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“Launch and Development of Consumer Choice in African Markets”

Rodrigo Miguel Madureira Godinho Serra Correia

Master's in Business Administration

Supervisor:

Professor Nuno Alexandre dos Reis Teixeira, Invited Assistant Professor.

ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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This last year has been both challenging and rewarding, marked by time spent across two distinct continents and environments, balancing life between Lisbon and Maputo. Over the past year, I managed to combine academic demands with significant professional and athletic growth, taking on my first major projects as an organiser and manager of events while also solidifying my role as a key member of the national TeamGym team.

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Resumo

Este estudo centra-se no lançamento e desenvolvimento da iniciativa Escolha do Consumidor em mercados africanos, com particular ênfase em Cabo Verde, Angola e Moçambique. Através de uma análise detalhada da literatura sobre o comportamento do consumidor, o processo de tomada de decisão e o impacto dos selos de qualidade nas vendas, o objetivo é avaliar as estratégias de internacionalização e a adaptação da Escolha do Consumidor a estes contextos. O projeto inclui ainda um plano de negócios abrangente para a expansão em Cabo Verde, onde foram analisados os potenciais clientes, a segmentação de mercado e as estratégias de marketing, com base na experiência adquirida no primeiro ano de operações em Angola e Moçambique. Estes países foram utilizados, neste contexto, como estudos de caso para refinar a abordagem futura em outros mercados africanos. São também apresentados os principais desafios, oportunidades e um cronograma de ações para o mercado cabo-verdiano.

Palavras-chave: Certificação de marcas, comportamento do consumidor, expansão internacional, marketing, mercados africanos.

Códigos JEL: M31 (Marketing), F23 (Multinacionais; Negócios Internacionais)

Abstract

This study focuses on the launch and development of Consumer Choice in African markets, with particular emphasis on Cape Verde, Angola, and Mozambique. Through a detailed analysis of the literature on consumer behaviour, decision-making process, and impact of quality seals on sales, the aim is to evaluate internationalisation strategies and Consumer Choice's adaptation to these contexts. The project also includes a comprehensive business plan for expansion in Cape Verde, where potential clients, market segmentation, and marketing strategies were analysed, based on the experience gained during the first year of operations in Angola and Mozambique. These countries were used, in this context, as case studies to refine the approach for future entries into other African markets. The key challenges, opportunities, and an action timeline for the Cape Verdean market are also presented.

Keywords: Brand certification, consumer behaviour, international expansion, marketing, African markets.

JEL Codes: M31 (Marketing), F23 (Multinational Firms; International Business)

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List of abbreviations

B2B – Business to Business

B2C – Business to Consumer

CC – Consumer Choice

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CMO – Chief Marketing Officer

e-WOM – Electronic Word-of-Mouth

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

PR – Public Relations

Q&A – Questions and Answers

ROI – Return on Investment

WOM - Word-of-Mouth

1. Introduction

This thesis concludes my master's in Business Administration at ISCTE Business School and explores the "Launch and Development of Consumer Choice in African Markets". This in-company project aims to develop and implement Consumer Choice's core activities within three diverse African markets.

The thesis draws directly from my five-month experience in Maputo, Mozambique, where I was deeply involved in Consumer Choice's expansion from the outset. Although in an intern position, my responsibilities extended beyond standard expectations, allowing me to participate in high-level planning and strategy discussions related to marketing and sales approaches for the project in both Angola and Mozambique. My role included contributing actively to key meetings, offering insights that influenced the project's strategic direction.

A significant aspect of my involvement was my assistance in organising the Maputo launch event, a critical milestone. My close collaboration with project partners and the commercial director enabled me to support strategic decision-making and witness the project's evolution from within. Additionally, my background in business internationalisation across African and South American markets, such as South Africa, Nigeria, and Brazil, enhanced my contributions to the project. This experience in emerging markets gave me insights into local consumer behaviour, market entry strategies, and regulatory challenges, equipping me to contribute meaningfully to project planning.

In summary, my substantial involvement in project strategy, combined with my expertise in international business expansion, provided essential groundwork for the analysis and insights in this thesis.

This master thesis' project does not disclose confidential information.

1.1 Strategic Question

"Consumer Choice" is a brand assessment and ranking system that relies on consumer satisfaction and approval levels. Its primary purpose is to gauge consumers' contentment and approval regarding a product or service, guiding them in making informed purchasing decisions. Obviously, it also brings marketing value to the companies. For a company or brand to be elected as the Consumer Choice in a category is something that brings market recognition. Consumer Choice empowers consumers to voice their opinions, allowing them to assess and endorse the brands that bring them the greatest satisfaction. The company's efforts enhance brand performance in the market. Consumer Choice represents the consumers' perspective. CC

conducts impartial and statistically significant research involving consumers, employing evaluation methodologies tailored to the specific category. Through a three-step process, it is pinpointed the brand that garners the utmost satisfaction and approval within its respective category:

- Identification: Identifying the attributes that hold the highest significance for consumers when contemplating their engagement with the relevant category;
- Classification: Ranking the significance of the attributes previously pinpointed as the most valued;
- Evaluation: Assessing the experience with the brands in the category by evaluating and assigning scores based on their performance in the most highly regarded attributes.

The Launch and Development of Consumer Choice in Angola and Mozambique is an ongoing project.

By exposing this, the research problem is: Is Consumer Choice an initiative that can also have success in African countries?

1.2 Project Objectives

The objective is to compare the current business plan that the company operates within Europe with the analysis of the internationalization efforts in the Mozambican and Angolan markets, taking into account their respective cultural differences, in order to make the necessary changes and ensure ongoing success. Insights gained from analysing these first two African markets, Angola and Mozambique, will then guide the strategy for the entry into the Cape Verdean market.

The general objective of this project is to implement the Consumer Choice in Angola, Cabo Verde and Mozambique with, at least, the notoriety that it has in Portugal.

To achieve this main goal, a set of specific objectives must be defined and accomplished:

- Involving key players from the main B2C industries in African markets. To give value to the winner's label, it's important to have it present in a wide range of sectors;
- Ensuring that the players recognize the value of Consumer Choice's market research improving their business and products;
- Allowing the consumer to make better informed choices in the targeted markets.

1.3 Key Project Questions

To steer the research, a series of descriptive and explanatory inquiries have been formulated to address the research problem. These questions are outlined below:

- In Marketing and Communication, what are the necessary adaptations for these three African countries?
- What are the main cultural and organizational differences between Angola, Mozambique and Cabo Verde?
- Do Consumer Choice's client companies in Africa value the market research or winning in a specific category more?
- To what extent does the category winner's label impact companies' sales in Portugal?
- Which business sectors invest the most in Consumer Choice in Europe?
- Which business sectors invest the most in Consumer Choice in Angola?
- Which business sectors invest the most in Consumer Choice in Mozambique?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Behaviour

To understand the issues involved in consumer choice, it is essential to understand this figure, which can be understood as any individual looking for a product or service to satisfy their needs. Generally speaking, buying occurs in response to a need or desire, which can be utilitarian, indulgent, superfluous, or hedonistic (Dazinger, 2004).

Consumer behaviour refers to the perception of the way in which people, groups, and organisations select, buy, use, and discard articles, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires, which contributes to each individual's consumer behaviour (Kotler et al., 2010).

The concept of buying has also undergone mutations over time, along with changes in consumer behaviour over the years, evolving from a purely rational and functional perspective to a more emotional and pleasurable one. Consumers often opt for a particular product based on their emotions and end up justifying their purchase at a later stage with logical arguments that were not really taken into account in the decision-making process (Cardoso, 2009).

It is also essential to take into account the concepts of planned, impulsive and compulsive buying, since planned buying consists of the realisation of an act that has emerged rationally from the identification of a need, moving on to the collection and evaluation of information and consequent assessment of the alternatives available, ending the process with the decision to buy, thus combining the consumer's needs with the resources available to satisfy them (Cardoso, 2009).

Impulsive buying occurs in an unplanned and spontaneous way, resulting from a sudden desire to purchase, with a view to immediate gratification, and therefore tends to be associated with excitement, as well as reduced availability of information, and occurs with little concern for its consequences (Lee et al., 2008).

Compulsive buying, on the other hand, occurs due to an abnormal motivation to acquire goods in response to factors such as low self-esteem, depression, or anxiety, and is generally associated with the consumer's attempt to achieve personal goals and raise self-esteem, rather than to fulfil a need or own something. As a result, compulsive buying can lead to financial debt and psychological and relationship problems (Verplanken et al., 2011).

Consumer behaviour doesn't just involve the buyer, but a group of people, since the buyer and the user can be different people, i.e. the buyer may be buying something to offer, and that's

where some marketing techniques come in, such as advertising, promotional dynamics and certification, which are responsible for persuading consumers to buy something, creating a need that might not even have existed previously.

With the increase in technological innovations, companies are faced with an increasingly competitive environment, in which the search for differentiators concerning competitors becomes a key factor in remaining in the market. The similarity between offers is becoming increasingly noticeable, and marketing professionals' actions are becoming essential for business survival. This reinforces the role of the consumer as the main driver of business actions, making it essential to understand consumer expectations.

Over the years, various models have been created that explain the factors that influence consumer behaviour, which can be dynamically affected by environmental factors, whether cultural or social, psychological or individual. As far as cultural factors are concerned, these have the greatest impact on consumer behaviour, given the patterns acquired throughout life and under which they experience every facet of their existence. The sense of continuity and regularity that culture, subcultures, and social classes give to the meaning of experiences is a fundamental determinant of the desires and behaviour of human beings who, by nature, seek consonance (Kotler et al., 2006).

Furthermore, it is important to consider that this effect is also reflected in the association of certain brands with specific social classes which, in turn, influence consumer behaviour in favour of confirming their beliefs and, therefore, fostering them (Stankevich, 2017).

Culture refers to how social life and its material aspects are conceived and organized to guarantee survival, as well as how we see the world. In other words, to discuss culture, all of humanity and the multiplicity of forms of existence must be taken into account, because culture is seen as the most fundamental determinant of a person's desires and behaviour. In this way, culture is seen as the total of learned beliefs, values, and customs that serve to direct the consumer behaviour of the members of a given society (Bedgood, 2019).

Accordingly, individuals acquire a set of values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviours through family life and other institutions, and these end up interfering with their consumption habits. Each culture consists of smaller subcultures, which provide more specific identification and socialization for its members, and these include nationalities, religions, and racial groups, among others (Bolton et al., 2013).

Each culture consists of smaller subcultures, which provide more specific identification and socialization for its members, and these include nationalities, religions, and racial groups,

among others. Social classes refer to the hierarchically ordered divisions of a society, whose members share similar values, interests, and behaviours, although the distribution of the population takes place through a scoring system, based on the possession of consumer goods, education, and other factors (Rani, 2014).

In the case of social factors, such as reference groups, family, social roles and status, these exert a direct or indirect influence on people's attitudes and behaviour, given their involvement and perception. Thus, everyone belongs to groups, has references, and plays social roles within their dynamics, and it is clear that the interdependence between these affects us in an equally interactive way (Kotler et al., 2010).

Social factors include reference groups, family, but also social positions which, in a way, influence individuals' purchasing behaviour. Reference groups are small groups that influence people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. There are two types of affinity groups: primary, which are made up of family, friends, neighbours, etc., where the individual interacts continuously and informally; secondary, made up of religions, professions, etc., where interaction tends to be more formal and less frequent. In addition to these, there is also a type of group which, even if the individual doesn't belong to it, can influence their purchasing decision to some extent: these are aspiration groups, groups to which the individual would like to belong. In this way, consumers allow themselves to be influenced by these groups, through their opinions or through concern for members who belong to the group (Ajzen, 2011; Krishen et al., 2016). In particular, the family is characterized as the reference group with the greatest influence on the consumer, and it is important to note that the traditional family organization is increasingly in decline, as individuals are increasingly concerned about friends or other people close to them, considering them to be family members. In this sense, it is essential to know the roles of each member, as this can bring competitive advantages to companies (Kotler et al., 2010).

In the social groups they belong to, everyone ends up taking on different roles and social positions and, in this sense, individuals opt for products that convey their status in society, namely depending on their social class, they opt for different clothes, decorations, hobbies, and so on.

Psychological factors, in turn, integrate the individual's desires, feelings, and needs that lead to a certain behaviour, referring to their motivation, perception, beliefs, attitudes, learning, and memory. In its actions, marketing considers three different theories of motivation (Lindon et al., 2021):

- A) Freud's theory of motivation (1916-1917) in which it is concluded that the psychological forces that shape individuals' behaviour are unconscious. Taking this theory, there are interesting hypotheses that were once studied, such as the fact that people avoid prunes because their wrinkled shape is reminiscent of an older person;
- B) Maslow's Theory of Motivation (1943), which argues that human needs are organized in a hierarchy, starting with the most urgent to the least urgent;
- C) Herzberg's Theory of Motivation (1959), which is a theory of motivation that divides it into two factors, the unsatisfactory ones that cause dissatisfaction, and the satisfactory ones that cause satisfaction. In this specific case, the unsatisfactory factors should be avoided and, at the same time, those that cause satisfaction should be identified.

In the case of perception, this is how a person selects, organizes, and interprets information to create a meaningful picture of the world around them, and there are three processes of perception (Sethna et al., 2016):

- A) Selective Attention: individuals are more likely to perceive stimuli related to a current need;
- B) Selective Distortion: individuals have a greater tendency to interpret the information they receive according to their intentions;
- C) Selective Retention: in general, individuals are more likely to retain information that in some way reinforces their attitudes and beliefs.

In the field of the learning factor, this is the totality of the changes that are part of an individual's behaviour as a result of their experiences, which makes it possible to develop a need for a particular product, associating it with strong impulses and providing positive reinforcement. Since man is capable of learning and changing his behaviour through the use of past experiences, there are two ways of acquiring knowledge: cognitively through a stimulus; and affectively, when the individual becomes aware of and conscious of the stimulus he receives. Human beings have been endowed with reason and a unique personality since they existed, which means that a belief is a descriptive thought that a person holds about something (Kotler et al., 2017; Pinheiro et al., 2018).

Human beings have been endowed with reason and a unique personality since they existed, which means that a belief is a descriptive thought that a person holds about something, which allows us to bridge the gap to attitudes, as these allow us to create a certain mental structure of liking or disliking something. This is where impulse buying comes from, namely the process

that takes place before a purchase of this type and its consequences, as impulse buying behaviour can generally be considered as something unplanned (Kacen et al., 2012; Boachie-Mensah et al., 2015).

The definition of this type of purchase is related to a sudden purchase which, due to its high speed, is a kind of impediment to the consumer's consideration, causing them to completely ignore other alternatives or future implications (Sharma et al., 2010). What triggers an impulse purchase is a temptation associated with gratification that is usually related to a temporary or fleeting state (Vohs et al., 2016). Thus, this often happens to consumers who have not previously created an effective strategy to develop resistance to this type of purchase, ultimately falling into temptation (Roberts et al., 2012).

Finally, individual/personal factors consist of distinct traits that lead to relatively coherent and continuous reactions to a stimulus from the environment, so individuals tend to exhibit consumption behaviour that is consistent with their self-image and past experiences. Examples of these factors are the consumer's age, occupation and economic conditions, lifestyle, or even personality traits (Kucharska et al., 2018).

At the same time, people's needs and desires change throughout their lives. In this sense, the family life cycle is a set of phases that families go through throughout their lives, which influence each person's needs and ability to fulfil them. Each person's profession influences their consumption patterns since economic conditions relate to each individual's wealth and attitudes towards spending versus saving, which allows us to realize that the elements that determine economic conditions directly affect the choice of certain products (Kacen et al., 2012; Rani, 2014; Roberts et al., 2012).

Each person's standard of living relates to their interests, opinions, and activities, and companies can position themselves by making associations between their product portfolios and consumers' lifestyles, whether current or potential. Every human being is characterized by their distinct personality, a personality that influences their purchasing behaviour since an individual's personality is made up of a multitude of components including values, attitudes, beliefs, motives, intentions, preferences, opinions, interests, prejudices, and cultural norms (Lindon et al., 2021; Solomon, 2017).

Personality is undoubtedly an important variable to take into account when studying consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. On the other hand, it's important to consider that consumer behaviour can also be influenced by situational variables involved in the decision-making process. By situational variables we mean the environment that surrounds them,

agglomerating a point in space, time, and a behavioural scenario. Therefore, a behavioural scenario is not only limited by time and space but also by a complete sequence of behaviour or a pattern of action (Bedgood, 2019; Moreno et al., 2017).

2.2 Consumer Decision process

Notwithstanding the different categorizations of the type of purchase, it is important to consider the underlying decision-making process, highlighting the sequentially of this process within the scope of the purchase, through the phases of recognizing the need, searching for information, evaluating pre-purchase alternatives, purchase, consumption, post-consumption evaluation and disposal (Stankevich, 2017).

At the same time, there are five fundamental stages to this action, namely problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. This process aims to provide the best choice between two actions, reduce decision-making effort, minimize negative emotions, and maximize the ability to justify the decision (Kotler et al., 2010):

- A) Problem Recognition: The decision-making process begins when the consumer identifies a need or problem that requires resolution. This recognition may be triggered by either internal stimuli, such as physiological needs (e.g., hunger) or emotional states, or by external stimuli, such as advertising, social interactions, or word-of-mouth recommendations. This stage is critical as it establishes the motivation for subsequent behaviours in the consumer journey (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).
- B) Information Search: Once the need has been recognized, consumers proceed to gather information relevant to addressing it. The information search can occur in two forms: internal and external. The internal search involves recalling past experiences or previously gathered information, while an external search involves seeking information from sources such as family, friends, marketing communications, or online resources. The extent of information search is often determined by factors such as perceived risk, the significance of the purchase, and the consumer's prior knowledge about the product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).
- C) Evaluation of Alternatives: During the evaluation of alternatives stage, consumers compare different products or services based on various attributes, such as price, quality, brand reputation, or specific features. This stage involves assessing the pros and cons of each option in order to determine which one most effectively meets the

recognized need. The evaluation process may involve both objective criteria (e.g., measurable product features) and subjective criteria (e.g., brand image and perceived value) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

- D) **Purchase Decision:** Following the evaluation of alternatives, the consumer makes a decision regarding which product or service to purchase. However, the purchase decision may be influenced by additional situational factors, such as promotions, product availability, or unexpected events, which could either facilitate or inhibit the decision to buy (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).
- E) **Post-Purchase Evaluation:** The final stage, post-purchase evaluation, involves the consumer assessing their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product or service after the purchase. This assessment has significant implications for future consumer behaviour. If the consumer's expectations are met or exceeded, they are likely to experience satisfaction, which may lead to brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. Conversely, dissatisfaction can result in negative feedback and reluctance to repurchase. The post-purchase evaluation is a crucial determinant of whether the consumer becomes a repeat customer and how they contribute to the brand's reputation in the marketplace.

2.3 Brand approval seals – impact on sales

Due to the complexity of the concept of quality assurance for the consumer, it is essential to realise the exact definition of a service guarantee as being a statement of repair by a company used to explain how the customer served can expect the company to act when the service reaches a certain level of certification. It is a way of acting towards the market that a customer can demand the service provider delivers when the service delivery system has been stipulated by certain quality indices (Baker et al., 2015).

In this way, some service guarantee certificates and seals are a way of expressing the responsibility and quality associated with the service itself (Boshoff, 2003; Lidén, 2009). By giving certain seals representing consumer preferences, specifically orientated towards certain products and services, the service guarantee constitutes a type of information that companies transmit to consumers through promises, which explain the promise of quality, namely the level of service quality that will be achieved.

The aim of transmitting this type of information, i.e. the role of the service guarantee, centres mainly on ensuring this guarantee, as awarding this seal of quality has the potential to

reduce customers' perception of risk and the possibility of the customer inferring a product failure, improve the reliability of the quality of the service and the overall assessment of the company, increase customer confidence in the quality of the product/item, stimulate customer purchase intentions and induce customer choices (Biswas et al., 2006; McCollough et al., 2004).

According to a study by Crisafulli and Singh (2016), service guarantees can also cause shoppers to feel righteous, although the consequences will be adjusted by different aspects such as the company's perception of its reputation, the stability of the item's performance and the convictions of customers in the initial phase. Based on the above phenomena, service guarantees have been acknowledged in industry and academia as a means of retaining and attracting new clients, as well as a new field in which companies are competing (Wirtz et al., 2004).

If used correctly, these seals that convey the reliability and guarantee of a given product will bring a huge competitive advantage to the company, since if it is used as a dependent variable in a research framework, the perception of each subject concerned by the assurance will be an extremely important variable. Service guarantees come in three stages: first, the company makes a warranty, then consumers develop personal subjective cognition following this warranty and, finally, consumers adopt their own behaviour in accordance with this cognition (Díaz et al., 2013).

It should be noted that people's cognition of things can be far from the facts, in which case consumers can positively perceive the awarding of quality seals and guarantees as an attempt to create greater value for the customer, or negatively perceive the guarantee as being simply to stimulate purchase intent.

Companies are stimulating impulsive customer consumption, and/or it's just one reason for the company's price inflation, which makes it possible to assume that an important antecedent for companies to gain advantages through service guarantees is that consumers have a correct perception of the company's guarantee, and the role of these quality seals awarded by specialists in the most diverse areas, such as chefs in the catering sector, sportspeople with regard to sports shoes or articles of the same nature, among other areas of consumption, appears to be a key player in providing reliability at the time of purchase, as well as boosting it (Rita et al., 2019).

According to the Consumer Choice, the impact of working with the company on sales, as reported by the seal winning brands in Portugal in 2019, varied across different sectors. In the cosmetics/aesthetics sector, sales increased by 15% to 20%, and a similar growth rate was observed in the banking sector, with an increase of 15% to 20%. The specialised retail sector

experienced a 5% to 10% growth, while the food sector saw sales rise between 5% and 15%. The telecommunications and automotive sectors both recorded a 5% increase, and the security sector noted a sales growth ranging from 10% to 15%.

2.4 Discussion about products or services between peers – Influencer marketing and impact on purchase intention

In order to realize the preponderance of influencers in the field of sales, it is elementary to clarify that influencer marketing may be regarded as the science of gathering people with powerful influential skills on the Internet to disseminate a trending product, service or merely a relevant information message to their customers (Sammis et al., 2015). This category of marketing includes various types, and influencer marketing, which is one of the new types of social marketing, has become increasingly popular and successful, especially since 2019, when the global market value of influencer marketing increased more than twofold, and by 2021 it had already reached the 13.8-billion-dollar mark (Statista, 2023). Nevertheless, several authors maintain that while the notion of 'marketing influencers' is quite young, influence is not a new phenomenon in marketing because influencer activity was around before the breakthrough in communication over social platforms. The use of famous people comes from the use of traditional marketing since these celebrities are considered to be figures with a great ability to influence consumer behaviour, managing to heighten the awareness and trustworthiness of a brand, because consumers consider celebrities to be more credible than contracted marketers, and as people emulate and follow celebrities, the latter can strongly shape consumers' behaviour and decisions (DeVaney, 2015; Jiménez-Castillo, 2019).

In this sense, the conceptualization of influencer marketing is moving in the same direction, because marketers are not using TV or film personalities for promotional purposes, but rather social media celebrities. But these untraditional social media celebrities, who are known by just a handful of people, are becoming regarded as more influential than traditional internet celebrities because they are perceived as more trustworthy and approachable (Djafarova et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2018; Kasmi et al., 2019).

According to Karhawi (2017), the figure of digital influencers is embodied through individuals who can realize some influence in what is a user's purchasing process, as they have the inherent pervasive power and skills to generate questions and influence conversations amongst their network, whereas influencer marketing is becoming more and more present these days. Mainstream social media influencers may be encountered on the majority of social platforms, however, Instagram might be among the networks that spring to mind when the

matter is touched upon, and that's owing to the characteristically visual content of the platform, bearing in mind that Instagram is focused on visual aesthetics and filtered photographs, rendering it an excellent environment in which to advertise products and target wide demographics (Corso et al., 2019; Djafarova et al., 2017).

Thus, digital influencers can be regarded as opinion formers, supporters of brands, and specialists who are known among their followers, providing a point of reference for the people they interact with, which gives them the status of independent supporters that mold public attitudes and decision-making employing interpersonal communication (Magno et al., 2018; Sahelices-Pinto et al., 2014).

Social media influencers have built a strong online presence with faithful followers around sharing authentic personal storylines in targeted areas of interest, including fashion, lifestyle, photography, and travel. Influencers can combine photos, videos, and activities with opportunities for interaction on social media and are interested in certain personal characteristics, such as physical features, tastes, and common traits. For this reason, influencer marketing on social media has now become an increasingly important marketing tool, enabling ordinary people easily to influence social media (Audrezet et al, 2018; Guerreiro et al, 2019; Jin et al, 2019; Khamis et al, 2017; Ladhari et al, 2020).

Typically, influencers discover new products or services based on their sector and interests and provide feedback and recommendations to improve their followers' lifestyles, spread trust and get information on how to sell their work. In doing so, they are considered to persuade their followers to favour certain brands or products that they own or use (Audrezet et al., 2018; Casalo et al., 2020; Djafarova et al., 2017; Ki et al., 2020; Ladhari et al., 2020).

The influencer's target audience, the followers, are themselves closely involved in creating and legitimizing the influencer's online identity, and, by following, interacting with, supporting, and cheering on the influencer, they help to legitimize and validate the influencer's status while increasing the scope and potential impact of their messages (Khamis et al., 2017; Lou et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2019; Sokolova et al., 2020).

It is hardly surprising that marketers use the faces of social media's most recognizable celebrities for advertising purposes, especially as millions of Internet users use social media for entertainment, inspiration or simply to get feedback on products. The emergence of the internet has transformed the way information is searched for, the way people interact with each other and, most importantly, the way people shop.

In recent years, the market has consolidated and become very attractive to companies, but although it is recording interesting figures, growth has been limited, leaving it impossible to

fully exploit its enormous potential. Although there is an increasing number of consumers, they are less open to online shopping, since making a purchase online is increasingly seen as a risky and uncertain behaviour. This label is attributed to the various characteristics, from the possibility of fraud, the inability to see the product physically to the lack of social interaction with the seller, online shopping takes place in an environment of uncertainty that leaves consumers worried. The lack of security and privacy in financial transactions and in the processing of personal data has been cited as one of the main reasons for not buying online (Hajli, 2014; Tirunillai et al., 2012).

In turn, the addition of social platforms has facilitated the sharing of experiences and opinions between consumers, creating the right environment for the creation of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), particularly through tools such as polls, questionnaires, and market research, among others. Consumer opinions through focus groups, question-and-answer instruments, or surveys are the most popular form of e-WOM and correspond to positive, neutral or negative statements about a particular product, service or brand. Through these opinions and stances, consumers can communicate with a large network of people, given their mutual interest in certain products and services or a specific activity (McCole et al., 2010; Stephen et al. 2012).

In many cases, these individuals don't know each other and their relationship is based solely on this type of experience gathering, since these tools can reach a much larger number of consumers and therefore information, the evaluations of surveys, questionnaires and market research provide real and very valuable information for consumers. For this reason, they have often become the preferred method of communication for users, who rely on them to decide between buying a product or service.

This tendency to evaluate and understand the dynamics of market consumption has played an important role in the development of commerce, helping to fill the gap caused by trust. For all these reasons, trust, evaluations, and the positions taken by various actors through the influence of these market studies are fundamental themes, and it has been shown that trust and the general attitude towards evaluations have a significant impact on purchase intention and the rating of evaluations in these questionnaires, surveys, consumer choice market studies and Focus Groups. As far as the influence of trust on purchase intention is concerned, the results are identical to those of another similar research (Hajli, 2014; Hong et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2008; McCole et al., 2010).

The results of this type of study are also close to those of other studies which have suggested that reviews positively affect purchase intention. Thus, the results show that trust is not

positively related to e-WOM attitude, and can be built through reviews (Stephen et al. 2012; Tirunillai et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2010; Filieri et al., 2014; Senecal et al., 2004).

In this way, it was ascertained whether the trust construct has a positive impact on evaluations, specifically on the attitude and ranking of market studies, and this means that to have an overall positive attitude towards these qualifications, they don't necessarily need to have a high level of trust online. This can be explained by the following example: a user may not have a high level of trust, decides to go and read some reviews because they are undecided about a product and, when they read the reviews, they come across negative comments about the product and end up not wanting to buy it or engage in online shopping, leaving their level of trust low (Awad et al., 2008; Flavián et al., 2005; Gauri et al., 2008; Utz et al., 2012).

However, since the reviews helped him decide whether or not to buy the product, he has a positive attitude towards the reviews, although this is not influenced by his level of trust, which is low. At the same time, trust positively impacts the rating of the item on sale, which suggests that a market study with a high level of trust will contribute positively to the rating. As noted, the results of this study corroborate the existence of a positive relationship between trust and purchase intention (Hajli, 2014; Hong & Cho, 2011; Kim et al., 2008; McCole et al., 2010).

Therefore, this means that when a consumer has a strong feeling of confidence in a particular piece of feedback, be it personal, the result of market research such as polls and surveys, or from another similar source, they will have a greater intention to buy a product or service, since there is a causal relationship between market research and the target audience of certain sales. Thus, an individual forms their intention to behave in a certain way towards something for which they have a positive affection, which means that the more favourable the attitude towards a certain behaviour, the greater the intention to continue with that behaviour. In this context, if the attitude towards criticism is favourable, the individual will have a greater intention to contribute or highlight the rating used for a particular market research tool. In turn, data has also shown that consumers' attitude towards feedback has a positive effect on purchase intention, since reviews positively affect purchase intention (Stephen et al., 2012; Tirunillai et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2010; Filieri et al., 2014; Senecal et al., 2004).

Consumer attitudes towards reviews, surveys, polls, sales initiatives such as Focus Groups, and initiatives such as Consumer Choice converge in the same direction, i.e. a favourable attitude towards reviews leads to a greater intention to buy on the part of consumers. There is evidence that there is no positive relationship between consumer rankings and purchase intention, i.e. Filieiri (2015) argues that market research rankings are used by consumers to seek information about products because such rankings indicate an average of the evaluations that

many consumers have given to the quality of a product or service, which facilitates comparison between similar products.

Thus, rankings can help reduce the number of alternatives a consumer considers buying and can make it easier for them to evaluate and choose. The same author also argues that the ranking, as it is an average of the evaluations made by a considerable number of consumers, can be considered more reliable and useful than individual evaluations, which can sometimes be highly subjective when assessing the performance of a product (Filieiri, 2015).

3. About Consumer Choice

3.1 Consumer Choice Concept

Escolha do Consumidor (Consumer Choice) is a well-established consumer evaluation system, launched in Portugal in 2012 by Consumer Choice - Customer Satisfaction Assessment Centre. The primary objective of this initiative is to identify and reward the brands that provide the best consumer experiences based on rigorous market research.

Escolha do Consumidor employs a consumer-centered approach. The evaluation process involves actual consumers who assess brands based on specific satisfaction criteria. These criteria are predefined according to market research, focusing on elements that are most important to the consumers within each category. This unique approach contrasts with many other certifications that rely on experts or corporate feedback. In 2012, the company launched as an alternative to traditional expert-driven evaluations, focusing on consumer feedback as the foundation of their decision-making process, becoming the top consumer evaluation and brand recommendation system in Portugal in 2014, growing in prominence for its trustworthiness and relevance to the everyday consumer.

3.2 Market Impact and Consumer Perception

Consumer Choice, or *Escolha do Consumidor*, evaluates over 900 brands across more than 100 categories annually in Portugal to provide transparent and reliable information for consumers. This system's credibility was further enhanced in 2019 when it earned ISO 9001:2015 certification, affirming its commitment to quality management. This certification ensures consistent quality and customer satisfaction and is globally recognized, helping businesses expand internationally. In 2021, Consumer Choice extended its operations to Spain, continuing its growth in the Iberian market 9 years after its launch in Portugal and 7 years after becoming the top consumer evaluation and brand recommendation system in Portugal.

A 2023 study by CINT found Consumer Choice to be the most recognized brand evaluation system in Portugal, with a remarkable 98% awareness rate. Key findings showed that 37% of consumers are motivated to buy products with the Consumer Choice seal, and 53% prefer this seal over others. This influence is driven by Consumer Choice's reliance on real consumer feedback, making it highly credible and appealing to consumers. In fact, 45% of consumers rated it as the most trustworthy brand evaluation system, far surpassing other seals.

Consumer Guidance Germany (CGG), an independent operator of evaluation systems in Germany with a strong presence in Austria, Switzerland, France, and Poland, acquired 50% of Consumer Choice in March 2023. CGG's acquisition provides Consumer Choice with enhanced strategic capacity and international expertise, aimed at accelerating existing projects without changing the company's overall direction. The focus remains on developing new products, entering new markets and ensuring a structure capable of supporting long-term growth.

Figure 1 - Consumer Choice Award Seal 2024. Source: Escolha do Consumidor Portugal



3.3 Product Diversification in Portugal and Spain

The in-market growth of the business, especially in Portugal and Spain, led to a diversification on the offer of seals to the companies in these countries. Besides the first, main, and traditional Consumer Choice seal, the company has now available seals that focus also on different aspects of the products, services or organizations:

- a) Professionals Choice seal is a business-to-business brand evaluation system, designed for companies looking to build credibility among professional decision-makers. This evaluation focuses on the aspects that are most important for the professional use of products or services, providing insights into how well brands meet industry-specific needs. It is a platform for businesses aiming to demonstrate their value and reliability within professional market.
- b) Sustainable Choice seal is the first public qualification system that evaluates products and services through both expert and consumer assessments. This system focuses on identifying the brands that actively contribute to sustainability on social, environmental, and economic levels.

- c) Happy Awards is an innovative system designed to evaluate organizations based on happiness. It employs a comprehensive 360° assessment that gathers feedback from employees, customers, and suppliers. This tool recognizes organizations that already invest in employee and stakeholder happiness and encourages others to improve their internal happiness levels. The goal is to measure and promote happiness as a key factor in organizational success, motivating companies to prioritize well-being and satisfaction within their operations.
- d) Quality Award evaluates quality through a consumer-based assessment system, considering the specific features of products or services. The growing consumer concern for quality has led to increased inspection efforts by official bodies, though often without involving consumers and through systems that lack widespread recognition. Quality should be a fundamental expectation across all companies, rather than a competition between them, so the Quality Award can be attributed to more than one candidate in each category, unlike the traditional Consumer Choice Seal. This approach ensures that, besides the approval of official bodies through inspections, quality is both demanded and recognized by the end-users.
- e) Good Choice seal is attributed to the products or services that received an excellent rating and scored above the average set by the brands in their category while competing for the Consumer Choice seal.
- f) Best Tech seal is an evaluation system that highlights outstanding user experiences in technology and digital services, using criteria such as design, usability, search efficiency, performance, and security. The system aims to acknowledge and reward top-performing technological innovations, including products, services, and apps created by companies. By doing so, it promotes innovation, quality, and excellence, driving advancements in the tech and business sectors.
- g) Excellentia Choice seal is attributed to companies based on their orientation to the consumer. It distinguishes the outstanding companies in Consumer Centric Management performance.

Figure 2 - Consumer Choice's offer diversification. Source: Escolha do Consumidor Portugal



These seven projects are currently being developed and implemented exclusively in the Portuguese market. However, the Spanish market has another seal that, for now, is unique to Spain. Citizens Choice is a tool that promotes the interaction between citizens and city halls' governors with the goal of evaluate local public policies according to citizens' satisfaction, empowering decision-makers in their choices, becoming easier for them to act on the real needs of the population. Citizens Choice also has its own seal for the City Halls that excel in governance, focusing on public policies that have had a significant and positive impact on citizens' lives.

Figure 3 - Citizens Choice Award Spain. Source: Elección del Consumidor Spain



Consumer Choice seal is, by far, the most recognized Consumer Choice's project in the market and its seal has been attributed in 198 categories in Portugal in 2024 on the most various business sectors, such as telecommunications, cosmetics, retail, automotive, security, banking, food, drinks, communication channels, music festivals, cleaning, technology, personal hygiene, health care, entertainment, press, mobility, energy, real estate, corporate organization, insurance, travelling, construction, household, hospitality, gambling, logistics and distribution.

3.4 Businesses International Expansion Strategy

The launch and development of Consumer Choice in Angola and Mozambique is nothing but a business expansion to foreign African countries, addressing the focus of expanding the new markets. When a business becomes successful in its foundation country, the internationalization normally becomes a part of the organic growth of a company. The internationalization of a business is a complex project, so complex that, in fact, there are already companies whose core-business is precisely this: to provide outsourced work as specialists on the internationalization of third-party businesses. Five Thousand Miles, is an example of a Portuguese company in this sector. But before the establishment of local presence and the start of the operations abroad, a well-structured business-plan is required to mitigate risks and maximize the success.

The process begins with the analysis of the market. It's crucial to investigate the industry, considering factors like the market's overall size, its growth potential, the competitive

environment, and relevant regulations. Additionally, assessing financial viability is critical, requiring a detailed cost-benefit evaluation that accounts for operational expenses, marketing investment, and projected revenues. This step also involves examining potential risks, whether financial, political, or operational, and planning mitigation strategies accordingly.

Establishing a local presence is a key step toward achieving sustained success. Companies must select an entry strategy that aligns with their goals, whether through direct investment, forming joint ventures, or opting for franchising. Direct investment provides greater control but demands significant capital and normally lacks local insights. Partnerships or Joint Ventures offer market knowledge and shared responsibilities. Another critical aspect is hiring local employees who are well-versed in the region's business environment and culture, ensuring smoother day-to-day operations. Addressing infrastructure needs, such as setting up offices, distribution channels, and logistical frameworks, is also essential for ensuring efficient operations.

To differentiate from local competitors, to bring innovation is essential. Market differentiation strategies should focus on delivering unique value propositions, such as superior quality, customer service, better price, or innovative solutions, to stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Businesses should adapt their products or services according to the local preferences, which might involve adjust product designs, packaging, or even pricing to suit the market's needs. The adaptations to a new environment should extend to marketing campaigns, aligning them with cultural norms, language, and consumer behaviour.

To gain traction in a new market where a company is unknown, marketing and communications play a superlative role. Tailoring marketing efforts to local preferences is essential to ensure that promotional content aligns with the cultural norms and buying behaviours of the target market. Furthermore, businesses should strive for an integrated omnichannel strategy, providing customers with a smooth and consistent experience across both online and offline platforms.

Lastly, continuous monitoring and adaptation are essential to long-term success. Businesses should regularly assess market performance, using metrics like market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction to gauge success. Collecting customer feedback allows for continuous improvement in products and services. If the expansion proves successful, businesses can scale further by expanding into nearby regions or introducing additional product lines. If challenges arise, it's important to remain flexible and adjust strategies or scale back as necessary.

3.5 Angola and Mozambique Market Context

The context of Angola and Mozambique presents distinct opportunities for a company like Consumer Choice, given its credibility and reliability in offering objective evaluations. In markets where transparency and trust are often lacking, Consumer Choice has the potential to become a key player by filling a void that many local businesses struggle to address. In both Angola and Mozambique, consumers frequently encounter unreliable information, which makes the role of a trusted intermediary more essential. By offering independent assessments, Consumer Choice can bridge this gap, providing a much-needed layer of trust and credibility in markets where corruption and opaque business practices can hinder consumer confidence.

In Angola, the strong influence of Portuguese culture plays a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour. The country often looks toward Portugal for trends and best practices, and success in the Portuguese market is normally highly valued. This cultural connection allows Portuguese companies or businesses with ties to Portugal, like Consumer Choice, to leverage their reputation and experience to build trust and gain a foothold in the Angolan market. Consumers in Angola are more likely to view Portuguese success stories as aspirational, making it easier for businesses with that association to establish credibility.

Mozambique, while also influenced by Portuguese culture, has a distinct dynamic due to its proximity to and influence from South Africa, as a more developed country nearby. This dual cultural influence means that while Portuguese successes are respected, Mozambican consumers also look to South Africa as a major reference point for trends, innovations, and business practices. As a result, Mozambique's consumer market may be more diverse in its preferences, with a notable tendency to adopt practices that have proven successful in the South African market. This cultural distinction requires an awareness of both Portuguese and South African trends when evaluating how to engage with Mozambican consumers.

The lower level of education among a significant portion of the population in both Angola and Mozambique presents another challenge, but also an opportunity. Consumers may lack familiarity with the concept of independent product evaluations and statistic methods, meaning there is a need to educate the market about the value that Consumer Choice brings. By providing clear, understandable information about product quality and consumer rights, the company can play a key role in empowering consumers. In this context, Consumer Choice's focus on transparency and clarity can set it apart as a trusted source of information in a market where consumers often lack access to reliable, educational resources. Obviously, the lower level of

education within costumers and stake-holders can be a hurdle while pitching Consumers Choice's methodology and added value to a business.

Another critical issue is the availability and quality of data. Reliable consumer data is often scarce or fragmented, making it difficult to accurately assess consumer needs and market trends. This creates an opportunity for Consumer Choice to offer something unique: trustable, independent assessments backed by verified data. By filling the gap left by inconsistent local data, Consumer Choice can position itself as an informal credible authority in both countries, particularly as consumers grow more aware of the value of trustworthy information.

Furthermore, inconsistent consumer protection regulations are a common reality in both Angola and Mozambique. Regulations governing product quality and consumer rights are often either poorly enforced or lack coherence, creating uncertainty for consumers. In such an environment, the independent evaluations provided by Consumer Choice, an European reliable company, become even more valuable, helping consumers navigate the market by offering reassurance about product safety and quality, which the existing regulatory frameworks may not provide.

Technological disparities, especially between urban and rural areas, also shape the landscape. The access to digital tools is limited in many regions, so Consumer Choice has to contend with a consumer base that may not be as easily reachable through digital channels. However, as technology access improves, particularly in urban areas, the company's ability to engage with consumers through both digital and traditional means becomes increasingly important.

Consumer awareness is another area where Consumer Choice can make an impact. The majority consumers in both Angola and Mozambique are price-sensitive, often prioritizing affordability over quality. This creates a smaller market for Consumer Choice since a large cut of the countries' population opts for the cheaper solutions ignoring quality guarantee seals. However, Consumer Choice can play an important role to educate consumers on the long-term value of investing in quality over time, this can help shift consumer behaviour and expand the market for higher-quality goods.

Competition from informal markets, which are prevalent in both countries, is another concern. Informal markets, where products are often cheaper but of questionable quality and legal certification, pose a challenge for businesses operating in the formal economy. However, this also presents an opportunity for Consumer Choice to differentiate itself by providing

consumers with reliable, independent evaluations that help them identify safe, better-quality products amid the vast array of alternatives in the informal economy.

The several challenges presented on business environment in Angola and Mozambique are also the opportunities for Consumer Choice to stand out. By offering transparency, educating consumers, and providing reliable data in markets where these qualities are lacking, the company has the opportunity to establish itself as a trusted authority in both countries. The distinct cultural influences in Angola and Mozambique, with Angola's strong connection to Portugal and Mozambique's dual focus on both Portugal and South Africa, further shape how Consumer Choice can tailor its approach to succeed in these markets.

4.Methodology

The methodology of this thesis focuses on exploring and evaluating the launch and development of Consumer Choice in African markets, with particular emphasis on Cape Verde as a potential new market. The approach involves a combination of literature review, case study analysis, and business planning, integrating theoretical insights with practical applications.

The literature review covers key topics such as consumer behaviour, the consumer decision-making process, the impact of brand approval seals on sales, and the role of influencer marketing. These studies provided a foundation for understanding how consumer perceptions of quality marks influence their purchasing decisions, as well as the significance of market trust in driving demand for products endorsed by seals like Consumer Choice.

A central element of this research was the transformation of my direct involvement in the first year of Consumer Choice's expansion into Angola and Mozambique into detailed case studies. These markets represent the first African countries where the initiative was launched, and my role in the project provided valuable insights into its implementation. The case studies allowed for a comparative analysis of both markets, identifying successes and challenges encountered during the expansion process. By drawing on both primary data from my work experience and secondary sources such as internal reports and market research, I was able to evaluate the performance of Consumer Choice in these contexts. This hands-on involvement was critical to shaping the lessons that will guide further internationalisation efforts in Africa, particularly in the Cape Verdean market.

Building on the findings from these case studies, I developed a comprehensive business plan for the launch and development of Consumer Choice in Cape Verde. This plan integrates the key lessons learned from Angola and Mozambique and applies them to the Cape Verdean market context. It includes a detailed market analysis of key consumer segments, industry trends, and the competitive landscape. Financial projections, such as sales forecasts and profit and loss estimates, were also developed to ensure the viability of the project. Furthermore, a chronological action plan that outlines the steps necessary for a successful launch and continued development of the Consumer Choice initiative in Cape Verde was created.

This methodology, grounded in both theoretical study and practical experience, ensures a thorough understanding of the dynamics involved in launching Consumer Choice in new African markets. By leveraging the insights from my direct involvement in Angola and Mozambique, the project is well-positioned for a successful expansion into Cape Verde.

5. Internationalization to Africa – Angola and Mozambique Case Studies

5.1 Launch Strategy in Angola and Mozambique

The launch of Consumer Choice in Angola and Mozambique started to be planned in June 2023. The Executive President and Founder of Consumer Choice Europe Mr. José Borralho has elected a CEO for these 2 markets, experienced in the Angolan market since he is a former Chief Marketing Officer of one of the biggest Angolan companies, Mr. Miguel Ângelo Soares. In order to, successfully launch and develop Consumer Choice in these two markets, Miguel searched for a partner in his network and ended up partnering with Mr. Rui Rodrigues, a high-profile entrepreneur with businesses and valuable networks in these target countries.

The first step was to find a strong commercial team, one for each market, give them training about Consumer Choice and start the cold calling with main business players in Angola and Mozambique. The immediate goal was to have these players present in the Launch and Presentation event scheduled for October 5th 2023, in Hotel Cardoso, Maputo for Consumer Choice Mozambique, and October 9th 2023 in Hotel HTCA in Talatona for Consumer Choice Angola. These events pretended to present this initiative to the decision-makers of the main companies of the various business sectors in presence, and to the general population through a press conference to the traditional press entities. This last communication strategy was held by a press relations agency and, in the week of the launch, news about Consumer Choice were on the main tv channels, radio stations, newspapers and obviously on this companies' online platforms as well, in both countries. Besides the traditional press, Consumer Choice was being promoted during its launch month through digital outdoors in the main avenues of Maputo and Luanda, and until the present day through its own digital platforms such as the website and the Instagram page. The launch event not only provided Consumer Choice with an opportunity to engage with the media but also offered business leaders in attendance the chance to hear from prominent keynote speakers. These included the founder of Consumer Choice, the company's commercial director for Portugal and Spain, the CEO for African markets, and the most awarded advertiser in the Lusophone world, Professor Edson Athayde. Having a prominent advertising figure like Edson Athayde speak at Consumer Choice's launch event greatly enhances its credibility and appeal, especially among high-profile executives of potential client companies who respect his career. His presence lends authority to the project, which relies on consumer trust, and helps attract valuable media coverage to boost visibility in the market. Edson's insights into marketing and brand-building inspire business leaders, while his

endorsement reinforces Consumer Choice's message of quality and reliability. Furthermore, his involvement facilitates valuable networking opportunities, potentially fostering new partnerships that support Consumer Choice's goals.

5.2 Sales, Marketing and Communication Strategy in Angola and Mozambique

After the launch event, where the potential clients could understand the project by what was presented by its main responsables and get inspired by Edson Athayde's talk, the commercial teams followed-up the contact with potential clients aiming the seal deals of participation in categories. This was made by an organic effort, door to door, mainly by videocalls in both markets. As reference previously, this participation in a category offers the brand a market study using the Consumer Choice Group global methodology with a confidence interval of 90 to 95% and the consequent run to be elected as the Consumer Choice in 2024, receiving the seal.

To boost the project credibility and exposure, Consumer Choice invested in creating categories for sectors where the brands and intervenients has a significant exposure, following and influence. By aligning with companies already well-established in the market, Consumer Choice can benefit from the credibility, market reach, and consumer trust already associated with these brands. These partnerships could help reinforce Consumer Choice's reputation and provide a faster route to gaining acceptance in new markets, as consumers often look to recognized brands and celebrities for guidance on quality and reliability.

In addition, collaborating with leading individuals in sectors that enjoy significant public exposure such as music, sports, or entertainment, can enhance Consumer Choice's visibility and population awareness. Creating categories in these sectors where the winners receive widespread exposure and recognition is a strategic way to engage with potential clients and create relevance within the consumers on a broader scale. Music, for instance, has a strong cultural following, and by tying awards or recognitions to industries with substantial consumer engagement, Consumer Choice can tap into existing fan bases and communities. These sectors also tend to have a significant influence on public opinion and consumer behaviour. Being associated with influential companies or sectors allows Consumer Choice to leverage that influence to shape perceptions and encourage consumers to make informed choices based on the company's assessments. This increased exposure and recognition, through partnerships within popular categories, not only enhances the company's visibility but also solidifies its position as a trusted authority in evaluating products and services.

Consumer Choice organized a second event in Angola on the 21st of March and in Mozambique on the 29th of April for awarding the seals to the winning companies. The objectives of this event were similar to those of the first: to gain media exposure, generate news coverage, create networking opportunities within the local corporate community, and build brand awareness. Additionally, this event aimed to formally recognize and distinguish the winning companies, further enhancing their reputation through the acknowledgment of their success.

Consumer Choice also participated in the FACIM trade fair in Maputo during the last week of August 2024. FACIM is Mozambique's largest commercial event with a substantial international presence. The event spanned one week, and during this time, the commercial director actively engaged with numerous corporate stakeholders, forging important connections within the Mozambican business community.

Besides the participation in FACIM, the exact same communication and marketing strategy was implemented in both Angola and Mozambique. However, the sales teams were different, as it was essential to have local teams in each country, taking advantage of the benefits previously mentioned. Employing local staff not only ensured a better understanding of the market dynamics, cultural nuances, and salespersons' network but also reinforced the project's commitment to being an integral part of the local business environment, thus enhancing its effectiveness and relevance in each market.

5.3 Results of the first year in Africa

In the first year of operations, Consumer Choice made some initial progress in both Angola and Mozambique. In Angola, 16 companies participated across 23 categories, including sectors such as telecommunications, retail, hospitality, advertising, insurance, technology stores, and journalism. In Mozambique, there were 12 companies involved across 19 categories, with participation from sectors such as telecommunications, television channels, breweries, banking, journalism, and advertising.

While these results indicate engagement from various industries, there remains considerable potential for further growth in both markets as the initiative continues to develop.

5.4 Main challenges faced on the first year in Africa

The sales process of the Consumer Choice project in Angola and Mozambique faced several challenges that impacted the acceptance of the project and the investment from local companies. One of the primary issues identified was the insufficient brand awareness to attract companies spontaneously at its launch, as reflected by the fact that only 10% of the leads were inbound. While it is highly unlikely for a project to achieve significant success in its first year in a new market, as growth is typically gradual, a higher number of inbound leads would have helped the sales teams achieve better results. This highlighted the need for further evolution and investment in the marketing and communication plan to effectively reach the target audience, which included decision-makers in local companies. Furthermore, the project's outreach to the final consumer, which should have been more comprehensive and sustained, did not reach the desired scope to generate higher visibility and, in turn, attract more businesses.

In the sales process, it became clear that companies were divided between those more interested in the market study and those more focused on the Consumer Choice seal. Managers from leading companies showed more interest in the market study, with some even inquiring whether they could purchase just this service. However, it was explained that Consumer Choice is not a market research company; the study conducted serves as a foundation for awarding the seal. While companies do receive the results, providing valuable insights into how their brand and products are perceived by consumers, this is a complementary benefit. Smaller companies, usually led by less experienced managers, were more interested in the possibility of using the seal for promotional purposes, but often lacked the financial resources to invest in the project and capitalize on the advantages it offered, whether through market study insights or leveraging the Consumer Choice seal in their communications, win case of winning.

Another challenge was the credibility of the seal. In both markets, an initiative already existed that awarded seals based on brand notoriety, and many companies confused Consumer Choice with this other initiative. It is important to note that although the existing initiative had been in the market longer, it was not a local project, but rather an adaptation to the Angolan market, much like Consumer Choice. The fact that many executives associated Consumer Choice with the existing initiative with different focuses and evaluation practices created an initial barrier that needed to be overcome.

Some companies also struggled to understand the statistical methods behind the Consumer Choice study, which complicated the sales process. This limited their ability to grasp the rigor and accuracy of the research, and for those who did join the project, it often hindered their

ability to fully interpret and utilize the results, reducing the perceived value they could extract from the study. This reinforces the need of a more educational approach while promoting and selling a project like Consumer Choice in Africa.

In Angola, the first five to six months were marked by poor sales performance due to the commercial director's lack of proactivity, which resulted in no sales. However, after this director left and the CEO temporarily assumed sales responsibilities, results improved despite the CEO's more limited contact network. The CEO's more proactive and direct sales approach proved to be far more effective in generating significant outcomes in a relatively short time.

Consumer Choice has also leveraged the CEO's influence and network in Angola, which made a significant difference in sales. Meetings were predominantly held with senior executives in Angolan companies, including Chief Marketing Officers and CEOs, individuals who had the authority to make decisions more effectively. Consumer Choice CEO in these markets, having been a high-ranking marketing executive at one of Angola's largest companies for many years, is still highly respected and well-known in the local business community. His reputation opened doors to these top decision-makers, leading to more direct and productive negotiations.

In Mozambique, a slightly different dynamic was observed. While the commercial team also engaged with senior executives, the meetings were more frequently held with marketing managers rather than with top-level executives like CMOs and CEOs, as was the case in Angola. Although the commercial team generated a strong number of outbound leads and initial interest, negotiations often stalled because the team struggled to escalate discussions to individuals with greater decision-making power within the companies. As a result, many discussions did not progress to the level of authority required to finalize deals. Other contributing factors included pricing concerns and the project's relatively lower notoriety in the market. By the end of the first year, the number of categories and participating companies was higher in Angola, while Mozambique consistently showed greater initial interest. However, this interest did not translate as effectively into closed deals, resulting in a lower conversion ratio in Mozambique compared to Angola.

The need for approval from higher-ups within companies presented a common barrier. Although the executives involved in negotiations had decision-making authority, more in Angola than in Mozambique, there was a cultural reluctance to invest in innovative initiatives without explicit approval from their superiors. This behaviour was observed both in the pre-sales phase, where it prevented some companies from participating in the project, and in the post-sales phase, where there was a hesitant adoption of the seal in marketing campaigns. The

reluctance to use the seal can be attributed to tight marketing budgets (as participation in Consumer Choice already consumed part of this budget, leaving little room for additional promotion of the results), but it could also be overcome if leading companies in the market took the first step. The imitative behaviour prevalent in African markets means that when large companies or multinationals adopt a practice, others tend to follow their lead, and in this case the large companies did not take the first step neither in participating in the Consumer Choice initiative or promoting the seal through their own communication channels or advertisement. In the first year, these companies didn't consider the promotion of this award important or a priority.

The launch of Consumer Choice in Mozambique coincided with a period of significant political instability, as the country approached an election year. During this time, the opposition party was gaining substantial momentum, posing a serious challenge to the regime party, which had maintained control of government institutions since Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975. This heightened political tension created a climate of uncertainty, making businesses cautious about committing to new investments or initiatives. Many companies, particularly in such an unpredictable environment, were hesitant to make long-term financial decisions, fearing potential market disruptions or policy changes. This instability contributed to the reluctance of businesses to engage with Consumer Choice during its launch year, as they prioritized navigating the political landscape over exploring new commercial opportunities.

5.5 Business improvement opportunities for Angola and Mozambique

In its second year of operations, Consumer Choice has substantial opportunities to strengthen its brand presence and market impact across Angola and Mozambique. Building on initial successes and insights gained in the first year, the primary focus for improvement should be on elevating brand awareness among consumers, refining B2B engagement, establishing more effective partnerships, and exploring strategic adjustments in pricing and marketing. By executing targeted and responsive strategies, Consumer Choice can address current limitations and more effectively position its seal as a trusted symbol of quality.

To build consumer familiarity with the Consumer Choice seal, a robust awareness campaign is already underway, including a television advertising presence. TV remains a trusted media channel in Angola and Mozambique, reaching diverse audiences across socioeconomic backgrounds, making it an ideal channel for Consumer Choice. To build on these initial efforts, advertisements could focus on relatable consumer scenarios that showcase

the seal's relevance in quality assurance, positioning it as a guiding tool in decision-making. In addition, website and social media platforms can play a supportive role by hosting content such as local success stories, testimonials, and insights from Consumer Choice-certified companies. By leveraging digital platforms to feature customer stories and region-specific benefits of the Consumer Choice seal, these channels can drive consumer engagement and demonstrate the seal's value in Angola and Mozambique, building confidence and trust among local consumers.

Direct consumer engagement at the grassroots level could also play an essential role in expanding awareness of the seal. Given that the general population is still in the early stages of familiarity with Consumer Choice, local activations, such as in-store displays, signage, and community events, would be powerful tools for building consumer recognition. Activations within shopping centres, supermarkets, and community fairs could serve as interactive opportunities where consumers can engage with Consumer Choice representatives who can explain the value and purpose of the seal. By providing tangible experiences with certified products, grassroots marketing efforts would not only increase brand recall but also indirectly encourage businesses to pursue certification to meet growing consumer expectations for reliable, quality-assured goods.

Building on the success of the first-year launch, Consumer Choice has already developed a foundation of event participation, having attended Mozambique's FACIM trade fair (Feira Internacional de Maputo). Repeating participation in such events would help to reinforce Consumer Choice's market position, especially given FACIM's high-profile attendance from major industries and influential decision-makers. Beyond repeated participation, Consumer Choice could consider deepening its involvement by sponsoring specific event segments or hosting workshops on topics such as consumer confidence and quality assurance. These efforts would position Consumer Choice as a thought leader in quality standards and branding, strengthening its industry reputation. Additionally, organizing its own biannual or annual summits in both Angola and Mozambique could allow Consumer Choice to create a dedicated platform for dialogue around the seal's value, quality assurance, and marketing strategies. This would foster greater understanding and interest in the seal among companies, helping them view it as a strategic differentiator in the market. Consistent, proactive participation in trade and industry events would generate media coverage, further amplifying the brand's visibility and appeal across both markets.

Consumer Choice's pricing structure is central to increasing adoption and retention. In the second year, a flexible pricing strategy adapted to the local economies of Angola and Mozambique could boost participation among local businesses. For instance, Consumer Choice

could continue to offer early-bird or renewal discounts to first-year clients who commit to re-certification, reinforcing the seal's value while helping companies assess its impact on their brand reputation. Offering incentives like these to longstanding clients would encourage repeat engagement and give businesses a compelling reason to maintain their seal certification. New industry categories are another growth area worth exploring to increase the seal's reach across more product types. By selectively introducing new categories in sectors with high consumer engagement, such as telecom, consumer electronics, or FMCG, Consumer Choice can respond to evolving market demand while encouraging broader participation. Over time, as the brand's visibility and value strengthen, the pricing model could be adjusted to reflect this added recognition, ensuring sustained growth in revenue.

Refining the sales team's approach could be instrumental in helping Consumer Choice build deeper client relationships and better align its offerings with key business cycles. The second year's strategy could involve targeting high-consumer-engagement industries like FMCG, telecom, and retail, where the Consumer Choice seal would be especially beneficial in enhancing brand trust. Direct, senior-level involvement in sales activities, from the CEO in Angola to the Commercial Director in Mozambique, would add value to client relationships, as these interactions demonstrate Consumer Choice's commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. Reaching out to potential clients during periods when they are planning budgets for the coming year could increase Consumer Choice's success rate in securing new clients, as companies may be more open to including new initiatives. Targeting outreach during planning cycles, rather than later in the year when budgets are often constrained, could better align Consumer Choice's sales timeline with client decision-making processes, fostering greater adoption of the seal. Building relationships with top-level executives, such as CMOs and CEOs, within targeted industries would further strengthen Consumer Choice's influence, helping position the seal as a powerful tool for brand differentiation in competitive sectors.

Building partnerships with local trade associations and business networks is another high-potential opportunity for increasing Consumer Choice's brand visibility and credibility. Collaborations with associations such as the Angola Chamber of Commerce or the Mozambique Chamber of Commerce could provide Consumer Choice access to networks of local businesses that are already respected in their fields. Through participation in association events, Consumer Choice would have opportunities to engage directly with member companies, highlighting the seal's value as a differentiator in the market. These connections would allow Consumer Choice to gain insights into regional business trends and challenges, refining its service offerings to better meet local needs. Strategic involvement with industry organizations

would further bolster Consumer Choice's credibility, as endorsements or informal support from these associations would be viewed positively within the business community. This positioning can play a significant role in Consumer Choice's strategy to attract companies seeking to align themselves with recognized quality standards.

6. Business Plan to Launch and Development in Cape Verde

6.1 Demographic and Economic Overview of Cape Verde, Angola, and Mozambique in 2023-2024

6.1.1 Cape Verde

Cape Verde, despite its smaller size and population compared to Angola and Mozambique, presents unique opportunities for economic development. As of 2024, Cape Verde's population is estimated at around 611 014, significantly lower than Angola's 37.2 million and Mozambique's 33.4 million (CIA World Factbook, 2024). However, what sets Cape Verde apart is its stable political and economic environment, supporting consistent growth, which contrasts with the more volatile conditions found in Angola and Mozambique, largely due to their greater dependency on oil and natural gas, respectively.

Cape Verde's market is primarily concentrated in its major urban areas, which serve as the focal points of economic activity. The largest cities include Praia, Mindelo, and Santa Maria, with significant portions of the population residing in these locations. Praia, the capital city located on Santiago Island, is the largest urban centre with a population of 153 116 inhabitants. It plays a critical role in Cape Verde's political, administrative, and economic life, housing the majority of government institutions, international embassies, and the country's main seaport. Praia is also a centre for commerce, with significant activity in trade, tourism, and services (Instituto Nacional de Estatística de Cabo Verde, 2023).

Mindelo, on São Vicente Island, is the second-largest city with around 78 435 inhabitants in São Vicente Island. It is an important economic and cultural hub, particularly for tourism and the arts, and features Porto Grande, a strategic port vital for international trade and maritime services. Mindelo is renowned for its cultural tourism and music scene, contributing to Cape Verde's broader tourism economy (Instituto Nacional de Estatística de Cabo Verde, 2023).

Santa Maria, on Sal Island, is smaller in population, with about 36 492 residents in the whole island, but it holds significant importance as a tourism destination. Known for its beaches and resort infrastructure, it plays a key role in attracting international tourists and boosting the hospitality sector. Tourism is a fast-growing industry in Cape Verde, particularly in Santa Maria, which hosts numerous international resorts and hotels (Instituto Nacional de Estatística de Cabo Verde, 2023).

Economically, Cape Verde is characterised as a middle-income, developing island economy, heavily dependent on the tourism sector. The recovery of this sector has been a

primary driver for the country's strong economic performance in recent years. Cape Verde's GDP at the official exchange rate in 2023 is estimated at \$2.587 billion. The real GDP growth rate stood at 5.15% in 2023, following exceptional growth rates of 17.44% in 2022 and 7.03% in 2021. This demonstrates the resilience of its economy, particularly as the tourism sector recovers post-pandemic. The real GDP per capita for 2023 is \$8,200, an improvement from \$7,900 in 2022 and \$6,800 in 2021, reflecting a stable growth trajectory (CIA World Factbook, 2024).

In terms of economic structure, Cape Verde is dominated by the services sector, which accounted for 70.6% of GDP in 2023, with industry and agriculture contributing 10.7% and 4.5%, respectively. The services sector, especially tourism, remains the backbone of the economy, though the relatively smaller industrial and agricultural outputs highlight the importance of diversifying economic activities (CIA World Factbook, 2024).

6.1.2 Angola and Mozambique

Angola's economy, predominantly oil-dependent, reached a GDP of \$84.723 billion in 2023, far exceeding that of Cape Verde. Despite its economic size, Angola faces considerable challenges, including inflation, currency depreciation, and widespread poverty. In 2023, Angola's real GDP growth was 0.86%, down from 3.05% in 2022, with a per capita GDP of \$7,200, reflecting a slight decline. Sectorally, industry dominated with a 45.3% GDP share, while agriculture and services contributed 14.9% and 39.7%, respectively. This sectoral distribution underlines Angola's ongoing dependence on oil, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices despite diversification efforts (CIA World Factbook, 2024).

Mozambique, a low-income economy with a GDP of \$20.625 billion in 2023, is heavily reliant on subsistence agriculture and extractive industries. Real GDP growth reached 5% in 2023, up from 4.36% in 2022, although challenges such as an Islamist insurgency threaten its vital natural gas projects. Mozambique's real GDP per capita remains low at \$1,500. Agriculture contributes 26.7% of GDP, followed by industry at 22.8% and services at 40.6%. This breakdown underscores the role of agriculture and a developing industrial sector centred on natural resources, with services assuming a less dominant role than in Cape Verde's service-driven economy (CIA World Factbook, 2024).

6.1.3 Insights from demographic and economic comparison between the 3 markets

In comparison, Cape Verde's economic stability and reliance on tourism provide a different market dynamic than the more resource-dependent economies of Angola and Mozambique. While Angola and Mozambique grapple with political instability and economic volatility tied to natural resources, Cape Verde's service-driven economy, supported by a stable political environment and consistent growth in GDP per capita, offers a more reliable environment for the development of new market ventures. As Consumer Choice considers its expansion into Cape Verde, it can build on the country's stable growth and service-driven market, while learning from the more challenging conditions encountered in Angola and Mozambique.

6.2 Cape Verdean Market Landscape Analysis

6.2.1 Industry Trends

Cape Verde's economic landscape includes several key companies across various sectors that play a vital role in the country's development. In the telecommunications sector, CV Telecom is the leading provider, offering essential internet, television, and telephone services throughout the islands, helping maintain Cape Verde's connectivity. TACV Cabo Verde Airlines, a national airline, is crucial for international connectivity, particularly for tourism, which is central to the economy. In the banking sector, Banco Interatlântico supports both individuals and businesses, contributing to the country's financial infrastructure. Utility services are managed by Electra, responsible for electricity and water supply, which are fundamental to daily life and business activities. Additionally, Enapor – Portos de Cabo Verde manages the country's port operations, ensuring the flow of imports and exports necessary for Cape Verde's trade-driven economy. In the renewable energy sector, CERMI (Renewable Energy and Industrial Maintenance Center) leads efforts to promote green energy solutions in Cape Verde (AFSIC, 2024).

In telecommunications, CV Telecom and Unitel T+ dominate, offering essential mobile and internet connectivity. With a 4% increase in subscriptions reported by Forbes África Lusófona (2024) in early 2024, both companies are positioned to address Cape Verde's rising demand for internet access, which is largely mobile-driven. In retail, Meu Super, part of the Portuguese Sonae MC group, stands out, providing a logistical advantage linked to a European supply chain, while smaller stores serve the broader population's needs. Key banking players include Caixa Económica de Cabo Verde, Banco Interatlântico (of the Caixa Geral de Depósitos group), and Banco BAI, each supporting businesses and individuals. Insurance leaders Impar and

Garantia (part of the Fidelidade Group) are central to the sector. The media landscape, with major outlets like RCV, RDP África Cabo Verde, TCV, and RTP África, serves as an essential platform for B2B and B2C outreach, making it ideal for Consumer Choice seal awareness campaigns. In the automotive sector, brands like Caetano, Stand.cv, and Tuacar provide well-known vehicle services, positioning them to benefit from the trust associated with the Consumer Choice seal. Finally, FMCG world major players, including various global brands, maintain a strong presence in Cape Verde, where the Consumer Choice seal can enhance their appeal to quality-conscious consumers.

6.2.2 Competitor Overview

Currently, there is no direct competitor to Consumer Choice in Cape Verde in terms of a brand evaluation system focused specifically on consumer opinions. Although consumer protection and quality control are present in the market, they are generally carried out through government agencies, such as the National Quality System (Sistema Nacional de Qualidade - SNQ). The SNQ plays a regulatory role, ensuring that products meet defined standards, but it does not operate with a consumer-oriented approach to brand assessment or recognition. This gap provides a unique opportunity for Consumer Choice to introduce a consumer-centric evaluation system that elevates brands based on direct consumer feedback, setting it apart from existing quality control mechanisms.

6.2.3 Potential Client Profile

The primary potential clients for Consumer Choice in Cape Verde are Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs), business owners and CEOs of large companies, particularly in key industries such as telecommunications, hospitality, retail, television, radio, banking, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), automotive, technology retail, and insurance. These individuals are responsible for shaping their company's marketing strategies and would greatly benefit from the added credibility and consumer trust that the Consumer Choice seal could bring to their brands. By targeting decision-makers in these sectors, Consumer Choice can effectively engage with companies that have significant market influence and are motivated by enhancing brand reputation and consumer satisfaction.

6.2.4 Organisational Structure

The organizational structure for Consumer Choice in Cape Verde will include four key roles. At the top of the structure is the CEO, responsible for the overall leadership and strategic direction of the company. The CEO will oversee all operations, manage the team, and ensure that the company's objectives align with its mission and vision. The investor will have a role in providing financial backing and strategic guidance, helping the company secure resources and scale effectively.

The Commercial Director will play a pivotal role in leading the sales efforts, negotiating with potential clients, and representing the company in key meetings. This individual will be responsible for securing partnerships and driving revenue growth. The Outbound Sales Executive will focus on prospecting potential clients, building a robust contact database, and cold calling. This role will be crucial for laying the groundwork for the Commercial Director to step in and close deals.

Additionally, a social media Agency will be hired through outsourcing to handle the company's digital marketing efforts, managing online presence, running campaigns, and interacting with consumers on social media platforms and website.

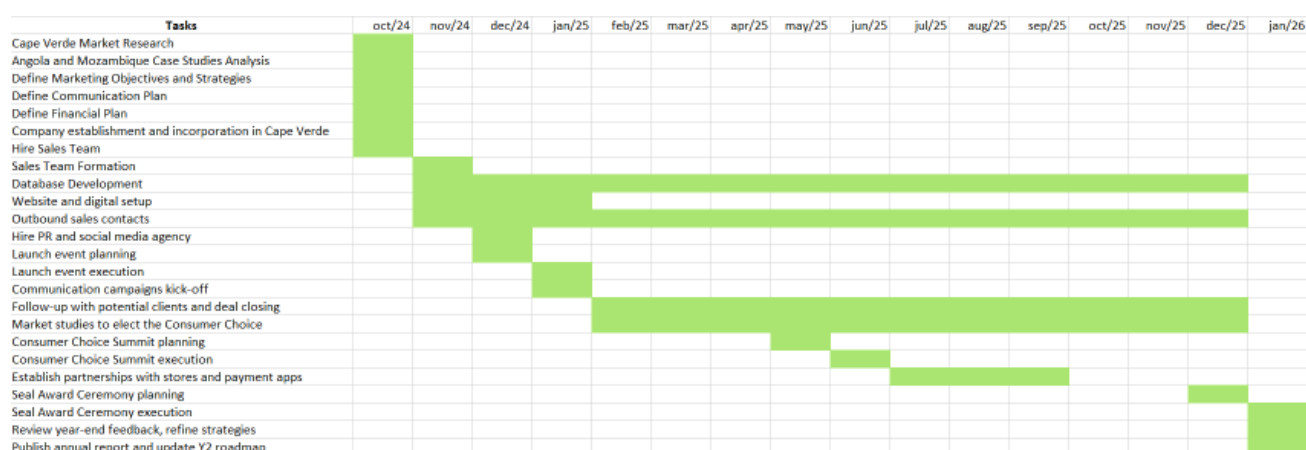
The ideal Commercial Director should have extensive experience in sales, preferably within the B2B or service sectors. He should be skilled in building and maintaining client relationships, negotiating deals, and leading sales strategies. A deep understanding of the Cape Verdean market or similar environments is crucial, just like an extended network in this market. Strong communication and interpersonal skills are critical, as the role involves meeting with key business stakeholders. This individual should be results-driven, with a proven track record of meeting or exceeding revenue targets, and possess leadership abilities to mentor and guide the sales team.

The ideal candidate for the role of outbound sales executive should have prior experience in outbound sales or telemarketing. They should be highly organized and detail-oriented, with strong research skills to effectively build a database of potential leads. Excellent communication skills are essential for cold calling and establishing initial contact with prospective clients. Persistence and resilience are important traits, as the role involves handling a high volume of outreach. The candidate should also be adaptable and collaborative, working closely with the Commercial Director to ensure a seamless sales process from lead generation to deal closure.

6.2.5 Project Roadmap

The project roadmap for Consumer Choice in Cape Verde outlines a structured approach to establishing and growing the brand's presence in the market. Spanning from October 2024 to January 2026, the launch roadmap covers key stages, including initial market research, brand promotion, and client acquisition, leading to the certification of companies that meet the established quality standards to be elected the Consumer Choice. This timeline ensures a balanced focus on brand awareness and client engagement, setting a strong foundation for Consumer Choice's success in Cape Verde.

Figure 4 - Consumer Choice Cape Verde General Roadmap. Source: Compiled by the author.



6.3 Marketing and Communication Plan

6.3.1 Marketing Objectives

The primary goal for the first year is to build initial brand awareness among 70% of the Cape Verdean target business community. Additionally, Consumer Choice will aim to achieve recognition among 30% of Cape Verdean consumers within the same period. Over the next three years, the long-term goal is to expand market penetration by securing partnerships with at least 30 companies across different key sectors, including telecommunications, retail, banking, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). Building on the initial momentum, Consumer Choice will aim to increase engagement and loyalty by demonstrating value to the businesses and increasing consumer confidence in the awarded companies. It is also a marketing objective for the first three years that Consumer Choice's Award Winners promote their achievement in traditional media advertisement.

6.3.2 Marketing Strategies

The marketing strategy for launching and developing Consumer Choice in Cape Verde will centre on a well-structured approach designed to reach the right market segments, establish a strong positioning in the local market, and leverage a variety of channels to promote the brand's value and benefits.

Segmentation will target middle to high-income earners, particularly those in urban centres such as Praia and Mindelo. These consumers, more likely to prioritize product quality over cost, represent the key audience that would resonate with the Consumer Choice seal. By focusing on this demographic, the marketing efforts will align with those who value consumer satisfaction and product excellence, which directly ties into the core of Consumer Choice's offering. In terms of positioning, Consumer Choice will be introduced as a brand synonymous with quality, trustworthiness, and consumer satisfaction in the Cape Verdean market. The marketing communications will emphasize that businesses awarded the Consumer Choice seal have met rigorous standards of excellence, thus reinforcing the credibility of the seal. The goal will be to convey to both businesses and consumers that the seal is a mark of distinction, providing assurance and confidence in the products and services that carry it.

For pricing, Consumer Choice will adopt the same base structure used in Angola and Mozambique, ensuring consistency across markets. However, to encourage early adoption during the launch phase in Cape Verde, discounted rates will be offered to companies with a strong local presence and high consumer recognition. These early adopter discounts are crucial in securing participation from prominent brands, whose endorsement of the seal will help establish credibility and visibility. Additionally, loyalty programs will be introduced to incentivize companies that participate in multiple categories or commit to long-term engagements, with benefits such as discounted fees or free seals for companies that participate in three or more categories. The marketing strategy will place a strong emphasis on consumer education, as this will be key to generating demand. If consumers understand the value and significance of the Consumer Choice seal, they will be more inclined to seek out businesses that display it, indirectly creating market pressure on companies to participate. Educating the market will involve a multi-channel approach, including social media, television, radio, in-store promotions, and targeted email campaigns. This comprehensive approach will ensure that the message reaches consumers across various touchpoints. The Launch and Award Winners events will be a significant milestone, mirroring the successful events held in Angola and Mozambique. The launch event will feature keynote speakers and be attended by members of

the media to generate buzz and raise awareness. Additionally, partnerships will be formed with local trade associations and chambers of commerce, such as the Câmara de Comércio de Sotavento and Câmara de Comércio de Barlavento. These partnerships will help keep Consumer Choice integrated into the local business landscape, aligning the initiative with the development goals of these associations. Despite attempts in Angola and Mozambique to partner with larger B2C companies in co-marketing campaigns, which were unsuccessful due to a lack of interest, similar efforts will be made in Cape Verde. These campaigns can leverage the brand strength of well-established companies to promote the seal as a mark of quality. To further give formation to clients, potential clients and maintain engagement, Consumer Choice summits will be organized annually. These events will focus on important topics such as market trends, consumer behaviour, and the role of consumer awards in business success. This approach will position Consumer Choice not just as a certification but as a thought leader in the market. Influencer marketing will also be a significant component of the strategy, with partnerships formed with local influencers who have a notable following. By awarding influencers who are active in specific categories, Consumer Choice can increase its visibility and reach a broader audience, ensuring that the seal is not only recognized but actively sought after. Partnerships with platforms such as e-commerce sites, payment apps, and local supermarkets will further enhance the campaign's reach. These platforms will offer opportunities for in-app or in-store promotions, encouraging consumers to prioritize companies awarded the Consumer Choice seal by offering promotions or discounts linked to quality products. Activation events in high-traffic areas such as malls and supermarkets will offer an opportunity for direct consumer engagement. These face-to-face interactions will allow consumers to experience the Consumer Choice brand firsthand, reinforcing its value in their purchasing decisions.

This cohesive and comprehensive strategy is designed to build Consumer Choice's reputation and influence in Cape Verde, leveraging both tried-and-true tactics from other markets and targeted approaches tailored to the local business environment.

6.3.3 Sales Strategy

The sales strategy for Consumer Choice in Cape Verde will involve a well-coordinated effort led by a two-member team. A commercial director will be responsible for all formal client meetings, with a focus on in-person interactions to strengthen client relationships. The commercial director's primary role is to present the benefits of the Consumer Choice seal,

showcase its value, and negotiate with prospective clients, particularly targeting well-established brands in Cape Verde.

Supporting the commercial director is an outbound sales executive, whose responsibility will be to develop and manage a contact database of potential clients. This process will include researching and identifying businesses with strong market presence and initiating cold calls to introduce Consumer Choice. The outbound sales executive will generate interest and set up meetings for the commercial director, ensuring that formal presentations are well-prepared and strategically timed. The sales team will invite prospective clients to an upcoming launch event, serving as an opportunity to build excitement and provide more in-depth information about Consumer Choice. During this event and subsequent meetings, the sales team will present specific sales support content. This content will include tailored presentations that emphasize the benefits of the Consumer Choice seal, case studies from successful implementations in other markets, and detailed potential return-on-investment (ROI) figures. By providing this support content, the sales team aims to build trust and credibility with prospective clients, encouraging them to see the value in participating in the program. The CEO will oversee the formation and training of the sales team, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively promote Consumer Choice in the Cape Verdean market. This structured approach, combining strategic outreach, tailored content, and strong leadership, is designed to maximize client engagement and secure significant market penetration in Cape Verde.

6.3.4 Communication Plan

The communication plan for Consumer Choice in Cape Verde aims to achieve two core objectives:

- B2B: The objective here is to build credibility and attract business clients interested in obtaining the Consumer Choice seal, positioning it as a competitive advantage. This will be achieved by emphasising the seal's role in enhancing brand reputation and showcasing it as a quality mark that appeals to Cape Verdean consumers.
- B2C: The goal is to increase consumer trust and familiarity with the Consumer Choice seal, encouraging them to choose products that bear this certification. Emphasis is on promoting quality, transparency, and trust, which the seal represents, as well as building brand loyalty by highlighting the benefits of choosing Consumer Choice-certified products.

The B2B target audience comprises CEOs, marketing directors, and business owners within sectors such as retail, consumer goods, hospitality, and services. Typically located in Cape Verde's economic centres of Praia and Mindelo, these decision-makers are often seeking ways to enhance their brand reputation and appeal to quality-conscious consumers. The instruments for reaching the B2B audience include:

- LinkedIn will serve as the primary platform for sharing content that includes success stories, market insights, and the benefits of obtaining the Consumer Choice seal. LinkedIn content will be tailored to demonstrate the seal's competitive edge.
- Email Marketing campaigns will deliver newsletters featuring industry-specific case studies and data on return on investment, helping businesses understand the value Consumer Choice can bring to their brand.
- Events and Partnerships with Trade Associations will allow for direct engagement, hosting summits, creating networking opportunities and participating in trade forums to explain the benefits of the Consumer Choice certification, ensuring moments for questions and detailed information on participation requirements.

The B2C target audience includes middle to high-income consumers in Cape Verde's largest urban areas, Praia and Mindelo, aged between 25 and 50. These individuals are typically professionals who value quality and trust, with a preference for brands that emphasise transparency and authenticity. The instruments for B2C engagement include:

- Social media (Facebook and Instagram): Posts on these platforms will focus on product quality and authenticity associated with the Consumer Choice seal. Using interactive tools like polls and quizzes, the plan aims to engage consumers, educate them about the seal, and reinforce its value.
- PR and Media Relations: Press releases and media interviews (radio and TV) will highlight the importance of the Consumer Choice certification and promote its advantages for consumer trust. Collaborations with local media and influencers will strengthen awareness of the seal as a mark of excellence. Consumer Choice will also advertise its educational campaigns on TV and radio.
- In-store Promotions: Displays in supermarkets featuring products with the Consumer Choice seal will allow consumers to interact directly with the brand. Promotional initiatives, such as discounts on certified products, will further reinforce the association of the seal with quality products and elevate its visibility in Cape Verde's retail environment.

This structured communication plan thus addresses each audience with tailored messaging and instruments to build Consumer Choice’s brand recognition in both business and consumer sectors.

Figure 5 – Communication Plan Chronogram. Source: Compiled by the author

| MONTH | B2B ACTIONS | B2C ACTIONS |
|--------------|---|--|
| JAN 2025 | Launch LinkedIn campaigns, initial e-mail introductions. Launch event. | Launch brand awareness on Facebook, Instagram, and local mainstream media associated to the launch event. Invited influencers on the event. |
| FEB 2025 | E-mail series on Consumer Choice value, targeting business leaders. | Engagement campaign on social media with polls, quizzes. TV and Radio educational campaigns. Grassroot activation events. |
| MAR 2025 | Begin partnerships with trade associations, seek participation on their events. Announce partnerships through LinkedIn. | Paid ads highlighting product quality through Consumer Choice evaluation on Instagram and Facebook. TV and Radio educational campaigns. |
| APR 2025 | Content on industry-specific case studies on LinkedIn and e-mail. | TV and Radio educational campaigns. |
| MAY 2025 | Summit promotion on LinkedIn and through e-mail. | Summit promotion on Facebook and Instagram. Grassroot activation events. |
| JUN 2025 | CC Summit and Summit highlights’ videos on LinkedIn. | Summit highlights’ videos on Facebook and Instagram. Press Releases for mainstream media about the event. Invited influencers on the summit. |
| JUL 2025 | Publish ROI-focused content for business credibility on LinkedIn. | Engagement campaign on social media with polls, quizzes. |

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| AUG 2025 | Content on industry-specific case studies on LinkedIn and e-mail. | Instagram and Facebook content about Consumer Choice's market research methodology. "How is the Consumer Choice elected?" |
| SEP 2025 | LinkedIn updates, publish testimonials from participant Cape Verdean companies. | Grassroot activation events. |
| OCT 2025 | E-mail updates on Consumer Choice's market impact. | Updates on Consumer Choice's market impact on Facebook, Instagram and Website. |
| NOV 2025 | LinkedIn Live Q&A with Experts | Engagement campaign on social media with polls, quizzes. |
| DEC 2025 | Launch annual report on Consumer Choice impact in Cape Verde on LinkedIn and e-mail. | Grassroot activation events. Thank-you posts on social media, wrap up annual campaign data. |
| JAN 2026 | Seal Award Ceremony (including influencers). | Seal Award Ceremony (including influencers). In-store/in-app promotion on winning products/services. |

6.3.5 KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

To gauge the effectiveness of the Consumer Choice initiative in Cape Verde during its first year, several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to monitor marketing efforts, website engagement, lead generation, customer acquisition, and the commercial team's efficiency. Website traffic will be an initial focal point, tracking visitor numbers and their sources, such as organic searches, social media, or partnerships with trade associations. By examining the channels driving website visits, Consumer Choice can assess the success of its digital campaigns, influencer partnerships, and educational outreach. If traffic falls short of targets, adjustments can be made across promotional strategies, including social media, TV, radio, and in-store ads.

Lead Conversion Rate is another essential KPI that will measure the effectiveness of converting website traffic into actionable engagement, like information requests, event sign-ups, or meeting setups. A high conversion rate indicates both interest in Consumer Choice and an inclination toward brand participation, providing insight into the sales funnel's effectiveness. The commercial team's performance is tied closely to this KPI, as they transition leads from initial interest to negotiations. Their progress in generating high-quality leads can also highlight potential areas for improvement in user experience, messaging, or follow-up processes.

Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) and sales team performance are also critical KPIs. CAC will measure the total cost of gaining new clients, incorporating marketing expenses, commercial salaries, and operational outlays. If CAC is high, more refinement in marketing or sales tactics may be needed, potentially using co-marketing campaigns, summits, and partnerships to reduce lead generation costs. The sales team's effectiveness will be evaluated through the ratio of calls to meetings to closed deals, providing a view of the outbound sales executive's efforts and the commercial director's success in closing deals. Collectively, these KPIs offer a comprehensive framework for assessing Consumer Choice's performance, allowing real-time adjustments based on data and market feedback.

6.4 Financial Plan

The income statement for the financial plan of Consumer Choice is based on key revenue and expense categories. Revenue will be generated by selling participation in various product and service categories. Each company participating in a category will pay \$ 5000 for the associated market study. If the company wins the Consumer Choice seal, they will be charged an additional \$ 10 000, bringing the total revenue per winner to \$ 15 000. For those that do not win the seal, they will only be required to pay the market study fee of \$ 5000. Based on market behaviour and previous experiences, it is estimated that 80% of participants will win the Consumer Choice seal, while 20% will not, particularly in the first three years of operation.

Expenses are divided into key categories. The first is the Cost of Goods Sold (COGS), which represents the cost to conduct each market study, amounting to \$ 3000 per category. Another significant expense is payroll, with a fixed salary for the outbound sales executive in the first year, while the commercial director will be paid on a commission-only basis. The outbound sales executive will be employed for one year to build a contact database and initiate client outreach, after which the commercial director will assume all responsibilities. Marketing expenses will be a mix of direct costs and bartered services, where Consumer Choice will

provide market studies and awards in exchange for advertising campaigns through influencers, TV, and radio, thus reducing cash marketing expenses.

Marketing efforts will decrease progressively over the first three years as brand awareness increases, with more companies promoting their Consumer Choice seal to boost their own credibility, reducing the need for extensive investment in promotion by Consumer Choice itself.

The initial investment for this project includes the fixed salary of the outbound sales executive for one year and marketing campaigns during the first year, totalling \$ 88 400. As sales begin in the first year, the revenue from the sale of categories will cover part of the operational costs.

Regarding taxation, micro and small-sized companies in Cape Verde, as defined by PwC (2024), are subject to a special tax rate of 4% on their gross sales if revenues remain below 10 million CVE. If revenues exceed this threshold, the company would be taxed at a rate of 21%.

In terms of the break-even analysis, Consumer Choice will achieve break-even in the first year if 9 categories are sold to companies that win the Consumer Choice seal.

Finally, the projected net income over the first three years is expected to reach \$ 147 620, with sales in the first year targeting 10 categories, growing by 50% in the second year to 15 categories, and by an additional 33% in the third year to 20 categories.

All figures mentioned are for illustrative purposes only. The actual figures cannot be disclosed due to confidentiality reasons. The detailed financial forecast is presented below.

Figure 6 - Detailed Financial Forecast. Source: Compiled by the author.

| INCOME STATEMENT | | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | |
|--|-----|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Seal Winners | \$ | 120 000 | \$ 180 000 | \$ 240 000 | |
| | Qnt | 8 | 12 | 16 | |
| Seal Losers | \$ | 10 000 | \$ 15 000 | \$ 20 000 | |
| | Qnt | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| TOTAL REVENUES | \$ | 130 000 | \$ 195 000 | \$ 260 000 | |
| Var Revenue | | | 50,0% | 33,3% | |
| COGS (3K per category sold) | \$ | 30 000 | \$ 45 000 | \$ 60 000 | |
| | Qnt | 10 | 15 | 20 | |
| Payroll | \$ | 25 000 | \$ 19 500 | \$ 26 000 | |
| Commissions (Commercial Director, 10% sales) | \$ | 13 000 | \$ 19 500 | \$ 26 000 | |
| Salary Expenses (Outbond Sales Executive) | \$ | 12 000 | \$ - | \$ - | |
| Marketing | \$ | 76 400 | \$ 70 400 | \$ 58 400 | |
| Summits (1 per year, 10K each) | \$ | 10 000 | \$ 10 000 | \$ 10 000 | |
| Influencers (3 per year, 3K each) | \$ | 9 000 | \$ 9 000 | \$ 9 000 | |
| Grassroot activation events (4 per year, 1.25K each) | \$ | 5 000 | \$ 5 000 | \$ 5 000 | |
| in-store/in-app promotion | \$ | - | \$ 10 000 | \$ 10 000 | |
| Radio advertisement | \$ | 9 000 | \$ 6 000 | | |
| TV advertisement | \$ | 9 000 | \$ 6 000 | | |
| Launch Event (only in Y1) | \$ | 10 000 | | | |
| PR and Social Media Agency (1.2K per month) | \$ | 14 400 | \$ 14 400 | \$ 14 400 | |
| Award Ceremony | \$ | 10 000 | \$ 10 000 | \$ 10 000 | |
| TOTAL COSTS | \$ | 131 400 | \$ 134 900 | \$ 144 400 | |
| Var Costs | | | 2,7% | 7,0% | |
| EBITDA | \$ | -1 400 | \$ 60 100 | \$ 115 600 | |
| Tax Rate (%) | | NA | 4% | 21% | |
| Taxes | \$ | | 2 404 | \$ 24 276 | |
| Net Income | \$ | -1 400 | \$ 57 696 | \$ 91 324 | \$ 147 620 |

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the launch and development of Consumer Choice in Cape Verde represent a strategic continuation of the project's expansion into African markets, building on successful introductions in Angola and Mozambique. The decision to enter the Cape Verdean market has been informed by detailed analysis and an understanding of the local business landscape. My involvement in Angola and Mozambique's first-year operations provided valuable case studies that guided assessments of international expansion feasibility, highlighting operational challenges, market responses, and consumer engagement insights essential for Cape Verde.

Marketing strategies for Cape Verde prioritize consumer education and emphasize the Consumer Choice seal as a trusted quality mark. Targeting middle to high-income urban consumers, the seal is positioned as a prestigious excellence indicator, aiming to generate demand supported by partnerships with trade associations and prominent brands, which reinforce its credibility.

The business plan includes a detailed financial forecast with expected revenue, expenses, and a break-even analysis. Based on projected participation sales across categories, the forecast anticipates positive net income of \$ 146 160 by year three, as marketing costs decrease alongside brand awareness growth. This model shows the project reaching its break-even point by selling participation in nine categories within the first year.

Despite thorough research, there are limitations, such as the unpredictability of market reception in Cape Verde. Actual consumer and business engagement with the Consumer Choice seal may vary, and reliance on early adopters to establish credibility could impact initial market traction if uptake is slower than expected.

As the project progresses, regular market research and feedback loops will be crucial to adapt the business model to evolving consumer preferences and competitive dynamics.

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