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**STRENGTHENING MARKETING CHANNELS OF A FAMILY FARMING COOPERATIVE:  
The Coafaso Case**

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**ABSTRACT**

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*This study objectified the creation of a marketing plan for the Cooperative of Family farming from the west region of Paraná, with focus on the strengthening of its marketing channels. The methodology used was a qualitative and quantitative approach. An internal analysis was obtained through interviews with the managers of the cooperative. The customers' research was applied to primary and high school teachers, as well as to higher education professors. The marketing plan design used was introduced by Campomar and Ikeda (2006), as it is a low cost method, up to date and applicable to any business. The research revealed that only 15% of the interviewed had knowledge about Coafaso though did not know about its itinerant market, stating the frailty of its marketing channels. This study offers a marketing plan with focus on increasing sales, strengthening of the institutional image and brand, as well as the extension of sale points.*

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**Keywords:** *Family farming, cooperative, marketing channels, marketing, sustainability*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

It is noted that the demand of healthier products has significantly increased within the years, since customers are migrating to purchasing healthier food that has a sustainable production process. This change of habits provides the opening of new niche markets, supporting the production and selling of family farming goods.

Family farming is not a relatively new term. Its beginning is attached to the rising of modern agriculture itself, since small-scale farming permanently existed, cultivating their own land and selling the overbalance of their goods. From this, Bertolini, Brandalise and Nazzari (2010) confirm that in Brazil, family farmers, until 1970, produced fare for their own consumption, selling the surplus e buying only what was not produced by their farming. All the work carried on the land was completed by and to the family.

Nevertheless, in the last decades, after the implementation of the term Family farming and the first legislations about the topic in Brazil, combined with the wide usage in social movements and academy, the term has gained new meanings (Maia, 2009).

Despite of small variations in the concept, it is important to notice that customers have agreed that family farmers have been treating natural resources more carefully, moreover, they are responsible for maintaining health safety, as well as significant contribution to employment in the countryside.

Maia (2009) encourages the thinking of agriculture beyond profit and power struggle, in addition to amplifying our capability to preserve the ecosystem, essential for sustaining life on earth. This is the perspective of sustainable agriculture and agroecology.

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE] census data (2006), in terms of employment (including family members and employees), family farming covered, in 2006, 13.04 millions of people, meaning 78.75% of total field labour.

Another advantage that family farming has is sustainability, as the idea of sustainable family farming states, above all, the growing dissatisfaction with the status quo of modern agriculture. This indicates the social desire of production systems that, simultaneously, preserve natural resources and provide healthier goods, without compromising technology levels already extended to food safety. (Bezerra & Veiga, 2000).

Irrespective to the majority of society recognizing the importance of family farming, taking the products of small farmers to the final customer is not an easy task, even if the producer is related to associations or cooperatives.

In this regard, the government has noticed this difficulty of family farmers since 1948 and created the Technical Assistance and Extension program, known by the acronym ATER. It is a free service created to assist family agriculturalists, of non-formal education, continuous nature, which promotes management processes, production, processing and marketing of agricultural activities and services and non-agricultural, including agro-extractive, forestry and craft activities. During these years, the program has faced different formats (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform [INCRA] 2014).

Even after the diagnosis of ATER professionals, many cooperatives do not have the expertise to put in place the necessary actions to mitigate their weaknesses and take advantage of the opportunity to enhance strengths. This is the case of the Cooperative Family Agriculture and Solidarity of Western Paraná– COAFASO.

The study is justified beyond the technical aspects involved, the high social value of the share. As it has been stated, according to the diagnosis of the Emater researchers, that the Cooperative does not have planning actions, aimed at targeting their activities, namely a definition of direction. It has flaws mainly in marketing, as its sales control system has no connection between the cooperative units, has no inventory control, no sales planning, no client register updated, and specially, only a few has knowledge of the cooperative and its products. Therefore, this study offers the creation of marketing plan, aiming at the sales increase from different marketing channels and add to the definition of the long and medium term targeting of the Cooperative, mainly with the strengthening of the institutional image and enhance of sales channels.

Thus, this study has the general objective to carry out a strategic marketing plan for the organization investigated, mainly focusing on the task of marketing their products, that these are organic and homemade food coming from small farms.

To achieve the general objective, the following methods will be used: a SWOT analysis (strengths and weaknesses; opportunities and threats); Undertaking diagnostic interview with potential consumers; and documentary analysis of the organization.

As a result, it is expected to achieve the leverage of its sales, considering the perspective of production, as well as the arrival of the products produced to the final consumer. Furthermore, it aims that with the implementation of the suggested marketing plan, the cooperative will feel more able to promote their sales through existing sales channels; expanding opportunities; offer a wider product portfolio from the family farming; have conditions to meet the demand in an organized way and be sufficient to stock the local market.

From these considerations, this study is intended to answer, under the conceptual framework of strategic marketing, particularly concerning marketing channels, the following research problem:

**How can a family farming cooperative strengthen its marketing, with restricted financial resources and without misplacing its ecological identity?**

To answer the research problem, the objective is to analyse the real cooperative's current situation in regard to the main marketing aspects, internal and external, as well as, the opinion of final customers, and subsequently develop a plan of action to address the main constraints.

## 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theoretical foundation is divided into four main axis: family farming, associations and cooperatives, strategic marketing plan, and marketing channels.

### 2.1 Family Farming

Family farming in Brazil has always lived with a dichotomy, although it occupies an important role in food safety in the domestic supply, the government dismisses marginal or secondary treatment.

Only at the end of the XX century, specific public policies were created to attend the sector's demand, as it was noticed the potential of family farming, being capable of combining food security with sustainable development, primarily focused on the preservation of finite natural resources (Maia, 2009).

It is possible to notice that the production model has given signs of exhaustion with the intense use of external resources, with social exclusion and increasing environmental degradation, causing rising social and production costs. Therefore, alternative production systems based on agroecological principles have been increasingly accepted and disseminated as an option for ensuring safe food, combat poverty, environmental conservation and maintenance of the small farmer in the field.

Family farming is a respected term by the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform – INCRA / Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – FAO (1996), having a strong presence of:

[...] three main characteristics: a) the management of the plant and the investments made in it are made by individuals who practice mutual ties of blood or marriage; b) most of the work is also provided by the members of the family; c) ownership of the means of production (although not always land) belongs to the family its transmission must be held inside in the event of the death or retirement of those responsible for production unit. (p.4)

Family farming holds an important role in the food production in Brazil and Gorender (2002), highlighting its importance by stating that "Recent well-grounded empirical research has demonstrated the extraordinary vitality of the development of Brazilian agriculture through small family farms; this small family run is that guarantees most of the food supply of urban populations " (p. 41).

As already indicated, another challenge with family farming is enabling small farmers into the market, competitiveness and sustainability. However, what is the most accepted concept of family farming? The different meanings of sustainability reveals different, and often come into conflict, values, realizations and political views about the model to be adopted for the development of agriculture, industry and trade and use of natural resources. Sustainability is directly related to sustainable development, which is defined as one that can ensure the needs of future generations (Maia, 2009).

### 2.2 Associationism and Cooperativity

Associationism enables greater participation and creates opportunities for dialogue between organized society and the government. Cielo et al (2009, p.1) describes: "The term associationism comes from association, as it refers to the feeling that associated must share, to distribute dividends and help each other in difficulties". According to Hodecker, Lana, Lizote and Verdinelli (2012), the associations represents a suitable space for discussion of topics related to the world of business relationships and local needs. When properly conducted, can assume a position of vanguard and pioneering.

The Brazilian Institute of Associationism [IBRASS] (2011) defines associationism as a formal or informal initiative of group of individuals and/or corporates that has as main goal, solve common problems and generate economic and social benefits, whether isolated would not have a high cost for resolution.

The mobilization of a group of people from a community or entrepreneurs to achieve certain goals is much easier and brings better results if conducted in partnership with an associative entity. The association enables greater participation and creates opportunities for dialogue between organized society and the government (SEBRAE, 2011).

The cooperativity is a form of associationism, consisting of cooperatives that are associations comprising, at least, twenty individuals that ally to voluntarily satisfy needs, aspirations and common economic interest. They act through a collectively owned and democratically managed company, in order to provide non-profit services to its members,

In that regard, the Organization of Brazilian Cooperatives [OCB] (2014) defines cooperative as: “An association of, at least, twenty individuals united by the cooperation and mutual help, managed in a democratic and participative way, with common economic and social goals, which has legal and doctrinal aspects are distinct from other companies”.

The legislation n. 5.764 (1971), in article 4, prescribes: “Cooperatives are partnerships, with their own form and legal nature, of civil nature, not liable to bankruptcy, created to serve the associated, characterizing themselves from other organizations...”.

### 2.3 Strategic Marketing Plan

Considering the high level of complexity involving the current affiliation with the customers, all organizations, despite their activity branches, must maintain a strategic plan that involves new market demands, without disregarding its internal strengths and weaknesses. Generally, the aims of the institutions are pre-established concerning their mission, view and organizational values.

However, although clarity for the institutional direction is pursued, the goals set at the strategic level are usually macro-oriented, as they approach the organization as a unit. Therefore, it is necessary to detail these macros goals in tactical planning, i.e. the departmental level. From this instant, there exists an interrelationship between strategic and tactical levels. The institutional decisions are defined at the management level, such as marketing, production, personal and financial plans.

According to Kotler (2000), one of the main reasons to study marketing is that it is responsible for the economic growth and development of the organization and society. Apart from the constant social and financial changes, from 1990, it has obliged the companies to investigate and diagnose the customer profile, seeking to serve and surprise them in special occasions.

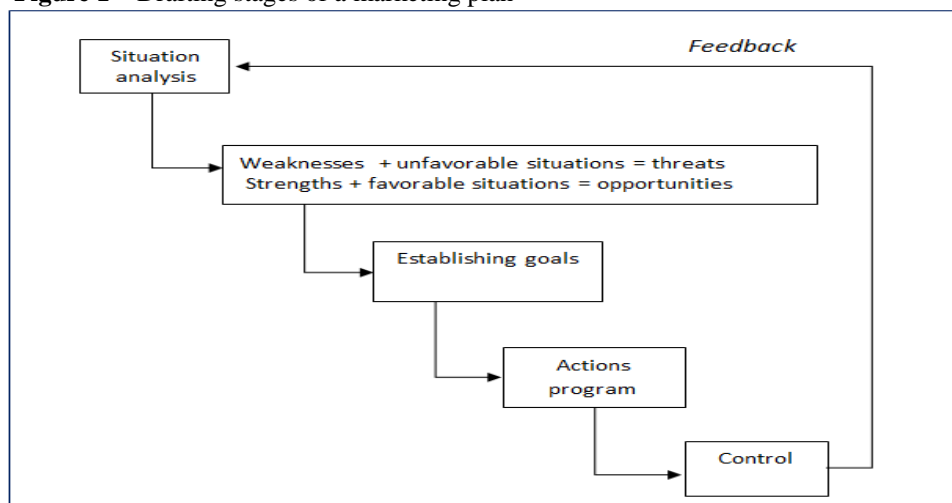
From the 1990, marketing has occupied a main role in formulating and implementing strategies, as the strategic management has to permanently cope with an environment in constant changes, from which two variables excels: the market and the competition.

The author McDonald (2005) highlighted that although the marketing strategic plan process and the creation plan appear to be an easy task, considering the logic that it sustains, several conceptual and practical questions may emerge, which convert the process into one of the most intriguing aspects of business management (Toledo, Camponar & Toledo, 2006).

Lima and Carvalho (2011), located 5 different marketing plan models in the literature: I) Jonh Westwood (1996); II) Jean-Jacque Lambin (2000); III) Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller (2006), IV) Marcos Fava Neves (2001, 2005), V) Marcos Cortez Campomar and Ana Akemi Ikeda (2006).

Analysing those models encountered in the literature, this study has opted for the adoption of the Campomar and Ikeda (2006) model, as sentences specified in Figure 1, as they were considered to be low cost, objective, up to date and applicable to any organization; allowing a feasible solution for the organization investigated, considering its technical staff and its financial situation.

**Figure 1** – Drafting stages of a marketing plan



Source: Campomar and Ikeda (2006, p. 126)

The marketing plan starts with the analysis of the situation, enabling the diagnosis of the organization, taking in consideration past and current data. The situation analysis is crucial to assess the extent to which the organization can achieve (goals). With the detailed analysis of the situation, the strengths and weaknesses (internal analysis) and opportunities and threats (external analysis) are verified. The most important aspects and situations are focused and, at the intersections, the threats and opportunities are identified. From then, the organization is able to establish clear and measurable objectives, as well as to build an action plan according to the demand of the costumers and the internal capability of the organization (Lima & Carvalho, 2011).

### 2.3 Marketing Channels

According to Guimarães et al (2003) and Zardo (2014), marketing channel is the path taken by goods from the producer to the final consumer. It is the sequence of steps in which the product passes under the action of various agents, to reach the final destination. Moreover, the marketing channel also reveals how the agents organize and come together to pursue the transfer of production to consumption.

As for the structure of the channel, it depends on the aspects of production, the product itself and the consumer market. As the number of producer increases and the volume of production decreases, the greater will be the number of agents required to meet this production in larger batches. The perishable the product, the smaller the channel will tend to be to reduce production losses. The closer to the consumer center is the production, the shorter the channel tends to become. As the unit value of the product increases, the channel length decreases, as the profit is obtained from the selling of few unities. Seasonal consumption offer longer channels (Guimarães et al, 2003; Zardo, 2014).

Zardo (2012) claims that the direct marketing has relationships occurring only between the producer and the final consumer, without the attendance of any intermediation, as the short indirect marketing is which the channel between producer and costumers is inserted a retail entity and, therefore, has the presence of a single intermediary between the producer and the consumer. Finally, the long indirect channel is one that offers wholesale and retail entities between the producer and the final consumer. In this case, there is the presence of more than one intermediate body between the producer and the consumer.

Zardo (2012) highlights the importance of knowing the marketing channel of a product to understand how the market behaves and how the price setting process is crucial to identify potential business opportunities or potential partners with those opportunities.

Santos (2011) supports that society has less time available and although buying is sometimes interesting, customers rationalize the time spent on this activity. Thus, it can be said that the main function of a distribution channel is so that the product arrives faster at the place where the consumers expect to find it. However, placing products in the right place when the customers are willing to purchase varies according to the target market and the product to be sold.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The study is characterized as an applied research, as the results obtained are intended to support the Coafaso's organizational management. In this regard, Silva and Menezes (2001) highlight that the applied research involves local aspects and intends to create knowledge for practical application and solving specific problems. It can also be recognized as a descriptive research, as it describes quantitative and qualitative variables, establishing correlation (Gil, 1991).

The sampling is nonprobability. The purposive sampling selects a subgroup from the population that, based on the available information, may be considered representative of all the population, once it has typical or representative characteristics of the group (Aribomi & Perito, 2004). The selection of purposive sampling occurs according to the experiences and judgment of the researchers.

For the internal analysis of Coafaso (first phase of the marketing plan), a questionnaire was applied to the managers of the company between February 6<sup>th</sup> to February 10<sup>th</sup> of 2015. The diagnosis enabled the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses related to the organization's marketing.

The external analysis (first phase of the marketing plan – opportunities and threats), occurred in the means of a market research with the final customers. Before applying the total population, six (6) pre-testing were performed, in which the survey was altered due to some queries and suggestions from respondents, enabling a richer and more objective final version. The population involved primary and high school teachers, as well as higher education professors. The survey was completed in Foz do Iguaçu (PR), between the dates 10<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2015. The population was chosen according to potential customers of regional, organic and semi-

organic products, given their environmental awareness. Through google.doc forms, 300 (three hundred) invitations to join the research were forwarded to electronic mails registered in the data base from a certain Union. 112 (one hundred and twelve) professors replied the e-mail. The diagnosis allowed the evaluation of the final customer's point of view regarding the cooperative and its products.

Furthermore, this research included the participant observation, since one of the authors of this article is the accountant of Coafaso, which allowed a complete documentary analysis of the company's financial data.

Finally, the creation of the marketing plan was based on the model by Campomar and Ikeda (2006), where it is composed of four steps: situation analysis (I), setting goals (II), action plans (III), and control (IV).

#### **4 DATA ANALYSIS**

This section presents the diagnosis and results obtained from this study, based on the references.

##### *4.1 Analyzed Organization Profile*

The Cooperative Family Agriculture and Solidarity of Western Paraná– COAFASO, was created from a wide debate amongst farmers of western region of Paraná, organized in Associations. These producers felt the need to organize their production, enlarge e legalize their commercialization. At first, they decided to create a cooperative in each county. After detailed research, they opted to create a single cooperative that involved all the associations from that micro region.

Coafaso was established in October 18<sup>th</sup> 2011, based in Foz do Iguaçu, western Paraná, with field across the state of Paraná, has the goal of stimulating production, reception, storage and commercialization of family farming products of partners or third parts. The cooperative is active in its field, therefore, local conventional markets, retail, as three selling stores located in Foz do Iguaçu, Medianeira and Missal, and institutional markets in four counties in its field, Foz do Iguaçu, Medianeira, Missal and Santa Terezinha de Itaipu.

As a result from the partnership with Emater, formed in 2012, the researchers created a Improvement Plan of Cooperative Management Process document to Coafaso, based on the results from the Diagnosis and Strategic Identification Matrix, which highlighted the cooperative's weaknesses regarding commercialization aspects. The main deficiency is in the disclosure and promoting their products. Thus, this Emater study was the motivating factor to the current research.

It was stated that the cooperative maintains stores in four locations, one in the headquarter of the organization in Foz do Iguaçu, the objective of the study, and in the Missal's filial, the third in Medianeira's filial and the fourth in Santa Terezinha de Itaipu.

##### *4.2 Internal Analysis Results of The Cooperative*

The main factor to draw appropriate means for achieving the goals, particularly those related to marketing, is the achievement of a diagnosis that enables the portray of the current situation of the organization.

As already highlighted, the current analysis of the association is the first step towards building an effective marketing plan, as recommended by Campomar and Ikeda (2006).

As the main goal of this study is to create a marketing plan, able to promote mainly the commercialization in fairs held weekly in the marketing centers, an interview was held with cooperative members and directors of Foz de Iguaçu unit.

A survey was used for this internal diagnosis, named: Diagnosis Questionnaire for Marketing Mix: Product, Price, Distribution and Sale, involving 57 questions, open-ended and closed-ended questions.

The items to be evaluated were disposed in a scale that varied between: not applicable, regular, good, excellent. Moreover, some strategically chosen aspects were opened, in order to obtain greater insight into the cooperative managers.

Thereby, the most significant answers from the survey were tabulated, mainly those that represented negative aspects, since the goal of this research is to offer solutions for the difficulties of the company.

##### *4.2.1 Product Aspects*

This item investigated the current situation of the cooperative, referring to product aspects, such as brand, additional services, quality control and product shape. 70% of the items received regular rating. Two aspects

were rated as being good: ability to meet the target audience identified by the defendants' products; and development of new products and innovation.

#### 4.2.2 Price Aspects

The aspects: understanding and price protection, practiced by employees and vendors considering added values; and the one referring to the pricing strategy and services were considered in the survey as regular. The reason for this is that the aggregate values are few or are not perceived by employees and vendors, as they are ignorant or know very little about the production process and its variables. The rating was also regular when related to the pricing strategy of products and services, considering the price analysis developed by the direct competitors. The suitability of product prices for the target audience of the cooperative was rated as excellent.

#### 4.2.3 Internal Point of Sales Aspect

When referred to the internal sale, the painting (quality, color, ceiling, conservation, useful for merchandising), the layout (circularization, organization, customer traffic areas, equipment and furniture) and the stock organization were rated as regular. It is noteworthy that the space used by the Marketing Center is given by a municipal public body and it has a wooden structure, with an area of 60m<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.2.4 External Point of Sale Aspects

The appearance of the facade and signage, lighting, conservation of accesses (sidewalk and parking) and visibility (obstacles to visibility) received the regular assessment. The structure was renovated in 2012. However, the investments were not sufficient and the renovation summarized in internal and external painting and minor repairs necessary for the functioning. It is noted that few investments were headed to family farming, not distinguishing the cooperative from a traditional point of sale.

#### 4.2.5 Sales/Promotion Aspects

For this matter, the item related to market research has been rated as regular, considered by the managers as one of the latent concerns to define possible sales strategies. Other aspects, such as average ticket price analysis (average buying price for customers); internal versus external people flux rating; contacts and call control, or seller visit; actions seeking celebrations of partnerships with suppliers; were not rated by the managers, considering their limited treatment capability and reduced production volume. In other words, the cooperative is aware of the production volume and only takes new supply commitment after careful evaluation.

Coafaso's managers pointed that one of their greatest concerns is the poor performance of trade shows on certain days of the week, since it opens on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Once a week, normally on Wednesdays, it is held in a neighborhood in an itinerant way.

Still considering the commercialization aspect, it was noted that another negative factor is the localization. As already mentioned, the selling center is located at the touristic side of Foz do Iguaçu, at Avenida das Cataratas, next to the hotels, yet far from the residential neighborhood, potential customers.

#### 4.2.5 Promotion/Disclosure Aspects

The items here investigated were rated as regular, precisely because of the lack of planning for writing stock sales (calendars, campaigns), as well as the lack of promotion actions such as contests, sweepstakes, free gifts, free samples and customer loyalty program. The lack of maintenance and update of the cooperative's website was another aspect that received the regular assessment.

#### 4.2.6 Service Aspects

The last aspect evaluated was related to the quality of the service, such as the selling staff introduction (uniform, badge, and neatness); including aspects related to punctuality and cordiality of the service. Both items were rated as good.

### 4.3 Final Customer External Analysis Result

Coafaso cooperative was established from the direct access difficulties of the family farmer to marketing channels, considering production characteristics. The organization has sought to meet this production by shortening the distance between the producer and the consumer.

When the internal management analysis was completed, it was possible to notice that the cooperative acts in conventional marketing and distribution channels. It is currently inserted in the marketing channel related to retail, in other words, free selling in their own stores. The second marketing channel is related to the participation in local and state markets. The third is the distribution of the production to the institutional market,

Food Acquisition Programme – PAA and National Scholar Meal Program - PNAE, which fall due to its characteristics as a short indirect channel because the cooperative operates as a retailer in the process, being the only intermediary between producer and consumer.

In this regard, the focus of this study is the detail investigation of the retail marketing channel and the market participation channel. However, this research has no intention in entering the National Programs named PAA and PNAE.

Once detected and interpreted the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, a market research with customers and potential customers became necessary, aiming to confirm evidences and observed insights. The survey was objective, directly addressing the critical points observed in the internal analysis, since the basic information about the customers profile are already in the cooperative's knowledge. Furthermore, this research sought to build a marketing plan more targeted to the sales channels (retail and trade), and that its implementation is feasible for the cooperative.

As already mentioned, the population involves primary and high school teachers, as well as higher education professors. After the development of the answer table, we obtained the detailed results as shown in the following paragraphs.

The total surveyed were 112 (one hundred and twelve) professors. The interviewed answered 13 questions regarding: preferable location of the customer, consumption habits of organic goods or similar, if they had knowledge and/or attend the headquarters of the cooperative and the markets, commonly purchased products.

Question 01 approached the customers' opinion to verify where they purchase their traditional goods, fruits and vegetables, considering these are the main products from Coafaso. From this question, 70% of the surveyed claimed that they purchase from supermarkets and 18% from markets. The option markets and others indicated a minor preference.

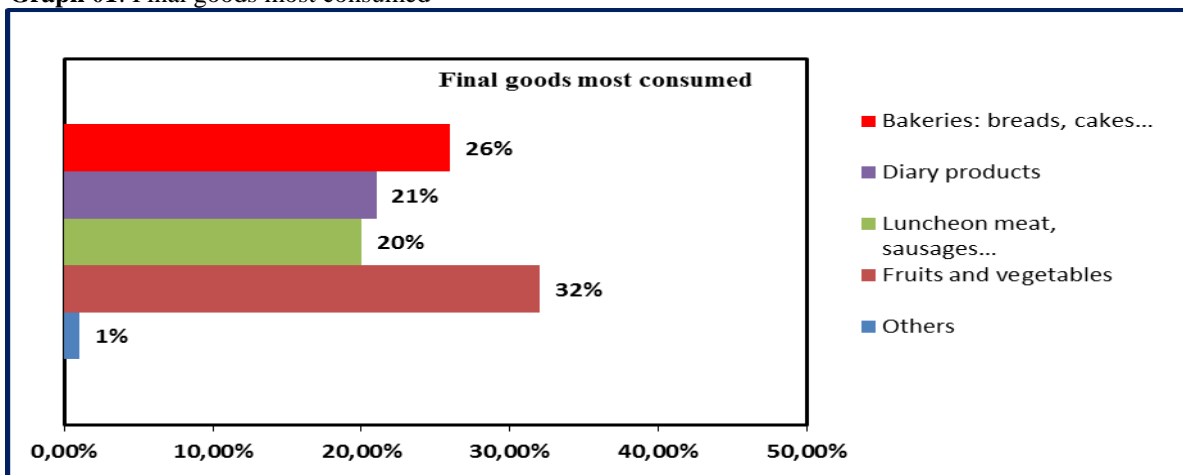
Question 02 asked about the customers' opinion, seeking to ascertain whether they have the habit of consuming organic or semi-organic products. A total of 53% of the consumers have as habit the consumption of environmentally friendly goods, while 47% consume traditional products. Considering the slow change in the consumers' habits, Coafaso should consider its niche market the 53% that are already supporters of the products.

Knowing if the customers already had knowledge about Coafaso - Cooperative Family Agriculture and Solidarity of Western Paraná, which has marketing center in Av. Cataratas from Foz do Iguaçu, was question 03. Only 15% of the interviewed already knew the cooperative. The reality reflected through this question must be the organization's main concern, as it reveals the brand weakness.

To those consumers that had knowledge of the cooperative, was asked in question 4 the reason why they frequented the institution. 80% of the surveyed related their visit to Coafaso due to the quality of the products.

Question 5 asked what sort of products customers normally purchase. In this question, each participant had two options. Graph 01 reveals the percentage of the answers.

**Graph 01:** Final goods most consumed



Source: Developed by the authors



Question 5 reveals that a high percentage of the customers purchase, at the same time, baking goods and fruits and vegetables. This data is considered an important data to the cooperative, since both product lines must be enhanced and available to customers so that both needs are supported in the same place.

Question 6 approaches the consumers' opinion about their awareness of Coafaso selling at markets, one in Itaipu and another in front of Costa Cavalcante Hospital. 71% of the participants were not conscious about the markets and revealed that they did not know the markets were at all related to Coafaso.

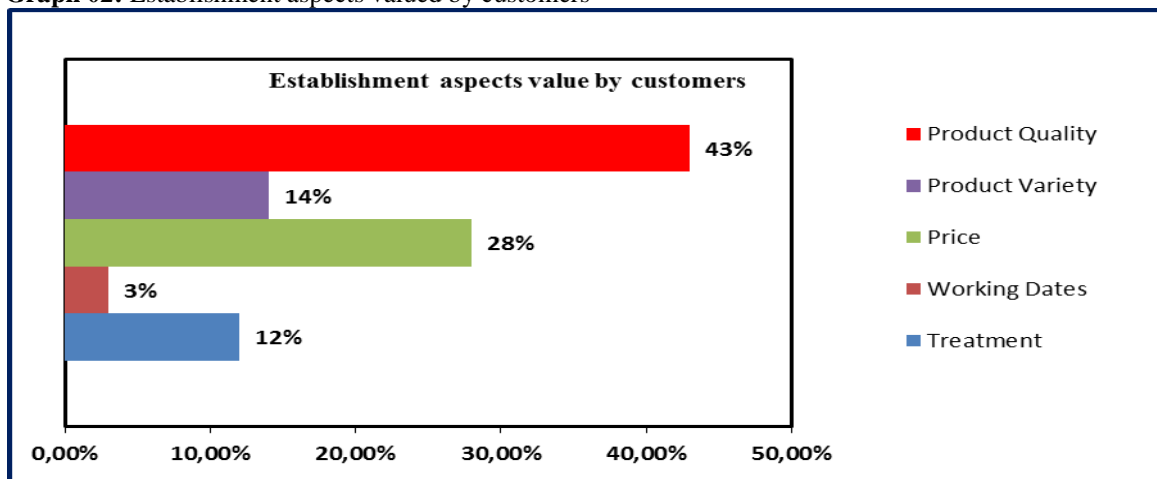
Knowing whether consumers value the brand with traditional products, semi-organic and organic, was the subject of question 7. The results shows that 79% of the participants value the brand, while 21 do not differ this aspect. Therefore, the organization must enhance their institutional image and product brand, considering that the quality is a discrepancy already achieved by the cooperative.

Question 8 is related to value of internal establishment's appearance (painting, furniture, lightening) in a scale of 25%, 50%, 75% and 100%. This query reveals that 72 of the surveyed, from the total of 112, value the internal aspect between 75% and 100%. Thus, considering that even the directors of the cooperative consider this aspect to be critical in its internal assessment, an urgent solution must be implemented.

Question 9 is about advertising, which questions the interviewed if they were convinced to buy a product from a flyer or product catalogue. 12% revealed that purchase goods that are fine advertised. However, 24% informed that normally purchase goods after viewing them in the establishment, while 64% confessed that flyers only invite them to visit the organization and, after visiting it, they decide whether to buy or not.

Question 10 referred to the valued variables in establishments from which participants purchase their goods. For this query, each surveyed had two options. Graph 02 reveals the percentage of the answers.

**Graph 02:** Establishment aspects valued by customers



Source: Developed by the authors

The previous question reveals a high percentage of clients that choose the institution according to the quality of products and prices. Considering that Coafaso already offers good quality products, it should conduct a price analysis in order to enhance their competitiveness and to add values.

The distance to the product is to what question 11 refers, which questions the maximum distance to the establishment the participants would be willing to travel according to the aspects from question 10. From the results, it can be concluded that 72% would be ready to make up to 8 kilometers to the chosen institution.

From question 12 it was known that only 3% of the surveyed had already accessed the cooperative's website. Furthermore, question 13 revealed that 44% of the sample would be willing to shop traditional products, fruits and vegetable, through the internet, while 36% stated the preference of purchasing those goods in person.

#### 4.4 Establishing Goals

It was verified that Coafaso is certain about the target audience, since their marketing channels are already oriented in such manner. Thus, knowing the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, in this section

of the Marketing Plan, the marketing goals to be achieved are presented, focusing mainly in marketing. The marketing objectives are actual facts that describe what the organization wants to achieve in a certain period.

The goals enables clarity of ideas, aiming to manage the market's relation, in a way that it obtains advantage over competition. It consists of specific decisions which determine the behavior of chosen market (Gomes, 2005).

Investigating the results from the analysis, the following objectives and aims are proposed, some of which should be implemented immediately, and others up to one year in these terms:

- a) Increase the portfolio of retail customers in 100%, considering certain products manufacture capacity;
- b) Hire consultants to develop graphic material, enhancing the institutional image and strengthening the brand of the cooperative;
- c) Introduce their products to representatives located in each region of the city (south, north east and west area).

#### *4.5 Action Program*

This step of the marketing plan aims to create the plan or action program, consisting of information such as: the action to be taken (what?), who should implement it (who?), the deadline (when?), how it be implemented (how?), what are the goals?

The development of the action program was based on the diagnosis previously presented, as well as, in the notes from the participants, based on the assumptions reported as follows:

- a) The facilities are granted by organs of the municipal administration and the products derived from family farming, with handmade features. In Foz do Iguacu the marketing center has working hours from Monday to Saturday;
- b) Coafaso performs on markets during some days of the week and on Fridays at Itaipu Dam, the main supporter of the institution. The cooperative takes part in regional and state markets, selling products from partners and advertising the cooperative's name. According to the coordinator of the Marketing Center, from the products sold in the markets, the ones with the highest demand are dairy products (cheese and butter), homemade jams, baked and cold cuts (salami and pork scratching);
- c) Apart from taking part in markets and marketing center, the cooperative also maintains a website for online shopping, however, the volume of products commercialized is low compared to other sales;
- d) Some sales are already supporting the demand for family farming products, nevertheless, some products are still not capable of coping with supply contracts, which inhibit advances in this type of market.

Once drafted the action program (Table 1), it is time to make every effort to implement, in other words, it is the time to put it into practice, committing to the goals, steps, deadlines and resources.

During the implementation, it becomes crucial to maintain an intense monitoring, evaluation and control of the action program. Periodically, it is suggested to evaluate the results, deploy and implement new actions to improve weaknesses. According to the authors Kotler and Keller (2006) apud Lima and Carvalho (2011), the top management should analyze the results of each period and take appropriate corrective action. Some internal and external measurements will be needed to assess progress and suggest possible changes.

Finally, it is clarified that this study was conducted to the preparation of the action program. Therefore, it is Coafaso's responsibility to analyze and verify the convenience and feasibility of this proposal. Thus, the implementation and control of actions phase will correspond to the own institution. Either way, a more detailed version of the marketing plan will be available to the directors of the organization and, if it is of interest of the cooperative, a short training on the subject of this research will be performed.

**Table 1:** Action Plan for Coafaso - Commercialization

OBJECTIVES	GOALS	HOW?	WHEN?	WHO?
Increase the volume of sales	Expand sales by 100% in the marketing center, markets and internet	Create campaigns directed to the target audience, leafleting the neighborhoods to disseminate the market dates, take part in local community and regional events (fartal, peixe-vivo market, religious festivals), disclose on local radio the neighborhood market dates, registering clients e-mails and sending direct mail disclosing the fair products	Immediately	Direction
Disclose the company	From 15% to 75%	Register the cooperative's brand to the INPI, label the products with the seal of Family Farming Cooperative, manufacture banners and seals	Immediately	Direction
Strengthen the intuitional image	Associate the cooperative's name with family farming originated products and healthy eating habits. Redesign labels 70% of products	Highlight on certified products as organic and semi-organic as the main benefits related to human health	Up to 6 months	Direction and employees
Increase marketing channels	Increase the supply and variety of products. Introduce the products of Coafaso to 2 representatives from each major region of Foz do Iguaçu (zone south, north, east and west)	Visit hotels in the area, deliver products and price lists. Send direct mails with the week's offering. Increase the production of higher preference customer's products, stimulate innovation and expansion of the product range	Immediately	Outside vendor, farmers and direction of Family Farming
Improvements in marketing channels	Readjust the physical structure to the theme. Perform one (1) renovation/rehabilitation of Coafaso's headquarters	Readjust the facade, paint and rearrange the furniture	Up to 1 year	Direction and Partners

Source: Developed by the authors

## 5 CONCLUSION

This study was developed to analyze the internal and external situation of a family farming cooperative, and from the achieved diagnosis, conduct a marketing plan, mainly directed at strengthening their marketing channels. Was used as a driver for preparing the marketing plan, the model proposed by Campomar and Ikeda (2006).

Amongst other results, the research revealed that 85% of the potential customers did not know about the cooperative. Considering that 53% of the surveyed value environmentally friendly products, the organization must advertise more their products, focusing on added values, strengthening the institutional image and the brand Coafaso.

Negative variables were found, such as: imprudent location of the establishment; little knowledge from the customers about the markets held by the cooperative; unattractive physical establishment; and scarce visits to the organization's website.

Positive aspects include: Coafaso produces good quality products, valued by 80% of the customers that already knew about the organization; almost 60% of potential customers already purchase the main products offered by the cooperative, such as, bakeries and fruit and vegetables; and almost 75% of the interviewed are willing to travel from 3 to 9 kilometers to seek for the products. It was also observed that the cooperative has the potential to improve their performance and increase the supply of products, either in quality or quantity.

Facing this scenario, it was established as marketing goals three main directions: a) increase the portfolio of retail customers in 100%, considering certain products production capacity; b) hire consultants to develop graphic material, able to better corporate image and strengthen the brand of the cooperative; c) introduce their products to representatives located in every region of the city (south, north, east and west zone)

Soon after, considering the diagnoses obtained and assumptions observed during the study, a program of action was elaborated, detailing the activities to be implemented in order to contribute to the increase in sales volume, strengthening the institutional image and improvements in selling channels, bringing positive results, direct and indirect, both for the families of family farming, and for the local community.

Thus, the answer to the presented problem occurred with the construction of a simple marketing plan and goal, feasible for cooperatives such as Coafaso, from which they will achieve a greater number of consumers, without weighting on the financial budget, but at the same time maintaining their organizational characteristics directed the production of ecofriendly goods.

The study contributed to the statement of marketing as a primary tool also for family farming cooperatives. It was found that it is possible to reconcile the promotion of marketing and maintaining an ecological institutional image. For that, it is recommended that Coafaso seeks support of marketing professionals to help with different visual and graphic aspects. It is also advised that Coafaso trains all their staff and members, motivating them to maintain ethical behavior, corresponding to the values espoused by the organization.

The limitations of this study are considered to be given in choosing only one customer profile, elementary school and high school teachers, and higher education professors. Limiting it to one audience may condition all the organization's strategies to be directed on the same way, and any sudden change in the public's behavior may cause major impacts on the organization's financial situation.

As a suggestion for future studies related to family farming, it is advisable to focus on the difficulties of small products cooperatives, in relation to the adequacy of the Food Acquisition Programme – PAA requirements, as some complaints from producers regarding the low annual limit delivery by producers were discovered during the research, as well as the price policy in the acquisition of food.

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