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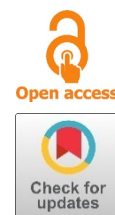
Research Article

# Association between satisfaction and performance in franchise networks: a study from the perspective of correspondence analysis

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## Abstract

**Objective:** to analyze the associative relationship between the performance of franchise networks and the level of satisfaction of franchisees, under the hypothesis that the level of satisfaction of franchisees has a positive association with the performance of the network. **Methodology/approach:** operationally, descriptive and documentary research with a quantitative approach was carried out in 106 Brazilian franchise networks from 12 different sectors comprising 20,261 franchised units. The data, referring to the fiscal year 2019, were compiled from yearbooks edited and audited by the Brazilian Franchising Association and Serasa Experian (PEGN). The categorical variables used in the research were: (i) network performance, (ii) franchisee satisfaction, (iii) network age, (iv) network size, and (v) franchise rate. **Main results:** through descriptive statistics and application of the exploratory technique of Correspondence Analysis, the study results confirm that the franchisee's satisfaction has a positive association with the network performance. **Theoretical/ methodological contributions:** these results contribute to the robustness of scientific research on franchising, specifically in the field of study on the relationship between franchisor and franchisee. **Relevance/originality:** this study empirically validates an association proposed in the literature involving satisfaction and performance in the context of franchises. **Social/management contributions:** this study also offers managerial input by reinforcing the importance of franchisors supporting their franchisees.

**Keywords:** Franchisee satisfaction. Franchise networks. Franchisor and franchisee relationship. Correspondence Analysis.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** analisar a relação associativa entre o desempenho das redes de franquias e o nível de satisfação dos franqueados, sob a hipótese de que o nível de satisfação dos franqueados apresenta uma associação positiva com o desempenho da rede. **Metodologia/abordagem:** pesquisa descritiva e documental, com abordagem quantitativa, em 106 redes de franquias brasileiras, pertencentes a 12 setores distintos, que compreendem um total de 20.261 unidades franqueadas. Os dados, referentes ao exercício de 2019, foram compilados dos anuários editados e auditados pela Associação Brasileira de Franchising e pelo Serasa Experian (PEGN). As variáveis categóricas utilizadas na pesquisa foram: (i) desempenho da rede, (ii) satisfação dos franqueados, (iii) idade de rede, (iv) tamanho da rede e (v) taxa de franquia. **Principais resultados:** a hipótese de que a satisfação do franqueado está associada positivamente com o desempenho da rede foi confirmada pelas estatísticas descritivas levantadas e pela aplicação da técnica exploratória da análise de correspondência (ANACOR). **Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas:** os resultados encontrados contribuem para a robustez das pesquisas científicas sobre franchising, especificamente no campo de estudo sobre a relação entre franqueador e franqueado. **Relevância/originalidade:** este estudo valida empiricamente uma associação proposta na literatura, envolvendo satisfação e desempenho, no contexto de franquias. **Contribuições sociais/para a gestão:** contribuição gerencial, ao reforçar a importância de os franqueadores fornecerem suporte aos seus franqueados.

**Palavras-chave:** Satisfação do franqueado. Redes de franquias. Relação franqueador e franqueado. Análise de Correspondência.

## INTRODUCTION

In the scenario that is hyper-competitive and open to the development of collaborative strategies, the franchising model is defined by the business relationship between two independent companies, contractually established through a license granted by the franchisor to the franchisee (Wu, 2015).

In the last decade, this model has been repeatedly used as an option for business expansion, based on third-party capital, and with the objective of strengthening and raising the visibility of the brand (Redecker, 2020). Franchises, thus, have been gaining momentum on a global scale (Boulay et al., 2020), with questions concerning the following points: (a) the reasons why leading companies organize themselves into franchise networks and involve franchisees; (b) franchise efficiency; (c) the relationship between franchisor and franchisee; among others (Baena, 2018).

One of the competitive drivers acknowledged by companies that seek to integrate a typical franchise network business model is the support offered by the franchisor, considering that, to some extent, according to studies, it leads to the success of the venture, which directly impacts the franchisees' satisfaction levels (Ortega et al., 2016). Thus, continued support is essential to franchise success (Roh & Yoon, 2009), whether from the perspective of the network in its entirety or the individual units (Pazetto & Beuren, 2018; Provan & Kenis, 2008).

According to Kalargyrou, Aliouche, & Schlenrich (2017), satisfaction can be understood as the franchisee's contentment, that is, a positive and affective state, resulting from non-economic and economic expectations met in the relationship with the franchisor. This is the conceptual definition applied in this study, and satisfaction is operationally evaluated based on the franchisees' perception of the support offered by the franchisors, based on an index composed of the following indicators: The quality of training, the quality of on-site consulting, and the quality of the operations manual.

Understanding franchisee satisfaction can provide useful references for franchisors and indicate the success of the relationship in the network (Ramírez-Hurtado, 2017). Moreover, research confirms the relationship between franchisee satisfaction, market continuity, and financial performance (Nijmeijer et al., 2013).

Although franchising is one of the most developed business models worldwide (Varotto & Aureliano-Silva, 2017), "the literature explaining franchise strategy and performance is scarce" (Wu, 2015, p. 1581), including research on franchisee satisfaction and performance analysis (Pazetto & Beuren, 2018). Thus, even if a theoretical relationship exists between franchisee satisfaction and franchise network performance, there is still a lack of empirical evidence to prove the nature of this relationship, confirming whether it is, in fact, positive (Kalargyrou et al., 2017; de Faria Olivo et al., 2020).

From the perspective of performance as an indicator of effectiveness (Richard et al., 2009), in its financial and marketing dimensions, and facing the possibility of contributing to the literature on franchising, especially from a strategic point of view, the question that motivated this research was the following: How is franchisee satisfaction associated with the performance of franchise networks? To answer it, this study aims to analyze the

association relationship between the performance of franchise networks and the level of franchisee satisfaction in Brazil.

Since research on franchising should become theoretically robust (Wu, 2015), this study also intends to contribute to strategic management, which involves entrepreneurs and franchises. Thus, by determining that the support offered by franchisors can translate into franchisee satisfaction, it is possible to establish a parallel and analyze its importance for the performance of franchise networks, aiming to verify if this effect drives franchisors to qualify and offer increasingly consistent support to franchisees since if someone wins, everyone wins (Jang & Park, 2019).

## THE FRANCHISOR vs. FRANCHISEE RELATIONSHIP

One of the main factors related to the satisfactory performance of franchises concerns the relationship between franchisor and franchisee, as the long-term success of a business and its continued growth hinge on this relationship, which must be productive and beneficial for both parties (Costa et al., 2011). Thus, "cooperation between franchisor and franchisee is essential for the franchise system to grow and prosper as a network" (Jambulingam & Nevin, 1999, p. 365).

Based on the franchisor's motivations, franchising has proven to be an advantageous strategic choice because it provides the following: (a) brand growth, (b) risk reduction, and (c) scale expansion (Sousa et al., 2014). The appeal of these benefits is similar for franchisees – which are small and medium entrepreneurs in general – being factors that increase the appeal of this business model, namely: (a) the use of an already established brand, (b) lower investment, and (c) a tested and approved marketing concept (Schreiber & Szyszko, 2014).

That said, when acquiring a franchise, a more complex commitment is involved than a mere financial transaction between the buyer (franchisee) and the seller (franchisor), given that this bond is closer and stronger (Sousa et al., 2014) because each party's duties and responsibilities are previously agreed upon (Costa et al., 2011). This way, three central components act as precedents and consequences of the relationship between the parties, namely: satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Jang & Park, 2019).

Objectives related to performance and to the roles assumed in the relationship between franchisor and franchisee are established (Spriggs & Nevin, 1995); nevertheless, most risks are faced by the franchisor, due to the brand image, the need for research and development of new products/services, financial support, among others (Souza & Lourenzani, 2011). The performance and decisions made by the franchisee, however, also impact the performance of the venture. Therefore, in the franchising business, there is mutual dependence between the parties involved (Quinn, 1998; Souza & Lourenzani, 2011).

Regarding this aspect, it is worth highlighting the different levels of support granted by the franchisor to the franchisee (Melo et al., 2022). For Guedes & Trigo (2009), this support is one of the factors responsible for the expansion of franchising in Brazil, as the performance of franchisees that operate in a network exceeds that of independent entrepreneurs. Thus, part of the competitive advantage achieved is due to the support offered.

Furthermore, the support offered by franchisors to attract and co-opt franchisees, thus increasingly expanding their networks, must also be analyzed on the "other side of the coin", that is, if there is satisfaction perceived by franchisees with the support received.

According to Plá (2001), there are five modalities/generations of interactions, based on the support offered, namely: (1) the franchisor grants the trademark right to the franchisee, without providing much support and backing; (2) the franchisor provides slightly more support and services, while most royalties are bound to sales, and franchisees are required to buy the products from the franchisor; (3) the franchisor provides the entire network with more services, support, training, and operational know-how, with a more consolidated support structure for the processes needed by the franchisees, and daily monitoring of operations, and the purchases of supplies are performed with the suppliers themselves, which reduces divergences between the parties (Plá, 2001; Ribeiro et al., 2011); (4) a large number of quality services are provided by the franchisor; franchisees actively participate in the strategic area of the organization through the board, which supports the company and assists in the consolidation of the franchised brand in the market (Plá, 2001); And (5) the assurance to the franchisee of store repurchase, with the franchisor being responsible for raising points which are essential to the success of the network, and the franchisees for monitoring its performance, as coordinators and supervisors of the process (Ribeiro et al., 2011).

Ribeiro, Galhardo, Marchi & Imperatore (2011), in turn, propose a sixth generation/modality: In addition to consolidating a profitable method, through the franchise system, the franchisor must be willing to review the strategic concepts, aiming to contribute to the consolidation of businesses that are also fair and sustainable.

Recent studies on the franchisor-franchisee relationship, from the perspective of the support offered, have placed themselves between the fourth and the fifth generation, as described by Plá (2001). That is, support is considered relevant, and the quality of interaction is considered one of the main predictors of network sustainability. Examples of this trend include research by Crosno & Tong (2018), Jang & Park (2019), Jirásek et al. (2022); Kremez et al. (2022); Melo et al. (2022); de Faria Olivo et al. (2020); Parker et al. (2019); and Su & Tsai (2019).

It is noteworthy, once again, that the analysis of satisfaction, in this study, is associated with the level of perceived quality of the support offered to the franchisee, that is, the more robust it is, the more satisfied the franchisee will be.

### Franchisee satisfaction vs. performance of the franchise network

Organizational performance is an essential factor for the survival and success of any business model (Richard et al., 2009). In the case of franchises, the actions, and skills of both the franchisor and the franchisee are relevant. This happens because the achievements of individual businesses benefit the network in its entirety; and the network, in turn, must be aware of and meet the demands of its franchised units, in a relationship of interdependence (Pazetto & Beuren, 2018).

The relationship between franchisor and franchisee is unique in nature, as they act mutually before the business venture even starts (Roh & Yoon, 2009). In order to achieve a "win-win" situation, collaboration and a balance of benefits between franchisor and franchisee are required (Jang & Park, 2019).

In this sense, considering franchisee satisfaction (Su & Tsai, 2017) is paramount to sustaining the business model and performance, and generating network success and sustainability (Jang & Park, 2019; Jirásek et al., 2022; Ortega et al., 2016). Franchisees who are satisfied with their franchisors are more motivated, engaged, and willing to strive for the best performance of their business (Nijmeijer et al., 2013); as well as "more cooperative and more likely to contribute to the success of the franchise system in its entirety" (Roh & Yoon, 2009, p. 87).

Satisfaction has also been shown to be one of the best predictors of loyalty (Ribeiro et al., 2011), in addition to the fact that it leads to several consequences – from stimulating the implementation of new practices to the decision to leave the network (Jirásek et al., 2022). In other words, in a franchise network, satisfaction is a key point for remaining in the network and the long-term survival of franchised businesses (Gauzente, 2003).

The relationship with the franchisor – herein named "support", offered to franchisees – is a preponderant factor in the decision-making when buying a franchise (Cho, 2004; Ramírez-Hurtado, 2017). In this aspect, franchisee satisfaction grows according to the quality of direct support received, that is, the higher the level of support quality, the higher the satisfaction (Nijmeijer et al., 2013).

For Jirásek et al. (2022), this relationship is one of the three performance dimensions that affect franchisee satisfaction, in general, in a franchise network; and it also mediates the effect of the other dimensions – financial and service performance.

The quality of support offered by franchisors therefore contributes to franchisee satisfaction, and positively impacts business results and financial performance (Guedes & Trigo, 2009; Nijmeijer et al., 2013; Roh & Yoon, 2009), which in turn leads to the success of the network in its entirety (Pazetto & Beuren, 2018).

Given the above, as a hypothesis to be tested throughout this study, it is proposed that: The level of franchisee satisfaction presents a positive association with the network's performance.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Through a quantitative approach, as well as a descriptive and documentary research, in this study, stands the analysis of the association relationship between the performance of franchise networks and the level of franchisee satisfaction. This is also a cross-sectional study, as the data observed and used represent a singular moment in time (Zangirolami-Raimundo et al., 2018) – in this case, information from the year 2019.

### Data collection and sampling

The data collection was carried out based on information available in the following yearbooks: (a) "The Franchise Guide", audited by Serasa Experian and published by the "Pequenas Empresas e Grandes Negócios (PEGN)" magazine – which covers more than 1000 franchises, and addresses: the industry trends;

the main legal and financial information to invest in a franchise; the tips to attract, train, and retain a qualified team; the secrets of multi-franchisees' success; and the brands evaluated and ranked based on the quality and performance of the network, and franchisee satisfaction (Editora Globo, 2020); and (b) "The Official Franchise Guide", published by the Associação Brasileira de Franchising (ABF, 2020) – the entity is a national reference in the franchise segment, and is responsible for the main indicators of the sector, disclosed in the guide, which also includes a complete record of the franchise brands.

The 2019 editions of the aforementioned yearbooks were used to analyze information related to 106 franchise networks, from 12 distinct sectors, comprising a total of 20,261 franchised units. The selection of the networks was random, based on the information availability (complementary in the two yearbooks researched).

In this sense, it is worth noting that databases, created with information from secondary sources, have been used in previous studies on franchising (Melo et al., 2014). These data are not only reliable and regularly updated, but also comprehensive in their coverage of the rapidly evolving franchise market (Baena, 2018). A descriptive analysis of the sample composition is presented in the results.

### Data analysis technique

To analyze the data, the techniques of univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics were used (Fávero & Belfiore, 2015), with the results of the univariate analysis used as input to create the strata of the categories that enabled the other

verifications. To support this process, the Stata software version 14 was used.

Regarding the examination of the relationship between satisfaction and performance, the exploratory technique of Simple Correspondence Analysis (CA) was chosen – useful when confirming the existence of a significant association between two categorical variables, and between the categories of each of them, in addition to determining the coordinates of the categories, for the development of perceptual maps (Fávero & Belfiore, 2015).

The perceptual map is the visual representation of object perception by an individual in two or more dimensions. This map generally has opposite levels of dimensions at the extremes of the x and y axes (Hair et al., 2009). CA provides the tools to examine the relationships between variables, in rows or columns individually, and in rows and columns combined (Fávero & Belfiore, 2015). Therefore, in the scope of this research, the use of this map enables to establish, at different levels, the association between franchisee satisfaction and the performance of franchise networks. The description of the compiled and analyzed variables is presented below (Table 1).

As noted, the dependent variable "network performance" (Richard et al., 2009) is represented by the increase in the revenue rates of the units and by the growth of the networks, in the number of franchised units. The independent variable "franchisee satisfaction" (Kalargyrou et al., 2017) is related to the quality indicators – training, field consulting, and operations manual – and reflects the perception of franchisees regarding the support provided by franchisors.

**Table 1**  
Research variables

Variables	Conceptual definition	Operational definition
Network performance	"Performance is a type of effectiveness indicator, which covers financial results and market performance" (Richard et al., 2009, p. 722).	The aggregate variable is based on each network's revenue growth rates and the number of stores.
Franchisee satisfaction	"Franchisee satisfaction is defined as a positive affective state reached when the economic and non-economic expectations of all aspects of the working relationship with the franchisor have been met" (Kalargyrou et al., 2017, p. 64).	The aggregate variable is composed of the following indicators: Training quality, field consultancy quality, and operations manual quality – individually obtained by the franchisees' perception evaluation, published by the Associação Brasileira de Franchising, in the Official Franchise Guide.  <b>Training quality:</b> Representative index of the evaluation of franchisees regarding the quality attributed to conventional training offered by franchisors to provide the necessary knowledge for the satisfactory development of the business concept, operations, and services related to routine work.  <b>Quality of field consulting:</b> Representative index of the evaluation of franchisees regarding on-site consulting, carried out by the franchisors for the transfer of timely knowledge and feedback.  <b>Quality of the operations manual:</b> Representative index of the evaluation of franchisees in relation to the manuals developed by franchisors to assist franchisees in their operational routine, establishing standards, and rules to be followed.
Sector of operation	A company's sector of operation is the specification of what it does to generate value for its customers. In this sample, they are defined by the entities responsible for producing the yearbooks.	Nominal variable, indicative of the sector where the network operates.
Unit count	-	Discrete quantitative variable – represents the number of stores in the franchise network, including smaller units such as kiosks.
Year the franchise started	-	Discrete quantitative variable – represents the network's age in years, with 2019 as the reference year.
Franchise fee	Value of the initial investment made by the franchisee, with the guarantee of the collection right, when duly described in the FG (Central do Franqueado, 2020).	Continuous quantitative variable – represents the value paid (one time only) for starting the franchise.

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2022).

## RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Univariate analyses

The sample analyzed is composed of 106 franchise networks, divided into twelve sectors of operation (Table 2). The prevalence of the "general services" sector can be observed (19), followed by: "food" (18); "health and well-being" (17); "training and courses" (11); "cafeteria and confectionery" (8); "cleaning and maintenance services" (8); "language teaching" (8); and "home, decoration, and gifts" (6). On the other hand, there was a lower incidence of observation in the sectors: "vehicles" (5); "cosmetics, perfume, and drugstore" (3); "clothing, footwear, and accessories" (2); and "culture and leisure" (1).

**Table 2**  
Observations by sector

Setor	n (a.f.)*	n (r.f.)**
Food	18	16,98%
Cafeteria and confectionery	8	7,55%
Home decor and gifts	6	5,66%
Cosmetics, perfumery, and pharmacy	3	2,83%
Culture and leisure	1	0,94%
Language teaching	8	7,55%
Health and wellness	17	16,04%
Cleaning and maintenance services	8	7,55%
General Services	19	17,92%
Training and courses	11	10,38%
Vehicles	5	4,72%
Clothing, footwear, and accessories	2	1,89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Notes: \*n(a.f.) = absolute frequency; \*\*n(r.f.) = relative frequency.  
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

The descriptive statistics for each metric variable in the database are presented below (Table 3). The means of the variables "performance" (6.80) and "satisfaction" (6.72) are similar, and their deviations can be considered relatively low (1.34 and 1.10, respectively).

**Table 3**  
Descriptive statistics of the sample

Descriptive statistics	Variables				
	Performance	Satisfaction	Network age	Network size	Franchise fee
Maximum	9,15	9,40	65,00	3.720,00	790,00
Average	6,80	6,72	12,72	191,14	56,29
Minimum	3,87	3,60	2,00	4,00	3,00
Standard deviation	1,34	1,10	9,65	411,26	81,15
Variance	1,80	1,20	93,16	16.9135,90	6.585,50
Median	6,95	6,70	10,50	6.585,50	45,00

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

In contrast, the standard deviations of "network age", "network size" and "franchise fee" are high (9.65, 411.26, and 81.15, respectively), and with significant variance, which highlights the heterogeneity of the sample and the lack of standardization. This can also be observed regarding the "maximum" and "minimum" statistics for each variable. For instance: a maximum age of 65, and a minimum of two; a maximum network size of 3,720 units, and a minimum of four. Regarding the franchise investment rate, it ranges from 3 thousand to 790 thousand Reais. It is worth mentioning that the values found in the medians were used as one of the criteria to categorize the variables.

In addition to breaking down the database, these analyses allowed the creation of the category strata that were used as input for the bivariate statistics technique and CA. Thus, considering the position and dispersion measures of the sample, the number of categories was established (in parentheses) for each variable: "network performance" (4); "franchisee satisfaction" (4); "network age" (3); "network size" (4); and "franchise fee" (3), which are described below (Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, respectively).

As observed (Table 4), it can be noted that most samples are in the medium-high stratum (27.36%), followed by: medium-low (26.42%), low (26.42%) and, finally, high (19.81%). Therefore, there is an approximate distribution of companies among the categories.

**Table 4**  
Network performance

Network performance	Interval	n (a.f.)*	n (r.f.)**
Low	0.0 – 6.0	28	26.42%
Medium-low	6.0 – 7.0	28	26.42%
Medium-high	7.0 – 8.0	29	27.36%
High	8.0 – 10.0	21	19.81%
<b>Total</b>		<b>106</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Notes: \*n(a.f.) = absolute frequency; \*\*n(r.f.) = relative frequency.  
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

Regarding "franchisee satisfaction" (Table 5), most companies considered themselves "not very satisfied" (33.96%), followed by "satisfied" (31.13%); "unsatisfied" (25.47%); and "very satisfied" (only 9.43%).

**Table 5**  
Franchise satisfaction

Franchise satisfaction	Interval	n (a.f.)*	n (r.f.)**
Unsatisfied	0.0 – 6.0	27	25.47%
Not very satisfied	6.0 – 7.0	36	33.96%
Satisfied	7.0 – 8.0	33	31.13%
Very satisfied	8.0 – 10.0	10	9.43%
<b>Total</b>		<b>106</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Notes: \*n(a.f.) = absolute frequency; \*\*n(r.f.) = relative frequency.  
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

Regarding the "network age" – the variable that measures the franchise's age, counting the years since its adoption by the franchising system – (Table 6) the predominance of networks with more than 10 years can be noted (50% of the sample), followed by franchises with 5 to 10 years (30.19%); and with up to 5 years in the system (19.81%). Therefore, the samples are not composed of franchises in their first years of existence.

**Table 6**  
Network age

Network age (years)	n (a.f.)*	n (r.f.)**
Up to 5 years	21	19.81%
From 5 to 10 years	32	30.19%
More than 10 years	53	50.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Notes: \*n(a.f.) = absolute frequency; \*\*n(r.f.) = relative frequency.  
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

Regarding the "network size", that is, the number of units in each franchise network (Table 7), the majority is represented by networks with up to 50 franchises (34.91%). Considering collectively the range between 50 and 200 units, there is a total of

42.45%; and the smallest contingent of the sample studied (22.64%) comprises larger networks, with more than 200 units.

**Table 7**  
Network size

Network size (units)	n (a.f)*	n (r.f)**
Up to 50	37	34.91%
From 50 to 100	22	20.75%
From 100 to 200	23	21.70%
Above 200	24	22.64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Notes: \*n(a.f.) = absolute frequency; \*\*n(r.f.) = relative frequency.  
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

The distribution of companies by category (Table 8), based on the franchise fee (paid when acquiring the enterprise) show the prevalent (71.7%) of the franchises that had a low investment (up to 50 thousand reais), being followed by companies (23.58%) with an investment from 50 to 100 thousand reais (considered medium). The minority (4.72%) is from the high investment group (above 100 thousand reais). This analysis reflects, in a sense, a profile of franchisees that can be classified as micro and small entrepreneurs, who have lower investment funds.

**Table 8**  
Franchise fee

Franchise fee	Interval (thousand R\$)	n (a.f)*	n (r.f)**
Low investment	Up to 50	76	71.70%
Medium investment	From 50 to 100	25	23.58%
High investment	Over 100	5	4.72%
<b>Total</b>		<b>106</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Notes: \*n(a.f.) = absolute frequency; \*\*n(r.f.) = relative frequency.  
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

**Bivariate analyses**

For the bivariate analyses, the variables "performance" and "franchisee satisfaction" were related to the variables "network age," "network size," and "franchise fee" (Tables 9, 10, and 11; and 12, 13, and 14).

According to the data (Table 9), the higher the network performance (medium-high and high), the fewer the number of newer networks aged up to 5 years old (2 and 1, respectively). And the number of networks increases along the year intervals: from 5 to 10 years (9 and 8); and above 10 years (18 and 12). In contrast, it is also possible to observe companies with low performance in networks that are more than 10 years old (12), and 5 to 10 years old (11).

**Table 9**  
Performance vs. Age

Network Performance	Network age (years)			Total
	Up to 5	From 5 to 10	Over 10	
Low	5	11	12	28
Medium-low	13	4	11	28
Medium-high	2	9	18	29
High	1	8	12	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

Networks with 50 to 100 units have a homogeneous performance level among the categories (6, 6, 6, and 4, representing low, medium-low, medium-high, and high, respectively). In contrast, networks with up to 50 franchises have companies with low and medium-low performance levels, totaling 26 observations. Meanwhile, regarding the networks with more

than 200 units, these have equal numbers (8) of companies with low and high performance. Based on the analysis, therefore, it is not possible to verify if there is a relationship between performance and network size (Table 10).

**Table 10**  
Performance vs. Network size

Network Performance	Network size				Total
	Up to 50	50 to 100	100 to 200	Above 200	
Low	10	6	4	8	28
Medium-low	16	6	3	3	28
Medium-high	11	6	7	5	29
High	0	4	9	8	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

In the analysis of the variables "network performance" and "franchise fee" (Table 11), it is noted that in medium-high and high performance levels of the networks, when the fee values increase, there are fewer observations. This indicates that better network performances are not related to higher franchise fees. Furthermore, it is not possible to state that low franchise fees lead to lower performance, given the average distribution among the categories. There is, however, a slight decrease in observations as the network performance increases, with low (24), medium-low (19), medium-high (18), and high (15) investment in the franchise fee.

**Table 11**  
Performance vs. Franchise fee

Network Performance	Franchise fee			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Low	24	3	1	28
Medium-low	19	8	1	28
Medium-high	18	10	1	29
High	15	4	2	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

When relating the "franchisee satisfaction" and the "network age" (Table 12), it can be observed that, in networks up to 5 years old, the "unsatisfied" (8 mentions) and "not very satisfied" (6) conditions of the franchisee are more recurrent than the "satisfied" (4) and "very satisfied" (3) conditions. In networks with more than 10 years, there is also a prevalence of lower levels of satisfaction: "unsatisfied" (11) and "not very satisfied" (18). The "satisfied" category corresponds to a significant part of the data, and it is possible to note that, over the years, the number of networks increases. Nevertheless, based on the information, no association was found between these variables.

**Table 12**  
Satisfaction vs. Age

Franchisee satisfaction	Network age (years)			Total
	Up to 5	From 5 to 10	Over 10	
Unsatisfied	8	8	11	27
Not very satisfied	6	12	18	36
Satisfied	4	10	19	33
Very satisfied	3	2	5	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

According to the analysis (Table 13), networks with up to 50 units have more "unsatisfied" (13) and "not very satisfied" (12) franchisees. In addition, in the "unsatisfied" category, it is possible to notice that, as the size of the network grows, the dissatisfaction tends to decrease.

**Table 13**  
Satisfaction vs. Network size

Franchisee satisfaction	Network size				Total
	Up to 50	50 to 100	100 to 200	Above 200	
Unsatisfied	13	8	3	3	27
Not very satisfied	12	7	4	13	36
Satisfied	7	7	13	6	33
Very satisfied	5	0	3	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

According to the data collected, regarding "satisfaction" and "franchise fee" (Table 14), networks with lower levels of satisfaction – "unsatisfied" (19) and "not very satisfied" (32) – are related to the low franchise fee. In the medium franchise fee category (in thousands), the condition "satisfied" prevails (10 networks); and, regarding the high franchise fee, the data were insufficient to verify if a relationship between the variables exists.

**Table 14**  
Satisfaction vs. Franchise fee

Franchisee satisfaction	Franchise fee			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Unsatisfied	19	6	2	27
Not very satisfied	32	4	0	36
Satisfied	22	10	1	33
Very satisfied	3	5	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>106</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

**Correspondence analysis (CA)**

According to the analysis guideline proposed by Fávero and Belfiore (2015, p. 246), before proceeding to the correspondence analysis:

it is initially recommended to perform the  $\chi^2$  test for the verification of the existence of dependence between the two variables and, consequently, for the evaluation of the adequacy of CA application.

CA uses the  $\chi^2$  test to analyze the distribution of absolute frequencies by category and evaluate the statistical significance of the association between two variables (Hair et al., 2009). Then, based on a contingency table, the expected frequencies and the  $\chi^2$  value for each cell are calculated, considering the differences between the observed and expected frequencies (Table 15).

**Table 15**  
Contingency table with observed absolute frequencies and  $X^2$  test

Network Performance	Satisfação do franqueado				Total
	Unsatisfied	Not very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	
Low	18	10	0	0	28
Medium-low	7	15	5	1	28
Medium-high	2	8	13	6	29
High	0	3	15	3	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>106</b>

Pearson  $X^2$  (9) = 62,8595 Pr = 0,000

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

Given the  $X^2$  test result, it can be stated that, at a significance level of 1% and 9 degrees of freedom, there is a statistically significant association between the variables "network performance" and "franchisee satisfaction", since  $X^2 = 62,86$  and Prob.  $X^2_{calc} < 0,01\%$ , which renders the use of CA viable. Following the guidelines proposed by Fávero and Belfiore (2015), the association between pairs of categories of these variables ("network performance" and "franchisee satisfaction") was subsequently examined by adjusted standardize residual analysis, aiming to study the relationships between all their categories in a simple correspondence analysis (bivariate), as presented below (Table 16).

The analysis indicated dependence between the categories: "low performance" and "unsatisfied"; "medium-low performance" and "not very satisfied"; and "medium-high performance" and "very satisfied". There was also an association of "high performance" with "satisfied," since the standardized residuals of the corresponding cells are, respectively, equal to 5.495, 2.554, 2.433, and 4.454 (positive and > 1.96).

**Table 16**  
Table of frequencies and adjusted standardized residuals

Network Performance	Franchisee satisfaction			
	Unsatisfied	Not very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Low	18	10	0	0
	7,132	9,509	8,717	2,642
Medium-low	7	15	5	1
	-0,067	2,554	-1,768	-1,237
Medium-high	2	8	13	6
	7,387	9,849	9,028	2,736
High	0	3	15	3
	5,349	7,132	6,538	1,981
	-2,992	-2,126	4,454	0,849

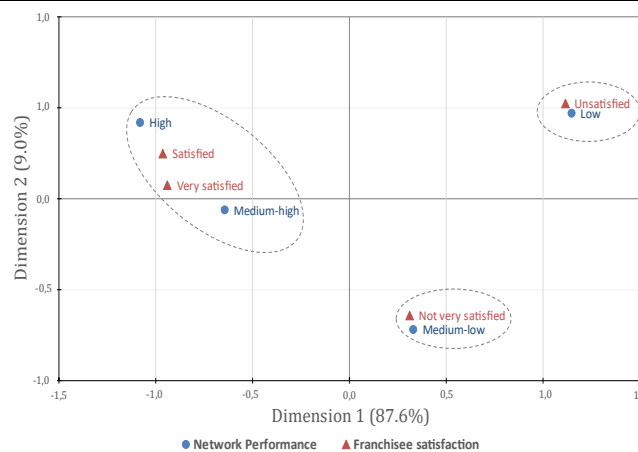
4 cells with expected frequency < 5

Pearson  $X^2$  (9) = 62,8595 Pr = 0,000

Likelihood-ratio  $X^2$  (9) = 72,8013 Pr = 0,000

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

With this, it was possible to generate the graphic representation of these associations, through the following perceptual map (Figure 1), which demonstrates some positive associations between the levels of "network performance" and "franchisee satisfaction", such as dimensions 1 and 2, which explain, respectively, 87.6% and 9.0% of the total primary inertia.



**Figure 1**  
Anacor biplot: network performance vs. franchisee satisfaction

Notes: coordinates in symmetric normalization.

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data (2022).

Analyzing the map, it is also possible to observe a strong association between the categories "low performance" and "low satisfaction", since the "unsatisfied" franchisees present "low performance levels"; and the "not very satisfied" franchisees follow the same logic, presenting "medium-low performance".

In contrast, as expected, the "medium-high" and "high" levels of "performance" are also associated with high levels of "franchisee satisfaction," ranking between "medium-high" and "high."

Thus, considering the associations present in the researched sample, the null hypothesis that "satisfaction" and "performance" are randomly associated is rejected, and the hypothesis defended in this study is confirmed – that there is a statistically significant association between these variables; and more than that, there is a logical association between the categories considered negative ("low performance" and "low satisfaction"), and positive ("high performance" and "high satisfaction").

The hypothesis defended and confirmed in this study – that satisfaction and performance are associated under a positive logic, in which networks with more satisfied franchisees perform better – corroborates the inferences of Guedes & Trigo (2009), Jang & Park (2019), Jirásek *et al.* (2022), Nijmeijer *et al.* (2013), Ortega *et al.* (2016), Ramírez-Hurtado (2017), and Roh & Yoon (2009).

Therefore, satisfaction is essential to network success (de Faria Olivo *et al.*, 2020; Ortega *et al.*, 2016; Melo *et al.*, 2022); and it hinges on the support received by and the relationship established with the franchisor (Ramírez-Hurtado, 2017; Su & Tsai, 2017), which is also an important factor in the decision to acquire a franchise (Cho, 2004).

In addition, the price of the "franchise fee" helps to cover the expenses with training, support, and implementation of the new unit (Central do Franqueado, 2020). Following this logic, it is possible to understand that franchises with lower investment fees tend to have less satisfied franchisees, since their satisfaction is related to the support offered by the network (Jang & Park, 2019; Nijmeijer *et al.*, 2013; Su & Tsai, 2017), which is covered by the franchise fee. Based on the collected data, it was observed that franchisee satisfaction in businesses with "low investment" is lower, according to the categorization into "unsatisfied" (19 networks) and "not very satisfied" (32 networks).

The network performance can also be related to the franchise fee, since the fee helps to cover the expenses with support (Central do Franqueado, 2020). Thus, it is considered that the support received contributes to satisfaction (Roh & Yoon, 2009) and its quality positively affects the franchisee's results (Jang & Park, 2019; Nijmeijer *et al.*, 2013; Su & Tsai, 2017).

In contrast, higher franchise fees do not lead to higher performance, since in "medium-high performance" and "high performance" the number of networks decreases as the fee increases. At "low franchise fees", the data indicate 18 and 15 networks; at "medium fees", 10 and 4; and at "high fees", 1 and 2, respectively.

Another point raised is the relationship between "network size" and "franchisee satisfaction," where the older the network, the more consolidated it is, and it has better processes and support, raising the levels of satisfaction.

In addition, the number of "unsatisfied" franchisees decreases as the "size of the network" increases. Thus, networks consisting of up to 50 units have 13 "unsatisfied" companies; networks from 50 to 100 have 8; and networks from 100 to 200 and above 200 have 8 networks each.

Finally, one of the advantages of franchising for the franchisee lies in the assistance received for maintaining the business in the first years (Carvalho & Viana, 2015). In the data, franchises with more than 5 years of life survive in networks with more than 50 units. As the networks are continuously growing and staying in the market (Redecker, 2020), the franchisee can survive the first years of the company's life.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study aimed to analyze the association between the level of franchisee satisfaction and the performance of franchise networks in Brazil. For this purpose, a theoretical survey on franchising was carried out, with the purpose of understanding and becoming acquainted with the system; and, subsequently, information was collected from yearbooks of the Associação Brasileira de Franchising and Serasa Experian (PEGN), to compose the sample.

To understand the data, in search of an answer to the research question, the following analyses were performed: Statistical (relative frequency and bivariate); and CA, at the end of the operation. It is worth noting that the use of CA was not aimed at finding a causality relationship, since the objective was simply to describe a phenomenon, as the nature of this study is solely descriptive and not explanatory.

When exploring the data through the analyses performed, a logical association was observed between lower performance levels and lower satisfaction levels ("low performance" and "low satisfaction"). Furthermore, "medium-high" and "high" performance are also associated with "medium-high" and "high" satisfaction levels. This confirms the study's hypothesis: The level of "franchisee satisfaction" is positively related to the "network performance".

Thus, as franchising has been growing in the last decade (Boulay *et al.*, 2020), it is worth highlighting the relevance of franchisors' suitability to satisfy their franchisees. In this sense, Brazilian franchises are categorized as fourth and fifth generation (Lima Júnior *et al.*, 2012) and, as such, they operate franchising systems, offering quality support to the franchisee. The latter, in addition to being present in the franchisor's decisions, must have these generations categorized in their network, and receive increasingly improved support (Ramírez-Hurtado, 2017). Those who received better support perceived better franchise performance (Guedes & Trigo, 2009), being the organizational performance a determinant for the permanence and success of networks (Richard *et al.*, 2009) that seek visibility in the market, reaching higher levels of performance.

Furthermore, other relationships emerged in the data analysis, such as: Franchises with lower investment tend to have lower levels of franchisee satisfaction; higher franchise fees are not necessarily related to better performance levels; and franchisee dissatisfaction declines as the size of the network grows.

In light of the above, this study contributes with information for strategic management, encouraging research on

franchising to understand the parallels between network performance and franchisee satisfaction, as an effect of the support offered. In addition, it offers incentive to the development and training of franchisors to provide more robust support, which will generate satisfaction to franchisees and network gain, improving the performance of the network in its entirety (Pazetto & Beuren, 2018).

One of this study's limitations concerns the selection criteria adopted to measure the construct "franchisee satisfaction". Dealing with satisfaction from the perspective of the support received was a conceptual and methodological choice; however, there are other studies in the literature that adopted other perspectives.

Su and Tsai (2019), for example, also evaluate satisfaction based on the perception of support received; however, unlike what is proposed in the present study, for them, support is analyzed in five dimensions, namely: Logistic support, operational support, marketing management, financial management, and communication systems.

Lusch (1976), in turn, understands satisfaction from the perspective of the relationship and conflicts between franchisor and franchisee. Jang & Park (2019) differentiate not only relational satisfaction, but also economic satisfaction; and Jirásek et al. (2022) associate satisfaction with perceived performance, analyzing it in three distinct dimensions, namely: Financial, service, and relationship.

Finally, as a suggestion for future research, studies that consider other forms of measuring satisfaction to compare results, such as the aforementioned possibilities, may be relevant, as well as longitudinal studies, capable of evaluating possible cause and effect relationships over the years.

Furthermore, as CA is an exploratory technique, it is also suggested to incorporate other variables and expand the samples in order to apply other confirmatory and predictive techniques, or even complementary techniques to CA, such as discriminant analysis or cluster analysis.

The adoption of qualitative methodologies to further explore the relationship and perception of satisfaction between franchisors and franchisees is another suggestion, as well as further cross-regional and/or cross-cultural research related to franchising, to offer insights on how regional and/or cultural differences may influence the perception of franchisees and their demand for support. Nevertheless, studies that analyze and compare data, encompassing franchisee satisfaction perception and opinion, may provide interesting revelations if cross-matched with performance variables.

### Conflict of interest statement

*The authors declare that there are no personal, commercial, academic, political and/or financial conflicts of interest in the process of appreciating and publishing this article.*

### Authors' statement of individual contributions

Roles	Contributions by authors		
	Viana T.R.	Azevedo A.C.	Pereira R.M.
Conceptualization	■	■	■
Methodology	■		■
Software	■		
Validation	■	■	■
Formal analysis	■	■	■
Investigation	■		
Resources		■	
Data Curation	■	■	
Writing - Original Draft	■		
Writing - Review & Editing	■	■	■
Visualization	■		
Supervision		■	
Project administration		■	
Funding acquisition		■	

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