RCMOS – O Saber Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal. ISSN: 2675-9128. São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

Year VII, Vol. 2, 2026 | Submitted: July 7, 2026 | Accepted: September 11, 2026 | Published: September 24, 2026

Strategies for Attracting and Building Relationships with Customers in the Supermarket Retail Sector in the Context of a Regional Crisis: A Case Study in Rio das Ostras

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Abstract

This article analyzes, based on Thiago Andrade de Oliveira's retrospective report and the historical records made available for the research, the customer attraction and relationship strategies the Oasis Supermarket Chain adopted in Rio das Ostras between 2014 and 2018. The study examines how commercial practices, loyalty programs, and community communication and engagement strengthened the company's presence in the local market. The investigation addresses six main dimensions: the Oasis Card linked to Tricard; registration and bonus initiatives for new customers; monitoring competitors' pricing; disseminating offers across channels; promotional campaigns and sweepstakes; and community activities. This research uses a qualitative, descriptive case study design, drawing on retrospective information from management and historical records, including advertising materials and photographs. The available data allow us to identify the diversity of strategies employed and how they align with the objectives of competitiveness, attracting consumers, and strengthening relationships with the local community. The analysis concludes that the case study demonstrates the integrated use of commercial, promotional, and community initiatives in a regional supermarket's performance.

Keywords: Supermarket retail; customer relationships; customer loyalty.

1. Introduction

Supermarket retail plays a significant role in cities' economic and social dynamics, meeting daily consumer needs and maintaining frequent interactions with different segments of the population. In regional markets, where commercial establishments compete for consumer preference, competitiveness depends on factors such as prices, payment terms, promotion of offers, convenience, and the quality of customer relationships. In this context, strategies to attract and retain customers become increasingly important for supermarkets' operations during periods of economic instability or heightened competitive pressure.

Analyzing these practices is particularly relevant for companies operating outside major metropolitan areas, where community relations, knowledge of market characteristics, and adapting business strategies to local conditions are integral to day-to-day management.

The period under investigation was marked by economic difficulties in Brazil and specific oil-industry-related impacts on municipalities. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Brazilian economy contracted in 2015 and 2016, and household consumption declined. In Rio das Ostras, the city government also issued an official statement in February 2015 on the decline in oil royalty payments, highlighting the effects of reduced revenues on municipal finances (IBGE, 2018; Rio das Ostras City Government, 2015).

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In this context, this study focuses on the Oásis Supermarket Chain in Rio das Ostras, Rio de Janeiro state, covering 2014 to 2018. The study examines the practices reported for this period, including the Oásis Card, linked to Tricard; initiatives for registering and rewarding new customers; monitoring competitors' prices; advertising offers through flyers, sound trucks, regional television, and Facebook; promotional campaigns and raffles; and activities carried out on commemorative dates and within the community.

The reconstruction of the analyzed practices is based on Thiago Andrade de Oliveira's retrospective account, which made it possible to organize information on the chain's commercial, promotional, and community strategies during the period under investigation. The account and the historical records available for the research allow documentation of the managerial experience under analysis.

The research problem is to understand how Oásis Supermarket Chain used these commercial, promotional, and relational strategies to attract consumers and strengthen its presence in the regional market. Based on this question, the general objective is to analyze the company's practices and discuss their roles in competitiveness and customer relationships. The study seeks to identify the main initiatives reported, describe the channels used to publicize offers, examine the role of customer loyalty tools, and characterize the promotional and community initiatives carried out during the period under investigation. This study is significant because it documents and analyzes a regional business experience using retrospective information and historical records available for this research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Relationship Marketing and Customer Loyalty in the Supermarket Industry

Relationship marketing is a management strategy that builds, develops, and maintains lasting bonds between organizations and their various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and others. Unlike commercial actions geared toward immediate sales, it prioritizes ongoing relationships based on trust, satisfaction, and mutual benefits. As Faria (2019) notes, its objective is to build satisfactory relationships with key actors involved in organizational activities, aiming to attract and retain customers and business over the long term.

Guimarães (2026) notes that organizations now operate in a market where consumer needs and expectations increasingly influence business decisions. In this context, simply offering suitable products is no longer enough for competitive differentiation, so organizations must develop strategies that add value to the consumer experience.

Faria (2020) observes that relationships with customers and suppliers are an important source of

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competitive advantage because they foster partnerships and sustain commercial relationships. Customer loyalty, in turn, reflects a broader process: a consumer's ongoing preference for a particular business and willingness to maintain recurring commercial relationships, even when competing alternatives are available.

Faria (2019) links customer loyalty to the transformation of a casual buyer into a frequent customer who returns to the business and recommends it to others, supporting the continuity of the business relationship. A loyal customer tends to maintain frequent business relationships with a particular organization, demonstrating a preference for its products and services, which encourages spontaneous promotion of the business through personal recommendations and helps strengthen its reputation; conversely, negative customer service experiences, recurring product quality issues, or failure to meet expectations undermine the trust that has been built and drive customers toward competitors.

Knowledge of customers' characteristics and consumption habits is also an important element of relationship marketing, as information on purchase frequency, product preferences, consumption patterns, and satisfaction informs decisions about product assortment, marketing campaigns, and service improvements. Among the tools organizations use to encourage continuity in business relationships, loyalty programs, reward cards, benefits for repeat customers, and targeted offers stand out.

Acevedo (2019) presents a four-stage framework for understanding consumer loyalty: cognitive, affective, conative, and action. In the cognitive stage, preference stems from available information and evaluations regarding the attributes of a particular brand or organization. In the affective stage, loyalty begins to incorporate positive feelings resulting from accumulated satisfying experiences. The conative stage is characterized by the development of the intention and commitment to make new purchases. Finally, the action stage corresponds to turning this intention into actual behavior, accompanied by a willingness to overcome potential obstacles to continuing the commercial relationship.

In the supermarket context, this classification helps us understand that consumer loyalty occurs when consumers choose a supermarket based on price and location, develop positive evaluations from satisfying experiences, form a preference for the store, and consolidate recurring purchasing behavior. It is therefore a process involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Thus, relationship marketing is an ongoing strategy for managing consumer relationships, while promotional campaigns are commercial tools that can complement it but not replace it.

2.2 Perception of Value and Payment Terms in the Supermarket Sector

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Perception of value in the supermarket sector results from the evaluation of the benefits offered by the establishment in relation to the financial and non-financial costs of purchasing products.

Halat (2018) emphasizes that consumer behavior is influenced by cultural, social, family, personal, and psychological factors, which helps explain why consumers facing similar economic conditions exhibit different behaviors in response to prices, discounts, and purchasing opportunities.

From an economic perspective, the demand for goods and services fluctuates depending on variables such as price, income, and consumer preferences, which helps explain that changes in purchasing power affect both the quantity demanded and the composition of household purchases. During periods of economic recession, the reduction in disposable income and the increase in financial insecurity encourage more selective consumption behaviors, with greater attention paid to prices and the commercial terms offered by retailers.

Price is a strategic variable for supermarkets, as it influences the affordability of products and the perception of the store's competitiveness. Faria (2020) notes that price reductions boost consumption and stimulate demand when combined with lower operating costs and economies of scale, and Campos (2019) identifies price as one of the fundamental elements of a company's marketing mix, along with the product, distribution channel, and promotion.

Discounts are tools used to increase the attractiveness of offers and encourage purchasing decisions; they can be applied to specific products, purchases in certain quantities, seasonal campaigns, or promotional initiatives targeting different consumer segments. Rocha and Borinelli (2024) emphasize that, through cost management, more efficient operations enable companies to set competitive prices while preserving the company's financial viability.

In addition to prices and discounts, payment terms are an integral part of the value proposition presented to consumers, and offering different payment options enhances the convenience of purchases and allows customers to choose alternatives that better align with their financial planning. Granting payment terms and accepting installment payments influence cash flow, working capital requirements, and costs associated with financial operations; therefore, expanding payment options must be accompanied by control mechanisms capable of maintaining a balance between commercial attractiveness and economic sustainability.

Cusatis (2024) highlights that brand positioning contributes to competitive differentiation and influences consumers' perception of risk. Kotler and Armstrong (2023) also emphasize the importance of past experiences in shaping consumer perceptions. Thus, trust in advertised terms, clear information about discounts, and fulfillment of payment commitments influence future evaluations of the establishment.

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2.3 Pricing and Monitoring Competition in the Supermarket Sector

Pricing is a key strategic decision in commercial management because it influences competitiveness, consumer behavior, sales volume, and organizations' financial results. In the supermarket sector, this decision is particularly complex due to the diversity of products sold, the high frequency of purchases, differences in profit margins across product categories, and the need to respond to market conditions.

Marketing plays a significant role in this process, as it involves analyzing the characteristics of consumers, monitoring the competition, identifying commercial opportunities, and defining strategies capable of providing value to the target audience. Kotler and Armstrong (2023) define marketing management as the process of identifying target markets and creating, delivering, and communicating value to consumers.

In the supermarket sector, pricing requires a comprehensive analysis of acquisition costs, operating expenses, the applicable tax burden, terms of negotiation with suppliers, and target profit margins. Pricing based solely on observing competitors' prices compromises financial results when stores have different cost structures, purchase volumes, and commercial terms.

Competitor price research supports business decisions by identifying prices charged by other stores and monitoring changes in market conditions, as similar products can differ significantly in cost and consumers' perceptions of value.

Competitive analysis helps identify products that shape consumers' perceptions of the supermarket's pricing—such as frequently purchased goods—thereby contributing to the establishment's image of competitiveness. This leads management to consider differentiated pricing policies across product categories, based on demand sensitivity and each group's economic contribution. In this regard, Michaux (2023) highlights the importance of competitive forces in defining organizational strategies, including consumers' power of choice and the possibility of switching between suppliers, where the ease of price comparison allows customers to direct their purchases to other stores when they identify significant economic advantages.

In this regard, pricing management should seek a balance between commercial attractiveness and the preservation of margins. Price reductions can respond to competition or stimulate demand, but their viability depends on procurement conditions, cost structure, and the ability to offset the reduction through increased sales volume; when this balance is not maintained, revenue growth may come at the expense of deteriorating financial results.

Management information is essential to support these decisions. Reports on sales, acquisition costs, margins by category, inventory turnover, and the results of marketing campaigns provide insights

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for evaluating the effectiveness of pricing policies. Monitoring these indicators makes it possible to identify products with satisfactory performance, low-profitability items, and situations where current prices need to be reassessed.

Kotler and Armstrong (2023) emphasize the importance of increasing productivity and utilizing technological resources to improve organizational performance; although their approach focuses on service management, this perspective also offers insights for supermarket management regarding the use of information systems to organize commercial data and support decision-making. Furthermore, the pricing process must account for terms established in negotiations with suppliers, which can change the actual cost of goods and affect the options for setting selling prices.

A supermarket's competitive positioning does not depend exclusively on low prices, since consumers consider various factors when evaluating offers, including prices, facilities, customer service, and communication, as highlighted by Maciel, Casagrande, and Sanches (2022), which reinforces the importance of understanding price research as a business intelligence tool capable of expanding the company's knowledge of the competitive environment and informing decisions that reconcile market conditions with internal operational capabilities.

During economic recessions, these practices tend to become more relevant, as reduced purchasing power intensifies consumers' focus on prices and stimulates competition among retailers. In this scenario, supermarket management faces the challenge of maintaining competitive offers without compromising the ability to cover costs and generate profits. Therefore, pricing in the sector should be understood as an ongoing management process, grounded in the integration of market information, procurement conditions, and financial objectives.

2.4 Communication and Interaction with the Community in the Supermarket Sector

Corporate communication is a strategic tool for building relationships between organizations and the various audiences they interact with. The communication strategies used by supermarkets involve different channels and forms of interaction, including print advertising, ads in local media outlets, point-of-sale promotional materials, digital platforms, social media, and in-person activities. The choice of these tools must take into account the characteristics of the target audience, consumer habits, the store's geographic reach, and the intended commercial and institutional objectives.

De Andrade (2023) emphasizes that advertising is linked to an understanding of consumers' interests and characteristics, seeking to present products, services, and ideas in a manner consistent with those consumers' needs.

The evolution of information and communication technologies has expanded the possibilities for interaction between companies and consumers. Costa (2028) observes that technological

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development has transformed social and cultural relations and altered communication processes; thus, the expansion of digital media has diversified promotional channels and redefined the relationships between message senders and receivers.

This transformation has altered the role assigned to consumers, who now have greater opportunities to access information, express opinions, and participate in the circulation of content. Breviário et al. (2025) highlight that the digital environment has amplified the importance of information in consumer behavior, allowing individuals to research products, compare alternatives, and share experiences related to organizations.

Terra, Dreyer, and Raposo (2021) emphasize that digital technologies have accelerated how quickly information circulates and expanded opportunities for interaction between individuals and organizations, so communication is no longer one-sided; consumers can also produce content, post reviews, and help shape companies' images. Torres (2018) defines internet use in marketing as applying communication, advertising, and relationship-building strategies in the digital environment.

In supermarkets, in-person communication takes place in various situations, such as serving customers, promoting in-store offers, answering questions, presenting products, and conducting promotional activities, enabling the store to engage with its audience and create opportunities to understand their preferences and identify their needs.

Joint activities that combine traditional, digital, and in-person channels expand the reach of commercial messages, since different consumer groups have distinct habits when accessing information: some follow promotions through digital channels, while others respond better to print materials, local advertisements, or in-store communication.

In this regard, the choice of promotional channels must be aligned with the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the target market. Using multiple tools simultaneously helps expand the reach of marketing efforts, provided the messages communicated, the organization's objectives, and the terms offered to consumers are consistent.

Beyond product marketing communication strategies, supermarkets can strengthen their relationship with the community by participating in local events, supporting cultural activities, collaborating with institutions, and carrying out initiatives of collective interest. It is important to distinguish these actions from those directly aimed at stimulating sales—such as prize-drawing campaigns tied to purchases, which use incentives to boost consumption— whereas support for community activities that do not require the purchase of products takes on a social or institutional character, depending on its purpose, the conditions for participation, and the benefits provided to the public.

Some initiatives also combine commercial and community objectives, such as events held in

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partnership with suppliers, recreational activities open to the public, and campaigns that combine product promotion with fundraising.

Supermarkets' participation in community life is particularly significant in local markets, where consumers, employees, suppliers, and managers are close together, fostering recurring commercial and social relationships. In these circumstances, the store's image is influenced both by shopping experiences and by how the organization interacts with the community and participates in local activities.

Evaluating communication strategies therefore requires identifying the objectives of each initiative and the observed results. For commercial initiatives, indicators such as the reach of the promotion, consumer participation, store traffic, and sales performance are considered. For community activities, the analysis examines the beneficiaries, the nature of the partnerships, the continuity of the initiatives, and the contribution of these initiatives to the organization's relationship with the community.

Thus, integrating commercial communication and community relations offers opportunities to build closer ties with the public, provided the initiatives align with the company's economic conditions and the characteristics of the population served.

3. Methodology

This research is a qualitative, descriptive case study focusing on the Oásis Supermarket Chain, located in Rio das Ostras, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, covering the period from 2014 to 2018. The choice of this case study is justified by the opportunity to examine the strategies adopted by an organization within its operational context, taking into account the characteristics of the regional market and the practices described by management. The qualitative approach is appropriate for the purpose of identifying, organizing, and interpreting the reported initiatives.

Data collection was based on a retrospective survey provided by Thiago Andrade de Oliveira, the study's key informant regarding the commercial and promotional practices of the Oásis Supermarket Chain from 2014 to 2018, during which time he served as a manager. The material gathered information on the use of the Oásis Card, linked to Tricard; initiatives for registering and rewarding new customers; monitoring competitors' prices; advertising offers through different channels; promotional campaigns and sweepstakes; and activities carried out on commemorative dates and in interaction with the community. Historical records, photographs, inserts, and advertising materials related to the chain's activities were also made available.

The analytical procedure consisted of organizing the information into six thematic areas: customer loyalty tools and payment terms; registration and incentives for new customers; monitoring of

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competitors; communication and promotion of offers; promotional campaigns and sweepstakes; and community activities.

4. Reported Practices

4.1 Oásis Card Linked to Tricard

Among the commercial strategies identified in the case study, the Oásis Card—linked to Tricard—stands out as a tool for expanding payment terms and strengthening consumer relationships. As manager Thiago reported, the supermarket offered a private-label card that gave customers access to differentiated payment terms, installment options, and discounts on selected products—part of the commercial practices the establishment adopted from 2014 to 2018.

The significance of this strategy must be understood in light of regional economic characteristics. Commercial activity in Rio das Ostras was situated within an area influenced by the oil and gas industry and operations related to the Campos Basin. The decline in oil-sector investments and economic activity, combined with the national recession, pressured the labor market and reduced the purchasing power of part of the population. In this environment, retailers faced the challenge of maintaining their competitiveness and adapting their commercial terms to consumers' financial constraints.

Linking the Oásis Card to Tricard integrated this strategy into a partnership model between the retail establishment and an organization specializing in financial solutions for the retail sector. The supermarket's branding on the card linked the payment instrument to its brand, while the Tricard-linked financial structure provided mechanisms for credit management and transaction processing. This format is similar to *private-label* card models, although the specific contractual classification of the product used by Oásis depends on the characteristics of the contracted plan.

According to Thiago, regarding how Tricard cards work, one of the options offered to consumers was to extend the period between the purchase date and the invoice due date, and the payment term of up to 40 days was linked to the so-called "best purchase date," which was determined based on the invoice's closing and due date cycle. This mechanism let consumers align purchases with their payment schedule for financial obligations; purchases made after the billing cycle closed could have a longer payment term until the due date, while those made near the end of the previous cycle had a shorter payment term.

Another benefit associated with the card was the option to pay for purchases in up to three interest-free installments for certain transactions in the supermarket sector—a feature that provides financial flexibility by spreading the total purchase amount across different due dates and, in the context of

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supermarkets, facilitates household budget planning, especially for higher-value grocery purchases, by allowing consumers to organize their payments according to their financial capacity.

In addition to payment flexibility, manager Thiago reported that the supermarket offered discounts on selected products to Oásis Card users, creating a commercial differentiation linked to the payment method used and allowing participating consumers to purchase certain products under specific conditions.

Offering exclusive discounts is a mechanism to encourage card adoption and recurring use. By linking commercial benefits to the payment method associated with the supermarket's brand, the company established a connection between the choice of payment method and the perceived advantages at the time of purchase.

From a managerial perspective, the partnership with Tricard is also significant because it involved the administration of credit by a specialized institution. Under the partnership model described, Tricard assumed the risk of default by approved consumers, while the supermarket would receive the transaction amounts in accordance with the contracted commercial terms. If this distribution of responsibilities were provided for in the Oásis contract, the structure would represent an alternative to the supermarket granting credit itself, thereby limiting its exposure to the risk of customer default.

The card's financial administration also entailed costs for the supermarket, including transaction-based administration fees and potential fees for advance payment of receivables, which compensate for processing and administration and the early receipt of amounts that would otherwise be settled at future dates.

Advance payment of receivables provided greater immediate access to financial resources, although the fees charged reduced the net amount received, making its use a financial management decision contingent on liquidity needs and the contract's economic terms. In this context, the Oásis Card represented an initiative to expand payment options and encourage in-store purchases, combining—through its association with the supermarket's brand and discounts on selected products—elements of consumer credit, commercial differentiation, and customer relationship building.

An interpretation of this strategy must also consider that the granting of consumer credit produced different effects depending on households' economic conditions. For certain customers, extended payment terms facilitate the management of expenses and preserve the ability to purchase essential goods; for others, the recurring use of credit increases the burden on future income when associated with financial charges or the accumulation of installments.

In the context of the 2014 to 2018 economic recession, the introduction of the Oásis Card, linked to Tricard, reflects a commercial response to the need for greater flexibility in consumer transactions,

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enhancing the supermarket's appeal while introducing a specific financial structure for processing purchases.

4.2 Registration and Bonuses for New Customers as Strategies to Attract and Encourage Adoption of the Oásis Card

Among the commercial initiatives identified in the case study, registration campaigns offering bonuses to attract new customers stand out. According to manager Thiago Andrade de Oliveira of the Oásis Supermarket Chain, these initiatives were part of strategies to expand the customer base from 2014 to 2018—a period marked by a national economic downturn and the effects of the oil and gas sector crisis on the economy of Rio das Ostras, in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The registration process represented the initial step toward applying for the card and the eventual granting of credit. By providing personal and registration information, the consumer formally expressed interest in signing up for the financial product, thereby becoming subject to the evaluation and approval criteria established by the institution responsible for the operation.

Information about the strategy indicates the use of incentives for the first purchase, through welcome discounts and possible temporary waivers of card-related fees. These incentives differ in their characteristics, although they share the goal of reducing certain costs the consumer perceives at the time of enrollment.

The welcome discount consisted of the opportunity to receive a reduction on the amount of the first purchase made with the card, in the form of a fixed monetary deduction or a percentage applied to the transaction amount, according to the conditions defined for each campaign. The manager cited as examples of promotional formats such as discounts of R$ 10.00 or R$ 20.00, as well as percentage reductions ranging from 10% to 15%, linking the immediate financial benefit to signing up for a payment method bearing the supermarket's brand. Thus, the benefit offered on the first purchase served as an initial incentive to draw the consumer to the store.

Another method mentioned refers to the possibility of a temporary waiver of card usage fees, combined with a reduction or exemption from certain financial charges for a specific period. The granting of these benefits was also contingent upon meeting criteria for card enrollment and usage. According to the manager's account, registration required the responsible financial institution to evaluate the application. Thus, benefit availability contingent on card issuance depended on a favorable outcome of the registration review process.

This shows that the customer acquisition campaign was a commercial initiative tied to purchasing a financial product, subject to its own approval criteria and the conditions set by the card issuer. Thiago mentions the possibility of requiring a minimum purchase amount to unlock the promotional

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benefit. Under this model, the discount would be granted only when the transaction reached a predefined amount. For example, the scenario presented a R$ 20.00 discount on purchases exceeding R$ 150.00. Linking the benefit to card payments made the bonus contingent on using the financial instrument, and the supermarket encouraged customers to make their first transaction with the card.

In the context of the economic recession, the use of sign-up incentives is an attempt to reduce barriers to trying out a new payment method. For consumers facing budget constraints, the prospect of receiving a discount on their first purchase or accessing special payment terms represented an advantage when evaluating available commercial alternatives.

From the supermarket's perspective, the sign-up and bonus campaign could increase the number of consumers eligible to use the card and strengthen the association between the store and the commercial benefits offered.

The bonus also has financial implications for the store. Granting discounts represents a reduction in the amount received from a given transaction, the financial responsibility for which depends on the terms established between the supermarket and the card issuer. If the retailer funded the incentive, its effects would need to be considered in the analysis of profit margins; conversely, mechanisms for sharing promotional costs could shift how expenses are distributed among the institutions involved.

Another relevant aspect concerns the communication of promotional terms. The effectiveness of a sign-up campaign accompanied by a bonus depends on the clarity of the information presented to the public regarding the need for credit approval, the requirements for using the benefit, and the possible existence of future fees or charges. Proper disclosure of these terms helps reduce misinterpretations regarding the nature of the bonus and the obligations arising from card enrollment.

The sign-up and bonus initiatives reported by manager Thiago Andrade de Oliveira are understood as a consumer acquisition strategy linked to the Oásis/Tricard Card, which sought to associate commercial benefits with signing up for the payment instrument, integrating short-term incentives into a broader proposal to facilitate purchases.

4.3 Competitor Price Survey

Researching competitors' prices was one of the sales management strategies adopted by the Oásis Supermarket Chain, located in Rio das Ostras, Rio de Janeiro, from 2014 to 2018, as monitoring the commercial terms offered by other establishments supported pricing decisions, promotional planning, and supplier negotiations. As the manager reported, management-designated professionals

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conducted weekly on-site surveys to identify supermarket prices in the region and compare them for specific products.

The weekly frequency was important because it tracked changes in offers and prices for frequently purchased products. According to the manager, the selection focused on goods considered strategic for consumers' price perceptions, identified in retail as *Key Value Items* (KVI).

Among the groups monitored were fast-moving and essential food items, such as rice, beans, soybean oil, milk, sugar, and coffee, due to their frequent inclusion in household shopping and the likelihood that consumers would use their prices as a benchmark to assess the competitiveness of supermarkets. The observed products also included personal hygiene and cleaning items from widely available brands. In these categories, comparing equivalent products helps identify price differences between stores and inform commercial positioning decisions.

Another group considered in the surveys comprised perishable goods, cuts of meat, and produce—items important for planning promotional offers because they are frequently included in family shopping trips and can be used in promotional campaigns.

Focusing the research on benchmark products allowed monitoring efforts to target goods with the greatest potential to influence perceptions of the store's competitiveness; thus, rather than comparing the entire product assortment, management prioritized items relevant to purchasing decisions and used the collected information to inform commercial planning.

The commercial department received the price surveys and used the information to assess product positioning relative to competitors, identify products priced above or below local market rates, and guide revisions to offers and negotiation priorities with suppliers. Management sought to maintain competitive prices on the items most frequently compared by consumers, aligning them with the prices charged by major competitors or setting lower prices when market conditions allowed, although this practice entailed reducing margins on certain goods and required an analysis of the product assortment's overall performance to preserve the operations' overall profitability.

The material also describes using differentiated margins across categories, with greater competitiveness on benchmark products and higher margins on complementary goods or those less subject to direct comparison. This corresponds to a strategy for managing the entire product portfolio, in which economic performance is analyzed by considering different levels of turnover, price sensitivity, and contribution to the total margin.

In addition to guiding pricing, the weekly surveys were used in planning promotional inserts. According to the information presented, the data collected from competitors helped in selecting the products that would receive the most prominence in marketing campaigns, as they were considered relevant for attracting consumers' attention.

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The products featured on the cover of the inserts served as the first point of contact between the promotional campaign and the consumer; thus, choosing well-known, frequently purchased items could help consumers understand the advertised benefits and strengthen the perception of the supermarket's competitiveness.

The relationship between price research and promotional planning also extended to supplier negotiations. According to the manager, management sought to secure commercial terms that would allow the supermarket to maintain competitive prices, using purchase volume and demand predictability as bargaining chips.

One practice described involved planning campaigns in advance and negotiating the volumes of merchandise earmarked for special offers. This strategy allowed the supermarket to present suppliers with a demand estimate and negotiate differentiated purchasing terms for products with higher commercial turnover.

Volume-based negotiations would benefit both parties. For the supermarket, purchasing larger quantities could lower unit costs, provided favorable commercial terms were in place; for the supplier, predictable orders facilitated planning for production, distribution, and the movement of goods. However, volume discounts were not automatic, since purchasing quantities beyond actual sales needs increased storage costs, tied up more capital in inventory, and raised the risk of losses.

The manager also mentions the possibility of negotiating brand placement in promotional inserts, in which certain products were subject to the commercial terms negotiated between the supermarket and its suppliers, linking the purchase of goods to the implementation of advertising campaigns. Another practice described involves centralizing purchase orders from the chain's stores, which increased the volume negotiated with certain suppliers, reduced order fragmentation, and facilitated uniform commercial terms.

Thiago also mentions making opportunistic purchases of non-perishable goods, taking advantage of favorable purchasing conditions—such as price reductions and supplier discounts—to bring forward purchases of goods intended for resale. This strategy required financial planning and inventory control, taking into account funds committed prior to sales, storage costs, product shelf life, projected demand, and the possibility of using the goods in future promotional campaigns. The manager also reported on the joint negotiation of products from the same industry, involving both goods with greater price comparability and complementary items—an approach that allowed for increasing the volume negotiated and helped secure favorable commercial terms for the entire order.

From a commercial performance perspective, the integration of price research, pricing, and negotiations with suppliers is understood as a strategy for responding to competitive market conditions. The systematic collection of information made it possible to identify opportunities for

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RCMOS – O Saber Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal. ISSN: 2675-9128. São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

Year VII, Vol. 2, 2026 | Submitted: July 7, 2026 | Accepted: September 11, 2026 | Published: September 24, 2026

price adjustments, while purchasing negotiations sought to create the economic conditions necessary to execute the offers.

This coordination gained relevance during the recession, when consumers' price sensitivity heightened the importance of campaigns focused on essential products. The ability to present competitive offers, however, depended on the joint management of costs, margins, inventory, and supply terms.

In the case of the Oásis Supermarket Chain, it is possible to identify a strategy based on conducting weekly price survey , prioritizing products that serve as benchmarks for consumers, and using these surveys to guide the creation of promotional flyers and pricing decisions.

Thiago also describes supplier negotiation practices based on purchase volumes, campaign planning, the centralization of orders, and the identification of commercial opportunities. Taken together, these initiatives point to a coordinated approach among purchasing, pricing, and promotional communication activities. It is understood that the strategy described highlights the importance of market information for supermarket management in highly competitive environments with restricted consumption.

4.4 Promotion of Offers Across Different Channels

The promotion of offers through various communication channels was one of the commercial strategies adopted by the Oásis Supermarket Chain from 2014 to 2018. According to the information gathered in the case study, the company used promotional flyers distributed on the streets and to households, sound trucks in neighborhoods, regional television advertising, and posts on Facebook.

The adoption of multiple channels must be understood in the context of the economic conditions faced by the municipality of Rio das Ostras, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, during the Brazilian recession and the downturn in the oil and gas production chain. In this scenario, promotional communication supported pricing strategies and consumer attraction efforts, highlighting offers for frequently purchased products and presenting commercial alternatives compatible with the budgetary constraints of a segment of the population.

The advertising strategy combined print, audio, audiovisual, and digital media, which—though they had distinct operational characteristics—shared a common commercial purpose: to increase the visibility of the offers and facilitate consumers' access to information about the products sold by the supermarket. Their combined use reached audiences with different information consumption habits, given the variety of situations in which the messages could be received.

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The content of the inserts focused on showcasing merchandise at promotional prices, everyday food items, basic food basket items, meats, and fruits and vegetables. The selection of these categories was based on their importance in household shopping and the possibility that consumers would use their prices as a benchmark to compare different stores.



Figure 1 – Promotional flyer from the Oásis Supermarket Chain. **Source:** Oásis Supermarket Chain archives, provided by Thiago Andrade de Oliveira.

The visual organization of promotional materials also played a significant role in communicating the offers. The emphasis on prices, product images, and special sales conditions aimed to make the advertised benefits easier to identify. Highly visible graphic elements, such as enlarged fonts and

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contrasting colors, helped convey key commercial information.

Regarding frequency, the material describes weekly insert distribution, with a concentration toward the end of the week—Thursdays or Fridays—consistent with the intention of publicizing offers for the weekend's busiest shopping period. The geographic reach of the printed materials depended on store locations and the selected distribution areas, since delivery to streets and residences allowed targeting consumers in the regions served by Oásis locations.

The use of sound trucks represented another form of promotional communication, targeting urban areas and residential neighborhoods. Thiago reported that these vehicles traveled through different neighborhoods, promoting offers via audio messages, highlighting selected products and prices. In this regard, promoting a limited number of offers—along with identifying the supermarket and providing directions to store locations—helped the public understand the message.

Regional television advertising constituted the third component of the communication strategy. Unlike the flyers distributed near the stores and the sound trucks targeting neighborhoods, television could reach audiences across a broader geographic area, depending on broadcasters' coverage and contracted airtime slots.

According to the manager, television commercials were used to publicize promotional campaigns and strengthen the institutional presence of the Oásis brand, combining the presentation of commercial offers with the supermarket's recognition among the regional public, while the audiovisual format allowed for the integration of images, sounds, voice-overs, and graphic elements to highlight selected products, present promotional prices, and reinforce the store's visual identity.

The use of Facebook added a digital dimension to the promotional strategy. According to the information presented, the social network was used to publicize offers, share content related to the campaigns, and expand opportunities for interaction between the supermarket and consumers. This channel differed from traditional media because messages could circulate through sharing and user interaction with posts. Digital communication also allowed greater flexibility in updating content, making it possible to publicize offer changes and present commercial information without producing new printed materials.

Thiago describes publishing digital versions of the flyers and promoting short-term offers that complemented the weekly promotional schedule, allowing the store to communicate specific commercial opportunities during the campaigns. Regarding frequency, he mentions daily publication, including the reproduction of offers from the flyers and the promotion of specific campaigns.

The printed inserts provided detailed product information and prices for later reference, and sound trucks reinforced certain offers in specific areas of the city through short, repeated messages.

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Regional television contributed to the audiovisual promotion of the campaigns and to the brand's institutional visibility. Facebook, in turn, provided a digital space for the circulation and updating of promotional information.

Integration occurs, for example, by promoting the same products and prices across different media, preserving the campaign's visual identity and reinforcing commercial information. The manager also describes cross-references between media, such as mentioning the Facebook page in print materials and television commercials, as well as using the digital platform to preview or supplement information shared in person.

Another relevant aspect concerns the content of the messages, which, according to Thiago, the Oásis Supermarket Chain's promotional communications prioritized competitive prices and frequently purchased goods, highlighting commercial terms considered attractive to consumers.

This approach was linked to the competitive price-monitoring strategy discussed in section 4.3, since identifying products for comparison across stores informs the selection of offers featured in the campaigns. Market research provided information for defining the offers; the various advertising channels made it possible to communicate these terms to the public.

It is also necessary to consider the costs associated with maintaining different promotional channels, as the printing and distribution of flyers, the hiring of sound trucks, television advertising, and the production of digital content involve financial and operational resources that must be evaluated in relation to the intended commercial objectives. In the case of the Oásis Supermarket Chain, the manager describes a promotional strategy based on a combination of traditional and digital media, including weekly flyers, sound trucks, regional television, and Facebook. These tools offered different possibilities for reach and communication, allowing the offers to be promoted in both physical and digital spaces that are part of consumers' daily lives.

The analysis indicates that flyers played a central role in the organized presentation of promotional products, while sound trucks served to publicize selected offers on the move. Thus, the promotional communication strategy is a component of the commercial responses adopted by the Oásis Supermarket Chain between 2014 and 2018. Its relevance stems from the use of different tools to publicize prices and offers, reinforce brand presence, and expand opportunities for contact with consumers in a context of economic constraints.

4.5 Promotional Campaigns and Sweepstakes

Promotional campaigns involving free gifts and sweepstakes were among the commercial strategies the Oásis Supermarket Chain used from 2014 to 2018. According to the manager, the store developed initiatives that let consumers enter raffles for prizes such as gifts, home appliances, and

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Year VII, Vol. 2, 2026 | Submitted: July 7, 2026 | Accepted: September 11, 2026 | Published: September 24, 2026

motorcycles, some of which were made possible with support from suppliers and business partners. These initiatives should be understood in the context of Brazil's economic recession and its impact on the regional economy, resulting from the downturn in the oil and gas production chain. Given the population's difficulties and pressure on consumer spending, the promotional campaigns offered an alternative way to differentiate the supermarket from competitors by linking purchases to the chance of winning additional benefits.

Prizes included household appliances, gifts, and motorcycles, which could attract different consumer segments because they included both household goods and higher-value items. Using motorcycles as the grand prize was a particularly prominent promotional tactic because of the item's value and its potential utility for personal and professional travel; household appliances, in turn, were linked to the needs and interests of the home environment.



Figure 2 – Promotional insert for the Oásis Supermarket Chain's promotional campaign. **Source:** Oásis Supermarket Chain Archives, provided by Thiago Andrade de Oliveira.

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RCMOS – O Saber Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal. ISSN: 2675-9128. São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

Year VII, Vol. 2, 2026 | Submitted: July 7, 2026 | Accepted: September 11, 2026 | Published: September 24, 2026

From a managerial perspective, the campaigns had different commercial objectives, among which the following stood out: stimulating purchases, increasing foot traffic in the stores, and strengthening the supermarket's institutional visibility, since the chance to win prizes favored the establishment's preference during the promotional period— when consumers were evaluating similar commercial alternatives. These initiatives also aimed to increase the average purchase amount, as setting minimum spending thresholds for participation or offering additional benefits based on spending encouraged customers to concentrate their purchases at a single store.

The manager describes a participation model based on the issuance of coupons linked to the value of purchases made. Under this format, consumers would receive a set number of coupons upon reaching a predetermined amount and could use them to enter the drawing after providing the information required by the rules.

Thiago also mentions the possibility of providing personal information and answering questions related to the company as part of the participation process. Another mechanism mentioned involves awarding additional coupons when customers purchase certain products or use specific payment methods, where campaign-participating brands offer promotional benefits, such as more coupons per purchase. This possibility is related to commercial partnerships established between supermarkets and suppliers, as it allows consumer incentives to be linked to the promotion of selected products.

The manager also points out a possible link between promotional raffles and the Oásis Card, linked to Tricard, as discussed in previous sections, highlighting that some campaigns involved supplier companies, which were responsible for offering prizes, financial contributions, or other forms of commercial collaboration. This partnership allowed the supermarket to integrate sales promotion activities with negotiations involving manufacturers and distributors, enabling it to run campaigns with higher-value prizes and offering partner companies opportunities to increase the visibility of their brands and products in the retail environment.

The link between prizes and product promotion also occurred through the inclusion of sponsor products in promotional inserts, advertising materials, and prominent display areas in stores, integrating brand exposure into the supermarket's communication strategies, while seasonal campaigns allowed promotional efforts to be concentrated during specific periods of the year, organizing initiatives designed to stimulate purchases and increase consumer participation. As reported by the manager, some of these campaigns lasted 30 to 60 days—a timeframe that encouraged participation across different purchasing cycles and expanded opportunities for consumers to take advantage of the promotions.

The setting of promotional timeframes also has operational and financial implications. Longer

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campaigns require greater investment in communication, participant follow-up, and maintaining promotional materials; however, they allow promotional activities to spread out over a longer period, fostering continuous exposure.

Communication about the promotions was an essential aspect of their execution. As discussed in section 4.4, the Oásis Supermarket Chain used various promotional channels, including printed inserts, sound trucks, regional television, and Facebook, to present the prizes, announce the participation periods, and publicize the established conditions to consumers.

Using multiple communication channels increased visibility of the prizes, participation rules, and validity periods; communication also played a significant role in ensuring transparency, helping consumers understand the requirements to participate.

In-store, promotion could be supported by displaying promotional materials, identifying participating products, and explaining how the sweepstakes worked. The manager mentions using entry boxes near the cash registers and physically displaying certain prizes, such as motorcycles, to increase the campaign's visibility. During the period under investigation, these types of commercial promotions were subject to the applicable federal authorization and oversight regime under Law No. 5,768/1971 and the regulations in effect at the time.

From an economic perspective, sweepstakes campaigns represent commercial investments whose evaluation depends on the relationship between the costs involved and the results obtained. The supermarket incurs expenses for purchasing prizes, producing advertising materials, operational execution, and promotion, although supplier participation may change how these costs are distributed. Thus, sweepstakes should be understood as sales promotion tools, even though they may also contribute to institutional visibility and customer relationships.

In the context of the 2014–2018 recession, the Oásis Supermarket Chain’s use of giveaways and sweepstakes can be interpreted as a strategy for commercial differentiation and stimulating consumption, as it added an incentive to the campaigns and expanded opportunities for cooperation between the supermarket and its business partners.

4.6 Community Activities

The community activities carried out by the Oásis Supermarket Chain complemented the institutional strategies adopted from 2014 to 2018. According to Thiago in the case study, the company promoted initiatives related to International Women’s Day, Pink October, Children’s Day, cupcake workshops, and the distribution of Christmas gifts in low-income neighborhoods in the municipality of Rio das Ostras, in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

Among the initiatives reported during the period under investigation, those related to International

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Women's Day and Pink October stand out. In the first case, the initiative was linked to the commemorative date and to celebrating women; in the second, it focused on raising awareness of breast cancer.



Figure 3 – Record of a campaign related to Pink October. **Source:** Oásis Supermarket Chain archives, provided by Thiago Andrade de Oliveira.

These initiatives mattered because they reached people in everyday settings, using consumer foot traffic to increase exposure to health-related messages; in this context, the supermarket served as a complementary venue for disseminating information, without replacing specialized services or institutions responsible for healthcare.

Among the activities, Children's Day celebrations and cupcake workshops—both recreational and educational—stood out; they included games, candy distribution, and other activities in spaces associated with the supermarket. The recreational activities also helped bring the supermarket closer to participating families by offering experiences children could access. The cupcake workshops, in turn, offered a different approach from that of the celebratory parties: while the latter focused on games and celebrations, the workshops engaged children in hands-on activities such as baking or decorating small cakes.

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Figure 4 – Photo of a recreational activity organized by the Oásis Network. **Source:** Oásis Supermarket Network archives, provided by Thiago Andrade de Oliveira.

The workshops took place in a dedicated space within the supermarket, allowing small groups of children to participate in playful baking experiences. Guardians' presence during the workshops and celebrations fostered social interaction and supervised the children's activities, helping expand the social dimension of the events. The culinary workshops held in the supermarket setting were tied to the products sold by the store, as they utilized ingredients and materials from the world of food.

At the end of the annual calendar, the Oásis Supermarket Chain promoted charitable initiatives during the Christmas season, with the distribution of gifts by a person dressed as Santa Claus, who traveled through various low-income neighborhoods in Rio das Ostras, bringing the activities to the communities and fostering closer ties between the company and the beneficiaries. As Thiago reported, the initiative's itinerant nature allowed it to take place in different locations, highlighting community interaction outside the stores, while the delivery of gifts and Santa Claus's presence gave the initiative a social and festive meaning associated with Christmas celebrations.

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Figure 5 – Photo of a Christmas event organized by the Oásis Supermarket Chain. **Source:** Oásis Supermarket Chain Archives, provided by Thiago Andrade de Oliveira.

Taken together, the initiatives described above reveal three main types of community engagement by the Oásis Supermarket Chain: awareness-raising and appreciation campaigns, recreational and educational activities, and charitable initiatives.

Campaigns held on dates such as Women's Day, Pink October, Children's Day, and Christmas provided opportunities to develop initiatives aimed at different audiences, aligning the supermarket's institutional activities with the community's cultural and social practices, while the cupcake workshops expanded these possibilities by offering recreational and educational experiences that encouraged consumer participation. At the Oásis Supermarket Chain, the manager reported activities for women, children, families, and residents of lower-income neighborhoods,

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with varying participation and reach in stores and at external venues.

5. Results and Discussion

Analysis of the retrospective information provided by the management of the Oásis Supermarket Chain allowed us to identify six dimensions of the commercial and relational strategies reported for the period from 2014 to 2018: payment terms and customer loyalty programs, attracting new customers, monitoring the competition, publicizing offers, promotional campaigns, and community engagement activities.

These dimensions served distinct yet complementary functions. The Oásis Card, linked to Tricard, and the registration and rewards initiatives focused on commercial benefits and encouraging consumer enrollment. Monitoring competitors' prices and negotiating with suppliers supported setting commercial terms and staying competitive. Meanwhile, printed inserts, sound trucks, regional television, and Facebook served as channels used to communicate offers and campaigns to the public.

Promotional campaigns and sweepstakes added incentives to commercial activities, while commemorative-date activities and community engagement represented other forms of contact between the company and its consumers. The diversity of these practices indicates that the reported activities encompass communication tools, promotional incentives, and initiatives to build closer ties with the public.

In light of the theoretical framework on marketing, consumer behavior, and customer relationships, the identified practices are interpreted as components of an integrated commercial strategy. The benefits of payment terms and sign-up campaigns related to attracting consumers; monitoring the competition related to commercial decisions; and the combination of promotional channels offered different ways to communicate prices and promotions. Community activities, in turn, expanded the contexts in which the company interacted with the local population.

The period's economic context serves as an important reference for interpreting the reported practices. The downturn in the Brazilian economy in 2015 and 2016, along with the difficulties municipalities in the region faced with oil royalty revenues, help contextualize that period's economic challenges (IBGE, 2018; Rio das Ostras, 2015).

The study's main contribution is to systematize the strategies reported for a regional supermarket ch nd examine how they related to the company's commercial operations. Available historical records, photographs, inserts, and advertising materials help document the described initiatives.

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6. Concluding Remarks

This study aimed to analyze the customer attraction and relationship strategies adopted by the Oásis Supermarket Chain in Rio das Ostras between 2014 and 2018. By analyzing Thiago Andrade de Oliveira's retrospective account and available historical records, we identified practices related to payment terms, customer acquisition, commercial competitiveness, offer promotion, promotional campaigns, and community engagement.

The results indicate that these practices played distinct and complementary roles in the company's operations. The case study provides insight into how different commercial and communication tools coexisted in managing a regional supermarket during a period of economic hardship.

Regarding the research problem, the available information shows how the chain coordinated commercial and relational tools to attract consumers and strengthen its presence in the regional market. The main finding lies in the diversity and complementarity of the identified practices, which encompassed payment terms, customer acquisition incentives, monitoring of the competition, advertising of offers, promotional campaigns, and community engagement.

Among the study's limitations is the retrospective nature of the information used, which depends on available accounts and accessible historical documentation. As a contribution, the study systematizes information on the experience of a regional supermarket chain, compiling strategies that can inform future research on competitiveness, commercial communication, and customer relations in retail, in addition to preserving part of the company's documentary history through photographs, inserts, and advertising materials related to its activities.

The Oásis Supermarket Chain's experience demonstrates the integrated use of commercial, promotional, communication, and community strategies within the scope of its regional retail operations.

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