

#MantaManners, a public education campaign.

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Ecotourism is an incredibly fast growing industry around the world. In particular snorkelling and dive activities are becoming increasingly popular (O'Malley et al., 2013). One of the animals that have become a particular focus of marine ecotourism is the Manta Ray. Around the world dive operators offering manta ray dives and snorkels have been estimated to make over US\$73million each year. While there are huge benefits in terms of economic growth, there are a number of concerns associated with human impact (O'Malley et al., 2013, WWF, 2013).

Manta rays are known to regularly frequent particular places on the reef known as 'cleaning stations' (Dewar et al., 2008). Because dive operators know that they are likely to find the rays here they advertise specific manta ray dives. The increased tourism surrounding manta rays is having a disruptive effect on their ecology (Manta Trust, 2013).

The goal of this campaign is to minimise the disturbance divers have on manta rays by increasing awareness surrounding appropriate human-manta interactions. The specific objective focuses on making divers follow a code of conduct we have devised while in the water with manta rays.

Divers and dive operators have been selected as the audience for the campaign as they are the ones who have the direct impact on the manta rays. They are also the ones who appreciate the manta rays and want to make the most of their dive experience.

Divers conducting dives through dive operators are predominantly tourists who may have limited English. Furthermore the prospect of an impending dive is quite distracting. Therefore we decided to create a simple laminated poster that can be distributed to the divers on the boat to the dive site.

This double-sided poster is broken up into two parts. On one side is a picture of an up close manta ray experience and 4 easy steps. These steps (indicated with green ticks for easy identification) will maximise the divers experience while limiting the disturbance they cause. On the other side is a picture of a manta swimming away and 4 ways (indicated with red crosses for easy identification) to disrupt the manta rays and have a bad experience. The idea is that by educating the divers on how to have the best manta ray experience we are also generating awareness on how to limit human disturbance.

In order to persuade the divers to seek more information online after their manta experience and increase the public awareness, we have also incorporated a hashtag. #MantaManners will be a way for divers to go online and tag the photos from their manta ray experience.

Using a simple poster we will be able to outline the best way to maximise their dive experience and minimise their disturbance. This in conjunction with the hashtag we will be able to reach a wider audience and promote more sustainable ecotourism.

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Side 1



Maximising your Manta experience!!

Try to:

- ✓ Leave plenty of open space, at least 3m, for the manta to manoeuvre
- ✓ Stay low - close to the sea-floor but be aware of your buoyancy and surroundings
- ✓ Stay calm and be patient - let the manta see you before approaching
- ✓ Allow the manta to come to you of its own free will

← **Follow these tips and this could be you!!!**

Fabrice Jaine.

Maximising your Manta experience!!

Try not to:

- ✗ Touch the Mantas as it can harm the Mantas' skin
- ✗ Chase or block the path of the Mantas as it will scare them and cause them to flee
- ✗ Swim too close to the cleaning station (rocky outcrop with cleaning fish)
- ✗ Encircle the Manta as it will scare it and cause it to flee at the first opportunity



