

Innovation as a business success factor: Multiple case studies



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ABSTRACT

Innovations are fundamental for organizations, in maintaining their competitive potential and in the

permanence of their customer. Innovation can be classified into a few different types, according to its emergence, because the innovative process can happen in various ways, meeting the current needs of organizations and consumers. In view of the above, this work had as main objective to identify what the organizations that are installed in a city located in the south of Brazil, have as innovation, verifying the types of innovations and organizational performance. The present study was developed from a qualitative research, bibliographic analysis and a study of multiple cases. Four companies participated in the survey, through semi-structured interviews, in which it was found that the main reason to invest in innovation is the search for consumer satisfaction. Companies seek to innovate to gain space, make profits and maintain their permanence in the market through the satisfaction of their customers.

Keywords: Innovation, Enterprise, Consumer, Competitiveness.

1 INTRODUCTION

Innovations need to be efficient, carefully analyzed and carefully understood, so that these new ideas and discoveries become a trend for the market, argue Davila, Epstein and Shelton (2007). This study aims to demonstrate how organizations are facing and adapting to the innovations that are emerging, since these are indispensable for taking advantage of new opportunities. It is noteworthy that this essay provided new knowledge and information about the development of innovation, how it is treated and the difficulties faced in some companies, as well as innovative activities and actions in organizations, as well as real evidence about its influences to promote survival and competitiveness in the market.

In this way, it was analyzed what types of innovations and how they arise in the organizational environment. In view of this, it was investigated how innovation occurs in companies that are installed in a city in the south of Brazil, characterizing the types of innovations and their performances in the development of this process, from multiple case studies.



2 THE CONCEPT OF INNOVATION

For Schumpeter (1961), innovation refers to the introduction of new products, new equipment, new methods, to innovate is not to improve something that already exists, but rather, to destroy predecessor elements, bringing to the surface only the new. For this author, creative destruction is a fact of essential importance for the economic system, and innovation is an endogenous variable, an internal element of the economy that if invested, if magnified makes the economic system have a better development.

Still in this vision, Schumpeter (1997) highlights that the entrepreneur considers that the main desire of all production is to meet the need of the consumer and ensure their own economic satisfaction, with the emergence of new demands, new transformations, innovations and openings of new markets that must be faced in order to meet the new perspectives of customers. It also argues that some factors create a favorable and productive environment for innovation, such as productive capacity without operation or raw materials not consumed.

In the view of Santos *et al.* (2016), innovation is not done alone, but together, with several people, it is like a game. The author also argues that it takes diverse views, perspectives and people to be able to put an innovative proposal into practice. For, it can be said that it is from different conceptions and interpretations that creative ideas and problem solving arise, giving rise to the new, in this way, it can be said that it is of fundamental importance the development of dialogue, good communication and teamwork in the organizational environment. Still, innovation, whether technological, institutional or social, arises from collective thought and action (Katila *et al.*, 2019).

For Bruno-Faria and Fonseca (2014), various contexts, approaches and innovative strategies must be elaborated, administered and put into practice, to then assimilate with the sector of activity in which the company is inserted or in its different areas of its field of activity. According to the authors, there may be changes in the proportions and meanings of applicability of innovation for each organization, directed to its projects, its reality, and different problems or future plans may arise, which must be analyzed to seek to solve or achieve them. Thus, it should be noted that innovating for Wilbert (2017) is understood as an improvement of something that already exists, is something unprecedented, something that was not known until its development, in addition, it concerns the processes, the improvement of these or the creation and development of new ideas, as well as the improvement and remodeling of management.

There is a dependence between the action of innovating and the technology, which may be directly related to Research and Development (R&D) or to the procedures for creating the new that use the technology. Innovation is beyond the creation of new products or services, innovating is directly related to the way of producing or disseminating the new, thus having the need for innovations "to be



flexible and changeable, always keeping in mind the equally changing needs of customers" (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2014, p. 117).

Silva and Dacorso (2013) state that innovation should be related to the purpose of developing innovative practices with their employees, unlike just elaborating specific R&D processes. It is also noteworthy that although some companies do not have R&D in their composition, they have tasks and skills directed to the act of innovating, as well as practices that make them flexible to change.

Innovations arise causing several transformations in the structure and performance of organizational activities, referring to these changes the Oslo Manual (2004) divides innovations into four distinct types: products, processes, marketing and organizational. There is a great importance when talking about innovation related to the insertion of new technologies essential for good management. Freeman (1997) classifies innovations in economic activity as incremental, radical, new technological system and new technoeconomic paradigm.

Gomes and Kruglianskas (2009) state that processes and products are predominant factors when referring to the emergence of the new in companies. Still, they highlight that innovation brings several benefits such as the creation of differentiated products to the customer, reduction of costs related to implemented technologies, increase of more qualified professionals, expansion of operation in the market, evolution in the aspect of health and safety at work, more malleable production system and with greater efficiency.

Still, it is worth mentioning that achieving results that positively impact the competitiveness of companies is the central reason for companies to invest in innovation. For Bagno and Faria (2022) even if innovation is associated with issues such as behavior, brand image, methods and tools, companies seek innovation because they understand that it will make them more competitive and bring better results over time.

3 APPLIED METHODOLOGY

Due to the purpose of knowing how the innovation process is present in organizations, A multiple case study was conducted in companies belonging to different branches of activity in a city in southern Brazil, aiming to understand what they mean by innovation and its main limitations or difficulties with regard to innovation.

To select the companies, information was sought from the Department of Industry and Commerce of the municipal government, where the name of the most prominent companies was presented, being selected two companies that had incentives from the municipality and two that did not have incentives.

For data collection, semi-structured interviews were used, as it allows the interviewer to change the script of the questions, modifying the questions, thus being more flexible and freer for the



interviewee to give his opinion and report facts about the subject addressed. (YIN, 2010). Also, non-participant observations, surveys were carried out through the internet, on company websites and in others that obtained information and news about them, as well as data and information with customers.

The instrument used for the semi-structured interview was composed of eighteen (18) questions that dealt with innovation related to organizational management, employee training, technology used, difficulties, billing and government or municipal support. In this stage, information was sought to understand what the selected companies understand by innovation, whether they believe in the importance of innovation, how they seek to innovate, as well as to identify the difficulties faced when seeking the new.

4 PRESENTATION OF THE COMPANIES

There were four companies from a city in southern Brazil that were part of this research, which will be called A, B, C and D. Founded in 2004, company A began its activities as a family business and, today, in addition to the headquarters, has branches in several cities. It operates in the industrialization and commercialization of materials for metallurgy. Currently, the company is classified as LTDA and has 50 employees.

Company B, a family-owned agribusiness in the food industry, started its activities in 2016. Being a microenterprise, it performs its activities in family, parents and two children, thus not having any other employee.

Company C is an industry dedicated to the production of plastic material for construction, in addition to the development of special projects, operating in the market since 1987. It has headquarters in the city of southern Brazil and branches in cities of several Brazilian states. It is classified as an LTDA operating company and has 400 employees.

Company D is a company of operation LTDA, operates in the manufacture of raw materials and the provision of services for civil construction, operating since 1997, and in 2005 underwent a restructuring, which changed its way of producing and managing. With a number of 22 employees, the company also serves other cities, within a radius of one hundred kilometers away.

5 INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS USED BY COMPANIES

The companies surveyed, in general, have carried out more than one innovation in their organizational environment and with the same purpose, serve their consumer.

In Company A, innovative processes and future projects aim to meet the needs of customers, through the development or improvement of products and the increase of new machines. In a similar way happens in Company D, which uses as a strategy new products, machines, different structures, or



segment, where they highlighted that such an increase provided customers with larger works, as well as with a greater variety of products and services.

The innovative process, according to Alves and Santos Filho (2016), in all organizations, aims to modify and improve their means of production, adhering to technologies, so there is the emergence of the new, which aims to satisfy the needs of customers. Company B, on the other hand, has a slightly different strategy, with new ideas being discussed, where new alternatives to problems are sought, even in courses, where they highlight that learning provides the art of innovating. In a similar view, Company C believes that "innovation happens with the involvement of all areas, because the areas of the organization are seen in an integrated way."

In the companies surveyed, none has an R&D (Research and Development) unit, but company C has the Development sector, however decisions about innovations are made in a collegiate formed by the Engineering, Development, Management and Board sectors. The R&D units in an organization, for Tigre (2006) are fundamental to create, prepare and implement a new idea, with this there is a reduction of the risks of the change process.

Government support, whether federal or state, was not observed in any of the companies, while municipal support occurred in two of them. Company A had as a municipal incentive the donation of a plot of land and Company B won from the municipality the amount of R\$ 50,000.00 (fifty thousand reais) for the construction of the company, passed on in the form of construction materials and earthmoving services. Avellar (2009) points out that public incentives make there a greater capacity to innovate, invest and obtain new technologies. For, this believes that it has a greater involvement between organizations, universities and research centers, thus creating a business environment with more possibility to grow and maintain in the current market.

6 DEFINITION OF INNOVATION IN THE VIEW OF THE INTERVIEWEES

There are different ways to carry out innovation, different visions of how it should happen, and the most varied words used to define what it is really to innovate. Company A defines what it understands by innovation as a "way to improve and be ahead of time, to gain space in front of its competitor".

The term innovate can also be understood by seeking the new, so Company B states that even newly implemented, seeks to do something different, insert new products, because "who does not innovate does not live". With a similar vision, Company C understands that to innovate "is to seek to do things with differentiated methodology, materials and management." To develop innovation is to go beyond having ideas and projects, it is to apply them to the company's purposes and implement them for the consumer, according to Figueiredo (2015).



For Alves and Santos Filho (2016) to innovate is to apply creativity, to your process, to your branch of activity, causing the creation of new processes, products, services or new ways of management in the business environment. With a similar vision, company D states that "to innovate is to seek novelty in the market, it is to develop better products, new segments, new equipment and differentiated products".

7 TYPES OF EXISTING INNOVATIONS AND THE REASONS FOR THE ACTION TO INNOVATE

Innovations in organizations can be classified as incremental, radical, new technological system and new techno-economic paradigm, according to Freeman (NASCIMENTO; YU; SOBRAL, 2008). Given this, it was observed what types of innovations exist in the companies surveyed and their evolution.

Company A seeks to innovate through the increment, performs the action of improvement or change in the product, to suit the taste and need of the customer. In addition, it has a technological system, with the change of machinery, being more modern, with greater productive capacity and producing different products.

Similarly, Company B states that its innovations are incremental, that there is an improvement in the quality and taste of the product, through the help of a professional in the field. For Tigre (2006), incremental innovations are the simplest process, carried out continuously, which changes simple characteristics of products or processes and management.

There is also a similarity between Companies C and D, regarding the type of innovation used, because the two companies develop radical and incremental innovations, in addition, they have technological changes. Many changes occurred in Company C, as the production process, inputs and materials used in production were changed.

The radical innovations for Tigre (2006), are almost always related to technological changes or development of R&D. The author also states that this type of innovation refers to major changes in the production system, which are characterized by having discontinuous jumps in products and processes. Company C also adds that several products were added to the organization, in the beginning the production was of only one product, after which several others were added, which opened doors to other markets, another segment and a different distribution channel. From the radical innovations made, this company created incremental innovations, such as product changes and quality improvement.

In a period of one year, Company C created 15 (fifteen) new products, between launches and adaptations and developed technological innovations through the construction of equipment and tools. Company D states that it seeks to innovate technologically with the acquisition of modern machines



and, in addition, with newer inputs. The innovations occur in an incremental and radical way in Company D, in the beginning the organization had many radical innovations, then with the structured processes, the innovations happened incrementally, in addition to changes in the constructive method and in the management model.

It is observed that the reasons that led the companies studied to seek innovation, is defined in the concern to meet the demands of its consumer and the need to remain in the market. According to Parolin (2013), to innovate is not only to launch new products or modify processes, innovation is also to have a management totally focused on market leadership, the search for competitive advantages, so a permanent innovative culture can be formed.

Company B sought to innovate to meet the need of the consumer, the search for perfection in relation to the product, in addition to the need to grow, with less labor and more machinery. For Figueiredo (2015) innovation is a type of knowledge existing in organizations, which people use to promote better production, control, quality and management that ensures permanence and success in the competitive market.

Company D also aims to please the consumer market, meeting the demand of consumers, meet their need to be competitive, leadership and to get ahead of competitors. Company C defends the idea that if it does not innovate it does not remain in the market. Therefore, the company needs innovations constantly otherwise it does not sustain itself. There is always the launch of a new product and different solutions are created.

Given this, it is perceived that in one way or another, with innovations carried out as incremental, radical, or technological, with thinking aimed at profit and its survival, all organizations aim to satisfy their wants and meet the needs and current demands of their consumer.

8 ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE SEARCH FOR INNOVATION

It is important to understand how the organization performs its projects and how it behaves when it seeks to innovate. In this way, it is worth highlighting who are responsible for creating the innovations, how employees react to the implementation of these, if there is any preparation of personnel and how the control is carried out.

Two of the companies studied the decisions are made in the family, this is because these companies arose from family work, is the case of Company A and Company B.

In Company D, the managing partner confirms that he is the one who makes things happen but assures that he always listens to the opinions of the employees, but has to check the possibility of realization before putting into practice. Similar to this, in Company C, decisions are made with the opinion of employees. To create the innovations, this company has a collegiate area that involves the sectors of Engineering, Development, Management and Board, where ideas are discussed.



The process of development and implementation of innovations must be a structured and continuous process, which enables the organization, different ways of seeing changes and adapting to constant technological transformations. It also believes that it provides the creation of value in the company, keeps it always adapted to the current tastes of customers and guarantees its competitive potential (CHIBÁS; PANTALEON; ROCHA, 2012).

The realization of a control is of fundamental importance to analyze the performance, because in this way it is sought to verify if the innovations are valid and accepted, in order to guarantee the business success. Company B does not have a control system, this is carried out by its owners based on their knowledge.

Informal knowledge is part of the innovation process, according to Figueiredo (2015), this learning obtained by the day to day of the organization, makes organizations find solutions to possible errors. The author also defends that with this method the productive process is improved and one learns to use all the available resources, to improve the product or service and please its consumer.

The consumption and billing can also determine the acceptance of some novelty, this is how companies A and D think. In Company A there is no strict control, but through the system that supports the company and its billing, it is perceived the increase or not of consumption of a certain product. In Company D also does not have a control, it is only perceived that there is a growth due to the increase in the number of services.

There is a slightly different view and performance in Company C, because there are spreadsheets that demonstrate sales in order to verify whether or not there is growth in the number of services and thus verify and make changes.

For Parolin (2013) innovation should be discussed and studied by all the areas that are involved in it, from production to management, so the activities focused on it work together in order to ensure a better strategy and control. Thus, all the organizations studied showed efforts to innovate, but they should improve in the control of innovation, as well as in its implementation.

9 INNOVATIONS: OVERCOMING PROBLEMS AND THE SEARCH FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

In the constant adaptation of the search for the conquest of the consumer market, companies must be financially prepared to invest in innovations, because first they need to implement and then achieve a return on their investment.

To consolidate space in the market, Company B has as its motto that "the more innovative the product, the more quality and the higher the revenue". For Company C, there is a product cycle and innovation is trivial, when you launch a new item soon you have an increase in revenue. For Company D, "each innovation is a leap in revenue, so never go without innovating, always change."



Given the importance of innovation to guarantee revenue, the company must be financially prepared to innovate. But, regarding this topic, Company A does not have any amount of its total revenues dedicated to investment in innovations, because innovations only occur when there is a new customer need to be met. Company D also does not have any type of fixed reserve, but makes acquisition in technology, within the principle technology is cheap, is investment and will bring return to the company.

Already, Company B argues that there is a reserve to pay for constant investments related to modifications and improvements in the company's machinery and equipment, while Company C reserves 0.7% of revenues for investment in innovation. In this way, it is perceived that there is still no great concern with the investments and resources to ensure the constant improvement of these companies.

Overcoming problems with the search for innovation is the way to development and the guarantee of business success. Thus, it is worth highlighting what are the biggest problems today in the search for innovation, observed in the companies studied.

For Company A, the biggest difficulty is finding qualified personnel. Also, for Company C, there is a lack of training of professionals and also adds the limited ability to invest in the company and difficulty in getting out of the routine, the convenience of the day to day. The qualification is also a problem for Company D, however, it would be solved if the professionals had greater knowledge about the subject or interest in learning.

Chibás, Pantaleon and Rocha (2012), state that the main problems to innovate and those that can prevent this process are the lack of trained employees, lack of financial resources and the great bureaucratization. In addition, problems can be considered, the difficulty of obtaining financing and the lack of search for knowledge by the entrepreneur.

In a differentiated view, for Company B the greatest difficulty is the issues related to the large amount of taxes, inspection, treatment of effluents and the adequacy of the legal standards to be met, as well as the difficulty of obtaining the license for the launch of a new product.

It is worth mentioning that innovation is directly linked to business success. The opinion of the companies studied are similar and show that they have common thoughts about the creation of the new. For Company A, innovation must be a continuous search for success, because without it there will be no success, but failure in the face of competitors.

According to Santos *et al.* (2016), innovation is considered a differential before its competitors, thus bringing a competitive advantage to the consumer market, this emergence of the new is a fundamental factor for the acquisition of goods by the company. In addition, the author highlights that innovations are decisive for the evolution and permanence of organizations in the consumer market.



For Company B to innovate is to ensure the improvement of product quality, add value to the product, customer loyalty to ensure the future of the company. For Company C, innovations are what define the company's leadership in the market with new and differentiated products.

Giving continuity, for Company D innovation defines the life or death of the organization, in addition to generating greater knowledge when trying to seek it. For Parolin (2013) innovation generates knowledge, which can be used by management to develop new processes or products, to implement new business or even make it a negotiable right. The author adds that the new results in value generation for the company.

10 CONCLUSIONS

Innovations promote knowledge in organizations developing techniques, generating ideas, improving quality and production control, in addition to creating value. They also aim to ensure customer satisfaction, increasing competitive power and ensuring business success. In this way, innovations are decisive for companies and the economic potential of the whole country.

Due to the importance of innovation in the power of growth of organizations, as well as determinant in the existence and maintenance, it becomes fundamental to studies in companies, regardless of the size and area of operation of the same.

The strategies used by the organizations studied to innovate are focused on the acquisition of consumers and maintenance in the market. It is noteworthy that R&D units help in the control of the innovation process, in the return and in the chances of success, but none of the companies surveyed has this advantage, which could be the key to develop innovations.

Another aspect demonstrated by the research is the connection of the term innovate with the creation and modification of projects, products or services, and, in addition, with the way of managing. Half of the companies studied use only incremental innovations and the other half also used radical innovations, technological innovation (it is present in all companies surveyed), and they invest all their efforts to adapt to new technologies.

Organizations do not need to stop at just one type of innovation, but the fear of risk, of transforming their production process, makes them accustomed to developing only small changes. However, to win the consumer, in the current scenario of constant changes, it is essential to change their way of thinking and managing to adapt to the new and ensure new customers.

The reasons why the companies studied to innovate is customer satisfaction, aiming to add value to their product or service and guarantee higher profits. For Chibás, Pantaleon and Rocha (2012), to innovate is to know how to always develop new ways to satisfy its customers, to adapt to the emergence of technologies and trends, is to create value and thus, to be able to remain in the competitive market and grow as an organization.



The companies studied have been striving to be able to innovate, because they know and believe in the importance of innovation for their continuity, acquisition of new consumers, obtaining profits and guarantee. These companies have overcome many challenges to be able to implement and be what they are today, however, they can overcome themselves to face some obstacles, but for this, there is a need to seek improvement in their area of expertise.



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