

**Corporate Social Responsibility at SeaWorld Following
the *Blackfish* Controversy: A Way Forward**

Helen A. Castro

Communication & Society

17:194:510.01

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

December 21, 2016

In 2013, a documentary called *Blackfish* exposed what its creators said were secrets about the way killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) were trained and treated at SeaWorld (Cowperthwaite & Oteyza, 2013). The movie was made after Dawn Brancheau, an experienced trainer, was killed by Tilikum, a whale who performed in the Shamu shows at SeaWorld in Florida. Brancheau's death in 2010 was seen as even more tragic because she was not the first person killed by Tilikum. Critics said that Tilikum should never have been allowed in a pool with human trainers after he was acquired by SeaWorld from a marine park in Canada where he had drowned a young trainer (Garcia, 2010), and many blamed SeaWorld and its practices regarding captive whales for the tragedy. There were protests by groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) (McEwan, 2014), and numerous entertainers backed out of their contracts to perform at the SeaWorld theme parks (Edwards, 2013; Johnson, 2014).

The damage to SeaWorld's reputation was rapid and extensive and continues to the present day (Betz, 2014; Duhon, Ellison, & Ragas, 2016), with a fall in stock price (Betz, 2014; Huston, 2016), reduced attendance numbers (Betz, 2014; Duhon et al., 2016), and continued calls for boycotts by celebrities (Toomey, 2015). Three years after the controversy erupted, SeaWorld's new management team is still trying to make things right, including by posting an advertisement this year for applicants for the position of Director, Corporate Social Responsibility (Public Affairs Council, 2016).

Purpose of This Study

This study will review the impact of the release of *Blackfish* on SeaWorld and investigate ways in which SeaWorld can use corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices to repair their damaged reputation. Other researchers have examined the impact of the *Blackfish* scandal on

SeaWorld (Duhon et al., 2016; Müller, 2016; Schoen, 2016), but this study differs in its focus on the proposal for SeaWorld to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015) in an effort to do well by doing good. The negative effects of the scandal are clear, but less has been discussed regarding a way for the company to move forward and recover their reputation. The following proposal addresses this issue in detail.

Background

SeaWorld was founded in 1964 by George Millay, Milt Shedd, Ken Norris, and David DeMott. According to the company's website, it was "originally planned as an underwater restaurant" and "grew into a marine zoological park on 21 acres along the shore of Mission Bay in San Diego. With an initial investment of \$1.5 million, 45 employees, several dolphins, sea lions, and two saltwater aquariums, SeaWorld drew more than 400,000 visitors its first year" (SeaWorld, 2015b). Since that time, SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment (which is the formal name of the current corporate owner of the parks) has grown to include three SeaWorld locations (San Diego, CA; San Antonio, TX; and Orlando, FL); two Busch Gardens theme parks and neighboring water parks (Tampa, FL; Williamsburg, VA); Discovery Cove (Orlando, FL), where guests can swim with dolphins; Sesame Place (Langhorne, PA), a theme park showcasing the characters from television's *Sesame Street*; and three additional water parks adjacent to the SeaWorld locations (Aquatica SeaWorld's Waterpark) (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2015b). The primary effects of the *Blackfish* controversy have been felt at the three SeaWorld locations, where the main attraction had long been the Shamu killer whale shows (Storey, 2015).

Competition

Particularly in Orlando, FL, SeaWorld faces tremendous competition for visitors from neighboring theme parks Walt Disney World and Universal Studios. Over the years, both of these competitors have grown to become multi-day resort destinations rather than simply places for Florida tourists to spend a day (Barnes, 2015; Global Industry Analysts, 2012; Pedicini, 2016). This expansion of competitors' resorts has resulted in both increased pressure on SeaWorld to attract more guests and a reduction in optimism from financial analysts looking at the company's earning potential for the future (Betz, 2014; Huston, 2016).

In addition to their success as vacation destinations, SeaWorld's competitors in Florida have strong reputations regarding their corporate social responsibility. According to Holcomb, Okumus, and Bilgihan, The Walt Disney Company's (Disney) "web site offered a link for comprehensive CSR activities" (Holcomb et al., 2010, p. 322), including a 100-page online CSR report detailing the company's activities in the areas of children and family, content and products, environment, community, and workplaces. Holcomb and colleagues devote four full pages to their discussion of Disney's CSR accomplishments. Next on their list is Universal Orlando, to which they devote two and a half pages. Areas of focus for Universal Orlando's CSR activities include environmental sustainability, diversity issues, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and children with life-threatening illnesses or with disabilities, among others (Holcomb et al., 2010, p. 326). Of note, Holcomb and colleagues report that when they analyzed data regarding SeaWorld's CSR activities, "most of the CSR activities often referred to the company's previous owner, Anheuser-Busch rather than Blackstone Group" [the owner as of the date of the Holcomb et al. study] (Holcomb et al., 2010, p. 328). In fact, the three and a half pages they devote to SeaWorld's CSR activities focus exclusively on those conducted when the company was owned by Anheuser-Busch. Even now, a look at SeaWorld's "Industry

Recognition” section of their website shows that almost all of the awards and achievements they have been recognized for are from that period and earlier (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016b).

According to Owen Rankin (personal communication, October 5, 2016), companies with good reputations are 7 times more likely to earn premium prices for their products and services. And if one of your competitors has been listed among the top ten of the “world’s most admired companies” for many years, as Disney has been (Fortune, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), incidents that reduce stakeholders’ trust in your company can be exceptionally damaging. As Deepa Prahalad notes in her article, “Why Trust Matters More Than Ever for Brands,” “Anecdotal evidence suggests that consumers are quite forgiving of strategic mistakes....The mistakes that are hard for companies to recover from are largely from poor conduct. Consumers are not looking for perfection — they are looking for decency” (Pralhad, 2011). When a company’s public response to a tragedy is not what stakeholders think it should be, trust is difficult to reestablish. This is the situation in which SeaWorld finds itself following the release of the movie *Blackfish*.

Blackfish

Gabriela Cowperthwaite’s 2013 documentary film *Blackfish* “presented the circumstances of orcas, or ‘killer whales,’ held in captivity at parks like SeaWorld as cruel to the animals and dangerous to the trainers” (Schoen, 2016, p. 1). The film got much of its credibility from the use of interviews with former SeaWorld trainers—who are also shown in old footage from their work in the parks—and their reactions to the killing of their friend Dawn Brancheau by Tilikum, the 12,000 pound orca who had a history of aggressive behavior against other humans. According to Schoen, “The trainers who die are presented to us as real people who are

friends with the actual people we see on the screen” (Schoen, 2016, p. 8). The very personal nature of what is explored in the film (including scenes of mother orcas reacting with “grief” at being separated from their babies) strengthens its effects as a tool to garner public support for the argument being made in the film (Schoen, 2016). Schoen even says that “*Blackfish* is especially fascinating to anyone interested in documentary as a tool for social activism” (Schoen, 2016, p. 5).

As a result of the film’s strong bias against the practices at SeaWorld, it is difficult to determine how much of what is shown is true and how much is manipulation of actual events and creative editing. In fact, SeaWorld even includes a lengthy article in the “SeaWorld Cares” section of their website titled “Why ‘Blackfish’ is Propaganda, not a Documentary,” which disputes many of the points made in the film and presents “supporting documents” for their position (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016f). However, regardless of the degree of truth shown in *Blackfish*, there is no doubt that the film had a strong impact on all who either saw it or simply heard about it from others. Its distribution in theaters, followed by “a well-advertised special on CNN” (Schoen, 2016, p. 6), and subsequent availability on Netflix (where it can still be viewed) ensured that it would have a wide audience.

The film effectively created a villain for the public to dislike. According to Schoen, “The culprit is associated with family – a place where we go for family outings, family fun. We know where SeaWorld is. It is in our world. When *Blackfish* gives us evidence that SeaWorld lies, we are being lied to by someone we know” (Schoen, 2016, p. 10). And the film clearly shows us that the only way to respond is to stop the villain who lied to us.

Initial Corporate Response to *Blackfish*

SeaWorld's initial corporate response to the movie was inadequate and consisted of a series of press releases and "position papers" that were "almost entirely focused on refuting the veracity of various claims made in Cowperthwaite's film, or assuring park visitors that the animals are well-treated" (Schoen, 2016, p. 10). Some of these communications were actually distributed before the film was even released. In his article, "SeaWorld Crisis Management: The Textbook Case of What NOT To Do," David E. Johnson states, "SeaWorld's response to the film was to lash out at it before it actually aired by sending a critique to film critics. Company executives had also refused to be interviewed for the film. This was a wrong way to deal with a brewing crisis as it created more attention for the film" (Johnson, 2014). In addition, SeaWorld completely ignored the social media aspect of the crisis, choosing to delete consumers' posts on their Facebook page calling for a boycott of the park rather than addressing the concerns voiced by the public. They also chose to focus on highlighting the animal rescue work they had done over the years instead of discussing the crisis. These actions caused consumers to become outraged, keeping the issue alive and growing on social media. Each time another consumer expressed concerns over the issues raised in the film, SeaWorld simply responded with criticism of the accuser and complaints that their park attendance was being affected (Johnson, 2014).

According to Duhon et al., "SeaWorld management underestimated the potential impact of *Blackfish* on its reputation and business performance and seemed slow to respond. When it did, the scope of its response and the matching of *words* with real *actions* were lacking" (Duhon et al., 2016, p. 25). Because of this, the overall impression was that they were still lying.

In August 2014, SeaWorld finally made an announcement that showed it was ready to take action to address stakeholders' concerns raised by *Blackfish*. Among the changes, it would "build new, larger environments at its theme parks and would fund additional research on the

animals along with programs to protect ocean health and whales in the wild” and it would “include features that will be more stimulating for the whales” in all three SeaWorld parks (Associated Press, 2014). Further, in March 2015, SeaWorld launched a “transparency campaign” aimed at restoring their reputation. The campaign consisted of print advertisements in major national newspapers, national television advertisements, and a new section on their website called “AskSeaWorld.com” (Duhon et al., 2016). According to Duhon and colleagues, “as of mid-2015, SeaWorld had spent \$10 million on all of its efforts related to repairing its reputation and making its case” (2016, p. 21). As they focus more on encouraging stakeholders to discuss their concerns on social media channels, SeaWorld shows a willingness to listen and act. This is a strong step in the right direction.

Other Issues Raised by the Film

In addition to its exposé of the conditions at SeaWorld, *Blackfish* also focused attention on the issue of using nonhuman animals for entertainment purposes. When SeaWorld first opened in the 1960s, science did not know much about the intelligence levels of killer whales, dolphins, and other animals that are kept in captivity. Since that time, however, much research has been done about animal intelligence, and we have learned that many of the animals we have used as circus and theme park performers are actually highly intelligent creatures with strong emotional ties to members of their family group (Anderson, Waayers, & Knight, 2016).

Anderson and colleagues also discuss evidence showing that “orcas are social mammals that will readily bond with humans” (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 52). In addition, studies have been done to determine whether killer whales in captivity live as long as those in the wild, with mixed results (Jett & Ventre, 2015; Robeck, Willis, Scarpuzzi, & O’Brien, 2015). Other studies have

investigated the effects of confinement on killer whale behavior and subsequent aggression by these whales (Anderson et al., 2016). Consequently, PETA and others have been very vocal in their protests regarding keeping animals captive for human entertainment. In fact, Ringling Bros. recently announced that it would no longer be using elephants in its circus performances, and that all elephants in their care would be sent to a conservation center in Florida for retirement (Karimi, 2016). *Blackfish* was the catalyst for many of these developments.

SeaWorld's New Focus

On March 17, 2016, SeaWorld announced the end of its killer whale breeding program (Howard, 2016). According to their website, “Times have changed, and we are changing with them. The killer whales currently in our care will be the last generation of killer whales at SeaWorld. The company will end all orca breeding as of today” (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016c). This announcement was followed by a 9.5% jump in the price of SeaWorld’s stock, which was “its biggest single-day gain ever” (Cesar, 2016). PETA has praised this decision but “is calling on the company to end their orca programs immediately and ‘open their tanks to the oceans’” (Howard, 2016). However, SeaWorld has stated that because their whales were raised in captivity, they cannot be safely released into the wild. According to the SeaWorld Cares section of the company’s website, “They will still be here for many years to come, living and thriving under the best veterinary care. While the animals are with us, we will be changing their habitats and their performances. The all-new orca experiences will soon take place in more natural looking habitats, and with a focus on the whales’ natural behaviors. The new ‘encounters’ will include the awe-inspiring moments you love with an added emphasis on education and conservation – ensuring future generations will be inspired for years to come”

(SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016a). They go on to say, “No longer a theatrical show, these programs will focus on orca enrichment, exercise and overall health. Our existing show pools and viewing areas will be redesigned into a more naturalistic setting and we will continue to present the whales at scheduled times before a guest audience. This exciting transformation will start in our San Diego park in 2017, followed by the parks in San Antonio and Orlando” (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016d).

In addition, SeaWorld recently announced a partnership with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to “work together as advocates and educators for the ocean and its animals” in the areas of fish and marine mammal protection, healthy oceans, and sustainable seafood. In that regard, “SeaWorld and HSUS will actively partner in efforts against the commercial killing of whales, seals and other marine mammals as well as ending shark finning. These initiatives are in addition to the rescue, research and resources SeaWorld already commits to protecting and saving marine mammals in the wild” (HSUS & SeaWorld, 2016). This partnership will also involve “efforts to protect coral reefs and the marine species that inhabit them from the over exploitation of wild-caught ornamental fish” (HSUS & SeaWorld, 2016) and a focus on sustainable seafood, through which “all seafood served in the parks will be sustainable and the company will carry other food offerings that reflect an awareness of animal welfare, such as crate-free pork, cage-free eggs and more vegetarian options” (HSUS & SeaWorld, 2016).

Further, the company’s CSR priorities featured on their website include support of animal shelters and rescue groups, wildlife stewardship, workforce engagement, and waste reduction, among others. As they state on their website, “Our goal is to consider the impact of our decisions, operations and investments; create measurable and continuing value for key

stakeholders; and to build trust within our communities” (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2015a).

These efforts, although slow in coming following *Blackfish*, are an excellent beginning. Additional options are presented in the following proposal.

Proposal

Cleaning the World’s Oceans

Because the SeaWorld theme parks entertain guests through shows that use trained marine mammals, it seems natural to suggest that the company address the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal regarding life below water, which is Goal 14. That goal states: “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” (UN, 2015). In particular, Target 14.1 would be a good place to start: “By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution” (UN, 2015).

Much of the pollution in the world’s oceans comes from plastics that are improperly disposed of on land or by fishing vessels (Avio, Gorbi, & Regoli, 2016; Tibbetts, 2015; United Nations Environment Programme, n.d.) and from microplastics in personal care items such as facial cleansers (Avio, Gorbi, & Regoli, 2016; Fendall & Sewell, 2009; Shim & Thomposon, 2015). Because lightweight plastic items can float in water and be carried great distances by ocean currents, much of the plastic debris in the oceans originates far from where it is ultimately found (Tibbetts, 2015, p. A91). In fact, researchers have estimated that “just 20 countries, out of a total of 192 with coastlines, are responsible for 83% of the plastic debris put into the world’s oceans” (Tibbetts, 2015, p. A91). Often this is because these countries do not have as well-

developed waste-management systems as the United States has (Tibbetts, 2015, p. A91).

Therefore, it will take more than just intervention by the world's governments to solve the problem of ocean pollution.

SeaWorld has made strides toward reducing their contribution to plastic waste with their 2012 decision to ban plastic shopping bags from all of their theme parks and replace them with bags made from 100% recycled paper (Garcia, 2012) and their partnership with The Coca-Cola Company to create “the first refillable plastic cup made from plant-based materials ... using proprietary PlantBottle™ packaging technology” (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2014). However, there is room for improvement.

Ocean Conservancy, a 501(c)3 organization founded in 1972 and based in Washington, DC, started the Trash Free Seas Alliance® in 2012 to “unite industry, science and conservation leaders who share a common goal for a healthy ocean free of trash” (Ocean Conservancy, 2016). In addition, in September 2015, they released a report titled *Stemming the Tide: Land-Based Strategies for a Plastic-Free Ocean* (Ocean Conservancy, 2015), in which they discuss specific steps that should be taken to “significantly reduce the global leakage of plastic waste into the ocean by 2025” (Ocean Conservancy, 2015, p. 3). According to the report, more than half of the plastic pollution in the oceans comes from just five rapidly developing countries—China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam (Ocean Conservancy, 2015, p. 3). Ocean Conservancy proposes that “interventions in these five countries could reduce global plastic-waste leakage by approximately 45 percent over the next ten years,” and “extending these interventions to other countries could have even more impact on this global issue” (Ocean Conservancy, 2015, p. 3).

It is interesting to note that one of the founding members of the Trash Free Seas Alliance® is The Coca-Cola Company. SeaWorld could take advantage of their existing relationship with Coca-Cola to facilitate entry into the alliance and contribute to the work being done to clean up the world's oceans. In addition, they could give their employees paid time off to volunteer with Ocean Conservancy and publicize this involvement on their website. Furthermore, they could partner with companies that make personal care products to encourage them to publicly commit to removing microplastics from their facial cleansers and related products by a specific target date. Publicly promoting these partnerships and discussing them as a way to improve living conditions for life-forms that live in the oceans could serve the dual purpose of helping to clean up the oceans and improving the company's reputation. However, SeaWorld must be careful to communicate these efforts without making it seem like they are only getting involved to fix their reputation. Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of the Humane Society, referred to SeaWorld's recent actions (i.e., ending their breeding program for killer whales, bringing in a "reform-minded" CEO, and deciding to eliminate their circus-style shows featuring killer whales) as "unprecedented" (Stanley, 2016), which suggests that he believes SeaWorld is sincere.

New Forms of Entertainment in the Parks

Educational Films

As the company moves away from presenting live shows using trained marine mammals in its parks (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016d), they will have opportunities to create new forms of entertainment that could also be used to educate their many visitors. One option might be to convert some of the large arenas currently used for shows into IMAX-type

theaters in which SeaWorld could show movies that address the issue of ocean pollution and ways to help. Working with a movie-making partner, SeaWorld could send film crews to different regions of the world where ocean pollution is particularly severe so that the movies they create will give visitors an accurate picture of the state of the world's oceans. The movie could use an animated version of the park's well-known Orca, Shamu, who could act as a "spokesperson" for the ocean's wildlife and share with visitors various ways to get involved in reducing current ocean pollution and preventing future pollution. This might appeal to younger children in the audience, who could be introduced to the idea of conservation through a fun character who could then appear in books, movies, and consumer products that would reinforce these environmentally friendly ideas in a way that would engage them. This is particularly important in the markets where SeaWorld has strong competition from nearby theme parks, such as Orlando, FL, where Walt Disney World and Universal Studios both use beloved characters to tie different aspects of their businesses together.

A quick Google search reveals that such an animated character (and his "crew") was used many years ago (Daniel Alexander Dizmentia, 2010), but it is no longer being featured to the extent that it had been in the 1980s and 1990s. In her book *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the SeaWorld Experience*, Susan G. Davis states that "[u]nlike other theme park owners, Anheuser-Busch [a previous owner of SeaWorld] has no significant media holdings or outlets to help integrate its parks into a cross-promotional marketing and merchandising strategy" (Davis, 1997, p. 27). In addition, she states, "Lacking a Mickey Mouse or Bugs Bunny, Anheuser-Busch and Sea World rely heavily on Shamu, the trademarked killer whale, which is also a licensed image, park logo, and corporate icon" (Davis, 1997, p. 27). It appears that legal issues have prevented SeaWorld from expanding its use of the animated version of Shamu, as

indicated in a footnote to Davis's discussion of this topic. She notes that "due to a series of bad licensing and media decisions, Shamu's uses have been limited to small ventures....Unknown to Busch when it purchased the Sea Worlds, all the rights to the image were held by Watson General Pictures, and Busch had to purchase them separately" (Davis, 1997, p. 255). Whether these legal issues prevent SeaWorld from creating new animated characters based on Shamu and other marine animals at the parks today is unknown but would be worth investigating. Using cross-promotional marketing in the parks along with educational materials and consumer products could help reinforce a more positive image of SeaWorld in the minds of stakeholders.

Educational Rides

An additional option for "edutainment" in the SeaWorld parks would be new rides that incorporate adventure and learning. In 2017, SeaWorld is planning to introduce an attraction at their San Diego, CA, park that will enable guests to "unlock the ocean's greatest mysteries and plunge to new depths in your mini-sub on the interactive ride Submarine Quest. Get up close to some of the ocean's most fascinating creatures like a giant Pacific octopus, elusive moray eels and Japanese spider crabs that measure nine feet from claw to claw" (SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc., 2016e). This is a great way to tie their mission regarding improving life for marine animals to their need to attract and entertain guests.

In addition to this planned ride, SeaWorld could borrow the interactive ride concept that competitor Disney uses in its "Toy Story Midway Mania" ride (Disney, n.d.) to create an experience in which guests could play arcade-style games in which they earn points for eliminating plastics and other trash while riding through an ocean-themed attraction. This type of ride has proven to be extremely popular at the Disney parks (Fox News, 2015) and could be an

effective way to allow guests to participate in “virtual” ocean cleanup while seeing some of the negative effects these pollutants have on ocean wildlife. In the waiting area for the ride, there could be interactive exhibits that would teach guests about the issue of ocean pollution and various ways to combat it. In the exit area, SeaWorld could sell products that further communicate the message about reducing ocean pollution and helping wildlife. The Shamu character could be used in these products as well.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that SeaWorld has done important work with marine mammal rescue, conducted research that has helped improve our understanding of many of the creatures who call the ocean home, and educated the public about issues related to these topics. However, it is also clear that the company mismanaged one of the most visible crises in recent history. Their initial refusal to accept any responsibility for the practices in their parks that led to Dawn Brancheau’s death and were exposed in *Blackfish* exemplified what *not* to do in a crisis. Their failure to address the public’s social media reaction to the film damaged both their reputation and their credibility. However, when they finally communicated with their stakeholders more than a year after the film’s release and began to show that they were listening to what people were saying, things began to turn around. SeaWorld’s renewed focus on the well-being of their captive orcas, combined with a commitment to end the theatrical performances by these animals in their theme parks and a partnership with the HSUS to protect coral reefs, fish, and marine mammals is an excellent beginning to what can be a strong future for SeaWorld. A genuine focus on CSR practices, strong corporate leadership, and improved, transparent communication policies will enable the company to reestablish their reputation and regain the public’s trust.

References

- Anderson, R., Waayers, R., & Knight, A. (2016). Orca behavior and subsequent aggression associated with oceanarium confinement. *Animals*, 6, 49–64, S1–S5.
doi:10.3390/ani6080049
- Associated Press. (2014, August 15). After film, SeaWorld to make improvements. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/16/business/after-film-seaworld-to-make-improvements.html?r=1&_r=0
- Avio, C. G., Gorbi, S., & Regoli, F. (2016). Plastics and microplastics in the oceans: From emerging pollutants to emerged threat. *Marine Environmental Research*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1016/j.marenvres.2016.05.012
- Barnes, B. (2015, August 2). Comcast invests by the billion in theme parks, Hogwarts and all. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/03/business/media/comcast-invests-by-the-billion-in-theme-parks-hogwarts-and-all.html?_r=0
- Betz, B. (2014, January 10). SeaWorld’s “Blackfish” controversy performed another trick: SeaWorld earns more bad press as attendance rates dwindle compared to Walt Disney and Cedar Fair. *The Motley Fool*. Retrieved from <http://www.fool.com/investing/general/2014/01/10/seaworlds-blackfish-controversy-performed-another.aspx>

Cesar, M.-L. (2016, March 18). A more socially responsible SeaWorld sees its stock soar.

Retrieved from <http://seekinglpha.com/article/3959655-socially-responsible-seaworld-sees-stock-soar>

Cowperthwaite, G., Oteyza, M. V. (Producers), & Cowperthwaite, G. (Director). (2013).

Blackfish [Motion picture]. United States: Magnolia Pictures.

Dan Alexander Dizmentia. (2010, August 14). Shamu and the animated Sea World crew. [Web

log post]. Retrieved from <http://danalexanderdizmentia.blogspot.co.uk/2010/08/shamu-and-animated-sea-world-crew.html>

Davis, S. G. (1997). *Spectacular nature: Corporate culture and the SeaWorld experience*.

Berkeley: University of California Press.

Disney. (n.d.). Toy Story Midway Mania [Ride description]. Retrieved from

<https://disneyland.disney.go.com/attractions/disney-california-adventure/toy-story-mania/>

Duhon, S., Ellison, K., & Ragas, M. W. (2016). A whale of a problem: A strategic

communication analysis of SeaWorld Entertainment's multi-year *Blackfish* crisis. *Case Studies in Strategic Communication*, 5, 3–37. Retrieved from

<http://cssc.uscannenberg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/v5art2.pdf>

Edwards, C. (2013, December 10). SeaWorld artist boycott quickens as Heart cancels show.

Bloomberg. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-12-09/seaworld-to-stick-with-concerts-as-acts-cancel-citing-orca-movie>

Fendall, L. S., & Sewell, M. A. (2009). Contributing to marine pollution by washing your face:

Microplastics in facial cleansers. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 58, 1225–1228.

doi:10.1016/j.marpobul.2009.04.025

Fortune. (2013). *World's Most Admired Companies, 2013*. Retrieved from

<http://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/most-admired/>

Fortune. (2014). *World's Most Admired Companies, 2014*. Retrieved from

<http://fortune.com/worlds-most-admired-companies/2014/>

Fortune. (2015). *World's Most Admired Companies, 2015*. Retrieved from

<http://fortune.com/worlds-most-admired-companies/2015/>

Fortune. (2016). *World's Most Admired Companies, 2016*. Retrieved from

<http://fortune.com/worlds-most-admired-companies/>

Fox News. (2015, March 6.). Disney World revamps popular Toy Story and Soarin' rides to cut

down on wait times. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2015/03/06/disney-world-revamps-popular-rides-to-cut-down-on-wait-times.html>

- Garcia, J. (2010, February 24). Tilikum known as dangerous whale at SeaWorld: Orlando SeaWorld trainers were barred from swimming with orca. *Orlando Sentinel*. Retrieved from http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2010-02-24/news/os-sidebar-tilikum-the-whale-20100224_1_seaworld-trainers-killer-whales-orca
- Garcia, J. (2012, April 12). SeaWorld theme parks to get rid of plastic shopping bags. *Orlando Sentinel*. Retrieved from http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2012-04-24/business/os-seaworld-bans-plastic-bags-20120424_1_plastic-shopping-bags-paper-bags-reusable-bags
- Global Industry Analysts, Inc. (2012). *Amusement and theme parks—a global strategic business report*. Retrieved from http://www.strategyr.com/Amusement_Parks_Theme_Parks_Market_Report.asp
- Holcomb, J., Okumus, F., & Bilgihan, A. (2010). Corporate social responsibility: what are the top three Orlando theme parks reporting? *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 2(3), 316–337. doi:10.1108/17554211011052230
- Howard, B. C. (2016, March 17). SeaWorld to end controversial orca shows and breeding. *National Geographic*. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/03/160317-seaworld-orcas-killer-whales-captivity-breeding-shamu-tilikum/>

- Humane Society of the United States & SeaWorld. (2016, March 15). SeaWorld & the Humane Society of the United States: Strengthening animal welfare and protecting oceans and marine animals [news release]. Retrieved from https://1b053f053cbb0b58a2c1-0c725c907c2d637068751776aeee5fbf.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/4b8f790d0eb746f58d9a1e1b7aaa6b1b_3-15-16-hsus-seas-partnership-announcement_final.pdf and <https://seaworldcares.com/en/Future/HSUS-Partnership/>
- Huston, C. (2016, May 11). SeaWorld downgraded on worry about growing competition. *MarketWatch*. Retrieved from <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/seaworld-downgraded-on-worry-about-growing-competition-2016-05-11>
- Jett, J., & Ventre, J. (2015). Captive killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) survival. *Marine Mammal Science*, 31(4), 1362–1377. doi:10.1111/mms.12225
- Johnson, D. E. (2014, January 7). SeaWorld crisis management: The textbook case of what NOT to do. Retrieved from <https://davidjohnsonstrategicvision.com/2014/01/07/seaworld-crisis-management-the-textbook-case-of-what-not-to-do/>
- Karimi, F. (2016, May 1). Ringling Bros. elephants perform last show. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/01/us/ringling-bros-elephants-last-show/index.html>

Kuo, V. (2013, October 28). Orca trainer saw best of Keiko, worst of Tilikum. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/26/world/americas/orca-trainer-tilikum-keiko/index.html>

Levine, A. (2016, September 27). SeaWorld in 2017: New coasters, rides and shows to turn the tide. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/experience/america/theme-parks/2016/09/26/seaworld-new-coasters-rides-shows-2017/91129692/>

McEwan, B. (2014, June 3). PETA vs. SeaWorld: The creative tactics and tech that drive PETA's SeaWorld campaign. Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2014/06/03/peta-vs-seaworld-the-creative-tactics-and-tech-that-drive-peta-s-seaworld-campaign/>

Müller, N. (2016, January 25). *Crisis communication on social media – Content analysis of SeaWorld's crisis communication after the release of the documentary Blackfish* (Unpublished master's thesis). Berlin School of Economics and Law, International Marketing Management, Berlin, Germany.

Ocean Conservancy. (2015). *Stemming the tide: Land-based strategies for a plastic-free ocean*. Retrieved from <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/mckinsey-report-files/full-report-stemming-the.pdf>

- Ocean Conservancy. (2016). Trash Free Seas Alliance®. Retrieved from <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/trash-free-seas-alliance/>
- Pedicini, S. (2016, January 18). Expect theme park industry growth to continue booming. *Orlando Sentinel*. Retrieved from <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/business/tourism/os-cfb-forecast-tourism-theme-parks-20160116-story.html>
- Prahalad, D. (2011, December 8). Why trust matters more than ever for brands. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2011/12/why-trust-matters-more-than-ev>
- Public Affairs Council. (2016, February 16). Director, Corporate Social Responsibility, SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment, Orlando, FL [Job advertisement]. Retrieved from <http://pac.org/job/director-corporate-social-responsibility/>
- Robeck, T. R., Willis, K., Scarpuzzi, M. R., & O'Brien, J. K. (2015). Comparisons of life-history parameters between free-ranging and captive killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) populations for application toward species management. *Journal of Mammalogy*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/jmammal/gyv113
- Schoen, S. W. (2016). Blackfish-ing for buzz: The rhetoric of the real in theme parks and documentary. *Journal of Florida Studies*, 1(5), 1–14. Retrieved from http://scholarship.rollins.edu/as_facpub

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2014, July 10). SeaWorld® Taps Coca-Cola's Breakthrough PlantBottle® Technology To Create First Consumer Cup [News release]. Retrieved from <https://seaworldentertainment.com/en/media/company-news/plantbottle>

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2015a). Corporate social responsibility. Retrieved from https://seaworldentertainment.com/en/how-we-care/corporate-social-responsibility?from=Top_Nav

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2015b). History. Retrieved from <https://seaworldentertainment.com/en/who-we-are/history>

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2016a). Educational encounters and experiences that matter. Retrieved from <https://seaworldcares.com/en/Future/Educational-Encounters/>

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2016b). Industry recognition. Retrieved from https://seaworldentertainment.com/en/who-we-are/industry-recognition?from=Top_Nav

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2016c). Last generation. Retrieved from <https://seaworldcares.com/en/Future/Last-Generation/>

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2016d). The last generation of killer whales at SeaWorld. Retrieved from <https://seaworldcares.com/future?from=SWParksPortal>

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2016e). Ocean Explorer: Deep Sea Discovery [New attraction coming to SeaWorld San Diego in 2017]. Retrieved from <https://seaworldparks.com/seaworld-sandiego/attractions/other-attractions/2017-new-attraction/>

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Inc. (2016f). Why “Blackfish” is propaganda, not a documentary. Retrieved from <https://seaworldcares.com/the-facts/truth-about-blackfish/>

Shim, W. J., & Thomposon, R. C. (2015). Microplastics in the ocean. *Archives of Environmental Contamination & Toxicology*, 69(3), 265–268. doi:10.1007/s00244-015-0216-x

Stanley, T. L. (2016, June 20). Why marketers like Disney and Seaworld are now opting for the humane touch. *Adweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/why-marketers-disney-and-seaworld-are-now-opting-humane-touch-171983>

Storey, K. (2015, October 29). Five things SeaWorld will probably announce during their Nov. 9 webcast. *Orlando Weekly*. Retrieved from <http://www.orlandoweekly.com/Blogs/archives/2015/10/29/five-things-seaworld-will-probably-announce-during-their-nov-9-webcast?mode=print>

Toomey, A. (2015, May 5). Pregnant Marisa Miller poses nude for PETA, urges fans to boycott SeaWorld. Retrieved from <http://www.eonline.com/news/653766/pregnant-marisa-miller-poses-nude-for-peta-urges-fans-to-boycott-seaworld>

United Nations. (2015). Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Sustainable Development Goal 14. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). Plastic and microplastics in our oceans – a serious environmental threat. Retrieved from <http://www.unep.org/stories/ecosystems/plastic-and-microplastics-in-our-oceans.asp>