

**Can Hotels Educate Consumers About Sustainability? in Gardetti, M. & Torres, A. (2016), Sustainability Hospitality, Chapter 9 (pp. 156-178), Sheffield: Greenleaf. by John Hirst, Durham University Business School**

**Introduction to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**

This Chapter seeks to link theory to practice in a way that can make a distinctive contribution to the quest for sustainability. The Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2013, p. 2) Draft Guidance for Providers of Education for Sustainable Development defines ESD as “enabling learners to develop the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations”. This guidance recommends “experiential and interactive approaches” which encourage learners to develop and reflect on their own values, beliefs and norms which can lead to 'transformational' or 'epistemic' learning. ESD encourages students to:

- consider the concept of global citizenship and what this might mean in the context of their own discipline
- consider the concept of environmental stewardship and what this might mean in the context of their own discipline
- think about issues of social justice and equity, and how these relate to ecological and economic factors
- develop a future-facing outlook, learning to think about consequences of actions, and how systems and societies can be adapted to ensure sustainable futures.

At Durham University Business School, we have been incredibly fortunate in developing a partnership with Aitken Spence Hotel Managements (Pvt) Ltd, a Sri Lankan company that operates a range of sustainability hotels. A team of MBA students taking a course in International Enterprise visits this company each year to carry out a one-week mini action research project, developed in conjunction with, and supported by, the company’s management team. Their studies have sought to holistically explore linkages between sustainable business practices and product/service delivery dimensions of the customer experience as viewed by management and customers. In the process our students become hotel customers themselves but, their experience goes way beyond that of most tourists, because they are privileged to “see the world behind the product”. Their input to co-creating their own “customer experience” thus constitutes a highly “experiential and interactive approach” (HEA, 2013, p. 11).

Further details about this course can be found in the UN PRME Inspirational Guide (PRME, 2014). The course includes a range of teaching and learning methods that are considered to be particularly effective in terms of preparing learners for their experience and then engaging them in it. They are intrinsically motivated by their interest in learning more about sustainable enterprise in a country that most of them have never visited before, and they are extrinsically motivated by the desire to do well in their assessment. The course includes various methods recommended by the HEA, as shown in Table 1.

<b>Pre-course reading</b>	“The Quest for Sustainable Business” (Visser, 2012)
<b>Lectures</b>	Themed around the “Five Managerial Mindsets” (Mintzberg & Gosling, The Five Minds of a Manager, 2003), and “Design-thinking” (Martin, 2009) and “Buddhist Economics” (Schumacher, 1993, pp. 38-46)
<b>Case studies</b>	Case studies of the hotel company in Sri Lanka
<b>Stimulus activities</b>	Videos, stories, poetry, team-building exercises
<b>Simulation</b>	Application of theoretical models to practical situations (using a Ketso Toolkit)
<b>Experiential project work</b>	Development of an action-research project in conjunction with the hotel company with the intention of making it a “lived experience”
<b>Place-based learning</b>	Visiting the hotel company’s head office and some of its hotels (in Sri Lanka) to conduct research in a context that stimulates “experienced reflection” (Mintzberg, 2009)

Table 1: Implementation of Teaching and Learning Methods Identified as Particularly Effective for ESD

The course is constructively aligned to achieve the learning outcomes identified in the HEA/QAA's Draft Guidance (HEA, 2013, p. 9), i.e. development of the learners':

- capacity for independent, evidence-based integrated thinking as the foundation for developing their personal code of ethics;
- awareness of their own values and how they influence their interpretation of and approach to addressing sustainability problems;
- ability to clarify their own views on ways that sustainability can be achieved in different local and global communities and circumstances and communicate them to a variety of audiences;
- ability to reflect upon and analyse their own values, decisions and behaviours;
- ability to evaluate the consequences of their own actions, and of collective actions, and be able to use this information strategically to develop new social norms where appropriate;
- willingness to take responsibility for their own actions, reflect on them, and make transformational changes;
- ability to adopt a proactive approach and a belief in their ability to take action;
- ability to engage listeners, convey complex concepts clearly and generate buy-in from audiences;
- capacity to be flexible and adapt their problem-solving mindset to fit changing or unforeseen circumstances;
- vision, motivation and resourcefulness, enabling them to contribute towards developing a more sustainable society, both locally and globally;
- commitment to lifelong advancement in their education for sustainable development.

For our learners, the experience has certainly been memorable, and in some cases life-changing.

*It has been an experience I shall never forget. I feel that a lasting legacy has started that has penetrated right into my heart. I know this will make my life forever fruitful.*

*The IEP module gave me a chance to experience a totally different culture with its own socio-political context that has revealed an approach to business that appeals to me. The blend of caring and sustainability suggests a more balanced approach which puts an equal emphasis on the means as well as the ends, which I shall take forward with me.*

## **Relevance to Hotels**

There are greater similarities between the educational experience and the tourist experience in regard to sustainability than perhaps we realise. They can both be categorised as high involvement, transformational value propositions, and some authors positively recommended hotel managers to "invest in educating consumers about sustainability" (Kovaljova & Chawla, 2013, p. 1). "Achieving sustainability will depend ultimately on changes in behaviour and lifestyles, changes which will need to be motivated by a shift in values and rooted in the cultural and moral precepts upon which behaviour is predicated" (UNESCO, 1997, p. 34). Kovaljova & Chawla (2013, p. 8) therefore conclude that customer education for sustainable development provided by hotels can indeed play a significant role in helping customers to "remodel their values and find true value in sustainability". However, they warn that this "can only result in successful outcomes if it is sincere and embedded in all aspects of the organisation's operations and management." They urge hotels to "rethink strategic policies and practices" by creating "strategic partnerships" with their customers to co-create experiences that will inform and help each other to "achieve genuine sustainability".

The idea that hotels can also be "providers of Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD) may seem rather farfetched. However, on reflection, the objectives of both tourism and education share a similar focus on the provision of experiences that create memories which become who we are (Kahneman, 2011). Our sense of identity is based almost entirely on how we relate to our existential context and on

our memories which together shape our values, beliefs and norms (Stern, 2000) and translate into how we think, feel and perceive, and in turn, condition our cognitions, attitudes and behaviours (Ajzen, 1991). Both higher education institutions (HEIs) and, increasingly, hotels focus on influencing their stakeholder value perceptions (SVPs) by engaging with the cognitive, emotional and material drivers of their behaviour. Making and developing these connections is a profoundly educational process, closely resembling the aims of “psychographic marketing” which also recognises the significance of the mental processes that drive consumer behaviour.

### Customer Service Value Creation

For both educational establishments and hotels, the emphasis is now on long-term relations and on addressing the various dimensions of stakeholder value. Customer service value (CSV) is significantly affected by intangibility and perishability, so enduring value is primarily vested in (emotional) memories of the experience (reinforced by photographs and other memorabilia) and life-style value impact. Accordingly, if they can evoke emotional memories through their alumni or customer relationship management communications, they can significantly increase its effectiveness (Percy, 2003). The “lived experience” that both hotels and (particularly residential) universities provide is thus their key value proposition.

CSV can be classified as shown in Table 2:

CSV Classification	Service/product Characteristics
Materialistic	a service/product that provides functionality and good value for money compared to other competitor’s offerings, often determined in the selection stage
Hedon(ist)ic	a service/product that provides pleasurable experiences e.g. by sight, hearing, touch, taste or smell thereby stimulating delight, enjoyment, e.g. first impressions of a hotel
Affective	a service/product that provides an emotional experience (happiness, excitement, satisfaction) that creates an affect memory (particularly peak-end experiences), e.g. the feel-good factor that a hotel inculcates
Cognitive	a service/product that engages customers’ conscious thinking processes, e.g. what they think about the quality of the hotel service/product itself or the local surroundings
Pragmatic	a service/product that engages customers in the practical act of doing something, e.g. the usability of the service/product itself, or participation in hotel leisure activities, e.g. tours, lectures, classes
Lifestyle	a service/product that synchronises with the customers’ system values, beliefs and norms, e.g. through identity, lifestyle behaviour and wellbeing
Symbolic	a service/product that emphasises the customers’ dignity/esteem through relationships, either with staff or other customers, e.g. by promoting a sense of belonging through connectedness or membership that transcends a purely instrumental relationship

Table 2: CSV Classification

Theories of customer value creation and co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) (Gentile et al, 2007) suggest a complex interrelationship between the company and the stakeholder, whereby the stakeholder becomes part of the service/product through engagement with it. In other words, the stakeholder experience emanates from the interaction between the stakeholder and the product/service provider from which associated values are derived (Addis & Holbrook, 2001).

A life-time value approach has always been acknowledged by educational establishments which segment their stakeholders according to various categories of membership relating to progression within the institution: freshers and undergraduates (junior common room members); post-graduates (middle common room members); graduates (alumni association members); honorary graduates and teaching masters/doctors (senior common room members), etc. Each of these constituencies is laden

with both symbolic and emotional value, serving to create a lasting bond between students and their *alma mater* which institutions can leverage to their advantage (e.g. by soliciting philanthropic donations) through alumni relationship management and marketing. At the time of writing, the UK Government is also exploring ways of exploiting this for student loan repayments. While hotels also seek to enrol guests into various clubs and loyalty schemes, these tend to more overtly instrumental (materialist/hedonistic value) and focus on attracting repeat business. In terms of the Multi-faceted Customer Value (MCV) Model: Fig. 1, the long-term interest of hotel establishments tends to focus on “self-oriented value”, whereas the long-term interest of educational establishments is more likely to focus on “other-orientated value”, which the Government is now opportunistically seeking to exploit.

Multi-faceted Customer Value	Intrinsic Value	Extrinsic Value
Self-orientated Value	<p><b>Quadrant 1: Individual</b></p> <p>Utility/hedonism (materialistic)</p> <p><i>The experience satisfied my wants for vfm, functionality and pleasure</i></p>	<p><b>Quadrant 3: Social</b></p> <p>Status/esteem (symbolic)</p> <p><i>The experience enabled me to demonstrate my concern for the wellbeing of others/nature</i></p>
Other-orientated Value	<p><b>Quadrant 2: Inspirational</b></p> <p>Virtues/aesthetics (affective)</p> <p><i>The authenticity &amp; awe of the experience impressed &amp; inspired me</i></p>	<p><b>Quadrant 4: Transformational</b></p> <p>Philanthropy/spirituality (transformative)</p> <p><i>The experience enabled me to make a contribution to creating a better/more sustainable world</i></p>

Fig 1. The Multi-faceted Customer Value (MCV) Model (adapted from Pelozo & Shang, 2011, p. 3).

### Operationalizing Sustainability and ESD: The Dilemma of Troublesome Knowledge

Both HEIs and hotels are clearly interested in the operationalization of sustainability, and there are many similarities, particularly between hotels and residential universities, e.g. they can both subscribe to the UK’s Green Tourism Accreditation Scheme and the Hospitality Assured Standard. Hotels can also participate in the Green Globe Award while the HEI equivalent is the Green Gown Award. There are a wide range of practical initiatives relating to UK HEIs, ranging from the regulatory Higher Education Funding Council’s Strategy for Sustainable Development (to which the author contributed at the consultation stage), to the developing partnership between the Environmental Association of Universities & Colleges (EAUC), which initiated the LiFE Index, and the National Union of Students (NUS), which initiated the Green Impact Model. The latest initiative is the “Sustainability Literacy Test” which is intended to provide an internationally recognised standard for assessing the learning outcomes of ESD, as well as evidencing the embeddedness of ESD within institutions themselves (an increasingly important aspect of Business School accreditation schemes, e.g. EQUIS and AACSB). While the tourism industry lacks the coherence of the UK Higher Education system, many sustainability initiatives, e.g. the Green Hotels & Responsible Tourism Initiative, are clearly being developed and implemented in parallel. The international Sustainability Literacy Test is an initiative that has the potential to become an internationally recognised assurance standard spanning ESD providers in both education and tourism.

Research to date suggests that sustainability value per se is not yet a primary driver of choice, although Sustainability Marketing is increasingly creating opportunities that will make it so in the future. In another sector, the Sustainability Apparel Coalition has established a ground-breaking scheme based on sustainability value-chain indices, a process that is helping to inform stakeholders of the “world behind the product”. Its Higg Index provides an internationally recognised tool for benchmarking against industry standards, continuous improvement, organisational learning, customer lifestyle value enhancement, impact assessment, due diligence, etc. An educational board-game has also been developed to introduce learners (university students and industry employees) to the methods by which the Higg Index contributes to sustainable value-chain management and hence sustainable consumption. The UKs Green Tourism scheme seeks to serve a similar purpose but has no direct ESD component, whereas Green Globe has established its own Academy providing training courses to support its members in achieving compliance with the following training requirement of its certification standard:

*All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of environmental, sociocultural, health, and safety practices. The success of the business' sustainability management*

*system depends on the effective integration and internalization of the system by employees at all levels (Green Globe Academy).*

The dilemma for ESD, irrespective of who provides it, is how to handle “troublesome knowledge” – knowledge that is discordant, disturbing and discomforting, that requires us to step outside of our “comfort zones” and, not only acknowledge that we are part of the problem which needs to change, but then to do something about it. The Durham University MBA module referred to above is constructively aligned with Mintzberg’s framework for management education (Mintzberg, 2009), based on five manager mindsets:

- Reflective mindset – questioning the way we think
- Global mindset – questioning how our contexts influence us
- Analytical mindset – questioning how our systems and structures shape us
- Collaborative mindset – questioning the quality and purpose of our relationships
- Action mindset – questioning how we initiate/respond to challenges and change

This framework recognises that we shape our environment at the same time as our environment shapes us. This phenomenon is captured by the biological term “autopoiesis” which can be extended to the social domain (Luhmann, 1990). Acknowledging this also helps us to address concerns that we over-internalise or individualise the problems that our context imposes on us (Smail, 1997). Smail blames Freud for opportunistically exploiting this by converting victims into patients (and fee-paying clients) thus disempowering them still further, rather than challenging the existentialist problems themselves. Although we are all part of the unsustainability problem, neither burying our heads in the sand nor psychotherapy can provide any solution – there is no option but to encounter “troublesome knowledge” (Meyer & Land, 2003), particularly that which is required to enable 9 billion people to achieve sustainable livelihoods while at the same time not compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. ESD is therefore inherently “troublesome” and the educational institutions in which it is taught become critical lenses through which its complexity is illuminated. They become a disruptive threshold across which learners must pass from one state of awareness (e.g. “that God’s in his heaven and all’s well with the world” (Yevtuschenko, 2008, p. 52)) to another (e.g. that in truth we’re like “the sleepwalker whistling a happy tune as he ambles towards the abyss” (McGilchrist, 2010, p. 237)).

### **Comprehending the Abyss of Unsustainability**

Critically contrasting the “abyss” of unsustainability, associated with enlightenment rationality, with the optimism of natural human care and understanding prior to their corruption and distortion by greed and self-aggrandizement, can be traced as far back as William Blake’s 18<sup>th</sup> century “Songs of Innocence and Experience”. The poet stands beyond innocence and experience, taking an objective stance from which to identify and address the illusions of both perspectives. While he deplores tyrannical domination systems that derive power from injustice and inequality (i.e. deepen the abyss of unsustainability), he also protests about the silent majority’s unwillingness to confront them; his poetry provides insights relevant to sustainability about the way in which separate modes of social control combine to create a co-dependency that is profoundly destructive of our ability to sustain humanity, i.e. to “build Jerusalem” on “green and pleasant land”, in terms of his verse.

McGilchrist explains how these separate but co-dependent modes of social control mirror the operation of the hemispheres of the human brain itself. The brain is an autopoieic organism that both shapes, and is simultaneously shaped by, its context, to which McGilchrist relates the history of the Western world. In particular, he argues that increasing left hemisphere dominance manifests itself in the efficiency cult which progressively reduces everything to its utilitarian or functional value, institutionalised by social control and domination systems, exactly as poetically portrayed in Blake’s Songs of Experience. The consequence of this, McGilchrist concludes, in much the same way as Blake, is that higher order values (also associated with sustainable development), e.g. of social and environmental justice, compassion, virtues, aesthetics, love, and anything conceived of as “sacred” are either commodified or otherwise dismissed and denigrated as useless, pointless or counterproductive. While Blake blames the state of innocence for its weakness in colluding with this state of affairs, a theme which Nietzsche (1889) carries

to extremes in “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, McGilchrist attributes it to the dysfunctionality caused by the suppression of right hemisphere neural processing. He contends that the modern (particularly Western) world is the result of “the attempt by the left hemisphere to take control of everything” (p. 402) in the interests of utility and efficiency, in which people “are simply interchangeable parts of a mechanistic system” (p. 431). Two years after the publication of Norbert Wiener’s (1954) prophetic treatise on “The Human Use of Human Beings”, novelist Kurt Vonnegut predicted that which McGilchrist now observes: “Machines and organization and pursuit of efficiency have robbed....people of liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Vonnegut, 1992, p. 292). The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Thoreau, whose legitimization of non-violent protest against injustice profoundly influenced civil rights activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and the Occupy Movement, said “let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine.”

McGilchrist concludes that the “return to the right hemisphere’ is of ultimate importance” (p437) for any hope of “saving paradise” (Brock & Parker, 2012), personified as “Gaia” (Lovelock, 2000)), which is dependent on higher order (right hemisphere) values being served, not ruled, by lower order (left hemisphere) values, e.g. as personified by “Mammon” in the Bible. This excerpt from the novel “The Business” captures the global market’s all-consuming demand for allegiance: “there is a strict rule in the Business that all executives — anybody above Level Six — must renounce all religious affiliations, the better to devote themselves to pursuing a life dedicated to Mammon” (Banks, 1999). As Capra explains, “the global market is really a network of machines – an automaton that imposes its logic on all human participants. However, in order to function smoothly, this automaton has to be programmed by human actors and institutions. The programmes that give rise to the new economy consist of two essential components – values and operational rules. The global financial networks process signals that assign a specific financial value to every asset in every economy....However, underlying all evaluations is the basic principle of unfettered capitalism: that money-making should always be valued higher than democracy, human rights, environmental protection or any other value. Changing the game means, first and foremost, changing the basic principle” (Capra, 2003, p. 185).

McGilchrist contends that the goods of the Western world (i.e. what we value) have been predicated on left hemisphere dominance which has itself been predicated on the practices of the Western world (i.e. what we do). This is also consistent with the philosophical concept of how “goods internal to practices” are developed (MacIntyre, 2000). McGilchrist argues that many Eastern societies have preserved better balanced hemispherical strategies, reflected in more symbiotic relationships between economic, social, and environmental responsibility (e.g. “Buddhist Economics”), but that these are now being destabilised by Western capitalism’s reductionist influence (particularly short-term profiteering) through globalisation, resulting in widespread social and environmental disruption and destruction. McGilchrist therefore calls for a rebalancing of our hemispherical processing strategies, which corresponds to demands from management disciplines for a better balance of analytical and intuitive thinking in management education (Martin, 2009), and from scientific disciplines for a better balance between assertive and integrative values and cognitions (Capra, 2003). In customer value perception terms, this translates into the need for a better balance between self-orientated (egoistic) values and other-orientated (altruistic) values.

Capra emphasises that “the current form of global capitalism is ecologically and socially unsustainable, and hence politically unviable in the long-run. More stringent environmental regulations, better business practices and more efficient technologies are all necessary, but they are not enough. We need deeper systemic change” (Capra, 2003, p. 184). Vonnegut, however, captured the essence of why “epistemic” change is so problematic: “for generations they’ve been built up to worship competition, and the market, productivity and economic usefulness, and the envy of their fellow men – and boom! It’s all yanked out from under them....Their whole culture’s been shot to hell.....[they need to regain] the feeling of participation, the feeling of being needed on earth – hell, *dignity*” (Vonnegut, 1992, p. 90/92). As Capra (2003, p. 188) concludes, “the values of human dignity and ecological sustainability...form the ethical basis of reshaping globalization,...globalization has no future unless it is designed to be inclusive, ecologically sustainable and respectful of human rights and values.”

## Traversing the Abyss of Unsustainability: A Sri Lankan Case Study

The foregoing discussion is intended to frame the contrast between instrumental Western (predominantly left hemisphere) approaches to sustainable business and those that Durham University students experience in Sri Lanka, which reflects a predominantly right hemisphere approach and which effectively “blows” their (largely Western) minds(ets). As critically objective observers, these post-graduates encounter a business phenomenon that is entirely new to them. It transforms the theory from their pre-course reading in “The Quest for Sustainable Business” (Visser, 2012) into a practical realisation of this quest - a model of authentically sustainable hotel management that also provides them with a practical vision of how the “abyss of unsustainability” might be bridged. While many western businesses respond to sustainability concerns by simply bolting on some social and environmental objectives in a rather reactive approach to getting on the sustainability band-wagon, these MBAs come face to face with a holistic integrated approach, embedded in deeply-held beliefs, values and norms. In stark contrast to Bank’s portrayal of western business thinking that encourages leaders to ‘amoralize’ their operations and offerings, they find that the beliefs and values of senior executives actually set the ethical tone of the organisation. They observe that emotional discourse about moral conscience, social responsibility and ecological protection are positively encouraged rather than evaded. They are even more astonished by the revelation that, given the degree of long-term effort and commitment to sustainability embedded in a whole range of sustainability practices, the hotels make very little use of this instrumentally in their publicity or marketing strategies.

They discover a business model based on Capra’s concept of sustainability which postulates “that sustainability – in ecosystems as well as human society – is not an individual property, but a property of an entire web of relationships: it involves a whole community. A sustainable community....What is sustained in a sustainable community is not economic growth or development, but the entire web of life on which our long-term survival depends. It is designed so that its ways of life, businesses, economy, physical structures and technologies do not interfere with nature’s inherent ability to sustain life” (Capra, 2003, pp. 187-8). This resonates with John Kay’s “Mode 1” business type, in contrast to the “Mode 2” business type, eulogized in the West, which he defines as “the product of a deformed style of capitalism based on a mistaken view of how markets work and how firms operate within them” (Kay, 1997, p. 426).

A strong sustainability-consciousness and a long-term focused sustainability strategy have been hallmarks of Aitken Spence (Hotels) since long before the global paradigm-shift towards sustainable development. Throughout its history, of over 150 years, this company has always sought ways of making a meaningful and relevant contribution to all of its key stakeholders, thereby generating sustainable value and enduring relationships. By mid-2009, it began implementing a groupwide integrated sustainability policy, which enabled the formal and structured integration of sustainability into its business model. The policy encompasses 19 clauses on compliance, ethical conduct, environment, community outreach, sustainable processes, governance, stakeholder engagement, quality, customer service, talent management, innovation, health and safety, human rights, information security, continuous improvement and credible reporting. The policy framework is implemented on a tiered basis, to ensure that basic requirements in all key areas are met. From a patchwork of sustainability initiatives tackled in different manners, the integrated policy now serves to blanket all areas identified as important for the sustainable growth of the organisation, and ensures its implementation across essential activities in all areas across the Group. Simultaneously, subsidiary companies are required to pay closer attention to key areas specific to their operation, as per the impacts, risks and opportunities identified. The company has developed a Rating Scheme to assess the sustainability implementation standards of its various subsidiaries. This is presented every six months to the Sustainability Team and the Management Board by way of sustainability performance scorecards that “allow companies to track cost and risk reduction as well as evaluate value-creation activities” and present consistent internal and external communication (Lubin & Esty, 2010, p. 50).

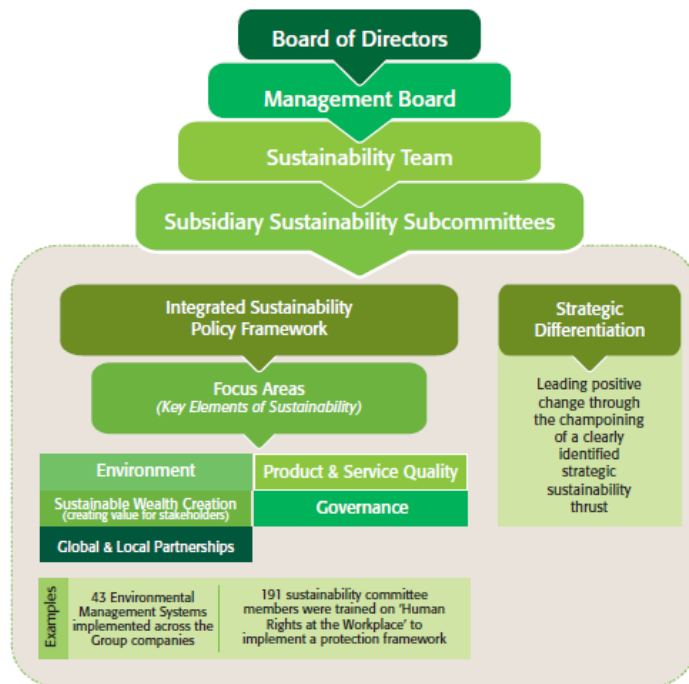


Fig 2. Sustainability Management Structure: Aitken Spence (Hotels)

*“Sustainable development requires an organisation to look closely at its three pillars: economic, social and environmental performance: by first identifying the impact it has on each. The integrated policy was drafted looking at all areas of our operations where we can potentially impact the economic performance, natural environment and social sustainability. Using the integrated policy as a guideline we have or are in the process of implementing management systems to focus on mitigating any adverse impacts and strengthening the positive impacts in each of these spheres. We are currently looking at how we can improve this process by improving our stakeholder engagement practices and also by comparing our practices with the ISO 26000 guidelines.” (Aitken Spence (Hotels): Sustainability Policy)*

Tables 3 and 4 summarise Aitken Spence (Hotels) sustainability goals and priorities.

Key Elements	Environment	Sustainable Wealth Creation	Product/Service Delivery	Governance	Local & Global Partnerships
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mitigate adverse environmental impacts from the operations using a scientific approach.</li> <li>➤ Protect ecosystems impacted by the operations of our company.</li> <li>➤ Increase energy efficiency and usage of energy from renewable and cleaner energy sources.</li> <li>➤ Improve waste resource management.</li> <li>➤ Develop adaptation strategies to tackle climate change effects on our business interests.</li> <li>➤ Develop and implement good environmental programmes and policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain strong economic performance.</li> <li>➤ Establish and maintain a strong and competitive, skilled human resource.</li> <li>➤ Community upliftment through employment creation, local purchasing, child and elder care programmes.</li> <li>➤ Infrastructure development.</li> <li>➤ Review and revise the channels for all key stakeholders to provide feedback.</li> <li>➤ Extend opportunities for skills development and lifelong learning for the employees and communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure product/service responsibility and safety.</li> <li>➤ Ensure the health and safety of all key stakeholders including employees, guests and clients.</li> <li>➤ Engage with suppliers, contractors and other service providers to ensure all links within the supply chain network are aware of the Group's values and commitments.</li> <li>➤ Establish quality management systems aligned with internationally accepted standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Establish required governance structures.</li> <li>➤ Review and revise Group wide code of ethics, policies, practices and procedures as per the risks, challenges and opportunities identified.</li> <li>➤ Establish a workplace human rights protection framework.</li> <li>➤ Maintain occupational health and safety systems within all Group Companies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Internalise the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact.</li> <li>➤ Internalise the 7 UN Women's Empowerment Principles.</li> <li>➤ Maintain a GHG emission inventory and meet the requirements of the Caring for Climate initiative.</li> <li>➤ Fulfil the commitment to the Global Compact Local Network.</li> <li>➤ Increase awareness of global issues on a local platform.</li> <li>➤ Develop a network of stakeholders with similar interests for knowledge sharing and to work on long term strategy development.</li> </ul>

Table 3: Goals to be achieved by Aitken Spence (Hotels) identified by the Group Sustainability Model



Key Elements	Environment	Sustainable Wealth Creation	Product/Service Delivery	Governance	Local & Global Partnerships
Priorities for 12/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reducing overall energy cost.</li> <li>➤ Increasing resource efficiency.</li> <li>➤ Zero waste dumping.</li> <li>➤ Increase awareness of environmental sustainability among employees and other key stakeholders.</li> <li>➤ Reduce withdrawal of freshwater by increasing efficiency of usage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increase engagement with key stakeholders to identify impacts and risks to plan adaptation and risk management strategies.</li> <li>➤ Increase hours committed for skills development and lifelong learning of the employees.</li> <li>➤ Engage in required skills development and improving the employability of target groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Carry out a customer perception study.</li> <li>➤ Implement brand awareness and brand qualities within the employees.</li> <li>➤ Strengthen the OHS risk management procedures of the strategic business units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implement the Human Rights Protection Framework.</li> <li>➤ Internalise the 7 Women's Empowerment Principles.</li> <li>➤ Continue to review the established policies, procedures and general practices against ISO 26000 guidelines and improve areas vulnerable to potential risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engage more effectively with entities within the Global Compact network.</li> <li>➤ Increase awareness of the UNGC principles, the Women's Empowerment Principles.</li> <li>➤ Establish a carbon emission inventory and disclose data on emission reductions as per the Caring for Climate initiative.</li> </ul>

Table 4: Prioritised Action Plan arising from Aitken Spence (Hotels) Group Sustainability Model

The strategic direction for this hotel company, over the short to medium term, involves consolidating and growing the traditional European market through product differentiation and competitive pricing, as that market continues to hold the strongest potential for Sri Lanka. However, it is also focusing on emerging markets, identified as having high potential while also concentrating on new specialised segments “such as nature, wildlife, wellness, and medical tourism”. The company recognises that world tourism is shifting towards “an experiential model”, with more travellers avoiding group travel and making greater use of online and technology platforms to “garner themselves better deals and more exciting tour options”.

The company has provided leadership in environmental and social sustainability and has consistently benchmarked itself against international standards and best practices, winning numerous accolades and awards for its sustainability practices and achieving a range of related ISO certifications. It has become the yardstick for the entire region in environmental and social sustainability through its various management systems, policies, procedures and general practices by which it identifies and manages the environmental and social aspects of its operations. Central to this is organisational governance which, in-line with ISO26000 and the new CSR Pyramid (Fig. 3), is regarded as both a core process itself as well as being the prime enabler of other core processes. The company’s sustainability enablers include: an integrated sustainability policy framework; a sustainable procurement framework; integration of 7R principles throughout the company; food safety, energy and water saving policies; stakeholder engagement; community outreach; and integrated sustainability reporting. The company also invests in the continuous sustainability education (i.e. ESD) of its hotel employees to achieve the behavioural changes required to meet its sustainability targets and add value to its clients. It prides itself on the fact that its sustainability activities are conceptualised, directed and managed entirely through internal expertise, driven by its own Sustainability Team, supported by subsidiary-level sustainability sub-committees.

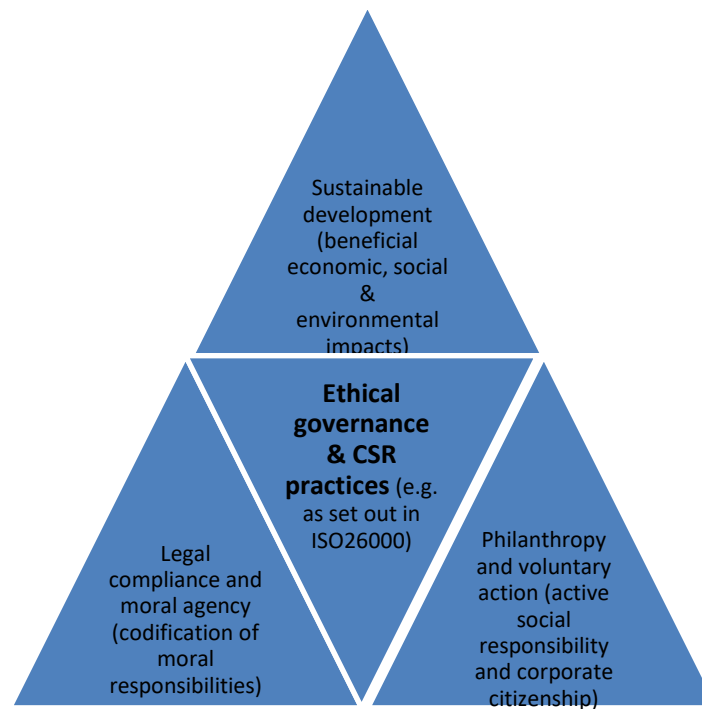


Fig. 3: The New CSR Pyramid

Durham MBA's have evidenced the outcome of the company's sustainable development activities first-hand, wearing two hats as both customers and researchers. Although well-prepared for their experience in advance, it always exceeds their expectations. Co-creating their itinerary with the company in an "experiential learning mode", they include visits to local schools, where they witness the educational support provided by the company, and observe its eco-park and recycling facilities, including a fertiliser plant, a paper mill, and even a process for converting waste toothpaste into cleaning products! Reflecting on this interactive experience genuinely contributes to their ESD, particularly enhancing their understanding of ways of operationalizing circular industrial ecosystems theory. They are particularly impressed when they discover that the hotel's CSR Manager moved to live in the local community, committing a great deal of time to working with community leaders, developing relationships of trust and open honest communication, to allay their fears about the impact of the hotel. This has provided a sound basis for future practice by ensuring effective engagement with community stakeholders who now view the hotel as a positive enabler of sustainable livelihoods.

### Implications for Hotels

Our students also found some evidence that the company acts on Kovaljova & Chawla's (2013) recommendation that hotels should "invest in educating consumers about sustainability". It displays its environmental policy and the Green philosophy behind its sustainability management approach in hotel rooms and social media sites "to educate guests". However, although there are some opportunities for customers to "see the world behind the product" as an "experiential learning" option, our students particularly recommend training staff to represent their learning about ESD to customers as a "win-win" opportunity. Research consistently shows that high employee engagement is correlated with customer satisfaction, customer retention and corporate performance (Deloitte's, 2010, p. 37). "Brands are not built around the product but around the employees who deliver the service and (ideally) create a memorable experience...The relationship between employees and customers is at the heart of the brand experience....when the unity of interest is intuitive, with employees and consumers sharing the same passions, it is particularly powerful" (Clegg et al., 2011, p. 171/174). Other organisations have successfully unlocked the potential value of their staff as channels of communication, e.g. the Austrian Forestry Corporation trained its 180 staff to communicate the company's sustainability vision to their 520,000 direct customer contacts and obtain feedback about how to improve their sustainability performance. Our students conclude that capitalising on this approach would create better value for customers, the staff themselves, and the hotels, thus effectively populating all quadrants of the MCV Model (Fig. 1).

While sustainability is becoming a key component of the tourism sector marketing mix, the conflict between left hemisphere (utility) values and right hemisphere (sustainability) values creates a cognitive dilemma. This translates into a pervasive distrust by consumers of marketing hype which fails to convince them that green product offerings do anything to contribute to a better environment and, more damagingly, often exacerbates their perception that business makes a mockery of their social and environmental concerns by “greenwashing”, resulting in a “value-action gap”. For companies that have a genuine commitment to sustainability, this customer value-action gap is a significant deterrent to sustainability marketing, due to the fear that it may, counter-productively, arouse customer scepticism about the company’s sustainability efforts.

Hotel managements are therefore often inclined to rely instead on the “lived experience” of their customers, and their reviews, to communicate their efforts and commitment to sustainability. Fellow travellers perceive such reviews as more trustworthy and credible because their peers have nothing to lose from being honest about whether or not a hotel has fulfilled their expectations of service, amenities, and sustainability, in contrast to a hotel’s own marketing activities (Sparks et al., 2013). Comments from social media sites influence 87% of visitors’ choice of hotel (TripAdvisor, 2012). However, our students’ analysis of on-line comments by customers from the hotels they visited in Sri Lanka revealed that the majority of consumers’ comments focused on the hotel’s friendly staff, beautiful surroundings and food quality, i.e. on the product itself rather than on the “world behind the product”. This suggests that the company’s commitment to sustainability remains largely hidden from view, and yet research demonstrates that this is directly proportional to positive customer attitudes towards hotel sustainability initiatives.

The dilemma for sustainability hotels is, therefore, how to convince customers of the authenticity of their efforts and commitment without attracting the cynicism attributed to ‘green’ rhetoric found in promotional materials (Frandsen & Johansen, 2001). The Hotel Sector could take a leaf out of the Sustainability Apparel Coalition’s book by taking steps to develop ways of providing customers with a “behind the scenes” perspective as well as putting more effort into preparing customers for “experiential learning” by “setting the scene” in advance. “Getting the consumer involved in the creation and delivery of sustainable value is one important way of harnessing consumer behaviour for sustainability” (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 103). Hotels employ engagement strategies to further their sustainability practices in both subtle and obvious ways, including positioning cards and brochures in hotel rooms as well as providing information on menus or brochures (Frandsen & Johansen, 2001), but this is customarily pitched at the level of “informating” associated with the MCV Model’s (Fig. 1) quadrant 1. More recent research (Goldstein et al., 2008) concludes that hotels can effectively engage more consumers in their sustainability practices by appealing to social identity effects, which correspond to the MCV Model’s (Fig. 1) “extrinsic” social and sacred values (quadrants 3 and 4).

Consumer identity is becoming particularly important in the positioning of sustainability-oriented services in the market-place (Belz & Peattie, 2012). Hotel companies therefore need to “drive environmentally responsible purchase behaviour” (Barber et al., 2012, p. 282) by focussing on the “management of meaning”, to create “a platform or arena in which negotiations about identity can take place” whereby the brand becomes “the interface between identity and image” (Clegg et al., 2011, p. 172-3). Barber et al. (2012, p. 297) found a “direct link between environmental consequences, their [customers’] concern for society as a whole, and the self-image that consuming environmentally friendly products would project, linking their strong values and beliefs to their self-image”, further confirming the validity of the MCV Model (Fig. 1). As Philip Kotler concludes, “increasing numbers of people will prefer to buy from companies that care. Companies will need to add an environmental dimension to their profile” (Kotler, 2011, p. 133).

By changing the message from “informating” to “transformating”, and linking it to social value norms, customers can also be engaged through the medium of “social capital” (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is the medium for “collaborative consumption” which is one of the “10 ideas that will change the world” (Time, 2011). Social capital connects (“bridging social capital”) and unites (“bonding social capital”) customers in ways that can empower them to establish such norms and, at the same time, develop

related affective and symbolic value (Table 2) bonds which coalesce into a “unity of interest” or sense of common purpose and then solidify into social solidarity and accountability. This underlies the concept of “mindful consumption” (Sheth et al., 2011), premised on challenging people’s mindsets (thinking and behaviour) in the light of the personal, social and environmental consequences of unsustainable consumption, which takes us right back to the aims of ESD outlined at the beginning of this Chapter.

Social networking technology now provides the means to leverage the transformational power of social capital to achieve social innovation through the relationship-building process. By giving consumers a voice, they can create their own “transforming” messages and contribute to developing the image of brands with which they identify through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), although this also requires an understanding of how cultural differences affect e-WOM, e.g. vertical individualism in the West, contrasted with horizontal collectivism in the East (Chu & Choi, 2011). Social norms are also a significant motivator for customer support of sustainability initiatives which cause-related marketing can help to strengthen. The hotel industry thus has the means to promote social and sustainability norms, contributing to much the same aspirational learning outcome as ESD, i.e. a mindset which understands that more sustainable consumption is in the collective long-term interests of everyone. However, they should heed the research which demonstrates that while learners (and customers) respond positively to a sense of participation and collective effort, they react negatively to attempts to induce guilt. The best responses were found to be achieved by empathic messages that connect with their own values rather than impersonal quasi-technical terminology, e.g. describing recycling in terms of “giving resources a second chance” (Belz & Peattie, 2012).

Much academic research focuses on the “business case for sustainability”, i.e. identifying to what extent guests are willing to pay a premium to enjoy a 'green' hotel (Campanelli & Rizzo, 2009) (Hann et al., 2009); (Han & Kim, 2010); (Kang et al., 2012). Pelozo & Shang (2011) conclude that companies can gain competitive advantage by linking their CSR activities to increased customer value, or by developing new sources of customer value. Some of this research evidences a degree of customer circumspection, on the grounds that hotels are perceived to be making savings from, for example, less frequent changing of towels. Savvy customers quickly recognise “greenwashing” when they see it (for example, one customer confessed to sticking post-it notes on his towels to verify the authenticity of espoused replenishment practice). Clegg et al. (2011, p.400) attribute such scepticism to the wider distrust of business practices, “institutionalised in a legacy of exploitative organizational behaviour and misbehaviour” from which “past traditions loom nightmarishly large on their present actions, even when they are well intentioned”.

The most commonly cited barrier to more sustainable consumption is customers’ perceptions that their efforts are not worthwhile without commensurate effort and commitment being demonstrated by companies (and governments), and of false sustainability claims made by companies about their services (Belz & Peattie, 2012). Our students’ research corroborates the importance of the way in which hotel managements incorporate and integrate “green” management practices into their policies and day-to-day operations in ways that are perceived as authentic from both internal and external perspectives of their customers’ experience (James et al, 2011). This strategy of embedding “a 360-degree view of sustainability within the business model” (Deloitte's, 2010, p. 42) builds the 'green' image and reputation as integral to the overall customer experience. This resonates with the hotel philosophy of taking care of guests and the environment (Frandsen & Johansen, 2001) and is consistent with Sheth et al’s (2011) notion of “mindful consumption”. Research shows that once a guest has experienced a hotel that offers an exceptional experience, including a sustainability offering, they are more likely to expect the same thing from all hotels and are more likely to factor this normatively into their choices, either by selecting hotels that practice sustainability or by returning to ones that they have previously experienced, depending on their destination (Graci & Kuehnel, 2012); (Chen & Peng, 2012). By educating their customers in sustainability, hotels both “foster the development of green tourism and promote its benefits to guests” and demonstrate their genuine commitment to sustainability, resulting in increased loyalty (Graci & Kuehnel, 2012), so maintaining the trust and credibility on which this relationship is founded is of the utmost importance.

## Conclusion

This case study of the Sri Lankan hotel company, Aitken Spence (Hotels), demonstrates not only that sustainable hotels can deliver excellent standards of customer service, but also that they can contribute meaningfully to ESD (in this case, for a group of critical-thinking Durham MBA students). It exemplifies the concept of “CSR 2.0 performance” (Visser, 2012) by embedding and integrating sustainability into its core operations in a way that positively impacts on all four quadrants of the MCV Model (Fig. 1). As Visser points out, CSR 2.0 necessitates developing an understanding of the “macro-level system (society and ecosystems)” in a way that changes attitudes and behaviours to optimise its chances of long-term survival. From this we can conclude that hotels need to foster the notion that they and their representatives can act as change agents themselves and engage in collaborative efforts to advance sustainable development. They can leverage this through the paradigm change taking place from the “old plan and push economy to the new engage and co-create economy” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 31), theoretically underpinned by a “market-oriented sustainability framework” (Crittenden, Crittenden, Ferrell, Ferrell, & Pinney, 2011). Hotels are also particularly well-placed to extend their offerings from “experiential” to “experiential learning” modes, based on the belief that “people interactive” institutions, which include both hotels and universities, can and do shape the world around them – Durham University’s motto, which the author was instrumental in crafting, is: “shaped by the past, creating the future”. Like Ray Anderson’s Interface, these organisations can motivate their stakeholders to begin “climbing Mount Sustainability” to create a sustainable future.

The transition from the established left hemisphere dominated world that subordinates the welfare of other species, future generations and the corporately excluded to the individual needs, rights and self-interested aspirations of affluent consumers will not be an easy ascent. Affluent lifestyles enjoyed at the expense of sustainable livelihoods are unsustainable. Stimulating right hemisphere strategies to better balance the way we think and perceive the world would be a step in the right direction towards realising the vision of a sustainable planet economy consistent with the “Buddhist Economics” (Schumacher, 1993) that has a spiritual home in Sri Lanka. Durham University post-graduates have witnessed this as a “lived experience” and, with it, the combination of value creation, environmental integrity, good governance and societal contribution (VEGS) that demonstrates “the qualitative and quantitative difference between other models of sustainable business and the CSR 2.0 DNA model” (Visser, 2012, p. 231). As Visser concludes, “the quest for a sustainable future is like a wheelbarrow. The only way we will make progress is if we pick it up and push forward” (p. 238). Hotels, as well as HEIs, must develop their own unique contribution to achieving this quest. As Stuart Hart asserts, “Companies can and must change the way customers think by creating preferences for products and services consistent with sustainability. Companies must become educators rather than mere marketers...” (Hart, 2014, p. 370).

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