Environmental Strategies in Hotel Business Administration

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**Abstract**
The problem of the environment is a strategic challenge in the era we are living in. In this sense, more and more managers from various areas of activity, the tourism industry included, have become increasingly concerned of promoting better environmental practices. If these practices were based on the 3R’s principle, later on they developed amounting to the implementation of much more complex systems and strategies to support the solving of environmental problems. The paper highlights the main environmental strategies implemented in the hotels of Romania and Italy, presented in a comparative analysis. The study provides an image of the current situation in two regions of Romania and Italy, thus showing the efforts made by managers to ameliorate the impact of the activities carried out on the environment.

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1. Introduction
The intrinsic relation between tourism and natural environment renders the former interested in all environmental protection actions. In this sense, the design of strategies to protect the environment was imposed for the following reasons (Rojanschi, Bran and Diaconu, 1997, p.23):
- replacing the system of random, casual actions by pragmatic and coherent actions to protect the environment;
- eliminating internal contradictions that limited the enactment of measures to protect the environment or reduced the efficiency of these measures;
- drafting, implementing and evaluating the environmental policy step by step so that its re-evaluation becomes possible;
- adapting plans for action and time scale implementation (on the long, medium and short term);
- choosing and training proper personnel according to stage and action;
- controlling the strict application of measures established according to the agreements.

Therefore, the concerns that aim at protecting the environment have increased in number worldwide, recording an upward trend among the tourism industry operators (Ardelean and Maior, 2000, p. 227). They understood that alignment to an ecological policy is an essential component of success because:
- tourists are more and more sensitive to such problems; as a result, they started to use “clean” products and services and the reputation and prestige of the company are increasingly related to the way in which it is integrated in the activity of environmental protection;
- protection norms are now mandatory and stricter year after year. A company that aimed at taking better ecological measures than current legislation (which will become compulsory in no time, anyway) has an advantage in the field of advertising and its image, not to mention the prospects of a substantial competitive advantage;
- although the alignment to norms of environmental protection usually incurs additional costs for companies, sometimes it can be the other way round. As a result, money can be saved from consumables, energy, water, etc.

Furthermore, the policy of every touristic unit should draw on the real demand of consumers of touristic services, on the customers' involvement in the implementation of these concepts, as active and aware part along the unity's staff. However, irrespective of the environmental policy implemented by a hotel, its observance needs seriousness and as much concern as the aiming of the profit indicators or the occupancy degree. A responsible involvement that is based on maintaining operation standards, reducing unjustified water, energy or fuel consumption, as well as efficient waste management will certainly lead to excellent results that can be assessed by comparing them to the consumption from previous periods or by observing

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the customers’ reaction to the friendly attitude of personnel with respect to the environment. (Ștefănică and Borza, 2014, p.90)

2. Strategies to Solve Environmental Problems in the Hospitality Industry
2.1. Implementation of the Environmental Management System

The creation of an environmental management system in a touristic unit is a complex process with several stages. First of all, it is important to define the environmental policy. It is a public document that outlines the measures to be taken at the level of the touristic unit in view of protecting the environment (Hobincu, 2004, p.1).

The stages of implementing the environmental management system comprise the following:

- **Training the personnel** in the field of environmental protection and environmental management.
- **Communication**—external communication consists of messages and documents for employees; external communication may have multiple shapes and is destined to tourists, public administration, mass-media, professional associations and all those that are interested in the products and services provided by the hotel.
- **Existence of documentation for the environmental management system**—is the proof of performance in the case of the environmental management system and contains a written copy of the environmental policy, the register of the factors with impact on the environment and the environmental management programme.
- **Operating Regulation**—consists in a series of clear instructions, respected by the touristic unit in view of protecting the environment. It makes possible the achievement of environmental aims and plays an important role in observing the legislation of the field.

Environmental policy and the implementation of an environmental management system respectively cannot be achieved in any touristic unit such as places where continuing improvement is not currently possible. In case the unit is smaller and environmental problems are simple, it can only be applied via a system of environmental management.

2.2."Three R's": Reduce – Reuse – Recycle

The application of the concept of "Three R's": Reduce – Reuse – Recycle, very popular at the end of the '80s, showed an important change in the perception, attitudes and behaviours of companies on the environment (Gherasim and Gherasim, 1999, p.21). At that moment, the managers concerned with the promotion of better environmental policies, including the ones in the tourism industry, acquired this concept and its effects showed in the following:

- the reduction of total costs incurred on the long term;
- the reduction of waste landfills that could become “time bombs”;
- the saving of all categories of resources.

2.3."Ten R's": for a better environmental practice in all tourism operations

In the field of tourism, Victor Middleton identifies and proposes Ten R's for a better practice on the environment in tourism operations (Middleton, 1998, p.134). For each of the Ten R's there is a task which can be easily solved and potential benefits for the environment can be traced and there is the possibility to significantly reduce costs in many cases. The Ten R's are:

- **Recognize**—recognising the nature of environmental problems and of the opportunities or threats related to the impact on the environment.
- **Refuse**—refusal to engage in certain activities when they are acknowledged as damaging for the environment.
- **Reduce**—what cannot be refused, due to lack of an alternative source for the short term, may often be approached as a target to reduce the current level of use.
- **Renew (replace)**—renewing/replacing existing products and processes with other products and processes friendlier to the environment and less toxic.
- **Re-use**—establishing the materials that can be economically re-used.
- **Recycle**—the exits that are usually a loss at the end of the operating or production cycle may be recovered and recycled to be further used (e.g. recycling of paper, cardboard, textiles, glass and aluminium boxes).
- **Reengineeer**—in the modern sense of business management, it means to introduce change to traditional management operations and structures to reduce costs and obtain better results in more and more competitive conditions.
- **Retrain**—the process of training and continuing education of personnel becomes increasingly important as in time, it can modify the consumers’ behaviours that may have a negative impact on the environment.
- **Reward**—we may often note that employees are too little interested in the environment and the impact of their activity on it to willingly allocate part of their time for operations related to environmental requirements. The motivation of personnel can be achieved via acknowledgement forms, especially financial ones for the aims attained or even overcome.
Reeducate—the change of behaviour is the ultimate purpose of the last of the R’s. It refers to the opportunities and special responsibility that many companies in tourism need to promote, develop the customers’ awareness of the environmental qualities in the products they buy. This means to inform the customers, raise their interest, maybe even enthusiasm, at the same time, and educate the ones that use touristic services.

The Ten R’s mainly operate in the field of offer and less so in the one of demand, especially to achieve a more efficient use of resources to control operational costs and waste management. Big companies find relevant to implement all the ten procedures together, integrated in a system of environmental management, while small tourism companies may follow only one or two of the processes.

2.4. The Strategy of Green Marketing

This strategy has two main features: orientation and engagement towards the environment (Welford, 1995, p. 153).

Orientation towards the environment – takes into consideration the effect of the company’s actions on the environment. Thus, to have a correct orientation towards the environment requires the understanding of the size and gravity of the environmental crisis in relation to problems such as the degradation of air, water and soil, as well as adjacent problems such as animals’ rights and preservation of species.

Engagement towards the environment by which the company decides to become “an employee in the service of the environment” and reflect this position in all its actions. By this engagement, the company needs to acknowledge the need to make the marketing theory real, in a pro-active way.

Thus, this approach of green marketing needs to correspond to the purposes, strategies and techniques of environmental management, including the introduction of environmental policies, of a programme to improve the environment and environmental education. Green marketing refers to the entire organisation to the same extent for all its products/services. It is useless to design a product or service with superior environmental qualities if the intimate structure of the firm presents a highlighted ecological degradation. Therefore, it is necessary for every organisation to design and implement ecological management strategies and to prove it is engaged on a path to sustainable development (Welford, 1995, p. 155).

At present, along these strategies, managers in the hospitality industry opt for obtaining ecological certificates and registration; by observing the requirements in obtaining them, contribution to the solving of environmental problems is made.

3. Methodology of Research

The purpose of research aimed at identifying the main environmental strategies (both global and partial) adopted in hotels of Romania and Italy, presented in a comparative analysis.

In order to realise our purpose, we chose the research through enquiry, because it assures a great flexibility, and the data and information are obtained quicker than by other methods. In the elaboration of the research instrument - the questionnaire - we established the types of questions, which are closed questions (dichotomous – with two predetermined answering variants). We avoided the open questions; we chose the closed questions, because they allow the easy encoding of the answers, and implicitly the easier and the quicker analysis of the data. The selection procedure was based on the use of the non-random method, based on accessibility. The choice of the modality of contacting the subjects involved the personal interviewing of the tourist units managers, performed by going to the hotels in the research area established. The questions asked to the managers had the purpose to obtain answers regarding the strategies by which environmental protection may be achieved in hotel businesses. The data obtained from the questionnaire were processed with the help of SPSS.13 program.

In what concerns the sample under research, the data analysis emphasises the following structure: according to the hotels – 53.3% of the hotels are from Romania/North-East Region hotels (the North-East region comprising the counties: Bacău, Botoşani, Iaşi, Neamţ, Suceava, Vaslui), and 46.7% of the hotels are from Italy/Veneto Region (Veneto in North-East Italy – the provinces Belluno, Padova, Rovigo, Treviso, Venice, Verona, Vicenza); according to the category of comfort – most of them are 3*** and 4**** hotels, and according to the number of employees – most hotels have from 10 to 249 employees.

4. Results of Research

Emphasizing the main environmental strategies adopted in the Romanian hotel industry, as compared to the Italian one (at the level of touristic units investigated).

Global Strategies

Processing and systematising data provides us the following results, as can be seen from table 1 below:
Table 1. Global strategies adopted in hotels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global strategies</th>
<th>Romania (%)</th>
<th>Italy (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy for implementing ecological management system (EMS)</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy for continuous improvement of environmental performances</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy of 3R’s</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy of 10 R’s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy of green marketing</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data obtained in SPSS

The results synthetized in the table above are highlighted by the following figure:

Figure 1 Global strategies on the protection of the environment adopted in hotels

In the Italian hotel industry, global strategies pertaining to the protection of the environment are much more important than in Romania. The most often encountered global strategy both in Romania and Italy is the 3 R’s (Reduce – Reuse – Recycle) and is implemented in almost all Italian hotels investigated, and in 41.3% of the Romanian ones, while the strategy of the 10 R’s is not known by the managers of the touristic units investigated (there are few exceptions in Italy) or was shown to be partially implemented at the level of personal touristic units after it was found that each of the ten R’s is present.

The strategy to implement ecological management is only found in 27.9% of the Italian hotels and in approximately 10.2% of the Romanian ones, whereas the strategy of continuous improvement of environmental performance records a higher frequency, 60.5% in Italian hotels and 24.5% of the Romanian ones.

The strategy of green marketing is the only one with a higher occurrence at the level of Romanian hotels (30.6%), as compared to the Italian ones (27.9%).

Partial strategies

Table 2. Partial strategies on the protection of the environment adopted in hotels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partial strategies</th>
<th>Romania (%)</th>
<th>Italy (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficient waste management</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of polluting emissions</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of energy consumption</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of water consumption</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of products, equipment, environment friendly technologies</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise diminution</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data obtained in SPSS

The results synthetized in the table above are highlighted by the following figure:
Of all partial environment strategies, the reductions of energy and water consumption are the less often adopted by the management systems of the touristic units investigated. At the opposite pole, there are the ones that concern the purchase of products, equipment or environment friendly technologies and efficient waste management – for Romanian managers, as well as the ones for noise diminution or the reduction of polluting waste for Italian managers.

The results obtained highlight the fact that, irrespective of the type of strategy adopted, it is found to a greater extent at the level of Italian hotels. It proves that Italian managers get involved more in the protection of the environment by managing businesses with a lower impact on the environment.

5. Conclusions

The context in which companies operate changed as the public was becoming more and more familiar with the problems of the environment. Probably this tendency will continue and consumers will refine themselves in their choices, as well as in understanding the companies’ messages. As a result, the way in which the company communicates with the external environment by means of products, services and other activities should become more open and honest.

Another important factor in the success of these strategies is the direct involvement of those with management positions, respectively the managers of all hierarchical levels as they are the ones that point out the way of approaching the environmental policy, those that, due to their responsibilities, may fight against indifference, fear of the unknown, and may guide the circuit of money; therefore, thanks to minimal equipment, they can stop the waste of resources, correct the errors that occur and, at the same time, recompense the worthy ones. Changing the attitude of all towards the problems of the environment and involvement in their solving is the incentive of continuous improvement in environmental performance. The fundamental key for the success of these strategies is to approach problems in a systemic manner, including research and planning. Last but not least, the company needs to consider environmental protection a priority.

References