



Targeting Zero Plastics in Tourism Businesses with UNESCO, PATA & Expedia Group





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Part 1: Introduction

Lesson 1 – What is the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge?

Welcome to our course! Plastic pollution is one of the world's most pressing challenges, therefore we congratulate you for taking this step towards plastic waste reduction in tourism and hospitality.

The amount of plastics we currently produce, consume and dispose of is **unsustainable**, and, as we will see throughout the course, tourism activities and hospitality businesses contribute *greatly* to this issue. For this reason, it is important that we lead the fight against single-use plastics.

In this course, we will cover the following topics:

1. What is the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge?
2. What is the necessary process to implement a plastic waste reduction strategy?
3. What are the concrete measures needed to reduce single-use plastics in my business?
4. How can local knowledge and products help fight plastic waste?
5. How can I continue my journey towards plastic waste reduction?

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- implement the necessary process for single-use plastics reduction to be applied by tourism and hospitality businesses;
- develop an action plan for plastic waste reduction for your business' context;
- identify what types of products and materials can be locally sourced to replace single-use plastics; and
- commit to plastic waste reduction and other priority sustainability challenges.



What are the sustainability challenges in tourism and hospitality?

Before we talk about the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge, it is important to understand why it was created and **why it is needed**. We know that tourism can act as a powerful tool for poverty alleviation, sustainable economic development, community empowerment and environmental conservation. We will talk more about this in Lesson 4. Nonetheless, tourism also **poses several challenges** to destinations across the world.

Seasonality, overcrowding in coastal areas and old towns, and degradation of cultural heritage and natural sites are just some of the **negative impacts** seen around the globe. These impacts are the result of a *rapid and unplanned* tourism growth. In some cases, this is referred to as 'overtourism'.

This is why it is crucial to take action and strive for a more sustainable tourism and hospitality industry!

What are the potential negative impacts of tourism?

Economic impacts

The negative impacts of tourism on a destination's economy can include:

- **over-dependence** on tourism for revenue and jobs;
- high levels of **seasonality** and employment unbalance (lack of jobs during off-peak and lack of workforce in non-tourism sectors in peak periods);
- **over-reliance on specific products** (e.g., one specific heritage site) **and markets** (e.g., one specific nationality of tourists); and, consequently,
- high **vulnerability** to unexpected crises, shocks as well as changes in demographics, tourist behaviour and travel trends.



Socio-cultural impacts

Over-reliance on tourism further poses a threat to communities which depend on it for income and jobs. **They also become vulnerable to changes and shocks.**

More than that, overtourism **adds pressure on existing infrastructure** (such as public spaces and public transportation), due to a growth in visitor numbers beyond the natural carrying capacity of destinations, and **creates negative experiences** for locals and visitors alike.

Other impacts associated with increased visitor flows include:

- locals making adjustments to meet tourists' needs, attitudes and values (e.g., modification of events, activities or cultural sites, or the loss or weakening of cultural traditions and values);
- loss of authenticity and cultural identity/heritage degradation;
- tourist-oriented shops often replacing everyday facilities, such as drugstores, local grocery shops, banks, post offices, etc.;
- housing and offices being transformed into hotels or used as Airbnbs, which causes the city to lose its inhabitants and imbalances the relationship between residents and the real estate market – thus a socio-cultural but also an economic negative impact.



Environmental impacts

Visitor overcrowding also directly impacts **resources** of particularly sensitive natural and historical sites, which usually are **critical assets for a destination**.

Unbalanced tourism can have negative environmental impacts such as:

- **loss** of local flora and fauna;
- increasing air, light and noise **pollution**;
- overwhelming the capacity of support services to cope with demand, especially water and **waste management** (e.g., plastic, food, solid waste, grey water); and
- higher levels of greenhouse gas **emissions** linked to the transport of tourists and supplies to/from/around destinations.

As you can see from these examples, it is *crucial* that **tourism and hospitality businesses** and all other stakeholders (DMOs, NTAs, communities and visitors) come together to recover from the COVID-19 crisis **without going back to the previous approaches and business models**.

So how can we do that?

"Travel connects people – physically, culturally, emotionally. When done responsibly, it can be a force for economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. We are endlessly pursuing opportunities to offer more journeys that broaden horizons and unlock lasting positive memories."

Expedia Group, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic caused **severe hardship** in destinations worldwide. In the Asia Pacific alone, the tourism contribution to GDP plummeted, resulting in tens of millions of **jobs lost** ([WTTC, 2021](#)). From an environmental perspective, the pandemic also caused severe **setbacks** in the region's fight against **plastic waste and marine pollution**.



Since 2020, over 25,000 tonnes of COVID-19 plastic waste have leaked into the oceans, and Asia is responsible for much of this number ([PNAS, 2021](#)).

Protected areas, national parks and heritage sites across the world have been struggling to continue their conservation works due to the lack of revenue and reduced staff ([IUCN, 2021](#)).

This highlights the extent of a crisis' impact on the travel & tourism industry, which is caused by a lack of preparedness, adaptive capacity and resilience of both destinations and tourism businesses.

Yet, the pandemic has provided a perfect opportunity for travel & tourism to transform from crisis into a *force for good*.

Environmental conservation, however, is not enough. **Before tourism can be sustainable, it must first build robust local economies and host communities.** It must further be responsible to local cultures,

beliefs and traditions. Finally, it must be resilient to withstand shocks but, at the same time, flexible to adapt to changes that are sure to come.

So how can travel and tourism be more sustainable?

[Expedia Group](#), one of the world's largest travel companies, is highly committed to sustainability and is powering better journeys by:

1. Choosing options consciously

- a. Upholding the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge to reduce environmental impacts and promote more sustainable travel choices.
- b. Creating online portals for identifying inclusive vacation options, such as LGBTQIA-welcoming hotels.
- c. Updating guidelines to promote only activities that uphold our animal welfare standards.

2. Travelling inclusively

- a. Creating information resources and providing accessibility search features that give everyone the confidence to travel, no matter their circumstances.
- b. Removing offensive content from our marketplace so everyone feels welcome, regardless of identity.
- c. Ensuring anyone who needs their service animal can travel at all times.

3. Exploring responsibly

- a. Partnering with destinations to engage travellers around being respectful and celebrating local culture.
- b. Joining cross-industry collaborations to offer more sustainable activities.
- c. Facilitating the transition to electric vehicles by including EV chargers as a searchable amenity in lodging options.
- d. Enabling destination and travel partners to promote sustainable and inclusive options and experiences to travellers.



As you can see from Expedia Group's example, sustainability in travel & tourism encompasses *much more* than a destination's efforts towards environmental conservation. In fact, **a resilient and sustainable destination requires businesses that are also committed to inclusivity and accessibility and to providing experiences that benefit local ecosystems, economies and**

communities.

One way for tourism and hospitality businesses to show their **commitment** and have support throughout their sustainability journey is to take part in local or global-level movements, such as UNESCO's Sustainable Travel Pledge.

What is the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge?

The [UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge](#) aims to promote **sustainable travel, community resilience** and **heritage conservation** globally. It was designed to inspire and incentivise local travel and hospitality businesses to **publicly commit** to the actions they take to protect local culture and the natural environment, in line with the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Pledge is the result of a collaboration between UNESCO and Expedia Group.

SIGN THE UNESCO TRAVEL PLEDGE [HERE](#).

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ([UNESCO](#)) is the specialised agency of the United Nations that aims to promote world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture. See the video below to learn more about UNESCO's work around the world to help achieve the SDGs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt7l1Ky4-gQ>

Expedia Group

Expedia Group is one of the world's largest travel platforms. It includes well-known travel brands such as Expedia, Hotels.com and Vrbo, among others. Expedia Group is committed to helping people experience the world in new ways, building lasting connections and increasing tourism's positive impacts for partners, travellers, employees, communities and destinations.

Watch the quick video below to learn more about Expedia and the Sustainable Travel Pledge:

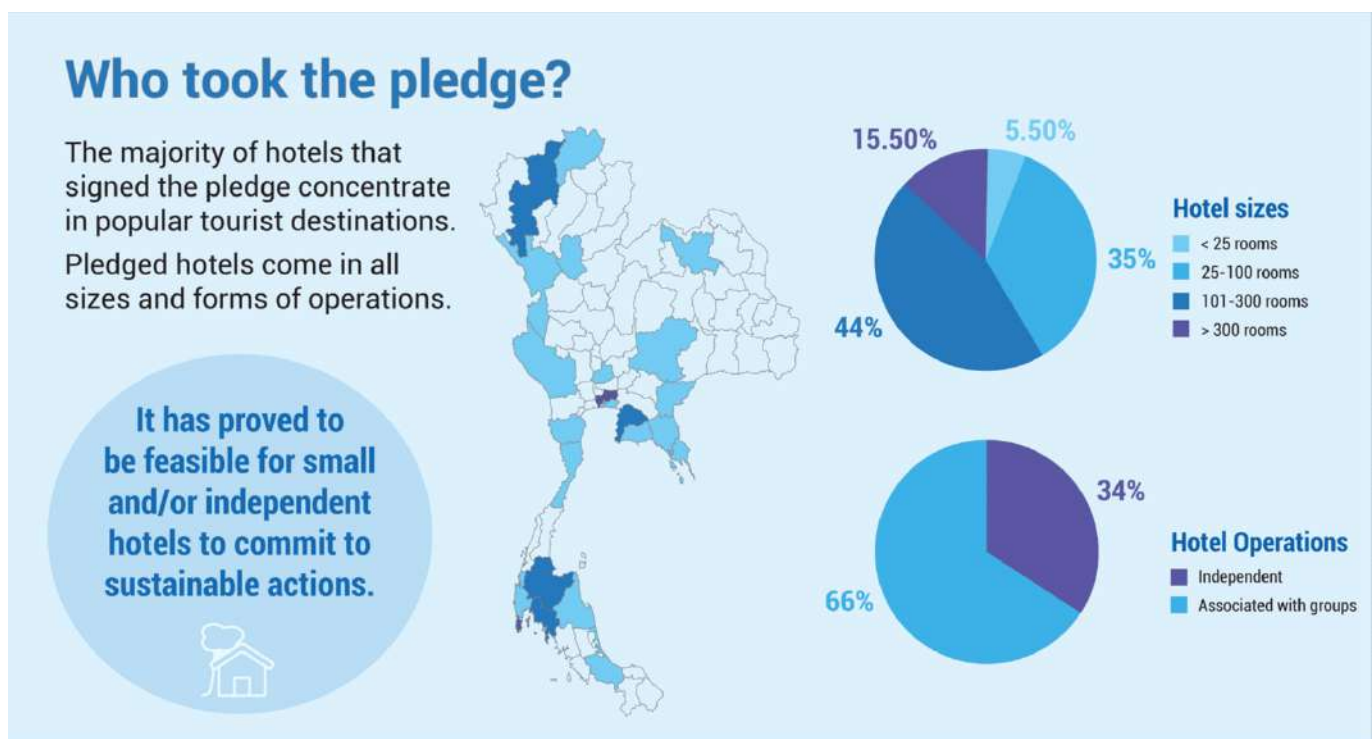
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIjG61gNrZA>

And why the need for a Sustainable Travel Pledge?

"Tourism offers life-changing opportunities for communities to promote and protect their local culture. The Sustainable Travel Pledge is particularly timely as we work to build a new kind of tourism in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, by inviting local tourism stakeholders to commit to inclusive and sustainable measures. This collaboration with Expedia Group firmly places communities and the promotion of culture at the heart of the development of sustainable tourism."

Ernesto Ottone R., UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture
([UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge, 2019](#))

The Pledge's pilot initiative took place in Thailand, in collaboration with [TAT](#) (Tourism Authority of Thailand), and it is the first country to implement the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge nationwide. As of March 2021, 556 hotel properties in Thailand have signed the Pledge to do their part to protect the environment and support local culture and communities.



See below some case studies and best practices from hotels that signed the Sustainable Travel Pledge in Thailand in 2020:

- **Bangkok. Prince Theater Heritage Stay** in Bangkok turned its property from a former casino in the early 1900s into a wholesome movie house and then into a cinema-themed hotel. It

regularly organises local artists' performances and artworks, and hosts film festivals promoting small and independent directors, and the local choir.

- **Krabi. Aonang Princeville Villa Resort and Spa** in Krabi facilitates trash collection in the community, renovates local mosques and promotes locally made products in a "resort marketplace". In addition, a large number of products used in the resort are made locally – for example, bed sheets made from traditional batik.
- **Phang Nga. Six Senses Koh Yao Noi** in Phang Nga, in addition to taking common measures, such as using reusable glass bottles and refillable ceramic jars for bathroom amenities, also grows vegetables and herbs, and raises ducks, chickens and goats on the resort grounds, and only works with suppliers that comply with their sustainable purchasing policies.



([UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge, 2019](#))

"The Pledge demonstrates our joint commitment to promoting sustainable tourism and enhancing environmental consciousness across the travel industry. In particular, we collaborate closely with the hospitality sector to enhance sustainability practices across Thailand."

Ang Choo Pin, Senior Director for Government and Corporate Affairs in Asia, Expedia Group

How does the Pledge work? What do businesses need to commit to?

When signing the pledge, businesses are requested to indicate the actions they are **currently implementing** and the initiatives they are **planning** on carrying out or pursuing in the future.

In Thailand, large hotels indicated that they support local communities by sponsoring local events as well as through donations. And 43% of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) showed commitment to the local culture through using local crafts and materials for decoration.

In fact, many sustainability certifications can be **out of reach** for small, medium-sized and independent hotels, still at the beginning of their sustainability journey.

The Pledge was developed to address this gap, as it is free and easy to join, whether for individual self-catering properties, global hotel chains or everything in between.

"The entire travel industry, including both small, independent businesses and large-scale operators, needs to make commitments to improve."

([UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge, 2019](#))

The Pledge must be signed *annually* and the **businesses** that sign the Pledge receive a UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge *certificate* to display both online and at their property, enabling travellers to identify those businesses that are committed to improving their sustainability.

And what are the commitments?

Community engagement

As part of the Sustainable Travel Pledge, tourism and hospitality businesses should **commit to supporting their local communities** through actions such as sourcing produce locally and hiring local people.



Sourcing local products and using local resources and services in tourism offerings and activities reduces reliance on international supply chains as well as economic leakages.

This means that, when the local supply chain is strengthened, the revenue generated by tourism **actually stays in the local economy**, benefiting all residents and non-tourism sectors.

Moreover, this is not only important economically, but also culturally and environmentally. As we will see in the last section of this course, local sourcing helps **empower communities and it is key in the fight against waste**.

Energy conservation

Energy conservation and efficiency not only help reduce the carbon emissions and preserve natural resources of destinations but also reduce costs. LED lighting, efficient climate control systems or sourcing renewable energy are all important measures to become a **more responsible and thoughtful steward of your business's energy use**.

Water conservation

Water scarcity is estimated to affect over 40% of the global population, and tourism and hospitality businesses often do not help with this problem.

According to the [Sustainable Hospitality Alliance](#) (2021), in some locations, **tourists consume over eight times more water than residents**. Tourists take baths and longer showers, use pools and saunas, and frequent lush and constantly irrigated gardens. This forces destinations to allow water use even when water scarcity is of grave concern for local residents during dry seasons.

The case of such water-stressed destinations demonstrates that destination-level planning is required to ensure that local needs are met. But tourism and hospitality businesses can also do their part by, for example:

- raising awareness of guests and customers;
- installing low-flow toilets; and
- capturing and using rainwater.



Waste reduction

Before moving on to the focus area of this course, single-use plastics, it is important to highlight that businesses should also commit to **reducing all other types of waste**, such as grey water, food waste and solid waste (glass, paper, aluminium, etc.).



As for food waste, for instance, the [Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) (FAO) (2019) estimates that **one-third of all food produced around the world – more precisely 1.3 billion tons – is either lost or goes to waste**. This means that the resources – land, water, energy –, labour and capital used along the food production process are all lost as well – and in vain. Therefore, hospitality businesses can play a huge role in the **fight against waste**.

Single-use plastics reduction

Finally, the last and fifth theme of commitment in the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge is the reduction of single-use plastics. In Thailand, most signatory hotels have already started addressing the issue, as you can see in the image.



As we will see throughout the next sections, however, **waste reduction is not a one-person job**, and businesses will need to collaborate with DMOs, other businesses and stakeholders as well as the communities to tackle this issue.

Speaking of communities, let's give an example of how tourism can support and work together with local residents to minimise the plastic waste challenge by putting value into plastic. You will see that not only does this directly meet the environmental challenge but it also strengthens the host community and benefits the tourism destination as a whole:

<https://youtu.be/h5G6-yoNuKc>

Part 2: Reducing Single-Use Plastics in Tourism Businesses

Lesson 2 – What is the necessary process to implement a plastic waste reduction strategy?

What is the plastic problem in tourism and hospitality?

Single-Use Plastic Products (SUPPs)

Single-use plastics are products that are made primarily from fossil fuel-based chemicals (petrochemicals) and disposed of right after use. They **do not biodegrade** (disintegrate), and, over time, break up into **microparticles** that are difficult to detect and thus contaminate the environment.

Every year, according to [UNEP](#) (2021), 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are used, and every minute, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased around the globe. This leads to over **300 million tonnes** of plastic waste each year. When looking at disposal of such waste, only 9% is recycled, 12% is incinerated and 79% ends up in landfills or in the sea ([PATA, 2020](#)).

And what are the consequences of plastic pollution? Watch the short video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=IAgOgYUbQew>

As you could see in the video, plastic pollution degrades the environment, kills wildlife, contaminates our food chain and, therefore, damages our health. And single-use and disposable plastics, particularly, represent the biggest problem.



Plastics and tourism

Plastic pollution also poses a **threat to tourism destinations**, and not only to their natural resources, wildlife and ecosystems, but also economically, due to costs for cleaning and collecting this waste as well as the **decreased visual attractiveness** of the place, especially beaches and riverfronts, and devaluation of their properties and businesses. But tourism itself is also to blame for this problem.

Tourism activities and tourism businesses contribute *greatly* to plastic pollution. In the Mediterranean, for example, marine litter **increases up to 40% during tourist peak season** ([One Planet, 2021](#)) and the annual damage of plastics to marine ecosystems amounts to US\$13 billion each year ([UNEP, 2014](#)).

([WWF](#), 2018)



Among tourism businesses, food providers are often major contributors to SUP waste. The increase in **food and beverage outlets** serving both visitors and the local community has resulted in a significant increase in plastic and foam products ([UNEP & WTTC, 2021](#)). SUPs are also common in accommodation providers which offer their guests single-use toiletries and plastic water bottles.

So what can you and your business do to be part of the solution in the fight against plastic waste?

What are the steps for implementing a plastic waste reduction strategy?

Now that we understand the plastic problem in tourism and hospitality, and the consequences of plastic pollution on our health, the environment and our destinations, in this section we will guide you through the **necessary steps** for implementing a successful plastic waste reduction strategy in your business, which are:

1. STEP 1 – Obtaining organisational buy-in

2. STEP 2 – Engaging staff, suppliers and stakeholders
3. STEP 3 – Measuring, monitoring & setting targets
4. STEP 4 – Developing and implementing an action plan
5. STEP 5 – Communicating efforts to customers and media

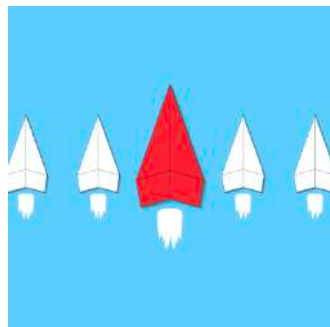
Let's start, then, with Step 1:

Step 1: Obtaining organisational buy-in

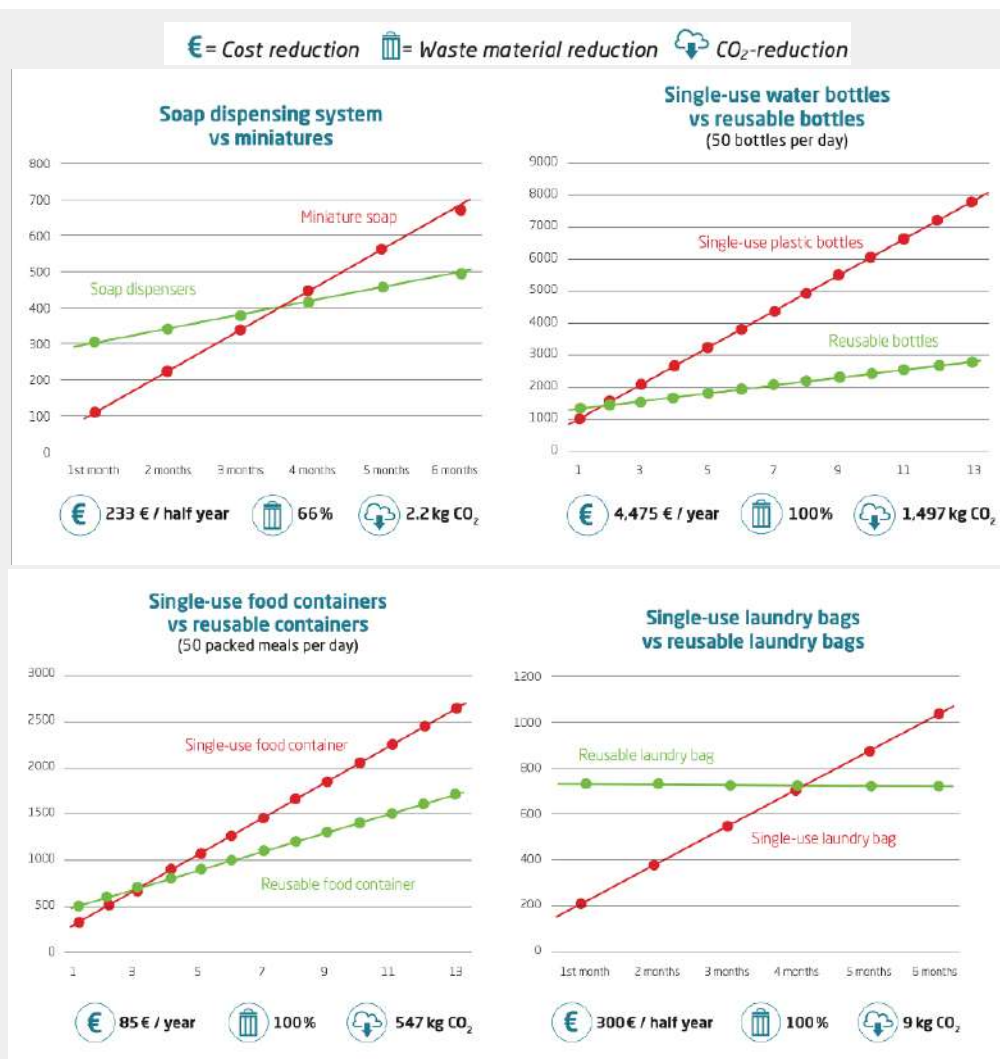
The *very first* thing you need to begin your fight against plastic waste is **organisational commitment**. Having buy-in from the senior management will allow the development of a sustainability policy and the planning and implementation of all the subsequent steps.

To obtain organisational buy-in, you need to start by **making a business case** for plastic waste reduction, which involves:

- acknowledging that there is a need for improvement and commitment to sustainability and reducing plastic waste within your business;
- knowing the benefits of reducing plastic waste, such as an improved business image, increased competitiveness and reduced costs;
- having a dedicated individual (or department) who can be a champion for managing plastic waste in the business; and
- raising awareness of the senior management on these topics.



For example, a cost-benefit analysis conducted by [Searious Business](#) with hotels in Europe shows the potential savings that these businesses have from shifting from single-use plastic products to reusable alternatives ([Futouris, 2021](#)).



As you can see from the graphs, even though the initial cost of sustainable alternatives may be slightly higher than of plastic products, in the long run, **they are much more cost-effective**, as all these alternatives generate **fewer procurement costs, less waste of materials** and **less CO₂ emissions**.

See in the video below how these hoteliers in Thailand not only managed to reduce costs but also increase customer satisfaction with their single-use plastic waste reduction strategies:

<https://vimeo.com/468577889>

Once the senior management is on board, the next step is **developing a sustainability policy**.

A sustainability policy is a statement that outlines the **business' commitment and strategy towards sustainability**. The reason to have a formal sustainability policy is to **integrate** all sustainability efforts and commitments into a single document for unity of purpose and to provide a clear picture of your sustainability direction to your staff and stakeholders (see [PATA's Sustainability Policy](#) as an example).

The sustainability policy should include:

- your business' **mission** in relation to sustainability;
- your business' **commitment** to sustainability and how you demonstrate or aim to demonstrate it;
- your areas of **focus**, such as waste management, for example;
- your business' scope and **relationship** with other organisations, partners and suppliers, to acknowledge your (potential) **level of influence** for improving sustainability in the sector.



You can, for instance, ask your partners and suppliers to comply with certain essential commitments in acknowledgement of a *collective responsibility* towards a more sustainable and responsible tourism and hospitality industry.

Moreover, it is very important to **communicate** this policy on the business' website, throughout the facility as well as to external stakeholders. Communicating your position on sustainability will help to show leadership, increase competitiveness and boost your brand image. We will talk more about this in the last step (Step 5), but for now we will continue to Step 2.

A good way to show your commitment to plastic waste reduction is to be part of a group or industry association, either at the local or international level. Here are some examples of global initiatives and movements:

- [Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#)

- [Break Free from Plastic](#)
- [Plastic Pollution Coalition](#)

Step 2: Engaging staff, suppliers and stakeholders

Waste reduction requires the commitment of all those involved in the business operations, including staff, suppliers and partners. Therefore, as we just discussed, **communicating** your policy and strategies to your stakeholders is *essential*.

Let's see now how to engage each of them towards plastic waste reduction:

Staff

Raising staff awareness of the need for minimising plastic waste will help you mainstream the process and facilitate strategy implementation.

It is important to not only communicate measures but also to **encourage a dialogue**, creating a sense of **ownership** throughout the business, and to show how each of the staff can help.

It may be by communicating with customers, sourcing reusable materials, finding new uses for existing plastic products, or ensuring the correct waste separation... regardless of the task, all staff should be involved and engaged.

One way to raise awareness and engagement is by providing training, including presentations, meetings and workshops with Q&A sessions, and perhaps off-site visits to recycling sites and/or volunteering activities, such as a beach/river clean-up.

Look at these tips for creating an effective internal communication, from PATA's [Plastic Free Toolkit for Tour Operators](#) (2020):

- **Create and communicate positive, action-focused messages.** You can propose a list of possible plastic reduction actions that the staff can choose to implement – this gives them a sense of ownership over their decisions.
- **Do not just tell people what to do.** Make sure to include encouraging messages and have a reward scheme for achievement.



- **Be clear, make it simple and fun.** Most staff are happy to do the right thing as long as they know what is expected from them.
- **Be interactive and provide channels for feedback.** Organise an office challenge to engage all staff. A little competition will help boost participation.
- **Use signage,** posters and other visual aids that provide clear, interesting and consistent messages on plastic waste reduction in the office.
- **Send updates and interesting facts** through reminders, newsletters, intranet etc. but make sure you are not flooding your staff with too many emails and messages.
- **Show progress.** Show your staff the progress that is being made and how their support has helped achieve results.

Stakeholders

Engaging with other businesses, partners and stakeholders through **working groups** is a great way to share and discuss plastic reduction initiatives. This working group should include leaders from different businesses and organisations (e.g., hotels, tour operators, restaurants, local NGOs, etc.) so that you can get **insights from various perspectives** to ensure your plans are integrated, feasible, yet ambitious.

Case study

The [Phuket Hotels Association](#) (PHA) currently has 75 members ranging from small boutique hotels to large international brands. The member hotels have joined together to promote Phuket as a destination, support environmental best practices and reduce tourism's negative impacts on the island.

In 2018, the Association launched an initiative together with the US Embassy of Thailand and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to reduce the use of single-use plastics in member hotels through a series of **workshops** and **site visits** to educate hotel staff. In that same year, the member hotels managed to prevent the use of approximately 1.6 million plastic straws and 4.4 million plastic water bottles.

PHA has also produced a booklet "The Big Green Guide" to highlight the sustainability initiatives of member hotels, and it organises an annual sustainability event which includes a **trade show of sustainable products and solutions** for the hotel industry, seminars and workshops, and a conference with keynote speakers discussing relevant topics ([Nagiah & Loudesamy, 2021](#)).



See some tips for developing a stakeholder working group and some guiding questions:

- Assign a group facilitator – Who will lead the working group?
- Define clear goals for group operation – What do we want to achieve?
- Define the roles of each stakeholder – Who will do what?
- Set clear milestones – What? When? How?
- Be transparent throughout the process – What is working? And what isn't?
- Monitor and evaluate progress – What did we achieve? How can we improve it?

Finally, the last group to be involved are the suppliers.

Suppliers

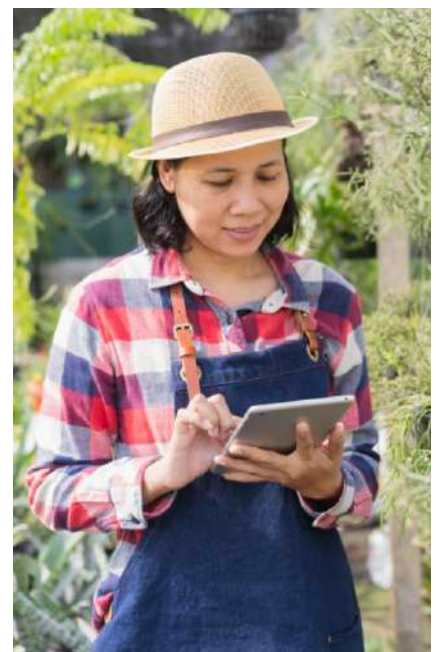
We left suppliers for last on this list for a reason. They are *crucial* for the success of your plastic waste reduction strategies. As you will see in more detail in the next section of the course (6. How can I reduce single-use plastics?), engaging and assisting suppliers to reduce plastics in their operations has a direct impact on the amount of plastic waste your business will generate.

The goal of engaging with suppliers, therefore, is to **develop a shared mindset about plastic waste reduction** and potentially **cut down on plastic waste that enters your business**.

Convincing your supplier or business partners to join might be challenging as it depends on their capacities, resources, expertise and, especially, financial availability. For this reason, we suggest that you:

- **IDENTIFY.** Map out your supply chain to understand where the plastics often come from and which suppliers tend to produce and use the largest number of plastic items.

- **ENGAGE.** Start a conversation with the suppliers you have identified with a clear and concise message to communicate your expectations. See the following example from the [Plastic Free Toolkit for Tour Operators](#) (p. 29).
- **INVESTIGATE.** Try to understand the suppliers' levels of awareness about plastic problems and their capacity and willingness to engage in plastic waste reduction initiatives. It is also important to know their motives and values as well as any **potential barriers to reducing plastic waste** in their operations. You can ask them:
 - Does your business have an official sustainability policy?
 - What are the main environmental challenges and opportunities for your business?
 - Do you prefer suppliers that implement responsible practices during the selection process?
 - Do you have any policies or initiatives regarding plastic use reduction?
 - Do you have any reduction targets on plastic use?
 - How do you manage plastic waste?
 - Do you measure and record the use of plastic within your business?
 - Do you use any alternatives to single-use plastic products?
 - Do you have any recycling schemes within your business?
 - Are you interested in cooperating in a joint project to reduce plastic use?
- **DISCUSS.** Based on the answers, you can have an open talk with your suppliers about plastic waste issues to get their opinions/feedback and you can **come up with solutions together** (such as finding ways to reduce plastic packaging and packing in the products that are supplied).
- **SHARE.** Share best practices and case studies, during a training or awareness session, for example, from successful suppliers to transfer knowledge across the supply chain. By sharing the success stories of selected suppliers, you do not only recognise their efforts but also showcase the practical benefits of plastic waste reduction initiatives to others.



- **INCENTIVISE.** Create incentives for suppliers to implement plastic reduction strategies in their operations. Suppliers may be more likely to join the initiative if they know that they will be recognised and rewarded. Some suggestions for incentivising suppliers include:
 - preferential contracting for suppliers committing to reducing plastic use;
 - promotional opportunities in marketing materials and on websites;
 - communication about the achievements of successful suppliers with others in the supply chain;
 - promotion of suppliers for good practices at the destination level.



Case study

In Indonesia, [Kecipir](#) is an e-commerce platform serving fresh and organic produce from local farmers directly to urban consumers through a **fully reusable, circular delivery system**.

Farmers list their produce on Kecipir's website where consumers can place their order and then fresh food is delivered in reusable containers.

See other initiatives by the Zero Waste Living Lab [here](#).

Also, see farm-to-table initiatives in Thailand [Homeland](#) and [Sampran Model](#).

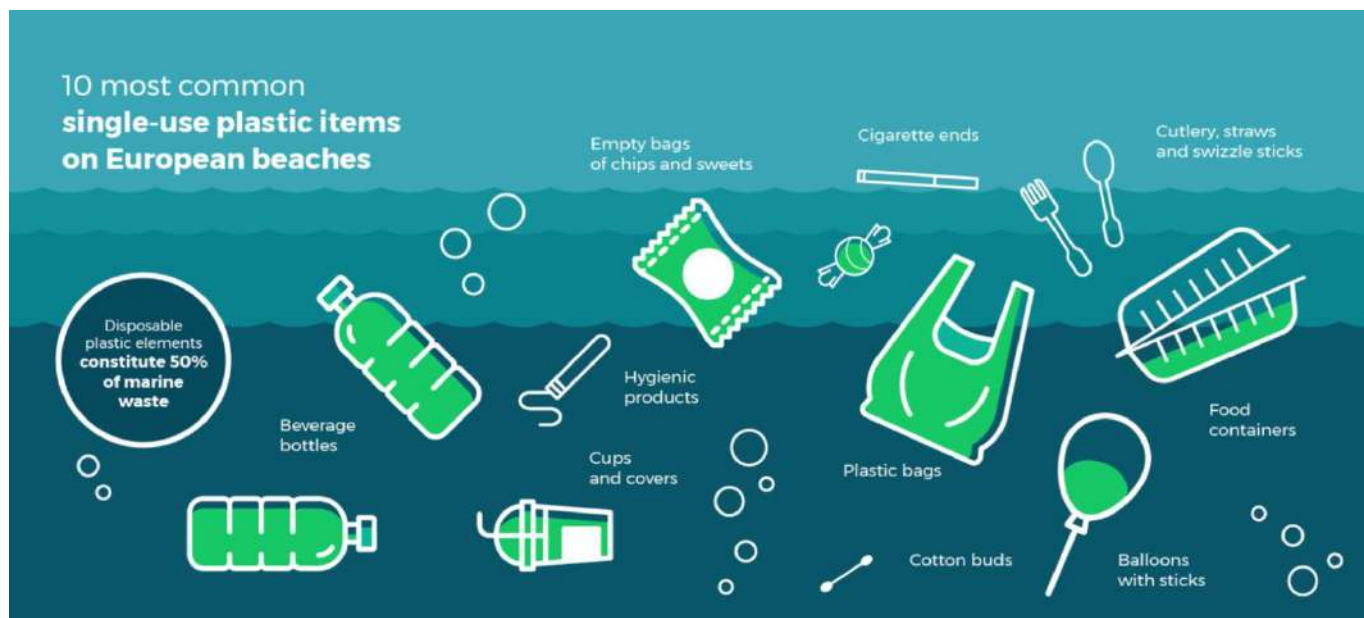
Step 3: Measuring, monitoring and setting targets

"You can't manage what you don't measure!". To be able to develop strategies and set plastic waste reduction targets, first you need to understand how much plastics you consume and where these plastics are coming from.

Measuring & monitoring

Start by looking into the main uses of plastic within your business operations. Target the single-use plastics and the **highest volume of plastic first**. Be clear on the quantity of plastic items your business purchases and how much they cost.

Do you know what are the most common SUPPs found in the oceans and beaches?



([Planet Silbo, 2019](#))

In tourism businesses, the most common single-use plastics also include **toiletries, bin bags, straws and stirrers, food wrapping and packaging and cleaning materials.**

Another important strategy at this stage is to **separate all waste in your business**. We encourage you to have separate bins for organic and inorganic (plastics, glass, paper, etc.) waste throughout the facility that are properly labelled and differentiated (e.g., through colours), and to encourage staff and guests to separate waste accordingly.

The plastic waste would then have to be further separated into **recyclable, non-recyclable and biodegradable** for a more accurate assessment.

After assessing the single-use plastics used in your operations, you can compile the corresponding quantities and costs of each item on a monthly or annual basis.

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR TOUR OPERATORS									
Business Area	Single-use Plastic Items	Recyclable or Non-recyclable	Can it be avoided or removed	Quantities Purchased per month	Price per unit	Purchase Cost per month	Target Audience of Change	Ease of Replacement	Comment

Download this table [here](#).

The next step will be to identify opportunities for change and set waste reduction goals. To do so, you will need to understand:

- what waste you can reduce or, ideally, eliminate;
- what materials can replace plastics – sustainably;
- what single-use you should purchase.

These topics will be covered in depth in the next section, but for now we will see how to establish feasible performance targets.

Setting targets

In order to reduce plastic use, specific targets must be set based on the findings of the assessment. Targets specify how far you want to go by quantifying the level of improvement to be achieved. They should be set for both the short and long term and consistent with the business's sustainability policy.

See an example:

Objective 1: Eliminate all single-use plastics at the office and on group tours by 2024.

- Target 1:** Eliminate 100% single-use plastics in office operations by end of June 2023.
- Target 2:** Replace 100% plastic water bottles on group tours with refillable options by 30 December 2024.
- Target 3:** Stop distributing wet tissues on group tours after 1 May 2023.

Objective 2: Increase awareness of staff about plastic reduction.

- Target 1:** Provide plastic reduction training for 100% full-time tour leaders and tour guides by 30 August 2024.
- Target 2:** Provide plastic reduction training for 100% full-time sales staff by 30 September 2024.
- Target 3:** Organise an office challenge on reducing plastic use by 30 October 2023.

([PATA, 2020](#))

It is important to make your targets **S.M.A.R.T** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound):

- **Specific** – What do you want to achieve? State clearly and precisely what is required.
- **Measurable** – How do you know if you have reached your target? Identify the indicator of your progress.

- **Achievable** – Are the objectives and targets attainable with the time and resources you have?
- **Realistic** – Are your objectives and targets achievable and not too ambitious? Focus on outcomes.
- **Time-bound** – Do you break down your objectives and targets into timely steps? Include a date by which the outcome must be achieved.



Targets should be established with **inputs** from all departments and approved by top management.

They should also be **communicated** to all internal and external stakeholders that will be affected by them.

One tip for setting targets is to identify some of the best practices of industry leaders and **benchmark** against these practices.

Based on this and considering available resources, you can set **ambitious but still achievable targets** to bring your operations in line with successful practices.

Having established your S.M.A.R.T. targets, the next step is to elaborate them into an action plan.

Step 4: Developing and implementing an action plan

An action plan is a document that outlines the actions needed to reach one or more goals. It also includes a sequence of steps that must be taken for a strategy to succeed. Here, your action plan should address a wide range of short-term and long-term measures to prevent and reduce plastic use.

But how can you develop an action plan?

Action plan development

First of all, take another look at your objectives and targets, and analyse which actions can be taken to align with them, for example:

- Avoid and reduce the use of unnecessary and single-use plastics.
- Use essential plastic products with the longest possible life cycle.
- Consider alternatives to plastics.
- Do not purchase non-recyclable plastics.
- Improve plastic waste management practices.
- Share knowledge and information with partners and stakeholders.

You can add your objectives, targets and actions into a table to help you guide the implementation process:

PLASTIC REDUCTION ACTION PLAN							
Overall Objective	Target	Specific Actions	Budget	Deadline	Department in charge	Partners	Comment
Objective 1	Target 1	Action 1					
		Action 2					
		Action 3					
	Target 2	Action 1					
		Action 2					
	Target 3	Action 1					
Objective 2	Target 1	Action 2					
		Action 1					
	Target 2	Action 1					
		Action 2					
	Target 3	Action 1					
		Action 2					

Download this table [here](#).

While developing your action plan, it is also important to take into consideration the following questions to help you decide if it is realistically achievable or not:

- Who is my target audience? Who needs to change their behaviour or mindset for change to happen?
- Who are the key stakeholders to be involved?
- How should I break down actions and assign them to staff accordingly?
- Is the allocated budget sufficient to implement?

- What are the resources (time, funds, potential collaborations, alternatives, people, materials, equipment) available to this project?
- Are there any risks related to the project? Be prepared for any doubts, concerns or disapprovals.

Having developed your action plan, it is time to put it into motion!

Action plan implementation

To implement your action plan, **roles and responsibilities should be allocated** at the operational level. All relevant departments that are involved need to plan carefully different tasks and allocate adequate resources.

With senior management support and clear communication in advance, you should get full cooperation from the department managers and staff.

Keep in mind that a clear timeline is crucial, as some of the tasks may need to be finished before others can happen.

Therefore, implementing an action plan will include:

- deciding people in charge and getting their buy-in to the process, as well as their suggestions on how best to complete the tasks;
- communicating the plan to others who will be involved in or affected, and make changes based on their feedback;
- allocating the necessary budget and resources to each task; and
- deciding on a timeframe for the tasks.



Finally, consider these additional tips for a successful implementation of your action plan:

- Break it down into phases, constantly monitor the progress and make adjustments as needed.
- Ensure all relevant departments, suppliers and business partners are informed and aware of what needs to be done.
- Be clear on the methods and deliverables of your plastic-free projects.
- Make sure that your staff (receptionists, tour guides, drivers, etc.) act as role models. If you want to launch a refillable water initiative, they should also have their own refillable bottle.
- Meet with the working group on a regular basis to evaluate if targets are being achieved and reassess strategies if necessary.

We have reached the final step. It is time to communicate your efforts to customers, guests as well as the media.

Step 5: Communicating efforts to customers and media

For effective awareness creation and behaviour change, it is crucial to **tailor your message to different targeted audiences**. Keep the message simple, concise and focused on why the change is relevant and important. Work with the Marketing Department for detailed external communication plans.

Customer communication

Guests and customers should be made aware of your business' efforts towards sustainability and plastic waste reduction. This is important for **increasing their own commitment** (e.g., by asking them to throw their rubbish in the appropriate bins) and for **justifying changes that have been made in the business** that they might need to adjust to – such as adopting reusable water bottles.



Craft a message that is **positive, action-driven** and makes customers feel excited to participate in such an environmental campaign. You should emphasise how their actions as individuals can contribute to solving the plastic problem at destinations and provide general tips on **behaviour changes** to prevent and reduce the use of plastic products.

Many travellers are unaware of responsible options when they are in another country, so it is up to you to **show them how they can be a part of the solution**.

See these tips for effective communication with customers:

- **Clearly communicate the goals and objectives you are trying to achieve.** Frontline staff who have direct contact with customers should be able to **communicate the right message** and be sensitive about when to communicate and which kind of customers would resonate with such a message.



- Explicitly explain their role (and how important they are) in achieving success - in a simple, fun and personal way. **Create a plastic reduction story** and how important it is for you, for your business and for customers. Include this message in booking documents to customers (e.g., booking confirmation, vouchers, feedback, etc.). Also, **take maximum advantage of social media platforms**, with positive-framing messages, memorable and viral videos, photo contests, easily shareable infographics, etc.
- Provide **motivation** for customers to join you (e.g., saving money in the long term) and think of ways to make participating as pain-free and **convenient** as possible (e.g., provide refillable bottles so that customers do not need to bring their own).

Don't forget to assess customers' level of satisfaction with the change and provide them opportunities to give feedback on the environmental aspects of their holidays. The voices of customers can be powerful to encourage in-destination stakeholders to take stronger measures on plastic waste reduction.

Media communication

The media is a very effective way to get your plastic reduction initiatives out there to a much **wider audience**. The massive coverage can leverage your business **reputation** and **image** in the market, help reach out to more customers and increase public awareness of plastic reduction.

You should focus on both **business-to-business** and **business-to-customer** approaches to target different audiences. Send out press releases, offer interview opportunities with top managers and **get**

featured on well-known tourism media platforms to spread your good practices across the industry and to potential customers.

Keep in mind that **local-based media** is easier to reach and often more interested in the issue if there is a local touch to your story. Therefore, consider how your initiative can fit in the local context and offer the media stories that are interesting for their target audience.



See these tips to increase your visibility with the media:

- Be part of a larger, **global movement**, such as the [Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#), or others we mentioned before.
- Collaborate with **influencers** for high-quality user-generated content.
- Participate in a local event and/or be part of public **events** at your destination to increase the visibility of your business's initiative (e.g., a beach cleaning event).
- Support the work of **NGOs** or researchers on plastic waste reduction to reaffirm your commitment to tackling the plastic problem.

Great! We have now covered all the necessary steps that your business or organisation needs to take to implement a successful plastic waste reduction strategy. Next, we will look into the specific measures for achieving the strategy.

Lesson 3 – What are the concrete measures to reduce single-use plastics in my business?

Reducing single-use plastics in tourism and hospitality businesses

In the last section, we introduced the five steps to developing a plastic waste reduction strategy:

1. STEP 1 – Obtaining organisational buy-in
2. STEP 2 – Engaging staff, suppliers and stakeholders
3. STEP 3 – Measuring, monitoring & setting targets
4. STEP 4 – Developing and implementing an action plan
5. STEP 5 – Communicating efforts to customers and media

To succeed, it is important that businesses know how to put actions into motion that support the plastic waste reduction strategy, for instance:

- How can you reduce single-use plastics?
- What types of products can you eliminate from your operations?
- What plastic alternatives are more sustainable?
- How do you ensure the responsible disposal of unavoidable plastic products?

These are all topics that we will cover in this section, so keep reading to know the answers!

Avoiding all waste

Let's start by watching this short animation on how to solve the plastic problem, narrated by Sir David Attenborough:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTcMPy6L88E>

As you watched in the video and you can also see in the inverted pyramid, solutions to plastic pollution should follow this hierarchy:

1. First, we must **eliminate all unnecessary plastics**, therefore preventing waste.
2. Then, we must ensure that our products and materials are **reused, recycled or recovered** (biodegraded, composted or repurposed – as we will see ahead).



So, before trying to find reusable products or plastic alternatives, the first thing your business should do is to try to **reduce waste** altogether as much as possible.

Why is prevention more sustainable than recycling?

Even though recycling is extremely important for avoiding products ending up in landfills, it is not a simple and straightforward process.

The recyclable waste needs to be collected, transported to the recycling facility, separated and cleaned. Then, depending on the type of material, it will go through numerous chemical processes that will allow it to turn into a new material, often of lesser value (for example: a plastic bottle is transformed into fibre for clothing or carpets). As you can imagine, **recycling requires a lot of work and resources** (e.g., energy, water), and, for this reason, it is NOT the priority solution. **Prevention is.**

Case study



The [TUI Group](#) introduced in 2018 a plastic waste reduction workstream, with the target of reducing SUPPs by 250 million across the group. By the end of 2019, TUI reported having eliminated 197 million across the hotels, 31 million from cruises and 27 million from airlines. Learn more [here](#).

Also, in July 2019, Natural Habitat Adventures ran the World's First Zero Waste Adventure in Yellowstone National Park. See [here](#) their 12 Lessons Learned for Zero Waste Travel.

So how can you prevent waste? As you saw in the last section, among the most common single-use plastic products in tourism businesses are water bottles. So let's start with them.

Single-use plastic water bottles

According to [UNEP](#) (2021), every minute, **one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased around the globe**. In **tourism**, as an example, EXO Travel Group, when measuring their plastic footprint, discovered that while on a tour, each traveller consumes an average of four plastic water bottles a day. Given that, at the time of the research, they hosted approximately 150,000 tourists a year, that alone accounts for **600,000 single-use plastic bottles being disposed of every year**.

So what can tourism businesses do to eliminate single-use plastic water bottles?

- By installing refill stations or water fountains throughout the facility.
- By providing reusable mugs and/or glasses for water drinking in these refill stations and water fountains.
- By providing (or selling) reusable water bottles to staff and guests.

However, as you can expect, old habits die hard, and your customers may be hesitant to drink from water fountains or stations. For this reason, remember the importance of Step 5 of the last section: **communication**.

Make sure that you **raise awareness** of your guests and customers on the issue of plastic pollution and the problem with single-use plastic bottles. Show them the numbers, present them the consequences and showcase images. Tell them how they can be a part of the solution with this simple step. It is important to also reassure them that the water is safe for drinking.

Moreover, it is crucial that:

- the sanitation and hygiene of the refill stations follow adequate standards;
- the water is always at a cool temperature;
- the staff (especially tour guides) set the example to customers by having and using their own refillable water bottle.

In hotels, you can place reusable glass bottles filled with drinking water in each room and encourage guests to ask staff to refill them whenever needed. You can also add water refill stations on every floor.

In restaurants, you can also serve flavoured water and sparkling water (made with a [carbonated water system](#)) to facilitate the adoption of this measure by customers.



Case study

As for tour operators, check how EXO Travel provides fresh refill water to travellers even during a tour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaBELINcH7E&t=4s>

Another example is found in the Maldives. Robinson Club Maldives Hotel is committed to sustainable water processing and waste reduction. **Their water treatment system uses osmosis to desalinate and purify seawater.** By adding minerals and carbonic acid, the generated drinking water is converted into soda water and decanted into one of 7,500 new glass bottles. The bottles are also cleaned locally which cuts out plastic waste altogether, eliminating the transport and disposal of around 800,000 plastic bottles a year (TUI Group, 2019).

Besides water bottles, single-use toiletries, sauce sachets, cutlery, cups and plates, just to name a few, are also extremely common plastic waste in tourism businesses. Let's see some of the strategies to tackle them.

Single-use toiletries and packaging

One key solution to prevent waste from toiletries and food products is to choose dispensers, jars, bottles and other refillable containers over disposable individual items, for example:

- Use dispensers for liquid soap, shampoo, etc. instead of single-use toiletries.
- Use dispensers for sauce (such as ketchup, mayonnaise) instead of plastic sachets.
- Use dispensers, shakers or paper sachets for sugar, salt and pepper instead of plastic sachets.
- Use dispensers, bowls or jars for jams, honey and butter instead of plastic pre-portioned packages.
- Provide loose tea bags (or even loose tea leaves) in jars instead of single tea bag wrappings.

"We started using glass water bottles, which reduced the number of plastic bottles we disposed of to over 200,000 per year. We changed bathroom amenities from small hotel-branded bottles to refillable wall-mounted containers. This not only reduced plastic waste considerably but also our expenses, since we did not need to do house branding, think of minimum industrial orders or keep item inventories."

Alisara Sivayathorn, CEO, Sivatel Bangkok Hotel

Moreover:

- Replace single-use plates, cutlery and cups for long-lasting reusable dishware, plates, bowls, etc. For pool areas in a hotel, where breakable materials are not allowed, opt for hard reusable plastics.
- Use Tupperware and other containers for storing leftover food rather than using plastic film wrap as much as possible.

As you can see from these examples, the key to reducing single-use plastics is shifting your procurement to **products in bulk** (instead of individual packaging) and **refilling reusable materials**, such as dispensers, bottles, jars, pitchers and so on.

Case study

Strattons Hotel, in Norfolk, UK, has a systematic approach to waste minimisation that includes two dimensions:



producers), housekeeping (laundry balls instead of washing powder) and staff involvement (weekly staff meetings to discuss resource efficiency) ([CEnTOUR, 2020](#)).

1. Waste management: monitoring of waste streams which are segregated, weighted, recorded and then treated (for instance, composting of organic waste in a wormery, reuse of clear bottles, 30kg of newspaper returned for recycling per week, buying in bulk, etc.).
2. Waste-saving initiatives in toiletries (refillable pump dispensers), water (rainwater collection for irrigation), food purchasing (food miles reduction by growing vegetables and involving local food

Have you ever heard the term "reverse logistics"?

Reverse logistics is a type of supply management that moves goods from the customers (in this case, your business) back to the sellers or manufacturers (your suppliers).

In other words, it means taking the plastic item that was going to be disposed of (thus at its end of life) and **giving it back to the supplier for reuse** (such as by refilling). This is a **circular economy** practice because you circulate products continuously between you and your supplier.

Remember Step 2 of the last section, when we talked about engaging and communicating with suppliers? One of the key steps there was "Discuss", in which we recommend that you can come up with solutions together with your suppliers on how to reduce plastic packaging and packing. **Reverse logistics is one of these solutions.**



You can, for instance, negotiate with your suppliers:

1. ways of sending back product packages for refill (such as hard plastic containers of cleaning products, liquid soap, shampoo, etc.).
2. a deposit system/return system for delivery packaging (e.g., reusable crates, bottles, cool boxes).

As you can see from these strategies, you can prevent and reduce single-use waste by:

- cutting out unnecessary products;
- buying in bulk;
- refilling containers and dispensers; and
- opting for reusable long-lasting products wherever possible.



Case study

[Six Senses only works with partners and suppliers who share its commitment to Zero Waste and Plastic Free.](#) Six Senses Laamu, Maldives, for instance, has removed all Styrofoam boxes from its sourcing operations, by providing suppliers with [biodegradable](#) thermo boxes.



Nevertheless, we know that, in a business's everyday operations, some single-use products, such as bins for organic waste or takeaway packaging, are inevitable. At the same time, we also know that non-recyclable single-use plastics inevitably end up in landfills and take hundreds of years to decompose.

For this reason, it is important to know how to choose the **most sustainable and appropriate single-use options**. But what does this mean?

Choosing appropriate single-use products

The first thing you need to do to be able to choose the most appropriate single-use materials for your business is to **understand your local context**. This means getting informed on what types of materials can be collected and disposed of responsibly in your business' municipality – either by a public or private waste management company.

This will allow your business to make more **informed sourcing decisions**.

For example, it would be meaningless for a hotel to purchase industrially compostable bin bags if the municipality does not have the infrastructure to process this product. And if you would use this bin bag to collect, for instance, glass waste, this compostable material would even contaminate the recycling system.

Therefore, it is important to know which materials are accepted by the local waste collection organisation for composting, recovery and recycling.

Also, **beware** that **there are alternatives that do more harm than recyclable plastics**. So replacing single-use plastics with another single-use material is not always more sustainable.



Shifting from standard single-use plastics to biodegradable plastics or alternative materials requires consideration of their **environmental impact** and if there is **adequate collection and treatment infrastructure** in place for them.

See at the beginning of the video below how alternatives (such as products from corn starch, soy, sugarcane, etc.) can often have a **bigger carbon footprint** than plastics made from fossil fuels as they require farming, thus land, fertilisers, water and other resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jis3uenOzU4>

The video mentioned the term "bioplastic". Let's see what it means, as explained by [Action on Plastic](#).

Bioplastics

Bioplastics are plant-based plastics, and they can be:

Biodegradable, which means that the plastic can be broken down by naturally occurring organisms such as bacteria, fungi and algae. However, what is left afterwards may still be toxic to the environment.

Compostable, which means that they are biodegradable under specific conditions. Compostable plastics can be further classified into:

- **naturally compostable**, that can break down on a natural compost heap (but very slowly); or
- **industrially compostable**, which requires the conditions of industrial anaerobic composting facilities to break down (but most municipalities do not have a collection system for industrially compostable plastics, which means they will likely end up in landfills).

Recyclable. As with the previous example, most public collection facilities do not have the infrastructure to recycle bioplastics, therefore even if they are recyclable, that rarely ever happens.

Now, what about other single-use products, such as paper, glass, tin and bamboo? What is their footprint?

Paper and cardboard

Paper and cardboard, whilst recyclable, require forests to be cut down and, when compared to plastic, **require more energy** to be produced and are **heavier to transport** (thus requiring more energy for this as well).



Glass, tin and foil

As put by [Action on Plastic](#), glass, tin and foil may seem like better alternatives – and they can be, but we need to be mindful of the resource extraction for tin and foil, and the high carbon emissions from transporting glass.

Moreover, even though these types of packaging materials can be recycled in principle, the reality is that many of them are not. In addition, **nearly all food tins and drinks cans are lined with plastic.**

Bamboo

"Eco" products made of bamboo, such as cups, toothbrushes and straws have become extremely popular as a sustainable alternative to plastic. **But are they really?**

First of all, bamboo is grown in China, thus transporting it to other countries and continents generates a large carbon footprint.



Second, due to increasing popularity, large areas of land are being cleared to be planted with bamboo, which leads to loss of habitat and biodiversity.

Third, items made of bamboo often feature a lot of chemicals and other materials, which can even include resins.

This leads us to the next important consideration:

Before buying single-use products, you need to look into the composition of this product and its disposal options, so that you can match this information with those from your local waste collection and recycling facility.

Let's see an example. One company that specialises in sustainable takeaway packaging sells the product "Large Snack Box | Kraft Compostable Food Packaging" shown in the image.

The name of the product is not enough to know what it contains and how it can be disposed of, so when we look at the description, we learn that:

- The material is fluted cardboard, which is made from wood pulp.
- The end-of-life options are: Naturally Compostable, Commercially Compostable, Biodegradable and Recyclable.



As mentioned before, except for "naturally compostable", all other options require **specific infrastructure** to process it so that it, in fact, biodegrades.

The same company also sells **bioplastic cups**, which are made, as the description says, from "PLA (Polylactic acid) from renewable and natural raw materials such as corn starch". Although this material may seem more "natural" than cardboard, it actually cannot be recycled or naturally composted.

This is why it is important to always check such specifications before purchasing bioplastic products or plastic alternatives.



"We need to remember that the most sustainable option isn't just about the material, it is about how the product was made, what it is replacing, how often it will be used, how it will be disposed of and the waste disposal infrastructure in the destination."

Jo Hendrickx, Travel Without Plastics

To summarise, always prefer single-use products that are:

- recyclable;
- naturally compostable if you have a local composting site;
- industrially compostable or biodegradable if there is a facility in your locality that can collect and process this waste so it will safely break down; or
- made from recycled plastics (or that have a high percentage of recycled plastic content).

Before we conclude this part about single-use bioplastics and alternatives, see an example:

Evoware is an Indonesian company that provides global distributors and small local businesses with a wide range of plastic-free and compostable products such as straws, cutlery, packaging and bags. They are all made from [renewable sources](#) such as seaweed, cassava, rice, sugarcane or palm leaves. See some examples of the products they created [here](#).



The image shows various Evoware products: a small brown packet, a white packet, a green packet, a brown bowl, a white bowl, and a green bowl. Below these is the text 'EVOWARE PRODUCT' and 'SEAWEED-BASED PACKAGING' in large green letters.

Now that we have seen how to source sustainable and appropriate single-use products, it is time to learn ways of **responsibly disposing** of the unavoidable waste that your business generated despite efforts to prevent it.

Disposing responsibly

To be able to dispose of products responsibly, you must first **separate** your waste. Remember the last section, Step 3 – Measuring, monitoring and setting goals? We talked about having **separate bins** for organic and inorganic (plastics, glass, paper, etc.) waste, as well as further separating the plastic waste into recyclable and non-recyclable.

Depending on the composition of the single-use products your business has purchased, you will also need to separate waste into biodegradable, naturally compostable or industrially compostable. Then, once you have made the correct separation, you can dispose of these products in these ways:

1. Naturally composting
2. Industrial composting and bioplastic recycling

3. Reusing and repurposing
4. Recycling
5. Energy recovery
6. Landfill disposal

Naturally composting

As we mentioned, natural composting bioplastics require that you have access to a **composting site** and that you are 100% sure that the bioplastic is, in fact, naturally compostable – otherwise, it will not break down (decompose).

The composting of naturally compostable bioplastics, then, follows the same logic as with food waste.

(Image source: [Kaneka](#))



Industrial composting and bioplastic recycling

Bioplastics that are not naturally compostable (and the majority of "green" products being sold out there belong to this category) need to be heated up to over 60°C to break down and cannot be recycled normally because they will **contaminate** and **harm** the quality of the standard plastics being recycled.

This is why you will require a facility in your area that collects and has the **necessary infrastructure** to biodegrade these materials separately from standard recyclable plastics. Heads up: **such facilities are rare to find!**



Now, when we talk about standard plastics – those made from fossil fuels and not plant materials – the disposal options are different.

You may sometimes hear these four words being used interchangeably when it comes to plastics' end-of-life options:

- Reuse
- Repurpose
- Recycle
- Recover

If you look back at the inverted pyramid with the hierarchy of waste reduction strategies, you will see, however, that these are all different concepts. Let's start with reusing and repurposing.

Reusing and repurposing

Reusing and repurposing are the **most preferred options** because they simply mean using it again. They do not involve collecting, recycling or processing. They do not involve any chemical or mechanical process. It just means using one or more times.

- Reusing means using for the **same purpose**, for example: using a plastic bottle many times; using the takeaway packaging you received when ordering food as a Tupperware in your home; or taking your plastic liquid soap container back to your supplier for refill.
- Repurposing is also reusing, but with a **different purpose**, such as transforming a plastic bottle into crafts or decoration. All the ideas in this [blog](#) are examples of repurposing plastic bottles.

Recycling

The recycling process involves breaking (usually melting) the product down into its basic raw material (plastic, glass, metal etc.) and then forming it into new products. It requires a facility to collect, separate, clean and treat the waste, and thus involves mechanical and chemical processes.

All fossil-fuelled recyclable plastics (such as plastic water bottles, plastic bags, etc.) can be collected and processed by most local waste management companies. So disposing of these products is fairly straightforward; you just need to separate the waste and let it be collected by the municipality's waste collection or a private company that provides this service.

It is important to know how recycling works. Watch the video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zO3jFKiqmHo>

Recycling can be divided into:

- **Downcycling**: when a product is recycled into another product of lesser value (e.g., plastic bottles turning into fibre, as we saw in the video).
- **Upcycling**: when a product is recycled into another of higher value (e.g., plastic bottles turning into bricks to be used in construction).

Case study



In the Philippines, [Green Antz](#) is an innovative social enterprise that produces **alternative construction materials**, such as eco-bricks, incorporating plastic waste. As mentioned on their website, Green Antz's goal is to find innovative ways to divert plastic waste from landfills and upcycle it to secondary uses: to demonstrate a new social, commercial & environmental model that combines **circular economy** with social elements and engineering ingenuity.

So why not find similar organisations in your area to upcycle your plastic waste?

Energy recovery

Energy recovery from waste, as explained by [EPA](#) (US Environmental Protection Agency), means "the **conversion of non-recyclable waste** materials into **usable heat, electricity or fuel** through a variety of processes, including combustion, gasification, pyrolysis, anaerobic digestion and landfill gas recovery".

See this short video from Viridor, a recycling, renewable energy and waste management company in the United Kingdom:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-vVOpGloBY>

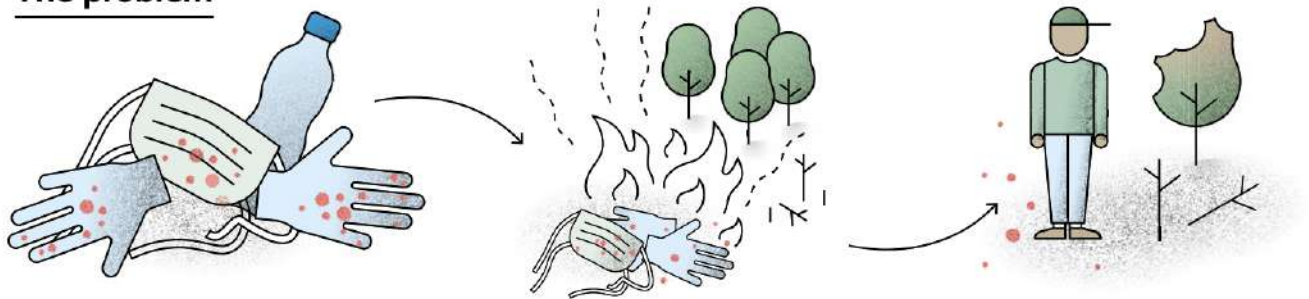
We suggest that you **get informed** if there is a similar company in your area to which you can give your non-recyclable waste, so it does not end up in landfills.

Landfill disposal

As illustrated in the inverted pyramid, landfill disposal should be the **last resort** when it comes to waste management. It should be an option only for non-recyclable waste and if there is not, in your location, a company that recovers energy from this waste.

And what about **COVID-related plastics**? As we mentioned at the beginning of the course, the COVID-19, besides all its economic, social and health and safety implications, also led to severe setbacks in the world's fight against plastic waste.

The problem



In response to COVID-19, hospitals, healthcare facilities and individuals are producing more waste than usual, including **masks, gloves, gowns and other protective equipment** that could be infected with the virus. There is also a large increase in the amount of single use plastics being produced.

When not managed soundly, infected medical waste could be subject to **uncontrolled dumping**, leading to public health risks, and to **open burning or uncontrolled incineration**, leading to the release of toxins in the environment and to secondary transmission of diseases to humans. Other wastes can reach water sources and add to riverine and marine pollution.

These practices **do not respect WHO guidelines on treatment of infectious and sharp waste from health care facilities, nor the requirements of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions** protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes!

([UNEP, 2021](#))

Single-use plastics are perceived as more hygienic than reusable materials because they are disposed of immediately after being used a single time. However, scientists argue that this is **not necessarily true** and that reusable products, after being washed and sanitised, are as safe and efficient as single-use ones ([Greenpeace, 2020](#); [Futouris, 2021](#)).

Therefore, it is possible to **maintain hygiene standards** and at the same time **avoid single-use plastic products**, such as gloves, masks (which are made from plastic fibres), disposable wipes and hand sanitisers, by, for example:

- reducing touchpoints;
- choosing refillable sanitisers over single-use ones;
- raising awareness of staff and guests/customers on the issue of COVID-19 plastic pollution and incentivising frequent hand washing, the use of sanitisers, as well as the use of reusable masks.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts, it is likely that some customers and staff will still prefer to use single-use PPE (personal protective equipment). **So how to dispose of this unavoidable waste responsibly?** See the tips below.

Stay informed. If your business needs to purchase single-use plastic PPE (because of public health advice and regulations), such as providing gloves at the buffet for customers, it is important to always

keep informed on such requirements and, as soon as they are no longer mandatory, switch back to the plastic-free solution (e.g., use of sanitisers and hand washing).

Separate your waste. Do not mix PPE waste (such as masks) with recyclable waste, as most single-use PPE cannot be recycled through traditional means.

- PPE can contaminate other recyclables, as recycling machines are normally not equipped to process them. Also, there is the possibility that the PPE which has been exposed to COVID-19 could infect frontline waste management workers who may not be properly protected to handle hazardous waste ([Sweeney, 2022](#)).



Get it right. Check with the local waste management facility or company what is the most appropriate way to dispose of single-use PPE.

Seek local partners. Check if there is any organisation in your area, such as [TerraCycle](#), that collects and recycles single-use PPE.

Communicate regularly. Communicate with staff, guests and customers. Provide reliable, consistent & easy to access information on **health and safety regulations**, raise their awareness of the need to reduce single-use COVID-related plastics, and reassure them of the **cleaning and sanitising protocols** in place at your facility.

You can find more information on how to reduce and manage COVID-related plastic waste on page 18 of the guide [How to Reduce Single-Use Plastic](#) as well as on the [Recommendations for the Tourism Sector to Continue Taking Action on Plastic Pollution during COVID-19 Recovery](#), and the [Tips for Reducing Single-Use Plastics During COVID-19](#).

We have now finished the section on how to reduce single-use plastics. We hope that the explanations, tips and recommendations provided here will help you to better understand the most important strategies for avoiding waste, finding **sustainable** and **appropriate** plastic alternatives, and disposing of each type of material responsibly.

In the next section, we will look into the relationship between plastic waste reduction and the empowerment of local communities and their cultural heritage.

Part 3: Supporting Local Communities, Heritage and Culture

Lesson 4 – How can local knowledge and products help fight plastic waste?

Supporting communities through tourism and hospitality

At the beginning of this course, we talked briefly about the **negative impacts** that travel and tourism activities can bring to communities and their cultural heritage. Apart from such tourism-driven impacts, **local populations face several other challenges**, such as social inequity, gender inequality, lack of inclusiveness and marginalisation, child labour, poor infrastructure, culture loss, among many [human rights](#) violations.

See, for instance, these key facts about the relationship between tourism and local communities and cultures:



([Sustainable Travel, 2020](#))

How can tourism businesses support their local communities?

Positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism

The positive impacts of tourism on the **economy** are commonly perceived as the most beneficial for destinations, as tourism leads to the creation of jobs and its revenue contributes to the improvement of infrastructure (such as better sewage, water and transportation system) and the preservation of natural areas and wildlife.

Nevertheless, tourism can also have a huge impact on communities' well-being and the conservation of their cultural assets. Positive social impacts in tourism include:

- cultural and language exchange between visitors and host communities;
- increased tolerance and inclusion through LGBTQ+ travel;
- development (and/or improvement) of leisure facilities, such as parks, bike lanes, etc.;
- investment in arts and culture;
- increased understanding of indigenous heritage and practices;
- revenue for heritage sites conservation;
- community empowerment; and
- contribution to the safeguarding of living heritage.



Making a positive impact

Remember when we talked about the importance of sourcing local products, using local services and hiring local people? This helps **retain the tourism benefits** in the local communities, **empower local people** through their crafts, arts, cuisine and other cultural assets, and, as we will see further in the next section, **use these assets and local knowledge to fight waste**.

But how else can businesses directly support communities? See the tips below:

- Help local communities market their products that showcase their cultural & natural heritage.
- In hotels and restaurants, develop menus based on the local cuisine and products.
- Prioritise selling/offering local fruits, beverages and snacks during tours.
- Source produce from local farms and markets whenever possible.
- Raise guests/customers' awareness towards more responsible and mindful choices that benefit the local communities.
- Teach guests/customers about local history, traditions and customs.
- Create partnerships with other local businesses to share best practices.

Case study

[G Adventures](#) and [Sustainable Travel](#) have partnered up to create "[G Local](#)", a supply chain assessment system that allows G Adventures to evaluate the extent to which their tours benefit local communities, such as:

- Is the supplier locally owned and operated?
- Does it purchase most of its products from local farms and markets?
- Are their dishes rooted in traditional local cuisine?



Using the results from the assessment, G Adventures calculates a "Ripple Score" for each of their tours, showing what percentage of the money spent stays in the local economy.

"In order to be as transparent as possible, they actually list the Ripple Score for each itinerary on their website. If a trip has a Ripple Score of 100, for instance, that would mean that **all of the suppliers that make up that tour are locally owned**. The average Ripple Score across G Adventures' tours is currently 93%" ([Sustainable Travel, 2020](#)).

See more of G Adventures' accomplishments and efforts towards sustainability in the figure.

And what can tourism do to fight gender inequality?

According to the [UNWTO](#) (2019), women account for 54% of the workforce in tourism. At the same time, however, women in tourism earn 14.7% less than men and they represent only 23% of tourism

ministers and 20.7% of government ministers. Women, therefore, face **challenges** such as gender pay gap and glass ceilings (an invisible barrier to higher job positions), as well as they suffer from gender stereotypes and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Nevertheless, when looking at the relationship between the **Sustainable Development Goals** and gender equality in tourism, women's empowerment in the industry can be supported by:

1. **Employment.** The tourism sector provides decent work for women.
2. **Entrepreneurship.** Women's tourism businesses lead to women's economic empowerment.
3. **Education.** Education and training promote gender equality and women's empowerment in tourism.
4. **Leadership.** Women are leaders in the tourism sector and are represented and influential in decision-making spaces.
5. **Community.** Tourism empowers women to work collectively for justice and gender equality.



And tourism and hospitality businesses can help empower women in tourism by:

- hiring women and supporting women businesses (such as your suppliers);
- eliminating gender pay gap;
- ensuring a safe workplace for women;
- respecting policies on maternity and care responsibilities;
- raising awareness of guests/customers on the issues of sexual exploitation in the destination;
- creating opportunities for women to achieve higher positions in the company.

Now, what does all of this have to do with plastics and waste?

Supporting local knowledge and products to fight plastic waste

In this section, we will look at the connections between communities, culture and plastic waste reduction, and how tourism and hospitality businesses can help, at the same time, empower local communities and fight single-use plastics.

Communities, culture and nature

Heritage and culture are **integral parts of society** and consist of different forms, such as built heritage, natural sites and intangible social practices that are passed on from generation to generation ([ICOMOS, 2021](#)).

However, as with the natural environment, **cultural resources are also threatened**, as we have seen, by urbanisation and mass production and consumption, pollution, environmental risks and changing demographics, which calls for stronger linkages between **nature** and **culture** ([UNESCO, 2015](#)).

Although natural and cultural heritage are often seen as separate domains, they are actually interrelated concepts, after all, "nature provides the setting in which cultural processes, activities and belief systems develop" ([Pretty & Pilgrim, 2008](#)).

Indigenous and rural culture takes place in natural environments and not only livelihoods but also local traditions rely on natural resources. For this reason, indigenous and rural communities hold immense knowledge of their environments, their ecosystem dynamics, sustainable harvesting methods and sustainable fishing, hunting and use of fauna and flora resources.

This deep-rooted knowledge has allowed these communities to live in harmony with nature, living off the land and its resources and, at the same time, **[maintaining the integrity of the environment](#)**.



The widespread production and consumption of plastics, however, challenges the sustainable living practices of rural and indigenous communities around the world.

The rise of plastics and the impact on culture

Since the 1950s, when plastics became mainstream, up to now, 7 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced and disposed of (mostly in landfills and in the environment), and, as we have seen in the previous section, plastic pollution leads to severe environmental impacts ([UNEP, 2022](#)).

From a socio-cultural perspective, not only does plastic pollution threaten the livelihoods of communities who depend on natural resources, but plastics have also changed communities' relationship with their own traditions and customs.

Because plastic products and materials are so cheap, versatile and easily accessible to everyone, also rural and indigenous communities have adopted them in their daily lives.

This is why, for tourism destinations and their businesses to achieve **true sustainability**, they need to empower indigenous voices, bringing back and drawing on their traditional knowledge.

As sustainability becomes more and more an intrinsic part of every political agenda, it is important to acknowledge that this way of living has been the 'normality' of indigenous peoples worldwide – thus we have a lot to learn from them ([UNDP, 2021](#)).



Environmental protection and local communities

Indigenous and rural communities are, as we have just seen, **stewards of their traditional lands and natural environment**, but, at the same time, particularly vulnerable to climate-related risks and environmental degradation due to their close relationship with – and **reliance** on – local ecosystems.

Therefore, because local people are directly impacted by waste pollution, they are also the first to benefit from efforts towards environmental conservation and sustainability ([TonToTon, 2020](#)). This makes it all the more important to actively engage local communities in such efforts.

"The recognition that local and indigenous people have their own ecological understandings, conservation practices and resource management goals has important implications. It transforms the relationship between biodiversity managers and local communities. While previously they were perceived simply as resource users, indigenous people are now recognised as essential partners in environmental management."

([UNESCO](#))

Empowering communities and fighting waste

To face environmental challenges, indigenous peoples are mobilising the **in-depth knowledge** systems that have been the source of their livelihoods for generations. By supporting these systems and sourcing products locally, tourism businesses can help empower communities and minimise the procurement of plastics.

Traditionally, indigenous communities did not use plastics. Instead, they used leaves for wrapping and as plates, reusable bags made of plant fibres or natural textiles, cups and cutlery made of bamboo, coconut or other plants/trees, water containers made of clay for public water refill, among many other examples.



"Although they comprise only 5% of the world's population, indigenous peoples safeguard 80% of the planet's biodiversity, and more than 20% of the carbon stored above ground in the world's forests is found in land managed by indigenous communities."

([Amnesty International, 2020](#))

Case study



Rimping Supermarket, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, looked at tradition to reduce plastic packaging: wrapping its products in **banana leaves** and a **bamboo string**. This alternative, of course, is feasible only in tropical locations where banana leaves are readily available locally and could be acquired for free depending on the quantity needed.

([Forbes, 2019](#))

Moreover, local sourcing is also important for shortening products' travel distance – which thus reduces carbon emissions in transportation.

Therefore, local sourcing helps address the four most significant burdens that tourism and hospitality businesses often bring to destinations ([Seidel & Cavagnaro, 2018](#)):

- CO₂ emissions from transportation and energy use;
- waste;
- economic leakages; and
- negative socio-cultural impacts.

The competitive advantage of local sourcing

Now that we have seen the economic, environmental and socio-cultural importance of strengthening the local supply chains and drawing from communities' traditional knowledge and local materials to reduce single-use plastics, it is time to get some ideas on **what types of products tourism and hospitality businesses can source locally**.

These ideas, besides all the sustainability benefits we have already mentioned, also have a great **market advantage** and will increase your business' competitiveness. Consumer research over the past years has revealed that travellers are more and more concerned about the impact they have on the destinations they visit. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced such preoccupation.

The lockdowns of 2020 have shown the world how nature thrives without overcrowding, which made tourists rethink the way they travel.

According to a research by [Expedia Group](#) (2022), 90% of global consumers look for **sustainable and responsible options when travelling**, and 3 in 5 have opted for more environmentally friendly transportation or lodging in the past two years.

Download Expedia's 'Sustainable Travel Study 2022 [here](#).



Moreover, post-COVID travellers are also looking for more local and authentic experiences and engaging in more nature- and community-based activities.

By promoting your business's commitment to sustainability, you can help raise visitors' awareness of common issues in tourism and encourage them to seek out local products and experiences during their stay.

Let's get started, then, with the ideas of local products that businesses can source. For this section, we will look at the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge's [10 hotel essentials you can source locally](#).

Amenities

Consumers are increasingly more aware of the issues surrounding chemical products for human health and thus leaning towards **natural and vegan beauty products, cosmetics and toiletries**. Fortunately, small industries are popping up to support this need, with products such as [artisanal](#) soaps, bar shampoos and natural body oils becoming more widely available. Your business can support these gradually growing industries by sourcing locally made amenities.



Artisanal products not only are cruelty-free and chemical-free but also help reduce plastic waste.

Soaps and shampoo bars are usually wrapped in paper, and lotions and oils can be purchased through a refill system and used in dispensers in the hotel rooms and bathrooms.

Arts and decoration

Most travellers are aware of the fact that many souvenirs are **mass-produced** in places far from their vacation destination. These items generally do not provide the unique memento they want from their trip, as they are **neither authentic nor local**.

As we mentioned before, tourists are increasingly looking for not only more nature-based but also *community-based* experiences. This means that tourism and hospitality businesses can take advantage of this trend to satisfy their guests/customers' expectations; reduce plastic materials and waste; **promote local and authentic crafts**; and, consequently, empower the communities who make such products, both culturally and financially.

Handicrafts

Hosting a small collection of locally made handicrafts in your business benefits everyone, from your guests to local artisans, besides giving a more global exposure to genuine local culture.

Even if your business does not sell handicrafts on-site, you can simply direct your guests and customers to where they can find the best handicrafts.



This is important for the **local culture and communities' income**, but also because **mass-produced souvenirs and "crafts" are often made of unsustainable materials, such as plastics**.

Artworks

Another way of promoting local culture in your business' property is to **display artworks in the facilities**, such as the hotel rooms, lobby areas, restaurant or office (in case of a tour operator).

You can also consider hiring local artisans to give demonstrations and workshops at your business if you have the capacity for it. This will definitely help **promote the local artisans and the local culture** as a whole.

Textiles

While it is often cheaper to buy textiles such as **bedding, towels, tablecloths, napkins** and **curtains** in bulk from a wholesale supplier, this approach means a lost opportunity for the business to stand

out from the competition and also lost income for small, local textile businesses, weavers and seamstresses. For this reason, keep in mind that, while it may cost more initially to work with local sellers, you can still end up saving overall. Your guests and customers will appreciate a more authentic experience during their holidays, and **local textiles are far more sustainable and beneficial** for your destination.

And why are local textiles and natural fibres more sustainable?

Most of the clothes, sheets, towels, cloths, etc. that we buy today contain plastics like polyester, nylon, acrylic and polyamide. When these products are washed, they degrade and **break up into millions of microplastics** (small fragments of plastic), which go into the wastewater systems, and leak into rivers and oceans. With the advent of **fast fashion** and the increase in the usage of polyester as the main component of clothes, the **resulting plastic pollution accounts for 30%** of all marine plastic pollution ([Greenpeace, 2017](#)).

Staff uniforms are another area where you can make a difference. While the volume of linens can become expensive, staff uniforms are not needed in such great amounts and likely will not cost your business as much overall. Also, **having your staff dressed in traditional styles adds to the local feel for the customers, contributing to their experience.**



Furniture

Furniture can also be locally sourced. **Supporting local carpenters benefits the community while giving your business an authentic, local design.** And from an environmental sustainability perspective, local sourcing means less packaging, less travel distance and less carbon emissions, as we have already seen. Moreover, local carpenters and artisans are **less likely to use unsustainable materials** usually associated with mass furniture manufacturers, such as plastics. They may also use reusable locally sourced materials by collaborating with other local businesses.

Food products

Sourcing produce from local farmers has the same benefits as the ones described above: reduction of plastic packaging and of carbon emissions from the transportation of goods. You will also be helping the local community by providing local families in the farming business with a reliable source of income.

Case study

[The Hideout Hotel](#), in Koh Yao, Thailand, is committed to sourcing only **local products** and **all food and bath amenities are made from scratch**. With a **zero-waste policy**, they do not sell bottled drinks or use plastic straws. Also, with the 'Farm to Table' initiative, more than 90% of ingredients and materials are grown and harvested from organic local farms on the island.



Fruits and vegetables

Organic food, healthy diets and responsible tourism are all growing consumer trends – especially in the post-COVID period, thus having locally sourced organic vegetables and fruits on your menu will definitely boost your business' **competitiveness**. It will also increase community engagement by **supporting local growers** and other businesses that handle the transportation of food products.

Seafood products

Not only are industrial-scale fishing operations putting seafood stocks at risk, but they undermine **small, local fishermen** for which seafood is sometimes their only source of income. By buying your seafood locally, you are **increasing the income stability** of members of the local community.

Another benefit to your business is the freshness of ingredients. The ability to honestly add the phrase "freshly caught" or "locally sourced" to your seafood menu is a major plus for customers and guests.

Local brands

As for "ready-made" food and beverages that are sold/offered in your business, such as products in the **minibar** of hotel rooms, **snacks** given during tours or **beverages** sold in the restaurant, instead of only offering international big brands, why not also include local ones? Sourcing local sweets, tea and coffee, spirits, beer from local breweries or any other local brands will definitely have a **more positive impact on the destination** than international products, as the profit of these purchases will go to already wealthy multinational corporations.

Part 4: Conclusion

Lesson 5 – How can I continue my journey towards plastic waste reduction?

Last steps

You have reached the end of this course! Thank you for joining us in our fight against single-use plastics and towards a more responsible, inclusive and sustainable tourism and hospitality industry. Let's review some **key points** of this course and suggest **further reading** for you to continue your journey towards plastic waste reduction and sustainability.

Key takeaways

This course presented you with ways to tackle the plastic problem in your business and at the same time support the local economy and communities. See below the key topics we covered:

1. 300 million tonnes of plastic waste are generated each year. Of this number, only 9% is recycled, 12% is incinerated and 79% ends up in landfills or in the sea. **Plastic pollution** threatens environments, livelihoods and decreases the attractiveness of destinations.
2. Once tourism reaches pre-pandemic levels again, it will very likely happen with the same negative impacts as before, and this is why **now is the time to take action** and strive for a more sustainable tourism and hospitality industry.
3. A **plastic waste reduction strategy** involves a) getting organisational buy-in; b) engaging staff, suppliers and stakeholders; c) measuring, monitoring and setting goals; d) developing and implementing an action plan; and e) communicating efforts to customers and media.
4. To **reduce single-use plastics**, businesses must a) avoid all waste by finding waste-free solutions (such as by using reusable products, dispensers and refillable containers); b) negotiate plastic-free deliveries with suppliers (or with minimum waste possible); and c) choose appropriate and sustainable single-use materials that can be properly collected and treated by the local infrastructure.

- For tourism to achieve true sustainability, it needs to empower local voices, **drawing on traditional knowledge** to not only preserve culture and strengthen the local economy, but also fight plastic waste through the sourcing of local products such as amenities, crafts, textiles, furniture and food & beverages.

Additional resources

The following reports, toolkits and resources are important tools for you to continue your learning journey on single-use plastic waste reduction in tourism.



Food & Plastic Waste Reduction Standards for Tourism Businesses

PATA's standards guide businesses on the necessary checklist for minimising food and plastic waste, and they also include resources, best practices and case studies. The plastic standards start at p. 43.

Plastic Free Toolkit for Tour Operators



This toolkit by PATA (2020) aims to assist tour operators to assess the current consumption of plastics, consider different alternatives and decide the best strategy on how to reduce their plastic footprint.



How to Reduce Single-Use Plastic: Guidance for Tourism Businesses

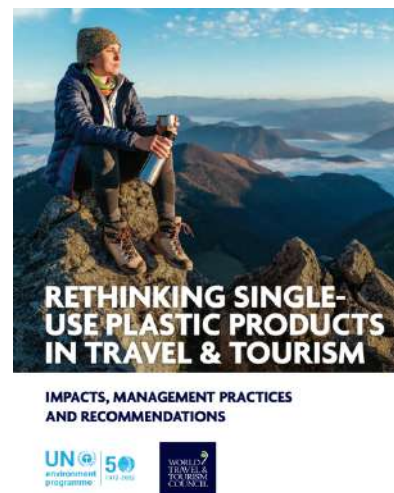
The guide by Futouris (2021) supports tourism businesses in finding more sustainable alternatives to commonly used single-use plastic products according to their sustainability performance index.

[Rethinking Single-Use Plastic Products in Travel & Tourism](#)

This report by UNEP and WTCC (2021) provides recommendations for impactful actions to reduce the overall consumption of SUPPs and promote circularity. See the Decision Trees on pages 23-7.

[3 Steps to Reduce Plastic & Benefit Your Business](#)

This guide provides plastic measuring tools, such as the [Plastic Footprint Tool](#) and the [Foodware Cost Calculator](#), that measures a business's potential cost savings and plastic reduction.



[Stop the Flood of Plastic: Effective Measures to Avoid Single-Use Plastics and Packaging in Hotels](#)

The report by WWF Germany (2019) provides the top 10 measures for reducing single-use plastics, as well as case studies and recommendations for tourism businesses.

[Travel Without Plastics](#)

TWP provides practical, cost-effective solutions to reduce single-use plastic in hospitality without compromising the guest experience or safety standards. They include guides, toolkits, workshops, webinars, e-learning courses and a SUP-Free certification.

[Supply Chain Sustainability: A Practical Guide for Continuous Improvement](#)

This report by UN Global Compact Office and BSR (2010) offers practical guidance on how to develop a sustainable supply chain programme, featuring many examples of good corporate practices.

[Reducing Plastic Pollution: Campaigns that Work](#)

The report by One Planet and SEI (Stockholm Environment Institute) (2021) provides insights and examples on how to maximise the success of campaigns for sustainable plastic consumption.



[Plastic Reduction Guidelines for Hotels](#)

The guide by the TUI Group (2020) provides information, practical advice and suggested alternatives to many single-use and unnecessary plastic items that are commonly found in hotels.

[Addressing Pollution from Single-Use Plastics: A life Cycle Approach](#)

This guide by the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative (2021) key messages and recommendations specifically for bottles, cups, bags, takeaway food packaging and tableware.



**ADDRESSING POLLUTION FROM
SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PRODUCTS:
A LIFE CYCLE APPROACH**
KEY MESSAGES FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES



[Toolkit for Plastic Waste-Free Hospitality](#) and [Toolkit for Plastic Waste-Free Tours](#)

These two toolkits by IUCN, Norad and Searious Business (2020) provide practical tips for businesses to implement plastic reduction strategies.

Finally, [sign the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge](#). It's free and applicable to all tourism businesses, regardless of their size or location. By signing the Pledge, you will be joining a network of leading tourism and hospitality businesses that are helping travellers make more sustainable choices.

All businesses who sign the Pledge will receive a certificate of participation from UNESCO, to display online and at your property.

Please contact us at crc@pata.org for any questions, suggestions or support.

The course is implemented by PATA with the support of UNESCO and Expedia Group.



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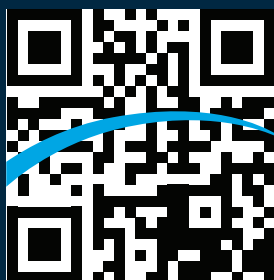
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