

AN ETHIC CODE FOR EUROPEAN HOTELS: THE TWO SIDES OF THE COIN

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ABSTRACT

Proposing a practical implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism on the hospitality sector, this paper raises implementation issues regarding the Global Code according to different realities from six different countries. Using examples from chain hotels and family hotels from Belgium, France, Denmark, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain, it outlines best practices and key success factors considering the Europe 2020 declaration about sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. Existing literature assumes ethic codes as voluntary instruments to achieve a more sustainable tourism, providing a set of written statements corresponding to a checklist of actions that are - or not – appropriate to follow in order to achieve sustainability objectives. Empirical research has scarcely been conducted to assess the situation on the ground. The study answers this gap and combines results led by six Higher Education Institutions which directly participated in the project. Regarding best practices, chain hotels are the ones that have already a more consistent and continued work, due to their greater financial capacity, in particular in relation to the introduction of new technologies to improve their environmental efficiency. On the opposite, small family hotels choose to work in partnership with other stakeholders, as they can not afford it by themselves.

KEYWORDS

Ethic Code; Hospitality Sector; Europe 2020 Declaration; Best practices

1. Introduction

This study falls upon the main weaknesses noted today in relation to the tourism industry, namely the lack of research and implementation of ethical standards in different companies related to Tourism (Payne & Dimanche, 1996). Considering the dimension of the Tourism Industry (UNWTO, 2013) widespread all over the world, with more than 1 billion of international tourists' arrivals and with an expected total contribution to the world economic force of 2,9% in 2013, ethics comes as a mandatory issue to be considered.

However, not before the early 90s, has the role of ethics issue gathered the attention of Tourism studies. Literature review on ethics for Tourism has progressed slowly and mainly focusing environmental ethics (Holden, 2003). The development of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET), officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, has reinforced the importance of considering a number of ethical questions when it comes to Tourism responsibilities regarding local communities and their natural, social and cultural environments. To better understand this reality, this study considers the official document of Ethics in Tourism, which is a reference for responsible and sustainable tourism. It contains a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide the different actors and to develop Tourism.

The primary focus of this paper is to understand how Ethic Codes, within the hospitality sector, may be designed and used to promptly answer the concept of sustainable development, regarding the environment, the community or culture (Hegarty, 1992).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Europe 2020 strategy

The world is constantly changing and the interaction between tourism and the environment has gained relevance given Tourism's importance in the global economy. Moreover, the fact that scientific evidence of environmental changes due to human actions has been given, it emphasized the awareness of how harmful can Tourism be for nature (Klavins et al. 2010). Securing the future of our planet requires a vision of progress that ensures a sustainable development of three main pillars: the social, the economic and the environmental one. The concept of sustainable Tourism has therefore been presented by UNTWO as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future

economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNTWO, 1999).

Since the 80's, the concept of sustainability has been highlighted and has entered into various segments of society and several initiatives related to this issue have been created. In 1987, the *Brundtland Report* established the need to seek sustainable development guidelines and the topic gained even more relevance with the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992. The definition of sustainable development resulted from a difficult process and consisted of an agreement on political principles that would account for a careful and responsible monitoring and use of the resources of the Earth. At the “Earth Summit” an important commission was founded, the Commission for Sustainable Development, and it aimed to sum up the results and present a program of action, called Agenda 21, which identified the major environment problems and propose a strategy related with the ways of developing without damaging the resources, on an international, national and regional scale.

Being tightly connected to environmental issues, sustainable development, has said before, must also consider social-cultural and economy aspects. Therefore, sustainable Tourism should make optimal use of environmental resources, respect socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and provide viable, long-term socio-economic benefits to all. Being cultural and natural resources at the core of its business, developing sustainable policy guidelines, providing indicators and monitoring sustainability are more than expected from the Tourism industry.

For all these reasons and considering that the growth of Tourism brings with it important responsibilities, sustainable and responsible Tourism must care for and answer ethical questions that will maximize its positive contribution and reduce its possible negative impacts. A Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) was therefore developed in 1999.

The Code features a voluntary implementation mechanism and has somehow become a reference for responsible and sustainable tourism. It contains a comprehensive set of principles that account for the economic, social, cultural and environmental components

of travel and tourism, designed to guide the different actors and to develop tourism in a sustainable way. UNWTO additionally works to promote and monitor the inclusion of the principles of GCET into government legislation, business practices and traveler's attitudes.

Besides the implementation of this Code, the Tourism industry also faces the need to adjust to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (COM, 2010). This strategy aims three fundamental vectors of growth: SMART growth, promoting the knowledge, innovation, education and digital society; sustainable growth, transforming the productive system more efficient in terms of resources, making our competitiveness stronger; inclusive growth, which pretends to minimize the unemployment, improve the qualifications of our manpower and fight poverty.

Considering the growth strategy formulated by the European Union, "Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. In a changing world, we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Concretely, the Union has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020." The tourism industry is facing enormous challenges but at the same time opportunities. Having a sustainable and responsible growth requires focus not only on the environmental side, but also on the social inclusion, innovation and stakeholder management.

Sustainability and ethical issues are a broad area of expertise and they require the involvement of all tourism stakeholders. Therefore, it is also crucial to consider the 3P's (Elkington, 1990): People, Planet and Profit when taking the decision to be more sustainable and more ethical. In a capitalist and very competitive economy and industry, the Tourism industry has to be able to see the benefits of taking care of People (eg. Hiring local people, respecting the local community by not disturbing and destroying) and Planet (eg. Informing tourists about the heritage of the destinations and the importance of it, waste reduction measures) in the Profit section. By not having a plus on the profit section, the circle of sustainability will not work and reverse actions might take place.

3. Exploring ethic codes

3.1. Ethic codes for the hospitality sector

Besides the purely operational challenges and businesses economic sustainability, there are other challenges that the hospitality industry has to face related with social, economic and environmental sustainability objectives. These are crucial as essential principles for the global policies regarding businesses, society and states' development. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Europe 2020 strategy guide are two international reference guides of principles and good practices to adopt in order to attempt answering these issues.

The hotel sector operates in a growing industry of services – the Travel & Tourism industry – which generates 9% of global GDP and supports 260 million jobs, or 1 in 11 of the world's jobs. According to WTTC's latest estimates, in 2013, Travel & Tourism total contribution to GDP is expected to grow at 2.9% (WTTC, 2013). However its social and wealth benefits can be so large as its social and environmental harmful consequences.

Due to this context, the accommodation sector has made a considerable effort to deal with the impact their business activities have on the environment, particularly by measuring and reducing their carbon and water footprints. Major international hospitality companies and also small businesses recognize that there are tangible benefits in doing this, including real efficiency gains and an improved corporate reputation. Another strongly related challenge for companies is how to manage the ethical operation of their business.

As well expressed by Malloy and Fennell (1998), the hotel sector, being integrated on the tourism sector, it has a sphere of influence that extends beyond that of a simple market exchange. Moreover, its accelerated growth, the constant need to improve technical, human and spatial resources, to be better and more efficient than its direct concurrence, and to do it rapidly may result in potential unethical transgressions. Therefore, the authors (Malloy and Fennell, 1998: 454) underline that “standard and control procedures are necessary to ensure that the sector respects the resources it uses”. Moreover, the inclusion of ethically responsible measures and procedures, beyond

answering the new paradigm of business development is also considered a core strategy that makes good business sense.

Codes of conduct are the most commonly tool used to implement more responsible businesses on social, environmental and economical perspectives (WTO/UNEP, 2005). They correspond to a broader and complex policy associated with more sustainable development of a territory or organization, covering aspects related to social, environmental and economic efficiency. On the ethical field, the ethic codes are the most common tool and are mainly focused on issues related to corporate social responsibility and to the operationalization of the governance principle in their management.

According with Langlois and Schlegelmilch (1990) we can find three types of ethic codes, namely:

- regulatory documents giving specific advice on behaviour and conduct;
- short, broad principles/beliefs including statements of aims and values;
- elaborate codes covering social responsibility to a set of stake holders.

The regulatory documents are associated with norms or rules from hotel private sector associations as a way of promoting good practice and standardize procedures in the provision of hospitality services by its associates. It can be seen as a useful tool for self-regulation within the hotel sector (WTO/UNEP, 2005). Some of the best international examples are the Handbook of Hospitality Conduct, from the BRAZILIAN ASSOCIATION INDUSTRY HOTELS (ABIH), the Code of Ethics of Hospitality, from the Brazilian Institute of Hospitality Management, and the Tourism Industry Association (TIA) CODE OF ETHICS, from the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, which is the largest representative body of tourism operators in New Zealand.

The second ones correspond to simple lists that summarize in a very clear language the do's and don'ts for customers, with the objective of influencing and educating their behavior. They are especially used on natural environments for particular activities (mountain bikers, walkers, divers, etc), but can “also cover wider issues such as

purchasing local produce, selecting equitable service providers, tipping practices, dress codes to respect cultural sensitivities, etc” (WTO/UNEP, 2005: 99).

The third ones are increasingly common in the world’s leading hotel chains, such as Marriot, Rezidor Hotel Group, Millennium & Copthorne Hotels plc, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Intercontinental Hotel Group, etc. Their Code of Ethics and Business Conduct – or just 'The Code' - sets out the principles and standards describing how these groups should work and behave. They are designed to reaffirm and promote corporation’s compliance with laws and ethical standards applicable in all jurisdictions in which these groups conduct their business. The Rezidor Hotel Group presents a short version of its “Code” which identifies clearly the main messages and principles of this kind of tool, namely:

1. We respect the law
2. We show respect for all persons in all situations
3. We think ethically
4. We act fairly
5. We do not discriminate against anyone for any reason
6. We are honest and transparent
7. We are loyal to our employer
8. We do not exploit the company’s resources
9. We think of safety at all times
10. We take care of the Earth

This Codes are applicable to all including directors, officers, employees and associates, as well as, without limitation, general managers, members of the Management or Executive Committees and other persons who work in or are affiliated with any hotel, residential or vacation ownership property that is owned, leased, managed or franchised by these hotel groups. This type of codes is vital to the continued corporative success, ensuring that all the individuals involved behave with honesty, integrity and in falling in line with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements. In short, business ethics is relevant both to the conduct of individuals and to the conduct of the organization as a whole.

In any case, these are voluntary tools whose application depends on each hotel policy, on its management priorities and objectives, and also on the financial capability to implement some of the measures or good practices.

4. Methodological aspects

A survey was conducted considering managers of family hotels and chain hotels from 6 different European countries to assess industry's own perceptions of the implementation of ethics codes. The survey aimed to identify which self-regulatory practices had been adopted and what measures should be introduced and by whom. In addition, a day-seminar was held with other industry members in March 2013 to discuss these issues and compare the realities from each country. Hotels from each country were selected in advance for their representativeness and interviews sought only with decision-making staff. Information was gathered by a combination of 12 face-to-face interviews that lasted between one to two hours.

A structured interview was used following a standard set of questions to obtain data that could be aggregated since identical questions were asked to each participant. The interview guideline consisted of four parts containing open-ended and closed-ended with ordered response choices (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). Part I was designed to collect information related to environment, the second part contained questions about innovation, the third one focused on social inclusion and the fourth group of questions was related with risk and stakeholder management. Some questions were related with recent actions put forward by the hotel within these areas, others were related with the policy of the hotel on the importance of taking actions in order to achieve some of the aims of the Europe 2020, and there were also other related with the process of recruitment and training.

5. Best practices' overview: the case of six European countries

Although on the same continent and part of the European Union, the countries that have been studied have their own specific characteristics, which are reflected on the obtained results about family hotels. The information gathered has been analyzed taking into account four different perspectives: environment; innovation; social inclusion and risk and stakeholder management.

5.1. Family hotels

The six family hotels' sample have an average of 33,4 rooms each (maximum 98 and minimum 10 rooms). The classification is between 1 and 5 stars, but the majority has 2, 3 or 4 stars. From the perspective of hotels' typology the sample is diverse, and mostly composed by City hotels, Boutique hotels, Hotels in historic monuments and SPA hotel. Most of them have undergone improvement works and interior renovation for the past 6 years.

In the environment field, results demonstrate that all the hotels' policies show efforts to develop good practices and make a more rational use of the resources, avoiding waste or damaging the environment because of their actions. Recycling, saving water and energy are the basic similarities that were found. The Danish, the Portuguese and the Belgian studied hotels are using certifications as the Green Key, ISO certification, European Eco-Label and local certifications, in order to improve and provide qualified services and as a strategy for communicating the values of the hotel to guests and suppliers. More than using the certifications for promotion, they are used to make the business more profitable. The French, the Lithuanian and the Spanish family hotels are not presently interested in obtaining certifications, as they find them unnecessary at this point and with no significant impact when communicating the values of the hotel to the customers.

Regarding energy and water saving, all the studied hotels are using low consumption light bulbs. In Denmark some hotels are monitoring heaters like the one studied and in Portugal solar panels are used to create energy. Moreover, and continuing with energy issues, results show that the French hotel is using cars running by bio-fuel and electricity. As for waste matters, all studied hotels, except for Lithuania, set up some recycling policies such as providing customers with recycle bins in all the hotel public areas and the French, the Danish and the Portuguese hotels provide training for the employees on how to produce less waste. Those who are certified follow strict guidelines to keep these standards and do control energy, waste and water consumption themselves in order to maintain the certification, which controlled by the Certifying organization.

Moreover, all the hotel respondents emphasize the importance of the involvement of the government and local authorities in these matters when it comes to supporting the family hotel industry, with incentives regarding best practices and rewarding those with best results by reducing taxes. The general attitude when it comes to invest in sustainable technology is different in the studied hotels. When looking at the Lithuania case, one may see that the idea of investing in greener technology is still understood as a mere cost with no benefits, disregarding the fact that this sort of investments have shown to be a profitable long-term saving, a key for better communication with 'eco'-concerned costumers and a much caring process considering the impact it may have on the environment.

In fact, when it comes to motivating family hotels' guests, all the countries, except for Belgium and Lithuania, choose to communicate the benefits of saving energy and water. The communication is done mostly to raise awareness about the impact that wasting energy and water will have on the environment. In the French case, clients may find inside the rooms signs explaining different measures for reducing waste and energy (eg. not washing towels and bed linen everyday will have a positive impact on the environment).

As far as innovation is concerned, the hotels studied seem not to be undergoing major investments in this field and the ones that still are considered are very short-term oriented, with a faster return on investment. Moreover, the family hotels work very individually, which means that local initiatives will not have more than a local impact.

Only improvements related with things that have been done in other businesses, like chain hotels or others, are being carried out and this are related to investments in the Information and Technology area and specific hotel software in order to follow the trends and to keep customer's satisfaction high. The Danish hotel distinguishes from the others as they do bigger investments in order to increase their profit margins and have more efficient processes, trying to get more relevance in the tourism industry. The other studied hotels try to increase their productivity by renewing Wi-Fi internet facilities in the hotels, online reservation systems and developing their communications with customers, because there are more options in the market and it is important for them to

show their products and services, using tools like social networks, brochures, newsletters and participating in national exhibitions where they advertise their services.

Furthermore, results have shown that generally the studied hotels are not establishing enough cooperation links with other companies or organizations in order to improve their services and offerings in this field. The lack of cooperation with other industries that has somehow characterized this sort of business must be overcome as small and medium enterprises (SME) usually do not have enough resources to develop innovation by themselves and sometimes against each other. In fact, besides the Danish and the Belgium cases who are developing collaborations with schools, powering industry, organizations related with the use of programs that care about the environment or even also the ones that represent the sector of family hotels, none of the rest of the countries are trying to improve their services and offerings by cooperating with other companies like, universities, research institutions or other organizations. Innovation needs to be viewed upon as bringing new ideas to the market, instead of just keeping up the market trends, and by doing so, family hotels could obtain competitive advantages over time.

As for the search for new markets, the Danish, the French and the Portuguese studied hotels are moving towards a reposition of their products in order to attract new and more clients. The adopted strategy consists of analyzing the current market and offer new products and services that fit clients' needs. This should be seen as a mandatory challenge for small hotel businesses, which cannot afford to be stuck on the past, offering the same products that they had since they were created and ignoring the needs and profile of nowadays tourists. Attracting new tourists by innovating can also be an answer for the problem of seasonality that all seem to recognize as an obstacle for profit.

Nevertheless, all the studied hotels, except the Belgian, within recent years have introduced new significantly improved services, like satisfaction questionnaires or guest books, which allow customers to express their opinion about their experience in the hotel and demonstrate how the hotel services can be adjusted to their needs. Customers seem to be more satisfied when they stay on a hotel that is adapted to their needs. Despite the fact that they are staying on a family hotel, where the environment is

cozier, more traditional, sometimes even rural, they still want / need technology facilities and others that make them feel well there.

As for social inclusion, it has been studied mainly focusing on human resources management and we could observe that all the studied family hotels use a formal recruiting process to create their working team. In accordance with the results, it is similar for all the countries to have an informal recruitment process, as well as to recruit young people for internships. People can look for vacancies in the family hotels by looking at the Internet, social network sites or by visiting the company.

CV and personal interview are the most common method for recruiting and the studied hotels have confirmed their preference for hiring people from nearby villages as this improves flexibility and also caters for the best interest of local economy by creating jobs for the local community.

In general, family hotel owners are open-minded concerning diversity in their business.. Usually, none of these hotels have problems with hiring people from different ethnics groups or religions, and also provide specific or special training concerning diversity. In some departments of family hotels (eg. SPA and Health care), the owners prefer one or the other gender, mainly to respond to the comfort of customers.

When looking at the Portuguese and Spanish studied hotels, another action that improves social inclusion has been taken forward. They both offer training opportunities to people from the local community through a partnership with local schools for people with special needs. They receive these students in departments like kitchen, cleaning or laundry. In the Danish case, they include former criminals in their team.

In terms of risk and stakeholders' management, the similarities found within the 6 countries had to do with the fact that they agree on having an ethical approach to business created extra value with the stakeholders and guests. Stakeholders help them to better satisfy the customers, as the last will be presented to local products and services. Most of them agree that being ethical does not mean that they can charge their guests extra for their services, but agree that it is still important, as being ethical gives

advantages when it comes to communicating the hotel values to their customers. The studied hotels, except for the Belgium, are working with local suppliers, reducing pollution when transporting the goods to the hotels. Taking the environment into consideration is something that is important for the Danish, French, Belgian and Portuguese hotels. This is, if the costs of buying environmentally correct are not too high.

As we have seen, it is important that the overall strategy of family hotels includes all the ethical aspects such as environment, innovation, social inclusion and risk and stakeholder management in order to be successful and sustainable. Due to a lack of money in the family hotels business, it is difficult for them to meet all the ethical expectations especially for the innovation part. However, the human resources management could be an important key for the hotels to reach most of the ethical goals. On the one hand, the obtained results indicate that family hotel owners should use offers provided from the state and local authorities regarding training possibilities and courses that will increase their knowledge on a non-operational level. Hotels should start with staff training in order to increase customer's satisfaction. Self-assessment is needed in order to analyze the current level of service and to see where it can be improved. Hotels should communicate sustainability on all levels, for instance, sing local suppliers for local products related with the traditions of the area while helping protecting and developing them. Moreover, the regional and / or national governments should be able to support correct ethical family hotels and punish un-ethical behaviour.

On the other hand, if a social network on European level could be made it would make it possible for family hotel owners to access free knowledge they would otherwise have needed to buy. Best practices, antilogous and getting expert advice should be a part of the forum. The purpose of creating an association between both national and international family hotels, which has a shared code of conduct regarding ethics and have the possibility to get a certification showing the commitment to this sort of conduct, is to increase profit, to reduce costs and to secure growth.

Looking for best practices could be a way to improve SME's development in the tourism industry and face the chain hotels supremacy. However, the future of the family hotel business is uncertain, the economic and politic environment across Europe is

constantly in evolution. New opportunities or threats can appear every day, will the family hotels be able to deal with them in the future? Family hotel business in Europe, even though it differs from a country to another is a buoyant market, which needs to be developed.

5.2. Chain hotels

The six chain hotels sample represent the following international hotel groups (Accor, Best Western, Intercontinental Hotel Group, Marriott, Pestana and SERHS Hotels). The hotel groups represented are huge companies that began its business mostly between the 60's and the 80's. Three of them have between 3400 and 4600 hotels, located between 74 and 100 countries. All of these hotel groups have adopted a multi-brand strategy to expand their business (between 3 and 19 brands), and some are the leading hotel groups in the World having the top brands.

On the environment field, all the interviewed chain hotels present a considerable number of implemented measures essentially in terms of recycling, saving water, reducing of waste and paper use and reducing energy consumption. Some of these measures are efficiently applied through simple actions by all the hotel departments, like for example: reduction of waste by using real cups instead of plastic ones, reducing paper use by printing on both sides, saving water by applying the towel rule and adding flow regulators on each shower head and water tap and, finally, reducing energy consumption by replacing regular room keys with key cards and changing regular light bulbs into led lights. Also, in terms of saving paper, all the chains have applied the “paper free office”, which implies the use of electronically sent documents.

Recycling and waste reduction seems to be the basic measure for most hotels in all the chain hotels, but in Lithuania, seems to be an unusual and really appreciated service. By far, Lithuania is the country whose concerns with sustainability and the efficient and responsible use of environmental resources are not yet significant.

However there are other actions that require a large financial investment but which result in huge benefits for business and also for local communities. One of the best examples, was the investment made by the hotel chain Pestana (Portugal) in an efficient

machine of desalination that convert sea water into drinking water. This purchase has solved the problem of water shortage that characterizes the southern region of the country where it is located one of its hotels. The expensive costs related to some eco-friendly actions is the most limiting factor in its implementation and this is the main reason for having just a few hotels with a solar panels energetic system to become more independent from energy suppliers.

Some of the chain hotels - like the Marriott in Belgium, the Pestana Group in Portugal and the Ibis in France - have their “Green teams”, composed by some of the employees of the company who have the role not only to ensure that the strategy of the overall hotel is applied throughout every department but also to create innovative solutions to increase the efficiency of the hotel in the environmental. These teams have the coordinating function of planning and implementing all the environmental policy actions’ guarantying that all employees will be aware about it.

The same three chain hotels were the only ones that stated having developed and financial supported conservation actions specially in order to help endangered species. For example, the Pestana hotel staff in Mozambique gives part of their tips to local research organisations and Accor and Marriott contribute in this part by not putting endangered species on their menus.

Being environmental friendly for a company, hotel or other, has become very prevalent both for taking part in the overall smart growth strategy and for becoming more competitive. For this purpose, it is important for hotels to show to their clientele that they are involved; the best way to do this by receiving certification. Most of the hotels have an understanding of this and apply for different certifications. In terms of environmental and quality certifications, it is a fact that not every interviewed hotel is applying for the same certifications. These certifications focus essentially on the environmental or on the quality management performance of each hotel and can be divided in to types: International/European and national/local. Depending on the country, hotels apply not only for international certifications: Green Key, ISO 14001 and 9001, and Blue Flag, but also for local ones such as the Svanemaerket in Denmark. Most of them apply for the green key, Ibis applies for ISO 9000 but the Holiday inn, in Belgium, does not have any certification at all.

In general, the staff in international chain hotels is highly involved in achieving the sustainable policy and reaching the environmental goals. To ensure it, all the hotels provide formal training for all its employees about reducing, reusing, and recycling, promoting therefore a permanent eco-friendly attitude not only on the workplace but also on a personal level and as a citizen. The creation of a “Green Team” in each chain hotel is a strategic way to ensure staff’s responsibility, guaranteeing the strategy implementation throughout every department of each chain hotels, and also promoting the proposal of create innovative solutions to increase hotel’s eco-efficiency.

One of the initiatives involving employees is the incentive for the use of public transport or other alternative eco-friendly mean of transport like the bike, with the incentive being cash back bonus. Although hotels are asking their employees to give privilege to eco-friendly transportation, just the Belgian hotels are the only ones to lend out bikes for their staff.

Also annual meetings are provided by head management to spread the environmental policy and make sure that employees will be aware of it. Accor is the only group to organize an international meeting - The “Earth Guest Day” - in which each Accor hotel manager’s attendance is mandatory.

In terms of clients’ information and involvement, most hotels place on their rooms a green pamphlet that informs the customer about the hotel’s sustainability, as well as the importance of guest involvement towards a more sustainable future.

The new charter of Accor, “Planet 21”, must be quoted as one of the benchmarks for all chain hotels because it gathers all of the components of sustainability –ecology, innovation, social inclusion, smart growth.

Considering stakeholders inclusion there are many external stakeholders of multinational chain hotels including guests, staff, local authorities, suppliers, financial institutions, and governments.

Guests should be informed and if possible involved on the sustainability process and environmental goals. The reduction of water or energy consumption can be

accomplished with the contribution of awareness guests. In turn, local authorities are a fundamental intervenient, for example, in the system of waste collection, transport, selection and recycling; if this isn't ensured by local authorities it will jeopardize the achievement of this measure by the hotels. Other situation it's related with tourists that do not respect the local environment and local habits and this is something that may have negative effects on public infrastructures preservation. To slow down these impacts, the analyzed hotel from Portugal partnerships with the local authorities in order to supply maintenance.

To be considered a sustainable hotel, it requires that its suppliers are also taking measures to respect the environment. In a competitive market, the hotel should prefer, as far as they can, a supplier that respects this criteria. In terms of national government, national policies may have a huge effect on companies' economic sustainability, depending on the taxes and regulations scheme and in the governmental support to eco-investments.

With respect to local communities, they should be considered in a large number of the hotel decisions. It could be strategic for the hotels operations to take advantage and capitalize the resources that are endogenous and closer, and it can bring differentiating aspects with relation to other hotels chain and competitor hotels. In addition, hotel chain development can stimulate the development of other local businesses - agricultural products, cleaning services, services security, etc. - and traditional activities - crafts, wines and local cuisine, etc.- that may enrich accommodation supplementary services. On a sustainable perspective, hotels have also the responsibility to contribute to the alleviation of local or (even) global social problems. In this context, the Portuguese hotel has referred that it gives support at least 5 social institutions that work with children, specifically orphans

The innovation area encloses 3 phases: invention, commercialization and diffusion. Only when these three areas are fulfilled the process will be fully completed.

One of the best examples in terms of innovation is presented by Accor with the creation of a robot that draw the sleep pattern of the hotel guests, called SleepArt. SleepArt has an application for smartphones as well as by introducing the concept through TV

commercials. In this case, the diffusion stage means that the guests are really using the application during their stay.

Ibis, Ibis Styles and Ibis budget invested in the design of an unique technological experience: charting a comfortable night's sleep in one of their hotels. In practice it is a robot connected to the new bedding – through 80 sensors located in the topper – that use a range of sleep data to chart the customer's night's sleep, live. This new bed has been tailored around the way customers use beds and local habits – worldwide - to provide unsurpassed comfort in its category.

Accor has also other initiatives that combine innovation with environment efficiency. Some of the examples presented by the hotels group in Belgium and France are: the investment on eco-design in its rooms components (use of dispensers or eco-friendly packaging for bathroom products; some of the hotels chain had at least three eco-designed room features, e.g. bedding, bath linen or paper).

In Spain and Denmark innovation is promoted by having partnerships with research institutions and local companies to develop new services, investing in IT and software and finding ways to achieve competitive advantages (in terms of summer package, brain food, wellness).

The similarities/diferences that were found when considering innovation are also the challenges of today, meaning that there is still much to do in the innovation field. Most of the studied hotels chain tends to copy already existing practices instead of really inventing new things (in fact, having Wi-Fi – as claimed by Belgium interviewed hotels - it can no longer be considered an innovation, especially in developed countries).

In terms of social inclusion, were identified the most common actions through the interviewed hotels, namely: having a recruitment process based on skills and background instead of gender, age, culture or any other characteristics; give priority to local people for job openings which includes the local community; taking advantage of young unemployed individuals or recent graduates looking for its first job by opening the possibility of absorbing them in the company but only as trainees, which is much easier and cheaper in terms of tax liabilities, social security and wage (especially in Spain and Portugal).

A big difference is that some of the interviewed hotels really check if their team of employees is diverse or not and others don't. A question that comes up here is if it is necessary or not to have a formal recruiting process to guarantee diversity. Lineal thoughts are not in agreement with the working methods in this kind of service companies. Each person is different, and their values will not always correspond with everyone else's; the brain works by creating "mind-maps" and that is something that is being well applied in chain hotels. Diversity is always seen as a competitive advantage, and that is why in the studied Belgium chain, they check annually if their staff is diversified according to common standards.

Another big difference is in the way the interviewed hotels deal with discrimination. For example in Denmark a chance is given to those who have their own faiths by providing special uniform accessories so they can continue their practices. For instance, Muslim staff has the option of wearing head kerchief. This is something that is not done in the other interviewed hotels.

There are also some differences in the recruitment policy specifically when regarding disabled people integration. The interviewed hotel in France, hires disabled people to places where work is not too demanding, such as the headquarters. To avoid and prevent discrimination in the recruitment process, human resources department staff must attend training sessions to assure that ethical and also efficiency principles are applied. A similar action is taken in the interviewed hotel in Lithuania, where the promotion of the non-discrimination is made among its employees. In turn, Spanish hotel managers value applicant's ethical skills by testing how they react when they are

exposed to multicultural habits (for example, the interviewer greets the candidates in a unusual way like kissing him/her). Also in Spain, it is usual to work with local schools and universities, so that the future generations get involved with them, but guaranteeing that ethical skills and principles are already acquired.

After the comparative analysis of the main actions developed by the interviewed chain hotels in the 6 countries we identify the major **challenges** for the environment (E), innovation (I), stakeholders involvement (ST) and social inclusion (SO) components:

(E1) The importance of using solar energy instead of electricity, making sure that all the chain hotels copy the best practices, making the desalinization machine be recognized all throughout Europe, choosing between certified raw products and local ones, etc. In regions where there is less sun, instead of solar panels, windmills should be implemented and financed by the government.

(E2) In order to preserve the ecosystem in which the hotels are established in, it is important that all hotels have an understanding that endangered species not be placed in their menus.

(E3) Portuguese investments in the desalinization equipment should be recognized all throughout Europe, especially in countries, such as Spain, with problems with fresh water. This equipment and the associated technology could help preserve the fresh water worldwide.

(E4) One other major issue for hotels is to choose between certified raw products and local ones. Indeed, local products are made by local farmers/suppliers, and they often can't afford to be certified. In this context, it would be important for hotels to help local producers –financially or otherwise- to apply for such certifications. Very few countries are able to use local products in their hotels.

(I1) Hotels should try to be original in inventing new initiatives instead of copying good initiatives from other chain hotels e.g. the towel rule as earlier mentioned.

(SO1) Strengthen the inclusion of disabled people and recognize them as positive and constructive.

(SO2) Increase the number of partnerships between hotels and education institutions.

(SO3) Involve more the local communities.

(SO4) Promote deeper and more dynamic intercultural skills for employees (for example, allowing them to do job exchanges in foreign countries).

(SO5) Give personal attention to people from different religions and stop hiring trainees as cheap workers because this increases the number of unemployed young people.

(SO6) The enterprise should assign a special value to the cultural identity of destinations (uniqueness).

(SO7) Focus on employment of qualified people in order to have a better service and not overcharge the trainees.

(SO8) Keep in mind that not only employees have to be trained but also managers must ensure that effective in-house training programs are provided for all workers, so that they become more familiar with the Ethical measures. In addition, they should be motivated to do it and be rewarded for it. Furthermore, all employees must be provided with clear and detailed guidelines about the company expectations.

(ST1) If possible, help local institutions to improve the destination development (chain hotels should share their influence).

If we consider the obtained results for chain hotels, specific measures are needed to show a possible way to implement the GCET into the chain hotels. There needs to be made a specific guide for managers and also for employees. This way they will be able to understand and practise the Ethical code in their everyday work. Moreover, these guidelines should care for particular characteristics of each hotel within the chain/group and the territory where they are situated.

6. Conclusion

This paper has illustrated some of the key drivers of and barriers to ethics applicable to the hospitality sector. By providing examples of best practice for familiar and chain hotels from six different countries one could understand that the immaturity of these areas of study considering Tourism literature review is reflected in the still undergoing process of bringing ethics and achieving sustainable outcomes to the hospitality sector. The results of this study demonstrate that codes of ethics are generally inaccurate and insufficient, and that is one of the chief reasons why enterprises apply measures in an inadequate way. Best procedures must be followed and some of them are exposed in this paper.

The findings suggest that motivators and barriers are present in both familiar and chain hotels, even if differently. Note that the small size of this sample makes it difficult to

draw firm conclusions, and further research should explore this aspect further. Bearing this in mind, the obtained results this study are worth being considered and underlined. By identifying the similarities and differences between family hotels and chain hotels' strategies across Europe, challenges to improve this sector in the future come as an added output. The analysis shows the best practices used, which each country could use and the way they can implement them into their businesses.

Moreover, the obtained results show that hotels that belong to chains that answer to huge economic groups appear to have some difficulties in operationalizing the environmental, ethical and sustainability policies defined by the latter.

Some of these groups have even created a brand for those policies and all results are thoroughly presented revealing a careful concern with the image and the impact it may have in terms of marketing.

However, when analyzed individually, each hotel seems to be only implementing some of the actions contained in the group's global policy. The specific technical, human or financial constraints of the hotel, or even its management priorities often influence the fully application of processes and measures centrally defined by the group in which it is included. On the other hand, some actions are often dependent on external factors that may not exist in the country/region of the world where the hotel is situated. Namely, aspects such as the involvement of the local stakeholders (public services and suppliers) and on a different level of the government are good examples of possible obstacles to the implementation of the group's global policy. Difficulties and external constraints may also result from natural characteristics (lack of potable water, mountainous topography, extreme temperatures, etc.) or human features (lack of human resources with skills for working in the tourism industry) from this country/region.

Without doubt, the theme of Ethics within Tourism and Hospitality is very actual and its importance will only grow towards the future. The first step in this first edition of the Ethicod IP was to thoroughly inform the students on what Ethics really mean in general, and then more particularly in the context of Tourism and Hospitality. Through their work, students have learned to understand that visible actions, ethically and sustainably

responsible actions, originate from a broad base of ideas and beliefs that are already a constant given and thus make out the mind set of people.

A paradigm shift for traditional hotel developers is desirable and a time of crisis may be an opportunity to break away from the prevailing model and motivate a fully integrating approach that considers the health and wellbeing of residents, guests, clients, employees and ecosystem.

From the point of view of best practices, chain hotels are the ones that have already a more consistent and continued work, due to their greater financial capacity, in particular in relation to the introduction of new technologies to improve their environmental efficiency. This context allowed to propose a set of operational actions without financial constraints. Already at the level of small family hotels, the feasibility of the proposed actions involve a great financial engineering exercise based particularly on working in partnership and in cooperation with other stakeholders.

7. References

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