



## Companies' practices and social responsibility: cases of companies in the French tourist sector

**By/Par**

**Amina BÉJI-BÉCHEUR et Faouzi BENSEBAA**

Université de Marne-la-Vallée    IRG

OEP/PRISM

Université Paris 12 Val-de-Marne

[amina.becheur@univ-mlv.fr](mailto:amina.becheur@univ-mlv.fr)

### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines the firms' practices in the French tourist sector. By confronting the concepts defined in the literature on the social responsibility and what really happens in companies, the current research shows that the studied firms implement a minimal social responsibility which remains well below the expectation level of some stakeholders. This situation is explained by several factors, namely structural. Finally, the paper suggests ways to improve the concept of social responsibility.

Keywords : Corporate social responsibility – Stakeholder theory - Tourism

## **INTRODUCTION**

Four topics allow to gather up the questions to the relations between the firm and society (Whetten and al., 2002): finality principles; organisational principles; social principles; links between authorities and firms. The first topic tackles the question of “why” there exist good citizen companies. Three non exclusive axes characterise this topic: social responsibility; ethics; attitude/values/ideology. The second topic relates to the firm’s responses to normative claims; thus, it studies how the companies’ interactions with the external environment must be managed. The third topic examines the specific concerns expressed by the external stakeholders and is thus interested in the nature of social relations. The fourth topic is centred on the activities of the firms which the State wants to influence – through regulation and implementation of economic policies, and on the activities that companies want to influence through lobbying. The study of these four main topics makes it possible to expose the various facets of this field of organisational studies. Espousing the first topic and particularly social responsibility, Carroll (1979) stresses on the corporate responsibility and considers that corporate responsibility does not stop at the borders of economic responsibility. Thus, Carroll suggests four types of responsibility: legal, economic, ethical and discretionary. In this continuity, this article aims at examining the legal, social, moral and discretionary responsibility in the tourist sector.

Indeed, tourism constitutes a sector in which the concepts of sustainability and social responsibility are accepted, at least in public policies and in the initiatives of certain actors. This interest reflects the idea that the sector’s viability is related to the quality of fundamental resources, be they natural, built in or cultural. However, following the example of other sectors than tourism, putting speeches and theories into practice is a problem insofar as conscience, interpretation, interest and practices in the tourist sector are variable. This research proposes to study the way in which French tourist firms implement the concept of social responsibility. Two parts structure this research. First, the context is justified and the modes of action of the tourist companies are studied from interviews and documents. The second part intends to show the degree of correspondence between speeches and practices under examination and to put the conceivable behaviours in the sector into perspective.

## **1. CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS OF COMPANIES’ CITIZEN PRACTICES IN FRENCH TOURISM**

The choice of the context is first explicated (1.1.) and the role of non governmental organisations (NGO) underlined (1.2). Through the analysis of documents and primary data collected by the manager of a communication agency in sustainable development, by the responsible of the campaign “*Agir ici*” and by the person in charge of the “Centre de Documentation Tiers-Monde” (who published press kits devoted to the question of fair tourism), the citizen practices of the French tourist companies are studied in order to explore the way in which companies appropriate the concept of citizenship (1.3).

## 1.1 Choice of the context

Because of the major role played by tourism in the models of economic development and because of the multiple actors who intervene in the tourist industry (Robson and Robson, 1996), this field presents a particularly rich framework of analysis to illustrate the diverse aspects of corporate citizenship.

Indeed, tourism is a value-creating activity in France with US dollars 40, 8 billions revenues in 2004, that is to say 7 per cent of GDP. It is the first industry in front of oil industry and one of the first world economic activities. It is the source of many imbalances in countries which depend on it and the development model based on tourism shows its own limits.

The analysts of the tourist sector underline certain negative aspects relating to various fields:

- to the economic field: non durable economic development (most of the financial tourism revenues are tapped by intermediate providers); seasonal and precarious employment (one notices the disappearance of traditional trades);
- to the legal field: child labour, destroyed traditional structures, non-respect of ILO rules;
- to the ethical field: non-respect of human rights (prostitution; transfers of population; inequalities in rights);
- to natural environment: unsuited architecture; waste of natural resources; deterioration of fauna and flora;
- to the cultural field: loss of the cultural heritage for a “folklorisation” of rites and cultures; loss of craft know-how for a standardised mass offer<sup>1</sup>.

After presenting the environment in which companies stand and the pressures which they are subjected to, we will analyse the answers they give.

## 1.2 NGOs' pressures and awakening of the international and national institutions

Long appreciated as a development-carrying industry, the tourist activity has been put to the test of its contradictions by NGOs over the past few years. Through active lobbying, the latter have led international authorities – the PNUE (Programme of the United Nations for the Environment), the WTO (World Tourism Organisation), UNESCO and the EC (European Community) - to begin an approach to responsible tourism. A charter of sustainable tourism was published in 1995. It aims at applying the Rio resolutions in favour of the environment to tourism. In its wake, the WTO, which gathers the world tourist

---

<sup>1</sup> *Alternatives économiques*, n°194, July-August 2001.

companies, adopted a global Code of ethics for tourism. Let us note that, above any other means, ecological problems are the key used by NGOs to encourage institutional actors to think about corporate citizenship. Thus, the United Nations encouraged the WTO to organise a world Summit on ecotourism in Quebec in may 2002 and to put the question of global tourism on the agenda of the world Summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg.

In addition, and to encourage good practices at a broader level, the United Nations set up a company-assessing programme through its annual reports<sup>2</sup> (which is equivalent to the French NRE law). This programme led to publishing the Tour Operators'(TO) list of good practices as regards sustainable development. The analysis of these good practices<sup>3</sup> emphasises the preeminence of the environmental protection topic, thus minimising all the other problems connected to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

In France, a campaign was launched in 2002 by a group of associations "*Agir ici*" ("*Act Here*") "*Quand les vacances des uns font le malheur des autres*" ("*When the holidays of the ones make the misfortune of the hosts* »)<sup>4</sup>. This campaign intended to promote responsible tourism. Therefore, it targeted public opinion, decision makers and the main actors in the tourist industry, namely travel agencies and French tour operators. The objective was that they put into practice the principles of the "Tourism and ethics" Charter launched in 2000 and inspired by the World Ethical Code of the WTO<sup>5</sup>. This campaign won the approval of the French Secretary of State to Tourism at the time. His involvement resulted in the implementation of a communication policy to promote responsible tourism. Thanks to the exerted pressures, the Secretary of State obtained from the main actors in the French tourist sector to sign the "Tourism and Ethics" Charter.

In addition, at regional level, one can notice the implementation of a voluntarist policy of sustainable development in tourist zones (Picardie, Poitou).

In the countries of the South, the problem of responsibility is not perceived in the same way. When the States face the problem of 'poverty', the 'manna' derived from tourism is always welcome. The States often stand aloof with regard to these citizenship problems and in fact, only local NGOs exert pressures to make people aware of that problem<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Tours Operators for sustainable tourism development in Site* : [www.uneptie.org](http://www.uneptie.org) ou [www.toinitiative.org](http://www.toinitiative.org)

<sup>3</sup> The good practices defined in the programme are seven in number: to work with suppliers who include environmental clauses in the contract; to improve transport to respect the environment; to support the protection of the natural and cultural heritage; to educate and sensitise people; to fight the illegal forms of tourism; to work on the destinations (auditing); to improve the management of the environment (ISO 14001certification).

<sup>4</sup> [www.agirici.org](http://www.agirici.org)

<sup>5</sup> See list of tourist charters in appendix A

<sup>6</sup> In Senegal, the State withdrew by selling the *Société de Financement du Tourisme* (Soficedit) to private operators. Enda, an NGO, denounces the damaging effects of mass tourism which gives birth to prostitution and drug-trafficking : « *if laws were applied, if deterrents existed against the involved tourist and hotel-keepers, these scourges could be contained. But, for the moment, the State lends a*

Thus, in spite of *Agenda 21* being adopted by 178 States of the United Nations in favour of sustainable development, there has been little impact on tourism in the countries of the South. When initiatives are taken, they are generally carried out by NGOs within the framework of the United Nations programmes, the national communities being then associated to the projects<sup>7</sup>.

Within this rather unconstraining framework, the private tour operators (TO) are subjected only to NGOs' pressures. However, the general public<sup>8</sup> has started to become aware of the negative effects of tourism and companies have started showing a certain - though limited - amount of commitment.

### 1.3. Characteristics of the behaviour of the main firms

In France, the analysis of how the first five TO - Accor, Club Med<sup>9</sup>, Selectour, Nouvelles Frontières (now TUI) and Havas (*Enjeux Les Échos*, 2003) - are involved in citizenship, brings out three main features:

- a very weak involvement in the problems of citizenship;
- a tactical or minimalist view of CSR illustrated by sponsoring actions which one could describe as discretionary responsibility (Carroll, 1979);
- a visible speech but limited practices of ecotourism.

TOs are classified on the basis of gross consolidated turnover carried out in 2001 by the group to which they belong. The classification is carried out by COFACE ORT, specialist in financial information on the companies, and by Leading Design, specialist in the realisation of classifications for the press. Information is collected in the annual reports, by questionnaires addressed to the companies and on the basis of the data available in the Bulletin of the Obligatory Legal Advertisements. In the classification suggested by *Enjeux les Échos*, the group Accor is included in the sector of the hotel trade which constitutes its principal activity. However, by developing an integrated supply by repurchasing shares of Go Voyage, Accor has become similar to a TO. The four other actors propose integrated offers in the same way, thus justifying the qualifier of TO. Indeed, as a study of the Management of Tourism indicates it (study of the *IREST*, 2003, Strategies of the tourist operators on the market of the voyage, p.36) : 'In France, it should be stressed that the majority of the TOs have two principal strategic activities: the turn operating which consists in assembling the various services of a stay in order to offer a 'packaged' product to the final customer and dry the flights activity. Many analyses sought to oppose the dry turn operating and flights, the actors dry flights and voyage being identified like different. However, it

---

*deaf ear. As for the private operators, priority is given to developing turnover.* » See File « Impact local du tourisme », January 2003, site : [www.novethic.fr](http://www.novethic.fr)

<sup>7</sup> *Magazine Choices* September 2002, published by UNDP (United nations development Programme).

<sup>8</sup> 15000 people took part in the « Agir ici » campaign launched in 2002.

<sup>9</sup> In 2004, Accor becomes the principal shareholder of Club Med.

arises from the talks carried out that these two activities are complementary. The control of sky is indeed a key factor of success for a TO. The control of sky makes it possible for a TO to attenuate its dependence with respect to the airline companies and thus to better manage its flows, while being given lower costs of transport. This strategy of development falls under a logic of vertical integration. A TO integrates one of the activities of the chain (here the air one) upstream'.

The analysis of the institutional sites of the five companies which interest us makes it possible to characterise their strategy as regards CSR. Only the Accor company set up a strategy of sustainable development complete in term of social responsibility. The four actors of French tourism are very little implied in term of practices of social responsibility. In the current context of concentration of the sector, one of the factors of success of a TO is the development of a strong mark at the international level (Irest, 2003). The importance of the brand capital partly explains the incurred risks of loss of legitimacy of the brand in the event of scandal questioning the social responsibility for the company. Indeed, as Suchman (1995) underlined it, the minimum base of the responsibility is legitimacy as an economic actor. Thus, it clearly appears that the companies of tourism begin in the environmental protection and in some practice social responsibility, in order to safeguard their economic legitimacy.

Then, the TOs' weak implication is underlined by the fact that only Accor and Club Med are affiliated members of the WTO and have consequently adhered to the world charter for ethical tourism. Moreover, apart from Accor, no other French company has taken part in the United Nations Environment Programme "*The Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development*". On the other hand, most French companies (except Nouvelles Frontières) have signed the charter of ethics in tourism<sup>10</sup> following the *Agir Ici* campaign (cf. above).

Rather of a tactical nature, this involvement is not translated today into terms of total strategy for the companies. The analysis of the companies' sites and the contents of the interviews reveal specific actions corresponding much more to a traditional policy of institutional communication through sponsorship than to the implementation of a sustainable development strategy in the company's activities.

Thus, Accor has set up an information campaign on fragile sea-beds in partnership with NAUSICAA (French National Sea Experience Centre). Through its foundation, Club Med acts to encourage solidarity actions suggested by its employees. Until now, Havas supported public awareness campaigns to fight sexual tourism in partnership with ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), an international association. Today, Havas works with CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere), an NGO which launched micro-projects. To date, only a campaign intended to sensitise the customers in this network to the environmental and social consequences of non responsible behaviours have been set up. However, because of the acquisition of a share in Havas by Thomas Cook and of the disappearance of Havas' name in January 2004, the future of this

---

<sup>10</sup> List of the signatories on site [www.tourisme.gouv.fr](http://www.tourisme.gouv.fr)

partnership is difficult to foresee. Indeed, the German company does not currently pursue any particular policy about sustainable development.

The other French companies having adhered to the Charter do not show any action in favour of sustainable development. One can notice the participation of AFAT (French Association for Tourist Agencies) to the TFD (Tourism For Development) label. This association, born in 1998, grants its label to tourist professionals who agree to redistribute 1 per cent of the amount paid by the consumer who purchases TFD products. Here, the approach is of a charitable nature and depends on the quality of the information given through the network of the travel agencies on their TFD affiliation. Thus, the impact is rather limited.

As a currently in vogue solution, ecotourism is presented as a response to the problems of sustainable development. This approach seeks to be a model of tourist development while ensuring an environmental protection. Certain hotel chains - for example Sofitel - encourage their customers to limit their consumption of electricity, to reduce their requests for renewed linen, etc. Thus, the large hotel groups have drawn a list of requirements regarding the localisation, the architecture and the construction of hotels that respect the environment. However, the concept of ecotourism is often overused and twisted from its original principles. Under cover of defending nature, actions that were detrimental to the local populations have been done: *'the establishment of Kahuzi-Biega National park in Congo led to the eviction of several villages'* (available on [www.agirici.org](http://www.agirici.org)). Certain stakeholders take this criticism even further by stressing that mass arrivals in a country - whatever the nature of the journey - supposedly has a negative impact on the natural environment because of the added consumption of water, air transports, etc.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it seems that *'the tourist industry is light years away from other sectors. Are the hotel chains really changing their control procedures and becoming transparent? Is social responsibility simply a donation to a charity?'*<sup>12</sup>, (*Financial Times*, 2003).

The previous analysis makes it possible to draw a picture of the nature of citizen commitment among the companies operating in the French tourist sector. We discuss this further in the following part.

## **2. NATURE OF SOCIAL PRACTICES IN FRENCH TOURISM**

Three points are developed in this part:

- putting into theoretical perspective the view of citizenship such as expressed by tourist companies' practices (2.1.);

---

<sup>11</sup> A criticism of the book by Rosaleen Duffy, *A Trip too far - Ecotourism, Politics & Exploitation*, Ed. Earthscan, 2002, in *Courrier International*, 13 September 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Statements by M. Barnett, *Institut pour l'environnement et le développement*.

- analysing the targets aimed by these practices by taking the stakeholder theory as a framework (2.2.);
- propositions as regards the companies' possible actions, based on the research applied to the sector and the analysis of emerging practices in the sector (2.3.).

## 2.1 Putting the practices of tourist companies into theoretical perspective

To define the citizen meaning of tourist companies' practices requires to replace one's reflection within the framework of various philosophical views regarding citizenship. To do so, the theoretical framework presented in the first part will be referred to.

The previous analysis underlined a profile common to the main companies operating in the French tourist sector :

- successful companies from an economic point of view;
- law-abiding companies (It is not possible to find any visible denunciation of dishonest behaviour among the studied companies in the media);
- companies which actively sponsor specific causes.

If one refers to Friedman's lesson (1962) or to that of Levitt (1958), the studied companies fully assume their social responsibility. Indeed, from this point of view, the obligations assigned to the company - operating legally and ensuring profitability for investors or owners - seem to be met.

According to these authors, the fact of assuming responsibilities of another nature is at companies' discretion. Firms will take initiatives in this direction only if the shareholders and/or the customers are sensitive to them. There cannot be socially responsible practices without them being useful to the company.

From this utilitarian point of view, let us explore if companies would find it useful to develop citizen practices. Let us first recall that utilitarianism assimilates a moral action with what produces the utmost well-being, whether or not this action serves the interest of the agent. The difficulty is then to define the concept of well-being for everybody (Grand and Grill, 2003).

Within this framework, three conceptions can be retained:

- sustainable development means welfare for everybody: defined as a total strategy to meet *'the needs for the present without compromising the capacity of the future generations of meeting their own needs'* (definition given by the World Commission on the environment and the Development, 1988), sustainable development is the current expression of this view. In this vision, *'the company cannot behave like a dinosaur destroying the environment which it needs to live; the company can remain healthy only in a healthy, relatively stable and fertile environment [ ] ; ...thus the concept of sustainable*

*development can be meaningful'*, Capron (2000). Within this framework, companies can have legitimate objectives other than profit. Thus, when Havas is the partner of a micro-development implemented by an NGO, it is in keeping with this view;

- the Aristotelian view (Sorell, 2001) focuses on the concept of ethical selfishness: by developing practices which support its own self-development, the contractor behaves in an ethical way. Within this framework, economic actors can work for others if this means preventing damage to their own interests or if the benefit obtained by others generates a clear benefit to their own advantage. Thus, by financing the foundation for the protection of coral reefs, Accor protects a natural heritage which constitutes the attraction of the sites that are proposed in its tourist offers<sup>13</sup>.

However, in Aristotle's view, pure selfishness as well as pure altruism are immoral. Thus, it would be immoral for tourist companies to destroy temples in order to make place for the construction of a tourist complex. But, do companies take purely altruistic actions?

It is difficult to consider that a tourist company who carries out an altruistic action does not expect a return in terms of competitive advantage. Even if the company does not communicate on that particular action, spreading information can be carried out through other channels: effects on the firm's reputation (Fombrun, 1996) are likely to be recorded. Then, the socially responsible practices are never totally innocent. These practices may be the source of competitive advantages, because they have direct consequences on the activity of firms: appeal of certain customers, acquisition of the leadership, etc., or because they have effects on the reputation and the legitimacy of firms.

- a third philosophical current considered as relevant to conceive corporate responsibility - the social contract - makes it possible to consider the nature and the type of responsibilities that are essential to companies. A social contract tacitly defines the rules of the game between the stakeholders and companies. Thus, the whole set of charters prove that some stakeholders' expectations are taken into account, and signing a charter clearly shows that the companies adhere to a form of social contract. However, as we have previously underlined, this contract is rather unconstraining for the signatories. Therefore, the latter do not apply all the requirements stated in the charters. So far, the usefulness of such practices is not obvious for the tourist providers. However, several researches applied to the tourist sector have emphasized the competitive advantage that companies would derive from implementing the principles of sustainable tourism (Miller, 2001b; Robson and Robson, 1996).

Apparently, the current wait-and-see policy of TOs is due to factors related to the structure of the tourist industry (Miller, 2001b; interviews):

- little control on the intermediaries in the sector, especially at an international level;

---

<sup>13</sup> And according to Handelman and Arnold (1999), taking actions in the social field and making one's customers aware of them greatly contribute to the company's profits.

- weakness of the law in developing countries;
- pre-eminence of the travellers's rights over those of the local communities in TOs' minds;
- a structurally concentrated and atomised sector, which involves difficulties in defining controllable common procedures;
- lack of information for travellers on the ill effects of tourism;
- the absence of systemic vision from the tourist actors on the effects of tourism, the costs being supported by the host countries;
- application by companies in France of the NRE law which stipulates that sponsoring is a form of CSR<sup>2</sup>.

This reflection underlines an ideological anchoring of TO in a minimal utilitarian vision of corporate citizenship, stressing the primarily economic, legal and discretionary responsibility of companies.

## 2.2 Corporate citizenship: towards which? for which stakeholders?

This first level of analysis implicitly reveals the stakeholders as considered by companies in the tourist sector: shareholders, investors, consumers, the State, employees and NGOs. Yet, some works bearing on the tourist sector (Robson and Robson, 2000; Ryan, 2002) underline the need to take into account a broader field of stakeholders as presented in the following figure 1.

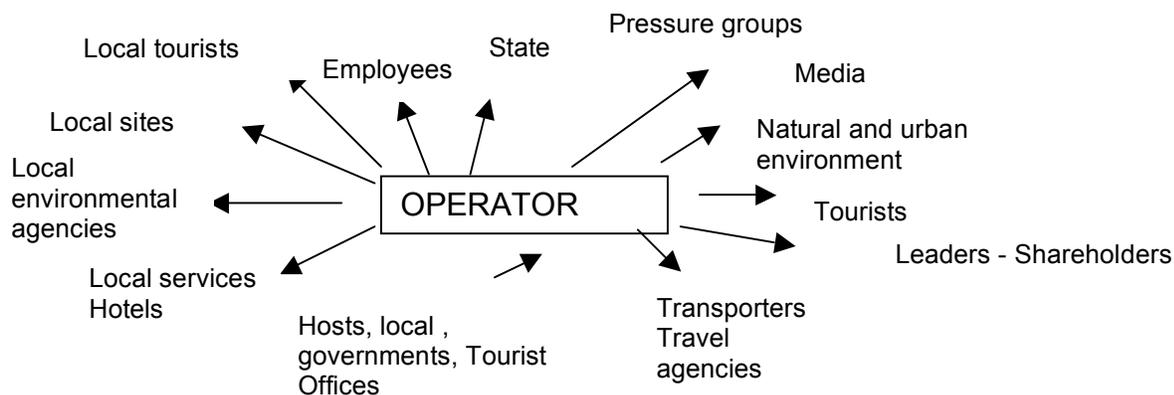


Figure 1 – TOs' stakeholders (adapted from Ryan, 2002)

According to Freeman's definition (1984)<sup>14</sup>, the stakeholders correspond 'to any group or to any individual that can affect or be affected by the pursuit of organisational objectives'. In

<sup>14</sup> Let us recall that the stakeholders' theory emerged in the Eighties as a useful concept to manage the relations with the individuals and the organisations concerned with social questions. The concept evolved, in the Nineties, to become a complete theory and to seriously compete with the SR system as

the French tourist sector, it appears that only national actors are regarded as stakeholders of the companies' social contract. It is only through NGOs or informed consumers that TOs' responsibility towards local populations, for example, is taken into account. It is thus possible to identify a group of dedicated stakeholders (Robson and Robson, 1996) for each stakeholder. As reflected in the figure 2 below, through a capillary phenomenon, the actions of a stakeholder (a local association) can influence an actor (a TO) by means of another stakeholder (a French NGO).



**Figure 2 - Capillary phenomenon of stakeholders' influence**

Taking this phenomenon into account, contradictory expectations can emerge and generate paradoxical attitudes in companies facing ethical stakes. One can thus underline the coexistence within the companies' environment of incentives to behave in a non ethical way (for example, consumers' attraction to sexual tourism) counterbalanced by legal and social sanctions (denunciation by NGOs) discouraging these schemes. As an illustration, to attenuate these contradictions, the Charter of the WTO underlines in its article 1 the need to respect a whole set of mutual responsibilities between hosts and tourists:

*Clause 2 - Tourist activities must be led in harmony with the attributes and traditions of regions or host countries in the respect of their laws, practices and habits;*

*Clause 3 – Host communities on the one hand, and local professionals on the other hand, have to respect visiting tourists and to respond to their life styles, tastes and expectations; teaching and training given to professionals contribute to the quality of the welcome.”*

As Damak-Ayadi and Pesqueux (2003) underline it, as 'an organisational theory', the stakeholder theory contributes to the foundation of a relational organisational model which makes it possible to understand the logic of the links between organisation and stakeholders; to some extent, these relations constitute the organisational 'substance'. Through this model, the stakeholder theory may serve as normative reference on the management modes to be

---

a theoretical paradigm. Models were then developed, for example, to identify and establish the hierarchy of the stakeholders (Mitchell and *al.*, 1997) or to apply the network theory to the stakeholders theory (Rowley, 1997). The management of relationships with stakeholders is also regarded as a more solid means of conceptualisation or study of the firms' actions in the social field than the management of societal problems (Clarkson, 1995). Accordingly, the implementation of quality relations between the primary (economic) and secondary (social) stakeholders can be synonymous with managerial performance (Waddock and Graves, 1997). Hence, it was considered that the stakeholder theory could be used as a basis for understanding and assessing corporate social performance (Waddocks and Graves, 1997).

implemented ('good practices'), thus providing a theory of action (which relational strategies should be implemented, Damak-Ayadi and Pesqueux, 2003).

### 2.3. Directions for action

The problem of CSR in tourist companies can be solved by various modes of actions:

- social tourism;
- ecotourism;
- sustainable tourism;
- fair tourism

Social tourism is a practice dating back to the post-war period. It aims at giving access to travelling to the most underprivileged people. Thus, Nouvelles Frontières company had originally been designed by Jacques Maillot to democratise travelling. One can notice here the contradiction generated by an *a priori* ethical objective in favour of the underprivileged classes (giving a right to all) which encouraged the development of mass tourism whose perverse effects are denounced today. However, this reasoning does not mean the negation of the right for all to travel but indicates the difficulty for responsibilities towards various stakeholders to coexist. To answer this contradiction, certain small TOs organise journeys with solidarity objectives such as building a school. The UNDP also encourages this type of practices allowing underprivileged young people to travel while bringing a benefit to the host community.

Ecotourism or green tourism aims at promoting a development of the tourist activity without deteriorating the natural environment. Most actors in the sector have followed this path through various actions: sponsoring, training and sensitizing travellers, listing the requirements for building equipments (international association of hotels and restaurants) and for recycling waste water. Although responsibility towards the future generations is considered, a company does not always take its responsibilities towards the present generation in this perspective. The conflict which, in 1996, opposed the inhabitants of the national park of Nagarhole in India to the hotel owners who no longer gave them access to the resources of the forest, illustrates this aspect.

The limits of a vision of responsibility that does not take into account the local stakeholders are thus underlined. In response to those limits, sustainable tourism, encouraged and supported by international authorities (UNEP and World Tourism Organization), proposes a broader vision of corporate social responsibilities. WTO (1993, 1995) defined the following principles: "*to improve the quality of life of local communities; to offer a quality experience to visitors and to maintain the quality of the environment which local communities and visitors depend on*". Several authors (for example, Miller, 2001a; Miller 2001b; Ryan, 2002; Swarbrooke, 2000) have sought to clarify the concept of sustainable tourism. Besides, UNEP aims at specifying the concrete methods for implementing sustainable development. To this end, a programme was initiated by this authority in favour

of sustainable tourism. The object is to present a guide of the good practices as well as to offer a discussion forum encouraging exchanges between actors.

More precisely, according to Swarbrooke (2000), the implementation of an approach to sustainable tourism implies a sustainable development model which can be relatively contrasted with a non "sustainable model" (*cf.* appendix 2). It would be however wiser to define the position of an actor in the tourist sector by adopting a continuum from non sustainable to sustainable depending on the characteristics implemented by the company being studied.

While questioning the equity of relations, fair tourism goes further than the three other modes of action described above. Following Ryan (2002), one can wonder whether sustainable tourism would not be a means of maintaining a status quo to protect the cultural and physical environment, without recognising the lack of social equity inherent to the situations generated by tourism. Consequently, what would be the ethics of a responsibility that would only aim at defending an environment favourable to the company's development without considering access to development for the local populations? By taking the utilitarian point of view again, the problem consists in determining how useful it is to preserve a favourable social climate in the host countries. Thus, a new vision of tourism would be to consider the creation of a durable value for the tourist, for the tourist industry and also for the local community (Ryan, 2002). It is a question of creating the conditions for a competitive advantage by mobilising a single organisation of the relation between the consumers and the company's assets (Gilson and al., 2000). By proposing a unique travelling experience to the consumers, actors involved in fair tourism can obtain a competitive advantage over TOs dealing with mass tourism, what is likely to allow to firms to conjugate both economic responsibility and ethical responsibility (as defined by Carroll, 1979; on the relation between ethics and competitive advantage, see Hosmer (1994) and Quinn and Jones (1995)). More precisely, this approach is defined as "*a whole set of service activities, proposed by TOs to responsible travellers and designed by the host communities (or at least mainly with them). These communities play a large part in the evolving definition of these activities (the possibilities of modifying them, of reorientating them, of stopping them)*" (Fair trade Platform). Moreover, the actors of this platform<sup>15</sup> defined a Charter indicating the following principles:

- partnership;
- concerted formalisation by contracts;
- local development ;
- transparency;
- responsible travellers.

So, it seems that tourism of ethical type shows the broadest contents in term of social responsibility. One the one hand, significant interactions between the three modes of action which are ecotourism, sustainable tourism and ethical tourism can occur since few

---

<sup>15</sup> Let's quote the most active ones : *Atalante, Voyager autrement (Vacances Bleues), Association Djembé* or other travel agencies situated in Southern countries.

contradictions exist between them. On the other hand, social tourism defined in a narrow way (i.e. the access of trip to the biggest number) is likely to enter in tension with the three other types of tourism. Indeed, in spite of certain efforts to educate tourists, to implement and to observe ethical charters, and to build partnerships with local actors, it is worth noting that tourism of mass generated by social tourism led to negative externalities: limited respect for environment; the exploitation of the local culture; only transactional and short-term relationships with local actors; use of lacuna in the law in developing countries, or even bypass of law, etc. Social tourism, since it is mass tourism, leads actors to respect economic responsibility, that is to say to create wealth (in fact, for stakeholders). Firms seek after competitive advantages through traditional ways: concentration, economies of scale, standardisation, aggressive pricing policy, segmentation by time and by type of customers, etc. A contradiction then emerges: social tourism contains the germs of antisocial behaviours.

In the field of managerial recommendations, it is not very easy to propose a mode of action insofar as few researchers have assessed the afore mentioned modes of action in view of their usefulness. Currently, the practices of CSR implemented by companies depend on the managers' goodwill according to their expertise or their culture (Maignan and Ferrel, 2003) and as shown by Miller (2001a), the points of view of experts about CSR in the tourist sector diverge.

The discussion of the second part shows the stakes related to CSR in the tourist sector. As Capron (2000) underlines, '*a tacit social contract exists between the civil society and companies: society provides a legal framework which allows companies to use natural resources and labour force, on condition of avoiding fraud and of respecting human beings; in return, society expects from companies to organise the production of utilities*'. The difficulty is to define what is acceptable or not by stakeholders (*cf.* Bécheur et Bensebaa, 2004; Mikkila, 2003). However, the acceptability thresholds evolve and can depend on changing cultural and information factors. For example, better informed actors can be expected to exert strong pressures on companies. The current stake is to anticipate the pressures (in a proactive manner) and to transform constraints into competitive advantages by implementing relational strategies and by identifying the most virulent stakeholders. Companies can remain passive and wait until requirements are imposed on them in the form of law. Reactivity can also be considered when organisations adapt to the evolution of societal expectations.

## CONCLUSION

Some initiatives were launched to make tourism a sustainable development vector and to make it beneficial to host countries. Charters and labels were adopted at an international level: TOs establish travellers' codes and set professional codes of ethics. However, these declarations of intent are not followed with real effects because there is no real constraint. Then, is it necessary to return to an 'economist' vision in which the State must mitigate the market's inadequacies? Here, as the actors of the sector of tourism undervalue social responsibility, pressure can be only institutional (Wood, 1991) and the regulation can be only

imposed by the State. Or are TOs able to define the conditions of a durable development in relation with other actors?

With this view, putting the actors' practices into perspective through the stakeholder theory underlines how relevant it is to widen the model of TOs' stakeholders at geographical level by taking the stakeholders of the host countries into account. In addition, it is important to pay close attention to the interactive methods to be implemented between the various stakeholders. To design these methods, it seems interesting to consider two theoretical fields:

- specifically derived from the strategy field, research on networks would make it possible to analyse the existing practices and to propose modes of action on how to manage interactions;
- anchored in the marketing field, research on the modes of exchange allows to define the types of relations which can be built (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993). According to whether it is transactional, contractual or relational, the exchange is more or less durable and rests more or less on legal or ethical bases.

It is up to actors to define the type of network and within the network, the nature of the exchange which best corresponds to their objectives, to their long term usefulness and in a Kantian vision to their professional ethics (how moral are intentions?).

## REFERENCES

- Alternatives économiques* (2001), Dossier sur le tourisme, 194.
- Bécheur A., Bensebaa F., 2004, Responsabilité sociale des entreprises : acceptabilité, crédibilité et légitimité des pratiques, XIIIème Conférence de l'AIMS, Le Havre, 2, 3, 4 juin.
- Capron M. (2000) Vous avez dit « éthique » ?, *in Revue du Mauss* n°15, Ethique et économie l'impossible (re)mariage ?, 271-277.
- Carroll A. B. ( 1979), A Three-Dimensional Model of Corporate Performance, *Academy of Management Review*, 4(4), 497-505.
- Clarkson M. B. E. (1995), A Stakeholder Framework for Analyzing and Evaluating Corporate Social Performance, *Academy of Management Review*, 20(1), 92-117.
- Courrier international* (2002), Quand écotourisme rime avec néolibéralisme, 13 septembre.
- Damak-Ayadi S., Pesqueux Y. (2003), La théorie des parties prenantes en perspective, *in Actes de la Journée de l'Atelier Développement durable de l'Association Internationale Management Stratégique*, ESSCA Angers (France), 15 mai .
- Enjeux les Echos* (2003), Le Grand Atlas des entreprises.
- Financial Times* (2002), Eco-tourism, Local People Hold the Key, 27 September.
- Fombrun C. J. (1996), *Reputation : Realizing Value from the Corporate Image*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Business School Press.
- Freeman R. E. (1984), *Strategic Management : A Stakeholder Approach*, Marshfield, MA : Pitman.
- Friedman M. (1962), *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- Friedman M. (1970), The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profit, *New York Times Magazine*, September, 13, 33.
- Gilson C., Pratt M., Roberts K., Weymes E. (2000), *Peak Performance*, New York : Harper-Collins.
- Grand B., Grill P. (2003), Ethique, développement durable et entreprise, *in Actes de la Journée de l'Atelier Développement durable de l'Association Internationale Management Stratégique*, ESSCA Angers (France), 15 mai.

Gundlach G., Murphy E. P. (1993), Ethical And Legal Foundations Of Relational Marketing Exchanges, *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (October), 35-46.

Handelman J. M., Arnold S. J. (1999), The Role of Marketing Actions with a Social Dimension : Appeals to the Institutional Environment, *Journal of Marketing*, 63(July), 33-48.

Hosmer L. T. (1994), Strategic Planning as if Ethics Mattered, *Strategic Management Journal*, 15 (Special Issue, Summer), 17-34.

Http : // [www.uneptie.org](http://www.uneptie.org)

Http : //www.toinitiative.org.

[Http://www.agirici.org](http://www.agirici.org).

[Http://www.novethic.fr](http://www.novethic.fr)

[Http://www.tourism.gouv.fr](http://www.tourism.gouv.fr)

Irest (2003), Stratégies des opérateurs touristiques sur le marché des voyages, étude réalisée pour la Direction du Tourisme, Paris, janvier.

Levitt T. (1958), The Dangers of Social Responsibility, *Harvard Business Review*, 36, 41-50.  
*Magazine Choices* (2002), Publication du PNUD (Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement), septembre.

Maignan I., Ferrell O. C. (2003), Nature of Corporate Responsibility Perspectives from American, French, and German Consumers, *Journal of Business Research*, 56(1), 55-67.

Mayer C. L. (Éd.) (2002), *Voyager Autrement, vers un tourisme responsable et solidaire*.

Mikkila M. (2003), Acceptability of Operations as an Indicator of Corporate Social Performance, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 12(1), 78-87.

Miller G. (2001a), The Development Of Indicators For Sustainable Tourism : Results of A Delphi Survey of Tourism Researchers, *Tourism Management*, 22(4), 351-362.

Miller G. (2001b), Corporate Responsibility in the UK Tourism Industry, *Tourism Management* 22(6), 589-598.

Mitchell R. K., Agle B. R., Wood D. J. (1997), Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience : Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts, *Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 853-886.

- Quinn D. P., Jones T. M. (1995), An Agent Morality View of Business Policy, *Academy Of Management Review*, 20(1), 22-42.
- Robson I., Robson J. (1996), From Shareholders to Stakeholders : Critical Issues for Tourism Marketers, *Tourism Management*, 17(7), 533-540.
- Rowley T. J. (1997), Moving Beyond Dyadic Ties : A Network Theory of Stakeholder Influences, *Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 887-910.
- Ryan C. (2002), Equity, Management, Power Sharing and Sustainability – Issues of ‘New Tourism’, *Tourism Management*, 23(1), 17-26.
- Sorell T. (2001), L'éthique des affaires in *Dictionnaire d'éthique et de philosophie morale* sous la direction de Monique Canto-Sperber, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 3e Éd.
- Suchman M.C. (1995), Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches, *Academy of Management Review*, 20 (3), 571-610.
- Swarbrooke J. (2000), *Sustainable Tourism Management*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Waddock S. A., Graves S. B. (1997), The Corporate Social Performance : Financial Performance Link, *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(4), 303-319
- Whetten D., Rands G., Godfrey P. (2002), What Are The Responsibilities of Business to Society ?, In A. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, R. Whittington (Eds.), *Handbook of Strategy and Management*, London: Sage Publications, 373-410.
- Wood D. J. (1991), Corporate Social Performance Revisited, *Academy of Management Review*, 16(4), 691-718.

**APPENDIX A**  
**List of charters and codes**  
(adapted from Mayer 2002 : 75- 78)

| Charter designation  | Originally institutions  | Contents of the charter   | Expected or carried out effects  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Sustainable tourism charter (Lanzarote, Canary Islands, April 1995)</b><br/>Complete text on the site : <a href="http://www.insula.org/tourism">www.insula.org/tourism</a></p> | <p><b>UNESCO – WTO – PNUE – European Commission</b></p>  | <p><b>Respect of local populations<br/>Protection of environment and inheritance –<br/>Development of local economy – Respect of the human rights</b></p>   | <p><b>Establishment of a follow-up committee for the implementation but little diffusion : weak impact</b></p>               |
| <p><b>World code of tourism ethics (Santiago, Chili, October 1999)</b><br/>Complete text on the site: <a href="http://www.world-tourism.org">www.world-tourism.org</a></p>           | <p><b>OMT</b></p>  | <p><b>Content inspired of the preceding charter but with less constraints ; orientation on the development of the tourist activity without harmful effects and the protection of the rights of the travellers</b></p> | <p><b>Little repercussions, not involvement in an approach of sustainable development</b></p>                                |
| <p><b>Tourism ethics charter (France, 1999)</b><br/>Complete text on the site : <a href="http://www.tourisme.gouv.fr">www.tourisme.gouv.fr</a></p>                                   | <p><b>State Secretariat of Tourism in dialogue with the professionals of the sector</b></p>  | <p><b>Takes up the principles of World Ethics Code of Tourism</b></p>   | <p><b>The signatories professionals of the charter obtain a label « Tourism and ethics » but no control is organised</b></p> |
| <p><b>Traveller ethics charter (France, 1997)</b><br/>Complete text on the site : <a href="http://www.atalante.fr">www.atalante.fr</a></p>   | <p><b>The tour operator with the editor Lonely Planet</b></p>  | <p><b>Intended for the tourists to incite them to adopt respectful behaviours of the « other » and environment</b></p>  | <p><b>Sensitising of the consumers</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Imilchil declaration (Morocco, 2000)</b></p>   | <p><b>Catholic committee against the hunger, for the development, associations and alternative travel agencies, fair trade platform equitable commercial</b></p> | <p><b>Protection of local populations</b></p>   | <p><b>Development of tourists project supported by local economic environment</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Fair tourism charter (France, 2002)</b><br/>Complete text on the site : <a href="http://www.pfce.org">www.pfce.org</a></p>   | <p><b>Fair trade platform</b></p>  | <p><b>Development of a tourist industry based on the partnership between actors, and the equity of the relationship</b></p>   | <p><b>Implementation of new forms of tourism by travel agencies</b></p>  |

**APPENDIX B**  
**Distinction between sustainable and non sustainable tourism**  
Adapted from Swarbrooke (2000)

| <b>Sustainable</b>                         | <b>Non sustainable</b>                    |
|--|---|
| <b>General concepts</b>                    | <b>General concepts</b>                   |
| <b>Slow development</b>                    | Fast development                          |
| Controlled development                     | <b>Uncontrolled development</b>           |
| Suitable scale                             | Disproportionate scale                    |
| Long term                                  | Short term                                |
| Qualitative                                | Quantitative                              |
| Social control                             | External control                          |
| <b>Development strategies</b>              | <b>Development strategies</b>             |
| <b>Planning and after, development</b>     | Development without planning              |
| Diffusion of the pressures and the benefit | Capacity augmentation                     |
| Local developers                           | Foreigners developers                     |
| Local labour                               | Imported labour                           |
| Local or traditional architecture          | Non local architecture                    |
| <b>Tourist behaviours</b>                  | <b>Tourists behaviours</b>                |
| Preparation for the travel                 | Travel little prepared                    |
| Learning of local language                 | Does not seek to learn the local language |
| Sensitivity and common sense               | Intensity and insensitivity               |
| Calm                                       | Heavy                                     |
| Repeated visits                            | Does not like to return                   |