

## Golf Tourism, its institutional setting, and environmental management: a longitudinal analysis

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### Abstract

The present article describes a longitudinal study made of the influence that the institutional setting, with respect to protection of the natural environment, has on the development of environmental management practices in the golf courses of Andalusia (Spain). In our study, a model of behaviour based on the precepts of the Institutional Theory has been tested, using the *Partial Least Squares* technique, at two different points in time; the empirical data used corresponds to the years 2007 and 2010. The sample was administered to managers or green-keepers of golf courses located in the above mentioned region, being that 28 of the 33 questionnaires of the 2010 sample were answered by those already sampled in 2007. It is observed that the environmental performance of these organizations is strongly conditioned by the laws, and that as both normative and mimetic practices settle, organizations under study develop environmental management policies seeking to improve their bottom line.

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### Introduction

If we assume that the main goal of any theory is to explain reality, the Institutional Theory is not, of course, an exception. If there is a reality today, beyond any doubt, it is that companies are in a process of accelerated change to adapt to an increasingly dynamic and complex business setting, trying to achieve a balance

between the interests of the different stakeholders and sources of pressure applied to their managers, at both strategic and operational levels. A clear example of this situation is found in the growing interest in the context of respect for the natural environment that affects corporate policies (Fraj *et al.*, 2010).

Following this interest, numerous studies have been carried out attempting to identify both external and internal factors linked to the environmental behaviour of organizations (Menon *et al.*, 1999; Rivera and Molero, 2006). One of the approaches more extensively used to explain these processes of influence on the environmental behaviour has been the Institutional Theory (Hoffman and Ventresca, 2002; Campbell, 2007). Within this theory authors such as Meyer and Rowan (1977), Scott (1995) and Phillips *et al.* (2000) propose that institutionalization is a process through which society's expectations influence the behaviour and structures of organizations. The growing social interest awakened in respect for the environmental impacts of companies' activities has led to the development of pressure mechanisms, supported by institutional theorists (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995) within the environmental field, leading to a stream known as Environmental Institutionalism (Jennings and Zandberguen, 1995; King, 1995; Boons and Stranegard, 2000; Carmona and Burgos, 2002; Russo, 2003; Bansall and Cleland, 2004; Llanas, 2005). This stream defends the adequacy of Institutional Theory to explain the spread of environmentally sustainable practices (Boons and Stranegard, 2000).

In this paper we use this theoretical framework to connect the pressure mechanisms with the concepts of social legitimacy and organizational performance. Although, as noted, there are many papers applying the principles of Institutional Theory to explain the spread of environmental routines in a given industry (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995), there are a few studying their impact on business performance via social legitimacy. Even more, we have not found any study doing so from a longitudinal perspective, analysing the evolution of environmental institutional pressures in a given sector of activity over a period of time, as it is done in this piece of research.

To do it, we needed to select an industry or organizational field with a very relevant environmental setting for developing the productive activity. That is why we have opted

for the tourism sector, and more specifically for a particular segment in a particular region, golf tourism in Andalusia (Spain). Andalusia is one of the leading golf tourism destinations in Europe, which has led to a rapid increase in this type of facility, not without creating a broad social debate about the environmental impacts involved.

In the present study we consider the existence of an institutional setting that conditions the behaviour in respect of environmental protection of the companies that operate golf courses. It is the coercive pressures (of legally enforceable regulations) that have the most influence in the scenarios studied. Coercive pressure thus reinforces the capacity of the institutional setting as a whole to influence organizational behaviour in adverse economic contexts such as that applicable in the second of the scenarios studied. To arrive at these conclusions, and after defining the theoretical framework and specifying the sample employed, we have conducted a comparative Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis of the temporal scenarios proposed, using Visual-PLS software for this.

### **Theoretical framework and research hypotheses**

The theoretical framework of our work is the so-called Institutional Theory. Previous institutional studies have approached the topic from a sociology approach, notable among which are the studies of Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Meyer and Scott (1983), Abbott (1992), Giddens (1993 and 1998), Selznick (1996), Stinchcombe (1997), Berger and Luckman (2005) and Meyer, Heinz-Dier and Rowan (2006), which are centred on analysing how organisations adapt to the pressures of the institutional context in which they are embedded, with the aim of achieving legitimacy.

Within an environmental perspective, institutional pressures defined by several authors have been identified (Meyer and Rowan, 1983, DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, Scott, 1995). In the case of their influence on the development of environmental practices, authors such as Hoffman and Ventresca (2002)

and Campbell (2007) argue that the Institutional Theory is adequate framework to explain the implementation of these routines, especially if, as Meyer *et al.* (1983) argue, the institutional context is characterized by rules and rituals that organizations must respect to achieving social legitimacy, in a business environment increasingly subject to social, legal and economic pressures for the production of environmental-friendly goods and services (Campbell, 2007; Melville, 2010).

*Characterization of the institutional context, in respect of environmental protection, of the golf courses of Andalusia*

In this institutional context we have identified the mechanisms of pressure argued by the classic authors of the Institutional Theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott, 1995), which are analysed in greater depth in the following paragraphs.

***The coercive pressure mechanisms, with reference to environmental management***

As shown in this epigraph, there are considerable studies with emphasis on the influence exerted by laws, regulations, decrees and ordinances on the development of social responsibility in environmental matters by organisations. A priori, it seems logical that the existence of standards of obligatory compliance, by way of laws, constitutes a more-than-considerable pressure for adopting practices respectful of the natural environment. Henriques and Sardosky (1996) come to the conclusion that there exists a direct and positive relationship between the legislative capacity of the government, in matters of the conservation of the environment, and the development of good environmental practices by the companies of a sector. There appears in this mechanism an element essential for this direct relationship of influence to exist: we refer to the coercive character that is implicit in all regulation backed up by possible sanctions. In this same line Dasgupta (2000) states that the more rigorous a regulation is in environmental terms, the more organisations will seek to implement methods and practices that would reduce the impacts of their productive activity on the natural environment. For Buysse and Verbeke (2003) and Camisón (2010), the incentive to avoid any possible future sanctions

makes organisations operate practices that are respectful of the natural environment. Authors like Sarkar (2008) even argue that the coercive instruments inspired in the public policies for environmental sustainability produce better results in organisations. Potoski and Prakash (2005) take a similar line and establish a direct positive relationship between the existence of coercive pressures, the reduction of the environmental impact, and increased productivity (quoted by Telle and Larson, 2007).

In the case of the golf courses of Andalusia these mechanisms of pressure are perfectly determined by a comprehensive regulation of environmental character, principally because most of the golf courses of Andalusia form part of a residential, hotel or leisure offer broader than the practice of the sport alone; this implies that the courses themselves (or the companies that operate them) are subject to more environmental standards. In the period of study covered by this article, the Regional government approved the Decree 43/2008, by means of which the conditions of implementation and operation of the golf courses of Andalusia are regulated. One of the principal objectives of this legal ruling is to ensure the environmental sustainability of facilities of this type in Andalusia and to create the figure of 'golf courses of tourist interest'. In the light of this, we are interested in testing, in our period of study, the following hypothesis:

***H1a: The coercive pressure produced by the laws and other applicable regulations has a positive influence on the adoption of sustainable environmental practices by golf courses.***

***The coercive pressure mechanisms for enforcing respect for the environment***

This pressure mechanism describes the rules that introduce a prescriptive dimension, either evaluative or of obligation, including both standards and values (Scott, 1995). Hence pressures of this type determine the objectives of a company and the actions needed to meet them. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) emphasize that, in these institutional pressure mechanisms, formal education, university specialisation, the existence of consultancies

and the establishment of professional networks are very important. For Heugens and Lander (2009), the interest of a company in sharing standards or values comes from its need to achieve legitimacy or social acceptance. In this same line authors such as John *et al.* (2001) and Zsidisin *et al.* (2005) establish a relationship between normative pressure mechanisms and organisational survival in a particular field, because pressure of this type generates greater legitimacy for a company. Studies such as those of Hefu *et al.* (2010) and Pasamar and Valle (2011) consider normative pressures to be the kind of pressure that has the greatest influence on company behaviour.

Within the institutional setting, with reference to environmental management, there are numerous published studies in which the influence of normative pressures on the environmental behaviour of organisations is evaluated; in these studies, a direct and positive relationship between them is found, and it is even argued that these pressures, exerted within the institutional context, constitute the principal source of environmental behaviour in organisations. The more notable among these studies are those of Henriques and Sardosky (1996); Florida and Davison (2001); King and Lenox (2001); Raines (2002); and Ximbiau *et al.* (2010).

In the particular case of the golf courses of Andalusia, Riquel (2011) has identified the normative pressures of environmental character shown in the following table.

Based on the above propositions, we have formulated the following research hypothesis for testing:

**H1b:** *The acceptance of values and standards stipulated by normative pressures has a positive influence on the adoption of sustainable environmental practices in golf courses.*

***The mimetic pressure mechanisms, with reference to environmental management***

Included in the mimetic pressure mechanisms are those organisational practices that are perceived as being successful for other organisations operating in the same activity sector (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983). As stated by John *et al.* (2001), Zsidisin *et al.* (2005) and other authors, mimetic pressures convey knowledge of the business environment in which an organisation conducts its operations, and which it shares with those competitors who are active in the same sector of activity. According to Scott (1995), when a company or organisation imitates practices in a particular organisational field, it does so with two objectives: the first is to reduce the uncertainty that is implicit in any innovation or organizational change; the second is to achieve greater social legitimacy in the eyes of the various different interest groups that are important for it. This homogenisation of practices is the principal source of isomorphism (Lu *et al.*; 2002). Following Ramus and Steger (2002), this mechanism is one of the principal reasons why environmental management strategies are adopted by companies. This proposition is reinforced by the studies of Campbell (2007) and Melville (2010), in which it is argued that the institutional context of companies has a growing influence on the development of environmentally-sustainable products and services by those companies.

**Table 1.** *Normative pressure mechanisms, with reference to environmental management*

**Elements of normative pressure in golf courses**

<p>The program "Committed to Green" of the European Association of Golf.                  The "Biosphere Golf" System of the Institute for Responsible Tourism.                  Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programme for Golf Courses.                  ISO Standard 14001.                  EMAS Regulation (European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, of voluntary application).                  Other normalized initiatives.                  Ecologists' pressure groups.</p>
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Source: authors' own compilation.

Riquel (2011) identifies the experience of the golf course 'Dunas de Doñana' in Huelva, which is considered by the specialist media to be the first ecological golf course of Spain. From the golf course's own information we extract the mention made by the website [www.euroresidentes.com](http://www.euroresidentes.com)<sup>1</sup>, dedicated to travel and tourism, about this golf course; it published a listing of the best golf courses in Spain, in the opinion of users and visitors to the website. The 'Dunas de Doñana' course of Matalascañas (Huelva) is included in the listing, in 14th position in the ranking out of the total of approximately 450 courses existing in the Spanish national territory.

Based on the above, we are in a position to formulate the following research hypothesis:

**H1c:** *The imitation of the environmental practices of other companies and organisations perceived as being successful has a positive influence on the adoption of sustainable environmental practices by golf courses.*

*Social legitimacy and business performance in the institutional setting, with reference to environmental management.*

Hatch (1997) states that those organisations that are questioned by others in their own field can end up being expelled from the market. Consequently legitimacy or social acceptance constitutes a valuable resource that helps to assure the survival of the organisation. Carroll (1979) and Wood (1999) found a direct relationship of influence between social legitimacy and the performance of an organisation. We have noted in the preceding sections how the objective of securing legitimacy has been considered by several institutional authors, including Scott (1995), John *et al.* (2001), Zsidosin *et al.* (2005) and Heuggens and Langer (2009), among others. If social legitimacy is understood in the terms used by Schuman (1995, p.573) as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, convenient and appropriate within a socially-constructed system of standards, values, beliefs and definitions", it has to be said that it is a concept that has been developed more theoretically than empirically, given the difficulty of

measuring it (Low and Johnston, 2008). Deephouse (1996), propose that it is possible to measure legitimacy by examining the evaluations or degree of acceptance shown by two key social actors, the government and the general public. Although according to Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy (2000), this concept has not been fully considered by researchers.

What seems clear is that the search for legitimacy drives policies of social responsibility in environmental matters. Bansal and Kendall (2000) state that the principal argument explaining the behaviour of an organisation towards environmental sustainability is the search for legitimacy within that organisation's institutional context. In this view an organisation takes action with the object of contributing to environmental sustainability, thus making its image conform to the values of society, its customers and other interest groups. This action, according to Fraj, Martínez and Matute (2010), helps to increase the company's sales and enhance its reputation. Authors such as Klassen and Vachon (2006) recommend that a company should take action across its entire chain of value with criteria of environmental sustainability. Therefore we are in agreement with the study of Banerjee (2002, p. 183) in which the existence is argued of a "company ecologism", understood as "*the recognition of the importance of the environmental principles with which a company must deal, and the integration of these principle into its strategic plans*".

Based on these arguments that associate the implementation of responsible environmental practices with social legitimacy and business performance, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

**H2a:** *The initiation and implementation of responsible environmental practices by golf courses has a positive influence on its acquisition of social legitimacy.*

**H3a:** *A positive direct relationship exists between the social legitimacy sought by golf courses and their business performance or returns.*

The integration of social responsibility in environmental matters into the global strategy

of the company implies a series of advantages. Authors such as Beaumont *et al.* (1993), Guimares and Liska (1995), Porter and Van der Linde (1995) and Shrivastava (1995) classify these advantages as follows: improved efficiency; increased product quality; greater market share; reduced costs; access to new products; motivation and satisfaction of the personnel; improved relationships with the

community; and increased financial assistance. Consequently we can state that the implementation of responsible environmental practices has a positive effect on the organisational performance.

Based on this line of argument, we believe it appropriate to formulate the following research hypothesis:

**Table 2.** List of indicators

Construct (abbreviated form)	Measurement scales	Indicators of the scale
Coercive pressure (PresCoer)	Kostova and Roth (2002)	Knowledge of the law Degree of compliance with the law Existence of regulatory authorities Existence of government agreements
Normative pressure (PresNorm)	DiMaggio and Powell (1991), Kostova and Roth (2002) and Llanas (2005)	Moral obligation Consistency with values of the context Consistency with social norms
Mimetic pressure (PresMim)	Scott (1995) and Llanas (2005)	Acquisition of information Existence of models to follow Imitation of practices, at any time Knowledge of successful experience
Environmental management practices (Envprac)	Romero <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Environmental proposals (N°) Proposals implemented (N°) Proposals that meet objectives (N°) Environmental actions (cost) Environmental infringements (N°) Employees with environmental training (N°) Environmental training given (hours) Suppliers with environmental certification (N°) Purchases from suppliers with certification (% of total) Dissemination of environmental achievements (expenditure) Awareness campaigns (expenditure)
Social Legitimacy (Legitim)	Deephouse (1996)	Social recognition Organisational values Legitimacy for government Legitimacy for employees Legitimacy for citizens Legitimacy for communications media Legitimacy for customers Legitimacy for suppliers Legitimacy for associations of ecologists Legitimacy for professional associations Legitimacy for business sector Relationships with interest groups
Organizational Performance (Perform)	Powell and Dent-Micallef (1997)	Economic conditions Financial results Profitability Number of green fees Market share

**H3b:** *The implementation of responsible environmental management practices by golf courses has a positive influence on the business performance of these organisations.*

To summarize, Table 2 shows the indicators that we have used for the formation of the constructs.

In accordance with the model represented in Figure 1, four types of measurement scale have been used:

-The first refers to the institutional context of the golf courses in Andalusia, and the three pressure mechanisms proposed under the Institutional Theory have been measured. This type of measurement has been used before, in the studies of DiMaggio and Powell (2002), Kostova and Roth (1991), and Llanas (2005).

-The second corresponds to the implementation of responsible environmental practices, for which our scale is based on the indicators designed for this type of organisation by Romero (2005).

-Thirdly, we have used the scale proposed by Powell and Dent-Micallef (1997) to measure the organisational performance, using the respondents' perceptions of their own

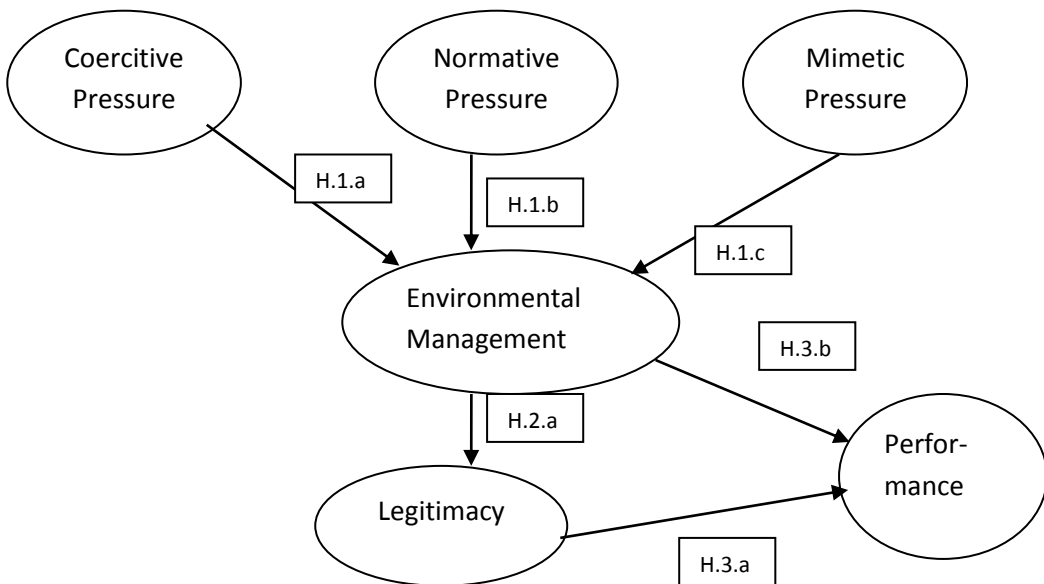
organisation's performance in comparison with its competitors.

-Lastly, to measure social legitimacy, the scale used is that proposed by Deephouse (1996), with the adaptations suggested by Llanas (2005).

### Research model and specification of the sample

Having reached this point, the various relationships of our research model are shown graphically in Figure 1.

The model presented has been used in the research of longitudinal character conducted, utilising the questionnaire administered in 2009, in which data corresponding to the year 2007 were collected, and the same questionnaire administered in 2012, to collect data for the year 2010. In it, the relationships among the constructs that form the core of our research are displayed, testing the hypotheses that have been raised previously by measuring the ability of institutional pressures to influence the development of environmental practices in golf courses, and how that level of development influences the perception of social legitimacy and business performance.



**Figure 1.** Model submitted to longitudinal research between 2007 and 2010

**Table 3. Technical specification of longitudinal samplings**

	2009 Questionnaire, requesting 2007 data	2012 Questionnaire, requesting 2010 data
<b>Research field.</b>	Golf courses.	Golf courses.
<b>Geographic location.</b>	Andalusia.	Andalusia.
<b>Methodology</b>	Structured questionnaire.	Structured questionnaire.
<b>Universe</b>	96 golf courses located in the Autonomous Region of Andalusia.	108 golf courses located in the Autonomous Region of Andalusia.
<b>Size of the sample</b>	Sample = Universe, 96 golf courses.	Sample = Universe, 103 golf courses.
<b>Valid responses</b>	31	33
<b>Sampling error</b>	7.42%	8.70%
<b>Level of confidence</b>	95%, $p=q=0.5$ ; $Z=1.96$	95%, $p=q=0.5$ ; $Z=1.96$
<b>Period of data collection.</b>	Pre-test: September 2008. First mailing: December 2008. First re-mailing: January 2009. Second re-mailing: February 2009. Treatment of data: February and March 2009.	First mailing: January 2012, first re-mailing: February 2012. Second re-mailing: March 2012. Treatment of data: March and April 2012.

Source: authors' own compilation.

The instrument used to obtain the data was a structured questionnaire addressed to the green-keepers and/or managers of the golf courses of the Autonomous Region of Andalusia; these persons were selected as prospective respondents since they are likely to have more direct information on the topic under study. The questionnaires were administered at the two points in time that appear in the above table 2; this is how we have been able to perform a longitudinal analysis of our subject.

#### **Analysis of data using partial least squares**

The technique of Partial Least Squares (PLS) has been used for the analysis of the data. Based on the models of structural equations, this is a powerful application for the study of the latent variables. The PLS technique presents advantages over the methods based on co-variances, particularly with reference to the requirements of the distribution of the variables of the sample, the type of variable and the size of the sample. Because our samples consist of 31 and 33 observations respectively, we have opted for the application of the PLS technique,

analysing first the measurement models and then the structural models.

#### *Comparative analysis of the measurement models*

The individual reliability of the items has been analysed, in both scenarios, by observing the standardised loadings of the indicators of the latent variables (Chin, 1998). The value of the standardised loadings must be equal to or greater than 0.505 according to Falker and Miller (1992). In the scenario for the year 2007, after successive clean-ups, we are left with 27 items out of a total of 44 that comprised the initial scale. In the 2010 scenario, after making the pertinent clean-ups, we are left with 29 items, out of a total of 44, that meet the criterion established by Falker and Miller (1992).

To evaluate the rigorousness of the latent variables the composite reliability of the construct is tested; this statistic allows us to check the internal consistency of the indicators for measuring the concept. Nunnally (1978) requires values higher than 0.7 as the critical



**Table 4. Discriminant validity: scenario 2007**

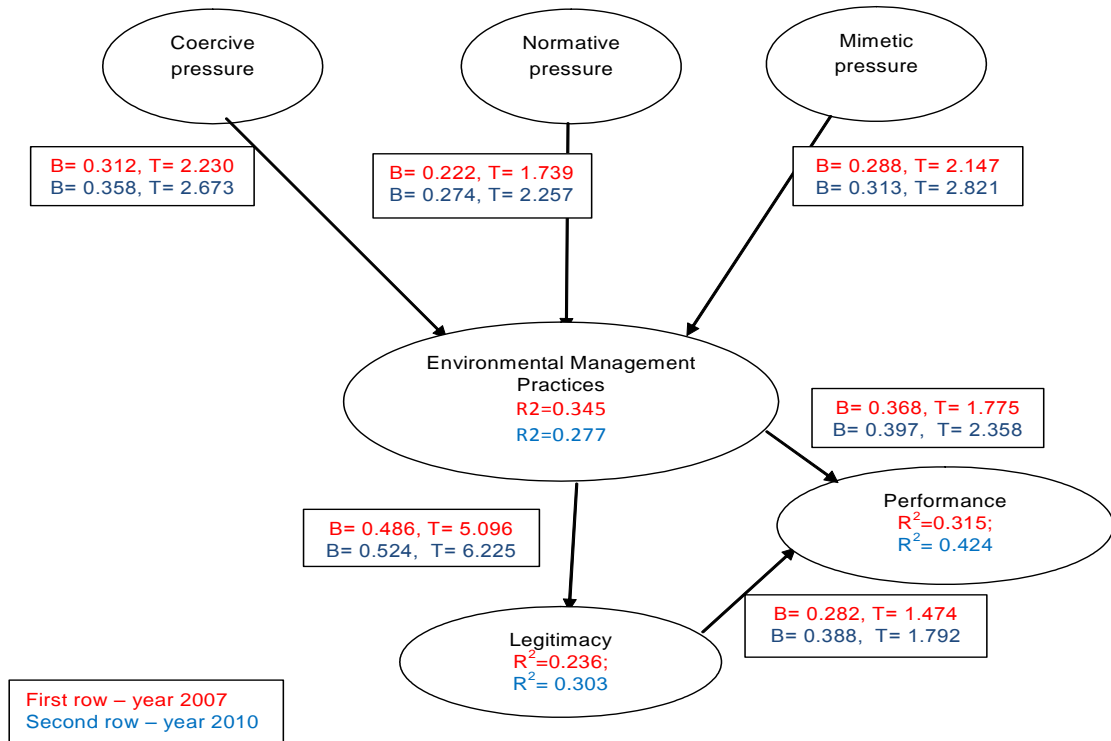
Constructs	PresCoer	PresNorm	PresMim	Envprac	Legitim	Perform
PresCoer	<b>0.733</b>					
PresNorm	-0.382	<b>0.761</b>				
PresMim	-0.097	0.357	<b>0.770</b>			
Envprac	-0.425	0.444	0.397	<b>0.759</b>		
Legitim	-0.312	0.633	0.411	0.486	<b>0.780</b>	
Perform	-0.464	0.207	0.135	0.505	0.461	<b>0.711</b>

Source: authors' own elaboration

**Table 5. Discriminant validity: scenario 2010**

Constructs	PresCoer	PresNorm	PresMim	Envprac	Legitim	Perform
PresCoer	<b>0.803</b>					
PresNorm	-0.319	<b>0.753</b>				
PresMim	-0.069	0.178	<b>0.742</b>			
Envprac	-0.248	0.356	0.289	<b>0.801</b>		
Legitim	0.290	0.318	0.366	0.578	<b>0.765</b>	
Perform	0.280	0.105	0.203	0.672	0.406	<b>0.837</b>

Source: authors' own elaboration



**Figure 2. Structural model 2007 and 2010**

value for a modest reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) enables us to analyse the convergent validity. Fornell and Larcker (1998) advise values higher than 0.5,

since with this minimum value there is an assurance that at least 50% of the variance of the construct is due to its indicators.

In our case, all the values exceed those established by the criteria of Falker and Miller (1992) and Fornell and Larcker (1998). It can be stated that in both scenarios the latent variables possess the characteristics of being consistent and having convergent validity.

The discriminant validity confirms that each construct measures a unique concept different from the rest. According to Barclay *et al.* (1995) this is achieved if the variance of a construct with its indicators is greater than the variance that it might share with the rest of the constructs of the model. For this, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the correlations between the constructs should be less than the square root of the average variances extracted (AVEs). These checks are presented in tables 4 and 5.

As can be observed, the requirement proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) is met in both scenarios.

*Comparative analysis of the structural models*

For the analysis of the structural model by PLS modelling, we use both the standardised path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) and the value of the variance explained ( $R^2$ ) for the dependent latent variables (Chin, 1998; Falk and Miller, 1992; Leal and Roldan, 2001). The re-sampling (bootstrap) technique has been used for the calculation of the Student-t test values that allow the consistency of the research hypotheses put forward in the model to be checked.

Table 6 shows a comparison of the strengths of the hypotheses of the research model in the two scenarios:

**Conclusions**

We have sought in this study to analyse the institutional setting of the golf courses of Andalusia in the context of respect for the natural environment, and from a perspective longitudinal. Given the current situation of economic crisis, that especially affects Spain, we believe that institutional pressures have an enhanced capacity to influence company behaviour. Following this line of thinking, the institutional setting of the golf courses of Andalusia, with reference to the environment, has been analysed with data for the year 2007, when the economic crisis had not yet provoked the severe effects that would be felt only three years later, in 2010. In this period Andalusia lost almost 4.5 million tourists annually; this leads us to think, a priori, that the subsector of golf tourism would also be negatively affected.

Regarding our research model, we would state, firstly, that in the two scenarios contemplated in our study, it is the coercive pressures that have the most influence on the behaviour of golf course operators, the organisations studied, with respect to the environment. The entry into force of specific legislation on the establishment and operation of golf courses in the Region of Andalusia has meant that coercive mechanisms are the principal factor responsible for ensuring that the golf courses of Andalusia implement policies of environmental responsibility. This direct

**Table 6.** Comparison of the testing of the hypotheses

Hypotheses	Relationship between constructs	Year			
		2007		2010	
		$\beta$ coefficients	t test (bootstrap)	$\beta$ coefficients	t test (bootstrap)
H1a	PresCoer->Envprac	0.3120	2.230**	0.358	2.673**
H1b	PresNorm->Envprac	0.2220	1.739*	0.274	2.257**
H1c	PresMim->Envprac	0.2880	2.147**	0.313	2.821**
H2a	Envprac->Legitim	0.4860	5.096***	0.524	6.225***
H3a	Legitim->Perform	0.2820	1.474*	0.388	1.792*
H3b	Envprac->Perform	0.3680	1.776*	0.397	2.358**

Note: Levels of significance: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.001 (based on  $t_{(499)}$  of two tails).

relationship has been demonstrated in previous studies, including those of Dasgupta (2000), Protoski and Praskash (2005) and Sarkar (2008), in which it is concluded that the stricter the environmental regulation the greater the extent to which organisations implement sustainable environmental practices. In fact, in the period analysed, it can be observed that this mechanism gains more capacity of influence; the path coefficient and the Student-t statistic are increased, and this leads us to think that, in times of economic crisis, the avoidance of possible environmental sanctions is also a factor that encourages environmentally-friendly policies within organisations (Camisón, 2010).

With reference to the normative pressures, these are seen to gain in capacity of influence in the period of study. It would seem logical that the passage of time should result in the entrenchment in organisations of those operating standards that originate essentially from professional associations (Scoot, 1995). Although normative pressures gain in capacity of influence, the hypothesis H1b was rejected in the sample of 2007 but was accepted in the sample of 2010; however, they were not found to have the importance attributed to them in the studies of Hefu (2010), Ximbiau *et al.* (2010) and Pasmara and Valle (2011), and they were relegated to the last position in capacity of influence in both scenarios of our study.

The mimetic pressures stay as the second-ranking mechanism in capacity of influence, in both scenarios. We consider that a situation of economic crisis, that affects tourism in general, causes greater uncertainty, which in turn gives the strategy of imitating the practices of other organisations increased consistency (the hypothesis H1c has greater strength in the year 2010 than in 2007).

Hypothesis H2a has also been affected by the increased complexity of the economic situation, and is found to have been reinforced in the period of study. In other words, the golf courses of Andalusia are fully convinced that an environmentally responsible policy confers more social acceptance, although a greater degree of legitimacy may not correspond with a better organisational performance, as can be

interpreted from the rejection of hypothesis H3a in both scenarios. We believe that this is due to the large number of legal standards with respect to the environment that oblige the golf courses to adopt responsible environmental behaviour. Those operating the golf courses believe that the best way to be accepted is to comply with the ruling legislation, even though this means implementing practices that are not perceived to have improved the business performance. This proposition would be in accordance with the study of Melville (2010), who argues for the existence of a growing institutional environment that drives the companies to develop environmentally-sustainable products.

Lastly, the evolution undergone by hypothesis H3b between 2007 and 2010 should be noted. In the sample of the year 2007, H3b was rejected, thus reaffirming the postulates in the papers of authors such as Suprpto (2004); Elsayed and Paton (2005); González and González (2005); Link and Naveh (2006); Roque and Cortez (2006); Aragon and Rubio (2007), in which a negative relationship between the implementation of responsible environmental practices and the organisational performance was argued. However, in the sample of 2010 a change was found in respect of the contribution made by responsible environmental practices to the improvement of organisation performance: a positive relationship was established in the studies of Williams *et al.*, (1993); Worrell *et al.*, (1995); Cordeiro and Sarkis (1997); Claver and Molina (2000); and Piñero *et al.*, (2009).

### **Managerial implications**

1. The importance of the legal standards (coercive pressure) on the environmental behaviour of organizations is emphasized. If we compare the evolution in the two temporal scenarios considered, we observe how their influence increases. This fact could be justified because in times of crisis companies pay more attention to be aligned with the legislation, in order to avoid possible sanctions.

2. The time factor in any organizational field favours the diffusion and sedimentation of environmental standards and management practices arising from business schools,

universities and professional bodies, so to avoid falling into competitive disadvantages, companies must control routines arising from the normative pressures.

3. The uncertainty generated around a context of economic crisis, as happens in our second scenario (2010), promotes the imitation of environmental practices (mimetism), as it is an optimal mechanism to reduce risks and uncertainties caused by any process of change or innovation.

4. Companies developing environmental management practices seek to improve their social acceptance, so we recommend actions to disseminate among their stakeholders the environmental measures implemented. Especially when, in general, they consider that their levels of organizational performance do not improve.

5. The relationship between environmental responsibility and organizational performance is more evident in an adverse economic context, because as a result of the development of such practices, companies can also get some improvements in their levels of efficiency, via cost reduction.

#### Limitations and future lines of research

In the section of limitations of our research, it is appropriate to mention that, although the reliability parameters of the scales are within the limits established by Numally (1978) and Fornel and Lacker (1998) for composite reliability and convergent validity of the constructs in the model, we are aware that the successive re-specifications of the scales in the two time points considered have caused them not to be fully equal. This limitation is circumvented to the extent that, following Mackenzie *et al.* (2003), using reflective indicators, as in our case, it is expected that these measures are interchangeable to share a common theme, and considered equivalent manifestations of the same construct.

As future lines of research we propose conducting multi-group analysis between organizations with different environmental settings, belonging to different industries or to the same one but located in different regions or

countries, in order to generalize the results obtained in this work.

#### Endnote:

<sup>1</sup> The information refers to the year 2009.

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