

Bringing Conservation Into Focus

Advancing Conservation by Working with Conservation Photographers

A Social Marketing Campaign with Two Behavior Changes in Mind

Tom Skeele

Marketing for Social Causes
(MKTG 6290)
Professor Pradeep Rau

December 9, 2012

Executive Summary

The International League of Conservation Photographers (iLCP) was founded on the premise that top-quality imagery adds great value and effectiveness to conservation projects or campaigns. Our 100+ photographers, many of the world's most renowned and experienced conservation storytelling photographers, have played a critical, and often prominent, role in a broad variety of conservation successes around the globe.

High quality conservation photographs can inspire a viewer to not just appreciate and care for our natural world, but to want to take action on behalf of the natural world. Adding further value to top-quality images, there are numerous benefits to be gained by engaging a conservation photographer in all stages of a project or campaign – from design to delivery. Using this type of imagery, and enlisting the advise of those who take the pictures, increases the American public's engagement in environmental conservation projects, which results in our country more effectively and comprehensively addressing the social issue of environmental conservation as a whole.

Often, NGOs, agencies, donors and other conservation interests do not understand the amount of positive impact such imagery can have on their work. To address this lack of awareness, and enhance the impact and outcomes of conservation efforts throughout our country, iLCP is developing a social marketing campaign to encourage two behavior changes:

[1] the conservation community to use more effective photography to communicate its work;

[2] the American public to take more action on behalf of the environment (inspired by an increase in use of top quality photography).

The priority audience for this social marketing campaign is the conversation community – NGOs, management agencies, and major donors to conservation programs. The primary message of the campaign is that using top-quality conservation photography can significantly help advance conservation programs and successes.

If successful, our social marketing campaign will result in a change of behavior at two levels: [1] within the conservation community, as well as [2] the larger American public. These changes will ultimately lead to a social good or benefit – the increased conservation of our environment.

1.0 Background, Purpose and Focus

The number of challenges to conserving America's natural environment grows steadily from year to year. Yet, our nation presently does not have enough human and financial resources being devoted to addressing these challenges. Without adequate resources, the steady degradation of our natural environment will continue, if not increase – all to the detriment of our quality of life, no matter where we live.

The good news is that more public and private money is being devoted to environmental conservation each year (minus those years affected by downturns in the economy). Yet, those funds are not enough. What is needed is more citizenry involvement in environmental conservation, in the form of more people donating their time, expertise, opinion and money in support of environmental conservation.

Unfortunately, while polls show an increasing public awareness and concern about the state of our natural environment, the number of Americans who actively support an environmental conservation project (outside of home-based efforts like recycling) is not growing as steadily as the need. There are many reasons for this trend, and all of them ultimately have to do with the fact that environmental conservation is not a high enough priority for the American public. What is needed is a change in priorities, or attitudes, which would in turn lead to a change in behavior (i.e., investing more time, money and other resources).

One way to accomplish this is to move people further along the progression from awareness to action, through the use of what is called conservation photography. Research and experience shows that nature photography moves people from awareness to understanding, and onto appreciation. However, it is conservation photography – or high impact conservation storytelling imagery – that moves people from appreciation to concern, and onto action. Therefore, to secure the level of citizenry involvement needed to adequately address the growing challenges facing our natural environment, the conservation community would do well to expand its use of conservation photography in its communications and outreach efforts.

Herein lies the focus of this social marketing campaign. The International League of Conservation Photographers (iLCP) was founded on the understanding that conservation photography adds great value and effectiveness to conservation projects and campaigns. This high-impact storytelling imagery moves people to action.

Yet, typically conservation NGOs, agencies and donors do not understand the positive impact such imagery can have on their work (by way of the impact it can have on their constituency's commitment to take action). This means that when faced with the greater cost of using conservation photography (these photographers are generally the best in the world at conservation storytelling), NGOs, agencies and donors all say they cannot afford it. Yet, by not prioritizing this cost into their budgets, the conservation community may ultimately never be as effective as it needs to be in engaging more people and their resources in environmental conservation.

To address this lack of awareness about the benefits of conservation photography, and the resulting lack of financial resources committed to using conservation photography, iLCP is developing a social marketing campaign to explain the "why" and "how" of using top-quality conservation photography to advance environmental conservation.

Our goal is to have more conservation NGOs, agencies and donors change their attitude about the value of this more expensive imagery, so they will change their behavior regarding how much they invest in using conservation photography.

If iLCP is successful in this campaign, we will see more conservation NGOs and agencies using conservation photography in their communications efforts, as well as more donors earmarking funding for the use of this type of imagery. This increase will result in more people wanting to take action on behalf of the environment, which in turn will result in an increase in the amount of time, money and other resources Americans invest in environmental conservation.

In total, our social marketing campaign will result in a change in behavior at two levels (within the conservation community, as well as the larger American public), which in turn will lead to a social good or benefit – the conservation of our environment.

Situation Analysis

Strengths: [1] iLCP is well established as a leader – if not the leader – in the field of conservation photography (no other organization that we know of solely focuses on this communications niche); [2] there is a definite cachet to working with iLCP, whether as another conservation NGO, an agency, a donor or another communications firm; [3] iLCP can provide ample case studies from around the globe of how high-quality imagery has been used to bolster, if not ensure, the success of a conservation effort.

Weaknesses: [1] iLCP presently has no money allocated, or is able to allocate any funds, for such a campaign; [2] iLCP will have a difficult time implementing this campaign as the organization has a staff of 2 FTE, and our photographers are generally very busy.

Opportunities: This campaign serves as a great opportunity for iLCP to increase the conservation community's [1] knowledge of, and acknowledgment of, the value of using visuals with words (or instead of words), [2] use of high impact visuals to tell their story; and [3] use of shorter messages, which will work better in a society that is increasingly driven by the culture and format of social media. It is also an opportunity for iLCP to conduct a literature review on the science behind how and why photography can influence people in ways that words cannot. This will enable iLCP to provide empirical science that complements our photographers' experientially learned understanding of how their imagery affects people.

Threats: [1] an improvement in camera technology is making it possible for lesser trained and experienced photographers to produce decent images at much less the cost of hiring a professional conservation photographer; [2] a bias in the conservation community (NGOs, agencies or donors) toward not funding, or budgeting for, communications work (most funding is devoted to "program work" – acres protected, animals conserved, policies changed); [3] compounding #2 is the poor economy, which affects donor's capacity to give; [4] a programmatically diverse and geographically distributed campaign audience, which will make it more difficult for this campaign to reach; and [5] much of campaign's audience does not like to "dump down" its message (i.e. make it shorter, and less policy heavy – they tend to be idealists in this manner).

Key Learnings: [1] iLCP knows of any social marketing campaign like this, so iLCP is blazing new territory with the campaign's messaging and 4Ps; [2] as mentioned above, this will be an opportunity to conduct a literature review on the science behind how and why high-quality photography influences people; [3] the field of cognitive science can provide evidence and insight as to the how and why; [4] recent focus groups confirmed the value and influence of conservation photography (which iLCP will want to learn from); and [5] political campaigns are using photography in this manner, so not only can iLCP learn from this work, but our campaign audience typically respects political campaign experts and expertise (and thus would view them positively).

Target Audiences

Describe priority target audience(s): iLCP's priority audiences will be [1] conservation NGOs, [2] foundation donors and other opinion leaders in the conservation community, and [3] conservation agencies. We chose NGOs because they will most likely use conservation photography to enhance their communications. We chose the funding community both [1] to address their bias toward funding "program work," and [2] because they are the entity that can most effectively encourage NGOs to begin budgeting for and using high-quality photography (in part by starting to provide funding for use of these images). We chose the agencies because no communications firm or stock photo agency that we know of has focused their marketing on this audience, which holds great potential as both a new pool of users and a positive role-model for others to follow.

Given the size of these three campaign audiences, and iLCP's limited resources for funding and implementing the campaign, iLCP will need to be strategic about initially focusing on smaller subsets of that very big pool. The author's initial ideas for each of the three audiences include:

1) *NGOs:* initially focus on [1] larger NGOs which already have communications departments (because they likely already somewhat understand the value of this photography, and already have an established communications budget to work with); and [2] NGOs in regions of the U.S. where there are more conservation donors who understand the value of effective communications (the Northwest, California, New York City and Washington, D.C. come to mind).

2) *Donors:* As previously mentioned, this is a key audience. iLCP would do well to focus on those foundations or other donors who understand the value of good communications, and who (better yet) already fund communications efforts. The strategy here is to get donors to [a] begin funding, or increase their funding for, the use of high-quality photography, and [b] become more active advocates for using conservation photography, as well as this social marketing campaign.

3) *Agencies:* iLCP should initially focus our campaign on those agencies more apt to use high-quality imagery, and to use it more prominently. This includes the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and state tourism agencies.

Market research findings: As stated above, iLCP knows of no campaign of this nature that has even been implemented. Therefore, we will need to research if there are any campaigns from which we can learn. Also stated above, iLCP will need to research the scientific "how and why" that makes conservation photography more effective in moving people to take action, as this will enable us to make a stronger case to our target audiences.

Behavior Objectives and Goals

Behaviors that target audience(s) will be influenced to adopt:

- 1) *Behavior Change Objectives:* Our target audiences will [a] begin using high-quality conservation photography in their communications projects and products; [b] enlist the expertise and advise of conservation photographers in the development of their communications campaigns, and on the multiple ways to leverage this imagery; and [3] begin adding a line item in their budget for conservation photography and conservation photographers.
- 2) *Knowledge Objectives:* Our target audiences will better understand [a] how and why conservation photography works, or makes a difference, in affecting people to take action on behalf of conservation; and [b] how conservation photography can improve an NGO's fundraising efforts.
- 3) *Belief Objectives:* Our target audiences will believe that [a] they can afford to use high quality conservation photography, and [b] using conservation photography is sustainable in that it will help raise funds to pay for future use of this imagery.

SMART: (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) goals quantifying desired behavior outcomes, as well as changes in knowledge, beliefs and behavior intent:

An initial list of SMART goals to be identified would closely, if not exactly, track the above stated behavior, knowledge and belief objectives. This would likely include, for example, [a] the increase in the number of conservation photography images purchased and/or used during a predetermined time frame; [b] the increase in the number of conservation photographers contracted to support an NGOs communications program or campaign; [c] how many NGOs have established a new, or increased their existing, budget line item for imagery; and [d] what sort of increase there has been in donor funding earmarked for the purchase and use of conservation photography.

This is a campaign for which “outputs” may be the primary objective focus for the first six or more months, while we initiate the various products we develop for the campaign (training workshops and promotional materials such as articles, brochures, etc.) and wait to see what changes in behavior, knowledge and belief they elicit.

Target Audiences Barriers, Benefits, the Competition and Influential Others

Perceived barriers and costs associated with adopting desired behaviors: For this campaign, cost will be the main, likely the only, perceived barrier. This includes the cost of purchasing high quality conservation photography, and the cost of consulting with a conservation photographer.

Potential Unique and Meaningful benefits that will help influence and sustain targeted behaviors: As previously mentioned, there is a certain cachet to working with iLCP and its photographers, a benefit received in the credit line for all of our images (“photographer name/iLCP”). Also previously mentioned is the fact that these images will improve a NGOs fundraising efforts. Finally, using these high quality images, along with the name association, and the ability to call upon our photographers as speakers, and use our images in public photo exhibits (all of which will have cachet with the NGO’s constituents), will help an NGO enhance its public profile – both in terms of how many people know of the organization, and how well they think of the organization.

- Competing behaviors/forces/choices: With advancements in photography technology, increasingly there are decent quality, but less expensive, images available for sale, and many NGOs simply decide to purchase a camera for their field staff to use to collect their own images.

- Influence in importance to others: As previously mentioned, donors (and where they invest their money) have a strong influence in how NGOs develop their budgets and spend their money. Specifically, donors, primarily foundations (which typically give larger contributions), want their funds focused on acres protected, animals saved, and policies changed. In this scenario, communications not seen as high priority, but rather just a tactic to support the fieldwork.

Positioning Statement: iLCP wants conservation NGOs and agencies to believe that using conservation photography [1] makes org/agency more effective, more professional looking, more influential, and more respectable; [2] helps increase income and public profile; and [3] makes a newsletter, website, office, event and other public outreach efforts more aesthetically desirable, and thus more captivating to one’s constituents. iLCP also want conservation donors to believe that [1] their investment will have a greater return if they earmark some of their funding for conservation photography, and [2] their Return on Investment when funding conservation photography is positive enough that the donors become spokespeople for having their grantees use more conservation photography, and establish/increase a budget line item for conservation photography.

Marketing Mix Strategies (4 Ps)

Product: Benefits of performing behaviors; features of goods or services offered to assist adoption

1) *Core Product:* NGOs and agencies will benefit from [a] increased public noticeability via an enhanced public profile; [b] increased respect from their partners, constituents and donors; which will lead to [c] increased constituency involvement and support; further leading to [d] increased effectiveness; and ultimately resulting in [e] increased success in meeting their mission. Donors will benefit from seeing this increased success, and realizing a better return on their investment due to their recipients’ use of conservation photography.

2) *Actual Product:* iLCP will provide [a] a training workshop and complementary informational materials on how top quality imagery is more effective, and how to make the most of leveraging conservation photography, [b] consultancy opportunities with iLCP or other communications expert partners, and [c] discounted rates for using images and services from iLCP.

3) *Augmented Product*: As conservation photographers see an increase in their income due to new business with NGOs and agencies, they will be more willing (as they have been in the past) to offer their services for at a discounted or pro bono rate. As well, iLCP has discussed the idea of developing a rotating loan fund for NGOs to use to initially purchase high quality imagery. This new program would be funded through an earmarked percentage of increased photography sales, as well as direct contributions from donors interested in helping encourage this change in behavior. The NGOs would be able to use this fund to initially pay for the use of images, and then pay the loan back (possibly at some sort of sliding scale), based on the NGO's ability to see a return on investment in terms of expanded contributions due to use of the imagery. This fund could be very difficult to monitor and evaluate, but it has great potential to help NGOs get past the initial challenge of having enough funding to use high quality imagery.

Price: Costs associated with adopting the behavior, and price-related tactics to reduce costs

1) *Costs*: NGOs and agencies would experience an increase, potentially significant, in communications-related expenses due to increased cost of using high quality imagery. NGOs and agencies might also feel that dealing with a photographer's use rights restrictions is a hassle due to the increased staff time-related costs.

a) Monetary incentives: iLCP will offer [1] the ability for an NGO to receive a discounted rate if purchasing images at greater volume (goods); [2] subsidized or free participation in the training workshop; and [3] discounted consulting from iLCP and its photographers.

b) Nonmonetary incentives: One nonmonetary incentive is the ability for an NGO or agency to be aligned with iLCP. Our brand is a benefit that is highlighted in a variety of ways, such as through photo caption and credit, mention of working with iLCP in materials, etc.

c) Monetary disincentives: iLCP is not aware of any.

d) Nonmonetary disincentives: iLCP is not aware of any.

Place: Creating convenient opportunities for audience(s) to engage in targeted behaviors and/or access products and services, including developing partnerships for distribution channels

In terms of using these images, "place" has little-to-no bearing on adopting the desired behavior, as all of the management of these images can be conducted electronically. There is, however, a challenge in accessing the campaign's actual products (services), such as the in-person training workshops. To address this issue, iLCP will develop an online workshop platform, as well as partner with other communications consultancy firms around country which can provide the workshop more regionally and more often (thus making it easier for the campaign's target audiences to access these trainings).

Promotion: Persuasive communications highlighting benefits, features, fair price, ease of access

1) Decisions on messaging, messengers, creative strategies, & media channels:

a) Messaging: The messaging of this campaign is an opportunity to [a] brand high quality images as valuable, beneficial, and effective (i.e. “Bring more focus to your conservation program”); [b] tailor different messages to different audiences (for instance, to better fit the budgetary size and communications sophistication of a given NGO); and [c] test and improve messages about the value and benefits of high quality imagery.

b) Messengers: This campaign is an opportunity to enlist the help of iLCP’s photographers as spokespeople, some of whom are the “rock stars” of the nature photography world. It is also an opportunity to enlist individuals from the donor community, who are influential opinion leaders in the donor and NGO community, as messengers to both other donors and the NGOs.

c) Creative Strategies: Two strategies come to mind. First, since this campaign is focused on images, the campaign should figure out how to use those images to help make the case for the desired behavior change. Second, since most all of the people associated with iLCP are visual communicators, iLCP would do well to enlist the help of experts in word messaging to help develop the campaign messages.

d) Media Channels: This campaign’s biggest challenge will be determining how to reach enough of each target audience to start a movement of behavior change, as each audience is distributed across the United States, and is not part of one association through which we can easily reach most or all of that community. iLCP will want to develop strategies or products for reaching greater numbers of our audiences, which most obviously would include online and mass marketing avenues related to these audiences.

2) *Consideration for incorporating prompts for sustainability*: As has been previously mentioned, use of these images can, and almost certainly will, increase the fundraising success of an NGO. Also previously mentioned is the idea of establishing a rotating loan fund to help NGOs initially shift to using high quality imagery. Both of these points should, and would, be incorporated into the campaign’s messaging.

Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation

1) Purpose and audience for monitoring progress and evaluation of final results: iLCP will want to monitor and evaluate the campaign results for four reasons/audiences: [a] to inform the donors of this campaign about its results (because that will almost certainly be required), [b] to collect information that can be used (assuming some level of success) to make a case for any follow-up campaign(s) iLCP may want to conduct; [c] to encourage the next level of adopters to make this behavior change; and [d] to inspire more opinion leaders (whether in the NGO, agency or donor communities) to speak out in support of the campaign and its intended behavior changes.

2) *What will be measured: inputs, outputs, outcomes and potentially impact and ROI:* As previously mentioned, iLCP will want to measure each of these five types of results – including inputs and outputs, because they can highlight progressive efforts and progress being made to push for behavior change, since a substantive level of behavior change may take awhile.

3) *How and when measurements will be taken:* At this time, it is difficult to determine how measurements will be taken, as that needed clarity will not exist until iLCP has further developed our audience strategies, products, and promotions. What we can assume at this time is that measurements will be taken at predetermined times throughout the campaign, not just at the end of the campaign, as these results will allow iLCP to add new messages, make possible strategic changes in the plan, and maybe even bring in new messengers, to the campaign.

Budget

1) *Costs of implementing the marketing plan, including added research and M&E:* At this stage in developing the campaign, it is too early to even surmise what the budgetary needs will be (much less establish a budget). iLCP will be in a much better position to develop a budget once the research, products, price, promotion, and monitoring and evaluation needs have been fully determined.

2) *Any anticipated incremental revenues, cost savings, or partner contributions:* As previously stated, iLCP expects to be able to help fund this campaign from [a] donors who believe in the benefits of high quality photography; and [b] some revenue from the increased sales of our photographers' images. As well, iLCP expects to be able to reduce costs by [a] working with partner communications firms interested in being part of this campaign, and [b] providing our products (primarily the workshop) online.