



## Competitive outreach in the 21st century: Why we need conservation marketing



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### ABSTRACT

Addressing impacts from human activities requires the change of current practices. However, reaching a target audience about conservation issues and influencing their behaviour is not easy in a world where people are continually bombarded with information, and distractions are permanently available. Although not typically considered to be part of the conservation science toolbox, marketing techniques were designed in the commercial sector to identify and influence human preferences and behaviour by placing target audiences at the core of the marketing process. It thus seems reasonable that the same marketing principles and tools could and should be used to address pressing conservation issues. In this manuscript, we provide an introduction to the main objectives of marketing and illustrate how these can be applied to conservation and animal welfare issues. To that end we offer two examples: Project Ocean, where a major UK retailer joined forces with the Zoological Society of London to influence consumer behaviour around seafood; and Blackfish, which coupled social media with an award-winning documentary to create a discussion around the welfare of large cetaceans in captivity. Without the ability to influence human behaviour, a conservationists' role will likely be limited to that of describing the loss of biodiversity and the decline of the environment. We thus hope that conservation practitioners can embrace marketing as a fundamental component of the conservation toolbox.

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### 1. Introduction

Conservation problems result from human activities. Accordingly, conservation solutions require the modification, cessation or replacement of those activities, and achieving this relies upon public support and action. In turn, such support requires issue

awareness combined with the willingness and ability to act. Thus, it is increasingly recognised that “conservation is primarily not about biology, but about people and the choices they make” (Cowling, 2005; Balmford and Cowling, 2006) and efforts to promote conservation action must understand and account for the influence of human behaviour (Veríssimo et al., 2012; Veríssimo, 2013).

However, the conservation community often fails to reach the public and influence their behaviour in a world that presents an overwhelming bombardment of information and a constant availability of entertainment. Additionally, the continuing culture of hopelessness among conservation biologists also constrains our

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ability to mobilise the general public to conservation action (Swaigood and Sheppard, 2010). Complicating matters further is the discovery that negative public perceptions of conservation practitioners may reduce the impact of any outreach efforts they undertake (Bashir et al., 2013). The result is that biodiversity and natural environments continue, for the most part, to decline in extent and quality, despite the numerous essential services they provide to society (Butchart et al., 2010; Rands et al., 2010; Harrison et al., 2014). For example, the 2014 Living Planet Index reveals a global decline in vertebrate population abundance of 52% between 1970 and 2010, with no indication of this decrease abating (WWF, 2014). Efforts to influence people's behaviours for conservation benefits should therefore seek new approaches. Although not typically considered as part of the conservation science toolbox, marketing techniques seem ideally suited to the task at hand (Veríssimo, 2013).

Traditional conservation outreach efforts have attempted to incite people to share the values of those conducting the outreach by simply educating the public at large about a given cause (e.g. Bjorkland and Pringle, 2001). In contrast, marketers put target audiences at the core of the process by trying to ensure what is being offered meets the needs and preferences of that target audience (Fox and Kotler, 1980; Akchin, 2001). Additionally, marketers use both qualitative and quantitative techniques to evaluate impacts that go beyond the more frequently used process outputs associated with conservation projects, such as counting the resources used for a project (e.g. number of leaflets distributed) or estimating project visibility (e.g. number of school classrooms visited) (Andreasen, 1994; Akchin, 2001; Lee and Kotler, 2011).

Why then, should marketing principles not be used to address pressing societal issues such as environmental degradation (Kotler and Levy, 1969; Fox and Kotler, 1980)? Indeed, Social Marketing has been widely implemented in other areas, such as public health, especially in the UK and the USA, to address issues such as healthy eating and smoking (French et al., 2009; Lee and Kotler, 2011).

Likewise, many conservation non-profit organisations (NPOs) are turning to marketing to increase the amount of financial support they receive from the public (Hibbert and Horne, 1996). These efforts have resulted in a growing body of literature detailing the importance of marketing for funding such organisations (e.g. Brady et al., 2011; Nicholls, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). WWF took this process one step further in 1986 when they undertook a global rebranding, with an update to their iconic logo, an action that encouraged several other NPOs to follow suit (Nicholls, 2011). These rebranding efforts demonstrate a growing acceptance that effectual marketing is a key component in funding conservation organisations.

Additional examples of the use of marketing techniques to promote conservation more specifically include the Pride campaigns pioneered by Rare (Jenks et al., 2010). These efforts seek to instil a sense of ownership and pride in local endemic species in the inhabitants of small nations, such as the 1998 St. Vincent parrot (*Amazona guildingii*) campaign (Vaughan et al., 2006; Jenks et al., 2010). In turn, this campaign drew heavily from the earlier work of Rare's founder Paul Butler in neighbouring Saint Lucia, where marketing tools had been used to successfully promote conservation of the St. Lucia parrot (*Amazona versicolor*) (Butler, 1988, 2000). In that earlier case the parrot was declared the national bird in 1979 and has since enjoyed a substantial improvement in its conservation status (Jenks et al., 2010).

Despite the achievements of Rare Pride campaigns (e.g. DeWan et al., 2013; Saypanya et al., 2013) and their subsequent adaptation by a few other organisations into similar, locally relevant initiatives, the wider application of marketing techniques in conservation remains limited. To address this issue a symposium was held at the International Marine Conservation Congress in Glasgow in August

2014 with the intention of illustrating the value of such techniques to the assembled members of the Society for Conservation Biology Marine Section and encouraging their more widespread adoption across marine conservation. Marketing theory was presented, as were examples of their use in influencing public preferences towards conservation goals. This was followed by a discussion on the merits and potential for the wider use of marketing techniques. A summary of these presentations and discussions follows here with recommendations on how conservation practitioners might apply marketing tools to enhance the impact of conservation activities.

## 2. An Ecologist's guide to marketing

Marketing is the process of planning and executing the development, value, promotion and distribution of products, services, and ideas to create exchanges that are mutually beneficial (Silk, 2006). In general terms, it focuses on building relationships and storytelling, which are innate human qualities. These exchanges are often between an organization and an intended audience (i.e. business to consumer), or between organizations (i.e. business to business). Professional marketing skills are commonly required to build and execute strategic marketing plans to serve a proposed outcome. It requires thorough research to understand the target audience's values and decision making processes, including an understanding of opposing views and interests to the intended idea to help build a stronger case and define competitive advantages.

There are three main objectives in marketing: 1) to create awareness and ensure an intended audience understands the basic concept behind the idea and its relevance to them; 2) to reduce or remove barriers surrounding the idea so that a proposed action takes minimal effort; and 3) to develop and manage relationships with the intended audience. Marketing always focuses on the audience's perspective. A target audience is defined using a specific set of values and interests, including demographics, geographic segmentation, behaviours, political values, social status and other variables determined by the required context. An ideal target audience is made of decision makers and/or influencers, who will ultimately be in charge of fulfilling the call to action. To do this, marketing professionals bridge, amongst others, psychology, sociology and graphic design principles in order to create a clearly-defined message for the target audience. The message precedes the call to action. The message is the information intended for the audience to know, built in a tone that appeals to their values. For example, messages of hope have in general more impact than messages of doom to inspire audiences to take action (Smith and Leiserowitz, 2014; Coulter and Pinto, 1995; Sodhi et al., 2011; Kelsey, 2012). A call to action is asking for a behavioural shift in the target audience, such as encouraging action, for example visiting a website, calling a toll free number, buying a product (or NOT buying a product), switching brands, or sharing knowledge with a friend. According to Schwartz's Norm Activation Model (Schwartz, 1977), behavioural change is influenced by the awareness of the need for change and the perceived notion that others are also acting. By targeting audiences at precise moments that most influence decisions, attitudes can be shifted. Once attitudes change, behaviour can change. McKinsey's loyalty loop, or consumer decision journey (Court et al., 2009) is an industry standard in marketing, which can equally be applied to audiences regarding conservation issues (Fig. 1, Table 1). It should, however, be noted that these adaptations of the consumer journey have yet to be applied to conservation action in practice.

The journey is a cycle of four stages: 1) initial-consideration set, 2) active evaluation (information gathering), 3) committing to an idea (or moment of purchase), and finally, 4) post-purchase experience. The targeted audience member (or consumer) begins with

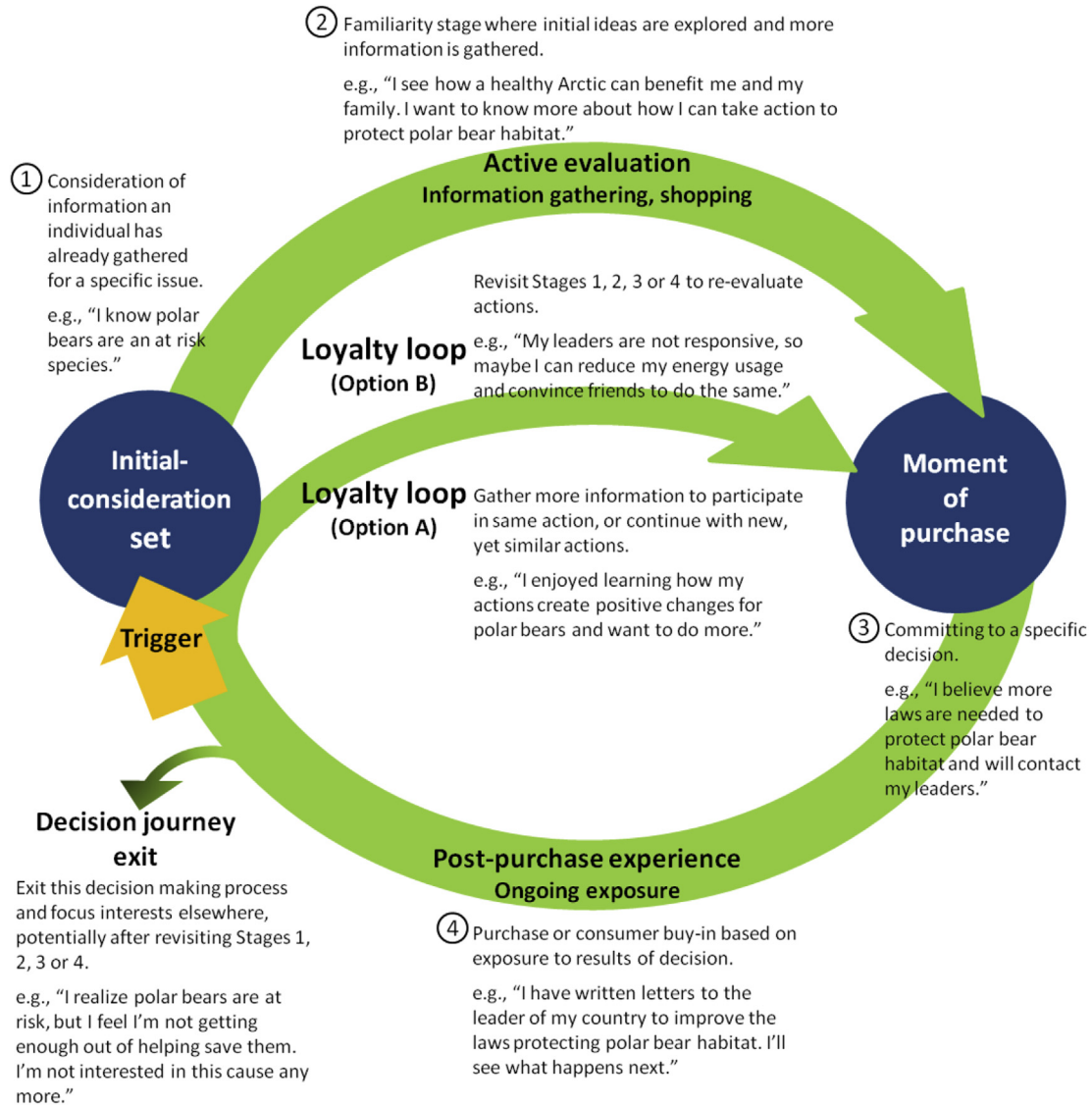


Fig. 1. The conservation decision journey (adapted from the consumer decision journey; Court et al., 2009).

determining what information they already have about a specific issue. Table 1 describes the consumer decision journey using an example in conservation. Once all stages have been completed, this journey can become a closed-loop or loyalty loop, where more

information is required to participate in new actions. If there is a positive and beneficial response from supporting the idea, further commitment to an idea (or another “purchase”) may occur. If no results are seen, individuals may still attempt alternative actions

Table 1  
An Example of a Conservation Decision Journey based on the Consumer Decision Journey (Court et al., 2009).

Stages of the consumer decision journey	Brief description of phase	Example from a conservation decision journey
Initial-consideration set	Consideration of information an individual has already gathered for a specific issue.	“I know polar bears are an at risk species.”
Active evaluation	Familiarity stage where initial ideas are explored and more information is gathered.	“I see how a healthy Arctic can benefit me and my family. I want to know more about how I can take action to protect polar bear habitat.”
Moment of purchase	Committing to a specific decision.	“I believe more laws are needed to protect polar bear habitat and will contact my leaders.”
Post-purchase experience	Purchase or consumer buy-in based on exposure to results of decision.	“I have written letters to the leader of my country to improve the laws protecting polar bear habitat. I’ll see what happens next.”
Loyalty loop (Option A)	Gather more information to participate in same action, or continue with new, yet similar actions.	“I enjoyed learning how my actions create positive changes for polar bears and want to do more.”
Loyalty loop (Option B)	Revisit Stages 1, 2, 3 or 4 to re-evaluate actions.	“My leaders are not responsive, so maybe I can reduce my energy usage and convince friends to do the same.”
Decision journey exit	Exit this decision making process and focus interests elsewhere, potentially after revisiting Stages 1, 2, 3 or 4.	“I realize polar bears are at risk, but I feel I’m not getting enough out of helping save them. I’m not interested in this cause any more.”

(another “purchase” within the same “brand”). Alternatively, there may be a decision to go back to previous stages of the journey to gather more information on other means to achieve the desired result, or to exit this decision journey for a new idea.

### 2.1. Branding and flagship species

An investigation of the world's 100 largest economies revealed that 13 of them are now companies (Hoorweg et al., 2010). For most of these, their single most valuable asset is their brand (Kotler et al., 2006). A brand is often defined as a name, symbol, design or combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product or service (Kotler et al., 2006). However, truly successful brands go beyond tangible characteristics and become the lens through which customers perceive a product or service. Marketers used such brand identities to build relationships of loyalty with the customer, ensuring both repeated purchases and peer recommendations. These relationships are so vital that hardly anything, from apples to water, remains unbranded; with branded products usually commanding a considerable premium over their generic counterparts (Kotler et al., 2006).

This need to create meaningful relationships with a target audience mimics the challenges faced by conservationists. In order to better engage their audience, conservationists commonly use species (but also ecosystems and landscapes, see Veríssimo et al., 2011) as the focus of their Conservation Marketing campaigns (Cousins et al., 2009; Veríssimo et al., 2011). These species, commonly known as flagship species (Veríssimo et al., 2011) are most effective if, like brands, their perceived attributes resonate with their target audience and if this group is aware of their existence (Veríssimo et al., 2013, 2014). This parallel between flagship species and commercial brands is hardly surprising given how frequently biodiversity features among the world's most powerful brands, such as Jaguar cars, Puma sportswear or Apple computers.

Realisation of this parallel helps open the door to the use of marketing tools to create, manage and evaluate the use of flagship species brands (see e.g. Veríssimo et al., 2014). Efficiently leveraging flagship species brands can yield important advantages to practitioners designing Conservation Marketing campaigns through the embodiment of the personal or social benefits of desirable behaviour (Keller, 1998). As with brands, conservation flagships can help individuals signal to themselves and others that they are engaging in a desirable behaviour, generating a reinforcing element through self-expression and peer-recognition.

Names are a key part of any brand and the same can be said for flagship species. In one study in the USA, Karaffa et al. (2012) offered members of the public a selection of real and fictitious species names and asked them which species were most important to conserve. The study found that species with fictitious common names with patriotic terms were selected as being of highest conservation concern, such as “American eagle”, “patriot falcon”, “great American wolf”. In contrast, negative-sounding species names, such as “razor eagle”, “killer falcon”, “sheep-eating eagle”, evoked least concern (Karaffa et al., 2012). Similar results were also found in a more recent study by Scott and Parsons (2014).

These studies suggest that greater conservation support could be garnered by rebranding threatened species (or sub-species/populations) by giving them interesting, patriotic (including “royal”) or regionally-specific and positive-sounding names. ‘Rebranding’ species common names is not uncommon: names are changed, modified and evolve over time ‘naturally’ and there are several instances where species were deliberately renamed to increase public interest. For example, the fishing industry has for decades changed the common names of fish species to influence consumer preference and increase market share (Jaquet and Pauly,

2008). In another example, the local resident population of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) was given the new common name the “Chinese white dolphin” (Osbeck, 1765) and then an even more regionally specific “the Hong Kong pink dolphin” to help develop local interest in the species. This gambit was ultimately successful with the Hong Kong pink dolphin selected as the official mascot of the Hong Kong handover celebrations (from UK governance to Chinese) in 1997. However one potential downside of rebranding and successful marketing (or indeed any conservation effort focused on single species) is that it may divert attention from other equally or more threatened species (Douglas and Winkel, 2014). Marketing initiatives should be conducted strategically, monitored, and be responsive to unforeseen negative consequences if they should arise.

### 2.2. Establishing an initial-consideration set

While flagship species can (and have) helped consumers through much of their conservation decision making journey, many issues, especially in the marine environment, face a much more basic challenge: they are ‘out of sight, out of mind’. This creates a substantial barrier even to instilling the public with an initial-consideration set (Table 1). While our knowledge of public perceptions (i.e. people's knowledge, values, concerns, etc.) of all marine environments is relatively low (Jefferson et al., 2014), the most unknown of these habitats is the high seas; a particular concern for the emerging issue of deep sea mining (DSM).

The deep sea is the largest ecosystem on earth, stretching from the edge of the continental shelf across abyssal plains and deep ocean trenches almost 11,000 m deep. Deep sea habitats such as hydrothermal vents, seamounts and abyssal sediments are home to a diverse and unique biota (Rex and Etter, 2010), but are also a source of precious metals such as copper, cobalt and gold (Mengerink et al., 2014) that are required for the manufacture of mobile devices (Geyer and Blass, 2010). Increasing demand (e.g. Yu et al., 2010) and technological advances are making it financially viable to harvest these metals from remote and previously inaccessible deep sea habitats (Halfar and Fujita, 2007). Harvesting is likely to cause detrimental impacts, including removal of habitats and sedimentation of communities close to mining areas (Ramirez-Llodra et al., 2011). Our understanding of how to facilitate habitat reconstruction in the deep sea is severely lacking and the structures that will be targeted by DSM (e.g. manganese nodules) may take millions of years to regrow (Van Dover et al., 2014).

Despite this, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) has licensed areas in the Pacific Indian and Atlantic Oceans, resulting in 15-year contracts for exploration with 17 companies. Many of these target areas are Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, where considerable gaps in DSM regulation exist (Gjerde et al., 2008). There is a substantial opportunity here to use innovative marketing techniques to catalyse connections between society and the remote deep seas and to generate support for strengthened regulation and management of the DSM industry. This will not be easy; connecting audiences with their ‘ocean backyards’ is already a considerable challenge (e.g. Vincent, 2011; Fletcher et al., 2012), and the deep sea is far from an ocean backyard. However, audiences have previously engaged with habitats far from their own homes (e.g. Caro and O'Doherty, 1999), and therefore connecting audiences with the unique world of the deep sea should be within our grasp.

Once connected, marketing could promote suitable actions. For example, mobile device recycling can recover precious metals (Geyer and Blass, 2010). While recycling is currently relatively accessible (Ongondo and Williams, 2011), it is relatively underused (Welfens et al., 2013). As mobile use rises rapidly, recycling will become more urgent. Increasing recycling behaviour is a complex



and difficult task (Kollmuss and Agyemang, 2002; Schultz et al., 1995), but marketing expertise could be applied to better market the ‘product’ of recycling obsolete mobile phones, and overcome the barriers to pro-environmental behaviour change.

Establishing an initial consideration set relating to DSM and the high seas may be most needed in the Cook Islands: a nation that has never even had a terrestrial mine within its borders. Despite this, the Cook Islands is a leader in developing management frameworks for DSM due to the high-density, cobalt-rich nodule fields within their EEZ (Lynch, 2011). In fact, the government preparation for DSM led to them being the first nation to pass specifically focused legislation, the Seabed Minerals Act, in 2009 (Lynch, 2011), which came into force in 2013. Industrial marketing efforts have long produced materials which openly encourage foreign DSM activities, also apparently with the support of the Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources (Kingan, 1998). Cook Islanders have a conservative approach to development, with robust restrictions on foreign land purchase and development, as well as regulations preventing any buildings exceeding the height of the tallest palm tree (e.g. the Development Investment Act 1995–6 and the Leases Restrictions Act 1976). Cook Islanders place great value on marine life and resources and many already hold negative views on the development of DSM in their waters (Lynch, 2011). Conservation marketing techniques could be used to build DSM ‘brand’ awareness in Cook Islanders, as well as instil a greater sense of national ownership and pride in their ocean heritage. These could then form an initial consideration set for additional outreach and Conservation Marketing efforts.

### 2.3. Conservation marketing in practice

While Conservation Marketing remains a growing field, there are examples of where these practices are beginning to be used with successful results, two of which are discussed below.

#### 1) Project Ocean partnership

Project Ocean was launched in May 2011, an innovative and ground-breaking partnership between the luxury London department store, Selfridges and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to bring ocean conservation to new audiences and change consumer buying habits (Selfridges, 2011). With Selfridges’ renowned creative marketing skills, Project Ocean provides an ideal opportunity to test the effectiveness of marketing conservation in new ways to effect change. Project Ocean has three clear objectives: 1. raise awareness of overfishing; 2. change people’s buying and eating habits; 3. raise money and awareness for marine reserves.

This conservation-marketing experiment launched the concept of ‘retail activism’ and brought together 22 NPOs as well as celebrities, scientists, royalty, fishing industry representatives, youth-group leaders, parliamentarians, heads of state, artists, fashion designers and musicians. Since the launch of Project Ocean, Selfridges has led by example and influenced many of its suppliers on a number of marine issues, including committing to only stock sustainably-sourced fish in its Food Hall and restaurants (Selfridges, 2011) and removing all beauty and cosmetic products containing shark oil or shark by-products (Selfridges, 2011). Selfridges is also addressing the issue of marine plastics through better retail ‘plastic practice’ in a new campaign in 2015.

In terms of reaching wider audiences and raising awareness, the Project Ocean advertising campaign reached a national audience through a wide variety of print and other media, including large advertisements across London and window displays along Europe’s busiest shopping street (Oxford Street) that conveyed important conservation messages (London blog, 2011), which generated

discussion among customers and reached brand new audiences through a series of events (Greenpeace UK, 2011) and in the media. For example the Daily Telegraph (12th May 2011) reported that Prince Charles called on consumers to only eat sustainable seafood to avoid a collapse in the world’s fisheries at the launch of Project Ocean, while the Sunday Times (24th April 2011) coverage went under the headline, “Haddock over Heels: Do people really want to be lectured about the environment while out shopping? Selfridges seem to think so”. Key messages were developed in collaboration with ZSL staff and the Selfridges’ creative team and included displays aimed at catching people’s attention, such as giant panda ‘swimming’ next to a southern bluefin tuna with the message ‘You wouldn’t eat a panda’. This illustrated that this tuna species is more threatened (Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; Collette et al., 2011) than the giant panda (Endangered; Lü, 2008). Another window engaged the public in a text-message-based petition to change European policy on discards in conjunction with ‘Hugh’s Fish Fight’ campaign, run by celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall (Syse, 2015).

Activities to raise awareness extended throughout the store with consistent messages presented in a variety of ways, including art installations, interactive displays and a live exhibit, again guided by ZSL for technical content. These highlighted threats to marine ecosystems and conservation solutions the customer could engage with through informed purchasing choices and donating funds. In addition to the communication focus, Project Ocean raised £120,000 during the one month launch period in 2011. These funds were used for example to train emerging marine conservationists in Southeast Asia (EDGE 2011), and to support a research expedition to the Chagos marine reserve (Chagos Trust, 2012).

In terms of traditional outreach metrics, and in addition to the many people who were exposed to Project Ocean through advertising or the London store, there was widespread media coverage reaching over 400 million people in 37 countries. This estimate is based on 85 print articles and 200 online articles and blogs (e.g. Sunday Times Style 24 April 2011, circulation: 1,091,869; Elle UK.com 11 May 2011, unique users: 250,000; International Herald Tribune 24 May 2011, circulation: 245,233; Metropolitan May 2011, circulation: 800,000) as well as 8 broadcast pieces for TV and radio.

In terms of actual conservation impact: a) Selfridges changed their purchasing practices to only select sustainable seafood, provide tools for their customers to do the same (Selfridges, 2014), and eliminate shark oil from their beauty products (Selfridges, 2011; Elle UK, 2015); b) Selfridges influenced the behaviour of their in-store franchises, such as a sushi restaurant chain (Yo Sushi!) that switched to sustainable seafood in not only Selfridges, but also across their 80 UK restaurants as a result of Project Ocean (Fish2Fork, 2015; Selfridges, 2011); c) Selfridges’ customers who experienced Project Ocean were more aware of what fish species they should eat (Richie, 2011); d) 52.6 ha of ocean was fully protected through a new community managed marine reserve in the Philippines (Matabao MPA Ordinance 2011 Municipal Resolution #2011-173); and e) the Marine Reserves Coalition (a collaboration between ZSL, Greenpeace UK, Marine Conservation Society, Blue Marine Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trusts) was created, which is working to increase ocean protection, particularly in seas under UK jurisdiction ([www.marinereservescoalition.org](http://www.marinereservescoalition.org)). The Project Ocean campaign has therefore shown the value of using retail and marketing as a mechanism to engender positive behaviour changes across society, thereby supporting conservation.

#### 2) Blackfish

One very successful example of animal-oriented Social Marketing surrounds the documentary *Blackfish*, which documents

various issues, including the deaths of trainers and wild captures, related to captive killer whales (*Orcinus orca*; Parsons, 2012). The documentary was shortlisted for an Academy Award; success that has been partially attributed to its social media reach. Both #Blackfish and #Blackfishthemovie trended multiple times on Twitter, helped in part by a range of celebrity endorsements (Rogers, 2013). When the documentary first aired on US television (on CNN), the network recognized the already growing social media conversation about *Blackfish* on Twitter and elsewhere. CNN actively leveraged that trend by curating a background conversation on Twitter about the film and related issues during the broadcast. There were 67,673 documentary-related Tweets seen by 7.3 million people, making it the most talked about show on CNN that month (Rogers, 2013). The cast of *Blackfish* remained extremely coordinated in their messaging and interactive with the film's audience and related causes. This is the consistent post-purchase experience and on-going exposure that we see in the McKinsey's loyalty loop (Fig. 1).

*Blackfish's* has developed a loyal following that has pressured corporate sponsors to drop SeaWorld partnerships and musicians to cancel shows at the park (CNN, 2014). The film also played an integral part in driving the proposition of a bill in California (AB 2140, more commonly dubbed "the Blackfish Bill" in the media), which if passed would lead to the prohibition of captive killer whales in the State. Following the film's release, the company has faced substantial declines in visitor numbers, in a year where most other theme park companies have an increase in their visits, associated with a 60% drop in stock price since the documentary aired in July 2013 (Ferdman, 2014). This stock crash has incited a shareholder class action lawsuit claiming that company executives failed to disclose to the public the potential negative publicity from the film (Rosen Law Firm, 2014).

The *Blackfish*-induced criticism of SeaWorld has also widened to include commentary on the lack of SeaWorld-funded conservation efforts, especially for wild cetaceans where their total (not annual) contributions were less than \$77,000 between 2004 and 2012 (Hodgins, 2014). SeaWorld subsequently announced a proposal for more education in its parks, more funding for the conservation of wild whales and dolphins, and the building of larger pools for their captive killer whales.

*Blackfish* was successful as a campaigning tool arguably because the producers and promoters combined the iconic species with a visual media format and supported that combination with extensive fact-checking. Scientists and lawyers used evidence to back-up every statement made in the documentary, leaving SeaWorld unable to sue the production team, or to effectively refute the vast majority of the statements made in the documentary. The resulting package was factually correct, yet emotionally moving; a combination that is effective at influencing public opinion (Sitar, 2012). Scientists and science journalists were recruited to provide simultaneous information on Twitter during the airing of the documentary, and members of the public who were interested in the issue and wanted to engage were encouraged and continually motivated to share their concerns via petitions and social media outreach. *Blackfish* and the associated social media coverage (as well as the response by SeaWorld) could be a road map for what to do (and what not to do) for increasing the impact of other animal welfare or conservation-oriented media products.

### 3. The future of conservation marketing

Marketing has been traditionally defined as "a process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others" (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). We seek to broaden this definition to

conservation issues, by proposing that 'Conservation Marketing' is 'the ethical application of marketing strategies, concepts and techniques to influence attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of individuals, and ultimately societies, with the objective of advancing conservation goals'.<sup>2</sup> Marketing professionals use techniques to influence the public to buy particular products by developing relationships or creating positive associations with that particular item or service. Despite their often malevolent reputation in conservation circles, the same techniques (proven to be globally effective for consumer product marketing) can be used to positively influence public behaviour regarding conservation matters. This is likely to be even more important in advancing marine conservation efforts to which the public typically relate less than they do with more visible terrestrial problems.

Little research has been conducted around the use of marketing techniques in conservation efforts. Even the flagship species concept, the most widely used marketing tool in conservation, still has many facets that remain under studied. Flagships can be used to give wider conservation problems a recognisable form, which can then be used in marketing strategies that better connect with target audiences. Research is needed to understand how the appeal of flagships (and their associated causes) may change under different contexts, such as when one flagship predates upon another (e.g. Veríssimo et al., 2012). Conservation scientists will also need to become more comfortable with the use of anthropomorphism to build a more favourable image of a species (e.g. Root-Bernstein et al., 2013). Relatedly, the potential impacts of extinction on the wider conservation effort must be considered, given that many flagships are already endangered species. Care must also be taken to avoid over promotion of one flagship species, which could perhaps lead to the perception that other species are less worthy (e.g. Douglas and Veríssimo, 2013). It is also recommended that further research be conducted to quantify how "rebranding" species, for example by changing their names, could assist in such efforts. Finally, studies are needed into the effectiveness of flagship species in the face of the various trade-offs involved in their selection and use. It is the proposal of this paper that the application of marketing techniques provides a number of tools that are capable of answering many of these remaining questions. It is thus clear that Conservation Marketing represents a field that is wide open for research, from the understanding of the environmental values of target audiences, to the evaluation of efforts to influence the behaviours of those whose lifestyle impacts on natural resources.

### 4. Conclusions

Although the two case studies presented here are high-profile examples selected for wider recognition among readers, marketing strategies can also tailor outreach strategies to local situations to achieve some very specific results over small scales. Regardless of the scale, marketing techniques can thus be used to influence human behaviour for the benefit of conservation (and animal welfare) efforts. Influencing human behaviour is one of the most significant challenges faced by conservationists today. Tackling it will require not only the willingness of conservation practitioners to learn from marketing, but also a push towards evidence-based practice and, thus, embracing failure (Veríssimo, 2013). This is no small test. Without the ability to influence human behaviour, a conservationists' role may be limited to that of describing the loss of

<sup>2</sup> This definition was crafted by the Steering Committee as part of the charter for the provisional Conservation Marketing and Engagement Working Group within the Society for Conservation Biology.

biodiversity and the decline of the environment. It is already recognized that “An entire generation of scientists has now been trained to describe, in ever greater and more dismal detail, the death of the ocean” (Knowlton and Jackson, 2011). However, we hope that the realisation of this plight and the associated need to influence human behaviour will lead us to embrace marketing as a fundamental component of the conservation toolbox.

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