



Barbados Interdisciplinary Tropical Studies (BITS) 2018

Addressing the Plastic Bag Issue of Barbados Through Education and Policy Recommendations



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Mentor: Mr. Barney Gibbs of the Future Centre Trust

Introduction

In 2017, a local Barbados NGO, the Future Centre Trust, led the initiative of trying to phase out of single-use plastic bags in Barbados. The organization focused its efforts on implementing a plastic bag charge that would act as a deterrent for consumers who rely on single-use plastic bags while shopping. The Future Centre Trust focused their energy on persuading supermarkets to collectively agree to implement a deterrent charge. The charge was met with resistance on many fronts, particularly by the public who felt that the charge was simply another means for wealthy supermarkets to make a profit.

In short, the campaign led by the Future Centre Trust was “unsuccessful” in that they were not able to implement a plastic bag deterrent fee, or ban the bag entirely. The contributing factors that led this ban to be “unsuccessful” were 1) backlash from the consumer on the deterrent fee; 2) a misunderstanding from the consumer on what was being proposed and why and; 3) a lack of government participation in the campaign.



Group members (ordered left to right: Environmental Sciences U2 student Sydney Westra, Environment & Development U3 student Eva von Jagow, International Development U3 student Stephanie Leandri)

The purpose of this research project is to persuade and assist both government and public of Barbados in implementing a plastic bag through education and policy recommendations.

Project Objectives

The overall goal of this project was to “make it easy for the government” to implement the plastic bag ban, as expressed

by project mentor Barney Gibbs. This was executed by promoting environmental education specific to the island of Barbados. From our research, we found that if the population is engaged, educated and in support of banning single-use plastic bags, governments are likely to take action. Our research project focused on public outreach and education in hopes to minimize the resistance and objections that were present in the campaign of the previous year.



Group member, Sydney Westra, cleaning up plastic found in the ocean.

Activities Completed

1. Identifying Sources of Resistance from 2017 Plastic Reduction Campaign.

In going forward with the 2018 campaign against the single-use plastic bag, it was first necessary to discern why the previous year's campaign ultimately failed. Since the media and literature is limited in this area, the most

effective approach to this was to accumulate anecdotal evidence from the actors involved.

2. Creating Educational Material Relevant to the Bajan Population

Combining extensive research on previously implemented plastic bag bans, along with the literature available on what drives environmental behaviour, we determined that in going forward with this year's plastic bag campaign, educating the public was of utmost necessity. The second goal of the research project was to aid in sensitizing the public on the detriments of the single-use plastic bag in Barbados. In order to do this, it was first necessary to establish why plastic is detrimental to Barbados specifically. This information was then compiled and integrated into educational content unique to each age demographic.

3. Creation of a Permanent Resource Advocating for a Plastic Bag Ban for the Barbados Population to Utilize along with a Concise Policy Proposal.

A permanent resource for understanding the logistics and details of the plastic bag ban has been created to ensure the message of the campaign is clear, and accessible to the public at www.BanTheBagBarbados.com. The website contains all the information on the reasons for a single-use plastic bag ban, educational material tailored to each demographic, and other ways to get involved with the ban.

Conclusion

This project focused its energy on addressing the 2017 campaign, and the

limitations that impeded its success. In researching the miscommunications and conceptions present on the island in regards

to plastic usage, as well as the successful plastic-bag bans and initiatives in other countries, it became clear that the central focal point of our work needed to be on anti-plastic usage advocacy and education. Our website will act as a permanent resource that will advocate for and explain the plastic bag ban, as well as serving as an educational portal for all demographics.

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The homepage of the created website: www.BanTheBagBarbados.com



Barbados east coast beach littered with plastic.

References

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