

Strategy and business economics

Satisfaction of private interest associations' members: a study with sugarcane producers in Brazil

Satisfação em associações de interesse privado: uma aplicação com produtores de cana-de-açúcar no Brasil

Satisfacción en asociaciones de interés particular: una aplicación con productores de caña de azúcar en Brasil

Luciano Thomé e Castro^{a,*}, Priscilla Mendes Machado^b, Marcos Fava Neves^a,
Roberto Fava Scare^a

^a Business Department, Faculty of Economics and Business of Ribeirão Preto, University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil

^b Business Graduation Program, Faculty of Economics and Business of Ribeirão Preto, University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify satisfaction antecedents presented by sugar cane producers with the associations they belong to. It was developed a model composed of seven dimensions which were grouped into two types: individual aspects (economic, networking and honor) and collective aspects (perception of services, representation, trust and relevance of the association). It was performed one quantitative and descriptive study, conducted through questionnaires applied directly to producers. 550 questionnaires were completed and 411 of these were valid. For the data analysis, correlation and multiple linear regression between the variables were used. The results showed that all seven variables were positively correlated with satisfaction, however, only five of them comprised the final model after multiple linear regression: perception of services offered, representation, trust, economical aspect and honor. Surprisingly, the results also showed that collective aspects affected more the satisfaction than individual aspects.

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Keywords: Associativism; Satisfaction; Predecessors of satisfaction; Collective action

Resumo

O objetivo do estudo foi identificar os elementos preditores da satisfação apresentada por produtores de cana-de-açúcar com as associações de adesão voluntária que eles fazem parte. Foi desenvolvido um modelo composto por sete dimensões aglomeradas em dois tipos: aspectos individuais (aspectos econômicos, estabelecimento de novos relacionamentos e honra) e aspectos coletivos (percepção de serviços, representação, confiança e relevância da associação). Questionários foram aplicados diretamente a 550 produtores e desses 411 foram válidos. A partir dos dados levantados,

* Corresponding author at: Universidade de São Paulo, Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade de Ribeirão Preto, Avenida dos Bandeirantes, 3900, 14040-905 Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil.

E-mail: lcastro@usp.br (L. Thomé e Castro).

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foram feitas análises de correlação e regressão linear múltipla entre as variáveis. Os resultados identificaram que todas as sete variáveis do modelo apresentam correlação positiva com a satisfação, entretanto apenas cinco delas compuseram o modelo final após a regressão linear múltipla: percepção de serviços oferecidos, representação, confiança, aspecto econômico e honra. Os resultados também mostraram, diferentemente do esperado, que os aspectos coletivos influenciam mais a satisfação dos produtores do que os aspectos individuais. Apresentam-se importantes orientações sobre a pesquisa em associativismo e a gestão de associações.

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Palavras-chave: Associativismo; Satisfação; Antecessores da satisfação; Ação coletiva

Resumen

El objetivo en este estudio es identificar los factores predictivos de satisfacción presentada por productores de caña de azúcar con relación a las asociaciones de afiliación voluntaria a las que pertenecen. Se desarrolló un modelo compuesto por siete dimensiones organizadas en dos tipos: aspectos individuales (aspectos económicos, establecimiento de nuevas relaciones y honor) y aspectos colectivos (percepción de los servicios, representación, fiabilidad y relevancia de la asociación). Se aplicaron cuestionarios directamente a 550 productores, de los que resultaron 411 válidos. A partir de los datos recolectados, se realizaron análisis de correlación y regresión lineal múltiple. Los resultados mostraron que las siete variables del modelo se correlacionan positivamente con la satisfacción, sin embargo, sólo cinco de ellas compusieron el modelo final tras llevarse a cabo la regresión lineal múltiple: percepción de los servicios ofrecidos, representación, fiabilidad, aspecto económico y honor. Además, los resultados indicaron, a diferencia de lo esperado, que los aspectos colectivos afectan más la satisfacción de los productores que los aspectos individuales. Se presentan importantes orientaciones sobre los estudios en asociativismo y la gestión de asociaciones.

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Palabras clave: Asociativismo; Satisfacción; Factores predictivos de la satisfacción; Acción colectiva

Introduction

The associations between producers of sugarcane in Brazil are formed by the guild of producers by producing regions. As an example, in south-central Brazil, there are 31 associations with about 18,000 sugarcane producers.

Until the early 1990s, the current regulations in the sector forced the participation of the producers in associations. With the deregulation, the producers would be free to join voluntarily the association they preferred, regardless of the region in which they are located, beginning to contribute financially. Other changes have taken place in the sector with the deregulation and the end of state support apparatus. From that moment on, the relationship of the actors through the associations was expanded in order to increase participation in the political process, and the members of associations had new demands, searching for cost reduction and product differentiation (Mello & Paulillo, 2005).

Given the importance of the association for producers and the freedom to join the associations they liked the most, the benefits provided by them can define their existence and stability. This is because the voluntary nature of associations positions their members as clients, demanding for specific services and choosing to remain bound to it by weighing the costs and benefits arising from membership. These costs are mainly related to entrepreneurs' time of opportunity costs and capital opportunity costs for the maintenance of the association. Thus, managers must seek to draw attractive actions in order to ensure the continued participation of its members (Conejero, 2011; Nassar & Zylbersztajn, 2004).

Associations can provide a range of individual and collective benefits, as well as facilitate the growth of economic and

social relations among their members. The degree in which associations provide desired benefits to the members can vary considerably, which ultimately affects their participation in association activities and enables many members to be disappointed with the business. Therefore, an important task for the long-term sustainability of business associations is to understand the determinants of adherence of member satisfaction (Newbery, Sauer, Gorton, Phillipson, & Atterton, 2013).

In this context, this paper aims to identify predictor elements of satisfaction presented by the producers of sugarcane with the associations they belong. In order to do this, a model was developed by the authors for a subsequent examination through statistical analysis. We will present below the factors studied leading theorists of the subject and that were added to the model of the research.

Satisfaction in the context of associativism

Since the existing relationship between members and association is similar to the relationship between customer and company, the concept of satisfaction developed by marketing theorists in the business context can be applied in this context. Oliver (1996) argues that there are plenty of concepts for satisfaction, which hinders a simple definition for that term. However, he presents its own definition, stating that satisfaction is the judgment that a characteristic of the product or service or the product or service itself provided (or is providing) a pleasant level of achievement related to consumption. Another definition is given by Kotler (2000, p. 58), stating that satisfaction “[. . .] is the feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from the

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