

## INNOVATION TYPES IN A DISTINCTIVE HOTEL

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### Abstract

**Background.** The hotel industry is considered to be the most significant type of accommodation because of its ability to provide revenue and satisfy the guests needs. There is huge competition in the hotel industry so in order to be able to maintain or improve their market positions and reputations; they need to develop innovations. Because it is not difficult to copy the innovation ideas from each other, they have to think about building very distinctive hotels for distinctive target groups.

**Research aims.** The aim of the study is to explore the innovation of a distinctive hotel in Hungary with the help of definitions of service and tourism innovation.

**Method.** For the research one innovative Hungarian hotel was chosen as a case study and the innovation processes of this hotel were classified into groups determined by the other authors mentioned in the literature review. The innovations of the hotel were grouped according to the innovation activity and the source of innovation.

**Key findings.** The research showed that the innovation of the selected hotel is service development and style changes, the innovation activity emphasizes organizational factors, and the sources of the innovations appear to be non-management sources.

**Keywords:** innovation, distinctive hotel, service development

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## INTRODUCTION

Innovation is essential for all kinds of companies. It is becoming harder for them to defend their position in the market and improve their competitiveness (Yen et al, 2012). The best way to do this is through innovation, since developing new offers is nowadays critical to satisfy customer needs (Wu, 2014). This paper reviews the innovation literature and the application of these theories in the specific case of a Hungarian hotel called the Hotel Bonvino Wine and Spa. The hotel was chosen because it is a unique hotel with special design and special services. The authors aim to identify the different innovation types which are applied in this distinctive hotel. By distinctive hotel we mean a hotel with unique characteristics and services which reflect the region where it is located.

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## **Defining Innovation**

The meaning of innovation can sometimes be confusing. The two words invention and innovation are often confused; sometimes they are even used as synonyms. The beginning of the process of transformation is called invention. It is used as an effective idea (Ottenbacher, 2008). Innovation came from the word “innovare” (Tidd, Bessant, & Pavitt, 1997), a latin word meaning to create something new (Ottenbacher, 2008).

Schumpeter (1934) said that innovation was a new way of doing things or better combinations of production factors (Ottenbacher, 2008). As he wrote, innovation creates new opportunities for adding value, it does not involve just the typical product or process innovation of manufacturing but also the market, organisational and resource input innovations, too (Martínez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes, 2009). Companies can introduce the innovation process in five areas. These are the following: (a) generation of new or improved products, (b) introduction of new production processes, (c) development of new sales markets, (d) development of new supply markets, (e) reorganization or restructuring of the company (Ottenbacher, 2008, p. 342).

As Drucker (1985) said, innovation should be seen as an opportunity. The result of these opportunities is the creation of a new offer or a change to a previous one. Innovation cannot only be a philosophy, but can be considered as a practice, a process or a product. The point is that the individual perceives the thing as something new (Ottenbacher, 2008, p. 343).

## **Innovation in the Service Industry**

Service innovation was not considered as an important issue until the beginning of this century (Djellal et al, 2013). Sundbo (1997) thought that innovation is not only an action, which is strategically re-created, but also a factor, that is identified by a greater jump in turnover or profit (Martínez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes, 2009).

The service industry is “highly heterogeneous and includes a great variety of interesting, complex and often highly innovative activities” (Martínez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes, 2009, p. 634), which is the reason why it is impossible to give a general account of services innovation (Miles, 2000).

## **Innovation in the Tourism Industry**

The tourism industry belongs to the service sector, so the theories of service innovation can also be applied to this sector. Hjalager (1997, 2002) has analysed the use of the term innovation in tourism research and concluded that innovation policies should emphasize sustainability and initiatives coming from other sectors’ (Mattson, Sundbo, & Fussing-Jensen, 2005, p. 359).

Previously we concluded that innovation also appears in the tourism industry in various forms so classification should be applied to deal with



different forms of innovation (Gyurácz-Németh, Raffay, & Kovács, 2010). In tourism innovation three main groups were identified: (a) innovation of the information and communication technologies, (b) innovation of tourism products, (c) innovative solutions and recommendations to the challenges.

### **Innovation in Hotels**

This study analyses innovation in a distinctive hotel, so it is essential to determine the importance of innovation in the hotel industry. Innovation is not so popular in this industry because of the conservative and capital intensive nature, which promises returns over more than 25 years (Gyurácz-Németh et al., 2010).

Allegro and de Graaf (2008) have found that the hotel industry's most innovative ideas come from those who have an outsider's perspective of the operation because they do not impede the existing paradigms (Gyurácz-Németh et al., 2010).

In hospitality innovation studies the role of employees (Chen, 2011; Nagy, 2014; Nieves & Segarra-Ciprés, 2015) and the customer orientation (Grissemann et al, 2013) cannot be neglected.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Innovation in the Hospitality Industry**

There are numerous research about advantages and disadvantages of hospitality innovation (Table 1). The most important advantage of innovation is competitiveness which is derived from the continuous improvement of the services of the hotel (Ottenbacher and Gnoth, 2005). The intangible factors are business reputation and guest loyalty which relate to the way that the hotel can satisfy all of their guests' needs by adapting new techniques. Innovation has a correlation with the sales activity and stock exchange return of the hotels as well (Nicolau & Santa-María, 2013).

The most dangerous disadvantage of innovation is the failure rate of the new novelties. Most of the innovations cannot reach the originals goals which make improvements very risky (Griffin, 1997). Even if the innovation is successful, it is still very expensive (Ottenbacher, 2008).

**Table 1.** The Advantages and Disadvantages of Hospitality Innovation

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Competitiveness (Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005)	Failure rate: 25-45% (Cooper, 2001), 58% (Griffin, 1997)
Business reputation (Ottenbacher, 2008)	Expensive (Ottenbacher, 2008)
Loyalty (Ottenbacher, 2008)	
Growing sales (Nicolau & Santa-María, 2013)	
Higher stock exchange returns (Nicolau & Santa-María, 2013)	

Source: authors' own compilation.



**The Innovation Classification.** Because of the diversity of the service sector it is easier to use groups when innovation is being analysed. The following typologies have been chosen for the research.

**Radical and incremental innovation.** The first group of Dewar and Button (1986), and Ettlie (1984) has two categories to analyse the intensity of innovation. The two categories are radical innovation and incremental innovation. Radical innovation is defined as fundamental and revolutionary changes in the technology or the processes and activities including new knowledge, which breaks with the current practice and is positively related to the risk that is associated with an attempted innovation (Dewar & Button, 1986, Damanpour, 1996, Sundbo, 1997). The incremental changes include all the innovation and those current applied technologies, which are not that costly but easier to predict (Martínez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes, 2009). It is more likely that radical innovation contains more new knowledge than incremental innovation (Sundbo, 1997).

Radical and incremental innovation can be seen as interrelated concepts and it has been proved that incremental innovation has a greater effect on radical innovation than vice versa (Martínez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes, 2009).

Lovelock's classification. The main points of Lovelock's classifications are: (Gyurácz-Németh et al., 2010)

1. Major innovations (new services in the market);
2. New business (new service in the market, which already provides an existing service, which meets the general requirements);
3. A new service has been served in a market (new services that are offered to the company's current customers);
4. Service line extension (increase in the existing service line or in a different way of service);
5. Service Development (an existing service change at certain properties, which is currently offered in the market);
6. Style changes (Highly visible changes to existing services) (Ottensbacher, 2008, p. 344).

**The innovation activities.** In case of innovation activities three main categories can be identified: (a) technological innovation, (b) organisational innovation, and (c) human capital innovation (Tseng, Kuo, & Chou, 2008, p. 1019).

**Technological innovation.** According to Sheldon (1983) this kind of innovative methods is capable of providing equipment and technologies (Tseng et al., 2008, p. 1018) which offer new and improved tools/machines that are suitable for the production and enhance the effectiveness of management. This is very important for the hotel industry's profitability. The



technological innovation is shown primarily in the improving of the communication and computer networks (Tseng et al., 2008).

**Organizational innovation.** The organizational innovation shows the organizational capital changes. This kind of innovation refers to the efficiency and effectiveness of the innovation, and how to manage and develop the knowledge of the hotels' CEOs, when they confront a competitive environment. This mode includes the organizational processes and the organizational culture as well (Tseng et al., 2008).

**Human capital innovation.** According to Orfila-Sintesa et al. (2005), the human capital innovation advocates that the adjustment of human capital skills is mostly equal to efforts in successful innovation implementation (Tseng et al., 2008).

Updating these skills/capabilities emphasizes the changes in training, in investment, and in the case of human resources (Griliches, 1990; Pine, 1992; Van de Wiele, 2007). This updating plays an important role also in the success of the innovation (Olsen & Conolly, 1999; Sirilli & Evangelista, 1998). The human capital innovation includes the collective hotel capability to bring about the right solution to the knowledge of the employees and the employees skills such as a wide-ranging customer relationship or the experience (Tseng et al., 2008).

**The source of innovation.** The study showed that the classification and the innovation activities are very important. But it is also an interesting question to think about the sources of innovation because it is not so common, so their innovative ideas mostly come from other sectors. There are two main groups which can be identified: management sources and none management sources.

**Management source.** Within management service process and physical production processes can be distinguished (Gyurácz-Németh et al., 2010). The construction industry is an example of the physical production process. Innovations coming from the construction industry gain great emphasis. These include new/different materials that are not actually developed for the hotel industry, but are now also used in this sector. It is important to emphasize the development of the background infrastructure in case of the hotel industry as well.

**None management source.** Psychology is one of the innovative sources which can be classified as a not management source. This topic has a great significance in the hotel industry, because the aim of the hotel is to



satisfy its guests with quality service. They can reach this satisfaction with for example adjustable lights to their own taste.

## METHOD

For collecting the information about the hotel two non-structured interviews were applied since the aim was to gather qualitative data. The interview contained the topics of the paper mostly about the innovation typologies however it was very important to make it easy for hotel representatives to talk about hotel innovation in their own words. We chose the sales and marketing manager of the hotel to make the interview with, since people in this position have to know the target groups and their needs as well as being aware of the new innovations to be able to sell the service of the hotel. The first interview was made on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September in 2011. For getting up-to-date information we repeated the interview three years later (8/10/2014) but the sales and marketing manager had been replaced so the interview was undertaken with another person in the same position. The results were then processed to form a case study.

## CASE STUDY – HOTEL BONVINO WINE SPA

This hotel is located in an extraordinary location. The surroundings of the hotel is not only a distinctive feature, but also it has a unique style. The founders of the hotel had the aim that every little detail should reflect on the characteristics of the wine-growing region of the Badacsony.

Approximately 70% of the hotel investment has been funded by European Regional Development Fund of the European Union. This investment targeted a niche market as there has not been a high quality hotel operating in the Badacsony or the surrounding area, but the existence and the turnover of Bonvino proves that there is a considerable demand for this kind of unique service. At first it had to be decided if this new hotel was going to be open all year round or whether it was going to be a seasonal hotel, which is typical in this area. To be able to work the hotel successfully and keep it open all year round, the owners needed to use innovative ways and techniques (Interview, 2014.10.08)

Their philosophy is that when guests arrive, they will not receive a usual standard room. This is the reason why every room has different characteristics. In the corridors various drawings can be found, which are all related to wine making and wine. The double rooms are not the same either. Two different styles can be found: the wooden ageing barrel and the reductive wine production styles. The reductive style is rather typical of the modern rooms, where the shiny, metallic surfaces can be recognised. The feature of the rustic rooms is the wooden-ageing barrel, which



is a more natural design. The hotel offers plenty of common hotel services, such as: restaurant, wine bar, spa, conference room. A great emphasis has been given to the design of the wellness department which reflects also the style of grape growing and the wonderful features of Badacsony volcanic mountain. The unique design of the Bonvino is not only the appearance and the style, but the local wellness treatments are also special. ([www.hotelbonvino.hu](http://www.hotelbonvino.hu))

## **Innovation Typology at Hotel Bonvino**

This subchapter is introducing the innovation types found in the distinctive hotel which has been chosen as an example for this research.

Table 2 summarises the different innovation types which were identified in Hotel Bonvino during the research. These types are being detailed further.

**Table 2.** Innovation Types Applied in the Distinctive Hotel

<b>Intensity of innovation</b>	<b>Lovelock's classification</b>	<b>Innovation activities</b>	<b>The source of innovation</b>
Incremental	Service development Style changes	Organisational Human capital	Design Culture

Source: authors' own compilation.

**Intensity of innovation.** Hotel Bonvino uses incremental innovation mostly. They apply small steps in the improvements process, they change the services and the packages in order to meet the customer need (Interview, 8/10/2014).

**Lovelock's classification.** Of course not every group can be used in the case of Hotel Bonvino, since they concentrate mostly on service development and style changes (compared to the style of ordinary hotels).

Hotel Bonvino's aim is to provide services which are new in the region. The emphasis has been placed on creating an active house. This activity can be recognised in all areas of the hotel, where they are dealing with their guests. First of all they continuously provide various in-house programmes that primarily focus on the wine culture of the Badacsony Wine Region. For example, next to the entrance there is a Wine Bar. They organise wine tastings and wine cellar exhibitions. The guests have the opportunity to have a conversation with wine-growers about various topics. In the spa area many different programmes can be found. The employees offer not only in-house programmes, but also try to guarantee active programmes outside as well; including Nordic Walking, hiking, and walking-biking tours. The offer also includes cellar tours and wine tours. Innovations provide common cooking areas for example where they can



barbecue, and the guests can celebrate harvest together during September. From October they will provide guests with autumn-winter themed packages such as: detoxification weeks and weeks for pregnant women. They have developed some special tours for example various trips using electric (environment friendly) cars. These are still only plans, because the hotel is new and major investment was made to build the hotel and they cannot deal with such further developments yet (Interview, 20/9/2011). The packages now contain a wine tasting (3 different wines from the region) which contains large amounts of information. Their plans for the future also suggest incremental innovation because they would like to concentrate more on the sustainable development of the hotel and its services (Interview, 8/10/2014).

The Lake Balaton is famous for various wines and many hotels offer accommodation in wine-growing regions, but Bonvino is different. The hotel operates not only in one of the most important wine regions of Hungary, but the design and the services reflect the history of wine-making. The hotel's design is a talking-design, because not only the programmes but also the elements of the design refer to wine. When the owners and investors worked up the design, it was an important aim that when the guest arrives, they do not get a usual standard room., Their stay at the Bonvin is all about Badacsony and the surrounding area, wine and wine culture. This idea's main point was their own, but they can thank the design team, who were relatively new but already famous in the market since they participated in the creation of ice hotels. According to the their ideas the ceiling was made in raw concrete which is a so-called breathing concrete, and can enable the hotel to 'breathe' (Interview, 20/9/2011). Although the idea of concrete is very innovative, it has failed because one of the target groups (older Hungarian leisure tourists) did not like it, so in some rooms the ceiling had to be painted in 2013 (Interview, 8/10/2014). Their idea was the 'wine storage' design at the reception desk, the wine cloud and the two types of rooms (Interview, 20/9/2011). Wine bottles show the room numbers and the corridor is full of pictures about wine-making. These features represent the distinctive look. The wine design appears not only in the corridor and rooms, but also in the wellness area and all other guest areas and places ([www.hotelbonvino.hu](http://www.hotelbonvino.hu), 7/10/2014).

**Innovation activities.** The organizational and the human capital innovation groups can be identified at the Bonvino Hotel. They do not focus on technological innovation, although they use the latest software and equipment. The organizational innovation is displayed strongly, because within the hotel a creative organization operates. Everyone has a right to make suggestions on all areas and topics, but these suggestions should be constructive. They held meetings weekly, with the chance to exchange their





ideas. In these meetings all department members could take part. They discussed, what they thought for example about the new packages. Each department is going to work on these ideas. This creative organization is still working in the hotel (Interview, 8/10/2014).

**The source of innovation.** No management sources of innovation could be identified. As mentioned above the wine-making style is distinctive in the market. This wine-growing design covers throughout the hotel ([www.hotelbonvino.hu](http://www.hotelbonvino.hu)). The design has not been changed but the concrete ceiling of some rooms has been painted because of guest complaints (Interview, 8/10/2014). This source is not essential for every hotel, but in this case it also plays a very big role for example the wine-growing, the culture of harvest conservation and the presentation of the Hotel Bonvino.

## CONCLUSIONS

Innovation has an important role in today's economies. There is no company which can survive in this changing environment without being able to innovate from time to time. In the paper, the innovation theories were introduced and reviewed including the success factors, the advantages, disadvantages and the pitfalls of innovation before being applied to the case study. Then the case hotel was presented and analysed from the perspective of innovation types, styles and sources. It can be stated that the result of the analysis was that in the hotel signs of incremental innovations can be found rather than radical ones. It is noticeable that the hotel was strongly design oriented and this highlighted a strong source of innovation for the hotel. As highlighted, the source of innovations in hotels often comes from outside the hospitality industry. By applying Lovelock's classification for service development, we observed that style changes were the most significant in the researched hotel. The hotel concentrates on organisational and human capital innovation following the other groupings. However, we found that the Bonvino were rarely applying technological innovation. As sources of innovation non-management innovations (psychology, design and culture) were shown to be the most important ones.

Although this analysis is only based on one hotel, we believe that our research is indicative of directions that may have wider implications. Bonvino was inspired by an organisational culture inspired by the design of a hotel specialising in wine, one of the cultural elements of the region. Where hotels have a dominant culture they may be more open to innovation than hotels which rely on a more traditional form of hospitality.



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## RODZAJE INNOWACJI W WYRÓŻNIAJĄCYM SIĘ HOTELE

### Abstrakt

**Tło badań.** Branża hotelarska jest uznawana za najbardziej znaczący rodzaj zakwaterowania, ze względu na jego zdolność do zapewnienia przychodów i zaspokojenia potrzeb gości. W branży hotelarskiej istnieje ogromna konkurencja, tak więc, aby móc utrzymać lub poprawić swoją pozycję na rynku oraz reputację hotele muszą rozwijać innowacje. Ponieważ kopiowanie innowacyjnych pomysłów wzajemnie od siebie nie stanowi żadnej trudności, branża musi myśleć o budowaniu bardzo wyszukanych hoteli dla wyszukanych grup docelowych.

**Cele badań.** Celem pracy jest analiza innowacyjności wyszukanego hotelu na Węgrzech z pomocą definicji innowacji w usługach i turystyce.

**Metodyka.** Do badań wybrano jeden innowacyjny węgierski hotel jako studium przypadku, a procesy innowacyjne hotelu zostały zaklasyfikowane do grup określonych przez innych autorów wymienionych w bibliografii. Innowacje w hotelu zostały pogrupowane według działalności innowacyjnej i źródła innowacji.

**Kluczowe wnioski.** Badania wykazały, że innowacje w wybranym hotelu znajdują odzwierciedlenie w zmianach rozwoju usług i stylu, działalność innowacyjna kładzie nacisk na czyniki organizacyjne, a źródła innowacji wydają się nie czerpać ze źródeł zarządzania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** innowacje, wyszukany hotel, rozwój usług

