

The Promotion of Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance Actions in Ski Resorts. The Case of Candanchú (Spain)



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Short Communication

Ski resorts are the economic driving force behind the development of the Pyrenees —the most important mountain range in Spain— during the winter season [1]. Thus, the territories located in the Pyrenean valleys have an economy that is highly oriented towards the tourist sector. Despite this, ski resorts in Spain are characterised by strong public intervention. Hence, of the almost 30 resorts in the country, only 7 are privately managed.

In this context, it is necessary to take into consideration what Scott et al. [2] have stated in relation to the adaptation of the ski industry to climate change and the promotion of activities beyond the sale of ski passes to diversify the sources of income of the resorts. Furthermore, Falk [3] concludes that ski resort conglomerates are, on average, 9% more efficient than independently managed resorts.

Finally, Moreno et al. [4] analyse the financial situation of ski resorts in Spain and conclude that there is a positive correlation between the ski area and a higher profit for the resorts, as well as between a higher size and performance of ski lifts and profit. They also show that those resorts with higher levels of debt have a negative impact on their profits, which is mainly due to the existence of restrictions on investment.

Withing this backdrop, we have proposed a feasibility plan to ensure the continuity of the business activity in the territory and to propose a strategy aimed at recovering profits within the framework of sustainable finances.

Consequently, a Corporate Social Responsibility Report has been proposed within the scope of a ski resort, proposing actions from a social, environmental, and good governance perspective.

Firstly, the starting point was the great economic dependence of the territory on ski resorts. This is an area with barely 15,000 inhabitants, more than 5,000 hotel beds and more than 15,000 second homes, which means that employment is closely linked to the tourism sector.

In this way, the operations of the ski resort go beyond its accounts and must take into consideration the entire population and businesses in the surrounding areas, as they are directly or indirectly affected by the development of the resort.

This situation is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, in the Eighth, on decent work and economic growth, the Eleventh, on sustainable cities and communities, and in the Seventeenth, on partnerships to achieve the goals.

In addition, actions are also proposed in relation to schoolchildren, sport competition and customer satisfaction with the service offered.

On the other hand, in relation to the good corporate governance dimension, it is necessary to ensure that the objectives of the management are linked to the good functioning and development of the company. Furthermore, this linkage must also be extended to the connection of the objectives of the station with those of workers, employers, neighbours, and public administrations.

Among the good corporate governance measures to be implemented in the company are transparency mechanisms in relation to decision-making, the drafting of a code of good practices, looking after the interests of all stakeholders, promoting the representation of women on the Board of Directors and the appointment of independent Directors who are not linked to the ownership of the resort.

Finally, the environmental perspective has been analysed. The economic activity carried out by Candanchú takes place in the heart of the Pyrenees in a privileged enclave surrounded by nature.

Skiing has had a great environmental impact on the area. Thus, the slopes of the resort have been occupied by ski lifts and hydraulic systems for the snow cannons. This has led to erosion of the mountains, alteration of the landscape, vegetation and flora and discharges into the river. Therefore, it is necessary to limit these effects and take action to safeguard the balance between mountain life and its exploitation. It should not be forgotten that mountain areas have found in winter activities a way of exploiting their resources which has allowed the population to settle in their territory in recent decades.

In this way, it is necessary to achieve a strategy for the exploitation of resources oriented towards sustainable development and which allows for continued investment and development of winter activities while respecting both current regulations and the ecosystem of the area.

To this end, it is also required to encourage actions related to the control of discharges into the river, the limitation of the use of private vehicles. Likewise, to promote the vision of snow as a complementary and integrated resource with the different uses of the mountain.

Equally, improving and promoting the offer of disciplines with less environmental impact, such as cross-country skiing or mountain ski, which do not require the aggressive infrastructure of alpine skiing.

In short, there is no doubt that alpine skiing generates strong economic benefits in the area while at the same time having an impact on the environment. For that reason, the importance of implementing a sustainable development strategy, considering all the sectors concerned, nature and its impact. Consequently, future developments and extensions of the resort must take into consideration the search for sustainable development and reduce the environmental impact, without neglecting economic progress.

In a sector in which public companies predominate due to the low profit margins and large investments required, actions are required in the social, environmental, and corporate governance fields. The present article proposes some considerations to prepare a corporate responsibility report for the Candanchú ski resort to be implemented to achieve a sustainable business and relation with society, nature, and competitors.

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