



ARTICLE REVIEW



ADAPTATIONS GENERATED TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS ON FOREIGN TRADE DUE TO SARS-COV 2: Analysis of the business context

AS ADAPTAÇÕES GERADAS PARA MINIMIZAR OS IMPACTOS NO COMÉRCIO EXTERIOR DEVIDO O SARS-COV 2: Análise do contexto empresarial

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Alumni.In Editors - UNICURITIBA

How to cite this article:

Meireles, E. S., Souza, K. L., Lima, A. A., & De Lima, D. E. A. (2024). As adaptações geradas para minimizar os impactos no comércio exterior devido o SARS-COV 2: Análise do contexto empresarial. *Revista Inteligência Competitiva*, 14, e0448. <https://doi.org/10.24883/eagleSustainable.v14i.448>

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research aims to identify the adaptations that Brazilian companies operating in foreign trade have implemented in their operations to mitigate the effects caused by the Covid 19 pandemic on imports and exports in the context of foreign trade.

Methodology/approach: To enable the achievement of the proposed objectives, a bibliographic literature review was carried out, that is, the scope of the research was broad so that it was possible to identify the actions implemented by companies operating in foreign trade to mitigate the effects caused by COVID-19 pandemic. The articles were collected in the SPELL, Scielo and Google Scholar databases. The data analysis technique used was content analysis (Bardin, 1977).

Originality/Relevance: The article addresses a topic of great importance, there are no studies that identified the actions that were implemented by Brazilian companies in a broad way to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are fragmented studies that did not consolidate all the actions that were implemented in the pandemic scenario.

Key findings: The main actions implemented by Brazilian companies operating in foreign trade to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were the reinforcement of hygiene processes, dismissal of employees, changes in meeting methodology and adoption of remote work by their employees

Theoretical/methodological contributions: This research is expected to contribute to the literature on crises, more specifically crisis mitigation strategies, given that the pandemic was a disruptive event and impacted commercial operations around the world. The study also presents managerial contributions, as managers can use the findings of this research to implement actions that aim to reduce damage in other crisis.

Keywords: Pandemic; Foreign trade; Imports; Exports, Adptations Implemented.



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24883/eagleSustainable.v14i.448>



RESUMO

Objetivo: Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo identificar as adaptações que as empresas brasileiras atuantes no comércio exterior implementaram em suas operações para mitigar os efeitos causados pela pandemia de Covid-19 nas importações e exportações no contexto do comércio exterior.

Metodologia/abordagem: Para viabilizar o alcance dos objetivos propostos, foi realizada uma revisão bibliográfica, ou seja, o escopo da pesquisa foi amplo, de modo que fosse possível identificar as ações implementadas por empresas atuantes no comércio exterior para mitigar os efeitos causados pela pandemia de Covid-19. Os artigos foram coletados nas bases de dados SPELL, Scielo e Google Acadêmico. A técnica de análise de dados utilizada foi a análise de conteúdo (Bardin, 1977).

Originalidade/Relevância: O artigo aborda um tema de grande importância, visto que não existem estudos que identificaram, de forma ampla, as ações implementadas por empresas brasileiras para mitigar os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19. Existem estudos fragmentados que não consolidaram todas as ações que foram implementadas no cenário da pandemia.

Principais descobertas: As principais ações implementadas por empresas brasileiras atuantes no comércio exterior para mitigar os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19 foram o reforço dos processos de higiene, demissão de funcionários, mudanças na metodologia de reuniões e adoção do trabalho remoto pelos seus colaboradores.

Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas: Espera-se que esta pesquisa contribua para a literatura sobre crises, mais especificamente sobre estratégias de mitigação de crises, dado que a pandemia foi um evento disruptivo que impactou as operações comerciais ao redor do mundo. O estudo também apresenta contribuições gerenciais, pois os gestores podem utilizar os achados desta pesquisa para implementar ações que visem a reduzir danos em outras crises.

Palavras-chave: Pandemia; Comércio exterior; Importações; Exportações, Adaptações Implementadas.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 crisis in December 2019, the coronavirus, a respiratory virus, has spread globally through the inhalation of air droplets containing the virus. In response to this mode of transmission, social distancing has emerged as the most effective preventive measure, albeit posing challenges for the business environment. Many establishments have needed to restructure their operations to continue offering services while adhering to guidelines for social interaction during the pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Vitorino, 2022, p. 5).

"The speed and efficiency in decision-making, as well as the stance towards competition, are critical factors of competitiveness and new business opportunities" (Cunha et al., 2020, p. 46). Consequently, many companies abandoned their 2020 strategic plans to adopt emergent strategies in response to economic and operational challenges resulting from the crisis. These included disruptions in raw material supply, changes in customer demands, increased costs, logistical challenges such as early deliveries, employee health and safety issues, and obstacles related to import and export (Cunha et al., 2020).

According to Schultz (2016), organizational performance is influenced by the internal and external environment, technology, people, and tasks, defining hierarchies, information flows, and organizational functions. During crises like this one, paradigms arise that generate resistance to change, resulting in conflicts and varying individual reactions—some see positive opportunities, while others focus on challenges (Santos, 2014). Negotiations also became more bureaucratic due to stricter customs measures in many countries to prevent virus spread. This resulted in quarantines for products, more detailed documentary analyses, and increased operational costs for businesses (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020).

Given the restrictions and limitations caused by the pandemic in international trade, research is needed to elucidate how companies in this sector adapted their routines to mitigate the pandemic's effects on their competitiveness. Specifically, how managers made decisions and adapted operations that were restricted or limited by the pandemic. Therefore, this study aims to answer what were the main adaptations in operations that companies engaged in international trade undertook.

Ranasinghe et al. (2020) highlight the scarcity of research investigating the impacts of previous health crises. Existing studies on other epidemics have predominantly focused on Asia, with little reported experience

in Europe in managing situations similar to the Covid-19 pandemic, the consequences of which are still unknown (RANASINGHE et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating new studies is necessary to better understand the landscape, especially in the Brazilian context, to open new research perspectives.

To address the proposed research question, this study aims to identify adaptations in business routines during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The objective is to analyze the main risks faced by companies and constraints in negotiations, as well as to propose an inventory of implemented adaptations. Understanding these adaptations is crucial for companies to better prepare for future crises, maintaining competitiveness and resilience. One of the most significant adaptations was the adoption of remote work and the transition to fully online processes, a practice that remains relevant today.

The research is relevant as it represents an initial effort to understand how companies made agile and assertive decisions regarding adaptations to their operations to mitigate the pandemic's effects, reducing risks and enabling them to remain competitive, even in an unpredictable scenario that had not been experienced before. It is expected that the findings of the research can provide guidance for managers in future crisis situations that companies engaged in international trade may face. It should be noted that, due to being a global crisis affecting the social, economic, and political environment, generating systemic effects on all economic activities, there are few studies in the literature that have presented concrete measures of actions/practices adapted in companies' operations to mitigate the pandemic's effects.

The structure of this study includes a contextual introduction, a theoretical review on international trade and the effects of the pandemic in this context, methodological procedures employed in the research, analysis and discussion of results, and finally, conclusions on the adaptation strategies of companies during the pandemic.

2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Foreign Trade

According to Amcham Connect (2022), international trade involves operations of buying and selling inputs, as well as providing various services that encompass businesses from other countries. It constitutes a set of operations that can provide significant opportunities for a company because even those not directly involved in the production of certain inputs can benefit from other needs involved in import and export processes. Thus, with the globalization of markets and the increasing mobility of factors such as machinery and equipment, research and development, and human resources, the explanatory potential of international trade through comparative advantages is becoming increasingly significant (Oliveira, 2002, p. 28).

International trade is essential for driving national economic growth, improving productivity, and enhancing the quality of domestically manufactured products. Furthermore, it supports policies of foreign and domestic investment abroad, as well as technology transfer. These measures complement the foreign trade policy, strengthening the coordination competencies assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in trade promotion and government representation in international organizations (Soares et al., 2023).

The importation of goods occurs when a country purchases goods or products originating from another country. In other words, products are manufactured in other countries and purchased by Brazil or any other country, for example. One of the main reasons for importing products is the need to supplement the lack of raw materials or domestic labor that may not meet the required demand. On the other hand, exportation is when a country sells a product or goods for internal use to another country. Companies in the country sell their products or services abroad. Therefore, negotiation is the process of communication used to achieve what we want when another person has control over whether or how we can achieve what we want (Folberg & Golann, 2008).

There are several reasons why a company decides to export its products, that is, to sell abroad. The international market has been a strategic alternative for companies to expand their consumer markets, seek an alternative to existing competition in the domestic market, or even achieve growth stability in their markets. In pursuit of expanding their market presence and enhancing competitiveness, one of the strategies used by organizations is internationalization. Thus, the most common alternative used is exportation (Pigatto, Ribeiro & Negreti, 2016; Soares et al., 2023).

One of the strongest reasons for this new sales format is that companies may want to enter new markets and thus expand and internationalize. In addition, some companies decide to export to meet demand that exists

abroad but not domestically. Exportation is also a great way to reduce oversupply and make production more efficient (Fazcomex, 2023).

According to Moraes and Firmo (2012), for a company to stand out, it is necessary to develop plans and put them into practice whenever necessary. According to the authors, companies use strategic planning to improve performance and competitiveness. However, there are still companies that do not use this tool because they do not know where to start or where to find information to help in its preparation. They also add that one of the main objectives of strategic planning is to prepare the company to anticipate the internal needs of organizations, their sectors, and the challenges posed by the market, with the aim of creating competitive strengths (Watkins, 2003, p. 9).

"Negotiation is defined as a process in which two or more parties enter into an agreement on a matter of common interest. Business requires considering a variety of transactions." - These transactions involve negotiations with one or more parties regarding roles and mutual obligations. Accordingly, it is clear that "Negotiation is the process of communication used to achieve something we want when another person has control over whether or how we can achieve what we want." (Folberg & Golann, 2008).

The commercial landscape began undergoing accelerated changes due to the financial and economic crisis of 2008, shaking the foundations of globalization and the market. Examples of these changes are global value chains and the multipolarity of economic and political power centers (Barbosa, 2020). Over time, the international market has faced other crises that directly impacted the economy and its negotiations.

Corporate strategy is the pattern of decisions in a company that determines and reveals its goals, purposes, or objectives, produces the main policies and plans to achieve these goals, and defines the range of business the company will pursue, the type of economy and human organization it is or tries to be, and the nature of the economic and non-economic contribution it intends to offer to its shareholders, employees, customers, and communities (Andrews, 1987, p. 52).

SARS-COV 2 Pandemic and Foreign Trade

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the COVID-19 pandemic was classified in March 2020, three months after the first case of the disease was identified in the city of Wuhan, southeast China. Since then, COVID-19, a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, has been present in dozens of countries and has infected more than 655 million people, with the highest number of cases in the United States. The United States also accounted for 16% of the disease's fatalities, which caused the deaths of 6.67 million people globally.

On January 30, the WHO declared that the outbreak caused by the new Coronavirus constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), considered the highest level of alert of the organization regarding the International Health Regulations. This decision was maintained to draw attention from society to cooperate in stopping the virus spread (Opas, 2021). With this declaration of emergency, numerous urgent actions needed to be taken, and one of them sparked several controversies and divisions of opinions: the closure of all trade sectors, companies, services, and any type of place that would generate crowds, which was called lockdown. Some months later, there was talk of flexibility, allowing some essential establishments to open during emergency phases (Ximenes, 2021).

The pandemic had a wide range of impacts affecting various spheres, including politics, education, economy, culture, and mental health. With the uncontrolled spread of the virus, several strategies were implemented to mitigate its spread, with social isolation and the closure of non-essential businesses being the most prominent measures (Farias, 2020; Moreira et al., 2023).

One of the main consequences was the disruption of global supply chains. With many countries closing their borders and imposing restrictions on the movement of goods, companies faced difficulties in importing and exporting their products. This resulted in delivery delays, lack of raw materials, and production interruptions. Additionally, there was a sharp decline in demand for products due to the closure of commercial establishments and social isolation. Sectors such as tourism, transportation, and retail faced major challenges, with a drastic reduction in demand and consequently in exports (Unicamp, 2020; Souza et al., 2023).

The pandemic restrictions were much more severe since the economy is globalized, commercial agreements, and economic blocs have evolved, as a large part of GDP is generated by imports and exports. Unlike previous crises, this one was global, not regional (Corrêa, Ribeiro, 2022). This scenario demanded new strategies not only in the organizational environment but also on a global scale. The changes and alterations caused by the pandemic imposed measures aimed at everyone's safety, triggering social isolation, legitimized by specific regulations, which promoted a new way of conducting organizations (Corrêa & Ribeiro, 2022).

With this pandemic scenario, between lockdowns and flexibility, the business sectors as a whole experienced instabilities; among the results, bankruptcy and closure of small and even large businesses were widely discussed. On the other hand, some sectors achieved profits and growth. Faced with these instabilities and changes in business sectors, in which the administrator is an essential part, this work aims to conduct a partial analysis of the Brazilian business market during the COVID-19 pandemic and its various expressions of organizational survival (Da Silva, 2021).

In this sense, it is worth noting that the business context of international trade was dramatically impacted by the consequences of SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic led to a series of restriction measures and lockdowns worldwide, causing a significant slowdown in global trade, with many countries closing their borders and imposing restrictions on the movement of goods. Companies faced difficulties in importing and exporting their products, resulting in delivery delays, lack of raw materials, and production interruptions (Da Silva, 2021).

As a result, organizations had to reorganize their strategic plans, as the economy is globalized, commercial agreements and economic blocs have evolved, and a large part of GDP is generated by imports and exports. Unlike previous crises, this was global, and adapting to the new world situation became essential. Strategic Planning is identified as a management tool, being one of the essential points for solving problems in organizations. It indicates the positive measures that a company should take to address threats and seize opportunities found in its environment (Teixeira, 2020).

With many countries closing their borders and imposing restrictions on the movement of goods, companies faced difficulties in importing and exporting their products, resulting in delivery delays, lack of raw materials, and production interruptions. There was also a sharp decline in demand for products due to the closure of commercial establishments and social isolation (Oliveira, 2013). Planning is also a mental exercise carried out by the company, regardless of the specific will of its executives, which is why some companies do not have a structured planning process, although they present some "planned" actions (Oliveira, 2013, p. 4).

Combating the virus made everything more difficult; after all, keeping everything functioning in the steel world while meeting health protocols is not an easy solution. In addition, we had to interrupt technical and commercial visits to clients, an activity of great relevance that had to be stopped (Seabra, 2021). Many corporations opted for remote work, adopted the removal of professionals considered at risk (over 60 years old, heart disease, people with pre-existing conditions, among others), and also adhered to the possibility of employees who continued in face-to-face work, using alcohol gel and specific PPEs to prevent disease spread. This adaptation, which initially seems positive for people and organizations, faced resistance when implemented, despite its necessity (Nlmk, 2021).

Based on a literature review, this study identified business practices adapted to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Making quick and emergency decisions is essential for a company to be able to adjust to environmental changes. According to Forbes, the company MRV, a builder that seeks creative solutions for its clients, managed to reduce the impacts of the crisis on its business and ranked among the 10 most innovative companies in Brazil. This is because, at a time when it was necessary to reinvent coexistence, it launched the #StayAtHome campaign, where its main goal was to create a digital channel so that all purchasing processes could be done entirely online (Deloitte, 2022).

3 METHOD

This chapter presents the method developed in the research, its scope, data collection, processing, presentation, and analysis. Therefore, a qualitative approach with a descriptive exploratory nature was employed in this case study. According to Ferreira (1987), "Method is the path through which an objective is achieved; a program that pre-regulates a series of operations to be performed, pointing out avoidable errors, aiming at a specific result; teaching process or technique: direct method; manner of proceeding; way of acting." Based on methodological authors, this research investigates theoretical and practical problems using scientific procedures to find answers to these issues (Marconi & Lakatos, 2017).

The research nature is exploratory, aiming to provide greater knowledge on a specific subject. It involves initial investigation with broad objectives, typically conducted when there is limited prior knowledge on the subject or to familiarize with a new field of study. Its main characteristics include preliminary nature, aiming to understand a problem or phenomenon initially without fully explaining it; broad objectives, often less specific compared to descriptive or explanatory research; methodological flexibility, allowing various approaches like literature reviews, preliminary case studies, and exploratory interviews; and contribution to future research by identifying gaps or areas needing further investigation (Creswell, 2013).

Regarding data collection procedures, the research is bibliographic. Bibliographic research is foundational in academic courses and serves as the initial step for all academic activities. It is essential in laboratory or field research as it provides preliminary bibliographic information. Seminars, panels, debates, critical summaries, and monographs all require bibliographic research. It is crucial in exploratory research for defining the topic, developing the subject matter, citing sources, and presenting conclusions (Andrade, 2010, p. 25). According to Martins (2001), bibliographic research aims to explain and discuss a topic based on theoretical references from books, journals, and other publications, while Amaral (2007) emphasizes its fundamental role in providing theoretical foundations for the research.

Data analysis, according to Enise Barth Teixeira (2003), is the process of making sense beyond the collected data, involving consolidating, limiting, and interpreting what people said and what the researcher observed and read—a process of forming meaning. It is a complex process involving transitions between concrete data and abstract concepts, inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation. Merriam (1998) highlights various qualitative data analysis techniques such as ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, constant comparative method, content analysis, and analytic induction.

To identify and analyze the main adaptations in business operations aimed at mitigating the effects of the pandemic on companies engaged in foreign trade operations, twenty scientific articles were initially collected from databases such as Scielo, Spell, and Google Scholar. Abstracts, introductions, and conclusions of these studies were reviewed, resulting in the selection of twelve relevant articles for this research after excluding eight studies that did not align with the research objectives and scope.

Data analysis categories emerged from content analysis, which involves classification, coding, and interpretation of collected data by researchers. Adaptations in business operations were identified through the interpretation of the twelve selected articles from Scielo, Spell, and Google Scholar databases.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

E-commerce

Since the Covid-19 crisis was declared a pandemic, Brazil has faced several challenges, primarily related to health and the economy. To survive this new scenario, many companies have adapted to meet legal requirements and cater to new consumer habits. Even before the pandemic, e-commerce was on the rise due to its convenience, quick service, lower prices, and customer comfort. The development of the internet and globalization have sparked a revolution, with e-commerce being one of its main outcomes (Scandiuzzi et al., 2011).

Understanding the expansion of e-commerce during the pandemic is crucial for identifying future trends, including assessing the performance of organizations affected by the effects of social isolation. To remain competitive, companies need to stay attuned to customer trends and demands. In the business world, it is consumers who dictate the rules, as they decide whether to consume the products and services offered by the company based on factors such as price, quality, and variety (Gasparetto, Borella, & Borella, 2021).

One of the companies that stood out during the pandemic, particularly due to e-commerce growth, was Magazine Luiza. "The market expected a slowdown in e-commerce, but we grew 46% in the second quarter, proving that even with store reopenings, digitalization is here to stay. Reopening also impacted results, with a 2.7 percentage point reduction in expenses, one of the lowest levels in history," stated Frederico Trajano in an interview with EXAME.

In a statement to the Brazilian Securities and Exchange Commission (CVM), Magazine Luiza recalled that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and to avoid overcrowding in stores, they adopted a strategy of early November offers, ensuring better prices on products from the beginning of the month compared to Black Friday itself.

It is worth noting that Black Friday once again reinforced the perception that everything our customers need #isatmagalu, with particular growth in the grocery category. In this category alone, Magalu sold over 1 million items during Black Friday, with high sales volumes of products such as beer, ketchup, cream, chocolate milk, diapers, and sunscreen," the company reported.

The above data aligns with the literature. According to Peter and Olson (2010, p. 21), e-commerce is an electronic medium that does not require physical stores, catalogs, or salespeople, enabling direct consumer

relationships and a database for research. This channel allows for meeting consumer needs and desires in a manner similar to traditional commerce.

The expansion of e-commerce during the pandemic was reinforced by the study of Favorete and Pereira (2021), which cited research conducted by Comscore. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was an intensification of quarantine, impacting digital media consumption in Brazil. The research compared the periods from March 9-15 to March 16-22.

The main highlight was for family and youth-oriented content, dubbed "Family & Youth," which saw a significant 43.1% increase week over week. Accesses rose from 637 million to nearly 912 million views (Favorete & Pereira, 2021). Following this, the News category also saw a considerable increase, rising from 725 million to 1.03 billion accesses in the same period, a growth of 42.6%. This reflects the intensified search for information on the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting not only the positive effects of quarantine.

Emotional Support for Employees

According to a survey conducted by Opinion Box in partnership with Vittude, 61% of respondents stated that work stress negatively affects mental health. Additionally, 72% indicated they would choose to work for companies that have programs related to emotional care. In the current context, it is essential for emotional health not to be seen merely as protocol but as part of the organizational culture, aiming to provide a good work environment so that employees have quality of life and well-being in their routine.

According to a 2020 study by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) on the impact on the mental health of essential workers during the pandemic, 43.7% exhibit symptoms of anxiety and depression in Brazil and Spain. "From internal surveys, we found that the pandemic caused a significant increase in emotional pathologies such as anxiety, distress, insomnia, and lack of concentration. In response to this scenario, we structured a program to promote self-care and to allow employees and their families to go through this period in a lighter and healthier way," explains Maristela Sousa, HR manager at Komatsu.

Launched in June 2021, the Healthily Program can impact over 5,000 people among company employees, family members, and dependents. "We aim to provide personalized care according to each person's real needs," highlights the HR manager. "In addition to psychological care, nutritional guidance is also available, aimed at improving the quality of life of our professionals; and legal and financial information, which aims to assist those who have taken on debt and are struggling to make payments, for example," she adds. In another vein, alongside this scenario, Komatsu also held seminars with the purpose of preparing its leaders to identify emotional situations - such as depression, anxiety crises, and concentration difficulties - in their teams.

The data cited above are linked to the literature, as Xing et al. (2020) states that the routine and work environment directly affect employees' mental health, causing stress, anxiety, physical symptoms, etc. During the SARS COV 2 pandemic, these issues worsened. Therefore, several companies were concerned with providing a certain structure for their employees in this matter. After all, for the organization to perform well in its work and achieve its profitability goals, the physical and emotional health of employees is fundamental.

The findings of this study regarding the strategy of adopting emotional support for employees during the pandemic are corroborated by research conducted by Junior et al. (2022), which states that during the pandemic, companies also focused on the mental health of their employees. Due to uncertainties about the disease and employment, many faced financial difficulties. To support their employees, they hired psychologists to provide psychological support. Additionally, they followed preventive measures recommended by health authorities and established communication channels to keep employees informed about company actions. Transmitting security and confidence to employees was essential during this period.

Home Office

An organization that does not prepare for changes is doomed to fail in an increasingly unstable and dynamic market. In this scenario, companies striving to remain competitive are compelled to develop innovative processes, adopt agile practices, and implement a culture of excellence capable of achieving more with less and overcoming critical moments, thereby gaining customer satisfaction and loyalty (Assimi & Marques, 2019). Constant changes in the market have led professions to reshape themselves according to new urgent needs. New forms of work, such as home office, have contributed to the development and maintenance of organizations.

According to a survey released on March 30 by the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted Brazilian industry (Máximo, 2020). Three out of

every four surveyed companies (73%) are facing difficulties in paying routines, taxes, suppliers, salaries, rent, and electricity bills, with 42% reporting significant difficulty in keeping up with accounts. In this scenario, one of the measures adopted by industries was home office work, considered safer for employees amidst the crisis (Máximo, 2020).

However, disadvantages have arisen for organizations, such as potential leaks of confidential company information. According to Nascimento et al. (2020), the decentralized work environment can lead to decentralization of information, even with software capable of centralizing data and limiting access. Another challenge is the implementation and maintenance of corporate culture. The diffusion of a culture within the organization is a strategic part based on a solid vision, mission, and values. Home office can represent an obstacle to effectively diffusing this corporate culture due to administrative decentralization and collective flexibility (Nascimento et al., 2020).

On the other hand, there are significant advantages. According to Zendesk (2023), one of the main advantages of home office is savings for both employees and companies. Many organizations point to reduced costs for building maintenance and daily commuting, whether by private or public transport, as well as costs for food. Less stress in traffic is also highlighted as a significant benefit, contributing to employees' disposition throughout the day. With more flexible working hours and the convenience of home office, work optimization and increased productivity are observed (Zendesk, 2023).

Given this context, several companies have opted to maintain home office even after the end of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic, such as Twitter, which announced permanent implementation for positions that allow this modality since May 2020. Hype 50+ also joins this movement. Clea Klouri, a partner at the company, stated in an interview with UOL that home office has become permanent due to successful investments in technology and work dynamics, which have allowed the company's expansion.

Xerpay, in an internal survey, found that 94% of employees in the financial services platform feel more productive with teleworking. Based on this information, the company allowed employees to choose the modality they prefer. Home office has been an alternative to keep employees active and safe in light of COVID-19 prevention guidelines.

These changes are supported by the literature. Authors like Luna (2014), Melo (2015), and Hara (2014) acknowledge the disadvantages of home office, such as supervising and controlling employees' work, reducing focus on the company, and increasing risks to security and confidentiality of information. However, they believe that with good management, these challenges can be overcome, also highlighting benefits such as reduced operational costs, objective management, and improved company image.

It is important to emphasize that the strategy adopted during the pandemic, allowing employees to work from home, continues to be widely used. The number of companies adopting this strategy for cost reduction and improvement of employees' quality of life has increased significantly between 2020 and 2024 (Soares et al., 2023).

Dismissal of Employees

Dismissal is considered a process by which the organization unilaterally ends its employment relationship with the employee. This is seen as a common occurrence in organizations and people's lives (Caldas, 1992). According to IBGE data from 2020, nearly one million companies opted to terminate some of their employees during the pandemic. The construction sector had the highest number of companies (45.2%) making cuts, followed by commerce (35.2%) and services (33.8%). Among medium-sized companies, with 50 to 499 employees, 45.4% reported layoffs, followed by large companies (more than 500 employees), where 37.2% reduced their workforce (IBGE, 2020).

Several famous companies had to make these decisions, such as Uber, as demand for the company's services plummeted worldwide after governments imposed social distancing measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus. In May 2020, according to UOL, the company announced it would lay off 3,000 employees and also closed 45 of its offices worldwide.

Airbnb also faced challenges. With travel suspended due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and lockdown measures, the home rental platform announced in May 2020 that it would lay off approximately 25% of its global workforce. According to Brian Chesky, co-founder and CEO, the company raised \$2 billion to manage the crisis, reduced expenses across all areas, but staff cuts were necessary for the company to survive until people can travel again.

Employees of the restaurant chain Coco Bambu, whose contracts were suspended through the application of Provisional Measure 936, were also laid off. The company had suspended employees' contracts in April. At the end of the two-month suspension period, 1,500 employees were laid off, which represents 20% of the 7,000 on the payroll.

At Uninove (Nove de Julho University) in São Paulo, teachers were surprised by a dismissal message that appeared on the online platform used for classes as soon as they accessed the site. The notice stated impersonally that the instructor was dismissed "from providing services to this company without the obligation to comply with the notice period provided for by law." The Sinpro-SP (São Paulo Teachers Union) reported filing a collective dispute at the Regional Labor Court seeking interim relief to annul the dismissals. The exact number of dismissed professionals is still unknown, but teachers and students estimate between 300 and 500.

In addition to these companies, there are other large international firms across different economic sectors. Disney announced the termination of 28,000 employees, MGM Resorts, which operates hotels in the United States and China, laid off 18,000 employees, Lufthansa in Germany announced the dismissal of 22,000 more employees, and American Airlines laid off another 19,000 employees.

The above data are connected with literature, as Stocker (2018), Ribeiro (2020), and Tylczak (1991) state that companies opt for the dismissal process mainly to maintain or increase their competitive advantage in the market. The decision to dismiss an employee requires planning, and criteria must be analyzed considering specific expenses, prioritizing the company's financial health in the short, medium, and long term.

Bureaucracy related to Foreign Trade

The Foreign Trade sector is crucial for Brazilian economic growth. Consequently, the government decided to implement actions to support and minimize the impact of the disease in the country, aiming to make it one of the engines for the economic recovery post-SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Portaria Inmetro n° 79/2020 established alternative conditions for Product Certification Bodies (OCPs) to assess compliance in manufacturing plants located in countries affected by the coronavirus. Portaria Secex n° 18/2020 temporarily suspended non-automatic import licensing for health products subject to antidumping duties. Portaria n° 120/2020 closed borders with Venezuela for 15 days and with Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Guyana, French Guiana, Paraguay, Peru, and Suriname for 15 days, and restricted entry by air for 30 days for foreigners from China, European Union, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, and Korea (Sebrae, 2020).

On the other hand, Resolução Camex n° 17/2020 facilitated and simplified licensing, control, or inspection activities for 33 NCMs (Mercosur Common Nomenclature) of medical-hospital use, and reduced import tariffs to 0% for 33 medical-hospital NCMs. Resolução RDC Anvisa n° 356/2020 temporarily waived the need for Company Operating Authorization, notification to Anvisa, and other sanitary authorizations for manufacturing and importing medical-hospital products. Resolução RDC Anvisa n° 352/2020 required prior authorization for the export of hydroxychloroquine and products subject to sanitary surveillance for Covid-19 combat (Sebrae, 2020).

Meanwhile, Circular Bacen n° 3,992/2020 established margin transfer during the validity of foreign currency operations by the Central Bank whenever exposure of any of the parties is equal to or greater than US\$ 500,000. Portaria Inmetro n° 102/2020 suspended for 12 months the mandatory certification of established medical-hospital supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). Instrução Normativa RFB n° 1,927/2020 simplified customs clearance of medical-hospital use products for Covid-19 combat, and Decreto n° 10,285/2020 reduced the IPI (Excise Tax) rate to 0% on 15 products necessary for Covid-19 combat (Sebrae, 2020).

Sanitization Procedures

Covid-19 is an acute respiratory disease categorized as a pandemic in 2020. It is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, belonging to the coronavirus family, a large group of viruses that can cause respiratory, gastrointestinal, hepatic, and neurological diseases (Wu et al., 2020; WHO, 2020). Another important factor contributing to the high transmission rate of the disease is that unlike other coronaviruses, SARS-CoV-2 can be spread by people who show few or no symptoms (Morawska & Milton, 2020; Villapol, 2020).

Transmission can occur through saliva droplets expelled primarily when coughing, speaking, or sneezing (Morawska & Milton, 2019). Thus, contamination occurs by breathing these droplets containing the active virus, which can be transmitted from person to person or through contaminated objects (Li et al., 2020).

Studies reveal that the virus can remain active on inanimate surfaces for up to 96 hours (Teixeira & Carvalho, 2020).

Mitigation measures for Covid-19 in Brazil began on February 28, 2020, in the Federal District; subsequently, other states in the federation adopted safety protocols recommended by international health organizations (Rodriguez-Morales et al., 2020).

All these transmissible factors directly impact businesses and operations as a whole, both financially and in terms of changes in habits upon reopening organizations. Since virus transmission can occur through contact or through the air, it is ideal for sanitization to be performed at the entrances of commercial establishments; whenever touching something, it is recommended to use 70% alcohol gel or wash hands with soap and water. It was also mandatory for masks to be worn in organizations, as companies needed to ensure all employees wore them, providing alcohol gel at the entrance and throughout the workday, monitoring a 2-meter distance between employees, ensuring well-ventilated areas, investing in frequent surface cleaning, among other measures (Ignaczuk, 2020).

Rafael Pimenta Weitzel, Coordinator of Police Support Activities, stated that the Legislative Police Secretariat (SPol) also engaged in the Senate's effort to combat the coronavirus. Policemen worked in shifts, underwent training, and underwent weekly virus detection tests. Weitzel reported that the Secretariat trained 11 employees specifically for environmental decontamination. The course was taught by naval marines, and since then, SPol has assisted in decontamination procedures at the Senate (Guedes, 2021).

In addition, the police regularly instructed security guards on temperature measurement procedures and checking the completion of the electronic form for the main symptoms of Covid-19. They also adjusted agent schedules so that teams formed cells and did not overlap, minimizing contagion risks (Guedes, 2021).

Change in Meeting Methodology

According to *Qualidade HC Magazine*, in the corporate world, work meetings are important and constitute a daily practice for planning, communication, idea sharing, discussion, negotiation, and decision-making. In hospitals, it is no different; numerous meetings are necessary to consolidate activities. Meetings are vital parts of the work process, mainly serving to align information and process flow within a company. It is a mechanism for sharing ideas aimed at guiding matters that need consensus decision-making (De Paula, 2023).

For ANAHP, the National Association of Private Hospitals, exercising communication is fundamental to ensuring quality and safety, as communication plays a strategic internal role, creating a sense of belonging, commitment, team spirit, and motivation (Camandoni, 2020). The pandemic brought unprecedented and unstable times with rapid and increasing changes. However, reliable, current, and high-quality information is not enough; it is also necessary to consider the role of communication appropriately and effectively to mitigate risks. At this moment, it is necessary to use media channels continuously (Oliveira, 2020).

Facing this new reality and necessity, this coordination transformed meetings into an online format, focusing on target audiences and developing meetings for all institution employees or specific groups such as the clinical and healthcare staff. There was also adaptation of established themes to address updates, behavioral, and operational issues for the new situation experienced (Oliveira, 2020).

The Hospital das Clínicas of the Faculty of Medicine of Ribeirão Preto of the University of São Paulo (HCFMRP USP) adopted Google Apps tools since 2016, but tools focused on conversation and video meetings were underutilized. The imposition of behavioral change by the pandemic accelerated the use of these tools, which provide speed in conversations and videoconference meetings, essential at that time. However, a minority of employees were prepared and/or had the necessary equipment, such as headphones, microphones, and cameras. Therefore, the organization provided these devices, and the use of this tool was accelerated by the new reality of the pandemic (Siansi, Gomes & Guideroli, 2021).

Betina Lackner, HR employee of the multinational Johnson & Johnson, stated that the company established that meeting periods change to 25 and 45 minutes instead of the usual 30 and 60 minutes. The reduction provided employees with a break between meetings. There are also guidelines to avoid scheduling anything during lunchtime, between 12 pm and 2 pm, or at the last minute or outside working hours. Employees also have one Friday free of meetings per month to focus on topics such as training, goal review, and planning (Moióli, 2021).

Loggi, a logistics-focused startup, followed suit, implementing a guide for meetings during the pandemic. In addition to reducing meeting duration, they strictly concentrated them between 9 am and 6 pm, blocked lunchtime for the entire company, and instituted "Wednesday without meetings." "We transferred the

way we worked in the office to home until we realized that working remotely is not like that," says Mônica Santos, CPO of the company.

Despite the importance of changing from face-to-face meetings to remote meetings via platforms like Google Meet, Teams, Zoom, and Ebex to enable meetings during the pandemic, which many companies have continued to do, it is necessary to note that social distancing has increased videoconferencing. This form of communication needs to be observed carefully because isolation can cause some discomfort in people regarding subsequent calls. It is essential to remain calm to reassure employees and promote engagement. It is important to double-check and verify if what was said was understood, given the high number of distractions. Care must be taken when implementing these strategies because understanding is not as clear as in face-to-face meetings (Junior et al., 2022).

Table 1 presents a synthesis of the main adaptations in the operations of Foreign Trade companies during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1 - Adaptations used by companies during the SARS-COV 2 pandemic

ADAPTATIONS	COMPANIES	AUTHORS
E-commerce	Magazine Luiza, Shein	Peter and Olson, 2010
Emotional support	Komatsu	Xing, Sun, Xu, Geng e Li.2020
Home office	Twitter, Xerpay e Hype 50+	Luna, 2014. Melo, 2015 and Hara 2014
Dismissal of employees	Uber, Airbnb, Coco Bambu and Uninove, Disney	Caldas, 1992. Stocker, 2018. Ribeiro, 2020 and Tylczak, 1991.
Bureaucracy in relation to Foreign Trade	_____	_____
Sanitization procedures	Legislative Police Secretariat,	Morawska and Milton, 2020. Teixeira and Carvalho, 2020. Caroline Ignaczuk, 2020 and Aline Guedes, 2021
Meeting methodology	Johnson & Johnson, Loggi, ANAHP, HCFMRP USP	Edson de Paula, 2023. Vanessa de Camandoni, 2020. Kauan Oliveira, 2020.

Source: Authors (2023)

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This paper highlights the crisis of SARS-CoV-2, which began globally in December 2019. It is a respiratory virus primarily transmitted through inhaling airborne droplets carrying the virus. This scenario has caused economic and financial difficulties for businesses across various sectors due to closures of commerce, increased unemployment, reduced consumer demand, and decreased consumer income.

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic severely impacted international trade operations as each country unilaterally adopted restrictive measures. Consequently, commercial negotiations during this period were largely halted or significantly reduced, resulting in negative impacts on company revenues. Organizations had to adapt to the new global environment, implementing adjustments to ensure economic security and long-term operational continuity.

Given this brief introduction, this study achieved its objectives by analyzing the economic impacts of Covid-19 on businesses, identifying key risks associated with SARS-CoV-2, and examining solutions implemented in business management. Among the primary practices identified in the analysis, organizations highlighted remote work, e-commerce, intensified hygiene procedures, and bureaucratic adjustments in import-export documentation.

The findings of this research, especially the adaptations presented in Table 1, are expected to be useful for managers facing crises with similar impacts on companies engaged in international trade. Given the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic's effects, it is believed that many of these adaptations implemented to mitigate its impacts may also prove effective in crises with lesser significance. Additionally, this study contributes theoretically by highlighting the scarcity of studies on actions and adaptations in business operations to address

the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the context of international trade. Thus, the findings of this research have the potential to enhance the theory of strategic decision-making in crisis contexts.

As a scientific work, this research has some limitations. Firstly, it relies on a literature review. While essential for scientific advancement, future research is recommended to include more in-depth qualitative analyses to investigate how these adaptive practices were implemented in daily business operations and how they influenced performance and competitiveness. Additionally, future studies should address specific social impacts on economies of developing countries caused by restrictions on international trade during the pandemic, although this was not the focus of this work.

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