

Welcome to Brazil, Amazon Region, the green center of the world: a strategy for sustainable tourism and eco-tourism

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Abstract

This work contributes to a discussion on a theoretical level on the external pressures for environmental changes which have started to act on companies of high impact potential to the environment, and the possible answers companies may have to those vectors of environmental demands. Aiming at assisting the expectations initially described, the main external conditions for the responsible companies are analyzed for the occurrence of changes in the business environmental strategies. The possible strategies adopted by the companies as an answer to these environmental determinants are classified, thus contributing to the elaboration of efficient and effective public policies that explore with responsibility this alternative of economic development. Finally, after having emphasized the limits of the concept of “Strategic Environmental Administration”, with respect to the materialization of the new challenge imposed by the paradigm of sustained development, the so-called concept of “Sustainable Before Management” is analyzed and presented as a sine qua non factor for a sustained environmental administration, emphasizing in this work the variable tourism – precisely the eco-tourism.

Keywords: sustained environmental management, environmental strategy, eco-tourism.

1 Introduction

The intensive and indiscriminate use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources, associated to the demographic explosion and an increased awareness that the Earth is the only habitat possible for man to live, in his more predictable



future, has imposed itself historically as a condition for man's action and the preservation and management of his natural environment. For decades, it was thought that economic growth would provide better life conditions for society as a whole. Nevertheless, since the 1960s, due to the accelerated pace of industrialization and population growth in urban areas, the impacts over the environment, either physical or economic and social, became more and more evident for society, mainly in the most developed countries, which then decided to prioritize environmental protection at the expense of economic development. The sixties were marked by conflicts of interest between conservationists and developmentalists, giving rise to what is called today the environmental issue. As there were, up to that moment, no mechanisms to plan or control the environmental issue, developed countries started to incorporate the environmental theme into economic studies and analyses of (social and private) costs and benefits of their productive investments.

Consequently, it had no weight in the decision-making process. It was also pointed out as one of the main causes of "market failures", i.e., the market would not be able to efficiently allocate any negativities created by the economic system, thus hindering development. In this case, it would be up to the government to intervene, correcting them and producing a positive result for society, through the elaboration of public environmental policies.

In the seventies, the environmental issue broadened its scope in such a way that two important international meetings were held to begin arousing the world's ecological awareness: the Club of Rome, in 1970, which, among other objectives, tried to warn authorities about the need to differentiate between economic growth and development; and the World Conference for Development and Environment, called by the United Nations and held in June, 1972, in Stockholm (Sweden). Said meeting has represented a milestone of history, because it was the first meeting between Nation States on a worldwide level concerning the environmental crisis, besides being the first significant social and political event in which the NGOs (non-governmental organizations) took part.

In this decade, the solution for environmental problems found by economists, based on the above mentioned principles, was following the "polluter-payer" principle: assessing environment resources and services was made through the currency unit. Therefore, the solution to avoid environment degradation needed to be a market solution, taken through the setting of a price to be paid by the polluting agent to the government, corresponding to the social costs arising out of the aggression. The adoption of this concept also showed a reactive attitude by economic agents, who, in order to lower their costs connected to this kind of environmental taxation, started to prioritize the so-called end-of-pipe technologies.

More recently, from the eighties on, society went back to reacting quickly and efficiently against the progress of the environmental degradation process. The awareness of environmental preservation, the need for "ecologically correct" business practices, a broader interaction between economic development and environment, and the inclusion by economic agents of social/political concerns spread quickly through many countries [1].



In this decade, environmentalists' emphasized two dimensions, in which the market failed its test of efficiency for the allocation of environmental resources and which must be corrected. The first one is related to the existence of public assets – clean air, drinkable water, etc. – which fall into a particular category where no market value can be attributed; and the second one, which is linked to economic growth and the environmental capability of receiving and assimilating negativities. Thus, as environment capacities are not unlimited and economic market mechanisms are not free from externalities, the companies, in order to respond to the increasing external demand for better sustained economic development, started to incorporate negative externalities of their economic activities into their internal responsibilities [2].

The nineties were represented by “globalizing” the environmental issue. The stage initiated around the turn of this century is one of intense involvement of environmentalist, social/environmentalist NGOs and economic agents in the issue of development and environment. Some events were most significant for the perception and consolidation of fundamental environmental principles related to regulation by the government and society, development of public environmental policies and corporate management of the environment: 1) the Second International Conference on Environmental Management, held at Rotterdam, in April, 1991; 2) the Second World Conference for Development and Environment held in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992, with the presence of representatives from more than 153 countries and about 5,000 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); 3) In 1992, the United Kingdom proclaimed *BS-7750: Specification for Environmental Management Systems*. This is a British regulation, which sets forth guidelines for the integration of the world's demand and need for services and products of high quality and also aligned with environment protection concerns; 4) In March 1997, the Conference Rio+5 was held in Rio de Janeiro, which was once again the center of debates of the international community around the environmental issue.

Such evolution of the environmental issue was due to the fact that, despite the visible “success” earned by the capitalist system in result of the “effective” combination of science and technology, and an “effective” resource management, when economic and monetary resources are confronted with social results, we can see that there is still a lot to be done. Social inequalities, environment deterioration and natural resources destruction are, among others, only variations around the same problem: exhaustion of the current development model. A model of politically unfair development (high concentration of capital), ecologically predatory (an extension of poverty and starvation), which has privileged growth at the expense of development.

2 The society requirement for the adequacy and responsibility in the development models

Therefore, one of the main contributions of all the evolution of the environmental issue was the fact that society started to require from organizations and political leaderships a more adequate and responsible attitude,



where concrete proposals are submitted for a new “paradigm” of development in which economic efficiency, social justice and ecological harmony are pursued in an integrated and inseparable way. Such larger integration between economy and environment has been increasingly divulged as a necessary thing, supporting a search for means of implementation of a new concept: Sustained Economic Development. In other words, Sustained Development must allow the enhancement of life quality levels (in a broad sense), emphasizing particularly the poor population; must represent not only national production growth, but also the way it is socially and sectorially distributed, and at the same time avoid significant and non-recoverable costs [3].

In the corporate world, the outcome of this evolution not only has the power to reach conclusions worldwide on life and environment quality, but also to make a significant pressure on the industrial productive sector for internalizing the environmental variable and establishing more sustainable activities, related to a more rational use of resources, satisfaction of demands by the interested parties (consumers, suppliers, community, NGOs, etc.) and decrease of impacts over the environment. Such pressures for environmental changes are increasingly strong in segments more sensitive to potential damages to the environment: paper and cellulose (deforestation), chemistry/petrochemistry, mining, etc. Companies pertaining to such segments are being pressured by various groups of interest to put the environment as one of their concerns in corporate policies.

The purpose of such article is to analyze the development of environmental corporate strategies in a scene marked by the growth, in intensity and extension, of imperative demands for implementation of a new development model based on sustainability.

3 Eco-tourism: the example of sustained activity

In the tourism sector, such sustainability is most necessary when it comes to ECO-TOURISM, because there must be an increased awareness by the companies which explore such segment and by the customers who enjoy its benefits. It's important to point out that among the parties involved in eco-tourism the biggest difficulty to implement a sustained development strategy is faced by the companies which, due to lack of political guidelines and a certain permissiveness in inspection, don't commit themselves with future generations when running their business [4].

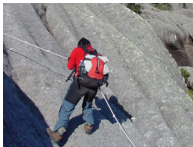
Eco-tourism: activities related to tourists and visitors or services which give support to local populations, cultures and economies in a positive way, besides contributing to ecological protection and sustainability.

- Eco-tourism travel has as primary focus to visit relatively remote and unchanged natural environments.
- The Eco-tourist exerts low impact on the natural environment, without altering resources or affecting the experience negatively.
- Participants have a relevant educational background and are willing to learn more about the natural and cultural history of the sites visited.

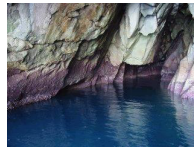


- The Eco-tourist offers direct benefits to the economy and to local residents, and collaborates to the preservation of natural areas and wild life habitat as well.
- The Eco-tourist promotes economic growth while protecting natural environment, meaning that all development must be subject to restrictions.
- The agency/operator helps funding surveillance of its own activities, also contributing to environmental preservation.

Travelers must have a spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity.



Rapel



Caving



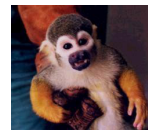
Birdwatching



Birdwatching



Flowerwatching



Photographic Safari [11]

Figure 1.

4 Companies and profit versus environmental and social responsibilities

Historically, the dominant aspect of any business has been simply short-term profit maximization, within a legal system. Such concept found a solid foundation in the economic area, where the company is traditionally seen as an entity organized by shareholders to make profits. Combined with this traditional model of company, the classic current has always defended the principle of segregation between the public sphere, where the governments acts as guardians of collective interest, and the private sphere, where people, individually or organized in groups, defend their personal interests. The rise of environmental and social responsibilities inevitably yields some kind of stress in organizations and leads them to an interpretation of their priorities and purposes. Those responsibilities require a new strategy, integrating, in an amplified scale, two of

the basic business dimensions: profitability and legitimacy. The latter, usually applied in the past to the public sphere, is now internalized by economic agents due to the environmental issue. The concept of legitimacy declares that products, activities and companies must pass by the judgment of social acceptance and that such acceptance, due to society's complexity, is more normally tested only if it's in compliance with current laws. Mere compliance with legal responsibilities by organizations is not enough to guarantee maintenance of economic positions established by them. Public opinion action requires from the economic agents other legitimating systems, based upon compliance with corporate responsibilities in the moral and ethic fields. Therefore, we may say that the companies' potential to obtain competitive advantages grows as they incorporate to their legal responsibilities the other two major dimensions of social responsibility: morals and ethics. Consequently, to the economic agent, in order not to see its legitimacy contested and not to lose a competitive advantage, resulting from the effect of actions taken by the various interested parties: clients, communities, public authorities, unions, class associations, universities, non-governmental organizations, environmental movements and other social actors, among them even representatives of the productive sector itself (through its industrial associations), is given the challenge of how to formulate efficient strategies, which, besides aiming at maximizing profits, may also serve to legitimate the existence of the organizations, as it stands to their responsibilities before society, through the response to basic social/environmental demands, for its multiple interested parties.

Through the inclusion of environmental matters into corporate strategies and the use of technological innovations, there is a search for greater autonomy of the productive processes relating to the environment with the resultant reduction of the use of environmental resources, to the extent that this represents creating competence for the construction of competitive advantages. In this sense, it's not enough to talk about technology, we must talk about clean technology, which is obtained through the implementation of innovative technological strategies based on the search of eco-efficiency. The solution of environmental issues of social character is seen by a great part of national leading economic agents as a threat to business profitability [5].

Consequently, in order to comply with the needs of the tripod over which rests the concept of sustained development – economic efficiency, ecological harmony and social justice – it is necessary, for a more accurate analysis, to introduce a new concept called sustained environmental management.

The sustainable strategy is more evolved in the graduation of corporate attitudes relating to environment. Organizations in this category promote and guarantee the handling of their processes and products from the viewpoint of health, safety and environment, through the principles of sustained development. By doing this, the company, besides its moral responsibilities, takes ethical responsibilities with clearer outcomes about its ethical role before society. By considering environment from an elevated perspective – one related to sustainability or respect to the limits of the capacity of ecosystems in their three dimensions (physical, biomes and anthropical ones), the company develops a

technology of integrated environmental management, where its environmental strategies are formulated in a way interdependent from legitimization, corporate and business strategies. Thus, integrating the environmental dimension into corporate strategies is made on an Anticipated Management of Sustainability level, in which the company responds to environmental demands of all its traditional and emerging stakeholders. The sustainable strategy recognizes that the company's environmental excellence is not totally attained without the effective participation of the community. For this purpose, it is incorporated into environmental management the use of an aggressive corporate communication and a solidary attitude towards the community in which it is included. This involves considering the social/cultural dimensions of the production and marketing processes of its goods and services.

5 Companies, profit, environmental and social responsibilities together through the eco-tourism

It is within the context of this valuable opportunity that we must think about tourism, particularly eco-tourism, since Brazil possesses privileged natural resources which may be "sold" by the companies according to the sustained development and all such development involves.

The *purpose* here is to develop concepts and tools to face the complex challenges presented in the Strategy of Sustained Development and Eco-tourism, and to characterize the dimension of sustainability of relevant policies. The principle of precaution and the regional aspects of sustained development through eco-tourism are of the essence.

But in a general and simplistic way, the main purposes of Eco-tourism are:

- Having an important information exchange network;
- Being a springboard of development in the country;
- Defending local interests and its clients on domestic and international level.

Thus, those primary and immediatist purposes may be reached mainly through:

- Information put available, via Internet or any other means, on eco-touristic projects and activities;



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

- Information put available, whenever proper, via newsletters, on eco-touristic projects and activities;

- Promoting community participation on eco-touristic projects;
- Creating a database on projects, programs, statistics, informative material and human resources education;
- Professional education and technical qualification with the preparation of courses or rendering access to national and international courses;
- Assessing, monitoring and popularizing social, cultural and environmental positive and negative impacts, resulting from eco-touristic activities;



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

- Carrying out research and debates on matters about Eco-tourism and related matters;
- Participating in (pilot and demonstrative) pioneer projects on eco-tourism;
- Representing Brazilian eco-tourism in international multidisciplinary groups.



Figure 7: Amazonian handcraft [11].

The growth of environmental awareness seen in the last few years has come along with the effects on consumer markets of products and services. Such effects have frequently been felt toward an increasing demand for information from consumers on the environmental aspects involved in their consumption decisions, i.e., consumer's buying decision is influenced by environmental considerations, which highlights the companies' social responsibility.

Nowadays, the companies' social responsibility is a matter of discussion and investments. Nevertheless, environmental issues involve ecological, economic and mainly social factors. Favorable economic, ecological and social conditions constitute the fundamental base for sustainability. Principles and criteria guiding the decision of companies in the acquisition and manufacture of products should take into account not only the consequences of industrial process, but also the whole life cycle of these products.

6 Significance of Eco-tourism for sustained consumption activity

And what about consumers? What is the part played by the main interested party in the environmental issue? What is the relationship between his/her choice and the process of environment degradation?

To consume is not always an individual decision, because advertising means may induce the consumer to thoughtlessly act almost under alienation. Today, people travel to all parts of the globe simply by pushing some buttons and don't even know anything about their neighbors, not mentioning the environment, more and more fragmented and changed each day [6].

We could encourage true sustained consumption, by consuming products of our region and nearer areas, honoring social, ecological and environmental features, in order that, instead of encouraging gas emissions which stimulate the greenhouse effect, we could promote natural products.

This tactics is not new. It was employed in India in 1948 to gain the country's freedom from England. A peaceful tactics which worked effectively. Most certainly, after this experience, other tactics have been created aiming at controlling the waste of human life, natural resources and development capacity to compensate men's greed and their disproportionate quest for power and wealth.

Tourism is an economic sector which depends more and more each day on nature to survive. The environmental concern has awakened the interest of many conscious people, who acknowledge natural resources as a finite asset needing care.

Industrialization and urbanization brought environmental pollution to society, which gave rise to a series of discussions in order to avoid having its natural heritage destroyed.

The greatest current danger is to look at tourism as a remedy against all evils worrying municipalities and develop it without planning. The responsibility for keeping environmental quality of tourist destinations is to be handled by all of us, including the tourist [7].

7 Final considerations

Responsible tourism is capable of respecting the characteristics of the destinations explored, without transforming the communities visited into satellites disconnected from urban culture. We must prevent the destruction of landscape beauty where those communities are settled, stopping the intervention in the functioning of existing ecosystems, on which depend healthy fauna and flora, water and air [8].

Those presenting minimum environmental impacts must be valued, thus, clients will keep away from non-conservationists hotel complexes and travel packages, and above all it's urgent to invest in human resources qualification, teaching all interested people to enjoy without destroying.



The environment is the background to any traveling intended. The location must offer beautiful landscapes, including nature in all its manifestations. The main outcome of eco-tourism must be the enhancement of native population's quality of life, as well as peaceful companionship with visitors.

The market demands more each day an ethical attitude from travel agencies, not only providing clients with comfort but also with nearness to the hosting population. Although tourism is a generator of employment and new money, there must be a commitment of tourists to the site and mutual respect among people.

Many problems, such as child prostitution and disrespect to the cultural and natural patrimony, are born from this lack of a greater affective relationship with the receiving center, because after the stay in a site, all that is left are only photos, memories and souvenirs.

Considering these aspects, World Tourism Organization (WTO) has launched a world code of ethics in tourism, presented in Brazil during the Third International Forum for Congressmen and Local Administrations, held in Rio de Janeiro.

The preparation of this code was initiated at WTO general meeting, in Istanbul, in 1997, and was unanimously approved in Santiago, Chile, in 1999. It is a participative project, having received many contributions during its preparation from more than 70 countries, tourism entities and non-governmental organizations [9].

The code has ten articles and contemplates tourism contribution to the understanding of preserving society's moral values, where tourism is considered an instrument of individual and collective development. This was the normalizing first step to educating tourists and natives who will receive them. Natives must be aware, and act accordingly, that they are true defenders of their city patrimony, not only recognizing economic, social and cultural benefits, but also understanding their risks.

Tourism, as set forth by the code, is much more than "increasing hotels and inn's occupation" or "simply filling the cities to capacity". It's an institutional instrument of self-education, mutual tolerance and learning of differences pertaining to peoples and cultures.

While considering that tourists and visitors, according to article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must have access to tourism and cultural sites without excessive formalities as it is the case of an entry visa which sometimes is granted, constituting a true embarrassing ritual before the immigration department, it is highlighted that to defend citizens is a constitutional duty. We are also distressed by the lack of projects and continuity of tourism policies in the public sector.

Due to mere political desires, people are engaged without having proper technical knowledge, permitting that tourism be transformed into a true "social pollution" and not a solution to economic crisis.

Government and businessmen are investing in community projects, but we must think about the role of tourism as a way of making individual more mature



and able to respect other communities and their cultural values. This is about constructing tourism through citizenship – the ethics of tourism.

Eco-tourism needs to write a coherent history for itself, in which local culture must be very much valued. All that is left to consider is whether we will have the time to disseminate the concepts of responsible, sustained, ecological tourism, under any name, before potential solutions for a serious work are used up [10]. If we don't do anything, little time will be left to admire the untouched nature found in the Amazon region. Be an eco-tourist. Eco-tourists are true eco-tourists when they do the site they visit some good.

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