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**Qualificação para exportação realizada pelo Núcleo PEIEX Cascavel no setor  
cervejeiro: uma análise na perspectiva do objetivo do desenvolvimento sustentável 8 –  
meta 8.3**

**Export qualification carried out by the PEIEX Cascavel Core in the beer sector: an  
analysis from the perspective of Sustainable development goal 8 – target 8.3**

**[TRADUÇÃO INGLESA]**

**CARINA LANGARO**

**CASCADEL/PR**

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**QUALIFICAÇÃO PARA EXPORTAÇÃO REALIZADA PELO NÚCLEO PEIEX  
CASCVEL NO SETOR CERVEJEIRO: UMA ANÁLISE NA PERSPECTIVA DO  
OBJETIVO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL 8 – META 8.3**

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## RESUMO

Langaro, C. (2024). **Qualificação para exportação realizada pelo Núcleo Peiex cascavel no setor cervejeiro: uma análise na perspectiva do objetivo do desenvolvimento sustentável 8 – meta 8.3.** Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná, Cascavel, PR, Brasil.

O comércio exterior brasileiro é complexo, e muitas empresas desconhecem os trâmites necessários para se tornarem exportadoras. Nesse contexto, programas de promoção e desenvolvimento da exportação são essenciais para aumentar a competitividade e promover a sustentabilidade empresarial. Dentre esses programas, destaca-se a atuação da Agência Brasileira de Promoção de Exportações e Investimentos (ApexBrasil), por meio do Programa de Qualificação para Exportação (PEIEX). Assim, este estudo tem como objetivo analisar como o programa PEIEX contribui para o desenvolvimento sustentável, conforme estabelecido na meta 8.3 do ODS 8, em empresas do setor cervejeiro. Essa indústria, que produz a principal bebida alcoólica vendida mundialmente, tem o Brasil como terceiro maior produtor de cerveja do mundo, sendo a América do Sul o principal destino de suas exportações. A pesquisa aplicada, de caráter exploratório e com abordagem qualitativa, foi realizada por meio de aplicação do método de grupo focal com técnicos extensionistas e entrevista com a monitora do PEIEX e representantes de duas cervejarias qualificadas, buscando identificar os benefícios obtidos pelas empresas participantes. Os resultados da pesquisa mostram que, apesar dos desafios identificados, como burocracia excessiva, complexidade logística e baixa demanda internacional, as cervejarias participantes do PEIEX relataram benefícios significativos. Entre os principais ganhos estão o acesso a conhecimento técnico sobre exportação, o aprimoramento de processos internos e a criação de uma cultura voltada à exportação. Esses avanços contribuem diretamente para a meta 8.3 do ODS 8, que busca promover o empreendedorismo e o crescimento sustentável de pequenas e médias empresas, fortalecendo a competitividade das cervejarias no mercado global.

**Palavras-chave:** Internacionalização; Cervejarias; ApexBrasil; Qualificação para exportação; Sustentabilidade empresarial;

## ABSTRACT

Langaro, C. (2024). **Qualification for export carried out by the Peiex Cascavel Nucleus in the brewing sector: an analysis from the perspective of sustainable development goal 8 – goal 8.3.** Master's dissertation, Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná, Cascavel, PR, Brazil.

Brazilian foreign trade is complex, and many companies are unaware of the necessary procedures to become exporters. In this context, export promotion and development programs are essential to increase competitiveness and promote business sustainability. Among these programs, the performance of the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil), through the Export Qualification Program (PEIEX), stands out. Thus, this study aims to analyze how the PEIEX program contributes to sustainable development, as established in target 8.3 of SDG 8, in companies in the brewing sector. This industry, which produces the main alcoholic beverage sold worldwide, has Brazil as the third largest beer producer in the world, with South America being the main destination for its exports. The applied research, of exploratory character and with a qualitative approach, was carried out through the application of the focus group method with extension technicians and interview with the PEIEX monitor and representatives of two qualified breweries, seeking to identify the benefits obtained by the participating companies. The survey results show that despite the challenges identified, such as excessive bureaucracy, logistical complexity, and low international demand, breweries participating in PEIEX reported significant benefits. Among the main gains are access to technical knowledge about exports, the improvement of internal processes and the creation of a culture focused on exports. These advances directly contribute to target 8.3 of SDG 8, which seeks to promote entrepreneurship and sustainable growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthening the competitiveness of breweries in the global market.

**Keywords:** Internationalization; Breweries; ApexBrasil; Qualification for Export; Corporate Sustainability;

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Exporting is widely recognized as an essential factor for economic and financial growth, both for companies and countries. However, it involves significant challenges, such as obtaining information on target markets, managing negotiations with intermediaries and representatives, and adapting to international regulations (Pereira, 2020). However, its positive impact is undeniable, as it contributes to economic development, attracting investments, generating jobs, and boosting the local economy (Faria, 2022).

Research indicates that companies rarely start the export process spontaneously; most of the time, they are stimulated by external factors that lead them to internationalization (Santos & Verdu, 2013). To face these challenges and opportunities, it is essential that managers are properly trained in foreign trade methods and have a strategic vision that includes the dilution of risks in different markets (Rochinheski & Brum, 2013).

In this context, export support programs, such as the Export Qualification Program (PEIEX), play a crucial role. Coordinated by the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil), PEIEX works together with universities and research centers to prepare Brazilian companies to compete in the global market (Araujo, Araújo & Costa Júnior, 2023). The program promotes technical and managerial qualification, allowing companies to adopt export practices in a planned manner, which, in turn, contributes to their sustainability and competitiveness (ApexBrasil, 2023c).

PEIEX is also aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 8, which aims to promote sustainable, inclusive and productive economic growth, in addition to providing full and decent employment for all (UN, 2015). By serving companies in strategic regions, such as the brewing sector, PEIEX offers solutions to improve management and access new markets, favoring business development and sustainability (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019).

The Brazilian brewing industry stands out for its potential for expansion and innovation, contributing significantly to the national economy, both in terms of job creation and increased exports. In the first half of 2024, Brazil's brewing industry exported US\$ 95 million in beer to 57 different destinations, consolidating itself as one of the main pillars of the beverage sector (Viana, 2023; MAPA/SDA, 2024). Brazil's largest trading partners in this

segment are South American countries, which accounted for 97.8% of beer exports in 2023 (Anuário da Cerveja, 2024).

## 1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Exports play a key strategic role in economic development, promoting the competitiveness of companies at a global level, attracting investments and generating foreign exchange. The PEIEX program, offered by ApexBrasil, has played a central role in qualifying national companies for internationalization, with a focus on sectors with great potential for expansion, such as brewing. However, despite the benefits associated with exporting, such as cost reduction, increased production scale, and the acquisition of new technologies (Faria, 2022), many companies still face significant challenges, such as the complexity of the export process and the bureaucracies involved, which limit their participation in the foreign market (Rochinheski & Brum, 2013). In addition, the influence of these programmes on corporate sustainability, as recommended by SDG 8, has not yet been sufficiently explored.

When companies operate in international markets, they are faced with varied challenges related to sustainability, requiring a deeper engagement with the SDGs (Gomes, Cunha, Mazzioni, Pereira & Gomes, 2024). In this context, PEIEX not only aims to technically prepare companies for the global market, but also contributes to sustainable economic growth by encouraging innovation and the formalization of small and medium-sized enterprises, in line with target 8.3 of SDG 8. This goal seeks to promote policies that favor entrepreneurship, the creation of decent jobs, and the development of innovative and sustainable initiatives. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the extent to which PEIEX contributes to sustainability and to inclusive and sustainable development in the brewing sector, in light of target 8.3 of SDG 8.

In view of this scenario, the present research seeks to answer the following question:

### 1.1.1 Research Question

How does the PEIEX program contribute to sustainable development, considering target 8.3 of SDG 8, in companies in the brewing sector?

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

### 1.2.1 Geral

Analyze how the PEIEX program contributes to sustainable development, considering target 8.3 of SDG 8, in companies in the brewing sector.

### 1.2.2 Specific

- a) Identify the role of PEIEX in the internationalization process of companies qualified by the Cascavel Core;
- b) Identify the main benefits acquired and difficulties faced by companies in the brewing sector during participation in the PEIEX program at the Cascavel Core;
- c) Evaluate how the results obtained by the qualification for export carried out by the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus are related to SDG 8 in companies in the brewing sector;
- d) Propose actions that contribute to the improvement of results in the export qualification process considering SDG 8 in companies in the brewing sector.

## 1.3 JUSTIFICATION AND CONTRIBUTION OF TECHNICAL PRODUCTION

Countries that seek economic development must actively participate in foreign trade, and it is up to the government to foster these operations. This includes granting tax incentives to companies and promoting imports and exports of various products and services in different global markets, ensuring dynamic and balanced foreign trade between companies from various sectors and regions (Faria, 2022).

The entrepreneur who aims to export needs to have a dynamic profile, seeking to know new markets before starting the company's internationalization process. Each business, according to its specific characteristics, must define the most appropriate strategy to gain a favorable position in the international market. However, it is not enough just to take a stand; this position must be achieved in a sustainable way (Silva, 2013).

In recent years, external pressures to adopt sustainable practices have intensified, driven by stricter government regulations, international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, and growing consumer demand for environmentally responsible products and services. Governments around the world have established strict regulations, such as the

European Union's Anti-Deforestation Regulation, which requires that imported products are not associated with deforestation (UNEP, 2022).

Additionally, investors are increasingly prioritizing companies that adopt environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) practices, which creates economic incentives for organizations to implement sustainable strategies (Global Reporting Initiative, 2023). Social pressure also stands out, as more conscious consumers demand sustainable products. Companies that do not meet these expectations may lose market share (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2021). This set of pressures has forced organizations to reevaluate their practices, integrating sustainability as a core element in their operations and business models.

ApexBrasil plays a key role in this process, promoting the development of Brazilian products, encouraging exports, and attracting foreign investment to the country. One of the pillars of this effort is the PEIEX program, which seeks to foster the export culture, preparing companies to adapt to the competitive market. This program has great economic relevance, as it allows a growing number of Brazilian companies to enter the foreign market, expanding their field of action and bringing benefits to the local economy. In the social context, assistance to companies contributes to the improvement of processes and to the increase of competitiveness (Silva, 2013).

By signing agreements with educational institutions to implement PEIEX in certain regions, the government seeks to foster local development and increase the export capacity of companies. Therefore, it is essential to understand the relevance of the project to the region, in order to improve its actions and ensure that companies develop and promote progress in their communities (Faria, 2022).

Target 8.3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), inserted in SDG 8, aims to promote policies that encourage inclusive and sustainable economic growth, entrepreneurship and innovation (UN, 2015). In the context of exports, this goal is directly related to strengthening the ability of companies to access international markets, promoting economic diversification and job creation. According to Duarte et al. (2023), exports are crucial for companies to access new markets and increase their competitiveness, aligning with the sustainable economic growth recommended in Goal 8.3. The qualification of companies for export, such as the one promoted by PEIEX, is a way to implement this goal, as it facilitates access to resources and knowledge essential for global competition, in addition to generating employment and income opportunities in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Studies, such as that of Melo et al. (2023), analyzed the adoption of sustainable practices by Brazilian microbreweries, highlighting the use of renewable energy and the reuse



of by-products, such as malt bagasse, in animal feed. International research, such as that by Jones and Smith (2022), has also evaluated the reduction of water consumption in European breweries, a crucial factor in mitigating environmental impact, given the high water demand in beer production. Another relevant study is that of Viana (2023), which analyzed the implementation of circular economy policies in alcoholic beverage industries, emphasizing the reuse of packaging and solid waste management. These works emphasize sustainability as a competitive strategy and adaptation to regulatory and social pressures in the brewing sector, showing that sustainable practices not only reduce environmental impacts, but also strengthen brand image and the relationship with conscious consumers.

Thus, the theme of this study is relevant when analyzing the results of the PEIEX Program, the result of a Public Policy (National Plan for Exporting Culture – PNCE) at the local level, demonstrating its effectiveness. In addition, the analysis of the results provided by the qualification of PEIEX Cascavel in companies in the brewing sector in the Western region of Paraná contributes to understand the profile of these companies and their aptitudes to enter international trade in a sustainable way.

The selection of the brewing sector is justified by its expansion, according to data from the Brazilian Association of Craft Beer. Craft breweries are responsible for the production of 352 to 380 million liters annually in Brazil, while the production of conventional beer reaches about 14 billion liters. Craft beer production grows between 30% and 40% annually, positioning Brazil as the third largest beer producer in the world, behind only the United States and China (Gruba, 2020).

According to the 2024 Beer Yearbook, Brazil accounted for 1,847 breweries in 2023, evidencing the continuous growth of the sector. In that same year, the volume of beer exported showed a significant increase of 18.6% compared to the previous year, totaling 231,977,494 liters. Paraguay stood out as the main destination for Brazilian beer, absorbing 59.8% of the total exported in 2023.

In addition, breweries have shown concern for more sustainable practices, especially considering that this sector is a large consumer of water, with most of this consumption occurring in the fermentation and packaging washing stages (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022).

Therefore, this study is justified by broadening and connecting the debate on sustainability in breweries, as well as analyzing the results of the actions adopted by companies in the brewing sector qualified by PEIEX Cascavel in relation to their sustainability, especially considering SDG 8 – target 8.3.

## 1.4 ESTRUTURA DA DISSERTAÇÃO

A presente dissertação está organizada em cinco capítulos principais, conforme apresentado na Figura 1:

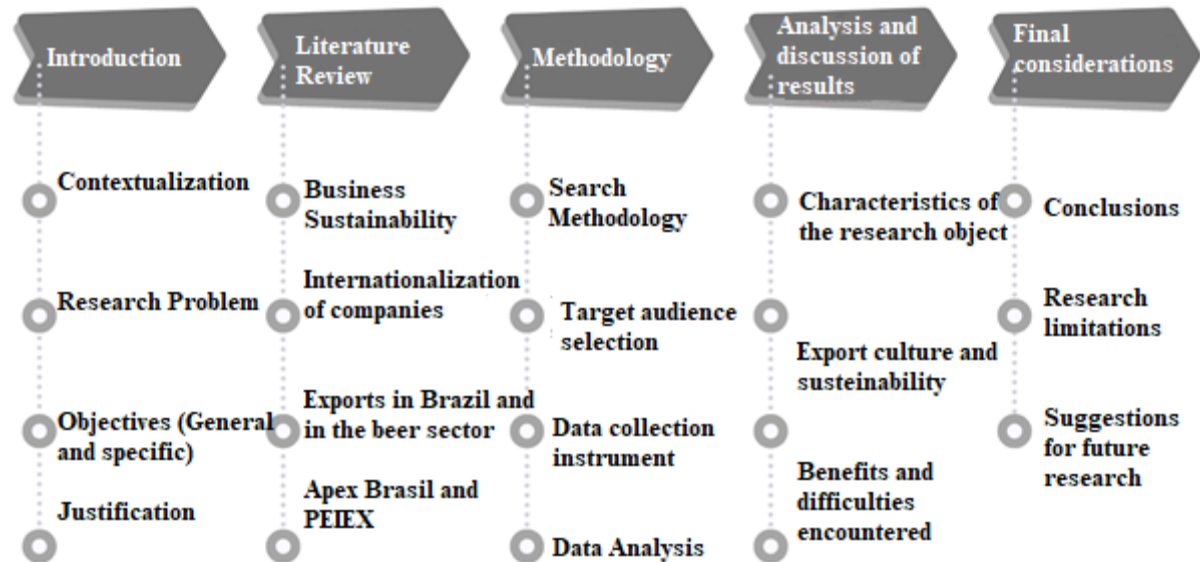


Figure 1. Structure of the dissertation.  
Source: Prepared by the author (2024).

In the first chapter, the introduction presents the theme, contextualizing the relevance of the study in the context of foreign trade and sustainability in the brewing sector. The general and specific objectives of the research are discussed, as well as the problem to be investigated. In addition, the introduction addresses the rationale for the choice of the topic, emphasizing its importance for academia and business practice, and outlines the structure of the dissertation.

The second chapter reviews the literature relevant to the theme. This section covers fundamental concepts related to export, sustainable business practices, and the role of the PEIEX program. This theoretical framework provides the necessary basis for understanding the issues discussed in the following chapters.

The third chapter describes the methodological approach adopted to carry out the research. The methods and techniques of data collection and analysis used are presented, including the choice of the target audience, the research tools and the design of the study. In addition, the selection process of the participating companies and the analysis techniques that

will allow the evaluation of the results of the qualification promoted by PEIEX in the context of sustainability in the brewing sector are discussed.

In the fourth chapter, the results obtained from the research carried out are presented. This section includes the analysis of the data collected, highlighting the main findings related to the qualification of companies in the brewing sector. The results are discussed in the light of the theoretical framework, allowing a reflection on the performance of the PEIEX Cascavel Center.

The final chapter presents the considerations of the study, as well as the bibliographic references used throughout the dissertation. And, finally, the appendix presents the semi-structured interviews used in data collection, with the objective of providing transparency and allowing the replication of the research by other scholars interested in the subject.

## 2 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL REFERENCES

In this chapter, the presentation is organized as follows: in the first subchapter, corporate sustainability is discussed; In the second subchapter, the internationalization of companies is addressed according to several authors. Then, the theme of exports in Brazil will be explored, with a specific study on the brewing industry. Finally, ApexBrasil and the PEIEX program are described.

### 2.1 CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

The growing discussion about sustainability in the contemporary world and in the corporate environment reveals a new era for the market, in which consumers are not only more aware, but also more demanding about the preservation and well-being of the planet's fauna and flora (Queiroz, 2022). Sustainability, at its core, refers to the responsible use of resources, so as to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022). It can be broadly defined as a business model that balances the needs of companies and their stakeholders, ensuring the preservation of natural resources for future generations (Whelan & Fink, 2016). In this sense, a sustainable company is one that generates profit for its shareholders, while protecting the environment and improving the quality of life of the people with whom it interacts (Gruba, 2020).

The concept of "sustainable company" is guided by the "tripod of sustainability", composed of three dimensions: 1) Social – focused on the quality of life of the people involved in business processes; 2) Economic – which seeks profitability without harming the environment; and 3) Environmental – focused on minimizing environmental impacts (Queiroz, 2022). Sustainable development strategies are linked to a model that integrates these three dimensions, encouraging innovation in production processes, generating value in the production chain and promoting conscious consumption, with the objective of reducing environmental impacts and meeting the social demands of the "Triple Bottom Line" (TBL) (Barbieri, 2010). Companies that make decisions based on these three pillars tend to develop more solidly and profitably over time (Whelan & Fink, 2016).

The concept of the "Triple Bottom Line" was developed by John Elkington in 1994 and has become a reference for organizations seeking to integrate sustainability into their operations (Queiroz, 2022). A study on sustainable practices in food companies revealed that these organizations are able to align the three pillars of sustainability, although the economic dimension is still prioritized (Whelan & Fink, 2016).

For Queiroz (2022), sustainability is an essential factor for any organization that seeks to maximize the return on invested capital. Companies that adopt sustainable practices tend to use all available strategies to stand out in the market, improving their image and increasing their profitability. This behavior reflects the growing concern of organizations to be recognized as sustainable, since there is awareness of the need to adhere to the tripod of sustainability. To face the changes in the economic scenario, companies are required to respond quickly and adaptively (Gruba, 2020).

Companies with sustainable strategies have a competitive advantage over those that do not adopt sustainable practices, as they are able to align their decisions with social, environmental, and economic aspects (Henderson, 2020). In addition, the benefits of environmental and social programs strengthen businesses (García-Sánchez et al., 2022). Corporate sustainability, therefore, encompasses a set of administrative actions that not only favor the preservation of the environment, but also promote the economic growth of the company and improve the quality of life of its employees (Whelan & Fink, 2016).

The adoption of sustainable practices in various sectors, including brewing, has shown that these actions improve the quality of products and services, while generating value and positive visibility for companies that follow sustainability standards (Whelan & Fink, 2016). With regard to economic sustainability, Sachs (1993) argues that it is made possible by the efficient allocation and management of resources, as well as a continuous flow of public and private investment. For him, economic efficiency must be evaluated in macro-social terms, going beyond the criteria of business profitability, and considering the impact of the flow of capital between companies, government, and the population (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022).

In this way, acting as a sustainable institution is one of the main factors that guarantee the engagement and solidity of a company in the market, both national and international, offering a competitive advantage over competitors. Thus, it is essential that companies advance in their sustainable strategies, seeking to improve their corporate image and ensure its survival and expansion on the global stage (Whelan & Fink, 2016).

### 2.1.1 Sustainable Development Goal

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global agenda adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, consisting of 17 goals that aim to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2023). This Agenda is a historic opportunity to improve the quality of life of all young people, especially the most vulnerable, and ensure the preservation of our planet for future generations. It takes considerable effort and unwavering determination to provide equitable opportunities in life for all children and adolescents. The implications are significant, as the achievement of the 17 SDGs (as can be seen in Figure 2) is paramount for the future of humanity (dos Santos & de Souza, 2024).

The commitment of the 2030 Agenda highlights that the SDGs and their respective targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, considering different contexts and national realities, capacities, and levels of development, respecting national policies and priorities. While targets are global aspirations, each government can adapt them by setting national targets according to its own level of ambition (Nhamo et al., 2020). This structure allows for a decentralized and democratic approach, where each government decides how these goals should be incorporated into management processes, public policies, and national planning strategies (Souto & Batalhão, 2020; Sachs, 2015).

UN SDGs	Description
1 – Eradication of poverty	End poverty in all its forms, everywhere.
2 – Zero hunger and sustainable agriculture	Eradicate hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3 – Health and well-being	Ensure access to quality health and promote well-being for all, at all ages.
4 – Quality education	Ensure access to inclusive, quality and equitable education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5 – Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6 – Drinking water and sanitation	Ensure the availability and sustainable management of drinking water and sanitation for all.
7 – Clean and affordable energy	Ensuring access to reliable, sustainable and modern energy sources for all.
8 – Decent work and economic growth	Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10 – Reduction of inequalities	Reduce inequalities within and between countries.
11 – Sustainable cities and communities	Making cities and communities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12 – Responsible consumption and production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

13 – Action against global climate change	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14 – Life in the water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15 – Terrestrial Life	Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16 – Peace, Justice and Effective Institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17 – Partnerships and means of implementation	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

**Figure 2.** Description of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

Source: Prepared by the author (2024) from Souto & Batalhão (2020).

In the World Employment and Social Outlook report, updated in September 2024, the International Labour Organization (ILO) notes growing pressure on inequality, as the share of labour income is stagnant and a large share of young people remain without work, education or training. The report indicates slow progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the 2030 deadline approaches (UN, 2024).

Thus, among the Goals presented, SDG 8 stands out for focusing on sustainable economic growth and the promotion of decent work. This goal is crucial to ensure inclusive development, generating employment opportunities and increasing productivity, especially in economically vulnerable regions (Barbieri, 2020).

#### 2.1.1.1 SDG 8

SDG 8 aims to create conditions for economic growth to benefit all, without compromising the resources of future generations (Barbieri, 2020). The goals to be achieved by 2030 based on this objective are mentioned in Figure 3:

Meta	Description
8.1	Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances, and particularly an annual growth of at least 7% of gross domestic product [GDP] in the least developed countries.
8.2	Achieve higher levels of productivity of economies through diversification, technological modernization, and innovation, including through a focus on high value-added and labor-intensive sectors.
8.3	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

8.4	Progressively improve global resource efficiency in consumption and production by 2030, and strive to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the Ten-Year Programme Plan on Sustainable Production and Consumption, with developed countries taking the lead.
8.5	Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all people, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
8.6	Substantially reduce the proportion of young people without employment, education, or training.
8.7	Take immediate and effective action to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and trafficking in persons, and ensure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms.
8.8	Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular migrant women, and people in precarious employment.
8.9	Develop and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, which generates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

**Figure 3.** Description of the targets related to SDG 8.

Source: Prepared by the author (2024) from IPEA (2019)

The 2016-2022 period, which includes the COVID-19 pandemic, was challenging for the advancement of SDG 8 indicators worldwide. In Brazil, the effects of the pandemic were added to a succession of internal crises and partial recoveries, which resulted, in general, in accumulated performances below average. Among the goals of this objective, seven of them have data available on indicators, and Brazil recorded an improvement in three. The reductions observed in the frequencies of young people without work, education or training (target 8.6) and children subjected to child labour (target 8.7) (IPEA, n.d) deserve to be highlighted.

Target 8.3 of SDG 8 highlights the importance of policies that encourage entrepreneurship, the creation of decent jobs, and the promotion of initiatives that favor sustainable development. This goal is crucial to foster an economic environment that not only generates jobs, but also prioritizes the quality and sustainability of these jobs. To achieve target 8.3, it is necessary to create an ecosystem to support entrepreneurship, which includes the formalization of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as capacity building and innovation in the sector (Gomes et al., 2024).

In addition to the opportunities mentioned for promoting goal 8.3, the internationalization of companies can also be a relevant strategy, especially in sectors with growth potential. Internationalization can result in direct benefits, such as market expansion, foreign exchange generation, and technology transfer, which are essential for sustainable economic growth and business innovation (Wang, 2024).



## 2.2 INTERNATIONALIZATION OF COMPANIES

The concepts of internationalization present in the literature are varied and depend on the focus given to the study. Overall, internationalization can be seen as a gradual process in which companies progressively increase their involvement in international business (Manganotti, 2021). This process represents one of the biggest challenges for companies seeking to become competitive and sustainable on the global stage, in the face of growing international competition (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019).

Time and gradual progression are crucial elements for successful internationalization. By adopting this method, organizations can implement more detailed and intensive entry strategies, committing more resources and taking on greater risks as they engage more deeply in foreign markets (Santos & Verdu, 2013). However, successful internationalization often requires a solid footing in the domestic market, as it is from this internal consolidation that companies can pursue new markets with more confidence. In many cases, they opt for markets that have economic and cultural similarities with their country of origin, which provides greater security in the process and facilitates the increase in commitment to international expansion (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

The decisions that lead to internationalization can be analyzed from two different perspectives. The first line of thought considers the decision-making process as rational and objective, focused on the efficient allocation of resources, minimization of costs and maximization of competitive advantage. On the other hand, there is a more subjective approach, which analyzes the behavior of decision-makers, their attitudes and perceptions in relation to internationalization (de Souza & Fenili, 2012).

Some studies indicate that companies rarely choose to export proactively; Often, they respond to external stimuli that drive them to enter the international market. These stimuli, known as internationalization motivators, can be classified as reactive or proactive. In the case of reactive stimuli, internationalization occurs in response to the scarcity of opportunities in the domestic market. Proactive stimulus, on the other hand, is generated by the search for growth, regardless of the economic conditions in the country of origin (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

Internationalization, therefore, is not a single and uniform process, but rather a series of strategic decisions that involve the analysis of risks, opportunities, and the external environment, both at the national and international levels. Each company, depending on its

characteristics and motivations, can adopt different paths in the process of entering global markets.

### 2.2.1 Strategies for internationalization

The decision to internationalize requires the formulation of plans that are fundamental for the development of new business opportunities abroad. In this sense, the global analysis allows us to define the choice of the form of entry into foreign markets, as well as to know determining factors of the internationalization process (da Silva, Araújo, Souza, Crispim & Gaspar, 2013).

The method of entry into foreign markets depends on factors such as: the company's objectives in relation to the desired international turnover, such as: geographic coverage, external competition, size of the company for sale and assets, product line and its nature (da Silva, Araújo, Souza, Crispim & Gaspar, 2013).

Selecting the best way to enter the foreign market, carrying out an internationalization plan, is to carry out this movement strategically (Westwood, 2013). This decision must take into account the aspects of the target market such as: potential, attractiveness, size, growth, competition, distance and accessibility (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

There are several different modes of entry, forms of risk analysis and differences between the methods for establishing international expansion. And, in this way, the strategies for internationalization can be classified as: contractual, investment and export (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

The contractual method is characterized by long-term association, which includes the transfer of organizational capacity and technology. Internationalization by investment, on the other hand, involves the installation of a unit in the foreign market. And, finally, entry by export is when the products are manufactured in the country of origin and later taken to the foreign market. It is divided into indirect, direct and cooperative (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

Indirect export is basically a negotiation carried out with a company, which will assume the responsibility of sending the products to be exported to the foreign market. In this case, organizations use exporting companies, trading companies or brokers, usually located in the country of origin, which mediate the entire process (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

When, unlike the example cited, organizations are responsible for taking care of all phases, from manufacturing to the outcome of the deal, export is classified as direct. In this format, there is greater autonomy in organizations, but risks are also increased. An

intermediary based in the destination country is used, and no extra aid in the country of origin (Santos & Verdu, 2013). In a summarized way, the forms of export, direct and indirect, can be better visualized in Figure 4.

DIRECT EXPORT		INDIRECT EXPORT	
The company is responsible for manufacturing its products and the entire export process.		The company is only responsible for manufacturing its products, "outsourcing" the export process	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The company has control over its entire export process, choosing markets, customers, sales price, distribution channels, marketing strategy, etc.</li> <li>- Profits from exporting be higher, as the company will deal directly with the international buyer.</li> <li>- The company builds its own international distribution network.</li> <li>- The entrepreneur knows the characteristics of the markets to export to.</li> <li>- The company has a better chance of protecting its brand, patents and other intangible properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The company must have at least one employee who communicates in other languages, understands the culture of other countries, is familiar with the export procedures and is responsible for this activity.</li> <li>- The costs and risks are higher, as the company will be responsible for the entire process.</li> <li>- The company needs to have financial resources to invest in prospecting, consolidating and retaining external customers.</li> <li>- The time required for the company to qualify for export is longer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The company can focus on manufacturing its products, leaving the entire export process to the exporting company.</li> <li>- Investment in export is low, as the export company assumes a large part of the costs.</li> <li>- The risks are small, since the export company knows the export process well and takes care of it.</li> <li>- Indirect export also entitles the company to tax exemption.</li> <li>- The time required for the company to qualify for export is shorter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The company interference in the export process of its products is reduced.</li> <li>- The company's knowledge of the export process and the characteristics of the international market are limited.</li> </ul>

Figure 4. Export: direct VS indirect.

Source: Adapted from Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022.

Whatever the format chosen to carry out the internationalization strategy, it should be seen as an essential means to increase the international competitiveness of companies. This happens because there is the promotion of country development, ease of access to resources and markets, and economic restructuring (da Silva, Araújo, Souza, Crispim & Gaspar, 2013).

Competing internationally induces the company entering new markets to seek productivity gains through technology and resource management without, however, allowing decreases in the quality of the goods produced. Competition forces companies to continually reinvest their profits and expand their market, and in order to compete in the world market, it is imperative that organizations invest in research and development. Thus, we can observe a chain reaction, with internationalization contributing to the improvement of product quality and the search for innovations, which consequently add value and generate increased profits (da Silva, Araújo, Souza, Crispim & Gaspar, 2013).

### 2.2.2 Factors influencing exports

A country's economic growth is strongly linked to the improvement in the volume of its exports. To achieve this goal, it is essential to understand the factors that influence a country's performance in the international market (Gomes, 2012). Among these factors, Ghemawat (2007) highlights the importance of the "distance" between countries, which can be measured by four main dimensions: cultural, administrative, geographical, and economic.

The cultural dimension is one of the most impactful determinants, as it shapes consumer behaviors, lifestyles, and preferences. Cleveland and Laroche (2007) point out that culture directly affects consumption needs, influencing the demand for products and services. In addition, Douglas and Craig (2011) point to sociocultural factors, such as demographics and economics, that influence consumption behavior patterns, such as housing conditions and family structure.

Another essential aspect is the impact of cultural dimensions on international management. Geert Hofstede's (1991) Theory of Cultural Dimensions suggests that firms should consider factors such as distance from power, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and aversion to uncertainty when entering foreign markets. These aspects are universal, but vary in intensity according to the local culture. For example, companies entering Brazil must adapt their strategies based on a detailed analysis of these factors.

The administrative and political dimension also exerts a great influence on exports. A country's governmental system, political stability, and economic policies can make it easier or harder for foreign companies to enter. In addition, protectionist measures such as tariffs and quotas, as well as subsidies to local firms, can create significant barriers (Ghemawat, 2007). The Latin American region has sought to expand its trade integration through agreements such as Mercosur and partnerships with external blocs, including new agreements with Asian and African countries, which reinforces the importance of integration for the global economy (World Bank, 2022; Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

Geography is another determining factor in exports. According to Ghemawat (2007), attributes such as geographic location, distance from borders, access to waterways and transport infrastructures directly affect logistics costs, especially in the case of fragile or bulky products. Products that need to be transported over long distances have higher costs, which can influence their competitiveness in the international market.

Finally, economic distance refers to the differences between countries in terms of macroeconomic stability, investment policies, access to credit, and skilled labor. These variables affect both a country's ability to attract foreign capital and the competitiveness of its products abroad (Ghemawat, 2001). In addition, market size and consumption potential, influenced by demographic factors such as population growth and education levels, also directly affect export success (Douglas & Craig, 2011).

### 2.2.3 Key facilitators or players for export

Facilitators, or players, are organizational and external factors that will help the company enter the market of other countries. These are the means that will make the internationalization process less complex and distant (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

The relationships between subsidiary or subordinate companies can be cited as a player. This happens because they can assume strategic roles in the multinationals in which they are inserted, making the changes made by one directly affect the development of the others. Another point would be the inter-organizational relationships, such as suppliers and buyers. It is through this interaction that companies have the possibility of obtaining more resources than the amount already controlled internally (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

Facilitators that help the internationalization process and that are mentioned by Rosa & Rhoden (2007) are: production technology; potential to adapt to changes in systems; qualification of the team; flexibility to produce different quantities of demand; competitive price; relationship networks.

The solicitation of orders coming directly from abroad is cited in another work as the main facilitator for the sales process. This movement would demonstrate a direct interest in the products manufactured by a certain company. This can happen in situations where some nations do not produce their consumer goods, and purchase them from other countries, inserting only their own brands for resale (Machado & Liboni, 2004).

The authors Araujo, Araújo & Costa Júnior (2023) in their study mentioned a series of forces that may be involved in the export process, and they can be seen in Figure 5:

Internal Forces	Organization characteristics - size, age, geographic location.
	Competencies - Based on knowledge, intellectual capital or contingencies.
	Physical, organizational, and networking resources.

	Entrepreneurial orientation - Alignment with new markets.
	Leadership.
External Forces	Market environment - market size, logistical aspects (infrastructure, transport, etc.) and market opening.
	Governments - regulations, export policy, customs restrictions, bilateral/multilateral agreements, ideological positioning.
	Macro Environment - Economic, political, technological, social and environmental factors.
	Industrial characteristics - dynamism, complexity and characteristics of industries.
	Competitive environment - Cooperation, codependency, co-learning, risk mitigation and networking.
Mixed or networking forces	Corporate leadership.
	Inter-relationships with customers, competitors, suppliers, government and society in general.
	Knowledge of the foreign market.
	Expansion in emerging markets.
	Technology transfer, partnerships and expansion of distribution channels.

**Figure 5.** Forces involved in the export process.

Source: Adapted from Araujo, Araújo & Costa Júnior (2023).

It can be seen that when it comes to positive influences on the export process, these forces can be due to several sources, both intrinsic to the company and external to it. In the case of negative influences, it also occurs in this way, and the so-called export barriers oppose the facilities that exist in the internationalization process.

#### 2.2.4 Barriers to export

Organizations that enter the internationalization process encounter some difficulties during this procedure (Santos & Verdu, 2013). Investigations into obstacles to internationalization, especially those related to restrictions on export activities, have gained prominence in the field of International Business since the 1960s (Kahiya, 2018). Barriers to export can be understood as internal and external obstacles that prevent or discourage companies from engaging in, expanding or maintaining export activities (Leonidou, 1995).

The lack of consensus on the definition and classification of barriers results in excessive fragmentation in studies on the subject, making it difficult to compare the results (Rocha, Freitas, & Silva, 2008; Arteaga-Ortíz & Fernández-Ortiz, 2010). However, in general, they are classified mainly as internal or external barriers and should be seen as a strategic response of the company to its strengths. The literature shows that both internal and external barriers have a significant impact on the export performance of companies.

The taxonomy proposed by Leonidou (2004) was widely used in research on export barriers due to its simplicity. This taxonomy classifies barriers based on their origin, dividing them into internal, which are intrinsic to the company and, most often, are associated with the company's insufficient organizational resources and capabilities (informational, functional, and marketing barriers) and external barriers that stem from the environment in which companies operate (procedural, governmental, task-related, and environmental barriers) (Sinkovics, Kurt & Sinkovics, 2018).

Another issue of note is the so-called Non-Tariff Measures that refer to policies that do not involve tariffs, but have an economic impact on the international trade of goods, affecting the quantities traded, prices or both. These measures include Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs), sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), quotas, export restrictions, and measures that occur across borders, such as government procurement or distribution restrictions (de Lucena, Santos & de Queiroz, 2018). Some examples are quantitative restrictions, import licensing, customs procedures, anti-dumping and countervailing measures (Leite Filho & Schneider, 2018).

Non-tariff barriers are a form of great concern due to their less direct and covert aspect (Kamal & Zaki, 2018). When sanitary barriers are so strict that they end up preventing the entry of the product, they are considered impeding or prohibitive, and when they end up hindering the entry of the product, they are called restrictive (Rubin, Ilham and Silva, 2008).

TBTs can negatively affect companies' exports by increasing variable production costs and setting a higher productivity threshold for export. In addition, technical regulations can be seen as inhibitors or promoters of trade, correcting information gaps in the market, but they can also act as a trade barrier by increasing export costs (Fontagné, Orefice, Piermartini & Rocha 2015).

In this sense, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has an agreement on these barriers that aims to avoid unnecessary or excessively demanding restrictions on trade and seeks to ensure that conformity assessment processes, standards and technical regulations are implemented by countries in such a way as not to become unjustified impediments to international trade. (de Lucena, Santos & de Queiroz, 2018).

The classification of tariff barriers, on the other hand, refers to import tariffs, other fees and customs valuation (Leite Filho & Schneider, 2018). When we consider the agri-food sector, formal rules can be decisive for the process of economic development both at the micro level – of the individual firm – and at the macro level – of a production chain, a state or a country (Vicensotti, Montebello & Marjotta-Maistro, 2019).

Machado and Liboni (2004) state that the barriers encountered during internationalization range from foreign protectionism, which causes some countries to control the entry of foreign products, to the image that the exporting country conveys, that is, the demand for orders made by the foreign market is proportional to its reputation in this scenario. The technological delay is also cited, since it delays production performance. Such factors make it difficult for companies to enter the foreign market, in which organizations are often at the mercy of large buyers.

The barriers to the internationalization of companies can be classified into three main factors, according to Rocha (2006). The geographical factor stands out for the relevance of physical and linguistic distances, which complicate the process of expansion into new markets. The environmental factor, on the other hand, refers to the lack of government incentives, such as exchange rate instability and support concentrated on the growth of the domestic market, which hinders international insertion. Finally, the cultural factor addresses the psychological and cultural distance between different countries, which can hinder adaptation and negotiations during the internationalization process. These challenges require specific strategic approaches to overcome.

There are countless barriers that companies have to face, from foreign consumer preferences, unknown business protocols, to even import control by foreign governments, fierce competition and exchange rate risk (Tesfom & Lutz, 2006). However, they can be triggers for specific response mechanisms, the effect of which is to improve export performance (Kahiya, 2018) and consequently the economic results of the company.

Due to the points mentioned, when organizations internationalize, they tend to maintain negotiations with countries that are geographically close or nations that have similar customs and traditions. This is so that companies feel familiarity during transactions, which means that entry into the foreign market is restricted to similar audiences (Rocha, 2006).

#### 2.2.5 Environmental barriers for export

Sustainability in the economic, social, and environmental spheres provides advantages in international trade, as consumers are more demanding in terms of efficient practices in these three scenarios (Christ, Oliveira & Cattelan, 2022). When we consider environmental measures and their impacts on exports, we observe that there are few studies specifically focused on this agenda. Evidence points out that many products from developing countries



face environmental requirements imposed by developed countries. (by Mattos Ansanelli, Grana, by Almeida & Corrêa, 2018).

Environmental measures include: technical measures with environmental purposes, as not all technical measures are related to the environment; and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, which are already exclusively environmental in nature. These requirements consist of norms, whose compliance is voluntary, and regulations, which must be complied with (WTO, 1994).

Environmental technical requirements refer to products, production processes, packaging, labels or certifications, established by public or private agencies or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that aim to protect health and the environment. For example: the establishment of the maximum level of lead in electronic products; the need for labeling of chemical products, among others (INMETRO, 2005).

To comply with sanitary and phytosanitary measures, producers of plants, beverages, meats, and fruits may face a series of procedures, such as production and institutional costs (to obtain the mandatory certification of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply) generating a slowness in the export process or even inhibiting it. In addition, countries can use this type of measure to practice the so-called eco-protectionism (de Mattos Ansanelli, Grana, de Almeida & Corrêa, 2018).

This is because, to further protect their domestic markets, different countries are starting to build new barriers with the priority of environmental standards and systems. Given the inconsistency of criteria between countries, added to the high attention to environmental protection by international organizations, "environmental protection-coated" barriers are widely used (Li & Zhu, 2020).

The authors Soares & Silva (2022) highlight the importance of expanding research on export barriers to include emerging economies, small and medium-sized enterprises, and service sectors. The growing interest in this subject, especially in the barriers that inhibit emerging market companies in their internationalization efforts, is understandable, as these markets play a crucial role as growth engines in the current business environment. Thus, the expansion of knowledge in this area is essential to guide effective strategies and promote greater global economic development.

## 2.3 EXPORTS IN BRAZIL

The internationalization process is a dynamic and complex operation, necessary for companies to survive and compete in the globalized environment. In Brazil, the internationalization of companies occurred late (late mover), as they were inserted in an atmosphere of uncertainties and discontinuities (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019).

The process of Brazilian internationalization can be considered recent, taking place only in the last decades of the twentieth century. In addition, organizations in general were passive in the face of the situation, without demonstrating proactivity to carry out such negotiations (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

At the end of the 70's there was a considerable boost in international trade, and thus this activity received attention from the State, based on a series of incentives. Among them, tax exemption and credits and the availability of financing can be mentioned, in addition to the creation of campaigns in order to promote internationalization. Thus, over the years, the interest in the international field has taken on greater proportions, and organizations have decided to follow this path and have sought their own means of internationalization (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

Evidence on the determinants of Brazilian exports shows that the country has comparative advantages in products that require low-skilled labor and in natural resources. The size of companies and the increasing returns to scale are important factors that increase the probability of becoming exporters. In addition, many Brazilian companies adopt various internationalization strategies, especially in labor- and natural resource-intensive industries, where Brazil is strong (Arbix, Salerno & De Negri, 2004).

One of the main promoters of participation in new markets, when considering Brazil, is the country's own location. And the government incentive affects in a certain way the motivation of companies in this process (Santos & Verdu, 2013).

### 2.3.1 Beer exports in Brazil

The brewing industry in Brazil dates back to the emergence of mercantile production in the regions of European colonization. From the twentieth century onwards, production and consumption began to expand due to new government policies that expanded and diversified the Brazilian economy. These new measures boosted the population's income and the expansion of transportation brought integration to the regions of the country, thus allowing

the distribution of beer to other regions, in addition to the proximity of the factory (Limberger, 2016).

According to Viana (2023), beer, among alcoholic beverages, has great prominence in Brazil, having been responsible for 92.6% of the consumption of alcoholic beverages (by volume) in 2021, and its market is highly competitive considering the presence of several local and international suppliers. And in the world market, beer is also the main alcoholic beverage sold, but with 77.5% of sales in volume in 2021, a slightly lower share than in Brazil.

Considering the importance of the brewing industry in Brazil, the analysis of the main foreign consumer markets becomes a strategic process. The objective of the survey of factors that influence exports is to make organizations in the field more competitive in the global environment (Bellucci, Lavarda & Roczanski, 2019).

According to data from the Ministry of Development, Industry, Commerce and Services (MDIC), in 2022, the beer sector recorded US\$ 120,047,504.00 in sales. In the first half of 2023, foreign sales totaled US\$ 87 million. In the last 10 years (2012-2020), exports have doubled: from about US\$ 60 million to more than US\$ 120 million (ApexBrasil, 2023a).

### 2.3.2 Brazilian Beer Buyer Market

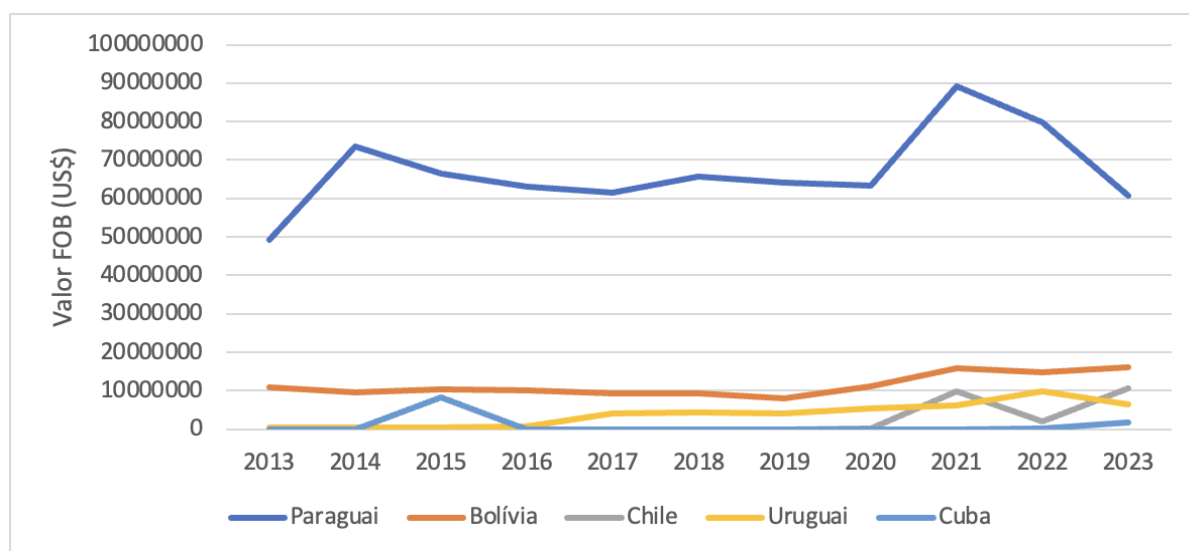
Beer has a loyal and growing consumer market in several countries, constituting one of the main products that make up the beverage sector. This market is largely affected by seasonality, with more significant sales during the summer and regional holidays (Rosa, Cosenza, & Leão, 2006). According to Porter (1982), in the brewing industry, product differentiation is coupled with economies of scale in the barriers established by marketing and distribution.

Regarding the production of the Brazilian beer industry, data from the IBGE's Annual Industrial Product Survey (PIA Product) (2022a), updated until 2021 (using the PIM-PF - Monthly Industrial Survey of Physical Production), show that, after a period of decline that coincided with the Brazilian economic crisis and lasted until 2017, the production of alcoholic beverages began to resume in 2018, showing growth in production so far, even with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 (IBGE).

The Brazilian government, through the Ministry of Economy, establishes the main sources of foreign trade statistics. Administrative records of export and import take place for the most diverse sectors, including the brewing industry. Brazil como um país membro do

MERCOSUR, adopts the MERCOSUR Common Nomenclature (NCM). And, considering the Malt Beer market, there is the following NCM: 2203.00.00, which can be used for various queries in foreign trade analysis tools (MDIC).

Among the tools available, Comex Stat stands out, as a system for queries and data extraction, which are released monthly, in detail, in relation to Brazilian exports and imports. The values are extracted from the Foreign Trade System (SISCOMEX) and based on the declaration of exporters and importers. From this data, it is possible to evaluate the 5 main beer buying markets in the country, which can be observed through Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** The top five export markets for Beer from Brazil.

Source: Prepared by the author based on COMEX STAT (BRAZIL, 2013 to 2023).

Among the International Terms of Trade (Incoterms), the FOB clause, Free on board, or "Free on board", is defined as the delivery of the goods object of the contract by the seller to the buyer on board the ship designated by the buyer. This means that the buyer must bear all costs and risks of loss or damage to the goods from that point, the so-called "critical point". This clause is undoubtedly the most important and most used in international purchase and sale contracts (Felgueiras, 2015)

There is a superiority in the volume of exports to the Paraguayan market when compared to other countries. Territorial proximity is a very relevant point in this relationship. In the literature, some factors are listed as important when it comes to geographic trend and competitiveness in the international market. Among them, the importance of similar levels of development among the countries involved is observed, and a similar structure of product transportation costs. Also, the existence of similar geophysical conditions (climate, topography, etc.), access to transport infrastructures, e, por fim, a importância de pertencerem

to the same economic bloc (Gomes, 2012). These points contribute to the understanding of the export partnership between Brazil and Paraguay, both in the brewing industry and in other markets.

The study by Batista (2019) aimed to analyze the participation of Mercosur countries in the exports and imports of each member country. Paraguay proved to be the most economically dependent country on Mercosur, as it had the highest levels of exports to within the bloc – a historical average of 52% – and imports of intra-bloc origin – a historical average of 39.6%.

According to César (2016), Paraguay is Brazil's main trading partner, and its economy is notably more open than that of the vast majority of other South American countries. Total exports to Paraguay in the period from 2019 to 2023 had a percentage change of 48.3%, while imports changed 4.3%. This means that Paraguay is a major importer of Brazilian products, corresponding to almost 50% of its imports coming from Brazil, and thus an excellent trading partner.

According to information from the ApexBrasil website (2023a), the Brazilian beer sector is in full expansion and offers a wide variety of products, innovation, generates jobs and moves the economy. Brazilian specialty beers were the focus of the 6th round of Exporta Mais Brasil, which is an ApexBrasil program, which aims to expand foreign sales of products in this sector.

Data from the 2022 Beer Yearbook, for the period from 2011 to 2021 point to a growth of about 150% in Brazilian beer exports, 2022 registered a small reduction compared to 2021. 200,588,542 kg of the product were exported, which represents a decrease of 16.8%. The reduction in the volume exported also had an impact on the total value of Brazilian exports, but on a smaller scale. In 2022, Brazilian beer exports earned US\$ 120,047,504, a reduction of 8.7% compared to the amount invoiced in the previous year (MAPA/SDA, 2023).

Another aspect observed is the expansion of the Brazilian beer export market. In 2022, Brazil exported beer to 79 different countries, equaling the highest mark in the period studied, verified in 2020, which represents a market expansion of 11.3% compared to the previous year and 216% compared to the beginning of the time series, that is, in the period from 2011 to 2022 (MAPA/SDA, 2023).

Currently, Brazil is the third largest beer producer in the world: 1 in 8 Brazilian municipalities have at least one registered brewery, and all regions of Brazil produce beers. In 2022 alone, according to data from the 2022 Beer Yearbook, Paraguay was the main

destination for Brazilian beers, accounting for 62.3% of exports. The main destinations are South American countries, which account for 98.4% of the export of the Brazilian product (MAPA/SDA, 2023).

The market value of the product varies depending on the country being exported. According to data from the 2022 Beer Yearbook, the Brazilian beer with the highest average value was the one exported to Bulgaria, which on average was worth 6.70 US\$/Kg. The destination where Brazilian beer is exported with the lowest average value is Benin, in West Africa, where it is sold with an average price of 0.10 US\$/Kg. Finally, considering the main trading partner of this sector, Paraguay, it is sold on average at 0.64 US\$ / Kg (MAPA/SDA, 2023).

In relation to Brazilian beer imports, there is a drop. While in 2021 the amount imported was 18,406,249 kg, in 2022 the amount decreased to 14,897,234 kg, which represents a decrease of about 19.1%. This reduction in the quantity of imported beer, which began in 2019, can probably be explained by the greater supply of domestic products, as evidenced by the increase in establishments and registered products (MAPA/SDA, 2023).

### 2.3.3 Brewing industry and sustainability

The production of beer generates a significant volume of waste that must be disposed of correctly, since there is a need to comply with legislation regarding the environment. Resource management in craft brewing offers a specific set of benefits, they are: resource management is measured based on gallons of water reused, kilowatts of electricity saved, tons of spent grains reused (Gruba, 2020).

Breweries have been concerned with more sustainable practices in production, since this sector is a large consumer of water, and this consumption largely occurs in the fermentation and packaging washing stages (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022).

There are studies involving sustainability and breweries at the national level: Lima and Walter (2017), and internationally: Hoalst-Pullen, Patterson, Mattord and Vest (2014); Patterson, Hoalst-Pullen and Pierson (2016); Herold, Manwa, Sen and Wilde (2016). Considering large-scale brewing industries, it was noticed that cleaner and more sustainable production is in line with the concept of sustainability by allowing gains in the economic, social, and environmental spheres (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022).

An evaluation at the level of the artisanal industry found that more sustainable practices, related to the environmental pillar, can be adopted at various levels of production,

and in this way, the reduction of water and energy use and greater energy efficiency are verified. In addition, in relation to the social pillar, actions that incorporate local culture and the well-being of those involved have been mentioned (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022).

Craft breweries are increasingly becoming important to a region's economy, generating direct and indirect jobs and valuing local labor. At the beginning of the operation, companies do not operate with a profit, hence the need for working capital and cash flow control. Therefore, it is perceived that profitability is fundamental for the organization, because it supports its other responsibilities (Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, 2022).

According to the study by Roveda, Brizolla, Baggio & Sausen, (2022), the behaviors of managers of brewing companies in relation to sustainability actions can be analyzed from the three pillars: economic, social and environmental. In the economic aspect, these companies generate jobs in their cities and implement awareness practices to reduce the consumption of water, electricity and inputs, in addition to adopting new energy sources, such as solar. Regarding the social aspect, companies develop projects with the local community and invest in training. In the environmental pillar, they seek to reduce the impact of their operations, promoting the responsible management of natural resources, implementing recycling systems and minimizing waste generation, thus contributing to the preservation of the environment.

Such actions can result in national and international growth of the product. Regarding international transactions, in addition to the company's own planning and investment, it is also possible to receive government impulses. Among the programs developed, the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil) can be mentioned as one of the main players dedicated to promoting the export of products and services abroad. It promotes internationalization, facilitates and enables foreign trade, and attracts foreign direct investment to Brazil, combining the strategic development of the industry with the support of public policies (ApexBrasil, 2023c).

## 2.4 APEX-BRASIL

ApexBrasil is an agency of the Brazilian government, linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consisting of an autonomous social service with the mission of contributing to the

internationalization of Brazilian companies, promoting exports of products and services, and attracting foreign direct investment to the country (ApexBrasil, 2023c).

According to information provided by ApexBrasil (2023c), the agency has business offices in the country and abroad, where it works in partnership with Brazilian embassies and consulates. To assist the process of entering international trade, the Agency offers a portfolio of programs that involve business qualification, increased competitiveness, strategic intelligence, trade promotion actions (fairs, business missions, business roundtables) and internationalization (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019). During the 2020-2023 period, the strategic objectives were established based on three major perspectives: social, internal processes, and sustainability (ApexBrasil, 2020).

Among some of the events and tools available, those that are widely used by the organizations linked to the research are selected, which demonstrates the search for the international market, as follows: participation in international business roundtables; visit and exhibition in international fairs; participation in international missions; international market research; participation in a training cycle on foreign trade; participation in events such as Trade Meeting Abroad (Encomex) and Fair for Handling, Storage and Cargo, Transport and Logistics Terminals (Expocargo), as well as the use of tools that allow the development of a virtual showroom, such as Brasil Global Net and Vitrine do Exportador (Rochinheski & Brum, 2013).

To strengthen national production chains and increase their internal and external competitiveness, ApexBrasil created PEIEX, in order to promote activities in locations where there is business concentration, by offering companies management solutions, actions related to the search for qualified information, product adequacy and access to markets. The Program also works to improve business competitiveness, as well as to identify the potential of companies for international insertion. In this process, it is privileged, initially, to serve companies that offer products with export potential (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019).

#### 2.4.1 Export Qualification Program - PEIEX

PEIEX establishes partnerships with several universities and research centers in projects throughout Brazil, with the objective of operationalizing the program in specific municipalities and regions. These associated institutions play a crucial role in qualifying companies, helping them to start export activities in a planned manner (Cruz, Bussolo & Iacovone, 2018; Dornelas & Carneiro, 2018).



It is present in all states of Brazil with 34 active Operational Centers and others in planning, totaling 1,313 municipalities, 237 extension technicians, 7,747 companies for export between 2016 and 2018, 20,000 companies completed the program in 8 years (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).

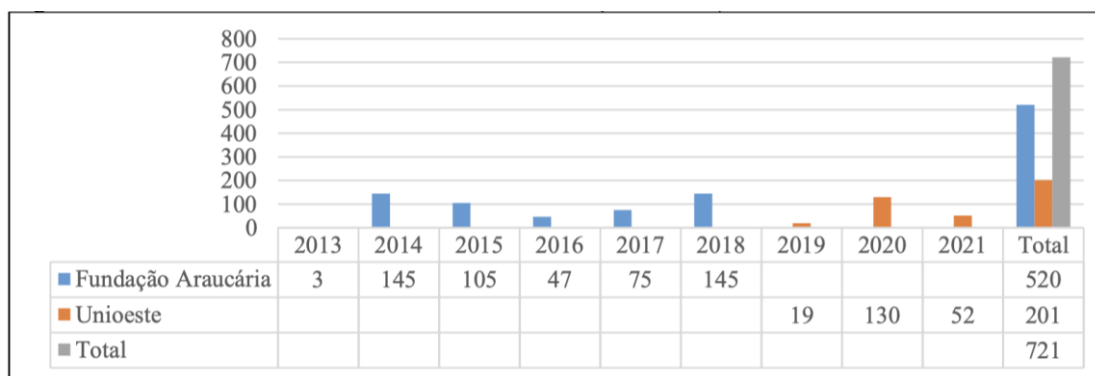
The Program focuses on companies from six sectors, namely: food and beverages (a), fashion (b), home and construction (c), personal hygiene, perfumery and cosmetics (d), machinery and equipment (e) and creative economy (f). No matter the size of the company or its tax regime, PEIEX serves companies that are motivated to adapt their product and/or services to the Brazilian export efforts and have an active profile in the federal revenue company's legal entity registry (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).

The greatest indicator of the efficiency of the work performed is the insertion of the company served by the Program in international trade after (or during) the qualification of the PEIEX. And this can be in two ways: the company that has never exported and makes its first operations from the Program, and the company that already exports, but with the PEIEX qualification starts to access other markets. By increasing its diversification of export destinations, increasing its sources of income, and increasing its client portfolio (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).

#### 2.4.2 Partnership between ApexBrasil and UNIOESTE

The State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) is a partner of ApexBrasil, and applies the PEIEX methodology in the qualification of companies. The service is free and provided by specialist professionals and extension professors, based on visits to companies and guidance given to entrepreneurs on the paths to the foreign market (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019)

Between 2013 and 2021, the PEIEX Cascavel Operational Center provided 721 services to 540 companies, as can be seen in Figure 7 (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).



**Figure 7.** PEIEX Cascavel: number of attendances (2013/2021).

Source: Prepared by Christ, Faria & Araujo (2022).

The conversion rate of the companies served by PEIEX Cascavel, which carried out direct exports after the service between 2013 and 2021, was 16.30%. In other words, of the 540 qualified companies, 88 started to export directly. However, this percentage may be higher, as the triangulation of the data was carried out based on information from the Ministry of Economy, which considers companies that export directly. Companies that export indirectly, through intermediaries, are not counted in the official list of exporters (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022). According to Silva (2021), the use of indirect exports can be an initial strategy for companies in the phase of insertion in the international market, offering a more affordable alternative for the internationalization process.

This result (16.30% of insertion in the international market after the qualification of PEIEX Cascavel) is quite relevant in the sense that in practice it is more common for the company to insert itself from indirect export, that is, industries "outsource" the export to a company specialized in this service/activity, such as trading companies or ECEs (exporting trading companies). In other words, the conversion rate of PEIEX Cascavel can be even higher, considering that many companies served by PEIEX Cascavel start their export activities from indirect export (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).

PEIEX Cascavel also has a hub in the municipality of Foz do Iguaçu, which serves companies from: Céu Azul, Itaipulândia, Matelândia, Medianeira, Missal, Ramilândia, Santa Helena, Santa Terezinha de Itaipu, São Miguel do Iguaçu, Serranópolis do Iguaçu and Vera Cruz do Oeste (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).

### 2.4.3 The PEIEX Export Support Methodology

The PEIEX methodology has changed over time, that is, at first the service was focused on management and foreign trade topics were worked in parallel (2016/2018) and in this phase of the Program it was allowed to make different deliveries to the same company. As of 2019, the PEIEX has been reformulated, which now has an exclusive focus on foreign trade, that is, a single delivery, considering the Export Plan (for goods companies) and the Value Map (for service companies) (Christ, Faria & Araujo, 2022).

PEIEX develops an initial methodology with companies that accept to participate in the program. These are evaluated and, after the composition of the diagnosis, informed about the internal improvements necessary to increase their competitiveness and efficiency, for participation in export promotion actions (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019).

Based on the evaluation of the production structure, an initial planning is synthesized in the Demand Meeting Plan. After collecting the information (checklist), a diagnosis and a work plan (demands) are prepared with the necessary requirements for export. The technical suggestions are proposed to the companies and, through negotiation, the period for their implementation is defined. At the end of the period, the company is evaluated again and a document is delivered recording the completion of this phase, which informs how much the company has prioritized and whether it is qualified to operate in foreign trade (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019).

At the end of the service, the company will be able to develop an export plan and able to participate in trade promotion actions (rounds, missions, fairs, etc.) organized by ApexBrasil in different foreign markets (Miranda, Ghisi & Goede, 2019). In addition, it will be able to contribute to Brazil's achievement of SDG 8, in which target 8.3 highlights the importance of supporting productive activities and entrepreneurship through the promotion of public policies, thus corroborating the role played by ApexBrasil through PEIEX.

### 3 METHOD AND TECHNIQUES OF TECHNICAL PRODUCTION RESEARCH

#### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is of an applied nature, as it aims to generate knowledge with practical application to solve a specific problem (Gil, 2019). In terms of objectives, this is an exploratory research. According to Vergara (2021), exploratory research seeks to offer a broad view of the problem investigated, usually through a bibliographic survey and practical experiences related to the topic. In this study, the exploratory approach is adopted through document analysis, focus groups and interviews, seeking to capture the perceptions of the actors involved. With this, the objective is to understand the effects of the qualifications carried out by PEIEX Cascavel in breweries in the western region of Paraná.

As for the approach to the problem, the study is qualitative. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the qualitative approach seeks to understand complex phenomena that cannot be measured statistically, and is characterized by flexibility that allows adaptation to unstructured data. The choice of this approach is justified by the objective of analyzing how the PEIEX program contributes to sustainable development, as established in target 8.3 of SDG 8, in companies in the brewing sector, enabling a detailed and contextualized view of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

In the technical procedures, the study adopts the case study strategy, widely used in the Social Sciences and Administration. The case study allows the in-depth investigation of a phenomenon in its real context, which can be composed of one or more cases, and integrating multiple data sources (Yin, 2018). The method makes it possible to combine qualitative and quantitative evidence for a robust analysis.

The evidence in a case study can be collected from a variety of sources, and the use of different sources aids in data triangulation, a technique that reinforces the validity and reliability of the research (Flick, 2018). Triangulation enriches the understanding of the phenomenon studied by integrating multiple perspectives and data of different nature.

In the context of this study, data collection was carried out through document analysis, focus groups and interviews. These tools allowed access to relevant information directly from the actors involved and from the institutional documents related to PEIEX Cascavel. Data analysis was carried out using the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2016),

which is characterized by the systematization of categories and themes emerging from the data collected.

The detailed procedures for data collection and analysis are described in the next sections of this chapter. A general summary of the characterization of the research can be found in Chart 1:

Frame 1. Characterization of the research

Nature	Applied
Objective	Exploratory
Addressing the problem	Qualitative
Technical procedures	Case Study

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

It is important to highlight that the chosen case study provides a detailed look at the reality of the participating companies, allowing them to explore their practices and challenges in a real context.

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Different methods were used for data collection in order to establish a scientifically consistent data triangulation. Chart 2 presents the data collection procedures with the respective specific objectives to be contemplated.

Frame 2. Data Collection Procedure

Objectives	Mechanisms	Source of Collection
a) To identify the role of PEIEX in the internationalization process of companies qualified by the Cascavel Nucleus.	- Semi-structured interview - Focus group - Document analysis	- Managers of Breweries 1 and 2; - Extension technicians;
b) Identify the main benefits acquired and difficulties faced by companies in the brewing sector during participation in the PEIEX program at the Cascavel Nucleus.	- Semi-structured interview - Focus group	- Managers of Breweries 1 and 2; - Extension technicians;
c) To evaluate how the results obtained by the qualification for export carried out by the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus relate to SDG 8 in companies in the brewing sector.	- Semi-structured interview - Focus group	- Managers of Breweries 1 and 2; - Extension technicians;

d) Propose actions that contribute to the improvement of results in the export qualification process considering SDG 8 in companies in the brewing sector.	- Document analysis	- Results of the interviews; - Online data;
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Source: Survey Data (2024).

After the presentation of the table that relates the objectives of the research with the respective data collection procedures used, it is possible to observe that the data collection was structured in such a way as to comprehensively and effectively address the aspects pertinent to the study. Each objective is accompanied by specific mechanisms that include semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis, allowing a triangulation of information. The diversity of sources, which includes both managers of the breweries interviewed and extension technicians, program monitors and data available online, provides a multifaceted view of the realities faced by companies in the brewing sector. These procedures are essential to ensure the depth and richness of the data collected, allowing a more robust and grounded analysis of the benefits and difficulties experienced during participation in the PEIEX program at the Cascavel Center.

### 3.2.1 Document analysis

Sá-Silva, Almeida & Guindani (2009) present some pertinent questions about documentary research, discussing the concept of document and the procedures of document analysis. They point out that documentary research is a procedure that uses methods and techniques for the apprehension, understanding and analysis of documents of the most varied types, and that it is a method of choosing and verifying data that aims at access to relevant sources. In preparing a document for analysis, those who work with the documents must locate the relevant texts and evaluate their credibility, as well as their representativeness. Thus, the critical evaluation of documents at all stages of documentary analysis is very pertinent (Poupart, Deslauriers, Groulx, Laperrière, Mayer & Pires, 2012)

The documentary analysis in this study focused on publicly accessible reports, such as the Beer Yearbook, data on exports and imports in the beer sector provided by the Ministry of Economy, and information available on the ApexBrasil website, among others. These documents will be used to meet the specific objectives of this work.

In addition, research already carried out in other contexts and branches of activities was also verified, in order to compare scenarios and produce a consistent description of the observed reality.

### 3.2.2 Focus Group

The focus group is a qualitative research technique that involves the gathering of a group of people to discuss a specific topic, guided by stimuli that encourage debate. The main characteristic of this technique is group interaction, which enables the generation of data from social dynamics and exchanges between participants. This allows for the creation of an environment that favors discoveries and an active and committed participation of the group members (Ressel, Beck, Gualda, Hoffmann & Sehnem, 2008). According to Flick (2021), this collective interaction is essential to access different perspectives, enriching the analysis of the topic in question.

This technique is particularly suitable for exploratory phases of a survey, when the goal is to gain a broader understanding of a phenomenon or to evaluate a project, program, or service. In addition, it can be combined with other data collection techniques, such as interviews or document analysis, to strengthen the consistency and depth of the results (Morgan, 2018; Flick, 2021).

In this study, a focus group was conducted with extension technicians from the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus, who were directly involved in the qualification processes of companies in the brewing sector. The meeting was recorded in audio, with the prior authorization of the participants, so that the results could later be analyzed and described in detail.

With this, we seek to meet the specific objectives of this work, and the script used during this data collection is found in Appendix A.

### 3.2.3 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most common sources of data collection in case study research, as mentioned by Eisenhardt (1989). However, researchers are free to use other methodologies, as flexibility in the choice of data sources is crucial for the robustness of the research. An important feature of the case study is the overlap between data collection and analysis, with field notes being a valuable tool to facilitate this integration (Yin, 2018).

Contemporary researchers, such as Flick (2021) and Morgan (2018), also discuss the diversity of interview types used in the Social Sciences, including structured, semi-structured, open-ended, and group interviews. They highlight the importance of the interviewer's planning and posture for the success of the interview, as well as considering the advantages and disadvantages of each type. The choice of data collection technique must therefore be carefully aligned with the specific research problem (Boni & Quaresma, 2005).

In this study, we opted for semi-structured interviews, which combine open-ended and closed-ended questions, allowing the interviewee to share their perspectives more freely. This approach offers the researcher a previously defined script of questions, but in an environment that resembles an informal conversation, which facilitates the fluidity of the discussion. The main advantage of this format is its ability to generate a more representative sample of the population of interest, while also directing data collection in a way that meets the research objectives (Flick, 2021).

To facilitate understanding, the questions that were used in the interview are detailed in Appendix B. The sample was composed of two companies served by PEIEX Cascavel, characterizing a multiple case study. The subjects of the research were the managers of the participating companies, aiming to obtain significant qualitative data for this study.

### 3.3 SELECTION OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE

In order to select the actors of this research, some criteria were established to choose the companies to be interviewed. These criteria include two main groups: i) being a company in the brewing sector; ii) have participated in the activities developed by the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus.

The companies were selected based on the information that they were within the group of companies served by the extension technicians of the PEIEX program, and, to provide a counterpoint in the analyses, two breweries of different sizes were selected. Thus, it was sought to identify the difficulties faced in the process of qualification for export, as well as the benefits obtained through participation in the program. In addition, the view of the entrepreneurs on the internationalization process was investigated, offering new perspectives for the analysis. Thus, the selection of participants was made by an intentional and non-random process, following previously established criteria (CRESWELL & CRESWELL, 2017).



Regarding the participants in the focus group, extension technicians who were active and who had completed at least one qualification in companies in the brewing sector were selected. In addition, the same questions applied to them were addressed in an individual interview with the monitor of the PEIEX Cascavel Program, held later.

The inclusion of the PEIEX Cascavel Program monitor as a participant in the selection of the target audience is of paramount importance, as she has a comprehensive and deep view of the program and its operations. His practical experience and knowledge about the dynamics of qualification and export complemented the information obtained in the interviews with the extension technicians. By addressing the same questions discussed in the focus group, the monitor contributes with a unique perspective, allowing the answers to be compared and contrasted, enriching the data analysis.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This section presents the results obtained from interviews with brewery managers, a focus group with extension technicians and an interview with a monitor from PEIEX Cascavel. To this end, the analysis of the perspectives of the various actors involved was the approach chosen to achieve the specific objectives of this work. With this purpose, an institutional diagnosis of the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus and the brewing companies of this study is initially presented, followed by the results obtained from the applied methodology.

The interviewees of this research, according to the methodology adopted, were coded to preserve their identity and ensure the confidentiality of the information provided.

Frame 3. Data Collection Procedure.

Interviewees from the PEIEX Cascavel Center	
Monitor	Monitor 1
Extension Technicians (focus group participants)	Coach 1
	Coach 2
Interviewees from qualified breweries	
Cascavel Brewery - Paraná	Brewery 1
Brewery of Foz do Iguaçu - Paraná	Brewery 2

Source: Survey Data (2024).

Each participant received a code that was used throughout the analysis, ensuring the anonymization of the data and maintaining the integrity of the information collection process. This approach allowed an objective evaluation of the testimonies, without compromising the privacy of the interviewees.

### 4.1 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE RESEARCH OBJECT

#### 4.1.1 PEIEX Cascavel: Institutional Diagnosis

The Operational Nucleus of the Export Qualification Program (PEIEX) in Cascavel plays a crucial role in preparing companies to operate in the international market. Established with the objective of training local companies for export, the Center focuses on offering technical and strategic support, especially for emerging sectors such as the beer sector. With a specialized team, PEIEX Cascavel uses various tools and methodologies to ensure that the companies served are prepared to face the challenges of foreign trade, integrating, whenever possible, sustainability practices in their operations.

The PEIEX methodology has changed over time, that is, at first the service was focused on management and foreign trade topics were worked in parallel (2016/2018), and, in this phase of the Program, it was allowed to make different deliveries to the same company. Since then, there has been a reformulation of the PEIEX, which has become exclusively focused on foreign trade, that is, a single delivery: Export Plan (for goods companies), and the Value Map (for service companies). Considering the size of the companies served under PEIEX Cascavel, more than half of the companies are classified in the Microenterprise size. And, in relation to the profile of the economic activities of companies, the concentration of services takes place in the manufacturing industries (Christ, de Faria & da Piedade Araújo, 2022).

In both developed and emerging countries, governments have invested in programs such as PEIEX to increase the competitiveness of companies on the global stage, in the face of intense international competition. The main objective of these initiatives is to act as an external strategic resource, providing companies with crucial information for effective performance in the international market (Arruda, 2020).

The benefits of these types of programs are described by Leonidou, Katsikeas and Piercy (1998), such as: stimulating interest in exports among the business class and helping entrepreneurs to identify an opportunity for growth in international trade. In this way, reducing the often oversized perceptions of the risks, costs and complexities of exporting.

Although the focus of these programs is on companies with export potential, these initiatives also need to serve as government advisors on reducing barriers to export and new forms of incentive to existing and potential exporters. And so, there is a dissemination of external opportunities and knowledge about exports, in addition to providing support for the planning and achievement of activities in the international environment (Arruda, 2020).

In Brazil, the federal government created a series of bodies and agencies, with the aim of developing Brazilian foreign trade. Some examples that can be cited are: Chamber of Foreign Trade (CAMEX), Brazilian Agency for the Promotion of Exports and Investments (ApexBrasil), Brazilian Service of Support to Micro and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE), Department of International Promotion of Itamaraty, among others (Rodrigues, 2004).

Considering the objectives of this work, the focus of the investigation was applied to the ApexBrasil Agency, which works in an integrated way with several institutions, among them the State University of Western Paraná, Unioeste. The implementation of this partnership takes place through the Export Qualification Program (PEIEX).

ApexBrasil is focused on commercial promotion actions and appreciation of Brazilian products and services abroad, where the protagonist is the entrepreneurs. Some actions that can be mentioned: market intelligence, strategy for internationalization, business and image promotion, investment attraction, and business qualification (Christ, de Faria & da Piedade Araújo, 2022).

Considering Unioeste, one of ApexBrasil's partner universities, it has a contribution to the development and construction of an innovative culture for the region in which it is inserted. In addition, it is an important institution that attracts resources from the locality where it is located. That is, the institution produces and socializes scientific and technological knowledge, encourages the formation of cooperation environments in an entrepreneurial way, which can be characterized as its social capital (Christ, 2022).

The evolution of internationalization is also noticeable at Unioeste, especially with partnerships between higher education institutions from different countries. They not only stimulate the exchange of knowledge, but also strengthen projects and expand their dissemination, placing the university in a position of relevance (Christ, 2022).

And, considering internationalization as an axis of action, the PEIEX Operational Center at Unioeste is core to training, consulting and advisory with the objective of increasing competitiveness and promoting the export culture in companies, preparing them for the challenges of the international market (Unioeste, 2023).

This program is also present in all states of Brazil with 34 active operational centers, with trained teams, formed by a coordinator, a monitor and extension technicians. In Paraná, PEIEX has been operating in the regions of Curitiba, Londrina, and Maringá since 2009, and in Cascavel, since 2013 (Unioeste, 2023).

PEIEX Cascavel serves all municipalities in the West and Southwest region of Paraná, with a total of 87 municipalities, and has a center in the municipality of Foz do Iguaçu. Between 2013 and 2021, it carried out 721 services in 540 companies, and of these services, the municipality where the program was located concentrated half of them, followed by Toledo and Terra Roxa. Considering the 2022-2024 biennium, the target number of qualifications was set at 150 companies (Christ, de Faria & da Piedade Araújo, 2022).

Considering only the "Food and beverages" segment, 71 companies were served by PEIEX Cascavel from 2013 to 2021. And, as some of them went through the qualification process more than once, this sector resulted in a total of 89 services. For this period of analysis, the conversion rate of all companies served in the center, that is, those that exported directly after the service, was 16.30% (Christ, de Faria & da Piedade Araújo, 2022).

#### 4.1.2 Brewing companies under review

The national beer is now produced in about 700 municipalities, in more than 1,380 Brazilian breweries (ApexBrasil, 2022). The Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil) has invested in this potential, having qualified 10% of the segment for international sales. Between 2018 and 2021, through the Export Qualification Program (PEIEX), the Agency trained entrepreneurs and teams from 80 breweries throughout Brazil to start exporting (ApexBrasil, 2023a).

The two breweries that were the object of research in this study were qualified by PEIEX Cascavel. Both represent a significant sample of the regional brewing sector, evidencing the diversity in terms of size, production profile, and stage of export development. These companies went through the PEIEX Cascavel qualification process, being prepared to face the challenges of the international market. The analysis of the trajectory of these breweries, considering their production characteristics, market strategies and competitive differentials, provides a solid basis to understand how qualification influenced their ability to insert and compete in the foreign market.

Brewery 1 was founded in the last century, but faced a period of interruption of its activities. From 2008, it was revitalized and since then it has consolidated itself as a reference in the production of high-quality beers in the western region of Paraná. The construction and assembly of the factory took place in 2011, with the start of production of the first draft beers – Pilsen, Weizen and Dunkel – in 2012 (Company data, 2024).

Since its foundation, the brewery has obtained significant recognition, standing out with the achievement of the Silver medal for Pilsen beer and the Bronze medal for Dunkel in the 2014 Cervezas America Cup. In 2015, Dunkel was elected the best beer in Brazil, and Weizen and CascaHell received Silver at the South Beer Cup. Later, in 2016, JararaPA won Bronze in the Brazilian Beer Competition. The year 2018 was remarkable with the launch of JararAPA 2.0 and the achievement of two medals at the Brazilian Beer Competition (Company Data, 2024).

The production line of Brewery 1 is equipped with high technology and has a team of qualified professionals, with a total of eighteen employees, including four partners. Each step of the manufacturing process is monitored to ensure that the beers maintain the standard that characterizes the brand. With an area of 600m<sup>2</sup> dedicated exclusively to production and storage, the brewery distributes its products throughout Brazil (Company data, 2024).

The inputs used are of international quality, following the tradition of German purity, most of the beers produced are composed only of water, malt, hops and yeast. In addition to these, the brewery also develops special recipes that include ingredients such as oats, cocoa, and beers aged in wooden barrels, expanding the diversity of flavors offered to its consumers (Company data, 2024).

Already, the history of Brewery 2 began to be traced on March 8, 2020, when the team began the first discussions about the possible name and labels. At the time, they had already tried a homemade recipe, produced in the garage of the house of the father of one of the founders, who, impressed with the success, encouraged the opening of the business. With this support, the shed where the brewery would be installed was built. In August 2020, the company obtained the CNPJ and, in March 2021, the license from the Ministry of Agriculture. Initially, production was 300 liters, with a 40-liter pan, and each batch required two days of great effort to fill the fermenter. Currently, in addition to selling bottles, the brewery also sells barrels and serves glasses at the bar attached to the factory, with a production capacity of 1200 liters per month (Company data, 2024).

In this way, Brewery 2 fits as a microbrewery, is based in Foz do Iguaçu and composed only of women. They have no employees, and the production is entirely carried out by the two partners, and, when necessary, an intern. They have more than 6 styles of craft beers, which can be tasted by visitors through a tasting ruler (Company data, 2024).

Each of the breweries under study is at a stage of development and focus. While Brewery 1 is older, with a history of revitalization and expansion, Brewery 2 is recent, with a smaller-scale operation, operated exclusively by the two partners, without regular employees. Both produce a variety of labels, but Brewery 1 has a more consolidated line with international inputs and special recipes, while Brewery 2 focuses on local artisanal production, with a more modest offer.

The choice of the two breweries allows us to explore different realities of the brewing sector. The contrast between an established and award-winning brewery with a new, smaller microbrewery provides a comprehensive insight into the challenges and opportunities in the export qualification process. In addition, it allows you to examine how sustainability can be addressed at different scales of production. And, also, how companies at distinct stages of maturity can prepare to compete in international markets.

#### 4.1.2.1 Export history

The companies interviewed went through the qualification process offered by the PEIEX Cascavel Center. The training included everything from documentary and regulatory adequacy to strategies for insertion in international markets, always taking into account the specific characteristics of each company.

As mentioned in the previous topic, Brewery 1 has a larger size, when compared to another interviewee. And, in this way, the paths of internationalization were traced in a different way. Brewery 2 has no history of exporting so far, and has not shown effective interest in doing so.

The export process reported by Entrepreneur 1 began between 2017 and 2018, when training and qualifications with PEIEX Cascavel began. The first step was to solve the bureaucratic issues necessary to start exports, and Paraguay was the country chosen for this first experience, due to its geographical proximity and ease of trade within Mercosur.

As the big problem is distribution, we chose to focus on neighboring countries, facilitating logistics and flow (Entrepreneur1).

Technician 1 also reinforced the importance of the geographical issue in relation to the flow of products:

Considering our regional market here, in the west of Paraná, the market that is most sought after is the Paraguayan, due to the proximity and facilities due to this. There are three borders that we can serve, which would be via Guaíra, Foz do Iguaçu and Ponta Porã, so these consumer units have a great facility due to the proximity to the companies served by PEIEX Uniãoeste.

During the qualification process, Company 1 participated in a business round in Argentina. However, the progress of export activities was severely hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, which practically paralyzed plans for about two years, due to travel restrictions, mandatory quarantines and the difficulties faced by the events sector in Brazil, on which the brewery depended to sell its main product, draft beer.

According to Backes, Arias, Storopoli & Rodriguez Ramos (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic forced most companies to abandon their strategic plans. This period caused a retraction in mobility and freight traffic around the world. Even after the critical period, the consequences, especially in foreign trade, were deeply felt, since it immensely hindered exports in all areas, whether in the supply of inputs, lack of equipment, freight costs or product shipping time. (de Araujo, de Araújo & da Costa Júnior, 2023).

Considering specifically the beer sector, the author Viana (2023) comments that the impact was especially relevant on the sales of alcoholic beverages in the so-called "on-trade"

market (bars, restaurants, hotels, etc.), which is the main sales channel for this type of product. This situation was, in fact, cited by Entrepreneur 1, pointing out that there were changes in consumer behavior at the time of the outbreak, with a greater search for domestic and online sales.

With the drop in revenue, the pandemic not only affected the internationalization plan, but also local operations, as Cervejaria 1 focused on a more segmented market, unlike large breweries that have a wider distribution.

In 2022, with the end of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the company resumed the process of qualifying and regularizing the necessary documentation for export, directing its efforts to the Paraguayan market. This choice was made because, as a member of Mercosur, the country offered strategic advantages, such as the ease of adapting labels and the absence of significant language barriers, and, above all, territorial proximity. According to data from the MDIC, Paraguay is the main destination for exports of beer produced in Brazil.

In December 2023, the company made its first export shipment, after adjustments and regularizations that were mentioned during the interview:

It all started when we realized the need to adapt our catalogs and website in other languages, such as English and Spanish. After this material update, we started to study the logistics necessary for shipping the products. Have an idea of the prices, cubage issues in the containers. Then we went after the necessary records, the formality and structure to be able to export. But, everything is overly complicated and with a lot of details and information (Entrepreneur 1).

Distribution and establishing the brand in an international market presented major challenges, as reported by the interviewee. He pointed out that the difficulty of building a presence in a new country, where the company is not yet known, resembles the process of starting a new business from scratch. In addition, he mentioned the financial limitation of the brewery, which does not have the necessary resources to invest in marketing, distribution and market expansion with the same intensity that large industries can do.

Due to the issues, Brewery 1 has been limited to exporting only one shipment so far. A situation similar to this, however in other companies, was highlighted by Técnico 2:

(...) There is a problem called "chicken flight". In many cases, the company makes only one export and thinks that due to difficulties and barriers, lack of information and market, various situations, it ends up abandoning the international market. In this way, considering Brazilian companies, those that have already exported do not reach 1%, and among them less than 5% remain in the export market, as they find several stones in the way that they cannot remove. Therefore, PEIEX also comes to assist in this process of teaching entrepreneurs that internationalization is interesting and fundamental, but that it is also important to stay. And so, after a sale, don't give up on the international scene (Technician 2).

From the experience of the extension technician, it is observed that many companies give up the international market after a first attempt to export due to the numerous difficulties



faced. This demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining the continuity and persistence necessary to achieve success in international trade, highlighting the need for continued support and effective strategies to overcome export barriers.

## 4.2 RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP

This section addresses the analysis of the results of this research, also contemplating the objectives established in this study. Interviews were conducted using the focus group technique with Extension Technicians from PEIEX Cascavel who participated in the qualification of brewing companies. An interview with the same script was also applied to the program's monitor. Subsequently, two entrepreneurs from the brewing industry who were qualified by PEIEX were interviewed. The answers provided by the interviewees were personal and reflected their individual experiences, as well as the perceived needs of each one. Among the five interviewees, three were men and two were women. In general, the answers demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the processes and highlighted potential improvements that, in the view of the interviewees, can be implemented.

Based on the work of Araujo, Araújo & da Costa Júnior (2023), it was observed that the technicians have a combination of academic, business, and executive experience, with a focus on foreign trade, internationalization of companies, and related topics. This allows us to argue that these professionals are qualified to identify relevant elements in the situations faced by entrepreneurs during the service.

In addition to the technicians, two entrepreneurs from brewing companies of varied sizes were interviewed, and their answers gave access to practical and real data on the subject under study. In this way, the interviews brought perspectives from various actors involved.

### 4.2.1 ApexBrasil support for qualified companies

We can understand PEIEX as one of ApexBrasil's operational "arms", offering consistent and improved support in the internationalization processes of companies. This cooperation was mentioned by the interviewees:

Regarding support, every year Apex has been improving this process of putting companies in the market, opening more doors, improving these processes of participating in events "out there", especially when it comes to food and beverages. And in relation to the practical support that ApexBrasil provides, we are here at the forefront with PEIEX, indicating customs brokers, pricing, and all the tools involved in the process of qualifying companies (Technician1). The form of government support changes over time, I have been able to see this since I have been part of the program. This happens mainly, but not only, when the government changes.

PEIEX is a public policy, and it only exists because it has results, we deliver reports, and we show what our goals are and we show everything being executed. Our value metric, how we measure the efficiency of this, is companies becoming exporters. So, of the companies served, how many started to export? This is something very important (...) (Monitor).

Still in relation to the support offered by ApexBrasil, PEIEX was mentioned as a gateway, but other projects and actions carried out by the Agency were also mentioned:

Last year we had a Program called Exporta Mais Brasil, which was sectoral. So, here in the west of Paraná, the fish market was contemplated in this project. But for the beer market there was also. It is a moment when ApexBrasil brings together partners, and especially foreign importers to come and buy from qualified companies. In the case of beer, the business round was in Rio de Janeiro, as there is a very strong beer culture there. So, I see that in fact ApexBrasil is concerned with the export of these companies, you know? This is the great core that it provides (Monitor).

If the company is well engaged and wants to participate, there are many fairs available. But, as the costs for their participation are borne by the companies themselves, participation is more complex. What ApexBrasil does is facilitate entry into that country, and provide a space for the exhibition of products. I think that the coolest thing for those who qualified through PEIEX is to participate in a business mission, because they will leave here with everything already prepared by ApexBrasil, not having to worry about what will happen there. He will have a prepared environment and will end up having contact with ambassadors in other countries and secretaries of commerce. It has agendas ready for business rounds and technical visits (...) (Technician1).

It can be observed that, according to the technicians, participation in the business rounds is a fundamental first step in the preparation of proposals to possible international buyers. According to information provided by ApexBrasil, during the 6th round of Exporta Mais Brasil, dedicated to the brewing industry, 11 companies participated and buyers from 4 different countries, including Denmark and Argentina (ApexBrasil, 2023a)

Entrepreneur1 participated in one of these events, and commented on his experience, highlighting the importance of interactions with the various actors involved in an international negotiation. According to him, by participating in missions and business roundtables, the company is investing not only in prospecting customers, but in understanding the reality of the target market and how to best position itself in it.

We have already participated in one in Argentina, where we did a round with suppliers and everything else. We realized that we had to be better structured, and we even received an invitation to one in Colombia, but we chose not to participate. In these events, people want to know if you already know how the issues involving the export of your product work in practice, such as logistical issues. This I think is one of the main points, because they don't want to take anyone by the hand and teach the basic issues of buying, selling and delivering, bank procedures, and everything else. I realized that priority will be given to those who already have this prior knowledge, as this makes negotiations much easier. In our case, the mission we participated in had the main function of showing us how things work in practice, opening up our range of knowledge (Entrepreneur1).

He also commented that, according to his view, the main advantage of the Business Roundtable is the knowledge generated by seeing other realities, and an excellent opportunity

to obtain practical insights on exports. However, it also exposes that companies need a lot of preparation and proactivity to make the most of these opportunities.

The conversations with local people, suppliers, distributors, retailers, other competitors who are also looking to open the market. The event we participated in was focused on the food industry, not exclusively on beer. (...) I realized the importance of going to these events already understanding how to get there and make your propaganda to be adequate at the time of conversations. For this it is important to bring your catalog in the correct language of the country (Entrepreneur1).

It is possible to observe that the interviewee highlights that this type of event is not only a sales opportunity, but also a preparation for future negotiations. There is scope for hands-on learning, and he recognizes that to maximize the potential of such events, it is crucial to be well-structured. This includes preparing catalogs in suitable languages, having price lists ready, and having a clear sense of the logistics costs involved. According to Entrepreneur 1, detailed preparation is what differentiates a productive business round from a merely informative experience:

The price lists were another thing they charged us. Many people who participated didn't have it, they arrived very raw. It is important to have an idea of the price of freight to that region, or at least an idea of the logistics that will be needed to ship the goods. At this point I realized that the logistics part is not something that PEIEX provides a lot of information about, we are the ones who have to look for. In our beverage business, internal logistics in our country is already difficult, imagine considering international shipping. And as this is something very particular to each sector, it is not easy for the PEIEX program to provide information for everyone. It is up to each entrepreneur to seek and update himself (Entrepreneur1)

Although PEIEX Cascavel has helped the company to qualify and understand various aspects of exporting, it is clear that, according to the manager's view, there is a gap in relation to international logistics. And, considering the beverage sector, in which the beer market fits, logistics is cited as a particularly challenging point, where the interviewee mentions that it is the company's own responsibility to seek information and updates on this aspect. This suggests that the Program offers a good initial base, but that participation in events requires a higher level of technical knowledge, in issues such as logistics and pricing.

Considering the importance of building the price, Technician1 highlighted the importance of adjusting the price for each country and shipment, demonstrating that this point is part of a solid strategic vision:

Regarding the economic issue, we work a lot on the issue of price, so that companies can sell well, with a good margin, and thus be able to pay employees well, invest and hire more. That's why this point of the price I leave more hours available to be worked, because for each country and shipment there are changes, and it is important to be well studied to have an interesting financial result. The idea is not necessarily to make a low price, as it may be that the target market can meet a more expensive price, as is the case in Paraguay. Many customers want to set the price, have all the tax benefits and leave the price lower than the competitor, but this does not necessarily have to happen, it is necessary to analyze how much that market is available to pay (Technician1).

The approach described by the interviewee exemplifies economic sustainability, which aims to maintain the financial balance of companies in the long term. Junior and Cescon (2022) discuss this perspective, highlighting the need for improvement in the management of organizations. According to the authors, it is essential to consider economic balance in all sectors. In addition, they highlight that this balance is achieved through strategic decisions, such as adequate price formation, adaptation to market conditions, and resistance to the pressure to compete only on price. The company, in this way, seeks solid and healthy growth, preserving the quality of its products, maintaining good profit margins and positioning itself competitively in the international market, without compromising its financial health.

Another government service mentioned during the focus group was the Exporta Fácil program, a logistics solution aimed at facilitating the shipment of products abroad, especially for small companies. When comparing ApexBrasil and Exporta Fácil, it is observed that both programs aim to strengthen Brazilian exports, however, they operate in different areas and with complementary approaches.

I would like to complement a tool that the federal government has introduced, which is “Exporta fácil” in recent years, linked to the Post Office, for the dispatch of products internationally. It is an aid program, with reduced values in the export of goods, helps the dispatch by the Post Office, and has a diversified delivery network in several countries. They allow the export of liquids, including beers, as long as they follow specific regulations, such as appropriate packaging, and specific authorizations (Technician 2).

It is possible to note that “Exporta Fácil” facilitates access to international markets for companies, and, in addition, can be an ally in promoting a sustainable economy. By making exporting more accessible, the program facilitates the inclusion of more companies in global trade and contributes to the adoption of more responsible and sustainable economic practices.

#### 4.2.2 Cultura exportadora e sustentabilidade

ApexBrasil's strategic objectives for the 2020-2023 period were established based on three major perspectives: social, internal processes, and sustainability. The relationship between the PEIEX Cascavel program and the sustainability of qualified companies was mentioned by the interviewees in a timely manner:

When we talk about ApexBrasil itself, they focus a lot on the subject of sustainability in the reports and studies they present, such as with products from the Amazon and Northeast. But, considering our work plan, it doesn't say anything exactly about this. In previous agreements, there was a topic called: People Management. And there this topic was deepened, if all the employees were registered, what could be observed in the work environment in relation to the facilities, it was really very detailed, and in many cases it took more than a day to finalize this part of the diagnosis. However, over time, Apex ended up focusing on actions directly aimed at exports, and focused on the processes that really lead to this purpose. Thus, matters beyond this are usually referred to Sebrae consulting (Técnico1).

There is no defined process on paper that says, you as a technician must teach the entrepreneur and develop the environmental, social and economic sides of the company that will be qualified. There is nothing formalized. However, we give a direction in this sense, that internationalization will bring the company a perspective in terms of revenue and growth. In the same aspect, it will need to hire employees and specialized people, which will contribute to the social sense of the enterprise (Técnico2).

There is a consensus among the interviewees about the lack of formalization regarding the concept of sustainability within the PEIEX Program. In addition, it is possible to identify that, according to their views, there is a certain dissonance between the institutional vision of sustainability of the ApexBrasil agency and the practical implementation in the centers, such as PEIEX Cascavel. According to Technician 1, in previous agreements there was a focus on management aspects, including practices that could be associated with social sustainability, such as employee registration and working environment conditions. However, over time, the focus shifted to concrete results related to exports, relegating other aspects, such as sustainability, to external consultancies such as Sebrae.

Our qualification focuses specifically on the work plan already designed by the PEIEX program, so for the issue of sustainability, the technician contributes a lot to points that are not within the plan (Technician1).

I perceive a lack of understanding and even a failure of communication, in relation to the concept of sustainability. It is not clear even to us, as a technical team. Financial sustainability is certainly a very strong arm, but not only that. I see that there is a way to move forward in this sense of the tripod of sustainability. Because ApexBrasil communicates that sustainability is part of the strategy. But, I have a somewhat pessimistic view, since I realize that today issues related to sustainability are very fashionable. I realize that for the entrepreneur, sustainability is saving paper, disposing of waste correctly, these things. But we know that it is much more than that. So, I see that, yes, there is a lot of room to advance on this front (Monitor).

In the operational practice of the Program, the sustainability approach does not seem to be formalized in a robust way and integrated into the export qualification process. This fact suggests that, even though ApexBrasil values sustainability in its discourse, this is not a priority in the execution of PEIEX. And, that responsibilities related to sustainability are delegated to other actors, such as SEBRAE. This could be proven during the interview with Entrepreneur1, who commented: "In relation to our employees, which would be a part of social sustainability, we had already incorporated it by notions previously given by Sebrae, so we did not see much need for changes during the qualification with PEIEX Cascavel".

Técnico 1's speech highlights the absence of a formal process for the development of sustainability pillars in companies qualified by PEIEX. At the same time, the interviewee mentions that the technicians end up, informally, guiding the entrepreneurs in relation to this topic. And this is particularly relevant, given that sustainability is a central theme in ApexBrasil's discourse.

(...) We talk about the environmental issue of the process, from a packaging consistent with the rules, permissions and legislation behind it. We explain why there are some guidelines in

Europe that allow us to enter with certain packages and in the United States it is not allowed, and vice versa. These are examples of questions that we explain during the qualifications we carry out, but there is nothing formalized within the process on these topics (Tecnico2).

The fact that technicians depend on their own initiative to introduce sustainability aspects into the qualification process demonstrates a lack of organizational structure to incorporate this dimension into the program. If there is no clear direction, the understanding of sustainability ends up being at the mercy of subjective interpretations. This can be observed by the statement of how sustainability is worked on, during the qualifications, by one of the interviewees:

What I have been working on on this point of sustainability is the issue of packaging. If what will be used will be wood, cardboard... How much waste will there be in the manufacture of these packages, what are the materials allowed in the country that will be exported? In addition, improvements in processes, to avoid waste, from tools such as 5S. In a company, we apply the concepts of cleanliness and organization, we remove a truck of dirt, and these disposals imply improvements in the end (Technician 1).

Another crucial point, made by Technician 2, is that during the qualifications he performs, he focuses his attention on the possible volume to be exported from the company that is being qualified, and the quantitative data provided by it. This is because increasing the Brazilian trade balance ends up being the main purpose of ApexBrasil, according to him. And, in this way, the qualitative issues involved in companies end up being left in the background.

The monitor points out that the concept of sustainability is not well understood by the technical team and entrepreneurs, being perceived in a simplistic way, such as saving paper or disposing of waste correctly, ignoring other deeper and interconnected aspects of the environmental, social and economic pillars – the tripod of sustainability. A situation that could be noted, in fact, in one of the answers provided by Entrepreneur1:

During the qualification we have to present our entire process, how it is done, how much water we use, all the information. But, as we work with a drink, and the legislation is already very strict, we already had an optimized structure focused on sustainability. The waste generated is properly treated from the beginning of the company. All water used later goes through a biological process, as it is our main input used, all within the project signed by an environmental engineer (Entrepreneur1).

Regarding the company surveyed, Brewery 1 has a good structure, advanced technology and a history of awards, and therefore has consolidation at a regional level. However, it demonstrated an excessive simplification and lack of clarity around the topic of sustainability, as it related the sustainable practices that they practice only to what is required by legislation.

In this way, there is a clear space for the technical team to be more trained in this aspect and for PEIEX, as a whole, to address the topic in a more strategic and integrated way to the internationalization process of companies.

Brewery 2, when asked about the sustainability of its company, demonstrated a commitment to preservation practices in different aspects of the production process:

We currently work with returnable bottles, reuse them and thus reduce the consumption of new packaging. As well as we reuse the water used to cool the wort for a new batch and dispose of the solid waste for animal feed. In addition to our energy being from the solar system (Entrepreneur 2)

For smaller companies, these actions that were mentioned by Entrepreneur 2 are important, but not necessarily innovative on the subject. Very relevant points for sustainability, and already applied in the company are: use of returnable bottles that can be related to the circular economy, reuse of by-products such as animal feed and use of renewable energy.

In short, these actions are sustainable and effective in the context of a microbrewery, but in order to be more robust, they could be accompanied by more comprehensive strategies with an even greater environmental impact. Because, during the processing of beer, there is a significant generation of waste (Duarte & Rezende, 2023).

Broader initiatives, such as the implementation of complete environmental management systems, total neutralization of carbon emissions, adoption of social responsibility principles – applies to larger companies – fair labor relations, employee safety, diversity and inclusion, community involvement, would be examples of even more advanced practices (Morais, 2023).

Faced with this issue, there is the involvement of the PEIEX Cascavel team during the export qualifications that were carried out. And, in this regard, Técnico 2 suggested that the Program should value the issue of sustainability more during training.

I realize that this part of sustainability lacks a little involvement and specific actions, considering the qualification process we carry out. Therefore, it is my suggestion from PEIEX to encourage these environmental and sustainability issues also within the didactic process, that is, in the transcription, in the actual training that we carry out. In qualifying as a whole. Because, as it happens today, it demands the goodwill of extension technicians to mention these issues (Technician 2).

According to his statement, issues related to the development of the sustainability tripod may be underestimated in the qualification process. And, therefore, it suggests the incorporation in a more structured and intentional way, in order to provide, from the qualification for export, sustainable economic growth.

#### 4.2.3 Export eligibility and sustainable economic growth

The internationalization process of Brazilian companies, which is fostered by the PEIEX program, can be considered a way of promoting sustainable economic growth, as

aimed at by sustainable development goal 8. This SDG advocates the development of competitive businesses capable of generating quality jobs.

In this way, according to the PEIEX Cascavel monitor, by encouraging companies to seek foreign markets, the Program helps to increase the resilience and competitiveness of companies, promoting inclusive and balanced growth in the long term.

According to his perception, the qualification process is very focused on making companies start exporting, and, once the export occurs, it will have several repercussions on an entire chain. Among the effects: increase in revenue, diversification in the source of revenue and no longer depend only on the domestic market, diversifying risks.

In addition, he mentions that, for exports to occur, there is a need to increase the number of personnel, whether operational, tactical, and strategic. To do so, trained people will be needed, who, for example, speak another language, understand a specific process, know how to do some type of certification.

The interviewee also comments, above all, in relation to the brewing companies, which have a large amount of water as production waste. And, in a reasoned way, it points out how exporting is not only a form of market expansion, but also a tool for internal transformation, which requires employee qualification, business structuring, and attention to sustainable practices.

Among the issues raised, it is noted that companies, when going through the process of qualification for export, face obstacles, but also acquire valuable knowledge.

#### 4.2.4 Benefits acquired by companies when they qualify

During the completion of an export qualification, companies not only have access to knowledge of international markets, but also internal and strategic improvements. In this way, PEIEX offers wide-ranging benefits, and acts as a transformation tool for companies of various sizes, helping them overcome barriers and become more competitive (Christ, de Faria & da Piedade Araújo, M. A, 2022)

Considering the Brewing sector, Technician 1 pointed out, according to his view, that the main benefits acquired by companies when qualifying is to have their doors open to the foreign market, in addition to the creation of an export culture.

During my consultations, I seek to awaken an export culture in companies, because they usually do not have one. If we observe, in general, during the formation of companies and creation of business plans, they do not think about the foreign market. Considering our region, we are only 150km from the border with Paraguay and Argentina, and in most cases we do not have these foreign markets contemplated in the companies' business plans (Technician 1).



Another relevant point for the brewing sector was mentioned by Technician 2, responsible for the qualification of Brewery 2. According to him, an innovation that began during the qualification process was the improvement in the packaging of the product:

(...) We specialize in Disposable Pet Bottled Beer. This was an innovation that started around 4, 5 years ago, and started during our PEIEX Cascavel qualification process. This product bottled in 1L, 1.5L packages is now available in supermarkets, with a differentiated, dark bottle to preserve the gas. This type of information can be extracted from the qualification process, which originated in other companies in the same sector. So, in this case, the brewery added knowledge and brought a benefit to it (Technician 2).

For this Brewery, which is artisanal, the main benefit that participating in PEIEX Cascavel brought was knowledge in the export area. According to Faria (2022), companies sometimes do not participate more actively in the foreign market due to a simple lack of knowledge.

Likewise, Entrepreneur 1 showed that one of the main gains by the company during the qualification process was the practical knowledge about the operation of the export processes. This learning included participating in business roundtables, providing networking opportunities and new business partnerships.

In addition, the interviewee highlighted the fundamental role of the extension technician in the continuous support during the process, emphasizing his helpfulness in meeting the company's demands. This shows the importance of personalized follow-up, which helps to clarify doubts, facilitate access to resources, and streamline bureaucratic processes.

In turn, Technician 1, responsible for qualification in this company, pointed out four benefits: improvement of processes, management, product offered and loss of dependence on the domestic market:

In this way, it is possible to understand that exporting is not difficult and that this promotes innovation for the business, from the improvement of processes, improvement of management, search for information for the product offered to be consequently better, loss of dependence with the domestic market (Technician 1).

In order to summarize the benefits highlighted by the interviewees throughout the export qualification process, a figure was created that illustrates these key points, facilitating the visualization and understanding of the positive aspects reported during the interviews.



**Figure 8.** Benefits acquired through the Export Qualification process (Cited by Respondents). Source: Prepared by the author (2024).

These benefits range from access to information on international markets to improvements in internal practices, making companies more competitive and prepared to face the challenges of foreign trade.

In the work carried out by (Arruda, 2020), in the companies served by PEIEX in the Agreste region of Pernambuco, in the textile and clothing sector, the interviewees point to a cascade effect and potential that a program such as PEIEX can provide to a region. Starting with the help in the way companies act, which induces the attraction of value-added talents, increases the income range, also pressures the government for logistical, bureaucratic, and tax solutions, and consequently, has a virtuous effect on the local economy. In this way, according to the author, when well executed, the program provides an effective return for entrepreneurs. In addition to this point, the improvement of the image of the company that

participates in PEIEX and practices exports was also mentioned, because the requirements made by international markets lead to an improvement in the quality of products, thus promoting the company's image in its local market as well.

Although the benefits achieved by companies by being qualified are significant, the interviewees also cited several difficulties along this path, until export. Therefore, while the qualification process is an opportunity for growth, it also requires companies to overcome significant barriers to achieve success in the foreign market.

#### 4.2.5 Difficulties for exports

To export, companies face a series of difficulties and critical points throughout the process. Each sector of the economy has its own particularities, and, therefore, the barriers encountered vary according to the company's field of activity.

Considering the brewing sector, the difficulties faced during the qualification process point to limitations that affect both extension technicians, in the development of their work, and the entrepreneurs themselves.

During the focus group, Technician 1 mentions the registration of products in foreign markets as a particularly complex barrier for food and beverages, such as beer. This is because each country has its own regulations, requiring detailed and specific documentation. In addition, the need to identify and interact with the various entities involved, such as ministries and regulatory agencies, makes the process bureaucratic and time-consuming.

I noticed great difficulty in registering products in other countries, as each country is very different and has its own regulations. So, the registration when we talk about food and beverages, is very complex, and requires very detailed documentation. It is necessary to mine the entities involved to ensure consent. Considering Paraguay, there was a great difficulty in registering beer there (Technician1).

Técnico 2 reinforces this complexity, pointing out that the export process varies significantly from country to country and from economic block to economic block. He mentions that diversity in international regulations is a major challenge, since the processes for exporting to countries such as Paraguay, England and China can be completely different. This creates difficulty for PEIEX technicians, who are not always able to provide a clear path for companies to follow in such different markets. The lack of more specific support from ApexBrasil to deal with these international particularities is also cited, making the qualification process confusing, according to him, both for technicians and entrepreneurs:

In each country and sector, all regulations vary greatly, and there is a difficulty for the PEIEX program to provide an effective guide for everyone. So, in many cases, the information ends up being confusing for us, extension technicians, and also for entrepreneurs.

Such notes are reinforced by Entrepreneur 1, who also highlights the bureaucracy for the registration of products abroad as a great difficulty faced in the qualification process. He also highlights the need for international relationships to facilitate access to these markets, which is not always easy for small or medium-sized companies. In addition, it cites as a barrier faced the logistical issues involved when sending remittances abroad.

In this way, a suggestion for improvement for PEIEX is raised by the interviewee: a more direct integration with other countries. According to his vision, the creation of ApexBrasil's international offices with consultants that can facilitate access to regulations and create connections between Brazilian entrepreneurs and foreign markets could simplify the registration process and reduce bureaucratic barriers. This assistance would work, according to him, as a "middle ground", making the process more agile and effective:

I think that PEIEX lacks a certain direct integration with other countries. For example, ApexBrasil had an office with consultants who connected entrepreneurs here with other countries. Referrals would be a great support and would make a difference, they would be like a midfield, let's talk like that (Entrepreneur 1).

From this entrepreneur's perspective, there is a need for more robust institutional and relational support during the qualification process. This support would be essential both to facilitate compliance with international legal requirements and to face logistical challenges, fundamental aspects for success in exports.

In turn, Brewery 2 pointed out two main barriers for the export of its products to become possible and viable: shipping logistics through the "cold chain" and non-existent demand. The first issue raised is a significant concern for products that are perishable or require strict temperature and humidity control. The proper logistics to ensure that the product arrives in optimal conditions is complex and expensive, representing a crucial challenge for export (Cardoso, Carmo & Pacheco, 2017).

In turn, the lack of demand in the foreign market, pointed out as another barrier by Entrepreneur 2, may be a premature perception resulting from insufficient market research. As the production capacity of this company is small, being a microbrewery, all production already ends up being supplied by regional demand, and, therefore, international opportunities are no longer considered. In addition, there are similar and very established beer brands on the market, which increase competition, turning sales into fierce competition.

A questão envolvida no porte da empresa em relação a capacidade de adentrar-se em mercados internacionais é relevante, e foi comentada por um dos Técnicos em seus apontamentos.

I believe that the key point is the public that the company wants to serve, even at an international level. So, for example, Ambev is looking for volume and large sales, but our market here in the qualifications we carry out is craft breweries, and thus a more specific product. There are small breweries that manage to export a lot, because in fact they have found their niche, their buyer market. So, the size may not be the main obstacle, but the market you want to reach (Technician 1)

Thus, according to the opinion of the interviewee, the ability to enter and prosper in international markets may be more linked to the market strategy and the suitability of the product than to the absolute size of the company. Technician 2 corroborates this understanding, and adds:

Most businessmen believe that exporting is for the big players, for the big companies, but we know that it is not. If we take the largest exporters in the world, the countries that export the most, most exports are small quantities and lots, with few units, but with the total volume they end up achieving a gigantic concentration of sales. Here in Brazil, there is a lack of this awareness and PEIEX is seeking to put this reality in the heads of entrepreneurs (Technician 2)

PEIEX, according to the view of the interviewees, acts in the awareness and implementation of an export culture, being fundamental for the economic development of the region. Because the more companies have a mentality focused on the international market, the stronger the regional economy will be, with access to new markets and opportunities. In this way, they say that, with the right support and accessible tools, even small companies can enter the international market, ensuring their financial sustainability and contributing to the economic development of the region:

So, thinking about the financial sustainability of the business, the implementation of this export culture in our region is very important. And, not only for large companies, with the capacity to export large containers, but also for smaller companies, using, for example, the tool that was mentioned earlier, Exporta fácil. There are several customs brokers and carriers that can assist in this process (Technician 1).

Another relevant aspect in sending products abroad is the decision of whether or not to use intermediaries to assist in the procedures. Both companies interviewed highlighted the advantages of having these services, and Cervejaria 1, which has already carried out an export, used intermediaries during the process, which contributed positively to the operation.

We can highlight the main difficulties cited by the interviewees, offering a detailed view of the obstacles that limit success in the internationalization process according to them.

**Table 4.** Main difficulties faced by companies to export (Cited by the interviewees)

Difficulty	Description	Effect
Product Registration	Country-specific registration requirement.	Increases the time and costs to access international markets.
Diversity in international regulations	Each country imposes different rules, making it difficult to standardize processes and increasing bureaucracy.	Need for constant adaptations and increased complexity.

Logistical issues	Difficulties with international transport and customs regulations. Especially for craft beers that need refrigeration during transport.	Risk of loss of quality and higher cost of operation.
Lack of demand	Difficulty identifying buyer markets or lack of interest in products in certain countries.	Frustration of expectations and difficulty in diversifying the market.

Source: Prepared by the author (2024).

As highlighted by Arruda (2020), the difficulties related to internationalization can generate significant impacts on large companies, but these challenges tend to be even more intense for smaller companies. In the case of micro and small companies, these barriers often make any attempt to enter the foreign market unfeasible.

According to the study carried out by Bonachela (2020) at the PEIEX center in Jaú, the main difficulty pointed out by qualified companies is in line with the last point highlighted in Chart 4: attracting buyer markets abroad. In addition, other barriers identified include the adaptation of the companies' websites to other languages and the definition of the price for export.

It is important to highlight that, despite the difficulties mentioned, companies - whether in the brewing sector or other industries - that are dedicated to the export qualification process can reap significant benefits, both in terms of learning and improving their operations. This commitment not only facilitates access to new markets, but also allows for the optimization of internal practices and the strengthening of competitiveness. In this way, organizations have the opportunity to transform challenges into levers for growth and innovation, both in the national and international contexts.

#### 4.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESULTS OBTAINED AND TARGET 8.3 OF SDG 8

Target 8.3 of SDG 8 seeks to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and the formalization of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, with the aim of fostering sustainable economic growth. In the case of breweries qualified by the PEIEX Nucleus of Cascavel, the benefits and challenges identified during the export qualification process are related to this goal.

Among the main benefits observed by breweries is access to specialized knowledge about exports, offered through personalized monitoring. This facilitates the growth of these

companies, supporting their insertion in global markets, which is in line with the pillars of goal 8.3.

Another relevant aspect was the improvement of internal processes and the development of an export culture in qualified companies, encouraging creativity and innovation, as recommended by goal 8.3. The ability to adapt and innovate in the foreign market requires companies to develop resources and managerial capabilities to ensure their competitiveness, and these improvements are highlighted as an important factor for long-term sustainability (Carvalho, Gomes & Lima, 2012).

However, difficulties were also reported, especially in relation to bureaucracy, such as product registration and diversities in international regulations. In addition, logistical barriers and the lack of demand in foreign markets were also challenges highlighted, which reinforces the importance of policies to support international trade, as pointed out by target 8.3 (Morini, Polis, Silva & Inacio Junior, 2021).

These results indicate that, although there are challenges, PEIEX has contributed significantly to the sustainable development of these breweries. To maximize performance, however, it is crucial that the program also includes post-qualification follow-up strategies and develops new international partnerships, in order to ensure a more robust and sustainable expansion, in line with the objectives of target 8.3 of SDG 8.

#### 4.4 PROPOSALS FOR ACTIONS FOR PEIEX CONSIDERING TARGET 8.3 OF SDG8

Based on the results of the research carried out with actors from the PEIEX Cascavel Center, it was possible to identify several areas of opportunity for the improvement of the qualification process offered by PEIEX. The proposed suggestions aim to address the difficulties faced by companies during qualification for export, with the aim of making them more prepared and competitive in the international market. In order to summarize these practical recommendations, Chart 5 highlights the main actions that can be implemented to improve the support offered to companies during the internationalization process, in accordance with target 8.3 of SDG8.

**Table 5.** Suggestions for Improving the PEIEX Qualification Process

Suggestion	Description
Incorporation of Sustainability	Include topics on sustainable practices and align companies with international requirements.
Focus on International Logistics	Deepen training in global logistics, with specialized partnerships to facilitate international transport.

Post-Qualification Follow-up	Create a continuous follow-up system after qualification to help companies overcome new challenges.
International Partnership Development	Facilitate the establishment of strategic international relationships by connecting companies to distributors and partners abroad.

Source: Prepared by the author (2024).

The third target of SDG8 encourages the creation of a sustainable economic environment, and PEIEX can strengthen this connection by integrating sustainable business practices into its qualification. In addition, in relation to international logistics, to contribute to goal 8.3, training on this subject can include innovative and sustainable solutions for the transport of goods, such as the optimization of routes and the use of sustainable packaging.

Creating a continuous post-qualification follow-up system can help companies solve emerging challenges, as well as provide support to expand sustainably. And to support business growth, as envisioned by target 8.3, it is critical to facilitate the establishment of strategic international partnerships.

In addition to the recommendations mentioned, as the lack of demand was one of the difficulties mentioned, PEIEX can also incorporate training more focused on identifying international market niches and digital marketing strategies. In addition, it would be interesting to offer more targeted support in the process of registering products in international markets, through the creation of practical guides and support materials, since this was another difficulty listed in the interviews.

The actions exposed are essential to prepare companies in a more comprehensive and effective way, allowing them to overcome the specific challenges of exporting and increase their competitiveness on the international stage. By implementing these suggestions, PEIEX can provide a more complete qualification experience, facilitating the insertion of companies in global markets and contributing to the strengthening of their operations and sustainability in the long term.



## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study examined the qualification process carried out by the PEIEX Nucleus of Cascavel, revealing important advances for companies in the brewing sector, such as the increase in knowledge about exports, the improvement of processes and the beginning of the creation of an export culture. These elements are essential for sustainable development, as provided for in target 8.3 of SDG 8, which aims to promote the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as encourage entrepreneurship and innovation.

Despite the benefits achieved, persistent challenges such as bureaucracy associated with product registration and international regulations, as well as complex logistical issues and lack of demand in foreign markets, still limit the potential of these breweries to expand more efficiently in the global market. These obstacles highlight the need for continuous support, especially in relation to adaptation to international requirements, which meets the guidelines of goal 8.3, which advocates sustainable economic growth.

The study also suggests that, in order to maximize PEIEX's performance, it is essential that the program incorporates sustainability practices in a structured way in its qualification processes. Integrating innovative and sustainable solutions in international logistics, as well as developing strategic international partnerships, are essential measures to strengthen the sector.

Finally, it is crucial that PEIEX offers more robust post-qualification follow-up, enabling companies to overcome emerging challenges and ensure long-term sustainable expansion, as advocated by target 8.3. It is therefore recommended that future research explore other sectors and regions, deepening the analysis on the impact of the qualification process and proposing practical solutions to the challenges identified.

One of the limitations of the current survey is the small number of companies interviewed, which restricts the representativeness of the results. Future research could expand the sample to include a larger number of breweries, of different sizes and regions, which would allow for a broader view of the challenges and benefits of export qualification. With a larger sample, it would be possible to identify patterns and variations between companies of different profiles and realities, providing a more robust analysis of the internationalization process in the brewing sector.

In addition to increasing the sample, it is recommended to diversify research methods. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches would allow for a more comprehensive and detailed analysis. And, to obtain a more complete view of the export qualification processes, a recommendation for future study would be to compare the experiences of the brewing sector with those of other sectors.

Another interesting line of research would be the study of successful cases of brewing companies that have managed to establish themselves solidly in the international market. By analyzing these experiences in detail, it would be possible to identify the strategies, resources and practices that contributed to the success of exporting.

In addition, with the growing global demand for sustainable products, it is recommended that future research deepen the investigation of how sustainable practices can be integrated into the export qualification process.

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## **APPENDIX A – FOCUS GROUP ROADMAP**

Topics to cover at the beginning of the interview:

1. Personal presentation;
2. Explanation of the research objectives;
3. Duration of the focus group;
4. Request permission to record, explaining the importance of the information.
5. It should be noted that the focus group will be transcribed and submitted to the approval of the participants before the information is used in the analysis of results, through a FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM.

### **Focus Group Roadmap**

1. Based on your experiences as extension technicians, how do you perceive ApexBrasil's support through PEIEX in companies that are qualified?
2. According to your views, what is the role of PEIEX in the internationalization process of companies? How has this influence occurred?
3. Considering that ApexBrasil's strategic objectives for the 2020-2023 period were established based on three major perspectives (social, internal processes and sustainability), including sustainability, where in this study SDG 8 stands out - which is to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. And more specifically goal 8.3, which is to "promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services" (UN, 2023, p.1), how do you point out the performance of the qualification program in the sustainability of companies qualified by the program?
4. And in relation to the brewing industry, how do you define the influence of PEIEX on the sustainability of this sector?
5. What main benefits has PEIEX provided to companies in the brewing sector?
6. What are the main difficulties and limitations of PEIEX? Which ones need to be overcome?
7. Do you perceive difficulties in adopting the solutions you suggest for companies? Can you cite examples?

8. Are there any important certifications for the brewing sector when it comes to exports? If so, what is the benefit of breweries having them?
9. What is the main destination of the company's exports in the brewing industry after joining PEIEX?
10. Do you consider the size of companies a problem for insertion in international markets?
11. Is there anything else you could add to support the subject of this study?

## APPENDIX B – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCRIPT

### Semi-structured Interviews Checklist

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job title: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email: \_\_\_\_\_

Time in the company: \_\_\_\_\_ Time in the current position: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation of the FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM.

#### COMPANY OVERVIEW:

- a. When was the company founded (first turnover)? Please briefly describe the history of the company.
- b. How many employees does the company currently have?
- c. What was the revenue (or billing range) in the last year?

#### PEIEX QUALIFICATION:

- d. How did you find out about the PEIEX program?
- e. How long did the qualification last? Please briefly describe how the whole process went.
- f. What was the main difficulty faced in the qualification process by Peiex?
- g. What was the main benefit gained?
- h. Considering that ApexBrasil's strategic objectives for the 2020-2023 period were established based on three major perspectives, including sustainability, how do you point out the performance of the qualification program in the sustainability of your company?
- i. In addition to PEIEX, has your company already participated in any other ApexBrasil trade promotion action, such as: fairs, business missions, business roundtables?

#### INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE COMPANY:

- j. Describe the evolution of the company's internationalization (countries/year/mode of entry)
- k. What was the reason for choosing these countries?
- l. How much do sales abroad represent of the company's revenue?
- m. Are the exports direct or do they use intermediaries to carry out the procedures?

n. What are the main barriers faced during the company's internationalization? Some examples are: bureaucratic procedures; shipping logistics; access to distribution channels; the need to adapt products; environmental or certification issues.

or. Which of these do you consider the most relevant, and for what reason?

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Research Title:** *Qualification for Export Carried Out by the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus in the Beer Sector: An Analysis from the Perspective of Sustainable Development Goal 8 – Goal 8.3*

**Principal Investigator:** Carina Langaro

Master's student in the Professional Master's Program in Administration

State University of Western Paraná – UNIOESTE

### **Research Objective:**

This research aims to analyze the contributions of the Export Qualification Program (PEIEX), carried out by the PEIEX Cascavel Nucleus, for the sustainable growth of companies in the beer sector, considering goal 8.3 of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

### **Procedures:**

Participation in this study involves an interview, in which the experiences and perceptions of the participants about the performance of the PEIEX Cascavel program will be explored. The interviews will be conducted in person or virtually, according to the participant's preference, and will last approximately 30 minutes. The information obtained will be recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

### **Risks and Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research. Participants may, however, feel more comfortable talking about some issues. For benefits, the research will provide an in-depth insight into the contribution of the PEIEX program to the sustainable development of brewing companies.

### **Confidentiality and Secrecy:**

All data and information provided will be treated confidentially. The results of the survey will be presented in an aggregated manner, without the individual identification of the participants or the companies, except with express permission. The recordings and transcripts will be stored in a safe place and only the researcher will have access to them.

**Voluntariness and Right of Withdrawal:**

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. The participant has the right to withdraw at any time, without the need for justification and without prejudice. In addition, it is possible to refuse to answer any question that generates discomfort.

**Contact for Questions:**

If you have any questions or for more information about this research, participants can contact the principal investigator:

Carina Langaro

Email: carinalangaro@hotmail.com

Phone: (45) 99858-2332

**Declaration of Consent:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, declare that I have been duly informed about the objectives, procedures, risks and benefits of the research. I freely and clearly agree to participate in this study and authorize the use of the information provided for the purposes described above.

**Signature of the Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_