



CASE STUDY

# **Optimising Environmental Footprint of Hotel Operations**

**Led by BehaviorSMART &  
Hotel Internazionale**

**BeST**

Behaviour Smart community  
for Tourism



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# CHALLENGE

One of the ways to optimise environmental footprint of hotel operations is to **switch default options** for choices such as towel changing and room cleaning.

As part of its efforts to minimise unnecessary consumption of water, energy and detergents, **Hotel Internazionale had transitioned to not changing towels on daily basis by default**. This meant that towels are automatically changed every three days unless guests ask for a change earlier.

The challenge was that after the change, **the housekeeping team did not adjust their behavior** and continued changing towels in every room even though it actually meant doing more work than necessary.

## BEHAVIOUR

The housekeeping team found it **easier to continue doing the same** as before rather than changing. They were also not motivated to make a change as **they did not feel the decision to stop changing towels made much sense**. In their minds changing towels on a daily basis was part of basic hospitality service and they did not understand why the hotel would take the risk of moving away from that.



## BEHAVIOUR

## MECHANISM

There are two mechanisms at play here that impede the smart operations change that the hotel leadership had made.



The first is **status quo bias**, which made it easier for housekeeping staff to continue doing what they have been doing for a very long time rather than change to a new process. This applied even though the new setup meant having less work in each room.



The second factor was mere **awareness**. The housekeeping team was led by the misunderstanding of the fact that this change meant worse service and did not consider the environmental aspect at all.

# HOW DID WE GET THERE?

The behavioural barriers that prevented the execution of the new default option from working were identified through **short interviews** with housekeeping staff.

## INTERVENTION

In order to overcome the status quo bias and the awareness gap, the leadership of the hotel undertook a **targeted awareness effort**. During special **staff meetings** hotel leadership made sure that housekeeping staff was aware that:



Hotel Internazionale was making this change for **environmental reasons** that were explained ;



Switching the default of towel changing **did not have damaging effect on guests satisfaction** ;



Declaring that towels are not changed for environmental reasons but changing them **was causing frustration to guests** ;



Hotel leadership was beginning to **monitor towel washing volumes** to ensure that the default change is producing the savings it expected.

## TESTING

The hotel team is **currently observing** the effects of the intervention on the behaviour of housekeeping staff and is **monitoring** the effect on the volume of towels being washed.



## RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

Even if leadership makes the decision to flip defaults and transition to adjust operations towards more sustainable design, this may not lead to an actual change due to the **resistance to change by staff** responsible for executing the adjustments.

This becomes a barrier for seeing the desired effects and causes client frustration as clients were happy with the fact that the hotel was automating the more sustainable decision of avoiding daily towel change.

**Understanding the reasons behind staff hesitance** and adding **motivators to overcome status quo bias** was an important step in rolling out the desired change.

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## CONTACT

[milena@behavior-smart.com](mailto:milena@behavior-smart.com)



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