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Socio-environmental management in micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN

Gestão socioambiental em micro e pequenas indústrias de Pau dos Ferros-RN

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the perception managers of micro and small industries in the city of Pau dos Ferros, RN about environmental practices. To this end, it was sought to verify whether these companies use the environmental management, identifying its practices and pointing motivations, barriers, and opportunities for its implementation; also it was intended to describe the positive and negative consequences perceived by some managers from the existing social and environmental practices, and identify their knowledge on the subject. The paper presents a theoretical approach to Sustainability and Sustainable Development, Environmental Management and Social Responsibility, Micro and Small Enterprises, specific aspects related to industrial activity and environmental management related to that segment. It is qualitative and descriptive research with field research and the collection instrument was through interviews with managers of micro and small industries in the city, followed by an interpretive analysis based on the data obtained. Research has shown that all respondents have awareness about the importance of the environment, and most of them develop some environmental practices, mainly focused on the energy and water savings, and some performing reuse of materials. Social-oriented stocks are scarce and are not directly related to the environmental strategy of the company. Most of the companies did not consider difficult to invest or develop environmental initiatives, although they realized that this requires incentives from the governments, which does not occur with any of the companies interviewed. Most of the managers understand that environmental actions generate positive impacts for companies, such as cost reduction, image enhancement, increased competitiveness and profitability, hardly realizing negatives aspects. In addition, respondents felt that their companies even being micro or small, have an importance for the community, mainly due to the generation of employment and income, vital to the development of the city and region.

Keywords: Social and environmental responsibility; Perception; Corporate sustainability; Socio-environmental practices.

Resumo: O presente estudo tem por objetivo analisar a percepção de gestores de micro e pequenas indústrias da cidade de Pau dos Ferros-RN acerca de práticas socioambientais. Para tanto, buscou-se verificar se essas empresas fazem uso de gestão socioambiental, identificando suas práticas e apontando motivações, entraves e oportunidades para sua implantação; também pretende-se descrever as consequências negativas e positivas percebidas por alguns gestores a partir das práticas socioambientais existentes, bem como identificar seus conhecimentos a respeito do tema. O trabalho traz uma abordagem teórica sobre Sustentabilidade e Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Gestão Ambiental e Responsabilidade Socioambiental, Micro e Pequenas Empresas, aspectos específicos relacionados à atividade industrial e a gestão socioambiental ligada a esse segmento. Corresponde a uma pesquisa qualitativa e descritiva, com pesquisa de campo e cujo instrumento de coleta se deu por meio de entrevistas com os gestores das micro e pequenas indústrias da cidade, seguidas de uma análise interpretativa, com base nos dados obtidos. A pesquisa mostrou que todos os entrevistados têm a noção sobre a importância do meio ambiente, sendo que a maioria desenvolve algumas práticas ambientais, principalmente voltadas à economia de energia e água, alguns realizando reaproveitamento de materiais. As ações voltadas para as questões sociais são escassas, não estando

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relacionadas diretamente à estratégia socioambiental da empresa. Grande parte não considera difícil investir ou desenvolver ações socioambientais, embora compreenda que isso requer incentivos dos Governos, o que não ocorre com nenhuma das empresas entrevistadas. Os gestores, em sua maioria, entendem que ações socioambientais geram impactos positivos para as empresas, como redução de custos, melhoria de imagem, aumento da competitividade e rentabilidade, quase não percebendo aspectos negativos. Além disso, os entrevistados consideraram que suas empresas, mesmo sendo micro ou pequenas, possuem uma importância para a comunidade, principalmente em virtude da geração de emprego e renda, fundamentais para o desenvolvimento da cidade e região.

Palavras-chave: Responsabilidade socioambiental; Percepção; Sustentabilidade empresarial; Práticas socioambientais.

1 Introduction

The actions of man towards the environment have caused serious changes in the planet and causing diverse problems, whose effects reach the whole world, generating several discussions about the environmental question. Factors such as the intensification of industrialization, population explosion, increased production, uncontrolled consumption, urbanization and modernization of agricultural techniques have also brought with it consequences such as the degradation of natural resources, water, soil and air pollution, culminating in environmental disasters observed until the present day (Nascimento et al., 2008). Due to these issues, we have tried to establish a new form of development, provoking an improvement in the quality of life of the population and, at the same time, the survival of the species on the planet.

Given the reality of the world market, companies have sought to insert the environmental variable among concerns, including in Brazil. The ideas of sustainability applied to the companies show a new posture on the part of the entrepreneurs, resulting in benefits for the economy, the society and the environment. Entrepreneurs are increasingly seeking to adopt sustainable management practices of their companies, and this policy extends to all companies, regardless of size and industry. For Sachs (2009, p. 32),

[...] productive use does not necessarily need to harm the environment or destroy diversity if we are aware that all our economic activities are solidly embedded in the natural environment.

From this new perception, companies begin to understand that it is possible to be profitable, producing quality products and being competitive, while protecting the environment and adopting socially responsible actions. In this sense, Nascimento et al. (2008, p. 60) point out that the environmental issue is no longer a problem to become part of an even larger solution, benefiting companies through “[...] the organization’s credibility with society through quality and competitiveness of their products”.

In Brazil, most of the enterprises are Micro and Small Enterprises (SMEs), which, according to the SEBRAE (2017) report, represent 99% of the country’s formal enterprises, accounting for 27% of GDP. These companies play a key role in the economic development of all regions of the country,

generating jobs, business, income and value. Of these companies, 15% are in the Northeast.

In the state of Rio Grande do Norte, MPEs correspond to more than 92% of all existing companies, according to SEBRAE (2016), of which a large part is in the countryside. Most MSEs are in the commerce sector (48%) and services (33%). Only 18% correspond to the industrial sector (considering the construction sector, which corresponds to 5%), and the agricultural sector, with just over 1%. As for the distribution of these companies by the State, the regions of Grande Natal (52.8%), Mossoró (12%), Assú (5.5%), Caicó (6.5%), and the remainder in the other municipalities.

The high representativeness of this category of business shows its importance for the socioeconomic growth and development of municipalities, distributed in every state, because in every city, however small, there are micro or small companies acting. Thus, this research aims at studying the Micro and Small Companies of the industrial sector, whose research is delimited to the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN, located in the Upper West Potiguar.

The choice for the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN is not random. Although it is observed that the process of concentrating capital investments and the consequent development are concentrated in capitals and big cities, some cities in the countryside of Rio Grande do Norte, such as Pau dos Ferros, have been outstanding in the economic scenario, due to the increase in supply of public services in the area of Higher Education, construction industry and also its large retail trade, have become a polo city, favored by its geographical location, with an area of influence covering forty-five (45) municipalities (Dantas, 2014).

Pau dos Ferros-RN also presents environmental aspects that require concern. The city, which is located in the micro region that receives the same name, which is part of the West Meso-region of the state of Rio Grande do Norte, is crossed by the Apodi-Mossoró River, which corresponds to the main water supply for the maintenance of the fauna and flora of the city and region West Potiguar. According to Alves (2014), the fauna of this region is very degraded due to the intensive use of the soils for agriculture and extensive livestock, causing a massive withdrawal of the existing vegetation, destroying even the shelter of the animals that live there. For the author, this microregion has the highest semiarid indexes in the

region, presenting low levels of rainfall and high temperatures.

Today, not understanding socio-environmental practices as a competitive and fundamental advantage for the survival of companies may lead them to not conform to a new world-wide approach, which relates sustainable production and consumption of products and protection of the environment as a means to stay in the market. This is a widespread vision and organizations should be guided by this new dynamic, regardless of country, region, economic sector or company size.

In the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN, which is located in a small state such as Rio Grande do Norte, will it be possible to verify this new position in its companies? Particularly in the industrial sector and the profile of the city's industries, which are predominantly MPE's, is the socio-environmental variable taken into account in the way of acting within these small organizations? How do their managers understand the socio-environmental variable related to their activities? In this scenario, the role of these managers is fundamental, because it is through them that the decisions are made and from them that the changes of direction and direction of their business are expected. It is in this sense that this research becomes necessary, seeking to understand and analyze these aspects in order to answer the following question: what is the perception of the managers of micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN about socio-environmental practices? The answer to this question will support the understanding of how the socio-environmental variable is considered from the perspective of the managers of these organizations.

It is through the managers' perception that it will be possible to identify how they understand the socio-environmental actions from the day-to-day activities of their companies. According to Nóbrega (2008, p. 141), "[...] perception is the act by which consciousness apprehends a given object, using sensations as an instrument". For the author, human perception derives from an observation and from a way in which one sees and understands something, possessing a mutable character. She explains that "[...] perception is not the exhaustive and total knowledge of the object, but an interpretation that is always provisional and incomplete" (Nóbrega, 2008).

The research, therefore, has the main objective of analyzing the perception of managers of micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN about socio-environmental practices. In order to do that, a qualitative and descriptive research will be carried out, through a field research, in which semi-structured interviews will be used, in order to achieve the following specific objectives: a) verifying if micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros -RN make use of socio-environmental management; if so, identifying their practices; b) pointing out the motivations, obstacles and opportunities for the implementation

of socio-environmental practices; c) Identifying the managers' knowledge about socio-environmental practices; d) Describing the negative and positive consequences perceived by some managers from the socio-environmental practices of micro and small industries in Pau dos Ferros-RN;

Trying to understand people's perception of socio-environmental issues is important in a number of ways, including the link between science and life, that is, the day-to-day life of these people and organizations. As Maturana (2001) observes, science gains more importance and validity when it is connected to the daily life of societies, because the act of doing science is based on the search for understanding our own perceptions and experiences. With regard to research, it is necessary that the socio-environmental management system be understood as an instrument of continuous improvement for Micro and Small Enterprises (SMEs). Analyzing the managers' perception regarding socio-environmental aspects in the Micro and Small Industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN is fundamental to understand how these companies are linked to the issue of corporate sustainability. In addition to being of great importance from the management point of view, the adoption of socio-environmental practices is also essential for the corporate image of MPES and for the community in which they are inserted, as offering environmentally correct products and services has become not only an obligation, as well as a matter of business survival today.

2 Theoretical assumptions

This Theoretical Framework will be structured in order to offer an understanding on the aspects of social and environmental management in the present day. This stage will be divided into four parts, to better understand the theories addressed and which will subsidize the research, as follows.

2.1 Sustainability and sustainable development

According to Boff (2012, p. 9), "[...] there are few words more used today than the noun sustainability and the sustainable adjective". This shows the importance that the subject has had on the part of the companies, the governments and the media worldwide. "It's a label that seeks to stick to the products and processes of their making to add value", adds Boff (2012).

However, it is noted that there is often a certain ecological falsehood about the current use of the word sustainability in an attempt to cover certain problems of environmental aggression, pollution and contamination, and sometimes as a marketing tool to sell and profit, simply. Boff (2012) points out that most of what is announced as sustainable is not generally sustainable, and notes that "[...] greenwash

is the practice most often used to deceive consumers. looking for chemical-free products”.

The concept of limitation of natural resources made it necessary to seek the balance between the use of the environment as a source of wealth and economic and social development. Sustainability emerges as a fundamental condition for maintaining one's life on Earth and has the basic idea of ensuring “[...] that our actions today will not limit the range of economic, social and environmental options available to future generations” (Elkington, 2012, p. 52).

Producing and selling indiscriminately have become the basic equation for unsustainability these days and that threaten the structure of the planet. This dynamics should be rethought in order to guarantee the existence of future generations with concrete possibilities to maintain and live in harmony with the environment, while at the same time guaranteeing development in the present, as Boff (2012, p. 16):

Sustainability is a way of being and living that requires aligning human practices with the limited potentialities of each biome and the needs of present and future generations.

Currently, the concept of sustainability is very widespread and is related to the planet's ability to maintain its natural balance, meeting the economic and social needs of present and future generations. Therefore, sustainability cannot be analyzed in isolation in one of its aspects. It involves, basically, three variables that complement each other, composing a social, environmental and economic system.

In 1984, the World Commission on Environment and Development was established. Three years later (in 1987) the report “Our Common Future”, also known as the “Brundtland Report”, was drawn up. In this report, the expression “Sustainable Development” appears for the first time, in which it is defined as: “[...] the ability of societies to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (CMMAD, 1991, p. 9).

Dias (2011) emphasizes, however, that although the concept of Sustainable Development is widely used, there is no exact vision of its meaning. He emphasizes that for some, sustainable development means achieving economic growth through the rational use of natural resources and more efficient and less polluting technologies; while for others it is above all a social and political project aimed at eradicating poverty, raising the quality of life of society and meeting the basic needs of humanity.

The concept of Sustainable Development must be seen by three aspects that encompass it: the economic, the social and the environmental. The so-called Triple Bottom Line, also known as the “Three Ps” (people, planet and profit), was developed by the British John Elkington in 1990 and refers to the results of a

company measured in terms of economic, social and environmental profitability (Aligleri et al., 2009).

In Brazil, the “Sustainability Tripod” is a concept that can be applied either in a macro way, to a country or to the planet as a whole, for example, as well as in a micro, such as in a residence, school or companies, regardless of size (Dias, 2011). Sachs (2009, p. 35) calls these three pillars of Sustainable Development a ‘Triple Victory’, while simultaneously meeting the criteria of “social relevance, ecological prudence and economic viability”.

2.2 Environmental management

According to Dias (2011, p. 102), Environmental Management “[...] is the expression used to denominate business management that is oriented to avoid, as far as possible, problems for the environment”. In the same sense, Floriano (2007, p. 1) defines Environmental Management as the administration of environmental resources with the objective of preserving them and ensuring that future generations find an environment compatible with their needs.

Donaire (2013) cites that among the actions that can be developed by organizations based on the environmental management of their natural resources, can be cited the recycling of materials, which brings a saving of resources for companies; internal reuse of waste or its subsequent sale; the development of new technologies or production processes based on cleaner production; development of new products aimed at the ecological market and its new demands, among others.

According to Barbieri (2011), through environmental management models, companies can orient themselves on decisions about how, when, where and with whom to address environmental problems within the company and how these decisions relate to other business issues. The author further explains that the adoption of an environmental management model

[...] makes coherent the accomplishment of activities developed by different people, at different times and places and under different ways of seeing the same issues (Barbieri, 2011, p. 119).

Among the models of Environmental Management that stand out most by international and national organizations are Cleaner Production and Eco-efficiency, constituting mechanisms that complement and strengthen Environmental Management Systems in companies. As Dias (2011) mentions, these instruments aim to ensure that natural resources are effectively transformed into products without generating waste.

According to Barbieri (2011), Cleaner Production (or simply, P + L) involves actions to minimize the consumption of energy, water and raw material, as well as the generation of waste and emissions, through non-generation, minimization or recycling of waste

generated. The author explains that P & L involves products and processes organized according to their priority in the following sequence: “[...] prevention, reduction, reuse and recycling, treatment with material and energy recovery and final disposal” (Barbieri, 2011, p. 126).

The model of environmental management based on Eco-efficiency is understood from the perspective that the reduction of material and energy used in the elaboration of a product or service increases the competitiveness of the company, at the same time reducing the impacts on the environment. It corresponds to a sustainable production and consumption model that contributes to the improvement of the quality of life through its actions (Barbieri, 2011).

These two environmental management practices can be applied to any company, regardless of size or industry. This is because any company is able to reduce its energy consumption, of water, in the same way that it can also encourage the use of recyclable products, reusing materials or containers used (Dias, 2011). They represent, therefore, a competitive differential in relation to those companies that do not adopt such practices. In addition, these two proposals are part of a Macro-Analysis of Sustainable Production and Consumption (SP & C), whose idea is to produce and use goods and services that meet the basic needs of man, improving his quality of life, minimizing use of natural resources, toxic materials and waste, without compromising the needs of future generations (Dias, 2011, p. 154).

Regardless of the organization, regardless of industry, place of business or size, concerns about society and the environment should guide their actions, both from a strategic point of view and in their internal scope, short, medium or long term. Organizations are not isolated entities. They interact all the time, either with their stakeholders, or with the social or natural environment, which, directly or indirectly, reflect and are reflected in their actions. For Aligleri et al. (2009), the credibility of an organization is not built in isolation, but is influenced by the image it passes to the market and society. Consumers, for example, are increasingly aware of how a good was produced, and considers in its analysis and decision to purchase not only aspects related to its intrinsic quality, but also socio-environmental aspects linked to the company, internally and externally. Therefore, socio-environmental problems should not be treated in isolation or classified as those that exist outside or within organizations and should consider the socio-environmental responsibility beyond the company and the production process, whose approach will be explained below.

2.3 Socio-environmental responsibility

For Levy (2005), it is necessary that the companies re-dimension in their social role, taking into account not

only the interests of the entrepreneurs or shareholders, but also of the entire population. It is at this moment that companies show their social and environmental role, their contribution to the well-being and quality of life of the whole society.

Donaire (2013) also explains the meaning of the idea of corporate social responsibility, which is based on the freedom that society grants to the company to exist. From this perspective, there is an implicit social contract in the company-society relationship.

A company, like other legitimate organizations, has the freedom to exist and work for a legitimate purpose. The payment of this freedom is the company's contribution to society (Donaire, 2013, p. 20).

By analogy, it is understood that the environmental responsibility of the company derives from this same relationship, because in the same way that the company uses existing natural resources, its counterpart to nature is to use those resources at the same time as it works to preserve it, by means of preservation, replacement or reduction of the impacts caused.

Thus, the question of profit must be observed, from the perspective of short and long term. Some organizations argue that social and environmental investments undermine the company's profitability. However, they do not realize that socio-environmental responsibility actions offer favorable conditions in the long run, since they increase the company's competitiveness while contributing to its survival, since the existence of companies becomes unviable in the face of an environment and degraded society.

Companies that think in the long run and invest in social and environmental responsibility become more competitive, consolidating their image in the market and generating for themselves great opportunities. For Kroetz (2000, p. 7), “[...] organizations that incorporate the culture of social responsibility, end up transforming it into a kind of intangible asset”, valuing its brand, its value and raising its economic potential.

It was with the disclosure of environmental problems, starting in the middle of the last century, that companies have been charged for their responsibilities to go beyond social responsibility. “Human well-being begins to be perceived as derived from the well-being of the planet and the social performance of the company also includes environmental concern”, as Aligleri et al. (2009, p. 12), from which derives the concept of socio-environmental responsibility.

The concept of Socio-Environmental Responsibility emerges from the idea that an organization is responsible for the impacts that its actions and practices produce, both in society and in the environment. Savitz (2007, p. 22) states that Social-Environmental Responsibility can be conceptualized as “[...] one that generates shareholder profits, while protecting the environment

and improving the quality of life of people with whom it has relations”.

This seems to be a concept that covers most of the purposes of actions based on socio-environmental responsibility. It involves the understanding for organizations that their decisions and practices should be turned not only to the economic-financial aspect, but also to social and environmental aspects. It is for this reason that Aligleri et al. (2009) notes that socio-environmental responsibility is inseparable from the concept of sustainability.

The role of organizations through their practices of social and environmental responsibility, regardless of size or sector of activity, is very important in the process of changes that the world goes through, since they appear as agents of transformation and development of society, acquiring a position of responsibility for the protection of the environment and the well-being of society.

2.4 Micro and small industries

This chapter presents an approach to the understanding of Micro and Small Industries, divided into three parts: the first deals with the conceptual and legal aspects of Micro and Small Enterprises (MPEs) in Brazil; the second part deals with Micro and Small Companies and the social and environmental aspects related to corporate sustainability; and then the Micro and Small Industries is presented, showing the basic concepts of industrial activity and its insertion in the Brazilian socio-environmental context.

2.4.1 Micro and small enterprises

There is no single criterion to define the companies, the most used being those definitions by the Economic Sector (primary, secondary and tertiary); by legal form; and by size. In Brazil, companies are generally classified according to size or size, where most of them are represented by micro and small companies (more than 90% of the total).

The number of employees and the gross annual turnover (Annual Gross Revenue) are the most used criteria to classify companies by size. There are several criteria for classifying micro and small companies in this approach, among which we can mention the Brazilian Federal Revenue (RFB) criterion, which classifies according to Gross Revenue annually earned, and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) that adopts as criterion the number of employees. Complementary Law 123/06 (Statute of Microenterprise and Small Business), instituted SIMPLES NACIONAL (a differentiated, simplified and favored tax regime provided for in Complementary Law 123, of 2006, applicable to Micro-enterprises and Small Enterprises, as of 07.07.2007) (Brasil, 2006). According to its Art. 3, micro-enterprises or small companies, the business company, the simple

company, the individual limited liability company and the entrepreneur are duly registered in the Mercantile Registry of Companies or in the Civil Registry of Legal Entities, according to the provided that: I - in the case of the micro-enterprise, it earns in each calendar year gross revenue equal to or less than R \$ 360,000.00 (three hundred and sixty thousand reais); II - in the case of the small business, it earns, in each calendar year, gross revenue exceeding R \$ 360,000.00 (three hundred and sixty thousand reais) and equal to or less than R \$ 4,800,000.00 (four million and eight hundred thousand reais).

For SEBRAE (2014), companies receive their classification in relation to their size or size, according to the number of employees and according to the sector. Microenterprise is one that has, in the case of Industry, up to 19 employees, and Commerce and Services, until nine (09). The “Small Company”, being Industry, must have 20 to 99 employees, and, in the case of “Commerce and Services”, from 10 to 49.

2.4.2 Micro and small enterprises in the socio-environmental context

Micro and small companies are being motivated to adopt social and environmental responsibility practices, since Brazilian consumers and the general public have been increasingly concerned about the impacts caused by organizations on the environment and their role as agents of transformation of the environment. society; are thus compelled to offer products and services with socio-environmental responsibility, and the consumer, thus arousing their interest, gradually become ethical consumers.

For Farias & Teixeira (2002), one of the great challenges today is to show to micro and small companies the importance of changing the conception about the environment and adjusting its productive processes to the limits and conditions that the natural and social environment impose. The authors point out that among the problems for micro and small companies to get involved in the socio-environmental issue are the limitation of financial resources of these companies for investments in this area, as well as the lack of time available by the managers of these organizations for such concerns, since almost always they are solely responsible for managing all business activities.

Contrary to popular belief, sustainable practices, which include environmental management, most often require no investment. This is basically the implementation of simple ideas, when applying techniques that make their processes more efficient and reduce costs by reducing energy consumption and raw materials, as well as reuse or recycling of materials for reuse within the company (SEBRAE, 2012).

According to Ferronato (2011), it is a matter of survival for micro and small companies to base their

actions on values based on socio-environmental responsibility, which reveals a high degree of maturity on the part of these organizations.

2.4.3 Micro and small industries and socioenvironmental aspects of industrial activity in Brazil

According to Corrêa et al. (2009, p. 171) "Industry is all human activity that, through labor, transforms raw material into other products, which can then be (or not) marketed". Micro and Small Industries (MPIs) therefore correspond to a category of companies that work with the transformation of raw material into products with a view to the final consumer. According to Andrade (2002, p. 1), micro and small industries are part of a fundamental sector for the Brazilian economy, standing out for its

[...] remarkable presence in the socio-political-economic Brazilian scenario, both numerically and for its performance in all branches of activity and in all sectors - industrial, commercial and services.

In the economic and social context of a nation, industries have a fundamental role to play in generating employment and income, in advancing technology and in promoting social welfare. However, the current challenge is to harmonize economic growth with preserving the environment and improving people's quality of life. To understand this dynamic, it is necessary to go back to the origin of industrialization in Brazil, in order to better understand how the socio-environmental variable is inserted in this sector.

In Brazil, its industrialization phase began basically from the 1930s. However, until the 1970s, Brazil's development was virtually disconnected from ideas of sustainability. At that time, as of the Stockholm Conference in 1972, global environmental debates were beginning to gain a voice and stimulated discussions across the planet, about the future of the planet and of humanity. However, this debate was only reached in Brazil in the 1980s, marked by the approval of the National Environmental Policy (Law 6,938, dated August 31, 1981). The importance of the environment considered in this period culminated in the dedication to the theme of a chapter of the 1988 Constitution.

According to CNI (2002), the impact of environmental measures on Brazilian industry since then was quite significant, whose needs to meet legal and licensing requirements meant that approximately 85% of industries in the 1990s started to adopt some measure associated with environmental preservation procedures in its activities. It observes, however, that it was not only the factor of legislation and environmental requirements that stimulated the search for sustainable production patterns from that period. The promotion of strategies based on environmental

competitiveness has played a significant role in the insertion of Brazilian industries in the new economic environment, contributing to the improvement of corporate eco-efficiency. It was in this sense that companies started to adopt measures to reduce energy consumption and productive inputs, reduce waste, reuse and recycle materials, conservation and increase operational efficiency.

From that point on, it was verified that industrial companies in the 1990s started to invest in environmental sustainability in their businesses, adopting some procedure related to environmental management, which, at the first moment, were investments related to the reduction of losses and waste of materials and finished products, with investments in effluent treatment and control, noise reduction and energy control.

Currently, there is a very different profile on the part of the Brazilian industry, compared to the beginning of the 1990s, which reveals an advance in the sustainability standard in its products and processes. In addition to this, a business posture that is more focused on current concerns regarding socio-environmental responsibility, where not only the adoption of an environmental concern in its business, but also the incorporation of ethical and cultural values in its decisions.

3 Methodology

According to Andrade (2007, p. 119), "[...] methodology is the set of methods or paths that are pursued in the pursuit of knowledge". Seeking solutions to problems motivates the human being to develop instruments capable of answering the most varied questions, from simple to complex ones. Therefore, each problem requires a different instrument (one method)

3.1 The research

The research techniques are related to the collection of data and correspond to the practical part of the research. In Andrade's (2007, p. 125) concept:

Techniques are a set of norms used specifically in each area of the sciences, and it can be affirmed that technique is the specific instrumentalization of data collection.

From this perspective, this research is categorized, in relation to its nature, as qualitative research; the objectives of the research, defined as descriptive; and, regarding the object, considered a field research. As for the technique of data collection, interviews and informal direct observation were also carried out in the companies that were the object of the research, and semi-structured interview scripts were used as a data collection instrument.

3.1.1 Classification of the nature of data: qualitative

The methodological approach used to obtain the research data will be qualitative. Qualitative research is used to study aspects of reality or to describe facts and phenomena, without the use of statistical methods. According to Oliveira (2011, p. 80), “[...] qualitative research corresponds to the grouping and analysis of information, in a non-numerical way, with texts and images, using formal research methods”. This approach was chosen because it is the most adequate methodology for the purposes of this study, since it encompasses with greater detail the understanding that is sought to establish regarding the object of study.

3.1.2 Classification in relations to the objectives: descriptive research

Based on the classification of Gil (2010), which classifies research as to its exploratory, descriptive and explanatory objectives, this work will use the descriptive research to achieve what is proposed.

Descriptive surveys aim to describe characteristics of a given population. In this type of research, facts are observed, recorded, analyzed, classified and interpreted, without the interference of the researcher, but can also be elaborated with the objective of identifying possible relations between variables (Andrade, 2007).

Michel (2005, p. 36) emphasizes that descriptive researches are widely used in the human and social sciences and are intended

[...] to analyze, as accurately as possible, facts or phenomena in their nature and characteristics, seeking to observe, record and analyze their relationships, connections and interferences.

Descriptive research seeks to know and compare situations related to human behavior, individual or collective, in its social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects, among others, which is consistent with the proposal of this study, since it is the analysis of the perception of individuals (managers) about social and environmental practices within their organizations, in this case, Micro and Small Companies.

3.1.3 Classification in Relation to the Object: Field Research

Surveys can also be classified according to their subject of study. According to Andrade (2007), they can be grouped into three types: bibliographic research, laboratory research and field research. This research will be characterized as its object of study as Field Research.

According to Marconi & Lakatos (2003, p. 186) the field research is conceptualized as

[...] the one used for the purpose of obtaining information and / or knowledge about a problem, for which a response is sought, or a hypothesis, who wants to prove or, still, to discover new phenomena or the relations between them.

Andrade (2007) explains that the field research receives this denomination because the data collection is carried out “in field”, where the phenomena occur spontaneously, not having interference of the researcher on them.

Regarding the objectives achieved in this type of research, Oliveira (2011) says that the field research seeks to generate data and knowledge about a problem, in order to a response, or a hypothesis that one wants to prove, or even to discover new phenomena or relations between events of interest. Silva (2010), on the other hand, emphasizes that field research should not be confused with data collection, since all research needs to collect data. However, in field research, the data are collected locally, with pre-established objectives, specifying what is collected, which can be obtained through interviews, questionnaire applications, tests or participant observation, according to the author’s understanding. In the case of this research, the field research is verified through the use of interviews with the twenty-four (24) managers of micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN.

3.2 Data collection instrument

Regarding the data collection instruments, this research will use a semi-structured research guide, to be carried out through the interview technique, which is considered as one of the “[...] essential tools for fidelity, quality and completeness of the research” (Michel, 2005, p. 37). Andrade (2007) emphasizes that data collection represents a very important phase of field research, but should not be confused with the research itself. After the data is collected the analysis, interpretation and its graphic representation will be made. Subsequently, the results of the research will be discussed, based on the analysis and interpretation of the obtained data.

Gil (2012, p. 109) defines the interview as the

[...] technique in which the investigator presents himself/herself before the investigated one and asks him/her questions, in order to obtain the data that interest the investigation.

In the interview, the conversation happens face-to-face, in a methodical way, providing the interviewee with the necessary information verbally (Marconi & Lakatos, 2003).

In this work, a partially structured or semi-structured interview was used (when it is guided by points of interest that the interviewer is exploring throughout the interview), in which the managers of micro and small industries were interviewed in the city of Pau

dos Ferros-RN about their perceptions regarding the aspects of Socio-environmental Management within their companies. The interviews were conducted between September and October 2015.

3.3 Study environment and research subjects

The study was carried out in the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN. Located in the Western Mesoregion, Microregion of Pau dos Ferros, the city is located 400 km from the capital of the State of Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, with a total area of 259.96 km² and an estimated population of 30,183 inhabitants (IBGE, 2018). Pau dos Ferros-RN is a municipality considered important, from the point of view of its location, in economic and population terms (Almeida, 2014). The city has a strategic geographical location, highlighting the regional economic scenario, being today the polo city of the Potiguar High West Region. The large daily flow of people coming mainly from the forty-five (45) municipalities that make up its geographic area of influence has led to the development of large retail and other sectors of the economy (Dantas, 2014). Although the economic activity of the city is led by the commerce and services sector (health, banking, business administration, accounting, among others), mainly the commercial area accounting for the greater participation in the composition of local GDP, although small, Pau dos Ferros is considered important for the size of the municipality (Almeida, 2014).

The research was directed to the study applied to the Micro and Small Industries of the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN, in which its managers, subjects of the research were interviewed. Currently, according to the Industrial Registry obtained through the FIERN System (Federation of Industries of Rio Grande do Norte), the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN has 24 (twenty-four) industries, all of them classified as Micro or Small Companies.

4 Data analysis and results

It is possible that, concurrently or even after the analysis process, data interpretation also occurs, consisting essentially of establishing the relations between the research objectives and the answers obtained. With the research it was possible to verify some points, which will be considered next.

All managers interviewed have a notion about the importance of the environment. Most of them develop some environmental practices in their companies, mainly focused on the issue of energy and water saving, and some reuse materials. Actions such as these, according to the research, have different motivations, ranging from economic motivation (via cost reduction) to the understanding that these practices contribute to an improvement of the environment and quality of life. It is worth

highlighting the fact that everyone understands the issue of the water crisis as an environmental problem, and how much this affects their companies and society as a whole. Many even report the issue of water as a factor affecting the economy, thus bringing about social problems. Unemployment and the economic crisis are also pointed out as great problems that have reflected in the actions of their companies.

Actions aimed at the community are scarce and the existing actions can be considered philanthropic, not directly related to the company's socio-environmental strategy. As for actions for employees, most are confined to periodic meetings held annually. Few even offer courses or training for these employees, and when they do, they are offered in partnership with institutions such as SEBRAE. However, some companies demonstrate the importance of their employees and the motivating role of these to the success of the business. Most managers, however, realize that their employees are not concerned about the environmental issue.

Most of the interviewed managers consider that it is not difficult to invest in the environment or to develop socio-environmental actions. However, they explain that these actions depend on incentives, mainly from the Government, to be implemented. Some of them note that socio-environmental actions depend only on simple actions, others understand that it requires investments.

According to the survey, most managers note that local consumers have not yet awakened to the socio-environmental issue. However, they understand that consumers in other regions, especially in large centers already show this interest, since it is perceived that society in general shows a great concern with the impacts caused by the companies in the environment.

A common point among all managers is that none of their companies has incentives from the government to carry out or improve social and environmental actions. However, everyone shows interest in one day receiving this benefit, if offered. They also complain about the lack of public participation in encouraging simple actions, such as the selective collection of materials, which most managers consider important and show interest in doing but see the absence of government counterpart in the implementation and continuity of these actions.

Most managers present superficial knowledge, when the subject is environment and social responsibility, where few can define expressions such as "sustainability" and "socio-environmental responsibility", according to the concepts theoretically consolidated. The managers consider that the companies invest in the environment for diverse reasons, from intrinsic motivation of the own manager until the search of the improvement of image and increase of business competitiveness.

A small number of managers have already attended courses or events related to the environment and

everyone would like to be better informed about social and environmental issues.

Managers, for the most part, understand that socio-environmental actions result in positive impacts for companies, such as cost reduction, image improvement before the market, increased competitiveness and increased sales. As for the negative points from these practices, it is almost inconceivable.

In almost all companies the managers considered that these have an importance for the city and the community, mainly because of the generated jobs in their organizations. This is worth noting, since industrial activity, although dealing with micro and small enterprises, is responsible for a large generation of jobs, many of them even employing more than twenty (20) employees, reaching forty (40) collaborators in one of the researched ones. Another interesting point is that many of these micro and small industries have been in the market for many years, having company with more than almost half a century of activity.

Analyzing the perception of managers on social and environmental issues in their companies' day-to-day activities was important in several aspects, mainly because the socio-environmental management system is understood today as a tool for continuous improvement for Micro and Small Enterprises), be they from the commercial sector, services or industries. Analyzing the managers' perception of socio-environmental aspects in the Micro and Small Industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN was fundamental to understand how these companies are linked to the issue of corporate sustainability.

In the scientific field, the research was of great relevance as to the innovative sense as it could be worked out, since there are still few studies related to socio-environmental aspects in micro and small industries.

Practically speaking, managers are expected to have awakened a little more about the importance of their organizations' role in the socio-environmental context and how valuable this can be, not only

for the success of their companies but also for the improvement of quality of population life. That these managers can work even harder to develop socio-environmental actions and that these actions are part of the day-to-day of their companies and become consolidated as practices. It is also hoped that society plays its part, as social and environmental actions are not the responsibility of the companies alone; the role of the community is fundamental so that there is an engagement of organizations and other actors in this process. Finally, it is important to emphasize how important it is that the Public Power fosters socio-environmental actions, especially in micro and small organizations, which often only need an incentive to be able to carry out actions of this nature. In the end, it is estimated that everyone will win by joining these efforts, not only companies, but the community and especially the environment.

5 Syntheses of main findings by specific objectives

With the general objective of analyzing the perception of managers of micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN about socio-environmental practices, the research was based on the following specific objectives: a) To verify if micro and small industries of Pau dos Ferros-RN do use of social and environmental management; if so, identify their practices; b) To point out the motivations, obstacles and opportunities for the implementation of socio-environmental practices; c) Identify the managers' knowledge about socio-environmental practices; d) Describe the negative and positive consequences perceived by some managers from the socio-environmental practices of micro and small industries in Pau dos Ferros-RN. To better visualize the obtained results, a synthesis of the main findings was made, according to the specific objectives and individualized from each company analyzed, as shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Summary of main findings by specific objectives.

COMPANY/ SEGMENT	PRACTICES	MOTIVATIONS/ CONSTRAINTS/ OPPORTUNITIES	MANAGER'S CONCEPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES
Enterprise 'A' – Food /Bakery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of paper bags (not used); • Use of electric ovens; • Separation of waste; • Water and energy saving; • Community actions, donations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of structure; • Lack of environmental awareness of the population; • High energy costs; • Economic and personal motivations; • Few customers care about the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined conception of Socio-environmental Responsibility; • Unprepared perception about Sustainability; • Understands the importance of the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competitiveness, positive image return and increased sales; • Good value for money.

Source: Prepared by the author. Field research (2015).

Chart 1. Continued...

COMPANY/ SEGMENT	PRACTICES	MOTIVATIONS/ CONSTRAINTS/ OPPORTUNITIES	MANAGER'S CONCEPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES
Enterprise "B" – Print shops and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • Donations of materials to the community; • Participation in Institutes of Support to Cancer Carriers. • Economic motivation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic motivation; • Absence of incentives from governments; • Consumers do not care about the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not formally structured the response on Sustainability and Social and Environmental Responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of costs; • Increase of competitiveness and sales; • Improvement of the company image.
Enterprise "C" – Communication, Print shops and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of waste; • Donation of materials for handicrafts; • Partnerships with institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal motivation and entrepreneurial awareness; • Lack of government incentive; • Considers it difficult to continue environmental actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the environment as important and possible to be working; • Articulated knowledge on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the company image; • Increased competitiveness and sales; • Consumer preference.
Enterprise "D" – Communication and print shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • You have already tried to perform selective collection, but it was not successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of skilled labor; • Difficulty in capital; • Lack of support from the Government; • Lack of environmental culture; • Considers environmental products still expensive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well formulated perception of socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It realizes that socio-environmental practices do not bring benefits to companies.
Enterprise "E" – Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • reverse logistic; • Support to Institutions to Support Cancer Patients; • Library for employees; • Lack of enterprise initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties inherent in the size of the company; • Formally structured the response on Sustainability and Social and Environmental Responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally structured the response on Sustainability and Social and Environmental Responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition before other companies; • Ease of markets; • Consumer preference.
Enterprise "F" – Glazing, marble and metallurgy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of waste; • Water and energy saving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of working capital; • Lack of information on environmental actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not formally structured the response on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in sales; • Environmental actions generate expenses.
Enterprise "G" – Cleaning products in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about liquid effluents; • Produce packaging from recycling; • Separation of materials; • Donation of products to institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial problems and lack of capital; • Lack of government incentive; • Costly environmental actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not formally structured the response on socio-environmental issues; • Perceives the market already concerned with socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive return on sales.

Source: Prepared by the author. Field research (2015).

Chart 1. Continued...

COMPANY/ SEGMENT	PRACTICES	MOTIVATIONS/ CONSTRAINTS/ OPPORTUNITIES	MANAGER'S CONCEPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES
Enterprise "H" – construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern with the soil; • Concern about the separation of waste and its destination • Water economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive bureaucracy in organs; • Lack of partnership with environmental agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well formulated perception of socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves image vis-à-vis consumers; • Increased competitiveness and sales.
Enterprise "I" – Print shop and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy saving; • Separation of materials and their donation; • Actions in partnership with the City Hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal motivation; • Cost savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well formulated perception of socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competitiveness and sales; • Important strategic factor; • Loyalty to customers.
Enterprise "J" – Manufacture of wooden furniture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of wood waste and its donation; • Energy saving; • Community actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High cost of raw material; • Consumers do not care about the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially formulated perception on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It works as company propaganda; • Environmental actions depend on spending.
Enterprise "K" – Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid waste of materials; • Water economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in investing in the environment at high cost; • Consumers do not care about the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulated knowledge on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of costs; • Increased competitiveness and sales.
Enterprise "L" – Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental concern in buildings; • Separation of waste and collection of debris; • Donation of trees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High taxes and lack of government incentive; • Low participation of society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally structured the response on social and environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases personal motivation; • Improves corporate image; • Increased competitiveness.
Enterprise "M" – Food/Bakery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of paper and cloth bags (not used); • Separation of materials; • Water and energy saving; • Shares with charities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal motivation; • Notion of responsibility; • Sale of materials can be sold; • Lack of incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulated knowledge on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society sees the company differently; • Positive financial impact.
Enterprise "N" – Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of waste and proper disposal; • Water economy; • Use of environmentally friendly materials and products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental awareness of the manager; • Lack of financial resources; • Lack of skilled labor, high costs and many taxes; • Considers it expensive to invest in the environment; • Few consumers with environmental awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally structured the response on social and environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative short-term financial impact of costs; • Positive long-term consequences for increased sales and competitiveness.

Source: Prepared by the author. Field research (2015).

Chart 1. Continued...

COMPANY/ SEGMENT	PRACTICES	MOTIVATIONS/ CONSTRAINTS/ OPPORTUNITIES	MANAGER'S CONCEPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES
Enterprise "O" – Food/bakery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • Leftovers from food used in raising animals; • Donation of food to religious institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for incentives; • Customers without environmental awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not formally structured the response on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You do not notice any positive or negative effects.
Enterprise "P" – Manufacture of wooden furniture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains of wood materials are donated; • Energy saving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands that consumers are already concerned about the environment; • Absence of government incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not formally structured the response on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial return, through increased sales and competitiveness.
Enterprise "Q" – Print shop and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • Separation of metals and fabrics are sold; • Voluntary action in partnership with institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers do not care about the environment; • Absence of public policies to encourage socio-environmental actions; • Understands that tax incentives motivate social and environmental actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulated knowledge on socio-environmental issues; • Socio-environmental actions only show a different concern on the part of the companies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water scarcity motivates the conscious use of the resource; • Companies become better viewed by society; • View as an extra cost to businesses.
Enterprise "R" – Manufacture of fitness and gym equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains of materials are donated or used for recycling; • Manufacture of objects from the remaining material; • Energy saving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge on the part of organizations; • High cost of socio-environmental actions; • Customers with environmental concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that actions depend on the area of activity of the company; • Formally structured the response on social and environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved customer perception of the company; • Increased confidence and loyalty; • Increase in sales and financial return; • Environmental actions, such as recycling, have a positive effect on the company and on society.
Enterprise "S" – Food, meat products and derivatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • Treatment and reuse of water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of skilled labor; • Considers it complex to invest in the environment in function of the expenses; • Consumers already care about the environmental issue; • Increased environmental awareness of the company. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulated knowledge on socio-environmental issues; • Understand that companies invest in the environment by collecting the organs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to notice a positive impact on sales, due to the local culture; • Reuse of water brings positive impacts, by reducing costs.

Source: Prepared by the author. Field research (2015).

Chart 1. Continued...

COMPANY/ SEGMENT	PRACTICES	MOTIVATIONS/ CONSTRAINTS/ OPPORTUNITIES	MANAGER'S CONCEPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES
Enterprise "T"- Ice making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about water consumption, the main raw material of production; • Separation of materials for later recycling; • Energy saving; • It develops actions of donations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive bureaucracy and difficulty in bank credit; • Motivation for corporate environmental awareness; • Does not consider it difficult to develop socio-environmental actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally structured the response on social and environmental issues; • Associates environment with quality of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of people; • Positive financial impact with increased sales and • cost savings.
Enterprise "U"- Food, pizza manufacturing and other products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of waste; • Organic vegetable in the company; • Water and energy saving; • Volunteer actions; • Social action with the philanthropic institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and business motivation; • Absence of incentives; • Cost savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally structured the response on social and environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial return for the sale of separate cans; • Contribute to a just, conscious and balanced society; • It generates value and credibility for the company; • Positive financial impact.
Enterprise "V" – Manufacture of wooden and stainless steel furniture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of debris from materials and wood dust that is destined for recycling; • Energy saving; • Absence of incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small company; • Does not consider it difficult to develop environmental actions; • Partially formulated perception on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially formulated perception on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental benefit, with use of materials; • Increased sales and image of the company.
Enterprise W" – Manufacture of glass, aluminum and PVC materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection and separation of materials; • Donation of materials; • Energy saving; • Volunteer actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal perception of the importance of the environment; • It perceives lack of knowledge on the part of the entrepreneurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally structured the response on social and environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves quality of life; • Improve the company image.
Enterprise "X" – Food/Bakery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and energy saving; • Separation of materials and subsequent donation; • Volunteer actions with charities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal motivation for social actions; • Considers it difficult to develop environmental actions; • Lack of awareness in the business environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not formally structured the response on socio-environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differential decision for purchased consumers; • Increases sales.

Source: Prepared by the author. Field research (2015).

6 Conclusions

Currently, organizations have sought to adopt a new posture in face of the environmental and social problems that are observed throughout the world, inserting the socio-environmental variable among concerns, in order to contribute to a new form of development, aiming at an improvement in the quality of life of the population and at the same time the survival of species on the planet. The adoption of sustainability ideas applied to companies shows a new mentality on the part of the entrepreneurs, resulting in benefits for the economy, society and for the environment.

Regardless of size and industry, companies are beginning to understand that it is possible to be profitable, produce quality products and be competitive, while protecting the environment and adopting socially responsible actions.

In Brazil, Micro and Small Enterprises play a fundamental role for the economic and social development of the country, generating jobs and income, fostering the economy and contributing to the improvement of people's standard of living. Large in size and importance, this niche has sought to adapt more and more to the changes that the market and society are demanding, and that this requires the adoption of a new socio-environmental posture, a fundamental requirement for its survival.

The industries, regardless of size, assume an undeniable role in the Brazilian economy and are responsible for most of the jobs generated and considered the "engine" of the national economy. According to Sachs (2009), since the 1990s, Brazilian industries have been taking a more focused stance on the issue of sustainability and inserting among their concerns, socio-environmental responsibility measures in their businesses. At that moment, the socio-environmental management gains emphasis in the implementation of industrial processes and products, adopting a new style of production, based on respect for the environment and contributing to a society with a better quality of life.

This new way of looking at their enterprises made it possible to reconcile productivity and profitability, making the national industry even more competitive, thus benefiting not only business but also society and the environment.

Micro and small industries, in turn, are also being motivated to adopt socio-environmental responsibility practices, as consumers and society in general have been increasingly concerned about the impacts caused by organizations on the environment and its role as agent of transformation of the society, although the research indicates that this mentality is still incipient on the part of the local consumers.

According to Dias (2011, p. 183),

[...] today change is very sensitive in the business community in relation to the perception of the importance of the environmental issue and how it can affect its business in the short, medium and long term.

The role of these managers is critical, because it is through them that decisions are made, as well as it depends on the guidelines on the direction of your business.

The present study had the objective of analyzing the perception of managers of micro and small industries of the city of Pau dos Ferros-RN about socio-environmental practices. To do so, we sought to verify if these companies make use of socio-environmental management, at the same time, identifying their practices and pointing out the motivations, obstacles and opportunities for their implementation; the negative and positive consequences perceived by these managers based on existing socio-environmental practices, as well as the identification of their knowledge about the theme, were also described.

Through the research, it was verified that all the interviewees have the notion about the importance of the environment and that the majority develops some environmental practices, mainly related to the one of energy and water saving, some realizing reutilization of materials in their companies. As for the community-oriented ones, it was verified that they are still scarce and are not directly linked to the company's socio-environmental strategy.

Another point observed was that most of the interviewees do not consider it difficult to invest or develop social and environmental actions, although he understands that this requires government incentives, which is not the case with any of the companies analyzed. Even so, managers, for the most part, understand that socio-environmental actions result in positive impacts for companies, such as cost reduction, image enhancement in the face of the market, increased competitiveness and sales, hardly realizing the negative aspects of these practices. In addition, the interviewees considered that their companies, despite being micro or small, have an importance for the community, mainly due to the generation of employment and income, fundamental for the development of the city and region.

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