QUALITY MILESTONES OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract: *At this stage there are numerous studies about how tourism activity is related and affects the environment. The purpose of this paper is to examine theoretically, and to analyse activities that occur in hotels, linking this activity to the principles and activities that reduce the tourism negative environmental impact. When we have the objective to discuss sustainable development we must balance between a trilogies that enclose the following three concepts: economic, social/ equity and ecology/environment. In fact in our opinion we agree that "sustainable development is a fractal" concept. Sustainable development is examined here, specifically - taking account of the activity of accommodation in hotels, and also the frame that such activity must integrates. The principles of sustainable development are the most important factors beside clients` expectations, such that to maintain a standard that not only is high, so the coefficients satisfy tourists, but to suit the requirements sustainability, which in this instance means rationalization repeated on different levels and plans (this concerns to energy consumption, water, to waste disposal, etc.). The relationship between tourism and the environment is particular complex, since these two factors are interrelated, and each of them is, at their turn characterised by complexity and variability. The fundamental premise for a friendly, high quality tourism is harmony on the one hand, with the operators (for sustainable development) and secondly with tourists (for a correct use of the facilities). As a syntagma, this can mean: the promotion and adoption of "green behaviour". It is believed today that more and more hoteliers should adopt this behaviour, an ecological framework in which hotel has the benefits of normal economic activity, showing competitiveness, but customer satisfaction in the highest grade (quality) remains the central plan in spite of rigors required by the so-called: "green behaviour"! As a final remark, we mention as milestone of ecological behaviour (green) connected to sustainable development are certification to ISO 14001 and eco-labelling of accommodation.*

Motto:
"Our goal is a delightfully diverse, safe, healthy and just world, with clean air, water, soil and power —economically, equitably, ecologically and elegantly
enjoyed."[3]

Introduction
When we have the objective to discuss sustainable development we must balance between a trilogy that enclose: economic, social/ equity and ecology/environment, in fact we agree that "sustainable development is a fractal" concept. "The Fractal Frontier is a geometrical algorithm which balances and integrates the triple-bottom-line needs of people, planet and profit. In this context a holistic fractal matrix becomes increasingly detailed, and guides effective decisions for sustainable results" (Matthews, 2012). The

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[3] McDonough, William & Brungart, Michael

sustainable development matrix (McDonough, Brungart: 2002: 79) of, a tool developed by UNO (Seth, 2007: 102) it is a Sierpinski's (equilateral) Triangle:

Figure 1. Cradle to Cradle Design™ Framework or "C2C"
source (McDonough, Brungart: 2002: 79)

In the literature we found an interesting model that explains the required comprehensive idea we refer in this paper.

There are some comments to make upon this model (Cradle to Cradle Design™ Framework or "C2C" (McDonough, W.; Brungart, M.; 2002: 46)

- it use fractal geometry, transform the mathematical concept into an ecological one -as "fractal ecology";
- it integrate the trilogy economy- ecology- -equity into the sustainability triangle and it demonstrates how the "3e" integrate into sustainable development;
- it is considered: "world's first and only model that graphically and conceptually identifies the instruction to achieve sustainable results, regardless of application" (Mock,T; Wernke,T.; 2011: 89);
- it is an instruction set / a "code" that are designed in order to define our condition sustainable land with various fields; Besides all human efforts (large and small) that can produce lasting results. This set of instructions / 'code' is a universal code that must shape the outputs, in order to produce repeatable and scalable results. Whether you are interested in economic development, food production, tourism and other fields of sustainable development, the same core set of instructions apply if sustainable results are desired.

This triangle, drawn by fractal geometry helps us to analyze the problems of sustainable development, because it shows how ecology, economy and equity is related, among other values, and we show how each level of decision has impact on all the above - mentioned planning three. Each of the fractal can be an asset. The aim is to design and balance the equation. So what we need to do is to move around as required fractal geometry, so that a new plan can generate value in each category (ecology/ environment; economy; equity/ society/ community).
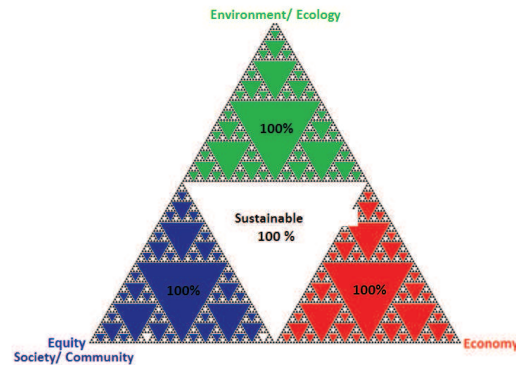
Figure 2. Cradle to Cradle Fractal Framework (C2C Fractal Framework) –adapted
Source: McDonough, W.; Brungart, M. 2002: 79

We propose to make an inventory of the conceptual framework used in sustainable tourism. But generally it is accepted as a sort of tourism activity that characterized by attempting to make as low as possible an impact on the natural environment and local culture, while helping to generate economic value and employment for local people. In our opinion, the closest definition to sustainable tourism is that, which it`s using the "*responsible tourism"* as paradigm.

The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for its actors - local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves. It is said that sustainable tourism is an adopted practice in successful eco-tourism (Edgell, 2006: 19).

To have sustainable tourism it must be aware of all three legs of the triangle: economic, social, environmental: economic prosperity, sparing use of natural resource and environment and communities (human resources, civil society).

At last decade the relationship tourists -hotelier, in sustainable development has become a priority, it has become more comprehensive by applying environmental management tools.
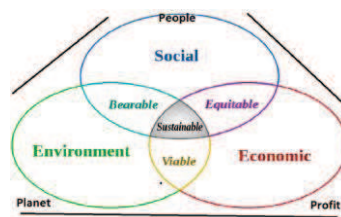

Figure 3. The three target dimensions of sustainable development
Source: Bayer, F.; Vogel, T.; Pleia, V.A.; 2013: 12

Tourist activity is mostly related to "natural resources", which obviously for sustainable development require certain instruments future oriented.

Figure 4. Relationship between sustainable tourism and some related concepts that constitute the MILESTONES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Source:

The systemic relationship between tourism and environment is feasible. We can see here a relationship full of potential, based on the strength of   a lot of complex inter-dependencies that are established between elements of each. In these days, the world it is speaking about: good quality, friendly environment, health and harmony of the environment. In tourism and its actors (tour-operators tourism, tourists, local community) those above named, must *ALL* be in harmony. Sustainable tourists can reduce the impact of tourism in many ways (Swarbrooke, 1999: 13), as well as:

- Informing themselves of the culture, politics and economy of local communities visited;
- Respecting and acting to conserve cultural heritage and traditional values, local traditions, customs;
- Understanding and tolerance upon local culture;
- Supporting the integrity of local cultures;
- Supporting local economies by purchasing local goods;
- Using the least possible amount of non-renewable resources;
- Conserving resources by interacting with businesses that are environmentally conscious.

United Nations and WTO reported World Tourism Barometer Reported that the impact is even greater as we know that tourism is considered the World's Largest Service Sector Industry, and this service evolved ascending, (reaching 1.035 Billion tourists in 2012, up from over 983 million in 2011, and 940 million in 2010). (*World Tourism Barometer* 2011; 2012; 2013)

Also the tourism sector is a major provider of jobs and income, and when we talk about business in hostelling, the more we could say that the impact in sustainable development is more acute in terms of the environment, resources and local communities. The location where the hotel is located is important. The concern of the tourists to the targeted area is directly related to the interests of investors to recover their investment. This is why there it is little ecological operation of hotels, the situation changes if certain measures are taken. In recent years there is more and more change on this plan of the development of sustainable environment.

Through this study we want to make an inventory of effects on the natural environment of the hotel business and also we examine possible to draw several conclusions for making a more aware management, for an accountable relationship between environment and hotelier. It is recognized that economic investors' interests are in conflict with the interests of the natural environment. The most times the investors tend to prefer the profit at any cost, money to the detriment of the environment, and of the life. Therefore, often in short term results are less noticeable but with implications that alter environmental issues, but also the socio-cultural ones.

If we refer to the fact, that there are different degrees of tolerance, which means that the number of people which possible can hit a stable area, following a certain local lifestyle.

Any exploitation above the limit will create alternation and changing socio-cultural and natural environment also. These are the reasons that experts draw attention to this kind of impact that ultimately compromise the attractiveness of the area, making a particular destination to be increasingly more avoided.

Environment and the Hotel

Currently in the world there are hundreds of thousands of hotels, which clearly have a great impact on the environment by interacting with it, like any other productive business, often being consuming resources, up to exhaustion, modifying their or destroying their, leading them to the long-term unwanted effects. These, and many others, are the reasons why the concept of "sustainable development" in tourism have expanded into this particular plan that is hostelling.

Below we make a list of activities considered sustainable in contrast to the corresponding unsustainable activities. (adapted from Swarbrooke, 1999:)

Table 1. Sustainable tourism vs. Non-sustainable tourism (correspondents/conformity/ mismatch)

Sustainable	*Non-sustanable*
General concepts	
Slow development	Rapid development
Controlled development	Uncontrolled development
Appropriate scale	Inappropriate scale
Long term	Short term
Qualitative	Quantative
Local control	Remote control
Development Strategies	
Plan, then develop (eco-design)	Develop without
Concept-led schemes	Project-led schemes
Concentrate on physical elements of landscape	Concentrate on "honey-pots"
Pressure and benefits diffuses	Increase capacity
Local developers	Outside developers
Local employer	Imported labour
Vernacular architecture	Non-vernacular architecture
Tourist Behaviour	
Law value	High value
Some mental preparation	Little or no mental preparation
Respect local customs& traditions	Disrespect/ignore local customs & traditions
Quiet	Loud
Learning local "language"	No learning local "language"
Tactful and sensitive	Intensive and insensitive

Many tourism-related activities have a direct or indirect impact on the natural environment, on physical structure of the place, on the bio-diversity. The natural areas are damaged by arranging tourist facilities, but the presence of the tourists can destroy local flora and fauna. Hotels using large amounts of water can contribute to water pollution, and/or to drying of the soil.

Taking into account our approach we will present the life cycle of tourist accommodation services (www.incdpm.ro/ro/ in Stefanică 2013: 616).

Figure 5. Life cycle of tourism accommodation services (adapted)
Source: Stefanică 2013: 616 www.incdpm.ro/ro/

Analyzing the effect of the activity of a hotel that is designed and constructed so as to provide quality services to the guest.

In these circumstances the respect for the natural environment and sustainable development need to consider that the big challenge is maintaining the level of comfort, convenience and benefits to tourists. The facilities provided should be designed to be

efficient, to save resources, remaining at the same time comfortable and useful as customers demand and expect.

Relative impact on the environment and suggestions for improvement are associated with each of the phases of the product life cycle classic, finding here, as well as: the growing period, plateau of maturity, and finally the track of losses also.

Europe has developed different systems of certification, from certification on local level, to national level in some cases at national level (the Swan or the Green Key- Greenland, Denmark and European Nordic Countries; Green Certificate -Latvia; La Clef verte-France; Legambiente Turismo -Italy; Milieubarometer -Netherlands; Hiiumaa Green Label -Estonia; Eco-Romania-Romania), and at last European eco-label. All can be applied to tourist hotel structures if they meet certain conditions if meet ecological principles of sustainability. For instance in hotel industry, the ECO-label must comply, the following provisions and conditions:

- An offer of services that is responsive and attentive to the issue of the environment (protective reasoned);
- an offers potentially interested in using an eco-label;
- Proof existence of certain technical conditions (green energy, waste management, water saving, etc);
- The development of programs / national-oriented sustainability;
- A special care about particularity of local conditions as: climatic conditions, geographic-physical structure/ biodiversity, traditions, customs, culture, behaviour and consumption;
- Some official/governmental advice support, even financial aid/ grants in the spirit of sustainability;
- People sensitized to environmental issues, particularly in improving environmental quality in relation to tourism, in particular the services offered by the hotel.

Openness of hoteliers to environmental issues can be measured by the presence of any measures taken to protect the environment management, such examples are:
- Prevalent use of eco-labelled products;
- Using of energy saving systems;
- Employees aware, sensitive and responsive to environmental issues;
- Customer awareness concerning his behaviour to environment (sustainably, careful and harmless).

- Generally, in the activity and the various issues of the hostelry business management, as presented above featured as ecologic, should be analyzed, and once identified environmental hazards, for them must be proposed mandatory solutions, taking into account the following:
- Protecting the landscape and beauty of the area;
- Protection of biodiversity;
- Educating employees and tourists ecological spirit by providing complete and credible information;
- Integrated Environmental values in the Operations Management (may use some international standard or ecological scheme/ initiatives);
- use of "green marketing";
- Minimizing the impact on the structure, integrating it into the surroundings;
- Reducing energy costs through efficient and economical suitable practices ;
- Diminish and dispose of waste, using more the method of "3R" -(Reduce, Reuse, Recycle);
- Minimizing environmental risks (floods, air pollution, fires, pesticides, water pollution, noise, soil pollution, inadequate waste disposal and sewage waste etc.).
- Specialized tour guides, to conduct harmless tourism, lacking environmental hazards;
- Environmental Audits regularly operated;

-        Promoting and supporting responsible tourism.

Attention and interest of hoteliers operators starts from business requirement, it is about the necessity to differentiate the quality of service to others of the same kind which is available on the market. Offer comes to meet the demand, and in recent years, demand, manifested need, consumers are manifested more and more, they are oriented towards quality products characterized as healthy and eco-friendly.

And more, the good quality products should be verified. In this regard, several initiatives voluntary stakeholders to have their own domain rules and standards were made known in time. Thus, emerged a number of guidelines, codes of conduct, best practices, labels oriented quality of accommodation and the environment.

The interest in the use of eco-labels increases when the hotel management understands the advantage of differentiating the hotels in question by using certification scheme / eco-labelling. Definitely this is a proved competitive advantage, an because of this should not be neglected, but we must recall the fact can create conflict in the chain, by copying and reproduction, again and again. In spite of this inconvenient in last years amounted to encourage the market to continue and expand the sustainable improvements, more and more hoteliers.

It is known that the inclusion of the European Eco-label, an label dedicated to the tourism facilities is more retrieved in broader tourism program supported and funded by the EU to promote the EMAS, environmental management and in particular for ISO 14000 standards family, these are leading to an accurate application of the principles of protecting the natural environment, environmental measures and sustainable development internationally.

Some stakeholders have established The International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI), this is European initiative, IHEI is located In Denmark at Copenhagen. This is a charity program developed by the international hotel industry for the benefit of all hotels and the environment. Their aim is to promote the benefits of environmental management as an integral part of running a successful, efficient hotel business. (Fletcher, 2013:6)

This initiative uses various tools such as:

▪   Dissemination of information related to the field of sustainable development and hostelling;
▪   Environmental policy instrument;
▪   Eco-design;
▪   Life Cycle Analysis;
▪   Environmental Management;
▪   Prevention of pollution;
▪   Other appropriate purpose.

Contemporary tourists are more interested in the problems of the natural environment, this is one of the reason they feeling the need for a formal certificate of quality hotels. Thus the hotelier business moves rapidly towards the introduction and use of tools for environmental management that are both more credible and more visible, being recognized internationally and now so often operates public. There seems to be a trend for increased use of ISO 14000 and EMAS in cooperation with the EU Eco-label. There are regulations approved by European Parliament and Council, already had revised eco-label in UE, and expands the scope of the European Eco-label for tourism, focusing on the hotel business.(Tomescu:2011: 695)

International Regulations officially recognized by International Bodies indicate the possibility of improving the quality of services in hotels, through measures we already have named above, such as rationalization of services, resource and use the excellent organic products (inventory, cleaning products, food products, environmentally sound products, whose quality has been recognized by the EU-Eco-label or national eco-labels instead of the traditional ones etc.).

In last five years Romania increased interest in applying the principles of sustainable development and sustainable tourism in the last 6-7 years too. (Ștefănică: 2013:620)

Services are considered areas where you can make as many improvements. These improvements may include elements of organization or technology. We can talk about this after are discovered the losses or defects, after installation of biological treatment plants, and after the costs it will be reduced through:

- Design, construction of buildings, furniture, and inventory purchase with eco-friendly materials;
- Design and implementation of energy-saving and water installations;
- Using sensors to turn on / off the light and water or other energy consumers;
- Electrical installations that operate with magnetic keys;
- Use of renewable energy sources etc;
- Increased use of recyclable products.

Conclusion

The relationship between tourism and the environment is particular complex, since these two factors are interrelated, and each of them are at their turn characterised by complexity and variability. Milestones of sustainable tourism are the three spheres (ecology, economy, and environment) and related concepts enclosed in Sustainable development Matrix.

The fundamental premise for a friendly, high quality tourism is harmony on the one hand, with the operators (for sustainable development) and secondly with tourists (for a correct use of the facilities).

Specifically in a eco hotel, environment protection issue should still allow the levels of services to remain high to ensure customer satisfaction. It would be helpful if the tourist customer would be sensitive to this problem would involve he himself. He must be informed about the initiative taken by the hotel concerning compliance principles to sustainable environment, and to customers it may be asked to cooperate in this regard. Obviously the local community would react to such initiative, and the image of such an organization would be well received, and more, obtaining environmental quality label (EU-Eco-label) would be a double guarantee, both for quality and for interest in sustainable tourism.

The ability of operators to promote the protection and conservation of resources that presenting their main activity will be the strength of development in tourism business and competition in tourism. No doubt the use of eco-labels, internationally visible, can be seen as a positive thing by the hotel, only if are accompanied by economic benefits, competitive and commercial, that can add value to such initiatives, as the European Eco-label is for instance.

In terms of environment, the life cycle stages, on that we should focus, are those that precede the services (emplacement and construction of the hotel building), but also involves the current services. Generally the structure of the location is considered an important aspect, but in particular only as initiative of this branch.

Activities taking place in an eco certificate hotel are under the sway of the principles of sustainable tourism development.

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