

**Start/end date:** 1<sup>st</sup> Jun 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2011      **Status:** Completed

**Partners:** Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI), Thomas Cook

## Issue and Opportunity

Cyprus produces about 570,000 tonnes of waste annually, 88% of which goes to landfill due to limited recycling facilities on the island. At an individual level, 468kg of solid waste is produced per person in residential areas and 679kg per person in tourist areas indicating that tourists produce more waste than the residents of Cyprus. Much of this waste from tourism is generated within the hotel sector where tourists spend the bulk of their holiday time.

In May 2009, the Travel Foundation held a two-day conference with the Cypriot Hotel Industry in collaboration with our funding partner Thomas Cook. The objective of the conference was to find solutions to reducing solid waste in the hotel sector. Hoteliers highlighted plastic waste as the key area they were interested in addressing first due to ongoing tourist concerns around levels of beach litter. As a result of this conference, a pilot project was launched in 2010 with three hotels and five self-catering properties in the Paphos area of Cyprus to reduce plastic waste.

Due to the initial reduction achieved and the positive engagement of the Tsokkos group to conduct further work, the project was extended in 2011 to larger number of hotels.

## Objectives

To achieve a 10% reduction in plastic waste by mass within hotels participating in the project.

## Project Activities

1. In collaboration with Cook, hotels within the resorts of Paphos and Ayia Napa/Protaras were identified to be part of the project.
2. Regional co-ordinators were recruited to manage the project in each of the resorts.
3. With support from Thomas Cook, project co-ordinators approached the identified hotels to take part in the project. A total of 28 hotels agreed to participate.
4. Project co-ordinators conducted visits to each of the hotels where they explained the scope of the project, helped with the identification of plastic reduction initiatives relevant to each individual hotel, provided training to hotel staff to implement the initiatives, and developed customer communications and training plans for use and implementation by hotel staff.

The plastic reduction initiatives included:

- Replacing one use plastic cups with multi-use durable cups around the pool area
- Replacing bottled water with drinking water dispensers and durable cups
- Stopping the use of bin liners in the bedrooms and using in bathrooms only
- Training hotel employees to use plastic liners of the correct size and thickness
- Changing plastic liners only when soiled

## CYPRUS STATISTICS

2.39 million international arrivals

UK tourists – 45.8% total arrivals

Revenue from tourism = €1.57 billion per annum (12% of GDP)

300 hotels (100,000 beds)



- Considering alternative options to wrapping glasses in plastic in bathrooms
  - Discontinuing the wrapping of fruit baskets with plastic
  - Using refillable dispensers rather than individual packaging for soap and shampoos
  - Providing straws only when requested from hotel guests
  - Purchasing cleaning materials in bulk
5. Project co-ordinators also worked closely with Thomas Cook Quality Assurance Managers throughout the project and provided them with a training document for reps to help them communicate the project to their customers at welcome meetings.
  6. Tour Operator Representatives were asked to encourage guests to fill in customer survey questionnaires regarding the project and return these to the project co-ordinators.
  7. Project co-ordinators collected and analysed the following data (pre- and post project):
    - Volume and cost of selected plastic items purchased by the participating hotels in June-October 2010 (used as a baseline) and during the same period in 2011 (following the implementation of plastic reduction measures).
    - Customer survey responses from hotel guests.

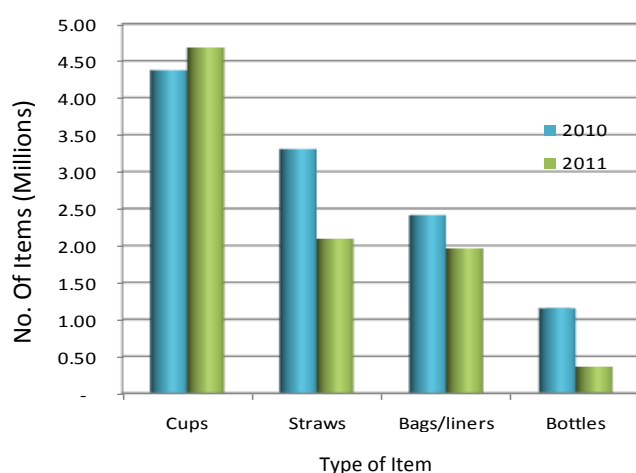
Data was taken from a total of 20 hotels and compared over a four to five month period. Not all hotels provided full data and seven hotels did not give sufficient data to be included in the final results (although they had implemented some of the initiatives to save plastic items).

## Achievements

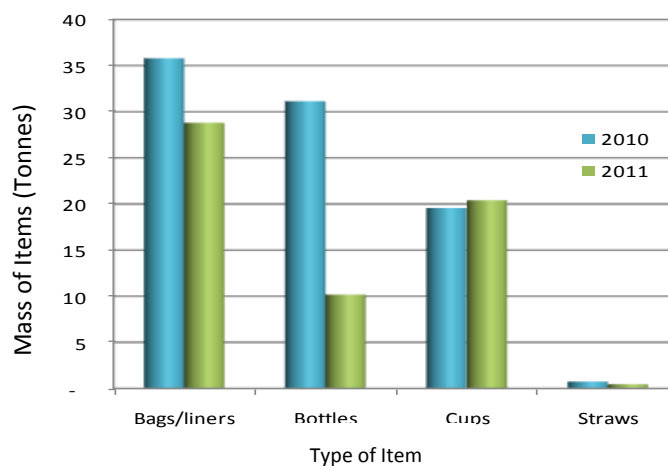
### 1. Plastic Reduction

- Participating hotels reduced the total number of plastic items they used by an average of 19% which equates to a 31% reduction in mass (27.5 tonnes).
- Hotels used 793,916 less bottles of water which equates to a 69% reduction in the number of items and a 67% reduction in terms of volume.
- A total reduction of 1,215,780 straws – 37% less in terms of items and volume.
- A total reduction of 451,558 bin liners and bags – 19% less in terms of items and 20% less in terms of volume.
- Hotels had variable results in performance, however Ascot Coral Beach was the top performing hotel making a 68% reduction in the number of plastic items used. Given they had already implemented plastic savings in the 2010 season as part of the pilot project the results suggest that ongoing savings could be expected from such a project should the implementation of initiatives continue.

**Total Number of Plastic Items**



**Mass of Plastic Items**





- The greatest reductions in plastic came from the following initiatives:-
  - Replacing the use of bottled water for All Inclusive guests with drinking water supplied from dispensers
  - Replacing single use plastic cups with multi-use durable cups
  - Only providing straws when asked for by customers
  - Provision of plastic bin liners in bathroom only

## **2. Cost Savings**

Hotels achieved a total cost saving of €111,000 by reducing their plastic consumption over the 4-5 month period. This cost saving was distributed as follows:

- €80,000 in Ayia Napa (a 38% cost saving)
- €31,000 in Paphos (a 30% cost saving)

## **3. Increased Employee Awareness**

- 1,250 hotel staff across the 28 registered hotels were trained from housekeeping to maintenance to front office staff.
- The project had a very positive effect on staff many of who have taken what they've learnt from the project to reduce their own plastic waste at home.

## **4. Positive Customer Reaction**

- 641 customer questionnaires were returned.
- 77% of hotel guests were aware of the project due to the communications activities carried out, and guests were largely positive towards the project.
- 50% of guests said that the project had a positive impact on their holiday experience, 48% said it made no difference to their holiday experience. Only 2% said it had a negative impact on their holiday experience.
- 56% said the project made them feel more positive towards Thomas Cook; 43% said it made no difference. Only 1% felt less positive.
- 98.4% thought the project was a good idea and 93% would like to see it rolled out in other destinations.

## **Issues/Challenges**

Reductions in usage were not achieved for all plastic items. The number of disposable plastic cups used increased because the majority of hotels stopped offering bottled water to guests and not all of them introduced multi-use durable cups. It is important to note however that this was predominantly due to hotels using-up existing stores of plastic cups. These results suggest that further quite significant reductions could be achieved if hotels currently using single use cups were to change to multi use durable cups.

As with many other similar projects, it proved extremely challenging to obtain monitoring data. Having project co-ordinators based in each of the regions proved invaluable in this respect as did the active engagement of the Tsokkos group of hotels who were extremely keen to monitor results having seen what was achieved by the Ascot

Coral Beach Hotel in the pilot study in the previous season. The strong relationship between Thomas Cook resort staff and this hotel group helped to reinforce the importance of the project to hotel managers.

Initially it was hoped that 50 hotels would take part in the project but it proved difficult to recruit that many even with the support of the Thomas Cook Quality Assurance Managers. Of the 28 hotels that signed up only 20 submitted data that could be used in the final analysis.

## Lessons Learned

Despite some challenges, this project has been very successful in demonstrating that significant reductions can be made in the disposal of plastic from hotels with very little financial outlay and generating considerable financial savings for the businesses involved. It has proven that significant results can be obtained working with hotel chains when senior managers are fully engaged and prepared to communicate the importance of the project from the top-down. The approach of obtaining senior manager buy-in using a pilot project to outline positive business results (i.e. cost results and positive impacts on customer experience) resulted in the hotel prepared to champion a much bigger project. This in turn resulted in a successful project that not only met, but exceeded its targets for plastic reduction.

One of the most common barriers to engaging hotels in waste reduction initiatives is proving that the actions taken will not have a negative impact on their guests' holiday experience. For example, it is assumed that all guests will want their own water bottle or will want to have a straw in their drink. This project demonstrates that, provided good communication is in place, changes can be made without impacting negatively on the customer experience. In fact, such changes can influence customers' perceptions of a business in a positive way.

The project has also demonstrated that hotels already implementing plastic reduction initiatives can continue to make considerable savings over time. The Ascot Coral Beach Hotel made record savings for the second year running through strict implementation of all of the initiatives. Hotels can continue this trend and avoid a plateau in results (and a corresponding reduction in motivation) by increasing their focus across different waste streams over time (i.e. cardboard/packaging, food waste).

## Further Information

Contact Julie Middleton

(Industry Programmes Manager)

[julie.middleton@thetravelfoundation.org.uk](mailto:julie.middleton@thetravelfoundation.org.uk)

