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A MARKETING RESEARCH FOR THE COMPANY VASCO CONSULT



UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

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Internship Report for obtaining the Master's Degree in Marketing Management

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Statement of Authorship of the Work

I declare to be the author of this work, which is unique and unprecedented. Authors and works consulted are properly cited in the text and are included in the listing of references.

Rita Adrião Sequeira

.....

(signature)

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of this academic journey. Their constant support, guidance, and encouragement have shaped both my professional and personal growth.

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With deepest appreciation,

Rita Sequeira

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ABSTRACT

The present report explores the obstacles encountered by Vasco Consult during its entry into the Portuguese market, thus necessitating the gathering of information to design a communication strategy. The main aim was to carry out an extensive marketing research with a focus on brand awareness of the brand in the corporate customer market, ultimately leading to the formulation of a strategic communication plan. A survey of 125 individuals in leadership positions across various industries was analysed using quantitative research methods. The results showed the current status of brand awareness among business consulting firms in Portugal. Some established companies already pose significant obstacles for Vasco Consult's market penetration.

The key results of the marketing research analysis show that the majority of respondents in the sample were aged 31 and 50, with a large percentage being executive managers. The sectors of health and wellness, hospitality, and industry had significant representation among respondents, with Lisbon emerging as the dominant geographic area. The preferred channels of communication were e-mail and personal referrals. Deloitte was the top-of-mind company, followed by PwC and McKinsey & Company. When looking for information on management consultants, respondents rely on people they know, followed by online search engines and e-mail was the preferred form of contact, followed by direct messaging on LinkedIn. Factors influencing their choice of consultancy included the quality/price ratio and satisfaction with results. These findings guided the development of an effective communication approach for Vasco Consult to differentiate itself in the Portuguese market.

This study provides valuable insights into the market environment, clarify the current competitive scenario, and provide strategic recommendations to improve the brand awareness of the company Vasco Consult, who wants to forge a unique market position in Portugal and establish itself as a reliable and competent business consulting company.

Keywords: Vasco Consult; B2B marketing; communication strategy; marketing research; brand awareness

RESUMO

O presente relatório ilustra o trabalho realizado durante o meu estágio na Vasco Consult, com foco no desenvolvimento de uma estratégia de comunicação para a afiliação da empresa em Portugal. O estágio ocorreu de outubro a dezembro de 2022 e teve como propósito explorar os obstáculos encontrados pela Vasco Consult, uma consultora de gestão fundada na Holanda em 2017, aquando da sua entrada no mercado português, tornando necessária a recolha de informação para o desenho de uma estratégia de comunicação para uma empresa B2B a atuar no setor de consultoria empresarial. O objetivo principal foi realizar um extenso estudo de mercado com foco na imagem e notoriedade da marca no mercado corporativo, levando ao desenho de um plano estratégico de comunicação. Para dar resposta ao problema de marketing foi realizado um estudo usando métodos de pesquisa quantitativa.

O relatório é organizado em vários capítulos, incluindo a importância desta investigação, os objetivos gerais e específicos do estudo, a apresentação da entidade acolhedora do estágio, o problema de marketing, revisão da literatura, a metodologia, os resultados do estudo - onde também se encontram as análises PESTLE e SWOT, a discussão e a conclusão com o plano de comunicação e limitações do estudo.

A metodologia utilizada envolveu, primeiramente, a recolha de dados secundários em bases de dados *online* para investigar a concorrência e identificar potenciais clientes. Esta recolha foi realizada por fases, em que primeiro foi recolhida o máximo de informação possível sobre empresas concorrentes e depois foram identificados possíveis clientes consoante a lista de clientes da concorrência, que mostraram que existe uma maior procura em determinados setores. Posteriormente, foi criado um questionário com base nessa pesquisa para recolher informações sobre os seguintes aspetos dos respondentes: a sua caracterização profissional, o seu comportamento na procura de informações, a *brand awareness* em empresas do setor, o nível de importância de certas características aquando da procura deste tipo de empresa e o seu perfil sociodemográfico. Foi realizado um pré-teste para garantir a clareza do mesmo e, em seguida, foi aplicado o inquérito por questionário por meio *online* através das redes sociais pessoais da investigadora. O método de amostragem utilizado foi por conveniência, e a análise de dados foi realizada utilizando métodos estatísticos descritivos, incluindo

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distribuições de frequências, medidas descritivas e análise de *clusters*. Esta pesquisa permitiu observar uma amostra de 125 indivíduos que ocupam cargos de *board members*, diretores, *managers* e líderes de equipa em diferentes indústrias.

Os principais resultados da análise do estudo de mercado mostram que a maioria dos entrevistados da amostra encontra-se entre os 31 e os 50 anos, com uma grande percentagem com o cargo de *executive manager* e em termos de habilitações literárias, 56% possui o grau de mestrado. Os setores da saúde e bem-estar, hotelaria e indústria tiveram uma representação significativa entre os inquiridos, com Lisboa a emergir como a área geográfica dominante. As formas de comunicação preferenciais foram *e-mail* e referências pessoais. A Deloitte foi a empresa com maior notoriedade *top-of-mind*, seguida pela PwC e pela McKinsey & Company. Ao procurar informações sobre consultoras de gestão, os entrevistados recorrem principalmente a pessoas dentro da sua rede de contatos, seguidas por pesquisas *online* e o *e-mail* foi a forma de contato preferida, seguida por mensagens diretas no LinkedIn. Além disso, ao escolher uma consultoria, os entrevistados enfatizaram características como relação qualidade/preço e satisfação com os resultados como sendo os fatores mais importantes a pesar na sua decisão. Foi utilizado método de Ward para a realização da análise de clusters, que agrupa indivíduos com características semelhantes. Nesta análise de dados foram identificados três segmentos de mercado com base no grau de importância que os inquiridos atribuíram a algumas características. Os perfis de cada segmento incluem variadas informações, por exemplo, os seus cargos, o setor e quantidade de colaboradores da empresa. Além disso, destacou-se o facto dos *executive managers* dominarem todos os segmentos.

Estes resultados contribuíram para o desenvolvimento de uma estratégia de comunicação e recomendações proficientes. Acredita-se que através da implementação destas ações, a Vasco Consult irá mostrar eficazmente a sua presença no mercado português, estabelecer uma identidade de marca forte e distinguir-se das suas concorrentes.

O plano de comunicação teve como objetivo a melhoria da *brand awareness* da empresa em Portugal e para isso foram identificadas medidas como: aprimorar e harmonizar o *branding* marca nas redes sociais e em todas as atividades da empresa; mudar todos os documentos usados na comunicação interna para inglês; participar em feiras comerciais e eventos de

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networking; organizar *webinars* com *target* específico; desenvolver *merchandising* para distinguir os participantes em feiras; anunciar em jornais de negócios; criar conteúdo em vídeo sobre os serviços, eventos e estudos de caso da Vasco; criar uma página afiliada no LinkedIn para a Vasco Consult Portugal; melhorar o SEO do site; redirecionar o domínio .pt para .com; desenvolver uma *newsletter* interno a ser enviado a cada dois meses, com tópicos como destaques de eventos passados, curiosidades sobre dias especiais, aniversários da equipe, novos projetos, últimas postagens no blog, recomendações de livros/filmes/séries e novos membros, com vista a fomentar a comunicação entre as equipas e gerar tema de conversa; organizar eventos de *team building* - presencial e online; organizar eventos de *networking*; associar-se a uma causa social.

Malhotra *et al.* (2017, p.871) destaca que em qualquer tipo de estudo de mercado existem limitações e, devido a inúmeras variáveis difíceis de controlar, não pode fornecer uma resposta completa para todas as questões apresentadas. Muitas variáveis intangíveis e subjetivas estão em “cima da mesa”, tornando-as difíceis de mensurar. Além disso, num ambiente em constante mudança, os dados recolhidos tornam-se rapidamente obsoletos, limitando a utilidade das conclusões da pesquisa. Um estudo de mercado requer esforço, dedicação e recursos financeiros, mas é frequentemente apontado como sendo menos dispendioso do que erros de marketing caros. Este estudo em particular apresenta algumas limitações: o tamanho da amostra é pequeno em relação ao universo, o método de amostragem não é aleatório pois só foi possível obter respostas dos inquiridos ao alcance da investigadora e ocorreram erros de não-resposta limitando a qualidade dos resultados.

Recomenda-se que, no futuro, um estudo de mercado seja realizado com uma amostra maior e aleatória. Se possível, deverão ser oferecidos incentivos de forma a reduzir erros de não-resposta. Além disso, considerando a complexidade do marketing para empresas B2B, é importante estar ciente das limitações e desafios que poderão ocorrer na conceção da pesquisa a fim de abordar todos os aspetos essenciais ao tema de forma abrangente.

Palavras-chave: Vasco Consult; marketing B2B; estratégia de comunicação; estudo de mercado; notoriedade

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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

B2B	Business-to-business
B2C	Business-to-consumer
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
Ig	Instagram
IT	Information and Technology
Li	LinkedIn
PESTLE	Political, Economical, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental analysis
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis
UN	United Nations
WS	Website

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Marketing has evolved into a critical component of modern business strategy, and its importance to an organization's success cannot be overstated. As business competition becomes more intense (Cortez and Johnston, 2017), it is critical to develop effective marketing strategies that can enhance a company's notoriety, image, and communication. This is certainly relevant in the business-to-business (B2B) context, in which companies are selling their products or services to other businesses.

The business consultancy sector in Portugal has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by the country's economic development and the increasing demand for business consulting services (Costa and Antonio, 2015). The sector covers a wide range of consulting services, including strategy consulting, financial consulting, human resources consulting, IT consulting, and marketing consulting, among others (McLarty and Robinson, 1998, p. 257). The business consultancy sector in Portugal has a highly competitive landscape, with several national and international firms competing for market share (IBISWorld, 2022).

The business consultancy sector in Portugal has grown significantly in recent years, driven by the country's economic development and the increasing demand for consulting services. According to the 2022 report by IBISWorld, the consulting industry in Portugal is estimated to be worth €3.9 billion, with an annual growth rate of 1%. Another report from *Jornal de Negócios* (Relvas, 2020) notes that the 4 top consulting firms in Portugal include the accounting firms - Deloitte, PwC, EY, KPMG - and management consulting firms such as McKinsey & Company, Boston Consulting Group, and Bain and Company. In 2020, the “Big Four” had more than 40% of the total turnover of the market share.

The increasing demand for digital transformation consulting services is one of the factors driving growth in the sector (Tavoletti *et al.*, 2021). As more Portuguese businesses seek to digitize their operations and processes, there is an increasing demand for consulting services to assist them in navigating the complex process of digital transformation (Innovation

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Finance Advisory, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated digital technology adoption (Guo *et al.*, 2020), escalating demand for digital transformation consulting services.

Generally speaking, the business consultancy sector in Portugal is expected to grow further in the coming years, due largely to the country's economic development (Portugal 2030, 2023) and rising demand for consulting services.

1.2. Goals

The main goal of this academic report is illustrate the work that was done during my internship at Vasco Consult with the focus of designing a communication strategy for the company's affiliation in Portugal.

The internship lasted from October to December of 2022 (320 hours), with the principal goal of developing practical skills based on the academic principles taught in the Marketing Management master's course. The main activity developed throughout the internship was the design and implementation of a marketing research for a B2B company operating in the business consultancy sector, with the intention of identifying the target audience and designing a communication strategy.

1.3. Importance of the investigation

Marketing is absolutely essential in the B2B context for increasing brand awareness, generating leads, and boosting sales. However, the B2B marketing environment is rapidly changing as a result of technological advancements and changes in customer behaviours (Cortez and Johnston, 2017).

One of the most significant trends in B2B marketing (Hyder, 2023) is the increased use of digital channels to reach potential customers, such as social media, e-mail marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO). Purpose-driven branding is another trend. Consumers exhibit a preference for brands that have a mission beyond the mere provision of insurance

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or the production of technology. Prospective customers are interested in the narrative of the brand and are inclined to place trust in it. The customers in question demonstrate a desire to place trust in the intentions. Also, as a result of changes in consumer behaviour, there has been a growing importance of digital channels, in recent years, (Hall, 2022, p. 113-114) and the need for personalized marketing, businesses must implement a more comprehensive and integrated marketing strategy.

In summary, the business consultancy sector in Portugal is experiencing significant growth (Barros, 2022), and marketing is becoming increasingly critical in the B2B context. As such, it is crucial for companies in the sector to develop effective marketing strategies that can enhance their notoriety, image, and communication.

The findings of this research will be beneficial not only for Vasco's communication plan but also for the developing a comprehensive marketing plan that can improve Vasco's notoriety, image, and communication. The report will also be useful for other companies operating in the B2B sector by providing insights into effective marketing strategies that can be implemented to improve their competitive edge. The report is the result of extensive research and analysis, and it is hoped that it will add valuable contribution to the field of marketing management.

1.4. Report structure

The report is organized into multiple chapters, initiating with research objectives, marketing research problem and an overview of the host entity and developed activities. It is then covering the literature review including the theory on business consulting industry, the current state of marketing in the B2B context and building brand awareness. In the methodology chapter, there is a description of data collection sources, population and sampling details and data analysis method. In the chapter of results, there is the macro and micro environmental analysis and the descriptive analysis of the survey. As a discussion and conclusion there is presented numerous suggestions/recommendations for Vasco's

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communication plan for the last semester of 2023, based in all the marketing research previously made, and the limitations of the study.

1.5. Curricular internship

The intrinsic goal of the curricular internship was to use the knowledge acquired during the master's degree in a professional environment, in this particular instance in the management consulting sector. In this case, a marketing research was carried out in order to produce information that helps decision makers to find a solution to a practical marketing problem. The internship proposal had previously set some guidelines, and after a meeting with the internship supervisor, it was possible to specify the general goal of the internship and, as a result, the specific goals inherent in it.

1.6. Objectives

General objectives

The purpose of this internship at Vasco Consult was to conduct a marketing research in order to identify competitors and potential segments as a means to establish the brand's positioning and communication strategy.

Conducting out a descriptive marketing research using a survey-based questionnaire was essential to accurately to describe and understand key characteristics of the Portuguese market. This approach was useful in developing well-supported marketing objectives and strategies that allow the company's visibility in the market to rise.

Specific objectives

In terms of specific goals, the following must be encountered:

- To define the organization profile;
- To perform a market analysis that will include:

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- Identification and analysis of competitors;
- Identification of relevant segments, including business-area segments;
- Definition of PESTLE analysis;
- Definition of SWOT analysis;
- To define the value proposition;
- To define the brand positioning in the Portuguese market.

According on this detailed analysis, which is framed in the new market that the company has entered, the brand's communication strategy, with a stronger emphasis on communication tactics and the corresponding media strategy, should be designed.

1.7. Presentation of the Host Entity

Vasco consult is a company whose core business is management consulting and therefore its turnover derives from the B2B market. Vasco was founded in the Netherlands in 2017 by Ruben Uppelschoten and to this day has a portfolio of clients ranging from smaller companies to the best known worldwide. Vasco started in a small office with borrowed chairs and with clients like Unilever, two years later the company grew to seventeen employees and started sponsoring the Dutch women water polo team. The following year, the organization grew to twenty one collaborators, which led to a brand new office in Driebergen-Rijsenburg, a small village near Utrecht and located about 60 km from Amsterdam.

In 2022, Ruben decided to bring the brand, culture and values to Portugal, the country where the man that inspired the name was born (Explorer Vasco da Gama). As of today, Vasco Consult has more than 50 employees: about 40 in The Netherlands and 10 in Portugal.

1.7.1. Services

Based on the information available on the website: www.vasco-consult.com and on the knowledge acquired in the company, Vasco Consult specializes in assisting businesses in

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improving the quality of their business processes and in bridging the gap between procedures and the Customer Journey. To do this, they created the Vasco Method, which covers a broad spectrum of services: Vasco Scan; Project Portfolio Management; Business Improvement; Transformation Management; Grip on data; Data Competence Center; Scale up and Consultant for a day (Vasco Consult, 2023) as presented below:

- Vasco Scan – there are numerous challenges in organisations. Vasco is able to make existing wishes and obstacles noticeable in a pragmatic manner within two weeks, specify which issues have importance, and give specific suggestions for improvement;
- Project Portfolio Management – Vasco assists in regaining control by aligning projects with the business plan, identifying the appropriate mutual priority, and methodically and structurally monitoring project results;
- Business Improvement – Vasco's approach leads to increased customer and employee happiness, greater cost efficiency, and an improvement in operating results in the short term;
- Transformation Management – to remain relevant and continue to provide an optimal customer experience, transformation projects like as system deployments, business integrations, and digitalisation are essential. A good plan is required for innovation, but successful implementation is equally crucial, and Vasco have the expertise in both;
- Grip on Data – Vasco assists enterprises in better understanding, managing, and utilising data in order to reach business objectives promptly;
- Data Competence Center – Vasco Consult assists businesses and organisations in the development of data analysis, the right design and harmonisation of reports, as well as data cleansing and migration.
- Scale-up – the organisation must be professionalised in order to continue to grow as a scale-up. It is critical to have the plan, structure, and data in order to assure commercial growth. Vasco assists organisations in achieving economies of scale;

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- Consultant for a day – organisations seek assistance because they lack the expertise to solve problems on their own. Vasco makes a consultant available for one day in such circumstances.

1.7.2. Mission, vision and core values

The mission and vision of Vasco Consult is to improve quality in order to increase employee involvement and satisfaction (Vasco Consult, 2023).

“To make a customer journey as simple as crossing a bridge.

Together, we make it simple.”

Their values are centered on honesty and transparency, so they never do at the expense of, they do it for someone else and they do it for success.

“We never do at the expense of - At Vasco Consult we act from respect and honesty. To customers, to partners and to each other.

We do it for someone else - We link our quality and commitment to the success of our customers and their employees. We always go the extra mile if necessary.

We do it for success - We aim for results. We do it for the customer, we do it together with the customer and then the customer can do it him/herself.”

1.8. Marketing decision problem

In 2022, the company decided to expand the business to Portugal by opening their first data competence center in Faro, Algarve. At the moment, the team already has more than 10 employees, adding to the 40 present in the Netherlands.

After a brief overview of the company’s available contents (social media, internal documentation, website, etc.), it revealed a lack of actions in the company's strategic

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marketing. This circumstance leads to weaknesses in the company's message as well as the consistency of its objectives and principles. The institution's inadequate communication effort is also evident in its incapacity to structure efficient and successful communication actions, both in the Portuguese and Dutch markets. There is no distinction between these two markets on which the company focuses its services, and as a result, the activities until this point have been established without market segmentation, implying that the communication actions carried out by Vasco on several occasions are ineffective for both markets.

The lack of communication coordination and consistency has had serious repercussions for the company's internal and external environments. These communication breakdowns might jeopardize the company's efficiency, reputation, and other aspects. As a result, there is an urgent need to implement a communication strategy, which in this case will be designed with specific attention to the Portuguese market, since it is the company's most recent and has the biggest need for action.

The establishment of a good communication structure within the company will ensure that all employees work in the same direction to meet the same goals. This is how everyone outside the organization will be capable of recognizing the business's functions in its ecosystem clearly and objectively. Any activity that includes more than one person requires communication. Through that the company interacts with the stakeholders, relating and interacting with one another, highlighting the importance of strengthening the communication area in this project. An organization cannot function without communication in order to meet its mission and all of the action goals of its strategic planning (Kunsch, 2006).

The marketing decision problem was defining the company's positioning and a brand communication strategy; the research will be based on the company's current marketing strategies and will include recommendations for improving its communication, notoriety, and image. The recommendations in this report will be based on a thorough analysis of the company's target market, competitors, and industry trends.

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The absence of innovative communication tactics, particularly in the Portuguese market, became the focal point of this study's development. The company asked me to focus my work on the online, not because it is something that, in general, is already prevalent in any corporation and that everyone talks about, but because it is one of the strongest instruments and with immense power, which Vasco must make the greatest use of. This tool must be integrated into the strategic planning of your activities, where it must be given a budget for the ongoing development.

1.9. Developed activities

The primary activity developed throughout the internship period at Vasco was the development of market research with the goal of understanding and improving positioning, image, and communication. This information helped to draw conclusions that enabled the design of the marketing plans and actions that will improve Vasco's visibility.

The company's integration phase began in the first week, during which colleagues were introduced both in Portugal and in the Netherlands, and a welcome session was held by Kim de Groot, the person responsible for human resources at the Netherlands office. This initial phase aided in gaining a better understanding of the business area in which the organisation operates and in adapting to it.

After the initial week of reception, the following activities/tasks were carried out:

1. Onboarding activities that included:
 - a. Plan of a strategy for approaching potential clients during the web summit, including a pitch to be presented in a networking environment and a social media plan to be implemented that week;
 - b. Training sessions in the Dutch office;
2. Identifying and analysing competition using multiple resources such as the Google search engine and social networks (LinkedIn and Instagram);
3. SWOT analysis;

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4. Identifying and characterising potential customers through competitor and client analysis;
5. Analysis of existing communication by Vasco;
6. Define the marketing decision problem and the marketing research problem;
7. Design and define the methods of the marketing research (questionnaire, sampling method, and other research methods);
8. Implementation of the survey to the sample of respondents;
9. Analysis of the survey data, analysis of the results and presentation of the main conclusions;
10. Design a communication strategy based on the findings of the market research and marketing trends;
11. Presentation of the proposed communication strategy to Vasco.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on a review of bibliographical references on the subject, the present chapter summarizes concepts and research trends in the field of business communication, strategic planning, with an emphasis on its importance for B2B. The objective is to synthesise information from multiple authors in order to conduct an original analysis of the subject matter. This analysis will function as a contextual foundation for the afterwards strategy proposed.

2.1. Branding

In light of intensifying competition, enterprises are seeking strategies to establish emotional bonds with their customers, promoting enduring connections. Establishing a strong brand is of utmost importance as individuals develop an emotional attachment, place confidence, and perceive the excellence of brands (Wheeler, 2009). The notion of brand has a longstanding history, however, it was not until the industrial revolution that it garnered acknowledgement in the realm of marketing. Presently, there is a widespread desire among companies to establish a brand. Nevertheless, the notion of branding is complex, and its definitions are subject to variation among experts in the field (Kapferer J.-N. , 2008, p.9). As per the American Marketing Association (2023), a brand is a composite of various components that serve the purpose of identifying a product or service and setting it apart from its competitors. The significance of the brand's perception by consumers outweighs the perspective held by the company itself. In today's markets, brands encounter obstacles due to market fragmentation and high consumer demands. However, they can leverage the value generated by consumers to their advantage (Kapferer J.-N. , 2008, p.4). The primary purposes of a brand are to facilitate consumer decision-making, to communicate the attributes of the product, and to foster brand awareness. Developing brand equity is a crucial endeavour for a company that aims to fulfil these objectives.

Typography

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Wheeler (2009, p.132-133) shows that the utilisation of typography plays an integral part in establishing a robust brand identity. The selection of an appropriate font necessitates familiarity with the range of available choices and a comprehension of efficacious typography in diverse settings. The adaptability, user-friendliness, and versatility of the selected font should be taken into account as its effectiveness may differ depending on the medium in which it is utilised. The consideration of clarity and legibility is imperative.

Colours

The utilisation of colour holds substantial importance in triggering emotional responses and expressing individual characteristics. The establishment of brand associations and the facilitation of differentiation are key outcomes (Heller, 2012, p.21-24). According to the process of visual perception, colour is perceived subsequent to the recognition of shape, but prior to the comprehension of textual content. The process of choosing colours for a brand necessitates an extensive knowledge of colour theory, synchronisation with brand perception and differentiation objectives, and the preservation of uniformity across diverse media platforms. The utilisation of colours can serve to consolidate an identity or distinguish products or business lines based on their functionality. Colour palettes are created to facilitate a wide range of communication requirements. The maintenance of precise replication of brand colours is of utmost importance and presents an immense challenge across various domains such as packaging, printing, advertising, and digital platforms (Wheeler, 2009, p.128-131).

2.2. B2B communication and relationship

B2B communication incorporates all levels of the "industrial chain" and all aspects of its operation in order to meet the demands of the end customer better than competitors. That is, in B2B communication, there is no direct relationship built between the company and the final consumer; rather, the relationship is established between corporations or institutions. This is the case for businesses that sell their products and services to other businesses, such

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as traditional industrial markets, massive distribution, services, and even government institutions (Hall, 2022, p.1-2).

The combination of potential target audiences in this sort of communication is significantly smaller than in B2C communication, and direct engagement with decision centres is often only a possibility. In this sense, communication is considerably more reasonable and feedback is much more immediate; that is, whereas in the B2C environment, the focus is on creating sensations and impulses that inspire the purchase, the goal in B2B communication is to build trust in the long-term relationship term. As a result, B2B communication tactics are typically significantly more complicated, differentiated, and segmented (Hall, 2022, p.2-5).

Hall (2022, p.15-18) also highlights that the same essential communication principles should be used: concern for customer satisfaction, knowledge of the target audience and their needs, showing the benefits, and measuring the results.

2.3. Offline marketing vs online marketing

B2B companies demand tailored digital communication for the numerous stakeholders involved in the purchasing process. Digital communication is critical for increasing consumer and prospect reach, lowering expenses, and facilitating information sharing. However, previous research has overlooked the heterogeneity among buying centre members, so understanding their goals and planning horizons is critical, especially in a complex and global supply chain context. Social and digital media also play an important role in B2B communication, with evidence of contagion effects and favourable connections with performance (Shankar *et al.*, 2022). Shankar *et al.* (2022, p.550) continue, "B2B digital communication content differs from B2C content" finding them to be driven by emotional appeals and corporate branding. Lead qualification in B2B selling can be improved by organisational methods for producing digital content. Timing and content are also crucial variables in B2B marketing communication efficacy.

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Hien and Nhu (2022) assert that in the last two decades, digital marketing has altered brands and enterprises, becoming a worldwide trend. It includes operations, methods, and communication that employ digital technologies to provide value to customers. Digital marketing engages stakeholders through current channels such as the web, e-mail, and wireless media. It is a different method with distinctive attributes and dynamics that improves client perceptions and purchase behaviour. The authors also affirm that using digital media, engaging with customers digitally, and implementing various strategies such as content marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimisation, pay-per-click advertising, affiliate marketing, native advertising, marketing automation, and e-mail marketing are all important components of digital marketing. Customers' perspective concerning digital marketing influence purchase intent significantly (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Consumers are substantially more inclined to trust digital marketing information and buy branded products based on brand reputation. Understanding the influence of various digital marketing approaches on customer attitudes and awareness of a brand is critical for building successful marketing plans and driving purchase intent in the digital era.

Following that, the relevance of online and offline marketing in B2B communication is constantly being defined. Every day, social and political changes bring new ways of thinking, and big changes in the global economy presenting new significant concerns and questions to be considered by companies (Shankar *et al.*, 2022).

2.4. Strategic communication

Strategic communication refers to the deliberate utilisation of communication by an entity in order to accomplish its goals. When used to achieve the mission of an organisation, it incorporates informative, persuasive, discursive, and relational communication (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007; Argenti and Howell, 2005). As per the research conducted by Duralia (2018), the primary objective of a marketing communication strategy is to effectively target a specific audience by delivering a concise and cohesive message. The deliberate or inadvertent creation of brand perceptions among target audiences is an essential aspect of communication

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management. This can enhance brand awareness and provide a safety net for the brand during public communication (Fombrun, Gardberg, and Barnett, 2000). B2B enterprises must broaden their approach by adopting a customer-centric perspective, adhering to the "Customer Learning Curve" (figure 2.1), and devising tailored initiatives to overcome any impediments to purchasing (Hellman, 2005).

Figure 2.1 - "Customer learning curve" process



Source: adapted from Hellman (2005)

2.5. Social media for companies

Social media is an uncontrollable element of modern customers' lives and has become an important part of business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing strategy (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). Due to digital platforms, organisations now also have the opportunity to establish brand awareness quickly and economically, while also communicating with customers at a reduced cost (Si, 2015; Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Hall, 2022, p.114). Although there is a significant body of research on the use of social media in B2C contexts, the adoption and utilisation of social media marketing varies between organisations operating in B2B and B2C environments (Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Salo, 2017). Professional social networks like LinkedIn are favoured by B2B organisations, whereas B2C organisations tend to favour mass-consumption social media platforms like Facebook (Moore *et al.*, 2013).

Developing social media communication strategies is vital in the digital world for creating, sharing, and discussing information online. Businesses should prioritise relationship maintenance over sales operations (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999), as the level of engagement on social media platforms is directly tied to the sort of content shared (Lacoste, 2016). Creating material that is up-to-date valuable, and encourages participation among the organisation, its employees, and consumers can result in online

collaboration and interaction that strengthens commercial relationships (Sashi, 2012). Content marketing may help businesses communicate with customers and highlight their expertise. Organisations must declare business objectives, establish metrics, and identify obstacles to effective implementation for B2B social media communication strategies to be successful.

Rukuni *et al.* (2020) points that brand awareness is critical for developing relationships with consumers, and social media plays an important role in increasing it. Using social media to raise brand awareness allows the company to reach a broader audience and generate brand recognition. In order to be effective on social media, the organization's posting must be useful, captivating, and credible. Customers benefit from informative content, whereas entertainment pleases and engages them. Also indispensable for customer trust is credibility. The author also emphasises that B2B SMEs should use social media techniques to improve brand notoriety, loyalty, and competitiveness. Failure to do so results in low brand awareness, lesser income, and ultimately the possibility of business failure.

2.6. Social media as an employer branding tool

Social media is becoming increasingly important in B2B employee engagement. Engaged employees on social media can supply valuable content for marketing in order to create leads and include value-adding information from a larger group of employees (Barry and Gironda, 2019). Employees who are engaged are more likely to build their organization's connections with suppliers and customers by generating corporate branding content (Kumar and Pansari, 2016). Barry and Gironda (2019) demonstrated that knowledge-sharing on social media platforms promotes successful employee participation and debate of ideas, resulting in increased staff innovation. Such initiatives empower employees and foster a better sense of community belonging (Li *et al.*, 2018; Barry and Gironda, 2019). Also, employee social media participation enables a B2B firm to better promote itself as an employer and consistently recruit new talent (Korzynski *et al.*, 2020; Kumar and Mölle, 2018).

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2.7. Digital touchpoint's best practices

Vasco Consult, an innovative organisation, has carefully developed three critical digital touchpoints to enhance its online presence and effectively communicate with its target audience. These touchpoints include a website, a LinkedIn page, and an Instagram account. The best practises for each channel, as documented, are presented here, guaranteeing that Vasco Consult maximises its potential and maintains a strong digital footprint in a competitive market.

Website

According to Koch and Hartmann (2022), the assessment of a website's quality is subjective and subject to variation among users. However, research has identified consistent factors that exert an influence on this perception. The evaluation of website quality is contingent upon a multitude of factors. The provision of valuable information to visitors is conditioned upon the presence of significant content. Design encompasses the visual aesthetics, website structure, and user experience. As stated by Berman and Katona (2013), Search Engine Optimisation (also known as SEO) entails the strategic manipulation of search engine rankings with the aim of boosting visibility in organic search results. Marketing professionals frequently employ SEO strategies to enhance their search engine rankings and establish credibility with potential customers. SEO is discouraged by search engines, as it may degrade the calibre of organic links. The best practices are summarized in Table 2.1

Table 2.1 – Best practices for website

Topic	Best practice	Reference
Design	Attractiveness - visually engages visitors.	Koch and Hartmann, 2022
	Navigation - affects website usability and information discovery.	
	Interactivity - flexibility and easy company interaction.	Al-Qeisi <i>et al.</i> , 2014

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Content	Offer knowledge and solutions to inquiries from visitors.	Koch and Hartmann, 2022
SEO	Improve current SEO through keywords, meta descriptions, title hierarchy, creation of internal links in blog posts and use alt text for images.	Marques, 2020, p.182-188

Source: self-elaboration

LinkedIn

Marques (2020, p.87-88) suggests that while there are numerous variables that can influence the effectiveness of publishing, there are no definitive formulas. Nevertheless, it is recommended to publish during the weekdays and working hours in order to effectively reach a professional audience. During the midweek period of Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, specifically within the temporal interval of 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM is advised posting. Table 2.2 presents a summary of the ideal approaches for utilising this particular platform according to its own documentation found in <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/linkedin-pages/best-practices>.

Table 2.2 – Best practices for LinkedIn

Topic	Best practice
Content	Use of quality images and image collages (2x more engagement). Use of videos instead of long texts (5x more engagement). Use showcase documents for posts with multiple pages.
Hashtags	Use of 3-5 hashtags, when relevant.
Grow audience	Invite to follow whenever possible. Answer to every mention made, specially from employees.

Source: self-elaboration

Instagram

Marques (2020, p.87-88) characterises Instagram as a mobile application that is frequently accessed during work breaks and at the end of the day. Additionally, Wednesdays are noted to have a higher rate of interaction on this platform. The author has identified specific days and times that are deemed optimal for publication, namely Monday and Thursday during the hours of 11:00-13:00 and 19:00-21:00. The table 2.3 summarizes the best practices as per the Hootsuite's documentation found in <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-best-practices/>.

Table 2.3 – Best practices for Instagram

Topic	Best practice
Content	Use of quality images and image carousel. Respect image size and preference for vertical content. Use CTAs whenever appropriate. Use alt text
Hashtags	Use of 3-5 hashtags, when relevant
Stories	Preference for vertical content. Use CTAs whenever appropriate. Use stories highlights for content that is interesting to see later
Reels	Video content for better storytelling (20% platform time ¹)
Design	Develop a consistent style to be easily recognisable

Source: self-elaboration

2.8. Brand awareness for a SME

Brand awareness is a psychological phenomenon that corresponds to the level of brand memorability among its target audiences (Anees-ur-Rehman *et al.*, 2018). The first stage in establishing brand awareness is to cultivate brand familiarity (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987).

¹ [How to build effective Reels ads from Meta](#)

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According to the research (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002), notoriety has two dimensions: depth, which refers to how easily the audience recognizes or recalls the brand, and breadth of memorability, or the number of purchase/consumption situations where the brand comes to the minds of the audience. Ideally, a brand should have both. Notoriety develops in three stages, and methods for defining and measuring notoriety have been created. Laurent, Kapferer, and Roussel (1995) stated that there are three levels of brand awareness: assisted notoriety (measured by the percentage of respondents who indicate knowing the brand from a previously provided list), spontaneous notoriety (measured by the percentage of respondents who indicate knowing the brand within a product category without any assistance), and top-of-mind (measured by the percentage of respondents who indicate knowing the brand as their first choice).

Building brand awareness is an essential phase in developing brand equity, but it is not enough to sustain a strong market position on its own. The second phase is to create a distinct feeling of the brand, assign unique qualities, and establish fundamental concepts that generate various forms of mental associations (Fournier, 1998). Kapferer (1991, p.33) and Aaker (1991, p.25) explain that managing a brand's image entails managing its assets, which include the image (or what the brand represents in the eyes of consumers). The brand image is formed not just by the company's communication efforts, but also by all consumer interactions with the brand. As per the statement made by Aaker (1996, p.45-47), a positive image creates high levels of consumer loyalty, the foundation of a strong brand. The image is a combination of the brand's physical, intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic qualities as interpreted by customers through time (Murphy, 1987). Concluding, it is critical to establish a link between brand awareness and the brand image preserved in consumers' mind.

There is a connection between brand-oriented strategy, brand performance, and financial benefits for SMEs (Anees-ur-Rehman *et al.*, 2018). The authors first emphasised the significance of two components of brand performance (brand awareness and brand credibility), and then they identified two paths through which brand orientation can lead to financial benefits: an internal route through internal branding, and an external route using brand communication. According to the authors, brand orientation is a strategic approach that

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focuses on creating, maintaining, and safeguarding brand identity in order to acquire long-term competitive advantages. It entails organising branding initiatives and making branding a top priority for upper management. Brand-conscious companies incorporate branding into their organisational culture, connecting their vision, values, and beliefs with the brand. Establishing brand awareness demands an ongoing communication of brand values and the fulfilment of brand promises over time.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Delimitation of the Problem and Research Question

The marketing problem under consideration is that Vasco Consult needs to improve its knowledge about the Portuguese market in order to establish its communication strategy. The decision problem will answer the question “How Vasco Consult can improve its communication in Portugal?” and is associated with the marketing manager, who requires the knowledge to make an informed decision to improve the company's brand awareness and image. The research problem is presented to the researcher, whose primary goal is to generate knowledge about the Portuguese market that will allow the management to design an effective strategy. In this case, the manager is Vasco’s CEO. The research question must be associated with the problem. With this research, the researcher attempts to express as precisely as possible what they wish to learn, illuminate, or better comprehend. This question will serve as the research's guiding principle; so, with the objective of the current study in mind, the following research question was developed: What is the most efficient way to communicate about Vasco in Portugal? (Quivy and Campenhoudt, 2005).

The findings of this investigation could be highly valuable to the organisation considering that they will be translated into a specific communication plan proposed by the investigator.

3.2. Marketing research

Malhotra *et al.* (2017, p.854 - 877) highlights the critical role that industrial marketing research plays in helping companies to identify opportunities, develop effective marketing strategies, and maintain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. He stresses the need for rigorous research methods, including quantitative and qualitative techniques, to gather data on various aspects of the industrial market, such as customer needs, competitive analysis, and market trends. The author also emphasizes the importance of using technology and data analytics to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of industrial marketing research. He

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notes that advances in technology have enabled researchers to collect and analyse large amounts of data, providing new insights and opportunities for industrial marketers.

3.3. Data collection sources

Given the marketing research problem under consideration in this study, the data recognised as appropriate to provide the required results were secondary data research and primary data collected through a questionnaire survey.

In order to have a better understanding of the research topic, a search for secondary data was conducted in the initial stage. Secondary data from online databases was thus used to investigate the competition as well as to identify potential clients. This data was gathered in the following forms: a study of management consulting organisations was conducted using search engines, LinkedIn, and input from Vasco's management. Next, all relevant information about competitors was gathered, including their name, website, headquarters location, approximate number of employees, services provided, sectors of activity, clients, and associated sectors, social networks, value proposition, and mission statement. Afterwards, it was examined the possible clients based on the industries that competitors had worked for, indicating that there was a demand there. This research was conducted in three phases: first, the information was divided by industry sector of activity; second, companies with a significant market presence were identified; and third, individuals with leadership roles and decision-making power were identified (recurring to LinkedIn) within each company, as it is often these employees who identify problem areas that need guidance. For confidentiality reasons, this database is not included in an appendix.

The information gathered during the first phase contributed for the design of the questionnaire. Alongside that, a questionnaire (appendix 2) was created during the internship with the help of Vasco's management to align with the interests of the company. A brief introductory statement mentioning the goal of the study was included in this questionnaire. The initial questionnaire had eighteen questions divided into several sections such as

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professional characterization, search behavioral characterization, brand awareness and sociodemographic segmentation.

- Professional characterization

This section included questions about the respondent's industry, the geographical region in which the business is located, its size, and the job role held by the respondent.

- Search behavioral characterization

The respondent was asked about their behaviour when looking for information about management consultant companies. It was asked where the respondent looks for information about these types of businesses, what makes this information credible, and how they prefer to be contacted by these companies for the first contact.

- Brand awareness

This section assesses the reputation and image of companies in the industry in the Portuguese market. They were first asked with identifying the first three companies in the sector that came to mind, and then they were provided a list of companies, previously identified by the researcher, in order for them to identify the known companies. Following that, they were asked to rate the importance of the following factors: quality/price ratio; type of services provided; business reputation; satisfaction with results; and presentation of quick results (Bendixen *et al.*, 2004). This was made using a 6-point Likert scale from 1 to 6, where 1 = *not important* and 6 = *very important*.

Individuals who had previously indicated that they knew Vasco Consult were asked to: identify the degree of similarity with competing companies, using a combination of pairwise comparison and Likert scales from 1 to 6, where 1 = *not similar* and 6 = *very similar*, explain how they knew Vasco and what the first contact was like, and finally to attribute the degree of suitability to the characteristics mentioned previously in the degree of importance, using a Likert scale from 1 to 6, where 1 = *not suitable* and 6 = *very suitable*.

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Two other questions were also inserted to assess the degree of adequacy of a list of characteristics in relation to Vasco Consult and the degree of adequacy in relation to the same characteristics of the question of the level of importance. Nevertheless, the lack of responses to these two questions implies that the absence of Vasco Consult in the market results in an insufficient level of awareness among respondents, leading to non-response.

This section had 8 questions and the techniques of top-of-mind, spontaneous notoriety, assisted notoriety, image reference, similarity between brands and semantic differential were used.

- Sociodemographic characterization

With the goal of carrying out a broad sociodemographic characterization, only a few questions were used to profile the respondents, using the following criteria: age group and education level.

A pre-test of the questionnaire was implemented in order to ensure the clarity of the questions in front of the intended audience. This pre-test involved ten individuals. No response difficulties were detected and, therefore, this was then put into practice.

3.4. Method of data collection

The survey was implemented online for practical reasons and to acquire as many answers as possible at no cost - its distribution was carried out through the student's personal social networks. From January 9th, 2023 to February 3rd, 2023, the online questionnaire survey was available. A single LinkedIn post was created in the initial phase, and in the weeks that followed, a private message was sent to every recognised employee of the businesses identified as possible clients of Vasco. In total, 125 answers were obtained using this method. The Google Forms online platform was chosen to store responses effectively, and afterward, an excel file containing all the data was downloaded. Following that, this database was organised and coded for use with data analysis software.

3.5. Population and sample

The survey's target group included directors, managers, team leaders, and business owners of companies identified as prospective customers who were over the age of 18. Due to the impossibility of studying the complete target population, this was based on a sample. Given the lack of a sampling frame of the target population, the sampling method used was non-random, more specifically the judgmental sampling - a method in which the cases invited to answer the questionnaire are those that the investigator has access. This method is rapid and affordable, but because the population is not well defined, results cannot directly generalise to that group because this approach is arbitrary, and its worth depends on the choice, knowledge, and originality of the researcher; it is a frequent technique in small business-to-business marketing research studies (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017, p.421 - 422).

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis methods were chosen based on the study's objectives and the data collected to achieve these objectives. The data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and concentrates on the main data collected via the survey-based questionnaire on brand awareness and image.

The following descriptive measures were used to analyse the data: mean, median, mode, standard deviation, relative and absolute frequencies. The findings are presented in tables or/and figures like histogram, bar and pie charts. A cluster analysis was also performed to identify market segments. It was applied the Ward method to perform a cluster analysis - a statistical technique used in hierarchical cluster analysis capable of identifying individuals within a group who exhibit similar characteristics with respect to specific variables. The proposed approach entails combining of clusters by leveraging the optimal value of an objective function that may encompass any metric aligned with the researcher's objectives. As similarity measures it was used the squared Euclidean distance (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017,

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p.739-748). The selection of the number of segments was based on a dendrogram and on an analysis of the fusion coefficients.

The results of data analysis produced information that was valuable for define conclusions that allowed the design of marketing plans and actions that can contribute to increasing the brand awareness of Vasco Consult in Portugal.

To conduct data analysis, the research was carried out with IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 and Microsoft Power BI software. The results of data, PESTLE and SWOT analysis are presented in the following chapter.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Macroenvironment - PESTLE analysis

Macroenvironment analysis involve monitoring, evaluate and disseminate information that affects directly or indirectly the future of organizations. The PESTEL model is commonly used to summarize these factors: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal (Hall, 2022, p.25). These forces possess the ability to shape opportunities or threats for companies (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018, p.99) and they may be categorized as general or societal trends that impact all industries or a specific sector. Managers must have a complete and adequate understanding of the surrounding situation and strive to operate in this competitive environment.

Political, Economic and Social

The year 2023 was anticipated to be a period of political uncertainty for Portugal, both on the global stage with ongoing conflicts and economic instability, as well as nationally with a perceived atmosphere of political attrition since the beginning of the year. According to the newspaper Público (2023, February 28th), the level of inflation persists at a historically elevated rate, the consumer price index exhibited a rate of 8.2% in February, indicating a level that surpasses that of the corresponding month in the previous year. This escalation in inflationary pressure can be attributed to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which had a global impact on the economy.

The Portugal 2030 (www.portugal2030.pt) initiative represents the upcoming multiannual financial framework programme for the period of 2021-2027. It is noteworthy for its emphasis on optimising and digitalizing processes, as well as promoting collaboration among entities in investment projects. Furthermore, a financial incentive scheme will be established with the objective of promoting investment projects of significant magnitude that aim to ensure supporting for investment, employment, and economic activity by large companies, with the ultimate goal of augmenting the provision of innovative goods and services. It is imperative for companies to properly prepare themselves for the new European funding

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framework by establishing connections with their usual collaborators and forming new networks to tackle the challenges posed by digitalization, sustainability, and energy efficiency. This will enable the development of highly innovative and distinctive projects in their respective sectors.

Technological

As per the latest Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) report of 2022, Portugal's ranking falls below the European average, securing the 15th position among the 27 Member States. However, it has improved its position by one spot compared to the previous year. Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands currently hold the top positions on the podium (annex 1 and 2). The utilisation of sustainable technologies, electronic information sharing, artificial intelligence, internet access, and fibre optic coverage are noteworthy positive aspects. Nonetheless, this poses certain difficulties in terms of internet service costs, proportion of IT graduates, utilisation of open data, fundamental software competencies, integration of social media in corporate settings, and implementation of e-Government. The significance of digital resilience has been further emphasised in light of the pandemic and apprehensions regarding cyber-attacks.

Legal

On May 1, 2023, a total of 70 amendments to the Labour Law (Lei n.º 13/2023, de 3 de abril, 2023) were implemented, resulting in significant modifications. For instance, the use of outsourcing after the termination of a contract is now prohibited for a year, and companies are encouraged to hire collectively. Additionally, the cost of dismissal has increased, and the monetary value of overtime work has doubled from 100 hours per year. Furthermore, it should be noted that there exists a tax exemption for expenses related to remote work, and the duration of parental leave has been prolonged.

It is imperative for enterprises that deal with data to consider the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union (European Union, 2022) that was created to protect individuals' personal data and govern its utilisation by major corporations and information services. The GDPR was implemented on May 25, 2018, providing each nation

with the opportunity to tailor its legal framework accordingly. The implementation of the GDPR in Portugal has incorporated specific provisions to ensure the protection of consumer rights. These provisions include the right of consumers to request the removal of their personal data from both the company that collected the data and any third parties with whom the data was shared. Additionally, personal data must be deleted when it is no longer necessary for the intended service or if it was obtained or processed in violation of the law. The retention period for personal data is determined by law, and in cases where there is no such definition, the retention period must be based on the purpose for which the data was collected.

Environmental

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute a universal appeal for all nations to take action towards the elimination of poverty, improvement of health and education, reduction of inequality, promotion of economic growth, fighting climate change and conservation of ecosystems on a global scale. These goals delineate the worldwide focal points up to 2030, with the intention of enhancing the standard of living for all citizens of the globe (BCSD Portugal, 2023). In 2017, a report (República Portuguesa, 2017) was submitted regarding the implementation of the SDGs where emphasised the measures taken at the national level in regard to each of the SDGs (annex 3). Nonetheless, as depicted in Figure 4.1, Portugal appears to have a considerable amount of progress to make as it stands behind 19 European nations with respect to implementing sustainability-enhancing initiatives.

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Figure 4.1 - The overall performance of UN Member States

Rank	Country	Score	Performance by SDG
1	 Finland	86.51	
2	 Denmark	85.63	
3	 Sweden	85.19	
4	 Norway	82.35	
5	 Austria	82.32	
6	 Germany	82.18	
7	 France	81.24	
8	 Switzerland	80.79	
9	 Ireland	80.66	
10	 Estonia	80.62	
17	 Netherlands	79.85	
20	 Portugal	79.23	

Source: <https://ods.pt/ods/#internacional>

4.2. Microenvironment - SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is used to diagnose the internal and external elements that affect the organisation's competitive position. SWOT analysis is a four-part method that includes the following elements: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Internal factors inherent in the organisation are strengths and weaknesses, whilst external factors relating to the environment are opportunities and threats. The purpose is to align the company's strengths to appealing opportunities in the environment while also removing or overcoming weaknesses and minimising threats (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). The SWOT analysis makes an essential contribution in that managers should be concerned not only with what is happening within the organization, but also with changes in the external environment as well. Table 4.1 provides the results of this analysis, which was conducted in collaboration with

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company employees. This information was useful to design the communication plan outlined in chapter 5.

Table 4.1 - Swot analysis of Vasco Consult

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong organizational and innovative culture	Lack of product differentiation
Good price-quality ratio	Weak brand identity
Excellent efficiency and productivity giving Able to deliver quick results	Inexistent communication strategy
Ability to scale sustainably	New in Portugal
High adaptability	Low brand awareness
Positive employee experience	
International presence	
Team's know-how	
Opportunities	Threats
Increased demand for digitization by companies	Instability among companies caused by the current inflation
Increased demand for data-driven decisions by companies	Competitors with very strong notoriety and presence in the market
Increased sensitivity to information shared between the various departments of a company	

Source: self-elaboration

4.3. Descriptive analysis of the results of the survey

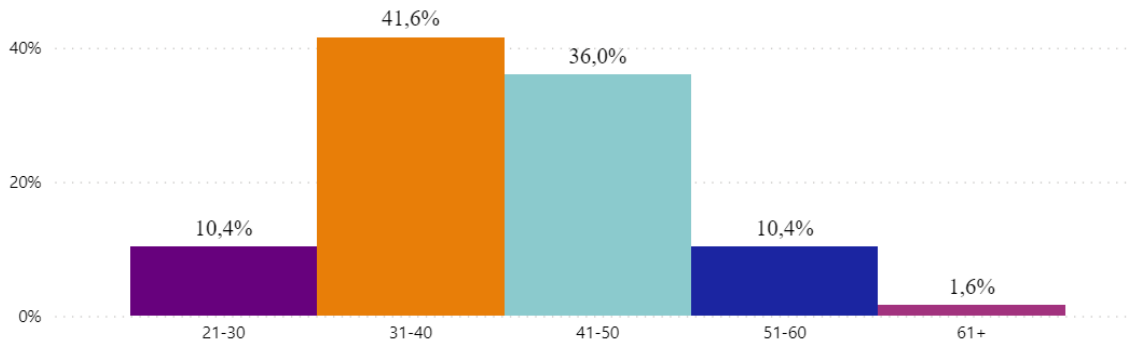
4.3.1. Sociodemographic characterization of respondents

The following figures (4.2, 4.3 and 4.4) illustrate the sample's sociodemographic profile. The main results presented in Figure 4.2 show that of the 125 respondents, 52 (41.6%) are

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between the ages of 31 and 40, 45 (36%) are between the ages of 41 and 50, the same amount (10.4%) is between the ages of 21-30 and 51-60, and two (1.6%) are over 61. In general, we have a sample that is predominantly between the ages of 31 and 50. The average age is approximately 40,6 years, and the median is approximately 35,5, the mode belongs to the interval 31-40 years, and the standard deviation is 8,76.

Figure 4.2 - Age of respondents

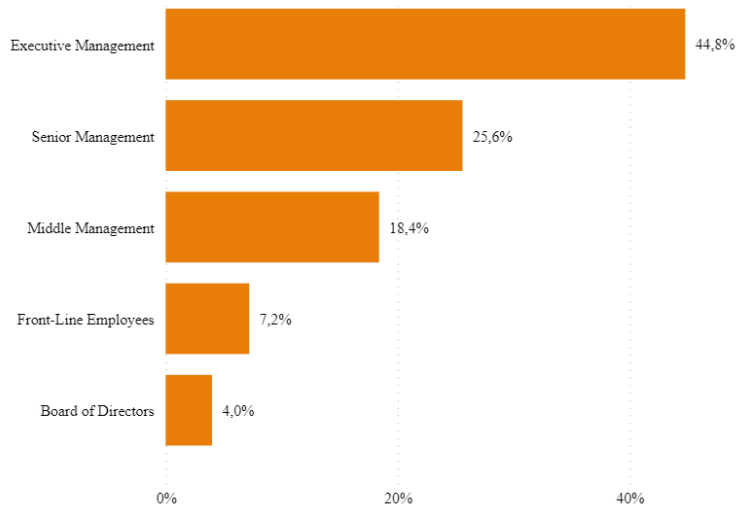


Source: self-elaboration

As per the findings shown in the Figure 4.3, 44.8% are executive managers, 25.6% are senior managers, and 18.4% are middle managers. There are 7.2% front-line employees and 4% board of directors with a lower incidence. For this research, it was considered that the board of directors is at the top of a company's hierarchy, followed by executive managers, senior managers, then middle managers and front-line personnel.

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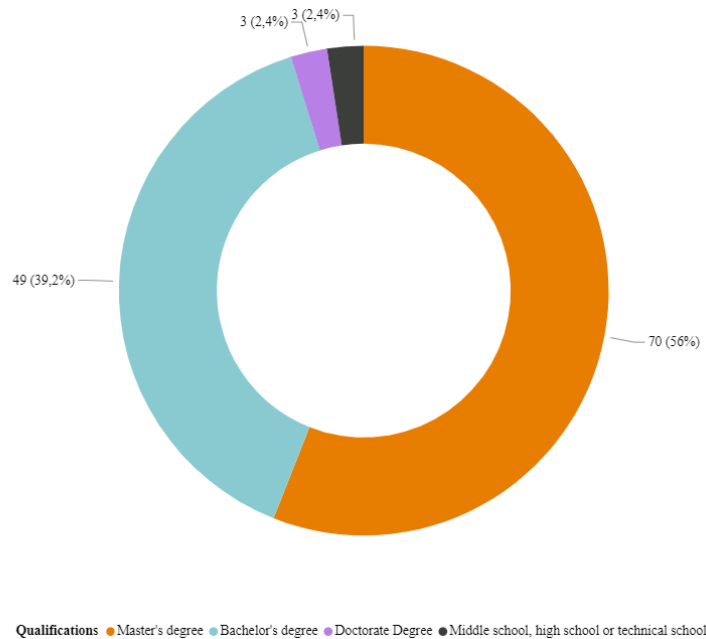
Figure 4.3 - Role in the organization of the respondents



Source: self-elaboration

Regarding the level of education of the respondents shown in the Figure 4.4, it was possible to determine that the majority (56%) have a master's degree, followed by 39.2% that have a degree and the same percentage (2.4%) have a doctorate and middle school, high school or technical school.

Figure 4.4 - Level of education of the respondents



Source: self elaboration

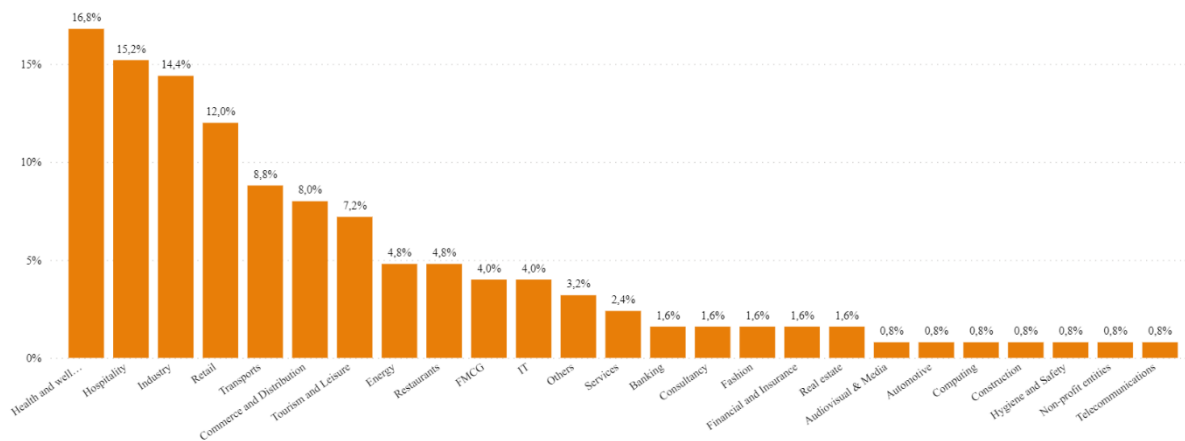
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4.3.2. Professional characterization of the respondents

The following figures (4.5, 4.6 and 4.7) illustrate the findings of the variable analysis according to the sample's professional characterisation.

Figure 4.5 reveals that most of the respondents are working in the sectors of health and wellness (16.8%), hospitality (15.2%), industry (14.4%), retail (12%), transports (8.8%), commerce and distribution (8%) and tourism and leisure (7.2%).

Figure 4.5 - Sector

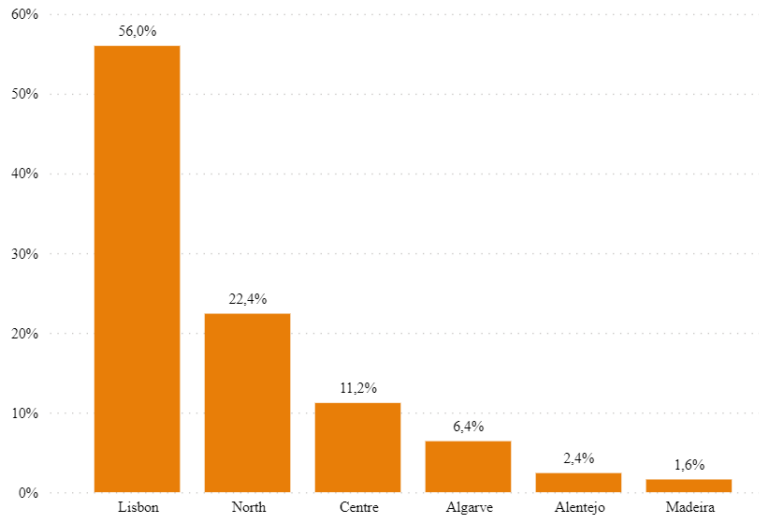


Source: self-elaboration

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In terms of geographic distribution, Figure 4.6 shows that the vast majority are present in Lisbon (56%), followed by the North (22.4%), Centre (11.2%), Algarve (6.4%) and finally Alentejo (2.4%) and Madeira (1.6%).

Figure 4.6 - Geographical location of the company's headquarters



Source: self-elaboration

Upon analysing the relationship between the characteristics of the industry sector and the geographical location of the corporate headquarters on table 4.2, it becomes evident that the majority of respondents belong to companies located in Lisbon. This location is characterised by a prevalence of health and wellness (12%), hospitality (8.8%), and transportation (6.4%) companies, as observed in previous analyses. As anticipated, the northern region exhibits a greater proportion of enterprises associated with the sectors of industry (5.6%) and retail (4%).

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Table 4.2 - Sector by location of headquarters

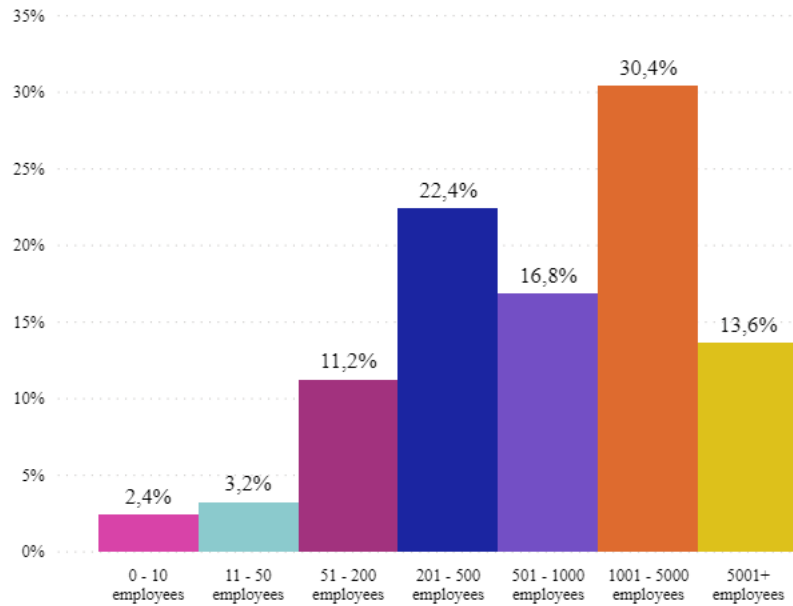
Sector	Alentejo	Algarve	Centre	Lisbon	Madeira	North
Audiovisual & Media				0,8%		
Automotive				0,8%		
Banking				1,6%		
Commerce and Distribution	1,6%		1,6%	2,4%		2,4%
Computing				0,8%		
Construction				0,8%		
Consultancy				1,6%		
Energy			4,8%			
Fashion				0,8%		0,8%
Financial and Insurance				0,8%		0,8%
FMCG	0,8%			3,2%		
Health and wellness		2,4%		12,0%		2,4%
Hospitality		2,4%		8,8%	0,8%	3,2%
Hygiene and Safety				0,8%		
Industry	0,8%		2,4%	5,6%		5,6%
IT		0,8%	0,8%	1,6%		0,8%
Non-profit entities				0,8%		
Others			0,8%	1,6%		0,8%
Real estate		0,8%				0,8%
Restaurants				4,0%		0,8%
Retail			3,2%	4,8%		4,0%
Services			0,8%	0,8%		0,8%
Telecommunications				0,8%		
Tourism and Leisure		0,8%		3,2%	0,8%	2,4%
Transports		0,8%		6,4%		1,6%

Source: self-elaboration

In terms of company size, as shown in figure 4.7, the majority have a range of 1001 - 5000 employees (30.4%), followed by 201 – 500 (22.4%) and then 501 - 1000 employees (16.8%). A minority of respondents answered that their company has more than 5001 employees (13.6%), followed by 51 - 200 employees (11.2%), and finally, 11 - 50 employees (3.2%) and 0 - 10 employees (2.4%). Concluding that most respondents work in large companies.

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Figure 4.7 - Company size



Source: self elaboration

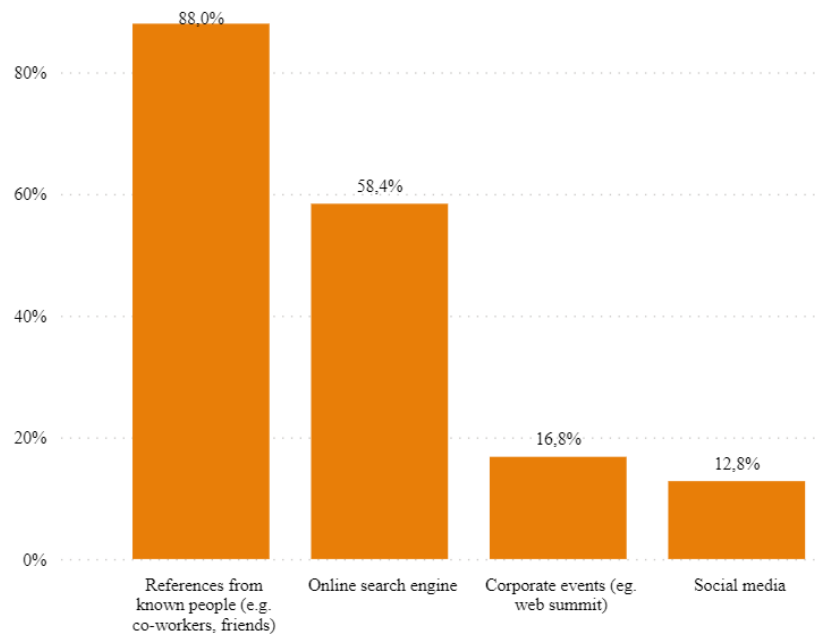
4.3.3. Search behavioural characterization of respondents

The following figures (4.8, 4.9 and 4.10) illustrate the findings of the variable analysis according to the sample's search behavioral characterisation.

When respondents need to look for information on management consultants, Figure 4.8 reveals that the majority look for this information from people they know (88%), followed by "Online search engine" (58,4%) and with a smaller percentage: "Corporate events" (16,8%) and "Social media" (12,8%).

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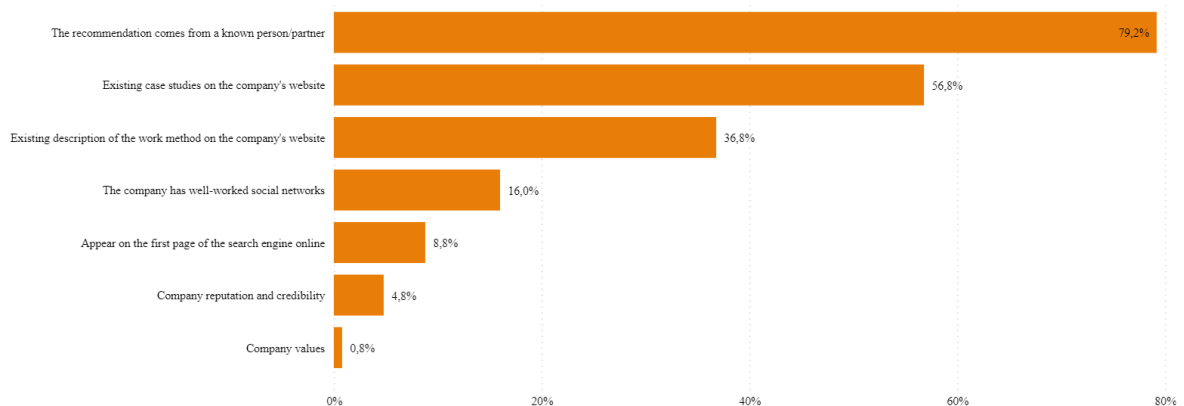
Figure 4.8 – Respondents' search information



Source: self-elaboration

For these respondents, these are the main ways that make the researched information credible, as shown in Figure 4.9: 79,2% trust a recommendation from a known person, 56,8% look for case studies on the company's website, 36,8% look for the company's work method on the website, 16% investigate the company's social networks, 8,8% trust if the company's website appears on the first page of the search engine, 4,8% are guided by the company's reputation and credibility in the market, and 0,8% if they identify with the company's values.

Figure 4.9 - Information credibility

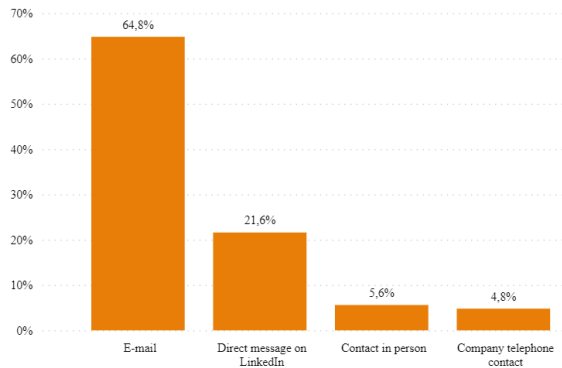


Source: self-elaboration

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Figure 4.10 shows respondent's preference in the form of contact. Most respondents said they prefer contact by e-mail (66.94%) followed by direct messages on LinkedIn (22.31%). With less expression we have personal contact (5.79%) and through telephone (4.96%). Concluding that e-mail and LinkedIn have a very significant presence in communication in this type of market.

Figure 4.10 – Preferred form of contact



Source: self-elaboration

4.3.4. Brand awareness

The following tables (4.3, 4.4 and 4.5) and figure (4.11) illustrate the findings of the variable analysis according to the sample's brand awareness research. The primary outcomes of the Table 4.3 are: the first three companies in the sector that occurred in the minds of the respondents were asked in order to analyse the notoriety of the companies present in the Portuguese market, and the following result was obtained: the company most quoted in first, second, and third place was Deloitte; the second was PwC, which was 12% of the times in first place; and the third, McKinsey & Company was mentioned 8,8%. In addition to Deloitte with 21,6% of the mentions, Accenture Portugal appears with 13,6% and KPMG with 12% for second place. Finally, Deloitte reappears with 16% of the mentions, followed by EY (13,6%), and McKinsey & Company (12,8%). Concluding, Deloitte is the company with the most top-of-mind notoriety. Furthermore, it was noted that Vasco Consult was not mentioned.

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Table 4.3 – Top-of-mind and spontaneous notoriety

Company Name	Quoted First	Quoted Second	Quoted Third
Deloitte	37,6%	21,6%	16,0%
PwC	12,0%	7,2%	8,8%
McKinsey & Company	8,8%	7,2%	12,8%
Accenture Portugal	8,0%	13,6%	6,4%
BCG	8,0%	7,2%	8,8%
EY	4,8%	8,8%	13,6%
KPMG Portugal	4,8%	12,0%	10,4%
BDO Portugal	2,4%	1,6%	
Kaizen Institute	2,4%	2,4%	0,8%
Baker Tilly Portugal	0,8%		
Blue shift	0,8%		
Auren Portugal			0,8%
Bain & Company		1,6%	1,6%
EWP			1,6%
IMBS		0,8%	0,8%
Kearney			0,8%
MHPB Consulting		0,8%	
Roland Berger			0,8%
Zertive		0,8%	

Source: self-elaboration

Respondents were asked to select the companies they were familiar with, obtaining the results shown in Table 4.4: Deloitte appears in first place with 97,6% of the selections (almost all respondents), followed by Accenture Portugal with 94,4% and KPMG Portugal with 92%. However, it is possible to notice that 4% of the respondents know Vasco Consult, which indicates that it already has some expression in the market.

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Table 4.4 – Assisted notoriety

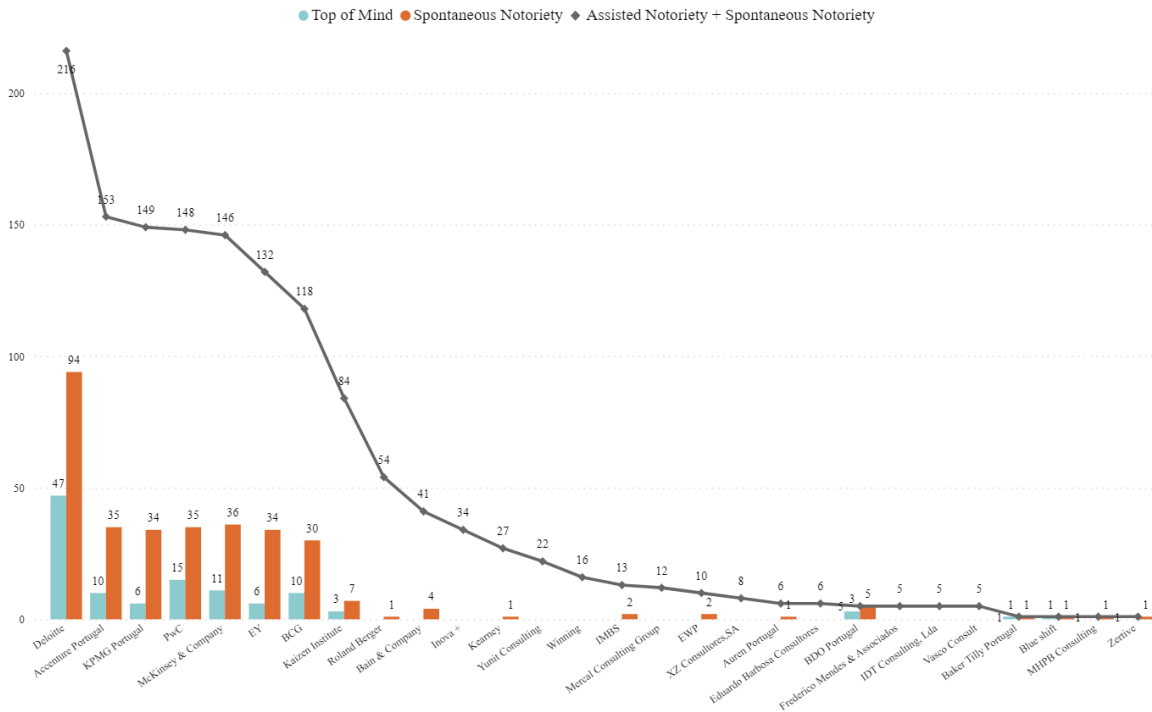
Company Name	Percentage Ticked
Deloitte	97,6%
Accenture Portugal	94,4%
KPMG Portugal	92,0%
PwC	90,4%
McKinsey & Company	88,0%
EY	78,4%
BCG	70,4%
Kaizen Institute	61,6%
Roland Berger	42,4%
Bain & Company	29,6%
Inova +	27,2%
Kearney	20,8%
Yunit Consulting	17,6%
Winning	12,8%
Mercal Consulting Group	9,6%
IMBS	8,8%
EWP	6,4%
XZ Consultores,SA	6,4%
Eduardo Barbosa Consultores	4,8%
Auren Portugal	4,0%
Frederico Mendes & Associados	4,0%
IDT Consulting, Lda	4,0%
Vasco Consult	4,0%

Source: self-elaboration

The figure 4.11 was constructed to enhance the analysis of notoriety by amalgamating top-of-mind, spontaneous, and assisted notoriety. In this figure it is also possible to observe the total notoriety that consists of the sum of spontaneous and assisted notoriety. As observed in the preceding tables (4.3 and 4.4), this data proves that Deloitte has a large advantage in terms of brand awareness, followed by Accenture Portugal. KPMG Portugal, PwC, and McKinsey & Company are in third, fourth and fifth place, with higher brand awareness and very similar values. On the other hand, Vasco appears in 24th place, ahead of brands such as Baker Tilly Portugal, Blue Shift, MHPB Consultancy, and Zertive. Demonstrating that, gradually, Vasco is acquiring its place in the Portuguese market.

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Figure 4.11 – Brand awareness



Source: self-elaboration

Table 4.5 shows the importance level of characteristics when choosing a consultancy company. To evaluate the level of importance of the notoriety of the company, it was revealed that most respondents (30,4%) consider it important. When assessing the level of importance of the quality/price ratio, it was noted that most respondents (38,2%) consider it to be very important. To learn the level of importance delivering quick results, it was discovered that most respondents (33,6%) consider it important. Regarding the level of importance of the satisfaction with the results, it was pointed out that most respondents (56,8%) consider it very important. To understand the level of importance of the services provided, it was observed that most respondents (37,6%) consider it very important. Also, by observing which characteristics are most relevant and combining data from very important and important, it is possible to conclude that, in order of importance, the results are: satisfaction with results (73.6%), type of services provided (61.6%), quality/price ratio (60%), and finally quick results and company notoriety with 53.6% and 47.2%, respectively.

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Table 4.5 - Importance level of characteristics when choosing a consultancy company

Characteristics	Very important	Important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Not important	Not at all important
Company Notoriety	16,8%	30,4%	17,6%	16,8%	14,4%	4,0%
Quality / Price Relationship	39,2%	20,8%	13,6%	19,2%	7,2%	
Quick Results	20,0%	33,6%	20,8%	12,8%	10,4%	2,4%
Satisfaction with the Results	56,8%	16,8%	4,0%	20,0%	2,4%	
Type of Services Provided	37,6%	24,0%	11,2%	20,0%	7,2%	

Source: self-elaboration

4.3.5. Contact with Vasco Consult

Regarding the findings of the variable analysis according to the sample's contact with Vasco Consult, the fundamental outputs consist in the respondents' experience with Vasco is mostly because they have heard about it but have not yet acquired its services (100% of responses) and the majority learned about it through a known person (80% of responses).

4.3.6. Segmentation

A segmentation analysis was run to identify target segments of potential clients of Vasco based on data collected in the survey. The five items that can influence a potential client's decision when choosing a company were used to segment the sample of respondents: C1 - the relationship between quality and price; C2 - the type of services offered; C3 - the level of notoriety of the company; C4 - the level of satisfaction with the results that have been achieved; C5 – rapid presentation of results. The Ward method, which is a hierarchal method that identify groups of individuals with similar characteristics, was utilised in the present analysis.

Table 4.6 shows a profile of segmentation of the sample based on the level of importance of these five characteristics, using a scale ranging from 1 to 6, that was carried out through the implementation of the Ward method and using the squared Euclidean distance. Based on the dendrogram we found three market segments. The first cluster contain individuals who assign a low degree of importance to the characteristics, with scores ranging from 2,2 to 2,9. The second segment encompasses individuals who attribute moderate to high importance to the aforementioned characteristics, with scores ranging from 4 to 5,5. Lastly, the third group comprises respondents who assign a high degree of importance to the characteristics, with

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scores ranging from 5,2 to 6. The segmentation can be visually observed in a more illustrative manner in Annex 1.

Table 4.6 – Profile of the segments according to the level of importance

Mean	Segment 1 – 23,2%	Segment 2 – 40,8%	Segment 3 – 36%
C1	2,8	5,3	5,2
C2	2,7	4,9	5,6
C3	2,2	4,0	5,3
C4	2,9	5,5	6,0
C5	2,5	4,5	5,3

Source: self-elaboration

Table 4.7 presents the profile of the three market segments, aiming to describe the segments in terms of the characteristics of participants. After conducting an analysis on all of the responses that were provided, it was learned that:

- It can be inferred that the aforementioned individuals belong to the first segment of the workforce, specifically in the fields of health and wellness, hospitality, and industry. Individuals who belong to the industry and retail sectors are classified as members of segment 2. Segment 3 involves individuals who are affiliated with the hospitality, retail, and health and wellness industries;
- The results reveal that the segment 1 exhibits a higher prevalence among organisations that have a workforce exceeding 5001 individuals, whereas the second segment is more prominent in companies with employee strength ranging from 1001 to 5000. The third segment, on the other hand, is relatively more prevalent in companies that have a size ranging from 201 to 500 employees, as well as those with employee strength ranging from 1001 to 5000;
- In terms of the correlation between job title and organisational hierarchy, executive managers constitute the predominant group across all three segments. In segment 3, it is also possible to find senior managers and middle managers with a significant expression.

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- The method employed for information retrieval holds significant importance, as it sheds light on the most effective online research techniques and the influence of personal referrals (i.e. word-of-mouth) across all segments;
- The predominant response across the three segments regarding the factor that confers credibility to the information encountered pertains to the endorsement emanating from a familiar individual or associate, underscoring the significant pertinence of this sort of marketing approach.
- E-mail is the most favoured mode of communication across the three segments, followed by direct messaging through LinkedIn. The presented data indicates that conventional methods are gradually becoming obsolete, highlighting the crucial significance of incorporating them into digital platforms.

Table 4.7 – Profile of the market segments

		Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3
Sector of activity	Hospitality	19%	7%	16%
	Industry	13%	18%	5%
	Retail	0%	15%	11%
	Health and wellness	29%	10%	11%
Number of employees	0 - 10 employees	3,4%	3,9%	0,0%
	11 - 50 employees	3,4%	5,9%	0,0%
	51 - 200 employees	13,8%	9,8%	11,1%
	201 – 500 employees	20,7%	17,6%	28,9%
	501 – 1000 employees	17,2%	13,7%	20,0%
	1001 – 5000 employees	17,2%	39,2%	28,9%
	5001+ employees	24,1%	9,8%	11,1%
Job role	Board of Directors	0,0%	7,8%	2,2%
	Executive Management	48,3%	49,0%	37,8%
	Senior Management	17,2%	25,5%	31,1%
	Middle Management	13,8%	15,7%	24,4%
	Front-Line Employees	20,7%	2,0%	4,4%

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Search method preference	Online search engine	39,2%	34,9%	27,7%
	Social media	3,9%	4,7%	12,0%
	Corporate events (e.g. web summit)	7,8%	9,3%	10,8%
	References from known people (e.g. co-workers, friends)	49,0%	51,2%	49,4%
What gives credibility to the information encountered	Existing description of the work method on the company's website	19,3%	17,1%	18,7%
	Existing case studies on the company's website	29,8%	27,6%	27,5%
	The company has well-worked social networks	7,0%	8,6%	7,7%
	Appear on the first page of the search engine online	1,8%	4,8%	5,5%
	The recommendation comes from a known person/partner	40,4%	41,0%	36,3%
	Company reputation and credibility	1,8%	1,0%	4,4%
Contact preference	Company telephone contact	3,6%	8,0%	2,3%
	E-mail	78,6%	58,0%	68,2%
	Direct message on LinkedIn	14,3%	28,0%	20,5%
	Contact in person	3,6%	4,0%	9,1%

Source: self-elaboration

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Communication plan

At this juncture, it is pertinent to underscore the significance of communication for this specific organisation. Empirical evidence suggests that Vasco Consult has limited investment in the domain of communication, and frequently employs communication strategies both inadvertently and deliberately. Hence, it is imperative for the organisation to engage in deliberate and strategic communication to the fullest extent possible. The formulation of a communication plan offers several benefits, including: the objectives of promoting and managing the positive image of the organisation, its services, as well as reinforcing the organization's identity through the sharing of values and interests and socialisation of employees, are crucial in organisational management; the establishment of an identification system involving a logo and graphic line is imperative to enable effortless recognition of the organisation; in the case of companies, it is important to monitor the communication strategies of competitors and their effectiveness.

5.1.1. Vasco Consult visual identity

5.1.1.1. Branding

The brand experienced a comprehensive rethinking process, collaborating closely with the designer to refine its identity.

Colours

The first step was to carefully choose a colour palette that best represented the brand's personality and values. The primary colours selected for Vasco were Vasco Blue, Vasco Orange. Yellow and lilac were chosen as secondary colours. With regard to primary colours, Heller (2012, p.43) indicates that blue is commonly associated with sentiments of compassion, balance, and loyalty, despite its perceived cool and distant nature. The colour in

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question is emblematic of the intellectual virtues (Guthrie, 2003). Heller (2012, p.339) declares that orange is commonly associated with attributes such as enjoyment, sociability, and transformation. Blue and orange are considered complementary colours. The colour blue is often associated with spiritualism, introspection, and tranquilly, while its opposite counterpart, orange, is commonly linked to contrasting attributes. As famously quoted by Vincent van Gogh, the renowned Dutch post-impressionist painter, the colour orange cannot exist without the presence of the colour blue. These four colours were also carefully combined into a gradient, resulting in a smooth transition and emphasising the brand's dynamic and up-to-date image.

Typography

The typography selected for Vasco's branding was Helvetica. The Helvetica typeface is widely recognised for its elegant, contemporary, and impartial visual appeal. The high adaptability and wide usage of the design can be attributed to its simplicity, clarity, universality, modernity, timelessness, and neutrality, which are desirable characteristics across various industries and design contexts (Prisco, 2020).

Symbol

One essential element was incorporated to further solidify the brand's identity - the logo's triangle, which served as a powerful visual anchor across all communication elements. According to the company's designer, choosing the shape of the triangle symbol as a visual emblem for Vasco was a deliberate choice made "to encapsulate the values and philosophy of the organisation". The triangle is representative of the coherence and concordance among these stages. The aforementioned statement conveys the notion of an unbroken sequence of enhancement, wherein every stage interlinks and supplements one another to attain ultimate triumph. The utilisation of this symbol effectively communicates Vasco's dedication to providing all-encompassing and thorough services, that extend from the initial stages to the ultimate desired outcome. This statement conveys the notion that the measure of success is closely tied to the robustness of the underlying framework and the assurance with which it is constructed. By incorporating this symbol, Vasco demonstrates its dedication to forging solid

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alliances with consumers, providing a reliable and firm foundation for achieving mutual objectives. Inspired by this symbol, a complementing triangle-inspired element was added to accentuate specific visuals, adding consistency.

Signature

The Vasco Consult embraces the logo signature "We make it simple" to reflect their commitment to optimising procedures, cultivating an environment of ongoing improvement, and providing pragmatic and tangible results for their customers. The adoption of simplicity as a guiding principle can enable organisations to reach their complete potential, enhance operational efficiency, and attain enduring success. The aforementioned catchphrase succinctly summarises the fundamental ideology and methodology of Vasco, which aims to optimise processes and enhance their effectiveness.

Templates for social media

After establishing the colour palette and symbols, each element was assigned to a unique theme, adding clarity and purpose to the brand's visual message. Colours were assigned strategically, with orange being assigned to blog articles, blue being assigned to company anniversaries, purple being assigned to "know the team" posts, and yellow being assigned to certificates. The captivating gradient was designated for job openings, attracting potential fresh talent. Meanwhile, the triangle symbol was used to highlight new team members, promoting a sense of inclusiveness. Appendix 3 presents the proposals for the templates for Vasco's social media platforms, vertical format for Instagram and horizontal format for LinkedIn.

5.1.2. Current communication

At the moment, Vasco Consult places substantial focus on digital communication channels, specifically its website and social media platforms. The website of the company primarily showcases the exposition of the company's mission, values, and objectives, along with an array of services provided by the company, and the antecedent projects executed by the

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company. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram serve as important communication tools for the company. The purpose of these communications is to disseminate information to the community regarding various aspects of the company, such as new team members, events associated with the water polo team, which Vasco sponsors, employment opportunities, and other relevant subjects. The majority of these publications are tailored exclusively for the Dutch market, thereby impeding effective communication and integration in Portugal.

5.1.3. Communication strategy

This communication strategy proposal, which I am proud to present, has been meticulously crafted and adapted specifically for Vasco Consult. As a trainee of this esteemed organization, I deeply invested in its success and have dedicated significant time and effort to develop this comprehensive proposal. Recognising the importance of efficient communication in achieving company objectives, I've taken into consideration Vasco's particular requirements, challenges, and aspirations throughout the entire process. This proposal intends to empower Vasco Consult to improve its communication practises, both internally and externally, thereby enhancing its brand awareness in the Portuguese market.

5.1.3.1. Desired placement

Currently, there is an increased emphasis placed by companies on their positioning, as they have recognised the significance of their image in establishing their brand identity. The organisation aspires to establish itself as the most skilled entity in the market, equipped with subject matter expert.

5.1.3.2. Value proposition

Vasco Consult provides motivational support for cultural transformation and facilitates the establishment of a bridge between individuals and operational processes. Our objective is to assist clients in adapting to market changes and facilitating their digital transformation within their organisations. Additionally, we transfer the knowledge to them

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on how they can become data-driven, enabling them to make more informed and deliberate decisions.

5.1.3.3. Communication goals

The foundation of a prosperous organisation lies in its ability to engage in efficient communication. The maintenance of a cohesive and uniform communication strategy is of utmost importance for Vasco Consult. This is crucial in order to effectively communicate unambiguous and succinct messages, reflect the organization's values and character, fulfil commitments, and promptly and efficiently interact with diverse stakeholders. Vasco Consult has made a commitment to attain the ensuing communication objectives:

- **Maintaining unified and consistent communication:** with the aim of achieving uniformity across all platforms, including internal and external channels, the organisation endeavours to maintain a cohesive and consistent approach to communication. The establishment of a unified brand image engenders cohesiveness and promotes trust among clients, team members, and stakeholders.
- **Clear and concise message delivery:** the effort to express information in a manner that is both clear and succinct, with the goal of ensuring comprehension by its intended recipients it is aimed, meaning the ability to express information concisely and avoid technical language promotes efficient communication and improves understanding.
- **Expressing values and personality:** recognition of the significance of communicating its core values and unique identity in all forms of communication. Through consistent communication of these key elements, the organisation establishes an identifiable presence in the market and promotes solid connections with its various stakeholders.
- **Upholding promises:** ensuring the fulfilment of commitments is of utmost importance for Vasco Consult in establishing and maintaining trust. Therefore, the organisation places emphasis on fulfilling its commitments. Vasco Consult enhances its credibility and cultivates enduring partnerships by fulfilling its commitments and meeting expectations.

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- Prompt and efficient engagement: having timely and productive interactions with its customers, employees, and other interested parties. The organisation prioritises prompt responses and proactive communication to effectively address inquiries, apprehensions, and prospects within a reasonable timeframe.

5.1.3.4. Communication principles

In addition to the previously delineated communication objectives, unique value proposition, and core values, Vasco Consult also has particular principles that lead its communication approach. The company's communication strategy is designed to be effective, impactful, and build trust among stakeholders by prioritising quality over quantity, centring the focus on the audience, and embracing openness and transparency.

- Principle 1: audience-centred focus

Acknowledgement of the significance of comprehending and fulfilling the requirements of its intended audience. The adoption of an audience-centric approach enables Vasco Consult to establish significant connections, promote active participation, and cater to the particular concerns and interests of its stakeholders.

- Principle 2: importance of prioritising quality over quantity

Prioritising quality in communication efforts, rather than focusing solely on quantity. The optimisation of the efficacy of its messages ensures that each communication piece is meticulously crafted, pertinent, and influential. This approach leads to heightened engagement and resonance with the intended audience.

- Principle 3: open and transparent communication

The communication strategy of Vasco Consult has been founded on the essential principle of transparency. The organisation acknowledges that the virtues of transparency and openness are conducive to building trust, credibility, and enduring associations with stakeholders. Vasco Consult fosters an atmosphere of honesty and integrity by providing precise and reliable information, disseminating insights and updates, and transparently addressing concerns or feedback. The company's

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dedication to transparency reinforces its establishment as a reliable partner and strengthens its standing within the sector.

5.1.3.5. Tone of voice

Ensuring a consistent and distinct tone of voice across diverse communication channels is of major importance. Vasco Consult's tone of voice across various communication channels, including its website, social media platforms, e-mails, and advertising materials, embodies the company's personality and functions as a representation of its relationship with its target audience.

5.1.3.6. Key communication messages

The term "Key Messages" refers to the main points or ideas that an organisation wishes to convey to their target audience. These messages are carefully crafted and strategically selected to effectively communicate the desired information and achieve the intended goals. Vasco aims to communicate to its target audiences the values of competence, extensive knowledge, professionalism, strong interpersonal relationships, talent, and employee benefits. Table 5.1 illustrates the distinct essential messages that Vasco Consult should communicate to its target audiences.

Table 5.1 – Key messages to target audiences

Target audience	Key messages
Clients and potential clients	Credible, competent organisation with extensive experience in business development, transformation management, and data analytics.
Employees and potential employees	A corporation that provides continuous training, possibilities for growth, team proximity, and remote work.

Source: self-elaboration

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5.1.3.7. Internal communication

The internal communication strategy of Vasco should be directed towards all members of the organization's workforce. The purpose of planning actions is to provide training to employees, both operationally and commercially, with the goal of establishing a proficient and driven team capable of effectively communicating the brand's key messages. This includes conducting internal training sessions. Furthermore, it is imperative to ensure that employees are kept informed of the organization's communication strategies. This can be achieved through internal meetings designed to disseminate information of mutual interest, including updates on ongoing projects in which they are involved. Such measures can foster a sense of engagement and facilitate the sharing of organisational values among employees. In order to reinforce this measure, a bi-monthly newsletter is scheduled to be disseminated via Vasco's internal platform. Maintaining weekly meetings to share information about new projects and employees is a highly advantageous measure for promoting internal communication. Sustaining the monthly marketing meetings is crucial for deliberating on the diverse initiatives that will be executed in the ensuing month, thereby allowing for timely adjustments within the current month, if necessary.

5.1.3.8. Online communication

In modern times, the online presence of a company is a prerequisite for its existence. The internet works as a primary interface for the job market and organisations, underscoring the importance of devising strategies that facilitate the establishment of such collaborative relationships. As aforementioned, Vasco possesses a range of digital platforms, including a website (WS), LinkedIn (Li), and Instagram (Ig). The channels were categorised into themes based on the nature of the communication. The “Team” section showcases new members, recent certifications, company gatherings, and commemoration of organisational milestones. The showcased “Projects” consist of case studies that exhibit the employed methodology and the demonstrated outcomes. “Events” for corporate events, including trade shows, networking events, and team building activities that are commonly organised by Vasco. The following theme is "Educate" with blog posts written from the perspective of Vasco's

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employees, discussing various topics related to the company's services. The "Connect" topic offers blog posts that provide employees with insightful perspectives on contemporary topics, such as International Women's Day or even give a backstage feeling. Table 5.2 displays the channels and their corresponding theme attributions.

Table 5.2 – Attribution of digital channels according to themes

Themes	Team	Projects	Events	Educate	Connect
Channels	Li, Ig	Li, WS	Li, Ig	Li, WS	Li, WS

Source: self-elaboration

5.1.3.9. Promotion

As a complement to the intra-organizational online communication efforts of Vasco Consult, it is imperative to initiate enhanced engagement with the media. In order to enhance the credibility, proximity, and knowledge sharing of a business consultancy firm with potential clients and professionals in the field, it is recommended to publish in newspapers and magazines related to the sector through press releases and sponsored posts.

5.1.3.10. Partnerships

As delineated in the segment pertaining to online communication, the internet serves as the main channel of interaction between the labour market, encompassing both experienced professionals and fresh graduates, and various entities. Consequently, it is imperative to uphold regular communication with recruiters and universities to enhance the company's credibility and reputation among these specific demographics. Within the B2B context, establishing affiliations with sector associations that work to advance and boost companies among top-tier professionals in the field is considered advantageous. Vasco's affiliations with esteemed organisations such as Startup Portugal (www.startupportugal.com), Portuguese Business Intelligence Association (www.apbi.pt), Data Science Portuguese Association (www.dsipa.pt), and Data Science Portugal (www.datascienceportugal.com) are likely to enhance its credibility, improve its visibility, and strengthen its notoriety among its stakeholders.

5.1.4. Monitoring and Control

The efficacy of a marketing strategy is determined upon its formulation and execution. In the words of Mações (2019, p.328-329), the process of executing and monitoring strategies comprises four distinct phases, namely: goal and objective setting, measurement of current performance, reinforcement or correction of actions as required, and establishment of new objectives. Given the established strategy, a crucial aspect in assessing the efficacy of the plan is to confirm a rise in the quantity of novel clients. This evolution can be monitored through commercial meetings. Simultaneously, the objective is to enhance the company's awareness and notoriety among industry associations and academic institutions, while also ensuring that the brand's intended positioning is aligned with the stakeholders' perception. One potential method for assessing a company's heightened visibility and acknowledgement among its stakeholders is by means of augmented engagement with its LinkedIn page, Instagram account, and website. According to the author Marques (2020 p. 40), table 5.3 shows the main KPIs by platform.

Table 5.3 - Key metrics by platform

Channel	Analytic system	Metric
Website	Performance - Google Analytics	Sessions (visits), average session time, pages per visit and bounce rate.
	SEO - Google Analytics, Google Search console and others	Organic traffic, number of organic keywords, keywords on the first page, backlinks, and main pages.
LinkedIn	LinkedIn stats	Followers, reach and engagement.
Instagram	Instagram stats	Followers, reach, profile visits, website clicks and engagement.

Source: adapted from Marques (2020)

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5.1.5. Actions and recommendations

Following a meticulous examination and according to the literature review, a clear overview of the suggested actions will be presented with a chronological schedule, encompassing the period up to the conclusion of 2023. Furthermore, supplementary measures are recommended and should be taken into account, including:

- Improve and harmonize branding on social and company's presentations;
- Change all documents used in internal communication to English;
- Attendance in trade shows and networking events;
- Organization of webinars;
- Development of merchandising to distinguish attendants in fairs;
- Advertising in business newspaper;
- Creation of video content on Vasco's services, events and case studies;
- Creation of affiliate page for Vasco Consult Portugal;
- Improve website's SEO;
- Forward the .pt domain to .com;
- Development of internal newsletter to be sent every two months, with the following topics: highlights about past events, fun facts about special days, team's birthdays coming up, new projects, latest blog posts, books/films/series recommendations and new people joining;
- Organization of team building events – presential and online;
- Organization of networking event;
- Associate with a social cause.

The data from the present marketing research shows that Vasco's brand awareness is currently lower than that of its competitors in the sector of business consulting. To tackle this challenge and enhance its position in the market, a comprehensive set of actions was recommended. The primary focus of these efforts is to increase Vasco's notoriety, a key characteristic identified as significant when clients are choosing a business consulting company (like it was shown in table 4.5).

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To optimize communication efforts, it is essential to target segments 2 and 3, as they place a high value on a company's notoriety. By tailoring marketing strategies towards these segments, the potential for positive reception and engagement increases significantly. Additionally, in terms of webinars, a targeted approach towards segments 2 and 3 within the retail sector would be most beneficial, as it can provide a higher return on investment since the data shows that these segments give great importance to notoriety. By strategically implementing these measures and focusing on building a strong brand awareness, Vasco can attract more attention and establish itself as a reputable and preferred consultancy partner, ultimately driving growth and success in the highly competitive consulting landscape.

Strategy timetable

A visual representation will be presented, illustrating the anticipated timetable for the forthcoming half-year period. Nevertheless, this strategy is highly adaptable and necessitates monthly revisions in accordance with the upcoming month's events.

Table 5.4 – Strategy timetable

Frequency	Channel	Actions
Every month	WS	Blog post
	Li	Post about blog entry
		Post about new employees Post “Meet the Vascos”
	Ig	Post and story about blog entry Post “Meet the Vascos”
	N/A	Team building activity
Every two months	SharePoint	Internal newsletter
When applicable	WS	Page with new case study – when project finishes
	Li	Post about new employees Post with team certificates Post about events

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		Job vacancy post Post about employee anniversary
	Ig	Post about new employees Post with team certificates Post and stories about events Job vacancy post Post about employee anniversary
	Others	Webinars Networking events Attendance in trade shows and fairs Advertising on business newspaper

Source: self-elaboration

5.2. Principal conclusions

The research process was conducted with the objective of addressing the identified problem, which pertained to the need of Vasco Consult, a consulting business, to enhance its understanding of effective communication strategies for establishing its presence in the Portuguese market. The aforementioned problem was accompanied by the subsequent research question: What is the most efficient way to communicate about Vasco in Portugal?

The findings derived from the marketing research conducted on brand awareness of management consultancies indicate that certain multinational corporations hold a powerful market presence. In terms of specific objectives, the research intended to provide insights to help with the decision-making process by generating data with the sample population: definition of company's profile; identification and analysis of competitors; identification of relevant segments, including business-area segments; definition of the value proposition; definition of the brand positioning in the Portuguese market.

To enhance brand awareness and improve its notoriety among customers, potential customers, employees, and potential employees, a range of strategies were developed that

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integrate both online and offline channels. These tactics aim to align the company's perceived positioning with its intended, generally leading to an increase in customer base. Vasco Consult establishes a solid foundation for effective communication by adhering to these communication objectives of ensuring consistency, expressing transparent messages, fulfilling commitments, and engaging proficiently. The organization's market position is further strengthened by its notoriety for dedication to core values, a unique collaborative approach, and a focus on simplicity. Vasco Consult endeavours to ensure that its communication strategies are in line with its overarching goals of client satisfaction, ethical business conduct, and sustained growth.

5.3. Limitations

Malhotra *et al.* (2017, p.871) shows that any kind of marketing research has its limitations and since there are numerous intervening variables that are difficult to control, marketing research cannot provide a complete answer to the issues. Due to limitations in the tools and techniques used, some marketing problems do not lend themselves to valid research conclusions. Many intangible and subjective variables are at work that are hard to measure. In a rapidly changing environment, data collected will quickly become obsolete, and research findings based on them will be of little use. It only supports as a foundation for predicting future events; it cannot guarantee their occurrence with any certainty. Marketing research requires additional energy, effort, and money. However, it is frequently stated that marketing research is less expensive than pricey marketing mistakes. Here are some limitations on the present research:

Limited sample size - the survey's sample size is small, limiting the ability to be generalized. If the sample size is too small, the results may not be typical of the full population of B2B consultancies in Portugal, and they may not be applicable to other similar contexts or situations (Bryman, 2012, p. 201).

Non-random sample – The sampling method in question (judgement sampling) exhibits certain limitations originating in potential selection bias, lack of representativeness of the

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sample, and inherent uncertainty regarding the quality of the information produced (Bryman, 2012, p. 201-202).

Non-response errors - form of error that happens when certain individuals within the sample do not provide a response, typically due to either their unwillingness to participate or unfamiliarity with the question's topic. This leads to alterations in the dimensions or attributes of the network sample in contrast to the initial sample (Bryman, 2012, p. 199).

Heterogeneity - The heterogeneity of the business world is such that the degree of diversity between small and large businesses surpasses the difference between any two individual consumers. Furthermore, there exists notable diversity across various categories of small enterprises (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017, p. 871).

Marketing for a B2B consulting is a complicated and multidimensional topic, and it may be difficult to capture all essential aspects and features in the research design (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). Broadly speaking, it is worth noting that the current investigation was conducted utilising all available data for analysis. Consequently, all inferences and deductions drawn were based on the information that could be gathered.

As a final note, I suggest that in the future, a market research should be carried out with a larger and random sample. If possible, incentives should also be given in order to reduce non-response errors.

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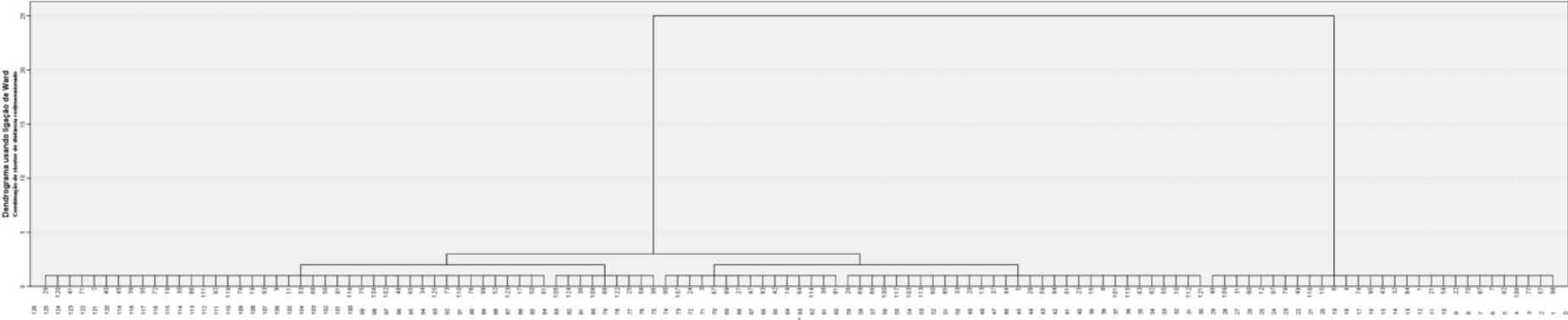
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Dendrogram of the Ward segmentation method



Source: self-elaboration

Appendix 2 – Marketing research on image and notoriety of management consultancy companies in Portugal

O meu nome é Rita Sequeira e sou aluna do segundo ano do mestrado de Gestão de Marketing da Universidade do Algarve. Estou a realizar um estudo de imagem e notoriedade com o objectivo de melhorar a comunicação da empresa Vasco Consult. A sua opinião é fundamental para atingirmos este objectivo. Gostaria de lhe colocar algumas questões que ocupam entre 3 a 5 minutos do seu tempo, agradecendo, desde já, a sua colaboração. Todas as respostas são confidenciais, anónimas e apenas serão utilizadas para fins estatísticos. Agradeço, mais uma vez, a sua preciosa colaboração.

1. Qual é o segmento de atividade da empresa onde trabalha?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audiovisual | <input type="checkbox"/> Indústria |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automóvel | <input type="checkbox"/> Informática |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banca | <input type="checkbox"/> Moda |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comércio e Distribuição | <input type="checkbox"/> Restauração |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construção Civil | <input type="checkbox"/> Retalho |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construção Naval | <input type="checkbox"/> Serviços |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consultoria | <input type="checkbox"/> Setor Público |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educação/ Ensino | <input type="checkbox"/> Saúde e Bem Estar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energia | <input type="checkbox"/> Tecnologia da informação |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entidades não lucrativas | <input type="checkbox"/> Telecomunicações |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financeiro e Seguros | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higiene e Segurança | <input type="checkbox"/> Turismo e Lazer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotelaria | <input type="checkbox"/> Outro. Qual? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Imobiliário | |

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2. Em que região geográfica se encontra a sede da empresa onde trabalha atualmente?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Norte | <input type="checkbox"/> Algarve |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centro | <input type="checkbox"/> Madeira |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lisboa | <input type="checkbox"/> Açores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alentejo | <input type="checkbox"/> Outra. Qual? _____ |

3. Qual é a dimensão da sua empresa?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 10 colaboradores | <input type="checkbox"/> 501 - 1000 colaboradores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 - 50 colaboradores | <input type="checkbox"/> 1001 - 5000 colaboradores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51 - 200 colaboradores | <input type="checkbox"/> 5001+ colaboradores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 201 - 500 colaboradores | |

4. Qual é o seu cargo dentro da empresa onde se encontra?

5. Quando precisa de procurar informação sobre empresas de consultoria de gestão, onde a procura?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motor de busca online | <input type="checkbox"/> Referências de pessoas conhecidas (ex: colegas de trabalho, amigos) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Redes sociais | <input type="checkbox"/> Outra fonte. Qual? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eventos corporativos (ex: <i>web summit</i>) | |

6. O que torna essa informação credível?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Existir descrição do método de trabalho no site da empresa | <input type="checkbox"/> A empresa ter as redes sociais bem trabalhadas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Existirem casos de estudo no site da empresa | <input type="checkbox"/> Estar na primeira página de pesquisa no motor de busca online |

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- A recomendação vir de uma pessoa conhecida Outra. Qual? _____

7. Como gostaria de ser contactado para uma breve apresentação de uma empresa de consultoria de gestão?

- Contacto telefónico da empresa Mensagem direta no *LinkedIn*
 E-mail Outra. Qual? _____

8. Por favor, indique quais são as primeiras três empresas que vêm à sua mente quando pensa numa empresa de consultoria de gestão:

9. Por favor, assinale nesta lista as marcas de consultoras que conhece:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accenture Portugal | <input type="checkbox"/> Inova + |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auren Portugal | <input type="checkbox"/> Kaizen Institute |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bain and Company | <input type="checkbox"/> Kearney |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boston Consulting Group (BCG) | <input type="checkbox"/> KPMG Portugal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deloitte | <input type="checkbox"/> McKinsey & Company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eduardo Barbosa Consultores | <input type="checkbox"/> Mercal Consulting Group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EWP | <input type="checkbox"/> PwC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EY XZ Consultores,SA | <input type="checkbox"/> Roland Berger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frederico Mendes and Associados | <input type="checkbox"/> Vasco Consult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IDT Consulting, Lda. | <input type="checkbox"/> Winning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IMBS | <input type="checkbox"/> Yunit Consulting |

10. Qual é o grau de importância que atribui às seguintes características?

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	1 – Pouco importante	2	3	4	5	6 – Muito importante
Relação qualidade/preço						
Tipo de serviços que presta						
Notoriedade da empresa						
Satisfação com os resultados						
Apresentação de resultados rápidos						

11. Se respondeu que conhece a Vasco Consult, por favor responda às questões seguintes. Se respondeu que não passe para a questão número 12.

11.1 Como classifica a semelhança entre os seguintes pares de consultoras:

	1 – Pouco semelhante	2	3	4	5 – Muito Semelhante
Vasco Consult - Kaizen Institute					
Vasco Consult - IMBS					
Vasco Consult - Accenture Portugal					
Vasco Consult - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)					
Kaizen Institute - IMBS					
Kaizen Institute - Accenture Portugal					
Kaizen Institute - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)					
IMBS - Accenture Portugal					
IMBS - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)					

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Accenture Portugal - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)					
--	--	--	--	--	--

11.2 Se sim, conhece a Vasco Consult porque:

- Já ouvi falar da empresa, mas nunca contratei os seus serviços
- Ocasionalmente contrato os seus serviços
- Regularmente contrato os seus serviços

11.3 Se sim, como tomou conhecimento da Vasco Consult?

- Pelas redes sociais
- Através de pesquisa orgânica no motor de busca *online*
- Por referência de uma pessoa conhecida
- No evento *web summit*
- Outra. Qual? _____

11.4 Se sim, qual é o grau de adequação da Vasco Consult às seguintes características?

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Relação qualidade/preço						
Tipo de serviços que presta						
Notoriedade da empresa						
Satisfação com os resultados						
Apresentação de resultados rápidos						

11.5 Se sim, indique por favor, dentro dos atributos listados, quais considera que melhor caracterizam a Vasco Consult:

Simple Complexa

Clássica Moderna

Necessária Desnecessária

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Importante Não importante

Fraca Forte

Acessível Dispendiosa

Agradável Desagradável

Diversificada Homogénea

12. Qual é a sua faixa etária?

18-20

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61+

13. Quais são as suas habilitações literárias?

Ensino básico, secundário ou técnico-profissional

Licenciatura

Mestrado

Doutoramento

14. Agradeço o seu feedback. Caso tenha comentários ou sugestões por favor deixe aqui.

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Appendix 3 – Visuals for social media posts

Company anniversary post

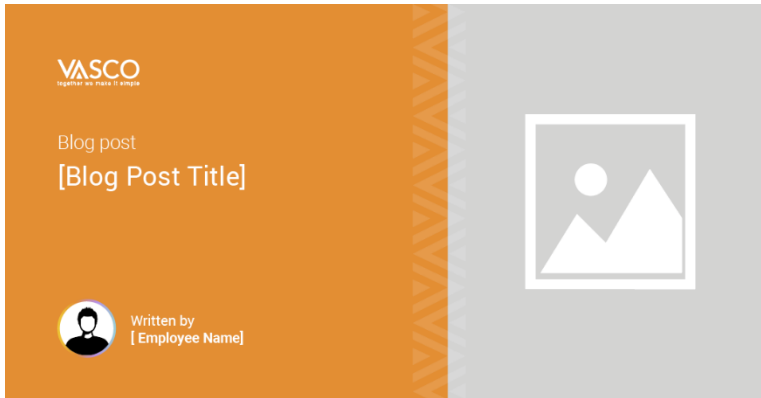


1ST YEAR VASCO

Happy to share
this ride with you
[Employee Name]!



Blog post CTA

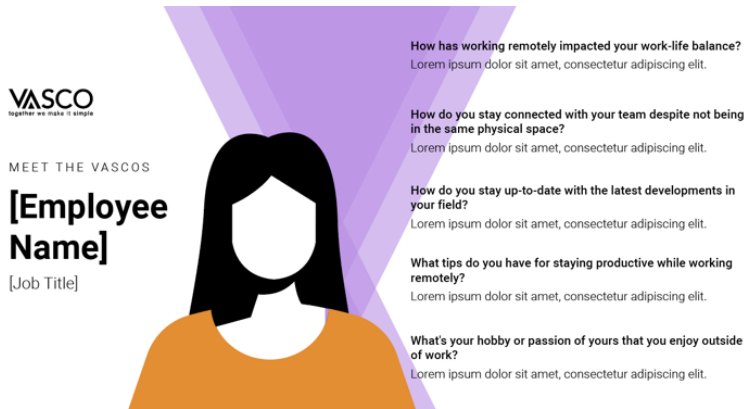


New certification post



MARKET RESEARCH FOR VASCO CONSULT

“Meet the Vascos” post



VASCO
together we make it simple

MEET THE VASCOS

[Employee Name]
[Job Title]

How has working remotely impacted your work-life balance?
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

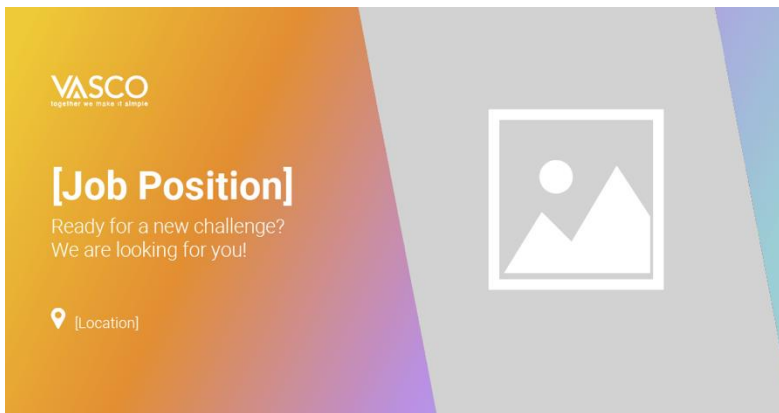
How do you stay connected with your team despite not being in the same physical space?
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

How do you stay up-to-date with the latest developments in your field?
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

What tips do you have for staying productive while working remotely?
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

What's your hobby or passion of yours that you enjoy outside of work?
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Job vacancy post



VASCO
together we make it simple

[Job Position]
Ready for a new challenge?
We are looking for you!

[Location]



VASCO
together we make it simple

[Job Position]
Ready for a new challenge?
We are looking for you!

[Location]

New employee



VASCO
together we make it simple

VASCO IS EXPANDING

Welcome [Employee Name]!
[Job Title]



VASCO
together we make it simple

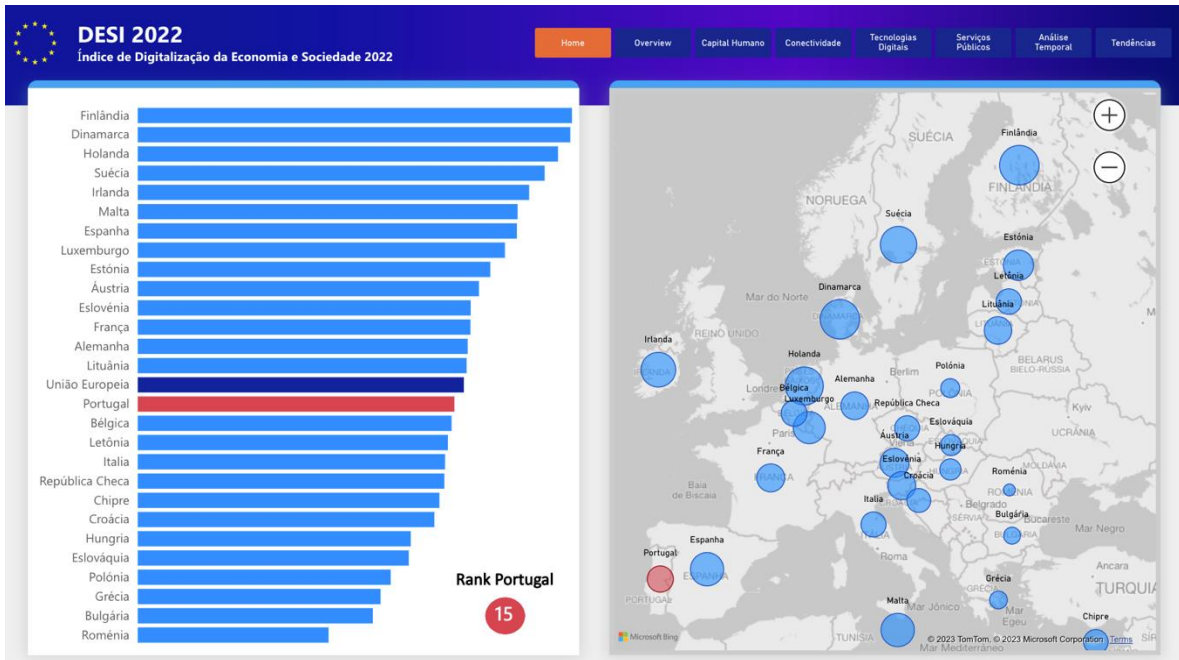
VASCO IS EXPANDING

Welcome [Employee Name]!
[Job Title]

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Economy and society digitization index 2022



Source: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi> (obtained on the May 20th, 2023)

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Annex 2 – integration of digital technologies in 2022



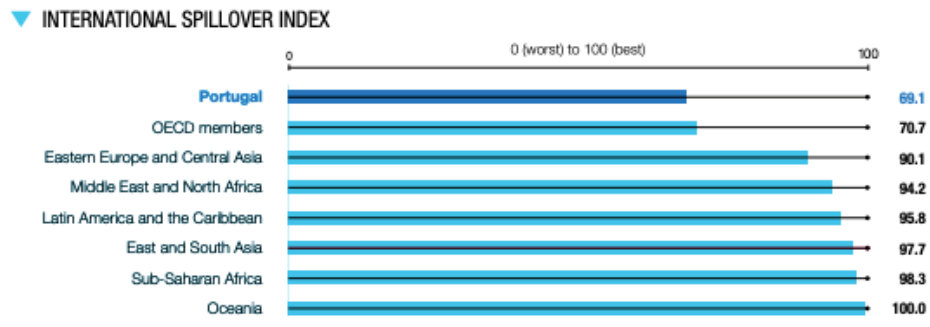
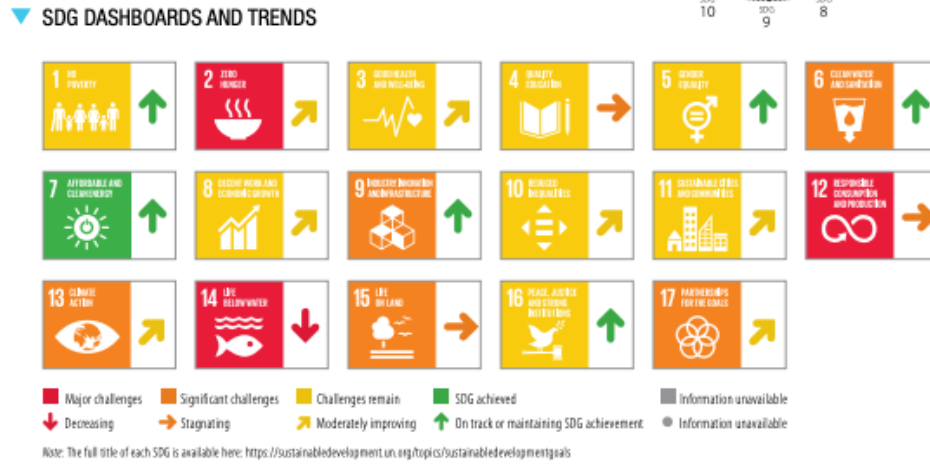
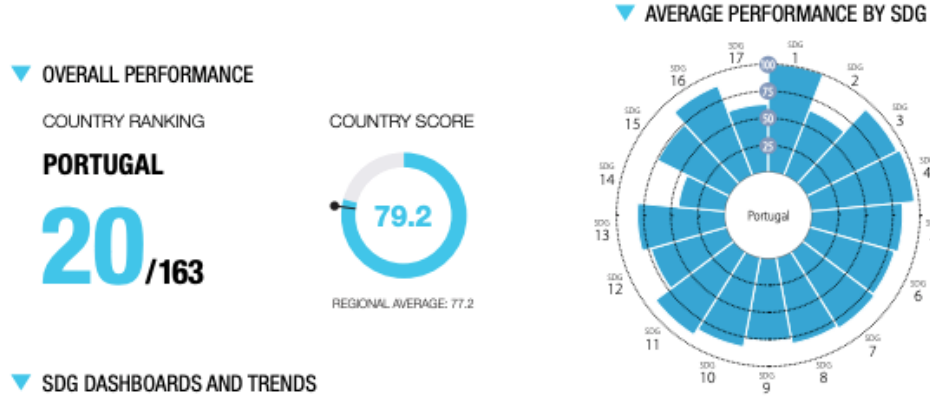
Source: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi> (obtained on the May 20th, 2023)

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Annex 3 - Portugal performance on SDG objectives

PORTUGAL

OECD Countries



Source: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2022/2022-sustainable-development-report.pdf> (p. 362)