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Plan de responsabilidad social empresarial para el sector inmobiliario

Corporate social responsibility plan for the real estate sector

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ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility as a voluntary agreement between companies and society to help achieve sustainability objectives, including environmental ones, is an argument for achieving business advantages in the market. So, the objective of the research is to design a corporate social responsibility plan for real estate companies in the city of Cuenca. The type of research was non-experimental, it had a qualitative and quantitative orientation and the scope of the study was descriptive-explanatory. The

methods used were the historical-logical, analytical-synthetic, deductive-inductive and the systemic method. The results not only demonstrated how basic it is to have social responsibility in companies, but also to design a plan and socialize people, the same ones who widely understand the concept of sustainability and support and idealize this in large companies, especially, in real estate agents as intermediaries to satisfy a primary need.

Descriptors: Social responsibility; marketing; ecology; private enterprises. (Words taken from the UNESCO Thesaurus).

INTRODUCTION

In Ecuador, the real estate sector is in a situation of renewal after the economic crises of recent years. This depression is attributed to the so-called surplus value law, which brought with it a reduction in resources allocated to housing loans, and a downward variation in prices in the real estate sector. In this sense, the demand for real estate companies fluctuates in terms of their size, availability of mortgage loans, current interest rates, house prices, amount of entry fees, unemployment indicator, among others. According to the president of MHeller Group, a company that develops real estate projects of a different nature, including housing for the middle class, states that: Ecuador is in the process of recovering from a major crisis, for this reason, the Bank of the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security (BEISS) is being forced to make substantive and formal adjustments to overcome the weaknesses.

The construction activity is closely related to real estate, each of these market branches are present at the regional and provincial level and drive the economy, therefore, in the province of Azuay, it develops relatively normally. According to José Jaramillo, president of the Cuenca Construction Chamber (CCC) affirms that there is an improvement from 2.5% to 3% in 2018 compared to 2017; while, Adrián Rodríguez, president of the Association of Real Estate Brokers (AREB) of Azuay points out that the increase is 5%.

The situation of real estate, according to data from construction companies (Bermeo Association), has a low demand, due to the high cost of construction materials that are basic to develop real estate activities. Then companies are forced to buy and sell in greater volume to energize this market. Despite this, since the cost of the properties is high, it is offered at a high price so that their profits may not be affected.

In the specific case of the city of Cuenca, Quito, Guayaquil and Ambato, 80% of real estate projects are developed in urban places. In Cuenca, there are undoubtedly exceptional cases; the number of foreigners looking for properties to inhabit them permanently causes the prices' increase due to their purchasing power. When this situation happens, an imbalance occurs since the population cannot pay these amounts of money. Another significant case is the assets around the tram project, where the properties depreciated slightly. This may have the opposite effect upon completion of the works, since prices could skyrocket due to the tourist result of this project.

Added to all, the interest of real estate companies for public projects is focused on house for everyone and social housing of the national government and of the city, respectively. Cuenca is an important city in Ecuador, so it becomes attractive to acquire a property; besides, it has an outstanding cultural, social and economic environment that give rise to the increase of prices in an excessive way. Therefore, it is an excellent opportunity for its companies to enhance their profits through high prices, consequently, people choose to acquire homes in this periphery.

Based on the aforementioned, the economic, social and environmental impact is a key aspect for a society because its future will depend on it. In this regard, companies have the responsibility to fulfill this role to manage a plan of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that responds to the impact of their decisions.

Given the antecedents, the following research problem arises: How to determine the impact of real estate activities based on the social, economic and environmental dimensions in the city of Cuenca? Therefore, the objective established in this research is to design a corporate social responsibility plan for the real estate sector that contributes to the sustainable development of the city of Cuenca.

METHODOLOGY

The research is non-experimental since the study variables were not intentionally manipulated, but rather an analysis of these in their natural state was carried out. It has a mixed orientation because both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The scope of the study was descriptive - explanatory since the characteristics of the object of study were detailed.

The historical-logical method was also part of the investigation; therefore, it explained the structure of the work chronologically according to the events. Another method used is the analytical-synthetic one. Furthermore, the deductive-inductive method was exposed in the research process. Finally, the systemic method was applied, since it used a set of procedures and premises that served to direct the process applied in the development of the topic.

RESULTS

The data resulting from the field research mark the beginning of the exploration of the real estate sector's situation in relation to the issue of CSR. The information serves as the basis for analyzing important aspects and having arguments when considering CSR in a company. The structure of the survey has been categorized into three components for its interpretation and is manifested as follows:

Characterization of the population

The people who participated in the survey were presented in elements of age, current employment situation and income level, so the results showed that 36% of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years old, followed by 34 % who were between 18 and 30 years old; furthermore, 78% were currently working. The income level of the respondents in a range of \$ 400 to \$ 900 was also determined in a percentage of 57% of the total respondents followed by 22% who had an income between \$ 901 and \$ 1,400. This data collection procedure was carried out through digital surveys.

Knowledge of CSR in people

In this component, four survey questions were assigned to establish the definition of CSR. In this respect, 36% answered that it is ethical, followed by 29% who defined it as social benefit. Similarly, in relation to the knowledge of the three dimensions of CSR, 92% understood the social element, 97% the economic dimension and 98% the environmental dimension.

Importance of CSR in real estate

The importance of CSR in organizations was contemplated in questions that were subdivided to differentiate what was relevant for people and what was the main thing for companies. With respect to the companies, the interaction of those surveyed with real estate companies was verified, so 45% had done so, while 55% had not; in turn, 94% of people stated that it was important for real estate companies to report that they had CSR and 85% considered that they should have a section of the company that exclusively dealt with social responsibility.

The last questions focused on what the company omitted from people, that is, on their interests in terms of CSR. Around this, 47% of people totally agreed to acquire a real estate service if it demonstrated to have CSR, while 6% said that it did not affect their decision even knowing that the company is socially responsible. Likewise, 58% fully agreed that companies manage a social responsibility plan and finally 67% fully agreed that real estate companies must necessarily have a CSR plan.

PROPOSAL

Once the analysis of the information obtained is done, a CSR plan proposal is created and presented to be introduced in companies whose objective is to implement this philosophy as a daily practice, not as an option but as a requirement. As a starting point, a diagnosis is made to know the current situation of the sector in terms of CSR then the dimensions that make up social responsibility are analyzed to finally obtain the ultimate result, which is referred to sustainability as an alternative for business management.

Diagnosis

The current situation of CSR in society is prioritized due to the importance that it has taken on in carrying out people's activities. To this, it is added that no company has a social responsibility plan to be exposed to the public in the city of Cuenca. They only focus on missions, visions and values. In general, this is a characteristic of most companies in the world market.

Social dimension

This is based on people who are in the range of action inside the company; it is considered the most representative factor for the image of companies and it has a great impact on the community. The idea is to institutionalize the procedures, which should be taken for granted in papers so that they may be socialized and, in turn, consulted when necessary.

There are general elements for all companies that must be specified when executing them in real estate companies, in order to break down or unite elements for greater effectiveness.

Environmental dimension

People, as well as companies, must take care of nature to reduce the impact that their activities inevitably cause. The natural place to develop the activities deserves special interest in having long-term projects because, at present, it does not seem to be very important, however, it will be put in the place it truly deserves along the time.

These elements may be applied within the organizational structure by starting with internal socialization and then complement it with its external partners in order to make actions easier for reaching the entities' progress.

Economic dimension

The economy is the goal of companies, and in this sector it is not the exception, however, this aspect is now being approached with the caution of meeting all the requirements that have always existed and that are demanded by society nowadays.

Sustainability

The combination of the dimensions provides a long-term sustainability of any company. Real estates, as companies that satisfy basic needs, are destined to last over time, but not with the same actors. The activity in the market is assured, but it depends on the tasks that CSR policies of the companies develop over time.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the different combinations of elements from the social, economic and environmental spheres give different results, so the highest number of these results must be obtained to ensure a more reliable CSR.

CONCLUSIONS

The real estate sector in the city of Cuenca has a wide space in the market, due to several factors, such as: activities of primary need, a population of potential clients, favorable conditions for urban development, etc. However, there is an urgent need to add corporate social responsibility in a formal way in companies to take full benefit of CSR. Spontaneous CSR accompanied by internal and external legal support enables real estate companies to have advantages that include: customer loyalty, raising their corporate image, staying in the market for a long time, optimizing resources, among others. An assertive CSR plan with companies encourages communication between the organization and the environment, generating new benefits through a socialization that explains the interests of the company and the community in order to detect the point where these interests come together and become part of an integrated objective.

Finally, as real estate services are the means to make heavy investments, they must be provided with the greatest possible transparency so that mistrust does not hinder commercial transactions. So, it is necessary to develop a CSR plan with guidelines to follow both for social, economic and environmental agreements with the aim of promoting better businesses that allow reaching good living conditions and a sustainable future of generations.

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