

AFAGU, Serving You in Death and During Your Life

AFAGU, Servindo na Morte e na Vida

Brena Carolina de Oliveira Silva

Halana Adelino Brandão

Antonio Messias Valdevino

Thiago Assunção de Moraes

Rita de Cássia de Faria Pereira

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the history of Anjo da Guarda funerary, which is the main company of the Cordeiro de Freitas Group. This is a teaching case that presents strategies of expansion and performance during the company's 24 years of existence, and the future prospects of the funeral home reported by Miguel, who is the commercial and marketing department of the group. Customers are benefiting with exchanges to use various services to the moment of death or care with life, and the company is attentive to market opportunities, being present in some states of northeastern Brazil. To write this case, we conducted interviews with the organization's managers for a primary data file. Data on websites, social networks, films, videos were also used. Thus, we seek to promote discussions and reflections about the marketing environment and the marketing strategy, contributing to the learning of these concepts in the classroom.

Keywords: Services; Marketing Strategy; Funeral Industry.

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RESUMO

O presente trabalho descreve a trajetória da empresa Funerária Anjo da Guarda, carro-chefe do Grupo Cordeiro de Freitas. Trata-se de um caso para ensino que apresenta as estratégias de expansão e atuação definidas durante 24 anos de existência da empresa e as perspectivas de futuro desta, a partir da visão de Miguel, diretor do departamento comercial e marketing do grupo. Entre necessidades que privilegiam o momento da morte ou os cuidados com a vida, seus clientes se beneficiam com trocas concretizadas por diversos serviços e a empresa mostra-se atenta às oportunidades de mercado, estando presente em alguns estados do Nordeste brasileiro. Para a elaboração deste caso, os autores realizaram entrevistas com os principais gestores da organização para a obtenção de dados primários. Também buscou-se dados secundários sobre as informações aqui relatadas em sites, redes sociais, filmes, vídeos e trabalhos acadêmicos. Busca-se, a partir deste trabalho, promover discussões e reflexões sobre ambiente e estratégias de marketing, contribuindo para o entendimento de tais conceitos em sala de aula.

Palavras-chave: Serviços. Estratégia de marketing. Mercado da morte.

Brena Carolina de Oliveira Silva 
 brena.carolina.adm@gmail.com
 Msc – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 Mestre – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 Currais Novos / RN – Brazil

Halana Adelino Brandão 
 halana.brandao@ufca.edu.br
 Msc – UFPE
 Mestre – UFPE
 Juazeiro do Norte / CE – Brazil

Antonio Messias Valdevino 
 messiasurca@gmail.com
 Msc – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 Mestre – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 Juazeiro do Norte / CE – Brazil

Thiago Assunção de Moraes 
 thiagoassuncao@pcs.uespi.br
 PhD – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 PhD – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 Picos / PI – Brazil

Rita de Cássia de Faria Pereira 
 rita_faria@yahoo.com
 PhD – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 Doutora – Universidade Federal da Paraíba
 João Pessoa / PB – Brazil

Introduction

In Juazeiro do Norte, July 12, 2017, Wednesday at noon. Miguel was sitting in the meeting room of the Cordeiro de Freitas Group’s administrative building. Miguel was the commercial director and was making the final adjustments to the presentation of the long-term planning that he had been preparing in recent days. The plan focuses on the expansion and changing performance of Funerária Anjo da Guarda for the coming years. Also, it defined the location for the funeral home to be opened in the next 10 years, and the innovations to be implemented in the business. On that day, at 2:00 pm, a meeting would be held to present this project to the Group’s board of directors.

Funerária Anjo da Guarda has always been the flagship of Grupo Cordeiro de Freitas. This group also brings together companies in the fields of health, optics, and floriculture, in a service strategy that complements its assistance plan (Plano de Assistência Familiar Anjo da Guarda – AFAGU). The assistance plan’s main objective is to offer funeral assistance to the associate members and enable access to health services, in addition to providing a network of partners ready to provide clients with the best care.

This funeral business was present in the Brazilian states of Ceará, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte and Bahia. Miguel’s current objective is to conquer the Brazilian northeast, taking the funeral home, and consequently the AFAGU Plan, to other states, in addition to making improvements in the services provided by it. Miguel knew well the history of the company, its evolution, and the changes that had taken place in the 24 years of Funerária Anjo da Guarda. He knew that Raimundo Cordeiro de Freitas – founder of the group and commonly called Raimundinho – was a man of vision. However, Miguel was worried and wondered: would he accept his proposals?

From Baixo Jaguaribe to Cariri Cearense

Raimundinho had decided to return to Russas, his hometown, after a few years working as a “galego” (so-called door-to-door salesmen), in Fortaleza, capital of the state of Ceará. Russas was known as “the land of sweet oranges” and was located

in the Baixo Jaguaribe region of the state of Ceará, being one of the most important economic centers in that region. It was there that Raimundinho had learned what commitment was, having responsibilities since he was little, such as opening the gate in the afternoon to allow the cattle to pass through or helping his parents with livestock activities. The return home brought the decision to undertake in that city.

Before starting his business, Raimundinho traveled to the interior of São Paulo to meet companies that worked with funeral assistance. On his return to Russas, and with the ideas and background acquired from his research, he opened the Funerária Vida Eterna in 1989, which focused on serving the lower social classes. Miguel agreed that the funeral service had been a good business opportunity and an innovative activity when implemented in Russas.

After four years in Vale do Jaguaribe, Raimundinho decided to expand the business to other cities. Raimundinho arrived in Juazeiro do Norte to negotiate the purchase of a funeral home that already existed there, Funerária Anjo da Guarda. Juazeiro do Norte is a city that is located 528 km from Fortaleza, it is considered one of the largest centers of popular religiosity in Brazil, attracting pilgrims from various locations, which can reach 600 thousand per year. Juazeiro do Norte has a strong economic influence in the Cariri Cearense region because of the traditional commerce of religious articles, and the footwear and jewelry center.

Raimundinho unified the company's brand after the purchase of the funeral home in Juazeiro do Norte, in 1993. He started using the name Funerária Anjo da Guarda for his business. At that time, he noticed a positive acceptance in Russas, but he had doubts if the Juazeiro do Norte also would accept this kind of enterprise so well.

Characteristics of the Funerária Anjo da Guarda

Miguel searched his notebook for the company's latest semi-annual report to check the number of existing call centers. In June 2017, Funerária Anjo da Guarda had 51 subsidiaries, 22 of these in the Cariri Cearense Region.

Raimundinho brought with him the idea of the funeral plan product when he came to Juazeiro do Norte, and this was launched as Plano AFAGU. Miguel thought

that the differential of the funeral plan offered by Raimundinho had been the advantage of allowing the apportionment of the death costs in small amounts, which the associates could pay. The AFAGU Plan is a portfolio of services that cover a range of facilities and conveniences to meet the needs of your target audience. The prices are varied and allow the company to offer the customer a personalized service with the support of qualified professionals.

Miguel believed that Juazeiro do Norte had been the city with the best acceptance of the funeral plan compared to other cities where the company operated. In 2001, the population of Juazeiro do Norte exceeded the number of 212,000 inhabitants, and 40% of the people of Juazeiro had the AFAGU Plan. In 2017, the population of Juazeiro do Norte was estimated at more than 268 thousand people, and 65% of the residents of that city were associated with the plan.

The performance of Funerária Anjo da Guarda opened space in the market and boosted the growth of other companies of the Cordeiro de Freitas Group such as Floricultura Rayanne, Cliniafagu, Casa dos Óculos and Farmafagu. These companies were opened exclusively in places where the funeral home was already present and took advantage of its customer base. Discounts on medical care, medicines, and optical accessories were offered as benefits to AFAGU Plan members.

Funerária Anjo da Guarda and other companies of the Cordeiro de Freitas Group operated with participatory management. Annually, the group promoted the Managers' Meeting, an event where those responsible for the sectors and companies of the commercial group presented their results and defined the goals. Miguel planned internal campaigns, usually in the form of games to promote sales and reward his salespeople. This happened after the event and the definition of the goals of the Funerária Anjo da Guarda.

Miguel verified in the first semi-annual report that Funerária Anjo da Guarda employed around 1,000 employees in 2017. The HR mainly used internal recruitment and selection processes, and it was not difficult to find people who had worked there for a long time. An example of this strategy was João Hélio, who started working at Funerária Anjo da Guarda as a typist, and is currently the administrative director of Grupo Cordeiro de Freitas. João was promoted to this position after Raimundinho decided to step away from managing the business to run for mayor of Russas in 2004.

João Hélio had graduated in Administration and, after his promotion as managing director, he realized the need to professionalize and structure the company after analyzing the new behavior of the funeral market in the region.

The Near Monopolization of the Funeral Market

Miguel looked away from his notebook, remembering when he had joined the company. In 2008, he had his first meeting with the board. Raimundinho had told him about the company, as he insisted that all the employees knew his story.

- When you commit to your story, you always bring another one, and that's my story - that's what Raimundinho said when he started to tell his story.

At the time when Raimundinho bought the Funerária Anjo da Guarda, there were about 20 other funeral homes in Juazeiro do Norte. However, he did not consider these funeral homes to be direct competitors because none of them offered the funeral plan product. The differential of the funeral plan offered by Raimundinho was the fact that people made a monthly investment, which guaranteed the provision of funeral services to the holder of the contract and their close family members when they needed it.

- At that time, the neediest people often depended on donations from friends or relatives to pay for the funeral service. There was also help from the City Hall, through the Social Action Department, which had a specific budget for this purpose.
- Joao Hélio commented.

The AFAGU Plan brought one more option to the population. In a short time, the funeral market in Juazeiro do Norte had only two companies: Funerária Anjo da Guarda and Funerária Terra da Luz. So it remained until 2008 when this reality began to change.

Losing the Monopoly: the way out is to Enjoy Life

New funeral companies began to appear on the market in 2008. At that time, the Commercial and Marketing department of Grupo Cordeiro de Freitas was created,

which until then was formed by the funeral home, optics, and florist. Miguel and the board had decided to position the funeral home as the best in the Northeast, making this statement the company's slogan. From then on, the company's commercial sector was no longer considered amateur. The "plan boy", as it was used to be called the person responsible for the company's marketing and sales, became the director of the Marketing department. Strategies were implemented that made the brand of Funerária Anjo da Guarda solid and recognized. The acquisition of the AFAGU plan also began to influence social issues due to the company's new positioning.

In 2010, the funeral home created the Support Center for the Bereaved Family (Núcleo de Apoio à Família Enlutada - NAFE), a project that aims to assist the client in two social aspects: first, the funeral home provides nursing assistants in the ceremonial and wake services, not only to health care but also provides emotional support to clients, religious interventions, and so on; the second aspect is that, as of 2014, the funeral home offered to its customers access to a house with a pantry, rooms, bathroom, and equipment for their most basic needs. This house is close to the Legal Medical Institute.

Among the services offered by NAFE are clarifying doubts and welcoming members of the AFAGU Plan while they wait for the body to be released. This process can take up to eight hours, depending on the cause of death. The Legal Medical Institute of Juazeiro do Norte is far from the central part of the city and there is not much availability of public transport there, which makes it difficult for people to access it. The Funerária Anjo da Guarda proposed with NAFE to offer comfort and safety to its customers during their waiting hours for the completion of the exams whether necroscopic - which aims to identify the cause of unnatural deaths - or the issuance of the Death Certificate. With that, the company promised a unique service in the funeral market of Cariri Cearense region.

With the new positioning and the emergence of other companies linked to the Cordeiro de Freitas Group (Cliniafagu in 2010 – a polyclinic serving several specialties – and Farmafagu in 2011 – focused on the retail trade of medicines – both with services included in the AFAGU Plan), Funerária Anjo da Guarda also started to modify its product and services. To Miguel, the main focus of creating other companies within the group was to create businesses that added value to its associates, and the service would no longer happen only after someone died. The AFAGU Plan also started offering lifetime options to its customers, which made the product more expensive.

Miguel reflected: “Whoever had the AFAGU Plan was usually the one who made the best choice, had the best product, and was willing to pay more for it”. Such changes had segmented the market and made room for the strengthening of competitors, as many people began to see joining the AFAGU Plan as a “rich thing” and began to look for options they considered more popular. There was no going back to the time when there was only Funerária Anjo da Guarda offering the funeral plan. The competitors had become something definitive and the company needed to have the maturity to accept this new scenario, defining its next actions and which audience it wanted to reach.

AFAGU: Serve well and Always be Present

Ao iniciar suas atividades no departamento Comercial e Marketing, Miguel começou a perceber algumas dificuldades para a realização do seu trabalho e passou a questionar por soluções Miguel as starting his activities in the Commercial department began to notice some difficulties in carrying out his work. There was no departmental budget in the company, the company’s mission was too large to stick in the minds of employees and customers, and there was no strategic plan.

In 2014, Miguel proposed to change the company’s mission to Raimundinho and João Hélio. Miguel thought that the company’s mission should be a short text capable of summarizing the purpose of the funerary home. It was approved by the board and the new company’s mission was “to serve the customer well and be always present”. This new text also fits into the project that Miguel had already developed, NAFE, which was managed by the human resources sector.

At that time, Miguel knew that changes would be necessary to align the company with what he intended to accomplish, but he believed that Funerária Anjo da Guarda would achieve satisfactory results in the future.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES OFFERED BY AFAGU

Turning his attention to the computer, Miguel added one last bit of information to his presentation and checked the time. He still had an hour and a half before the meeting, enough time to go to the restaurant next to the building and have lunch.

The meeting room was right next to the managing director's office, which meant he had to go down the stairs.

Arriving on the ground floor, Miguel saw the doorman in the small reception area of the building, checking the external security cameras on the monitor.

- Good afternoon, José!

- Good afternoon, sir Miguel! - O porteiro lhe respondeu.

At the reception, next to the building's exit door, there was a board with some information, including the AFAGU Plan price list. The AFAGU Plan is divided into three categories and has a total of 6 plans with monthly fees: Essential, Preventive, and Prime. In addition to funeral services, such as performing asepsis, preparing and dressing the body, flowers and an ornate mortuary are also available. The funeral home also has complementary services, ceremonial and thanatopraxis, accompanied by makeup.

Thanatopraxis or embalming consists of several techniques used for preparing and preserving the corpse for the wake. The blood is replaced by concentrated formaldehyde and other substances are removed from the body, such as feces and stomach gases to delay the natural process of decomposition. The procedure also sanitizes the body to avoid contamination or any type of leakage of liquids and gases, and suppress odors. The thanatopraxis process is completed when the corpse's mouth is closed. After the closing of the incisions, facial reconstruction, clothing, make-up, and hairdressing are made. These procedures seek to give a natural appearance to the deceased. This aims to help the family members during the pain and grief.

In the ceremonial service, tributes are carried out by experienced musicians and instrumentalists. These musicians can pay tribute to the family and to their loved ones who passed away through music, liturgical accompaniment, praises, and messages during wakes and masses.

Miguel knew that these services were the differential in the company, but he regretted the fact that ceremonial and thanatopraxy services were not available in all the places where Funerária Anjo da Guarda provided services. Small town subsidiaries did not have the physical structure to perform thanatopraxy and the costs of adaptations were high. As an alternative, Funerária Anjo da Guarda uses outsourcing services to provide these services in these cities.

Customization of Funeral Products and Services

The plans included in the AFAGU Plan product have different values, and this influences the provision of other services. The Essential category offers basic funeral services and around 50% discount on complementary services, in addition to 500 km land transfer, including round trip. The Preventive category differs from Essential by offering clothing and a coffee kit, in addition to a longer transport route and a 75% discount on thanatopraxy service and the ceremonial. The Prime category fully covers the funeral services, without additional charges. All categories of funeral plans include natural flowers, coffins, clothing, and condolence cards. However, there is differentiation according to their prices. Each service package gives the right to include in addition to the contract holder nine beneficiaries whether family members.

Miguel, together with the company board, sought to establish processes and strategies that respected the religious choice of its customers, even though the company was based on Christian doctrine. The funeral home's centers are adaptable, with a rotating panel, which has a removable cross on one side and a biblical message on the other. This makes it possible to attend to different religions and beliefs, according to the religious precepts of the deceased's family.

The company sought to establish a relationship based on commitment and respect to customers. In this way, the commercial team has the option of recording the last customer wishes when the AFAGU Plan is sold. In "My Last Wish", the client says how he would like to be veiled, including music, clothing, and ornamentation. In the event of death, the family is informed about the request established during life, and may or may not comply with the recommendations.

For the company, dealing with death is delicate. Therefore, the funeral home's employees are prepared to assist the family in different situations. As several types of eventualities lead to the client's death, which can be sudden or even violent, the care during the provision of the services must be differentiated because some family members may be more dismayed than others. Each case is considered unique and therefore should be treated accordingly. With that in mind, the funeral home set up a distinct structure that is suitable to serve the most diverse customers.

The Current Structure of AFAGU

Funerária Anjo da Guarda has air-conditioned wake centers equipped with suites in some locations, designed to serve customers of different beliefs to carry out the services offered. It also has memorial parks, which differ from traditional cemeteries with open spaces and a planned landscape set, licensed by the Superintendência Estadual do Meio Ambiente (SEMACE), the sector responsible for issuing the operating license for cemeteries in Ceará.

The Funerária Anjo da Guarda's memorial parks were built seeking to bring an image of tranquility and lightness, to reduce people's fear of being in that environment, and provide serenity and reflection. In addition, there are no constructions above the surface, only the tombstones, and it is not allowed to have ornaments that harm the composition of the environment, with such a rule established in the contract.

In addition to its services, the funeral home has more than 1,200 partners in various areas in its agreement guide, intending to offer AFAGU Plan members discounts on services provided. However, between Funerária Anjo da Guarda and its partners, there are no financial transactions. In this commercial partnership relationship, the partner offers discounts on services provided to AFAGU customers. The funeral home provides technical support and space in its media, in addition to sharing the plan's customer portfolio. Partnerships are renewed every two years, so the partners are cataloged in a guide that is distributed to all AFAGU associates.

The Current Structure of AFAGU

On his arrival in Juazeiro do Norte, Raimundinho had used a very peculiar, if not a little crazy, commercial strategy. Miguel had never seen or heard of anything like it. Raimundinho had called beggars, street vendors, and the unemployed to publicize the funeral plan with pamphlets. And it had worked, as absurd as it sounded.

Currently, the dissemination of AFAGU Plan's services and partners is carried out through its radio station, called Rádio AFAGU, broadcast only in its funeral homes. Such information is also available through the website, an application available

only for Android, the AFAGU App, and the official fan page, the latter two not having a large number of fans.

As a means of external dissemination, the company uses advertisements on television and radio in the region, billboards, and pamphlets, but only when there is a need for mass reach. Funerária Anjo da Guarda also participates in religious events, such as masses and evangelical worship, seeking to reach the public that directly or indirectly can hire the service offered.

As an example of the marketing actions implemented, the company supports the Sonho Olímpico project, in the city of Crato, Ceará. This project aims to promote access to sports for underprivileged children through sponsorship actions. In addition, the funeral home sponsors a futsal team named AFAGU, in Russas city. Nicknamed “team of death”, this futsal team won first place in the Ceará Futsal Championship in 2006 and 2011.

The company also regularly develops social actions in the cities where it operates, aiming to offer basic health services to the population free of charge. For Miguel, these activities allow the funeral home to get closer to potential customers, to reduce the impact of the proposed service and the prejudice with the brand, since death is still considered a taboo for many people.

AFAGU's Future Perspectives

Miguel returned to the meeting room at 1:45 pm, in order to test the equipment he would use in the meeting. He believed that Funerária Anjo da Guarda had great possibilities for growth and had a personal goal to retire only when it reached all regions of the country. “I’ll leave the international part to whoever comes after me”, he thought.

Miguel thought of a branching strategy for the expansion of the company, such as putting a funeral home in a certain location and small service points around it. Miguel recognized that franchising was not an option. The differential of the Funerária Anjo da Guarda was the respect and affection that the employees treated the customers, regardless of social class. People liked being in the company, and that made all the difference to Miguel. So he would soon have to decide which growth strategy to implement.

For Miguel, the company essence reflected Raimundinho's personality, the way he treated people. "He managed to get that into his company," he thought to himself, and it was a trait he could never lose. Miguel believed that respect was the company's biggest secret, everything else was a must. Miguel also defended that whoever was in the management should keep this, as he believed that this was the winning spirit of Funerária Anjo da Guarda.

Miguel was satisfied by the end of the meeting. His ideas were approved, and now the planning also included the construction of more cemeteries, in addition to the six already existing in the states of Ceará and Bahia. Aiming for the diversification of services, the group planned the implementation of two crematoriums in Fortaleza, one for human bodies and the other for pets. In addition, the chapel under construction in the center of Juazeiro do Norte will be finished in the next few years. This space has 1,600m², and two rooms on the side for holding popular wakes.

Finally, it was decided at the meeting to renovate the existing funeral center in the city's funeral home, to transform it into a refined environment, aimed at higher social classes. Miguel's idea was to segment the company. He wants to keep the popular option that the funeral home was already working on, and also offer the luxury service option to customers. Miguel thought as he left the meeting room: the market changes and so do we!

Teaching Notes

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The purpose of the case is to enable students to experience management decision-makers that took place at the funeral home, contextualizing through the situation addressed Marketing concepts such as growth, diversification, and segmentation. Based on the analysis of this work, we intended that students can reflect on:

1. The market characteristics (macro environment) and how they influence decision-making in companies.
2. The funeral home's aspects and its decisions about the definition of the target audience.

3. The definitions of the segmentation and positioning strategies of Funerária Anjo da Guarda.
4. The strategies about products, prices, promotion, and distribution adopted by the company throughout its trajectory.

SOURCE OF DATA ACQUISITION

We used data from primary and secondary sources for the elaboration of this teaching case. We obtained primary data interviewing directors of Cordeiro de Freitas Group. We interviewed the administrative director and the director of the commercial and marketing department (who were mentioned in this teaching case and had their names changed), the director of HR, and the Funerária Anjo da Guarda's superintendent. In the end, we had 168 minutes of recorded interview audio. From the recorded reports, we structured the story described in the teaching case. The names of the company and its owner (sir Raimundinho) were cited after the organization's consent.

We also use as secondary data the company's websites and social networks, movies, videos, and academic works to understand the trajectory of the funeral home and the services offered by it. For the characterization of the places mentioned in this teaching case, we used data from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) about the municipalities of the mentioned municipalities. Local newspapers also were used. The primary and secondary data collection took place from April to June 2017.

RECOMMENDED USE

We recommend the use of this teaching case in intermediate courses related to consumer behavior, marketing, and organizational strategies, whether in undergraduate or lato sensu graduate courses.

TEACHING PLAN

There are several possibilities for applying the case tool for teaching, such as the lecture, debate, and problem-solving, involving the student intellectually and emotionally (ALBERTON; SILVA, 2018; DA COSTA MINEIRO et al., 2018). Therefore, we recommend the use of topic discussions, which seeks to develop students'

perceptions and encourage them to participate in the decisions. To do that, we also suggest to professors following the preparation, availability, and application stages (Table 1).

Table 1 Suggested teaching case use strategy

Preparation stage	<p>Basic bibliography: to be able to have a topic discussion in the classroom, aiming to relate theory and practice, we emphasize that the student has learned the concepts to be discussed. If the teacher has not worked on the concepts during the course, we suggest a basic bibliography in the theoretical context of this teaching case.</p>
	<p>Duration: we indicate that the basic bibliography should be made available at least two weeks before the discussion (if the professor has not discussed the topic/concept before).</p>
	<p>How: the bibliography can be forwarded to the students in the virtual environment or the students' email. Literature can be submitted in article or book format.</p>
Availability of the teaching case	<p>Professors should make available to students only the case and issues to be discussed. The activity must be solved in teams composed of 03 to 05 students. If the professor wishes, the students' answers can also be used as a subject evaluation.</p>
Application of the teaching case	<p>In this part, the professor must apply the teaching case, with the theme previously determined. Below is our suggestion:</p>
	<p>Topic: Environment and Marketing Strategies.</p>
	<p>Goal: to discuss aspects of decision making, referring to decisions related to the process of growth, positioning, segmentation, and diversification of a company, relating and expanding knowledge in Marketing strategies.</p>
	<p>Time: 120 minutes.</p>
	<p>Initiation: (20 minutes): it consists of the initial part of the class. The teacher must tell the narrative addressed in the case of AFAGU and may use a presentation with the use of slides (or another one that he finds more convenient) or the whiteboard.</p>

Topic discussion (90 minutes): the professor should encourage discussion between the teams. The students have to provide their answers to the questions linking theory and practice, citing and referencing authors). We suggest that each question is discussed in 15 minutes, and the professor can encourage the participation of all students. Also, the chairs can be arranged in a “U” in the classroom.

Questions:

1. Based on the information reported in the teaching case and on what Ferrell and Hartline (2018) propose, try to identify and characterize the marketing strategies used by Funerária Anjo da Guarda.
2. What environmental influences can be identified in the funeral home's decisions?
3. Identify and evaluate the positioning and market segmentation actions adopted by AFAGU.
4. Regarding the strategic definitions defined by Miguel at the meeting, how do you analyze the future projections of the funeral home? What suggestions does the team propose?
5. What potentials can be explored in the funeral home's service portfolio?
6. Death is still a taboo. However, the company needs to sell. How does the team evaluate the communication strategy used by the funeral home? Evaluate and suggest improvements if necessary.

Closure (10 minutes): the final ten minutes of the class should be used by the professor for additional comments.

Source: developed by the authors (2021).

To resolve the issues, as mentioned above, we suggest forming teams of three to five people. After the discussion, we propose that a written version of the answers be delivered, which can be used as an assessment in the course. The questions and class format exposed in these teaching notes may be modified at the discretion of the professor, who may use the case for lectures at various times during the course, seeking to encourage student participation. The main purpose of the teaching case is to stimulate the student to discussion focused on the student.

Regarding the answers, we emphasize that they may differ, since the managerial situations contextualized in the case would support, even if supported by theory, having more than one direction (LEAL; DE OLIVEIRA, 2018). Even so, in these notes, we made an analytical contextualization of the case presenting possible answers.

ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING CASE AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS

Question 1: There are different levels of organizational strategies that can be adapted to AFAGU's actions. It is possible to identify them according to their levels, naming their corporate strategy, business strategy, functional strategy, and operational strategies. Corporate-level strategy is primarily concerned with the selection of businesses, products, and markets. The business unit strategy focuses on product lines, geographic areas, etc. Strategic issues at the business unit level include positioning a company relative to its competitors, accommodating new technologies, influencing the nature of competition through vertical and horizontal integration, political lobbying and networking, etc. Functional-level strategies are related to business processes and their value chain. These strategies include marketing, manufacturing, research and development, and finance. And finally, operational strategies, address how each part of the business is organized to deliver strategic results at the corporate and business unit levels and functional strategies. Therefore, the operational strategy focuses on process, human resources, and financial issues. These strategies include in-store decision making, invoice payment, supply chain management, asset usage, and other resources, including employee incentives in the organization's best interest to gain a competitive advantage. (DAL-SOTO; MONTICELLI; JEFFERSON, 2017; GIRALDI; CARVALHO. 2020).

Question 2: As organizations exist to meet market needs, even when those needs are avoided, or taken for granted (ABDALA; MISOCZKY, 2019; DA SILVA RODRIGUES; ICHIKAWA, 2017), as in the case of death. Working with death is to get involved with dilemmas, including ethical ones (RIBAS; GOMES, 2012; DA SILVA TOLENTINO, 2020).

It is in this sense, Leskaj (2017) and George, Walker, and Monster (2019) explain that it is a requirement that organizations identify and organize the information necessary to analyze the situation in which they are involved and make the appropriate decisions to improve their performance. The teaching case of Funerária Anjo da Guarda brings up a series of issues related to the market and the definition of strategic plans and future projections of the company.

A strategic plan is a flexible instrument and is known as one of the most used management approaches in contemporary organizations (WOLF; FLOYD, 2017). This type of planning is a key element of strategy, a selection of characteristics and measures to be taken that includes factors related to mission, vision, analysis of environments, objectives, and goals. The managers are encouraged to think in terms of importance, as well as to focus and project them and from there. The theoretical contextualization of the case occurs in two points: Marketing Environment and Segmentation.

In the first theme, we approach the analysis of the External Marketing Environment, which includes all external factors: competitive, economic, political, legal/regulatory, technological, and sociocultural, which can exert direct and indirect pressures relevant to the company's marketing activities (FERREL; HARTLINE, 2018). In the narrative of the case, we show that, at various times, the entrepreneur Raimundinho faced situations in which he had to adapt, due to environmental factors that influenced the Funerária Anjo da Guarda, and later, the companies that joined it to form the Cordeiro de Freitas Group. We conceptualized the variables or forces of the marketing environment below and related them to the history of the AFAGU.

- **Economic variables:** they refer to economic conditions and/or fluctuations that mainly affect consumption habits. Current and expected conditions in the economy can have a profound impact on marketing strategy (FERREL; HARTLINE, 2018). We observed that the variable was fundamental for the establishment of the funeral home. One of the potentialities that we noticed by the entrepreneur was that, analyzing the profile of the public, he began to offer a product that served a portion of the population that did not have access to high resources.
- **Political-legal variables:** they constantly interfere in companies, mainly in terms of regulation and normalization of activities. In the case of the funeral home, we cite the Superintendência Estadual do Meio Ambiente – SEMACE – this is the only sector in the state of Ceará that authorizes the operation of cemeteries. As for the norms, there is an ethical and moral regulation, in the civil/criminal scope of dealing with bodies. Each type of death is treated differently. Thus, the victims' relatives are assisted by the funeral home, in the Núcleo de Apoio à Família Enlutada – NAFE. Despite being a diversification in

its service, the NAFE proposal, presented here, can also be understood as a response to political-legal requirements.

- **Sociocultural variables:** these forces are reflected in the adequacy of organizations to meet cultural specificities, such as beliefs and values of a given population (TUNES; MONTEIRO, 2017). The Funerária Anjo da Guarda has a greater presence in Juazeiro do Norte, a city located in the south of Ceará that has outstanding cultural attractions in terms of religiosity, on a Catholic basis. However, there are other religious needs that the company meets, according to the reality of the client and their families, since this factor has a great influence on the services provided by the funeral home.
- **Natural variables:** these variables are concerns about the environment, and issues related to nature. In this case, we approach the actions related to the theme, such as the fact that the funeral urns used by Anjo da Guarda are made of wood. In this sense, it would be up to the company to discuss and evaluate the processes in this area. In addition, another concern to be raised in debate involves the care of the soil, to avoid contamination with slurry from the corpses.
- **Technological variables:** the technology variable is the way we perform certain tasks, the processes we use to create innovative things. Therefore, technological changes can represent significant changes in consumer behavior and the creation of marketing opportunities (FERREL; HARTLINE, 2018). Regarding the role of technology in organizations, there are some perspectives, among them that technology is a product of progressive human action and that it causes constant changes, improves the decision-making process, and encourages greater responsibility in its conduct. (DOWSETT, 2020; DE OLIVEIRA JÚNIOR, 2020). In this case, we saw the company's concern with the adoption of technologies, such as social media, websites, apps, and an internal system that allows communication between the companies of the group. Technology, in the sense of technique resource, we see that the company uses specific procedures in the treatment of the corpses, such as thanatopraxis and makeup (FALSARELLA; JANNUZZI, 2017).
- **Demographic variables:** they should consider family conditions, size, for example, and characteristics such as age, gender, education, lifestyle and

ethnicity (ROCHA; CASOTTI, 2018). An important point to be highlighted in the case of the funeral home is the number of people allowed to join the plan (ten), independent of family ties, as popularity is a strong aspect of the plan, as well as the recognition of the expected and high number of members in families in the countryside. In addition, the income influences the choice of plan type, as well as the profile of the lower social classes to which the product was initially offered.

- **Competitors:** Competitors also exert a lot of influence on the company's decisions, since they are in dispute with customers. In the beginning, the company did very well in the Juazeiro do Norte market, sharing it only with another funeral home. However, due to strategies and necessary adjustments, new companies began to compete for shares in that market.

Question 3: The points discussed below will talk about the approach to segmentation and positioning. Market segmentation is the categorization of consumers according to demographic characteristics concerning objective aspects of a population, such as age and gender (TAYLOR-WEST; SAKER; CHAMPION, 2020), psychographic, psychological and lifestyle characteristics (PITT; BAL; PLANGGER, 2020), and also based on the consumer's relationship with the product or service (SOLOMON, 2016; RIVIEZZO et al., 2021). With this categorization, the company can better meet the needs of the market, as well as develop a knowledge base about it.

As a result of the services offered, the market segmentation practiced by the funeral home is closely linked to the religiosity of the customers. In this case, we noticed that in the structure of Funerária Anjo da Guarda there was a concern with the religious practices of the clients, and the wake center was adapted and with removable parts, to meet different beliefs. In addition, the funeral home always seeks to participate and sponsor religious events, such as masses and worship, and thus reach its target audience.

When using terms related to segmentation, we make distinctions between market segmentation, consumer segmentation, and business segmentation. As the market is composed of consumers and businesses as two separate economic entities, market segmentation indicates consumer segmentation, business segmentation, or both. While consumer segmentation groups share similar preferences within

the same segment, business segmentation groups share similar business offerings, strategies, and tactics (e.g. similar price levels, similar product quality). In addition, segmentation groups, depending on the product or service consumed, share similar product preferences and styles expressed in their product reviews, including on social media (TRIVEDI; SRIDHAR; KUMAR, 2016; LEHMANN, KRUG; FALASTER; 2019; MOON; JALALI; EREVELLES, 2021).

As we explained in this teaching case, the company has been planning to maintain service to the lower social class, and start services aimed at the higher social classes at the same time. To serve this new public, the company has in its perspective to offer physical space and differentiated services, aimed at the demands of such consumers..

Positioning refers to creating a mental image of the product offering and its differentiating characteristics in the mind of the target market. This mental image can be based on actual or perceived differences between competing offerings.(FERREL; HARTLINE, 2018). Knowledge about the target consumer allows a better delivery of benefits in the products or services offered, satisfactorily meeting their needs and desires, and enabling efficient communication with this market share. This is the specific value statement that the organization attaches to its brand.

In this sense, students can use the Ansoff Matrix, presented in Table 2, to visualize the positioning of the organization and each of its products. Thus, based on the objective of conquest that the company has on the market, it is possible to define tactics to reach its goals. The Ansoff Matrix brings a holistic view of the strategies and should be analyzed in a complementary way with the SWOT.

Table 2 Ansoff matrix for AFAGU positioning

		Products	
		Existing products	New products
Market	Existing markets	Market penetration	Product development
	New markets	Market development	Diversification

Source: developed by the authors (2021).

In the case of the Funerária Anjo da Guarda, the positioning lies in being the best in the Brazilian northeast, featuring its services and operations to establish its brand in the minds of customers. Based on its segmentation and positioning, the company has been seeking to add value to current and potential customers. An effective positioning process is a guarantee that the company's current and potential customers understand and feel satisfied with the benefits involved in the company's offer, that is, it is possible to visualize its position in the Ansoff Matrix in the Product Development, Diversification, and Market penetration.

Questions 1 and 4: Among the possible strategies in the relationship between product and market are the development of products or markets, market penetration, and diversification (FERREL; HARTLINE, 2018). In the case of the funeral home, several marketing strategies were adopted. We highlight: the partnership processes, which enhance and strengthen the brands involved, characterizing **the funeral home's market penetration**; the **diversification**, both concerning the companies, which clustered around the funeral home and fed back there and in the diversification of services and markets; the personalization of care pointed out in terms of social class (funeral plan divided into three categories), religion (service following the religious precepts of the client and family, and it is even possible to make a last wish for funeral rites), and type of death (necessity to act according to the family's possible emotional disorders due to how the AFAGU's client died) in a focus for the **product development strategy**.

Question 5: We make the following suggestions:

- The Funerária Anjo da Guarda has a stronger performance in the state of Ceará, despite being present in other states. Thus, from a perspective of expansion, it could expand the number of subsidiaries in other places where it operates.
- The company can take the funeral centers to other cities where the subsidiaries are present to strengthen the brand, as well as provide a better service.
- The company aims to open more cemeteries to enable service in small towns. However, changes in the initial project (of the cemetery) are suggested, given those small towns cannot support the dimensions of cemeteries equal to those that the company has today.

- In smaller cities, services are outsourced and this can lead to a loss of service quality. Thus, the company must seek alternatives, such as the monitoring of these outsourced services for quality assessment.
- There are, within the funeral market, some innovations that Funerária Anjo da Guarda could apply, such as video conferencing at ceremonies, processions, and burials, to facilitate the farewell of the deceased when relatives live far away. This service has already been carried out in centrally located companies for some time but is not as widespread.
- In this case, we also mention the implementation of a PET crematorium in the capital of the state of Ceará, but the funeral home does not have plans to provide cemeteries for the burial of pets. Thus, it should be implemented if market viability is recognized.

Question 6: Promotional activities are critical to communicating a product's features and benefits to the company's target markets. These communications involve the sending and sharing of meaning between buyers and sellers, either as individuals, companies or between individuals and companies (FERREL; HARTLINE, 2018). The funeral home must promote its services within previously established marketing parameters, outlining the image to be passed on which, consequently and if done well, will result in gains.

As a means of integration in communication with customers, the funeral home uses digital channels, such as websites, fan pages, and apps. In addition, the Funerária Anjo da Guarda uses mass media to reach a greater number of (possible) customers. However, despite advertising being one of the most important ways used in promotion, a process in which brands are strengthened, they seduce customers with enchantment techniques, forming the image of their products, linking them to positive feelings and attitudes (LEHMAN; KRUG; FALASTER, 2019; SCHEUFFELEN; KEMPER; BRETTEL, 2019). For the funeral home, this was and still is a delicate issue, since they work in the face of a controversial perspective: death..

Initially, the Funerária Anjo da Guarda intensively used some methods of printed propaganda, such as radio advertisements and pamphlets. However, with professionalization and the establishment of partnerships, the company started to associate its brand with others (clinics, health professionals, etc.) using a guide.

Another important point is to make the client understand the discourse about life and thus involve him, as the company's focus is to establish a commitment to the client throughout his life, that is, until the moment of his death.

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