



MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE GEOGRAPHIC INDICATION OF SÃO TIAGO/MG

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GEOGRÁFICA DE SÃO TIAGO/MG**

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Received: 12/11/2025
Accepted: 02/26/2026

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ABSTRACT

The recognition of Geographical Indications (GI) for products or services can benefit the entire production chain and promote the socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental development of a region. However, the registration of a GI alone does not guarantee the expected positive impacts. During the post-implementation phase, it is essential to develop strategies and align actions to enable GIs to achieve their full potential. This is exemplified by the GI from São Tiago, in Minas Gerais, which, despite being granted in 2013, has yet to generate significant advantages for stakeholders and the region. In this context, this study aims to propose marketing strategies to consolidate the São Tiago GI. In order to achieve this, the study has adopted qualitative, descriptive and applied research making use of an action research approach. Data collection was conducted through bibliographic and documentary research, complemented by observations made during visits to production sites and meetings with members of the São Tiaguense Association of Biscuit Producers (Assabiscoito), which is responsible for requesting the GI, as well as representatives from other institutions associated with this asset. The collected data were analysed using content analysis techniques. The findings highlight the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of the São Tiago GI. Furthermore, the international, national, and local biscuit markets were studied to understand consumer behaviour, aiming at defining the most effective competitive positioning strategy for the GI. This analysis supports the development of an appropriate marketing mix and strategic recommendations aligned with local challenges. These strategies, combined with structured management, could facilitate the systematization of initiatives, thereby contributing to increased economic activity, job creation, and income generation in the region.

Keywords: Geographical Indication. Product Valorization. Territorial Marketing. Marketing Plan. Marketing Strategies.

RESUMO

O reconhecimento de Indicação Geográfica (IG) conferido a produtos ou serviços pode beneficiar a cadeia produtiva e promover o desenvolvimento socioeconômico, cultural e ambiental do território. Contudo, apenas o registro de IG não garante impactos positivos. No pós-registro, são necessários o desenvolvimento de estratégias e o alinhamento de ações, favorecendo que o ativo atinja sua potencialidade. Esse é o caso da IG de São Tiago, em Minas Gerais, que, concedida em 2013, ainda não conseguiu gerar vantagens para os envolvidos e região. Nesse cenário, este estudo tem por finalidade desenvolver a proposta de estratégias de *marketing* para consolidar a IG em questão. Para isso, foi realizada uma pesquisa qualitativa de natureza descritiva e aplicada, utilizando-se a estratégia da pesquisa-ação. A coleta de dados ocorreu com pesquisas bibliográfica e documental, além das observações realizadas durante as visitas ao ambiente produtivo, para reuniões com membros da Associação São-tiaguense dos Produtores de Biscoito (Assabiscoito). Os dados apurados foram tratados considerando a análise de conteúdo. Como resultado, elencaram-se os pontos fortes e fracos e as ameaças e oportunidades da IG. Além disso, foram analisados os mercados internacional, nacional e local de biscoitos, identificando o comportamento do consumidor e definindo a melhor estratégia competitiva de posicionamento. Verificou-se a composição do composto de *marketing* mais adequada para, enfim, obter estratégias condizentes com as fragilidades locais, favorecendo a sistematização de iniciativas, que, com gestão estruturada, poderão contribuir para o maior movimento da economia e a geração de emprego e renda.

Palavras-chave: Indicação Geográfica. Valorização de Produtos. Marketing Territorial. Plano de Marketing. Estratégias de Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Geographical Indication (GI) is a legal instrument that protects products or services which possess notoriety or unique characteristics related to their geographical origin (Santos; Medeiros; Figueiredo, 2023). Once recognized, the GI is for the exclusive use of local producers who must strictly follow established standards (Pimentel, 2013).

By functioning as protection mechanisms for products or services linked to specific territories, GIs can benefit the entire production chain involved. By ensuring exclusivity of production and marketing, they confer notoriety to the region, consequently enabling the promotion of its socioeconomic, cultural and environmental growth (INPI, 2019). In other words, GIs constitute a strategy to emphasize the relevance of territoriality and cultural identity, strengthening regional development.

In smaller municipalities, with a predominance of micro and small businesses, the share of income from the sale of products protected by GI can induce development and assume greater local representativeness (Sebrae, 2024). This effect demonstrates the adherence of GI to endogenous development approaches, in which economic growth is driven by local resources and knowledge.

However, obtaining GI registration, by itself, does not guarantee benefits for the region (Cerdan; Bruch; Vitrolles, 2014), and the difficulties do not end with implementation. After registration, the



development of strategies and the alignment of actions, encompassing local actors, are necessary so that the GI can reach its potential for generating positive impacts (Matos, 2019).

The lack of this alignment can lead to the abandonment of the GI by the producer who are is fully involved. This producer, on the one hand, has difficulties in meeting the regulatory requirements, with the aim of standardize the necessary production processes and guaranteeing the required quality (Silva *et al.*, 2017) and, on the other hand, fails to perceive the value gained from recognition in highly competitive markets, mainly due to problems related to local marketing management (Niederle, 2013).

This is the situation of the GI for the biscuit from São Tiago/MG, which, granted in 2013, has not yet managed, based on the benefits of this recognition, to increase income and improve the quality of life of the population, attract tourists, promote the engagement of the association and develop the municipality and the region (Soares, 2023).

Even the Coffee with Biscuit Festival, used as a local strategy to promote the biscuit, already existed before the GI was registered. However, the event can expand its objectives, absorbing functions of dissemination and strengthening of the GI as a way to increase the competitiveness of local companies, by establishing value for customers and stimulating the relationship between them, as suggested by Kotler and Amstrong (2015). In this context, territorial marketing actions, which have the same principles as GIs, can provide differentiation of products and services in a given territory, with the help of applying marketing mix tools (Antunes; Costa, 2019).

Given the above, it is believed that the development of marketing strategies, considering digital evolution and the 8Ps of the marketing mix – product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, positioning and performance (Sebrae, 2023a), and the alignment of actions, carried out in a structured way, can represent an alternative to mitigate existing weaknesses and improve the positioning of the GI of São Tiago/MG, in the expectation of resulting in greater economic activity, with the generation of employment and income.

From this perspective, this work aims to develop marketing strategies for the Geographical Indication of São Tiago/MG, in order to enhance its performance and contribute to local development, considering the product, the territory, the producers and the other actors linked to it.



After this introduction, the second section deals with the theoretical foundation. The third section details the methodology used. The fourth section presents the results and discussions, followed by the final considerations.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Geographical Indication (GI) is a protection instrument applied to products or services linked to a specific territory, whose specificities stem from their geographical origin (Maiorki; Dallabrida, 2015). In Brazil, it is regulated by Law No. 9,279/1996, which provides for two modalities: Indication of Source (IP) and Designation of Origin (DO). The IP refers to the consolidated reputation of a locality as a center for production or service provision, while the DO is related to the qualities and characteristics of the products or services attributed to the geographical environment (Brazil, 1996). INPI/PR Ordinance No. 04/2022, art. 9, §§ 1 and 2, reaffirms the distinction between the two modalities.

Part of the literature argues that Geographical Indications (GIs) facilitate the socioeconomic and cultural development of territories (Vieira; Lourenzani, 2019; Giesbrecht; Minas, 2019; Dupim, 2015; Nunes; Bandeira; Nascimento, 2012; Boechat; Alves, 2011; Bruch, 2008). Bruch (2008) points to GIs as an alternative to promote regional sustainability without converting the territory into an industrial hub or monoculture. Nunes, Bandeira, and Nascimento (2012) indicate that GIs can favor economic dynamism and cultural appreciation. Dupim (2015) and Giesbrecht and Minas (2019) associate the recognition of GIs with regional strengthening and the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage. Vieira and Lourenzani (2019) mention impacts on agribusiness, small producers, and tourism. Boechat and Alves (2011) highlight effects on the market, standardization, and agritourism.

In a critical sense, Marie-Vivien and Biénabe (2017), Belletti, Chabrol and Spinsanti (2016), Shiki and Wilkinson (2016), Vieira, Zilli and Bruch (2016), Cerdan, Bruch and Vitrolles (2014) and Nascimento, Nunes and Bandeira (2012) state that the GI seal, in isolation, does not guarantee results, and the structured management is necessary for the perception of positive effects.



Matos (2019) identifies challenges in the pre-implementation, implementation and post-implementation phases related to compliance with requirements, collective articulation among producers and maintaining engagement after registration. Maiorki and Dallabrida (2015) warn of productive limitations and risks of exploitation of natural resources in the face of increased demand. Silva *et al.* (2017) and Conejero and César (2017) point out difficulties arising from standardization and regulation, which may exclude small producers.

Once these challenges are overcome, Geographical Indications (GIs) can contribute to changes in regional production and market dynamics. Gollo and Castro (2008) mention effects such as increased property value, expanded participation in the marketing cycle, improved quality, demand stability, and mechanisms to protect against misuse. Cerdan, Bruch, and Vitrolles (2014) add benefits such as preservation of agricultural diversity, identification of production methods, increased consumer confidence, stimulation of exports, and protection against unfair competition.

MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR RESTRUCTURING GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

Recognizing the obstacles to the consolidation of Geographical Indications after registration, studies indicate the need to strengthen management mechanisms to enable results in the territory (Pellin, 2019; Belletti; Marescotti; Touzard, 2017; Kegel; Carls, 2015).

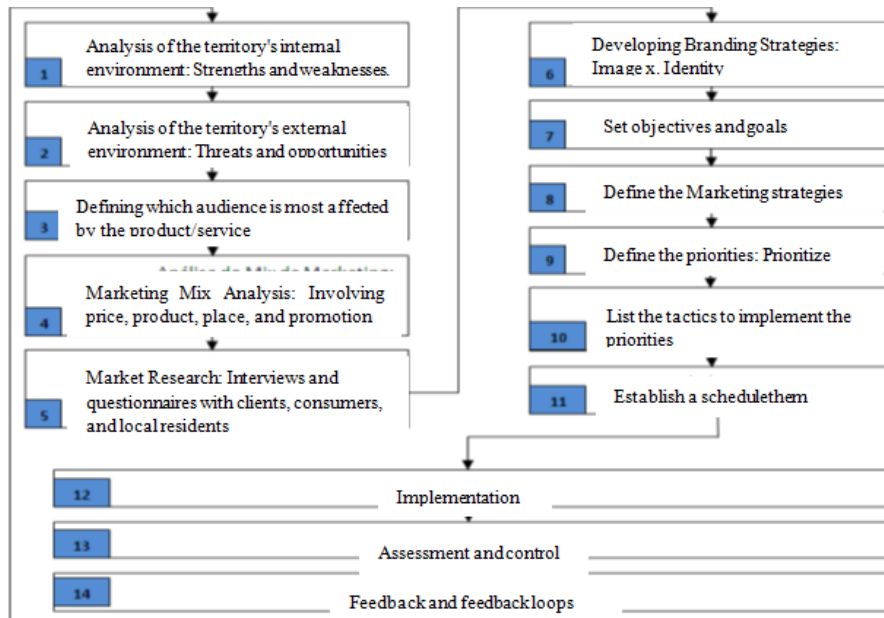
In this context, marketing can contribute to the marketing management of products or services linked to the GI, supporting their commercial, industrial and tourism exploitation (Sakr; Dallabrida, 2015). Territorial marketing assists in the strategic planning of the GI and promotes the differentiation of the territory and the attraction of audiences and investments, in convergence with the objectives of the GIs themselves (Antunes; Costa, 2019; Sakr; Dallabrida, 2015).

For this action to produce effects, it is necessary to formulate a marketing plan as a guiding instrument for actions over time, with the definition of problems, goals and deadlines, subject to adjustments according to the results obtained (Campomar, 1983).

In this sense, this study adopts the marketing plan model proposed by Sakr and Dallabrida (2015), presented in Figure 1, structured to meet the market demands of products and services linked to GIs.



Figure 1 | Schematic marketing plan



Source: Sakr; Dallabrida (2015).

Cells 1 and 2 correspond to the analysis of the territory’s internal and external environment, allowing for the development of the SWOT Matrix and supporting the definition of strategic positioning, identification of opportunities, and prioritization of actions (Sebrae, 2023b).

Cell 3 deals with defining the target audience of the product or service, considering the need to know consumers in order to adapt the offer (Kotler; Keller, 2011).

Cell 4 refers to the marketing mix. McCarthy (1964 *apud* Goi, 2009) structured the 4Ps – product, price, promotion, and place. In this stage, product characteristics, pricing, sales channels, and communication strategies are analyzed (Sebrae, 2023a). With the expansion of the model, other Ps were incorporated (Goi, 2009). In this study, we adopt the proposal of the Brazilian Service for Support to Micro and Small Enterprises – Sebrae (2023a), with 8Ps – product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, positioning and performance, which include, in addition to the traditional elements, customer service, productive organization, strategic definition and monitoring of results.

Cell 5 addresses market research and cell 6 branding policies. Cells 7 to 11 deal with the application of actions in the territory. Cells 12 and 13 refer to implementation, control and evaluation. Cell 14 contemplates the continuity of the system.

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPED

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, favoring the analysis of investigations, habits, attitudes, and behavioral trends of individuals or social groups (Marconi; Lakatos, 2017). Regarding its nature, the research was classified as applied, as it sought solutions to specific problems of people and organizations (Gerhardt; Silveira, 2009). From the point of view of its objectives, it was descriptive in nature. Descriptive research seeks to describe phenomena or characteristics of a population (Prodanov; Freitas, 2013). Regarding the strategy, action research was adopted, which allows for cooperation and participation of those involved in solving the identified problem (Oliveira, 2020).

The theoretical framework guided the methodological definition, indicating a participatory and applied approach to capture the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of the GI.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Data collection occurred through bibliographic and documentary research, as well as observations during visits to the production environment for meetings with members of the São Tiago Biscuit Producers Association (Assabiscoito) and representatives of entities involved with the GI of São Tiago/MG. The bibliographic research gathered information related to the topic (Cervo; Bervian; Silva, 2007), and the documentary research and field visits allowed for the comparison of theory and practice.

Considering the action-research strategy, the visits to the production environment for meetings with Assabiscoito members and representatives of entities linked to the GI enabled cooperative and participatory involvement throughout the research and validated secondary data. From an ethical standpoint, since it involved only institutional data and technical-institutional meetings, without the collection of personally identifiable data or sensitive information, without recording individualized testimonies and/or intervention or exposure of participants as research subjects, the study was exempt from review by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP), in accordance with Article 1, sole paragraph, items II, III and V, of Resolution No. 510/2016 of the National Research Ethics Commission (CONEP).

The data were processed using content analysis, a research technique that aims at the objective and systematic description of the manifest content of the communication (Bardin, 1995).



RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Initially, the topic was explored through bibliographic research involving scientific articles, dissertations, theses, books, and relevant websites. Next, data on the Geographical Indication (GI) of São Tiago/MG and biscuit production in the municipality were collected through documentary research in documents from public bodies and entities linked to the GI.

From October 2023 to July 2024, visits were made to the production environment and meetings were held with members of Assabiscoito and representatives of entities linked to the GI. The dynamics of the interactions allowed for cooperative involvement of the actors and favored observations for ratification and understanding of secondary data.

Subsequently, the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the GI were identified, and a SWOT Matrix was developed. Then, the international, national, and local biscuit markets were analyzed, identifying the target audience and consumer behavior. Based on this, the competitive positioning strategy and the marketing mix were defined. Finally, the marketing strategies were discussed and validated in a face-to-face meeting with those involved in the IG of São Tiago/MG.

THE MUNICIPALITY OF SÃO TIAGO/MG AND BISCUIT PRODUCTION

Located in Minas Gerais, in the Campo das Vertentes mesoregion and the São João del-Rei microregion (Figure 2), about 200 kilometers from Belo Horizonte, the city of São Tiago has, according to the last census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), carried out in 2022, 11,192 inhabitants.

Since its foundation, the municipality has produced biscuits, especially cornmeal and cassava flour biscuits (Assabiscoito, 2011). In the 1990s, production expanded and São Tiago/MG became known as the Land of Coffee and Biscuits. In 1999, the Coffee and Biscuit Parade was created, which became the Coffee and Biscuit Festival, recognized as intangible cultural heritage by the State Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage of Minas Gerais (IEPHA/MG). The event takes place annually on the second weekend of September in the Praça da Matriz (Main Square), featuring stalls selling biscuits, handicrafts, and local agricultural products.



Figure 2 | Location of São Tiago in Minas Gerais



Source: Municipality of São Tiago (2020).

For the annual festivities, a clay oven was built, which was demolished at the end of the event. Due to its connection with local tradition, the Oven in the Square was inaugurated in 2012, in a covered space maintained by the public authorities and currently under the responsibility of Assabiscoito (Municipality of São Tiago, 2020).

In 2021, São Tiago received the title of State Capital of Coffee with Biscuits. The city is part of tourist routes such as Estrada Real, Caminhos de São Tiago and Queijo Terroir Vertentes, indicating the expansion of the activity in the region (Vieira, 2022). Also noteworthy is the Discover São Tiago project, a partnership between local entrepreneurs and the Municipality, focused on tourism (Discover São Tiago, 2024).

After proving the notoriety of the products, the municipality obtained, in 2013, the Geographical Indication (GI) registration for the biscuit. São Tiago is also part of the GI for coffee from Campo das Vertentes, in the GI modality, requested by the Association of Coffee Growers of Campo das Vertentes and granted in 2020 (INPI, 2024).

The production of biscuits is part of the economic and cultural dynamics of the municipality and can be expanded with the growth of tourism.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF SÃO TIAGO/MG BISCUITS

Assabiscoito, founded in 2023 to represent biscuit producers, gathered, in partnership with the Federal University of São João del-Rei (UFSJ), documentation proving the notoriety of São Tiago/MG biscuits as a traditional product, to be presented to the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI). In 2013, the Geographical Indication registration in the Geographical Indication modality was obtained, under number 201104 (INPI, 2024). The delimitation of the GI corresponds to municipal limits, with production control exercised by the Regulatory Council. The specifications require the use of raw materials in accordance with legal requirements and compliance with the physical-chemical and microbiological characteristics defined in the Technical Specifications Booklet (CET) (INPI, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE SWOT MATRIX OF THE GI OF SÃO TIAGO/MG

Based on data from Soares (2023) and Barros *et al.* (2020), the analysis of documents from Assabiscoito and other entities, as well as observations in the production environment, the SWOT Matrix of the GI of São Tiago/MG was developed (Figure 3), presenting evaluations of its internal environment, strengths and weaknesses, and its external environment, opportunities and threats. Strengths and opportunities are elements that favor the consolidation of the GI, while weaknesses and threats represent obstacles to be overcome.

Figure 3 | SWOT Matrix of the Geographical Indication of the São Tiago/MG Biscuit

	Strengths	Weaknesses
INDOOR ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established biscuit and cookie production activity. - Registration of the Geographical Indication with the INPI (Brazilian National Institute of Industrial Property). - Graphic representation of the IP (Protected Geographical Indication). - Recognition of the importance of the product-territory link. - Quality product with historical and cultural identity. - Representative entity. - Offering of technical training. - Ease of distribution of production and access to raw material suppliers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incipient management of Assabiscoito in relation to the GI. - Low membership of Assabiscoito. - Lack of unity and partnership among producers. - Absence of initiatives to strengthen relations between local actors and to foster trust and cooperation. - Absence of a Regulatory Council and production control. - Lack of financial resources for some producers to meet the standards stipulated by the GI. - Failures in the dissemination of the GI. - Inability to perceive the increase in income and quality of life after obtaining the GI. - Little exploitation of the seal and low dissemination of the differentiation in the quality of products with GI.

OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT	Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support from Sebrae Minas. - Support from local public authorities, even if limited, and other involved institutions. - Existence of the Coffee and Biscuit Festival and the Oven in the Square space. - Participation of the municipality in the delimitation of the Campo das Vertentes Coffee GI. - Growth of tourism in the region and proximity to locations with consolidated tourism activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competition with producers who do not follow the GI standards and sell at lower prices. - Insufficient labor. - Instability in sales volume. - Taxation rates for registered producers. - Few incentive policies.

Source: Prepared by the authors using data gathered from document analysis and observations made during meetings with members of Assabiscoito.

MARKET ANALYSIS

After developing the SWOT Matrix, an analysis of the biscuit markets was carried out at the international, national, and local levels.

In the international market, the Brazilian Association of Biscuit, Pasta, and Industrialized Bread & Cake Industries (Abimapi), in partnership with the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil), released positive results for the first half of 2023. Exports from Abimapi International members reached approximately 80 countries, with a 12.2% increase in value compared to 2022. Biscuits represented 54% of exported products (ApexBrasil, 2023).

In the national market, data from Abimapi (2022, 2023) indicate performance between 2018 and 2022. The volume produced went from 1.15 million tons in 2018 to 1.59 million in 2021, with a reduction to 1.55 million in 2022. Production remained stable, with a variation of less than 2.5%. Revenue evolved from R\$ 14.3 billion in 2018 to R\$ 29.2 billion in 2022, even with a decrease in volume due to price increases.

In São Tiago/MG, data from the Information Management Division of the State Secretariat of Finance of Minas Gerais (DGI/DIEF/SAIF/SEF-MG), from May 2024, indicate a growth of 37.93% in revenue between 2015 and 2022 and 1.93% in ICMS collection. The municipal market projection is R\$ 80.8 million in 2023, R\$ 89.5 million in 2024, and R\$ 98.1 million in 2025.

In 2022, the revenue from biscuit and cookie manufacturing in São Tiago/MG (CNAE 1092-9/00) represented 0.24% of the national revenue. According to Sebrae (2016), the sector contributes directly or indirectly to 51% of the wealth generated in the municipality.



CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Lately, it has been observed that the behavior of Brazilian consumers is different. They are more connected, responsible, and disloyal, changes that are reflected in the consumption of food products, including biscuits. Consumer loyalty to brands with greater involvement is lower, since there is an expanded number of opportunities for choice, increasing the chance of disloyalty (Abimapi, 2023).

According to Abimapi (2023), consumers have been attracted by lower prices, since their purchasing power has decreased due to inflation. As a result, consumers are starting to buy more affordable, more economical brands. In addition, consumers are demonstrating greater environmental and social awareness, not wanting to bear the costs that may arise to have more added value. Another point relates to the expansion of e-commerce in recent times. However, when purchasing food products, consumers consider physical contact necessary (Abimapi, 2023).

Focusing on biscuit consumption, it's noticeable that it's directly linked to three elements: routine, impulse, and convenience. Some biscuits are part of the consumer's daily life, being classified as routine biscuits. Others are purchased on impulse due to their attributes. And, convenience purchases occur when biscuits replace a meal due to lack of time (Abimapi, 2021 *apud* Viana, 2023).

THE BISCUIT CONSUMER IN SÃO TIAGO/MG

According to Barros *et al.* (2020), biscuit production in São Tiago/MG reaches the final consumer thanks to intermediaries, considered facilitators of the production chain and divided between bakeries, fairs, supermarkets, and street vendors. Biscuits are distributed by own or outsourced fleets, predominantly in the Campo das Vertentes region, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.



MARKETING MIX COMPOSITION FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF SÃO TIAGO/MG BISCUITS

The management of the marketing mix for this GI should consider data related to the influences of the internal and external environments, identified by the SWOT Matrix, assessments of the local, national, and international markets, and analyses of biscuit consumers.

Given the limitations evidenced and the points considered to be driving forces, the development of marketing strategies should consider initiatives for the 8Ps, which, in addition to meeting the objectives of traditional marketing, uses electronic channels to connect with customers (Barreto *et al.*, 2015). However, it is emphasized that biscuits are perishable foods, a fact that presents a challenge for e-commerce, but does not prevent the expansion of the relationship between the producer and customers through digital means.

In this context, the interventions, executed in an integrated manner, propose: 1) structuring actions for the product; 2) establishing pricing methods; 3) defining points of sale and distribution channels, as well as forms of contact with the market (physical and virtual); 4) implementing communication and promotion plans, through the development of actions for brand management (branding); 5) considering the know-how of the people; 6) relating production procedures and methodologies to tradition; 7) indicating the strategic positioning; and 8) observing the productivity and quality of the product.

MARKETING STRATEGY PROPOSAL FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF SÃO TIAGO/MG BISCUITS

Prior to developing marketing strategies, the data collected and analyses performed enabled the establishment of strategic objectives to strengthen the GI of São Tiago/MG, with a horizon of up to five years. These objectives are: structuring the management of the GI; raising awareness among producers and the community about the attributes of the products; strengthening the relationship between the actors involved; encouraging association and collaboration among members, expanding the number of members in Assabiscoito; increasing the visibility of the GI through branding actions; identifying the profile of the end consumer to guide customer service; and stimulating digital



transformation, considering the General Data Protection Law.

To meet the listed objectives, the marketing strategies (Table 1), guided by the competitive positioning of the product with quality controlled by the GI and by strengthening association, were discussed and validated by the members of Assabiscoito, facilitating the operationalization of the proposal.

Regarding the product, the actions include the use of the IG (Geographical Indication) badge, packaging redesign, tastings, and explanatory videos. Partnerships with other producers and the creation of eco-bags broaden the product's reach and link consumption to local history. In terms of pricing, consulting services establish standardized pricing policies and progressive discounts, ensuring common criteria among producers. In terms of distribution, organizing sales routines, using digital channels, conducting satisfaction surveys, and direct mailings expand reach and streamline customer service. Promotion includes investment in graphic materials, participation in gastronomic events, partnerships with local tourism, and a strong digital presence. Regarding personnel, actions include team training, workshops, and hiring employees to strengthen management and customer service. Processes include continuous evaluation and bottleneck correction, ensuring efficiency and adaptability. The positioning leverages São Tiago as the "Land of Coffee and Biscuits," supported by public authorities, creating a distinctive collective brand. Finally, performance involves constant evaluation of results, allowing for adjustments and ensuring that objectives are met. so that strategies can be adjusted according to the results.

In this context, the presented marketing plan articulates the 8Ps to value local culture, consolidate the Geographical Indication (GI), and boost regional development, serving as a model for other similar initiatives.



Table 1 | Proposed strategies for the marketing mix

Marketing mix items	Strategies and actions
Product	Use of the graphic representation and the GI seal, considering the established requirements: Structuring the Regulatory Council; Raising awareness among Assabiscoito producers regarding compliance with the requirements; Redesigning the labels on individual biscuit packages; Establishing a partnership with producers in the Campo das Vertentes GI municipality to create secondary, giftable packaging; Producing ecobags; and Using the Assabiscoito headquarters for tastings and for distributing graphic material and showing videos explaining the history of biscuits and Assabiscoito.
Price	Evaluation of current pricing practices and proposal of a pricing and discount policy, considering the requirements to be met for the use of the seal and graphic representation of the Geographical Indication (GI): Hire specialized consultants for analysis and development of a pricing policy and a progressive discount plan.
Square	Structuring operational routines for better results in sales processes: Organizing message distribution lists and direct mail for sending promotional material; Developing a standard customer service script; Conducting customer satisfaction surveys; and Planning sales through digital channels and product distribution.
Promotion	Idealization and execution of promotional actions to position the biscuits as a product with GI recognition and to strengthen Assabiscoito: Create promotional graphic material; Organize an event to promote Assabiscoito and the GI; Establish partnerships with entrepreneurs in the local tourism sector and in São João del-Rei and Tiradentes to promote the GI and its benefits; Produce uniforms; Participate in the Tiradentes Gastronomy Festival and other events; Hire a team to distribute graphic material at the Coffee and Biscuit Festival; Make appearances during the shows at the Coffee and Biscuit Festival to present the importance of the biscuit GI; Structure the Assabiscoito institutional website and social media for the promotion of the GI; Reactivate and promote the “The Taste of Experience” project; and Encourage the creation of a tourist map of São Tiago/MG, marking the bakeries.
Person	Strengthening the management of the Geographical Indication (GI) to achieve the new positioning of biscuits as a quality product conferred by recognition and to attract more members to Assabiscoito: Provide the Assabiscoito team with more employees; Train the Assabiscoito team and attendants of associated bakeries on the relevance of the GI; Promote workshops to raise awareness among associated and non-associated producers of Assabiscoito about the importance of association and cooperation among them; and Conduct research to identify the end consumer of biscuits from São Tiago/MG.
Processes	Evaluation of actions taken in other variables and, if bottlenecks exist, development of new proposals: Identify potential bottlenecks in the actions taken in other variables and, if necessary, develop new proposals to address them.
Positioning	Exploring the identity of the municipality of São Tiago/MG as the Land of Coffee and Biscuits: Proposing to the local public authorities the creation of elements that refer to biscuits.
Performance	Constant evaluation of the results of the proposed actions for the other seven variables of the marketing mix: Establish evaluation criteria for the proposed actions for the other seven variables of the marketing mix.

Source: Prepared by the authors.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this research was to propose marketing strategies to enhance the performance of the Geographical Indication of biscuits from São Tiago/MG, transforming formal recognition into actions to strengthen the production chain and promote regional development.

Biscuit production in São Tiago/MG began with the founding of the municipality and constitutes a source of local income, preserving a tradition passed down through generations. With the expansion of the activity, the producers organized themselves and, in March 2003, created Assabiscoito, which began to represent their interests. In partnership with UFSJ, the entity gathered documents that resulted, in 2013, in the registration of the Indication of Origin.

Although it guaranteed formal recognition, the GI did not generate a significant increase in visibility or sales. It became necessary to develop territorial marketing strategies to improve the performance of the GI.

The SWOT analysis identified the following as strengths: the productive tradition, the product-territory recognition, the existence of Assabiscoito, and the support of Sebrae Minas; as weaknesses: management difficulties, low participation, limited cooperation, and failures in the dissemination of the seal; as opportunities: institutional support, the Coffee and Biscuit Festival, and regional tourism; and as threats: unfair competition, labor shortage, and high tax burden. This assessment, combined with market and consumer behavior analysis, allowed for the definition of a differentiation strategy based on the quality assured by the GI.

The strategic objectives for five years and the marketing mix actions considered the local reality, digital advances, product perishability, and the need to expand customer relationships through electronic channels.

A marketing plan was developed with initiatives for the 8Ps – product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, positioning, and performance. The proposals were discussed and validated by those involved, prioritizing the strengthening of associativism and collaboration among members. The study achieved its objective by proposing and validating strategies that link the recognition of the GI to actions that strengthen production and local development.



Considering the existence of other Geographical Indications in the region, replicating this work can broaden the impact and contribute to regional strengthening.

Among the limitations, the producers' initial limited understanding of the GI and the lack of data on the consumer profiles stand out, making it difficult to align the product with the market.

For future research, it is suggested to deepen control, evaluation and feedback mechanisms, as well as studies on the consumer profile and producers' perceptions, aiming at greater alignment between productive interests and market demands.

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