

## **Entrepreneurship in Biophilic Tourism: The Case of “Botel diffuso dei laghi”**

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*Abstract.* Biophilic tourism, a dimension of experiential tourism, is based on being close to nature and feeling connected to the natural environment. Biophilia is founded on Wilson's (1984) premise that human beings have an innately emotional affiliation to other living organisms. Compared to urban contexts, natural environments facilitate mindfulness and concentration (Gillis & Gatersleben, 2015). However, due to the many, and often stressful, demands of modern life, there are often fewer possibilities to connect with the natural world (Chen, Tu, & Ho, 2013).

Botel diffuso dei Laghi is a floating boat hotel on Lake Lugano, in Porto Ceresio (Varese-Italy): an innovative start-up taking its first steps in this specific field of tourism. Strongly symbolic, Botel may be seen to have a high potential for promoting respect for the environment, especially given that water was chosen as the location for the concept. It enables a form of tourism which is both experiential and slow, and makes possible a rediscovery of a direct contact with nature.

On the one hand the start-up answers a need to return to one's roots, on the other it encapsulates all the innovation needed by an off-the-grid unit on a lake. It combines nature and innovation through a value system based on the awareness of the global need for recuperation and regeneration and with respect for environmental and socio-economic aspects.

In sketching a series of “possible” combinations between human beings and the environment, this start-up carries a highly symbolic message which suggests new ways of approaching tourism. The concept aims to: celebrate experience and living (instead of consuming); take one's time and focus on reflection (instead of a “here-today-gone-tomorrow” approach); focus on self-determination and co-creation of services in a system that includes businesses, users and territorial networks (rather than all-inclusive, mass-tourism).

In a wider sense, it represents an invitation to look for meaning in one's actions: for the present and the future; for ourselves, and for the things and people who are close to us. Furthermore, the Botel concept presents an alternative perspective on luxury, understood in this context as being able to choose how to use the time we have at our disposal, in line with trends which link status to self-determination and experience. In particular, the customer experience is interpreted in a holistic dimension, inclusive of the different perspectives (entertainment, education, escape and aesthetics) underlined by Pine and Gilmore (1999).

There is an expanding market consisting of people who are choosing to get closer to nature in order to rediscover a link with their true selves. Botel is a vehicle that provides a means to discuss this, considering ideas, trends, goals, possibilities and risks. In this sense, too, it contributes to increasing awareness, indeed the opportunities offered by a world in transformation go hand in hand with risks and

difficulties. At times, these are not immediately visible and this case shows them as potential areas of interest which can inspire both industry professionals and academics in their thinking, strategies and decisions.

*Keywords:* experiential tourism, innovative businesses, value co-creation

## 1 Introduction

This study examines the concept and launch of an innovative business in the tourism and hospitality sector and the complex challenges faced by innovative start-ups in that industry. Innovative Italian start-ups are defined by decree law no. 179, 18 October 2012 that specified several requirements, in particular the role of technology in the pursuit of innovation and development. According to the law, companies “have, as their exclusive or main corporate object, the development, production and marketing of high-tech innovative products or services of high technological value”. This was supplemented in July 2014 with a new decree law that included provisions for “businesses which promote national tourism by using technologies and the development of original software are also considered to be innovative start-ups, in particular when they offer services to tourism companies”. The overall regulatory framework comprises a system of incentives including tax breaks, reduced administrative requirements and access to fundraising measures (Di Diego, 2013; Giudici et al., 2019; Ghio et al., 2016).

Innovative start-ups are listed under a special section of the Italian Companies Register. As of April 2018, according to data obtained from the AIDA data base made available by Bureau van Dijk, there were 15 businesses registered as innovative start-ups in NACE Rev. 2:55 – Accommodation sector<sup>(1)</sup>. Obviously, this does not cover the entire scope of innovation in tourism but it does show a substantial and representative example of the existence of innovative start-ups in the field. A first screening showed no existing company website in 8 out of 15 cases. In 4 cases, the website was under construction. In one instance, the company was connected to a network. A specific, functioning website existed in only two cases. Aside from their inclusion in the Companies Register, in most cases it would appear that they were in the early stages of start-up. Only 5 of the 15 start-ups provided a means of contact. These 5 companies were contacted (via telephone and email), but only one company acknowledged our efforts by answering some initial questions presented in questionnaire format. This was the Botel Diffuso dei Laghi (a floating boat hotel in Varese, Italy).

## 2 The Botel concept: innovation, values

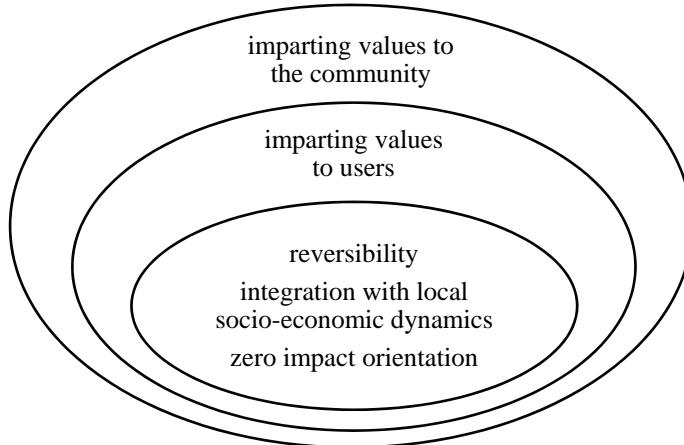
The company has a value system which has been designed to be communicated to customers and the community (see figure 1). This is intended to engender social and environmental awareness in visitors and the local community, for both daily use and for exceptional situations<sup>(2)</sup>. Botel is an innovative start-up rich in symbolic references; it appears to be the right product at the right place at the right time. Its focus on a natural form of tourism is in tune with sustainable tourism trends, in which harmony between man and the environment is essential, with regeneration beyond sustainability, and linked to a philosophy in which places should be entered on “tip toe”. This is the first attempt in Italy (Botel diffuso dei laghi, 2018). After its launch and some months of testing, another 4 units will be installed in other locations, and changes will be made in view of de-seasonalisation. Structures on floating platforms

<sup>(1)</sup> The businesses are located in the following regions: Abruzzo (L’Aquila), 1; Campania (Napoli), 1; Emilia Romagna, 4 (Bologna, 1; Rimini, 3); Lazio (Roma), 1; Lombardia (Varese), 1; Marche (Ascoli Piceno), 1; Piemonte (Cuneo), 1; Sardegna (Sassari), 1; Sicilia, 3 (Messina, 1; Palermo, 2); Veneto (Padova), 1.

<sup>(2)</sup> This study was made possible thanks to the availability of the innovative start-up Botel Diffuso dei Laghi, in the person of the administrator Gaetano Gucciardo who responded to an initial questionnaire, provided detailed material and granted an in-depth interview.

already exist in Europe (mostly in Eastern and Northern Europe), but are linked to utilities and generally converted from old boats. Botel is unique in that it is a brand-new, off-the-grid structure (not connected to a utility network) (Gucciardo, 2018).

Figure 1: The company value system



## 2.1 Co-founders background

The Botel concept was the brain-child of Gaetano Gucciardo and Roberta Turra who have, throughout their careers, been keenly interested in sustainability. Gucciardo has been working in the field of bioclimatic design since the 1990's, paying particular attention to abnormalities in protective enclosures. He observes that in those days, studies did aim to create comfortable environments that promoted wellness but often neglected to communicate these aims with the client; back then, green building simply wasn't as frequently discussed as it is nowadays. Pioneers in the field were then often found in Germany, where *Baubiologie* green architecture started to become more widespread in the 1970's (Wienke, 2000; Lavagna, 2008; Sorricaro, 2010). Gaetano and Roberta have always been interested in environmental challenges specifically in their efforts to help limit human impact. Their interests tied in with legislation that was voted in by the Lombardy region in an effort to reduce soil erosion and promote the regeneration of degraded land. This reinforced their fundamental beliefs and inspired further research on how to find ways of living in harmony with nature.

Gucciardo emphasizes the spirit of inclusiveness and universal design for living that lies behind the company's approach. In its current form (prototype 2.0-0), the unit is completely barrier-free, easily accessible by people with reduced or permanent mobility issues. Along with the ease with which installations can be removed and the focus on a zero-impact installation, the economic and social aspects of life are also an essential part of company values. This could include, for example, coordinating existing restaurants in a project of "diffused restaurant". Botel units have been designed to offer an experience that will regenerate and educate users through contact with nature; they are intended to increase learning and awareness and ultimately improve wellness in individuals and the surroundings. The prototype of the floating diffused hotel (Botel Diffuso dei Laghi) was launched on Lake Lugano in January 2018, at Porto Ceresio in the Province of Varese (figure 2).

Figure 2: The floating hotel unit



Source: Botel diffuso dei laghi, 2018.

Botel floating units are eco-sustainable structures. None of the Botel units emit waste into air or water: on the contrary, the units have been designed to help lessen air pollutants and produce more energy than they consume. As an energetically active building, the energy performance exceeds current efficiency rating scales (from A4 to G) (Botel diffuso dei laghi, 2019). The Botel units are not connected to utility networks and have been designed to fit into the concept of a circular economy. The units generate their energy from photovoltaic cells and low-power wind turbines. No carbon dioxide or waste water is produced as each unit is fitted with a closed loop treatment system (with zero discharge) without the use of chemicals. Waste water is filtered: ultraviolet disinfection is used for grey water and evapotranspiration for the disposal of black water. Furthermore, the floating units have no definitive impact on the location site: therefore, it may be claimed that the units have zero environmental impact. If they are removed from the lake, the environment reverts to its original state. Choosing to install the units on water was essential to ensure this would happen, as only water allows this type of project to be completely reversible.

### 3. Biophilic tourism, the learning process, awareness

This type of experiential tourism may be specifically defined as biophilic as it is based on being close to nature and feeling connected to the natural environment. This subject has not yet been widely discussed; there are, however, some interesting contributions which help to appreciate the potential of using biophilia for psycho-physical regeneration and learn more about biophilic tourism (see among others: Chen, Tu, & Ho, 2013; Curtin, 2013; Gillis & Gatersleben, 2015; Steckenbauer et al., 2016; Mamede et al., 2017; Purani & Kumar, 2018).

Biophilia is based upon Wilson's (1984) premise that human beings have an innately emotional affiliation to other living organisms. Due to the many demands of modern-day life, including living in mega cities, stressful work and commutes, ubiquitous internet and work and life balance, there are fewer possibilities to connect with the natural world leaving many people to feel disconnected from nature (Chen, Tu, & Ho, 2013). Contact with nature is considered essential to both psychological wellness and personal fulfillment. Compared to urban environments, natural environments facilitate mindfulness and attention to the present, interest and a sense of "survival", and thereby positive emotions (Gillis & Gatersleben, 2015: 949).

Due to this natural fit with biophilic tourism, in April 2019, Botel was chosen to host an exhibition on biophilia: “*Biophilic (r)Evolution – Incontro (silente) tra Arte e Natura*” (a silent encounter between art and nature), a selection of works by the artist Marina Taroni. Visitors were invited to experience biophilia through a series of paintings showing the relationship between art and nature, free from human intervention. Similarly, one objective of the Botel organization is for its’ guests to experience a synergy with the environment (Ma.Ge., 2019). The social dimension is clearly important, but equally important is that the business has to be targeted at the right market segment who are educated in the concept and will respect the values of company and the operating systems.

End users are meant to recognise Botel’s potential for regeneration and reconciliation with the environment, and consequently are not merely seen as consumers, but as a potential driving force which will steer lifestyle choices in the direction of increased sustainability as they co-create their biophilic experiences. Botel guests must manage the resources which are made available by nature. There are no links to utilities: furthermore, whoever stays on Botel must also be able to handle the power supply that is generated through photovoltaic means in line with the *European Charter for Solar Energy and Urban Planning* – a document, promoted by Thomas Herzog in 1996, which inspired Botel’s designers and founding partners (Botel diffuso dei laghi, 2018); finally the entire structure must be removable. One interesting statistic is that, according to the company’s 2018 sustainability report in terms of water usage, Botel consumed only 1/5 of daily average consumption. In this context, it is important to consider ISTAT data showing “Italy ranks first in the EU for water abstraction for public water supply: 428 litres per person per day” (ISTAT, 2019).

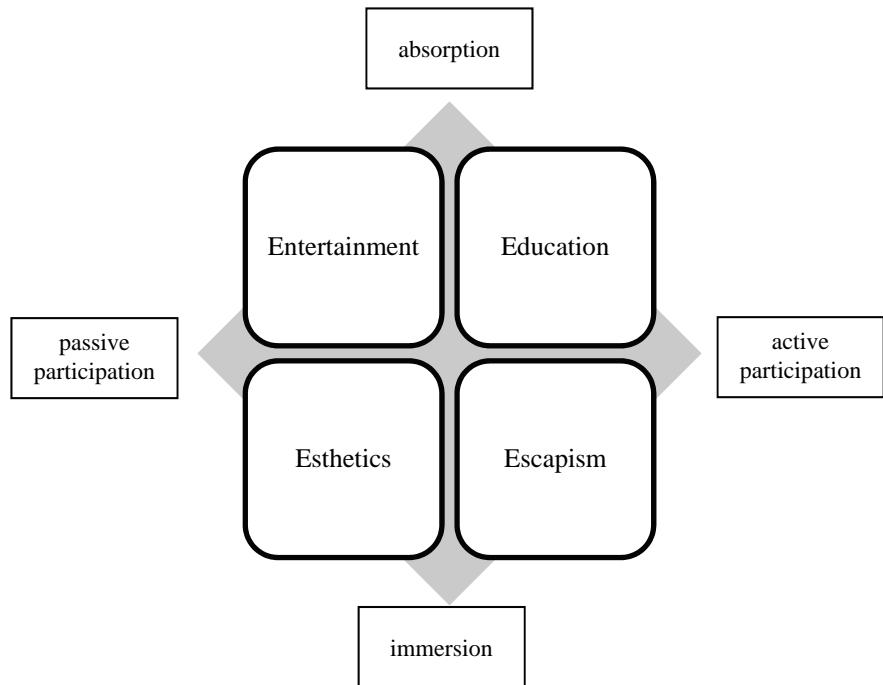
#### 4 Co-creation, experiential luxury and the Botel experience

Target markets for Botel have been identified as being “conscious consumers” who have a medium to high level of environmental awareness; are conscious of environmental and social problems; are particularly careful to adopt a gentle and non-invasive approach to life and to nature; and finally, tend to identify luxury with having time for oneself. Geographically speaking, the highest levels of interest have been shown by Northern Europeans, though some enquiries for Botel have come from Eastern Europe and France. Gucciardo points out: “our clients have achieved a degree of maturity that is sufficient to conceive of a holiday in ‘experiential’ terms”. Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) seminal book suggested analysing the customer experience from four different perspectives: entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetic. Botel may be seen to respond to all of these experiences at a profound level.

Various authors have wrestled with the subject of what constitutes an *experience*. Pine and Gilmore mention the need for “memorable” experiences and underline that “experiences are inherently personal” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:2;12). According to Boswijk et al., meaningful experiences are more than memorable, as they are a result of “the sum of our interactions with our environment and the lessons we learn” (Boswijk et al., 2007:20). As claimed by Mehmetoglu and Engen, Pine and Gilmore’s model “appears to be a useful framework for helping us to understand better customer and visitor’s preferences” (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011:250). This model may be seen in figure 3. Briefly, it may be seen that tourists have a personal set of values that would be important in the choice of tourist destination.

These values result in travel motives that operate as the “push” factor for the forthcoming trip; as the motivations for the travel amalgamate, travel motives surface that produce a set of possible destinations, along with the tourist’s attitude toward the destinations. At this stage the expected value of the experience from the destination acts as the “pull” factor for travel motivation in a negative or positive way in the destination choice (Oh et al., 2007:122).

Figure 3: Pine and Gilmore's four realms of experience



Source: Adapted from Pine & Gilmore, 1999.

There is an expanding market consisting of people who are choosing to get closer to nature in order to rediscover a link with their true selves<sup>(3)</sup>. This is the most significant part of the Botel experience. This type of experience may be compared to that on a sailingboat, but on the sailing boat, one has to be active. A lake is less dynamic than the sea, and requires less effort; in this way, there is more time to listen and reconnect with nature. Life on a floating structure inspires introspection in the user and promotes self-discovery; in this respect, Botel answers a demand for experiential slow tourism by helping facilitate personal time for contemplation and meditation.

Considering the services that are offered and the target market, users will be required to co-create unique value. The role of the “active consumer” in the co-creation of value is effectively addressed, among others, by: Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Vargo and Lush (2004; 2008). High-quality interactions that enable individual customers to co-create unique experiences with the company are central to the practice of value creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004:7). Value will be created in the context of a personalised experience achieved through interacting harmoniously with the natural environment and the floating unit. Implicit would be a pact between the client and the Botel organization concerning respect for the environment and a conscious use of resources. Given the target profiles, the possibility of vandalism will be minimized. Detailed instructions are made available for the operation of the unit, for example on the use of eco-friendly, surfactant and pollutant free and microplastic free detergents, as their use is essential to maintain the efficiency of its system in order to guarantee quality of life on board

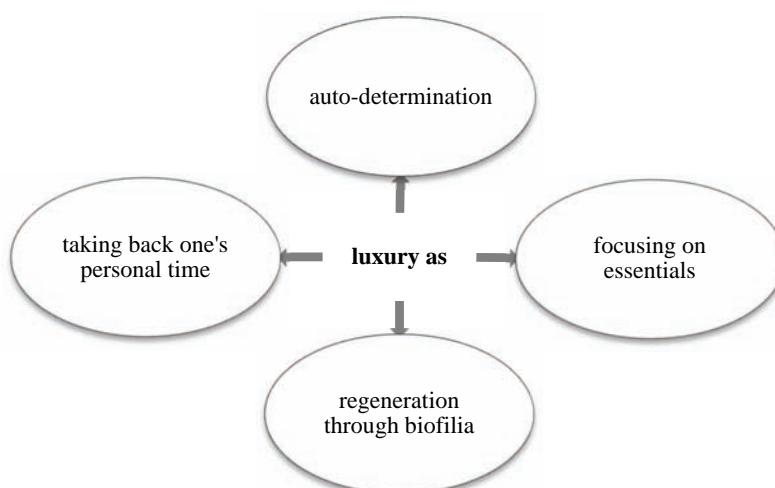
<sup>(3)</sup> Regarding the growing trend for experiential tourism, a report compiled by Booking.com referring to tendencies for 2019 reads as follows: “Travel with experiences at its core was one of 2018’s major travel trends but 2019 will take it even further”. The study, which was conducted by analysing millions of verified guest reviews and thousands of travellers, showed that for 60% of travellers, experiences are more important than tangible goods (Booking.com, 2018). Expedia’s 2019 Travel Trend report highlights the rise in alternative accommodation. In particular, the fastest-growing accommodation types for 2018 for Canadians include houseboats (up more than 35% year-over-year) and tree houses (up more than 30% year-over-year). Though focusing on a specific sector, the report reflects the increasing interest in nature tourism (Expedia, 2018).

the floating structure and for the natural environment. As the unit is fitted with a closed-loop water system there is minimum risk of polluting the lake water, ensuring that the quality of life on the Botel would not be compromised.

The co-creation of value can also be seen in a social perspective, as the biophilic experience will inspire both company and clients to show that it is possible to achieve environmental regeneration that goes beyond sustainability. This is a powerful message helping to spread virtuous behaviours, a message that is connected to the satisfaction that is felt through the use of a commodity that is not linked to conspicuous consumerism and waste. In this instance, luxury is defined as *the chance to reclaim ones' personal time so that one can return to the essentials of life* (figure 4). This ties in with the thoughts of the influential writer, Yeoman who states that “Over the last decade, the concept of luxury has changed from materialism to time and aspiration” (Yeoman, 2011:50). In line with this vision, Gucciardo believes that Botel offers “a dimension of ‘barefoot luxury’, a concept of luxury that is based on essentials and autodetermination”. The exclusive nature of being the master of one’s own time emerges. This definition of luxury ties in with the idea that “luxury” in travel and tourism is not limited to the conventional view of a five star hotel or resort, but includes now a large variety of unique and exclusive experiences.

The underlying philosophy that inspired Botel emanates from the thoughts of the former President of Uruguay, Mujica (2010-2015) who, when interviewed by Yann Arthus-Bertrand for the documentary *Human*, observes: “We live by buying and throwing away [...] and what we are wasting is our time [...] we consume life” (Arthus-Bertrand, 2015-16). The basic tenets of luxury as applied to the Botel organization may be seen in figure 4. In an evolutionary social perspective, experiential services geared towards sustainability and regeneration help virtuous perceptions and behaviours that become more familiar and disseminate ideas that have long been promoted by governments and organisations but have yet to become part of everyday life. In the area of sustainable tourism, there have been a number of global, European and national conferences and charters, from the Rio Conference of 1992 that defined general guidelines; the Aalborg Commitments from 2004 advanced a perspective on sustainable tourism (European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, 2004). More recently, the Rimini Charter for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism resulted from the work undertaken during the Second International Conference on Sustainable tourism, held in Riccione in 2008 (Emilia Romagna Region, Province of Rimini, 2008).

Figure 4: Experiential luxury in the Botel



## 5 Sustainability and orientation to the network

As is often the case for innovative start-ups, Botel Diffuso dei Laghi has been met with enthusiasm and opposition, acceptance and resistance. Public institutions were especially enthusiastic about the idea. Of particular importance, the municipality of Porto Ceresio was highly appreciative of the project. Some opposition came from the world of business: according to Botel this was due to a more conservative approach to tourism. In terms of financing, although credit institutions supported the project by providing loans, the start-up did not get the expected response from public tenders and credit facilities that were often provided for similar ventures. It was concluded that this particular industry sector had specific barriers to entry.

The company strongly believed that their strategy should be open to complexity, something that was necessary in order to guarantee that the project was fully sustainable. More specifically, sustainability was pursued by adopting an integrated approach, taking social, environmental and financial aspects into account, by including:

1. harmonious relationships with stakeholders as well as the community in a wider sense;
2. respect for the environment and nature ;
3. economic-financial balance in a growth perspective.

Gucciardo points out that none of these aspects is considered as being more or less important than the others. Shortcomings in one area will inevitably have an impact on the others, threatening the conditions that are necessary for the enterprise, seen as a natural system and a socio-economic network, to develop. Gucciardo emphasises that the corporate vision aims to accommodate experiential tourism in view of accessing the territory “on tiptoe”, with the aim of reducing the impact of a business activity in an environmental and social sense. There are various considerations that should be born in mind from a social, environmental and economic perspective. As highlighted by Iansiti and Levien: “Knowing what to do requires understanding the ecosystem and your organization’s role in it” (Iansiti & Levien, 2004:68).

In terms of the social impact it is important to promote the uniqueness and culture of the community chosen to accommodate the business venture without disrupting the established equilibrium. To achieve this, in a context of collaboration and networking, interlocutors must be fully conscient of the main categories of stakeholder associated with the project. These include, in order of importance:

1. the socio-economic fabric/network, consisting mainly of existing businesses;
2. public institutions called on to develop regional marketing campaigns by supporting all activities that invest in a given destination;
3. the network of actors who are able to attract consumers, collaborating to create a wide range of offers;
4. banks and other financial institutions.

In line with this vision, socially speaking the most important aspects were found to be: 1. The complete, harmonious integration of the business with the existing socio-economic conditions; 2. the positive, collaborative contribution to the existing offer; 3. enhancing local characteristics.

Regarding the environmental issues, the company sees the main challenges and problems as being: 1. land use; 2. environmental awareness of users; 3. the efficiency of regional marketing. Regarding land use, the original concept was to design a completely removable diffused hotel with zero impact in terms of land use. A starting point that would allow users to approach this type of hospitality was a certain degree of environmental awareness (for example, concerning the use of water and energy), fundamental for accessing services. Increasing awareness in the individual, and its consequent impact on the community, is a long-term company objective. The company feels there is a great need for an efficient regional marketing campaign to promote existing structures as well as to help create networks and expand opportunities. In addition, in cases that have been assigned to public players, political dynamics

and the times required for institutional processes often slow procedures down. This generally requires long-term strategic investments.

Economically speaking, Botel lists the most important issues as being: 1. regulatory facilitations which are inapplicable for start-ups; 2. a general uncertainty on how to apply benefits to start-ups; 3. neither institutions nor consultants have the necessary know-how to apply existing provisions to start-ups. In general, it is not easy to get information on incentives – even within trade associations and institutions. This weighs heavily on the efficacy of being able to take advantage of possible tax incentives.

## 6 Insights and open questions

Botel is an innovative business idea taking its first steps in a specific tourism sector, unique among 15 existing companies in sharing details of its experience. The opportunities offered by a world in transformation go hand in hand with risks and difficulties. At times, these are not immediately visible and this work shows them as potential areas of interest which can inspire professionals and academics in their thinking, strategies and decision making. Strongly symbolic, this may be seen to have a high potential for promoting respect for the environment (especially given that water was chosen as the location for the concept).

Botel diffuso dei Laghi enables a form of tourism that is both experiential and slow; it enables a rediscovery of a direct contact with nature culminating in a celebration of the essential. If on the one hand the start-up answers a need to return to one's roots, on the other it encapsulates all the innovation an off-the-grid unit on a lake would need. It is a representation of a technology aimed at achieving sustainable wellness. In other words, it combines nature and innovation through a value system based on the awareness of the global need for regeneration and on respect for environmental and socio-economic aspects. In sketching a series of "possible" combinations between human beings and the environment, this start-up carries a highly symbolic message which suggests new ways of approaching tourism. This aims to:

- \_ celebrate experience and living (instead of consuming);
- \_ take one's time and focus on reflection (instead of a here today, gone tomorrow approach to tourism);
- \_ focus on self-determination and the co-creation of services in a system that includes businesses, users and territorial networks (far from following an all-inclusive standard and mass-tourism).

In a wider sense, it represents an invitation to look for meaning in one's actions: for the present and the future; for ourselves, and for the things and people who are close to us. Then, there is the idea of luxury, understood as being able to choose how to use the time we have at our disposal, in line with trends which link status to self-determination and experience. Botel invites us to discuss these ideas, trends, goals and possibilities. In this sense, too, it contributes to increasing awareness, but some unanswered questions remain.

(1) *Firstly, to what extent the philosophy and values are part of the founders' personal vision and how likely is the risk of their loss if the start-up is taken over by other owners?* Botel contains a number of intangibles which could easily mean that the floating unit might become an object of curiosity instead of a place that expresses a way of being where you can find yourself. In fact, the worries that came to light during the 1992 Rio Conference concerning sustainable development are still far from finding answers (see among others: Gibson, 1991; Robinson, 2004). We are referring to worries which are mostly linked to a fear of ambiguity, hypocrisy and delusion. Sustainable development requires a high degree of coherence from a business, though this is not easy to maintain when various players are involved. Gucciardo notes that at times it was not possible to seal a partnership due to the interlocutor

not explicitly agreeing to the project guidelines, in particular in terms of reconciling the business model with sustainable values.

(2) *How is the vision going to be shared and implemented?* Effectively sharing the vision and steering the business team and the entire network to stick to consistent behaviour and messages means devoting a lot of effort to coordination and keeping track of developments, seeing as the risk of **non-manifest resistance** comes from within and without. This sort of resistance does not necessarily depend on individual negativity, rather on diverse goals and a different way of seeing things. As a consequence, words and actions can have different meaning and importance. Even though they share the same starting point, this means they do not necessarily reach the same conclusions. The risk of a gap in organisational coherence should not be under stated, especially when *customer experience* is fed by so many intangibles and vocational elements, as is the case with Botel. In this business context, an approach towards prototyping based on empathy – with the user and generally speaking the interlocutor – in a logic of *design thinking*, instead of formal planning, could be the thing to ensure coordination and communication (see, among others: Brown, 2008; Martin & Martin 2009).

(3) *Another question that arises concerns the contextualisation of experiential luxury and the social value of the message it carries.* This way of experiencing luxury brings to mind how formative and at the same time exclusive these experiences can be. If this can represent a pull factor for individual users in a wider sense (at community level), the idea of being in touch with nature as something that is not for everyone but an exclusive experience might be developed. Continuing to host exhibitions and other events which can be enjoyed by the community (consider the biophilia exhibition held in the start-up phase and other occasions) would communicate a clear message in this sense.

(4) *Is it possible to scale the project in other locations/regions and countries? Botel may be seen to be a unique concept, but this is still on a very small scale. Could the project be replicated elsewhere and would it be a suitable concept for a US type franchise?* The company and its business model strive for excellence, bringing territory, innovation and meaning together. Making sure all intangible elements can be easily communicated and understood by potential users and the community will be an important challenge. The picture that emerges is that of an extremely complex strategic design based on innovation with a strong green approach. Without claiming to have been exhaustive, this study has shown some areas which might benefit from further study and discussion in the light of future trends which will see the increase in innovative businesses in the tourism sector.

Generally speaking, we believe a debate on possible risks would be essential to increase awareness in individual enterprises and, from a macro perspective, to underline the importance of public intervention in terms of facilitation and training, and in terms of simplification of start-up legislation.

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