

Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science

**COURSEWORK SUBMISSION FORM AND
PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC HONESTY DECLARATION**

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Summative Assignment

Enjoyable and Sustainable:

developing initiatives to make coastal tourism compatible with the environment.

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Background

Over the past two decades, the tourism sector in Sicily has experienced exponential growth. According to the last report of the Bank of Italy (2019), between 2000 and 2017 the number of sleeping accommodations has increased by approximately 60% - twice as much as the national average. Today, tourism is one of the Sicilian most profitable sectors making up around 32% of the regional GDP (Fotia, 2016). These numbers are expected to grow further since the renewed American magazine *Forbes* has ranked the capital Palermo second on the list of the top worldwide leisure destinations to visit in 2020 (Elliot, 2019). However, despite being a driving force of the economy, the tourism industry also involves the consumption of considerable amounts of natural resources and the production of huge amounts of waste (Chen & Chen, 2007; Gössling & Peeters, 2015). Considering that 80% of global tourism takes place in coastal areas, with beaches and coral reefs being the most popular destinations (WTTC, 2017), policies directed at the safeguard of marine and coastal shorelines are needed with absolute urgency. It has been estimated that over six million tonnes of the rubbish flock into the ocean every year and that around 80% of waste in beaches and coastal areas is plastic (Wabnitz & Nichols, 2010). In Sicily, many regional newspapers have already raised their concerns about the worrying situation of our beaches, seashores, and seabed. To mention just a few, the newspaper *Giornale di Sicilia* (2019) has defined the Sicilian shorelines as open plastic landfills. According to the “Beach Litter” investigation promoted by the environmental organization *Legambiente* for every step you take on a beach you “encounter” four pieces of plastic litter (Bianca, 2019). Finally, Adkronos (2019) reports that quantities of micro-plastic found in the Sicilian sea achieve an overall density ranging between two and five floating objects per Km². The implications of these alarming levels of contamination are manifold. Plastic pollution constitutes a serious threat to marine wildlife, with plastic ingestion causing sub-lethal infections or, in the most severe cases, the death of marine species (Eagle, Hamann & Low, 2016). In addition, dirty beaches and contaminated sea waters threaten the tourism sector itself undermining the attractiveness and competitiveness of natural landscapes.



Figure 1. On the left the crystal-clear waters of the renewed Mondello beach. On the right the decay situation of the Sperone, a beach situated just a few kilometres away.

Having raised these concerns, this essay addresses the issue of coastline deterioration related to the tourism sector following two principles: prevention and safeguard. While one recommendation is directed at reducing levels of plastic consumption, the second one aims to the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of Sicilian coastal areas. The underlying goal is to create a common policy applicable to every hotel accommodation across Sicily with the aim to reduce levels of plastic consumption.

Memorandum

To: Manlio Messina, Tourism Dept of the Region of Sicily.

From: Augusto Di Miceli

Date: 5th May 2020

Dear Mr. Messina,

There are not enough words to describe the beauty and the charm of Sicily: Tropical white sand, warm and bright transparent sea, rugged volcanic coastlines framed by the magical atmosphere of its millennial history and culinary delicacies. This is why every year millions of tourists flock to Sicily to spend their holidays. Unfortunately, the extraordinary number of arrivals has contributed to greater and alarming levels of environmental pollution and many regional newspapers and local authorities have already raised their concerns about the worrying situation facing Sicilian coastlines defining them as “open landfills” (Giornale di Sicilia; 2019).

The two recommendations drafted in this memorandum have two main goals. The first one is to develop an environmentally and financially sustainable strategy directed at decreasing levels of plastic waste related to the tourism industry. The second one is directed at the restoring, safeguard, and preservation of the original natural asset of our beaches and shorelines. Given that coastal plastic pollution affects indistinctly all Sicilian coastal areas, the underlying concept is to develop an impactful common environmental policy that can be applied to every hotel across Sicily. To such purpose, a small-scale preliminary test will be carried out in the Grand Hotel Federico II situated in the city of Palermo. Two reasons make the Hotel Federico II a suitable candidate for the pilot test. The first one is its location: amongst the Sicilian cities, Palermo has been the most popular tourist destination in 2018 peaking at 1.5 million new arrivals (Statista, 2018). The second one is its popularity given that the property hosts more than fifty thousand tourists per year. Besides, Mr. Antonello Buscemi, Federico II's general manager has

already expressed both his eagerness to take part in this project and his willingness to communicate to the local authorities all relevant data to evaluate feasibility, advantages, drawbacks and improve upon the project design.

1.Green and equipped

The Mediterranean climate with its warm winters and, sunny and hot summers makes Sicily a paradise on earth. Temperatures range between 15°C and 40 °C throughout the year and this requires tourists, often engaged in long walks, to buy large amounts of water in plastic bottles. This unnecessary plastic waste can be significantly reduced by supplying tourists with a water bottle in a tote bag that can be handily carried around during tours and excursions.

Following the arrival and at the end of the check-in process a hotel employee will give guests the option to join the hotel efforts in reducing plastic waste. Hotel's customers will be allowed to keep a tote bag and a water bottle during their stay under two conditions: leaving a deposit of 15€ and signing up a form which outlines that guests must try to avoid plastic consumption during their stay. At the end of the stay, tourists will have two opportunities: they can have the deposit back by handing back the tote bag and the water bottle or they can keep them by leaving the deposit.



Figure 2. The green and equipped kit.

The water bottles and the tote bags will be entirely produced with recycled and biodegradable materials. The production of water bottles and tote bags can be carried out by the Sicilian firm SIRI Srl, a leader in the field of the reuse of recycled materials for the production of eco-friendly products. Manufacturing costs for these items are really low (e.g. the market price for a biodegradable water bottle is less than 4€ and less than 1€ for a tote bag), therefore the 15€ deposit will not only fully cover the initial investment, but it may realistically become a profitable source of incomes. Indeed, it can be reasonably assumed that many tourists will want to keep the water bottle and the tote bag as a souvenir of their good times spent in Sicily. Conversely, in the case in which guests will want to get the deposit back, the water bottle and the tote bag will be returned and reused after having been thoroughly cleaned.

2. Plastic-free Ecolabel

Creating a Sicilian plastic-free ecolabel will encourage other Hotels across Sicily to take part in this initiative. Hotels who will offer to join the regional effort to avoid plastic waste will be promoted on official Sicilian touristic web pages, social media accounts, tour operators, and travel magazines. In change of this visibility, hotels will have to donate the twenty percent of the earnings proceeding from the selling of water bottles

and tote bags to the environmental association *Legambiente-Sicilia*. The amount of money raised through these donations will be used to launch several environmental campaigns that will involve schools, universities, local institutions, and political organizations with the purpose of cleaning the Sicilian coastlines. In 2016, *Legambiente-Sicilia* had already organised a similar successful campaign called “Clean beaches and seabed” for one weekend during which students, volunteers, and political organizations gathered together to collect tonnes of waste from the beaches and seashores (Legambiente, 2016). However, considering the critical environmental situation of Sicilian coastlines, a greater restoration effort and constant maintenance work are required. Therefore, being able to rely on periodic donations will allow *Legambiente-Sicilia* to set up constant and more impactful cleaning campaigns that will engage the entire community.



Figure X. Legambiente-Sicilia “Clean Beaches and seabed” environmental campaign, 2016.

I do acknowledge that such measures are challenging and will require a collective and remarkable effort. However, considering that only in 2018 Sicily hosted almost five million tourists (Grasso, 2019), it becomes clear that the skilful adoption of such recommendations may enormously benefit the Sicilian environment. Moreover, tourism is one of the Sicilian most profitable sectors making up around 32% of the regional GDP (Fotia, 2016), therefore safeguarding our natural heritage also means supporting our economy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the recommendations or their implementation.

Kind Regards,

Augusto Di Miceli

Theoretical justifications

In this section of the memorandum, I show how recommendations drafted above are grounded in consumer psychology theories and linked to the newest findings within the hospitality field.

1.1.Stakeholders perspectives

To guarantee the successful development and implementation of new policies it is crucial to identify the key actors and assess their interests and positions (Schmeer, 1999). In this regard, it is possible to identify three main motives that justify firms' adoption of eco-friendly measures in a corporate setting: (i).Obtaining legitimacy (Bansal & Roth, 2000), namely providing the perception that company's policies are framed by "a socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). (ii).Meeting stakeholder demands (Cespedes-Lorente, Burgos-Jimenez & Alvarez-Gil, 2002). (iii).Gaining economic advantages from the implementation of such measures (Cespedes-Lorente, *et al.* 2002). Recommendations stated in the memorandum above satisfy all three motives: (i).As discussed later, engaging in eco-friendly behaviours is seen as socially desirable (ii).The Booking.com (2019) travel edition reveals that 70% of global travellers are more likely to book environmentally-friendly accommodations. (iii).The implementation of such measures may bring economic benefits. In addition, a stakeholder analysis focused on pro-environmental behaviours need to explore the principles and factors underpinning such behaviours. According to the *Goal framing theory* (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007), environmental behaviours frequently imply a conflict between three goals that shape people's conducts in a given situation, these are hedonic goals, gain goals and normative goals. Hedonic goals seek to create immediate short-term advantage and improve one's feelings by avoiding efforts or negative thoughts, by seeking direct pleasure, improvement of self-esteem. Gain goals look at middle or long-term benefits regarding

individuals' resources such as saving money. Normative goals seek to determine what is the most appropriate thing to do in a given situation. Several studies show that environmental actions often involve a conflict between hedonic and gain goals on one hand, and normative goals on the other hand (Nordlund & Garvill, 2002; Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Steg, Bolderdijk, Keizer & Perlaviciute, 2014; Steg, Lindenberg & Keizer, 2015). Though acting eco-friendly is thought to be the correct thing to do, people often refuse to do so simply because it is more expensive, less enjoyable, or more laborious than another environmentally harmful action. This trend is known as "moral hypocrisy" and it is used to express the well-documented discrepancies between self-reported behaviour and factual conducts in the sustainability field (Batson *et al.*, 1999; UNEP 2005; Luchs, Naylor & Irwin, 2010; Monin & Merit, 2012). Steg *et al.* (2014) claim that one possible solution to prompt pro-environmental behaviours and avoid the conflict between contrasting goals is **making hedonic and gain goals compatible with normative goals** and therefore allowing consumers to satisfy multiple goals simultaneously. This can be achieved by diminishing the perceived cost of eco-friendly conducts while increasing its perceived benefits. Accordingly, in the recommendations drafted in this memorandum the conflict between hedonic, gain and normative goals has been handled by avoiding extra costs - through the mechanism of the refundable deposit - but at the same time making recommendations attractive, status-enhancing and enjoyable.

2.1.Green and equipped

Two principles justify this initiative, these are commitment and, self and social signaling

2.2.Commitment

At the end of the check-in process, guests will have the opportunity to commit to the hotel efforts to reduce plastic waste by signing up a form and leaving a 15€ deposit to obtain a tote bag and a water bottle. This process aims to generate guests' commitment to the environment. Accordingly, different studies show that individuals tend to act as consistent as possible with their commitments and conducts (Cialdini, 2007; Baca-Motes *et al.*, 2013; Terrier & Marfaing, 2015). This principle comes from cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) which proposes that humans have an inner need to keep all their beliefs and behaviours in harmony and avoid disharmony/dissonance. Building on the so-called "foot-in-the-door" technique (Freedman & Fraser, 1966), Cialdini (2007) argues that initial commitment may pave the way for future consistent behaviours. Accordingly, Freedman and Fraser's (1966) study showed that obtaining people's agreement on a small request prompts compliance with future larger requests. In their experiment, householders who agreed to display in the windows of their homes a little sign which read "*be a safe driver*", were more likely to give their consent for the installation on their front lawn of a huge billboard reading "*drive carefully*". Furthermore, written commitments have also proved effective in fostering pro-environmental behaviours. Baca-Motes *et al.* (2013) and, Terrier and Marfaing's (2015) studies showed that hotel guests who made specific and written commitments were more prone to reuse their towels. In Werner *et al.*'s (1995) study, people who made a written commitment were more likely to participate in a curbside recycling program than those who came to know of the program face to face, by a phone call or from a flyer. Moreover, according to Joule and Beauvois (as cited in Grandjean & Gueguen,

2011) to make commitment more effective (i).It should require a financial or physical cost¹, (ii).It should be driven by internal convictions or personal values and (iii).It should be sufficiently noticeable. Other authors have also stressed the importance of the public nature of the action demonstrating that conducts engaged in public enhance the relationship between individuals and their behaviours generating commitment and consistency (Joule, Girandola & Bernard 2007; Baca-Motes *et al.*, 2013). The purpose of this recommendation is to replicate the effect of these theories. This is possible for the following reasons: Firstly, making guests signing up a form may generate a stronger form of commitment compared to an oral agreement. Secondly, according to our data, the vast majority of the travellers have environmental concerns, and this may prompt commitment based on internal reasons. Thirdly, the deposit makes the commitment sufficiently costly. Lastly, the possibility to exhibit the tote bag by carrying it around and the hotel environment where often guests get in touch with each other guarantee visibility and public commitment.

2.3.Self and social signalling

Several studies suggest that social image concerns and social pressure are the main motivators of prosocial behaviours (Benabu & Tirole, 2006; Ariely, Bracha & Meier 2008; Lacetera & Macis, 2010). Ariely et al. (2008) document that people typed quickly on a keyboard or cycled rapidly on a stationary bike when these actions were aimed at increasing donations for a good cause and when the performance was recognized publicly. Lacetera and Macis (2010) found that the frequency of blood donations increased only when donors were publicly announced in the local newspaper and awarded in a public ceremony. Therefore, in my initiative, the possibility for guests to publicly signal their commitment to the environment by exhibiting the tote bag will

¹ For the positive association between the costliness of the initial pro-environmental behaviour and its consistent future repetition see also Gneezy *et al.*, 2012.

function as a stimulus for enjoying the plastic reduction program. However, people not only behave prosocially because they desire social approval but also because they care about their self-image (Benabu & Tirole, 2006). For instance, De Young (2000: 515) claimed that often people engage in eco-friendly behaviours “because of the personal, internal contentment that engaging in these behaviors provides”. Importantly, acting prosocially in public may also influence people’s identity. Elster (1989) suggest that the public engagement of prosocial behaviours may influence one’s self-image since others’ perception of one’s social image can also influence his/her own self-image. Benabu and Tirole (2006) suggest that people’s behaviour is shaped by a need to maintain harmony between one’s conducts, values, goals, and the self-image that they try to uphold. Therefore, one’s commitment to a pro-environmental cause would act as self-signal that he/she cares about the environment and this will increase the likelihood of future consistent behaviours. In light of all the above, it is therefore plausible that the combination of commitment and signalling concepts will both prompt guests’ participation in the hotel’s plastic reduction initiative and increase the likelihood that guests will behave eco-friendly during their stay.

3.1. Plastic-free ecolabel

Although some authors argue that ecolabels play a relatively marginal role in the consumer decision-making process (Font & Buckley, 2001; Reiser & Simmons, 2008), some research shows that they may be a useful tool to enhance the uniqueness of territory and increase tourism flows (Calabro & Vieri, 2014; Cerqua, 2016). Fraguell, Martí, Pintó, and Coenders (2016) claim that the Blue Flag ecolabels not only contribute to raise tourists and local communities’ awareness about environmental issues but also convey economic and social value to the beaches. Moreover, the type of ecolabel I suggest does not simply communicate rules and standards to whom hotels must adhere but plays an active role in mobilising the society towards the safeguard and betterment of the environment through the system of targeted donations. Indeed, this initiative has

been designed to satisfy the four basic principles of the strategic processes associated with social movement framing: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000). These frames are created and employed to allow social movements to achieve a specific goal such as recruiting new members, mobilising participants, gaining new resources, etc. (Benford & Snow, 2000). Frame bridging consists in bringing together two or more ideologically congruent but structurally disconnected frames concerning a specific issue or problem. For example, the ecolabel strategy may successfully bridge the frames of hoteliers worried about the economic damage caused by beach pollution and those of local communities who desire to live in a clean environment.

Frame amplification “involves the idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 624). In particular, my recommendation taps into existing environmental concerns and narratives that today have become socially dominant (Félonneau & Becker, 2008).

Frame extension refers to the need of representing the social movement’s interests as extensible and important not only for the social movement itself but also to other potential members. It is clear that adhering to the ecolabel and participating in the cleaning campaigns are activities that will benefit not only adherents but society as a whole.

Frame transformation involves shifts in previous understandings and meanings or/and the creation of new ones. The eco-label recommendation seeks to promote an innovative understanding of environmental liability where responsibilities do not only fall on one subject but rather are fragmented and distributed amongst all societal players and this may trigger a virtuous circle that will bring social, economic and environmental benefits.

4.Limitations and Conclusions

These recommendations have a few limitations. Firstly, the first strategy that requires customers to sign up the form and leaving the deposit is time-consuming and may slow down the check-in process causing delays and annoying guests. Therefore, it will be important, during the pilot test, to seek ways to make the process as quick and simple as possible. Secondly, the strategy of making hedonic and gain goals compatible with normative goals presented in paragraph 1.1 may have some side effects. Steg *et al*, (2014) claim that by merely targeting hedonic and gain goals, these motives will become more important in the decision process and this may undermine the influence of normative goals. The consequence is that this strategy in some cases may inhibit eco-friendly behaviours since people with strong hedonic and gain goals will act pro-environmentally only in cases where the potential benefits of such behaviours will worth the effort. To avoid such a problem Steg *et al*, (2014) suggest to strength the importance of normative goals as much as possible. Lastly, in paragraph 2.2 I have stressed the importance of commitment in predicting future pro-environmental behaviours. However, some scholars found that not always pro-environmental behaviours predict future eco-friendly conducts. Accordingly, Khan and Dhar (2006) show that some individuals after engaging pro social behaviour feel that they can “afford” to engage in less ethical conduct, this phenomenon is known as the “moral licensing” effect (see also Mazar & Zhong). Despite these limitations, I believe that the skilful adoption of these recommendations will have a considerable positive impact on the Sicilian environment and may serve as a basis of more ambitious eco-friendly policies.

Appendix

Table 1.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Interests	Concerns
Regional Tourism Department	• Communicate a positive and attractive image of Sicily. • Protect the environment by reducing urban waste and preserving natural treasures. • Create common standards and common policies applicable across Sicily. • Compliance with norms and regulations both at national and European level.	• Profitability and competitiveness : Environmental initiatives must be economically viable and competitive.
Hoteliers	• Adapt supply to a growing demand for eco travelling among consumers. • Boost brand awareness. • Reduce property environmental impact. • Lower management costs and wastes. • Safeguard the beauty of the cultural and natural heritage.	• Some initiatives may require costly investments. • Prices need to be kept unvaried.
Clients	• Feel-good factor. • Greater range of supply due to new eco-accommodations. • Boost social and self-image.	• Travelling is already an expensive activity, and many cannot afford extra costs. • Behaving pro-environmentally implies a mental and physical effort.
Local community	• Live in a cleaner environment. • Civic engagement. • Social cooperation. • Mutual trust. • Sense of duty and pride. • Gain environmental awareness.	• Initiatives need to be worth engaging. • Initiatives do not have to be excessively time consuming.

		• Need for a balance between work life, family duties and environmental activities.
Environment	• Protection natural habitats and pristine environments. • Preserve marine flora and fauna.	• Activities need to be impactful. • Need for constant preservation activities.

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