

Measurement of the strategic behavior of micro and small-sized enterprises: An analysis supported by the Miles and Snow typology (1978)

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The purpose of this article was to analyze the strategic behavior of micro and small-sized enterprises in accordance with the typology proposed by Miles and Snow (1978). The research used a quantitative approach through a survey. The analyzed data originates from 368 questionnaires applied in service-providers located in the city of Concórdia, Santa Catarina - Brazil. As a result, it was verified that the service-providers tend to use strategic behavior based on analytical placement. This suggests that the enterprises seek to maintain themselves in a stable market, but also seek for new products and markets. It was also observed that family enterprises and non-family enterprises have very similar strategic behaviors, indicating that the means of ownership does not condition strategic behavior, or at least does not differentiate them in a totally opposite polarization in their strategic behaviors. As a main contribution, this study demonstrates that the taken by the researched enterprises can be the result of dynamics of the environment and of the strategic mindset of its managers..

Keywords: Strategic behaviors. Strategic decision taking. Micro and small-sized service providers. Miles and Snow Typology.

Medição do Comportamento Estratégico de Micro e Pequenas Empresas: uma análise baseada na tipologia de Miles e Snow (1978)

O objetivo deste artigo foi analisar qual o comportamento estratégico das micro e pequenas empresas a luz da tipologia proposta por Miles e Snow (1978). A pesquisa possui uma abordagem quantitativa utilizando uma *survey*. Os dados analisados se originaram de 368 questionários aplicados em empresas prestadoras de serviços localizadas na cidade de Concórdia, Santa Catarina - Brasil. Como resultado verificou-se que as empresas de serviços tendem a utilizar o comportamento estratégico baseado no posicionamento analítico. Isto sugere que as empresas procuram se manter no mercado estável, mas também estão em busca de novos produtos e mercados. Também foi observado que empresas familiares e não familiares possuem comportamentos estratégicos muito similares, indicado que a forma de posse não condiciona para o comportamento estratégico, ou pelo

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menos não as diferencie numa polarização totalmente oposta de seu comportamento estratégico. Como principal contribuição, o estudo demonstra que o caminho que as empresas pesquisadas percorrem pode decorrer da dinâmica do ambiente e do pensamento estratégico de seus gestores.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento Estratégico. Tomada de decisão estratégica. Micro e Pequenas Empresas de Prestações de Serviços. Tipologia Miles e Snow.

1 Introduction

The business scenario is going through constant changes and the reflexes reach the organizational environment. Such level of changes may be unpredictable, unstable and affect the organizational structure of the enterprise, even further than other factors (DUNCAN, 1972; GALLAS, 2015). This requires that enterprises of different segments also change or adapt to the new environment (MARTINS *et al.*, 2008). As a result of this scenario there is a heightened competitiveness, and management has increasingly higher degrees of uncertainties in relation to the decisions to be taken (DAFT; SORMUNEN; PARKS, 1988). These environmental uncertainties influence the performance of management, and consequently the behavior of the enterprises.

In environments with broad and diversified offers, clients are more demanding in relation to the products sold or to the service rendered this requires greater attention and flexibility by management, who needs to seek for different strategies guided towards the consumer and to the product or service (DRUCKER, 1998). Accordingly, the enterprise must understand what strategic behavior to adopt, with the purpose of combining resources and behavior to construct competitive advantage in relation to competitors and generate the intended results (RIBEIRO, 2010).

Miles and Snow (1978) contend that there are four strategic typologies that make it possible to understand the behavior of each enterprise, independently of being small, medium or large. These typologies are: defender strategy, prospector strategy, analyzer strategy or reactor strategy (MILES; SNOW, 1978). In this proposal, the use of these strategies makes it possible to find the difficulties of the environment which the enterprises are experiencing and the strategic attitudes or choices of management.

Prior researches on the strategies of micro and small sized enterprises (MPEs) in the Brazilian scenario encompassed the following topics: strategy formation (ROCHA *et al.*, 2011; SANTOS; ALVES; ALMEIDA, 2007); influence of the strategic typology in the performance of schools (MARTINS *et al.*, 2008); impact of the strategic management process as performance antecedents (GONÇALVES FILHO *et al.*, 2011); “constructed” strategies (ALVES *et al.*, 2013); strategic positioning (SCHREIBER *et al.*, 2013); knowledge creation strategy (SOUZA; ZAMBALDE; OLIVEIRA, 2013); strategic planning as a management tool (MOURA *et al.*, 2014); strategic conceptions – safari (SENO *et al.*, 2014); strategic discussion of management teams (URBANAVICIU; LIMA, 2014); relationship between environmental pressure and strategic behavior (VIDAL; BARBOSA; BOUZADA, 2014); strategic practice (CARNICELLI; SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2016); cognitive style and dimensions of the strategy process (PEREIRA; BORINI; FISCHMANN, 2017); management competencies and the influence on strategic performance (CASSOL *et al.*,

2016); situational strategic planning (RODRIGUES; SANTOS, 2016) and competitive intelligence as strategy support (PEREIRA *et al.*, 2018).

It is important to emphasize that many studies on strategic behavior are concentrated on large sized companies from which concepts and models are derived and which are not totally applicable to small companies. (ALVES *et al.*, 2013; ROCHA *et al.*, 2011). On the other hand, the strategic typology of Miles and Snow (1978) is widely used in the context of the MPEs. Accordingly, the objective of this article was to analyze which strategic behavior are used by the micro and small-sized service providers located in the municipality of Concórdia, Santa Catarina – Brazil.

The study was developed from the investigation of 368 MPEs of the researched municipality, with the data being quantitatively analyzed by means of descriptive analyses contingency coefficient (CC) for comparison of the groups of companies – family and non-family. The study is justified in view of the fact that the environmental dynamics impels the organization to adapt strategies and change behavior in order to survive (ZANIN; MACHADO; SEHNEM, 2011). Thus, management needs to understand the requirements of clients, the environment of its activities and restructure organizational processes to survive moments of crisis.

Another important point is the growth of the service sector, where the present economic context forces companies to have a strategic position to remain in the market (GALLAS *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the understanding of the strategy is what will lead to the necessary decisions for reaching the objectives of the organization (SOARES; TEIXEIRA; PELISSARI, 2011). The following sections of this article present: the theoretical referential, method, results and discussions as well as the final considerations.

2. Strategy in the organizational context

In the past years researchers have increased their concern in examining the conceptual structure and the different constructors that comprise the studies in the discipline of strategy (PINTO *et al.*, 2016). Mintzberg (1973) defines strategy as a practice based on three main modes: enterprising – when there is a strong leader capable of dominating external coalition; adaptive – adoption of solutions related to the demands of the environment; planned – previously formulated strategy through systematic analysis of the cost-benefit relation. In the cost/benefit aspect the implementation of the strategy requires the acquisition of resources and strategic factors that are acquired in specific markets for the implementation of the strategies and must be capable of generating a return (HIRSHLEIFER, 1976). Mintzberg (1978) re-defined strategy as a coherent line of action leading to important and desirable results for the organization. Porter (1999) stated that strategy is the creation of an exclusive and valuable position, a different set of activities (competitive advantage) and, thus, the essence of strategic positioning consists of choosing different activities to those of the rivals.

Strategy should generate competitive advantage and guarantee the maintenance of the company in the market (HENDERSON, 1989). Companies that obtain their livelihood in identical manners cannot coexist, in the understanding that each one must be different to the competitor to hold unique competitive advantage (PORTER, 1985). In this line of thought, strategy is also essentially connected to competition and to competitive advantage, arising

from the development of a singular competence, differentiating the company from its competitors (GHEMAWAT, 2000). The concept of strategy and management itself took precedence when the rate of social, economic, political and environmental changes began to require constant redirecting of objectives and paths to be taken by organizations (GALLAS *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, strategy is observed as one of the entrepreneurial practices, nevertheless in the past decades it has transformed itself into a polemical concept, comprising different definitions arising from varied perspectives of analysis (FONSECA; MACHADO-DA-SILVA, 2010).

In the midst of the Brazilian crisis, companies need to administer and attend to the needs of the market in increasingly differentiated ways in order to keep competitive. The instability of the market continuously demands management to think of the organization with solid bases and with perspectives of expansion to remain competitive (ZANIN; MACHADO; SEHNEM, 2011). In this scenario marked by constant changes, there is the need for managers to seek for instruments to prepare the companies for economic and technological changes present in the scenario, with the understanding that the strategies offer to the company a direction to follow to reach the desired objectives (CHICHOSKI; CERETTA; ROCHA, 2013).

2.1 Strategic behavior

The development of a company depends on its organization adaption to changes in the environment (MILES; SNOW, 1978). Companies develop a relationship strategy with their consumer which can be perceptible to their competitors (MILES; SNOW, 1978). To dimension its activities in different markets, the company must infer the minimum results necessary to permit the optimization of its products and services (WERNERFELT, 1984). The process begins with the alignment of the organization with the market, with the purpose responding to or assisting in the formation of the present and future needs of clients and define the strategy to be followed (MARTINS *et al.*, 2008). Accordingly, organizational structure is a process of adaptation of the company to the environment (BOTT; SILVA; SASSAKI, 2009). The Miles and Snow (1978) analysis model aims to evaluate the organizational adaptation to the competitive environment.

The realization of the organizational strategic adaptation to the competitive environment was denominated by Miles and Snow (1978) as “adaptive cycle”, and is directly related to the perception of the problems by management. In the face of the problems occurring in the environment and in the companies, adjustments must be performed after having full control of the company (MILES; SNOW, 1978). Once adaptations are made, the companies tend to hinder changes in the organizational structure, where four types of strategic behaviors exist due to reaction to the environment, where each one needs to be analyzed and preferred in accordance with the type of strategy the company intends to follow (BOTT; SILVA; SASSAKI, 2009). The manner in which the organization operates in the market is what will determine the equilibrium of the control processes and adjustments of operations (CHICHOSKI; CERETTA; ROCHA, 2013).

The administrative problem consists of solving the reduction of uncertainties and establishing the solution of business and engineering problems (DEGENHARDT; MAÑAS, 2005). Solving the administrative problem is not only reducing uncertainties, once it involves the formulation (planning) and implementation of organization processes (innovation). Management

must pay attention towards maintaining stability in the three sectors of the organization: administrative, engineering and business, forming in this manner a positive cycle (CHICHOSKI; CERETTA; ROCHA, 2013).

Despite the problems being interconnected, they can be explained individually. The business problem consists of resolving product-market issues, developing and projecting the image of the company which defines its market and market orientation. Engineering problem involves the creation of a system to operate the solution of the business problem, in other words, select appropriate technology to produce and distribute the chosen products and services. Miles and Snow (1978) developed four strategic typologies to assist management in their decisions in relation to the problems of the adaptive cycle, which are classified as: prospectors, defenders, analyzers and reactors, as demonstrated under Table 2.

Table 2 – Strategic behavior typologies

Typology	Concepts
Prospectors	Organizations that continuously seek for new product and market opportunities; sources of changes and creation, once they aim to innovate through extensive and non-intensive planning; the main focus being on innovation and not on efficiency; decentralized control, permitting the monitoring of the environment.
Defenders	Organizations that seek to maintain a line of products or services and rarely present innovations. Aim to compete in price and quality of the products already worked on; have intensive and not extensive planning with centralized control; concentrated, mainly, on increasing efficiency.
Analyzers	Organization that act in types of market, one stable and another changing, with intensive and detailed planning. Considered mid-point between prospector and defender typology, once while it operates in a defensive market it tries to maintain a product-market domain, but when operating in a prospector market, aims to explore new products and markets.
Reactors	Organizations that perceive changes in the environment but react to pressure only when forced to; present a performance inferior to the other types of strategies.

Source: Prepared based on Miles and Snow (1978).

Miles and Snow (1978) presented four alternatives to the organizations, but each with its own strategy for responding to the environment and with its specific technology configurations, structure and process that are consistent with the strategy. No typology is capable of encompassing all of the forms of organizational behavior (MILES; SNOW, 1978). The typology permits the understanding of a strategic behavior or each company; nevertheless organizations do not follow one single typology, once factors of the external environment change the organizational structure of the company (ZANIN; MACHADO; SEHNEM, 2011). It is possible to perceive that companies use various types of strategies in the search for growth and competitive differential. Nevertheless, they should analyze which strategic behavior to use and whether it determines their role in the environment.

Once the posture to be adopted is chosen, the company must adjust its productive process, its distribution network and logistics, its price policy, its marketing and promotion efforts and other processes involved, with the aim of supporting the chosen posture (MARTINS *et al.*, 2008). It must be clear for the company which strategic behavior to adopt, in order to take advantage of all of the benefits that its productive structure, resources, capacities can generate (RIBEIRO, 2010). Therefore, it is possible to verify that strategy has a high importance in the company, once it can contribute towards the performance of the organization. The Miles and Snow (1978) typology assists management in taking the path in accordance with the

most enabling decisions towards organizational success, once it is based on the responses of the companies to the changing conditions of the external environment.

Conant, Mokwa and Varadarajan (1990) proposed 11 dimensions capable of identifying strategic behaviors of organizations, their objective was to permit and evaluation of changes in the external environment, analyze strategic behavior and the relation with the strategies adopted by management of the organizations.

This questionnaire aims to reflect the dimensions of the strategies comprising the model. Two questions were developed for each of the "strategic dimensions explained in the adaptive cycle of Miles and Snow (Table 03). For each matter four different answers were developed. The answers were characterized as "adaptive active" posture. The interviewed party had to choose the option of answer that best adapted to the organization, within the 11 dimensions (CONANT; MOKWA; VARADARAJAN, 1990).

Table 03 – Dimensions of the Adaptive Cycle and strategic type characteristics.

Adaptive circle components	Dimensions	Types of Strategic Behaviors			
		Defenders	Prospectors	Analyzers	Reactors
Entrepreneurial problems and solutions (choice of domain of products and markets)	Product-market domain	Narrow and carefully focused	Broad and continuously expanding	Segmented and carefully adjusted	Uneven and transient
	Success posture	Prominence in 'own' product markets	Active initiation of change	Calculated followers of change	Opportunistic thrusts and coping postures
	Surveillance	Domain dominated and cautious/strong organizational monitoring	Market and environmentally oriented/aggressive search	Competitive oriented and thorough	Sporadic and issue dominated
	Growth	Cautious penetration and advances in productivity	Enacting product market development and diversification	Assertive penetration and careful product market development	Hasty change
Engineering problems and solutions (choice of technology for production and distribution)	Technological goal	Cost-effectiveness	Flexibility and innovation	Technological synergism	Project development and completion
	Technological breadth	Focal, core technology/basic expertise	Multiple technologies / 'pushing the edge'	Interrelated technologies / 'at the cutting edge'	Shifting technological applications / fluidity
	Technological buffers	Standardization, maintenance programs	Technical personnel skills/diversity	Incrementalism and synergism	Ability to experiment and 'rig solutions'
Administrative problems and solutions (selection of areas for future innovation and	Dominant coalition	Finance and production	Marketing and R&D	Planning staff	Trouble-shooters
	Planning	Inside/out..control dominated	Problem and opportunity finding/campaign (program) perspective	Comprehensive with incremental changes	Crisis oriented and disjointed

structure and process rationalization)	Structure	Functional/line authority	Product and/or market centered	Staff dominated/matrix oriented	Tight formal authority/loose operating design
	Control	Centralized and formal/financially anchored	Market performance/sales volumes	Multiple methods/careful risk calculations....sales contributions	Avoid problems/handle problems, remain solvent

Source: Adapted from Conant *et al.* (1999).

In the first group the set of eight changes in the external environment is analyzed, in relation to the last five years, approaching the form in which they understand the frequency and intensity of these changes. These matters enable the calculation of a score for each interviewed party, the greater the score obtained the greater the perceptibility demonstrated that a certain change has a greater or lesser degree of importance in the decision making process (CONANT; MOKWA; VARADARAJAN, 1990).

In the second group, containing eleven questions, the objective is to identify the strategic behavior of the organization and the strategic profile of the interviewed party. Four questions indicate a prospective posture, with emphasis to innovation, research and the creation of new products, realization of monitoring of the environment, capacity for identifying new educational products and services and of offering responses to the trends identified in the market. Another five questions describe an analytical posture, where emphasis is allocated to stability, maintenance of an already materialized position, offer of services depreciated in the market without innovation, management of cost-benefit matters and little investment on research. The last five questions aim to identify a defensive posture, with a prevalence for maintain the equilibrium of the niche, disposition for ignoring environmental challenges, restricted range of services, low aggressiveness in terms of expanding domains (CONANT; MOKWA; VARADARAJAN, 1990).

3. Method

3.1 Methodological approach

The study has a quantitative approach, with a survey type research having been performed, considered adequate for the objective of the research once the aim is to obtain information and characteristics of a certain group of people (PISONNEAULT; KRAEMER, 1993). Service providers were investigated where the aim was to identify the evaluation and perception of management in relation to the strategic behavior adopted by the company in the face of the market in which it operates, based on the Miles and Snow (1978) typology.

Out of the different classification systems, the Miles and Snow (1978) typology has been the more long-lasting and used, having been submitted to countless validation tests and practical applications (HAMBRICK, 2003; ALMEIDA; ANTONIALLI; GOMES, 2011; GALLAS *et al.*, 2015; SOMAVILLA; MACHADO; SEHNEM, 2013; ZANIN; MACHADO; SEHNEM, 2011). The survey uses the strategic behavior model (prospectors, defenders, analyzers and reactors), proposed by Snow and Hrebiniak (1980), where they proposed the analysis of four characteristics in one single dimension with four items, where questions were labeled as type A, B, C and D.

The research is cross-sectional, which occurs when data collection takes place in only one moment, in this manner, it tries to describe and analyze the state of one or more variables in a determined moment (SAMPIERI; COLLADO; LUCIO, 1996).

3.2 Population and sample

The population of the survey is consisted of 2,542 micro and small-sized service providers in the city of Concórdia, Santa Catarina - Brazil, according to registers of the City Hall of the city. Sampling error of 5% was established and confidence level of 95% and, thus, 334 companies would be necessary to comply with these statistical concerns. The final sample of the survey was made up of 368 companies.

In order to be classified as microbusiness in Brazil, Law 123 of 2006 defines that for this annual gross revenue must be equal to or lower than R\$ 360,000.00 (SEBRAE, 2011). The researched service providers all fit into this category, and call attention once the service sectors is undergoing daily changes and transformations and this requires greater attention of management on the market and, at the same time, greater concern in relation to the strategic behavior used by competitors for winning over new clients.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Data was collected by means of a structured questionnaire with closed questions divided into two parts: (1) characterization of the companies in accordance with the Miles and Snow (1978) typology and (2) identification of the profile of the respondent party. The questionnaire was structured based on Snow and Hrebiniak (1980), in which each dimension has four answer alternatives which characterize the strategic behavior of the mentioned dimension, this brings the respondent party to check only the one alternative that best represents the reality of the company.

Connant *et al.* (1990) emphasizes that this same method was tested by McDaniel and Kolari (1987), Segev (1987) and Zahra (1987), with the purpose of performing a more summarized analysis of the strategic behavior. These authors propose a validation of the aspects studied by Miles and Snow (1978), enabling the identification of the strategic behavior of the companies.

Table 4 – Nomenclature used in the research

A	B	C	D
Analyzers	Defenders	Prospectors	Reactors

Source: prepared by the researchers.

The categories of a typology are defined by a package of peculiarities, in other words, when identified, each typology may be tested and expanded by strategists revealing preference for a determined set of variables (HAMBRICK, 1984; SOARES; TEIXEIRA; PELISSARI, 2011). The second part of the questionnaire is related to the identification of the profile of the responding parties with reference to the characteristics of the company and of management (respondent), in which the following were identified: gender, age, schooling, profile of the manager, age group of the manager and period of operation of the organization in the market.

The data collection procedure was structured in such a way that the researcher made visits to the companies, presenting the studied theme and the procedures. The respondent was asked to make a careful analysis of the questions and, in sequence, the day for the researcher to return was scheduled and, when necessary, to clarify any doubts before the final

application. Data was collected in 2016, whereby all of the respondents were, at that time, managers of the service provider MPEs in Concórdia/SC.

For the data analysis the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) software, version 20.0 was used. The statistical methods have the purpose of organizing, analyzing the set of data collected or comparing the characteristics (REIS; REIS, 2012). The classification criterion of the companies among the four alternatives occurs from the highest number of associated answers. This analysis was performed through descriptive statistics (frequency analysis). In the case of a draw between the analytical, defender and prospector alternatives, the resulting strategy was classified as analytical (MILES; SNOW, 1978). In the case of a draw with the reactor alternative, it was classified as reactor (GALLAS *et al.*, 2015). For comparison of the groups formed by family and non-family companies a contingency matrix was used of the strategic behaviors used by management.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

4.1 Service providers

In Concórdia/SC the service providers represent 61.4% of the GDP for 2012, generating R\$ 21,367.34 in amount per capita, while other segments remain below this percentage and value (IBGE, 2012). Service providers have a capacity of generating innovative strategies and seeking initiatives for expanding the knowledge of management, once the adoption of these strategies is a significant and determinant step towards winning over new clients and of differentiation from its competitors. In the present Brazilian economic context service companies are the first to feel the economic recession of the country and with this outcome came the need for understanding the strategic behavior profile of the companies in this region.

4.2 Profile analysis of the participants of the survey

In this phase the results relating to the profile of participating managers and companies, as per Table 1, are presented. It should be observed that the participants of the research were only leaders (owners) or managers of the MPEs, obtaining 368 respondents, of which 51.4% were of the female gender and 48.6% of the male gender. Upon analysis of the age group, it was observed that the majority, 35.3% were of ages between 36 and 45 years, and when considering the age group of 26 to 35 years, which came second, there is a representativeness of 60,6% of the respondents, which demonstrates that management of the research sample are of young age.

In relation to schooling levels, it was observed that most of them have complete secondary education 34,2%, and in second place graduates with 29.9% (110 respondents) and postgraduates 17.1% (63 respondents), totaling 40.0% which can infer that these managers have qualified themselves to improve the management of the companies and to search for greater competitiveness in the market. It is perceived that in relation to the type of company (family or non-family) 53.8% of the researched companies were family companies, which is common in the researched region.

Table 1 – Description of respondent profiles

Profile identification		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	189	51.4
	Male	179	48.6
Age group	Up to 25 years	44	12
	26 to 35 years	93	25.3
	36 to 45 years	130	35.3
	45 to 55 years	53	14.4
	Over 55 years	48	13
Schooling	Elementary school	69	18.8
	Secondary school	126	34.2
	Graduate	110	29.9
	Post-graduate	63	17.1
Time of operation of the company	Up to 05 years	84	22.8
	Between 5 and 10 years	64	17.4
	Between 11 and 20 years	108	29.3
	Between 21 and 30 years	54	14.7
	Over 30 years	58	15.8
Family business	No	170	46.2
	Yes	198	53.8

Source: Research results.

When analyzing the segment of activity of the researched companies it was identified that the majority, 17.7% work with transport. This representativeness refers to the fact that the researched region has many transport cooperatives that work with large companies of the food sector, specifically in the sectors of grains and meat. The second segment with a representativeness of 9.5% was mechanics with 9.5% followed by the beauty sector (beauty parlors) with 9.0% (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Sector of activity of the researched companies

Segment of activity of the company	Frequency	Percentage
Transport	65	17.7
Mechanical	35	9.5
Beauty parlor	33	9.0
Accounting	27	7.3
Medical/Physiotherapy clinics	25	6.8
Washing	21	5.7
Legal	20	5.4
Real estate broker	20	5.4
Food	18	4.9
Painting and construction	16	4.3
Education	14	3.8
Computing	12	3.3
Health clubs	10	2.7
Veterinary clinics	9	2.4
Hoist/crane services	9	2.4
Customs brokers	6	1.6
Laundry	6	1.6
Tourism	6	1.6
Other	16	4.1
Total	368	100

Source: Research results.

4.3 Strategic behavior analysis of MPEs

The first phase of the strategic behavior analysis of the companies refers to the understanding of the data in the 11 dimensions as proposed by Connant, Mokwa, Varadarajan (1990) and the type of strategic behavior that prevailed for each one, subsequently, the results of the sole question for strategic behavior proposed by Snow and Hrebiniak (1980). The strategic typologies of Miles and Snow (1978), enable the understanding of the strategic behavior adopted by micro and small-sized service providers, as per Table 3.

It is important to note that management, when responding to the questions, was not aware that each of their answers would represent a strategic behavior, and answered the questions comparing their company to the market and marked the best alternative that would represent the attitude of the company (Appendix A – Questionnaire).

Table 3 – Consolidation of the responses in each of the 11 dimensions

Dimension	Strategic behavior									
	Analyzers		Defenders		Prospectors		Reactors		Total	
	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
Services offered	85	23.1%	88	23.9%	107	29,1%	88	23,9%	368	100%
Company image	80	21.7%	100	27.2%	99	26,9%	89	24,2%	368	100%
Monitoring	104	28.3%	86	23.4%	91	24,7%	87	23,6%	368	100%
Loss or demand by consumers	95	25.8%	104	28.3%	84	22,8%	85	23,1%	368	100%
Objectives	104	28.3%	96	26.1%	96	26,1%	72	19,6%	368	100%
Management competences and aptitudes	95	25.8%	90	24.5%	101	27,4%	82	22,3%	368	100%
Competition	107	29.1%	71	19.3%	87	23,6%	103	28,0%	368	100%
Leader	95	25.8%	104	28.3%	89	24,2%	80	21,7%	368	100%
Concerns with the future	95	25.8%	105	28.3%	90	24,5%	78	21,4%	368	100%
Organizational structure	99	26.9%	87	23.6%	97	26,4%	85	23,1%	368	100%
Performance	112	30.4%	98	26.6%	72	19,6%	86	23,4%	368	100%

Source: Research results.

When management was questioned on how their companies behaved in relation to the services offered in comparison to other companies in the same segment, the strategic behavior that best characterized them was the prospector, represented by 29.10% (107 respondents). This result indicates that the analyzed companies are being proactive and presenting and “entrepreneurial spirit”, continuously seeking products and new ideas, as well as new markets to work and develop the company. The prospector typology may be considered as an organization that continuously seeks for product and market opportunities, also being a source of change and creation, aiming to innovate with extensive and non-extensive planning (MILES; SNOW, 1978). Gallas *et al.* (2015) when researching the beauty and esthetics sector observed a defensive behavior in relation to the dimension of services offered, with a representative percentage of 56.45%. It can be observed that both sectors render services, but the environment to which they are related require different strategic behaviors.

In relation to the image passed on by the company, the strategic behavior that most characterized the researched companies was the defensive one, representing 27.2% (100 respondents). The result demonstrates that the companies have defensive behaviors, being reluctant to search for new opportunities in the market, preferring to continue with the same

actions they are used to – the “comfort zone”. These companies have a narrow focus and rarely change their strategic action structures. The organizations aim to maintain a line of products and services and rarely present novelties. They aim to compete in the price and quality of the products they already work with (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

With reference to the quantity of time that the company spends to monitor market changes, greater emphasis was for the analytical typology, represented by 28.3% (104 respondents). The results demonstrate that the companies attempt to monitor changes in a routine manner, once the market tends to change continuously and the adopted behavior enables to accompany and adopt the most promissory innovations of competitors. The organizations work in two types of market, one stable and another changing environment (MILES; SNOW, 1978). This behavior can be considered a mid-point between the prospector and defender behaviors, once it aims to maintain the domain on the defensive market and explore new products on the prospector market.

In comparison to other companies the increase or the loss of demand perceived by the company was characterized by the defender typology, represented by 28.3% (104 respondents). The results demonstrate that the defender companies tend to have a narrower focus and try not to modify their present mode and structure. In other words, they do not increase their offer of products and, consequently the services rendered, and in this manner they suffer with the loss of demand or winning over new clients, but since they continue working in the same market and with the same consumers, they tend to have a small increase in demand. Organizations that perform with this behavior concentrate mainly on increasing efficiency within a stable space in the active market. These companies do not permit the search for new opportunities outside their market (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

In the analyzed sample dedication and commitment are objectives considered important for the companies, characterized as an analytical typology, represented by 28.3% (104 respondents). The results demonstrate that the companies try to maintain dedication and commitment to the consumer, once this behavior characteristic evidences the concern on visualizing the needs of the consumer in a new operation market and attending to expectations in another stable market. The companies with this behavior work with intensive and detailed planning, considered as a mid-point between the defender and the prospector behaviors, they minimize risks and maximize opportunities (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

With reference to the competencies and aptitudes of managers, these were characterized as prospectors, representing 27.4% (101 respondents). According to Miles and Snow (1978) the companies with this behavior invest continuously in research and development of products, using extensive and non-intensive, but due to their continued focus on the creation of new products and search for new markets, these companies tend to be inefficient, leaving an image of uncertainty when compared to their competitors.

When analyzing the answers on how the companies protect themselves from their competitors, an analytical strategic behavior was observed, represented by 29.1% (107 respondents), where management emphasized that their company is capable of carefully analyzing emerging trends and adopting only those that have proven potential. This represents that the companies are observing new ideas of the competitors and adopting more promissory strategies, enhancing the emergence of services and of entering into new markets. The companies with this behavior accompany the ideas of the competitors and adopt the most promising innovations, in order to increase opportunities in the market (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

In comparison to their competitors the characterized companies presented a defensive behavior, represented by 28.3% (104 respondents), where it is common to observe that most of the respondent companies belong to the transport service sector. The results demonstrate that management does not search for opportunities outside their domain; to the contrary, they dedicate their attention to the market they attend to. Management of these companies has a more conservative vision and rarely creates innovation (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

In relation to their competitors and to the manner in which the companies prepare for the future the predominance of the defensive typology was verified, represented by 28.3% (105 respondents). The results demonstrate that this strategic behavior maintain a line of services protecting quality and price, when analyzing the defensive posture of the companies in relation to future prospection it is necessary to consider the moment of crisis and economic instability which has a great influence on the researched sector. These companies do not generally search for new opportunities in the market, and in view of this, there is no concern for the future, once their only objective is to work in the present market and where stability is identified. The defender behavior aims to compete through price and quality of present products, this behavior demonstrates a small vision of the market and not searching for new segments of operation (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

When comparing the organizational structure with the competitors the strategic behavior that characterized the researched companies was analytical, represented by 26.90% (99 respondents). The results demonstrate that management gives priority to the organization of the functional areas of the company, and once this is a characteristic that aims to accompany competition, each sector must analyze and verify the need for placing a strategic plan that will help to absorb and improve products/services in relation to competitors. The companies with analytical behaviors work in more markets, aim to accompany competition and adapt their products in accordance with the market segments and in this manner better absorb and improve products to reach potential consumers (MILES; SNOW, 1978).

Contrary to many companies of the same segment, the procedure adopted by the companies to evaluate performance is characterized by the analytical typology, represented by 30.4% (112 respondents). The results demonstrate that the procedures used for evaluation have the participation and involvement of all the collaborators of the company.

With the purpose of complementing the analysis of the 11 dimensions of Connant, Mokwa, Varadarajan (1990), an overall average of the strategic behavior presented by the researched companies was calculated, and the typology presenting a higher percentage of response was the *analytical* typology, as demonstrated under Table 4.

Table 4 – Overall average of strategic behaviors in 11 dimensions

Analyzer	Defender	Prospector	Reactor
26.45%	25.47%	25.02%	23.10%

Source: Research results.

This result demonstrates that the service providers of the city of Concórdia, Santa Catarina – Brazil, operate in two markets, one being more stable and another more dynamic, they aim to aggregate new products to the market already created by other companies and which were already successful. The analytical strategic behavior operates in two types of domain, product or market; management analyzes the new ideas of the competitors and quickly adopts the more promising ones (SOARES; TEIXEIRA; PELISSARI, 2011).

The Snow and Herbiniak (1980) proposal is to understand the strategic behavior from one single dimension. The question used to understand the strategic behavior in one single dimension proposes that the respondent analyze four descriptions and checks the one that best represents the company in comparison to competitors. It was observed that once again the analytical behavior prevailed in the answers represented by 26.90%, that is, 99 respondents (Table 5), which reinforces the results of the analyses of the 11 dimensions proposed by Connant, Mokwa, Varadarajan (1990).

Table 5 – Analysis of the strategic behavior in one dimension

Behavior	Frequency	Percentage	Accrued percentage
Analyzers	99	26.90%	26.90%
Defenders	95	25.80%	52.70%
Prospectors	88	23.90%	76.60%
Reactors	86	23.40%	100%
Total	368	100%	

Source: Research results.

The results demonstrate that the strategic behavior of the researched companies is represented by the analytical typology, in which management aims to maintain the organization in a stable market, but there is the search for new services. Considering the calculation of the overall average of the dimensions, it is possible to verify that the analytical posture predominates in most of the companies, in this manner, events in the market environment have been determining which actions management needs to take, with the purpose of diagnosing, solving and/or taking advantage, in the measure in which problems and opportunities arise.

The results corroborate with Luo and Park (2001) who related the strategic alignment and performance in the Chinese market, where they emphasized that the Miles and Snow analytical guidance (1978) is more appropriate for turbulent environments, moments that represent the environment in which the service providers are experiencing in Brazil (moment of economic and political turbulence).

Contrary to the results in this study, Gallas *et al.* (2015) when analyzing also the service provider sector, but in the beauty and esthetics sector, verified a defensive strategic behavior by the analyzed companies, which is also similar to the results of Hoffmann *et al.* (2009), who analyzed microbusinesses in the durable goods retail trade where the defensive strategic behavior predominated in the researched companies in such context. Hékis *et al.* (2013) also analyzed the service providers in the hotel service network in Santa Catarina and determined that they adopted, in their majority, the prospector strategic behavior, characterized by the search for new markets and introduction of new products and services to their clients.

When comparing family and non-family businesses, it is verified that they have great similarity in relation to strategic behaviors – analyzers, defenders, prospectors and reactors, varying in a small degree in the 11 investigated dimensions. Presented under Table 6 are the results of the correlation matrix using the Contingency Coefficient for nominal variables.

Table 6 – Contingency matrix on the strategic behavior of family and non-family businesses

Dimension	Type		An	Def	Pros	Rea	Total	<i>p.value</i>
Services offered	Family	No	60	34	51	26	171	0.765
		Yes	59	44	62	32	197	
Business image	Family	No	39	47	60	25	171	0.094
		Yes	61	53	48	35	197	
Monitoring	Family	No	54	44	43	30	171	0.891
		Yes	57	49	51	40	197	
Loss or demand of consumers	Family	No	49	41	32	49	171	0.767
		Yes	54	55	39	49	197	
Objectives	Family	No	43	45	34	49	171	0.205
		Yes	49	41	57	50	197	
Management skills and capabilities	Family	No	52	37	40	42	171	0.901
		Yes	57	49	43	48	197	
Competitors	Family	No	51	45	35	40	171	0.817
		Yes	53	49	41	54	197	
Director	Family	No	35	53	38	45	171	0.682
		Yes	48	51	44	54	197	
Concern for the future	Family	No	42	42	59	28	171	0.002*
		Yes	50	48	40	59	197	
Organizational structure	Family	No	48	38	46	39	171	0.589
		Yes	49	56	49	43	197	
Performance	Family	No	38	50	35	48	171	0.978
		Yes	41	59	43	54	197	

* Significance level at 0.05.

In ten of the 11 dimensions investigated no differences were verified in the strategic behavior of family and non-family companies. The only case was in relation to the dimension “Concern for the future”, where family companies tend to use a more reactor behaviors, while non-family companies use more prospector behaviors ($CC = 0.191$; $p. value < 0.05$). In this context, it is verified that the environment in which the companies are inserted has a direct influence on the competitive strategies of small companies as proposed in the model developed by Miles and Snow (1978). Desarbo *et al.* (2005) and Sollosy (2013) state that the companies develop stable standards of strategic behavior an adaptation to the environmental conditions.

5. Final considerations

This research had the purpose of analyzing strategic behavior in the perception of managers of the service provider MPEs in the city of Concórdia, state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, with the application of a questionnaire for data collection, structured in accordance with the studies of Miles and Snow (1978), Miles and Herbiniak (1980) and Connant, Mokwa and Varadarajan (1990). Predominance was verified in the use of the analytical behavior. The behavior that was least present in the results of this research was the reactor, with 23.10%, demonstrating that the companies are dedicating their attention to improvements, the prompt adoption of promissory strategies and continuously aiming for opportunities and new markets, once with the reactive behavior, management perceives the environment of uncertainties, but due to not having strategy, rarely makes adjustments for improvement of the organization.

The results of this study contribute in a practical manner with the MPE managers, once it demonstrates that path that the service providers can follow in view of the environmental trends and in accordance with the strategic thoughts of management. This analysis offers indications that managers are more aware of the market in the face of the economic and political crisis in Brazil. The study also contemplates the field of strategy and emphasizes the empirical importance of visualizing how companies are acting in the face of the market and the changes that occur. As management contributions of the research it is possible to highlight the strengthening of the understanding of strategic behavior of the service sector in the researched environment, once it is understood that the companies determine their strategies from the outlook they have of the external and internal environments.

The main limitations of the research refer to the strategic behavior analysis of only one sector; the characteristics of the geographical region; and focus on the period of crisis. Having said that, it was not possible to make any comparisons between the sectors or even with other regions or periods. In this respect, future researches could expand the study of this subject matter, bringing other contexts and sectors, as well as investigating whether the organizations continue with the behaviors after the period of economic crisis. It is also important to observe the importance of researching large sized companies, where the market is bigger and the results could present different configurations to the ones analyzed herein.

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APPENDIX A – RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Variáveis	A	B	C	D
1. In comparison to other enterprises the services offered by your company are best characterized as:	More innovative and the most varied in the market. ()	Parts of our services do not suffer many changes and are relatively stable, while other services are innovative and undergo changes. ()	Our services are focused, relatively stable and consistently defined throughout the organization and market segment. ()	Our services were always in constant change in response to opportunities and threats in the market environment. ()
2. In comparison to other service enterprises your company passes to the market an image of:	Few selected services of high quality. ()	Adopting new ideas and innovation, but only after careful analysis. ()	Reacting to market opportunities and threats to maintain or increase its position. ()	Having a reputation in the market for being creative and innovative. ()
3. The quantity of time your company spends in monitoring changes and threats in the market can be best described as:	Prolonged: we are continuously accompanying the market. ()	Minimum: we rarely do not spend much time accompanying trends and changes. ()	Average: we spend a reasonable amount of time accompanying trends and changes. ()	Variable: sometimes we spend a lot of time and other times we spend little time monitoring trends and changes in the market. ()
4. In comparison to other enterprises the increase or decrease in demand experienced are probable due to:	Our practice of concentrating on and fully developing the markets we presently serve. ()	Our practice of responding to market pressure taking few risks. ()	Our practices of aggressively entering new markets with new types of services, offers and programs. ()	Our practice of penetrating as deeply as possible the markets we presently serve, while adopting new service only after a very careful review of its potential. ()
5. One of the most important objectives for your company, in comparison to other enterprises of the same line of business are dedication and commitment towards:	Maintaining costs under control. ()	Analyzing our costs and revenue carefully and generating selectively new services or entering into new markets. ()	Assuring that people, resources and equipment required to develop new services and new markets are available and accessible. ()	We safeguard ourselves against critical threats taking the necessary actions. ()
6. In comparison to other enterprises of the same line of business the competencies and aptitudes of their managers can be best characterized as:	Analytical: their skills permit both the identification of trends as well as the development of new services and markets. ()	Specialist: their skills and competencies are concentrated on one or few specific areas. ()	Comprehensive and enterprising: their skills and competencies are diverse and flexible enabling the creation of changes. ()	Flexible: skills are related to short-term demands. ()
7. In relation to your competitors, what has mostly protected your company from your competitors has been that:	We are capable of carefully analyzing emerging trends and adopt only those that have proven potential ()	We are capable of doing a limited amount of things ()	We are capable of responding to trends despite having only moderate potential when they arise. ()	We are capable of consistently developing new services and new markets. ()

8. When compared to your competitors it is possible to state that management of your company is mostly focused on:	Maintaining a safe financial position through costs and quality control measures ()	Analyzing market opportunities and selecting only those with proven potential, while maintain a safe financial position. ()	Activities or business functions which mostly need attention given to opportunities or problems presently faced. ()	Develop new services and expand to new market segments. ()
9. In comparison to competitors does your company prepare itself for the future:	Identifying possible solutions for the problems or challenges requiring immediate attention. ()	Identifying trends and opportunities in the market that could result in the creation of new services. ()	Identifying problems that, once resolved, will permit the maintenance and improvement of present services and market position. ()	Identifying trends in industry that other enterprises in the same line of business have demonstrated to have long-term potential, while also solving issues related to our present offer of services and the present needs of the consumers. ()
10. In comparison with the competitors your organizational structure is:	Functional by nature: organized by areas, such as marketing, accounting, human resources, operations, etc. ()	Guided by services or by markets. ()	Above all functional, but in some areas guided by services or markets. ()	Changing continuously in order to qualify us to find opportunities and resolve problems when these arise. ()
11. Contrary to many other companies in the same line of business, the procedures that your organization uses to evaluate performance are best described as:	Decentralized and participative, stimulating the involvement of many collaborators. ()	Strongly guided towards the solution for problems requiring greater attention. ()	Highly and primarily centralize under the responsibility of senior management. ()	Centralized in most established service areas and more participative in newer service areas. ()
12. Which of the following descriptions combines more or is most adequate to your organization in comparison to other service companies?	My company aims to identify and maintain a niche of services that is safe and relatively stable. ()	My company operates offering a wide range of products and services in constant redefinition. ()	My company maintains a limited and stable line of products and services and at the same time seeks to develop some new products and services in carefully selected and promising areas. ()	My company does not seem to have a consistent market guidance in its products and services. ()