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INTERIORIZATION OF INNOVATION



ORGANIZERS OF THE COLLECTION

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INTERNALIZATION OF INNOVATION

ALI-SEBRAE Program:
Case studies conducted in the
States of Minas Gerais and
São Paulo



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ABOUT THE ORGANIZER

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ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Launched in 2008 in partnership with the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), it aimed to provide qualified and specialized support to micro and small businesses, achieving impressive numbers.

Data from Sebrae (2023) indicate that the Program trained more than 5,000 ALIs agents and supported more than 400,000 companies across the country. It is an initiative dedicated to using innovation as a tool to solve problems and challenges faced by small businesses, whether urban or rural. Within the scope of the Brasil Mais Program – a partnership between SEBRAE and the Ministry of Economy – innovation is understood as a strategic means of reducing costs and/or increasing revenue for SMEs.

What began with a focus on bringing innovative solutions to companies was later expanded to six more categories: ALI Productivity, ALI Digital Transformation, ALI Rural Innovation, ALI Entrepreneurial Education, ALI Innovation Ecosystems, and ALI Geographical Indication. In all categories, it operates specifically, addressing the particularities of different territorial and sectoral contexts (ALI, 2025). Thus, ALI's main objective is to foster the success of these ventures, contributing to the sustainable development of their territories.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

To this end, it encourages entrepreneurial education, trains individuals and organizations for innovation, and develops actions to harness the economic and social potential of Brazilian territories, which includes supporting local arrangements and systems (also called Ecosystems) with an emphasis on sustainability and technology.

The case studies presented here were developed in two of the most important states in Brazil: São Paulo and Minas Gerais. The former is responsible for the largest Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with a diversified and more populous economy; the latter due to its large territorial extension, has a strong impact on food and mining production. Therefore, whether under the old "coffee with milk" policy or today, they continue to play a relevant role in the national economic scenario.

Regarding the modalities, the studies focused on: ALI Innovation Ecosystems and ALI Productivity. The ALI Innovation Ecosystems works directly on territorial development, promoting initiatives to strengthen the culture of innovation. The main objective of ALI Productivity is to promote innovation in companies, especially in more economically developed regions, aiming to increase the productivity and competitiveness of small businesses in the industrial, commercial, and service sectors.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

It begins with work related to the ALI category Innovation Ecosystems applied in cities of different sizes and regions of the State of Minas Gerais such as: INOVAP (Alto Paraopeba), Movimento Inovatu (Paracatu), Norte Valley (Montes Claros), and Zebu Valley (Uberaba). Next, we present the cases related to the ALI Productivity category, with operations at the SEBRAE regional office in Jundiaí (SP).

All studies reaffirm the relevance of the ALI Program and demonstrate how SEBRAE has impacted territories and businesses with different structures and realities.

We thank SEBRAE for the opportunity and the entrepreneurs and local stakeholders for their partnership and trust.

Enjoy your reading!

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VARIOUS AUTHORS

ALI ECOSYSTEM

CASES OF INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS IN
MINAS GERAIS

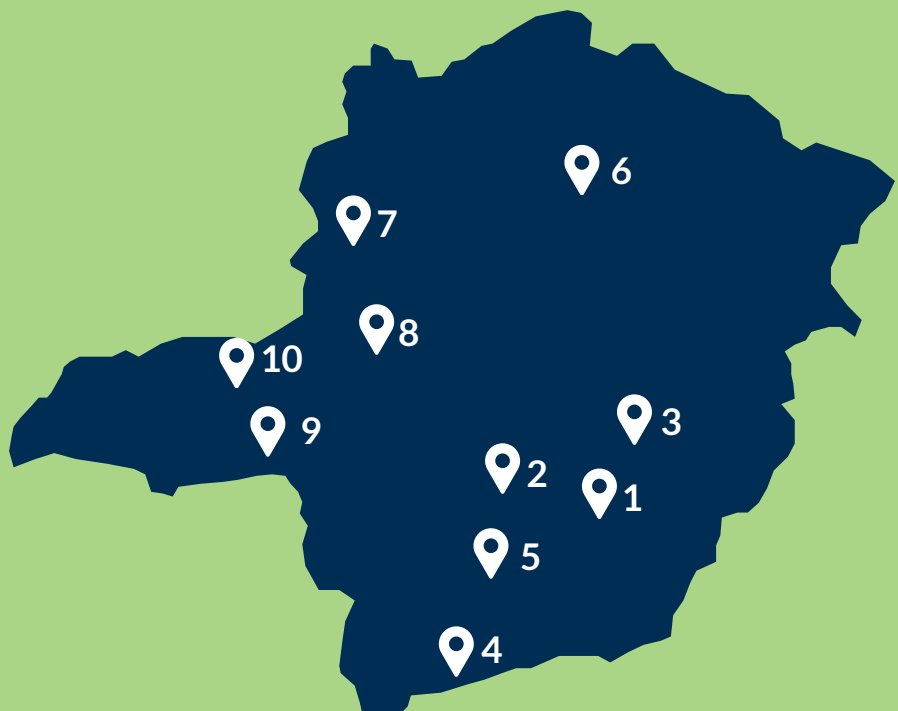


Sebrae has been working to promote innovation in Brazilian ecosystems, with emphasis on the Innovation Ecosystems Methodology (ELI), developed in 2019, and the creation of the Local Innovation Agent - ALI Ecosystem project. In Minas Gerais, using the ELI methodology, 10 Innovation Ecosystems were identified in different regions: Itabira Innovation Ecosystem, Hard Tech (Itajubá), Inova Novo Oeste (Divinópolis), INOVAP (Alto Paraopeba), Movimento Inovatu (Paracatu), Norte Valley (Montes Claros), Patos Valley (Patos de Minas), UBERHUB (Uberlândia), Vale dos Ipês (Lavras), and Zebu Valley (Uberaba). Of these, four are presented below in this collection, as they present the challenges of reconnecting local actors, given their disparate socioeconomic realities.

THE CITIES REPRESENTED

1. Alto Paraopeba
2. Divinópolis
3. Itabira
4. Itajubá
5. Lavras

6. Montes Claros
7. Paracatu
8. Patos de Minas
9. Uberaba
10. Uberlândia



ELI METHODOLOGY AND THE ALI ECOSYSTEM PROGRAM

In the literature on institutional innovation arrangements, different terms are found, such as 'Innovation System' (IS) or 'Innovation Ecosystem' (EI). Sebrae uses the latter, considering it as a "set of complex relationships that form between the actors or entities involved in enabling technological development and innovation" (SEBRAE & CERTI, 2019, p. 7).

More than a definition, Sebrae also contributed to the development and application of the Local Innovation Ecosystem Methodology - ELI Methodology, which addresses the performance, management, and monitoring of innovation ecosystems by maturity levels. Created in 2019, an initiative of SEBRAE/PR with contributions from the Foundation for Reference Centers in Innovative Technologies (CERTI), the ELI Methodology aims to map, analyze, and classify local actors, with the goal of boosting the development of innovative companies and businesses that pursue a culture of innovation.

Among its operational strategies, the ELI Methodology proposes analyzing and diagnosing the degree of maturity of each Innovation Ecosystem based on five main dimensions: innovation environments, programs and actions, science, technology, and innovation (STI) institutions, public policies, and capital. Ultimately, this methodology offers a systematization of these actions.

For local actors, this facilitates the identification of which dimensions should be further incentivized; for Sebrae, this diagnosis helps direct actions and efforts that can be offered to benefit the territory. One initiative could be the offering of the ALI Ecosystem Program.

While the ELI Methodology focuses on the operation, management, and monitoring of innovation ecosystems at different maturity levels, the ALI Ecosystem Program supports the institutional arrangement by hiring a Local Innovation Agent – ALI Agent (Sebrae scholarship recipient) for a fixed term. The focus of this program is on ecosystems that have minimal actor articulation and still need support to develop and strengthen. Therefore, the ALI Agent is fully dedicated to supporting the demands of an ecosystem (SEBRAE, 2023). The role of the ALI Ecosystem Agent is to help activate innovation in the territory through agile tools for diagnosis, planning, and implementation of solutions that can articulate, integrate, and energize innovation actors, contributing to local development and the creation and strengthening of innovative companies.

In Minas Gerais, using the ELI methodology, 10 Innovation Ecosystems were identified in different regions. This collection will present four of them: INOVAP (Alto Paraopeba), Inovatu (Paracatu), Norte Valley (Montes Claros), and Zebu Valley (Uberaba). Each case study below will present the nuances of the territorial reality and the challenges each Agent faced in supporting their respective Ecosystem.

LOCAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM
OF ALTO PARAPEBA

INOVAP



CHALLENGES IN DISCLOSING AN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM WITH INITIAL MATURITY THAT INCLUDES THREE MUNICIPALITIES: A CASE STUDY ON THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM OF ALTO PARAOPÉBA/MG – INOVAP

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ABSTRACT

This case study highlights the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems as catalysts for local economic and social development. One dilemma faced by early-maturity ecosystems is the need to increase their visibility within their own territory and attract new stakeholders and opportunities. This study will explore the strategies adopted by the Alto Paraopeba Innovation Ecosystem (INOVAP) to address this challenge and promote innovation. INOVAP's unique feature is the integration of three cities: Congonhas, Conselheiro Lafaiete, and Ouro Branco, in Minas Gerais. The methodology used was a case study using a questionnaire prepared via Google Forms and sent to stakeholders in the Ecosystem and participants of the UAI Summit INOVAP event.

The results revealed that nearly 24% of respondents learned about INOVAP through the UAI Summit INOVAP, while more than 80% demonstrated increased motivation to contribute to the Ecosystem after the event. Furthermore, all respondents affirmed the importance of another edition of the UAI Summit INOVAP in the region. It can be concluded that the strategies adopted were effective not only in promoting INOVAP, but also in stimulating the culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in the region. The lessons learned will be valuable for replicability of the methodology in other ecosystems, encouraging the search for innovative solutions to local and regional challenges and strengthening connections between people and institutions committed to development through innovation.

Keywords: Innovation Ecosystems; Alto Paraopeba; INOVAP.

1. ALTO PARAOPEBA AND ITS INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

The Alto Paraopeba region of Minas Gerais, historically marked by mining, has undergone significant transformations with the establishment of large steel companies in recent decades. In response to the social and economic impacts of this growth, the Public Consortium for the Development of Alto Paraopeba (CODAP) was created in 2006. Aiming to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on mining, leaders from Congonhas, Conselheiro Lafaiete, and Ouro Branco joined forces to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

The geographic proximity and complementary characteristics of these cities favored the creation of an integrated network of collaboration, which now brings together major industries such as Gerdau, CSN, and Vale, higher education institutions, public agencies, and new businesses, including startups and technology-based companies.

With support from Sebrae and consulting from the CERTI Foundation, the Alto Paraopeba Local Innovation Ecosystem (INOVAP) was created in 2020, officially structured in 2021 with an "initial maturity" diagnosis. This case study analyzes INOVAP's performance, focusing on the impact of the UAI Summit INOVAP 2023, an event that aimed to increase the visibility of the ecosystem, attract new stakeholders, and promote regional development. The methodology adopted involved a case study with a questionnaire administered via Google Forms, distributed in March 2024 to participants and stakeholders in the ecosystem through WhatsApp groups.

2. CONTEXTUALIZATION

In May 2023, Sebrae hired a Local Innovation Agent (ALI) in the Ecosystems category to work at INOVAP, aiming to drive the ecosystem's development through actions adapted to regional realities. As a recent structure, INOVAP has adopted a practice of benchmarking with other more established ecosystems, promoting technical missions and participating in events as a learning and integration strategy.

In the first four months of ALI's operations, Sebrae promoted or supported important events, such as the Minas Summit in June 2023, which had approximately 25 participants from Alto Paraopeba. Attendance at this event was crucial for expanding knowledge about INOVAP itself among local stakeholders, generating connections, and engaging new participants.

This journey culminated in the creation of the Uai Summit INOVAP, conceived after remarkable experiences such as the ALIs' mission to Rio Grande do Sul and participation in the E-Festival in July 2023. The initiative took shape after contact with the Uai Summit in Viçosa, resulting in a partnership to hold the event in Alto Paraopeba. The Uai Summit INOVAP took place on November 17, 2023, in Conselheiro Lafaiete, and represented the first event focused exclusively on innovation in the region, led by local businesspeople and aimed at entrepreneurs from different sectors. Participation in events such as Hacktown and the Startup Summit was also essential in shaping the proposal. This case study analyzes how the Uai Summit INOVAP helped solve the dilemma of the ecosystem's low visibility, promoting recognition and attracting new stakeholders and opportunities.

3. DILEMMA AND STRATEGIES FOR ITS SOLUTION

Faced with the challenge of increasing INOVAP's visibility in Alto Paraopeba and attracting new players and opportunities, several strategies were outlined: strategic partnerships, digital marketing, innovation training, and event promotion.

The UAI Summit INOVAP was the main action consolidating these strategies. Focused on entrepreneurs and innovation enthusiasts, the event aimed to position INOVAP as a regional reference, compatible with its "initial maturity" stage, according to the ELI Methodology. Even planned for approximately 300 people, the event faced and overcame five main challenges, structured around the following actions:

i) Exceeding expectations: actively listening to stakeholders

ALI Ecosystems began by actively listening to INOVAP stakeholders to understand their motivations and align expectations. The conversations reinforced the role of innovation events in fostering knowledge and visibility.

ii) Recruitment and engagement of the Organizing Committee: motivation for pioneering and giving first

The committee was formed voluntarily via WhatsApp and divided into four areas (communication, curation, sponsorship, and infrastructure). Motivation was based on concepts such as "pioneering" and "give first," strengthening collaboration and collective commitment.

iii) Collaborative work by people who don't know each other: constant alignment for a greater result

The autonomy of the committee leaders generated belonging and creativity. Even with the departure of a leader, the group reorganized, avoiding postponement of the event and ensuring credibility. Documents such as the playbook and media kit were prepared by the committee, with support from ALI. Sebrae played an essential role in attracting sponsors, being the most prominent brand in the publicity. The event had 18 sponsoring companies and 38 supporting companies.

v) Alignment between the three cities in the Ecosystem: establishing a recurring schedule for rotation of the host city

Conselheiro Lafaiete was chosen as the host city due to its population size and infrastructure, accounting for 60% of the Ecosystem's population. To balance regional perceptions, a commitment to rotation among the municipalities in future editions was created. Documentary records (spreadsheets and playbooks) were also created to facilitate future organization.

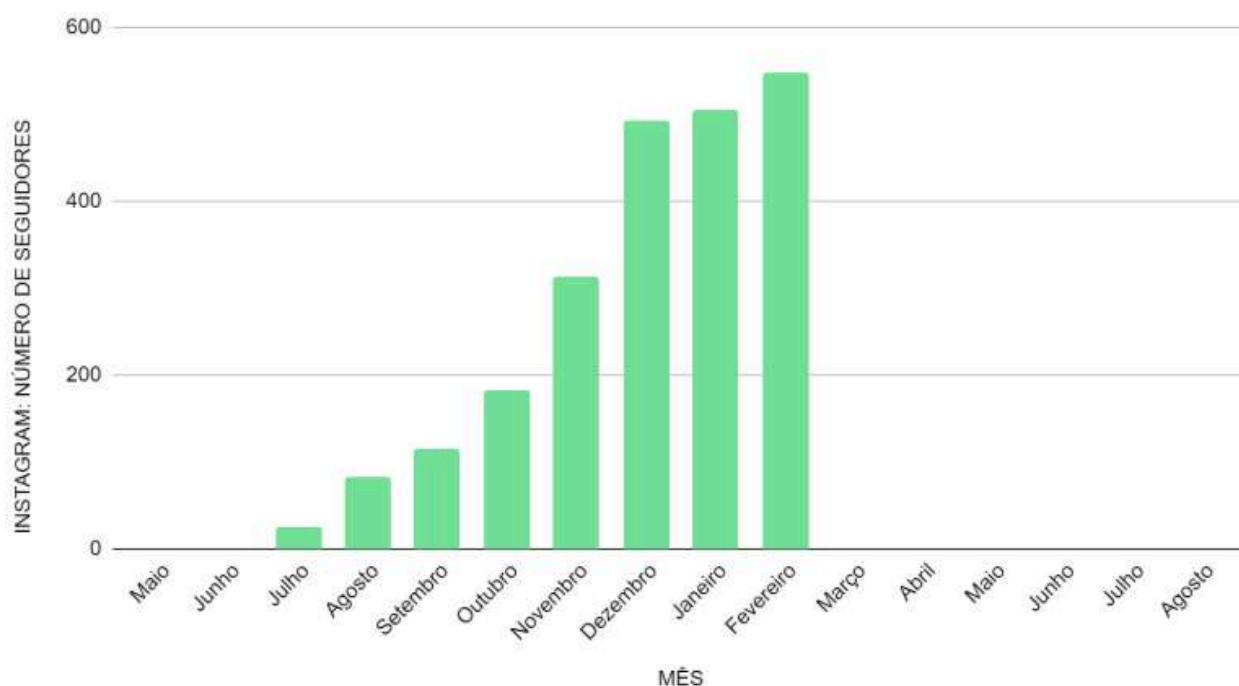
v) Reaching the expected audience: collaboration between stakeholders

Promotion began after initial planning with social media campaigns, student and teacher mobilization, collaborations with business owners and authorities, and individual invitations to mayors. Charging admission fees helped ensure audience commitment and a share of the event's revenue. The chosen location allowed space flexibility, which proved to be a good fit given the turnout. Sebrae's support, via the ALI Program, was essential for coordination, engagement, and institutional strengthening. The event was attended by the mayors of Ouro Branco and Brás Pires, expanding the political and institutional impact of the UAI INOVAP Summit.

4. UAI SUMMIT INOVAP 2023

The UAI Summit INOVAP was held in Conselheiro Lafaiete on November 17, 2023, bringing together more than 300 participants. The program followed a structured journey based on the "5W2H" model, addressing different perspectives on innovation through lectures and thematic panels.

Graph 1 - Growth in the number of followers of INOVAP's Instagram profile

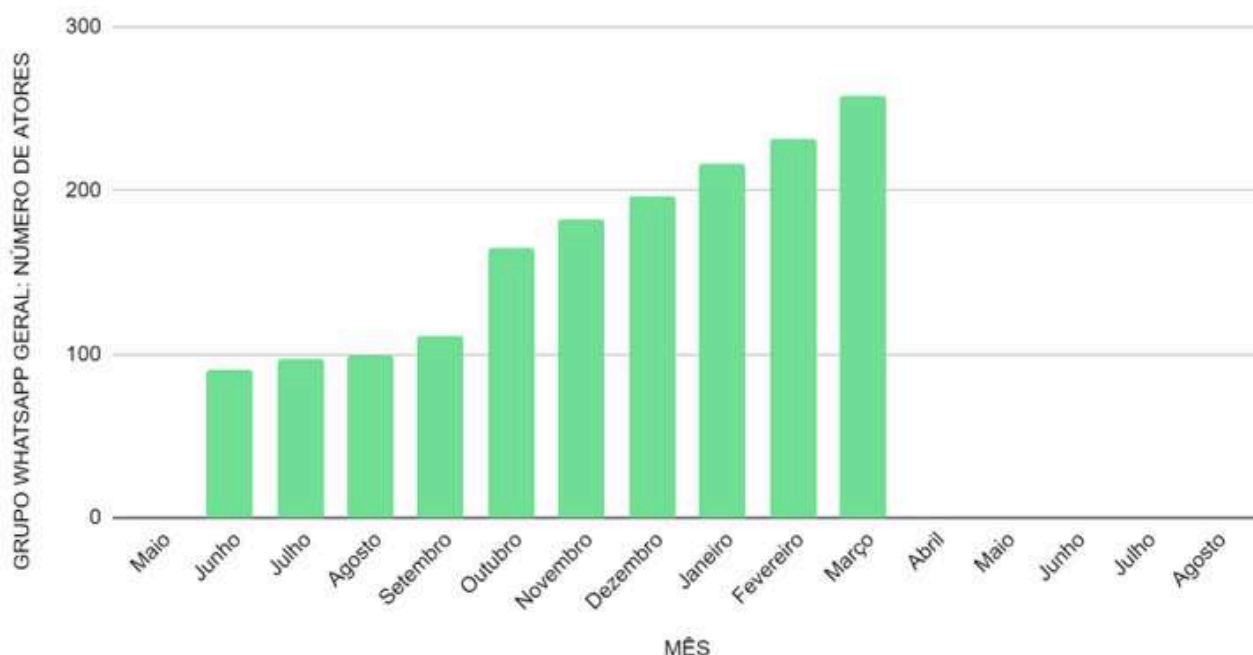


Source: Prepared by the author.

Similarly, the number of participants in INOVAP's WhatsApp group also increased, as shown in Graph 2, demonstrating greater engagement and strengthening of the network. Furthermore, the event promoted social impact through the collection of over 65 kg of food with the "social entry." After the event, the Organizing Committee and INOVAP's governance held meetings to evaluate the results and plan future editions.

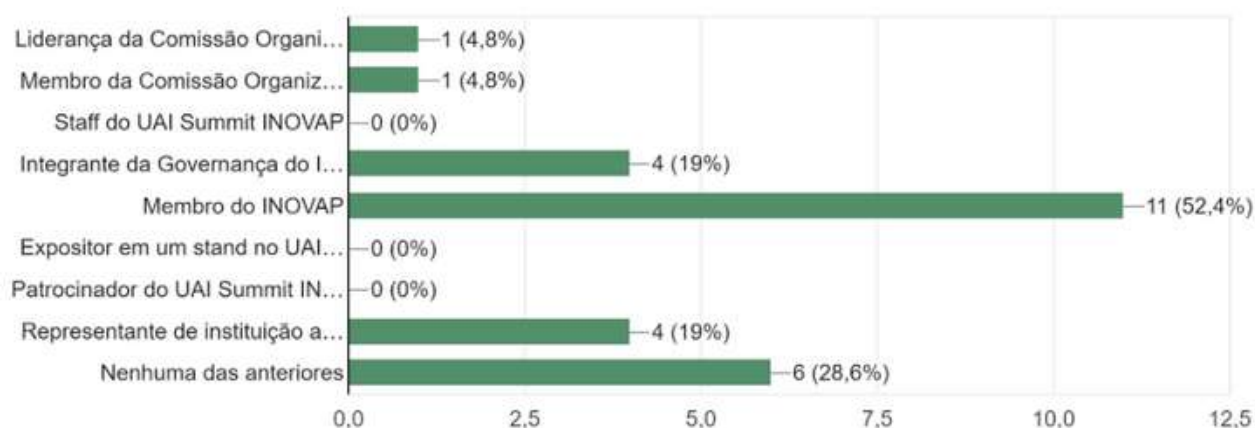
An additional survey, sent in March 2024, gathered impressions and expectations about the UAI Summit INOVAP. Graph 3 shows the respondents' self-identification: 52.4% consider themselves members of INOVAP and 28.6% do not identify with any category within the ecosystem. The majority of respondents represented private companies (57.1%) and Conselheiro Lafaiete (71.4%).

Graph 2 - Growth in the number of people in INOVAP's main WhatsApp group



Source: Prepared by the author.

Graph 3 - Form responses to the question: "How do you identify yourself?"



Source: Form constructed for this study.

The results show that 85.7% strongly agree that the event brought more knowledge to the region, and 81% said it increased their motivation to contribute to the Ecosystem. All respondents stated that a new edition is important. Based on the qualitative reports, the UAI Summit INOVAP was considered the starting point of a regional innovation movement.

5. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSION

During the UAI Summit INOVAP, important lessons were learned for future replication of the methodology in other ecosystems. Understanding the event's impact was essential to engage participants and guide the Ecosystem's actions strategically. The post-event survey indicated strong audience identification with the proposed objectives, highlighting the value of initiatives that foster innovation and regional entrepreneurship.

The results were impressive: high participation, strong interaction among stakeholders, and a collaborative environment. The organization of the event propelled the Ecosystem's development to a new level of maturity. The ALI Ecosystems Program played a key role, offering support and connecting the various stakeholders through strategic partnerships. The conclusion is that the event was a significant opportunity to strengthen the culture of innovation, unifying the three INOVAP cities and paving the way for rotating annual editions that further expands its reach and impact.

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PARACATU LOCAL
INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

INOVATU



INNOVATION IN PARACATU: ALI METHODOLOGY APPLIED TO REACTIVATE AN ECOSYSTEM WITHOUT PRIOR DIAGNOSIS

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ABSTRACT

This case study addresses the possibilities of applying the ELI-SEBRAE methodology in territories where there was no prior diagnosis and, at the same time, discusses how to reactivate the ecosystem, as it had become stagnant. It highlights how the ELI methodology can be adapted and implemented based on the experience of applying it in the municipality of Paracatu, associated with the ALI Ecosystem Program, which provides a Local Agent to support this environment. To this end, the challenges, opportunities, and specific characteristics of the territory were identified, and local stakeholders were involved in identifying needs and defining strategies to foster leadership and innovation. The case study highlights the steps, tools, and approaches used to strengthen local governance in the Inovatu Ecosystem and develop strategies and actions adapted to the specific realities of this region.

The process of reactivating the Ecosystem worked, both through the application of the ELI methodology and through the support of the ALI Agent.

Keywords: Paracatu; Innovation Ecosystems; Governance; ELI Methodology; ALI Program.

1 - INTRODUCTION

Paracatu is a municipality located in the northwestern region of the state of Minas Gerais, in the Minas Gerais savannah, with approximately 94,000 inhabitants. (IBGE, 2022) It boasts several waterfalls, mansions, and churches from the colonial period. Its historic center is listed as a Brazilian cultural heritage site, and boasts a rich cuisine. (IPHAN, 2012)

Its history dates back to colonial Brazil. In 1744, bandeirantes reported to the crown the discovery of the mines in the Paracatu Valley. However, there is evidence that the settlement had already been founded years earlier. The last major gold discovery

in Minas Gerais occurred in the Paracatu River Valley in the early 18th century. Gold fueled the growth of the Arraial de São Luiz and Sant'Anna of the Minas of Paracatu, which, in 1798, was elevated to the Vila de Paracatu do Príncipe. With the decline of alluvial gold, the town's economy was affected, but it was revived based on agriculture. Another significant moment was the construction of Brasília in the 1950s. This gave rise to renewed impetus, and Paracatu benefited from its location on the BR-040 highway.

In the 21st century, its economy relies on large-scale, highly technological agriculture; intensive livestock farming; maintained mineral exploration, but prohibited the old-fashioned mining method; and coexists with rudimentary subsistence farming and extensive livestock farming. (Paracatu City Hall, n.d.).

The municipality's main economic activities are agriculture, particularly its irrigated area, and mining, particularly gold mining, as Paracatu is home to the largest gold mine in the country and the largest open-pit mine in the world. The municipality has excelled in job creation and attracts residents from various regions. In education, it has consolidated itself as an educational hub, with the presence of the Federal Institute of Triângulo Mineiro (IFTM) and the private universities Athens University Center (UniAtenas) and the Faculty of Noroeste de Minas (Finom), including a medical program.

However, as a municipality linked to mining, local stakeholders began discussions about its future when mineral reserves cease. Seeking to translate this concern into action, the first workshops introducing the topic took place at the end of 2020. In total, there were 36 hours of remote workshops on the following topics: Innovative and Creative Cities; Community Management; Innovation Initiatives; Ecosystem Management; and 14 hours of in-person meetings for the Construction of the Paracatu Ecosystem, where an action plan was established (Ulhoa, 2020). At the end of 2020, a group called Movimento Inovatu was created, which is the Local Innovation Ecosystem of Paracatu.

According to Sebrae and Certi (2019, p. 7):

An innovation ecosystem can be compared to a biological ecosystem, which can be understood, in short, as a complex set of relationships between living resources, habitats, and inhabitants of an area whose function is to maintain a state of sustained balance. An innovation ecosystem, on the other hand, is characterized by a set of complex relationships formed between the actors or entities involved in enabling technological development and innovation. Thus, it can be understood that the various ecosystems are seen as the result of the interactions between their actors, with each actor having their own role.

In 2021, the Paracatu Innovation Ecosystem Governance Group was established, composed of representatives from public authorities, private institutions, and entrepreneurs who proposed to collaboratively manage actions, projects, and activities focused on innovation. In the same year, the brand that would synthesize this mobilization was created: Movimento Inovatu.

This work is a case study, according to FIA (2020). These are used as a benchmark, that is, as inspiration for those who wish to carry out something similar to what was reported. According to Martins (2008, n.p.), it is: "a methodological strategy [...] to evaluate or describe dynamic situations [...]. The aim is to grasp the entirety of a situation and, creatively, describe, understand, and interpret the complexity of a specific case, through a deep and exhaustive dive into a delimited object.

The object of this study is the Paracatu Innovation Ecosystem which is at the initial maturity level. It was observed that there are actors cooperating to strengthen governance with representatives of the four helixes: academia, private initiative, government, and organized civil society.

The dilemma that guided the study was the need to simultaneously develop the application of the local innovation ecosystem methodology and promote the reactivation of Inovatu.

The work is organized into five sections, including this introduction. The introduction begins by presenting the Inovatu Ecosystem, its context, and the dilemma of this case study. The third section presents how this dilemma was addressed, and the conclusion, followed by references, is presented.

2. INNOVATU ECOSYSTEM: CONTEXT AND DILEMMA

Paracatu began its existence during the gold rush in the 17th century. With the transfer of the capital to Brasília, it began to benefit from its proximity to the Federal District (IPHAN, 2012). From the 1970s onward, agriculture and advanced mining consolidated their economic pillars, making the municipality a leading producer of gold, zinc, grains, and derivatives (IBGE, 2012).

Given the finite mineral resources, initiatives for economic diversification and sustainable development emerged. A 2010 assessment by the Morro do Ouro Mine company noted concern about the impacts of the potential closure of the mine and the involvement of ADESP in the search for alternative sources of income (de Queiroz, 2010).

Created in the 2000s, ADESP coordinates actions with the public and private sectors for projects in the areas of culture, education, the environment, and security.

In 2010, with SEBRAE, it implemented "Paracatu 2030," a two-year sustainable development plan focused on quality of life and reducing inequalities. In 2020, Nexa, with Sebrae and ADESP, promoted the "Paracatu Movimenta" project, with 36 hours of remote workshops and 14 hours of in-person workshops on innovative cities, community management, and the development of an action plan for the municipality (Ulhoa, 2020). The following year, the Governance Group and the "Movimento Inovatu" brand were created, with four central objectives: educational activities on entrepreneurship; a communication channel; a diverse management committee; and benchmarking with reference cities.

In 2021 and 2022, the group promoted initiatives such as the Fator S Challenge (solutions for agribusiness), Fator S Agita, hackathons, and meetings on tourism, sustainability, and innovation, with the participation of institutions such as UniAtenas, Finom, and IFTM. However, at the end of 2022, the group ceased operations. It resumed in 2023 with Sebrae's ALI Program, which assigned a Local Agent to Inovatu.

Since 2019, Sebrae and the Certi Foundation have structured the ELI Methodology, focused on managing and monitoring ecosystems by maturity levels (SEBRAE & CERTI, 2019, p. 5). In Minas Gerais, only three ecosystems have not applied it —among them, Paracatu. Without a prior diagnosis, it was up to the ALI agent to map actors and demands as a basis for reactivating Inovatu.

Figure 01- Timeline



Fonte: Apresentação Inovatu

3. SOLVING THE DILEMMA: APPLYING THE ELI METHODOLOGY AND AGENT SUPPORT ALI

Since there was no prior diagnosis or documentation beyond the 2022 Intervention Plan, there was no clear starting point for the Innovation Agent and the Consultant to define an activity plan. Considering the group's low maturity and the existing plan, the strategy was organized into five main fronts: raising community awareness about the topic of innovation and the roles of stakeholders; supporting and connecting the entrepreneurial community through meetings; creating and maintaining communication mechanisms; strengthening governance; and encouraging the improvement of innovation environments.

The first action was an alignment meeting with the local Sebrae (Brazilian State Department of Education) to map the stakeholders and understand the dynamics within the governance group. Since the Agent's arrival occurred during a pause in activities, a meeting was held with the consultant to conduct a workshop to reactivate the group. This opportunity allowed the Agent to be introduced, her role clarified, and the attendees' perspectives on the history of the Inovatu Movement.

The workshop was held at Sicoob Credigerais, with six representatives from different institutions: the Secretariat of Development, Sebrae, IFTM, ADESP, and Sicoob. Some resistance was noted within the group to new approaches, making it necessary to recognize past achievements and focus on the future. It also became clear that part of the group did not fully understand how governance works and the roles of each stakeholder.

During the workshop, the importance of better defining how governance works and preparing stakeholders to integrate new representatives was emphasized. The lack of defined roles and the fact that the presidency was in transition were identified. The Agent gained access to the Instagram account and the Drive containing records of previous actions and began conducting visits and individual interviews with the stakeholders. These conversations deepened the understanding of existing relationships, identified potential leaders, and strengthened ties.

The need for an innovation training path for stakeholders became clear, including technical missions to expand their repertoire. In July 2022, the appointment of a new president was coordinated, as the previous leadership was inactive. The new president was officially appointed at an August meeting. A review of the bylaws was suggested, but the group showed resistance, and the Agent was still unclear about the points that should be modified.

Also in July, the Agent and the Sebrae Analyst participated in a technical mission to Rio Grande do Sul with other agents and consultants from Minas Gerais. The experience reinforced the importance of conducting missions so that local stakeholders could also understand the role of leadership and develop a broader vision of innovation.

Throughout 2023, Agente continued to promote initiatives such as: introducing the ecosystem to new stakeholders, participating in external events, supporting the Paracatu Tourism Challenge Hackathon, Empreenda Paracatu, accelerating hackathon projects, presenting case studies such as the one in Ijuí, meetings to enable an Innovation Center in Paracatu, and encouraging the creation of an entrepreneurial community linked to the Productivity Program.

Governance meetings remained frequent, although with varying numbers of participants. They were essential to strengthening group cohesion and creating a more collaborative environment. In September and October 2023, workshops were held to review the Intervention Plan and plan for 2024.

At the first meeting, participants discussed how they could contribute, defined priority actions, and assessed the possibilities of their institutions in an ideal scenario. The dynamic was divided into three parts: general discussion, groups by area, and presentation of proposals.

In October, the focus was on deepening the planned actions. The previous plan was shared, and participants brought suggestions for improvement. Despite the absence of some confirmed participants, the workshop helped adjust the plan and direct the following year's actions. With the new directions, the group began 2024 by structuring thematic working groups, initially divided into two and later expanded as new volunteers joined. In July 2024, the following WGs were active: Governance, ICTI/Innovation Environments, Communication, Programs and Actions, and Municipal Innovation Law.

This division enabled greater focus and a culture of practical action. One of the revived initiatives was Inovatu Talks, with three meetings under the theme "Stakeholders in Focus." Two were virtual: the first with the City Hall presenting its Development Plan, and the second with Nexa Resources showcasing its Open Innovation platform. The third was in-person at Sicoob Credigerais, bringing together leaders from the cooperative and the ecosystem to discuss their relationship with innovation.

In April 2024, with the group more established, the Technical Mission to Rio Grande do Sul was held, involving members of the governance group and regional leaders.

The goal was to provide an immersive experience in successful practices, with visits to Tecnosinos (São Leopoldo), Feevale (Campo Bom), Pacto Alegre and Tecnopuc (Porto Alegre), and the Gravataí Innovation Secretariat. Sebrae Minas provided support with transportation, accommodation, and logistics, while Agência Nacional structured the entire journey with a focus on maximizing the participants' improving performance.

Before the mission, an official invitation was extended to leaders, encouraging them to share their expectations. During the mission, there was alignment of objectives, distribution of materials, questionnaires, and moments of reflection. After the mission, an integration meeting welcomed new members. With 13 participants, the mission was considered a success. Reports indicated that it was "inspiring" and "useful," generating ideas, a sense of belonging, and increased engagement, including the involvement of representatives from the agricultural sector. The sense of belonging index, measured by a questionnaire based on the ELI Methodology, increased from 2.3 (August 2023) to 4.81 after the mission.

In addition to the mission, the group also participated in the ELI Summit with 11 members wearing the Inovatu Movement t-shirts (Figure 2), accompanied by representatives from Patos de Minas and three other members who went on their own.

Figure 02: Participation in the Eli Summit



Source: Agent Report

As the months passed, increased stakeholder engagement and strengthened governance became noticeable. New participants were reached through meetings, presentations, events, technical missions, and interactions on social media, such as the Inovatu Community open group and the Instagram page

As the months passed, increased stakeholder engagement and strengthened governance became noticeable. New participants were reached through meetings, presentations, events, technical missions, and interactions on social media, such as the Inovatu Community open group and the Instagram page.

To measure actions after the start of work in May 2023, Table 1 was created, based on the Agent's monthly reports.

Table 01 - Inovatu Movement Ecosystem Actions - May 2023 to July 2024.

Tipo de Atividade	Missões Técnicas	Apresentação do Ecosistema	Reuniões de Governança	Eventos
Quantidade	5	36	13	17

Source: Prepared by the author based on the ALI ELI Program Monthly Reports (2023 and 2024)

Another way to visualize engagement is through the Inovatu Movement's Actor Map (Figure 03), which shows the diversity of participants: government, organized civil society, ICTIs, companies, and innovation mechanisms.

Figure 03: Map of Actors of the Innovative Movement



APresentation of the Inovatu Movement

Comparing the 2023 scenario to that of July 2024, we see a more structured and active governance group. Meetings, which were previously infrequent, have become frequent. The number of participants has increased from 55 to 86, with new members already integrated into the group's dynamics, understanding the role they can play in driving local innovation.

4. CONCLUSION

The Inovatu Movement emerged with relevant representatives from all sectors, but it needed to organize and strengthen itself to welcome and retain new members over time.

Considering the context of Paracatu, launching a new action plan without considering previous initiatives could compromise the engagement of stakeholders already involved and the credibility of the process. Therefore, the strategy adopted was to listen to participants, validate their experiences, and, based on them, build joint actions.

This approach, albeit more gradual, allowed for a better understanding of local dynamics, strengthened the governance foundation, and created a more receptive and collaborative environment. The group grew in number and participation, but most importantly, the emergence of a structure that favors the continuity of collective work.

Currently, the group is more mature and structured, recognizing its role in the development of the local innovation ecosystem. The adopted strategy contributed significantly to this progress, promoting consistent results over time.

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LOCAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM
OF MONTES CLAROS

NORTE VALLEY



THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS: A CASE STUDY OF THE NORTH VALLEY

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1. ABSTRACT

This case study explores the impact of the lack of active use of communication channels, such as Instagram, on the participation and effectiveness of the actions of the Norte Valley Ecosystem, highlighting the role of the Local Innovation Agent Program in this ecosystem. The lack of knowledge and interaction among stakeholders with the activities developed in this Community creates a communication gap, hindering collaboration and participant engagement. This disconnect can fragment the ecosystem, limiting its potential for innovation and growth. Therefore, the active maintenance of communication channels is essential to promote greater integration and collaboration among ecosystem stakeholders. The work of the ALI Ecosystems Program has been crucial in driving local development, coordinating activities across various axes that strengthen the ecosystem.

This study offers valuable insights into the importance of effective communication in innovation and entrepreneurship, with potential application in other regions facing similar challenges.

Keywords: North Valley; Local Innovation Ecosystem; ALI Program Ecosystem, Communication; Montes Claros.

1. INTRODUCTION

The northern region of Minas Gerais stands out for its diversity and historical, cultural, and economic significance. Among its 89 municipalities, Montes Claros stands out as an industrial and logistical center, with the presence of large industries and multinationals.

Its economy, previously agricultural, diversified from the 1970s onward (FRANÇA et al., 2009), consolidating the city as a regional reference (Portal Montes Claros, 2024).

Montes Claros also became a leader in the educational and healthcare sectors, with nine hospitals and a jump in the number of higher education institutions from three to eleven between 1990 and 2000 (ANTUNES SOUZA and SOUZA, 2008). With approximately 414,000 inhabitants (IBGE, 2022), the city has a per capita GDP of R\$25,870.23 and high volumes of public revenue and expenditure, ranking among the largest municipalities in Minas Gerais and Brazil.

In this context, the Norte Valley Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem were created in 2015, with the mission of connecting academia and the market and fostering business competitiveness.

However, the case study identified the low use of communication channels as an obstacle to integration among ecosystem actors, compromising collaboration and growth.

The study was developed based on interviews, analysis of economic data, institutional documents, and a literature review, following the case study methodological approach proposed by Martins (2008). The structure of the work includes contextualization, a presentation of the Norte Valley, an analysis of the communication problem, and a final section with conclusions and references.

2. NORTH OF MINAS AND MONTES CLAROS: BRIEF CONTEXTUALIZATION

Northern Minas Gerais is a diverse and strategic region, with Montes Claros standing out among its 89 municipalities for its economic, historical, and cultural importance. Known as the "capital of Northern Minas Gerais," the city has approximately 414,000 inhabitants (IBGE, 2022) and a per capita GDP of R\$25,870.23, with a strong presence in the industrial, logistics, and service sectors (Portal Montes Claros, 2024).

Montes Claros evolved from an agricultural economy to an industrial city, historically driven by incentives from SUDENE, and continued to attract large companies such as Coteminas, Nestlé, Novo Nordisk, and Eurofarma. Its strategic location, with access to federal highways and a well-structured airport, reinforces its role as a regional development center.

The city is also a benchmark in education and healthcare, with institutions such as UNIMONTES, UFMG, and IFNMG, as well as an extensive hospital network. Figure 1 (Data MPE Brasil, 2024) shows that the sectors with the most active companies are Retail, Food, and Construction. According to RAIS (2021) and CAGED (2024), there are 8,912 companies and over 93,000 formal jobs.

Complementing this scenario, Figure 2 (Dataviva, 2021) highlights Public Administration and Commerce as the main sources of income, while Figure 3 (Dataviva, 2022) highlights medicines, footwear, and coffee as the main exported products. This context reinforces the importance of the Norte Valley Innovation Ecosystem, a topic discussed in the next section.

Figure 1 - Distribution of the Industrial Sector of Montes Claros

Serviços Especializados Para Construção	Construção De Edifícios	Confeção De Artigos Do Vestuário E Acessórios	Fabricação De Produtos Diversos	Fabricação De Móveis	Impressão E Reprografia De Gráficos	
		8.52%	3.57%	3.03%	2.48%	
		Manutenção, Reparação E Instalação De Máquinas E Equipamentos	Fabricação De Produtos Têxteis	Óleos De Refinação	Café, Castanhas E Derivados De Beldades, Perfumaria	
	5.68%		1.91%	1.28%	1.08%	
	Fabricação De Produtos Alimentícios		Fabricação De Produtos De Borracha, Couro E Plástico	Fabricação De Borracha, Couro E Plástico		
		1.68%	0.96%			
		0.71%				
37.2%	9.58%	5.6%	1.3%	0.71%	0.42%	

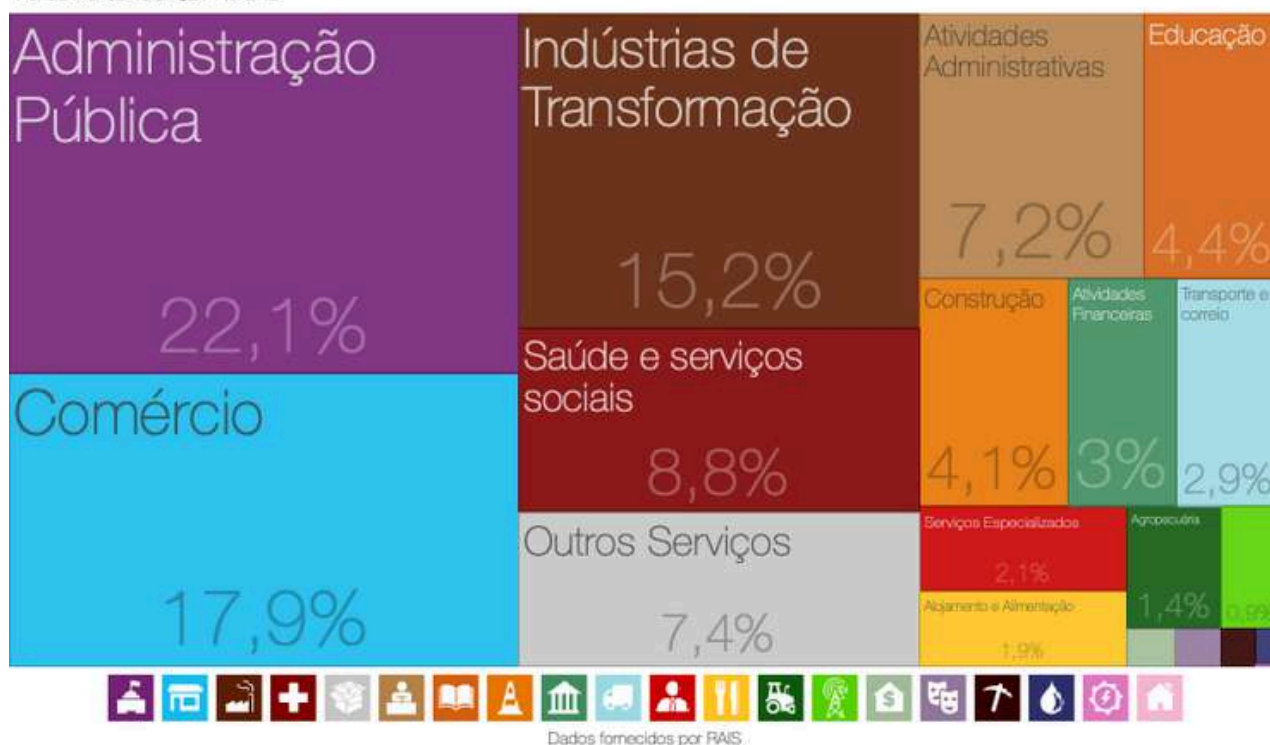
Source: Data MPE Brasil (2024).



Figure 2 - Distribution of Monthly Income by Economic Sector

Indústrias em Montes Claros (2021)

Renda Mensal Total: \$214 M BRL



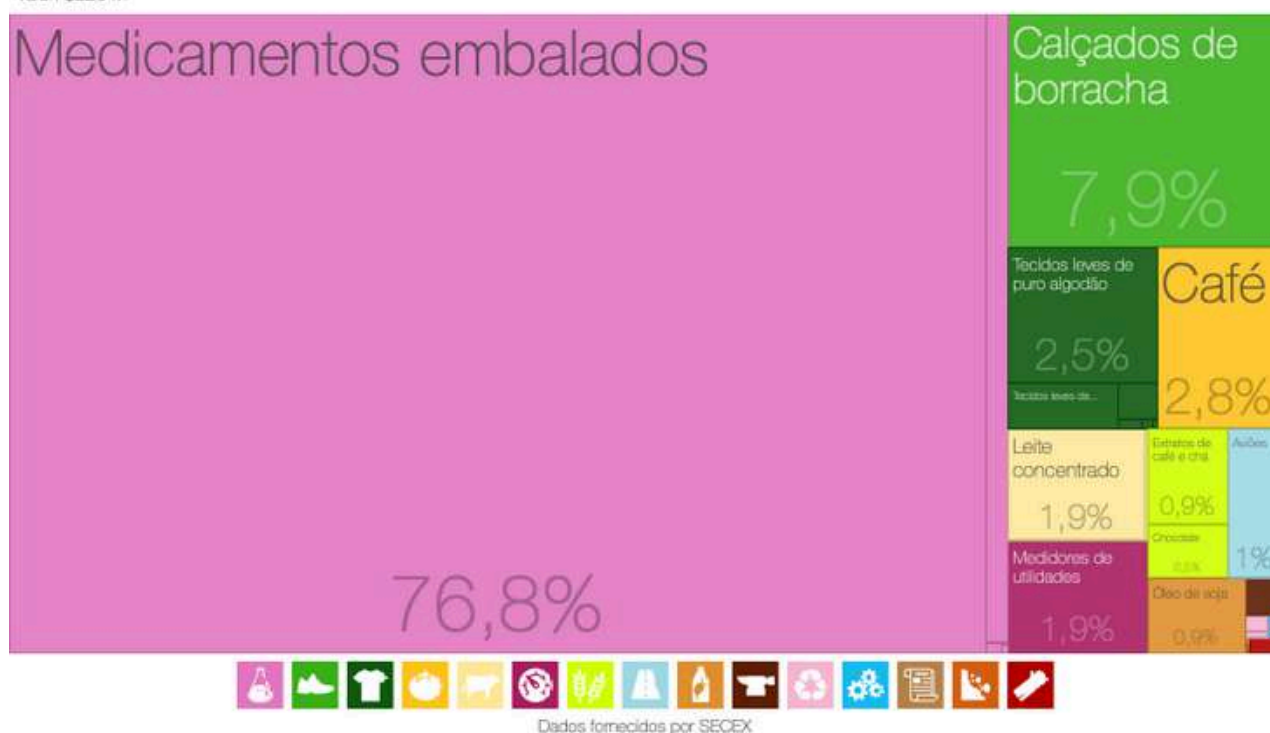
Source: DATAVIVA (2021)

Figure 3 - Distribution of Montes Claros Exports by Product

Exportações de Montes Claros (2022)

Baseado nos estados produtores

Valor: \$229 M



Source: DATAVIVA (2021)

3. NORTH VALLEY: HISTORY, CHALLENGES, AND ITS COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The Norte Valley Ecosystem was created in 2015 with a focus on innovation and the connection between academia and the market, bringing together diverse stakeholders such as educational institutions, startups, and government. Initiatives such as the "It Coffee" and "It Lunch" events and the creation of the "Minas Up" community drove its expansion to municipalities such as Pirapora and Janaúba.

In 2020, Sebrae-MG and the CERTI Foundation structured a strategic plan based on workshops and interviews, defining priority sectors such as agriculture, ICT, biotechnology, and health, as well as clear goals through OKRs. This phase marked the beginning of the ecosystem's consolidation.

The 2021 pandemic, however, revealed a weakness: the lack of active digital communication. The lack of updates on social media and the website hampered engagement and collaboration among stakeholders. As the figures and tables presented below demonstrate, this challenge reinforced the importance of maintaining active communication channels as a foundation for the integration, visibility, and sustainability of the Northern Valley Ecosystem.

In 2023, Sebrae, through the ALI Program, identified the inactivity of the Northern Valley Ecosystem's communication channels, such as Instagram (@nortevalley), which had only three posts and 75 followers (Figure 4). In light of this, the Local Innovation Agent mobilized local stakeholders and implemented strategies to reactivate digital communication and strengthen engagement.

Figure 4 - Instagram Ecosystem North Valley 2023



Source: Instagram account North Valley.

Actions such as regular content creation, use of shared calendars, and partnerships with local organizations resulted in increased visibility and participation. Instagram reached 62 posts and 427 followers by June 2024 (Figure 5), with a significant increase in reach and engagement (Figure 6).

Table 1 confirms this progress, with 27 active startups, 21 events, and a broad digital presence.

Figure 5 – North Valley Ecosystem Instagram 2024



Source: Instagram account North Valley.

Figure 6 - Instagram Insights North Valley Ecosystem 2024



Source: North Valley Instagram account.

Table 1 - North Valley Ecosystem Indicators - Until June 2024

Description	Quantity
Number of active startups	27
Number of companies that raised funds for innovation	10 *
Number of mapped companies **	31
Number of innovation-stimulating events	21
Number of people in the open WhatsApp group	169
Number of Instagram followers	427
Number of published articles	3
Number of accesses to the shared calendar	80
Number of visits to the Ecosystem website	606
Number of visits to the Ecosystem map	3190
Number of stakeholders engaged in the ELI	30

Source: Prepared by the authors

* Estimate compiled with the Inemontes business incubator and FUNDETEC.

** Only companies that have already been directly approached or that participate in ecosystem activities. Startups are not included, as they are already being calculated in another specific indicator.

The ecosystem also gained strength with the diversification of actions. In 2024, 34 events were held by different actors (Figure 7). The stakeholder maps (Figures 8 and 9) show that the number of participating companies grew from 8 in 2020 to 58, of which 27 operate in digital businesses, highlighting the maturation of the Norte Valley as an innovation hub.

Figure 7- North Valley Ecosystem Event Map 2024



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 08 - North Valley Ecosystem Stakeholder Map 2020



Source: CERTI Foundation (2020)

Figure 9 - North Valley Ecosystem Stakeholder Map 2024



Source: Own elaboration

4. CONCLUSION

The work of the Local Innovation Agent (ALI) was decisive in revitalizing the communication channels of the North Valley Ecosystem, making communication more active and efficient. With the stakeholders mapped and channels such as Instagram and the website regularly updated, there was a significant increase in engagement and participation in the ecosystem's activities.

The results are evidenced by the growth in posts on Instagram (from 3 to 62) and followers (from 75 to 427), as shown in the corresponding figures. Cross-promotion of content and structured dissemination strengthened integration among participants and expanded the reach of local actions.

This communication restructuring proved essential to consolidate collaboration among stakeholders and ensure greater visibility for initiatives. Digital presence became a strategic factor for keeping the community engaged and active.

Thus, active communication became one of the pillars of the North Valley's sustainability. Its continuity is vital to attract new participants, foster innovation, and boost entrepreneurship in Montes Claros.

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UBERABA'S LOCAL
INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

ZEBU VALLEY



INNOVATION COFFEE: THE JOURNEY OF REACTIVATING THE ZEBU VALLEY ECOSYSTEM (UBERABA-MG)

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how a community was reactivated through the Local Innovation Agent Program - ALI Program Sebrae, in the Local Innovation Ecosystems category. The community focused on this case study is "Zebu Valley," the name given to the innovation ecosystem of the city of Uberaba. Although the name refers to the breeding of a famous cattle breed in the region, this ecosystem does not operate in a specific segment, having supported companies in the legal, agricultural, technology, and education sectors, among others. Its orchestration began in 2015 and was very active in fostering innovation in the city. For various reasons, which are presented in this paper, between 2021 and 2022, stakeholder engagement was lost, and, in turn, the community lacked enthusiasm for carrying out activities related to the community.

This dilemma was addressed through the actions of Sebrae's Local Innovation Agent Program - ALI Ecosystems, which provided a scholarship holder exclusively dedicated to Zebu Valley and the support of a consultant. Strategic actions were then implemented, with the creation of the Innovation Café, which sought to expand contact between Zebu Valley participants and other planned activities aimed at reconnecting the ecosystem with society, marking the reconnection between stakeholders and the reactivation of the ecosystem. This paper concludes that the ALI Program resolved the dilemma, bringing back engagement to the community through activities and events created jointly with local stakeholders and with the support and monitoring of the Sebrae Local Innovation Agent.

Keywords: Local Innovation Agent Program (ALI Program); Innovation Ecosystem; Zebu Valley; Uberaba.

1 - INTRODUCTION

Uberaba, located in the Triângulo Mineiro region, is the 7th most populous city in Minas Gerais, with 337,836 inhabitants (IBGE, 2022). Its strategic geographic location, close to major centers such as São Paulo and Brasília, offers logistical advantages.

The city accounts for over 40% of the GDP of its Intermediate Geographic Region (FJP, 2023) and, in addition to being recognized as the "land of the Zebu," received UNESCO recognition in 2024 as a geopark of international significance (Agência Brasil, 2024).

With a strong educational and scientific base, Uberaba is home to institutions such as UFTM, IFTM, and UNIUBE, and stands out in areas such as healthcare, mechanics, and agriculture (SEBRAE, 2024). In supporting entrepreneurship, it stands out for its robust infrastructure, including the Uberaba Technology Park and the Moon Hub by AgTech Garage, a public-private innovation center (PwC, 2023).

The Zebu Valley Ecosystem, created in 2015, brings together various stakeholders—government, companies, and universities—who work collaboratively to promote innovation. However, between 2021 and 2022, there was a decline in community engagement. The case study, based on Yin's (2001) approach, highlights this challenge and presents the ALI Program as a central element in reversing the situation, with actions aimed at enhancing participants' sense of belonging.

Using the ALI Program methodology, joint activities were implemented with local stakeholders, such as the "Innovation Café," with the aim of reviving the dynamics of Zebu Valley. The study is structured in five sections: introduction, history of the ecosystem, analysis of the dilemma, solutions applied, and conclusion, highlighting the role of the ALI Program in the collaborative restructuring of Uberaba's innovation ecosystem. The figures and tables that comprise the study detail the impact of these actions.

ZEBU VALLEY, THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM OF UBERABA

With its strategic location, solid educational base, and entrepreneurship support structure, Uberaba constitutes a Local Innovation Ecosystem with unique characteristics. According to Sebrae (2021), this type of ecosystem promotes integration between companies, universities, and government to boost economic and social development through innovation. The definition involves dynamic relationships between people, institutions, and resources in a specific territory, as highlighted by Sena (2018), supported by authors such as Wessner (2007) and Bezzon and Diniz (2020).

The Zebu Valley Ecosystem began in 2015, with support from Sebrae and the participation of entrepreneurs in events such as Startup Weekend. From then on, the group created an active network, conducting training, courses, and meetings, with actions recorded on the account @zebuvalley. However, between 2021 and 2022, there was a significant drop in the frequency and volume of activities — a reflection of the impacts of the pandemic, which distanced stakeholders and reduced the collaborative spirit, even with some activities being continued remotely.

To reverse this scenario, in 2023, Sebrae Uberaba hired a consultancy firm that produced the report "Defining a Journey to Support Innovative Entrepreneurship," mapping the key stakeholders and guiding the recovery of the ecosystem. That same year, the ALI-ELI Program began, providing an agent to work directly in orchestrating Zebu Valley, with the support of a senior consultant and based on Sebrae's ELI methodology.

Through interviews, meetings, and a situational assessment, Agent ALI identified the distance between members and the lack of active governance. From this, new meetings began between key stakeholders to redesign strategies and strengthen the ecosystem. This resumption marked the beginning of a new phase for Zebu Valley, focused on integration and strengthening innovation in Uberaba, as will be detailed in tables and figures in the next sections of the study.

3 - DILEMMA: THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE ACTORS OF ZEBU VALLEY

The central dilemma of this case study concerns the decline in engagement among key stakeholders in the Zebu Valley Ecosystem in 2021 and 2022, especially in collaborative actions aimed at innovation. To investigate this scenario, a quantitative analysis was conducted based on posts on the ecosystem's social media platform (@zebuvalley) and a survey was administered to relevant stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

Table 1 presents the number of actions carried out between 2016 and 2022, divided into "Innovation Events" and "Governance Meetings." It can be seen that, between 2017 and 2020, the ecosystem maintained an average of 45 innovation events per year, a number that dropped drastically to 14 in 2021 and just 7 in 2022. Governance meetings were also interrupted in 2020 and 2021, signaling a loss of connection among stakeholders in the region.

Qualitative research confirmed the active participation, early in the development of Zebu Valley, of institutions such as Sebrae, Utech, the Uberaba Technology Park, and local universities. Among the events most cited as strengthening engagement are "Ti Talks," "Startup Weekend," and meetings with successful case studies. According to those interviewed, these activities promote networking, learning, and consolidate a culture of collaboration.

The main reasons cited for the decline in participation were the lack of structured governance, the impacts of the pandemic, and the lack of a clear purpose for the ecosystem. Based on this diagnosis, strategic actions were proposed to reverse the situation and reactivate engagement, a topic that will be addressed in the next section of the study.

Table 01
Zebu Valley Ecosystem Actions
2016 to 2022

Classification	Year						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Innovation Events	3	53	32	44	53	14	7
Governance Meetings	0	5	3	3	0	0	2

Source: Instagram @zebuvalley (2024)

4 - NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ZEBU VALLEY

Given the decline in engagement in the Zebu Valley Ecosystem, an action plan was structured in 2023 by the Local Innovation Agent (ALI) and a consultant hired by Sebrae Uberaba.

The proposal involved interviews with current and new participants, visits to innovation environments, and governance meetings. Through these interactions, the Agent was able to understand the stakeholders' demands and propose actions aligned with the community's interests. The first major initiative was a workshop held in August 2023, which marked the Agent's official presentation and initiated the development of the 2023/2024 Action Plan based on the six strands of the ELI methodology.

Subsequently, individual video conferences were organized with the stakeholders, followed by the creation of thematic WhatsApp groups. These groups discussed the priorities raised in the workshop, which were consolidated and presented at an in-person meeting at FIEMG in October 2023. In December, Uniube hosted a governance meeting where the plan's progress was announced and a gathering was held among the participants. Furthermore, the ALI Agent began frequenting innovation environments in the city, strengthening ties and encouraging conversations about the ecosystem in informal settings.

One of the most successful initiatives was the creation of the Innovation Café, conceived after identifying a lack of relaxed spaces for exchanging ideas about innovation. The first event, in February 2024, brought together 26 people and stood out as the event with the largest number of participants since the program's inception. Three other editions were held through July, with varied participation, but always maintaining representatives from the triple helix (university, government, and business).

The events were marked by short pitches, networking opportunities, and spontaneous partnerships among participants, as illustrated in Figure 1.

This movement generated new developments, such as the monthly governance happy hour and the planning of the First Uberaba Startup Meeting, to be held in 2024. Table 2 shows the significant number of actions carried out between May 2023 and July 2024: two missions, 51 ecosystem presentations, 48 WG meetings, 15 GIS meetings, seven governance meetings, and 39 events. Figure 2, updated by the ALI Agent, presents a complete map of the Zebu Valley actors, highlighting the participation of representatives from all spheres: government, civil society, ICTs, companies, and innovation mechanisms.

Comparing the Agent's start in 2023 with the current scenario, a significant transformation can be observed. The previously disjointed ecosystem now holds frequent meetings, discusses strategies, and develops joint actions. The participants' enthusiasm is evident, including the creation of t-shirts with the Zebu Valley visual identity, used in missions such as the ELI Summit MG in Itajubá. These signs demonstrate a strengthening sense of belonging and concrete progress in orchestrating the ecosystem.

Figure 01: Innovation Café, Issues 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Source: ALI Agent Reports (2024).

Table 02
Zebu Valley Ecosystem Actions
May 2023 to July 2024.

Type of Activity	Zebu Valley Missions	Ecosystem Presentation	Working Group Meetings	GIS meetings	Governance Meetings	Events
Amount	2	51	48	15	7	38

Source: Local Innovation Agent Report (2023 and 2024)



Source: Official Presentation of Zebu Valley.

Figure 02: Zebu Valley Actors Map

5 - CONCLUSION

Zebu Valley is an ecosystem strategically located in Uberaba, whose operations are broad and not restricted to agribusiness, despite its name. It supports companies and entrepreneurs from different sectors who wish to innovate, bringing together key stakeholders such as educational institutions, technology companies, organized civil society, and the municipal government. At the beginning of this case study, in May 2023, the ecosystem showed signs of disconnection and low engagement, contrasting with a more active and collaborative past.



With the delivery of the orchestration consultancy and the arrival of the ALI Program, a process of reactivating the community began. The Local Innovation Agent began attending the ecosystem's environments and events, identifying its dynamics and needs through the ELI Methodology. Based on this diagnosis, the Innovation Café was conceived, an event created to strengthen ties and generate connections between stakeholders. The initiative resulted in partnerships, connections, and new projects, such as the Zebu Valley Happy Hour and the First Startup Meeting, aimed at expanding the network and strengthening the ecosystem.

It can be concluded that the Innovation Café was a turning point in the reactivation of Zebu Valley, playing a strategic role in mobilizing stakeholders. The ALI Program was essential, not only for the technical support but also for the Agent's full-time dedication over the 15 months. The outlook for 2024 is one of an active community, with frequent meetings and joint initiatives focused on innovation, marking the rebirth of Zebu Valley as a vibrant and collaborative ecosystem.

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VARIOUS AUTHORS

PRODUCTIVITY ALI

PRODUCTIVITY STORIES FROM THE
STATE OF SÃO PAULO - JUNDIAÍ



INTRODUCTION

Org. Valter de Souza Filho

In the case of ALI Productivity, participating companies are monitored for a period of four to six months. During this cycle, the main challenges faced by companies are diagnosed, potential solutions proposed, improvement actions implemented, and, finally, the impacts generated are evaluated. The journey is structured around in-person meetings, with the application of tools such as the Innovation Radar at the beginning and end of the process (Guide, 2025).

The Innovation Radar is a diagnostic tool composed of six dimensions: management controls, operations management, marketing management, innovation practices, digital transformation, and ESG (environmental, social, and governance). Each dimension is assessed through four questions, with three possible answers (A, B, or C), each scored according to the level of maturity of the company's management. This system allows us to assess the company's initial stage, monitor its progress throughout the intervention, and measure the results achieved. Additionally, financial productivity is also measured, comparing indicators from the beginning and end of the monitoring cycle (Guide, 2025).

The SEBRAE regional office in Jundiaí serves 18 municipalities in the region: Bragança Paulista, Cabreúva, Caieiras, Cajamar, Campo Limpo Paulista, Francisco Morato, Franco da Rocha, Itatiba, Itupeva, Jarinu, Jundiaí, Louveira, Morungaba, Pedra Bela, Pinhalzinho, Tuiutí, Vargem, and Várzea Paulista.

LOCAL AGENT PROGRAM FOR INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY

The ALI (Local Innovation Agent) Productivity project aims to drive business innovation, seeking to reduce costs and/or increase revenue for micro and small enterprises (MSEs). Monitoring takes place over a period of 4 to 6 months, through planned meetings that follow the ALI Productivity program's methodological guide.

In the initial meetings, a qualitative assessment is conducted of the participating companies' maturity level across six dimensions: management controls, operations management, marketing management, innovation practices, digital transformation, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) aspects. Each dimension is scored from 1 (low practice) to 5 (high practice), based on previously defined criteria.

In the second meeting, the main problems faced by entrepreneurs in business management are identified, with one of them prioritized for treatment. In the fifth meeting, an innovative action aimed at solving the selected problem is proposed. At this point, a prototype of the solution is developed, which will be tested and validated. The company's financial productivity is also measured.

In the sixth meeting, the prototype is tested and, if approved, it is implemented. Three months after implementation, in the ninth meeting, the maturity level and financial productivity are reassessed, allowing for a qualitative analysis of the performance of the actions adopted.

All information is recorded in the ALI System, a national database for the program, managed by SEBRAE. This electronic platform is constantly updated and is currently at version v.1.1.11-39815. The data collected was extracted from this system and analyzed to generate the results presented in all ALI productivity projects.

HOW PROCESS IMPROVEMENT OVERCOME CHAOS IN PRODUCTION

VARGEM | SECTOR: INDUSTRY



HOW PROCESS IMPROVEMENT OVERCOMES CHAOS IN PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Seeking a better quality of life after the birth of their first child, a couple left their busy routine at a factory in Extrema, Minas Gerais. With experience in the cosmetics industry, especially hair dyes, they decided to start a business in the neighboring city of Vargem, São Paulo. They identified a little-explored niche: the production of high-end hair dyes. Their initial success exceeded expectations, but rapid, unplanned growth created challenges such as operational delays and disorganization. To overcome these difficulties, they sought support from SEBRAE (Brazilian Institute of Education), through the Brasil Mais Program, and joined SENAI's Digital Transformation program. With the help of a specialist, they implemented significant improvements in finance, inventory control, and production. This led to greater efficiency, organization, and sustainability, consolidating the business in the market.

Keywords: Process Improvement. Production Management. Inventory Control. Financial Management. Cosmetics Industry.

1. INTRODUÇÃO

In July 2020, a couple, then employees of a cosmetics company located in Extrema, Minas Gerais, decided to start their own business due to the strain caused by their intense work routine and low expectations for improving their quality of life. The arrival of their first child and the resulting reduction in family time, coupled with stagnant wages, motivated them to open their own business, leveraging their extensive experience, especially in cosmetics production. Following this decision, the entrepreneurs conducted market research, price surveys for machinery, supplies, and raw materials, and evaluated potential locations for setting up the company.

With their planning in place, they formalized a severance agreement with their former employer. With these funds, they leased a warehouse in the neighboring city of Vargem, São Paulo, where they lived, and purchased their first equipment. Since the available resources were not sufficient to cover the costs of equipment, hiring, and purchasing raw materials, they resorted to bank financing.

The Vargem region is home to several cosmetics companies and other segments geared primarily toward mass consumption, offering inferior-quality products to the market. The couple then identified an opportunity to offer hair dyes with a premium raw material quality, seeking to serve a more demanding and under-explored consumer market. Thus, they decided to begin producing hair dyes, focusing on this niche.

As a strategy, the company adopted two operating models: production of hair dyes for industrial clients, who apply their own brands and market the products as if they were their own (a model known as white label), and production under their own brand, offering several color options, including the most sought-after, such as black, brown, and blonde, as well as their variations. Although the industry was still relatively unknown, the product was widely accepted in the first months after its launch.

This allowed the company, even during the pandemic, to boost its business and receive a significant number of orders, exceeding its production capacity. This growth exposed weaknesses in process management and the incorporation of operational routines by employees, resulting in delays in deliveries.

Given this scenario, this case study aims to analyze the challenges faced by the company in managing rapid growth and identify strategies to improve operational management and order fulfillment, ensuring business sustainability.

2. CONTEXT AND DILEMMA

According to data from the Brazilian Association of the Personal Hygiene, Perfumery, and Cosmetics Industry (ABIHPEC), Brazil ranks second among the countries that launch the most products in this sector and is the fourth-largest consumer of beauty products in the world (ABIHPEC, 2020). According to research conducted by McKinsey & Company in partnership with Business of Fashion, after a significant recovery since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global beauty market is estimated to reach approximately US\$580 billion by 2027, with average annual growth of 6% (McKinsey & Company; Business of Fashion, 2023).

Within this context of beauty sector expansion, the hair color segment also shows strong growth potential. According to Business Research Insights, the global hair dye and color market was valued at US\$26,510 million in 2022 and is expected to reach US\$54,417 million by 2031, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.3% over the forecast period.

This research led the entrepreneurs to realize that their chosen field has great growth potential, being a constantly evolving sector that offers promising prospects for success, especially because today's consumers are always looking for higher-quality products, like those offered by them.

This segment is driven by factors such as urbanization, lifestyle changes, and consumers' growing concern about hair health. Furthermore, it offers growth prospects driven by technological advances, modernization of production methods, and increasing demand in emerging economies.

Through consultations with the city governments of Vargem-SP, Extrema-MG, and Bragança Paulista-SP, as well as trade associations, it was found that industrialization in the beauty sector was practically nonexistent.

Furthermore, after establishing the business, the entrepreneurs began attending courses, trade shows, and conferences to keep up with market trends. They also visited factories in the same sector in other regions to compare practices, processes, and performance, confirming that the product offered maintained the quality differential intended for a demanding audience. Supported by the experience gained in industries where they had worked, they decided to set up their own chemical laboratory, enabling them to develop and manipulate formulations with greater control and precision.

In this context of improvement and innovation, it is important to understand the historical trajectory of the hair color industry. French chemist Eugène Schueller, founder of the L'Oréal Group, was a pioneer in developing, in 1907, the first permanent oxidizing dye capable of lightening natural hair. Since then, the cosmetics industry has continued to evolve, launching innovations such as the toning shampoo in 1931 and the permanent toning cream in 1953, making the coloring process easier for consumers (Morphic Beauty, 2012).

Hair color, whose main objective is to add color to hair, is commonly used to cover gray hair, highlight certain areas, restore the original tone, and enhance hair aesthetics.

The availability of a wide range of shades is among the main drivers of growth in the hair dye market, supported by techniques ranging from professional application to home use. Among current trends, the ombré technique stands out, creating a gradient by applying distinct shades from roots to ends. Also observed, especially among young people, is the growing use of colors that harmonize with clothing, reflecting coloring as a form of personal expression.

Raw materials were a priority: entrepreneurs sought suppliers who offered high-quality inputs and diverse colors, in addition to the traditional ones.

The adoption of high-quality raw materials and inputs, which gave the product a competitive edge, combined with effective production and marketing strategies, caused demand to grow rapidly and exceed the company's production capacity. This accelerated growth generated delays in deliveries, triggered by several operational problems: low equipment efficiency, employee idleness, delays in correcting faults, errors in product counting, inventory discrepancies, and improper mixing of in-process and in-stock items.

The business owners understood that the problems they faced were directly related to the production system. However, given the complexity of the situation, they didn't know where to begin improvements, which led them to a central dilemma: how to fulfill orders within the established deadline?

3. SOLVING THE DILEMMA

Despite their solid experience in the cosmetics industry, the entrepreneurs were unprepared to deal with the management challenges that arose with the business's rapid growth. Difficulties such as delivery delays, employee idleness, unstructured financial management, and the sale of unavailable products began to directly impact the company's performance.

It was in this context that the company received support from the Local Innovation Agent (ALI) and decided to participate in the Brasil Mais Program, in addition to receiving consulting services from SEBRAE.

The partnership with the National Industrial Training Service (SENAI), through the Digital Transformation Program, was essential for structuring internal processes more robustly.

One of the main problems identified was related to people management. Employees often didn't know exactly what to do and often remained idle waiting for orders. As a first step, a chart was created clearly defining the functions of each production position, in addition to the implementation of daily checklists to monitor activities and ensure that no step was forgotten or neglected.

In the financial sphere, processes were executed informally and with little systematization, which compromised visibility of the factory's true economic situation. Furthermore, problems related to inventory control were recurrent and directly impacted the sales department, resulting in the sale of ready-to-deliver products that, in practice, were not available. This scenario directly impacted purchasing accuracy and created uncertainty in decision-making, especially regarding customer orders. Questions constantly arose about the availability of raw materials in stock, the feasibility of making new purchases within the required timeframes, and even the existence of sufficient financial resources to meet demands.

To address this situation, the business owners participated in financial consulting offered by SEBRAE, which resulted in the adoption of control spreadsheets, the definition of performance indicators, and the implementation of an integrated management system to improve financial organization and support decision-making, especially in purchasing. Taking advantage of an employee's idle time, his/her activities were redistributed, and he/she assumed responsibility for controlling and maintaining inventory, as established in the job and function flowchart. This employee received specific training to operate the control spreadsheets and was responsible, on a daily basis, for organizing, counting, and entering the data, which was later integrated into the company's management system.

Furthermore, the ABC Curve methodology, suggested by the consultant, was adopted to guide the replenishment of inputs, raw materials, packaging, and materials essential for production and delivery. Based on this classification, the company began to prioritize control of the most critical items and those with the greatest impact on its operations. Constant delays, rework, and internal conflicts forced business owners to dedicate a large portion of their time to resolving production issues, compromising the monitoring of the company's financial and administrative management. Due to the constant increase in demand and operational complexity, this highlighted the need for a more robust and structured management model.

Given this context, the ALI recommended that the company participate in SENAI's Digital Transformation Program, an initiative in partnership with SEBRAE, aimed at participants in the Brasil Mais Program. The program, offered free of charge, provided a specialist who worked directly with the company, carrying out in-depth work on mapping and standardizing processes.

This intervention enabled the development of a more efficient organizational model, solving many of the problems related to time management, employee organization, inventory control, and financial management. The formalization of processes contributed significantly to improving productivity, reducing waste, optimizing deliveries, and strengthening overall management.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participation in the ALI Program allowed business owners to understand that, even when faced with significant challenges, it would be possible to implement simple, low-cost solutions. Initially, it was believed that the only alternative would be to hire more employees and invest in training to solve people management and inventory control problems. However, it soon became clear that the most effective path would be the gradual implementation of well-defined processes capable of guiding activities and eliminating employee downtime.

Although adapting to the changes required effort and discipline, especially in a context of financial difficulties, it was realized that dedicating time to implementing improvements was essential to achieving sustainable results in the short and long term.

In a short period of time, significant advances were observed in financial management, inventory control, and the organization of internal processes, providing greater stability and operational flexibility, even in a challenging economic environment.

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THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL VISIBILITY IN THE MARKETING STRATEGY TO INCREASE SALES

ITUPEVA | SECTOR: SERVICES



THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL VISIBILITY IN THE MARKETING STRATEGY TO INCREASE SALES

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates how the physical visibility of microenterprises directly impacts their sales performance, highlighting the importance of traditional marketing strategies in attracting customers. The research highlights essential factors, such as strategic location, an attractive facade, and effective signage, which are crucial for attracting the public's attention and increasing visitor flow. The study also reinforces the importance of integrating physical space and digital marketing, ensuring that the company's visual identity aligns with its value proposition. The results demonstrate that relatively simple actions, such as facade renovation, combined with digital strategies, led to a significant increase in productivity, which grew 78.12% during participation in the ALI Program.

It is concluded that physical visibility, often underestimated in the current scenario, constitutes a relevant competitive advantage and is one of the strategic pillars for the sustainable growth of microenterprises in local markets.

Keywords: Traditional marketing; Physical visibility; Microenterprises; Retail location; Increased sales.

1. INTRODUCTION

Itupeva is a welcoming city in the interior of São Paulo, located 60 km from the capital. It stands out for its tourism and economic potential. According to the 2022 Census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the municipality has approximately 71,000 inhabitants, representing a 57.42% increase compared to the 2010 Census (IBGE, 2022).

In this promising environment, an artisanal pasta business emerged in 2022, founded by a local entrepreneur of Italian origin. The shop is located on a busy street, taking advantage of its tradition and passion for gastronomy to carve out its market share.

Thanks to the quality and care taken in the production of its pasta, the company experienced accelerated growth in 2023. However, after this initial growth, it began to face low sales volume. Faced with this challenge, it sought support from the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE), through the Local Innovation Agent (ALI) Program Productivity (SEBRAE, 2024).

Through specialized consulting, it was possible to implement significant process improvements, contributing to increasing the business's efficiency and competitiveness.

2. CONTEXT AND DILEMMA

Of Italian descent, the entrepreneur grew up learning from her family the art of making artisanal pasta—a skill she had neglected after her father's death. With a degree in Business Administration, with a postgraduate degree in Accounting and Finance, she built a career in finance and sales before becoming an entrepreneur.

In 2020, at the height of the pandemic and pregnant with her youngest daughter, she decided to turn her passion for gastronomy into a business. She began making artisanal pasta for friends and neighbors, investing in courses and perfecting her recipes. The launch of a stuffed gnocchi boosted demand, leading her to participate in trade shows and hire employees. When artisanal production took over her entire home, she found it necessary to open a business on one of Itupeva's busiest avenues. The business was structured with a clear purpose: to offer fresh, artisanal pasta, made with high-quality ingredients and traditional Italian techniques, providing authentic flavor and a home-cooked meal experience made with love. Despite initial growth, sales volume began to decline.

The entrepreneur realized that, even though it was located on a busy street, her store went unnoticed. This compromised the attraction of new customers and the consolidation of the brand as a reference in artisanal pasta.

Given this scenario, the dilemma that guides this case study arises: "How can we increase the company's visibility and strengthen its brand in the local market?"

3. SOLVING THE DILEMMA

Location is one of the determining factors for the success of a company, especially for micro and small businesses. According to Batistella et al. (2017), being in high-traffic areas, such as busy streets, shopping centers, or strategic neighborhoods, generates greater foot traffic, strengthens brand recognition, and increases the chances of converting sales. Furthermore, aspects such as easy access, proximity to other services, and parking availability directly impact customers' purchasing decisions.

At the same time, the visual presentation of a business location plays a fundamental role in attracting customers. According to Designer (2024), the storefront represents the company's first impression and, when well-planned, with design, colors, and signage aligned with the brand's identity, arouses curiosity and generates interest in the public. Despite the increasing digitalization of businesses, physical visibility remains essential, being one of the pillars for brand consolidation and strengthening sales (INTERNET, 2024). However, this visibility should not be treated in isolation.

According to Brasil (2014), the integration of in-person and digital strategies is essential to expand reach, strengthen customer relationships, and increase the business's competitiveness.

Faced with the challenge of increasing her visibility and attracting more customers, the businesswoman sought support from SEBRAE AQUÍ, at the Itupeva City Hall, and was referred to the Local Innovation Agent (ALI) Productivity Program, which offered specialized consulting services in marketing and design, as well as ongoing monitoring by a Local Innovation Agent.

Guided by these consultants, the businesswoman began a collaborative process of developing solutions, beginning with a creative brainstorming session involving her team, family, and close customers, seeking to understand which elements best represented the essence of Italian artisanal pasta. The first step was to analyze the facades of other establishments, photographing examples, and identifying the visual elements that most caught the public's attention. In parallel, collaboration began with design professionals to transform these references into a project aligned with the brand's visual identity, using the colors green, red, and white, traditional symbols of Italian culture. The implementation began simply, with adjustments to the paint job and the exterior visual composition.

With the support of a local painter, details were added that reminiscent of a traditional Italian restaurant, creating a more attractive facade that is consistent with the business's purpose, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Facade Change

Figura 1 - Alteração da fachada



Antes



Depois

Source: Authors' own

During the process, the businesswoman and her team adopted an active listening strategy, asking customers, when they picked up their orders, about their perception of the new facade and the visual elements implemented. In addition to improvements in physical visibility, advances were also made in the brand's digital positioning. Social media presence was improved, with an increase in the frequency and quality of posts. Public interaction strategies were incorporated, such as the use of question boxes and polls, encouraging greater engagement. Posts began to be systematically monitored, analyzing metrics such as reach, interaction rate, and conversion.

This monitoring allowed us to identify the most relevant content formats for the target audience, enabling continuous adjustments to strategies and, consequently, maximizing campaign results.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Physical visibility is essential in the marketing strategy of any business looking to increase sales and consolidate its brand. Integrating physical and digital marketing, offering a cohesive and efficient customer experience, is the key to maximizing sales potential and ensuring the longevity of a business in today's market. With a well-planned approach, the visibility of a physical business can be a great ally in increasing sales and gaining customer loyalty. As a result, a 78.12% increase in productivity was observed compared to the company's initial productivity in the program. This demonstrates that, in addition to interactions in response to campaigns, the monthly growth in followers on social media, the improved facade helped to identify the physical space, attracting more customers to the new store. Initiatives that began with brand building and increased store visibility, combined with other initiatives, led to increased sales and the need for more space to serve customers. The company is currently expanding, with the expansion of its physical store in Itupeva and the opening of a new unit in Jundiaí, expanding its presence in new markets.

These actions are part of the company's strategy to consolidate its brand and strengthen its presence in the artisanal pasta market in the city.

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PROCESS STANDARDIZATION: THE
KEY TO EFFICIENCY AND GOAL
ACHIEVEMENT

JUNDIAÍ | SECTOR: SERVICES



PROCESS STANDARDIZATION: THE KEY TO EFFICIENCY AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the importance of process standardization within companies to achieve efficiency and achieve goals. This standardization involves prototyping and validating the standardized operational process, analyzing its process and accuracy, thus helping with organization, streamlining work processes, and increasing productivity. Through applied research, the study demonstrates how the company standardized its operations to address high process variability, seeking uniformity through an analysis of workflows. This resulted in a reduction in raw material waste.

The company faces dilemmas such as raw material waste due to weekly meat replenishment without considering actual consumption, and variability in snack manufacturing activities, in which each employee performs the steps differently, resulting in inconsistent and unsatisfactory products for consumers. This case study shows how process standardization becomes a catalyst for business efficiency and development.

Keywords: Process Standardization; Operational Efficiency; Waste Reduction; Productivity; Food Sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

Brazilians' eating habits have been changing, driven by factors such as urban population growth, increased purchasing power, and the greater participation of women in the workforce, among others (SEBRAE, 2025). This scenario has generated new business opportunities.

It was in this context that, in 2014, the entrepreneurs opened a shop specializing in milkshakes in the city of Caieiras, in the interior of São Paulo. In 2017, they expanded their operations with a new venture, bringing an innovative offering to the local market: baguette-style snacks stuffed with shredded meats, which are among the most sought-after products by customers.

Over the years, the company expanded its operations, opening units in Caieiras and Jundiaí, the latter being the focus of this study, whose analysis and improvements were subsequently applied to the other unit as well.

The company participated in the Local Productivity Innovation Agent (ALI) Program in the first half of 2023. Currently, it is recognized for offering a diverse menu of snacks, particularly its shredded beef and chicken sandwiches, which are among the most sought-after products by customers.

The main challenges faced relate to the waste of raw materials in the production of snacks, caused by the high variability of activities. Standardizing production has brought a series of benefits to the company, such as streamlining processes, reducing costs, and improving quality.

2. CONTEXT AND DILEMMA

The business's journey began in the city of Caieiras, in the interior of São Paulo, when two brothers decided to leave their jobs to start their own businesses. One of them had a degree in Gastronomy, and the other in Business Administration.

Their first experience in the food industry came in mid-2014, with the opening of a shop specializing in milkshakes. As the months passed, they realized the need to adapt the business to seasonality, since milkshake sales were directly dependent on weather conditions. From there, they began developing a winter menu, including options such as crepes, coffees, sweets, and appetizers

Inspired by the passion of one of the brothers, who used to enjoy the traditional pork sandwich at his favorite team's games, they decided to create a unique product for the local market. It was up to the other brother, a chef, to develop the exclusive recipe for the pork sandwich, launched in 2017.

The new product quickly won over customers and became one of the business's biggest successes. However, the milkshake shop's structure didn't support larger-scale production. Therefore, the sandwich had to be removed from the menu so the operation could refocus on milkshakes. Even so, the idea for the snack remained alive and matured.

This growth resulted, in 2018, in the opening of a new company, located in a space of just 9m² next to the milkshake shop. In this new approach, the brothers created a concept of sandwiches prepared on Parmesan baguettes, filled with popular flavors such as carne louca, pork (the menu's pioneer), shredded chicken, and hot dogs.

The business model was designed to serve customers exclusively during business hours, focusing on the needs of people on the go or looking for a quick, tasty, and affordable lunchtime meal. In just three months, demand grew so much that it was necessary to hire more employees. In this short period, the company was already selling over a thousand sandwiches per month, even operating from noon to 7 p.m., an unconventional hour for snack bars.

Their success led the entrepreneurs to use part of the milkshake shop as inventory for their sandwich operations. This growth led them into 2020, when they faced their biggest challenge: the pandemic. After just over a month with the store closed, costs began to weigh on them, and the brothers decided to reopen, but this time with delivery and in a new neighborhood. This decision proved to be a game-changer for the business.

With people staying home, demand for deliveries increased significantly, and in just six months, revenue grew 300%. Even after the pandemic restrictions ended, delivery remained a key player, representing approximately 90% of sales.

Given this scenario, the company began to better structure its operations, expanding its product mix to include burgers and portions, as well as implementing internal processes to enable its expansion. In 2021, they took a major leap forward by opening a new location in the neighboring city of Jundiaí, four times larger than the previous one.

Although the business started with a focus on baguettes, today burgers are their best-selling products. Both locations operate heavily in delivery, especially through the iFood platform. They currently have 15 employees and together generate over R\$1.6 million in annual revenue. This accelerated growth has brought with it significant operational challenges.

Raw material replenishment followed a fixed pattern, without taking into account variations in demand, which generated waste. Furthermore, the snack preparation and assembly process depended heavily on the individual performance of each employee, compromising input control, quality standardization, and productivity.

Given this scenario, the following dilemma arises for entrepreneurs: how can process variability be reduced to mitigate input waste and ensure operational efficiency?

3. SOLVING THE DILEMMA

The snack assembly process, the company's flagship product, involved steps that could be improved to optimize daily production and reduce losses. Initially, the meats were prepared, shredded, stored in large quantities, and later used in the manufacture and assembly of the snacks. However, the amount of meat used in each snack was not standardized, resulting in variations in product size and wasted raw materials, which required precise control over consumption. Meat not used during the period was discarded, thus contributing to increased operating costs and also resulting in a reduction in profits.

To reduce process variability and maintain efficient control of resources, the company decided to standardize its production steps. To do this, it identified the activities that should be standardized, communicated and trained employees in the new routines, and began monitoring the effectiveness of the processes implemented.

The quantity of inputs for preparing snacks began to be controlled by weighing, allowing for accurate recording of the volume of raw materials used and serving as a parameter for the continuous optimization of the production process (Albuquerque, 2021, p. 9). The separation of the quantity of meat for each snack, as illustrated in Figure 1, began to be carried out individually and accurately.

With this measure, the company ensured greater consistency in the quality of the snacks, in addition to achieving a significant reduction in losses, estimated at up to 30%.

Figure 1 - Detail of ingredient separation

Figura 1 - Detalhe da separação de ingredientes



Vista geral



Porções individualizadas

Source: Authors

This initiative paved the way for implementing a quality control system and thus ensuring quality for the customer (Johnson et al., 2015). Furthermore, routines and technical operational procedures were created, with detailed documentation of activities to ensure standardization.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Standardizing processes was essential for the company to achieve greater operational efficiency, product quality, increased productivity, and, consequently, greater competitiveness in the market.

During this process, the entrepreneur realized that focusing only on operations, to the detriment of management, negatively impacted business development. The lack of time to analyze indicators, the difficulty in delegating tasks, and a lack of knowledge of the company's actual numbers were factors that limited its growth at a certain point.

When asked about advice he would give to other entrepreneurs, especially those just starting out or facing similar challenges, he responded: Make as complete a plan as possible. Keep in mind that the money coming in belongs to the company, not yours. Understand that it will be necessary to compromise on some things for the business to begin to perform and, most importantly, plan for crisis scenarios.

Regarding future challenges, the entrepreneur highlighted two key points: Workforce management, which is already a current challenge, especially due to the difficulty in finding and retaining qualified employees; and high competition, resulting from the market having a low barrier to entry, which requires innovation, technological adaptation, and brand strengthening.

The desire for expansion is present, but the path to this requires the development of well-structured processes, less dependence on direct labor, and the development of a strong brand capable of generating value and positioning in the market.

The company is also seeking to improve the purchasing journey through delivery, understanding that this channel will remain one of the pillars of the business.

The entrepreneur acknowledges that, if he could start over, he would have paid more attention to financial planning, created reserve funds, sought management training, and learned early on the importance of delegating. Furthermore, he believes that access to credit, combined with well-defined processes, can be a strategic tool to drive business growth.

Therefore, the main lesson learned from this process is that developing management skills, especially in the financial, operational, and strategic areas, is fundamental to the success and sustainability of the business. Participation in the ALI Productivity Program represented a turning point for the company, bringing a new mindset focused on continuous improvement, process organization, and a focus on sustainable development.

Finally, this study reinforces that, in highly competitive and dynamic markets, the constant pursuit of innovation, operational excellence, and strengthened management are crucial factors in ensuring the permanence and growth of companies in the market.

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PARTIES THAT ENCHANT: PROCESS
OPTIMIZATION IN THE EVENTS
SECTOR

BRAGANÇA PAULISTA |
SECTOR: SERVICES



FPARTIES THAT ENCHANT: PROCESS OPTIMIZATION IN THE EVENTS SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

In early 2023, a company in the events segment, facing a scenario marked by increased demand for its services, participated in the ALI Program. During the cycle, an improvement project was developed aimed at solving the problem of fluctuating revenue, which compromised financial predictability and sustainable cash flow. The solution adopted was process standardization, which proved effective in mitigating this dilemma. As a result, there was a positive impact on both revenue and productivity, showing that simple actions can generate innovation and improve business performance. The work of SEBRAE's accredited consultants in the areas of marketing and people management, combined with the methodology of the ALI Program, was fundamental to the successful implementation. This case study also demonstrates that the actions taken after the program are crucial for the company to achieve its objectives and maintain the results achieved.

Keywords: Process Standardization; Operations Management; Revenue; ALI Program; Events Sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Gil (2024), the party and events sector is expected to generate more than R\$75 billion this year, consolidating the growth trend observed since 2023. This scenario reflects a post-pandemic behavior, in which people have come to even more value in-person experiences, human contact, and moments of celebration.

This movement toward valuing in-person experiences is directly related to how many companies in the sector emerge and develop. It was precisely this context, combined with the identification of an unmet demand in the region, that motivated the creation of a party and events company located in the interior of São Paulo. Two entrepreneurs, dissatisfied with the traditional spaces available—characterized by an excess of electronic toys, intense visual stimuli, excessive screen time, fast-food-style dining, and reduced social interactions—decided to turn this perception into a business opportunity.

The search for environments that would provide more affectionate, welcoming celebrations that valued togetherness was the starting point. Thus, in September 2017, a space was created for parties and events with a unique concept: offering a cozy, electronics-free environment with healthy and delicious food, as well as providing children with the freedom to play, stimulate creativity, and experience traditional games.

Over time and with the consequent growth of operations, new challenges began to emerge. In 2022, although the company maintained a steady volume of budget requests, it faced difficulties in effectively converting them into sales. Furthermore, managers began to notice limitations in supervising daily tasks due to the accumulation of responsibilities across different areas of the business. Given this scenario, the Local Innovation Agents Program (ALI) emerged as a strategic alternative to support overcoming these challenges, offering methodologies and tools aimed at improving management and internal processes.

2. CONTEXT AND DILEMMA

In 2018, a children's party venue was founded based on the perception of a market opportunity. Two entrepreneurs, after experiencing their own experiences as mothers, identified the difficulty in finding places that combined fun, quality food, and traditional games for children's celebrations. Motivated by this scenario, they decided to start their own business.

After a phase of market research and development of the business plan, they selected the location, structured the menus, and gradually professionalized the operation. They invested in hiring qualified entertainers, aiming to offer parties that provided memorable experiences for their clients.

During the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company faced significant challenges. As the events sector was one of the first to be impacted by restrictions, due to the need to avoid large gatherings, the company was very close to permanently closing its doors. However, with the advancement of vaccinations and the adoption of government measures, the sector began to recover in 2023. According to data from ABRAPE (Brazilian Association of Event Promoters), the first seven months of 2023 recorded estimated revenue of R\$66.5 billion in the sector, the best result in the last five years. This growth was also driven by government incentives aimed at reviving the sector (ABRAVE, 2024).

Locally, this positive scenario was also reflected in increased demand. The company saw a significant increase in customer interest in holding events at the venue, thus beginning a new phase in its history.

With a team of over 30 employees, including both permanent and temporary employees, the need arose to increase reservation volume and improve management. To this end, a specific position was created, with responsibilities focused on sales service, administrative activities, and support in supervising events. The managers were divided between operations, administrative management, and social media.

Despite the increased staff, some challenges persisted, especially related to communication failures, operational errors, and negligence in performing fundamental tasks, compromising the quality of services provided. This situation required stricter management oversight, creating overload and hindering the development of strategic activities for business growth.

In the initial stage of the ALI Program, a business assessment was conducted that identified different levels of maturity in the organization's processes. In marketing, the company presented a maturity level of 5 on a scale of 0 to 5, evidencing well-structured planning, alignment with market trends, and a constant commitment to updating.

On the other hand, in operations management, the maturity level was rated as 3, indicating that, despite the existence of some procedures and checklists, there were weaknesses in the way activities were conducted, directly impacting process efficiency and consistency.

Since its founding, concern for the quality of service provided has always been a fundamental principle, especially because the parties held represented, for many clients, the realization of dreams they had planned for years.

Any slip-up or overlooked detail could compromise this experience. The diagnosis provided a broad overview of strengths and critical aspects, highlighting operations management as a priority area for intervention.

Given this scenario, the guiding question arises: how to implement effective actions in operations management to ensure service excellence and customer satisfaction?

3. SOLVING THE DILEMMA

By joining the ALI Program and systematically applying its methodology, combined with the consulting services provided, it was possible to define actions and implement significant improvements in the business.

In Stage 2 of the ALI Program, a mapping of the main dilemmas faced by the company was carried out. These were organized to understand which ones directly impacted costs and, most importantly, revenue. It became evident that the most critical problem was related to fluctuations in revenue, as in some months the number of parties booked was satisfactory, while in others it fell far short of the target. At that time, the company needed to hold 12 parties per month, but was operating with only eight parties per month, which seriously compromised its financial sustainability.

Upon further analysis, it was identified that, despite a significant number of quote requests, the sales conversion rate was much lower than desired. This factor directly affected cash flow, creating uncertainty for future investments and impacting the business's stability.

Furthermore, the businesswomen perceived that, even with increased investment in advertising and promotional activities—such as gifts, freebies, or an increase in the number of guests—conversion results were not proportional. The lack of structured data made it difficult to accurately assess the effectiveness of these marketing actions.

Given this scenario, prioritized solutions were proposed, focusing on professionalizing the sales process. One of the first actions was to define clear goals for sales conversion, a practice previously performed intuitively and without effective monitoring. To strengthen this strategy, ALI recommended two specific consultancies:

People Management Consulting: Aimed at improving team management, especially in the recruitment, selection, and retention processes. The high turnover of freelance employees working at events was a significant pain point. The consultancy offered best practices to improve engagement, promote alignment of expectations, and reduce turnover.

Marketing and Sales Consulting: Although the company already had a good degree of maturity in digital marketing, it recognized the need to improve communication of the space's added value. Recommended actions included:

Share the party venue's routine online (organization, maintenance, preparations);

Highlight the uniqueness of the space, free of electronics and with an affective purpose;

Produce content that creates emotional connections with followers;

Participate in business groups and entrepreneur networks;

Adjust elements of the identity, such as the slogan, and invest more strategically in sponsored ads.

After consulting and validation in the ALI Program, the solution chosen was to standardize the customer service journey, which until then had been carried out in a poorly structured manner dependent on each employee.

The businesswomen created a complete flowchart of the sales process, defining the service steps, the responsible parties, and the deliverables at each stage. Standardized messages were also created, and, as a strategic differentiator, customers were formally invited to visit the space in person, understanding that many were unclear about the unique offering.

The prototype of this new journey was presented to the sales team and validated through an online form with 12 questions, covering both technical process issues and organizational climate aspects. Validation was successful, requiring only minor adjustments before implementation, which took place the following week.

This practice brought greater visibility to results, enabling more assertive decision-making and reducing the need for constant supervision.

SEBRAE, through the ALI Program and its accredited consultants, played a central role throughout this entire process. Its tools and methodologies led the way from problem identification to prioritization of actions and implementation of solutions.

The implementation phase was agile—about seven days—reflecting both the team's engagement and the clarity and objectivity of the project.

As a result, the company not only solved the problem of revenue fluctuation but also promoted structural improvements in management, directly impacting productivity, financial predictability, and the quality of the experience delivered to customers.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The case study presented demonstrates how a willingness to learn, openness to consulting, and commitment to executing proposed actions can generate significant transformations in a business. More than acquiring knowledge, the practical application of concepts and tools was essential to generating the observed results.

The competitive advantage of this enterprise lies in the seriousness with which it analyzes its processes, the discipline to implement projects, and the awareness that it not only delivers events, but also fulfills dreams and creates memories that mark the lives of its clients.

Participation in the ALI Program was crucial for the evolution of operational management, resulting in gains in productivity, financial stability, and improved customer experience. The company not only solved the problem of revenue fluctuation but also created a culture of continuous improvement, which remains active even after the end of the program.

Given the growth prospects of the party and events sector, combined with consumer behavior that increasingly values in-person and personalized experiences, the company is prepared to face future challenges. The intention to expand, both in reach and physical structure, reinforces the commitment to sustainability, innovation, and delivering value to its customers.

This study reinforces that process management, combined with the use of innovation methodologies, is essential for businesses that wish to remain competitive, efficient, and aligned with the demands of today's market.

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