

# PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT FOR COMPETITIVENESS: AN APPROACH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRINTING INDUSTRY

## *A GESTÃO PARTICIPATIVA PARA A COMPETITIVIDADE: UMA ABORDAGEM NO CONTEXTO DA INDÚSTRIA GRÁFICA*

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Competitiveness has caused intense changes to the business environment, hampering the sustainment and success of companies, requiring them to develop business strategies aimed toward creating competitive advantages that contribute to the organizational survival on the market. Based on this panorama and under the prism of participative management and its theoretical assumptions, how may it contribute to business sustainment and the creation of competitive advantages in a company in the printing industry?

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study is classified as a case study of qualitative and descriptive nature, with data collection through the application of two questionnaires to the managers and collaborators of the analyzed company.

**Results:** The study results point out that there was, at the time, fragility in the company regarding the aspects that based the collective participation of the collaborators in the decision-making process and in the integrative practices that supported the activities developed to create strategies for the organization itself. Given the findings, it was strategically concluded that the implementation of participative management might contribute to business sustainment, directing the efforts in favor of valuing collaborators since this may potentialize perspectives of growth and the creation of competitive advantages, allied to intellectual capital performance and the development of new strategies.

**Originality/value:** The participative model was proposed as a strategy of business sustainment and competitiveness, supported by collaborator coparticipation for the efficient management of the organization.

**Keywords:** Strategy; Sustainment; Participation; Valorization.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** A competitividade tem causado intensas mudanças no ambiente empresarial, dificultando a sustentação e o sucesso das empresas, requerendo destas o desenvolvimento de estratégias empresariais voltadas para a criação de vantagens competitivas que contribuam para sobrevivência organizacional no mercado. Baseado neste panorama e sob o prisma da gestão participativa e seus pressupostos teóricos, como esta pode contribuir na sustentação empresarial e na criação de vantagem competitiva em uma indústria do ramo gráfico?

**Desenho/metodologia/abordagem:** Para tanto, classificou-se como um estudo de caso, de natureza qualitativa e descritiva, tendo sua coleta de dados por meio da aplicação de dois questionários aos gestores e colaboradores da empresa em análise.

**Resultados:** Estes apontam que atualmente na empresa há uma fragilidade quanto aos aspectos que embasam a participação coletiva dos colaboradores no processo decisório, bem como as práticas integrativas que sustentem as atividades desenvolvidas na criação de estratégias para a própria organização. Diante dos achados, conclui-se de forma estratégica que a implantação da gestão participativa pode contribuir com a sustentação empresarial, direcionando esforços em prol da valorização dos colaboradores, pois esta potencializará perspectivas de crescimento, criação de vantagem competitiva aliada ao desempenho do capital intelectual e desenvolvimento de novas estratégias.

**Originalidade/valor:** O modelo participativo é proposto como uma estratégia de sustentação e competitividade empresarial, apoiado na co-participação dos colaboradores para a gestão eficiente da organização.

**Palavras-chave:** Estratégia; sustentação; participação; valorização.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The competitiveness among organizations has increased recently, directing companies in terms of the search for strategies to remain active on the market (Crnkovic, Monteiro, & Dias, 2016). With the high competitiveness, scenario dynamics, and transformations to the business environment, new strategies become necessary, conditioning the survival of an enterprise to its competitive capacity and economic growth relative to its competitors (Marques et al., 2016). Under this bias, strategic business management explores all available resources effectively, given that companies are becoming true live organisms, more flexible and adaptable to change for greater business longevity (Crnkovic, Monteiro, & Dias, 2016).

Under this focus, the new business management paradigms require decentralized, participative, interdependent, and integrated functions. The organizational development of a company is conditioned to the continuous improvement to the management processes, given that the efficiency of the processes depends on the references and resources used in them, pointing to human beings as totally determinant factors, given that their training and development makes possible the increase in process efficiency and productivity in any organization (Alvarenga & Estender, 2017).

An alternative that has been growing over the years is the implementation of Participative Management, a philosophy or doctrine that values the participation of people in the decision-making process involving various aspects of the management of the organization (Crnkovic, Monteiro, & Dias, 2016). The participative model emerged gradually as a sustainment strategy so that companies may compete effectively against the competition, thus seeking an integration among all organization resources, especially the human capital, which concerns this type of management (Souza, 2012).

Given the above, this study, which had as its research field a company in the printing industry, aimed to answer the following research problem: under the prism of participative management and its theoretical assumptions, how may it contribute to business sustainment and the creation of competitive advantages in a company in the printing industry? As a way to respond to the problem,

we had the general objective of analyzing the theoretical assumptions of participative management and their possible contribution regarding business sustainment and competitiveness in a company in the printing industry from the central region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

It is denoted that organizations depend more and more on their collaborators, and, for them to bring good results, they need to be motivated and in tune with the company goals, as well as concerned with productivity, a factor that may come to influence the competitiveness of the organization significantly; in other words, it is relevant for companies to safeguard their teams, motivating them and leading them to cooperate with results and commitment (Crnkovic, Monteiro, & Dias, 2016).

In the face of a panorama that inspires competitiveness, the printing industry has undergone alterations that interfere with the strategic options of each company. The extinction of jobs and even the conversion of professions, more demanding clients, shorter delivery deadlines, more aggressive competitors, and new digital media that threaten to replace printed materials are some of the changes printing companies have encountered (Bettencourt, 2013). Such transformations highlight the need for qualified labor and the ability for collaborators to make decisions in the face of the new adverse situations imposed by the organizational system (Sanini & Ruschel, 2015).

## 2 PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

The idea of participation exists since ancient times with the name of democracy, but it was from the Second World War that it started to assume a concrete form and awaken the interest of organizations (Neto & Filho, 2000). Historically, Heckscher (1996) and Tolfo, Piccinini, and Guimarães (1999) already commented that the participation theme had been present within the scope of organizations for some time; however, it developed markedly over the 1980s, especially from this decade, when there was a propagation of the Japanese model to several countries, including Brazil, and, from this, the problem-solution groups and the semiautonomous groups emerged, as well as the Quality Control Circles (QCCs), worker groups formed at the workplaces, parallel to the formal organizations, to discuss and propose ideas for solving problems for the work process.

According to Silva et al. (2013), it was in the 1960s that Participative Management ended up being widely disseminated by the influence of a study carried out by researcher Rensis Likert, who compared the traditional model with the participative model, resulting in an administrative model divided into four systems: coercive authoritarian, benevolent authoritarian, consultive, and participative. However, in the mid-1980s, Participative Management took on a new function: that of social technology and management model, and, from then, it started to be considered one of the new paradigms of administration given that it integrated the most advanced management practices and aimed to meet the needs for coordinating various change processes in business management and work relations (Orlickas, 2012).

In this train of thought, Machado and Leite (2002) brought about the term participative administration and pointed out that it took on different forms and meanings in several countries, such as the German comanagement, the French participationism, the quality circles of Japanese management, and self-management. Guimarães, Korosue, and Corrêa (2006) drew attention to this mixture of concepts, emphasizing that self-management is often addressed as a management technology and other times as an alternative management model. For the latter authors, self-management cannot be confused with comanagement or “participative management”. Self-management is defined by them as “[...] the property and control of the production means by the workers, the equitable division of the results, and the control of the work process and management of the enterprise by the workers as well”, whereas participative management is seen as “[...] a managerial strategy



introduced by company managers to increase organizational efficiency and efficacy” (Guimarães, Korosue, & Corrêa, 2006, p. 294).

Under this bias, Santos et al. (2002) conceptually defined Participative Management as a set of principles and processes that defend and allow the regular and significant involvement of workers in the definition of targets and goals, the resolution of problems, the decision-making process, the access to information, and the control of execution. Corroborating this idea, Penterich (2006) emphasized that worker involvement results in a variety of conducts that support the company mission, aiming at reaching its goals.

## **2.1 Participative Management within the scope of organizations**

Lawer (1992 apud Philip & Arrowsmith, 2021) argued that studies with large organizations pointed out that the involvement of employees in a participative manner, in which knowledge and power were broadly diffused and decentralized, would increase the probability of mutual gains. In this context, the democratization of social relations and the development and complexity of modern companies, together with the accelerated changes and the intensification of communication, represent the reasons why employee involvement is a tool that helps business development, always aiming at the motivation and satisfaction and, especially, the valorization of collaborators (Silva et al., 2013).

Souza (2012) emphasized that administrating with the participation of collaborators enables seeking an integration of the organizational goals with the individual collaborator goals, involvement, creative contribution, and accountability for the results, helping to outline participative and innovative management necessary in current times when organizations seek more effective management models. According to this approach, in an economy in which competition is high and organizations continue to deliver more using fewer resources, participative management has been used to achieve efficacy, rewarding and including employees in the decision-making process, which has been associated with higher levels of long-term strategic success (Paros, 2021).

Campos (2000) already defended that implementing a Participative Management system that contemplated all previously mentioned characteristics would not be an easy task, with it being necessary to overcome various barriers rooted in organization culture to leverage changes indeed significant in this sense. However, Jago (2017) commented that cultural differences are important but must not be overly exaggerated, inflated, or rooted because they alter participative management and change managerial behavior, possibly bringing about some consequences, and such differences may not be of great importance regardless of them being good, bad, or neutral. Such a thought goes against that proposed by Wagemans et al. (2012), who considered that culture must be clear and precise, rendering it an important factor for the environment in which participative management permeates.

In view of this, Maximiano (2011) defended the existence of basic participative management models: the directive model and the participative model. The author emphasized that authority, obedience, leadership, discipline, and autonomy are ingredients that combine in various dosages to influence the behavior of people in various social groups, including organizations. Leadership, discipline, and autonomy in organizations predominate in the participative model, in which people are responsible for their own behavior and performance. According to the investigation by Silva et al. (2013), the greater the autonomy of people and the possibility for them to make decisions that affect their own work are, the more participative and effective this model will be because the collaborators feel valued and involved in the company decisions.



However, studies have made evident that workers wish for more participation than company administration is willing to allow. However, contrary to this idea, in recent years, companies have been demonstrating interest in allowing the participation of employees within the organizations. In this sense, the search for a participative management style by managers increases, believing it to be more effective and that the participation processes will increase organizational efficiency and lead the organization to obtain competitive advantages over other companies (Ornoy, 2019).

Under this focus, it becomes relevant for the organization to enable spaces for constructing strategies, fostering strategic thinking so that all levels reflect upon the organizational dynamic (Campos, 2000). Based on this panorama, Maximiano (2011) argued that participation strategies are grouped into four categories: information improvement, participation in the decision-making process, participation in the direction, and participation in the results. The author also defended that information improvement aiming at decision-making may take place from three modalities: consultive, based on the opinion of third parties; shared, when the decision emerges from a group of people; self-managed teams, characterized by autonomy in the decisions and collective responsibilities. Regarding participation in the direction, the author elucidated that they must participate institutionally in the power structure of the company, more than merely in the decision-making process of a director or department of the organization.

However, for there to be a good implementation of participative management, it is necessary to change aspects such as behavior, structure, and systemic vision (Barros, 2012). The behavior change will start to be through mutual cooperation, leadership, autonomy, and responsibility. The organization structure must be organized so that the participation does not depend only on the people but on the systems, rules, and procedures. In turn, the vision must be shared not just among collaborators but also the clients and suppliers, i.e., in all senses of the organization so that all opine on certain decisions. Still under the bias of manager behavior relative to their collaborators, Rolková and Farkasová (2015) highlighted that this factor has a more significant impact on their motivation, i.e., the manager is the fundamental impeller of the participative process and, therefore, it is expected of them to have interactive attitudes in the face of strategic issues of the organization, to know how to make decisions while establishing priorities, to be directed towards the innovation process, and to delegate functions.

A study conducted in an automotive company in Macedonia pointed out that participative management, effective communication with one's supervisor, and the existence of a participative strategic planning process significantly produce employee satisfaction (Petkovska, Bojasziew, & Mucunski, 2015). In other words, companies that incorporate the philosophy of participative management and employee capacitation in their everyday activities are more prone to have collaborators who are, besides satisfied, more productive.

Based on this panorama, the immersion of companies in a competitive and variable environment requires them to develop strategic alternatives tied to an adaptation to the new conditions imposed by the surrounding scenarios, conditioning them to use all available resources effectively. Given this scenario, the implementation of participative management practices may be considered a strategic alternative that enables the participation of collaborators in the decision-making processes and other planning of the organization, seeking to motivate, commit, and engage them, rendering them co-responsible for the business success (Shagholi, Abdolmalki, & Moayed, 2011).



## 2.2 Business Strategy

The business strategy was defined by Mintzberg (2006, p. 26) as a standard or plan that integrates the chief targets, policies, and action sequences of the organization, given that, when well-formulated, it helps organize and allocate the resources of an organization in a viable manner based on its internal competencies and deficiencies. Hence, the literature on strategic people management emphasizes the importance of the involvement and participation of workers for results such as work satisfaction, employee retention, and organization performance (Philip & Arrowsmith, 2021).

In this train of thought, it becomes perceptible the insertion of organizations in a mutable socioeconomic context in which they often adopt appropriate strategies that provide competitiveness within this scenario they operate on, developing the so-called competitive, collaborative, and cooperative strategies (Martins & Guindani, 2013). To Kiziloglu and Serinkan (2015), in a competitive scenario, the sustainment and success of companies on the market become more complicated, which indicates the need to develop business strategies that come to contribute to survival and generate competitive advantages for the organizations.

Also, the manager must choose the most appropriate type of strategy relative to the goals established by the organization, given that it must be in agreement with the mission and vision of the company. The strategies may be established according to the situation in which the organization finds itself and may be directed towards survival, maintenance, growth, or development. In general lines, the survival strategy must be adopted when the company has no alternative, when the internal and external environments are unfavorable; the maintenance strategy, when the company has strengths that enable it to maintain its position on the market; the growth strategy, when the company finds itself in an environment of threats; and the development strategy, when the company has several strengths and the external environment is favorable (Oliveira, 2011).

Given this context, the identification of key resources must be carried out to develop strategies aiming at improving the organization, considering the vision of all those involved. Moreover, successful strategies require commitment and not just acceptance. Hence, participative management may contribute to the engagement of different actors in implementing the proposed actions (Pereira, Santos, & Resch, 2021).

## 2.3 The printing industry in Brazil

Historically, the printing industry arrived in Brazil in 1808 together with the Portuguese court, when an important sector of the national economy emerged. The 19th century was marked by the formation of the printing industry known today; printed products of greater expression and important technological innovations emerged in this century; for example, photography, newspapers, and magazines are novelties from this time (Sanini & Ruschel, 2015).

According to data from the Brazilian Association of the Printing Industry (ABIGRAF, 2019), 97% of companies in the printing industry in Brazil are micro and small companies, and the printing segment had 19,142 companies in 2018, with an estimated 178,714 people employed nationwide. In southern Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul was the leading state in the number of companies, with 4,437 printing establishments and a total of 38,854 employees, thus representing 23.3% of the direct jobs nationwide. The state answered for 37.2% of the revenue of the south region; the sector presented a total revenue of around R\$ 46.7 billion, which corresponded to a 2.8% participation in the industrial GDP. Hence, based on such data, one may notice that the printing industry has a relevant importance



in the Brazilian industrial matrix (ABIGRAF, 2019).

A factor that justified this study within the scope of the printing industry was the sudden change that occurred in the competitive environment of such businesses. The need for companies in the sector to implement strategies that allow them to survive in this transitioning market is denoted, and among such strategies is the search for continuous improvements to internal processes such as cost reduction; in addition, strategies directed at human resources must support the organization in achieving its competitive goals, increasing its competitive advantages and providing an economically significant contribution to the performance of the entity (Altuntas et al., 2014). Moreover, regarding human capital, companies do not consider dismissals but rather retaining and qualifying the labor available within the organization, aiming at increased productivity (FINDES, 2020). Also, it becomes necessary for companies in this sector to pay attention to labor qualification and the implementation of less superficial management.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology proposed for this study is structured next, comprising the steps of classification of the research and data collection, analysis, and processing. Regarding the technical procedures, this research is classified as a case study because it intended to analyze a single case, seeking a broad and detailed understanding of the studied phenomenon. According to Yin (2010), case studies emerge from the need to study complex social phenomena and must be used to tackle contextual conditions that are not clearly defined.

Relative to the objective, this study is classified as descriptive research, given that its objectives aim to describe the characteristics of the studied phenomenon and establish a relationship among the values proposed in the studied object. To Oliveira (2011), descriptive research has the primary purpose of describing the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon or establishing relationships among variables. Regarding the approach of the study, its nature is characterized as qualitative because, after being collected, the data was interpreted as a way to obtain information pertaining to the studied problem, thus being an interpretative investigation (Creswell, 2010).

Furthermore, this study had a bibliographic foundation because secondary data from publications on the study theme were used to explain the problem, the objectives, and the research subject. In this sense, Gil (2002, p. 44) elucidated that bibliographic research “is developed based on material already elaborated, constituted primarily of books and scientific articles”.

The primary data collection and analysis unit was a company in the printing industry located in the central region of Rio Grande do Sul. The company staff was composed of seven collaborators and two managers, subdivided between the production and administrative sectors. Hence, two questionnaires containing a series of mixed questions elaborated from the theory addressed in the study were applied, with one to the seven collaborators from all company sectors as a way to capture their perceptions about the environment in which they developed their activities and the other to the two managers as a way to understand the company management and to what extent it was imbricated in the relationship with the collaborators. Hence, still with the purpose of collecting data on the environment of the analyzed company, the technique of direct observation in the environment was used non-systematically.

Lastly, the data were tabulated in *Excel*, and later the statistical analyses of frequency and percentage were carried out; still under the perspective of this study, the data analysis also occurred through comparative theoretical analysis, having interpretative textual analysis as a basis, which, in the conception of Severino (2007), means taking a position regarding the enunciated ideas, over-



coming the strict message of the text, reading between the lines, forcing the author to a dialogue, and exploring all the fruitfulness of the exposed thought.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

This section comprises the analysis of data collected by applying a questionnaire to the managers and collaborators of the participating company and the direct observation of the studied environment. Under this bias, we stress that the following results are presented in a categorized manner and subdivided into topics: (a) the environment of the analyzed company; (b) the management practices adopted by the company; (c) the participative management approach in the analyzed company. Hence, the collected data were tabulated and grouped by similarity, thus facilitating a comparative interpretation among the participant groups.

### 4.1 Environment of the analyzed company

With the purpose of performing the analysis of the company environment, we sought in this section the perception of the collaborators regarding the environment in which they developed their activities relative to the physical environment, the professional relationships with colleagues and managers, professional satisfaction, and cooperation.

Responding to the first objective of the study, the synthesis of the perception of the collaborators about the physical environment of the company is shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Physical environment

		Yes	Not	Does not have
<b>The conditions of the company's physical environment are satisfactory.</b>	Coexistence space	6	0	1
	Furniture	5	2	0
	Hygiene	7	0	0
	Temperature	7	0	0
	Sanitary facilities	7	0	0

Source: Drawn up by the author.

Regarding the contextualization of the studied environment, through the collected data, one may notice in Chart 1 that in relation to as the physical environment, most of the collaborators they assessed that it had a satisfactory coexistence space and offered an environment with appropriate hygiene, temperature, and sanitary facilities; however, two collaborators positioned themselves against the company's existing furniture and deemed it unsatisfactory.

The collaborators were also asked about the professional relationships within the work environment, and the data obtained may be observed in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Professional relationship

	Great	Good	Regular	Bad	Very bad
How do you classified your relationship with co-workers.	2	3	2	0	0
How do you classified your relationship with managers.	2	2	3	0	0
How do you classified the working environment in general.	2	3	2	0	0

Source: Drawn up by the author.

According to Chart 2, three of them consider that the company has a good work environment, however two consider it excellent and two consider it regular. Therefore, in relation to socializing with colleagues, three of the collaborators classify it as being good, however two judge it to be excellent and two others as being regular. As for the relationships with the managers, three collaborators pointed them out as regular, two as great, and two as good. It is worth highlighting that most of the respondents pointed out that the relationships with managers were regular; however, for authors Rolková and Farkasová (2015), managers must be the fundamental impellers of the participative process and, therefore, they are expected to have an interactive attitude in the face of the strategic matters of the organization; the authors also pointed out that managers represent motivational elements for the team.

Regarding the existence of a cooperation relationship among all company members, the respondents confirmed its existence, which was also ratified by the managers, who stated that the collaborators were always encouraged to cooperate. Pereira (1995) already stated that, once participative management is implemented, one of the results that a company will likely manage to achieve will be the change in its relationship with the employees, which will go from an employment relationship to a relationship of partnership, cooperation, and participation within the organizations.

Regarding the work developed by the collaborators and its reflection on professional satisfaction, they stated that they felt important to the company most times but that the execution of their work did not always provide professional accomplishment, given that they stated that the company rarely valued their professional performance. Hence, one may notice that, however more the collaborators had a feeling of commitment to the company, it did not provide a return or practice that valued such an organizational bond. In agreement with this, Pinto and Costa (2009) emphasized that, in a globalized and competitive world, companies that do not value their employees, do not integrate them in the work process, do not allow them to feel motivated, satisfied, involved, and committed in the organizational environment will hardly have market longevity.

#### 4.2 Management practices adopted by the company

With the purpose of ascertaining the adopted management practices, we sought in this section to describe the involvement of the collaborators in problem resolution, their autonomy in decisions, and their participation in creating strategic actions by the company.

In this context, regarding the resolution of problems in operational activities, in the view of the collaborators, they stated that the company rarely encouraged such a practice. On the other hand, the company managers pointed out that there was involvement by the collaborators and that it was at times satisfactory and other times unsatisfactory. However, the managers also agreed that involving the collaborators in a participative manner, depending on the situation, could help



business development. Hence, in this case, the perception of involvement of collaborators diverged from that of the managers. Therefore, we emphasize that the listed results justify that the implementation of participative management could come to contribute within the organization (Rolková & Farkosová, 2015), given that it is based on the involvement of collaborators in decision-making, in resolving possible problems, and in capacitating collaborators, in addition to supporting their autonomy, personal initiative, and creativity.

Under this bias, regarding collaborator autonomy in the decision-making process, they stated that they could not always make decisions in their own activities given that they did not have an opening for such on the part of the direction. In the conception of Silva et al. (2013), the greater the autonomy of people and the possibility for them to make decisions that affect their own work are, the more participative and effective this model will be because the collaborators feel valued and involved in the company decisions.

In this train of thought, the participation of the collaborators in the creation of strategic, operational actions to be adopted by the company did not always occur, and although they had a certain autonomy in the view of the managers, they reported that the employees never participated in the definition of company strategies. However, Campos (2000) defended that participative management requires the organization to enable spaces for constructing strategies, fostering strategic thinking so that all levels reflect upon the organizational dynamic.

Another investigated variable related to participative management is the leadership profile adopted by the company, which most collaborators classified as benevolent authoritarian (when only the leader makes decisions yet collaborators are consulted when necessary) and consulting authoritarian (when collaborators participate but the final decision is of the manager). To Maximiano (2011), formal authority, bureaucracy, and their mechanisms prevail in such models, in which management is centralized, bosses cannot be asked about their decisions, and collaborators do not have the freedom to expose their ideas. Also, it is understood that such a model is the object of criticism because it may cause global inefficiency of the work, the fragility of the company, dissatisfaction and demotivation of workers, and authoritarianism.

Still regarding the role of the leader and their importance to professional development, the collaborators ratified this relevance and pointed out some characteristics inherent to a leader in their perspective, such as being communicative, having a teamwork spirit, knowing how to motivate and value collaborators, being receptive to criticism and opinions, and providing a good work environment that values worker wellbeing. In the perception of the managers, they believed that the leader exercises an important role pertaining to encourage, motivate, satisfy, and reward collaborators.

Regarding communication between managers and collaborators, Maximiano (2011) emphasized that, for improving information, it must enable the creation of an open communication channel in which there is not only information transfer but also a concern with the clarity and good understanding of it. Hence, from the survey of the leadership profile of the company with the communication factor, we have the following, as per Chart 3.



Chart 3: Communication at the company

	Never	Rarely	Almost always	Always
<b>The goals, targets, or results of the company are discussed among all.</b>	1	4	2	0
<b>The company gives feedback to their collaborators relative to their performance in the activities.</b>	0	5	2	0
<b>how often does the company hold meetings with all collaborators.</b>	1	4	2	0

Source: Drawn up by the author.

Through Chart 3, one may notice that, for the most part, the goals, targets, or results of the company were rarely discussed among all, given that the company did not usually provide feedback to their collaborators relative to their performance in the activities. Such a fact may be connected to the non-holding of meetings that integrate the entire team, the moment in which feedback to the employees about their performance in the activities could occur. In line with that, in the perception of the collaborators, a good communication flow among all areas of the company would be a factor that would promote work efficiency, with the meetings being scenarios conducive to such a matter.

In the search for answers for such positions of the collaborators, the managers stated that the goals, targets, and results were indeed rarely discussed with all collaborators given that they did not receive feedback regarding their performance in the company either; however, they believed that this is of utmost importance for their professional performance. Regarding communication, the managers commented that meetings rarely occurred among the collaborators but emphasized the existence of an open conversation channel between managers and collaborators that could be through monthly individual meetings, and they emphasized that structured and transparent internal communication could contribute to achieving good results.

Based on this panorama, Santos et al. (2002) argued that the implementation of participative management could defend and allow the regular and significant involvement of workers in the definition of targets and goals, the resolution of problems, the decision-making process, the access to information, and the control of execution. Corroborating this argument, Penterich (2006) emphasized that worker involvement results in a variety of conducts that support the company mission, aiming at reaching its goals.

#### 4.3 Participative Management approach in the analyzed company

As proposed in this study, this section addresses the perception of managers and collaborators regarding the management practices adopted by the company, enabling a comparison relative to the theoretical assumptions of participative management with the practices verified in the business environment and the possible contribution to the analyzed organization.

Based on this panorama, through the speech of the managers, the absence of a consolidated culture in the company was denoted; however, they recognized that its existence renders the environment more productive and flexible and favors the integration among all collaborators. In this train of thought, Wagemans et al. (2012) considered that the culture must be clear and precise, rendering it an important factor for the environment in which participative management permeates.

Relative to the management model adopted by the company, a divergence was noted relative to the position of the managers given that, for one of them, the predominant model was coman-



agement (in which the role of the leader exists but so does the constant participation of employees), and they emphasized that the current company management almost always allowed collaborators to expose their suggestions regarding the work environment. In the conception of the other one, there was a predominance of the mixed model between the traditional and self-management models (in which all are aware of their functions but have the autonomy to perform their work, free from hierarchy and the role of the leader), and there was openness for collaborators to expose their suggestions.

As for the management practices directly connected to the collaborators, the managers ratified that the company offered none of them, nor did any type of benefit or encouragement exist. Table 1 presents some practices adopted by the company in the perception of the collaborators regarding their favoring.

Table 1: People management practices adopted by the company

<b>Practices in favor of collaborators</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Financial benefits (performance bonus, share in the profits, etc)	1	12,5%
Favors their participation and autonomy the collaborators in the execution of tasks	3	37,5%
Professional growth (through courses, promotions, etc)	0	0,0%
Transparent communication	1	12,5%
Lectures or motivational practices for the team	1	12,5%
Adequate and continuous training	0	0,0%
Valorization of new ideas	2	25,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Study data.

The data point out that, in the perception of the collaborators, the company favored their participation and autonomy in the execution of tasks, valued new ideas, offered financial benefits, had efficient, open, and transparent communication, and offered the team motivational lectures and practices. Also, for the collaborators, the analyzed company did not promote actions that favored professional growth, thus agreeing with the speech of the managers, who also ratified this information. Another factor that draws attention according to the surveyed data is related to the fact that the company did not offer appropriate and continuous training to the collaborators, who could contribute to organizational development. However, it is understood that the implementation of participative management practices may positively reflect on the productivity of the organization, given that they aim at the valorization of the potential of collaborators.

Regarding the strategic actions, in the conception of the managers, the company adopted maintenance strategies, with it being possible to highlight the strengths through them. Upon investigating the strategic actions, it was elucidated that, for the managers, the company developed them based on the standardization of products and/or services, seeking to maintain its position on the market and, consequently, increase its competitiveness level. Moreover, although the managers pointed to the predominance of a strategy model, it became evident through their speeches that there were no formally defined strategies for achieving the business goals.

Another factor that emerged from the perceptions of the managers regarding the strategies was due to the divergence of their positions, given that there was a consensual gap between them that pointed to disparities of understanding which, in a scenario that inspires competitiveness, one must bet on the implementation of new management strategies that contemplate the partic-

ipation of collaborators, given that it would contribute to the decision-making and survival of the company on the market. Under this bias, Oliveira et al. (2012) emphasized that, for a company to generate results, grow, and support itself on the market over the years, it needs to be conducted through effective management, with clearly defined strategies and qualified professionals motivated and involved in the organizational processes of the company.

Promoting an equalization of the perceptions of the managers with the collaborators, the latter understood that an environment in which all participate in the decisions propitiates better performance of the team, with it being perceptible that the success of the company is tied to the commitment of all. Such an assertion is backed by the speech of the managers, who considered that a satisfied and committed collaborator helps the company obtain growth, success, and sustainment on the market given that their performance reflects on the efficiency of the executed work and that maintaining them with such attributes may be considered a competitive factor of activity.

In thinking of participative management as a contributing factor to the competitiveness of the analyzed company, the importance of the choice by managers in the implementation of practices that maximize collaborator participation is highlighted. In this train of thought, it is up to the managers to measure the results so to understand the real evolution of this type of management in the development of the activities by the employees. Hence, we listed in Chart 4 some of the factors imbricated with participative management that may contribute to the competitiveness of the studied company.

Chart 4: Factors contributing to business competitiveness

<b>Managers' beliefs and values</b>
<i>Would result in greater collaboratives participation</i>
<b>Organizational culture</b>
<i>Creation of a democratic, collaborative and participatory work environment</i>
<b>Market positioning</b>
<i>Enabling everyone to understanding the company's situation in the market and participate in the decision-making process</i>
<b>Workforce profile</b>
<i>Makes it possible to get to know collaborators, offering these activities that are consistent with their skills, thus improving integration and productivity.</i>
<b>Production process</b>
<i>Enables collaborators to cooperation on the tasks and shared learning</i>
<b>Collaborators involvement</b>
<i>Enables access to informations, feeling of belonging to the team, co-responsibility for objectives and goals, relevance these in decision-making processes</i>
<b>Active leadership</b>
<i>Enables greater integration between of hierarchical levels, direction in the search for results</i>

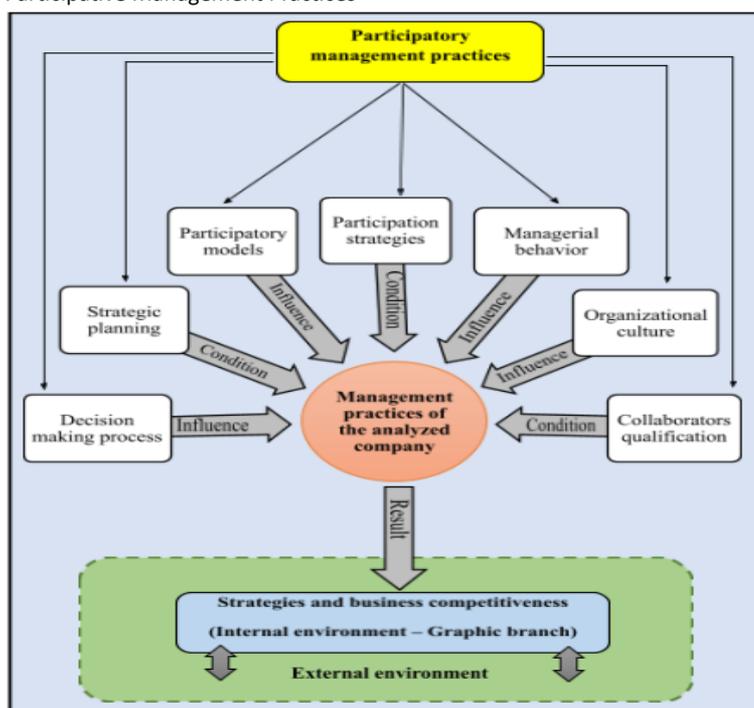
Source: Drawn up by the author.

Corroborating the above, Borges and Santos (2009) stated that participative management is applied to democratic management, in which collaborators and managers participate together in the decisions, given that involving them in a decision means sharing with them the context and justification for the choices. To the authors, participative management allows those involved skills such as learning to think, modify, perfect, innovate collectively, and meet scheduled targets, aiming to achieve the organizational and individual goals. To Marques and Priori (2014), the application of such management allows all those involved to be administrators and not merely task executors,

creating g in them the awareness that they must pay attention to the possibilities, diagnosing and solving problems to obtain a continuous improvement of their work within the company.

In synthesis, it is emphasized that the structure and the organizational and behavioral variables that condition a participative management model depend on a coherent functioning among the various systems and processes of the company, given that it requires more significant effort for its implementation because it involves cooperative practices. In this train of thought, based on the literature covered while constructing this study, Figure 1 presents a systematization of how the studied practices may condition and influence the management of the analyzed company, resulting in the creation of sustainment strategies that enable greater business competitiveness.

Figure 1: Influence of Participative Management Practices



Source: Drawn up by the author.

Lastly, given the above, it is worth stressing that the implementation of participative management practices requires planning that involves all levels of the company, given that it creates a link between the collaborators and the company itself since, in the face of such practices, they come to learn the organizational mission, vision, values, and objectives and identify with them. Also, it is also understood that this identification process enables more significant contributions from the collaborators in a proactive manner for the organizational goals to be achieved.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL

This article sought to analyze the theoretical assumptions of participative management and reveal the contributions that its implementation may cause regarding business sustainment and competitive advantages in a company in the printing industry located in the central region of Rio Grande do Sul, taking into account that companies in this industry need to adopt strategic actions that come to contribute to their organizational development given that the sector has undergone

significant transformations stemming from the advancement of technology that also affects the performance of collaborators within the organizational environment.

In this interim, through the analyzed data, it was noticed that the physical environment of the company and the professional relationships between managers and collaborators were partly harmonious, contributing to good interpersonal relationships, important for more participative management. However, one may conclude that the relationships between managers and collaborators, when weakened, interfere directly with the professional performance of those involved, compromising the construction of a healthy work environment in which the manager must assume an intermediary role, stimulating participative management.

Through the surveyed data, one may also conclude that, despite the apparent commitment of collaborators to the company, there was no compensation valuing such an organizational bond. Under this bias, it is perceptible that the lack of professional recognition within the work environment may result in the demotivation of the collaborators and cause problems that affect the financial and organizational performance of the company, so it must invest in practices that integrate the personal goals of its employees with those of the organization itself, strengthening the interrelations and the creation of sustainment strategies for greater productivity and cooperative participation in the processes and procedures.

Regarding the involvement of collaborators in the resolution of operational problems and decision autonomy, a discrepancy relative to the perception of managers and collaborators was noted more punctually, given that, for the latter, the incentives were rare and they did not always have the freedom to make decisions about their own activities, contradicting that exposed by the managers, who pointed out that their involvement was satisfactory. It was also noted that the collaborators did not participate in the strategic definitions and rarely received feedback on their performance, and that, although the communication was open within the organization, no meetings were held integrating the entire team, contradicting the participative management prerogative of engaging all collaborators to the company goals and also integrating them to the growth targets.

Based on the theoretical findings of this study, it becomes important to emphasize that the implementation of the participative management model proposes to the company the creation of decentralized structures for decision-making and problem-solving within the organizational scope so to foster the exchange of information and opinions among all. However, its applicability in the analyzed company encounters a barrier in the absence of a consolidated culture, as well as problems of diversions of ideas in the adopted management, given that it oscillates between comanagement and a mixture of traditional management and self-management, factors that may hamper the structuring and implementation.

Regarding strategic actions as a relevant aspect for implementing participative management, it was noticed that the analyzed company adopted a maintenance strategy aiming at the standardization of products and/or services to achieve the business goals, yet without its existence being defined formally. Another factor that emerged refers to the disparity of understanding between managers and collaborators relative to the implementation of new strategies that contemplate the participation of all, with there being divergences regarding the possibility of participation of the collaborators in the decision-making processes, drawing attention to the fact that the participation of all in a systematic and organized manner may positively impact the performance of the team, so this practice may be considered a factor of business competitiveness.

Also, by promoting a comparison between the management practices adopted by the company and the participative management assumptions, it should be noted that, at the time, there were no relevant aspects in the analyzed company that based the participation of all, so one could

conclude that the adoption of a new management model that values human capital would reduce the demotivation indices within the organizational environment, allowing for a more significant permanence of the collaborators at the organization.

Upon the verification of some deficiencies relative to the management of the analyzed company, we strategically suggest the implementation of participative management because it is understood that it may contribute to the business sustainment based on the valorization of its collaborators, enabling the integration between the collaborators and the company itself, given that, in the face of such practices, they come to learn the organizational mission, vision, values, and objectives and to identify with them. Also, it is understood that it would potentialize growth perspectives, the creation of competitive advantages, the performance of its collaborators, and the development of new strategies.

Lastly, it is worth emphasizing that the success of participative management is connected to thorough planning and a slow and gradual approach, given that the challenges faced by companies upon implementing management processes and practices that involve their intellectual capital are many. In this train of thought, we suggest for future studies the application of the practices found in the literature to the analyzed business environment as a way to improve the performance of the collaborators in the face of the processes developed regarding its effective contribution to the improvement of business management and competitiveness.

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3. Development of theoretical propositions (theoretical work)	√	√	√	
4. Theoretical foundation / Literature review	√	√	√	√
5. Definition of methodological procedures	√	√		
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9. Critical revision of the manuscript		√		√
10. Manuscript writing	√	√	√	√

