



Spanish hotel chains alignment with the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

Mercedes Ruiz-Lozano ^{b,*}, Araceli De-los-Ríos-Berjillos ^a, Salud Millán-Lara ^b

^a Business Organization Area, Universidad Loyola Andalucía, Escritor Castilla Aguayo 4, 14004, Córdoba, Spain

^b Financial Economics and Accounting, Universidad Loyola Andalucía, Escritor Castilla Aguayo 4, 14004, Córdoba, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 December 2017

Received in revised form

11 July 2018

Accepted 12 July 2018

Available online 18 July 2018

Keywords:

Ethic codes
Sustainability
Transparency
Management
Tourism

ABSTRACT

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) is the sectorial reference tool in sustainable and value-based management for tourism stakeholders. The objective of this research is to analyze the adoption of the code and the extent of its development so far.

The content analysis of 115 Spanish hotel chain web pages allowed us to know the extent to which hotel chains are responding to the GCET's principles.

The results show that adherence to the code improves the transparency of hotel chains and the differences found according to the geographic scope of the chains confirm that their actions depend on the socio-economic and cultural context of their setting. This study supports the promotion of this tool as a way to achieve sustainable economic development, since the Code acts as a guide for ethical and sustainable behaviour of organisations, clarifying stakeholders' expectations.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Different studies confirm a virtuous circle deriving from ethical leadership in organisations where morally correct behaviour yields better results and greater integrity (Santora and O'Sullivan, 2014; Flynn, 2008). All this translates into a greater level of transparency resulting in a positive evaluation from all stakeholders. Moreover, this trend in the realm of business forms part of a wider global view espousing the necessity of progressing toward a more sustainable economic development.

In this context, the United Nations Millennium Declaration emphasised the importance of abiding by a set of core values so as to strive toward a more peaceful, prosperous and just world (UN, 2000). These values were defined as freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. The Millennium Declaration represented the response of the international community to the development and security challenges of a rapidly changing global environment so as to design a common, inclusive and equitable future where businesses play a relevant role.

Tourism is a sector of business that is key to development, prosperity and well-being (UNWTO, 2016). As noted by many

studies, tourism is also directly linked to sustainable development due to its economic, social and environmental impact (Hultman and Säwe, 2016; Klytchnikova and Dorosh, 2013; Muchapondwa and Stage, 2013). Since tourism in recent years has grown exponentially, even in times of crisis (UNWTO, 2016), its businesses and their impact have likewise flourished.

The new business environment in tourism is in constant flux, the strategic planning process must unequivocally take this climate of uncertainty into account. Furthermore, Galant et al. (2015) advanced that tourism companies have to recognise that transparent communication is a feature that can positively influence stakeholder satisfaction.

Research on sustainable tourism has mainly focused on destination, incoming tourism and impact, and to a lesser extent on the business ethics (Mihalič and Fennell, 2015; Zahaira, 2014). On the other hand, the cleaner approach to production is making headway outside industry, and sustainable tourism is an important example (Goffi, 2018; Hens et al., 2018; Lee, 2001). Interest in these issues has grown in recent years, different tourism studies have analysed the interdependence between business ethics and sustainability (Fennell, 2015; Zahaira, 2014; Fennell and Malloy, 2007).

As a result, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), aware of the importance of ethical management for sustainable development, adopted in 1999 the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET), a set of principles subsequently endorsed by United Nations in 2001.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: mruiz@uloyola.es (M. Ruiz-Lozano), arios@uloyola.es (A. De-los-Ríos-Berjillos), smillan@uloyola.es (S. Millán-Lara).

Since then many organisations in the sector have implemented it. This led the GCET to serve as a reference in the value-oriented management of tourism stakeholders. Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly recently encouraged the WTO to continue promoting and disseminating the GCET and monitoring its implementation as a way to respond to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030. The code of ethics is thus perceived as a tool for management favouring contribution of tourism organisations to sustainability.

According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) of the *World Economic Forum 2017* Report, Spain's highly competitive economy maintains a leading position in world tourism. As noted by *Moreno de Souza et al. (2015)*, the acceptance and commitment of hotel chains, one of the main actors in the tourism sector, is key to the adoption of the Code and implementation of a concrete, participatory, integrated and coordinated sustainable development policy in the tourism sector. For these reasons, the current study chose the main Spanish hotel chains as the subject of analysis.

The objectives of the current research are therefore the following. Firstly, to determine the degree of adhesion to the GCET and the extent of its development through the breakdown of its principles. Secondly, to determine the extent to which the hotel chains are responding to the principles of the Code through disclosure information about their engagements with interest groups, regardless of their adherence to the Code. Finally, this research aims to correlate transparency about sustainability with the factors of code adoption and type of hotel chain according to its geographical scope.

The study is organised as follows. Sections 2 and 3 are a review of the literature on the subjects of codes of ethics and the GCET. Section 4, in turn, describes the methodology of the study, while section 5 advances the main results. Section 6 discusses the results obtained. Concluding remarks are provided in section 7.

The dominant discourse on sustainability and responsibility calls for a solid understanding of the process of how a responsible tourist destination actually implements a sustainability agenda (*Mihalič, 2016*). This study therefore analyses the way in which the GCET and the disclosure of social responsibility information represent potential tools for more sustainable tourism based on transparency and the engagement of stakeholders.

2. Codes of ethics

There is a widespread consensus that the institutionalisation and transmission of an ethical code is the first step toward improving the behaviour of an organisation with regard to its different stakeholders (*Garegnani et al., 2015; Kaptein, 2015; Erwin, 2011*). The KPMG report of 2014 corroborated the link between formulating an ethical code in an organisation and better business practices. Yet it is necessary, so as to contribute to sustainability, that the code be tailored both to the company's circumstances and organisational strategy, identity and predicaments. Moreover, the report identified a decrease in misconduct as well as an ability among organisations toward more efficiency in detecting and responding to wrongdoings.

Motivations that can lead large companies to implement ethical codes are protection or improvement of reputation, compliance with key stakeholders, general communication of commitments, generation of trust, and compliance with legal commitments. Moreover, certain sectors of tourism require abiding by regulations to promote their development (*KPMG, 2014*).

Garegnani et al. (2015), nonetheless, considered that research addressing the question of the quality of ethical codes is lacking, in spite of the many studies on ethical code content and the extent to

which these codes serve as tools to regulate the behaviour of individuals within an organisation (*Bodolica and Spraggon, 2015; Erwin, 2011; Kaptein, 2015*). Research on these issues in Spain is limited to some papers published by *Ayuso and Garolera (2012)*, *Rodríguez-Domínguez et al. (2009)* and *Ruiz-Lozano et al. (2016)*.

The specialised literature actually advances the existence of a large gap between business policy and ethical practice in organisations due to the inadequate design of codes, the lack of managerial commitment and the pressure to meet short-term objectives (*Bodolica and Spraggon, 2015; Webley and Werner, 2008*).

Research carried out in the framework of the hospitality sector has focused on the importance of understanding its ethical issues and practices. *Myung (2017)*, for example, identified social responsibility (SR) as a central issue.

Other recent papers have focused on SR practices and reporting by both national and international hotels (*Mossaz and Coghlan, 2016; Moreno de Souza et al., 2015; Grosbois, 2012; Mattered and Moreno-Melgarejo, 2012; Chung and Parker, 2010; Erdogan and Baris, 2007; Holcomb et al., 2007*). These studies highlighted how hotels, especially international chains, incorporated SR policies of environmental concern into management. Yet, little research has focused on the potential influence of ethical criteria on these new management systems (*Gössling et al., 2012; Kazimierczak, 2006*) with the exception of studies of specific subjects such as the defence of animals (*Fennell, 2014*) or sex tourism (*Tepelus, 2008*).

3. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: development and evolution

Concerns about the ethics in the tourism sector have led different international organisations toward the development of a code of conduct. *Payne and Dimanche (1996)* advanced four areas of concern: the natural environment, local communities, employees and tourists. Doubts arose initially as to whether the document should specifically serve the different stakeholders or serve as a guideline for global conduct. The UNWTO opted, finally, for a global code requiring agents of the sector to recognise the following aspects: the limitations of natural resources; the need to curb growth in order to achieve economic development; the need to consider the socio-cultural costs involved in developing tourism; and since tourism is a service, it should be offered adhering to ethical rules of management with respect to both employees and customers. These different considerations led to the adoption in 1999 of the GCET (*WTO, 2001*). *Table 1* shows the Code's 10 principles.

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) (*UN, 2011*) is a specialised body responsible for implementing and promoting the Code, as well as evaluating and following up the stipulations of the UNWTO. Several authors stress the importance of these

Table 1
Articles of the global code of ethics for tourism (*WTO, 2001*).

Article 1: Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies
Article 2: Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment
Article 3: Tourism, a factor of sustainable development
Article 4: Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement
Article 5: Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities
Article 6: Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development
Article 7: Right to tourism
Article 8: Liberty of tourist movement
Article 9: Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry
Article 10: Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8093095>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8093095>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)