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Sustainable Strategic Management Model for Hotel Companies: A Multi-Stakeholder Proposal to "Walk the Talk" toward SDGs

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Abstract: As we reach the fifth anniversary of the Declaration of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the tourism sector responsible for over 10% of the world's GDP still does not have an open-source, sustainable management criteria that would enable and empower them to "walk the talk" to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The purpose of this paper is to fill the gap in the social sciences and business management literature by providing a theoretical Sustainable Strategic Management Model (SSMM) proposal for the Fourth Sector (4S), Small- and Medium-sized (SMEs) Hotel companies (4S-SM-HCs), which are committed and have the will to contribute firmly to the 2030 Agenda. Based on their corporate purpose and aligned with the SDGs, this article provides a holistic proposal with a multi-stakeholder approach, adding the SDG perspective. Through a qualitative research methodology based on two focus groups in which the main stakeholders and the management team of the 4S-SM-HC under examination took part, a theoretical SSMM is co-defined so that the hotel company can make significant contributions to the five areas of the SDGs. Basing their structure on the internationally recognized Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria and co-created through social learning, this SSMM proposes four strategic management axis and develops ten principles of ethical performance (PEP). The main contributions of this article are two: (1) to provide an ecosystemic SSMM proposal to the 4S-SM-HCs to allow them to make significant contributions to the SDGs, and (2) to facilitate a methodological framework with a multi-stakeholder approach and SDG perspective to enable them to contribute to the wellbeing of people, the community and the planet.

Keywords: sustainable development goals; SMEs; fourth sector; SDGs in practice; SMEs contribution to SDGs; sustainable strategic management model; stakeholder engagement; tourism; hospitality; triple bottom line for triple wellbeing

1. Introduction

On the fifth anniversary of the United Nations declaration on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) with their 169 targets and 232 indicators [1], progress is uneven, and much remains to be done [2]. In this period, efforts were diverted by the end of 2019, as the COVID-19 pandemic we are suffering aggravated the situation [3]. The health, social, and economic crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus adds to the climate crisis, feeding back and aggravating each other [4,5]. We are both witnesses to and victims of the severe consequences of the increase in average global temperature and its foreseeable worsening, mainly due to human activities [6,7] directly and negatively impacting the health of people and ecosystems [8–17]. All this appears as one of the scientific reasons for the current pandemic from a zoonotic origin [18].

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), sponsored by the United Nations, points out that the climate crisis is but a structural symptom of a socio-ecological crisis that damages the planet and communities and is caused by the prevalence of economic growth and social welfare [19,20].

In 1972, the report "The Limits to Growth" already warned of the possibility of reaching a collapse in a hundred years, of continuing to maintain the pace of growth and exploitation of natural resources [21], something of which the Stockholm Resilience Centre also warns in its report "Transformation is feasible", which invites us to reflect beyond the year 2030 and to achieve the SDGs within planetary limits [22]. Assuming the responsibility that we, the present generations, have with future generations [23], proposals are emerging from civil society, the business world and academia that converge on highlighting the need to change the current economic model for one that allows to progress firmly toward the SDGs, focusing on the well-being of people and the planet [24–33]. Far away from Friedman's doctrines [34], the Davos Manifesto 2020 states that a company not only generates wealth but should also satisfy 'human and societal aspirations as part of the broader social system'. Therefore, its performance must measure its shareholders' return and how it meets its environmental, social, and good governance objectives governance [35,36], something Elkington had already advanced in 1994 [37,38]. More recently, this author states that the economy is moving towards 'new circular and regenerative models of growth' [39], in line with the regenerative economy advocated by the Capital Institute [40,41] author Wahl [42,43] as well as Roland with the new model of the regenerative company [44]. Likewise, economic models are advancing that point to the need to generate this triple positive impact only within planetary limits, such as the so-called "Doughnut Economy" [45,46], endorsed by both the World Economic Forum [47] and the Stockholm Resilience Centre [48,49]. For its part, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) report emphasizes the need for business strategies to be developed within the limits of the planet [50,51]. The authors Safonov et al. suggest the creation of "new and sustainable business models" that allow nature to be valued, given that 'our health and wellbeing fundamentally depends on it' [52]. A growing body of research and initiatives suggests how we can create a sustainable, welfare-oriented post-growth economy that develops within planetary boundaries [28,53–59], including suggesting degrowth scenarios [60,61] especially needed in the Global South [62].

Likewise, it would be in the interest of the common good to propose degrowth scenarios in the tourism industry [27,63–65], especially in certain territories where this industry's development has been exceptional [66,67]. In this context, the so-called "Fourth Sector" (4S) [68,69] needs to lay a more prominent role, given the relevance that it can have in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda [70]. The so-called "for benefit" organizations as opposed to the "for profit" companies [71,72] are governmental, private, and third sector organizations that, based on a purpose, build their business model combining economic viability with the generation at the same level of positive social and environmental impacts [73,74]. This paper will focus on the private sector and, more specifically, on Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector, for three main reasons: (1) Firstly, because of their contribution to 'global economic activity, social well-being, and environmental footprint' [75], and, given their specific weight (they represent 99.7% of the business fabric within the countries of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)), their contribution is key to 'achieving the SDGs', providing 'diverse contributions to economic and social well-being' [76], despite the numerous challenges they must face [77–79]; (2) secondly, SMEs are called upon to play a crucial role, because their rapid growth favors the creation of employment and added value, helping to alleviate poverty in both industrialized and developing countries [80], although their contribution varies considerably from one country to another due to their heterogeneity [76]; and (3) thirdly, within SMEs, small hotel companies play a relevant role in sustainability [81,82], and SDGs represent an enormous challenge for them [83].

As a consequence, the objective of this paper is twofold: (1) To develop an ecosystemic proposal of a Sustainable Strategic Management Model (SSMM) for Fourth Sector (4S), Small- and Medium-sized

(SMEs) Hotel companies (4S-SM-HC) to facilitate their effective contribution to the SDGs, and (2) to provide a methodological framework with a multi-stakeholder approach to make practical contributions to the triple wellbeing of people, the community and the planet [84], transitioning from a purpose-driven company into a sustainable strategic management hotel company. Figure 1 reflects the synthesis of this paper.
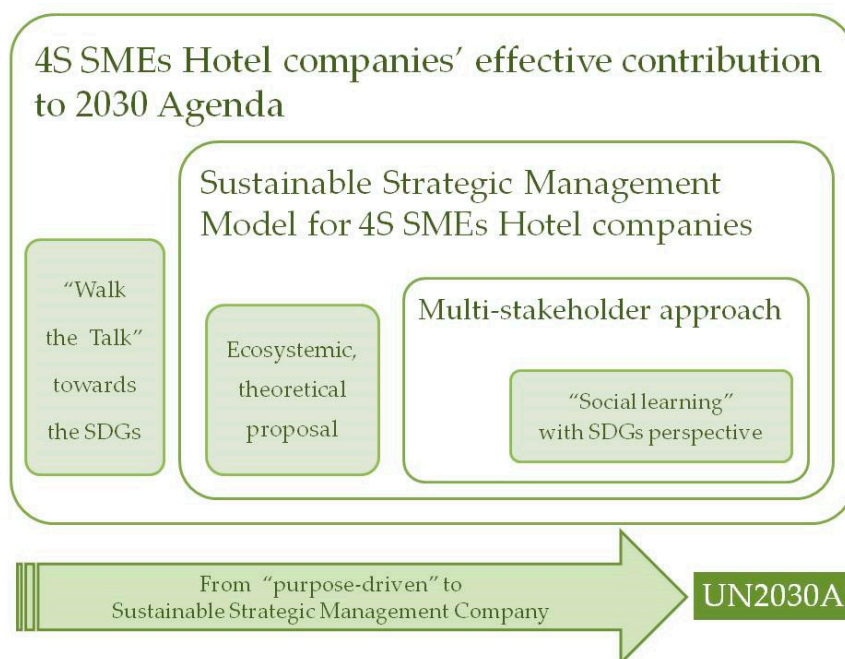

Figure 1. Diagram reflects the synthesis of this paper.

2. Theoretical Framework

Small, purpose-driven hotel businesses (4S-SM-HC) need to make specific contributions in order to achieve the SDGs; however, there is no evidence of previous research in social science and business management fields which provide a multi-stakeholder co-created Sustainable Strategic Management Model (SSMM) for 4S-SM-HCs to facilitate positive impacts throughout the value chain. The literature review on sustainable business models, strategic management for sustainability and stakeholders, value chain approaches, and how the tourism industry addresses SDGs' challenges will be part of the theoretical framework that we will address in this section.

The research carried out in sustainable business models in the hospitality industry is still at an early stage, even though the hospitality industry is one of the most critical sectors that can contribute to sustainability [85]. The authors Nosratabadi et al. point out that the research carried out so far in this field has been aimed at evaluating the degree of sustainability in hotels rather than providing sustainable business model solutions [85], which is precisely the core objective of this research. While traditional business models cannot address the needs required by the progress towards the 2030 Agenda [86], sustainable business models provide competitive advantages and contribute to SDGs [85]. The United Nations Global Compact, a voluntary initiative created from the business world to move towards SDGs [87], points out that the decade ahead is crucial to get the private sector, which accounts for more than 75% of global GDP, to participate in facing the challenges posed by SDGs. This is still a pending issue [88], as shown in the study conducted by the United Nations Global Compact and Accenture Strategy in ninety-nine countries. Over one thousand senior executives acknowledged that businesses should make greater contributions 'to achieving a sustainable global economy and society by the year 2030' [88]. Likewise, the "Guide to the Alternatives to Business as Usual" published by the Wellbeing Economy Alliance after a participatory process with stakeholders seeks to redefine the concept of business success from "profit maximization" to "purpose-driven" [89].

Moreover, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a United Nations initiative, has published the working paper "Six transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" [90], which will enrich this study's outcome.

Tourism is an industry that acts as a driver in sustainable development and can contribute to each SDGs [91–93]. The United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO) in its report "Tourism for Development: Key Areas for Action" [94] makes recommendations to companies to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability 'in core business models and value chains with enhanced action' and whose pillars will be considered for this research. Given the strategic relevance of the global tourism industry, the UNWTO has created the platform "Tourism for SDGs" [95] in which it encourages the industry to contribute to SDGs, as they are 'reframing the discussion of Corporate Social Responsibility' and consequently, 'learn, share and act' to advance towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Eight years before the publication of the SDGs, the UNWTO, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Foundation, the Rainforest Alliance, and 32 other partners, created the "Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria". Their objective was to develop universal criteria co-created in a participatory manner with experts from the tourism sector globally accepted by the industry and would become the first international standardization of norms for achieving sustainable tourism [96]. Now known as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), it is the internationally recognized entity that has developed the world reference standards, the GSTC criteria, for sustainability in the travel and tourism industry [97]. This research will be based on this in order to propose a structure of the SSMM that will be submitted for discussion by the participants.

However, to do so, it is essential to understand the evolution that the strategic management for sustainability has undergone: during its beginnings, it was involved in matters related to the green movement and to research related to business management and strategic social responsibility, affirms Suriyankietkaew, [98] who identifies up to five schools of thought related to strategic management for sustainability, which reflects the breadth of studies on this subject. The authors Baldessare et al. identify the gap between sustainable design theory and business practice [99], and they have identified a "sustainable business model" as one of the four levels of design for sustainable innovation. These authors affirm that sustainable business modeling requires companies that have redefined their purpose and report on economic, social, and environmental levels, in addition to 'taking a stakeholder view of the firm, by including society and the environment as stakeholders', something that is precisely what this research focuses on, adding the perspective of the SDGs as a strategic vision in the business model.

The stakeholder perspective and value chain model called "Creating Shared Value" (CSV) by Porter and Kramer [100] has been widely addressed in the literature by other authors. Among these, Fernández-Gámez et al. who demonstrate how hotels that apply CSV achieve greater economic profitability [101]; Collins and Saliba point out that an organization alone cannot create sustainability-oriented services but rather 'requires collaboration with its stakeholders', and they add that sustainability has to be directly interrelated with the core business of the company, thus aligning it strategically [102]; and Hsiao has investigated case studies on how a particular hotel chain [103] can involve stakeholders, although in this case, this model is reduced only to "green practices". Other authors, such as Raub and Martin-Rios, provide a sustainable management model for hotel companies with a stakeholder perspective and local impact to translate them into specific initiatives [104]. On the other hand, the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform suggests that the framework with stakeholders should be purposeful, transformative, and proactive [105,106]. The stakeholder value creation framework for business models for sustainability created by the authors Freudenreich et al. highlights the need to define what contribution stakeholder relations make to sustainability through their value proposals. However, they recommend simplifying stakeholders' complex networks in the first stages of the analysis [107].

The state-of-the-art literature in this field indicates that the *porterian* value chain analysis models have significantly impacted current strategic management models [108]. These same authors, Stead and Stead, assert that the current changing business environment requires a new paradigm of "sustainable

strategic management", more precise and aligned with current reality and based on the assumptions of Costanza's Ecological Economics [28,109], which sees the company as a 'coevolving subsystem of the economy, society, and ecosystem'. These authors argue that sustainable strategic management 'represents the next co-evolutionary stage of strategic management' and provides a conceptual framework for managers who are 'moving their firm toward a truly sustainable enterprise' [108].

Consequently, this article presents the results of a research focused on analyzing a 4S-SM-HC based in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. Through qualitative research methodology consisting of two consecutive and interrelated Focus Group discussions (FG) carried out with multi-stakeholders and a value chain approach, a theoretical SSMM co-created through "social learning" and structured in four strategic management axis is proposed and develops up to ten principles of ethical performance (PEP). Consequently, the 4S-SM-HC can move forward in order to achieve the SDGs, contributing coherently and effectively to the 2030 Agenda's goals.

3. Materials and Methods

This research is based on previous studies in business management literature that are relevant to reach these research objectives: (1) Reed et al. [110] affirm that "social learning" occurs as a result of "social interactions" such as shared spaces where reflections and debates that benefit society are generated, which is precisely one of these research goals; (2) likewise, the ecosystemic approach, as confirmed by Sun et al. [111], allows one to establish symbiotic and interwoven relationships with "the time, space, and place" in which the company operates, providing an additional focus on how sustainable companies can be prosperous while facing challenges in the economic, social, and environmental spheres; and (3) in parallel, Scheider et al. propose four science tasks to contribute to SDGs, including finding 'common ground on what sustainability means' in particular contexts. To this end, the authors propose the 'involvement of societal actors in research projects', highlighting the need to facilitate frameworks for reflection and deliberation through participatory processes oriented towards the 2030 Agenda. In this way, the necessary scientific basis is created to face the SDGs' complex challenges [112]. These authors also suggest the need for both civil society and academia to 'co-develop novel sustainability visions for sectors that contextualize the 2030 Agenda', which is part of this paper's objectives. In this way, the 4S-SM-HC, the stakeholders, and the research team would join forces for the same objective, that is, to make a modest contribution in regard to the aim of achieving the 2030 Agenda jointly.

The qualitative methodology was considered as the optimal method to reach the proposed objective. To this end, the research process began in September 2019 and ended in April 2020. The realization of both FGs took place in two different locations: Madrid (Spain), where the central offices of the company under examination are located, and on the island of Tenerife (Spain), where the hotels they currently manage are located. The research process consisted of five phases: (1) theoretical framework definition; (2) focus group design; (3) data collection; (4) data analysis; and (5) results, as detailed below:

- Phase 1: Definition of the theoretical framework and selection of the 4S-SM-HC to study. This first phase took place during September and October 2019, and during it, the theoretical framework was defined. Exhaustive desk research was carried out to select the company to be studied. The selection criteria were based on four principles: (1) the company must have a transformative purpose that goes beyond obtaining economic benefits to committing to providing social and environmental benefits [113,114]; (2) it must be an SME following the OECD definition of this type of company [76]; and (3) it must be a company with a Triple Bottom Line (3BL) as defined by Elkington [37]. Once the three criteria were verified, this phase concluded with the selection of the 4S-SM-HC.

- Phase 2: Focus group discussion design. To achieve the objectives, the methodology selected by the research team was qualitative. In this phase, carried out during November 2019, the profile definition and selection of the participants in the Focus Group discussion (FG) were made, as it

was the data collection technique considered most appropriate by the research team for achieving the research objectives [115]. The research data were collected through two semi-structured, interrelated, and consecutive Focus Groups (FG). A meticulous selection of participants was made, creating a broad representation of different stakeholders and sectors, avoiding iteration of data. The first FG was composed of representatives from the 4S-SM-HC, which was defined by the knowledge of the purpose and decision-making capacity to adopt and implement it, creating transversality among all levels of the company, summing six participants (four members of the board of directors, and two more from the "Green Team"). Continuity between both FGs was guaranteed by both the research team and the two company executives directly involved in implementing the SSMM, so both attended and actively participated in both FGs. The composition of both FGs was made considering the company's criteria on stakeholders' priority and focusing on local impact. Consequently, the stakeholders' selection was made through the combination of four criteria: (1) area of knowledge and expertise in the four sections defined by the GSTC criteria: business management and governance, local community benefits, and cultural and natural heritage benefits; (2) position they held, since all of them occupy positions of responsibility and high qualification, either as senior managers in the organization or as entrepreneurs or managers of private companies or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); (3) combining criteria one and two with the representation of the government sector (first sector), private sector (second sector), third sector (NGOs) and the fourth sector, represented by the hotel chain itself; and (4) keeping a gender balance as far as possible. In this way, a balance was achieved in the representation of the four sectors, thus creating trans-disciplinarity and multiple cross-knowledge, such as that of project management, business associations management, entrepreneurship in both private companies and NGOs, gender equality, circular economy, accessibility, and sustainable management of cultural and natural heritage. Their identification in the Results section is facilitated by assigning each participant a unique identification number, presenting the results of the two FGs together. As participants #8 and #9 took part in both FGs, it will be indicated to which FG their intervention corresponds (FG1 or FG2). Table 1 reflects the multi-criteria profiles, describing sector, organization, positions, and areas of knowledge and expertise, gender, and FG attendance.

Table 1. Focus group participants' multi-criteria selection, allowing trans-disciplinarity and multiple cross-knowledge.

#	Sector	Organization	Position and Areas of Knowledge and Expertise	Gender Equality	Attendance to Focus
1	First sector (State-Owned Enterprises and Government-Owned Enterprises)	Regional Government	Project management director. Expert in accessibility and environmental management	M	FG#2
2	Second sector (private companies)	Hotel Business Association	General manager	M	FG#2
3		Private company	Founder and Managing director. Expert in cultural heritage management	M	FG#2
4	Third sector (Non-Governmental Organizations)	NGO	Expert in environmental and natural heritage conservation	F	FG#2
5			Expert in gender equality	F	FG#2
6	Fourth sector (4S) ("For benefit companies")	4S-Small and Medium-sized Hotel companies' (4S-SM-HCs) management	Shareholder, Chief Executive Officer, and member of the board of directors	M	FG#1
7			Shareholder, Chief Financial Officer, and member of the board of directors	M	FG#1
8			Human Resources Officer, member of board of directors	F	FG#1 FG#2
9			Shareholder, Chief Operating Officer, and member of the board of directors	M	FG#1 FG#2
10		4S-SM-HCs "Green Team"	Member of "Green Team"	F	FG#2
11			Member of "Green Team"	F	FG#2

- Phase 3: Data Collection: This phase took place during December 2019 in Tenerife. The research team, acting also as facilitators and moderators of the discussion, carried out the two FGs in a consecutive and interrelated way. The joint duration of both FGs exceeded four hours and forty-five minutes (two hours and twenty minutes for the first FG and two hours and thirty minutes for the second FG). It took place in the facilities belonging to the hotel group located on the island of Tenerife, Spain, offering an atmosphere of confidentiality and cordiality in equal parts to obtain the best feedback from all participants. Based on the theoretical framework and social learning purposes, a strategic formulation of the theoretical model was made, structured around the four axes per the GSTC criteria. A semi-structured script was drawn up, suggesting topics of discussion to focus the debate, converging on both FG themes and establishing the same thematic guideline between them, thus allowing the discussion to be focused while being open and participatory. Participants knew the content of the presentation on the day of their FG seeking their free intervention. Both FG discussions were held in Spanish—a language common to all the participants—and recorded in both audio and video format and only audio to guarantee the recording. The content was then transcribed and translated into English when the results were presented. A climate of trust was created at all times among all members to encourage reflection, discussion, and co-creation of the model, asking them to make all the contributions they deemed appropriate and to confirm, expand or discard the variables they deemed appropriate since their contributions would constitute the basis of the SSMM that 4S-SM-HC would implement through its implementation. Table 2 shows the FG themes per GSTC criteria structure and sections.

Table 2. Focus group discussion themes.

#	Focus Groups Themes (Strategic Axes of the SSMM, Sustainable Strategic Management Model)	Reflections Posed to FG Participants on Principles of Ethical Performance (PEP) of the SSMM to Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals
1	"Effective, sustainable management"	Which strategic PEPs should a 4S-SM-HC incorporate in order to demonstrate effective sustainable management?
2	"Social and economic benefits to the local community, minimizing negative impacts"	Which strategic PEPs should a 4S-SM-HC implement to maximize social and economic benefits to the local community while minimizing negative impacts?
3	"Benefits to cultural heritage, minimizing negative impacts"	Which strategic PEPs should a 4S-SM-HC undertake to maximize benefits to cultural heritage while minimizing negative impacts?
4	"Benefits to the environment, minimizing negative impacts"	Which strategic PEPs should a 4S-SM-HC address to maximize benefits to the environment while minimizing negative impacts?

- Phase 4: Data analysis is performed using thematic analysis [116]. From January to February 2020, a thematic analysis of the information and data extracted from the FGs was carried out. This type of analysis is the most appropriate for this research objectives because it allows the research team to identify, extract, analyze and group the data obtained and associate them to a single issue, and, specifically in this research, it allows the GSTC criteria and the SDGs to be interrelated, providing a better understanding and interpretation of the data. The thematic analysis, therefore, allows us to identify and analyze specific themes within all the data extracted from the transcriptions in the following six phases [117]: data knowledge, performing various readings and listening, and making the transcriptions; data coding, shaping the characteristics common to all of them; grouping them by specific themes; reviewing the themes and checking that they are well correlated as a whole; theme defining and naming, providing detailed information

on all of them; and ending with report producing, analyzing and selecting the most significant extracts in accordance with the objective of the research and the theoretical framework. To avoid potential limitations in this analysis, implicit context data were included in the results [116].

- Phase 5: Results: This last phase took place from April to June 2020. The results were classified into four sections according to the FG themes established in Phase 3. The participants were asked to contribute with their reflections, adding their knowledge and experience, and with a will of co-creation to configure the definition of the SSMM proposal with a stakeholder approach and an SDG perspective. In this way, the debate with all its assessments and contributions will configure the SSMM model that the 4S-SM-HC will implement in the coming years.

4. Results

Below are the most relevant results of the research of the two FGs in which both managers and members of the 4S-SM-HC "Green Team" and the selected stakeholders participated. They present the participants' reflections and contributions during the discussion, classified following thematic analysis detailed in Table 2.

Considering the relevance of the empirical findings and the scarce previous literature on the subject, the results presented below have been summarized by highlighting the more unresolved aspects of the discussion of both FGs. A number will follow each highlighted intervention in parentheses, representing the participant who made it (Participant #1, hereinafter P1) according to the enumeration established in Table 1. In the case of participants who attended both FGs (P8 and P9), it will also be indicated which FG did that particular intervention (FG1 or FG2).

It is proposed to participants of both FGs to reflect and debate on the Principles of Ethical Performance (PEP) that should be contained within each of the four strategic axes of the SSMM, coinciding with the GSTC criteria sections: (1) effective sustainable management; (2) social and economic benefits to the local community, minimizing negative impacts; (3) benefits to cultural heritage, minimizing negative impacts; and (4) benefits to the environment, minimizing negative impacts. These four strategic axes of the SSMM are clearly related to the seven "principles for building resilience", an approach based on resilience thinking that provides us with the keys to 'how these interacting systems of people and nature—or social-ecological systems—can best be managed' to ensure a sustainable and resilient ecosystem [118,119]. The SSMM will also be aligned with the General Guidelines of Spain's Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 [120,121] and with the Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda of the Spanish Government [122].

Next, the ten agreed PEPs classified in each of the four strategic axes will be described, specifying to which specific SDGs the company could potentially contribute (avoiding redundancies), as well as suggested actions for their development and implementation. Therefore, the 4S-SM-HC-HC may transform its purpose into a significant contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

4.1. Reflections on Strategic Axis 1: Which Strategic PEPs Should a 4S-SM-HC Incorporate in Order to Demonstrate an "Effective, Sustainable Management"?

The research team asks the participants of both FGs to present their reflections on the PEPs that should be incorporated within this strategic axis, taking into consideration that the GSTC criteria include in this section the incorporation of measures such as legal compliance, sustainability management system, staff engagement, customer experience, and destination engagement, among others. The confirmation by the participants of the PEPs of this strategic axis would allow the company to contribute potentially to the SDGs 3 [123], 5 [124], 8 [125], 10 [126], 16 [127], and 17 [128], mainly.

4.1.1. Code of Conduct

Firstly, participants support the need to incorporate a code of conduct that describes the values, principles, and standards that will govern the conduct of the company's managers and employees, highlighting the need for a "roadmap" that ensures the company's ethical commitment;

the dissemination of sustainability values and policies among employees, managers, and stakeholders; and the commitment to contribute to 2030 Agenda. The company had been guided until now 'by doing things with shareholders and customers (. . .) with transparency and honesty. Moreover, although we had not a code of conduct (. . .), we have tried to do it without betraying our principles or their priorities, but rather aligning ourselves with them' (P9, FG1). They state the code of conduct is 'an exercise in good practices to be shared with stakeholders, shareholders, (. . .) and also with our suppliers'. They recognize that 'we already do many of these things. However, it is not by writing' (P6), while they confirm that for the team, it is fundamental that they are given 'a code of conduct from the top down, it is vital to get this for to the employees and customers' (P11).

Stakeholders also believe that it is necessary for ethical issues and the well-being of all agents. It is clear that 'the code of conduct favors the company (. . .), contributes to the employees' knowledge of the company's ethical commitment, and this is also transmitted to the guests' (P1). The company stresses that this PEP will contribute to "best practices" (P9, FG1). They consider that this code of conduct should also include the adhesion to international conventions such as the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism [129–131]: 'aspects related to ethics in tourism (. . .), for example, commitments against child exploitation (. . .) against sex tourism (. . .), this should be contemplated in the final document' (P9, FG1).

4.1.2. Guidelines for Employee Engagement and Involvement

Following the discussion, the need for the development of Human Resource (HR) policies and the principles that will govern the relationships between the company and employees emerged. These policies and principles would include creating sustainability education and training programs for employees, promoting health and safety procedures in the workplace, seeking gender equality, conciliation, and inclusiveness. Likewise, the company will promote the creation of multi-disciplinary working committees to address major corporate projects, including the sustainability committee, and encouraging participation and employee engagement. They argue that the 2030 Agenda's challenges need the involvement of all teams 'because this is a people business serving people' (P9, FG2). It is also necessary to involve employees in the SSMM as a vital part of the process because 'what we say we want to do (. . .) must be articulated throughout the company; (P9, FG2), not only; to the "Green Team" (. . .), because we must be all aligned to convey this plan, which will be very motivating' (P8, FG1), adding 'all the workgroups (. . .) each at its level' (P9, FG1). The "Green Team" members expressed their full support: 'this is a key project, and we will work to make it possible' (P10).

Stakeholders emphasize the need to include policies of 'inclusiveness (. . .) and gender equality; it is one of the fundamental SDGs and will increasingly be so' (P2), something that is emphasized by the other participants: 'gender equality and inclusion (. . .) are fundamental' (P5). This PEP proposal is supported by previous research: the gender perspective in HR policies, according to Segovia-Pérez et al., could 'provide a different perspective and enrich creative and innovative tourism products and destinations' [132] and would be a way to balance gender differences in the industry because, as Silva et al. conclude, although HR policies are "gender equality-sensitive," there are still 'differences related to important issues such as the same salary for the same function' [133]. By incorporating these policies, the company could contribute to the SDG number 5 and support the Beijing Declaration signed by 189 countries in 1995 whose primary focus is implementing equality measures in twelve areas [134,135]. They also confirm that HR policies should include issues such as training and motivation since they are critical to the success of the company: 'all emphasis is usually placed on customer service, but when employees are motivated (. . .) their work will be excellent because they will feel fairly paid' (P9, FG1).

4.1.3. Commitment to Quality Assurance (QA) for Clients

The participants affirmed the need to create policies that ensure the quality of service provided to clients within the sustainability framework, establishing the fundamental pillars of client–company

relationships. They also discussed the need to monitor and follow up on their level of satisfaction, establishing corrective measures if necessary, and pursuing customer engagement, especially in terms of sustainability. They want 'to be able to transmit to customers (. . .) certain values and commitments; (P9, FG2), which are already part of their purpose, but that 'we should put them in value (. . .) without forgetting to transmit the message of associating quality with sustainability because (. . .) so far it is built in 98% without sustainability' (P7). They say that always 'any practice, any service or any proposal that is not sustainable, is not of quality, that is to say (. . .) it must contemplate the social and environmental impact' (P9, FG1). Thus, this PEP needs to 'relate sustainable management to quality assurance' (P9, FG2) and indicate that these policies 'have more to do with coherence and transparency than with describing in detail what to do, but (. . .) having it in writing acquires the rank of commitment' (P9, FG1). They believe that the contribution of employees is essential since they are sure 'they have something to say about issues of this kind that can help us (. . .) go deeper into it' (P9, FG2).

4.1.4. Core Principles in the Engagement with Shareholders and Stakeholders

In this section of discussion, the participants affirmed the need to establish principles that regulate the relations with shareholders as well as stakeholders, guaranteeing the economic viability and sustainability of the company and responsible management, strengthening the relations with both groups, and generating transparent information that allows the creation of alliances with SDG perspective. They ensure that they aspire to create 'prosperity (. . .) and that it is sustainable and economically viable for shareholders (. . .) even though our model is not one of continuously increasing the number of hotels' (P9, FG2), and establishing these principles will serve as their "business card", but they must be 'the same, wherever they are: in Tenerife, Uruguay, or where we operate, being equally applicable with a local perspective' (P9, FG1). They admit to difficulties: 'although it is only a matter of time' (P6), and indicate the need to include in this PEP the application 'of an ethical and transparent information commitment' (P9, FG2), a very relevant aspect since the publication of sustainability reports by Spanish hotel companies is scarce, and they suffer from a lack of transparency, according to Bonilla-Priego and Benitez-Hernández, 'in their process of identification, prioritization and dialogue with stakeholders' [136]. At the same time, the new European legal framework on sustainable finance [137] as well as the commitments acquired through the signing and adhesion of the countries of the European Union, such as the Paris Agreement [138] and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development [1] represent a commitment by the financial markets to sustainability and responsible investment, with a tendency for funds to prioritize investment in companies that have implemented environmental, social, and governance policies [139–141].

4.2. Reflections on Strategic Axis 2: Which Strategic PEPs Should a 4S-SM-HC Implement to Maximize "Social and Economic Benefits to the Local Community While Minimizing Negative Impacts"?

Continuing with strategic axis 2 and following the guidance of the GSTC criteria for hotels, this subsection includes community support, priority on local purchasing, and community services. The results obtained from the discussion of this strategic axis would allow the hotel company to add further progress towards SDGs 1 [142], 2 [143], and 12 [144].

4.2.1. Relationship with Suppliers and the Value Chain, Creating Shared Value

The participants point out the need to establish basic principles for selecting suppliers, regulating supplier–company relationships, and monitoring the whole value chain's sustainability. They also contribute to prioritizing local and nearby suppliers, establishing periodic analyses on how to improve the sustainability of their products and services jointly, with a preference for those with a sustainable production and distribution process and have implemented good social and environmental practices in their businesses. These principles would mean 'one more support to the advancement and progress of the communities; (P7), putting the focus from the local to the global and transmitting value transversally

'with the other actors of each destination' (P9, FG2). They assure that shared value must be created 'in all links of the chain' (P7), given the transversal impact that the operation of a tourism enterprise generates in the destination [83,101,145]: 'for me, the socio-economic benefits to the community are the capacity to have a transversal impact on the small economies of the places' (P9, FG1). It is not only a question of creating jobs—it is paradoxical in specific destinations [146]—but also of creating value in the whole business ecosystem, following, among others, the European strategy "From farm to fork" [147], creating sustainable gastronomy [148] reflecting on the ethical dimension of gastronomy, as suggested by the author Bertella [149].

In this whole process, collaboration and alignment with the stakeholders are fundamental: 'the important thing is to establish base ideas (…) to develop later that model' (P1). This is fundamental because 'sometimes there are many obstacles to implement projects that I wish they had been done this way' (P2). They find it imperative: 'to know how to surround oneself with people who (…) share this philosophy and vision' (P4), so that each one can contribute from their own field 'and thus be able to help (…) truly collaborative projects come out' (P5). They also want to emphasize the small supplier because 'many already have a sustainable production although not certified' (P5), and add 'other companies that can (…) reconvert their business' (P3).

4.2.2. Support, Dissemination, and Implementation of the New Economics

The discussion of this topic among the participants underlined the need to foster the development, research, and implementation of the new economics, defining the essential application criteria, especially for the social economy and the circular economy. Likewise, this PEP can favor social development in the territory by supporting projects and organizations that promote sustainable development, supporting ethical and sustainable businesses that benefit the common good from the local level. In this area, tourism can become an instrument for sustainable development [150], in addition to being strategically aligned with the European [151] and Spanish [152] strategies for the circular economy: 'it is necessary to manage resources effectively and efficiently' (P9, FG1), although difficulties are often encountered 'because suppliers (…) are limited on an island, and sometimes it is not possible' (P10), although 'in hotels, the circular economy can even be applied to food consumption' (P1).

They point out that it would be desirable to make a 'constant, not punctual, life cycle analysis' (P2) of the products that are bought and consumed, and—as García-Muiña et al. affirm—to analyze the products from the initial design phase since this allows to influence the level of sustainability that their life cycle will have [153]. All these actions 'would allow the creation of green jobs here in Tenerife' (P1) and would be in line with the Report on Circular Economy applied to Tourism [154] elaborated by SEGITTUR (Spanish State Trading Company for the Management of Innovation and Tourism Technologies) [155], allowing the reduction of negative impacts.

4.3. Reflections on Strategic Axis 3: Which Strategic PEPs Should a 4S-SM-HC Undertake to Maximize "Benefits to Cultural Heritage While Minimizing Negative Impacts"?

The following are the reflections of the debate on the PEPs of strategic axis 3, whose section of the GSTC includes criteria such as presenting and protecting cultural heritage and contributing to their respect and appreciation, among others. The approval by the participants of the PEPs included in this strategic axis would allow the company to contribute primarily to SDGs 4 [156], 9 [157], and 11 [158].

4.3.1. Support for Initiatives to Preserve and Disseminate Cultural Heritage

During the discussion, participants stressed the need to encourage initiatives that safeguard and disseminate cultural heritage, collaborating locally to promote culture, and supporting cultural projects promoted by the community and by local authors and artists. The participants confirmed that 'this type of action is necessary (…) because it attracts another segment of tourism' (P3) by offering visitors 'activities and experiences that meet their cultural concerns' (P9, FG2) and that 'in many cases, the reception of hotels are becoming tourist information offices (…), so this type of initiative (…) is

vital' (P2). Support for local culture is essential 'to show a more authentic reality of products and heritage' (P3). The other participants also confirm this PEP: 'we need to improve in this aspect as a destination (. . .), to take care of our (. . .) cultural wealth (. . .), creating and supporting activities thinking (. . .) also of the local population; (P4), being also necessary 'to implement initiatives to identify the heritage, to protect it, to analyze it and to preserve it' (P3). It will also be of fundamental importance to evaluate the economic, social, and environmental impact that is generated as a consequence of the activity of restoration and enhancement of the cultural heritage, as proposed by the author Settembre, through the model of "Cultural Heritage Life Cycle Management" [159].

4.3.2. Support Sciences, Research, and Innovation

The participants supported the need for the 4S-SM-HC to support organizations promoting research, social innovation, intellectual development, critical thinking, promotion and dissemination of culture and knowledge, expanding and disseminating knowledge, and encouraging continuous improvement in the sustainable management of the company and its environment. This PEP would be aligned with the Spanish Strategy for Science, Technology, and Innovation 2021–2027, which articulates the European Union's policies in this area [160]. The company states that 'it is important to support research projects (. . .) on how to transform mass tourism destinations (. . .) that have their natural heritage deteriorated (. . .), and support projects that allow young people to innovate' (P9, FG1). The stakeholders state that 'this support in dissemination and training is fundamental' (P1). They confirm that they have taken part in research projects based on technology, innovation, and eco-design that have positively impacted the common good. For example, innovation for new materials with the minimum impact is demanded by the hospitality industry, since, as Pleissner states, eco-minded consumers 'expect materials to be overall sustainable', preferring hotels to be engaged in activities for protecting natural resources [161].

Likewise, they emphasize the need for communication between the academic and business worlds for the generation, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge, since 'there is a gap between the academic world and business pragmatism, and both can jointly very well convey innovation projects' (P9, FG2). Investing in science and innovation is essential, not only in large projects but mainly in supporting local micro-entrepreneurs and SMEs, as stated by Pérez-Alemán: 'local innovation depends on collective strategic efforts through increasing networks among small producers and other organizations' [162]. Through alliances with these small producers, they can 'create conditions that foster inclusion and upgrading of small-scale producers in a supply chain' [163].

4.4. Reflections on Strategic Axis 4: Which Strategic PEPs Should a 4S-SM-HC Address to Maximize "Benefits to the Environment While Minimizing Negative Impacts"?

To conclude, strategic axis 4 is addressed, in which section the GSTC includes criteria such as efficient purchasing, energy and water conservation, and actions to reduce pollution and conserving biodiversity and ecosystems. This strategic axis and its two PEPs would reinforce the company's contribution, especially in SDGs 6 [164], 7 [165], 13 [166], 14 [167], and 15 [168].

4.4.1. Initiatives to Protect and Conserve Natural Heritage

Participants stressed the importance of implementing real actions to protect and conserve biodiversity, respecting and defending native flora and fauna and generating conservation projects that protect, respect, and defend biodiversity and animal life. They maintain that tourism companies benefit 'from conditions and natural resources to attract customers (. . .) therefore we must necessarily be aligned and protect these resources (. . .) so that they do not disappear and (. . .) improve them, if possible' (P9, FG2). This means that they must develop policies to protect the natural heritage that 'include our requirements to suppliers' and partner companies (. . .) that organize, for example, excursions for (. . .) birdwatching or whale watching (. . .), which must pass a series of filters that accredit good practices (. . .) and we will inform our clients of them' (P9, FG2), which is supported by

stakeholders who emphasize that sometimes the lack of criteria 'feeds into the deterioration of our destiny' (P4). They also stress the need to make clients aware 'of the problems of conserving these resources' (P2), as it is necessary to 'take great care of our natural heritage' (P4), focusing on protection because 'protected areas can be a tourist resource, but we must seek control over the carrying capacity and avoid overcrowding' (P4). They also add that 'it would be important to repopulate hotel gardens with native plants that also require less water consumption' (P1), and 'here we have a native landscape that would be better preserved because it also favors native fauna' (P4).

4.4.2. Implementation of Mitigation and Adaptation Measures against Climate Change

The discussion confirmed the need to include the implementation of practical actions to measure, compensate, reduce and verify the impact of the carbon footprint as a result of the company's activity, establishing efficient systems to promote water and energy savings, prioritizing the hiring of suppliers whose sources are sustainable or non-polluting alternative energies. They also suggest that the company promote light and noise pollution reduction, as well as the gradual decreasing of single-use plastics and harmful chemicals, replacing them with harmless products and establishing proper control and recycling of non-reusable products. The participants of the 4S-SM-HC assure that 'we want to measure (...) and communicate how many tons of CO_2 we have compensated, how many tons we have recycled, and have defined objectives (...), measuring the impact of each of the raw materials we buy' (P9, FG1), since 'when we say effective sustainable management (...) it means using the minimally necessary resources, without wasting them' (P7). In this sense, the authors Fuentes-Moraleda et al. state that most clients would be willing to pay more to stay in a hotel 'with an environmental management system' [169]. Furthermore, stakeholders reiterate that supporting the products of local suppliers 'generates a double positive impact (...): reducing the carbon footprint and combating climate change (...) while promoting agriculture' (P1). In this way, both local jobs and new opportunities may be created for local entrepreneurs, who are the primary creators of employment by 'facilitating the economic and social regeneration of countries', as Romero-Martinez and Milone state [170].

In conclusion, Table 3 summarizes the results, describing the four strategic management axes, with ten principles of ethical performance and their suggested development criteria confirmed by participants, and its main potential contribution to each SDG.

Table 3. Summary of the results.

Strategic Management Axes	Principles of Ethical Performance	Suggested Development Criteria	Potential Contribution to SDGs.
1. Effective sustainable management	Code of conduct	Establishment of the values, principles, and rules that will govern the conduct of hotel company employees and management	3 5 8 10 16 17
	Guidelines for employee engagement and involvement	Development and definition of human resource policies and the fundamental principles that will govern company/employee relations	
	Commitment to quality assurance to clients	Statement of the fundamental pillars of client–company relationships	
	Core principles in the engagement with shareholders and stakeholders	Description of the goals and principles for economic sustainability and the company's viability	
2. Social and economic benefits to the local community, minimizing negative impacts	Relationship with suppliers and value chain, creating shared value	Establishment of fundamental principles for the selection of suppliers, regulation of supplier–company relations, and monitoring of the value chain	1 2 12
	Support, dissemination and implementation of the new economics	Fostering the development, research, and implementation of new economics, mainly the social economy and the circular economy	

Strategic Management Axes	Principles of Ethical Performance	Suggested Development Criteria	Potential Contribution to SDGs.
3. Benefits to cultural heritage, minimizing negative impacts	Initiatives to preserve and disseminate cultural heritage	Contribution and support to organizations that safeguard and disseminate cultural heritage and the respectful and pleasant exchange between cultures	4 9 11
	Support sciences, research, and innovation	Support for organizations promoting research, social innovation, intellectual development, critical thinking, and the promotion and dissemination of culture and knowledge	
4. Benefits to the environment, minimizing negative impacts	Initiatives to protect and conserve natural heritage	Implementation of effective actions for the protection and conservation of biodiversity, respecting and defending native flora and fauna	6 7 13 14 15
	Implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures against climate change	Implementation of practical actions to measure, compensate, reduce and verify the impact of the carbon footprint as a result of the company's activity	

5. Discussion

The results emerged from the discussion defined ten PEPs structured in four strategic axes, providing a stakeholder approach and an SDG perspective. These ten PEPs are aligned with those previously developed by the United Nations Global Compact, which had developed ten principles in four areas (Human Rights, Labor, Environment, and Anti-Corruption) for companies to make progress towards SDGs [171], and the Spanish chapter of the Global Compact and SEGITTUR presented in February 2020 a "Decalogue for business action in the tourism sector in terms of SDGs" [172,173]. Both are useful proposals to raise awareness among companies and start them on the path towards the SDGs, but they need to be participatory and strategic approaches resulting from reflection and co-participation. This proposal considers the structure and criteria of the GSTC, summing the multi-stakeholder approach and allowing SMEs to build their SSMM according to their available resources and their context within the territory. No advance can be achieved toward the 2030 Agenda without the active participation of businesses [174], as a significant part of the SDGs are directly related to the implementation of business strategies [175], which are still very fragmented despite the numerous studies published since its declaration [174]. Therefore, this SSMM proposal, as a result of a dialogue between academia and businesses, provides academic contributions and practical implications, facilitating feasible, measurable, and specific sustainable management strategies, as well as a social learning methodological framework with a multi-stakeholder approach. Both contributions fill the existing literature gap, providing practical solutions to a "complex topic," creating connections between companies and the 2030 Agenda [174,176] to be replicated or adapted to other contexts, and facilitating conscious progress towards the SDGs.

Our findings confirm—and are aligned with previous existing literature [104,177–179]—converging to a greater extent with models with a stakeholder approach for the hospitality industry, such as that proposed by the authors Raub and Martín-Rios and the integrative and participatory one proposed by dos Santos et al. However, the novelty and originality of this study are threefold: (1) it provides a joint vision of the academic and business world; (2) it is carried out through a methodological framework of social learning, as it is co-created with the participation of the 4S-SM-HC, the main stakeholders in the territory and academia; and (3) it establishes a coherent thread between the transformative purpose of the company [113] and its contributions to the SDGs. Additionally, basing the SSMM structure and principles on the GSTC criteria and internationally recognized indicators that are accepted by the travel and tourism industry facilitates its accessibility, understanding, and implementation to SMEs in the sector. For many SMEs, opting for sustainability certifications may be inaccessible due to their audit and certification costs; in this case, the proposed SSMM, based on the GSTC criteria, can guide them to advance in line with the international acceptance

of the industry in terms of sustainability, allowing the 4S companies to move from the triple bottom line [38] to a triple wellbeing [84], and thus contribute to the seventeen goals of the SDGs.

6. Conclusions

This proposal allows the 4S-SM-HC to implement a holistic SSMM by applying specific management strategies to make contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda goals. The proposed SSMM is an ecosystemic, theoretical model for 4S-SM-HCs to make practical and specific contributions to the SDGs. SMEs can implement it by developing each of the ten proposed PEPs and planning short-, medium-, and long-term action plans. The objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and oriented to the goals of the 2030 Agenda. It will be necessary, therefore, to establish priorities, plan and assign resources for its effectiveness and regularly train and qualify all employees, as emotionally engaged teams will result in better financial results [180]. These proposals are especially necessary now that we must react to the health, climate, economic and social crises that we are experiencing [181–183], thus moving towards a "sustainable wellbeing economy" that puts the common good first and focuses on the well-being of people and the planet [184,185]. The adoption of the SSMM proposed with the ecosystemic approach used ensures the sustainability of the company since it allows it to be seen as a "living organism" with a "complex adaptive system" [111]. For this purpose, the stakeholders' contribution is essential since the 4S-SM-HCs face immense challenges and need an ecosystem engagement that allows them to progress toward the SDGs [78].

This SSMM does not seek to condense all potential contributions that a 4S-SM-HC can make towards 2030, but rather provide them with a useful and easy-to-use guide based on four strategic axes and ten PEPs that may inspire them to develop and expand the suggested lines of action, adapting them to each local reality. It has been demonstrated that small tourism businesses improve their competitiveness if they adopt good sustainable practices [186] while generating "customer engagement" [187], potentially creating a "virtuous circle" for sustainability that contributes to a wellbeing economy [188]. This theoretical model is fully accessible and implementable regardless of its size because it transforms the purpose and values of 4S companies into effective contributions to the common good in a coherent manner, focusing on local needs while providing a global vision. The following Figure 2 reflects the conclusion of this article.

Figure 2. The diagram shows the four strategic management axis and the ten principles of ethical performance of the SSMM proposal.

7. Limitations and Future Lines of Research

This research's limitations are derived from the qualitative nature of the FG as a data collection technique. However, conducting two consecutive, linked, and inter-dependent FGs provided a more significant amount of data, enriching the thematic analysis and therefore allowing for more in-depth results. It would be desirable to supplement this research with quantitative studies that would complement the results; however, the current legislative and regulatory shortage of 4S and its lack of visibility and recognition could make it challenging to study this scope and characteristics [73]. On the contrary, this technique's value lies in the interaction that arises from the debate among the participants. Therefore, it is considered the most appropriate technique for understanding the context, especially when the research team is close to the subject of the investigation [189]. Likewise, social learning occurs as a consequence of social interactions, and by sharing reflections and spaces for discussion and the exchange of ideas, it is possible to make decisions that benefit society [110]. Additionally, the multi-professional profiles of selected experts, their high level of representativeness in organizations from the four sectors, the high degree of knowledge and experience in the four main axes of the SSMM (economic, social, cultural, and environmental), and the near gender balance may have enriched the results of the research.

As it is a theoretical model, there are no empirical results. Once this theoretical SSMM has been tested in the 4S-SM-HC selected, it would be advisable to carry out another research with the same company using the Delphi methodology to identify improvement points and correct possible deviations, thus confirming the usefulness of the SSMM and, eventually, to prototype it. In the same way, once implemented, it would be desirable to deepen the ecosystem approach to verify that organizations progressively add their efforts to expand the boundaries of the current sustainable business ecosystem, making them adaptive and resilient to change and working within planetary boundaries [111]. At this point, it would also be necessary to expand on the studies that add essential customer feedback through customer journey map techniques to provide the user's perspective to the SSMM.

Likewise, it would be necessary to deepen the proposed SSMM by introducing measurable variables in quantitative and qualitative terms as proposed by the authors Venturelli et al. [190], developing key performance indicators to measure the degree of implementation of sustainability as suggested by the authors Hristov and Chirico [191], or implementing "wellbeing indices" as suggested by Haavard et al. [192]. Voluntary reporting of non-financial results that demonstrate the degree of compliance with the SSMM would also be welcome, as it contributes to generating 'trust among investors and improve company reputation', as stated by the authors Caputo et al. [193].

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