WHEN A FISH OUT OF WATER BECOMES THE KING OF THE POND. INNOVATION AT AQUARIUM DU QUEBEC, A CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

Over the past 10 years, the Aquarium du Québec (Province of Québec, Canada) went from being a fish out of water to being the king of the pond by doubling its attendance. To do so, it offered its customers a new or significantly improved product, while changing its organizational and marketing methods. The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify the incremental and/or radical innovations that supported its current success. Specifically, the paper aims to answer the following questions by discussing the innovations implemented between April 2002 and April 2012: What innovations were introduced? Among these innovations, which can be described as radical innovations? Did the introduction of radical innovations mark a turning point in respect to attendance? By focusing on the same organization, the analysis provides clear findings on the types of innovations that are more successful in that context. This case study shows that a combination of incremental innovations, especially at the organizational, product and marketing levels, introduced over a ten-year span, has allowed the organization to make the necessary adjustments and increase attendance. The introduction of radical innovations is therefore not a turning point in respect to attendance. Thus, the case study of the Aquarium reveals that even without implementing radical innovation, a tourist attraction can succeed in changing its image, double its attendance and significantly increase the quality of its offer. The paper provides researchers and industry practitioners indications pertaining to a successful innovation implementation model in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Incremental Innovation, Radical Innovation, Services, Aquarium, Case Study, Interview, Attendance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In literature, “innovation is widely regarded as a critical source of competitive advantage in an increasingly changing environment” (Dess and Picken, 2000; Tushman and O’Reilly, 1996, cited by Crossman and Apaydin, 2010). Also, “the need for continuous innovation [is recognized as] essential to maintaining competitiveness and economic health” (Blawatt, 2008). Fortunately, innovation is a very trendy research subject with thousands of scientific articles being published in the year 2011 alone. However, a good part of these articles focus on manufacturing. “There is evidence that the notion of innovation, well established in the manufacturing sector, cannot simply be transposed to the service sector” (Hipp and Grupp, 2005: 517). In services, knowledge intensive business services firms (KIBS) are the most extensively researched. The literature demonstrated that industries have their own typologies regarding innovation. Furthermore, “the study of innovation management among small and medium enterprises in the context of a traditional service sector is at an embryonic state” (Tsekouris et al., 2011: 320). More specifically, innovation amongst the tourism industry service companies has not been subject to much attention by researchers. However, the tourism industry is one of the most important world industries and contributes annually billions of dollars to the world economy (Word Travel and Tourism Council, 2012). Assessing its economic contribution is a challenge because the boundaries that define its services are difficult to circumscribe (such as transportation, accommodation, catering, leisure and entertainment). It is estimated that in Canada in 2010, the tourism industry accounted for a GDP of $29.4 billion (Commission canadienne du Tourisme, 2010). In terms of tourism products, “an ongoing challenge for Canada's tourism industry is matching new travel experiences with future market demand and changing demographics” (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2012). The innovative capacity of organizations is therefore a factor that allows them to thrive in a highly competitive environment that is particularly vulnerable to economic downturns and challenging weather conditions.

One organization that has felt the pressure to innovate and who acted accordingly is the Aquarium du Québec (Province of Québec, Canada). In 2002, after being closed for two years to carry out redevelopment and repositioning initiatives, the new Aquarium du Québec opened its doors. The product
was significantly improved by the addition of new exhibits and new landscaping. At that time, its repositioning put the emphasis on cold water fish and marine mammals typical to Quebec’s wildlife. During the following years, attendance targets were not met and an annual decline in attendance was even observed. Critics rang out from all sides, as to decry the poor quality of the offer and the pricing deemed too high.

The conclusion was therefore that the innovations that were introduced did not meet the expectations of its leaders and the population. They were indeed innovations because, by focusing on the definition of innovation in the Oslo Manual adopted by member countries of the OECD, the concept is defined as: "The implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or a process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations" (OECD, 2005: 46). Closing the facility was then considered but rejected by the government. In 2006, it decided instead to replace the management team that was a non-profit organization. The Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq) who manages provincial parks, provincial wildlife reserves and provincial tourist resorts was then chosen. The new team put in charge faced quite a challenge to turn things around. They were facing a small and decreasing attendance as well as high operational costs. In 2009, this quote by Minister of the National Capital (Ministre de la Capitale National) reflects an astonishing turnaround: "Not only the Aquarium can enhance the reputation of Quebec as a cultural and tourist capital, but its constantly increasing number of visitors make it an engine of the economic development for the entire region" (Translation. Sépaq, 2009).

The Aquarium du Quebec is a fertile subject to study innovation; this organization has indeed offered to its customers a new or significantly improved product, while changing its organizational and marketing methods. Indeed, over 10 years, the institution has introduced several innovations that on the one hand have had mixed success and on the other were described as successful. By focusing on the same organization, the analysis provides clear findings on the types of innovations that are more successful in that context. The objective of this case study of the Aquarium is therefore to identify incremental and / or radical innovations implemented after 2002 who supported its current success. This study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge for innovation in tourism services that is, in all likelihood, far less studied compared to innovation in manufacturing companies and knowledge-intensive (KIBS). The study findings emerge for industry practitioners and for researchers interested in innovation and tourism. Specifically, the work will aim to answer the following questions by discussing the innovations implemented since 2002:

- Since 2002, what innovations were introduced into the establishment?
- Among these innovations, which can be described as radical innovations?
- Did the introduction of radical innovations mark a turning point in respect to attendance?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW
This literature review will focus on the concept of innovation, more specifically on the degree of novelty continuum, the types of innovations and innovations in services to create new markets or modify existing ones.

If researchers agree on the importance of advancing knowledge in the field of innovation, they have however not reached a consensus yet on the definition of the concept. In reading its literature, one realizes that the definitions for innovation are numerous and diverse, a sign of its complexity. Two distinct visions immerge. The first, labeled as Schumpeterian, considers as an innovation only what is radically new. Its definition is "new combinations of knowledge, resources or equipment" (Schumpeter, 1934). In the second, the authors are less restrictive and incremental improvements qualify as innovation. The reference definition of innovation from the Oslo Manual (2005), adopted by the OECD Countries, is the one that will be used in this analysis. Thus, innovation is defined as: "The implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or a process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations" (OECD, 2005: 46). Incremental innovations are therefore considered to be innovations. This choice is based on evidence that shows that “most improvements to service activities are incremental.” (Berry et al., 2006: 56). In light of the debate surrounding the definition of the concept, it is important to clarify how to
distinguish incremental innovations and radical innovations, being the position of innovation on a continuum ranging from a low to a high level of radical departure from the context of the organization. The more the changes brought about by an innovation are radical, the more they involve the adoption of new behaviors on the part of members of the organization and / or an adaptation of structures (Wolfe, 1994, quoted by Landry et al., 2007: 40). The Oslo Manual proposes to classify the degree of novelty of innovation according to whether they are new for the company, for the market or for the world. In this study, a radical innovation will be labeled as such if it is new to the market. The market consists of tourism industry service companies, including other aquariums.

The Oslo Manual distinguishes four types of innovation. The first is Product innovation: "introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses" (OECD, 2005: 48). The second is Process innovation, or "the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method" (OECD, 2005: 49). Marketing innovation is "implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing" (OECD, 2005: 49). Organizational innovation is "implementation of a new organizational method in the firm’s business practices, workplace organization or external relations." (OECD, 2005: 51).

Since the Aquarium du Québec is a service company that has innovated to increase its attendance, the typology proposed by Berry et al. offers an interesting perspective. Their matrix will therefore also be mobilized in order to refine our understanding. As part of their work, they specifically studied the service innovations that create new markets or modify existing ones. They distinguish two dimensions: “offering an important new core benefit or a new delivery benefit that revolutionizes customers’ access to the core benefit” and “whether the service must be produced and consumed simultaneously” (Berry et al., 2006: 57). It therefore allows a characterization into four groups according to these two axes. The first, “flexible solutions”, includes “service innovations that offer a new core benefit and that can be consumed apart from where and when they are produced” (eg: eBay) (Berry et al., 2006: 58). The second, “controllable convenience”, refers to “innovations that create markets on the basis of new delivery benefits offer controllable convenience” (eg, Netflix) (Berry et al., 2006: 58-59). The third, “comfortable gains”, brings together “service innovations that offer a new core benefit consumed at the time and place of production [substantially new experiences with direct benefits to customers’ emotional or physical comfort]” (eg Starbucks) (Berry et al., 2006: 59). The fourth and last, “Respectful access”, offers a “new delivery benefit, and the production and consumption of the service are inseparable” (Berry et al., 2006: 60).

4. METHODOLOGY

The search strategy retained derives from the conceptual framework and the research questions identified. Since this study focuses on an organization, the Aquarium du Québec, the qualitative research approach chosen is a case study. Case studies are recognized in the literature as the research strategy most appropriate for understanding complexities of management (Bartunek et al., 2006, cited by Tsekouras et al., 2011, 324). To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon studied, it is important to visit the attraction and to meet some of its personnel. This allows observing the facilities and interactions between employees and visitors. Doing so seems quite consistent with the research questions and supports the appropriateness of a qualitative approach.

This case study stems from an interpretive epistemological position. In this sense, it seeks to interpret a phenomenon and understand it. In Ellington’s continuum of qualitative research (2009: 8-9, quoted by Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 45-46), this is a joint approach because the objective is to generate practical implications for practitioners and is based on a semi-structured interview. Participation will be rather passive, consisting of listening to the interviewee and do observation on the site. To minimize my influence on the data collected, I have not expressed my personal opinions throughout the exchange, I rather proceeded by reformulations to make sure I understood the responses. Also in this sense, the questions were phrased so as to not induce responses. To show some reciprocity for his generosity, I committed to providing the results of the work to the interviewee.
The qualitative methodology implemented consisted of a semi-structured interview, field observations and document analysis. A **semi-structured interview** conducted with a key informant addressed the research questions. The respondent was in the upper management of the Aquarium/Seapa during the key period of innovation studied (2006 to 2012). It was based on a discussion guide comprising of questions derived from the conceptual framework. The interview began with a very general question to allow the speaker to speak freely. The discussion guide was used only as needed, to address issues that did not emerge spontaneously. It served more as a checklist to address all the points targeted in the conceptual framework than for conducting an interview in a question-answer format. Among the topics discussed, there was some background on the organization, an identification of the various innovations implemented over time and a distinction between radical and incremental innovations. The interviewee, however, was given some latitude to let additional relevant concepts emerge. The interview was recorded and the content was transcribed in a MS Word file. It was then analyzed using coding systems in QDA Miner. The **field observation** consisted of an informal visit of the Aquarium. The aim was to visualize the physical elements. In so doing, particular attention was paid to the atmosphere that prevailed on the site and interactions between employees and customers. The initial visits, done in the company of the interviewee, took place before and after the interview. The more informal conversations, which took place during this portion of the meeting, have enhanced the content of the formal interview. Indeed, they have clarified the understanding of certain elements, raised some questions and allowed to visualize some of the elements that had been discussed during the interview. Another visit took place in the evening without the presence of the respondent to discover the site more extensively and observe interactions, especially between employees, while our respondent was absent. This study also includes **document analysis**. The annual brochure of the Aquarium, which was distributed from 2002 to 2012, allowed identifying some of the innovations introduced in chronological order as presented to the visitors. The attendance statistics of the institution during this same period were also consulted.

The study focused on the innovations introduced at the Aquarium of Quebec from 2002 to 2012 to assess the impact on attendance. The interview allowed discovering and describing the perspective of the interviewee on the subject. This approach involves some subjectivity that is considered. When possible, his words were triangulated with the field observation and the document analysis. For example, the phases of the evolution of the product according to the informant were triangulated with the brochures of the institution. This methodology is meant to provide greater validity. However, ultimately, the triangulation is rather here to improve the spectrum of the information collected than to retain or remove information found only in one of the three categories.

As part of this analysis, it was decided to focus on one organization, considered a critical case according to the typology of Miles and Huberman (2003). Indeed, the Aquarium has introduced several innovations in recent years that are deemed a success. Focusing on this establishment, which can be considered as a benchmark, is of interest in his field. Moreover, the innovations that were introduced are diverse. Also, over a period of ten years, an extreme variability regarding the outcome that resulted from innovations was witnessed. This variability further supports the relevance of selecting this organization as part of this analysis. Note that the study includes a single in-depth interview with a key informant. With respect to the respondent's selection, it results from the fact that he was an important player in the decision-making and the implementation of innovations after 2006. Therefore, the respondent was chosen based on his decision-making role in the innovation process of the organization.

The unit of analysis for this study stems from the research questions. Here, we focus on innovation at the Aquarium du Québec. Therefore, the organization that is subject to this case study is the unit of analysis. Located in Quebec City (Province of Québec, Canada), the Aquarium du Québec opened its door in 1956. The 16 hectares site has indoors and outdoors exhibits. Throughout the years, new exhibits were introduced. In 2012, 10,000 marine animals inhabit the Aquarium: fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and sea mammals including polar bears, walruses, and seals. This unit will be bounded in time. The period from 2002 to 2012 is studied. The interviewee has certainly talked about the experience as he experienced it, but the focus was on the innovations introduced and not the managerial aspects. Therefore, the questions focused on the organization and not on the interviewee’s experience as a manager in an innovation context.
To insure the quality and thoroughness of the research, this work mobilizes the criteria of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. To embody the credibility and dependability, a triangulation of results will be made on the information collected during the interview, document analysis and observation of the site. This will identify the elements of convergence between these three sources but also allow a broader spectrum of data to improve the content. In addition, a peer familiar with the area of study reread the analysis to clarify meaning if necessary (Creswell and Miller, 2000, quoted by Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 40. In regards to transferability, features of the unit of analysis were elaborated to allow other researchers to make comparisons with the results obtained in this work. In addition, the study does show some sensitivity to the organization studied and the respondent. In this sense, a consent form was presented to the participant to meet the guidelines of the Ethics Committee of Laval University Research (CÉRUL). Throughout the study, there was a concern to respect the participant (anonymity) and to report his words properly.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

I will now present the highlights of the results collected during the field observation, the in-depth interview and the document analysis.

5.1 Organizational Innovation

At the outset, the innovations introduced since 2002 are divided into two phases. In the first, from 2002 to 2006, the Aquarium was under the direction of the Société des parcs et des sciences naturelles du Québec, an NPO. In 2006, Sépaq was commissioned by the Quebec Government to manage the facility. Before 2006, policy guidelines had been given so that the species of the Aquarium focused on cold-water fish (trout, etc.). Delays and additional costs during construction, due to incorrect initial assessment, have resulted in the establishment opening its doors before the planned projects were finalized. Calculations, based on the number of visitors expected and the expenditure, resulted in a pricing of $24 per adult that was criticized at the time. In retrospect, the choice of exhibits did not meet the expectations of customers who wanted to observe exotic and charismatic species rather than those presented. During the following years, the cost of admission decreased but there was little innovation at the product, process, organizational and marketing level.

It is from the moment that Sépaq became manager in 2006 that innovations were implemented at a fast pace. The aim was then to take steps to stop the decline in admissions and increase revenues. The wind of change that resulted can be described as organizational innovation. Indeed, that's when the mission of the institution, then focused on education, conservation and research, was amended to take into consideration the customer and make it the focus. It led to what is called in-house the "customer service initiative" (Translation). "For example, employees who previously had to obey an internal rule not to interact with customers were asked to obey the opposite rule and share their passion for their profession. Management then indicated that there were two types of employees: the competent and smiling ones and former employees" (Translation). This shift was well received but some employees were part of the second category and, over a six-month period, some of them were discharged.

5.2 Product Innovation

With the shift to customer service a "pleasure initiative" was also operated and the aim was to entertain the visitors. The Aquarium wanted to change the reputation it gained after its reopening in 2002 of being "dull". This shift led to product innovations. They strived to enhance the experience on one hand and boost income on the other. Related activities were added (water games, fitness trail, TreeGo) and the playground was improved. Also, animation activities were introduced: Festi Lumièr e (on winter evenings, trees, structures and animal-shaped ice sculptures are illuminated), Halloween Lights, etc. Related services also made their arrival, including "Animal keeper for a day" and "A Night at the Aquarium". In addition, they modified the eligibility criteria to hold special events on the site, such as weddings, so they were more profitable. They posted the first names of the marine mammals on the exhibits to facilitate attachment to animals from the visitors. In regards to the animal collection, the aquarium welcomed two new residents: a pair of arctic foxes. In-house studies show that visitors stay longer on the site. Various
initiatives were also set in motion to develop new markets. They attempted to confer new benefits to the site. As such, the institution has partnered with Cercle des Supermamans so they hold monthly events at the Aquarium. Young mothers now have special treatments with the introduction of a nursing room with a view looking over the St. Lawrence Seaway. In addition, the paths were paved to be more enjoyable for strollers.

5.3 Marketing Innovation
Also, marketing innovations were set in motion in order to increase the number of visitors and revenues. In 2006, they distinguished two distinct profiles among the 5 million visitors that come to Quebec City each year: those staying in hotels and those staying at friends and relatives homes. Marketing initiatives aimed each of these two groups. For the first, they developed very competitive packages with the hotel association of the region of Quebec. It organizes yearly a special event for hotel employees to let them rediscover the Aquarium so that they would not hesitate to suggest a visit to the Aquarium to their customers when asked for recommendations. Also, a shuttle was established in partnership with a nearby shopping mall to provide easy access to the Aquarium to visitors staying in three hotels in the region. As for the visitors staying with friends and relatives, they made the annual passport more attractive by adding special benefits provided by partners. The reasoning was that residents who are passport holders are more likely to bring their guests to the Aquarium based on the fact that it is at no additional cost to them.

5.4 Degree of Novelty
Time constraints and cost make it easier to make incremental innovations on the site. In physical development, the Aquarium is facing a major challenge, balancing the desire for innovation with the inconvenience caused by the work to visitors and animals that are both disturbed. According to the respondent, the introduction of radical innovations has not marked a turning point in respect to attendance. During the 2006-2012 time span under review, the respondent did not indicate any radical innovation at the market level. It was impossible for the respondent to isolate an element that had helped to increase the number of visitors. He said that each initiative has had an impact, whether financial, in terms of reputation or quality of the product. All these elements fit together and ultimately contribute to increased attendance. Thus, the increase in visitors resulting from a combination of factors: “I think the success resulted from the quality of our service, our product and also our marketing efforts. It is all this which has meant that we managed to turnaround the situation and then put it on track” (Translation). He then specified that the move towards "customer service" and the introduction of the improved annual passports particularly contributed to the success in his opinion. Annual sales of passports increased from a thousand in 2006-2007 and then rose to over 10 000 in the 2010-2011 season. It is however not a radical innovation to the market given that similar initiatives are adopted by other tourist attractions.

5.5 Evolution of Attendance
By viewing attendance statistics, we find that the innovations were successful at increasing the number of visitors from the 2006-2007 season, which is when Sépaq was hired to manage operations. The respondent, however, stressed the importance of continuing to enhance the experience for visitors each year to at least maintain the current attendance. “I think the product should constantly evolve. For example with our Festi Lumière, if it’s always the same, visitors will stop coming. Although we have a clientele that has renewed since there are new families every year, I think we need to continue to innovate” (Translation).

5.6 Networking
An element that emerges from the interview is the importance of networking for finding success in tourism service organizations; the respondent often alluded to it. This is done by networking with other zoological institutions but also with other tourist service businesses. As such, he observed that an excellent climate of cooperation prevails between zoos and aquariums. For example, it has benefited from the collaboration of the Calgary Zoo for the expertise at its inaugural Festi Lumière, both for cost estimates and for the design. He noted that zoological institutions make loans and trade animals. In respect to other organizations in the tourism industry, he has reached an agreement with the hotel association in the region of Quebec to develop competitive packages. He also partnered with the Quebec Winter Carnival for its Festi Lumière. In addition, the Annual Passport has been made more attractive through benefits delivered by partners. This networking is also multi-sectorial. Indeed, in regards to the development of the
animal collection, a development committee was established to bring together people involved in the socioeconomic development of the region of Quebec (Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Office, University, etc.). Their expertise and advice serve as inputs to the development plan of the Aquarium.

5.7 Expertise

From the depiction made by the respondent of the context that prevailed at the reopening of 2002 and the period after 2006, an element of distinction that he stressed is the importance of expertise. He indicated that in 2002, the managers in place did not have an expertise in zoological institution management. This has led to some pitfalls, particularly in terms of ratemaking and meeting customer needs. So was the case with Sépaq but the difference was that they surrounded themselves with advisers and experts from the get-go. For the creation of the new building that will open in the summer of 2012, Sépaq turned to a firm specializing in the development of exhibits for aquariums with an excellent reputation. In addition, they conduct customer surveys to ensure they meet their needs and pose well-advised actions.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This case study answered its three research questions. First, this analysis shows that the Aquarium has introduced innovations from 2002 to 2012 that belong to each category of the Oslo Manual typology. For example, with regards to organizational innovation, from 2006, a shift towards "customer service" and "pleasure" has occurred. Having changed the organization's mission to put the customer at the heart of the raison d'être was an important and significant change. Allowing the employees to interact with customers and especially encourage them to do so was a significantly new practice. In addition, entertainment of clients, which was not part of philosophy until 2006, became an integral part of the decisions regarding the development of the offer. With regards to product innovation, related activities have emerged in the wake of the "pleasure" shift that has taken place: water games, TreeGo and improved playgrounds. Furthermore, the Aquarium has introduced events, including the Festi Lumière, and related services, such as "Animal keeper for a day" and "A Night at the Aquarium", to expand its offerings and increase the quality of the experience. The animal collection was also enhanced but to a lesser extent. From 2006, product innovation has thus manifested by broadening the range of services rather than by the improvement of the collection. Marketing innovation also took part in the turnaround. Several significant changes have been made on this point from 2006. First, they developed a marketing approach on two axes with targeted action for two distinct audiences: visitors residing in hotels and visitors who reside with friends and family. The most striking element was to have adjusted the pricing of the annual passport and making agreements with partners to make it more enticing. Process innovation was used by the Aquarium to a lesser extent. However, in regards to maintenance, certain devices have been computerized to be more cost-effective.

In regards to the typology proposed by Berry et al. on innovations in services that generate new markets or modify existing ones, the Aquarium has relied on "Respectful Access". It is the proposal of a new service-related benefit at the place of production. (Berry et al., 2006: 60-61). This took place on two fronts: young parents and entertainment. In addition, the enhanced entertainment component broadens the visitor experience. A survey of customers shows that "occupy and entertain children at the heart of the motivations of Quebec residents who visit the Aquarium" (Translation. Sépaq, 2011: 7). With the introduction of related activities, the site has developed a new service offering that meets the needs of outdoor entertainment for residents of the Québec Region.

Among all of the innovations, none has a sufficient degree of novelty from a market standpoint to be considered a radical innovation. The innovations in the service offering introduced between 2002 and 2012 are incremental. The introduction of radical innovations is therefore not a turning point in respect to attendance. Thus, the case study of the Aquarium reveals that over a period of ten years, the organization has doubled its attendance due to a combination of incremental innovations especially at the organization, product, and marketing levels. It is not possible to isolate a single element that has contributed to a significant increase in attendance. The combination of incremental innovations, introduced over the years has allowed the organization to make adjustments. This study revealed that even without implementing radical innovation, a tourist attraction can succeed in changing its image,
increase its attendance and significantly enhance its offer. However, we must note that during the 2002 to 2006 period the institution has not changed its offer and that during the same period, attendance was decreasing. From the moment that organizational, product and marketing innovations were introduced, attendance increased. This seems to indicate that the attendance is closely linked to innovation for a tourist attraction. A difference in respect to the adequacy of the innovations at meeting customer needs in 2002 and after 2006 appears to be the dominant factor that explains the fact that innovations were classified as failure in the first case and success in the second. The improvement of this suitability is based on customer surveys and inputs from its network and experts.

Interestingly, a chain reaction between the innovations emerged from the analysis. Indeed, organizational innovations have resulted in innovations in the product and in its marketing. The "customer service" shift and "pleasure" shift resulted in an enhanced experience for customers and a widening of what is proposed to reach new markets. These have been commercialized by a more competitive pricing that was based on an extensive network of partners.

A concept that emerges from the interview is the importance of networking in innovation for businesses operating in the tourism industry. Whether at the level of product innovation or marketing, the input of partners was stressed. This contribution is either to take advantage of their expertise, to make it more attractive to customers or to ensure their support.

This case study has some limitations. Only one in-depth interview was conducted with a manager. This ensures that only one perception is offered and limits the representativeness of ideas. However, by using a key informant, its findings are relevant and of interest. Moreover, the concept of innovation had different meanings for individuals. This may have affected the completeness of the innovations addressed by the respondent. In addition, social desirability may have influenced his account of events. The respondent may have overlooked some things that did not favor him or his organization or have chosen not to address some points not to give a bad image to his organization. Furthermore, this study focused on the period from April 2002 to April 2012. The findings might have been different if the study period began at the time of the creation of the organization. The questions do not address the aspects of organizational change that were involved among its staff. These are all elements that could be the object of further research.

Shortly after the period studied, a new pavilion hosting jellyfish, seahorses, tropical fish and rays opened. However, its impact on attendance was not studied as it was not available in the time span on which that study focused. It will be interesting to pursue this study following the introduction of its new building, considered a more radical innovation than those introduced so far by the respondent to assess the impact on attendance. Does the arrival of the new pavilion mark an increase in attendance greater than that observed since 2006? An avenue of research could be to study the difference in investment pertaining to incremental and radical innovation and evaluate the most valuable approach in a tourism attraction context. Another element that emerged during the interview is the importance for a tourist attraction to increase its offer on an annual basis. It would be interesting to assess whether it is common practice in the industry and if it translates in improvements in attendance. Moreover, it would be desirable to perform a similar case study in several tourism attractions in order to identify elements that diverge and converge among them.

In concluding, this case study showed that for a fish out of water to become the king of the pond, it needs to be resourceful, be in-tune with its environment and network with the other species of the pond.

7. REFERENCES


8. AUTHOR PROFILE

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