



**The Drivers of Customer Disengagement: The  
Case of the Telecommunications Sector in  
Portugal**

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## **Biographical Note**

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## **Abstract**

The development of the connection between companies/brands and customers is an important stage that impacts the lifetime of their relationship. However, this seems to be better for the development and maintenance of a healthier relationship in some sectors, rather than others. This gap seems to be even more evident in the telecommunications sector, mainly due to the nature of the sector, where companies provide predominantly functional and utilitarian services, and that heavily relies on exit barriers to maintain the relationship with the customer.

The focus of this study on the ending stage of relationships through customer disengagement aims to add knowledge to the development of the process that often leads to defection in the telecommunications sector. Companies want to know what makes a customer stay with them but also what drives a customer to leave.

This study intends to address the gap on relationship marketing research and literature, which is often focused on the positive side of the relationships and not so much on the negative side, and to explore what drives customer behaviour towards customer disengagement and the reasons and motivations behind that behaviour within a specific relationship context.

A combined qualitative and quantitative study helped to explore this issue, allowing assessments of consumers' individual and collective behaviours and pulse.

A proposed research model was tested through survey analysis and it was possible to study five main disengagement drivers: brand strength/value, exclusive services, pricing & loyalty programs, technical problems and unmet expectations.

With this study it was possible to conclude that pricing & loyalty programs, technical problems and unmet expectations influence customer disengagement and that the drivers considered have different degrees of importance depending on the time that the customers are connected with the same telecommunications provider. The results present insights to telecommunication providers, helping them to better understand the key disengagement drivers acknowledged by their customers and their impact on customer disengagement.

**Key-words:** customer behaviour, customer disengagement, customer satisfaction, relationship ending, telecommunications.

## Table of Contents

Biographical Note.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
1. Introduction .....	9
2. Literature Review .....	11
2.1. Defining customer engagement .....	11
2.2. Defining customer disengagement.....	14
2.3. The role of relationship context in customer disengagement .....	17
2.4. Identification of customer disengagement drivers.....	20
3. Empirical Study.....	22
3.1. Identification of the research question .....	22
3.2. Identification of the research context .....	24
3.2.1. Brief overview of the sector .....	24
3.2.2. The relevance of the research context .....	26
3.3. Methodology.....	27
3.3.1. Empirical Approaches of similar studies .....	28
3.3.2. Qualitative Study: Netnography .....	30
3.3.3. Quantitative Study: Survey .....	31
3.3.3.1. Structure of the Survey.....	32
3.3.3.2. Data Collection and Sample Description .....	35
3.4. Data Analysis .....	36
3.4.1. Netnographic Data Analysis.....	36
3.4.2. Survey Data Analysis.....	38
3.4.2.1. Sample Descriptive Analysis .....	38
3.4.2.2. Results' Analysis .....	43
3.4.2.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis .....	43
3.4.2.2.2. The influence of disengagement drivers on customer disengagement (H1) .....	52
3.4.2.2.3. The influence of moderating effects on disengagement drivers (H2).....	55

3.5. Discussion of Results .....	63
4. Conclusions, limitations and suggestions for future research .....	66
5. References.....	70
Annexes.....	74

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Disengagement process for functional/utilitarian and participative/co-creative service contexts .....	18
Figure 2 Research Model.....	23
Figure 3: Intention to switch telecommunications provider in Portugal .....	26
Figure 4: Number of followers on Facebook at April 16, 2016 .....	36
Figure 5: Type of interactions on Social Networks, from January to March, 2016 .....	37
Figure 6: Types of negative interactions identified .....	38
Figure 7: Sample analysis – Gender.....	39
Figure 8: Sample analysis – Age Groups.....	39
Figure 9: Sample analysis – Educational Background (Qualifications).....	40
Figure 10: Sample analysis – Telecommunications Provider .....	40
Figure 11: Sample analysis – Telecommunications Services Contracted .....	41
Figure 12: Sample analysis – Number of Telecommunication Services Contracted .....	41
Figure 13: Sample analysis – Time with Current Telecommunications Provider .....	42
Figure 14: Sample analysis – Disengagement Drivers .....	43
Figure 15: Research Model ( <i>post</i> factor analysis).....	51
Figure 16: Normal Probability Plot .....	53

## List of Tables

Table 1: Customer Engagement (CE) Conceptualizations .....	13
Table 2: Summarizing the main approaches on customer disengagement (CD) .....	16
Table 3: Summarizing the main approaches on the relationship context .....	19
Table 4: Summarizing the main potentially disengagement drivers in the telecommunications sector .....	21
Table 5: Total number of subscribers of the telecommunications sector in Portugal .....	24
Table 6: Companies market share of the telecommunications sector in Portugal .....	25
Table 7: Characteristics of the studies reviewed .....	29
Table 8: Scale and Items Used for the Measures.....	33
Table 9: Analyzed Variables.....	35
Table 10: KMO values' classification .....	44
Table 11: KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity tests for Disengagement (dependent variable) .....	44
Table 12: KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity tests for Disengagement Drivers .....	45
Table 13: Communalities' Matrix .....	46
Table 14: Component Matrix for Disengagement .....	47
Table 15: Rotated Component Matrix for Disengagement Drivers .....	47
Table 16: Influence of customer disengagement ( <i>post</i> factor analysis) .....	48
Table 17: Influence of drivers on customer disengagement ( <i>post</i> factor analysis).....	49
Table 18: Errors' Analysis .....	53
Table 19: Correlation Coefficients .....	54
Table 20: Variance Analysis .....	54
Table 21: Coefficients Analysis .....	55
Table 22: Multivariate Test .....	56
Table 23: Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) for type of provider .....	57
Table 24: Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) for number of services .....	58
Table 25: Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) for time with the same provider .....	59
Table 26: Multiple Comparisons - Post hoc test (Tukey) for time with the same provider .....	61
Table 27: Validation of the analyzed hypotheses (H1) .....	63
Table 28: Validation of the analyzed hypotheses (H2) .....	64

## **1. Introduction**

The relationship between customers and companies/brands has several stages. One of these relational stages can be characterized as engagement. This engagement concept is emerging in the relational marketing literature (Hollebeek, 2011a). Developing and sustaining relationships with customers may require companies to look beyond repurchase behaviour and contracted loyalty periods (van Doorn et al., 2010). To develop and sustain relationships, companies must seek customer engagement to expand and fortify the loyalty nexus, with relational marketing research demonstrating that engaged consumers might show higher levels of loyalty to brands (Hollebeek, 2011a). Hence, companies need and want to explore what drives customer engagement towards a brand. Nevertheless, companies also need to explore what are the drivers of customer disengagement, since the relationship between customers and companies begins, develops, and ends. To postpone as much as possible the ending stage, companies must understand what drives a customer to leave and to disengage with a brand. Firms are paying more attention to their relationships with customers to retain them (Naidu & Ponduri, 2015).

Relational marketing research on customer engagement has tended to focus more on the positive side of relationships, giving more attention to relationship development and maintenance than on the negative side of relationships (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010), and giving less attention to relationship ending and dissolution (Chen, Lu, Gupta, & Xiaolin, 2014). Therefore, there is a need to explore the development of relationships and its impact on the process of defection (Hollmann, Jarvis, & Bitner, 2014).

Moreover, in some sectors seem to be less prospects to postpone this ending stage of a relationship comparing to others and more likely to be exposed to the disengagement phenomena, which may suggest that the propensity for customer disengagement is different across service categories (Bowden, Gabbott, & Naumann, 2015). The telecommunications sector is one of the examples where customers are more likely to disengage with a company (Roos, Friman, & Edvardsson, 2009), and the customer disengagement phenomena is supported by high churn rates (Hughes, 2007). Despite the overall growth of the sector, firms are making strong efforts to supply customers with a range of several services because customer switching continues to be

high (Chen et al., 2014). In addition, telecom companies often offer services that are close substitutes, with zero or low switching costs (Naidu & Ponduri, 2015). Various studies were done using the telecom industry, but only few on distinguishing variables that influence brand devotion for telecom providers (Husain, 2015). Using Portugal as an example, according to study made by the *Diário Económico*, in this country this sector has the highest number of complaints issued per year (Económico, 2015). The operators need to determine and evaluate the determinants of customer satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) in the telecommunication industry in Portugal. Furthermore, switching decisions are affected by decision-making processes influenced by customers' connection with a company/brand that reflect prior levels of knowledge and/or engagement. These prior levels in addition to the development of the current connection that may lead to disengagement can be linked with switching decisions affected not only by rational decisions but also by emotions (Roos et al., 2009).

Besides this section, this report is structured as follows. In Section 2, a literature review on customer engagement is made, considering engagement and disengagement. Are presented different relevant definitions for the customer engagement subject, different relevant definitions for the customer disengagement subject, is presented and discussed the role of the relationship context in customer disengagement, customer disengagement drivers are explored and potential drivers in the telecommunication sector identified. In Section 3, the empirical study is presented and explored, including the presentation of the research context, a review of the empirical studies made in similar studies, the presentation of the qualitative research method, netnographic, the presentation of the quantitative research method, the survey, and the analysis of the data collected using both methods. Hence, are also presented the hypotheses to be tested (H1 and H2), and the applied statistical tests (Multiple Linear Regression for H1 and MANOVA for H2). In Section 4 are discussed the results of the previously presented hypotheses tests and in Section 5 are described the conclusions of the study, its limitations and depicted some suggestions for future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

In this chapter, it will be presented the concepts and the theories relevant for the customer disengagement research field. To understand the concept of customer disengagement, first is necessary to understand the concept of customer engagement. They are connected and do not exist separately. Moreover, every relationship is influenced by the context that surrounds it (Bowden et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the role of the relationship context nature. It will also be summarized the main results and contributions of the similar studies analysed and the findings related to the disengagement drivers identified in the studies reviewed.

### **2.1. Defining customer engagement**

The establishment of long-term relationships is crucial for the survival of the company and the management of customer relationships is crucial to establish and maintain those relationships (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997). Current relational marketing theory conceptualizes the relationship between customer and company/brand as more than simple or repetitive transactions between the parties. Inherent to this relationship, there are processes and manifestations by which customers and brands deepen their connection and that influence customer behaviours that go beyond purchases, and these can be positive or/and negative (van Doorn et al., 2010). This relationship is not static; it is a two-way, dynamic experience between parties that influence the outcomes that the customer experiences. These characteristics that surround the connection between customer and company/brand are defined as the hallmarks that typify engagement (L. D. Hollebeek & Chen, 2014).

Customer engagement must be understood as a sum of concepts that are interconnected, which are summarized in Table 1, instead of a definition. This must be like that because customer engagement can have multiple behaviours, processes and expressions, which are affected not only by the customer characteristics but also by the companies' movement (or lack of movement) towards their customers, and the context that surrounds their relationship (Verhoef et al., 2010). Engagement is seen has a driving force to explain postmodern consumer behaviour and decision making, with differences between academic literature and professional approach but with a strong

common point: its complexity as a social and psychological phenomenon (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010).

The marketing concept differs from professional approaches in focus of the concept due to asymmetric information on customers' needs and companies' assets to meet them (Sashi, 2012). Customer engagement incorporates value creation activities and should be viewed as a multidimensional construct that affect customers' cognitive, behavioural and emotional tendency to interact in a continuous basis with a company/brand, which can be considered as an opportunity and as a threat to a company, at the same time (Bolton, 2011). Bowden (2009), explores the engagement stage as a second phase, where the customer satisfaction necessary to start a loyalty link is not the most important element as in a first stage, but which begins to be replaced by other and most influential mechanisms like affective commitment or emotions based decision processes and bonds. This is also explored by Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012), with the exploitation of customer relationships beyond purchase and of the awareness about the effect of previous levels of engagement on the current level of customer engagement (Bowden et al., 2015).

Table 1: Customer Engagement (CE) Conceptualizations

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Vivek et al. (2012)	Consumer engagement	The intensity of a consumer's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and/or its activities
Hollebeek (2011b)	Customer brand engagement	The level of a customer's motivational, brand-related & context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interactions
van Doorn et al. (2010)	Customer engagement behaviours	The customer's behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers
Gambetti and Graffigna (2010)	Engagement	Identification of marketing-based sub-forms of engagement: consumer, customer and brand
Higgins and Scholer (2009)	Engagement	Being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or interested in something, generating the consequences of a particular attraction or repulsion force
Bowden (2009)	Customer Engagement Process	Psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand
Patterson, Yu, and De Ruyter (2006)	Customer Engagement	The level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization

Source: Adapted and extended from Brodie et al., 2011 and Hollebeek, 2011.

## 2.2. Defining customer disengagement

Despite the importance of customer engagement, customer behaviour is not predictable and static, and relationships come to an end sometimes. Therefore, it is important for companies to understand why customers disengage, which implies the identification of the reasons that sustain or obstruct consumer engagement regarding relationship marketing approaches (Ashley, Noble, Donthu, & Lemon, 2011). Bowden et al. (2015) defines customer disengagement as “*a process by which a customer-brand relationship experiences a trauma or disturbance which may lead to relationship termination; which involves a range of trigger based events; which varies in intensity and trajectory; which occurs within a specific set of category conditions and which is dependent on prior levels of customer engagement*” (p.779).

Finding the most important cause for a disengagement process is many times difficult and is dependent of a range of different reasons, which promote the emphasis on the need for a broad perspective on the drivers of customer disengagement (Åkerlund, 2005). Bowden et al. (2015) states that the literature on engagement seems to be separated from the literature on disengagement, which implies that the understanding on the framework and development of customer relationships is still not enough. Mattila (2007) suggest that engagement and disengagement are connected and this interconnection between them should be explored, implying that if a customer is highly engaged, they have additional resistance to end the relationship and will seek for improvement instead of defection to overcome negative experiences. On the other hand, it also implies that in some situations weaker customer engagement may lead to a faster deterioration of the relationship, which probably will lead to the end of the relationship. Halinen and Tähtinen (2002) see the type and the nature of relationship as conditions that influence the types of relationship ending that may occur and propose a categorisation of factors and events that influence the relationship ending process and divide them in predisposing factors, which already exist prior to the relationship and that are underlying to it and rather static, and precipitating events, which are the ones that may introduce change into the relationship and function as an impulse for the parties to act.

The customer disengagement process is then a psychological and personal construct, instead of an objective one, which is dynamic and impacts customers’

behaviours, both individually and collectively, towards a company/brand. Both parties are influenced in this relationship ending process, which impact future possible relationships between them, and also other relationships that the customer may develop with other entities. (Edvardsson, Kowalkowski, Strandvik, & Voima, 2014). This brings another theme to the defection discussion, which is the effect that customer disengagement may have in other customer relationships. If customers perceive that are other viable options to relate with and their link to the current relationship is not strong enough, the likelihood of disengagement and defection increases (Capraro, Broniarczyk, & Srivastava, 2003).

Relational marketing research on relationship ending has been largely focused on identifying the motives and motivations that lead to this stage of the relationship such as service/product failures, pricing, end of loyalty programs, dissatisfaction (Bolton, Kannan, & Bramlett, 2000; Verhoef, 2003), and on the development of the relationships between customers and companies in terms of lifecycle, which will inevitably come to an end or disengagement stage despite of previous engagement stages (Dwyer, Schurr, & Sejo, 1987; Sashi, 2012). But regardless of the major preponderance of these disengagement triggers and processes on the relationship ending, a relationship can also end without be directly affected by them.

Table 2: Summarizing the main approaches on customer disengagement (CD)

Approaches		Methods	Results	Author(s)
Customer disengagement; Relationship ending; Relationship dynamics; Service relationships.	How and why customers disengage from their relationships with service providers	Analysis of personal interviews with emphasis on negative experiences and qualitative exploration of the results	CD as dynamic personal construct, dependent on prior levels of CE; impacts customers' behaviours that lead to relationship ending within service contexts	Bowden et al. (2015)
	Impact of negative critical waves in relationships dynamics			Edwardsso n et al. (2014)
Buyer-seller relationships; Emotional and relational exchange.	The role of social media in building closer relationships with customers	Development of a model of the customer engagement cycle	Customers have to progress through the stages of the CE cycle to become fans	Sashi (2012) Dwyer et al. (1987)
Customer defection; Loyalty; Relationship marketing.	Identify reasons that sustain or obstruct CE regarding relationship marketing approaches	Empirical model test based on previous findings on psychological engagement	Different customer willingness to engage/defect according to relational situations	Ashley et al. (2011) Capraro et al. (2003)
Affective commitment; Customer retention; Loyalty.	Implies the interconnection between engagement and disengagement	Qualitative research to validate links between commitment measures	Identifies states of customer affection that condition the propensity to disengage	Mattila (2007) Verhoef (2003) Bolton et al. (2000)

Buyer-seller relationships; Relationship ending.	How contextual factors affect relationship ending within services context	Qualitative research and models' development to understand dissolution in services context	Identifies types of relationship ending and how relationships' dynamics and prior levels of involvement influence their outcomes	Åkerlund (2005) Halinen and Tähtinen (2002) Dwyer et al. (1987)
-----------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------

Source: Author's Elaboration

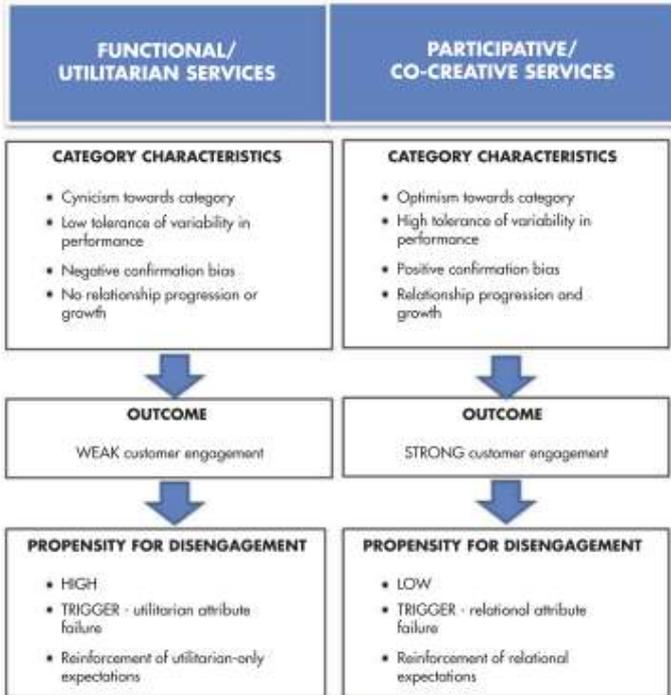
### 2.3. The role of relationship context in customer disengagement

According to Laros and Steenkamp (2005), relational marketing research should study how the context and emotions that are related to customer behaviour impact customers' relationships to fill and address gaps found in literature. As Åkerlund (2005) suggests, customer disengagement behaviours and customer relationship with companies/brands are also influenced by factors inherent to the relationship context, which are external to the relationship itself. Fournier (1998) infers that these relationships affect, and are affected by, the context in which they are embedded and highlights the importance of understanding the meaning and the reasoning behind customer behaviours, and of the relationship to the customer, as well as the circumstances behind the formation of the relationship. Also, van Doorn et al. (2010) found that changes in the context of the customer relationship with a company/brand can affect the engagement level over time and the propensity for disengagement. Moreover, Bendapudi and Berry (1997) implied that the customers' motivations to develop, form, engage and maintain these type of relationships can be different across the relationship context, in particularly, the service context. Likewise, Roos et al. (2009) argued that context is one of the features which is necessary to the existence of the relationship and implies that in the telecommunications sector some specific drivers may exist.

Lovelock (1983) projected a services' categorization, which identified particular characteristics that are helpful to define these types of relationships but which is not

useful to define the contextual nature of these relationships since it does not capture consumers' behaviours towards the service provider. Jiang and Wang (2006) provide a different type of classification scheme which incorporates customers' behaviours and divides consumption in two states: one that is purely utilitarian and focused on the functional motivations and consequences of customers' behaviours which provides customers with functional utilities and/or solutions of practical problems; and other that is more co-creative and focused on the participative motivations and consequences of customers' behaviours which provides customers with cognitive, psychological, emotional and meaningful experiences. The first categorization includes contexts less likely to potentiate customer engagement, while the second one includes contexts more likely to potentiate customer engagement (Bowden et al., 2015). This is especially important since this study will focus on a specific service context and therefore the drivers are different according to the context nature.

Figure 1: Disengagement process for functional/utilitarian and participative/co-creative service contexts



Source: Bowden et al. (2015)

The main approaches on the role of relationship context are summarized in the Table below.

Table 3: Summarizing the main approaches on the relationship context

<b>Approaches</b>		<b>Methods</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
Customer behaviour; Customer emotions; Telecommunications.	Role of emotions in customer relationships and their impact on relationship development	Empirical study on emotions in customer relationships and analytical categorization modelling	Identification of emotions related to customer behaviour on different contexts of relationship ending	Roos et al. (2009) Laros and Steenkamp (2005)
Commitment; Relationship development; Trust.	The impact of commitment and trust in services	Customer quantitative questionnaire on the factors that influence services' relationships	Commitment and trust as central pieces in the development of a relationship with service providers	(Clark, Scholder Ellen, & Boles, 2010; Wetzels, De Ruyter, & Van Birgelen, 1998)
Customer satisfaction; Service relationships.	The impact of services context on service relationships' satisfaction	Customer qualitative survey on service relationships' satisfaction analyzed with regression models	Categorization scheme that incorporates customers' behaviours	Jiang and Wang (2006)
			Services categorization scheme	Lovelock (1983)

Source: Author's Elaboration

## **2.4. Identification of customer disengagement drivers**

Eskafi, Hosseini, and Yazd (2013) detected that brands that have loyal customers are less exposed to disengagement phenomena, stating that companies should look for brand loyalty and defined it as a biased behavioural reaction resultant from psychological processes obtained by an individual that makes him develop a predilection towards a certain brand. This loyalty is harder to get for some products and services than others and to develop and maintain customer satisfaction is an important factor to prevent dissatisfaction and disengagement. It is developed when a customer believes that a brand reflects or promotes aspects of his self-image or expectations. It is essential to identify customer needs and expectations and ensure they are met in order to improve customer satisfaction. Otherwise customers will most likely disengage toward a brand or company (Chalmers, 2006).

Herrmann, Xia, Kent, and Huber (2007) showed that price perceptions directly influence satisfaction judgments through perceptions of price fairness, and (Wang, Lo, Chi, & Yang, 2004) found that customers look for tangible and intangible advantages in a product or service according to their expectations. They noticed that customers seek in particular for functional value, seen as the attractiveness derived from the quality perceived by the customer and the expected performance of the service, for social value, which refers to the unique appeal associated with the service, for emotional value, seen as the desirability derived from the effective status created by the service, and for perceived sacrifice which is the resulting cost from the purchase or usage of the service. When the expectations created about a service do not meet these criteria, the likelihood of customer disengagement is higher.

Customers usually complain about elevated pricing, poor network quality, delayed services, or unrealized promises (Nimako, 2012), which are starting points that may lead to disengagement. Ou, Shih, and Chen (2014) discovered that the quality of the relationship, company reputation, trust and switching costs are key determinants on relationship commitment, which can evolve to brand loyalty. He conducted an analysis that shows that these determinants have several consequences, specifically intention to recommend, retention decision and intention to subscribe new services. However, when customers feel trapped in a relationship due to involuntary continuance commitment,

they express disloyalty, mistrust and negative word-of-mouth that potentiate disengagement.

Rahman (2014) affirmed that pricing, offering, fulfilment of customer expectations, exclusive services, brand value and ability to solve technical problems have significant influences on making customer satisfied. These indicators will be used as drivers to be tested in this study and they are presented below in Table 4.

Table 4: Summarizing the main potentially disengagement drivers in the telecommunications sector

<b>Potential Drivers</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
Pricing	Ou et al. (2014); Herrmann et al. (2007); Wang et al. (2004)
Brand Strength/Value	Rahman (2014); Ou et al. (2014)
Customer Expectations	Rahman (2014); Ou et al. (2014); Nimako (2012); Kotler and Keller (2006); Chalmeta (2006); Wang et al. (2004)
Exclusive Services	Rahman (2014); Kotler and Keller (2006)
Technical Problems	Rahman (2014); Ou et al. (2014); Nimako (2012); Wang et al. (2004)
Loyalty Programs	Rahman (2014); Ou et al. (2014)

Source: Author's Elaboration

Thus, our empirical study will focus on the drivers of customer disengagement in the telecommunications sector in Portugal, as will be described in the following sections.

### **3. Empirical Study**

In this chapter, it will be presented the chosen methodology for this study, the one that better addresses the proposed research question. It includes the identification of the research question and the identification of the research context. It also includes a methodological review of similar studies and its main conclusions, the presentation of the chosen methodology and the reasons to choose it. In addition, it is presented the analysis of the data collected in the study.

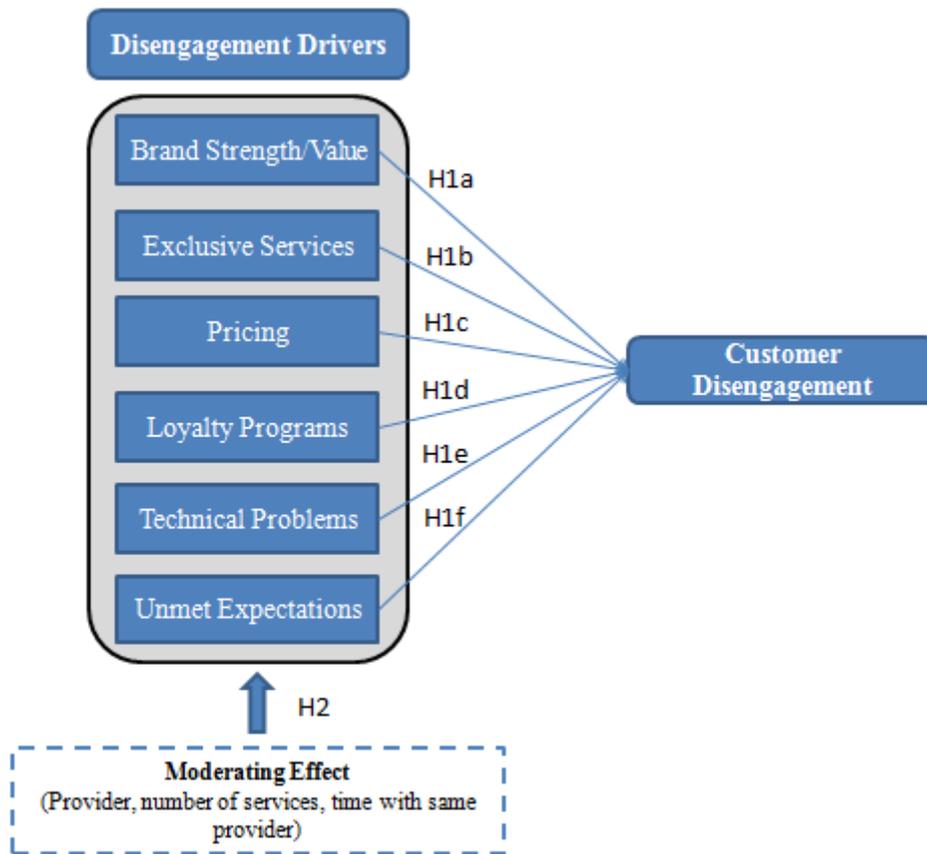
#### **3.1. Identification of the research question**

This study aims to narrow and explore the gap found in relationship marketing literature regarding customer disengagement, to explore customers' behaviours and the nature of the decision-making processes that lead to disengagement. The research context chosen was the telecommunication industry, and thus our goal is to study customer disengagement towards telecommunications providers, and to answer the following research question:

*What are the drivers of customer disengagement on the telecommunications sector in Portugal and what is their impact?*

Based on the previous literature review, the model to be analyzed in this study is presented in Figure 2. This model intends firstly to identify the disengagement drivers on the telecommunications sector in Portugal, using the potential drivers previously identified on the literature review; and secondly to measure the impact on the relationship of these drivers and consequently their link to customer disengagement.

Figure 2 Research Model



Having this model as a baseline, some hypothesis may arise based on previous assumptions, such as:

**H1:** Disengagement drivers influence customer disengagement.

H1a: Brand strength/value influence customer disengagement

H1b: Exclusive services influence customer disengagement

H1c: Pricing influence customer disengagement

H1d: Loyalty programs influence customer disengagement

H1e: Technical problems influence customer disengagement

H1f: Unmet expectations influence customer disengagement

**H2:** The importance given to each disengagement driver varies significantly according to the provider, number of services and time with same provider.

In order to answer to the research questions posed above, a methodology including netnography and a survey will be applied.

### 3.2. Identification of the research context

#### 3.2.1. Brief overview of the sector

The telecommunication sector in Portugal is disputed by three major players: NOS, MEO and Vodafone.

- NOS is a company that emerged from the merger of two telecommunication companies (ZON and Optimus) in May of 2014. This merger allowed both companies to join forces to offer integrated telecommunication services.
- MEO is a company owned by Altice that also emerged from a merger between MEO (mobile services provider) and PT Comunicações (fixed services provider) in January of 2015. This merger also allowed both companies to join forces to offer integrated telecommunication services.
- Vodafone Portugal is a company owned by the Vodafone Group that was until the beginning of 2015 one of the key players in the mobile telecommunication sector. With the mergers of its competitors, it decided to enter in the fixed telecommunication sector, also offering integrated telecommunication services in order to be able to compete for market share.

Combined, these three companies represent more than 99% of the market and generated 3.650 million Euros in revenues in 2015 (ANACOM, 2016).

Table 5: Total number of subscribers of the telecommunications sector in Portugal

<b>Total number of subscribers (in thousands)</b>	<b>2015</b>
Active Mobile Stations	16.790
Active Mobile Stations with effective usage	12.779
Fixed Voice Service Subscribers	3.856
Paid TV Subscribers	3.517
Fixed Internet Subscribers	2.991

Source: ANACOM (2016)

At the end of 2015, the mobile telecommunications market had a total of 16.790 thousand active mobile stations and of those 12.779 thousand had effective usage. On the fixed telecommunications market, fixed voice services is what concentrates higher number of subscribers (3.856 thousand), followed by paid TV services which had 3.517 thousand subscribers and fixed internet services which had 2.991 thousand subscribers.

Table 6: Companies market share of the telecommunications sector in Portugal

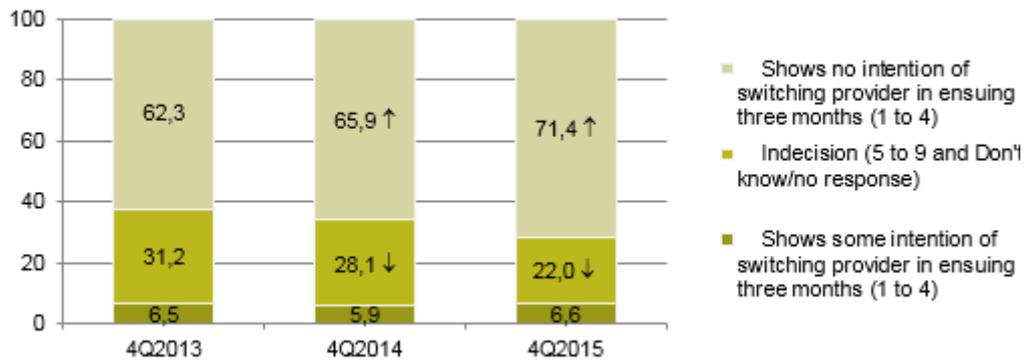
<b>Market Share (%)</b>	Fixed Voice	Fixed Internet	Paid TV	Mobile Voice	Mobile Internet	Double play	Triple play	Quadruple / Quintuple play	<b>Total</b>
MEO	50,1	44,0	40,7	44,2	43,9	32,9	32,2	52,6	57,8
NOS	32,8	36,4	43,8	20,9	28,4	40,7	37,5	40,7	35,1
Vodafone	12,4	14,8	10,2	33,4	27,4	14,1	21,1	6,7	7,0
Others	4,6	4,7	5,3	1,5	0,2	12,2	9,2	0,0	0,1

Source: ANACOM (2016)

Regarding market share, MEO is the leader when we consider the telecommunications market as a whole, followed by NOS and by Vodafone. This only changes when we consider the Paid TV and the Triple Play (customer is a subscriber of three telecommunication services) markets, where NOS is the market leader. At the mobile voice telecommunication market, Vodafone is still the second company with most market share due to his history has a mobile service provider but now it faces more competition from its rivals.

According to Markttest's Telecommunications Barometer, at the end of 2015, "lower price" was the main reason for the selection of a provider with a weight of 28%, being the second reason the availability of offers in the customer's area of residence with a weight of almost 10%. In the same period, 71% of the customers reported not having any intention to switch their telecommunications provider, which represents a decrease on the intention to defect compared with the previous periods. This is presented below, in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Intention to switch telecommunications provider in Portugal



Source: ANACOM based on microdata from Marktest BTC, 4Q2013 to 4Q2015

### 3.2.2. The relevance of the research context

This industry as suffered several changes over the last decade, moving from delivering aspirational status through technology and communication that only a few could pay and enjoy to deliver services that are used on a daily basis and that no one can live without. Today, telecommunications are an inseparable part of our life. They are present every day at any moment. A phone is not only used for making calls or sending text messages anymore. It has several other functions, being the most important the connection to the internet. The opportunities that lie in the telecom market seem endless and the growing demand is creating a worldwide market (Rahman, 2014). In a sector that has faced so many changes over the latest years, a high flexible method is needed to access up-to-date behaviours, symbolisms and meanings. Despite the amount of research on topics and themes such as customer relationships, customer satisfaction and loyalty, research also shows that switching decisions that can lead to customer disengagement are fuelling defection rates, which are still high in some sectors (Hoffman & Lowitt, 2008), and this phenomena is a particular issue in the telecommunications sector (Hughes, 2007), which suggests that there is still the need to measure the drivers impact in the study of these topics and themes (Hollmann et al., 2014).

Telecommunication providers are in nature not purely utilitarian neither purely co-creative but the services that they provide are usually classified as utilitarian services due to the inherent characteristics of the services that they provide and the type of contracts that are made (Roos et al., 2009). Wang et al. (2004) pointed out that these

types of service relationships are based on power asymmetries, which often turns customers dependent on their service providers. Loyalty programs are inherent to the telecommunication sector, which makes their customers feel like prisoners. Plus, Wetzels et al. (1998) stated that dependence is related to calculative commitments, which translates to a weaker attachment to a relationship due to its lack of emotional and affective components. In addition, they affirm that when customers feel dependent on their providers, they are more susceptible to abandon their relationship, since they are more likely to feel vulnerable and exploited. Consequently, utilitarian relationships are considered less likely to sustain long-term customer commitment because customers are not motivated to maintain them (Clark et al., 2010).

Taking these theories in consideration, for this study, the relationship context between telecommunications providers and their customers is considered to be utilitarian in nature.

### **3.3. Methodology**

A research method can gather data in different ways. According to Fortin, Filion, and Côté (2009) the objective of a quantitative research is to establish facts, to highlight relationships between variables by testing hypotheses, verify cause-effect relationships or verify theories, while the goal of qualitative research is to discover, explore and describe phenomena. The research questions that provide a check of the relationships between concepts or check for differences between groups, are characteristics of a quantitative study, while the research questions that assumes a holding or description of what has been lived or experienced correspond to a qualitative study.

Since the goal of this study is the determination of disengagement drivers and measure their impacts, both methods will be used, starting with a netnographic approach, followed by a quantitative study. This decision was made taking in account the specifications of the study and the similar studies reviewed. With netnography it was possible to gather data from customers of the three players in the market about customer disengagement and identify the most relevant drivers of the sector, and with the analysis of the survey responses it was possible to explore their impact and relationship.

### **3.3.1. Empirical Approaches of similar studies**

Similar studies on customer disengagement have focused their analysis in both firms and individuals, in a wide range of sector of activities, and were made in different locations all around the globe. While the most used methods for data collection are surveys and/or interviews (mostly in-depth interviews), the methods use for data analysis are varied and include methods that use statistical tools (e.g. Nvivo and ANOVA) but also methods that do not include statistical tools (e.g. ethnography and storytelling). Table 7 presents a synthesis of the main characteristics of the similar studies reviewed.

Table 7: Characteristics of the studies reviewed

Authors	Country of study	Sample size	Sector of Activity	Firm size	Data collection	Response rate (%)	Unit of analysis	Statistical analysis
<b>Bowden et al. (2015)</b>	Australia	48	Services	SML	Focus Groups; interviews	N.A.	The firm, The individual	Nvivo, Constant Comparative Method
<b>Edvardsson et al. (2014)</b>	Finland, Sweden	30	Manufacturing	SML	Interviews	N.A.	The firm, The individual	N.A. (Story telling)
<b>Hollmann et al. (2014)</b>	USA	19	Multiple Industries	SML	Interviews	N.A.	The individual	N.A. (ethnography, storytelling), Nvivo
<b>Roos et al. (2009)</b>	Sweden	81	Telecommunications	SML	Interviews	N.A.	The firm, The individual	ANOVA, Bonferroni corrected <i>t</i> -test
<b>Mattila (2007)</b>	USA	210	Hotel industry	SML	Survey	95	The individual	Correlation, Regression
<b>Jiang and Wang (2006)</b>	Hong Kong	28 350	Multiple Industries	SML	Focus Groups, Survey	N.A. 86,6	The individual	Regression
<b>Åkerlund (2005)</b>	Sweden	42	Financial Services	L	Interviews	N.A.	The firm, The individual	N.A. (Story telling)
<b>Laros and Steenkamp (2005)</b>	The Netherlands	645	Food Industry	SML	Survey	N.A.	The individual	LISREL 8.50, ANOVA
<b>Verhoef (2003)</b>	The Netherlands	6525 1128	Financial Services	ML	Surveys	35 65	The firm. The individual	Correlation, Regression
<b>Capraro et al. (2003)</b>	USA	1000	Health Insurance	SML	Survey	23	The individual	Regression
<b>Bolton et al. (2000)</b>	Europe	405	Financial Services	L	Database	N.A.	The firm	Correlation, Regression

Source: Author's Elaboration

### **3.3.2. Qualitative Study: Netnography**

Over the latest decades, the Internet has been increasingly used as the communication method, providing new communication tools, and its importance in customers' daily life is also rising. This enables and facilitates new ways of interactive customer experiences and new ways of customer/firm interactions, which can contribute for the development of customer engagement (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). This phenomena allows that even geographically dispersed customers that have common interests can get together at any time and talk about them online (Thomsen, R., Straubhaar, Bolyard, & M., 1998), connecting customers in a richer way compared to when these technologies does not exist (de Valck, van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009). According to Hoffman and Novak (1996), within this Internet phenomena, consumers are also increasingly participating in interactive processes, which include multiple feedback loops and, most likely, real-time communication. (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007) studied firm-hosted online communities and their results showed that individuals' with online interaction have higher propensity to interact with people that they have never met offline in an online environment and attribute greater value and meaning to the interaction with firms within the online community rather than people without online interaction. These findings suggest that customers with online interaction with companies are more likely to engage and develop deeper connections with them than customers without online interaction.

Jupp (2006) defined netnography as "a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of the online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications". Kozinets (2006a) summarized it as a method that adapts the practice of ethnography to the specifications of the online environment, providing guidelines for participant observation in it. Comparing this method with others, it is less obtrusive and more natural than focus groups, surveys, or interviews because it does not constrain customers to choose from predetermined assumptions (correctly or not) made by the researcher, providing an unique examination of genuine occurring customer behaviours. This method has also a high degree of flexibility, and can be used just as an observational method or as one that incorporates a high level of involvement, like in-depth interviews and surveys (Kozinets, 2006b). In addition, it is

faster, simpler, and less expensive because it allows for up-to-the minute assessments of consumers' behaviours, providing information generated directly by customers regarding the symbolism, meanings, and consumption patterns of their interaction (Kozinets, 2006a).

The application of netnographic techniques in the business world is helping companies all across the globe to better understand consumption and social meanings behind customers' behaviours, and its practice has been increasing. The use of netnography is rising not only in the business world but also in the academic one, with several articles published based on netnographic data by the most remarkable marketing and consumer research journals (Kozinets, 2006a).

### **3.3.3. Quantitative Study: Survey**

Questionnaires are usually used for descriptive and explanatory studies (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Given the objectives of this study, it is relevant to use the survey as the qualitative research method, which is one of the techniques most used for data collection and can be applied in various ways (Saunders et al., 2009). In this case, the survey will be sent to potential participants using the Internet, in particular by email.

When respondents answer to self-administered questionnaires, it is impossible for them to obtain clarifications about the questions and statements (Fortin et al., 2009). Therefore, surveys should contain standard, simple and closed questions in order to be interpreted equally by all respondents (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover it only includes closed questions, firstly for the respondents comfort and secondly from the point of view of the analysis of the results, these are, in theory, more appropriate (Ghiglione & Matalon, 1993).

Despite the limitations of this type of method, there are a set of associated benefits, being the most important the capacity to cover a large number of people scattered throughout the territory, and the speed and low costs associated with obtaining the data (Fortin et al., 2009).

### **3.3.3.1. Structure of the Survey**

The questionnaire was composed by 28 questions. The first 6 questions have the purpose of access socio-demographic data and the type of telecommunication services used by respondents and the remaining 22 questions intent to measure the impact of the identified disengagement drivers.

To measure this, were considered seven items (disengagement, brand value/strength, exclusive services, loyalty programs, technical problems, pricing and unmet expectations).

Each element included in the survey has three variables since, according to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2009) it is advisable to have at least three items in order to have estimates with higher level of confidence.

The questions of the survey were based on previous studies (Rahman, 2014; Out et al., 2014; Nimako, 2012; Ashley et al., 2011; Mattila, 2007; and Garbarino & Johnson, 1999) and adapted to the purpose of this study. It is noteworthy that the order of the questions was placed randomly, in order to not induce responses.

A 7-point Likert scale was adapted and used to measure the variables on the basis of the literature review, with anchors of strongly disagree and strongly agree, being 1 – strongly disagree and 7 – strongly agree.

Table 8: Scale and Items Used for the Measures

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b>Disengagement</b>	Q9: I do not feel emotionally attached to my current provider	Mattila (2007)
	Q11: I do not feel sense of belonging with my current provider	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q15: The level of my commitment to my current provider is low	Garbarino and Johnson (1999)
<b>Brand Value/Strength</b>	Q7: My provider is not better than its competitors	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q10: My provider does not look like a good company	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q19: My provider does not have a good reputation	Ou et al. (2014)
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	Q12: I do not consider the quality of the exclusive services of my current provider sufficient	Rahman (2014)
	Q8: I do not consider the quantity of the exclusive services of my current provider sufficient	Rahman (2014)
	Q16: The benefits offered by my current provider are not attractive	Ashley et al. (2011)
<b>Loyalty Programs</b>	Q24: I want to abandon my current provider at the end of the loyalty program	Nimako (2012)
	Q20: I will not recommend my current provider due to its loyalty program	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q17: I do not like my current loyalty program	Ou et al. (2014)
<b>Technical Problems</b>	Q21: The overall service quality of my current provider is insufficient	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q26: My current provider services are not consistently reliable	Garbarino and Johnson (1999)
	Q23: My current provider services are not	Garbarino and

	consistently available	Johnson (1999)
<b>Pricing</b>	Q13: The promotional activities of my current provider are not attractive	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q22: My current provider services are not worth the money	Garbarino and Johnson (1999)
	Q14: There are better alternatives to choose than my current provider	Ou et al. (2014)
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	Q25: My current provider does not met my initial expectations	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q27: My current provider does not take customers in consideration when it makes business decisions	Ou et al. (2014)
	Q18: My current provider does not deliver what we agreed	Garbarino and Johnson (1999)

Source: Author's Elaboration

To test and ensure the reliability and relevance of the survey, a small scale pre-test was made before the release of the questionnaire. According to Saunders et al. (2009), the purpose of a pre-test is to redefine the questionnaire to make sure that respondents do not have problems when answering to it and that are no problems when collecting the data. This test also helps the researcher to validate the research instrument, since it is applied before distribute it to a broader audience. The subjects selected for the test commented on the adequacy of the questions and on the structure of the questionnaire in order facilitate its interpretation.

The variables that will be analyzed are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Analyzed Variables

Variable	Group
Disengagement	Group I
Brand Value/Strength	Group II
Exclusive Services	Group III
Loyalty Programs	Group IV
Technical Problems	Group V
Pricing	Group VI
Unmet Expectations	Group VII

Source: Author's Elaboration

### 3.3.3.2. Data Collection and Sample Description

The survey was made on Google Docs and shared by email with students attending bachelors, masters and PhDs at FEP. A note was also sent to promote sharing the questionnaire with friends and family in order to increase the number of potential respondents and their diversity. The survey was available in Portuguese and in English, to guarantee that all respondents that wanted to answer to it had the foundations to do it. This decision was also made to increase the number of potential respondents.

The survey was sent to 3200 people, being these the total potential respondents, although not all of them may have seen it due to several factors, such as low access to the Internet and consequently to email, low interest on this type of studies, ignoring communications via email, among others. It was available on the Internet for two weeks, between May 18<sup>th</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>, obtaining 136 responses. By being available online, it was possible to enjoy certain advantages such as speed and absence of costs but it also provided greater flexibility in controlling and monitoring the respondents' responses and greater speed in the collecting and processing of data.

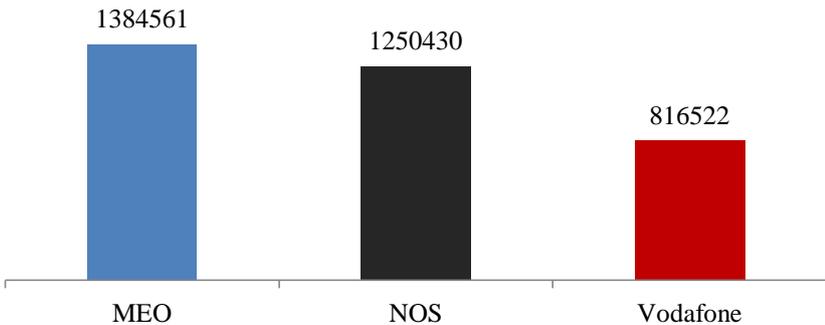
**3.4. Data Analysis**

**3.4.1. Netnographic Data Analysis**

On this subdivision will be presented the results and analysis of netnography. Telecommunications providers in Portugal interact with their current and potential customers by two means: face-to-face in physical stores and at distance by phone using their customer support line or online using social networks (Facebook is the number one social network used, with a weight of almost 88% considering all online interactions followed by Twitter with less more than 12%). Netnography allows instant access to interactions that occurred in the past and that are occurring at the moment. It is also the mean to access the highest volume of interactions between customers and their providers without being intrusive, being also a good technique to immediately determine the type of interaction (positive, negative or neutral). Interactions are positive if someone talks positively about a brand, negative if someone talks negatively about a brand a neutral if it does not fit in any of the previous types (e.g. of promotion, advertising, miscellaneous, images, videos, etc). To determine the most common disengagement drivers of the Portuguese telecommunications sector, data was collected from the Facebook and Twitter pages of MEO, NOS and Vodafone Portugal (NOS is the only one that does not have a Twitter account), from January 2016 to March 2016 and the results of the analysis are presented below.

Both MEO and NOS have over 1 million followers on Facebook alone and Vodafone has more than 800 thousand followers. This ranking of total number of followers is in line with the percentage of market share of each one of the companies.

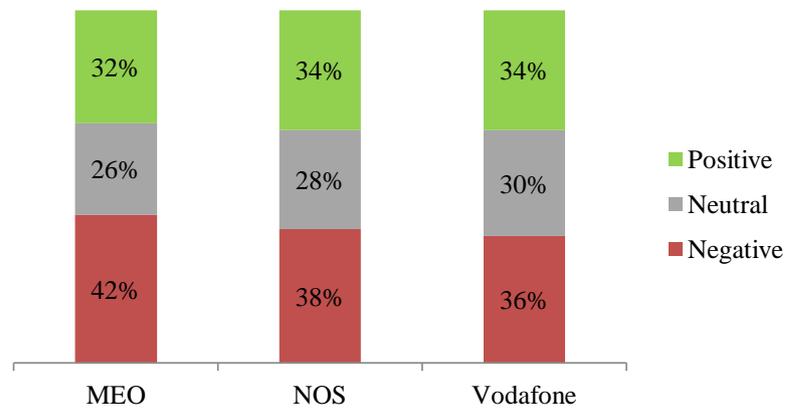
Figure 4: Number of followers on Facebook at April 16, 2016



Source: Author’s Elaboration using Facebook pages of the companies

During the months considered, a total of 6.251 interactions were identified on Facebook and Twitter pages of the three companies combined (2.457 from MEO, 2.182 from NOS and 1.612 from Vodafone Portugal), with the most significant number of interactions identified as being negative ones. This happens in all three companies' pages as shown in Figure 5.

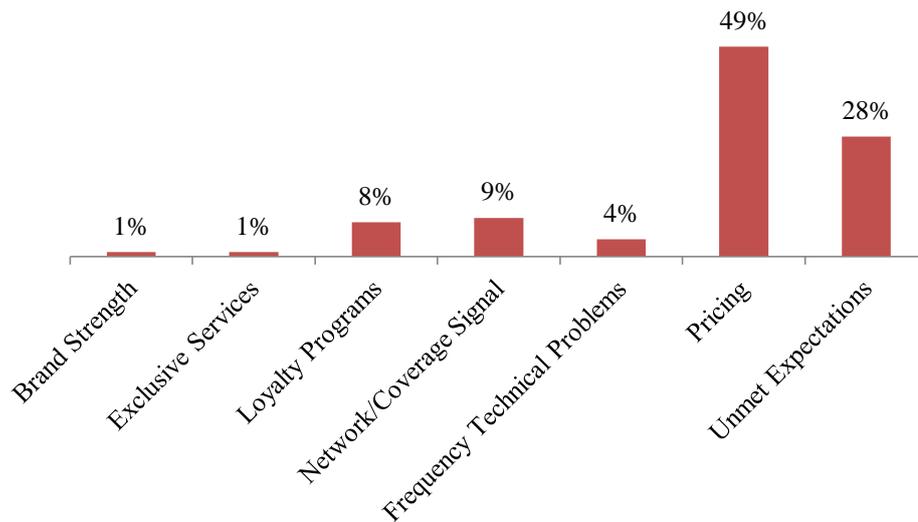
Figure 5: Type of interactions on Social Networks, from January to March, 2016



Source: Author's Elaboration using Facebook and Twitter pages of the companies

Considering only the negative type interactions, they were divided in line with the subject of the interaction. This subject was determined according to the contents of the texts written by the customers. The total number of negative interactions identified in all three companies' pages is 2.441 and they were classified as shown in Figure 6. It shows that the higher percentage of negative interactions identified were motivated due to pricing (49%) or due to unmet expectations (28%).

Figure 6: Types of negative interactions identified



Source: Author's Elaboration using Facebook and Twitter pages of the companies

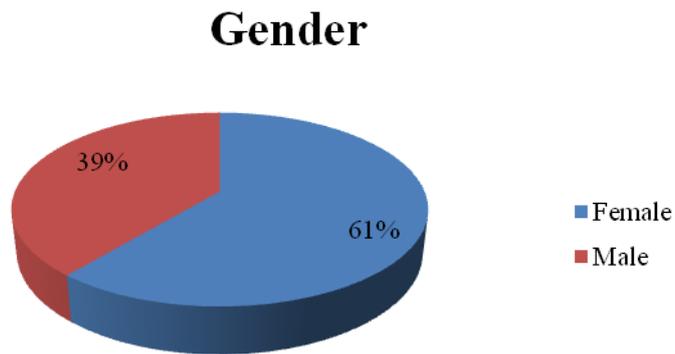
### 3.4.2. Survey Data Analysis

On this subdivision will be presented the results of the survey and its analysis. The data were processed using the IBM program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and also with Microsoft Office 2007, in particular Microsoft Excel. Initially a description of the sample will be displayed, followed by the interpretation of the study variables.

#### 3.4.2.1. Sample Descriptive Analysis

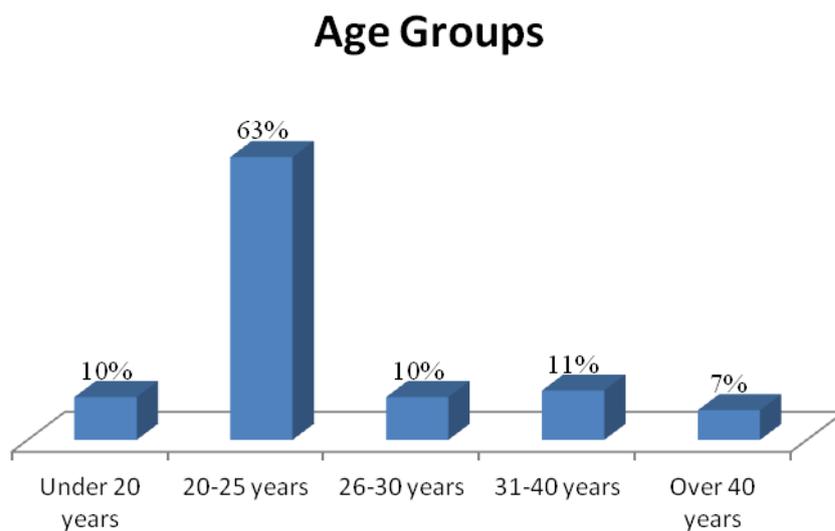
Through descriptive analysis, the study showed that the majority of the responses were given by females (61%) as it is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Sample analysis – Gender



In terms of age groups, the majority of the respondents are situated in the group of 20-25 years (63%). The rest of the sample is almost equally divided between the remaining groups, as it is seen in Figure 8. The most significant age group of the remaining ones is the 31-40 years group (11%) and the least significant one is the over 40 years group (7%).

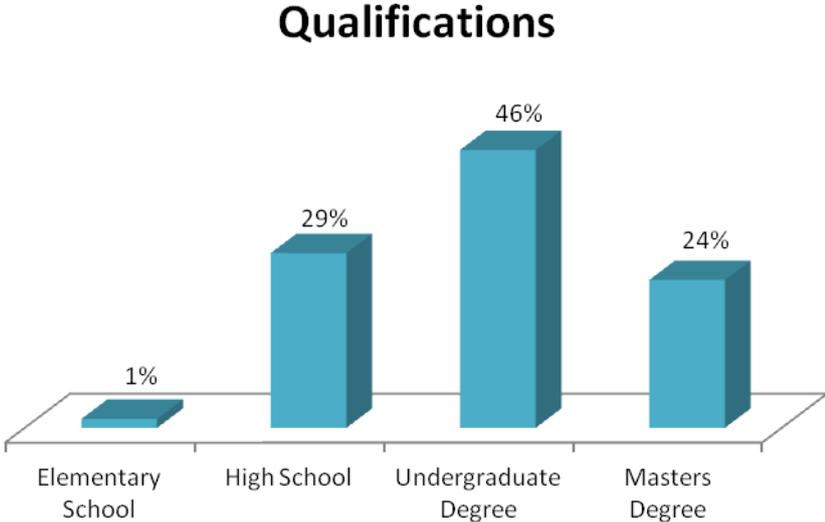
Figure 8: Sample analysis – Age Groups



In terms of educational background, the respondents are inserted in four different groups of qualifications, being these Elementary School, High School, Undergraduated Degree and Masters Degree. Figure 9 presents the distribution between

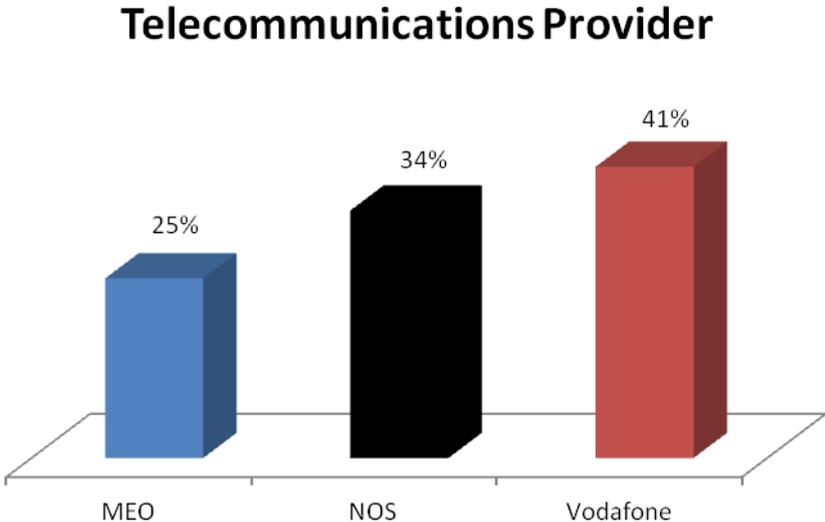
these groups, being the most relevant one the Undergraduated Degree (46%) qualification group and the least relevant one the Elementary School (1%) qualification group.

Figure 9: Sample analysis – Educational Background (Qualifications)



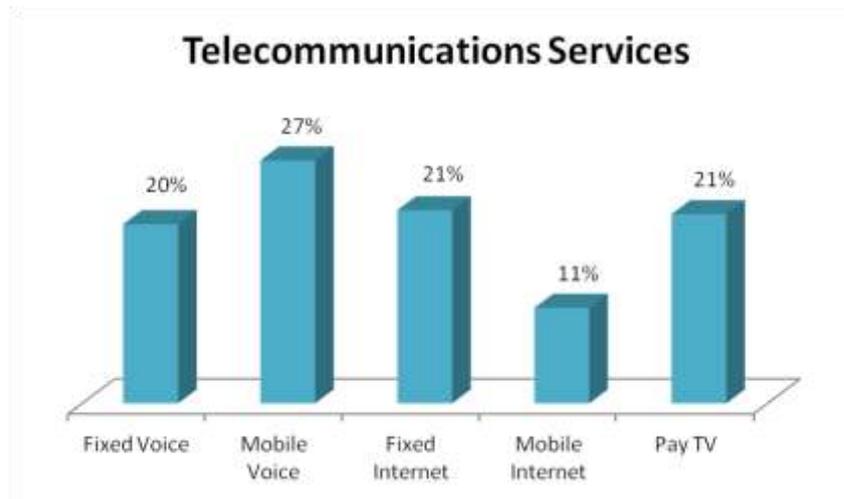
Regarding their telecommunications provider, Figure 10 shows that Vodafone is the most represented one (41%), followed by NOS (34%), being MEO (25%) the least represented one.

Figure 10: Sample analysis – Telecommunications Provider



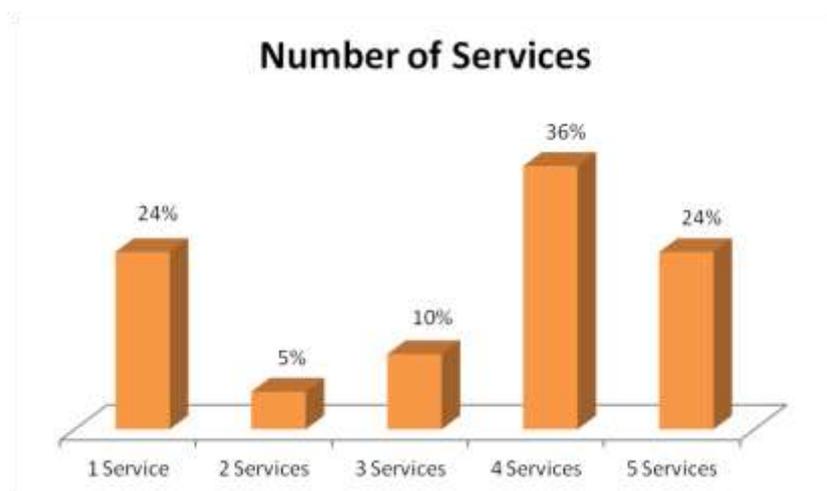
In terms of telecommunications services contracted with one or more providers, the most relevant service stated by the respondents is the mobile voice (27%) and the least relevant service is the mobile internet (11%). The remaining telecommunications services are almost equally divided in terms of responses.

Figure 11: Sample analysis – Telecommunications Services Contracted



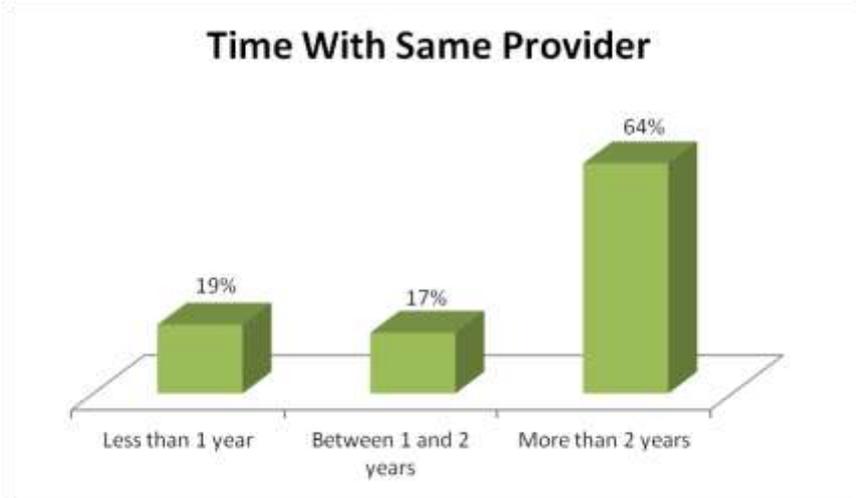
Regarding the number of services contracted with their telecommunications provider, the majority of the respondents has four services contracted (36%), while the minority of the respondents has two services contracted (5%). The distribution of the sample is presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Sample analysis – Number of Telecommunication Services Contracted



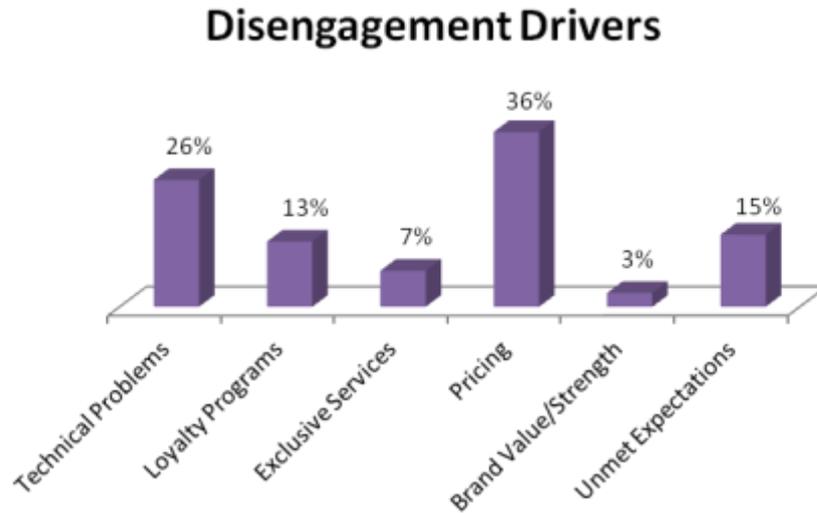
Considering the time that respondents maintain their connection to their current telecommunications provider, the majority of the sample is still connected to the same companies for more than two years (64%), with the rest of the sample being almost equally distributed among less than one year (19%) and between one and two years (17%) as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Sample analysis – Time with Current Telecommunications Provider



Regarding the potential drivers that lead customers of telecommunications providers to disengage with them, the majority of respondents stated pricing decisions (36%) and technical problems (26%) as the top disengagement drivers and Brand Value/Strength (3%) and Exclusive Services (7%) as the least important disengagement drivers.

Figure 14: Sample analysis – Disengagement Drivers



#### 3.4.2.2. Results' Analysis

To ensure reliability and precision in the statistical analysis and to apply the most adequate tests and methods is essential to do a preliminary analysis of the data.

In order to verify the existence of correlation (or lack of it) between customer disengagement and the disengagement drivers, it will be elaborated the Exploratory Factor Analysis of the presented items.

##### 3.4.2.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

According to Hair et al. (2009), to perform a factor analysis, the sample size must be at least five times the number of variables analyzed. Given that there are 21 variables in analysis and are intended five times more observations, the minimum number of acceptable answers are 105. However, the number of responses reached was 136, exceeding the minimum established.

The quality of the correlation between variables is usually tested through KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Pestana & Gageiro, 2008). KMO's test is a variables' homogeneity measure which varies between 0 and 1 and compares the simple correlations with the observed correlations between the variables. Marôco (2007) presents the KMO values and its implication in factor analysis according to Table 10.

Table 10: KMO values' classification

<b>KMO</b>	<b>Factor Analysis</b>
]0.9;1.0]	Excellent
]0.8;0.9]	Good
]0.7;0.8]	Average
]0.6;0.7]	Mediocre
]0.5;0.6]	Bad
$\leq 0.50$	Unacceptable

Source: Marôco (2007)

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tests the hypothesis of the correlations matrix be the identity matrix, which means that there are correlations between the variables. If the test results in a high value, it enhances the rejection of the null hypothesis (variables are not correlated). According to Marôco (2007), the null hypothesis can be rejected if p-value  $< 0.001$  and it cannot be rejected if p-value  $> 0.001$ .

The results of both tests are present below in Table 11 and Table 12. The results show a KMO of 0.903, value that corresponds, according to Table 10 in Marôco (2007), to "excellent", and in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, p-value is equal to 0, and therefore less than 0.001, which rejects the null hypothesis, meaning that there is a correlation between the variables.

Table 11: KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity tests for Disengagement (dependent variable)

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		0,870
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	101,214
	df	3
	Sig.	0,000

Table 12: KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity tests for Disengagement Drivers

**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		0,903
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	1431,149
	df	153
	Sig.	0,000

After these tests, it is possible to perform with confidence the Exploratory Factor Analysis, extracting the factors through Principal Component Analysis' method with varimax orthogonal rotation.

According to Malhotra (2010), communalities' identify the variance's fraction that a variable shares with the other variables and the variance's fraction that is explained by the common factors. In addition, Hair et al. (2009) stated that the analyzed items must present values above 0.5. As shown in Table 13, in this study, all the values are according with this rule so all the items were kept at this stage.

Table 13: Communalities' Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Extraction</b>
Disengagement 1	0,722
Disengagement 2	0,718
Disengagement 3	0,574
Brand Strength/Value 1	0,881
Brand Strength/Value 2	0,771
Brand Strength/Value 3	0,777
Exclusive Services 1	0,840
Exclusive Services 2	0,632
Exclusive Services 3	0,713
Pricing 1	0,690
Pricing 2	0,704
Pricing 3	0,748
Loyalty Programs 1	0,690
Loyalty Programs 2	0,737
Loyalty Programs 3	0,759
Technical Problems 1	0,779
Technical Problems 2	0,852
Technical Problems 3	0,830
Unmet Expectations 1	0,784
Unmet Expectations 2	0,879
Unmet Expectations 3	0,618

Table 14 shows the Disengagement factor composed by 3 items and Table 15 shows the 6 factors composed by 18 items in total, which resulted from the analysis. These factors present a cumulative variance of 67.15% and 76.01% each.

Table 14: Component Matrix for Disengagement

Factor	Component
	1
Disengagement 1	0,850
Disengagement 2	0,848
Disengagement 3	0,758

Table 15: Rotated Component Matrix for Disengagement Drivers

Factor	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Brand Strength/Value 1	,210	,082	,177	,886	,104	,047
Brand Strength/Value 2	,275	,080	,146	,784	,191	,127
Brand Strength/Value 3	,121	,251	,014	,834	,000	,062
Exclusive Services 1	,107	,050	,867	,069	,188	,183
Exclusive Services 2	,251	,333	,470	,183	,435	,120
Exclusive Services 3	,507	,138	,547	,245	,243	-,136
Pricing 1	,670	,160	,299	-,032	,352	,033
Pricing 2	,554	,218	,590	-,020	-,002	-,012
Pricing 3	,708	,273	,148	,325	,101	,187
Loyalty Programs 1	,711	,291	,256	,143	,093	-,067
Loyalty Programs 2	,778	,179	,056	,110	,141	,253
Loyalty Programs 3	,773	,186	,131	,298	,061	,129
Technical Problems 1	,345	,754	,170	,172	,135	,122
Technical Problems 2	,126	,896	,084	,106	,100	,072
Technical Problems 3	,290	,824	,077	,172	,024	,176
Unmet Expectations 1	,292	,570	,074	,126	,100	,585
Unmet Expectations 2	,215	,263	,113	,145	,043	,853
Unmet Expectations 3	,389	,225	,104	,143	,244	,570

According to this matrix, pricing and loyalty programs factors should be considered together and the next tests will take this in consideration. This means that the items that compose these factors will be combined and reordered in one unique factor.

To measure the reliability and validity of the multi-item constructs, the Cronbach's Alpha was used in order to verify the consistency of the components. As stated by Hair et al. (2009), Cronbach's Alpha varies from 0 to 1, being the values above 0.7 the best ones to consider in any analysis and the ones ranging between 0.6 and 0.7 being in the limit of acceptance. The results for the factors in this study are presented below in Table 16 and Table 17. These Tables shows, as stated, the combination of factors and their correspondent items.

Table 16: Influence of customer disengagement (*post* factor analysis)

	Item	Mean	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Disengagement</b>	I do not feel emotionally attached to my current provider	4,426	,850	0,755
	I do not feel sense of belonging with my current provider	3,911	,848	
	The level of my commitment to my current provider is low	4,477	,758	

Table 17: Influence of drivers on customer disengagement (*post* factor analysis)

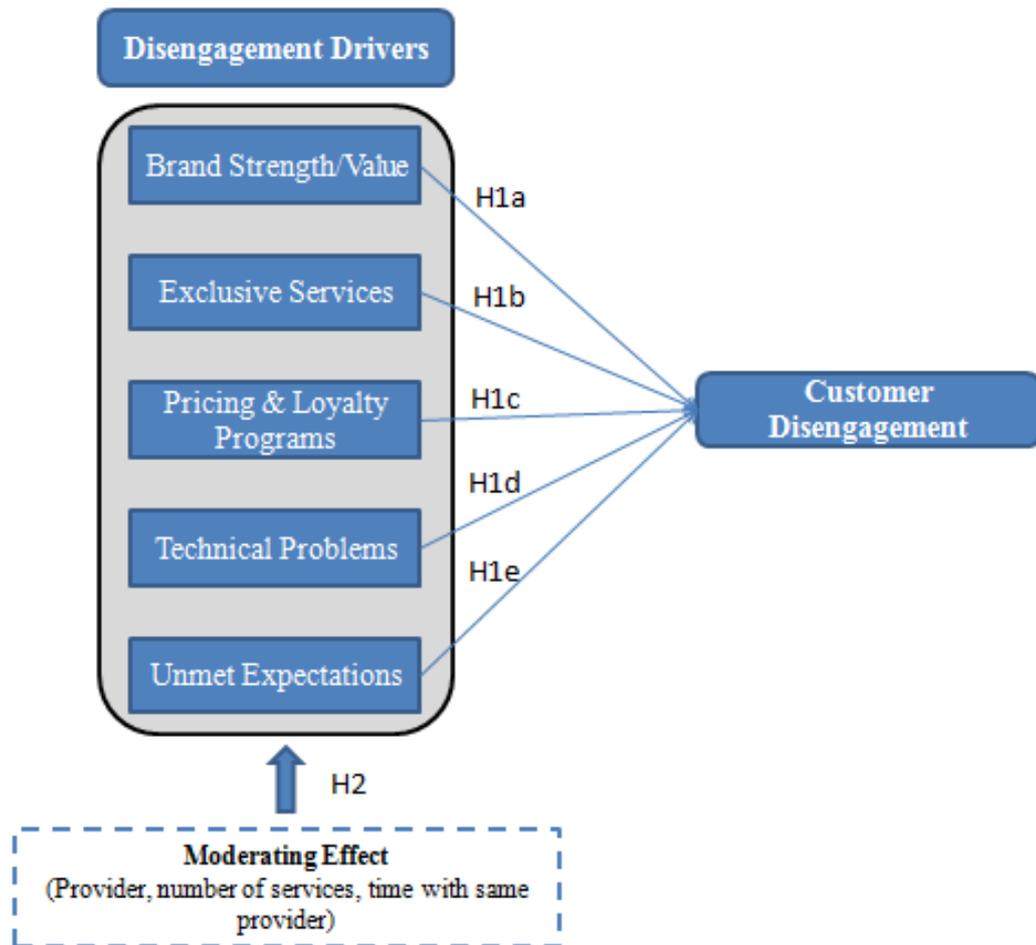
<b>Disengagement Drivers</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
<b>Brand Strength/Value</b>	My provider is not better than its competitors	4,029	,886	0,668
	My provider does not look like a good company	2,385	,784	
	My provider does not have a good reputation	2,237	,834	
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	I do not consider the quantity of the exclusive services of my current provider sufficient	3,614	,867	0,736
	I do not consider the quality of the exclusive services of my current provider sufficient	3,563	,470	
	The benefits offered by my current provider are not attractive	3,148	,547	
<b>Pricing &amp; Loyalty Programs</b>	The promotional activities of my current provider are not attractive	3,600	,670	0,889
	There are better alternatives to choose than my current provider	3,874	,554	
	My current provider services are not worth the money	3,133	,708	
	I do not like my current loyalty program	3,888	,711	
	I will not recommend my	2,585	,778	

	current provider due to its loyalty program			
	I want to abandon my current provider at the end of the loyalty program	2,963	,773	
<b>Technical Problems</b>	The overall service quality of my current provider is insufficient	2,770	,754	0,887
	My current provider services are not consistently available	2,518	,896	
	My current provider services are not consistently reliable	2,763	,824	
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	My current provider does not met my initial expectations	2,866	,585	0,754
	My current provider does not deliver what we agreed	2,459	,853	
	My current provider does not take customers in consideration when it makes business decisions	3,170	,570	

All of the components have values above 0.7 except Brand Strength/Value, which presents a value of 0.668.

Due to the results obtained by the factor analysis, there is the need to make some adjustments to the previously presented research model and to the hypothesis. The adjusted research model is presented in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Research Model (*post* factor analysis)



Consequently, it is also needed to reformulate the initial hypothesis:

**H1:** Disengagement drivers influence customer disengagement.

H1a: Brand strength/value influence customer disengagement

H1b: Exclusive services influence customer disengagement

H1c: Pricing & Loyalty programs influence customer disengagement

H1d: Technical problems influence customer disengagement

H1e: Unmet expectations influence customer disengagement

**H2:** The importance given to each disengagement driver varies significantly according to the provider, number of services and time with same provider.

To verify these hypotheses, two methods will be employed: for H1 a Multiple Linear Regression analysis will be used, and for H2, the statistical test MANOVA will be developed.

#### **3.4.2.2.2. The influence of disengagement drivers on customer disengagement (H1)**

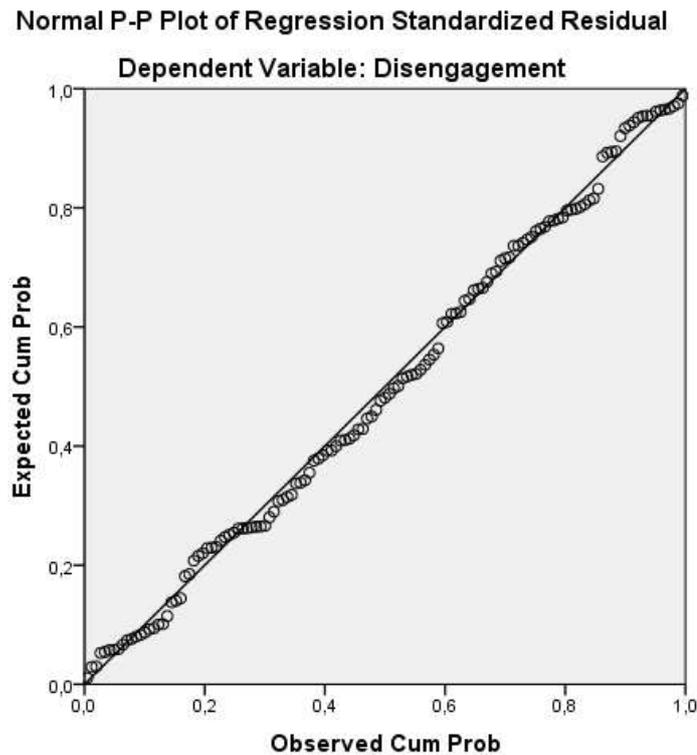
In order to verify the hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d and H1e, the Multiple Linear Regression analysis will be used to predict the dependent variable (disengagement) behaviour depending on the independent variables (disengagement drivers).

However, before testing, it is necessary to validate the model's assumptions using residual analysis. According to Marôco (2007), in this model, the independent variables must not be correlated or have weak correlations. To confirm it, the residuals need to be random, independent, have a normal distribution with an average of zero and present a constant variance.

To verify the independence of the residuals was used the Durbin-Watson Test. The value of  $d$  range between 0 and 4 and if this value is around 2 we do not reject the null hypothesis (Marôco, 2007). In this study,  $d=2.183$ , as shown in Table 19. Since  $d$  is a value close to 2, we do not reject the null hypothesis and consequently do not reject the independence of the residuals.

To prove the normal distribution of the residuals, the Normal Probability Plot was used and it is presented below in Figure 16. As stated by Marôco (2007), this allows to prove that the residuals have, approximately, a normal distribution because the dots are positioned along the main diagonal.

Figure 16: Normal Probability Plot



The confirmation of the null average and constant variance can be verified by the visualization of Table 18.

Table 18: Errors' Analysis

**Residuals Statistics**

	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Std. Predicted Value	-1,774	4,286	,000	1,000	136
Std. Residual	-2,197	2,273	,000	,981	136

With the validation of assumptions, it is possible to advance to the analysis between customer disengagement and disengagement drivers. Firstly, it is necessary to measure the model's adjustment quality.

To Marôco (2007) and to Pestana and Gageiro (2008) the use of the adjusted determination coefficient (Adjusted  $R^2$ ) is the best estimator for the model's adjustment quality because it will only increases its value if the variables variance errors'

decreases, leading to a better adjustment. Moreover, it is possible to think about the adjusted determination coefficient as a measure of the capacity of generalization of the model in analysis, since it represents an estimative of the explained variance of the dependent variable if the model had been based on the population and not on a sample.

In this study, Adjusted  $R^2$  equals 0.575 (Table 19), which means that 57.5% of the variability of the dependent's variable variability (customer disengagement) is explained by the five disengagement drivers analysed. The remaining variability is explained by factors that are not included in this model.

Looking at the simple correlation coefficient (R), it is possible to conclude that an increase of the disengagement drivers leads to an increase of the customer disengagement, since there is in this study a strong positive correlation between variables, with R greater than 0.6 (Marôco, 2007).

Table 19: Correlation Coefficients

<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Durbin-Watson</b>
0,722	0,588	0,575	2,183

To analyse the variance, the F Test was used in order to reject the null hypothesis ( $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ), meaning that the independent variables are not correlated with the dependent one. As shown in Table 20, it is possible to conclude that customer disengagement is correlated with all the disengagement drivers identified in this study.

Table 20: Variance Analysis

<b>Variance Analysis</b>					
	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Regression</b>	45,558	7	8,911	12,727	0,000
<b>Residual</b>	90,393	129	0,701		
<b>Total</b>	134,949	136			

To determinate the importance of each type of disengagement drivers to the development of customer disengagement, the Beta Coefficient was the measure used.

The results are present in Table 21. It shows that the most important variable in this study is technical problems, with  $B=0.371$ , followed by pricing & loyalty Programs with  $B=0.311$  and by unmet expectations, with  $B=0.297$  ( $p=0.000$ ). Brand strength/value ( $B=0.100$ ) and exclusive services ( $B=-0.017$ ) are the two variables with less impact in customer disengagement and have no significance in its explanation ( $p>0.05$ ). According to these results, it is possible to observe that only three variables positively influence the development of customer disengagement (brand strength/value, pricing & loyalty and technical problems).

Table 21: Coefficients Analysis

<b>Coefficients Analysis</b>					
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Constant</b>	-,002	,072		-,023	,982
<b>Brand Strength/Value</b>	,100	,072	,099	1,380	,170
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	-,017	,072	-,017	-,229	,819
<b>Pricing &amp; Loyalty Programs</b>	,311	,072	,310	4,295	,000
<b>Technical Problems</b>	,371	,072	,370	5,133	,000
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	,297	,072	,296	4,103	,000

#### **3.4.2.2.3. The influence of moderating effects on disengagement drivers (H2)**

In order to verify the H2 hypothesis, the Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) will be used to discover in what extend the type of provider (MEO, NOS or Vodafone Portugal), number of services subscribed (one, two, three, four and five services) and time with the same provider (less than one year, between one and two years and more than two years) influence the importance of the disengagement drivers in study. This test was the chosen one since, according to Marôco (2007), it is the best to verify this type of hypotheses.

In MANOVA's test, when we reject the null hypothesis, it is possible to conclude that the outcomes are statistically relevant and there observed differences between means, meaning that there is at least one population average which is significantly different from the others and this difference was caused by the independent variables mentioned above.

In this study H0 tests the equality of the averages of the moderating effects analyzed and H1 represents the difference of those averages. We reject the null hypothesis if  $p\text{-value} < \alpha$  and assume that the influence of each moderating effect is significantly different. To correctly perform these tests, the normality was verified by the application of the Central Limit Theorem as stated before and the significance level chosen was 5%.

Of all four test statistics, the Roy Largest Root is considered by (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989) to be often the most powerful one. For this reason, it was the test to be considered (Table 22).

Table 22: Multivariate Test

<b>Roy Largest Root</b>					
	<b>Value</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Hypothesis df</b>	<b>Error df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Type of Provider	0,38	0,990	5,000	131,000	0,010
Number of Services	0,64	1,662	5,000	131,000	0,048
Time with the same provider	0,91	2,356	5,000	131,000	0,044

Since all moderating effects are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), it is possible to proceed with the multivariate variance analysis for each one of the moderating effects in study.

Table 23: Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) for type of provider

**Multivariate Variance Analysis**

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Brand Strength/ Value</b>	Between Groups	0,281	2	0,141	0,139	0,871
	Within Groups	133,719	134	1,013		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	Between Groups	1,558	2	0,779	0,776	0,462
	Within Groups	132,442	134	1,003		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Pricing &amp; Loyalty Programs</b>	Between Groups	2,017	2	1,009	1,009	0,367
	Within Groups	131,983	134	1,000		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Technical Problems</b>	Between Groups	1,942	2	0,971	0,971	0,381
	Within Groups	132,058	134	1,000		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	Between Groups	0,794	2	0,397	0,394	0,675
	Within Groups	133,206	134	1,009		
	Total	134,000	136			

As we can see by the results presented in Table 23, we do not reject H0 at a 5% significance level for all disengagement drivers, meaning that the time with the type of provider is not relevant for all disengagement drivers, since the means are not significantly different.

Table 24: Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) for number of services

**Multivariate Variance Analysis**

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Brand Strength/ Value</b>	Between Groups	0,962	4	0,241	0,235	0,918
	Within Groups	133,038	132	1,023		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	Between Groups	4,783	4	1,196	1,203	0,313
	Within Groups	129,217	132	0,994		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Pricing &amp; Loyalty Programs</b>	Between Groups	2,426	4	0,606	0,599	0,664
	Within Groups	131,574	132	1,012		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Technical Problems</b>	Between Groups	4,634	4	1,158	1,164	0,330
	Within Groups	129,366	132	0,995		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	Between Groups	0,762	4	0,191	0,186	0,945
	Within Groups	133,238	132	1,025		
	Total	134,000	136			

As we can see by the results presented in Table 24, we do not reject H0 at a 5% significance level for all disengagement drivers, meaning that the number of services is not relevant for all disengagement drivers, since the means are not significantly different.

Table 25: Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) for time with the same provider

**Multivariate Variance Analysis**

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Brand Strength/ Value</b>	Between Groups	2,989	2	1,495	1,495	0,228
	Within Groups	131,936	134	1,000		
	Total	134,925	136			
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	Between Groups	3,168	2	1,584	1,591	0,208
	Within Groups	131,406	134	0,995		
	Total	134,574	136			
<b>Pricing &amp; Loyalty Programs</b>	Between Groups	7,735	2	3,867	4,043	0,020
	Within Groups	126,265	134	0,957		
	Total	134,000	136			
<b>Technical Problems</b>	Between Groups	1,951	2	0,976	0,975	0,380
	Within Groups	132,148	134	1,001		
	Total	134,106	136			
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	Between Groups	6,292	2	3,146	3,245	0,042
	Within Groups	127,991	134	0,970		
	Total	134,288	136			

As we can see by the results presented in Table 25, we reject H0 at a 5% significance level for only two disengagement drivers (pricing & loyalty programs and unmet expectations), meaning that the time with the same provider is relevant for these two disengagement drivers, since the means are significantly different.

After discovering what moderating effects are relevant and influence disengagement drivers, it is important to test which pairs of means are significantly different and this can be done using post hoc tests (Marôco, 2007).

Although there is no agreement on which post hoc test is the best one, Marôco (2007) claims that Tukey's test is the one that is more appropriate, since with its analysis of multiple comparisons, it allows us to see which groups are significantly different between each other. For this reason, Tukey's test was the chosen post hoc test to be used in this study.

Table 26 presents the results of Tukey's test for the moderating effect time with the same provider. Despite running the test for all variables, only the two variables with significant impact are considered in the analysis.

Regarding the pricing & loyalty programs disengagement driver, it was found that this driver has more impact when customers have the same provider between 1 and 2 years than when they have the same provider for less than 1 year (mean difference = 0.7785). Only this relationship proved to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Concerning the unmet expectations disengagement driver, it was found that this driver has more impact when customers have the same provider between 1 and 2 years than when they have the same provider for less than 1 year (mean difference = 0.6983). Again, only this relationship proved to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 26: Multiple Comparisons - Post hoc test (Tukey) for time with the same provider

**Multiple Comparisons – Tukey’s Test**

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>(I) Time with the same provider</b>	<b>(J) Time with the same provider</b>	<b>Mean Difference (I – J)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Brand Strength/ Value</b>	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	-,127245	,28618145	,897
		More than 2 years	-,358773	,22375211	,248
	Between 1 and 2 years	Less than 1 year	,127245	,28618145	,897
		More than 2 years	-,231528	,23468976	,587
	More than 2 years	Less than 1 year	,358773	,22375211	,248
		Between 1 and 2 years	,231528	,23468976	,587
<b>Exclusive Services</b>	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	-,486493	,28560627	,208
		More than 2 years	-,323075	,22330240	,320
	Between 1 and 2 years	Less than 1 year	,486493	,28560627	,208
		More than 2 years	,163417	,23421807	,765
	More than 2 years	Less than 1 year	,323075	,22330240	,320
		Between 1 and 2 years	-,163417	,23421807	,765
<b>Pricing &amp; Loyalty Programs</b>	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	-,778544	,27996410	,017
		More than 2 years	-,469422	,21889105	,085
	Between 1 and 2 years	Less than 1 year	,778544	,27996410	,017
		More than 2 years	,309122	,22959108	,372
	More than 2 years	Less than 1 year	,469422	,21889105	,085
		Between 1 and 2 years	-,309122	,22959108	,372
<b>Technical Problems</b>	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	-,399376	,28641222	,347
		More than 2 years	-,175045	,22393254	,715

	Between 1 and 2 years	Less than 1 year	,399376	,28641222	,347
		More than 2 years	,224330	,23487901	,606
	More than 2 years	Less than 1 year	,175045	,22393254	,715
		Between 1 and 2 years	-,224330	,23487901	,606
<b>Unmet Expectations</b>	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	-,698378	,28187061	,038
		More than 2 years	-,432169	,22038167	,126
	Between 1 and 2 years	Less than 1 year	,698378	,28187061	,038
		More than 2 years	,266208	,23115455	,484
	More than 2 years	Less than 1 year	,432169	,22038167	,126
		Between 1 and 2 years	-,266208	,23115455	,484

### 3.5. Discussion of Results

In this section, the results presented in the previous chapter will be discussed.

With this study it was intended to investigate what are the drivers of customer disengagement on the telecommunications sector in Portugal and what is their impact. To achieve it, a research model was developed to analyse the impact of disengagement drivers (brand strength/value, exclusive services, pricing & loyalty programs, technical problems, unmet expectations) on customer disengagement and if their impact was influenced by some moderating factors (type of provider, number of services, time with the same provider). These drivers (also our factors) were reached using Exploratory Factor Analysis.

The results showed that only three drivers (pricing & loyalty programs, technical problems, unmet expectations) have significant influence on customer disengagement.

Table 27: Validation of the analyzed hypotheses (H1)

Hypothesis	Description	Validation
H1a	Brand strength/value influence customer disengagement	
H1b	Exclusive services influence customer disengagement	
H1c	Pricing & Loyalty programs influence customer disengagement	
H1d	Technical problems influence customer disengagement	
H1e	Unmet expectations influence customer disengagement	

Additionally, it was found that of these three disengagement drivers, Technical Problems is the one that most influence the behaviour of customers towards customer disengagement, closely followed by Pricing & Loyalty Programs. This conclusion is in line with what was pointed up by Bowden et al. (2015), who acknowledged that functional/utilitarian service contexts (category in which telecommunications companies are included according to Roos et al. (2009)) have higher propensity for disengagement than participative/co-creative service contexts, with what Nimako

(2012) stated, saying that disengagement drivers specific of these type of services are more likely to be connected with pricing, network quality, delayed services, or unrealized promises (which were the three drivers that this study shown to have significant influence on customer disengagement)., and with what Wetzels et al. (1998) affirmed, being loyalty programs translated to a weaker attachment to a relationship due to its lack of emotional and affective components.

Concerning the other two disengagement drivers that were studied, although Wang et al. (2004) argued that customers look for the perceived quality/value of a brand and the unique appeal/desirability associated with the service, it was proven that these factors are not strong enough to significantly influence customer disengagement on the telecommunications sector in Portugal.

Regarding the test to find out if the impact of the drivers in study varied significantly depending on a series of moderating effects (type of provider, number of services and time with the same provider), the results showed that the importance given to each disengagement driver only varies significantly according to the time with the same provider, being this hypothesis partially proven.

Table 28: Validation of the analyzed hypotheses (H2)

Hypothesis	Description	Validation
H2a	The importance given to each disengagement driver varies significantly according to the provider	
H2b	The importance given to each disengagement driver varies significantly according to the number of services	
H2c	The importance given to each disengagement driver varies significantly according to the time with the same provider	

However, this conclusion is only true for two of the five factors (pricing & loyalty programs and unmet expectations). Only for these two drivers the results of the multivariate variance analysis proved to be significant.

Regarding the pricing & loyalty programs disengagement driver, it was found that this driver has more impact when customers have the same provider between 1 and

2 years than when they have the same provider for less than 1 year (mean difference = 0.7785). Only this relationship proved to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Concerning the unmet expectations disengagement driver, it was found that this driver has more impact when customers have the same provider between 1 and 2 years than when they have the same provider for less than 1 year (mean difference = 0.6983). Again, only this relationship proved to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

These conclusions are in line with what was revealed by Bowden et al. (2015), since utilitarian relationships possess weaker attachment links, making customers more susceptible to abandon their current relationship, and with what was stated by Roos et al. (2009), who showed that the inherent characteristics of the telecommunication services that telecommunication companies provide and the type of contracts that are made have influence due to contract clauses and lack of emotional and affective components in the relationship.

#### **4. Conclusions, limitations and suggestions for future research**

In this section, the final of this study, will be summarized the main deductions retrieved from the investigation, as well as its limitations and some suggestions for future research.

This study helps to narrow the gap found in the relational marketing literature, since research on customer engagement has tended to focus more on the positive side of relationships, giving more attention to relationship development and maintenance than to the negative side of relationships, addressing the need to explore the development of relationships and its impact on the process of customer disengagement.

Companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of analysing customers' behaviour, and that keep customers engaged and avoid customer disengagement is fundamental. It is the type of relationship processes that companies and customers experience that can potentiate or decrease the risk of customer disengagement.

The ability to prevent customer disengagement is now considered to be one of the main keys for companies to achieve long-term customer commitment and to maintain sustainable competitive advantage. However, finding the most important cause for a disengagement process is many times difficult and is dependent of a range of different factors.

A way to find the most important causes for customer disengagement is to study the disengagement drivers and their influence in the disengagement process. Different drivers will impact differently the relationship and induce different outcomes. These drivers will generate different behaviours from a customer towards a certain company.

In the telecommunications sector, low brand strength/value can destroy the predilection of the customers towards a certain brand since it does not reflects or promotes aspects of the their self-image or expectations; bad, not enough or totally lack of exclusive services can break the unique appeal/desirability associated with the services provided; perception of high pricing & long loyalty programs can influence customers judgments through perceptions of price fairness and make them feel trapped in a relationship due to involuntary continuance commitment; high number and/or persistent technical problems can decrease the attractiveness derived from the quality and the expected performance of the services provided; and unmet expectations can

negatively influence the perceived sacrifice made by the customers, translating into a greater perceived cost than the value resultant from the usage of the service provided.

However, the effect and the importance of each driver may not be the same for every type of telecommunications provider, for the number of services that each customer contracts or for the time that each customer stays with the company.

The main goal of this study was to identify a set of disengagement drivers of the telecommunications sector in Portugal and to examine their influence on customer disengagement based on the moderating effects of the type of provider, the number of services contracted, and the time with the same provider. To achieve it, a qualitative study and a quantitative study were employed. The first one to determine the most common disengagement drivers of the Portuguese telecommunications sector, with data collected from the Facebook and Twitter pages of MEO, NOS and Vodafone Portugal, from January 2016 to March 2016; and the second one to measure the six variables retrieved from the literature review and the qualitative study and analyze their behaviour: brand strength/value, exclusive services, pricing, loyalty programs, technical problems and unmet expectations. This survey obtained 136 responses, being 61% of the respondents' females, the majority of the total respondents in the group of 20 to 25 years old (63%), and 46% have an undergraduate degree.

Through a Multiple Linear Regression it was proved that only three of the five factors extracted from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (pricing and loyalty programs merged in to one factor) have a significant positive influence on customer disengagement, namely pricing & loyalty programs, technical problems and unmet expectations. In particular, technical was the driver with the highest importance from all the drivers in study. This comes in line with what was predicted since customers seek in particular for functional value in functional/utilitarian service contexts like the telecommunications sector. Next in importance was pricing & loyalty programs, which is also in line with what was expected, emphasizing the fact that pricing should be consistent with the value of the services provided given that price perceptions directly influence customers opinion and awareness about price justice. It also makes customers feel like they are often dependent on their service providers due to the inherent calculative commitment of loyalty programs.

Despite the initial suggestion that brand strength/value and exclusive services were also factors that significantly influenced customer disengagement, it was shown that this was not correct and these factors are not strong enough, which demonstrates that changes in the predilection of the customers towards a certain telecommunications provider and in the desirability associated with the telecommunication services in Portugal are not sufficient to significantly influence customer disengagement.

It was also verified that the importance given to each disengagement driver only varies according to the time that customers are connected to the same telecommunications provider, and that this is only significant for pricing & loyalty programs and for unmet expectations. It was demonstrated that this hypothesis for the type of provider and the number of services subscribed is not significant. To reach these conclusions, a Multivariate Variance Analysis (MANOVA) was developed. For both pricing & loyalty programs and unmet expectations it was discovered that these drivers have more impact when customers have the same provider between 1 and 2 years than when they have it for less than 1 year. This comes in line with the weaker attachment inherent to a utilitarian relationship, making customers more susceptible to abandon their current relationship, due to its lack of emotional and affective components. When a customer is with the same provider between 1 and 2 years, he is closer to the end of the contract loyalty clause (in Portugal, generally, the subscription of telecommunication services requires a 24 months permanence with the company) than when he was with the same company for less than 1 year. At this stage of the relationship, he is much more aware of the ups and downs that his relationship suffered, especially when it comes to price movements and matching or not his expectations.

As a final reflection, this study also implies that telecommunication providers need to develop effective customer centric strategies, since utilitarian relationships are less likely to sustain long-term customer commitment. Hence, they must improve their service quality and reduce customer disengagement caused by technical problems. These companies have to put in practice efficient service improvement systems in order to identify problematic issues and implement processes with the aim of solving them. This result also implies that managers need to focus their attention on developing and implementing strategies to manage and reduce customer disengagement. Therefore it is

important to produce new and improved studies on this subject since there is still a lot to explore regarding this increasingly important topic.

For future research, and as a suggestion, it is necessary to state and acknowledge that this study had some conditioning factors and limitations.

To begin with, it is important to notice that this study shrinks the possibility of generalization due to its characteristics, since it is focused on a specific context, sector and country, and due to the sample used, given that the sample has similar characteristics like age (63% of respondents between 20 and 25 years old) and educational background (46% of respondents have a bachelor degree). Regarding sample size, it would be interesting to increase it in future research.

Moreover, this study could be applied to other countries, sectors and contexts to see if the outputs are the same or not according to them. This way it would be possible to see if this study can be expanded to any country, sector or context or if it is just suitable in the ones employed here.

Also, the netnographic method was used in a 3 months' time range and using two online platforms. As well, the survey was only available online and for two weeks. It would be interesting to see if different types of platforms and time ranges were used and if it significantly changes these results. Additionally, different types of methods, like ethnography or in-depth interviews could be used to see if these methods produce different outcomes.

As a final point, it would be interesting to exploit if the importance given to each disengagement driver varies significantly according to different moderating effects, such as type of service subscribed (mobile internet, fixed internet, pay TV, fixed voice and mobile voice), previous levels of engagement, among others.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1 – Survey in English

### Customers Behaviours and Level of Involvement Towards their Telecommunication Providers

This survey is conducted under the Master in Management at School of Economics and Management at University of Porto, whose main objective is to evaluate the behavior and the level of involvement of customers with their telecommunications provider.

All information provided will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will serve only to statistical purposes.

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

**\*Obrigatório**

#### 1. Gender \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- Male  
 Female

#### 2. Age \*

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. Educational Background \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- Basic School  
 High School  
 Undergraduate Degree  
 Masters Degree  
 MBA/PHD

#### 4. Telecommunications Provider(s) \*

*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*

- MEO  
 NOS  
 Vodafone  
 Outra: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. Telecommunications services contracted with one or more telecommunication providers \*

*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*

- Fixed Voice  
 Mobile Voice  
 Fixed Internet  
 Mobile Internet  
 Paid TV

6. How many time do you have the Telecommunications provider(s) \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 2 years
- More than 2 years

**Please, answer to the following sentences according to your opinion, using a scale from 1 to 7, being 1 (one) strongly disagree and 7 (seven) strongly agree:**

---

7. My provider is not better than its competitors \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

8. I do not consider the quantity of the exclusive services of my current provider sufficient \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

9. I do not feel emotionally attached to my current provider \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

10. My provider does not look like a good company \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

11. I do not feel sense of belonging with my current provider \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

12. I do not consider the quality of the exclusive services of my current provider sufficient \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

13. **The promotional activities of my current provider are not attractive \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

14. **There are better alternatives to choose than my current provider \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

15. **The level of my commitment to my current provider is low \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

16. **The benefits offered by my current provider are not attractive \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

17. **I do not like my current loyalty program \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

18. **My current provider does not deliver what we agreed \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

19. **My provider does not have a good reputation \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

20. I will not recommend my current provider due to its loyalty program

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

21. The overall service quality of my current provider is insufficient \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

22. My current provider services are not worth the money \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

23. My current provider services are not consistently available \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

24. I want to abandon my current provider at the end of the loyalty program \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

25. My current provider does not met my initial expectations \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

26. My current provider services are not consistently reliable \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

27. **My current provider does not take customers in consideration when it makes business decisions \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

---

Strongly Disagree                        Strongly Agree

**Please choose the two most important motives to disengage with your telecommunication provider**

---

28. \*

*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*

- Brand Value/Strength
- Exclusive Services
- Loyalty Programs
- Technical Problems
- Pricing
- Unmet Expectations

**The end**

Thank you for your collaboration!

## Os Consumidores e os seus Operadores de Telecomunicações

Este questionário é realizado no âmbito do Mestrado em Gestão da Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto e tem como objetivo determinar e medir o impacto dos fatores de afastamento dos consumidores para com os seus operadores de telecomunicações.

Todas respostas são confidenciais e os dados apenas serão usados para fins estatísticos e para efeitos de apresentação de conclusões, nunca em termos individuais.

Agradeço desde já a colaboração e o tempo despendido na resposta às questões que se seguem.

**\*Obrigatório**

### 1. Género \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- Masculino  
 Feminino

### 2. Idade \*

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Habilitações Literárias \*

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- Ensino Básico  
 Ensino Secundário  
 Licenciatura  
 Mestrado  
 Doutoramento

### 4. Qual o seu Operador de Telecomunicações \*

*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*

- MEO  
 NOS  
 Vodafone  
 Outra: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Serviços Contratados com o seu Operador de Telecomunicações \*

*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*

- Telefone Fixo  
 Telemóvel  
 Internet Fixa  
 Internet Móvel  
 Televisão

**6. Há quanto tempo tem o mesmo Operador de telecomunicações? \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- Menos de 1 ano  
 Entre 1 e 2 anos  
 Mais de 2 anos

**Por favor classifique as seguintes afirmações de acordo com a sua opinião, usando uma escala de 1 a 7, sendo 1 (um) discordo completamente e 7 (sete) concordo completamente:**

**7. O meu operador não é melhor do que os seus concorrentes \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**8. Não considero a quantidade dos serviços exclusivos do meu operador suficiente \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**9. Não me sinto emocionalmente ligado ao meu atual operador de telecomunicações \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**10. O meu operador não parece ser uma boa empresa \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**11. Não tenho sensação de pertença ao meu operador de telecomunicações atual \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

12. Não considero a qualidade dos serviços exclusivos do meu operador suficiente \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

13. As ofertas promocionais do meu operador atual não são atrativas \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

14. Existem melhor alternativas do que o meu operador atual \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

15. O nível do meu compromisso com o meu atual operador de telecomunicações é baixo \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

16. Os benefícios oferecidos pelo meu operador não são atrativos \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

17. Não gosto do meu programa de fidelização atual \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

18. O meu operador atual não entrega totalmente os serviços que contratamos \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Totalmente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Totalmente						

**19. O meu operador não tem uma boa reputação \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**20. Não recomendo o meu operador atual devido ao meu programa de fidelização \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**21. A qualidade geral do serviço do meu operador não é suficiente \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**22. Os serviços do meu operador atual não valem o que pago por eles \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**23. Os serviços do meu operador não estão consistentemente disponíveis \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**24. Quero abandonar o meu operador no fim do meu período de fidelização \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**25. O meu operador atual não cumpre com as expectativas que tinha inicialmente \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

26. Os serviços do meu operador não são consistentemente fiáveis \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

27. O meu operador atual não tem em consideração os seus clientes quando toma decisões de negócio \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo Completamente	<input type="radio"/>	Concordo Completamente						

**Por favor escolha os dois principais motivos que o levam (ou levariam) a afastar-se do seu operador de telecomunicações**

28. \*

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- Valor da Marca
- Serviços Exclusivos
- Programas de Fidelização
- Problemas Técnicos
- Preço
- Não Cumprimento Expectativas

**Fim**

Obrigado pela sua colaboração!