Chapter 2
Factors Influencing the Level of Trust in Vaccines

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ABSTRACT

The authors explore the degree of consumer trust regarding the various brands of Covid-19 vaccines made available by laboratories in Portugal. This chapter aims to fill a gap in the literature, since brands of COVID-19 vaccines have never been analysed from a brand trust perspective. The results show that the level of trust differs significantly between vaccine brands, with BioNtech - Pfizer, Moderna - National Institute of Health and Oxford -AstraZeneca inspiring the highest levels of trust among respondents. Other vaccine brands - Sanofi GSK, Janssen Pharmaceutica NV, and CureVac - showed lower levels of trust or respondents had no opinion whatsoever. Gender, age, family net monthly income, educational qualifications, and being a health professional were also found to influence the level of trust towards vaccine brands differently. The results may serve as strategic orientations for the pharmaceutical industry brands, but they may also be the object of reflection for public organisms when making purchasing and implementation decisions in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

Vaccines constitute one of the greatest success stories in the health sector. They are part of a multifaceted public health response to the emergence of pandemics (Hussein et al., 2015). Indeed, the history of vaccines is long, having started with Hippocrates (400 BC) and his description of diseases such as mumps and diphtheria. No further discoveries were recorded until 1100 (AD) when the smallpox vaccine was identified (idem, ibid). Currently, under COVID-19, the global market size of the respective vaccines is projected to reach over 5 billion by 2024 (Reportlinker, 2021).

On 11 March 2020, COVID-19 (a disease caused by the novel coronavirus) was characterized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic. The term "pandemic" refers to the geographical distribution of a disease, not its severity. The designation recognizes that outbreaks of COVID-19 exist in several countries and regions of the world (PAHO, 2020). As of 19 February 2022, 61.9% of the world's population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. 10.42 billion doses have been administered globally and 30.92 million are administered every day. However, only 10.6% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose (Hannah et al., 2020).

Vaccines are a technology that humanity has always relied on in the past to reduce the number of deaths from infectious diseases (Andre et al. 2008).

Methods of growing viruses in the laboratory led to rapid discoveries and innovations, including the creation of polio vaccines. Other childhood diseases were in the scientists' sights such as measles, mumps and rubella, and vaccines for these diseases considerably reduced their negative effects.

Less than 12 months after the beginning of the pandemic, several research teams around the world have taken up the challenge and developed vaccines to protect against SARS-CoV-2. As of 13 August 2021, there were 21 COVID-19 vaccines from different sources approved worldwide for emergency use (Rahman et al., 2022).

Effectively, preference for a particular brand is built up over time, taking into account the associations and expectations that users make, which may be positive or negative. In the case of vaccine brands, some factors to be considered by users are the characteristics of the brand itself, such as its effectiveness, type of regulation, approval, manufacturing origin, public trust and professional trust (i.e. by physicians) (Quintanilla, 2021).

In this sense, it was considered important in this research to provide a theoretical and practical reflection related to concepts intrinsic to the brand, understood as a promise of certain tangible and intangible benefits and, as such, producer of various meanings, perceptions, and associations in the minds of their publics (not forgetting