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Innovation and Brands: The Managers' Perspective in a Multiple Case Study in a Brazilian Region

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to identify what an innovative brand is from the perspective of business managers in a region of Brazil, and describe how they manage innovative brands. A multiple case study was carried out with five innovative companies from four economic sectors: telecommunications, information technology, chemicals, and electricity. The interviews with these managers were processed with content analysis, being established sixteen categories which include: definition of innovation; innovative brand features; reasons for innovation; relationship between brands and innovation; area responsible for innovation; dissemination of innovation; organizational culture of new ideas; types of innovation; reduction of time, costs and risks to innovation; relationship between the company and the market; brand strategies; brand personality; integration of the end consumer into innovation; rewards for the consumer; and brand heritage. At the end, theoretical and managerial contributions are presented that can be applied or adapted to other organizations in their process of innovation and brand management. In this sense, it is important to highlight that, in the studied cases, incremental innovation is dominant; the stage at which successful innovations improve consumer brand awareness, attitude, and usage prevails; and the companies studied could be distributed in two of the innovation possibilities proposed by Brexendorf et al. (2015): follower brands and craft-designer led brands.

KEYWORDS

Innovation, Brands, Innovative Brands

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1. INTRODUCTION

Innovation management and brand management have received increasing attention from corporate management in recent decades. It is possible to observe an interdependent relationship between brand management and innovation management in the form of a virtuous circle (Brexendorf, Bayus, & Keller, 2015). Organizational innovation has the consequence of brand performance measured in terms of sales growth, market share, and general performance (Weerawardena, Cass, & Julian, 2006).

Therefore, the objective of this article is to identify what an innovative brand is from the perspective of business managers in a region of Brazil known as the Mineiro Triangle, (Triangulo Mineiro) and describe how they manage innovative brands.

The Mineiro Triangle region is located in Minas Gerais State and is composed of more than 50 municipalities, among them: Uberlândia; Uberaba; Araxá; Patrocínio; Ituiutaba; and Frutal. The Mineiro Triangle region occupies the second place in Minas Gerais´ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) behind only the Metropolitan Territory that includes the capital Belo Horizonte (Alves & Barbosa, 2017).

The development of this research was also motivated due to the fact that there arefew studies that relate both the themes of innovation and brands, and the need for greater integration between brand management and innovation management – although there are many studies that deal with innovation and brands separately. Brand management and innovation management can mutually benefit, however it is possible to observe that brands receive little attention in the innovation literature and the brand literature makes little reference to innovation (Brexendorf et al., 2015).

Some studies addressing these concepts can be highlighted: Maldonado-Guzman, Pinzon-Castro and Popoca-Zamarripa (2019) deal with the relationship between service innovation and brand equity, seeking to bring the two concepts together as part of business strategies capable of generating competitive advantages. Lin (2015) also comments on the role of innovation in competitive advantage, and highlights the importance of considering the consumer experience with innovative brands for building solid relationships (in this case, in the airline industry, considering the experience with the innovative brand, brand equity and satisfaction). In turn, Sharma, Davcik, and Pillai (2016) analyze the role of product innovation as a mediator of market performance resulting from investments in R&D and brand equity.

Pappu and Quester (2016) investigate how consumers' perception of the innovative character of a brand affects their loyalty to that brand. Grębosz (2017) discusses the characteristics of market positioning, communication and life cycle of innovative brands. The impact of radical innovations in product categories is the object of the study by Bagga, Noseworthyb and Dawar (2016), focusing on consumer perceptions of competing brands, when one of them introduces a radical innovation, with or without significant change in the category´s attributes. Thus, it is noted that studies encompassing the themes of innovation and brands have started to emerge recently, with gaps still to be filled in this field. Therefore, it is important to highlight the relevance of this study, as it addresses innovative brands from the perspective of managers, seeking to deepen the knowledge about these brands, how they are developed, and managed.

Gehlhar, Regmi, Stefanou and Zoumas (2009) conducted a study with leading brands in the market that indicates that, for a brand to remain in the lead, it is not enough that the brand responds to changes in demand, it is necessary for the company to direct the market through its product innovations and consumer education. This study is in line with the understanding of Schumpeter (1939), who postulated that changes in consumer tastes, at the initiative of consumers themselves, are very small and that they are generated by the action of manufacturers. For Gehlhar et al. (2009), the leadership of a brand depends on the differentiation capacity of its products that can be obtained through product innovation.

The combination of technological and organizational innovation with the brand's reputation contributes to the creation and development of the brand personality (Bhat & Bowonder, 2001). Innovation is one of the values often sought by corporate brands, as it is considered an element that expands the company's credibility and the acceptance of new products (Aaker, 2004).

Aiming to achieve the objective of this article, it was decided to carry out descriptive, qualitative research, with multiple case studies involving five innovative companies from four economic sectors: telecommunications; information technology; chemicals; and electricity. Data was collected from interviews and documents, and triangulated through the use of different sources of information. The interviews with the managers of the five companies were subjected to classical content analysis, with categorization done through thematic analysis.

As a result of this article, there is the structure of the category system or coding framework adopted in this study, consisting of 16 categories (A to P) subdivided into 99 subcategories or codes, extracted from the literature, as well as their frequency count (F).

It was noted, among the companies studied, that the prevalence of those that seek to respond to the needs of consumers [market-driven] in relation to those that seek to influence market consumption [driven-markets] (Beverland, Napoli, & Farrelly, 2010). The five companies studied in the Mineiro Triangle region were distributed in only two innovation possibilities of the innovation typology and brand positioning built by Beverland et al. (2010): (1) follower brands (four out of five companies); and (2) craft-designer led brands (a company). In the five companies, incremental innovation prevails over radical innovation (Gatignon, Tushman, Smith, & Anderson, 2002).

From the perspective of the managers of the companies in the study, it is possible to note the presence of corporate branding strategies (Rao, Agarwal, & Dahlhoff, 2004; Sanchez, 2004), mixed branding (Rao et al., 2004), and house of brands (Rao et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004); and the presence of only two of the brand personality dimensions proposed by Muniz and Marchetti (2012): credibility and audacity.

Based on the research results, the article brings theoretical and managerial contributions. As theoretical contributions: the identification of the prevalence of the conceptual stage in which successful innovations improve brand perception, attitude, and use of consumers (Brexendorf et al., 2015) and the prevalence of incremental innovation in relation to radical innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002). In addition, there is a classification of the companies studied in only two possibilities of innovation considering the innovation and brand positioning typology built by Beverland et al. (2010): follower brands; and craft-designer led brands.

The structure of the coding framework adopted in the study (consisting of 16 categories, subdivided into 99 subcategories), defined from the literature, can be used in future research, contributing to knowledge in this field.

As managerial contributions, it is important to highlight some best practices, such as the creation of an innovation center, prospecting programs, and partnerships with startups, an environment that stimulates innovation and new ideas and the use of public policy resources aimed at fostering innovation.

2. INNOVATION

It is possible to observe a consensus on the importance of innovation for economic and social development (Van de Ven, 1986). The absence of innovations capable of solving problems of social and economic order contributes to a further impoverishment of society as a whole (Bers, Dismukes, Miller, & Dubrovensky, 2009). For Galbraith (1999), innovation is universally desirable.

Within the scope of the firm, Schumpeter (1939) already highlighted the importance of innovation by pointing out that obsolescence, or the absence of the new in companies, would be the primary reason for them not to exist forever. For the author, the natural cause of the end of companies lies in their inability to maintain the pace of innovation that kept them prosperous. For Damanpour and Gopalakrishnan (2001), the company's competitiveness depends on the adoption of product and process innovations.

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the concepts of innovation (Gatignon, Tushman, Smith, & Anderson, 2002; Moch, & Morse, 1977; Testa, Luciano, & Jaeger Neto, 2013). There are two different perspectives in the literature to understand innovation (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008; Testa et al., 2013). For a chain of authors, innovation has the state of the art as a parameter, while for another chain, innovation has organization as its reference, with both points of view being valid (Birkinshaw et al., 2008).

Innovation is different from invention (Mohr, 1969; Van de Ven, 1986). An invention is associated with making a new thing exist, whereas an innovation is associated with making the new thing used (Mohr, 1969). Iinvention is the result of an individual activity, while innovation is the result of the collective and institutional activity that sought to transform a given invention or new idea into a circulation good (Van de Ven, 1986). Thus, for an invention or new idea to become an innovation, it must be implemented and institutionalized (Van de Ven, 1986).

Quite broadly, Schumpeter (1939) includes anything done differently in the term innovation. Mohr (1969) considers that the concept of innovation is not related to the idea of creativity per se, but to the idea of adopting something non-traditional, which may have been invented both inside and outside the organization. In turn, the Oslo Manual defines innovation as: "implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or a process, or a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, in the organization of the workplace or in external relations" (FINEP, 2005, p. 55).

The Oslo Manual also proposes the definition of an innovative company based on product and process innovation, in which the product / process innovator is one that has implemented a new or significantly improved product or process over the period of analysis (FINEP, 2005).

Incremental innovations can be defined as those aimed at improving price and / or performance at a rate of progress consistent with the rate of progress of the existing technical trajectory (Gatignon et al., 2002). Tironi and Cruz (2008) define incremental innovation as one that provides improvements to existing products and processes, such as technical characteristics, uses and costs.

Radical innovations are those that promote an advance in price and / or performance at a rate of progress higher than the rate of progress of the existing technical trajectory (Gatignon et al., 2002). For Tironi and Cruz (2008), radical innovation is that based on a technological or market novelty, capable of creating a new market, and even leading to the discontinuity (disruption) of the existing market. Incremental innovations are preferred over radical innovations, due to the cost (Utterback & Abernathy, 1975). The risk and the level of commercial and technological uncertainty are higher in innovations with a greater degree of novelty (Tironi & Cruz, 2008).

According to Pihlajamaa (2017), the implementation of radical innovation depends on people's efforts. For Bers et al. (2009), radical innovations are initiated with a relevant crisis or market opportunity and, no matter how radical they are, they start from previous knowledge.

The adoption of innovation allows the company to maintain, or even increase, its production at a lower total cost, even though the prices of the factors of production remain constant, which gives the company a higher level of competitiveness (Schumpeter, 1939). The results of Schmidt's research (2013) suggest that innovations may involve cost reductions, enabling greater competitiveness and expanding market share. The likelihood of an organization innovating may be greater in more dynamic environments than in more stable environments (Mohr, 1969). The findings of Weerawardena et al. (2006) also indicate that the high level of competitiveness and the dynamism of an industry pressure companies to look for new ways to carry out their activities in order to obtain advantages in relation to the competition.

For innovation to exist, three roles must be played by people, as: (1) advocates of ideas; (2) the sponsors; and (3) organizational leadership capable of providing conditions for the development of innovation (Galbraith, 1999). Institutional leadership must be able to implement organizational culture as well as strategies, systems and organizational structure compatible with the promotion of innovation (Van de Ven, 1986). Galbraith (1999) highlights the need for the meeting of advocates and sponsors to favor the promotion of innovation in an organization.

For the success of an organizational strategy which is geared towards innovation, it is not enough just to involve the Research and Development (R&D) team, it is also necessary to involve all people in the organization in the process of generating new ideas. Innovation cannot be limited only to innovative activities, but must be present in all activities of the organization (Parolin, 2013).

Galbraith (1999) suggests that two organizations must coexist in a company: an operational organization, responsible for carrying out the company's day-to-day activities, as related to its current business; and an innovative organization, dedicated to carrying out new activities, such as testing new products and technologies. For the author, these two organizations are conflicting and contradictory and there must be a separation between them in order to protect the innovative effort, including the use of different physical facilities by the two organizations (different plants, buildings or floors).

Several recent studies show that the consumer can be integrated into the innovation process (Füller, Matzler, & Hoppe, 2008; Mack & Landau, 2015; Mahr, Lievens, & Blazevic, 2014; Pellizzoni, Buganza, & Colombo, 2015; Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014). As instruments for integrating consumers in the process of developing new products, the following can be cited: internet forums and online communities such as blogs and social networks, call centers, visits to consumers' homes for an entire day, workshops and interviews with consumers, online diaries for consumers to record their behavior, competition of ideas open to the international community, and testing of prototypes, among others (Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014).

Mack and Landau (2015) studied an external source of ideas for companies, the so-called innovation contests. The research by Pellizzoni et al. (2015) points out that some of the participants in these contests may seek a reward, be it monetary or not, while others may be driven by the activity itself of proposing ideas, by the fun and challenge it provides.

3. BRAND MANAGEMENT

Brand strategies can be divided into the following categories: (1) corporate branding, a strategy in which the corporate name appears in the name (brand) of the company´s products and services as a form of endorsement (Rao et al., 2004); (2) mixed branding, a strategy in which some of the company's products and services are given the corporate name and someof the products have brands that do not bear the corporate name (Rao et al., 2004); and (3) house of brands, a strategy in which the corporate name is not used in the brand names of the company's products and services (Rao et al., 2004), these brands being worked independently (Sanchez, 2004). Sanchez (2004) mentions yet another possibility of a brand architecture strategy called branded house. In this strategy, the product brand uses the corporate brand accompanied by a description (Aaker, 2004).

Brexendorf et al. (2015) propose a conceptual model, as shown in Figure 1, which presents an interdependent relationship between brand management and innovation management in the form of a virtuous circle composed of three stages: (1) Brands provide strategic focus and guidance to innovations; (2) Brands support the introduction and adoption of innovations; and (3) Successful innovations improve brand perceptions, attitude, and usage. The authors clarify that, because it is a virtuous circle, there is no starting or ending point, but a constant interaction between brands and innovation capable of creating value for the organization.

According to the model of Nguyen, Yu, Melewar and Chen (2015), one of the antecedents that positively impact brand innovation is the acquisition of knowledge from social media, which includes information obtained from discussion forums, networks, social media, internet sites, blogs and other online channels (Nguyen et al., 2015).

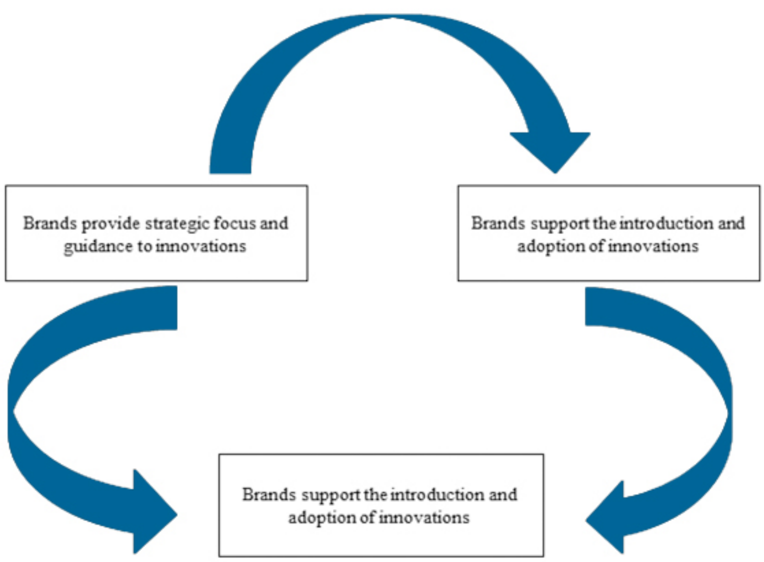

Figure 1. Virtuous circle of interdependence between brands and innovation.
Source: Adapted from Brexendorf et al. (2015, p. 550).

Beverland et al. (2010) sought to build a typology of innovation and brand positioning. In a multiple case study involving twelve brands from different countries (France, Japan, Australia and New Zealand), the authors compared the type of innovation implemented (incremental and radical) and the company's relationship with the market (market-driven and driven-markets). From these two dimensions, the authors identified four possibilities for innovation that can result in strengthening the brand, namely: (1) follower brands; (2) category leader brands; (3) craft-designer led brands; and (4) product leader brands, as shown in Figure 2.

Follower brands are brands that seek to respond to consumer needs (market-driven) by developing incremental innovations in their products. Category leader brands are also market-driven, however, they seek to meet consumer needs through radical innovations. The craft-designer led brands differ from the previous two, in that they seek to influence the consumption of the market (driven-markets) through small incremental innovations in the product that depart from inside the company. Finally, product leader brands are those that seek to influence market consumption (driven-markets) by developing radical innovations that are new to the world, pioneering the industries to which they belong (Beverland et al., 2010).

Muniz and Marchetti (2012) identified five dimensions of brand personality in the Brazilian context. They are: credibility; joy; audacity; sophistication, and sensitivity. Silva, Paula and Paula (2017) sought to identify the characteristics of brands that are considered innovative, according to the perceptions of consumers. The authors propose to group ten categories that define the characteristics of innovative brands, namely: entrepreneurship; marketing and communication; product mix; practicality and functionality; packaging and design; consumer relationship; management; socio-environmental sustainability; technology and Research and Development (R&D); and novelty + new experience.

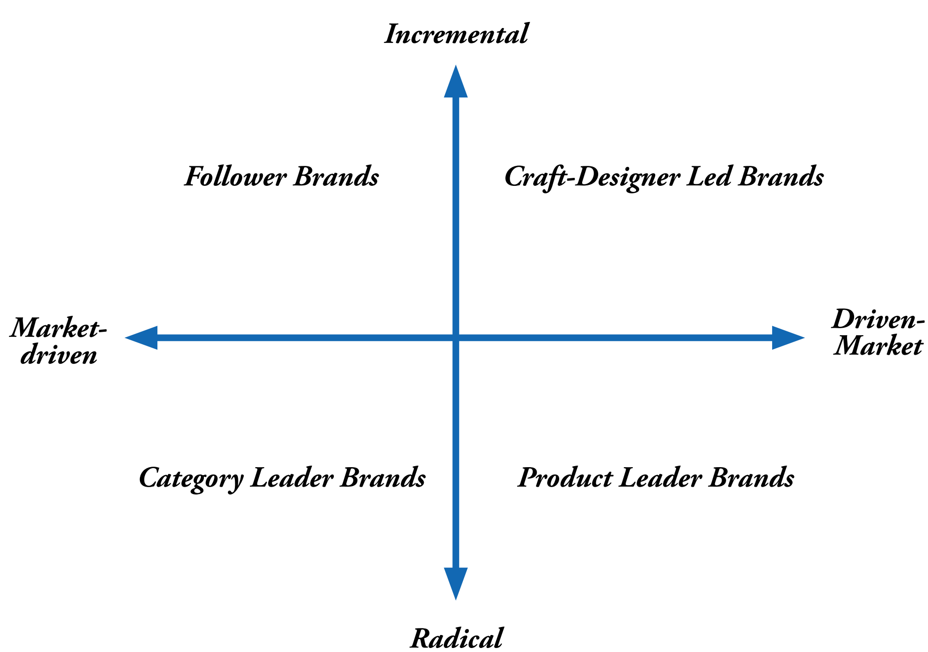

Figure 2. Typology of innovation and brand positioning.
Source: Adapted from Beverland et al. (2010, p. 36).

Bhat and Bowonder (2001) observed that innovation allows for differentiation, cost leadership, segmentation, and a greater ability to reach consumers, also constituting a source of competitive advantage. Rimoli, Noronha and Serralvo (2013) show that aspects of innovation, such as modern design and technological characteristics, affect the brand image.

The concern to seek innovation while maintaining tradition seems to be present in some industries. The results of the case study conducted at the Harley-Davidson Motor Company by Rimoli et al. (2013) indicate that the company's brand portfolio seeks to combine traditional and innovative. Beverland (2005) suggests that some luxury wine manufacturers present themselves to the external public as a traditional artisanal production company that does not adhere to market trends, even though, in practice, their design and marketing professionals are attentive to the movements of competitors, innovations, and changes in consumer tastes.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by an interpretive paradigmatic basis (Morgan, 2007). It was decided to carry out qualitative research (Bauer, Gaskell, & Allum, 2002; Gaskell, 2002), adopting the case study, in its variant study of multiple cases (Yin, 2010). The study had a descriptive character (Triviños, 1987). The data collection procedures used in this research were interviews and documents (Creswell, 2007).

In the period from 07/31/2017 to 09/21/2017, emails were sent to companies that could meet the following cumulative criteria:

a. a company that has its headquarters or branch in the Mineiro Triangleregion;
b. a company dedicated to activity present in the innovation indicators presented at PINTEC 2014 (IBGE, 2016);
c. a company that fits the concept of an innovative company in product / process, according to the Oslo Manual (FINEP, 2005), during the period of PINTEC 2014 (triennium 2012-2014) or more recent.

Among the companies contacted, five returned the signed consent form until the closing date for data collection (11/30/2017), therefore, they were selected, non-probabilistically, to participate in the study. The other companies contacted did not respond to the email sent within the deadline.

The companies selected to participate in the multiple case study are presented below with fictitious names in order to preserve the respondents' anonymity and the confidentiality of the information they provide (Lüdke & André, 1986): (1) Alfa company, which has been working on IT projects since 2005, and the person in charge of marketing and structuring new businesses was interviewed; (2) Beta company, which has been providing technology environment management, telecommunication service management and customer relationship management services for over 18 years, with an innovation specialist being interviewed; (3) company Gama, which has been operating in the telecommunications and information technology sector for over 60 years, with a new business specialist being interviewed; (4) Delta company, which has been operating in the field of cleaning and sanitizing chemicals since the late 1980s, with the commercial director responsible for the Planning, Development and Innovation sector being interviewed; and (5) the Sigma company, which has been dedicated to projects that combine multiple sources of energy, such as solar energy, biodiesel and biogas since 2012, with the head of innovation and strategy being interviewed.

The individual interviews were carried out between 08/22/2017 and 11/08/2017 and had an average duration of approximately 1 hour and 5 minutes. The executives of the companies Alfa, Beta, Gama and Delta were interviewed in person, while the executive of the company Sigma was interviewed by phone, due to the impossibility of scheduling a face-to-face interview. According to Creswell (2007), the interviews can be carried out face to face, by phone or in groups.

For the interviews, we used an interview script that had a role similar to the guiding topic suggested by Gaskell (2002). After the interview, the interviewee was asked to indicate executives from other companies that fit the established selection criteria and could also be interviewed, a procedure called snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961).

The interviews were conducted and recorded in audio by one of the authors (Creswell, 2007), and the transcription was performed by a hired person (Creswell, 2007; Gaskell, 2002). The transcription of all interviews resulted in a text corpus that totaled 108 pages.

The text corpus was subjected to a classical content analysis (Bauer, 2002), using the categorical analysis technique, with the categorization being done through thematic analysis (Bardin, 2011). As enumeration rules, or counting modes, the frequency and the presence / absence of a certain registration unit were adopted (Bardin, 2011). Coding and counting the text units of the interview transcripts were performed manually (Bauer, 2002).

In order to confirm the accuracy of the results obtained and to ensure the validity of the research, an attempt was made to triangulate data through the use of different sources of information (Creswell, 2007). For Yin (2010), data triangulation is performed using more than a single source of evidence that will converge on the same facts. In the case studies of the five companies, the following sources of evidence were used: interviews and documentation (Yin, 2010). It is worth mentioning that most of the data was obtained through individual interviews with the executives of the companies studied. The documents were used mainly to corroborate and strengthen the evidence from the other source (Yin, 2010).

5. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Chart 1 shows the structure of the category system or coding framework adopted in this article, consisting of 16 categories (A to P) subdivided into 99 subcategories or codes, extracted from the literature, as well as their frequency count (F).

It can be observed that, despite the lack of consensus regarding the concepts related to innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002; Moch & Morse, 1977; Testa et al., 2013), the results obtained point to some convergences in definition of innovation among the interviewed executives, in which we highlight the following: (1) all respondents associated the definition of innovation with the implementation of a new process and the implementation of a new organizational method, according to the Oslo Manual (FINEP, 2005); and (2) among the interviewees, the idea prevails that the definition of innovation is also related to the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, according to the Oslo Manual (FINEP, 2005).

All of the interviewed executives considered practicality and functionality, the relationship with the consumer, and novelty + new experience as being characteristics of an innovative brand (Silva et al., 2017). Among the five managers interviewed, four pointed out packaging and design as well as technology and R&D as characteristics of an innovative brand (Silva et al., 2017) and three considered the other characteristics identified by Silva, Paula and Paula (2017) as an innovative brand.

Chart 1

Frequency counting of registration units by code from categories A to P

	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
A	Definition of innovation (Birkinshaw et al., 2008; FINEP, 2005; Testa et al., 2013; Kimberly, 1981 as cited in Van de Ven, 1986; Mohr, 1969; Schumpeter, 1939; Van de Ven, 1986).	1	Anything done differently (Schumpeter, 1939).	1
		2	State-of-the-art innovation (Birkinshaw et al., 2008).	2
		3	Innovation regarding the organization (Birkinshaw et al., 2008).	2
		4	Innovation regarding a market or an industry (Testa et al., 2013).	2
		5	Adoption of something new from inside or outside the organization (Mohr, 1969).	0
		6	Succesful new idea (Kimberly, 1981 cited in Van de Ven, 1986).	3
		7	Development of new ideas by people who transact in an institutional context (Van de Ven, 1986).	0
		8	Implementation and institutionalization of a new idea (Van de Ven, 1986).	0
		9	Implementation of a new or significantly improved product (FINEP, 2005).	4
		10	Implementation of a new process (FINEP, 2005).	5
		11	Implementation of a new marketing method (FINEP, 2005).	2
		12	Implementation of a new organizational method (FINEP, 2005).	5
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
B	Characteristics of innovative brands according to consumer perception (Silva et al., 2017).	1	Entrepreneurship (Silva et al., 2017).	3
		2	Marketing and communication (Silva et al., 2017).	3
		3	Product Mix (Silva et al., 2017).	3
		4	Practicality and functionality (Silva et al., 2017).	5
		5	Packaging and design (Silva et al., 2017).	4
		6	Consumer relationship (Silva et al., 2017).	5
		7	Management (Silva et al., 2017).	3
		8	Socio-environmental sustainability (Silva et al., 2017).	3
		9	Technology and Research and Development (R&D) (Silva et al., 2017).	4
		10	Novelty + new experience (Silva et al., 2017).	5

Chart 1

Cont.

	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
C	Reasons to innovate (Aaker, 2004; Bers et al., 2009; Bhat, & Bowonder, 2001; Mohr, 1969; Pihlajamaa, 2017; Schmidt, 2013; Schumpeter, 1939; Teh, & Marx, 2012; Tironi, & Cruz, 2008; Utterback, & Abernathy, 1975; Weerawardena et al., 2006).	1	Survival (Schumpeter, 1939).	3
		2	Crisis coping (Bers et al., 2009).	1
		3	Seizing market opportunity (Bers et al., 2009).	3
		4	Costs reduction (Bhat & Bowonder, 2001; Schmidt, 2013; Schumpeter, 1939; Utterback & Abernathy, 1975).	3
		5	Greater dynamism of the environment (Mohr, 1969; Weerawardena et al., 2006).	1
		6	Higher level of competitiveness (Schmidt, 2013; Schumpeter, 1939; Tironi & Cruz, 2008; Weerawardena et al., 2006).	4
		7	Sales maximization (Utterback, & Abernathy, 1975).	1
		8	Increased market share (Schmidt, 2013).	0
		9	Increased productivity (Tironi, & Cruz, 2008).	0
		10	Maximizing product performance (Utterback, & Abernathy, 1975).	1
		11	Obtaining differentiation (Bhat, & Bowonder, 2001).	2
		12	Value creation (Teh, & Marx, 2012).	2
		13	Segmentation (Bhat, & Bowonder, 2001).	0
		14	Acceptance of new products (Aaker, 2004).	1
		15	Increasing the company's credibility (Aaker, 2004).	0
		16	Larger customer base (Bhat, & Bowonder, 2001; Schmidt, 2013).	2
		17	Influence of the chief executive (activism, ideology, personal desire) (Mohr, 1969).	1
		18	Motivation of individuals (Pihlajamaa, 2017).	4
		19	Resource availability (Mohr, 1969).	2
		20	Existence of prior knowledge (Bers et al., 2009).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
D	Relationship between brands and innovation (Bhat, & Bowonder, 2001; Brexendorf et al., 2015; Rimoli et al., 2013; Weerawardena et al., 2006).	1	Brands provide strategic focus and guidance to innovations (Brexendorf et al., 2015).	1
		2	Brands support the introduction and adoption of innovations (Brexendorf et al., 2015).	0
		3	Successful innovations improve brand perceptions, attitude, and usage (Brexendorf et al., 2015).	4
		4	Organizational innovation has the consequence of brand performance measured in terms of sales growth, market share and general performance (Weerawardena et al., 2006).	3
		5	Innovation aspects affecting the brand image (Rimoli et al., 2013).	1
		6	Technological and organizational innovation combined with brand reputation contributes to the creation and development of brand personality (Bhat, & Bowonder, 2001).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
E	Existence of an area responsible for the innovation process and its location (Galbraith, 1999).	1	There is no specific area responsible for the innovation process.	1
		2	There is an area responsible for the innovation process located in the same physical location as the company.	1
		3	There is an area responsible for the innovation process in a physical location different from the company´s (Galbraith, 1999).	3

Chart 1
Cont.

	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
F	Dissemination of the innovation process in the organization (Parolin, 2013).	1	Innovation process limited to only certain activities / areas of the organization (Parolin, 2013).	1
		2	Innovation process disseminated throughout the organization (Parolin, 2013).	4
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
G	Mechanisms for the development of an organizational culture that encourages the emergence of new ideas and strategies for these new ideas to be implemented (Galbraith, 1999; Teh, & Marx, 2012; Van de Ven, 1986).	1	Institutional leadership capable of fostering innovation (Galbraith, 1999; Van de Ven, 1986).	3
		2	Presence of sponsors of new ideas (Galbraith, 1999).	1
		3	Advocates´ access to sponsors (Galbraith, 1999).	3
		4	Allocation of financial resources to sponsors of ideas (Galbraith, 1999).	0
		5	Promotion of internal fairs for the advocates of ideas (Galbraith, 1999).	0
		6	Combination of different advocates' ideas by sponsors (Galbraith, 1999).	0
		7	Task rotation among advocates of ideas to facilitate the establishment of networks (Galbraith, 1999).	0
		8	Proactive search for sponsors by advocates of the idea (Galbraith, 1999).	0
		9	Interaction with consumers to understand their needs (Galbraith, 1999).	2
		10	Organizational structure capable of positively affecting the results of innovative processes (Teh, & Marx, 2012).	1
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
H	Type of innovation most frequently implemented in terms of novelty degree (Gatignon et al., 2002; Pihlajamaa, 2017; Tironi, & Cruz, 2008)	1	Incremental innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002).	5
		2	Radical innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
I	Reasons for incremental / radical innovation to be used more often (Birkinshaw et al., 2008; Tironi, & Cruz, 2008; Utterback, & Abernathy, 1975)	1	State-of-the-art innovation creates greater ambiguity and uncertainty (Birkinshaw et al., 2008).	0
		2	Risk and uncertainty in innovations with a higher degree of novelty (Tironi, & Cruz, 2008).	2
		3	Incremental innovations cost less than radical innovations (Utterback, & Abernathy, 1975).	1

Chart 1
Cont.

	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
J	Strategies for reducing time, costs and risks associated with innovation (Bers et al., 2009; Van de Ven, 1986)	1	Identification of the crises or opportunities that motivated innovation (Bers et al., 2009).	1
		2	Identification of challenges to be faced by innovation, such as those of technological, social, marketing and organizational nature (Bers et al., 2009).	0
		3	Systematic competitive intelligence (knowledge management, information retrieval and pattern recognition) (Bers et al., 2009).	0
		4	Total and systemic vision of innovation (Bers et al., 2009; Van de Ven, 1986).	0
		5	Commitment and connection of all stakeholders involved in the innovation process (Bers et al., 2009).	0
		6	Practice of probing and learning (Bers et al., 2009).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
K	Company relationship with the market (Beverland et al., 2010)	1	Market-driven (Beverland et al., 2010).	4
		2	Driven-markets (Beverland et al., 2010).	1
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
L	Brand strategy adopted by the company when introducing new products (Aaker, 2004; Macrae & Uncles, 1997; Rao et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004; Urde, 2003)	1	Corporate branding (Aaker, 2004; Macrae, & Uncles, 1997; Rao et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004; Urde, 2003).	2
		2	Mixed branding (Rao et al., 2004).	2
		3	House of brands (Rao et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004;).	1
		4	Branded house (Aaker, 2004; Sanchez, 2004).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
M	Association of innovation with brand personality (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012)	1	Credibility (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012).	5
		2	Joy (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012).	0
		3	Audacity (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012).	3
		4	Sophistication (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012).	0
		5	Sensitivity (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
N	Strategies for integrating the final consumer into the innovation process (Füller et al., 2008; Mack & Landau, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2015; Pellizzoni et al., 2015; Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014)	1	Brand communities (Füller et al., 2008).	0
		2	Online communities, such as social networks and blogs, discussion forums, internet sites and online channels (Nguyen et al., 2015; Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014).	4
		3	Call Centers (Schaarschmidt, & Kilian, 2014).	2
		4	Visit to consumers' homes (Schaarschmidt, & Kilian, 2014).	0
		5	Workshops (Schaarschmidt, & Kilian, 2014).	2
		6	Interviews with consumers (Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014)	1
		7	Record of behavior in online diaries by consumers (Schaarschmidt, & Kilian, 2014).	0
		8	Innovation contests / ideas competition open to the international community (Mack, & Landau, 2015; Pellizzoni et al., 2015; Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014).	1
		9	Prototype testing (Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014)	1

Chart 1
Cont.

	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
O	System of rewards for the consumer in the innovation process (Pellizzoni et al., 2015; Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014)	1	Knowledge is given by consumers voluntarily and free of charge (Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014).	0
		2	Non-monetary reward (Pellizzoni et al., 2015).	5
		3	Monetary reward (Pellizzoni et al., 2015).	0
	Category		Subcategories Or Codes	F
P	Reconciling brand heritage with innovation (Beverland, 2005; Rimoli et al., 2013)	1	The brand portfolio consists of traditional brands and innovative brands (Rimoli et al., 2013).	0
		2	Fidelity to traditions of brand heritage while paying attention to competitors´ movements, innovations and changes in consumer preferences (Beverland, 2005).	4

Source: Authors, based on literature review and research data.

The reasons for innovation most cited by the executives interviewed were the higher level of competitiveness (Schmidt, 2013; Schumpeter, 1939; Tironi & Cruz, 2008; Weerawardena et al., 2006) and the motivation of individuals (Pihlajamaa, 2017).

The conceptual model by Brexendorf et al. (2015) presents an interdependence relationship between brand management and innovation management in the form of a virtuous circle composed of three stages (corresponding to codes 1, 2, and 3 of category D), in which there is no starting or ending point, but a constant interaction between brands and innovation, which is capable of creating value for the organization. However, the results show that, among the interviewed executives, there is a prevalence of one of the three stages: successful innovations improve brand perceptions, attitude, and usage (code 3 of category D). In the same vein, the frequency count obtained for category 4 code D also indicates that, from the perspective of the interviewed managers, the idea that organizational innovation has the consequence of brand performance (Weerawardena et al., 2006) prevails.

In the studied companies, there is, the existence of an area responsible for the innovation process in a physical location different from the company's location, as suggested by Galbraith (1999) and the innovation process is disseminated throughout the organization, as recommended by Parolin (2013).

In the set of interviews, institutional leadership capable of fostering innovation (Galbraith, 1999; Van de Ven, 1986) and the access of advocates to sponsors (Galbraith, 1999) appeared more frequently as mechanisms for the development of a culture and organizational structure that encourages the emergence of new ideas and strategies for these new ideas to be implemented. The research also pointed out other mechanisms for the development of this organizational culture. The Beta company executive, for example, reported that the company has incentive innovation programs in which employees who come up with the best ideas receive financial awards. The best projects are selected to participate in an exhibition. These initiatives, in addition to providing greater visibility and recognition for the employee, can also allow the company to make real gains.

In all companies studied, incremental innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002) prevails over radical innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002). The risk and uncertainty associated with innovations with a higher degree of novelty (Tironi & Cruz, 2008) as well as the idea that incremental innovations have a lower cost than radical innovations (Utterback, & Abernathy, 1975) which appeared in the interviews as reasons for this prevalence of incremental innovation.

In the texts transcribed from the interviews, there was a near absence of the strategies for reducing time, costs, and risks associated with innovation listed in codes 1 to 6 of Category J. However, the interviewees described some strategies adopted in their companies that enable them to innovate spending less time, reducing cost and risk, as discussed below.

Beta, for example, has a formal prospecting and partnership program with startups. It prospects and selects startups to go through a six-month acceleration stage, through mentoring, networking, and new business. The most promising startups can even receive investments from the business group of which Beta company is a part. Another strategy adopted by Beta to reduce uncertainty and risk is the use of public resources derived from public policies aimed at fostering innovation, such as government incentives and foundations that support research related to states.

Sigma company also takes advantage of external resources to promote R&D as a means of reducing the risk associated with innovation. Gama company highlights the role of creating its innovation center as a strategy for reducing the time, cost, and risk associated with innovation. This innovation center has a clean and inspiring environment, suitable for the development of disruptive innovations. The company's plan is for employees to temporarily disconnect from all of their day-to-day activities in order to dedicate themselves exclusively to the Innovation Center, forming multidisciplinary teams lasting from four to six months. The company expects them to act as multipliers of a new work method when they return to their areas of origin. The interviewee of company Alfa also highlighted the importance of the physical environment for the development of an innovative spirit and the emergence of new ideas.

Among the companies studied, those that seek to respond to consumer needs [market-driven] (Beverland et al., 2010) prevail over those that seek to influence market consumption [driven-markets] (Beverland et al., 2010). The companies Alpha, Beta, Gama, and Delta are more focused on responding to the needs of consumers [market-driven] (Beverland et al., 2010). The company Sigma, from the perspective of the interviewed executive, seems to be more inclined to influence the consumption of the market [driven-markets] (Beverland et al., 2010) than just seeking to respond to the needs of consumers [market-driven] (Beverland et al., 2010).

Considering this, it is possible to build a typology of innovation and positioning of the companies studied, as following the model proposed by Beverland, Napoli and Farrelly (2010), from the analysis of categories K and H, as shown in Figure 3.

According to this analysis, the companies Alfa, Beta, Gama and Delta may be located predominantly in the quadrant called follower brands, while the company Sigma may be located mainly in the craft-designer led brands quadrant (Beverland et al., 2010).

Based on the perspective of the interviewed managers, the presence of corporate branding strategies (RAO et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004), mixed branding (RAO et al., 2004), and house of brands (RAO et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004) was noted. In the executives' interviews, the presence of only two of the brands personality dimensions proposed by Muniz and Marchetti (2012) was observed: credibility and audacity. The credibility dimension (Muniz & Marchetti, 2012) was identified in the statements of all the executives interviewed.

For the studied companies, online communities, such as social networks and blogs, discussion forums, websites and online channels (Nguyen et al., 2015; Schaarschmidt & Kilian, 2014) prevail, in terms of frequency count, in strategies for integrating the final consumer into the innovation process.

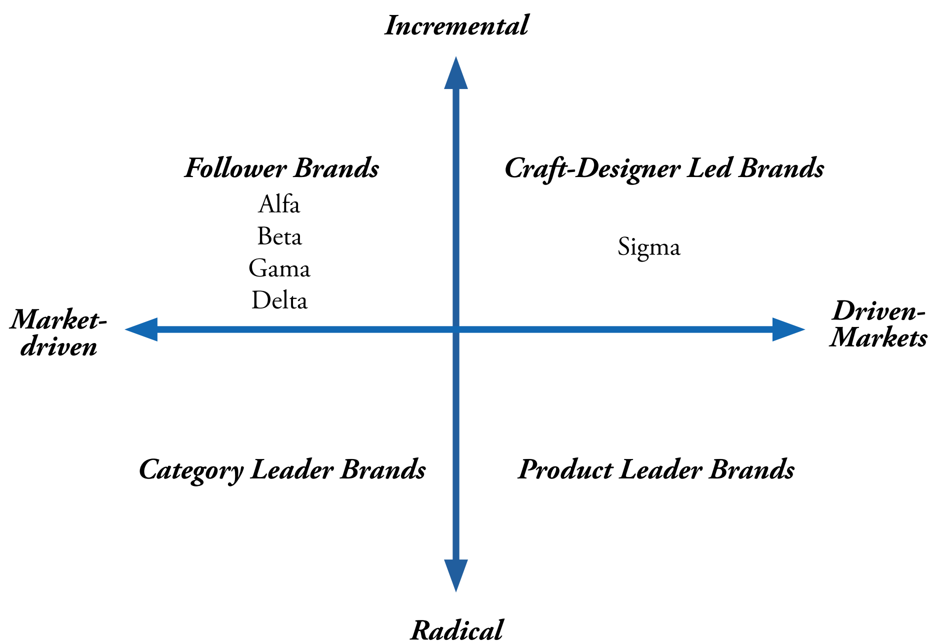

Figure 3. Typology of innovation and positioning of the studied companies.
Source: the authors, adapted from Beverland et al. (2010, p. 36).

Regarding the rewards for the consumer in the innovation process (Pellizzoni et al., 2015), none of the studied companies offers monetary rewards to consumers for their participation in this process. All choose to offer non-monetary rewards.

In the interviews, four of the five managers agreed on the possibility of reconciling the brand heritage with innovation, highlighting the issue of fidelity to the traditions of the brand heritage while paying attention to the competitors' movements, innovations, and changes in consumer preferences (Beverland, 2005).

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Within the scope of innovative brands, this article aimed to identify what an innovative brand is from the perspective of business managers in the Mineiro Triangle region and describe how they manage innovative brands.

In terms of theoretical contributions, it should be noted that the results obtained in this research indicate that, among the interviewed executives, there is a prevalence of one of the three stages of the conceptual model by Brexendorf et al. (2015): successful innovations improve brand perceptions, attitude, and usage. The five companies studied in the were distributed in only two innovation possibilities of the innovation typology and brand positioning built by Beverland et al. (2010): (1) follower brands; and (2) craft-designer led brands. This occurred because in all of the five companies, incremental innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002) prevails over radical innovation (Gatignon et al., 2002).

The managerial contributions of this article are related to the identification of some of the best practices performed by the five companies, among which it is possible to highlight: (1) creation of an innovation center; (2) establishing programs that offer financial rewards for the best ideas; (3) implementing a prospecting program and establishing partnerships with startups; (4) maintaining a physical environment that encourages innovation and the emergence of new ideas; and (5) use of public resources from public policies aimed at fostering innovation.

One of the limitations of this research is related to the sources of evidence. For carrying out the case studies of the five companies, only two sources of evidence were used: interviews and documentation (Yin, 2010). Another limitation concerns the relatively small number of companies studied and interviews carried out. In content analysis, when working with reduced frequencies, the risk of error increases (Bardin, 2011). In addition, content analysis, despite being a technique that uses systematic, explicit, and replicable procedures, does not allow a single reading of the texts, and is therefore is not free from bias (Bauer, 2002).

This research covered companies from only four economic sectors: telecommunications, information technology, chemicals, and electricity. However, according to Campos and Ruiz (2009), a variety of innovation patterns can be observed at the sectoral level in the Brazilian industry. Consequently, future studies can investigate other economic sectors and the results can be compared with those obtained in this article. In addition, the structure of the system of categories or coding framework adopted in this study, consisting of 16 categories subdivided into 99 subcategories or codes, extracted from the literature, can also be used in future research, both quantitative and qualitative.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The authors declare that they contributed to all stages of the research, except for data collection, a step that was performed only by the first author.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.