

The Public Face of Zoos: Images of Entertainment, Education and Conservation

Authors: Carr, Neil; Cohen, Scott

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Abstract:

The contemporary justification for zoos is based on their ability to act as sites of wildlife conservation. Alongside this is the reality that zoos have historically been defined as sites for the entertainment of the general public and continue to be dependent on the revenue raised through visitor receipts. Consequently, zoos are, today, identified as sites of conservation, research, education, and entertainment. In recognition of this, the aim of our research was to assess the image that zoos are currently portraying to the general public, to see how the different roles are advertised and how they sit alongside one another. The data were gathered via a content and semiotic analysis of the websites of 54 zoos spread throughout the world. The results indicate that the image zoos present to the public whilst incorporating a strong conservation message lacks depth. In addition, the image zoos present via their websites has a strong emphasis on entertainment. Based on the results of this paper, it is suggested that zoos need to present their conservation credentials in more detail and ensure the entertainment message does not adversely affect transmission of the conservation or education one whilst at the same time continuing to attract sufficient visitors to ensure the economic viability of zoos. In addition, it is recognized that changing public perceptions of zoos requires these institutions to act together rather than independently when determining the overarching theme of the “zoo.”

Keywords: [CONSERVATION](#); [ENTERTAINMENT](#); [IMAGE](#); [ZOO](#)

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