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STRATEGIES OF SELLING FOCUSED ON BEEKEEPING IN RONDÔNIA, BRAZILIAN AMAZON FOREST



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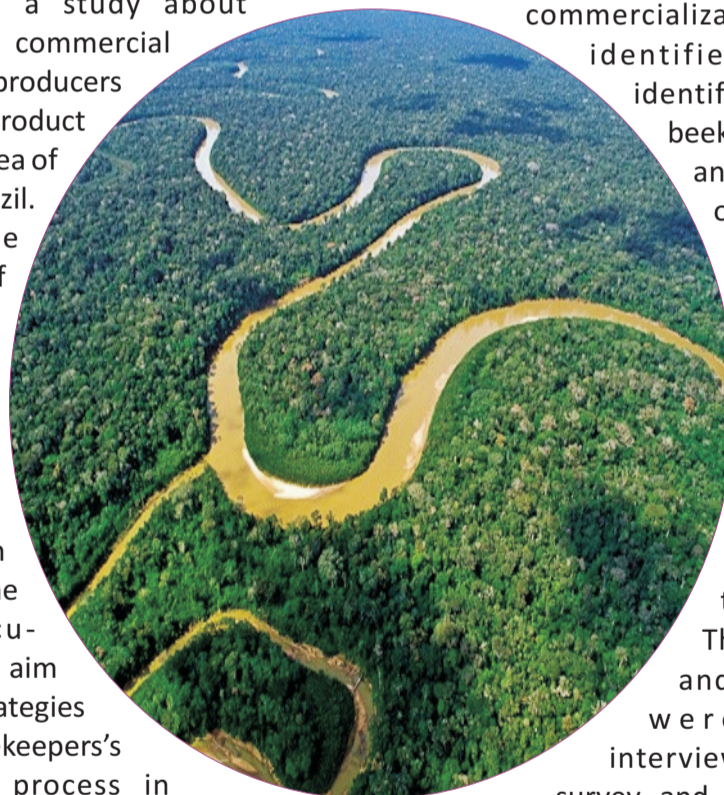
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ABSTRACT:

This paper is a study about formation of commercial strategies by producers of honey and its sub product from the Southern area of Rondônia State in Brazil. This region is the leading producer of honey and honey by-products in Rondônia State. This study was based on the theory of the strategic formation dimensions, which was adapted to the agribusiness peculiarities. This paper's aim is to identify the strategies that affect the beekeepers' commercialization process in Southern Rondônia. To reach the expected results, (1) the commercialization strategies developed by the studied region's apiculturists were typified; (2) the major factors



that influenced the region beekeepers' commercialization process were identified, and (3) it was identified how the region's beekeepers join together and relate with each other for improving the honey and its derivatives commercialization. The case study method was used, and it was adopted the required proceedings, like a sample taken out of 72,2% of the producers' total. The data triangulation and cross-verification were gotten from interviews, documentation survey and intensive and direct observation of the beekeepers action, which met the theoretical reference structure and made it possible to investigate the commercialization problems the apiculturists

were going through. As a tool of quali and quantitative data analysis it was adopted the software Sphinx Survey – Lexical Edition. Besides the strategies, the study focuses on twenty-three analysis elements that are influential in the strategical formation process.

KEY WORDS: Smallholder farming. Agribusiness. Amazon rain forest region. Comercialization. Strategy. Honey.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The apiculture practiced in Rondônia began with the State colonization, highly influenced by Brazil's Southern migrants, and it received in the 1980s heavy State Government support by means of technical training and infrastructure investments. In 2007, the honey production in the region of Colorado do Oeste and Vilhena (South Rondônia), reached 96.040 kg yearly, with 3657 hives, representing 2% of its gross domestic product, according to Brazilian Development Ministry & Brazilian service for supporting the micro and small firms (SEBRAE, 2007).

The apiculture's Local Productive Setup in that region is underpinned by producers whose majority, do not own rural property for the apiary installation, so, they lease properties from third parties. The activity is another income alternative in the rural environment and also for micro and small business related to the sector and this segment presents potential to increase production, to get productivity progresses and to improve products quality, by means of developing new goods as well as seeking new internal and external markets. The formulation and implementation of strategies, chiefly the corporate ones, impose many challenges to the organization: to choose between reducing its corporate scope in a defensive way, or to keep or increase its corporate scope, a kind of choice that demands great effort from the organization as a whole.

The beekeepers from South Rondônia, aiming at an alignment with the competitive scenario, founded the Apiarist Cooperative "Portal da Amazônia" (COAPA). The cooperative was created with the purpose of structuring the production collective commercialization, as well as organizing the physical and managing infrastructure, besides consolidating the recognition of the brand "Mel silvestre da Amazônia" (Amazonian wild honey). However, the commercialization difficulties remain, as shown by the entities related to the activity.

This study's importance, besides getting together some already studied references either in the strategy area or in the agribusiness study, consists of supplying the honey producers, as well as entities connected to the activity, and scholars and researchers, with subsidies for a better understanding of the sector's commercial activity, under the view of agribusiness' particularities and the developed theories in the study on strategy. Given the presented context, the present research aims at answering the following question: which are the strategies that impact the honey and derivatives selling process?

The study's objective, thus, was to identify the strategies that impact the South Rondônia beekeepers' selling process. To reach the expected results, (1) the commercialization strategies developed by the studied region's apiculturists were typified; (2) the major factors that influenced the region beekeepers' commercialization process were identified, and (3) it was identified how the region's beekeepers join together and relate with each other for improving the honey and its derivatives commercialization. The work is structured by topic, as theoretical framework, research method described, and sequence of results analysed and presented. On the last topic is showed final considerations and after references.

2 .THEORETICAL REFERENCE

In this topic, the theoretical aspects related to the productive chains and of commercialization in agribusiness, as well as the strategy formation and its conceptual dimensions targeted at organizational aspects, will be approached. The conceptual disassembling of this topic will allow identifying the strategic dimensions utilized by the apiculturist agents in the process of commercialization of their products.

2.1 Productive Chains and Commercialization in Agribusiness

The concept elaborated by Davis and Goldberg (1957) in their book *A Concept of Agribusiness* defines the meaning of agribusiness, in which, the theme is a conjunct of all operations that involve the production and distribution of inputs for rural production, besides the storage, the processing and the distribution of animal husbandry products and by-products. By observing the focuses defined in the concepts, many actors built their concepts about the agribusiness and the productive chain, as shown in Board 1.

Authors	Concepts
Muller (1982)	Defines the concept of agro-industrial complexes (CAI in Portuguese), as a techno-economical processes conjunct connected to agricultural production, to processing, to products transformation, to production of industrial goods for agriculture and to corresponding commercial financial services.
Castro, Cobbe and Goedert (1995)	Productive chains are conjuncts of interactive components, such as animal and farming husbandry, as well as forest productive systems, services and inputs suppliers, processing and transformation industries, distribution and commercialization, besides the final consumers of the products and by-products, in the chain.
Arbage (2004)	Defines the agricultural business view as a conjunct of agents involved in the process of transformation and of adding value to the agricultural goods.
Padula and Cánepa (2004)	Defines the agro-industrial productive chains as composed of many segments, ranging from the inputs production for the raw material manufacturing and the goods industrialization or manufacturing, to the final product distribution and consumption. Such chain components are inserted in an environment ruled by laws and norms and composed by organizations of public or private interest, which act over the chain.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Study in Kottler (2000) associates the negotiation to the concept of exchanging; thus, it can be understood as the acquisition of a desired product from someone who accepts something in return.

2.2 The strategy and its concepts

Despite the work of many authors about strategy, there is not yet in the literature a consensual definition about it. However, many concepts present a convergence as for its content and its formation process, as show in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Strategy conceptual definitions.

Author	Concepts
Chandler (1962)	Strategy is the basic objectives determination throughout a firm's deadline, the adoption of appropriate actions and the search of resources to achieving these objectives.
Learned <i>et al.</i> (1965) and Andrews (1971)	Strategy is the establishment of final objectives or goals, the development of policies and plans to achieve such objectives, defined from the understanding of which business segment the firm is in and which kind of firm it wishes to be.
Lodi (1969),	Strategy is the mobilization of all the firm's resources in the national or international range aiming at achieving long-term objectives (...) its objective is to allow major flexibility to the answer to unpredictable contingences.
Katz (1970)	Strategy is the relation between the firm and its environment, its present situation and projected future situation, as well as an action conjunct to reach such objectives.
Ansoff (1977)	Strategy is a rule conjunct for a decision making situation of uncertainty. The strategic decisions are about the relation between the firm and its environment.
Steiner and Miner (1977)	Strategy is the establishment of the firm's mission and objectives, taking into account the internal and external forces, which operate in the process, by formulating tactics and strategies to reaching such objectives and making sure its adequate implantation occurs.
Quinn (1978)	Strategy is a standard or plan which integrates the main goals, policies and actions' sequences of an organization in a coherent way.
Hofer and Shandel (1978)	Strategy is the establishment of the means to achieve the proposed objectives, subject to a set of restrictions from environment.
Jauch and Glueck (1980)	Strategy is an involving and integrated unified plan, related to the strategic advantages with the environment challenges. It is elaborated in a way that the firm's basic objectives can be reached.
Porter (1986)	The competitive strategy consists of offensive or defensive actions to create a defensible position in an industry, facing successfully the competitive forces and getting, thus, a better return over the investment made.
Mintzberg (1987)	Strategy can be understood as: Plan (a course of actions consciously engendered, a guideline and/or a set of guidelines to deal with a determined situation); Pretext (a specific "manoeuvre" aiming at deceiving the contender firms); Standard (a flux of pattern actions, or consistency in the behaviour); Position (a manner to overview the organization from inside its environment); Perspective (a deep-rooted way to see the world, in this case the strategy means to the organization what the personality means to the individual).
Hax and Majluf (1988)	Strategy is a set of coherent, unified and integrative decisions, which determines and discloses the organization's wish in terms of long-term objectives, programmes of actions and priorities in resources allocation.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In order to clarify this dilemma, the table 2 presents some definitions about strategy, which reveal, implicit or explicitly, the convergence points about the theme and the individual approach specific forms.

2.3 The strategy formation

Interconnected to the strategy concept definitions are the processes that originate it. The forms of strategy arising are not identical to each other, and are implemented in every organizations or business segments. Specifically, they are a result of a conjunction of external factors, as environmental and competitiveness, including the internal conditions of each organization and of each strategic

option. See Table 3 as follows.

Table 3: Main strategic formations.

Strategies	Conceptual Discussion	Main authors
Planned versus achieved	Planned strategies and performed strategies are two different approach forms that are not incompatible, but complimentary. Some planned strategies are never implemented, or are just partially implemented, just as certain guidance for organizational decisions that does not result of a previously established plan or it is executed despite the plan.	Chandler (1962); Steiner and Miner (1977); Hax and Majluf (1988); Newman, Logan and Hegarty (1989); Katz (1970); Mintzberg and Waters (1985).
Deliberate versus emerging	Deliberate strategies are the ones that are executed just as they were explicitly planned, through a controlled process; whereas emerging strategies are consistent patterns of actions put in practice despite of - or in the absence of - intentions.	Mintzberg and Waters (1985).
Implicit versus explicit	The strategies effectively planned are inclined to hold limited divulgation and comprehension, getting just partially explicit to the external observer, unlike what occurs with the implicit strategies. The missing explicitness does not mean, therefore, the strategy absence, but, an imposition of limits.	Gluck, Kaufman and Walleck (1982); Andrews (1971); Hambrick (1980); Hax and Majluf (1988); Kottler, (2000); Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2000); Mintzberg and Waters (1985).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

By recognizing the existence of implicit strategies in many firms, it is necessary to highlight the advantages to make them explicit by means of a plan. According Steiner and Miner (1977) the strategic planning provides a unified structure through which managers can administrate the firm's main problems, identify more easily new opportunities, to evaluate the forces that can be empowered and to correct the weaknesses. On the other hand, by conceiving the firm more like a social body than a technical unit, other authors consider that only people have objectives and that is why the formation of strategy is a negotiation process among the firm's internal social groups (Cyert & March, 1963). Other approaches state that the strategy formation may present other connotations, like: a cognitive character and be understood as a strategist's mental formation process (Makridakis, 1990; Corner; Kinicki & Keats, 1994); See Table 4 that follows.

Table 4: Conceptual Dimensions of the Strategic Formation.

Perspective	Conceptual Discussion	Main authors
Cultural	The culture takes over a fundamental role in the organization, putting itself as the dominant force of the strategic formation. Culture behaves as an initial filter which, sets a direct influence over the people's and the firm's decisions. The collective perception eventually select and prioritize the information that will be used for the strategic decision-making.	Pettigrew (1985); Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2000); Prahalad and Bettis (1986); Motta (1998); Lorsch (1986); Peters and Waterman (1982).
Power	The understanding of power as an influential factor characterizes the strategy formation as an influence open process, spotlighting the use of power and politics to negotiate favourable strategies and determined interests.	Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2000); Thierart (1984); Bolman and Deal (1997); Pfeffer and Salancik (1978)
Entrepreneurship	The understanding of the strategy formation under the entrepreneurship view adds value to the intuition, judgement, wisdom, experience as the only leader criterion. The approach conveys a strategy idea as a perspective, associated to image and direction sense, that is to say, vision.	Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2000); Collins and Moore (1970); Palich and Bagby (1995).
Cognition	The cognitive perspective targets at succeeding in understanding strategy formation in the human cognition scope, using specially the cognitive psychology field. In this sense, the strategies are conceived in the strategist's intellect and not as a result of other factors' influence.	Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2000); Simon (1957); Makridakis (1990); Corner, Kinicki and Keats (1994); Pidd (1998); Smircich and Stubbart (1985).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

However, there are defenders of the idea of strategy formation due to a competitive environment. Thus, the market forces drive the organization to the goals and plans definition and to the search of a referential positioning in the context (Porter, 1986; Day, 1990).

Porter (1986) presents the idea that, by means of analysis of forces which govern the industry and the competition, it will be made possible the development of corporate strategies that will define, in a confrontation between the organization's intentions and the environment's answer, the firm's competitive positioning. Porter's understanding (1986) about strategy, influenced by the intention of creating a competitive positioning, is based on the creation of a single and valuable position, involving a different set of activities; on the necessity of making excluding decisions in the competition about what to do and what not to do in the creation of an adjust in the firm's activities. Notwithstanding, the search for the competitive strategy does not do without a conjuncture analysis on evaluation over the competitive market. Thus, again Porter (1986) developed another model, which became reference to the firm's competitive evaluation and formulation of strategies, the forces model that guides the competition in the industry, as shown in the Figure 1 below.

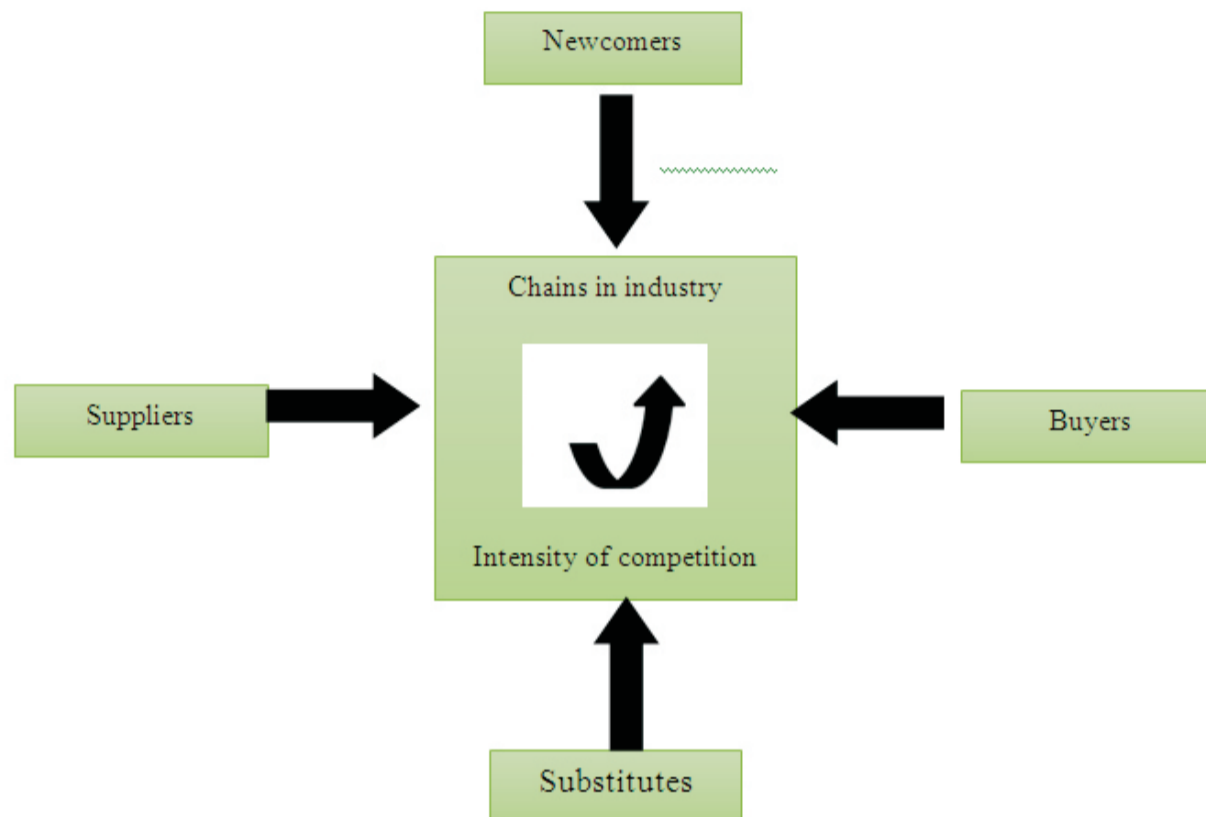


Figure 1: Forces model which guides the competition in the industry by Porter.
Source: Porter (1986).

Porter's understanding (1986) is that, for surviving in the market, it is not enough to evaluate, assimilate or overcome the distinctive competitions from the competitors, it is necessary to identify the forces that are capable to change the competition intensity, in the last analysis, which reduce the possibility of an organization getting a superior performance (Porter; Montgomery, 1998).

Hannan and Freeman (1984) state that most of changes observed in the firms are superficial, once the basic structure and the character of an organization are definitely settled little after its birth. To explain the changes, they survey the interactions between almost casual innovation in the organizations and the fight for the existence in the population level.

There are in literature analytic intents of mapping the environment. Example of this is the environmental analysis proposed by Kottler (2000), in which dimensionally the environment is separate in demographic environment, economical environment, natural environment, technological environment, politic-legal environment and socio-cultural environment. There are no formulas to guide the environmental factors choice to be considered. Instead, the market specific aspects are supposed to be considered. Consider the Figure 2 below.

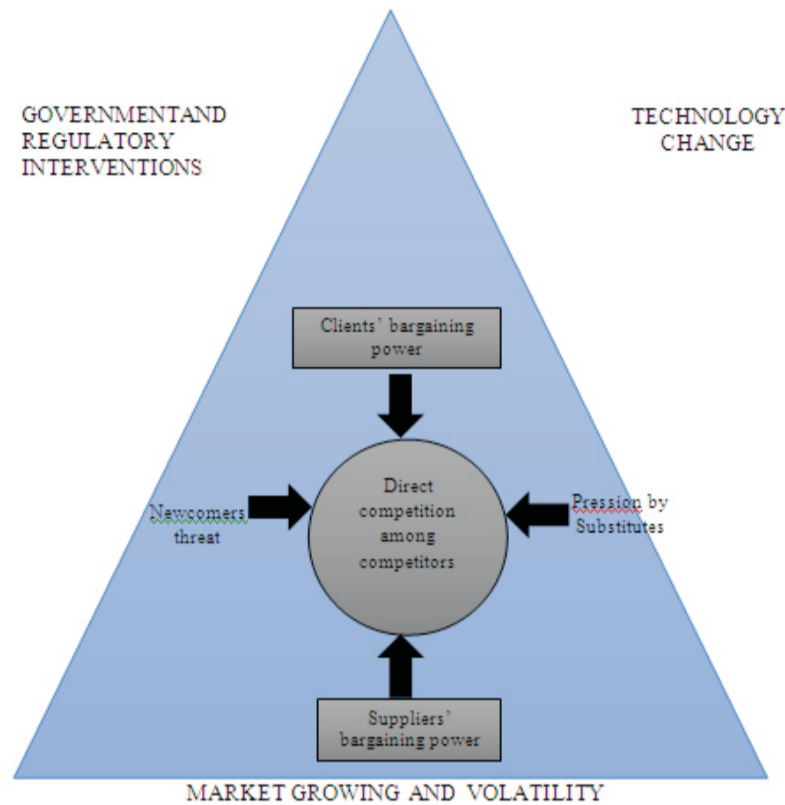


Figure 2: Forces that Influence the Market Attractiveness. Source: Day (1990).

The author proposes a model (Figure 2) that inserts in the competitive context three large-scale environmental dimensions, besides the forces that guide the competition in the industry model proposed by Porter (1986).

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEEDINGS

This study had as its locus the South region of the Rondônia State, and the agents involved were: The apiculturists and the institutions that comprise the programme PROAPIS- Programa da Apicultura Integrada e Sustentável, (sustainable and integrated beekeeping programme) namely: COAPA - Cooperativa Apícola Portal da Amazônia (Apiarist Cooperative “Portal da Amazônia”) and SEBRAE- Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micros e Pequenas Empresas- unidade de Vilhena (Brazilian service for supporting the micro and small firms – Vilhena city office). The research universe comprises the apiarist producing units of the towns that are in the South region of the State, which carried out the goods production and commercialization process.

Considering this research report and the measuring of the PROAPIS results, elaborated by SEBRAE and FECOMERCIO (2008, State Commerce Federation), the total associated apiculturists has risen to 61 in relation to the 48 of September, 2007, nevertheless, only 18 apiculturists out of this total, in December, 2009, were active in the product commercialization process. The research reached 13 honey and derivatives producers which accomplish the production and commercialization process, amount that represented 72,2% of the total of producers.

Interviews were conducted for collecting data. The interview script development was elaborated by taking into account the theoretical references, surveying the involvement of the analysis

elements and the defined dimensions in the theoretical approach. The theoretical parametre for elaborating the interview script is shown in the Table 5.

Table 5: References for Elaborating the Interview Script.

Theoretical Approach	Dimensions	Analysis Elements
Strategy Formation	Behavioural	Strategist cultural aspects
		Power contention in the strategy formulation
		Strategist enterprising character
		Strategist cognitive aspects
	Competitive	Learning / strategist incrementalism
		Newcomers threat
		Substitutes threat
		Buyer's bargaining power
		Suppliers' bargaining power
	Environmental	Competition in the industry
		Government and regulatory interventions
		Technology change
	Processes	Market growth and volatility
Planned strategies x accomplished strategies		
Deliberate strategies x emerging strategies		
Implicit x explicit strategies		
Agribusiness' Productive Chains	Relationship	Formalized x non formalized strategies
		Relationship between producer and Cooperative
		Trust in sales
	Product Features	Repetitive sales among parties
		Honey and derivatives features
		Prices seasonality
		Own storing or third parties'

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The thematic order exposed in the table 5 presents the structure as for the theoretical approach of the strategic formation and of the agribusiness productive chains, which are aligned under dimensions criteria, expressed in concepts presented by authors with recognized authority in the subject and research in the theoretical approach marked off. The analysis elements direct and contribute to an adequate marking out of the researched aspects.

The bibliographic research targeted at describing the fundamentals of strategy formation and at characterizing the commercialization in the agribusiness range, by means of observation of the analysis elements and the defined dimensions in the theoretical approach and, it also had as an aim to build a questionnaire to be answered by the beekeepers.

The documental survey and the research intensive and direct observation was carried out by means of meetings which took place in the SEBRAE/Vilhena headquarters, where the beekeepers in an individual way and without any interference, answered the questions according to any beekeeper's individual acquaintance.

As a tool to analyse data and the extraction indicators, the software Sphinx Survey (Lexical Edition) was adopted, which comprises the inquiry conception and supports all basic proceedings: questionnaire conception and edition, answers input and counting and statistical analysis (simple and cross tabulations, single and bi varied data analysis). For carrying this research out, it was adopted the open questions as a study tool (Survey's text) which ordered the frequencies of each text and defined its

variables.

The collected data analysis and presentation, as Marconi and Lakatos state (2006) are in text format, for a better understanding of the research. The research steps are shown on Figure 3.

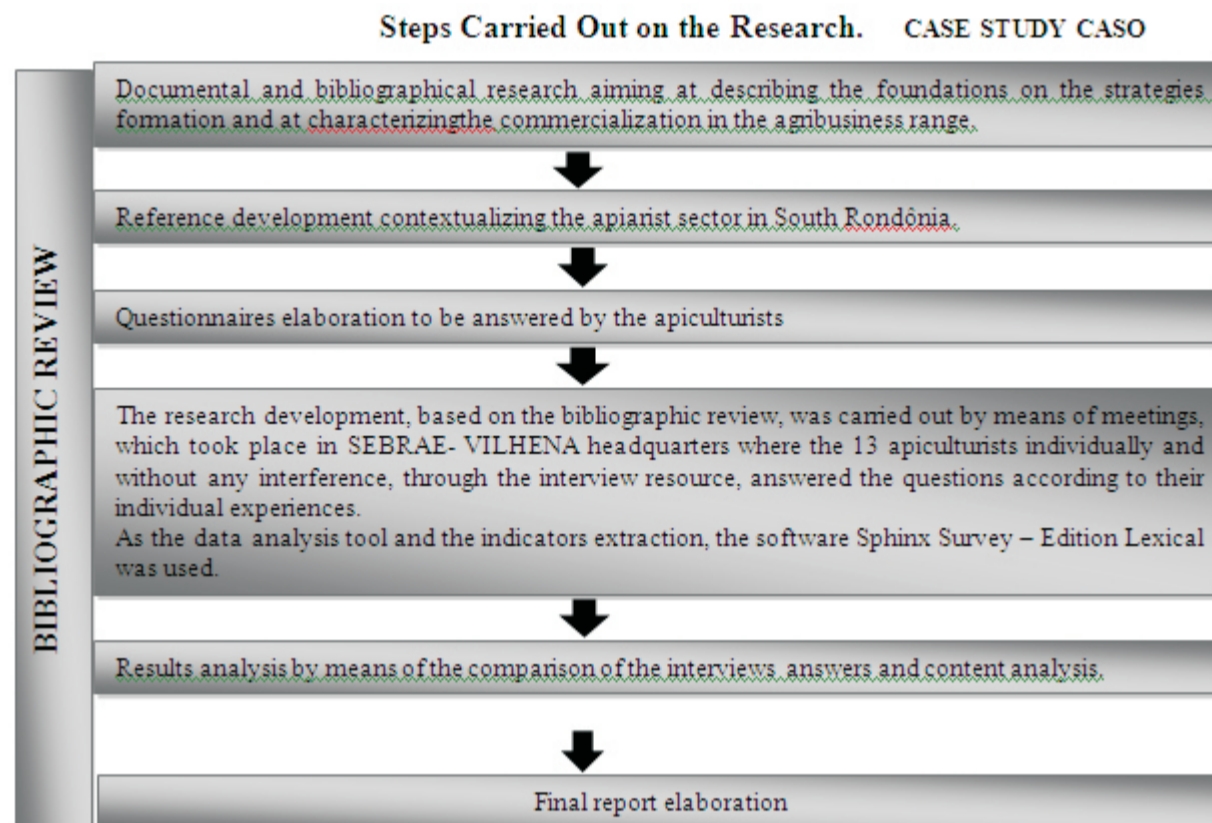


Figure 3: Research steps.
Source: Elaborated by the Authors.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this topic, the results of the application of the three established specific objectives in the research will be presented, showing the commercialization strategies features developed by the beekeepers in South Rondônia. It will be identified the main factors which influence the generated goods commercialization process, and it will be identified how the apiarist agents from the investigated region organize themselves and relate to each other in order to sell their honey and derivatives production.

4.1 Commercialization process general features

The honey and derivatives commercialization process presents a lot of needs and features. The commercialization process general description presents the trends and each dimension's representativeness, as well as the analysis elements, which are more impacting to the beekeepers. In Figure 4, it is shown how often each dimension of the values revealed in the investigation appears.

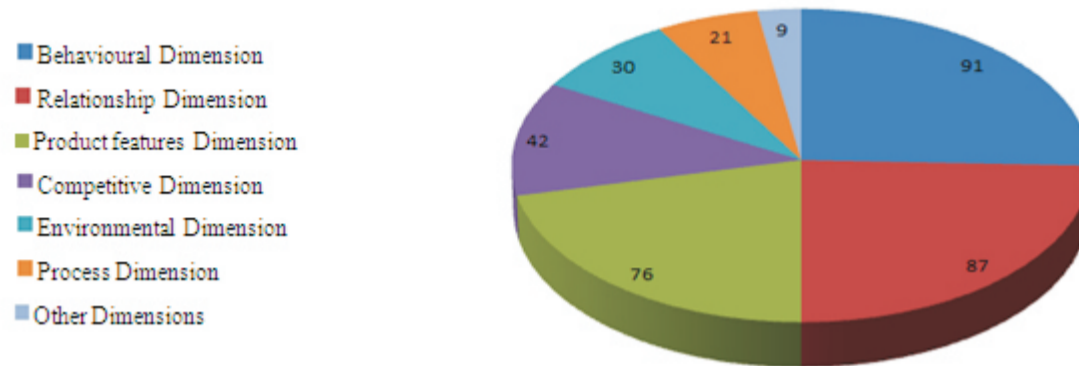


Figure 4: Dimensions' frequency.
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The figure 4 reveals that the behavioural dimension presents major relevance in the formulation of the commercialization process strategies, according to the apiarists. In this dimension, the investigation highlighted the elements: cultural aspects, the family influence, the region features in the activity's execution practices; learning, the category interaction, the qualifications and their applicability.

4.2 The honey producers' commercialization strategies

Although it is not clear for the interviewees the definition of the strategy theme, some important issues are listed as references that may be considered when adopting the sector's commercial strategies. The interviewed producers' preoccupation with quality for the strategic advance is to be spotlighted.

Usually, most of producers sell their crop on the same date they have to pay their accumulated debts. If a heavier debt is to be paid in a date other than the planned one, a part of the crop is sold. About the managing controls, many manifestations reveal that most of producers do not elaborate any, or make it precariously. It was noticed that the producers understand that the control is important, nevertheless, they cannot apply it to their routine. Other relevant aspect in the adoption of commercial strategies is related to the apiarists' clients. The interviewed producers' preponderant opinion indicates that the apiarists search for the best price for their product, but they respect their few customers loyalty.

It could be realized that the reliability on returning customers influences the way they choose the product's buyers. The choice, eventually, will rest with old clients, due to, majorly, two main factors: firstly, it is to be taken into account that the delinquency risk in the segment is considerable, especially among new buyers, who, up to the purchase moment, are unknown people. So, the producers prefer selling to traditional customers for security reasons, and, acting like that, they reduce the ex-post opportunism possibility described by Williamson (1996). Secondly, these traditional customers are preferred because they use to hold their business nearby, so, lower cargo dues become an attraction and an important argument in the price establishment. In this kind of situation, the cooperative role makes its start. The research revealed that the producer starts recognizing that the cooperative is an important supporting tool for commercialization.

As for the developed strategies, another important factor is the evidence of the existence of two

distinct strategic groups in the business. Such verification seeks reference in Porter's theory (1986) that says that each one of the groups ends up following different strategies among themselves, but it gets similar when inside the strategical group.

To depict the two groups, firstly, there are the most financially structured producers who hold better opportunities to develop sales plans; secondly, there are the financially less structured producers, who sell their products in an unplanned way and consequently they end up degrading the prices in the market.

4.3 Influential Dimensions in the Honey Commercialization Process

The analysis elements of the different dimensions of the approached theoretical aspects were considered influential in the honey commercialization process. Every element, taking into account its individual characteristics, revealed aspects more or less important for the strategy formation in the sector.

4.3.1 Behavioural Dimension

Culture was the first aspect analysed in the behavioural dimension. The research spotted a frequency of 46, which represents 51% of this aspect, considering a total frequency of 89 in the behavioural dimension. Among the interviewed producers it was noticed an individualist trend which harms the commercialization actions, the processes are akin, for, they have been guided by the same organization (SEBRAE).

By analysing the culture as an influential factor in the strategies formation and by correlating it with the found results, it could be noticed that the strategy formation in the sector is straight related to the collective interpretations about the world got from the surroundings, that is to say, a collective culture. According to these interpretations, consensuses, divergent opinions face-offs, resistances to changes which permeate organization universe and, consequently, the strategic decisions making, behaviour patterns are designed and they are different depending on the strategic group the producer is in.

As the producers' managerial feature is one of the kind of family-run business, in the firm's internal sphere, natural power disputes and negotiations for establishing the commercialization strategy are supposed to come about. They do not consider relevant the internal contention, either because they are alone, or because they hold they decision making power.

However, this power dispute for strategy formation, which is noted in the internal firms' managerial sphere, spreads itself outside, but not with the same intensity in the producing class. Among the producers there are not disputes, there is a relation of union, inside an idea of mutual help. This harmonic situation, nevertheless, does not occur with other interviewed producers' opinion. For them, the disputes do exist, but without a strong competitive feature, let alone the search for information. Some interviewees see a positive aspect for the political dispute in the class sphere, claiming that internal discussions could help the category get united to face the market environment peculiarities with more bargaining power.

The moment and the situation in which the internal disputes come about, usually in low demand periods and in periods of negotiating with the Government for, for example, commercialization mechanisms must be improved, and prices and licenses for production are to be looked after. In this case, besides the internal disputes for leadership power inside the working class range, there are also opinion divisions about the presented claims. Part of the producers agrees with the role performed by the leadership and part disagrees. The commercial strategies of each producer at this moment are

inclined to become different from each other due to personal convictions.

Correlating the results obtained with this study's theoretical basis, about the power dispute aspect, the organization internal perspective can be surveyed, by taking into consideration the internal disputes, the focus on the micro power (BOLMAN; DEAL, 1997), in which the strategy formulation is seen as process of negotiation and concessions among individuals, groups and coalitions in the organization internal sphere.

In the cognitive approach, the investigation showed a frequency of 19 that represented 21% of this aspect, considering a total frequency of 89 in the behavioural dimension.

In this approach, the strategies are conceived in the human intellect and not as a result of other factors' influence. Thus, two aspects became relevant in this analysis: (1) the producers' school formation and the producers' acquired learning, and; (2) the ignorance and the apiarists' lack of information. It is considered that, in both cases, the heavier the restrictions are, the worse the limitations will be to the analysis and development of strategic alternatives.

It was noted a consensus that producers' schooling, the acquired learning they got in the training carried out and the learning acquired in the activities' practice, contribute for helping them choose the best strategic alternatives.

The educational level and good learning reached contribute definitely to their practices, because they encourage producers to seek and accept more information and to develop better capacity to observe the market changes, like the technology evolution and the market trends. Also, because they make possible a greater understanding of the business environment, and of the trends in a more complex context. In the apiculture, the commercialization is more affected by the workers' poor schooling and the technical learning than by production itself. Thus, the ignorance and lack of information are factors that also contribute to shrinking of the scope of the decision-making alternatives and to a tendency to conservatism, linked to old traditions which are not supposed to be adequate to the present scenario. Furthermore, the producer, by recognising his/herschooling limitation, complies with third parties' opinions that may influence him/her negatively.

A relevant aspect in this study has pointed out that the buyers who are often informed about the market can get more competitive advantage, confirming Porter's proposition (1986) that speaks about a better buyer's bargaining power that comes from better access to information.

4.3.2 Competitive Dimension

The study revealed that the buyers possess a negotiation power much higher than the producers'. It was noticed that the buyers are organized, well informed, and know more details about the market's nuances. The buyers' bargaining power reached a frequency of 20, which represents 49% of the elements.

The aspect "buyers' bargaining power" may be a result of the producers' precarious financial situation, they borrow money from the buyers in order to finance their productions, and, as a rule, they settle to sell their products beforehand, at a lower price. It may be a market configuration in which a few people buy and many people sell. In this cases, the buyers' power is even higher, because, besides committing the producer, they make him/her dependent on them.

Moreover, extensive part of the producers do not own adequate structure for storing their goods. This fact obliges them sell the production right after the picking up time, and it makes them lose, consequently, bargaining power.

Because of the fidelity element, the beekeepers are afraid of going for new buyers, and end up putting themselves at the mercy of traditional buyers, conscious that they may suffer some loss, but,

opting for the safety of knowing they will get paid. In general, the negotiation values are meaningful and the risks of a possible delinquency may affect the enterprise continuity.

This circumstance can occur because of the factors presented by Porter (1986) according to which: (a) the buyers are concentrated and acquire big amounts in relation to the seller's sale; (b) the buyers transfer to producers a meaningful fraction of their own costs or acquisition; (c) the buyer gets total information of market. All these elements, present in the commercial relation, grounded by the sectional features of storing, information and uncertainty end up putting the producers in disadvantageous position before the buyers.

The study has pointed out a frequency of 1, which represents 2% of the beekeepers' competitive dimension which is smaller than that one carried out by the buyers. This element is considered of little expression and does not affect the definition of the commercialization strategy.

The input suppliers, in the last times, use to come across with a harder confrontation by the producers in relation to their goods purchase. In some cases, the beekeepers organize themselves in kind of buying centres in which bargain takes place, mainly, instalment negotiations. As the honey production may undergo oscillation, considering the blossoming conditions and its quality, the beekeepers are unsure about their financial funds and the pay delinquency results in financial interests. This incites the producers to sell the products beforehand or to take over the absorption of this financial burden in the final result. Under these circumstances, the beekeepers will have to disburse a greater honey volume to keep their duties.

Competition in the sector is a non-relevant element in the interviewees' evaluation. Its frequency was of only 6 which represents 14% of the competitive dimension.

The point is that the beekeepers do not see the other beekeepers as rivals, but, as partners, and aspects of the competitiveness end up, many times, encouraging a positive behaviour in the class.

The investigation revealed that instead of rivalry and competition, the producers give rise to a class union, becoming less individualist and, consequently, stronger. By confronting the interview results with the theory about the competition inside industry (Porter, 1986), it was noticed that, in the segment, rather a notion of co-existence than of rivalry was in the air.

The beekeepers' main preoccupation as for the newcomers is due to the opportunist ones, who get in the sector in periods of better pay and get out in bad periods.

4.3.3 Environmental Dimension

In view of the Government's influence and its interventions in the beekeeping activity, the beekeepers reported the weight the interventions exert over the commercialization process. This feeling is verified through the 30% representativeness of the frequency in the environmental dimension shown by the investigation.

In general, the producers' strategies are reactive to the conditions of the environment, as Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2000) say, they state that determined strategies formations may present a passive character, that is to say, are formulated in observance of a reaction to the environment in which they are established.

Azevedo, on his turn (1997), points that the agro-industrial goods commercialization is particularly subject to the public policies action for two factors: one, related to social regulation and sanitary control, and other, related to prices and stocks. The study revealed that two factors, both connected to prices and stocks, are referred to as attenuating in this influence: (1) the Government agriculture policies' discontinuity; (2) the releases of the licenses for the product commercialization in the state, national and even international spheres

The discontinuity aspect, according to the interviewees is due to, essentially, the lack of public resources to support the beekeeping activity. Thus, the norms fulfilment about the social regulation and the goods sanitary control loses force, leaving the market at the mercy of other influences.

It is assumed that normally the best honey prices are gotten in the period in which there is small blossoming area. Thus, the beekeepers that hold good stocking conditions and some financial capacity to wait the best commercialization moment, take advantage. In this sense, the beekeepers point the necessity they have to get support from government through lending facility concession and interventions either to support commercialization or stock acquisition, or, still, by financing the commercialization or the basic structure for adequate goods stocking.

The theoretical foundation about the government's influence and the government's intervention in the strategy formation is described by Day (1990), who speaks about the government's power to act in the market exerting an influential role in the commercialization process. Notwithstanding, the question that stands out most is about the public policies' loose consistency, what, in its turn, ends up harming the evaluation of the role exerted by the very government in the sector.

The technological change is, according to the interviewees, the aspect which represents lesser relevance in the environmental dimension. When asked about the technological changes, the beekeepers drove their answers to the technological improvements made available from the technical train and guidance given by SEBRAE, which, when implemented, make productivity improvement possible. Thus, the technology, in their opinion, is linked to production increase and consequent costs lowering. Such situation is reflected in commercialization, suggesting lower production costs and supply increment.

4.3.4 Process Dimension

The interviewees presented divided opinions about the planned strategy idea as a means to configure a relation between the firm and the environment in future, that is to say, plans capable to preview changes to face the proposed challenges and, on the other hand, to analyse the strategies carried out and the position acquired by the firm as a result of past actions. There was a 28% representativeness of this element frequency.

Part of them defend the idea, which considers the past behaviour as influential in the process. The other part turns over in their minds the idea of the present context's major influence. Thus, a synergy may appear, like what Hax and Majluf (1988) say about the strategy formation, in other words, that it becomes a delicate midterm between learning from past and outlining new directions which head the organization for the future.

The deliberate strategies are the ones that are put into practice just as if they were explicitly planned, through a controlled process. The emergent strategies, on the other hand, are consistent actions' patterns carried out despite of (or, in the absence of) intentions.

In some interviewees' opinion, the strategy emergency, considering the contextual situation, holds power because of the scenario volatility. Deliberation, assessing of what was learned from past, is also important, because it can prevent a manager to commit mistakes already committed in past.

Finishing this element analysis, it can be observed that, as Mintzberg and Waters (1985) say: purely deliberate strategies and purely emergent strategies are extreme situations. Therefore, what ends up occurring in the sector is a mixture of both situations.

As for the implicit and explicit strategies, according to the beekeepers, they hold little expression, with just 23% of representativeness of frequency in the answers because they are chiefly

put into practice just in the implicit way, so, are connected to the decision maker's strategic thought. Notwithstanding, it could be noticed that, in some cases, formalization comes about. Actually, there is a strategy report in documents, even though it is connected to the elaboration of a budget chronogram rather than to a more elaborated and wider planning.

4.3.5 Relationship Dimension

The relationship between the beekeepers and the cooperative is such a relevant aspect from the beekeepers' point of view, considering the future strategy formation. It is to be said that the cooperative is still being organized and structured and great expectation is in the air about its conclusion.

In a certain way, good relationship between the sides is under construction and has generated good perspectives of liability, credibility, safety and other benefits to the producer. In the relationship with the buyer, there is interest to create fidelity linking, once it is of interest of both segments.

The seek for wider fidelization emerges in this aspect. Beekeepers and salesperson try to solve their conflicts searching for mutual benefits, which are able to diminish transaction costs as stated by Williamson (1996). However, considering the comparison of the sellers' bargaining power with the producers' (Porter, 1986), there are beekeepers who do not recognize this relation as one of partnership; they believe they are somehow deceived by the sellers. Producers accept a closer relationship with certain sellers in order to reduce delinquency risks and disagreements in the product classification by firms they do not know and for which they nourish some suspiciousness.

In the approximation and improvement of the relationship between beekeepers and sellers, these traders, sometimes, provide the producers with additional services, like, for example, loans, pay advances and storing help. And, if this is good, on the one hand, because helps the producer with a temporary measure, on the other hand, harms his/her bargaining power on middle and long term periods, leaving him/her weaker in this aspect.

Despite the natural co-existence between them, one can hardly state that the relationship closeness between the sides is constituted only of good elements. Some interviewees believe that the relationship with the traders is considered harmful and is an element that badly commits the definition of a better commercialization strategy.

Despite of it, it could be perceived that a search for major fidelization in the segment is coming about, however, in some producers opinion, this closeness can be more advantageous to the sellers because their bargaining power is wider. The search for this approximation ends up moving the sides away from each other in the sector's transactions, as Williamson (1996) sees. He says the relationship between the sides must be a pure market one, closer to more hierarchical treat, suggesting, this way, major savings with transaction costs.

4.3.6 Product features dimension

In view of the honey and production similarity features, the interviewees understand that the lack of a technical classification and the product non-differentiation, affect the commercialization process, mainly because of the difficulty to establish distinctive quality parameters of a product in relation to the other, considering the lots of possibilities generated starting from the kind of flowering. The investigation result points the 34% representativeness in the dimension total.

Thus, also the honey and its derivatives oscillations are expressive, due to difficulties to establish differentiations of quality of the product. The greater possibility of the product be modified and get value differentiations is not within the producers' reach, because the external environment

holds influence on determining the different kinds of flowerings which are being grown in the neighbourhood.

Despite of it, the producers try to create differentiations for their product, mainly, as for quality, beehive displacement to a place closer to the flowering units, fewer impurity levels etc.

Prices seasonality is an important element for the commercial strategy formation. Its representativeness reached 49% of the total frequency of this dimension.

The study pointed that the seasonality became less relevant in the last years, due to many other factors, such as: the beekeepers financial limitation; substitute or changed products entered the market; and the lack of agriculture policy for supporting the beekeepers.

Another relevant factor in prices seasonality is the sales scheduling strategy that is for all year long. In this case, a higher supply stabilization would be welcome, and, consequently, a lower prices seasonal variation.

As for storehouse, it was realized that the beekeepers recognize its importance, but, taking into account their financial limitation, inside the dimension approached here, they give it lower relevance.

Stocking, understood by interviewees as one of the relevant aspects for commercialization, contrasts with their reality in which big part of beekeepers, practically 80% of them, do not possess their own storehouses, and ends up depositing their product in someone else's places, or are obliged to effectuate sales at a loss.

Such situation affects the commercialization process, because it strikes the bargaining power from the beekeeper and deprives them from what would be their product physical possession. The product left in traders' possession can, at any time, be put on the market, affecting directly the production and degrading prices. In this deposit case, the salesperson establishes a financial compromise with the producer, with an open-ended price to be fixed whenever this seller succeeds in selling the product.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The honey and its derivatives commercialization process in South Rondônia is majorly characterized by the commercial selling relation between beekeepers and sellers. The inexistence of government's actions as well as of sectional public policies is denounced by the beekeepers as a harmful aspect to the segment.

The beekeepers dependence on the dealers is meaningful and it causes an imbalance in the producers' bargaining power, which is a bit oversized in favour of the salespersons, mainly because of the beekeepers' uncapitalization.

It was noticed the occurrence of some commercialization strategies developed by the beekeepers, such as (a) planning the sale time, searching for financial accommodation to grant suppliers' pay and for other necessities; (b) income optimization because of prices raise in the seasonal variation, in this condition are only the beekeepers who hold good financial availability and that have adequate storing conditions, and; (c) sales distribution over the year, searching for risks reduction, due to the prices instability. In this group are the few beekeepers who hold favourable financial conditions, however, their storing areas present some limitations, and; (d) sales to "loyal" buyers, reducing delinquency risks and discussion over products' disconformities, this aspect was identified as quite relevant. It is to be said that, in general, the strategies, in higher or lower degree, are reactive because of the dealers' structure and bargaining power.

Two producers' strategic groups were also identified. One, of "capitalized" producers, and the other, of "non-capitalized" ones. Two distinct behaviours in the productive class were noticed. One,

more innovating and audacious found among the new beekeepers and the capitalized ones, and the other, more conservative, found among the ones considered traditional. As implications of this study, it can be said that it may offer the beekeepers, representative entities and researchers of the area, an important range of information, which will help the activity's management and understanding.

The analysis elements, influential in the strategy formation, presented in the study, made possible a situational view of the strategic behaviour in the sector. Such elements can help outline decisive guidelines important to future planning of sectional actions.

Other aspect to be highlighted as this study implication is about the very beekeepers' strategies, reactive to the buyers' bargaining power. Although the capitalized strategic group possesses a situation a little bit more privileged, a considerable part of them is subject to strong external pressures. Such expediency may be stressed in the analysis and job, chiefly by the class entities connected to the beekeepers.

Finally, given the verification of lack of storing structure be one of the factors which reduce the beekeepers' bargaining power, the question that is stressed is how is this problem going to be solved. Perhaps supporting measures for a definition and immediate structuration of the beekeepers' cooperative - COOAPA could be an important backing to the sector to heal this failure. As this study's limitation, it is possible to point out that by respecting the study's qualitative feature, a questionnaire with open questions was given to the interviewees. The same way, considering the study's feature and the questionnaire's interview proposition, some answers were a bit vague and did not serve to the initial plan.

As a suggestion for further studies, that the different elements initially explored in this paper be studied in a deeper way either in its quantitative or qualitative aspects. The limitations already spoken about suggest that perhaps alike studies could be come about in the other regions of the State, covering, thus, the whole regional product offer.

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