



Sustainability and sustainable development

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1.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND QUALITY IN PRACTICE



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Abstract: In this chapter, two excellent examples from Hungary are presented as cases related to the issues discussed in Chapter 2.6, titled *Social responsibility and quality: issues of competitiveness and sustainable development*. One case is about a *Sustainable restaurant initiative* introduced by the Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation, while the other concerns the *Safe place certification* developed by the CertUnion certification and consulting company. Both cases are examples for presenting responsibility, quality and innovation from different approaches while contributing to both competitiveness and sustainable development.

Keywords: certification, commitment, confidence, consumer awareness, dining, hygiene, responsibility, sustainability criteria.

1.1. Sustainable restaurant initiative¹

The Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation is aiming towards the creation of a new kind of dialogue on food and to translate Sustainable Development Goals into understandable, everyday actions. The Foundation's objective is to make environmentally conscious, responsible eating as widely-known as possible. In this context, the Foundation experts present, within the framework of a wide range of professional and educational activities, what individuals and catering facilities can do to ensure that environmental considerations prevail during meals. In recent years, much information and various awareness-raising campaigns have been launched, in which not only information was the main aspect, but also, active participation of the population was encouraged, and their Responsible Restaurant network already has more than 50 members.

About the Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation

The Foundation aims to spread environmentally conscious, responsible dining and to help the environmental efforts of Hungarian restaurants. In order to reach this goal, raising public awareness concerning the environmental effects of food consumption is needed. The Foundation encourages individuals to choose local and seasonal products, consume less meat and dairy products, and to reduce their food waste. To promote these behaviours and outcomes, the Foundation launches interesting challenges and inspiring campaigns, further offering team-building programmes and educational activities for students. Since its foundation in 2012, the Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation has won numerous awards and motivated millions of people to eat more responsibly. It has also developed a certification system that recognises green restaurants and encourages the participants in the food-service industry to invest in environmentally-friendly solutions.

About the sustainable restaurant initiative

The Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation is the first and only organisation in the country that qualifies restaurants on the basis of sustainability criteria, which, if they meet the 7 key criteria, can receive the Sustainable Restaurant certificate (Papp & Lugasi, 2018). The certification issued by the Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation can be obtained by restaurants and catering companies that are con-

¹ This subchapter is based on information available from the following websites: <https://gasztrohos.hu/vedjegy/fenntarthato-vendeglatohely>; <https://www.gasztrohos.hu/fenntarthato-vendeglatohely-minosites>; <https://www.gasztrohos.hu/en>.

stantly working to reduce the ecological footprint associated with their operations. The Foundation's experts help qualified restaurants benefit from their efforts, for example, through media appearances and participation in international projects, while optimising waste management, energy and water efficiency as well as raw material sourcing, etc. The Foundation renews the certification every 2 years, however, its experts also visit the sites regularly for sustainability checks during the 2 years, therefore ensuring quality control. To become a sustainable restaurant, a restaurant should meet 7 sustainability criteria. The criteria are as follows:

- avoiding the use of palm oil;
- avoiding polystyrene packaging and reducing the usage of straws (only available on request);
- offering at least 2 vegetarian dishes;
- using at least 30% domestic raw materials;
- using at least 1 bio-certified raw material or product;
- using at least 1 environmentally-friendly cleaning agent;
- on-going efforts to reduce local environmental impact.

In addition to meeting the criteria, long-term commitment is also important. In general, representatives of restaurants visit the Foundation to obtain certification. The qualification is for 2 years, after which the above criteria are re-examined, looking at what has been improved and what the goals are for the next 2 years. At the beginning of the qualification process, a detailed questionnaire is used to map out where a given restaurant could make more sustainable or responsible decisions, be it energy management, waste management or charity action (vendeglatasmagazin.hu, 2019). Restaurant managers are also involved in the process prior to the launch of the initiative. The starting point is the idea that green investments can bring economically rewarding benefits to restaurants, and that a brand can be built if someone cares about the environment. The certification makes it easier to choose a restaurant for those who also take environmental considerations into account when eating their lunch or dinner. Going to a restaurant can be not only an experience and type of relaxation, but also part of a “green” lifestyle. Eating in a sustainable restaurant is both a prestige and an exemplary behaviour (Szám, 2017; theviewmagazine.eu, 2019). Currently (by October 2020)², 53 restaurants have the Sustainable Restaurant certification in Hungary.

It can be stated that the number of catering facilities wishing to join the network of Sustainable Restaurants is constantly increasing, while the certification becomes better-known among the general public. Growing popularity and consumer awareness increase the market opportunities for restaurants, while they are increasingly contribute to meeting sustainability goals. Overall, the sustainable restaurant initiative has its part in the recognition of competitive advantages regarding sustainability

² Check at: <https://gasztrohos.hu/vendeglatohelyek>.

measures, the return on related developments and investments, and the creation of social values that cannot be expressed in money. The initiative is proof that sustainability in a restaurant is not only about recycling and using biodegradable packaging, but it could mean much more than this.

1.2. Safe place certification

The COVID-19 or coronavirus pandemic, which erupted at the end of 2019 and expanded in 2020, is among the most turbulent and significant changes affecting businesses, economies and societies. The pandemic has adversely affected businesses in several respects, as well as social relationships and people's daily lives throughout the world. Unfortunately, the virus epidemic is still going on, endangering people's lives and the operation of businesses. The tragedies and shock caused by COVID-19 have changed many things world-wide. A series of new phenomena have emerged, one of them being an even greater appreciation of health and life.

We can say that the pandemic has re-written or is re-writing the market, one of the determining factors of which is hygiene, or even more so the appreciation of "visible hygiene". For this reason, hygiene has become a fundamental factor in the choice of consumers and customers, especially in those activities or sectors where transactions between the organisations and the customers necessarily or typically take place through physical presence, physical connections or personal contact.

In response to the negative effects of the coronavirus on businesses and their customers, in June 2020, CertUnion developed a set of supportive criteria helping business actors creating health-friendly working conditions in epidemic situations and informed customers and guests about these efforts. The idea is based on the "Clean & Safe Stamp"³ introduced by the Portuguese Tourism Agency (Turismo de Portugal) in early 2020. The point of this is that the certification, and the logo designed to authenticate it, informs customers that the business is making efforts to safeguard the health of customers. It is a commitment to comply with health-safety regulations issued by the National Tourism Authority according to National Health Authority guidelines.

About the certification⁴

SafetyPlace™ is a set of criteria designed to support the management of epidemics for all market participants. It specifies how to deal with client spaces, catering facili-

³ See the website for details: <https://portugalcleanandsafe.com/en>

⁴ This section is based on the information available from the following websites: <https://certunion.com/safetyplace-biztonsagosnak-nyilvanitva/> https://safetyplace.hu/?utm_source=certunion.com&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=CertUnion_SafetyPlace_2020

ties, accommodation, etc., to minimize the risk of further infection or transfection between individuals present. The manual, the basis of the criteria system, was compiled with the professional support of the staff from the Hungarian National Blood Transfusion Service (Országos Vérellátó Szolgálat) and the BSL-4 laboratory of the University of Pécs.

One of the advantages of SafetyPlace™ is that it is not an absolutely separate entity, but can be integrated with existing management systems (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, etc.), thus, it does not impose an additional burden on companies. The manual on which the certification is based was developed in accordance with relevant regulations, therefore, it was not necessary to figure out how to regulate, but to rely on existing regulations that had already been in place.

Obtaining the qualification, based on experience, takes 2–4 weeks, depending on how prepared the company is. In doing so, the company's occupational safety, health and hygiene practices are reviewed and compared with the manual. Then, for compliance, in areas where there are shortcomings, they correct and replace them according to the manual. An important part of the process is staff training. The implementation of the measures is checked by auditors on the basis of a checklist, upon completion of which the organisation receives the SafetyPlace™ certification. The use of the certification and logo is valid under annual inspections. This demonstrates that the company is making an outstanding effort to minimise the risks posed by epidemics. With the certification, the company becomes entitled to a certificate of compliance and to use the SafetyPlace™ logo in its marketing communications. In addition, CertUnion operates a public database⁵ accessible to all, where the public can search for companies with SafetyPlace™ certification and see which companies are worth visiting, especially in case of any adverse health situations.

Benefits offered by Safety Place™ certification⁶

CertUnion's public opinion poll⁷ shows that 94% of those surveyed expect businesses to be more cautious during a pandemic, and 88% feel the need for the location to have some sort of confirmation for this. In a survey among businesses, in which 100 business leaders were enquired, found that 58% of businesses rate epidemiological precautions and their communication as important, and 36% consider it as extremely important. The majority of businesses surveyed (64%) would

⁵ <https://safetyplace.hu/safetyplace-minositett-helyek/>

⁶ This section is based on information available from the following websites: <https://certunion.com/jarvanyugyi-ovintezkedesek-nem-eleg-jonak-lenni-annak-is-kell-latszani/>; <https://safetyplace.gr8.com/>; https://safetyplace.hu/?utm_source=certunion.com&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=CertUnion_SafetyPlace_2020

⁷ A survey of 1,000 people among the Hungarian population over the age of 40.

find a certification useful in this regard, which inspires confidence in customers, making it an excellent marketing tool and giving them a competitive advantage over their competitors. The benefits offered by the Safety Place™ certification can be summarised as follows:

- safe customer and guest reception;
- safe working environment for the employees of the company;
- trusted certificate issued by an independent organisation;
- the qualification is authentic for both customers and guests;
- registration in a public database in which certified companies and service providers can be searched for;
- use of the SafetyPlace™ certification and logo in marketing communication.

As a result, more customer traffic is expected because market research shows that 88% of people would choose a qualified place, which means higher sales and more revenue. By October 2020, 5 companies had been certified, including a winery, a fleet management company, an enterprise management company, a PR and advertising agency and a consulting company. In fact, this certification initiative is a good example of responsible innovation, since it meets the requirements of ethical acceptability, sustainability and societal desirability.

Questions / tasks

1. Do you think you would like to dine at a restaurant that has a Sustainable Restaurant certification? What are the pros and cons of your choice? Explain and justify your answer.
2. How would you extend or modify the qualification criteria? How would you increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the initiative?
3. What are the advantages, limitations and possible drawbacks of the initiative?
4. What are the potential benefits for restaurants, guests and society?
5. What do you think—would you rather go to a shop, store, restaurant, etc. that has such a certification? What are the pros and cons of your choice? Explain and justify your answer.
6. What are the advantages, limitations and possible drawbacks of this certification?
7. Is the certification really a competitive advantage? Does it really differentiate certified organisations from competitors?
8. What are the benefits of this certification for companies, customers and society?

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