



Influence of interpretation on conservation intentions of whale tourists

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Interpretation increased conservation intentions in whale watch tourists.
- Conservation intentions did not increase in control group without interpretation.
- Effect of evoking emotion is larger than fostering responsibility or knowledge.
- Whale tourism can contribute to whale conservation through interpretation.

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ABSTRACT

The concept of interpretation denotes on-site education while people engage in a guided nature-based activity. The literature suggests that interpretation influences conservation intentions but does not reveal whether the effect is constituted by interpretation or by other aspects of the guided activity. This study examined the effect of interpretation on conservation intentions on top of a wildlife viewing tour without interpretation, and differentiated among interpretation contents. In a field experiment among whale watchers, four interpretation conditions were implemented: (1) no interpretation (control group), (2) knowledge content, (3) responsibility content, and (4) emotion content. Whale conservation intentions were measured before and after the whale watching experience. The results indicate that interpretation has an effect on whale conservation intentions. The effect of emotion interpretation was larger than were the effects of knowledge interpretation and responsibility interpretation. Incorporating emotional messages, then, could contribute to successful interpretation in terms of promoting conservation among tourists.