

PRESS RELEASE

Making a statement for the environment: Gebr. Heinemann reduces its use of single-use bags by 70 per cent in 2017 and expands its “plastic bag project” to additional sites

Hamburg, 29 January 2018. Reputable environmental protection organisations regularly publish powerful, emotive images: sandy beaches covered in, entire coastal regions spoilt by and dead marine animals suffocated by plastic waste.

The reason for this environmental misery is, in part, down to the around 500 billion plastic bags used annually around the world, some of which are “disposed of” without thought. It will take up to half a millennium before this waste, which for the most part travels through rivers before ending up in the world's oceans, is broken down and degraded.

Encouraging initial successes and 142,000 euros for marine conservation

Gebr. Heinemann and the marine conservation organisation OceanCare have come together in the past year to develop a counter-strategy and have started a joint initiative to reduce the amount of plastic waste in the oceans: as a globally operating company, Gebr. Heinemann put its trust in the regulatory mechanism of price; introducing a fee of 30 cents on all single-use plastic, paper and ZIP bags across its 14 German and Austrian duty free sites. All proceeds generated from the campaign are invested in OceanCare projects.

Intended to lead to a drastic reduction of single-use bags as well as encouraging customers to rethink their choices, the initiative is already proving to be a success. Many customers have joined the trend started by Heinemann and are using less and less of these “polluters”. The actual usage figure in Heinemann shops went down by 70 per cent last year: from a total of around 8.8 million in 2016 to 2.5 million. At the same time, the use of reusable bags has risen by around 350 per cent (from almost 21,400 bags in 2016 to almost 96,700 in 2017). The donations transferred to the OceanCare in 2017 also speaks for itself: a total of 142,000 euros.

Strengthening the awareness of environmental protection issues

“Ecology and economy are not mutually exclusive, they are two sides of the same coin. We see responsibility for the environment as our duty,” says co-owner Claus Heinemann of his company’s guiding principle. “We are delighted that our joint initiative with OceanCare allows us to contribute to the strengthening of our passengers’ awareness of the issue of environmental protection. However, while we are pleased with our success we are not yet satisfied. We are treating our ‘plastic bag project’ exactly as all other areas within our business: our modus operandi is to move forward, be creative and pro-active, and keep looking for further improvements. We will not only work hard to further improve our services, but also for a continued reduction of plastic bags, change to alternative materials and support of a change in consumer behaviour.”

Bratislava and Ljubljana are also on-board as of 2018

Following the success of the pilot phase in Germany and Austria, the campaign will be extended to additional Heinemann Duty Free sites in 2018. Up next are Bratislava in Slovakia and Ljubljana in Slovenia: as of January, single-use plastic bags will only be available for 30 cents in the airport shops there too. The proceeds will also go to OceanCare and, as at all participating sites, the airports have waived their concession fee. As an environmentally-friendly alternative to plastic bags, passengers now have the option of a reusable bag made from 50 per cent recyclable materials for 2 euros, or a hip LOQI bag in the Heinemann design for 4.90 euros, as in the Heinemann shops in Germany and Austria. Both are ideal for use as shopping bags for holiday purchases or as beach bags.

“I Care”: working together against single-use plastic

“The gigantic amount of plastic waste in the ocean is such a significant challenge that it needs everyone to do their bit: governments, organisations, companies, and also consumers, can and must help to resolve this problem. Gebr. Heinemann has taken on this responsibility and is demonstrating in concrete terms how disposable plastic can be reduced,” says Vera Bürgi, Managing Director of OceanCare. OceanCare uses the donations from Gebr. Heinemann on projects aimed at reducing plastic waste in the oceans and saving marine life at risk due to plastic waste. Environmental education activities and research projects on the reduction of plastic waste also make an important contribution. As a UN special adviser on marine conservation, OceanCare took part in the 12th Meeting of the Parties of the Bonn Convention (UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species, CMS) in Manila last October. The marine conservation organisation presented their “I Care” campaign at the meeting; a project where OceanCare and a number of partners use their combined power to encourage people around the world to rethink their attitudes towards disposable plastic. Heinemann’s co-owner Claus Heinemann also took a stand in the campaign film. You can watch the [video](#) here.

Find out more about the “I Care” campaign [here](#).

About Gebr. Heinemann SE & Co. KG

Gebr. Heinemann is one of the top players on the international travel retail market and the leader on the European market. It is the only family-run business among the global players of the travel retail industry. As a distributor, Gebr. Heinemann supplies more than 1,000 customers in over 100 countries. In the retail sector, the company operates more than 320 Heinemann Duty Free & Travel Value shops, fashion label boutiques under license and concept shops at 77 airports in 28 countries, along with shops at border crossings and aboard cruise liners. The company has been designing its Duty Free & Travel Value Shops since 2008 in accordance with an exceptional brand concept. Today, the Heinemann Duty Free brand is present at numerous airports worldwide including Sydney. In total, the retail operation now serves more than 40 million customers across 120,000 square metres of retail space every year. Gebr. Heinemann has 6,000 employees around the world. Gebr. Heinemann has had its headquarters in what is now the HafenCity district of Hamburg since 1879. The company is managed by cousins Claus and Gunnar Heinemann, the fourth generation of the family to run the business.

About OceanCare

The Swiss non-governmental organisation has campaigned for sea creatures and the oceans worldwide since 1989. Using research and protection projects, environmental educational campaigns as well as intensive input in international bodies, the organisation is taking concrete steps towards the improvement of living conditions in the world’s oceans. OceanCare has been recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a special adviser on marine conservation. The organisation is also part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter.

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