

Ethical Theories Applied in the Field of Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to synthesise the main ethical theories that can be applied in any economic area in general and in the tourism field in particular. It is widely believed that each economic sector in which human interaction is principal, has a moral side. This moral side is translated into tourism through concepts such as ethical tourism, responsible tourism, and sustainable tourism. Three main ethical theories are described from a philosophical perspective. They can be applied in a concrete manner to real tourism processes and activities and will enable clarification of key concepts that form any applied ethics expert's tool: values, principles, standards, ethics, and/or codes of conduct, etc. In the last part of the paper, among the main conclusions, future research directions are detailed.

KEYWORDS: *ethical tourism, kantian theory, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism, utilitarian ethics, virtue theory.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *Z30, Z39.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term ethics derives from the Greek word *ethos*, which refers to a customary way of conduct or to the beliefs that guide an individual, a group, or even an institution. Thus, here are included those principles, rules, and standards, some of which crystalize in form of laws or codes of conduct (Bîgu & Anastasiu & Cernea, 2018), others are taken as such, being taken as granted.

In regards to another related concept, moral is a set of convictions, principles, rules, values, etc. concerning what is good or bad, right or unfair regarding actions, behaviours, or human values (Anastasiu, 2011). Therefore, morality helps us in understanding which conduct we should adopt or refuse, which are the essential values of a community, what social well-being is, and what fundamental rights and obligations each individual holds.

Values, behaviours, actions, etc., in order to be ethical, must contain four fundamental elements (adapted after Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013): pre-eminence of the rational approach, the existence of moral standards that are followed by all members of a community, the principal of fairness, and the universal dimension. These will be presented sequentially in this paper.

We consider that it is truly important to refer to ethics regardless of the field of activity, as it offers the possibility to reflect on the society we live in, the people with whom we interact, and on ourselves. Considering that tourism is a domain in which human interaction plays an

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important role, it cannot be taken into consideration without its moral side. The aim of this paper is to present theoretical aspects of ethics that we can refer in the field of tourism. Additionally, the concepts of responsible tourism, sustainable tourism and ethical tourism are also the authors' focus, supporting the idea that the tourism industry also has a moral dimension, not only in terms of economic, social, and cultural aspects.

This paper is structured as follows: after a brief introduction, the authors focus on fundamental ethical theories, and then on presenting the concepts of responsible tourism, sustainable tourism and ethical tourism. In the final part of the paperwork, research that is based on these three concepts and that represent key references in scientific literature are discussed. At the end of the paper, the main conclusions and future research directions are underlined.

2. FUNDAMENTAL ETHICAL THEORIES

As we mentioned earlier, we will focus on the four fundamental elements that imprint an ethical character on values, behaviours, and actions. First, the preeminence of the rational approach indicates that the substratum of ethics is always a rational one, based on logical arguments. This means that ethics follows which moral judgment is correct, which action is permitted and which is not, and which moral theory has the foundations and consequences of a moral insight.

As for the moral character of conduct, it does not exist without referring to the set of moral norms and values of a society, as well as the fact that they have a high grade of stability, which cannot be replaced permanently by other norms and values with a weak moral character or without any morality.

The principle of impartiality underlines the fact that this concept is a fundamental condition for an action or a behaviour to be considered moral (Harrison, 2005; Jones & Pollitt, 2002). Humans must receive a nonpreferential treatment; this way the idea has a very powerful echo in the tourism field, for example, because all individuals that bought a tourist service package need to benefit from similar services and not differentiated depending on other unclear criteria without morality. Surely, since this is an economic rather than a strictly existential field, this rule does not apply to all people in general, and only to the ones that bought the touristic services.

Finally, the universal dimension (Bowie, 2001; Flynn, 2008) is specific to all ethical principles and theories; in other words, in order to be a moral norm or principle, a statement with moral character must be applicable in all similar situations in which it was first applied. For example, as soon as we establish the fact that it is wrong in a moral way for a tourism service provider to mislead his clients by publishing fake online photography of the offered accommodation, it becomes applicable not only to a provider from a particular town in Romania, but also for all tourism service providers in the country.

It should be observed that the emergence and development of ethics in occidental culture has been influenced directly by occidental philosophy, which put its mark decisively on theoretical and practical foundations. In conclusion, ethics cannot be separated from its philosophical foundation, but neither can occidental philosophy be separated from its ethical dimension. However, as there is no single philosophy in the occidental world, we can easily

observe that there is not only one philosophical theory, but several. We will look at each one of them in turn.

2.1 Kantian theory of ethics

Firstly, the Kantian theory of ethics is one of the fundamental philosophical theories that attempts to define rigorously the reference domain of ethics. The starting point of this theory (Kant, 1972) is the observation that states that the greatest specific of human being is attached to 'good will'; but, in order to understand what morality is, we need to introduce the distinction that refers to those actions that are done out of predisposition and those that are based on obligation.

According to the German philosopher, Kant (1972), only the actions that are performed out of duty have a moral content, the inclination of doing good deeds not being a necessary and sufficient criterion in order to be considered moral. For example, Kant argues, when a random human being undertakes various actions of charity from time to time, when his budget allows it, because he considered that it is his duty, we can call it a moral action; in opposition to moments in which a person, because she has a warm soul and is altruistic, always does charity acts that develop an inner satisfaction, in this case the actions cannot be considered truly moral. In this way, Kant establishes the fact that moral actions do not depend on the purpose of following goals, but only if they are accomplished by truly ethical means. In this way, we can confirm that Immanuel Kant is a deontologist by definition, given the fact that the ethics he elaborated it is not primarily concerned with the consequences of people's actions, but always emphasises the means.

It should be noted that the German philosopher is aware of the difficulty of differentiating, in some given situations, between actions that are similar but which can be performed by duty and by inclination, too. The example that Kant offers is suggestive and is taken, not accidentally for sure, from economics field (adapted after Kant, 1972): suppose that a merchant does not increase the price for his services that he offers when he has an trade relationship with a inexperienced customer but keeps the prices unchanged, both the seller and the service provider, for all customers, regardless of age, roots, level of education, etc. In this case 'everyone is served fairly'. However, it is not enough for the action to have a moral character, because it is possible that the action may not have been done by duty or inclination, but out of selfishness, because the trader or service provider is aware that he will win only by being fair with his clients. Therefore, treating clients impartially is necessary in order to do a fair action morally, but it is not enough.

In conclusion, Kantian ethics is centred on duty, but at the same time, it has a universal character. Synthesising, we can affirm that, from this perspective, an action is moral as long as it has good intentions. Thus, as we could see from the examples Kant offered, this ethic is not exclusively abstract, but, moreover, it aims at practical aspects of life consisting of a guide that needs to be followed. Humans confront situations where moral's character or absence cannot be easily established. Maybe this explanation for the business domain, including tourism field, cannot be dispensed with from Kantian ethics, which has become integrated in the ethical field and in general culture of the occidental world.

For example, if we keep in mind ethical business domain applicable in tourism from Kantian perspective we can ask ourselves if the idea of offering tourism services in order to mislead his clients with false publicity, for example, by offering accommodation that is situated closer to an important touristic point of interest, it can be universally available in tourism field? Or,

another example: let us suppose that a tourism service provider from the mountain side invents a local tax that tourists must pay as they visit. Let us repeat the question: Can those actions be understood as universal maxims? The answer is negative for both examples.

2.2 Utilitarian ethics

Unlike Kantian theory, utilitarian ethics does not emphasise the means but the consequences of actions; in other words, an action is good or bad in relation with the results of that act and not in relation with what it represents. Therefore, if an action produces benefits, it can be considered good or moral, and if an action produces losses or disadvantages, it can be neither good nor moral. Therefore, it can be affirmed that an action is moral if the ratio between benefits and costs or losses involved is positive, and, inversely, that action is not moral if the ratio is negative. And this positive ratio between benefits and costs must remain unchanged with respect to all parts affected by that action.

The utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who is the founder of the utilitarian paradigm, argued that the principle of utility is based on the idea that happiness is to be understood as the prevalence of pleasure over pain. In his fundamental paper, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham affirms that pleasures can be distinguished from a qualitative point of view according to seven criteria, which has been referred to as the hedonistic calculus (Bentham, 2000):

- Intensity criteria, which states that a pleasure is superior to another if it is more intense;
- Duration criteria: the pleasure that lasts longer is superior;
- Certainty criteria which supports the idea that the pleasure which can be accomplished to a greater degree is superior;
- Closeness in time criteria, of proximity, according to which pleasures that are separated by a shorter time are more worthy of being desired;
- Fecundity or productivity criteria, according to which the superior pleasures are those that generate other pleasures beside the pleasure itself;
- Purity criteria: a pure pleasure is greater than one that can offer pain or suffering;
- Extension criteria, which are concerned with increasing the number of people that are affected by that pleasure.

Thus, Bentham introduces the idea that pleasures do not have the same level of importance but can be compared, measured and evaluated. Therefore, there is a hierarchy of pleasures, an idea that was to be continued in later approaches by philosophers that belong to this paradigm. As John Stuart Mill (1994) states in his paper called 'Utilitarianism', an action is correct from a moral point of view as long as it produces happiness and is incorrect if it produces the opposite of happiness. Happiness, from a utilitarian perspective, has two main components: on one hand, the lack of pain or suffering, which is a mandatory condition, but not enough to be happy, and especially, obtaining pleasure is a necessary condition and sufficient for people in order to be happy.

This philosophical school which states that pleasure represents a fundamental criterion of morality had many critics, but Mill points out that not all pleasures are the same, some of them are 'more desirable and valuable than others'; and there are certain criteria by which we can distinguish between different types of pleasure.

A first criterion is qualitative, and it is close connection with intellectual and artistic pleasure superiority, to those that derive from imagination, profound emotions, or are connected with moral emotions in proportion with pleasures that are simple sensation. In general, intellectual

pleasures are superior from corporal pleasures and this is not because of its internal characteristics, but because they produce greater advantages. An example is needed: Let us suppose that two people have almost the same amount of money, and, while the first person spends that money to organise various expensive parties, the second one invests that amount of money in his own education, which includes economics and management knowledge that will permit him to become a successful businessman with big revenues. If we analyse these two situations, it is obvious that, even if both actions bring pleasures, the second one is clearly superior, and necessary itself, but because pleasure or benefits obtained are greater and, on the other hand, it produces long-term advantages.

The second criterion for pleasure differentiation is the quantitative one, respectively the fact that it is seen as being superior the pleasure that brings benefits to a large category of humans and not to a minority. The fundamental rule is that all parts involved in a certain endeavor, for example in a business in the tourism field, to have something to gain from that action. But that is not all, because Mill introduces a new criterion of competence, precisely the fact that, out of all different pleasures, the superior one has been agreed by a person from that domain.

The utilitarian approach argues the fact that there are several steps through which it is possible to determine which of the actions under consideration brings the greatest benefits (adapted after Frederick, 1999):

1. All actions are established as alternatives and the access is broadly permitted;
2. All those who are going to be affected by the alternative actions are listed and watched (this enumeration can include also the research team members in ethical domain if they are directly affected);
3. The ratio between benefits and costs is calculated for each participant for each analysed alternative;
4. A hierarchy of alternative actions is established according to the best benefit-cost ratio.

For example, we can analyse the ‘Tourists, go home’ campaign from a utilitarian point of view. It is well known that this campaign seeks to put emphasis on excessive tourism, even through some street protests in various parts of Europe. Thus, from a utilitarian perspective, this school, which is increasing vocally in countries such as Spain, Greece, etc. cannot be moral or immoral; only the analysis of the consequence of this campaign on all the actors involved in tourism domain from certain countries or regions can establish this. Firstly, utilitarianism must be distinguished from ethical selfishness, which considers that an action is morally correct if benefits are maximum for a person that undergoes that action and, at the same time, costs are reduced to minimum. From this idea we can conclude that, from an ethical egoism point of view, ‘Tourists, go home’ campaign it is not correct morally speaking because it brings financial loss to services providers, forcing them to reduce the number of accommodations offered or to take other measures that will affect the number of tourists from that country, region or location.

On the other hand, utilitarianism can be distinguished from ethical egoism and from ethical altruism, which holds that an action can only be morally right if the benefits, i.e., the costs, of those directly affected by that action are considered. From this perspective ‘Tourists, go home’ campaign is morally correct because the quality of residents from that area where a large number of tourists are, have to suffer. The financial benefits are less important than other factors such as quality of life and of habitation in general, the life of residents being affected negatively, so the campaign can be considered a moral solution to the given problem. In addition, various studies (Hall & Brown, 2006) show the fact that tourism can have an

increase in inequalities as a result between members of a community, including those who live in a crowded tourist area.

Let us suppose that in Romania, in some touristic area that is crowded, there will be people who support this campaign. If we analyse the consequences of this movement on this campaign from a utilitarian perspective, we will see that the benefits of this campaign among all involved actors are lower compared to the losses. All of this because tourism service providers could be affected in a major way by this movement and their activity would bring them any financial profit. This means, that a decrease in jobs in various tourist area of Romania, some of them already having these problems. Moreover, the utilitarian ethics imposes that the analyse of consequences of an action should be analysed not only on short term, but also on long term, and, in this case, the negative consequences of this campaign would be significantly higher. In addition, utilitarianism imposes the growth in number of persons that are affected directly by an action, and the analysed campaign does not produce such an effect.

2.3 Virtue ethics

In general, ethics seen as a branch of philosophy holds that there are three fundamental factors that need to be taken into account in order to analyse an action: the action itself, the principles of action, and the consequences of that action. However, there is also a fundamental ethic paradigm that emphasises neither the action itself, nor the principle of actions, nor the consequences in particular. The focus is aimed at the agent that does the certain action, more precisely on the character traits of the person that does that action. The character traits considered are called virtues

This paradigm is called virtue ethics and has its origins in Aristotle's moral philosophy, most notably the 'Nicomachean Ethics'. Aristotle (1998) defines virtue (areté) as being similar to moderation, in another words, a middle way lying between extremes, something that is not excess, nor insufficiency, situated equally distant from the two extremes. Moreover, generosity is a virtue of ethical character, as is temperance. The Greek philosopher offers a series of example of these virtues, that have as common element the idea of morality. For example, courage is such a virtue because it is situated between cowardice and recklessness: 'He who flees from all and fears and dares nothing becomes a coward; he who fears nothing but braves everything becomes bold, just as he who enjoys every pleasure, refraining from none, becomes fearless, and he who avoids all, like a savage, becomes callous. Therefore, moderation and courage are destroyed by both excess and insufficiency, while moderation saves them (Aristotle, 1998, 1104a, 20-25). Accordingly, here are some of the fundamental virtues, as Aristotel categorised them: courage, moderation, generosity, magnanimity, greatness of soul, gentleness, sincerity, cheerfulness, kindness, decency, etc.

The ethics of virtue underline the fact that in different cultures there are different sets of values, therefore, the first step that needs to be done is to understand what the system of virtues of values of a specific culture mean. (Anastasiu, 2018). In this way, we can induce the idea that ethical virtues are affected by cultural relativism; however, we cannot ignore the fact that some virtues need to have a universal character (Boşca, 2021). In fact, the foundation of this ethical theory keeps in mind the universal character of some essential virtues, an idea that is perfectly in line with Aristotel's philosophy.

For example, ethical virtue applied in tourism field puts its emphasis on those behaviours that should be adopted by all parties involved in this socio-economic phenomenon. The main

priority should not be obtaining profit in any given circumstances but adopting some models of behaviour that lead to growing the quality of services in Romanian's tourism services, to growing the level of satisfaction, but also of the tourism services providers. In this way, both the tourist and service provider can keep in mind the model of virtues proposed by Aristotle, which is based on moderation, kindness, decency, transparency, cheerfulness, and, why not, generosity. Although it may sound as a simple ideal, this model can prove effectiveness in economic return, because tourists are encouraged to come back to the visited places, where they had a very pleasant experience because they benefited from high quality services, and their host were welcoming, kind, cheerful, and friendly, not just interested in making a quick profit. In other words, tourism not only has an economic dimension, but also a social and moral one, interaction between those who offer tourism services and the beneficiaries of there services often being essential regarding people's reaction on those services.

3. ETHICAL TOURISM

As shown above, tourism is not only an economic phenomenon, but also a social and moral one. From this perspective, the fundamental characteristics of tourism are as follows (adapted after Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013):

- (1) Tourism involves the realisation of economic, socio-cultural and ecological interactions.
- (2) Those interactions take place on the way to and into a particular destination, that is, at the same time, the place in which other people live (home and/or backyard of a house, a village, a city, a particular region, or various mountain or seaside resorts, etc.).
- (3) Frequently, these interactions involve power differences, meaning that the industry of tourism and tourists in general can impose their point of view about the ones that offer tourism services.
- (4) All these interactions have frequent consequences, that can be positive or negative, for both service providers and tourists. These consequences, whether beneficial or detrimental, can affect some communities or ecology of a region or certain place.
- (5) Tourists sometimes tend to look at visited places and the accommodation that they temporarily occupy as inferior to the city and place that they live.
- (6) Both tourists and service providers pursue their own interests, which is inevitably a selfish one, each part involved in tourism field trying to maximise its own benefits.

In other words, the field of tourism has not only a strong socio-economic and cultural component, but a moral one as well, which is directly related to quality of live, in an individual and family way of meaning, as well as at community level and to various norms and value systems (Anastasiu & Bîgu, 2018) or the unfolding of behavioral patterns (Anastasiu, 2015). However, an important first step in strengthening the ethical foundations of tourism was realised with the introduction of responsible tourism notion, which, according to the Cape Town Declaration regarding Adoption of Responsible Tourism, has the following characteristics (Goodwin, 2011):

- Produces economic and financial benefits for people that live in touristic areas, at the same time contributing to the increasing number of jobs in the region, as well as improving working conditions. In general, it aims to increase the quality of living for the whole community that offers tourism services;
- Encourages residents of touristic areas to take decisions regarding those measures that affect their quality of life;
- Contributes directly to conservation and protection of natural, cultural and historical heritage specific to a touristic region, in addition, particular attention is offered to cultural diversification;

- Consideration should be given to minimising negative consequences regarding socioeconomic and ecological levels on certain touristic areas;
- aiming to provide pleasant experiences, as well as encourage interaction between tourists and locals, tourism is also aimed at people with disabilities, which means that their access to tourism services must be facilitated by specific means;
- Finally, given the fact that tourism always has been an important social and cultural phenomenon, a relationship of respect between tourists and hosts should be encouraged, as well as a strong sense of belonging and even local pride among tourism service providers.

Ethical tourism is defined in a broad sense (Koak & O'Rourke, 2023, Weeden & Boluk, 2014) as that type of tourism in which all stakeholders, suppliers and consumers of tourism services, as well as the tourism industry in general, implement principles that correspond to morally right behaviour, in which benefits are shared among all stakeholders. Additional attention is paid to the protection of local culture and the natural environment. Reaching this level of argument, a clarification is in order. The tourism industry is undoubtedly an economic sector. Undoubtedly, the main objective of business in general, and the tourism industry in particular, is profit. As much profit as possible. However, this does not mean that any means to achieve the economic goal of profit is permissible, but that an ethical approach is required that emphasises the immense responsibility that the tourism industry has (Boşca & Georgescu, 2015). As Fennell (2006) points out, sustainable tourism can have a strong ethical dimension. Thus, ethically sustainable tourism has the following basic characteristics

- It must not degrade or even destroy the tourism resource, which can only be used in an ecologically sound way;
- it must offer 'quality' experiences that provide the tourist with pleasant emotions or special reflections; under no circumstances should the tourist feel that they have wasted their time without the tourist experience having met minimum expectations;
- lastly, the educational component should not be overlooked, aimed at all those involved in the tourism phenomenon: tourists, local communities, tourism service providers, local public administrations, non-profit organisations, etc.

In other words, ethical tourism should not be confused with sustainable tourism or with another form of tourism, such as ecotourism, because this concept has a universal dimension, or is trying to become universal because it represents a way of thinking, a philosophy that applies to all types of tourism and therefore implies a way of reflecting on the behaviour of actors working in this economic, social, and moral field (Georgescu & Boşca, 2013). It can therefore be said that the aim of ethical tourism is similar to that of ethics in general, i.e. to define man as a moral being to a much greater extent than as an ecological or 'green' being. This is because morality is a defining characteristic of a human being, regardless of where or in what culture an individual or group lives. Sustainable development can only be talked about in close connection with ethics (Smith & Duffy, 2003). In all cultures, without exception, people make judgments about what is right and what is wrong, in all cultures people face moral dilemmas and have to make morally reasoned decisions (Georgescu & Anastasiu 2019), and therefore have to be aware that some decisions are less ethical than others, and some are unethical, and that these decisions will affect the lives of fellow human beings in a positive or negative way, and that decisions should not be made that will have a major negative impact on other people or beings in general, or on the environment. Moreover, as some researchers have noted (Fennell & Malloy, 2007), in the tourism industry, both theoretical ethics, represented by fundamental ethical paradigms, and applied ethics are essential to understand the specific problems of this industry.

Various researchers focus on these three concepts of ethical tourism, responsible tourism and sustainable tourism, their main works, which use these notions, having a notable impact in the scientific world. Firstly, if one searches the Web of Science (WoS) database for “ethical tourism” as main keywords from the title, would find that the most cited paper on this theme is of Malone et al. (2014). This recent paper investigates the role of hedonic emotions in determining the ethical behaviour of tourists. The main findings show that emotionally charged experiences are great determinants of consumers’ ethical choice. Another paper related to ethical tourism (Hultsman, 1995), published almost three decades ago, tries to divide the literature by referring to papers dealing with the following issues: ecological impacts, marketing, sustainable development, humanistic and social concerns, and education.

Secondly, if changing the search query with “responsible tourism” the number of published papers doubles in comparison with the previous search. The most cited paper appears to be the one of Cheng and Wu (2015). The authors try to support a sustainable tourism behaviour model, by studying the relationship between environmentally responsible behaviour, environmental knowledge, environmental sensitivity, and place attachment. Similar in terms of citations, the paper of Mihalic (2016) actually introduces a new concept: responsustainable tourism. A model based on Awareness, Agenda and Action is proposed by this research to complement existing sustainability indicators.

Thirdly, if searching the WoS database for “sustainable tourism” (in the documents title), the number of published papers raises fifteen times as compared to the previous search, of “responsible tourism”. Sims (2009) analyses the sustainability of tourism through the lens of local food consumption. Another highly cited paper is that of Buckley (2012). The author effort concentrates in shaping the tourism sector by reviewing a set of sustainability indicators, grouped on five key themes. Moving on, the WoS search indicates that the paper of Lee (2013) has the third highest number of citations in the Web of Science database. The paper focuses on community involvement for sustainable tourism development. A year later, the paper of Juvan and Dolnicar (2014) draws attention by explaining the gap between attitude and real behaviour in sustainable tourism activities. It also represents a contribution that describes an effective need to reduce environmentally unsustainable tourism behaviour.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Given all of the above, one of the fundamental roles of ethics is to encourage us to ask relevant questions about both the society we live in and the people we interact with, as well as ourselves; also, ethics encourages us to reflect critically on decisions and the consequences of those decisions, but also to formulate well-argued critical judgments about the behaviours of others, etc. As a field in which human interaction plays a fundamental role, tourism cannot be separated from its moral side.

As we explained in the paper, there are essential differences between Kantian and utilitarian ethics, differences mainly related to the fact that Kantian ethics emphasises the principles of action, respectively, the need to universalize these principles, while utilitarian ethics looks at the consequences of the action as essential to be able to determine whether an action is morally right. Likewise, virtue ethics also has its own ways, placing emphasis on the agent who performs a certain action, more precisely, on the character traits of the person who undertakes a certain action.

Regarding the highlighting of the specific characteristics of ethical tourism, respectively, of responsible tourism, as well as those of sustainable tourism, we can conclude that they can exert an impact on people, on the environment, and on the local culture. A successfully approach of all the challenges specific to this field depends on the way tourism is practiced in general.

The above-mentioned ethical theories are only a philosophical reflection exercise (elegant but useless) if ethics cannot be applied concretely to real tourism processes and activities. Therefore, the first lines of future research require clarification of key concepts that form any applied ethics expert's tool: values, principles, standards, ethics, and/or codes of conduct, etc. The emphasis should be on the formulation of principles that support the ethical culture of tourism (the principles of environmental responsibility, social justice, and respect for local culture and traditions). From this point of view, it is also important to analyse the actual functioning of the ethical management systems of the tourism organisation (the methods and tools of ethical management) and to identify elements that differentiate between management ethics, organisational ethics, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The second future research direction will focus on the economic, social, and environmental impact of ethical investments in tourism, emphasising the role of responsible and sustainable allocations (sustainability indicators, strategic management, public-private partnerships, green finance, and ESG investments).

The third future research direction will aim to review the agreements signed by international or national organisations that propose recommendations, standards, and best practices in the field of tourism: the UN World Tourism Organisation (Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Tourism), the European Union (EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism), UNESCO (Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage), World Travel and Tourism Council, MEAT in collaboration with agencies and nongovernmental organisations (2023-2035 Romanian National Strategy for Tourism Development), etc.

The final area of future research will identify obstacles and challenges to the implementation of ethical standards at the organisational level (prioritisation of interests, profit maximisation, legal loopholes, increased individualism, toxic leadership, etc.) and at the global level (civilisational confrontations and cultural diversity, lack of clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, extreme poverty, etc.).

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