermo et al. (2019) argue that each method is best suited for obtaining a specific type of data. In-depth interviews are optimal in the collection of data on individuals' personal perspectives, histories and experiences, and focus groups are

suitable when collective views and group dynamics on a topic are desired (Oranga & Matere, 2023).

Firstly, exploratory research will be carried out to bring new insights to this research (Kothari, 2004) through a semi-structured interview with Pedro Baptista, CEO of Praxis. This interview's purpose is to assess Praxis's current customer engagement initiatives and their market position. This method was selected for the interviewee's ability to explore appropriate subjects and add value to the discussion. Before the interview was conducted, a test was carried out to verify the feasibility of the interview, to assess the correct understanding of the questions (Appendix 5) and their relevance for the investigation (Maxwell, 2013). Thus, the formulation of some questions was changed, and a few were added or removed due to redundancy, as observed by the interviewer, taking into account the general understanding of the questions raised and the insights they brought to the investigation. The interview was conducted in person, one-on-one and focused on exploring how Praxis understands and manages customer engagement as a brand loyalty and competitive advantage driver (Appendix 5).

Subsequently, a focus group discussion and in-depth interviews with consumers will be conducted to discuss participants' perceptions, ideas, opinions and thoughts (Appendix 7) (Krueger & Casey, 2000). This method was selected for its speed and efficiency in obtaining data from multiple participants, increasing the number of participants in the qualitative study. In this context, the discussion is designed to explore how customers perceive and respond to engagement initiatives and their impact on loyalty and brand experience.

The discussion script was divided into two main sections. The first section focused mainly on assessing participants' associations with craft beer brands, not only with spontaneous recall and awareness of market players, but also with sensory and experiential differentiators from commercial beers. In the second section, the script focused on participants' lived experiences with brand initiatives and formats' preferences. Additionally, participants were asked about their sense of community and belonging to craft beer brands at these events, and about their perceptions of brand authenticity, identification, and emotional connection. Finally, this discussion also sought to investigate the impact of customer engagement initiatives on brand loyalty and advocacy by asking participants about their level of recommendation to friends and family.

Regarding the sampling method, a purposive sampling approach was used to allow the researcher to deliberately select participants for the sample. Considering the main characteristics intended to study, the identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals with strong knowledge about the phenomenon under analysis, which is recurrent in qualitative analysis (Bernard, 2011). Different from random sampling methods, which seek a heterogeneous sample, the purposive method intends a higher concentration in the population layers considered relevant for the explanation of the phenomenon (Etikan, 2016).

Therefore, it was sought to include people who considered themselves as beer enthusiasts, specifically craft beer, provided that their opinion would be valid and their contributions would be more fruitful to the present study. The general objective is to uncover their awareness and perception of Praxis, and their experiences and feelings towards Praxis engagement initiatives.

3. Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a qualitative process aligned with thematic analysis principles, as emphasised by Braun and Clarke (2006,2021), adapted for the present case study, addressing how Praxis employs customer engagement strategies to differentiate from competition in the Portuguese market.

The analysis drew from three complementary qualitative datasets, one in-depth interview with Praxis management, a focus group discussion with six participants and six in-depth interviews with consumers. Data preparation involved verbatim transcription verification and segmenting by question/response for manageability. The research methodology was conducted in Portuguese; thus, in vivo terms were retained for accuracy, and analysis relied on manual inductive coding per Braun and Clarke's thematic approach, using open coding, axial grouping and codebook development to ensure transparency and auditability.

Firstly, data familiarisation involved full readings and re-listenings of each dataset to ensure the narrative tone, noting of repetitions and non-verbal cues. Secondly, open coding produced over one hundred descriptive codes for each dataset, prioritising in-vivo terms (“património a ser recuperado”; “cultura Praxis”) to capture accurate responses. Each code captured an idea's essence without overlap, and duplicates were consolidated. The generated codes were then systematically reviewed to identify the most significant and frequent ones, directly related to the research question and sub-questions (McLeod, 2024). Afterwards, axial coding categorised these codes into themes, connecting underlying concepts and patterns: 5 for Praxis in-depth interview and focus group discussion, and 4 themes for consumers' in-depth interviews. Validation occurred through constant comparison, and codes were revisited across transcripts for consistency. This process concluded with codebook tables operationalising themes for each dataset (Appendix).

3.1. Praxis Perspective

This thematic analysis grouped the identified codes into five preliminary themes. The themes emerged as “Heritage, identity and legitimacy as differentiation”, “Customer relationships, space and everyday engagement”, “Engagement initiatives and market reach”, “Sustainability, local embeddedness and circular economy”, and “Building Praxis culture over time”. Additionally, theme 3 was refined into four subthemes to distinguish between different types of engagement initiatives, specifically “Festivals”, “Sports sponsorships”, “Cultural nights”, and “External activations”. Finally, a formal codebook was created (Appendix 6), defining each theme

and subtheme, their criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and providing examples through excerpts.

3.1.1. Heritage, identity and legitimacy as differentiation

Praxis emerges as a locally rooted craft brewery and restaurant using heritage, identity and legitimacy as the main pillars of its differentiation and growth strategy. Praxis's differentiation strategy was built on the foundation of recovering and reactivating Coimbra's brewing heritage, particularly the legacy of historic brands and the former factory site, which were transformed into a strong identity asset rather than a nostalgic backdrop. To support this heritage focus, Praxis has collaborated with scientists and historians from the University of Coimbra, reinforcing legitimacy and linking the brand to the city's collective memory. Furthermore, Praxis strategic decision-making process started by adopting a craft beer and hospitality path, instead of a pure museum model, not only leveraging the historic factory but also investing in German brewing education and a conservative product philosophy, privileging tested, high-quality recipes and immediate customer feedback in the restaurant space to mitigate disappointment or dissatisfaction in their customer base. Over time, this approach has allowed Praxis to develop a sustainable business model, combining on-site consumption with broader distribution across Portugal while maintaining its regional character.

3.1.2. Customer relationships, space and everyday engagement

Regarding Praxis target, two main customer groups were identified: the end-consumer who visits the brand embassy, whether it is the museum or the restaurant, and the business clients, namely other restaurants, bars or shops, who resell Praxis products to the end-consumer. For both segments, interaction is deliberately direct and relational, with a short communication chain: commercial staff enable technically informed conversations and rapid responses to questions or problems due to their participation in the production process.

Additionally, employees act as mediators of the brand story, which reflects a relationship marketing logic, where proximity, knowledge sharing and personal trust replace formalised marketing practices. Furthermore, Praxis clearly serves a diverse but locally anchored customer base, reflecting its position as both a brewery and social hub, bringing together families, young professionals, students and older generations in the same space. As Pedro stated, "veem a Praxis como uma casa de família". Young professionals, particularly from Coimbra's technology cluster, form a highly engaged segment who reset from their work week by drinking Praxis beer at their location, socialising and appropriating the space as their regular after-work

meeting point. Students and academic communities are also central, mainly due to the academic tradition of the city, from student Tunas to simple friends' get-togethers, which reinforces Praxis's appeal among younger, student-like audiences. At the same time, the older generation is actively incorporated as well, through monthly dinners bringing together renowned exponents of the Coimbra song tradition and younger musicians, as well as periodic reunions of former factory workers, allowing seniors to reconnect with their past workplace and transfer stories, practices and local memory to newer publics.

3.1.3. Engagement initiatives and market reach

The focal point of the interview was to assess the breadth of Praxis initiatives used to deepen customers' engagement. Praxis develops a wide set of engagement initiatives that leverage both the restaurant as a physical experience space and the beer brand as a mobile, event-driven presence in order to deepen emotional ties with customers and the city.

Praxis restaurant venue is used as a cultural and social hub rather than just a place to eat and drink. It hosts stand-up comedy nights adapted to a family-friendly environment, monthly gatherings of "*Canção de Coimbra*" that bring together renowned older guitarists and younger musicians, and periodic reunions of former factory workers, all of which invite customers to co-produce the atmosphere and narratives surrounding the space. In parallel, the Praxis Beerfest stands out as a flagship project, extending the Praxis Beer brand beyond their physical space. Conceived to celebrate 100 years of the Topázio and Onyx brands, the festival activated iconic urban spaces (Campo de Santa Cruz and Jardim da Sereia), inviting top international brewers, and enabling visitors to compare distinguished, high-quality foreign beers with Praxis's own recipes. This event served simultaneously as a heritage celebration, a quality sign, and a way to position Coimbra as a "*terra de tesouros esquecidos ou escondidos*", elevating both the city and Praxis brand. Beyond this festival, Praxis participates in tap takeovers abroad (A Coruña), local events with mobile beer units, and invests in sports sponsorships, ensuring that Praxis beers are associated with shared leisure moments, fandom and community life even outside the restaurant.

Furthermore, the research revealed a deliberate strategy of embedding Praxis in local sports and cultural networks, with the sponsorship of the local football team Académica as a key example. This sponsorship is framed not just as visibility but also as solidarity with a historic, yet struggling, club; it generated record jersey sales that combined both brands and contributed to a shared sense of city pride. Praxis also supports various sports sections (judo, rugby,

handball, volleyball, basketball and futsal) and community groups, strengthening its image as a supporter of “difficult” initiatives relying heavily on volunteerism and parental involvement.

The company experiments with formats and segments different niches, learning from trial-and-error and effectively letting customer response shape the evolution of initiatives.

3.1.4. Local embeddedness and “Praxis culture”

Praxis CEO expanded on their strategic intention to deepen local impact and recognition rather than pursue broad, geographically dispersed campaigns that would dilute relational intensity and stretch resources. In this sense, customer engagement is tightly coupled with territorial embeddedness and a desire to be recognised as an institution of Coimbra rather than merely a commercial venue. Regarding their customer engagement strategy, specifically the selection of initiatives, Praxis prioritises sports and cultural projects in the local region both because they often face resource constraints and because local proximity enhances the perceived impact on customer segments.

The interviewee highlighted that their mix of customer groups helps build a shared “Praxis culture” in which different age groups and lifestyles co-produce the atmosphere and long-term loyalty around the brand. Furthermore, their initiatives create an experiential branding strategy in which the Praxis beer brand accompanies customers across different contexts, making the brand present in everyday social rituals and reinforcing a distinctive, locally rooted “Praxis culture”. Additionally, the CEO revealed that co-creation appears in the gradual construction of the previously mentioned “Praxis culture” through repeated interactions: regular customers, cultural groups, ex-workers and even high-profile visitors (such as President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa) co-produce the atmosphere, stories and rituals defining the brand over time.

3.2. Consumer Perspective

3.2.1. Focus Group Discussion

To investigate consumers' preferences and perceptions, a focus group discussion was conducted. Before this research was carried out, a pre-screening test was conducted, where participants were asked about their craft beer consumption, which resulted in a focus group discussion with 6 male habitual craft beer consumers aged 26 to 35, all young professionals working full-time in Lisbon.

The thematic analysis grouped the identified codes into five preliminary themes. The themes emerged as “Craft beer brand awareness and associations”, “Sensory and experiential differentiation”, “Event participation and preferences”, “Perceptions of engagement purpose and impact”, and “Loyalty dynamics and recommendations”. Finally, a formal codebook was created (Appendix 8), defining each theme, their criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and providing examples through excerpts.

3.2.1.1. Craft beer brand awareness and associations

Regarding perceptions of craft beer and brand awareness, participants immediately associated craft beer with Musa, suggesting that this brand holds a salient position in their mental representation of the craft beer category. Alongside this brand-specific recall, terms such as “*lúpulo*”, “*diferenciada*” and “*amigos*” were mentioned, linking craft beer simultaneously to ingredients and flavour, as well as to convivial group-based consumption contexts. Additionally, all of the participants revealed some brand knowledge, naming Musa, Nortada and Praxis as known craft beers.

3.2.1.2. Sensory and experiential differentiation

The discussion further revealed a clear, shared perception of differentiation between craft beer and mass-market beer primarily through flavour intensity and perceived “*pureza*” or “*originalidade*” of taste. Participants highlighted a greater variety of flavours, price differences, and their niche market positioning. Visual identity and consumption context also emerged as distinguishing characteristics, specifically labels, venues and occasions in which craft beer is consumed, described as more distinctive than those associated with mainstream brands.

3.2.1.3. Event participation and preferences

Furthermore, participants reported attendance at craft-beer-related events, such as regional beer festivals and medieval fairs featuring tastings in more traditional settings. These events were

described as relaxed and inviting, often held outdoors, with music and an informal atmosphere, reinforcing the experiential and social dimensions. Participants revealed their preference for concerts and live music events as engagement initiatives, although they acknowledged their attendance depended on the specific line-up. However, the venue itself was described as highly inviting, and this was the main reason for visits, even in the absence of attractive programming. Beyond existing formats, participants expressed curiosity for initiatives fostering more direct interaction, such as quiz nights, beer-pong competitions or karaoke, and suggested inviting more diverse artists.

3.2.1.4. Perceptions of engagement purpose, and impact

When asked about the purpose of engagement initiatives, participants' opinions differed. Whereas some framed these actions as mechanisms to generate revenue, others perceived them as a perfect alignment with the brand's niche positioning, arguing that these initiatives foster a sense of community around the brand. However, all agreed that despite the event, the brewery's physical space was seen as inherently community-building, with participants arguing that people are initially drawn by the taste of the beer but remain attached to the brand through the atmosphere and social environment.

Overall, engagement initiatives were perceived to enhance the brand's image and authenticity, although participants stressed that this effect is contingent on the choice of artists or public figures involved. Thus, initiatives featuring personalities with whom they did not identify could negatively affect their perception. Regarding emotional connection and identification with the brand, several participants acknowledged events and initiatives as helpful for understanding the brand's positioning and interaction style, and recognised themselves in many of these activities.

3.2.1.5. Loyalty dynamics and recommendations

Finally, engagement initiatives were not seen as loyalty drivers per se. Participants agreed that they already visited and consumed the brand regularly, irrespective of events, and thus considered them as added value, rather than core drivers of their behavioural commitment. Nonetheless, all participants reported having recommended the brand to friends and family, mainly due to the physical space and the beer itself, frequently using events as occasions to invite and introduce new visitors.

3.2.2. In-depth Interviews - consumers

To facilitate comprehension of individual consumer behaviours, brand perceptions and customer engagement feedback from Praxis consumers, in-depth interviews were conducted as well. Before this research was carried out, a pre-screening test was conducted, where participants were asked about their craft beer consumption, specifically Praxis, which resulted in 6 in-depth interviews with Praxis consumers, ages ranging from 20 to 57 years old, with 2 female and 4 male consumers.

This approach was conducted after the focus group discussion to further investigate Praxis consumers, and to compare with other craft beer brands in the industry (e.g. Musa), thus the interview script used was similar to the focus group (Appendix 7).

The thematic analysis of the consumers' interviews grouped the identified codes into four preliminary themes. The themes emerged as “Product and Brand distinctions”, “Engagement initiatives and experiences”, “Community and Local identity” and “Loyalty and emotional ties”. Finally, a formal codebook was created (Appendix 9), defining each theme and subtheme, their criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and providing examples through excerpts.

3.2.2.1. Product and Brand distinctions

Craft beer is perceived as a high-quality product, despite its small-scale production, strongly tied to local identity, experimentation, and shared social experiences, with Praxis emerging as the central reference brand in Coimbra.

Across the six interviews, participants consistently associate craft beer with limited production and more thorough processes, and with more intense flavours in comparison to mass-market brands. Participants described craft beer flavour as “*mais encorpada*”, highlighting its heavy, rich and thick flavour. Praxis clearly dominates spontaneous awareness, with some interviewees revealing it as the only craft beer brand they can recall, while others name it first among a small set of known brands (Musa, Nortada, Dois Corvos e Epicura). Furthermore, participants distinguish between everyday, functional beer consumption, with brands like Sagres and Super Bock in bars, cafés and nightlife, and “special” craft beer occasions such as dinners with friends, work events, or formal family gatherings. In addition, craft beer tends to be reserved for calmer and more meaningful moments, where tasting and company matter more than the alcohol itself.

Regarding brand and product perceptions, interviewees repeatedly frame craft beer brands as more careful, transparent and authentic than big industrial brands. Several participants

mentioned small-scale production, allowing for more attention to detail, visible production spaces in the restaurant, and an impression of stricter quality control and honesty (observing beer production tanks and storage area at Praxis).

Particularly, Praxis beer is distinguished for its materials and visuals. Interviewees mentioned heavy beer mugs, darker beer bottles, sober design and distinctive labels, making the product easy to recognise and feel more “serious” and authentic, relative to industrial brands. However, price, convenience, or habit were rarely mentioned as primary differentiation factors.

Flavour-wise, craft beer is linked to strong, memorable flavours, different beer styles and pairings, as well as higher perceived quality. Interviewees note bitterness, body, and complexity, sometimes describing specific products (“Praxis Onix with notes reminiscent of coffee or caramel”) as impossible to replicate in mainstream beer. There is also awareness of different beer styles fitting different moments or foods, similar to wine, reinforcing the idea of connoisseurship and deliberate choice.

3.2.2.2. Engagement initiatives and experiences

Furthermore, analysing consumers’ perceptions of customer engagement initiatives, these appear to be central to the experience with Praxis, bridging the gap between the product and the community. Examples of initiatives include the Praxis Beer Fest, city street-food festivals, summer drinks festivals, football match activations, concerts, and special launches of new editions. Participants highlight these events as an opportunity to discover new beers and flavours, taste multiple styles, and spend longer, higher-quality time in those spaces.

Praxis Beer Fest emerges as a focal point, with one interviewee recounting their attendance, describing “the specific mystic of the event”, the high level of organisation, and very family-friendly concerts, which together created a distinctive, immersive atmosphere centred on beer. Some participants, despite not having attended the festival, reinforced its importance to the city and culture and explained how it transformed a familiar city space into “a beer environment”.

Besides Beerfest, Praxis presence with stands at local gastronomy fairs, Francesinha festivals, and Doçaria Coventual events, as well as street food festivals and summer drinks festivals were also highlighted. Some interviewees described pre-match activations with Praxis sponsorship featuring beer stands outside the stadium, making it a natural meeting point before games. Others recall cultural initiatives revolving around stand-up comedy and music. All of these experiences were consistently associated with discovery and experimentation. Participants explained how festivals and fairs encourage them to try beers they would not normally order

and help them identify new favourites. Even participants who did not take part in certain initiatives report awareness of them through media or word-of-mouth, showcasing the initiative's contribution to a broader perception of Praxis as an active, culturally engaged brand.

The value of these initiatives was also highlighted through its organisation, since respondents characterised Praxis initiatives as “well-organised”, with good logistics and clear layout. Moreover, they expand on how all elements of the events appear aligned with the brand’s character, specifically visual identity, music, food and service. This sense of immersion, of entering a world that is recognisably “Praxis,” differentiates the initiatives from generic sponsorships where a logo is merely added to an existing event.

3.2.2.3. Community and Local identity

There is a strong sense of rootedness and local identity throughout the interviews. Praxis is repeatedly described as a “brand of the people” and as “the beer of Coimbra”, highlighting its status as more than just a generic craft beer brand, a city emblem. They emphasise Praxis as a city institution, an establishment to show to visitors as a part of Coimbra’s identity.

The interviews also reveal how Praxis functions as a social hub, where locals spend time together. Several participants describe the restaurant as a meeting point for friends, colleagues and families.

Furthermore, previously mentioned Praxis partnerships and events play a crucial role in reinforcing the community and identity theme. Participants consistently praised the sponsorship of Académica, since both entities are perceived as historical pillars of the city, and they described how seeing Praxis on the team’s jerseys evoked feelings of identity and pride. Additionally, the brand’s presence in events is seen by participants as a form of civic participation and they reinforce the brand’s regular presence, which contributes to the vibrancy of the city’s social life.

3.2.2.4. Loyalty and emotional ties

Finally, this theme captures how consumers’ perspectives translate into concrete loyalty behaviours and affective bonds. Multiple interviewees revealed that Praxis is a habitual choice for social gatherings and meals, and describe returning to the venue because they know they will have a positive experience.

Emotional identification with the brand is particularly salient. One interviewee revealed that identifying Praxis in places already valued and in association with artists or teams they admire provides a feeling of shared interests and fosters a sense of closeness (“the brand is interested

in the same things”; “like a friend of a friend”). Another interviewee expanded on how Praxis events and spaces facilitate “good group moments”, leading them to describe it as “the beer that unites us”. These accounts illustrate how shared interests, contexts, and memories deepen the emotional connection. Many participants also describe a multi-generational connection to the brand due to their family's relationship with Praxis, and reveal that returning to the venue evokes memories of their family. They mention their parents, and in some cases, grandparents, frequenting the space, and continuing to go to Praxis feels like maintaining a family tradition rather than simply choosing a convenient restaurant.

Loyalty is manifested through advocacy and gifting for most participants. They recount recommending Praxis to friends and visitors as a must-try experience in Coimbra and gifting bottles or packs, particularly at Christmas, emphasising its distinctiveness, refinement and local pride. Some interviewees contrast Praxis with larger brands, admitting that given a choice at events or bars, they prefer to purchase a Praxis beer because it represents their city and aligns with their tastes and values.

4. Discussion and Findings

This study aimed to analyse how customer engagement fosters differentiation in the craft beer industry, specifically analysing the case of Praxis, using a qualitative analysis, including both a firm (CEO interview) and consumer perspectives (focus group and in-depth interviews). The research first analysed how Praxis develops customer engagement initiatives and then how customers perceive and respond to these initiatives and their impact on loyalty and brand experience.

The research indicates that craft beer is perceived as a distinctive, social, and experience-driven category, with events and physical venues enriching the brand relationship. Praxis stands out as Coimbra's premier craft beer brand, perceived through superior quality, immersive events and deep local identity.

The brand is developing a wide set of engagement initiatives, leveraging both the restaurant as a physical experience space and the beer brand as a "mobile", event-driven presence to deepen emotional ties with customers and the city. This set of initiatives is composed of stand-up comedy nights and gatherings of "Canção de Coimbra", hosted at Praxis venue, but also, Tap Takeovers in Portugal, and abroad, activation at local gastronomy, beverages and street food events, and Praxis Beer Fest, which can be predominantly described as experiential-based initiatives (Harmeling et al., 2017).

Craft beer-related engagement initiatives are valued for their relaxed, outdoor, and music-rich atmosphere, and there is a growing interest in more interactive engagement initiatives, mirroring the social dimension of CE (Vivek et al., 2012) and corroborating Harmeling et al. (2017) model on types of engagement marketing initiatives. Thus, suggesting an undiscovered potential for task-based initiatives, responding to consumers' wants.

The study also revealed that initiatives (e.g. Praxis Beer Fest, gastronomy fairs, concerts and sports activations) are valued for discovery, immersion and brand-aligned organisation. These bridge the gap between the product and the community but emphasise experiential quality over mere presence.

These patterns clearly illustrate the four customer engagement dimensions (Brodie & Hollebeck, 2011; Vivek et al., 2012), where consumers' interest in sampling different beer styles, feelings of local pride and family ties, event participations, habitual visits and feelings of com-

munity account for cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social dimensions, respectively. Furthermore, Praxis case exemplifies CE as a dynamic, iterative and context-dependent state instead of a simple transactional outcome (L. Hollebeek, 2011).

Regarding brand experience, evidence describes Praxis as “the beer of Coimbra” and “a brand of the people”, symbolising pride and identity shown to visitors as emblematic of local culture. This showcases how Praxis uses Brand Storytelling as a key mechanism in their differentiation strategy, as proposed by Azila et al. (2023). Additionally, data describes Praxis's intention to deepen local impact and recognition with engagement strategies instead of pursuing broad, geographically dispersed campaigns, diluting relational intensity and stretching resources. Their focus is evidently on cultural and sports initiatives since local proximity enhances perceived impact on customer segments.

However, research highlighted the absence of formal success measures since Praxis relies on attendance, word-of-mouth and repeat visitations. On the contrary, Vivek et al. (2014) addressed the need for an empirical scale for customer engagement to measure conscious attention, enthused participation and social connection. Thus, indicating an opportunity for Praxis to evaluate engagement efforts and use results to outline future strategies.

Additionally, research uncovered that the brewery venue itself is often the main attraction, even without events. This evidently describes Lemon & Verhoef (2016) work, where the customer experience, in this case in Praxis restaurant, sets the foundational condition upon which the engagement initiatives are built. Therefore, the experience customers have in the venue is described as an antecedent and a contextual driver of customer engagement (Vivek et al., 2014).

Even though engagement initiatives are viewed as enhancing image, authenticity and community feeling (with suitable artists well-aligned with the brand image), research suggests consumers' loyalty is driven primarily by the product itself (e.g. beer) and venue. Thus, events can be considered as “added value”, often used to invite and introduce new visitors rather than the core reason for advocacy. Loyalty, on the other hand, is found to be manifested in habitual visits, gifting and recommendations, rooted in multi-generational family traditions, shared interests and emotional closeness rather than impacted by events alone. Even though research suggests consumers did not interpret CE initiatives as a direct loyalty driver, these were mentioned to cultivate affective commitment and foster advocacy, corroborating (Vivek et al., 2012). However, this leaves room for further research to understand how customer engagement initiatives actually impact loyalty versus advocacy.

5. Conclusions

The present research demonstrates that customer engagement serves as a strategic differentiator for Praxis in the Portuguese craft beer market. The brand leverages locally embedded, experiential initiatives to amplify product excellence and venue centrality into a resonant brand identity representing Coimbra's heritage and translating community pride. Praxis cultivates multi-dimensional engagement through heritage reactivation, multi-generational relational hubs and events, thus enhancing authenticity and advocacy while bridging product attributes to cultural legitimacy.

Additionally, these initiatives act as "added value" amplifiers rather than direct loyalty drivers, with consumer loyalty mainly rooted in superior beer quality and habitual visits. Nonetheless, CE initiatives foster symbolic differentiation, word-of-mouth, and long-term affective commitment.

The findings also underscore opportunities for breweries, specifically Praxis to adopt formal CE metrics and task-based formats, while contributing to understanding CE in resource-constrained SMEs and calling for future multi-case, longitudinal research to validate loyalty pathways in experience-driven categories.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The research's main limitations relate to its scope, design, measurement choices, and context-specificity, which restrain the generalisability and explanatory power of its conclusions.

The study is a single-case study focused on Praxis, adopting a qualitative design, allowing for rich, context-sensitive insights into engagement practices and meanings, but restricting external validity and hindering whether the identified patterns are idiosyncratic to Praxis, Coimbra or Portuguese craft breweries more broadly. The absence of comparative brand cases limits the ability to isolate which elements of Praxis's strategy are, in fact, differentiating versus those common among craft beer brands.

Secondly, the investigation relies on self-reported perceptions from the CEO and consumers, subject to recall bias, social desirability, and positive skew, particularly given the strong local pride associated with Praxis. The qualitative approach does not include transactional data (e.g. sales, visit frequency, or digital engagement metrics), which could triangulate narratives on loyalty, advocacy, and the effectiveness of specific initiatives. Thus, causal connections between engagement, brand experience and loyalty remain interpretive rather than empirically tested.

Third, the study does not operationalise customer engagement with the appropriate CUE scale proposed by Vivek et al. (2014), even though it is grounded in robust engagement and experience theory. This portrays limitations in the precision with which dimensions, specifically conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection can be measured, compared across segments, or statistically linked to outcomes such as loyalty and advocacy.

In this sense, future research may use the appropriate CUE scale previously mentioned (Vivek et al., 2014) and develop a comparative study for Praxis and competitors, measuring CE levels and cross-analysing with actual sales data.

Finally, the sampling strategy is purposive and emphasises engaged, craft-aware consumers, which may under-represent less-involved or more price-sensitive segments. Therefore, these groups' interpretations of engagement initiatives are not explored, and findings reflect a relatively involvement-heavy section of the market.

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Appendix

Dimension	Factor
Innovation	I1: Technology and Research & Development (R&D)
	I2: Resource Availability
	I3: Market Orientation
	I4: Leadership and Organizational
Community	C1: Local Identity and Neo-localism
	C2: Community Involvement and Partnerships
	C3: Third Spaces
	C4: Community Networks and Capital
Social	S1: Social Responsibility
	S2: Social Influence
	S3: Social Trust
	S4: Social Norms
Engagement	E1: Emotional Engagement
	E2: Cognitive Engagement
	E3: Behavioral Engagement
	E4: Employee Engagement

Appendix 1: Industry Success Factors - Craft Beer

APPENDIX

THE SERVQUAL INSTRUMENT^a

DIRECTIONS: This survey deals with your opinions of _____ services. Please show the extent to which you think firms offering _____ services should possess the features described by each statement. Do this by picking one of the seven numbers next to each statement. If you strongly agree that these firms should possess a feature, circle the number 7. If you strongly disagree that these firms should possess a feature, circle 1. If your feelings are not strong, circle one of the numbers in the middle. There are no right or wrong answers—all we are interested in is a number that best shows your expectations about firms offering _____ services.

- E1. They should have up-to-date equipment.
- E2. Their physical facilities should be visually appealing.
- E3. Their employees should be well dressed and appear neat.
- E4. The appearance of the physical facilities of these firms should be in keeping with the type of services provided.
- E5. When these firms promise to do something by a certain time, they should do so.
- E6. When customers have problems, these firms should be sympathetic and reassuring.
- E7. These firms should be dependable.
- E8. They should provide their services at the time they promise to do so.
- E9. They should keep their records accurately.
- E10. They shouldn't be expected to tell customers exactly when services will be performed. (—)^b
- E11. It is not realistic for customers to expect prompt service from employees of these firms. (—)
- E12. Their employees don't always have to be willing to help customers. (—)
- E13. It is okay if they are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly. (—)
- E14. Customers should be able to trust employees of these firms.
- E15. Customers should be able to feel safe in their transactions with these firms' employees.
- E16. Their employees should be polite.

Appendix 2: ServQual Instrument

- E17. Their employees should get adequate support from these firms to do their jobs well.
- E18. These firms should not be expected to give customers individual attention. (–)
- E19. Employees of these firms cannot be expected to give customers personal attention. (–)
- E20. It is unrealistic to expect employees to know what the needs of their customers are. (–)
- E21. It is unrealistic to expect these firms to have their customers' best interests at heart. (–)
- E22. They shouldn't be expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customers. (–)

DIRECTIONS: The following set of statements relate to your feelings about XYZ. For each statement, please show the extent to which you believe XYZ has the feature described by the statement. Once again, circling a 7 means that you strongly agree that XYZ has that feature, and circling a 1 means that you strongly disagree. You may circle any of the numbers in the middle that show how strong your feelings are. There are no right or wrong answers—all we are interested in is a number that best shows your perceptions about XYZ.

- P1. XYZ has up-to-date equipment.
- P2. XYZ's physical facilities are visually appealing.
- P3. XYZ's employees are well dressed and appear neat.
- P4. The appearance of the physical facilities of XYZ is in keeping with the type of services provided.
- P5. When XYZ promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.
- P6. When you have problems, XYZ is sympathetic and reassuring.
- P7. XYZ is dependable.
- P8. XYZ provides its services at the time it promises to do so.
- P9. XYZ keeps its records accurately.
- P10. XYZ does not tell customers exactly when services will be performed. (–)
- P11. You do not receive prompt service from XYZ's employees. (–)
- P12. Employees of XYZ are not always willing to help customers. (–)
- P13. Employees of XYZ are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly. (–)
- P14. You can trust employees of XYZ.
- P15. You feel safe in your transactions with XYZ's employees.
- P16. Employees of XYZ are polite.

Appendix 3: ServQual Instrument

- P17. Employees get adequate support from XYZ to do their jobs well.
- P18. XYZ does not give you individual attention. (–)
- P19. Employees of XYZ do not give you personal attention. (–)
- P20. Employees of XYZ do not know what your needs are. (–)
- P21. XYZ does not have your best interests at heart. (–)
- P22. XYZ does not have operating hours convenient to all their customers. (–)

* A seven-point scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" (7) to "Strongly Disagree" (1), with no verbal labels for the intermediate scale points (i.e., 2 through 6), accompanied each statement. Also, the statements were in random order in the questionnaire. A complete listing of the 34-item instrument used in the second stage of data collection can be obtained from the first author.

^b Ratings on these statements were reverse-scored prior to data analysis.

Appendix 4: ServQual Instrument

Appendix 5: Praxis Interview Transcript

1. Como é que descreveria os clientes da Praxis?

Não há apenas um típico cliente Praxis atualmente. Há um grupo heterogéneo de clientes que nós observamos. Enquanto que, durante muito tempo, houve uma predominância do cliente que via a Praxis como uma continuação da cerveja de Coimbra, e que valorizava

maioritariamente a nossa história e a tradição, atualmente também já contamos muito com jovens que chegam à cidade e procuram um espaço acolhedor e bonito, digamos assim, para passar o seu tempo e conviver com amigos. Claro que também contamos muito com as famílias, porque o nosso espaço promove muito isso, para além de sermos claramente um negócio de família. Tal é que os dias de maior faturação são aos fins de semana e o nosso restaurante é muito familiar. Nós inclusive conseguimos transformar isso também numa vantagem para nós e para os clientes e produzimos bebidas para os miúdos. O Caxôpo é a nossa marca de sumos para os mais novos e produzimos sumo de maçã e sumo de malte. Na verdade, nós começámos por ser a primeira unidade de cerveja artesanal em Portugal, mas já não utilizamos essa categoria porque ela foi estragada, por assim dizer, mas o mercado também fez questão de acabar com essas cervejeiras que correram mal. Nós começámos com a produção e venda direta ao cliente, mas passámos de ser a cervejeira dos velhos e dos bêbedos, e começámos a mostrar às pessoas a parte positiva do álcool. Para além disso, também indo ao encontro da evolução do mercado, lançámos as primeiras duas cervejas sem álcool e assim vamos continuando a crescer cada vez mais com o mercado também.

2. Quais são as principais fontes de diferenciação da Praxis em relação a cervejeiras de maior dimensão ou concorrentes?

Acho que aquilo que nos distingue é logo a génese deste projeto, portanto, o objetivo era criar um negócio claro, sustentável, mas que partisse desta base de património a ser recuperada, a ser redescoberta pela própria cidade. Ou seja, é uma identidade muito forte deste projeto. Esse património que estava basicamente esquecido, estava perdido e acho que a Praxis hoje em dia é reconhecida por esse trabalho de recuperação de investigação, com o contributo de vários não só cientistas, mas historiadores da própria cidade da Universidade de Coimbra. O que de alguma forma também ajuda a recuperar a identidade não só da própria cidade e a dar uma identidade a este projeto pronto. Essa foi a base, a opção foi seguirmos por este caminho da cerveja artesanal. Portanto, podíamos apenas ter feito um museu, não é, estaríamos por aí, ponderávamos, tínhamos lá um torniquete, cobrávamos os bilhetes para entrar e pronto. Nós, uma vez que já estávamos ligados um bocadinho à área da hotelaria, vimos aqui uma oportunidade de desenvolver um produto, apesar de na altura não sabermos muito dele usámos a escola que mais pergaminhos tinha nesta área, que é a escola alemã, para não só passar por lá o nosso mestre cervejeiro, eu próprio ele esteve lá quase 2 anos e meio a fazer uma pós-graduação. Foi daí a nossa base de conhecimento, enfim, que é sempre um bocadinho diferente daquilo que foi surgindo por aí assim a seguir com algum, enfim, alguns curiosos até a

enveredar por esta área das cervejas artesanais e, portanto, muitas vezes nós éramos olhados até no nosso mercado como um bocado conservadores, porque só púnhamos receitas, digamos que de cerveja no mercado, que estávamos completamente seguros da sua qualidade até porque nós tínhamos o feedback imediato, como disse há pouco, portanto, não podíamos estar a arriscar expulsar clientes do nosso espaço, portanto, nós tínhamos que assegurar que no mínimo as pessoas pediam uma e ficavam com desejo de pedir a segunda. No final de contas, passavam na caixa registadora e pagavam com o sorriso na cara, não de má vontade e, portanto, foi assim que a Práxis se afirma no mercado como uma instituição da região da cidade, instituição essa que pronto tem por base um negócio sustentável de comercialização de cerveja, de refeições que foi evoluindo para uma distribuição tanto a Norte como a Sul para o interior, para o litoral da sua cerveja e pronto ia ser um processo ainda em andamento e que esperamos que dê passos largos.

3. Como é que a sua cervejeira define o engagement com o cliente? O que significa para si na prática?

Na prática, isso é a razão disto tudo que aqui está. Portanto, hoje em dia, essa proximidade com o cliente e quando falamos de cliente temos que falar aqui de 2 clientes. O cliente que vem aqui a esta digamos que a embaixada da marca não é da marca Práxis, que é o nosso museu, o nosso restaurante e senta-se aqui uma mesa e não só prova as nossas cervejas, como também é atendido. Ou seja, há aqui “1 on 1”. A influência também de alguém que fala diretamente com o cliente, que são os nossos funcionários, os nossos colaboradores, que têm essa responsabilidade e temos o outro cliente, que é o cliente, que tem um negócio, um restaurante, um bar, uma mercearia. E tem interesse em ter o nosso produto também à venda no seu espaço. Vê isso com uma mais-valia para o seu projeto para o seu espaço. São 2 ramos diferentes, digamos assim. Temos tentado fazer aqui esta convivência. Portanto, são bastante diferentes. Como é óbvio, não é, mas é muito importante esta proximidade. Ou seja, tanto esse cliente que tem o bar tem o restaurante, tem o acesso direto, portanto, a quem decide a quem manda não é. Portanto, tem 1 cadeia muito curta aqui, assim de comunicação. Muitas vezes, quem lhe entrega o produto é o vendedor também é o comercial que sabe também da própria produção do produto. Aliás, eles próprios muitas vezes estão na produção do produto também, o que também é muito importante. E aqui assim também, ou seja, há uma grande dinâmica na parte de quem fala diretamente com o cliente final e de alguma forma também, muitas vezes contribui no processo de fabricação de produção do próprio produto, portanto. É muito importante esse

know-how saber responder às perguntas dos clientes e dos nossos. Digamos que o nosso mercado-alvo.

4. Que iniciativas específicas utiliza a sua cervejeira para envolver os clientes? E quais delas considera mais bem-sucedidas ou impactantes para a sua marca?

Eh pá, digamos que o auge o topo delas foi este ano aproveitando, aproveitando os 100 anos das marcas Topázio e Onyx. Já andávamos há muitos anos a planear, não é que temos que marcar de alguma forma 100 anos, ou seja, não sei se terei oportunidade de celebrar mais alguma vez na minha vida, 100 anos de alguma coisa nas empresas em que estou envolvido, portanto, era uma oportunidade que tínhamos aqui assim, para a Praxis e para o nosso pequeno grupo empresarial de Coimbra de assinalar 100 anos. De mostrar à cidade, mostrar ao mundo, digamos que de facto, o que esta Terra tem de tesouro escondidos ou perdidos, ou por descobrir. E, portanto, o Praxis beerfest acabou por ser uma possibilidade de fazermos tudo isso de pegarmos em espaços que, enfim, para quem é de Coimbra, percebe que são espaços icónicos da cidade que deram muitas alegrias. E que fazem parte de um histórico cultural da própria cidade do Campo Santa Cruz, com todas as alegrias da nossa académica, que nos proporcionou à cidade o Jardim da sereia, que é um ícone cultural da cidade. Portanto, seria muito mais fácil, por isso simplesmente chegarem a um descampado e fazer uma festa e estava feito, convidava os estrangeiros músicos e estava feito, mas não optámos por de facto fazer diferente e pronto, investir nestes espaços para, enfim, pegar nas melhores cervejeiras do mundo e nisso não temos qualquer problema em fazê-lo, portanto, fomos buscar algumas das melhores cervejas nas receitas que nós produzimos aqui, nomeadamente a das topázio e Onyx e convidámos esses cervejeiros a virem à nossa festa também para que as pessoas provassem outros estilos de cerveja, mas com uma qualidade muito muito alta e ao mesmo tempo, comparassem com a nossa também para perceberem que é pá, afinal, aqueles gajos ali à beira Mondego plantados até nem fazem lá cerveja má, e claro que isso vai sendo reconhecido. Em Londres participamos todos os anos num concurso em que, em 2021, uma das nossas cervejas passou à fase final, foi Imperial Stout, foi classificada como a melhor imperial stout do mundo. Normalmente temos os nossos, os nossos ídolos. Temos as nossas marcas ídolos, os nossos cervejeiros, ídolos que servem como a nossa luz, o nosso farol, digamos assim, mas ganharmos aí esses nossos ídolos o título de melhor Imperial Stout do mundo é sempre muito confortante, só para acrescentar a Topázio e a Onyx nem sempre foram da Praxis. Foram adquiridas em 2021 ao Grupo, já sabias disso? Pronto, e nós vamos fazendo várias iniciativas. Vamos estar, por exemplo, agora na Corunha a apresentar as cervejas. Para um mercado, enfim, muito, muito específico é o

mercado da Corunha, muito às vezes até muito fechado. Ali sobre a Estrela Galícia a própria Estrela Galícia vai nos convidar para visitarmos as suas instalações, o seu museu. Outras cervejeiras irão estar presentes também nos espaços de outras cervejeiras a mostrarmos a nossa cerveja. E pronto e vamos participando aqui com as nossas roulottes em tudo que sejam eventos aqui da zona também para de alguma forma mostrarmos aqui um bocadinho de bairrismo e de dentro das nossas possibilidades e do nosso budget também temos aqui sempre possível exposta à marca.

O Patrocínio da académica também surgiu um bocado assim, mas nós não conseguimos resistir a ele. Em tudo na vida, não é, quando estamos na mó de cima, toda a gente quer estar connosco quando estão na mó de baixo, que foi o caso, muito pouca gente quer estar connosco e pronto e nós vimos ali assim, não só uma oportunidade histórica de nos associarmos a uma das marcas mais históricas da cidade, mas também porque eles precisavam muito e não tinham na altura ninguém que se quisesse associar ao projeto. E acabou por ser bom e por bater os recordes de venda de t-shirts, porque aparecia a marca Praxis, aparecia a marca académica.

5. Como incentiva a participação ou a cocriação por parte dos seus clientes?

Como eu te expliquei nós não temos aqui um departamento de marketing, somos uma empresa familiar com muita qualidade de produto. E pronto e acreditamos piamente nesta relação com aquilo que nos rodeia, não é? E é evidentemente que, por exemplo, as noites de stand up que promovemos também são um desses casos. Portanto, temos aqui uma forte interação com o cliente, mas um simples almoço e jantar da Praxis cria essa interação, ou seja, é muito importante que as pessoas quando entram aqui dentro consigam ter um impacto, não é? E nós temos clientes aqui, não diria todos os dias, mas todas as semanas, enfim, que insistem em visitar-nos. Por exemplo, nós temos este cluster em Coimbra das novas tecnologias à sexta-feira à tarde. A partir daí, das 5 da tarde é tu veres esta Casa a encher se de informáticos. Malta, que passou a semana toda a fazer programações em empresas que dão cartas a nível mundial e que nasceram em Coimbra e eles vêm para aí fazer reset aos seus computadores cerebrais com canecas. Como também temos, por exemplo, um grupo que apoiamos uma vez por mês em que pegam no património da Canção de Coimbra e nós oferecemos-lhes aí o jantar em que junta desde os Carlos Paredes ainda vivos desta cidade às novas gerações para fazer aqui uma troca. De conhecimento muitas vezes não seria possível para os jovens que estão a aprender a guitarra portuguesa, a guitarra de Coimbra, ter acesso a eles não é? E os mais velhotes com todos os seus, os seus vícios e as suas dicas e as suas histórias de vida. Conseguem fazer essa passagem

e pronto e com isto tudo, ainda juntamos aqui os antigos trabalhadores da fábrica de vez em quando também para fazer os almoços, os jantares vamos criando aqui uma dinâmica da casa que vai permitir que as pessoas também reconheçam aqui o seu grau de Instituição da própria cidade, ou seja, não é só um restaurante para ir comer uma francesinha. Ou seja, é o almejar dessa distinção também da própria Praxis porque também acho que é importante esse objetivo para termos aqui uma casa com essa atratividade e um produto com esse reconhecimento também, pois é o produto, o nosso veículo de divulgação, mas é muito importante esta base.

6. Como mede o sucesso ou o impacto destes esforços de engagement?

O melhor instrumento que nós temos para medir o sucesso dessas iniciativas. É nós vemos que continuam ou não a ter adesão, não é? Nós a determinada altura, falando há pouco das noites de stand up isto demorou a arrancar porque enfim as pessoas olhavam para a Praxis como um sítio para beber umas cervejas, comeram uns bifos, mas não é para virem ouvir umas piadas. Aliás, tivemos essa dificuldade no início porque isto é uma casa de famílias. E, como deves imaginar, entrarem os pais com os filhos aqui e quando reparam estão a ouvir pessoas a contar umas anedotas picantes. Não funcionou muito bem, portanto tivemos que criar aqui alguns mecanismos de melhoramento destas iniciativas e pronto isto são processos de aprendizagem como nos negócios, que vão sendo adaptados àquilo que é melhor. Por exemplo, este é um mercado muito, muito, muito específico. Quer dizer, nem toda a gente gosta de stand up. Há pessoas se calhar que até vêm à práxis que nunca foram ao stand up, nem nunca querem ir ao stand up. Agora pronto, isto permite-nos também ir aqui a vários nichos de mercado não é se calhar uns mais velhos, uns mais jovens, uns mais femininos, outros mais mistos. Não sei, mas é um bocadinho essa adaptação de cada uma dessas iniciativas e desses projetos permitem-nos ter uma maior abrangência e não estarmos dependentes só de um de um tipo de mercado.

7. Que fatores internos ou externos mais influenciam a sua estratégia de engagement?

O principal fator aqui assim, normalmente só são desportivas ou culturais, não é porque são enfim, são normalmente as iniciativas com maior dificuldade e que dependem muito da paixão e gostos das pessoas. Eu próprio embora não pareça, mas já fui desportista e fui desportista, não de um desporto como o futebol que, enfim, também sabemos que não, não é fácil, mas tem muito mais estrelato e muito mais capacidade de angariação, de recursos e sei bem que se não for a carolice das pessoas envolvidas, os treinadores ou os pais são iniciativas que têm muitas dificuldades e pronto e, no fundo, ao impactarmos positivamente essas iniciativas. Também há aqui um reconhecimento desses pais desses atletas, do nosso valor enquanto instituição da

cidade, portanto, não é. É também se calhar um fator, essa proximidade, ou seja, iniciativas da nossa região, da nossa, da nossa cidade é se calhar também um fator de decisão. Não só então iniciativas desportivas, culturais, mas também o de serem aqui à volta também. Não temos capacidade para andar pelo país todo.

8. Pode partilhar exemplos de como o envolvimento do cliente afetou diretamente a lealdade à marca, a construção de comunidades ou a vantagem competitiva?

O feedback que tivemos do Praxis Beer Fest foi maravilhoso. As pessoas adoraram o espaço, reconheceram a qualidade das nossas decisões, do nosso impacto positivo para a cidade. O simples facto de um Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa quando passa para cima ou para baixo parar aqui, ou seja, ele também demonstra aqui alguma notoriedade. Ou seja, não é só um espaço elitista, que não é isso que eu estou a querer dizer, porque ainda no outro dia tinha uma Tuna feminina de medicina ali na esplanada. Pronto isto, enfim, mostra aqui de vários públicos, alvo que frequentam o nosso espaço, que é esse o Público que depois também leva as cervejas para casa, oferece prendas Praxis no Natal, bebe com os amigos e com os familiares, produtos Praxis nos seus eventos e, portanto, é esta cultura Praxis. Estamos aqui a desenvolver e há iniciativas que têm maior impacto, também investimos mais nelas, há outras que têm um impacto mais humilde, mas que vão causando um impacto ao longo do tempo. Como estas iniciativas que vão sendo organizadas aqui na Praxis e que no final estamos aqui a construir uma cultura práxis. A Starbucks chegou a ter uma linguagem própria, e é um bocadinho ISTO que estamos a tentar desenvolver aqui assim.

9. Como vê a evolução da Praxis na interação com o cliente e o seu crescimento?

Eu vejo a crescer nesta dinâmica local de impacto local, porque é aqui também que temos a gênese do nosso projeto, o nosso espaço físico e uma grande parte do nosso público-alvo. Eu acho que passa muito por aqui. Quanto ao crescimento, o desperdício Praxis é reutilizado, portanto, temos uma preocupação com a economia circular. Nós já praticamos isso há décadas. Não só por termos uma unidade agrícola onde reutilizamos estes desperdícios todos, ou seja, alimentamos animais com com estes desperdícios. Portanto, estamos aqui sempre com parcerias, porque eles muitas vezes são mais ou menos da nossa dimensão ou ligeiramente maiores ou ligeiramente mais pequenos. Portanto, a nossa decisão é de um impacto maior local e isso hoje em dia, também sob o ponto de vista de preocupações ambientais também tem impactos favoráveis. Em vez de termos que gastar dinheiro num camião que vai para França, ou que vem de França para cá. Se pudermos enfim fazer aqui meia dúzia de quilómetros é

bastante mais compensatório sob o ponto de vista financeiro e até ecológico. Portanto, vejo este crescimento numa dinâmica de impacto local e regional com parcerias da mesma dimensão.

Theme Name	Subtheme Name	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Excerpt
Heritage, Identity and Legitimacy as Differentiation	-	How Praxis uses local brewing heritage, brand origin, identity, technical expertise, and external validation (awards, collaborations) to distinguish itself from competitors, especially larger breweries.	Mentions recovering "património", origin story as differentiator, German brewing training, quality-first policy, global awards, or positioning as "instituição da cidade"; contrasts with "curiosos" or big breweries.	Day-to-day service, specific events, or sponsorships without heritage/identity link; generic quality mentions without origin context.	"acho que aquilo que NOS distingue é logo a génese deste projeto, portanto, o objetivo era criar um negócio claro, sustentável, mas que partisse desta base de património a ser recuperada a ser redescoberto pela própria cidade." "Hoje em dia é reconhecido por esse trabalho de recuperação de investigação, com o contributo de vários não só cientistas, mas historiadores da própria Universidade de Coimbra."
Customer Relationships, Space and Everyday Engagement	-	Building/maintaining relationships through the physical "embaixada da marca" restaurant and museum space, dual B2C/B2B customer logic, staff mediation, short communication chains, and routine interactions (regular customer groups).	Refers to "dois tipos de clientes", staff as experience mediators, proximity/"proximidade", weekly regulars, taproom feedback, or customers taking beer home/gifting; everyday lunches/dinners as interaction.	One-off events, sponsorships, or sustainability without focus on relational space/service dynamics.	"temos que falar aqui de 2 clientes. O cliente que vem aqui a esta embaixada da marca não é da marca Praxis, que é que é o nosso museu, o nosso restaurante" "temos o outro cliente, que é o cliente, que tem um negócio, um restaurante, um bar, uma mercearia. E tem interesse em ter o nosso produto também à venda no seu espaço. Vê isso com uma mais-valia para o seu projeto para o seu espaço."
Engagement Initiatives and Market Reach	Festivals	Large-scale, heritage-linked events like Praxis Beerfest using iconic spaces to showcase quality and city pride.	Praxis Beerfest, 100-year Topázio/Onix celebration, iconic venues (Campo Santa Cruz), inviting global breweries for comparison.	Smaller on-site nights, sports sponsorships, or external activations.	"aproveitando os 100 anos das marcas Topázio e Onix" "o Praxis beerfest acabou por ser uma Possibilidade de fazermos tudo isso de pegarmos em espaços que, enfim, para quem é de Coimbra percebe que são espaços são icónicos da cidade" "convidámos esses cervejeiros a virem à nossa festa também para que as pessoas. Enfim, provassem outros estilos de cerveja, mas com uma qualidade muito alta e ao mesmo tempo, comparassem com a nossa"
	Sports Sponsorships	Partnerships with sports clubs (especially Académica) for visibility, match-day presence, and mutual benefit during tough times.	Académica Sponsorship, t-shirt sales records, presence "nos dias de jogo", multi-sport sections, "publicidade desportiva".	Cultural events, festivals, or non-sports activations.	"o Patrocínio da académica (...) não conseguimos resistir a ele" "nós vimos ali assim, não só uma oportunidade histórica de nos associarmos a uma das marcas mais históricas da cidade, mas também porque eles precisavam muito e não tinham na altura ninguém que quisesse se associar ao projeto"
	Cultural Nights	Recurring on-site entertainment/cultural events (stand-up, fado) to create "dinâmica da casa" and attract niche audiences.	Noites de stand-up (including adaptations for families), Canção de Coimbra gatherings, content-audience issues, niche appeal.	Large festivals, sports, or off-site activations.	"do stand up isto demorou a arrancar porque enfim as pessoas olhavam para a práxis(...) como um sítio para beber umas cervejas, comeram uns bifés, mas não é para ir ouvir umas piadas"
	External Activations	Off-site visibility to extend reach (tap takeovers, rolotes, market entries like La Coruña).	Tap takeovers, rolotes at events, La Coruña presentation, "bairrismo", budget-constrained exposure.	On-site events or sponsorships without external venue focus.	"vamos participando aqui com com as nossas rolotes em tudo que sejam eventos aqui da zona também para de alguma forma mostrarmos aqui um bocadinho de bairrismo"
Local Embeddness and "Cultura Praxis"	-	Strengthening local ties and Gradual development of distinctive Praxis culture/language through cumulative initiatives, learning from errors, and long-term aspiration.	"impacto local" and "Cultura Praxis" "linguagem própria", cumulative small initiatives	heritage without economic practices Isolated events or heritage without future-oriented culture-building narrative.	"Como estas iniciativas que vão sendo organizadas aqui na práxis e que no final estamos aqui a construir uma cultura práxis (...) A Starbucks chegou a ter uma linguagem própria"

Appendix 6: Thematic Analysis Codebook - Praxis Interview

Appendix 7: Focus Group and In-Depth Interview Questions

- (1) O que vos vem à cabeça quando pensam em marcas de cerveja artesanal?
- (2) Que marcas de cerveja artesanal conhecem?
- (3) Na vossa opinião, o que distingue uma marca de cerveja artesanal de marcas de cerveja maiores e mais comerciais?
- (4) Já alguma vez participaram em eventos, programas ou iniciativas organizadas por marcas de cerveja artesanal? Como foram essas experiências?
- (5) Que tipos de iniciativas já observaram da Musa?
- (6) E que tipos de iniciativas já participaram?
- (7) Que tipos de iniciativas de engagement é que apreciam mais e porquê?
- (8) Na vossa opinião, estas iniciativas de engagement são desenvolvidas para criar um sentimento de pertença e de comunidade? Se sim, como?
- (9) Como é que estas iniciativas influenciam a vossa perceção da marca e da sua autenticidade?
- (10) De que forma é que estas iniciativas impactam a vossa ligação emocional à marca e a vossa identificação com a marca?
- (11) Como é que estas iniciativas influenciam a vossa lealdade à marca?
- (12) Que características da cerveja, experiências ou iniciativas de engagement é que vocês consideram únicas ou memoráveis?
- (13) Que fatores, para além do produto em si, contribuem para a vossa lealdade à Musa?
- (14) Já recomendaram a amigos/família? Se sim, como foram esses momentos?

Theme Name	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Excerpt
Craft Beer Brand Awareness and Associations	Consumer recall and mental associations with craft beer brands, revealing category salience and top-of-mind positioning.	Apply when participants spontaneously name brands or describe sensory/quality/social associations upon category cue; includes core vs extended brand knowledge sets.	Do not apply to discussions of product attributes, events, or loyalty without direct brand recall/association; exclude deliberate listing prompted by specific questions.	"50% dos participantes respondeu Praxis, enquanto que os restantes responderam Lúpulo, Diferenciado e Amigos."
Sensory and Experiential Differentiation	Perceptions of craft beer superiority through taste, positioning, and physical space, distinguishing from mainstream alternatives.	Code segments emphasizing "sabor mais puro/original", variety/intensity, niche pricing/labels, special occasions, superior Musa taste, or Marvila space	Exclude event descriptions, engagement motives, or emotional impacts unless explicitly tied to sensory/space differentiation; no generic mentions of beer without comparative superiority.	"sabor mais puro e original" "O espaço do Musa de Marvila é excelente e muito convidativo."
Engagement Experiences and Desired Formats	Experiences with craft events, observed/attended initiatives, and preferences for future engagement types.	Include mentions of specific events (Beerceira, Musa concerts/Octoberfest/Halloween), atmospheres (outdoor/music), repeated participation, concert appreciation, lineup dependency, or desired interactive initiatives (quizz/beer pong/karaoke).	Do not code interpretations of engagement purpose/impact, loyalty effects, or recommendations; exclude non-event space praise without activity context.	"Participaram em vários concertos, evento de Halloween e no OctoberFest. Apreciam bastante os concertos e gostavam de noites de quizz, concursos de beer pong ou karaoke."
Perceptions of Engagement Purpose and Impact	Interpretations of why brands run initiatives and their effects on belonging, authenticity, emotional ties, and self-identification.	Apply to views on commercial motives, niche/community fit, space as a driver for feelings of belonging, perception shifts, varied emotional responses, or routine/personal independence.	Exclude pure event descriptions/preferences or loyalty mechanics without purpose/impact reflection; no factual recall of events alone.	"Estas iniciativas são feitas para gerar liquidez." "O espaço fomenta o sentimento de pertença, revemo-nos em muitas das iniciativas (...) ligação emocional (...) são experiências bastante pessoais."
Loyalty Dynamics and Recommendations	How engagement influences (or fails to influence) loyalty, habitual behaviours, and recommendation patterns.	Code when events are secondary to loyalty, space/consumption pre-existing, space-led recommendations, or events used as persuasion tools.	Do not apply to event preferences, awareness, or general perceptions without explicit loyalty/recommendation linkage; exclude product superiority without behavioural outcomes.	"Os eventos não aumentam a lealdade... temos por hábito frequentar o espaço... Recomendamos ... devido ao espaço físico ... aproveitamos os eventos para convencer os amigos."

Appendix 8: Thematic Analysis Codebook - Focus Group

Theme Name	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Excerpt
Product and Brand distinctions	Captures perceptions of craft beer as sensorially superior, production-focused, and distinct from mass-market alternatives through flavour profiles, packaging, serving styles, and artisanal processes.	References to unique tastes, textures, visuals, low-volume production logic, pairing expertise, or traditional/rustic elements that differentiate from commercial beers.	General beer preferences without craft comparison; non-sensory attributes like price or availability.	"sabor completamente diferente" "Carta de bebidas gigante (...) vais comer isto então bebe isto"
Engagement initiatives and experiences	Encompasses direct or observed participation in brand-linked events, festivals, sponsorships, or activations emphasizing discovery, social novelty, organization, and immersive atmospheres.	Mentions specific events (e.g., Beerfest, fairs, stands), attendance details, positive surprises, variety tasting, or cultural pairings like music/concerts.	Pure product consumption without event context; hypothetical suggestions without observation.	"fui ao Praxis beer fest com a minha mãe" "a própria mí-stica do evento (...) bem organizado (...) concertos muito familiares" "O festival, (...) faz muitas vezes é dar a conhecer novos produtos e que depois desbloqueio prová-los mais à frente e voltar ao restaurante (...)"
Community and Local identity	Reflects senses of rootedness, multi-generational ties, civic pride, and symbiotic local embedding where the brand embodies city tradition and fosters belonging.	Expressions of heritage, family habits, city symbolism, producer-consumer proximity, or tradition-aligned authenticity.	Individual taste preferences; national/global expansion desires without local focus.	"A Praxis é uma marca das pessoas" "fiel à cultura e à história (...) pais iam ou os avós iam" " quando nós adicionamos o tradicional, sinto logo que parece que é uma ligação mais próxima aos clientes."
Loyalty and emotional ties	Describes emotional alignment, repeat behaviors, gifting, recommendations, and value congruence driving venue returns, purchases, and identification via shared interests or memories.	Links events/products to repurchase, gifting, pride, familiarity, or preference over alternatives due to emotional/cultural resonance.	One-off experiences without loyalty mention; negative quality complaints.	"Creio que essas iniciativas (...) quando vou já sei o que é que quero." "também como um presente, (...) não pegáramos inicialmente (...) num Pack de 6 cervejas, super bock íamos oferecer a alguém"

Appendix 9: Thematic Analysis Codebook - Consumers Interviews