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Sustainability

Corporate sustainability practices in accredited Brazilian hospitals: a degree-of-maturity assessment of the environmental dimension

Práticas de sustentabilidade corporativa em hospitais brasileiros acreditados: verificação do grau de maturidade quanto à dimensão ambiental

Prácticas de sostenibilidad corporativa en hospitales brasileños acreditados: evaluación del nivel de madurez en la dimensión ambiental

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to assess the degree of maturity of Brazilian accredited hospitals in relation to sustainable practices, specifically the environmental dimension. Therefore, a questionnaire was constructed, shaped by the literature review and the evaluation method of the Corporate Sustainability Index of BM and FBovespa (n.d.). Furthermore, the relationship between three corporate sustainability tools (the certification of the International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 14001, published sustainability reports, and the existence of an area dedicated to corporate sustainability) and the maturity of hospitals in relation to sustainability practices were assessed. The results show that, of the 38 hospitals that participated in the survey (43% of subjects studied), 58% obtained a maturity rating of very high or high rating, according to the established criteria. In addition, some research variables showed statistically significant differences among the hospitals that have ISO 14001 certification, those that publish sustainability reports, and those that have an area dedicated to sustainability. Consequently, hospitals should take action to include much more sustainability actions in their strategies, such as how to establish a participatory dialog with stakeholders, in order to improve and raise the level of maturity of hospitals.

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Keywords: Sustainability; Environmental sustainability; Accredited hospitals; Maturity level

Resumo

O principal objetivo deste artigo é verificar o grau de maturidade dos hospitais acreditados brasileiros em relação às práticas de sustentabilidade, mais especificamente na dimensão ambiental. Para isso, um questionário foi construído a partir da revisão de literatura e do método de avaliação do Índice de Sustentabilidade Empresarial da BM&FBovespa (n.d.). Além disso, verificou-se a relação entre três ferramentas de sustentabilidade corporativa (certificação International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 14001, a publicação de relatórios de sustentabilidade e a existência de uma área dedicada à sustentabilidade na empresa) e a maturidade dos hospitais em relação às práticas de sustentabilidade. Os resultados apontam que, dos trinta e oito hospitais que participaram da pesquisa (43% do universo investigado), 58% das instituições obtiveram classificação de maturidade muito alta ou alta de acordo com os critérios estabelecidos. Ademais, algumas variáveis investigadas apresentaram diferenças estatisticamente significativas entre os hospitais que possuem a certificação ISO 14001, que publicam

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relatórios de sustentabilidade e que possuem uma área dedicada à sustentabilidade. Assim, os hospitais devem adotar atitudes para inserir cada vez mais a sustentabilidade em suas estratégias, como estabelecer um diálogo participativo com os *stakeholders*, que poderão aprimorar e elevar o grau de maturidade das instituições hospitalares.

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Palavras-chave: Sustentabilidade; Sustentabilidade ambiental; Hospitais acreditados; Grau de maturidade

Resumen

El principal objetivo en este artículo es verificar el nivel de madurez de los hospitales brasileños acreditados respecto a las prácticas sostenibles, específicamente en la dimensión ambiental. Para ello, un cuestionario fue construido a partir de la revisión de la bibliografía y del método de evaluación del Índice de Sustentabilidad Empresarial de BM&F Bovespa. Además, se investigó la relación entre tres herramientas de sostenibilidad corporativa (*International Organization for Standardization* [ISO] 14001, la publicación de informes de sostenibilidad y la existencia de un área dedicada a la sostenibilidad en la empresa) y la madurez de los hospitales con relación a las prácticas de sostenibilidad. Los resultados muestran que, de los treinta y ocho hospitales que participaron en la encuesta (43% del universo investigado), el 58% obtuvo calificación de madurez muy alta o alta, de acuerdo con los criterios establecidos. Asimismo, algunas variables investigadas presentaron diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre los hospitales que cuentan con la certificación ISO 14001, que publican informes de sostenibilidad y que poseen un área dedicada a la sostenibilidad. De esa manera, los hospitales deben adoptar acciones que incluyan cada vez más la sostenibilidad en sus estrategias, como, por ejemplo, establecer un diálogo participativo con los *stakeholders*, lo que mejorará y elevará el nivel de madurez de los hospitales.

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Palabras clave: Sostenibilidad; Sostenibilidad ambiental; Hospitales acreditados; Nivel de madurez

Introduction

From the 1980s, concern about the scarcity of natural resources and their conservation for future generations meant that all sectors of the economy began to assume responsibility in the pursuit of sustainable development (Klabin & Aragão, 2010). One of the areas under discussion is health, more specifically, the hospital sector, whose operations have a major social and environmental impact, since they involve a huge amount of waste to be disposed of in landfills (Jarousse, 2012), as well as high consumption of materials and energy (Weisz, Haas, Pelikan, & Schmied, 2011).

A first step in the pursuit of sustainability in the sector is to assess the impact of its activities by building metrics: these are important not only to assess the current state of companies, but also to assist in setting future goals for reducing environmental harm caused by operations (Zucchi & Mwamakamba, 2011). Therefore, this study aims to assess the degree of maturity of Brazilian hospitals in relation to corporate sustainability actions, particularly in the environmental dimension.

To this end, a questionnaire was created, inspired by the literature review and the Índice de Sustentabilidade Empresarial (Corporate Sustainability Index/ISE), the Brazilian index that analyzes the performance of companies listed on BM&FBovespa according to aspects of corporate sustainability. Additionally, the degree of commitment to sustainable practices was also evaluated, using three parameters: (i) operational performance, evaluated based on ISO 14001 certification; (ii) the relationship with society and transparency, evaluated based on publication of a Sustainability Report; and (iii) management structure, evaluated based on the existence of a specific sustainability area.

The paper is organized as follows: first, a literature review is presented addressing the key concepts of corporate sustainability and its elements, such as corporate sustainability certifications, reports and indicators, etc. Environmental sustainability issues for hospitals are looked at in depth. The methodology, the research questions and the hypotheses are then described. A discussion of the results follows, with a rating of the hospitals according to the degree of maturity. Finally, the main conclusions of the research are presented.

Review of the literature

Corporate sustainability and its tools

Corporate sustainability concerns the way in which enterprises conduct business, including their production processes, stakeholder engagement, disclosure and public commitments (João, Serralvo, & Cardoso, 2011; Zylberstajn & Lins, 2010). Based on the balance between financial, environmental and social aspects (triple bottom line) in the management and evaluation of companies (Lemme, 2010), the concept of corporate sustainability should be aligned with the organization's strategy and objectives (Marrewijk, 2003). For this to occur, it is essential to use tools for monitoring, measurement, incentive, information and engagement in this area. Among the existing mechanisms, we will analyze those that according to the literature have the highest impact on the management of corporate sustainability: (i) ISO 14001 certification, (ii) publication of sustainability reports, and (iii) creation of a specific area in the company; in addition to sustainability indexes.

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