

AN INNOVATIVE SERVICE FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN BRAZIL: THE PANTANAL BRAZIL WEB SITE CASE

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Abstract

The Pantanal BRAZIL ® Portal is a website aims to create sustainable value and shared in the process of interaction between people and organizations through information, products and services generated by the states the Pantanal: Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. It a service organization that operates in the sector of Information Technology offering a platform for digital content distribution aimed at promoting commercial development, cultural and social development in the Pantanal region. Thus the Portal Pantanal Brazil wants to seize opportunities to encourage various sectors intensifying their shared value. Given the above, this article aims to propose a critical reflection on the process of design and operation of an innovative service by reporting the steps followed from the moment of conception until the moment the idea of his offering to the market. Furthermore, we evaluated the performance of the new service with the purpose of identifying your strengths and opportunities for improvement. Thus, in methodological terms, this is an exploratory-descriptive, in the form of a case study. Data were collected from the Google Analytics to a sample of Internet users who accessed the portal for the four years that it is operating. The results indicate that in terms of resources, the portal is considered a platform for synergistic action, acting as a channel for interactivity between the Region of Pantanal and the national and international market.

Keywords: Biodiversity; innovation; portal; information technology; sustainability.

Introduction

The PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal is a web site that aims at creating a sustainable and shared value to the process of interaction between people and organizations through information, products, and services generated in the states that are home to Pantanal: MT and MS. This is a service organization product that operates in the Information Technology sector, offering a platform to distribute digital content aimed at promoting economic, cultural, social, as well as environmental and scientific development in the Pantanal area.

According to Souza *et al* (2014), throughout the last decades, the Internet has expanded continuously, both in terms of the technology used and its dimension, becoming an

essential means for doing business. As a result of that growth, many information search and organization tools were created - a context that includes prominent Web Portals. To Lederer *et al* (2000), the Web (World Wide Web), is the most popular service available on the Internet; a service comprised of a collection of servers that contain pages with hypertext and multimedia elements (texts, images, animations, sounds and videos).

According to Zilber *et al* (2012), the so-called portals or websites are applications used to integrate information, assets and services from one or more companies and make them available through a unique access point, using the virtual space of the Internet as a means.

Having that in mind, when one thinks of an organization that is designed to provide information, goods and services through a virtual channel, it is possible to categorize it as a member of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service sector. Daft (2010) further adds that such an endeavor may be focused on e-business, which is defined as any business that takes place through digital processes and over a computer network as opposed to the physical space.

According to IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2009), the ICT sector can be described as a combination of industrial, commercial and services operations that capture, transmit and broadcast data, as well as buy and sell equipment and products that are closely related to these processes. Regarding these computer-related products (goods and services), IBGE classifies the creation of web sites and portals for the Internet as a custom-made software development service.

Based on the classification proposed by IBGE (2009), microcompany Mag e Parceiros Web, headquartered in Campo Grande/MS and creator of the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal, may be considered an ICT sector service company and, even more so, a KIBS (Knowledge Intensive Business Services) company, since according to Freire's (2006) understanding, KIBS are organizations that operate within the following Economic Activity National Classification (CNAE): Computer-related activities (division 72 of CNAE), which includes among different classes, the Computer Software Development (7220) class.

Therefore, when we understand the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal as a product – or as goods – and at the same time as service offered by Mag e Parceiros Web, it is possible to attribute it the concept of an innovative product, since it has been designed to offer diverse information translated to nine languages in one unique place. It is also relevant to point out that the concept of innovation used here is the one understood by Sundbo and Gallouj (1998) as a change in business by means of adding a new element, or by the combination of elements that results in processes being executed differently.

In view of the aforementioned, this article aims at proposing a critical view on the design and operations process of an innovative service, reporting the steps taken since the conception of the idea through its market launch. Additionally, we aim at assessing the development of the portal in order to identify its weak and strong points, as well as its improvement potential. On what concerns methodology, this is an explanatory descriptive research, in the form of a case study. Data was collected from entrepreneur records and results from Google Analytics daily reports.

The relevance of this work is based on the fact that the service sector, especially regarding those activities related to information technology, has shown significant growth in the country. However, research in the area materializes in significant lower number than industry research (IBGE, 2009). In addition to that, it has been verified that there is also a demand for studies focused on service innovation (NÄHLINDER, 2002; OSLO, 2004; KUBOTA, 2009).

Services feature some specificities that differentiate them for manufactured goods, such as intangibility, which is an aspect that prevents clients from seeing, touching or

establishing any previous contact with services before consuming them; concurrence or inseparability, since services are created and consumed simultaneously; perishability, since they cannot be stocked (FITZSIMMONS; FITZSIMMONS, 2005). Haukness (1998) and Corrêa; Cahon, 2002 add two more characteristics: ephemerality, which indicates that the service while being offered has temporary existence, which ends when services cease to be rendered; and the highly intense interaction between the producer/provider and consumers, something that requires intense customization.

Regarding the fact that the service is characterized by a highly intense interaction, Vargo; Lusch (2004) states that the need for a change in perspective is evident. Trade and economic processes with a focus on services aim at customizing the offer, which requires unique customer service and reveal the constant role taken up by the consumer as a co-creator. According to these authors, these relationships tend to be maximized in order to provide the best customization possible in view of the consumers' needs.

Fitzsimmons; Fitzsimmons (2005, p. 4) understand that: "service is a perishable and intangible experience, developed for a customer who plays the role of co-producer." In relation to the co-producer role taken by the consumer while making use of the service offered by an organization, Prahalad; Ramaswamy (2004) explain that co-production or co-creation is nothing but an intense participation of the consumer in the service, generating higher value through customization and therefore higher levels of satisfaction. In that sense, the essence of co-production in service is a search for the best way to add value to consumers, catering to their interests from an individual perspective, since satisfaction is derived from the perception of value generated by service quality and performance.

Lusch; Vargo (2006) point out that what is really relevant to consumers are not the physical characteristics of goods but the benefits they generate (service). Therefore, Bendapudi; Leone (2001) argue that in order to guarantee a successful business an organization needs to generate value to their product (goods and/or service), by building an image of quality that is proactive, continuous and consistent.

It is also important to point out that the idea of co-production can even help the improvement process in the production system of a specific service, as a way to help correct errors and/or leveraging improvement opportunities. However, according to Lusch; Vargo (2006), the co-creation process happens specifically in the moment in which the service is being rendered, and therefore requires previous and thorough investment in planning the way operations are supposed to happen in which deliverables are expected by the organization.

Planning the characteristics of a product (goods and/or services) and the flow of stages and resources needed to offer those products are closely related to the project of what is going to be offered in the market. According to Slack *et al* (2002), products are designed to satisfy customers and cater to their current and future needs while improving the organization's competitive edge in face of their competition. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate a product project and a production process project (ERDMANN, 2007).

Mello Neto; Turrioni (2002) add that in order to manage a process it is necessary to first be able to visualize it. That can be achieved through process analysis techniques. That way, it is possible to detect errors and improvement opportunities, defining critical tasks and eliminating those that do not add value or that are duplicate, in an attempt to elevate the company to higher grounds, allowing it to stand out in the competition.

Mello (2005) offers a service development process model. The method is divided into four stages: Service construction project, service process project, service installation project, as well as assessment and improvement, as illustrated on figure 1.

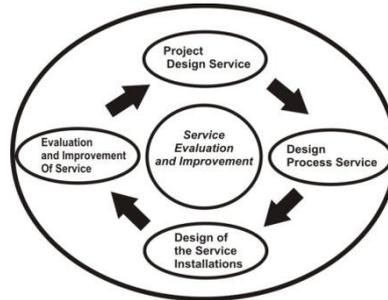


Figure 1: Service development process model.
Source: Mello (2005)

Based on figure 1, we understand that in stage 1 – the service construction project – a research must be conducted to investigate the needs and expectations of customers (or the market) to create or improve the service that is able to cater to these needs and expectations. Having all that information, the ideas generated to cater to the needs and expectations verified can be selected and, with the support of a proper competition strategy for the current market situation, we can define the concept and service package that will be offered. A large part of the client expectations and needs verified at this stage can serve as criteria to define the specifications of the service project that is being designed, guaranteeing that all these expectations and needs are satisfied – and also creating a competitive edge.

Gianesi; Corrêa (2004) state that sometimes, as it may happen with certain services, what is being offered is not very clear from the beginning. That is why some companies define their concept of service with a brief statement, which allows their clients to draw a mental image of what the organization intends to offer. Johnston; Clark (2002) mention four points that must be included when drafting a service concept statement: aspects of the client's direct interaction with the service; the expected outputs of the process; how the service will be rendered; as well as aspects of potential benefits obtained by the client with the service.

On stage 2, which is called service process project, we identify and define the main processes and their respective activities needed to perform, deliver, or maintain the service. The processes and activities that integrate an operation are those essential for the service to happen, according to the specifications defined.

Stage 3, called service installation project, refers to the design of the tangible part of the service, such as the definition of physical installations (layout) in which the service will be delivered, as well as the attributes that are important according to a client's perception regarding quality of service – for both front-end and back-end activities, which in many cases are critical to the final delivery of the service.

On stage 4, which is called service assessment and improvement phase, we define a process that guarantees that the service designed actually satisfies what has been identified as a need on stage 1. This phase includes the definition of a system to assess the service designed and its future validation by the client. This stage also includes the definition of a system that guarantees recovery to those clients whose needs and expectations are not properly fulfilled. This improvement system can also cause a review of stages 1, 2 and 3 of the project and service development process.

Service innovation

The innovation process is fundamental for the development of the service sector. However, most studies that approach this phenomenon tend to focus on the industry and therefore become a rather incomplete comprehension of the service innovation process (OSLO, 2004).

In view of the reality presented by Oslo (2004), we see it necessary to propose a reflection about the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal, from the perspective that it is an innovative service related to the ICT sector.

Therefore, bearing in mind the object of this article, and based on Sundbo; Gallouj (1998), we can list four types of service innovation: product, process, organization, and market innovation. Product innovation is related to providing a new service, such as for example a new content section for the portal. Organization innovation is related to the introduction of new management tools and models, such as the implementation of participatory management into production operations so as to constitute and consolidate a team that is competent and committed to the business. Process innovation is related to modifying prescribed procedures to elaborate/produce a service (back office) or in user/customer service information and delivery (front office) – an example of that is to have customer service delivered via chat and/or telephone. Finally, market innovation is related to the discovery of new markets by identifying niches in the same market or a shift in the behavior of an organization in its environment – as an example of that, we can consider the events market related to the Pantanal, their promotion and participation.

Web Portals

In the new 21st century economy, the speed in which we gain access to information as well as its diversity can be a decisive factor in people's lives as well as to organizations of different sizes and sectors. The overload of data and information spread around the web and from different sources (data banks, documents, printouts, e-mail messages) can make it difficult for people to access them. Also, intelligible data and information sometimes require a significant amount of time and access two different systems. Turban and King (2004) indicate that portals are a potential solution for those problems, since, according to the authors, portals channel the overload of information by means of a virtual environment that allows for the search and access of relevant data from different information technology systems and the Internet by using advanced search and indexation systems.

Almeida (2004) states that portals not only aim at being the first option for users in search of information but also a reference information goods and services. The author alerts to the fact that in spite of the commercial value they have, portals' definitions and classifications are still ongoing due to the infinite number of resources that are constantly being implemented.

According to Souza *et al* (2014), a portal can be considered the main door to a set of resources and services on the Internet. Angulo and Albertin (2000) also add that portals offer a variety of services in categories such as content, communication, community, electronic commerce.

Therefore, regarding the different services offered, we can say that the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal was designed to: offer periodic information on the Pantanal, free of charge and in nine languages: Portuguese, English, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Dutch, Japanese and Mandarin; offer products and services that are typical to the region, allowing for local development through E-commerce and tourist attractions; and as a crowd funding platform, working as an interface between those who offer products/ideas and their financing counterparts, leveraging collaborative financial support to social and environmental projects in the area.

When reflecting upon the format of the aforementioned portal, and based on Zirpins *et al* (2001), we can classify it as being an industrial portal or a B2B (business-to-business) portal, since it provides a virtual environment for exchanging information and most importantly an environment that is suitable to facilitate commercial trades.

Still regarding its classification, the Pantanal Brasil® Portal can be characterized as a local portal, since according to Panfieti and Matsuda (2010), local portals are those that use online tools to provide users with better access to services, cultural events, news, tourism, leisure, among other subjects in their city or region. That the exclusive content allows information to be more accessible to the consumer public, generating a link and strengthening the relationship between site developers, users/local public, executives and business owners, at no cost to the user.

Methodology

The present investigation is characterized as an explanatory descriptive research, with a quantitative approach and shaped as a case study.

Data was collected by reviewing specialized bibliography – with a special focus on the service development process model proposed by Mello (2005) - document analysis (analytical reports), as well as interviews with the people responsible for the Portal. As for data organization, management and analysis, we applied the four stages described in the aforementioned model.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

The PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal design and operation process assessment was made by reviewing specialized bibliography and applying the service development process model proposed by Mello (2005). Therefore, in order to present and discuss the results, we decided to follow the four stages that comprise the aforementioned model, which are:

On stage 1, which is called service conception project, a research was made on the needs and expectations of clients (or the market) in order to create or improve a service that can cater to those needs and expectations. Having all that information, the ideas generated to satisfy those needs and expectations verified were selected, with the support of a proper competition strategy for the current market situation. After that, we defined the service concept and package options that would be offered.

Therefore, based on the analysis of the collected data, we can state that the idea of building an Internet portal called PANTANAL BRASIL® was born out of the understanding that the Pantanal destination in Brazil can offer unique potential in comparison to other prestigious destinations such as the northeastern, southeastern and, most recently, the southern Brazilian beaches. However, we understand that beautiful beaches can be found in a the different places around the world, and that the Pantanal biome, with its beauties and natural wealth, is unique – so much so that in 2000 UNESCO included the location as a World Heritage Site. In addition to that, when work began in 2008, the creators realized that the public with the highest interest in ecotourism were foreign tourists, which justifies the decision to develop a tool specially dedicated to that market. By researching public management organizations, we were able to define the origin of the visitors. Having that information, the eight most representative markets were then selected with the intention of offering them dedicated material in their own mother languages. The preliminary idea was to develop a tourist portal that would satisfy the basic information needs on the location, special care, proceedings and mainly a way to facilitate traveling and tourism operations.

However, in the very beginning organizers detected that the tourism sector needed investment and incentive, due to a serious deficiency in infrastructure and service options at the time. In 2010 public authorities started to encourage investments to bolster the development of the sector. In that sense, the intended portal, with its international reach required higher support from local services. However, local businesses were not in condition to finance the tool as it was originally intended.

At the same time, the acknowledgement of the economic potential of the States in which the Pantanal was inserted (Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul), with their farming and agricultural production, as well as the exploration of natural wealth, encouraged the initiative to broaden the themes included in the Portal (FACHIM, 2005).

Hence, the focus of the website remained on Tourism, influencing the content offered – which happened as a way to encourage and foster the activity and not as the main service offered in the Portal, which coincides with the perception of Angulo and Albertin, 2000.

From those experiences, the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal started to be developed aiming at becoming a business portal, encouraging tourism and fostering the development of the Pantanal region. The portal promoted the economic and investment potential of the area, as well as its culture and biodiversity, bringing the stakeholders and suppliers closer. With a profile characterized by offering information from reliable sources to the market, a number of institutional partnerships were formed with public agencies (government departments, production sector associations, institutions and universities) to provide content. In order to take full advantage of the reach offered by having the content in different target-languages, partnerships were established with the German, Italian and Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, as well as local and international portals. Currently the Portal's position is solid, ranking high on Google searches for: opportunities, business, biodiversity, fauna, flora, tourism, agribusiness, agro-energy, scientific promotion, culture, "in pantanal".

In terms of market segmentation, the Portal opted to attract two types of audiences: individuals and organizations that want to offer goods, services and projects through the portal and those who want to acquire them. So the potential audience for the Portal are organizations and individuals that search for unique products and that help promote the sustainable development of the Pantanal region. They are also consumers of exclusive cultural products and ecological services or simply those who want to associate their brand with local promotion initiatives through portal advertisement.

Based on information collected in the experience acquired throughout the development of the Portal, it's possible to say that the package and service offers are: the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal is an innovative service that provides a platform for interactivity and a virtual experience, stimulating and facilitating business, sharing information and experiences, researches and projects in favor of the Pantanal biome and local sustainability.

Therefore, considering the service packages offered, it is possible to say that the mission of the Portal is to promote the region in which Pantanal is inserted as a way to foster communication and commercial relationships between people (C2C) and companies (B2B), as well as between companies and people (B2C), allowing for a virtual business environment, encouraging promotion and conservation of the region to generate shared value. And the business view is to become a world reference for subjects and products (goods and services) related to the Brazilian Pantanal.

On stage 2, which is called service process project, we identified and defined the main processes and their respective activities needed to perform, deliver, or maintain the service.

From the information obtained on stage 1, we defined that the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal aims at creating sustainable and shared value in the interaction process between people and organizations through information, goods and services generated by the states that are home to the Pantanal (MT and MS). So, based on Panfietti and Matsuda (2010) and Brabham (2008), we understand that the main Portal's activities include: offering periodic information on the Pantanal; fostering local development through e-commerce and tourist attraction; serving as an interface between stakeholders interested in supporting and/or developing social and environmental projects in the region by means of a crowdfunding.

The Portal defined its business strategy has been recognized as the largest information channel for the Pantanal. In order to do that, it focuses on establishing partnerships in different areas to provide content and news, goods, services and environmental projects.

Stage 3, called service installation project, refers to the design of the tangible part of the service, such as the definition of physical installations (layout) in which the service will be delivered, as well as the attributes that are important according to a client's perception regarding quality of service – for both front-end and back-end activities, which in many cases are critical to the final delivery of the service.

In that sense, in order to fulfill the organizational goals, it is important to point out that the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal started the research and development activities for the system structure in 2008 with the creation of the original platform and the first layout draft. At this point, the Portal has already been published on the web for over a year, with a number of partnerships established to access and generate content, which include: State Department of Environmental Issues, Planning, Science and Technology (SEMAC/MS), State Department of Agricultural, Production, Industry, Commerce and Tourism Development (SEPROTUR/MS), the Mato Grosso do Sul Tourism Foundation (FUNDTUR/MS), the MS Bioenergy Producers Association (BIOSUL), the MS Planted Forests Consumers and Producers Association (REFLORE-MS), the MS Pig Farmers Association (ASSUMAS), the MS Veal Beef Producers Association (ASPNP), Painele Florestal, and SEBRAE/MS.

The company provided includes information on the Pantanal in reference to its ecosystem, fauna, flora, curious information, access to the region, culture, music and arts, information on the productive and economic chain in the state of MS as well as tourist information.

In 2009 the Portal gained more visibility with the participation in regional trade shows such as the Tourism Trade Show and Business Rounds (FUNDTUR/MS). In that same year, the first version of the Business Plan was drafted based on a model provided by SEBRAE. From that moment on, we began contacting external partners, such as the Italian-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in RS (CCIRS).

In 2010 the Portal participated of a number of events, both national and international, including: VERONAFIERE/Italy; EXPODIRETO/RS; FEIRA DAS AMÉRICAS/RJ; BNT MERCOSUL/SC Tourism Trade Show; RIBAS FLORESTAL/MS Trade Show; the official release of the *Senior Experten Service* (a Program of the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry/AHK for MS, with the support of SEPROTUR/MS and FECOMERCIO/MS). In addition to that, it also develop the project alongside the MS Tourism Foundation, financed by BID and was represented in an event in China, where it had the opportunity to distribute informational material. It also established a partnership with an internationally-renowned photographer and others with TRIP LINHAS AÉREAS and the German-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in RS (AHK).

In 2011, three years after its release, the Portal received some alterations as a way to update its layout (second version) include user instruction tools such as social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and Slide Share), strengthening partnerships and including the state of Mato Grosso in its scope, complementing the region known as the "Pantanal territory", a World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2000). In that same year, portal representatives visited Expodireto/RS and established partnerships with translation companies. The Portal promoted, with the support of SEPROTUR, FUNDECT and NOVOTEL, an event to introduce the AHK in Campo Grande.

In 2012 many changes were scheduled, including a new positioning for the Portal and the management as a way to broaden its operations and allow for sustainable growth. In that same period, the Virtual Boutique was created as a new service option, connected to the

Incubation Projects for Joint Economic Endeavors of the Tourism Production Chain in Bonito and Serra da Bodoquena and Pantanal de Corumbá (IEESTUR). The Virtual Boutique operations (scheduled to 2013) will be regarded as the first step of the portal in the e-commerce market. As for the partnerships established, some of the highlights are the Federal Universities of MS and MT, to promote the results of the research performed in their research centers through the "Scientific Promotion" channel; the Chinese-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIBC); Italian Portals (Brazil Planet and ITALPLANET); the National Association of Producers of Red Ceramic (ANICER), that used the portal to promote the 41st Meeting of Red Ceramic Industry in Campo Grande (Dec. 08).

It is important to point out that since the beginning of 2012, motivated by Barnes; Vidgen (2000) ideas, the Portal has offered fixed content facilitating the purchase of tourist packages by means of an online form, video technology, images, sound, street view (360°), advertising space (publicity) and the conclusion of the e-commerce to platform that is ready to begin operations.

Regarding the advertising space, advertisers have different options to promote their products or services, which include banners, different sizes, pages (home page, internal page), preferred language and advertising time. Advertisers will have a complete report with the number of visits generated. The PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal banners include different visibility formats, customized according to the investments clients are ready to make, in these categories: 01 jaguar; 02 jaguars and 03 jaguars.

Based on the aforementioned, it is possible to say that in order to facilitate its main goals, the Portal designed the following strategies: Maintain the business focus by increasing the number of products (goods and services) offered; offer a wide variety of products through the electronic commerce platform, a medium variety of tourist packages and also a medium variety of projects on the crowdfunding platform; widen the number of tools for proactive communication (mailing, newsletters, social networks, blogs, opinion polls); provide content facilitated by the communication sectors of different partners and by creating our own content; and systematically maintain the content provided.

The PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal for a production and operational strategy that concentrates sales in lower quantities with a wide variety of products. We understand that this strategy allows for lower inventory and aggregation costs from different income sources due to the wide variety of items offered, such as advertisement, handcraft, project participation and collaborative financing, as well as tourist services and the participation in event promotion (SLACK *et al*, 2002).

As for the technology used, we aimed at developing a robust platform to provide instant content and products to different buyers. We understand that the platform is the central point of all operations and transactions that will be performed, and that it has to be robust in order to include two or more distinct groups (on the one side, product suppliers from a creative economy, and projects that will search for collaborative funding, tourist packages and advertising space; on the other side, organizations and final consumers that search for goods and services related to the Pantanal and its region). However, it is important to observe that in order for the relationship to unfold, local suppliers have to be prospected and mapped, to make sure they can fulfill the offer. In order to do that, since its foundation, the Portal has developed strategic partnerships to guarantee access to information. In the short term, we intend to provide e-commerce and crowdfunding still this year.

On stage 4, which is called service assessment and improvement phase, we defined a process that guarantees that the service designed actually satisfies what has been identified as a need on stage 1. In order to do that, redeveloped a system to assess the service designed and its future validation by the client.

On what regards serve as production control, one of the main tools used to monitor the Portal's performance is Google Analytics the, which offers daily reports. According to recent reports, the Portal has received over 20,000 visits monthly. It is currently the fourth most visited web site that offers information on a specific region in Brazil. The most sought after subjects are: Pantanal in Brazil, handicraft in Pantanal, fauna, flora, biodiversity in Pantanal, business opportunities (MT, MS), tourism (MT, MS), agribusiness, forests, agro-energy (in Pantanal as a whole).

However, in spite of being considered a portal visited by different countries, its rejection rate is still significant, around 50%. It is important to note that the rate is measured through a daily Google Analytics report and shows navigation restricted to the home page, indicating visitors that do not continue their browsing experience in the website. That rate allows us to infer that visitors enter the website motivated by a specific interest on the subject, but the content is not attractive enough to satisfy their needs. The lack of available content or outdated information can be explained by the fact at the capital for investment on the service infrastructure it is not yet at a minimum to provide for the sustainability of the Portal.

In order to deal with the problems detected on the analytical report analysis and find ways to attract users, the goal for the next years is to sell advertising space. Even though this is an existing service, it is not yet enough to guarantee the needs of the endeavor, due to the financial frailty of the Portal, which requires investment for continuous development of content that would facilitate promotional campaigns and thus acquiring commercial value.

On a more positive note, the recent recovery of the Brazilian economy is allowing tourism in Pantanal to grow. In addition to this reality representing new social and economic development perspectives (job and income generation), it has simultaneously generated worries with possible negative environmental and social impact in the area, regarding the lack of organization of activities in protected areas and the low levels of qualification to provide contemplative and adventure tourism options (ECOIA, 2012). That is why the Portal decided to monitor current events and developments, planning and organizing to anticipate news that help minimize negative impact and facilitate actions that contribute to the region's sustainable development.

Aligned with the growth in tourism, travel agencies and business owners are growingly using the Internet as a tool for promotion an attraction of consumers in a globalized way. Thus, the Portal also intends to provide opportunities to encourage different sectors of the tourism production chain to intensify their shared value. With the platform, different options of sightseeing rides, hospitality and general information can be offered to support the tourists who visit the region – with options available for both the states of MT and MS. The Portal will welcome tourists through partnerships with companies specialize in offering a unique services, such as hospitality, transfers, information on sightseeing rides and travel insurance. The service is already available through our partner agencies, who provide assistance to incoming tourists.

In addition to that, the new phase of the PANTANAL BRASIL® Portal includes the implementation of a biweekly newsletter, intended to inform our partners and advertisers with the main news and information on the activities, projects, promotions and other events included in their channels. Flavián *et al* (2006) agree that the service aims at obtaining customer loyalty and stimulating interaction and co-participation of users to allow for the planning, programming and control of the services offered. Distribution will be made through a focused mailing system in order to avoid spamming.

As for e-commerce, the Portal is expected to operate through a distribution channel (DC) for the logistics and product storage. Headquarters are in Campo Grande/MS. In the

same location, products will be organized by categories and suppliers, as a way to control incoming goods, storage, transport and final product delivery.

Conclusion

The Portal provides updated content, aligned with the main demands surrounding the Pantanal biome, aiming at providing users with precise and reliable data. It aims at guaranteeing credibility and market positioning in a way that companies, organizations and the government both have opportunities to associate their brand with an internationally-renowned innovative initiative. In addition to that, the tool allows for users to have a general view of the Pantanal, with important cultural, environmental, economic and scientific information. The relevance of this innovative service relies on offering information and stimulating sustainability so as to give nature and economic interests the same priority. However, in order to achieve that goal many the changes are necessary, in a continuous evolutionary effort to qualify and improve the platform – in both its layout and its interactivity with users and content.

Based on the information discussed, it is possible to infer that the need for capital, sponsoring and/or investment, as well as a lack of public interest in funding the evolution of the Portal, directly influence the insufficient flow of information provided in the website, which has delayed the increase of its commercial value. A business plan that includes the modernization of the Portal was developed, and with some of the actions implemented has been consistently assessed in order to strengthen a continuous search for investments that would guarantee the sustainability of the tool.

In addition to that, it is important to observe that the knowledge acquired in the four years it took to develop the Portal has shown that it is necessary to create an institutional structure that subsidizes the development of projects that complement its business proposition. Thus, in order to cater to those demands the PANTANAL BRASIL Institute was created – a non-profit organization (OSCIP) that aims at analyzing and developing projects funded by public resources –, characterized as the Portal's social responsibility instrument.

The alignment between information and product suppliers present in the Portal generate data that stimulate the creation of the Pantanal Sustainability Observatory. A project that goes over the national borders and includes areas of Pantanal in Paraguay and Bolivia, which is under study and may offer the Pantanal Biome better attention to issues related to sustainability.

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