

# PERCEPTIONS OF THE PORTUGUESE CIVIL SOCIETY ABOUT THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE

## PERCEÇÕES NA SOCIEDADE CIVIL PORTUGUESA SOBRE A FORÇA AÉREA

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### Abstract

This study aims to understand how information is linked to the perceptions (individual and knowledge construction process) of Portuguese civilian society about the Portuguese Air Force (PrtAF), using the research methodology recommended by the Instituto de Estudos Superiores Militares (Institute of Higher Military Studies), in particular the Quivy and Campenhout (1998) Method for Research in Social Sciences. In terms of results: (i) information was associated with the perceptions of the section of civil society under analysis (106 students from three higher education degrees), according to the ability of the PrtAF to engage public attention and the perceived usefulness, not only of the accomplished operational missions, but also of its very reason of being; (ii) a frequent dissemination of news stories on newly accomplished missions showed a positive cumulative effect; (iii) the aforementioned associations were found to be enhanced depending on the type of mass media used, the type of operational mission conducted and the content/connotation - neutral, positive or negative - of the disseminated news story; (iv) divulging relevant information about the PrtAF has the added value of increasing overall knowledge and filling existing gaps or flaws in the way the military environment is perceived.

**Keywords:** Communication, Portuguese Air Force, Image, Information, News, Perception.

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## Resumo

Este estudo teve por objetivo perceber como é que a informação se associa às percepções (conhecimento e processo de construção individual) na sociedade civil Portuguesa sobre a Força Aérea Portuguesa (FAP), utilizando a metodologia preconizada pelo Instituto de Estudos Superiores Militares, designadamente o Método de Investigação em Ciências Sociais de Quivy e Campenhoudt (1998). Em termos de resultados: (i) a informação associou-se à percepção da franja da sociedade civil estudada (amostra de 106 alunos de três cursos de ensino superior), consoante a capacidade deste ramo para despertar atenção e a utilidade com que é percebida quer a sua existência, quer as missões operacionais que realiza e divulga; (ii) a frequente divulgação de notícias sobre missões acabadas de efetuar tem um efeito cumulativo sentido como muito positivo; (iii) as associações supracitadas mostraram-se potenciáveis consoante o meio de comunicação utilizado, o tipo de missão operacional realizado e o teor/conotação – neutro, positivo ou negativo – da notícia divulgada; (iv) divulgar informação pertinente sobre a FAP, tem como mais-valia adicional o aumento do grau de conhecimento e o colmatar de falhas ou faltas na forma como é compreendida a envolvente castrense.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunicação, Força Aérea Portuguesa, Imagem, Informação, Notícia, Percepção.

## Introduction

*“Now that every consumer online is a commentator, reviewer and publisher, all organisations have to stop talking and start listening to how they are perceived.”*

Smith (2009, p. 560)

Communication has long been an integral part of human life in society and of the organizations that make up contemporary societies.

While it is true that public organizations differ from private ones – e.g., and respectively, in their objectives (collective interest versus profit) and structure (centralized bureaucracy versus decentralized units) – it is equally true that both use the mediating role of the media to position themselves in the public space, to achieve visibility, to build their image and to legitimize their *raison d’être* (Decker et al, s.d., pp. 4;9-11).

The individual perceptions of the “public”, result from the influence of the surrounding social environment and of personal factors, such as desires, past experiences, etc. (FCT, s.d.), greatly contribute to this legitimization. Accordingly, the image emerges as the result of an individual construction based on visual information, speech and action (Decker et al., s.d., pp. 2-3).

Military Institutions (MI) and, specifically, the Portuguese Air Force (PrtAF), are naturally not oblivious to this reality in spite of the latter’s specific character, which is why the

information/communications issued by the “defence communicators will have to appeal to an audience that is both more sophisticated about technology and interested in military matters, but still has gaps in understanding defence issues.”(Albritton, 2009, p. 15).

In this context, it has proved important to analyse the perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the PrtAF and to identify the factors influencing those perceptions, with particular emphasis on the role of the media, and to propose catalyst actions that promote a better understanding of the mission and, consequently, provide a more realistic and improved image of this branch of the Armed Forces (FFAA). Essentially, to understand whether, despite much being said about civil society viewing the military with some ambiguity - largely the result of the current national situation of crisis -, the dominant public opinion continues to be that these professionals play an important role within the nation.

The general aim of this article, which reflects the Individual Research Work (IRW) produced by the author in the Field Grade Officers Course 2013/14, is then to examine how news stories can be associated with the individual construction process (knowledge and perceptions) about the PrtAF in civil society. An aim that, in terms of specific objectives, involves understanding whether: (1) news stories about the PrtAF engage the attention of civil society; (2) the way in which this information is transmitted engages the attention of civil society about the PrtAF in a different manner; (3) the perceived usefulness of the missions contributes differently to this perception; (4) online information about the PrtAF is consulted for some time after the date of issue; (5) greater frequency of information about the PrtAF has a (positive) cumulative effect on the institution’s image in Portuguese civil society.

## 1. Contextualization of the issue

*“Do not accept a priori  
anything you can verify  
Kipling (In Kdfrases, s.d.)*

This chapter aims, albeit very briefly given the length of this article, to address: the role of the media in public opinion; and communication in/from the PrtAF.

### a. The media and public opinion

Where there is an organization, there is also communication (Decker et al., s.d., p. 1), perceived “as a compound that forms the organization and that informs it, causing it to be what it is” (Restrepo, 1995, p. 95).

Five considerations must be taken into account in this respect:

- Human beings are not a camera or a tape recorder, nor a sponge that absorbs exactly that which surrounds it, but rather an entity that responds to the cues/ inputs it finds meaningful; this is the reason why perception is said to be the result of influence from various sources, such as surrounding environment, personal

characteristics, etc. (FCT, s.d.), and image is said to be the product of the individual construction process (Decker et al., s.d., pp. 2-3);

- The axiom of the Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1977 cited in Dalisay, 2012, p. 482) that people, perhaps for fear of possible isolation or ostracism, tend to follow the ideas that gather greater social consensus, i.e. those of the majority (frequently transmitted through the media), which logically causes dissenting opinions, already the minority, to become even more reduced;
- The organizational communication process can present the following dimensions: (a) to inform, i.e., to give form, as happens with the regulatory system of the mission, values, principles, policies, etc.; (b) to divulge, or to make known, to publish; (c) to establish relationships geared towards education, socialization and/or strengthening of cultural processes (through, for example, recreational activities, rituals and celebrations); (d) to participate, that is, the moment when one explicitly gives the floor to others, listening to them and recognizing them, which essentially refers to the point where communication is accomplished (Restrepo, 1995, p. 95);
- Organizational communication “covers all forms of communication used by organizations to relate to and interact with their audience” (Scroferneker, 2006, p. 48), and should be thought of not only as a form of information transfer but as a strategic tool for organizations (Scroferneker, s.d.);
- In this process of media influence, it is important to include information both from print journalism, associated with what is commonly named traditional media, and, increasingly, from the internet (Jornal i, 2012). The latter manifests through what might be dubbed digital journalism, but also through social networks, which share an important tool among themselves: they allow us to hear the pulse of public opinion quickly and economically.

## **b. Communication in/from the Air Force**

An organization such as the PrtAF—with a unique identity, but also aware of these issues and imbued with the aspiration to remain firmly rooted in national society - must be sensitive to the fact that their communications must serve the purpose of engaging attention (by being appealing, for example) and of transmitting relevant information to address gaps in knowledge or flaws in the way civil society understands the military environment (Albritton, 2009, p. 15).

This serves a dual purpose, to “create value for the organization and for society” (Nassar, s.d.) and to transmit a coordinated message - strategic communication and public information, respectively—, underlied by an internal and external communication strategy, detailed in communication plans, directives, etc..<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The types of communication associated with Defence/MI hitherto analysed should not be confused with Information Operations, which seek to maintain superiority in all informational dimensions, to preserve the action of friendly forces and to block an opponent’s action, by resorting to influence, interruption, etc. (King, 2011, p. 6).

These plans and directives (for action in public relations, communication, etc.), like the other activities of the branches, are designed according to the guidelines of each respective Chief of the General Staff (CGS), which must in turn be in accordance with those devised by their respective hierarchical bodies, i.e. the General Staff of the Armed Forces<sup>2</sup>, the National Defence Ministry<sup>3</sup> and the Government Programme<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Characterization of the perceptions about the Air Force in Portuguese civil society

*“Insight, untested and unsupported, is an insufficient guarantee of truth.”  
Russell (In Pensador.Info, s.d.)*

The topic having been put into context, this chapter will now present a few studies relative to the perceptions of the Portuguese population about the military environment and the use of social networks in the PrtAF, as well as the research model used in this analysis.

### a. Perceptions of the Portuguese population about the Defence and the Armed Forces

From the large-scale survey of the Portuguese population conducted by Carreiras (2009a; 2009b), within the project “The Portuguese Armed Forces of the post-Cold War”, the majority of respondents (83.2% in a sample of 1,535) considered the FFAA necessary, rating them as highly important for National Defence (ND) and identifying them as the institution in which they trust the most (Carreiras, 2009a, p. 5). This positive/very positive image and the great confidence in the MI was also noted by Pereira (2011, pp. 85; 87) in 83% of 54 935 young people present at the 6th edition of the National Defence Day 2009/2010.

Additionally, and in a scale from 0 to 10, the following data were obtained, among others:

- The Portuguese follow “matters related to ND and the FFAA in the media with moderate to low interest (5.11) and [considered] their degree of knowledge of the FFAA low (3.80)” (Carreiras 2009a, p 5);
- A high approval of the participation of Portuguese military in international peace missions, in order to “defend democracy and human rights (8.02), contribute to world peace and security (7.90) and defend Portuguese interests (7.77)” (Carreiras, 2009a, p. 6);

<sup>2</sup> E.g., CEMGFA (2013).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., MDN (2009).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., PCM (s.d.).

- In comparison to the Navy and the Army, the PrtAF are perceived as the branch which offered better technical (7.80) and civic (7.72) preparation and better equipment and materials (7, 30) to its military personnel; the same was not verified regarding proximity to the population, where the highest average value was associated with the Army (6.74), only then followed by the Air Force (5.81), and lastly by the Navy (5.71) (Carreiras, 2009a, p 8).;
- The military profession is perceived as being quite prestigious, coming in fifth place (7.30) behind doctors (8.72), fire-fighters (7.92), engineers (7.58) and teachers (7.43) (Carreiras, 2009a, p. 8). A prestige that proved proportional to hierarchical rank: 5.98 for enlisted; 7.21 for sergeants; and 7.89 for officers (Carreiras, 2009b). While the study by Vaz (2009) focused (unlike Carreiras, 2009a, 2009b; Pereira, 2011) on young candidates to the contract system of the courses for officers or enlisted of the PrtAF, prestige was also an important motivating factor (pp. 14-15).

Pereira (2011, p. 88-90) also gathered evidence, on a scale of 1 to 7, that the armed forces were “seen as necessary to the security of the country (6.10), effective in accomplishing their missions (5.77), well organized (5.76)” and trained to meet the challenges of modern society in terms of equipment (5.22) and preparation (5.35).

### **b. The use of social networks in the Air Force**

As stated by Mineiro (2010, p. 3), the power of public opinion and its role in victory or defeat in a war are clearly evident in history. When transposed into today’s military reality, this is reflected in the fact that, despite the FFAA in general and the PrtAF in particular “being seen as pillars of national sovereignty, for today’s society the [MI] is judged not by what it proposes to do, but by what it actually does, [and] social networks are an adequate channel to display those achievements.”

In this context, the representation of the PrtAF in social networks (Mineiro, 2010) is “important”, “necessary” and “inevitable” (p. 20), with Facebook, when compared to Hi5, emerging as the service whose number of users is proportional to age and education (p. 21), and with Twitter, although little used - but because it transmits an image of credibility - as the service identified by almost half the sample as an “important” and “very important” institutional tool (p. 21)

Also according to Mineiro (2014), to date, Facebook users in the PrtAF belong to the age bracket 34-47.

### **c. Research Model**

In light of the methodological procedures associated with the hypothetical-deductive method proposed by Quivy and Campenhoudt (Quivy et al., 1998), in accordance with the Harvard standards (ARU, 2010; 2012) recommended by IESM (2012a; 2012b), this research was developed:

- In the section of the population that is expected to play a more active role on the national scene<sup>5</sup> in the medium to long term and is therefore a prime target of PR (and public information) actions by the PrtAF (Mineiro, 2013; Roque, 2013).
- In accordance with the criteria and heuristics described in the *Data analysis* subchapter.

The dimensions and key indicators operationalized in Table 2 are based on the concept map shown in Table 1. It should be noted that the dimensions into which the concepts of “perceived usefulness” - namely, “other public interest missions”, “international engagement” and “military defence of the republic” - are subdivided were adapted from the legislation (AR 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) and the mission areas (CEMFA, 2013).

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5 A first approach followed the criteria of adolescence (15-24 years) defined by the United Nations (WHO 1986: 11; Eisenstein, 2005, p 6), corresponding to the section of the population potentially eligible for entry into the PrtAF, and who is essentially expected to play a more active role in the national scene in the medium to long term. However, for practical constraints, the range from 15 to 17 had to be excluded, because, according to the directors of secondary schools, underage students can only integrate this type of study if duly and timely authorized in writing by their parents or guardians. This constraint, while not excluding the schools already contacted, which were quite crowded in bureaucracy to begin with, from participating in this research, appeared too time-consuming and not very fruitful in face of the intended requirements (dates and number of respondents). Also because of time constraints resulting from the intention of carrying out the questionnaires in face-to-face mode (as it potentiates greater wealth of information resulting from a closer relationship of trust between the respondents and the author), the geographical area elected was the NUTS II region of Lisbon (Territorial Units for level II statistic ends, Eurostat, s.d.; MCOTA, 2002; PCM, 2008).

**Table 1 – Conceptual map**

Starting question	Derivative questions	
<p><b>SQ:</b>How is information linked to the perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the role of the PrtAF?</p>	<p><b>DQ1:</b> Do news stories about the PrtAF engage the attention of civil society?</p>	
	<p><b>DQ2:</b> Does the perceived usefulness of the PrtAF in Portuguese civil society vary depending on the type of operational mission accomplished and divulged?</p>	
	<p><b>DQ3:</b> Is the information on the PrtAF available online consulted with some continuity after being published?</p>	
	<p><b>DQ4:</b> Is a cumulative effect of information on the PrtAF perceived positively by Portuguese civil society?</p>	

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Hypotheses	Concepts	Dimensions	Indicators
<b>H1a:</b> The existence of news about the PrtAF engages the attention of civil society.	Engaging attention	News	Knowledge
			Information
<b>H1b:</b> The type of media through which news about the PrtAF is transmitted engages a different level of interest by civil society.		Written media	Daily newspapers
			Weekly newspapers
			Magazines
Televised media		Daily news programmes	
		Commercials	
		Major news reports	
Digital media		Official PRtAf website	
		Facebook	
	Twitter		
<b>H2:</b> The perceived usefulness of the PrtAF in Portuguese civil society varies depending on the type of operational mission accomplished and divulged.	Perceived usefulness	Other public interest missions	Search and rescue
			Organ transport
			Collaboration on civil protection activities
			Aero-medical evacuations
			National Defence Day
			Open Base Day
			Technical education
			Civic education
		International engagement	International peace operations
			International humanitarian aid
Military defence of the Republic	Airspace defence		
	Supporting the National Aviation Authority in “air policing” activities		
<b>H3:</b> The information on the PrtAF,available online is consulted with some continuity after being published.	Continuity	Online	Official PRtAf website
			Facebook
			Twitter
			Online bodies
<b>H4:</b> A cumulative effect of information on the PrtAF is perceived positively by Portuguese civil society.	Cumulative effect	News	Information

**Table 2– Operationalization of the dimensions/indicators**

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Operationalization
Engaging attention	News		Information about new and recent developments or different data relating to an existing situation.
		Knowledge	Set of ideas, notions or knowledge related to something (fact, topic, event, etc.).
	Information	Organized set of data, which is realized in a message about a certain event, fact or phenomenon.	
Continuity	Media	(Televised, written and digital)	Media instrument or technology used to disseminate information to a large number of receivers at the same time.
	Information content		Textual content of a news story, of a piece of writing.
Cumulative effect	Image		Process of mental construction, or representation (in thought) of an idea acquired or created by humans.
	Public interest mission		Action that contributes to the general good, benefiting a large section of members of society, without prejudice to third parties.
	International prestige		Value recognition associated with the fulfilment of commitments, obligations, duties and/or promises with at least one supranational entity.
Perceived usefulness	National sovereignty		Power of a State to exercise Command and Control, without submitting to the interests of another State.
		Operational mission	Performance of a task, duty or responsibility in the context of military operations or the military component of the strategy.
	Civic education		Set of life experiences, teaching methods and processes aimed at the acquisition of a sense of fairness and responsibility, learning respect and obedience to laws, and the practical application of shared values in order to prepare individuals for citizenship and responsible living at the moral, social and political levels (Bento, 2005, p. 251).
		Technical education	Set of methods and educational processes oriented to the performance of a profession with specific characteristics.

(Source: Prepared by the author)

### 3. Presentation of the study, data analysis and discussion of the results

*"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data.  
Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories,  
instead of theories to suit facts."*

Holmes (*In Doyle, s.d.*)

The topic having been put into context, a literature review having been performed with a preliminary characterization of the perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the PrtAF, and the research model presented, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the method used to analyse the data collected and to discuss the results in order to test the H and to answer the DQ and SQ.

#### a. Method

*Participants.* One hundred and six participants, mostly female (65.1%), between 18 and 23 years of age (42.5% aged 18 ; 35.8% aged 19; 15.1% aged 20; 3.8 aged 21%, 0.9% and 1.9% aged 22 - 23), from the (NUTS II) region of Lisbon (68.9%), attending higher education in the following areas/courses<sup>6</sup>: Technology – Undergraduate Degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Instituto Superior de Engenharia de Lisboa<sup>7</sup> (n=42≅39,6%); Social Sciences and Services - Integrated Master's Degree in Psychology at the Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade de Lisboa<sup>8</sup> (n=39≅36,8%); Architecture – Undergraduate Degree in Design (Fashion) at the Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa<sup>9</sup> (n=25≅23,6%).

*Procedure.* The questionnaires were distributed and answered after the objectives of the investigation were explained in person and once the participants were assured that there were no correct/incorrect answers and of the anonymity and confidentiality of individual responses, which would solely be used for statistical analysis. In order to minimize the possibility of latter respondents having had access to any new information (news) about the PrtAF, this survey was performed over an intentionally short time frame (12-20DEC2013).

*Measuring instrument.* A survey was conducted through a questionnaire (comprising eight questions, as shown in Table I), built and optimized after the work of Hill et al. (1999; 2000) Carreiras (2009a; 2009b), Mineiro (2010; 2013) and Roque (2013), and based on the (validation)

<sup>6</sup> In the sample selection of respondents, a potentially cross-sectional group was delimited, representative of the diversity present in society as a whole. Rooted in the heuristics (i.e. "mental shortcut, which enables problem solving and quicker and more efficient decision-making [...]), and reduces the time spent in the decision making process, Cherry, 2014) of the diversity of the area/course attended. Specifically: Engineering, for its frequent association with "hard sciences" and a strong component of mathematical reasoning, logical reasoning, etc. ; Psychology, for its traditional link to a relational component, oriented towards the other; Design (Fashion) for its common relation to a creative thinking component, strongly avant-garde, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Higher Engineering Studies (ISEL).

<sup>8</sup> Faculty of Psychology of the University of Lisbon (FPUL).

<sup>9</sup> Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon (FAUL).

feedback collected in the pre-test study conducted on six people with similar characteristics to the sample appraised.

**Table I- Questions listed on the questionnaire**

Question	Type of answer
Q1. How do you rate your degree of knowledge about the PrtAF <sup>1</sup> ?	Rating Scale with 11 points (0 = extremely low; 10 = extremely high)
Q2. When the media (magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and internet) discuss issues related to the PrtAF, how much attention do you pay to this kind of information?	Rating Scale with 11 points (0 = Not attentive; 10 = Extremely attentive)
Q3. What level of interest do you have in news about the PrtAF presented in the following types of media?	Rating scale with 11 points (0 = Not interested; 10 = Extremely interested)
Q4. I will show you a list of operational missions accomplished by the PrtAF. I would like you to say, for each, what do you consider to be its usefulness for Portugal?	Rating scale with 11 points (0 = Not useful; 10 = Extremely useful)
Q5. When you access the internet, you choose the information you read based on:	Rating scale with 11 points (0 = Totally disagree; 10 = Totally agree)

**Table I– Questions listed on the questionnaire (continued)**

Q6. When presented with a report on a mission accomplished by the military personnel of the PrtAF, you tend to think:	“They did no more than their duty”? “The Portuguese Air Force is an asset for Portugal”?	Choose one answer
Q7. What is your opinion on the importance of the PrtAF to Portugal		Rating scale with 11 points (0 = Not attentive; 10 = Extremely attentive)
Q8.: Based on your answer to Q7), state your opinion about the importance of the PrtAF to Portugal, after reading the following news stories <sup>2</sup> :	a. “Military mission accomplished in Cape Verde resort”? b. “F16 airplane captures suspicious aircraft”?	Rating scale with 11 points (0 = Not important; 10 = Extremely important)

(Source: Prepared by the author).

## b. Data analysis

*Student's t-tests* and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were performed, as well as Levene tests and *Post Hoc* tests, *r* Pearson correlations, means estimates<sup>10</sup>, standard deviations, minimums and maximums, using the SPSS 21.0 software for Social Sciences.

In order to confirm/refute the hypotheses, a set of criteria and heuristics for validation/acceptance was defined, namely:

- (1) **Kappa coefficient**, after the work done by Ramalho (13, pp. Ap B-2; Ap B-3), and defined by the “observation of a value equal to or greater than 80% agreement on the same question [...]. In an agreement assessment, [a value  $\geq 0.80$ ] is excellent”;
- (2) “Similar answer” **heuristics**, reflected in the count of the number of participants who:
  - (a) in H1a and H1b, linked to Q2 and Q3, respectively, answered a non-zero value in at least one of the nine media, indicating a minimum of attention was engaged;
  - (b) in H2, linked to Q4, answered a non-zero value in at least one of the 12 operational tasks, and answered a non-zero value to Q7 and Q8, indicating a minimum of perceived usefulness;
  - (c) in H3, linked to Q5, chose “Title impact/content” over “Date of issue”;
  - (d) in H4 linked to Q6, chose “The Portuguese Air Force is an asset for Portugal”, rather than “They did no more than their duty.”

**Engaging attention.** This concept was studied once the degree of knowledge of respondents about the PrtAF (Q1) had been established through Q2 and Q3.

*Q1: Degree of knowledge of respondents about the PrtAF.* Statistically significant differences were observed (Table II) between the mean values of Engineering and Psy-

<sup>10</sup> The interpretation of means, based partly on Carreiras' evaluation (2009a; 2009b), follows the following classification: ]0.3], weak; ]3,6 [, moderate; ]6,8 [, high and ]8.10], very high.

chology students versus Design students ( $t=7,267, p<0,05$ ), namely [ $M_{Eng.}=4,10; SD=1,665$ ], ( $M_{Psychology}=3,03; SD=2,277$ ) e  $M_{Design}=2,24; SD=2,006$ ], which, in light of the level of agreement (85.8%) and of the defined heuristics, strengthens the information presented below, resulting from the validation of hypotheses.

**Table II– Statistical data relating to the Degree of knowledge about the PrtAF and Attention given to information about the PrtAF by course area.**

Variável	Grupo	n	M	DP	Mínimo	Máximo	ANOVA		Post Hoc (*)	Homocedasticidade	
							F	p		Levene	p
Grau de conhecimento sobre a FAP	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	4,10	1,665	1	7	7,267	0,001(***)	Eng. <sup>a</sup> > Design p = 0,001 (***)	0,930	0,398(**)
	Design	25	2,24	2,006	0	8					
	Psicologia	39	3,03	2,277	0	8					
	Total	106	3,26	2,104	0	8			Eng. <sup>a</sup> > Psicologia p = 0,045 (***)		
Atenção prestada a informação sobre a FAP	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	4,64	2,093	0	8	3,342	0,039(***)	Eng. <sup>a</sup> > Design p = 0,049 (***)	1,118	0,331(**)
	Design	25	3,40	1,780	0	6					
	Psicologia	39	3,74	2,233	0	7					
	Total	106	4,02	2,125	0	8					

(\*) HSD (honestly significant difference) Tukey test in case of homoscedasticity.

(\*\*) The Levene test is not significant ( $p>0,05$ ), from which homoscedasticity can be inferred.

(\*\*\*) The mean difference is significant ( $p\leq 0,05$ )

(Source: Prepared by the author).

Q2: *Attention engaged by information about the PrtAF.* Statistically significant differences were observed (Table II) between the mean values of Engineering and Design students ( $t=3,342, p<0,05$ ), with the former presenting higher mean values compared to the others: [ $M_{Eng.}=4,64; SD=2,093$ ] e [ $M_{Design}=3,40; SD=1,780$ ].

*Hypothesis testing.* The data obtained **validate** (95.3% agreement) and **confirm H1a: The existence of news about the Air Force engages the attention of civil society**, and that attention is engaged ( $3,40\leq M\leq 4,64$ ) moderately.

Q3: *Attention engaged by the news according to the type of media.* The type of media that, although moderately, aroused greater interest (Table III), was television, namely *Major news reports* ( $M=4,95; SD=2,796$ ) and *Daily news programmes* ( $M=4,49; SD=2,572$ ). Among written media (Table III), with weak mean values, greater interest was aroused by *Daily newspapers* ( $M=2,70; SD=2,187$ ) and, from the three types of digital media, by *Facebook* ( $M=2,32; SD=2,332$ ).

Table III – Statistical data relating to the interest (attention) raised by the different media

	M	DP	F1	F2
Grandes reportagens	4,95	2,796	0,842	
Telejornais	4,49	2,572	0,919	
Anúncios publicitários	3,25	2,555	0,539	0,584
Revistas	2,77	2,331	0,729	
Jornais diários	2,70	2,187	0,704	
Jornais semanários	2,37	2,099	0,636	
Facebook	2,32	2,332		0,814
Site oficial FAP	1,81	2,136		0,878
Twitter	1,34	2,013		0,897

(Source: Prepared by the author)

In order to ascertain the existence of commonalities among these nine types of media, an exploratory factor analysis was performed (EFA), made possible by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO) of 0.791 and a value of  $\chi^2(36)=818,690, p<0,0001$  in Bartlett's sphericity test. Using principal component extraction (PCA) and Varimax rotation method, the EFA yielded a 2-factor solution that covered 74.856% of the total variance (F1=38,454%; F2=36,402%), namely (Table III): F1, henceforth referred to as "televised and written media"<sup>11</sup>, which includes *Daily newspapers, Weekly newspapers, Magazines, Daily news programmes* and *Major news reports*; and F2, henceforth identified as "Digital media", comprising *Official PrtAF website, Facebook* and *Twitter*. *Commercials* showed very similar factor loadings on both factors (marked in italics in Table III), which led to the removal of this indicator.

F1 (Table IV) was the only factor that showed a statistically significant mean difference ( $F=4,010, p<0,05$ ) among Engineering and Design students [( $M_{Eng.}=4,11; SD=1,817$ ); ( $M_{Design}=2,88; SD=1,993$ )].

Table IV – Statistical data relating to the interest (attention) raised by Type of media.

Fator	Grupo	n	M	DP	Mínimo	Máximo	ANOVA		Post Hoc (*)	Homocedasticidade	
							F	p		Levene	p
F1	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	4,114	1,817	0	9,0	<b>4,010</b>	<b>0,021(**)</b>	Eng. <sup>a</sup> > Design $p = 0,014 (**)$	1,168	0,315(****)
	Design	25	2,880	1,993	0	6,0					
	Psicologia	39	3,118	2,095	0	6,0					
	Total	106	3,457	2,020	0	9,0					
F2	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	2,135	1,841	0	8,2	1,227	0,297(***)	Eng. <sup>a</sup> > Psicologia $p = 0,025 (**)$	1,171	0,314(****)
	Design	25	1,353	1,721	0	6,0					
	Psicologia	39	1,889	2,259	0	7,4					
	Total	106	1,860	1,984	0	8,2					

(\*) Teste Tukey HSD (*honestly significant difference*) em caso de homocedasticidade.

(\*\*) A diferença das médias é significativa ( $p \leq 0,05$ ).

(\*\*\*) A diferença das médias não é significativa ( $p > 0,05$ ).

(\*\*\*\*) O teste de Levene não é significativo ( $p > 0,05$ ), de onde se conclui existir homocedasticidade.

(Source: Prepared by the author)

<sup>11</sup> Nomenclature assigned by the author for the purposes of this study, based on a content analysis of the indicators that comprise the factors.

As can be seen in Table V, the greater level of interest aroused by *Televised and written media* (F1: M=3,46; SD=2,020) compared to *Digital media* (F2: M=1,86; SD=1,984) - respectively, moderate versus weak - proved to be statistically significant ( $t=9,100, p<0,0001$ ).

**Table V-** Statistical data (for paired samples) relating to *Media*

Emparelhamento		n	M	DP	Teste <i>t-student</i> (*)	
					t	p
Par	F1 e	106	3,46	2,020	9,100	0,000(**)
	F2		1,86	1,984		

(\*) 105 d.f.

(\*\*) The mean difference is significant ( $p \leq 0,05$ )

(Source: Prepared by the author)

*Hypothesis testing.* The data obtained **validate** (95.3% agreement) and **confirm H1b: The type of media through which news about the PrtAF is transmitted arouses a different level of interest in civil society**, and the level of attention engaged is moderate for *Televised and written media* (with the exception of Design students,  $M=2,88$ ) and weak for *Digital media* ( $1,35 \leq M \leq 2,14$ ).

*Derivative question testing.* Based on the analysis performed, the validation and the confirmation of the two hypotheses raised, it can be concluded, in response to DQ1: Do news stories about the PrtAF engage the attention of civil society? -, that the existence of news stories about the PrtAF and the type of media used engages a different level of attention (moderate and weak) among the three groups under analysis ( $n=106$ ). The type of media that, although never rising above moderate level, engaged the most attention was televised and written media (in descending order: *Major news reports, Daily news programmes, Magazines, Daily newspapers* and *weekly newspapers*), over digital media (in descending order: *Facebook, Official PrtAF website* and *Twitter*).

**Perceived usefulness.** Concept studied through Q7 and Q8, and Q4.

Q7/Q8: *Perceived importance of the PrtAF to Portugal - baseline level* (Q7) and *news content/connotation* (Q8). In the baseline<sup>12</sup> phase (Table VI), the perceived importance by respondents was high ( $M=7,66; SD=1,718$ ), with the mean values of the three groups of students - statistically not different ( $F=1,831, p>0,05$ ) - varying between "very high" ( $M_{Design}=8,20$ ) and "high" ( $M_{Engineering}=7,38$ ).

<sup>12</sup> The baseline phase corresponds to the answers given at the first "neutral" moment, as opposed to those given after reading two news stories.

Table VI- Statistical data relating to the Perceived importance of the PrtAF to Portugal.

Variável	Grupo	n	M	DP	Mínimo	Máximo	ANOVA		Homocedasticidade		
							F	p	Levene	p	
<i>Baseline</i>	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	7,38	1,529	2	10	1,831	0,165(**)	0,930	0,413(*)	
	<i>Design</i>	25	8,20	1,607	5	10					
	Psicologia	39	7,62	1,928	2	10					
	Total	106	7,66	1,718	2	10					
1. <sup>a</sup> notícia	Positiva	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	6,98	1,880	0	10	2,330	0,102(**)	1,118	0,829(*)
		<i>Design</i>	25	7,92	1,681	4	10				
		Psicologia	39	7,64	1,980	1	10				
		Total	106	7,44	1,898	0	10				
	Negativa	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	6,17	2,470	0	10	0,035	0,965(**)	1,118	0,856(*)
		<i>Design</i>	25	6,00	2,533	1	10				
		Psicologia	39	6,08	2,599	0	10				
		Total	106	6,09	2,513	0	10				

(\*)The Levene test is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), from which homoscedasticity can be inferred.

(\*\*) The mean difference is not significant ( $p>0.05$ )

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Comparing the baseline and post-news presentation phases (Table VI), there was a decrease in the majority of mean values. This decrease, while not falling below “high” level (Table VII), is statistically significant in: Pair2( $F=7,045, p<0,001$ ), baseline( $M=7,66; SD=1,718$ ) versus Not.Negat.( $M=6,09; SD=2,513$ ); Pair3( $F=5,725, p<0,0001$ ), Not.Posit( $M=7,44; SD=1,898$ ) versus Not.Negat..

Table VII – Statistical data(for paired samples) relating to the Perceived importance of the PrtAF to Portugal, depending on the order of presentation of the news stories.

Emparelhamentos	n	M	DP	Teste t-student (*)	
				t	p
Par1: <i>Baseline e</i>	106	7,66	1,718	1,471	0,144(**)
Not.Positiva		7,44	1,898		
Par2: <i>Baseline e</i>	106	7,66	1,718	7,045	0,000(***)
Not.Negativa		6,09	2,513		
Par3: Not.Positiva e	106	7,44	1,898	5,725	0,000(***)
Not.Negativa		6,09	2,513		

(\*) 105 d.f.

(\*\*) The mean difference is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

(\*\*\*) The mean difference is significant ( $p\leq 0.05$ ).

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Impact of the order of presentation of the news stories (positive and negative).

The assessment of a possible order related effect was carried out using Student's t-test, by comparing the ratings assigned to Not.Posit. (Q8a) between the group who read the positive story first (Gr.Positive-Negative) and the group who read it second (Gr.Negative-Positive). The same procedure was performed with Not.Negat. (Q8b). In these analyses (Table VIII), there were no statistically significant differences between the mean values of the two groups [ $(t_{Q8a}=0,210, p>0,05)$ ;  $(t_{Q8b}=-0,161, p>0,05)$ ]. In other words, the assessment of each of the two news stories proved independent of their order of presentation.

**Table VIII – Statistical data relating to the *Perceived importance of the PrtAF to Portugal*, depending on the order of presentation of the news stories.**

Variável	Grupo	n	M	DP	Teste t-student (*)		Homocedasticidade	
					t	p	Levene	p
Q8a_Not.Positiva	Gr.Positivo-Negativo	54	7,48	1,861	0,210	0,834(**)	0,751	0,388(***)
	Gr.Negativo-Positivo	52	7,40	1,953				
Q8b_Not.Negativa	Gr.Positivo-Negativo	54	6,06	2,702	-0,161	0,872(**)	1,553	0,215 (***)
	Gr.Negativo-Positivo	52	6,13	2,327				

(\*) 104 d.f.

(\*\*) The mean difference is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

(\*\*\*) The Levene test is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), from which homoscedasticity can be inferred.

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Q4: *Perceived interest to Portugal of the different operational missions carried out by the PrtAF.* Ten of the 12 operational missions carried out by the PrtAF were, on average, perceived by 106 respondents as having “high” and “very high” usefulness to Portugal, with the exception (classified as having moderate usefulness) of *Open Base Days* and of the *NDD*. In terms of the three dimensions (Table 1), *Other public interest missions*, and specifically *Search and Rescue* ( $M=8,93;SD=1,311$ ), was the dimension that registered a higher mean value (Tabela IX), followed by *International engagement* (with greater expression for *Int.Human.Aid*,  $M=8,50;SD=1,675$ ) and *Military defence of the Republic* (namely, *AirDefen*,  $M=7,41;SD=2,559$ ).

Table IX –Statistical data relating to the perceived usefulness of the different operational missions.

	M	DP	F1	F2
Busca e salvamento	8,93	1,311	0,780	
Transporte de órgãos	8,60	1,870	0,886	
Ajuda humanitária no exterior	8,50	1,675	0,712	
Evacuações aero-médicas	8,11	1,977	0,692	
Colaboração em actividades de protecção civil	8,09	1,969	0,681	
Operações de paz no exterior	7,90	2,192	0,565	
Defesa aérea	7,41	2,559		0,658
Apoio à Autoridade Aeronáutica no “policimento” aéreo	7,17	2,513		0,694
Formação técnica	6,73	2,167		0,826
Formação cívica	6,65	2,191		0,860
Dia de Base aberta à Comunidade	5,28	2,491		0,841
Dia da Defesa Nacional	4,88	2,838		0,825

(Source: Prepared by the author)

From the *public interest missions* perceived as having high usefulness [( $M_{F1}=6,73;SD=2,167$ );( $M_{FC}=6,65;SD=2,191$ )], *Technical* and *Civic education* (Table IX) were rated at the lower end of this range.

In order to ascertain the presence of commonalities among these 12 missions, an EFA was conducted, made possible by a  $KMO=0.784$  and a value of  $\chi^2(66)=883,605,p<0,0001$  in Bartlett’s sphericity test. Using PCA and Varimax rotation methods, the EFA yielded a 2-factor solution that explained 64.059% of the total variance (F1=34,539%; F2=29,520%), namely (Table IX): F1, henceforth referred to as “Immediate operational missions”<sup>13</sup>, including: *Search and rescue, Organ transport, Collaboration on civil protection activities, Aero-medical evacuations, Peace operations and International humanitarian aid operations*; and F2, henceforth referred to as “non-immediate operational missions”, comprising: *ND Days and Open Base Days, Technical and Civiceducation, AirspaceDefence and Air “policing” activities*.

Concerning these two factors, no statistically significant differences were found between the mean values obtained in each of the three groups (Table X).

TableX – Statistical data relating to theType of operational mission.

Fator	Grupo	n	M	DP	Mínimo	Máximo	ANOVA		Homocedasticidade	
							F	p	Levene	p
F1	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	8,112	1,238	5,33	10	1,273	0,284(*)	1,409	0,249(**)
	Design	25	8,417	1,480	5,00	10				
	Psicologia	39	8,590	1,238	5,00	10				
	Total	106	8,360	1,366	5,00	10				
F2	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	6,766	1,650	2,33	10	1,564	0,214(*)	2,816	0,064(**)
	Design	25	6,160	2,060	2,67	9,50				
	Psicologia	39	6,030	2,219	1	9,67				
	Total	106	6,352	1,982	1	10				

(\*) The mean difference is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).(\*\*)The Levene test is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), from which homoscedasticity can be inferred.

(Source: Prepared by the author)

<sup>13</sup> Nomenclature assigned by the author for the purposes of this study, based on a content analysis of the indicators that comprise the factors.

In terms of intraindividual analysis (Table XI), the greater perceived usefulness of the following proved to be statistically significant:

- *Immediate operational missions* (M=8,36;SD=1,366) compared to *non-immediate* (M=6,35;SD=1,982) ( $t_{Par1}=11,466, p<0,0001$ );
- *Immediate operational missions* (M=8,36;SD=1,366) compared to *Baseline* assessment (M=7,66;SD=1,718) ( $t_{Par2}=-4,308, p<0,0001$ );
- *Baseline* assessment (M=7,66;SD=1,718) compared to *Non-immediate operational missions* (F2:M=6,35;SD=1,982) ( $t_{Par3}=9,127, p<0,0001$ ).

**TableXI – Statistical data (for paired samples) relating to the Type of operational mission.**

Emparelhamento	n	M	DP	Teste <i>t-student</i> (*)	
				t	p
Par1 F1 e	106	8,36	1,366	<b>11,466</b>	<b>0,000(**)</b>
F2		6,35	1,982		
Par2 <i>Baseline</i> e	106	7,66	1,718	<b>-4,308</b>	<b>0,000(**)</b>
F1		8,36	1,366		
Par3 <i>Baseline</i> e	106	7,66	1,718	<b>9,127</b>	<b>0,000(**)</b>
F2		6,35	1,982		

(\*) 105 d.f.

(\*\*) The mean difference is significant ( $p\leq 0,05$ )

(Source: Prepared by the author)

*Hypothesis testing.* The data obtained **validate** (100% agreement) **and confirm H2: The perceived usefulness of the PrtAF to Portuguese civil society, varies according to the type of operational mission performed and divulged**, from “very high” (*Immediate operational missions*) to “high” (*baseline phase and Non-immediate operational missions*), or “moderate”, considering the missions per se ( $M_{OpenBas}=5,28$ ;  $M_{NDD}=4,88$ ).

*Derivative question testing.* Based on the analysis performed, the validation and the confirmation of the proposed hypothesis, in can be concluded, in response to **DQ2: Does the perceived usefulness of the PrtAF in Portuguese civil society vary according to the type of operational mission accomplished and divulged?** -, that the 106 respondents perceive the PrtAF as a useful institution for Portugal. An appreciation that, on average, varied depending on the operational mission divulged, from “very high” - for immediate missions developed in the national (*Search and Rescue, Organ transport, etc.*) and international (*International humanitarian aid, among others*) contexts - to “moderate” with regard to non-immediate missions. Among the six missions grouped in the non-immediate factor, the highest mean values were in *Airspace Defence and Support to the National Aviation Authority in air “policing” activities*.

It is noteworthy that the perceived usefulness never dropped below high levels, despite: the positive news and negative news having been perceived as such; a certain oscillation between the mean values registered at “zero” (baseline) and “one” (where the presentation of negative news caused a slight decrease in mean values) moments.

**Continuity.** Analysed through Q5.

Q5: *Significance of the date of issue of the news versus impact of the title/content on the choice of reading.* The impact of the title/content ( $M_{\text{Total}}=7,81;SD=1,651$ ) relative to the date of issue ( $M_{\text{Total}}=4,98;SD=2,760$ ) was the reason most chosen by respondents when deciding to read, or not, a given online news story (Table XII).

**Table XII – Statistical data relating to *Choice of information* by degree.**

Variável	Grupo	n	M	DP	Mínimo	Máximo	ANOVA		Brown-Forsythe (**)		Homocedasticidade	
							F	p	F	p	Levene	p
Data de edição	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	5,36	2,162	0	10	2,025	0,137(*)	82,822	0,146	3,918	0,023
	Design	25	5,44	2,844	0	10						
	Psicologia	39	4,28	3,178	0	10						
	Total	106	4,98	2,760	0	10						
Impacto do título	Eng. <sup>a</sup>	42	7,52	1,502	5	10	1,068	0,347(*)		0,037	0,964	(****)
	Design	25	7,96	1,645	5	10						
	Psicologia	39	8,03	1,799	1	10						
	Total	106	7,81	1,651	1	10						

(\*) The mean difference is not significant ( $p>0.05$ )

(\*\*) As heteroscedasticity was verified, a Brown-Forsythe test was calculated.

(\*\*\*) The Brown-Forsythe test is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), from which homoscedasticity can be inferred.

(\*\*\*\*) The Levene test is significant ( $p\leq 0.05$ ), from which heteroscedasticity can be inferred.

(\*\*\*\*\*) The Levene test is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), from which heteroscedasticity can be inferred.

(Source: Prepared by the author)

The preference for *Impact* rather than *Date* (Table XIII) proved to be statistically significant ( $t=-9,622, p<0,0001$ ).

**Table XIII – Statistical data (for paired samples) relating to the *Choice of information*.**

Emparelhamento	n	M	DP	Teste <i>t-student</i> (*)	
				t	p
Par Data de edição e Impacto título/conteúdo	106	4,98	2,760	<b>-9,622</b>	<b>0,000(**)</b>
		7,81	1,651		

(\*) 105 d.f.

(\*\*) The mean difference is significant ( $\leq 0.05$ )

(Source: Prepared by the author)

*Hypothesis testing.* Considering that 76.4% of the participants elected “impact of title/content” (7.6% answered “date of issue” and 16% chose both), and that this value does not meet the established criteria of 80% agreement for acceptance, the hypothesis was neither accepted nor rejected – **H3 could not be validated**. It was concluded that, in spite of the “high” mean values for *Impact* (M=7,81) when compared to “moderate” for *Date* (M=4,98), it cannot be said whether online information about the PrtAF is consulted with some degree of continuity after being published, depending on the impact of title/content. Or, in other words, one of the great arguments for having information available online cannot be confirmed, the argument that once information is accessible, it continues being accessed over time.

**Cumulative effect.** Analysed through Q6.

Q6: Type of thoughts brought on by a news story on a new mission accomplished by the PrtAF. In accordance with the foundational heuristics, the majority of respondents - 88.6% of 106 participants (Figure 1), or, in an intragroup analysis (Figure 2): 95.8% of Design students, 87.2 % of Psychology students and 85.7% of Engineering students - when presented with a news story on a mission newly accomplished by the military personnel of the PrtAF, feel/think that *The PrtAF is an asset for Portugal over They did no more than their duty*.

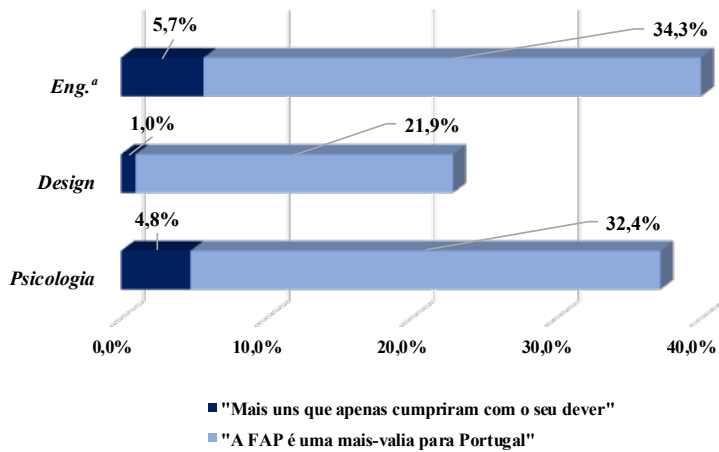


Figure 1 – Cumulative effect (intragroup frequency count percentages)

(Source: Prepared by the author)

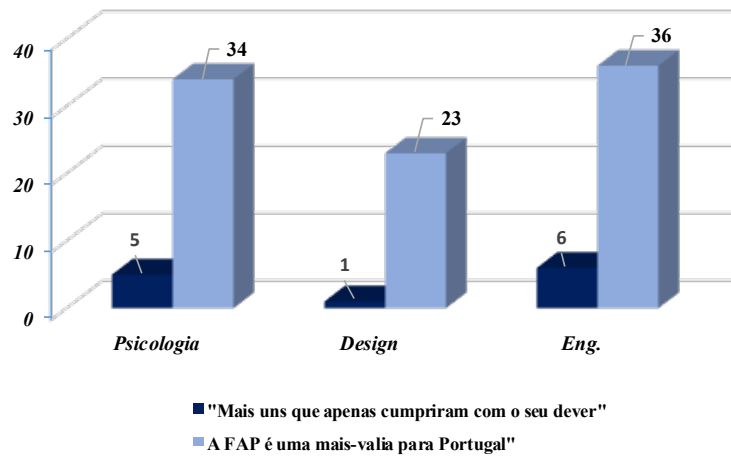


Figure 2 – Cumulative effect (intergroup frequency count)

(Source: Prepared by the author)

*Hypothesis testing.* The data obtained **validate** (88.6% agreement) **and confirm H4:** A cumulative effect of information about the PrtAF is perceived positively in Portuguese civil society.

*Derivative question testing.* Based on the analysis performed, the validation and confirmation of the hypothesis raised, it can be concluded, in response to **DQ4: Is a cumulative effect of information about the PrtAF perceived positively in Portuguese civil society?** -, that, for the majority of the inquired section of society, the frequent, or successive presentation of news stories about newly accomplished missions by the military personnel of the PrtAFis perceived as one more demonstration of how this branch of the FFAAis an asset for Portugal. Which, seen from another perspective, reflects the positive way in which the majority of respondents perceived the cumulative effect of divulging news stories on operational missions newly accomplished by the PrtAF.

**Integrated analysis.** The integrated analysis of the data collected is based, essentially, on the study of Pearson's correlations ( $r$ ), with 37 significant correlations found ( $\alpha=0,01$  e  $\alpha=0,05$ ), with "strong" to "moderate" levels, among which are worth mentioning:

- *Engaging attention*, measured by Q2, and: televised and written media ( $Q3_{F1}:r=0,708,p<0,0001$ ) and digital media ( $Q3_{F2}:r=0,401,p<0,0001$ ); non-immediate operational missions ( $Q4_{F2}:r=0,382,p<0,0001$ ); and degree of knowledge about the PrtAF ( $Q1:r=0,365,p<0,0001$ );
- *Perceived usefulness*, measured by Q7 and: televised and written media ( $Q3_{F1}:r=0,382,p<0,01$ ); immediate ( $Q4_{F1}:r=0,431,p<0,0001$ ) and non-immediate ( $Q4_{F2}:r=0,690,p<0,0001$ ) operational missions; and the feeling that the PrtAF is an

asset for Portugal when presented with a news story about a newly accomplished mission ( $Q6:r=0,363,p<0,0001$ );

- *Cumulative effect*, measured by  $Q6$ , and non-immediate missions ( $Q4_{F2}:r=0,302,p<0,01$ ).

### c. Discussion of results

This discussion of results is organized in accordance with the four DQ, and with the corresponding concepts (below each DQ, underlined) -, based on the analysis of the data collected in this investigation, on the defined heuristics and criteria and on the heterogeneity of the three groups, operationalized in the heuristic *Degree of knowledge about the PrtAF* (ranked between “weak” and “moderate”;  $,24 \leq M_{Q1} \leq 4,10$ ), supplemented, wherever possible, by a comparative study of these data and of data resulting from other research work – and, finally, with the answer to the SQ.

*DQ1: Do news stories about the PrtAF engage the attention of civil society?* Statistically significant differences were noted in the mean values of *Attention engaged by information about the PrtAF* ( $Q2$ ), and it was concluded that, for the section of civil society under analysis, news stories about the PrtAF engaged a moderate level of attention ( $3,40 \leq M_{Q2} \leq 4,64$ ).

This moderate level of attention also proved to vary depending on *Type of media used* ( $Q3$ ). From the nine types of media analysed, the one that, on average, was chosen as raising greater interest was *Televised media*, especially *Major news reports* ( $M=4,95;SD=2,796$ ) and *Daily news programmes* ( $M=4,49;SD=2,572$ ). *Written media* came in second place – mostly *Magazines* ( $M=2,77;SD=2,331$ ) and *Daily newspapers* ( $M=2,70;SD=2,187$ ) – and, finally, *Digital media*, primarily *Facebook* ( $M=2,32;SD=2,332$ ).

The EFA performed yielded a 2-factor solution: F1, “Televised and written media”, which included *Daily newspapers*, *Weekly newspapers*, *Magazines*, and *Major news reports*; and F2, “Digital Media”, which included *Official PrtAF website*, *Facebook* and *Twitter*. F1 was the only factor that showed statistically significant differences between the means of some students, and the factor that, on average, aroused greater attention [F1 ( $M=3,46;SD=2,020$ ); F2 ( $M=1,86;SD=1,984$ )].

Compared with data from other investigations, the mean values registered in this research, when confronted with those obtained by Carreiras (2009, p. 5), present as equally “moderate” for  $Q1(M_{III}=3,26$  versus  $M_{Carreiras}=3,80$ ),  $Q2(M_{III}=4,02$  versus  $M_{Carreiras}=5,11$ ) and  $Q3F1(M_{III}=3,46$  versus  $M_{Carreiras}=5,11$ ).  $Q3F2(M_{III}=1,86$ ) behaved differently, rating a “weak” level in this research. In agreement with Mineiro (2010, pp. 20-21; 2014) it was demonstrated that, among digital media, *Facebook* and *Twitter* rated, albeit with a “weak” level of interest raised, at the upper and lower ends of this range, respectively.

*DQ2: Does the perceived usefulness of the PrtAF in Portuguese civil society vary depending on the type of operational mission accomplished and divulged?* In the “neutral” baseline phase ( $Q7$ ), the 106 respondents unanimously considered that the PrtAF has a very positive (“high”

and “very high”) importance for Portugal ( $7,38 \leq M_{Q7} \leq 8,20$ ). A view also shared when confronted with two news stories with different connotations, namely: positive, “F16 airplane captures suspicious aircraft” ( $6,98 \leq M_{Q8} \leq 7,92$ ); negative, “Military mission accomplished in Cape Verde resort” ( $6,00 \leq M_{Q8} \leq 6,17$ ). The order in which the news stories (positive and negative) were presented did not prove to be a factor with significant impact on perceived usefulness (i.e., the positive news was always seen as such, regardless of having been presented before or after the negative news story, and vice versa), however the same did not occur with the different connotations. Therefore, despite the three mean values with a “high” level, the impact of the negative news story ( $M=6,09; SD=2,513$ ) proved to be significantly lower than the baseline phase ( $M=7,66; SD=1,718$ ) and the positive news story ( $M=7,44; SD=1,898$ ). In other words, the existence of a negative news story contributed to a significant decrease in the perceived usefulness of the PrtAF to Portugal, which still did not drop from a “high” level ( $M_{Neg.News}$  located on the lower parameter of [6.8]).

When associated with different operational missions, this degree of perceived usefulness showed some fluctuations (Q4). Thus, among the 12 analysed operational missions, the one that, on average, was perceived as having “very high” usefulness was *Search and rescue* ( $M=8,93; SD=1,311$ ), among *Other public-interest missions* (in light of the official PrtAF typology, CEMFA, 2013). In second place, with “very high” and “high” usefulness, emerged *International engagement*, with greater emphasis on *International humanitarian aid* ( $M=8,50; SD=1,675$ ) and, finally, with “high” usefulness, *Military defence of the Republic*, with particular emphasis on *Airspace Defence* ( $M=7,41; SD=2,559$ ). The only missions perceived as moderately useful were *Open base days* ( $M=5,28; SD=2,491$ ) and *NDD* ( $M=4,88; SD=2,838$ ), the latter mission being, of the 12 missions listed, perhaps the one in which the PrtAF has a smaller share of responsibility, either in design or conduction.

The EFA performed yielded a two-factor solution: F1, “Immediate operational missions”, including *Search and rescue*, *Organ transport*, *Collaboration on civil protection activities*, *Aero-medical evacuations*, *International peace operations* and *International humanitarian aid*; and F2, “non-immediate operational missions”, including *ND Day* and *OB Day*, *Technical* and *Civiceducation*, *Airspace defence* and *Air “Policing”*. These two factors differed in a statistically significant manner in the mean values of perceived usefulness, between “very high” ( $M_{Q4F1}=8,36; SD=1,366$ ) and “high” ( $M_{Q4F2}=6,35; SD=1,982$ ). The average values of perceived usefulness in the baseline phase ( $M_{Q7}=7,66; SD=1,718$ ) were found to be between F1 and F2.

The behaviours registered here by the variables tend to agree with the data from other investigations, specifically: Carreiras (2009a, p. 5), on the “high” importance of the FFAA for National Defence and on the trust placed by the public on the MI; Pereira (2011), concerning the “very positive” and “positive” image of the MI (pp. 85; 87) and the importance of the existence of FFAA to respond to the country’s security needs (pp. 88-90.); Vaz (2009, pp. 14-15), about the prestige of the military profession and the PrtAF. The appreciation of the “high” contribution of the technical ( $M_{TII}=6,73; M_{Carreiras}=7,80$ ) and civic education ( $M_{TII}=6,65; M_{Carreiras}=7,72$ ) provided by the PrtAF is in agreement with the results obtained by Carreiras (2009a, p. 8).

DQ3: Is the information on the PrtAF available online consulted with some continuity after being published? The continuity analysis was performed based on the heuristics of *Impact of title/content of the news story over Date of issue* (Q5). A heuristic that, although statistically significant in terms of mean differences ( $t=-9,622, p<0,0001$ ), was not possible to validate, as it only garnered agreement from 76.4% of respondents (a value below the 80% agreement criteria established for validation/acceptance of hypotheses).

DQ4: Is a cumulative effect of information on the PrtAF perceived positively by Portuguese civil society? This study was conducted using the heuristics associated with Q6, the prevalence of the feeling that *The PrtAF is an asset for Portugal over They did no more than their duty*, validated and confirmed by 86.6% of the respondents in this research.

Response to the **SQ**: How is information linked to the perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the role of the PrtAF? Based on the evidence reviewed here, it was concluded that, for the section of the sample of Portuguese civil society under analysis, perceptions are associated with information through:

- (1) The ability to **engage the attention** of Portuguese civil society to the reality of the PrtAF, and it was found beneficial to use:
  - (a) Different types of media, mainly televised (especially *Major newsreports* and *Daily news programmes*) and written (especially *Magazines* and *Daily newspapers*) media;
  - (b) The dissemination of relevant content, which will enable the increase of the “weak” to “moderate” levels of knowledge about the PrtAF and/or address gaps in the way civil society understands the military environment (which is also in accordance with Albritton, 2009, p. 15).
- (2) The **perceived usefulness** of the PrtAF to Portugal, either as a whole (“high” level) or in association with:
  - (a) The type of operational mission accomplished and divulged, with priority to immediate operational missions, perceived as having “very high” and “high” usefulness (case of *Search and rescue*, *Organ transport* and *International humanitarian aid*, among others), followed by non-immediate missions, perceived as having “high” usefulness (particularly *Airspace defence* and *Support to the National Aviation Authority in air “policing” activities.*);
  - (b) Content/connotations of the news stories, with a negative content/connotation-contributing to a significant devaluation of usefulness without, however, dropping below “high” level.
- (3) The **cumulative effect** of the successive or frequent release of news stories about missions newly accomplished by the military personnel of the PrtAF. An effect felt as positive, as it induced thoughts like “*The PrtAF is an asset for Portugal.*”

The diagram in Figure 1 depicts the answer to the SQ in light of the four tested premises (one is marked “x” because it could not be validated) on the (heterogeneous) section of civil society under analysis.

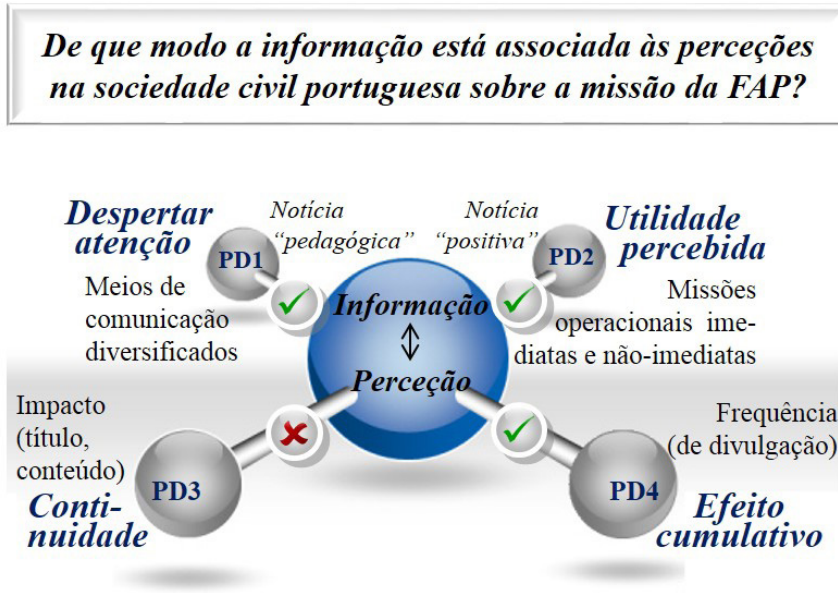


Figure1 – Diagram representation of the answer to the starting question

(Source: Prepared by the author based on the results discussed).

## Conclusions and Practical Implications

*"The moment I managed to find all the answers, all the questions changed."*

Coelho (s.d.)

In order to better understand the *Perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the PrtAF* - reflected in the SQ: *How is information linked to the perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the role of the PrtAF?* -, this study was based on the Method for Research in Social Sciences created by Raymond Quivy and Luc Van Campenhoudt in accordance with the method proposed by IESM (2012a; 2012b) (Quivy et al., 1998).

This purpose has been structured into the three chapters of this article.

Chapter 1, *Contextualization of the issue*, mainly intended, through a literature review, to present and circumscribe the topic of this research. Thus, a few brief considerations were listed, concerning: the construction of perceptions/images; the binomial "organization and communication"; the action of media communication on public opinion; and, for all the aforementioned, it is imperative that the communication transmitted by the PrtAF be sensitive

the purposes of engaging attention and transmitting information that serves as the catalyst for a proper understanding by civil society of the reason of being of the military environment.

Chapter 2, *Characterization of the perceptions of Portuguese civil society about the Air Force*, focused on: (a) the substantiation of the set of issues researched, anchored primarily in the research by Carreiras (2009a; 2009b) - complemented by Pereira (2011) and Vaz (2009) -, pertaining to the study of the perceptions of the Portuguese public on issues of Defence and the Armed Forces, and Mineiro (2010), regarding the use of social networks in the PrtAF; (b) presentation of the research model and the resulting conceptual map.

Chapter 3, *Presentation of the study, data analysis and discussion of the results*, focused on the organization of inputs, on hypotheses testing, on structuring the products found and on answering the SQ. For that purpose, a questionnaire was applied to a sample of 106 students - from the Mechanical Engineering degree at ISEL; from the Integrated Masters Programme in Psychology at FPUL; from the Design (Fashion) degree at FAUL - aged between 18 and 23 years, mostly coming from and living in the NUTS II region of Lisbon. A data analysis was performed, using the SPSS 21.0 software, which allowed us to examine the H and answer the four DQ. Briefly, for this section of civil society under analysis, and after validating the heuristics of the heterogeneity of the three groups of respondents, who reported "weak" to "moderate" knowledge about the PrtAF:

*DQ1: Do news stories about the PrtAF engage the attention of civil society?* It was concluded that the three groups of respondents had their attention engaged (albeit "moderately") by the presence of news about the PrtAF. In descending order of preference, written and televised media engaged attention levels between "moderate" (*Major news reports and Daily news programmes*) and "weak" (*Magazines, Daily newspapers and Weekly newspapers*). While the attention engaged by digital media (*Facebook, official PrtAF website and Twitter*) rated only as "weak", as expected by Mineiro (2014), as the age group who accesses the PrtAF Facebook page ranges between 34 and 47 years of age.

*DQ2: Does the perceived usefulness of the PrtAF in Portuguese civil society vary depending on the type of operational mission accomplished and divulged?* It was concluded that the usefulness of the PrtAF and of their missions is mainly perceived as "very high" to "high". The connotations (positive or negative) of the news stories and the type of operational mission accomplished and divulged revealed an important role in that perceived usefulness. Regarding connotation: the positive news story on the PrtAF was always seen as positive, regardless of the order in which it was presented (before or after the negative news story); and the negative news story contributed to a decrease in the mean values of perceived usefulness of the PrtAF to Portugal, remaining, however, at a "high" level. As for operational missions, and also in descending order of preference, priority was given to immediate missions, perceived as having "very high" and "high" usefulness (*Search and rescue, Organ transport, International humanitarian aid, Aero-medical evacuations, Collaboration in civil protection activities and International peace operations*), compared to non-immediate missions, perceived as having "high" to "moderate" usefulness (*Airspace Defence, Support to the National Aviation Authority*

in air “policing” activities, Technical and Civic education and, at the moderate level, Open Base Days and ND Day).

DQ3: *Is the information on the PrtAF available online consulted with some continuity after being published?* It was not possible to affirm whether there was a prevalence of impact of the title/content over date of issue of the news, because failure to comply with the criterion of a minimum 80% agreement for acceptance of the hypotheses prevented the validation of H3.

DQ4: *Is a cumulative effect of information on the PrtAF perceived positively by Portuguese civil society?* It was concluded that the dissemination of news about missions newly accomplished by the military personnel of the PrtAF was perceived positively by the respondents because it was seen as consolidation/proof of the opinion that “*The PrtAF is an asset for Portugal.*”

From the analysis conducted, and to answer the SQ, it was demonstrated that information is associated with the perceptions of the section of civil society under analysis about the PrtAF, depending on the ability of this branch of the FFAA to engage attention and the perceived usefulness both of its existence (as a branch) and of the operational missions it has accomplished and divulged. Furthermore, the frequent dissemination of news about newly accomplished missions tends to have a cumulative effect, felt as very positive. These evidences proved to be more enhanced depending on the type of media used, the type of operational mission accomplished and the content/connotation - neutral, positive or negative - of published news stories. The availability of knowledge about the military reality proved to be a further contribution in engaging public attention concerning the MI.

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