

**Documentary for Social Change:  
Analysing Rhetorical Elements in Marine Life  
Documentaries**

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***Dedicated to  
My mother, the number one for me, Mas WiL***



## Abstract

This thesis investigates the effectiveness of various rhetorical elements in marine life documentaries (known in this study as blue documentaries) that influence attitudes towards environmental conservation. It examines two documentaries, one produced outside Malaysia and the other a Malaysian production. Both films strive to raise public awareness of marine life conservation. In this thesis I also identify three groups of respondent responses (which included coastal, rural and urban areas) in terms of their education, emotion and change of attitude towards marine life conservation. Six focus-group discussions and 72 semi-structured interviews were conducted at three geographical locations within Malaysia in order to research their documentary viewing experiences. Key concepts from rhetorical theory were employed to formulate the conceptual framework. The rhetorical concepts focus on ethical appeal (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos) and rational appeal (logos). The study found that emotional appeal was the strongest element in raising awareness of pro-conservation and encouraging social change. This finding demonstrated the effectiveness of this rhetorical tool for understanding perceptions of conservation, which not only lead to short-term educational, emotional and attitudinal changes but, months later, demonstrated a change of attitude towards marine life pro-conservation. This thesis also argues that the locality of the issue represented is the most compelling component for the respondents in the study, not only for appealing to their emotions but also in eliciting a high moral responsibility to protect the environment and lessen marine life consumption, particularly for endangered species. The rhetoric of emotion also raised feelings of responsibility to protect the country's iconic species.

As well as the importance of the appeal of the rhetorical elements of emotion, both ethical and rational appeal were important in raising awareness of the natural world. These tools encourage the social and political change which, it is hoped, will pave the way for marine life sustainability, by exposing the general public to information about the detrimental effects of human behaviour on marine life. The study highlights how blue documentaries can encourage pro-conservation awareness and positive perceptions of outreach programmes, not only among urban populations but also villagers and islanders of Malaysia.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the background to this thesis, indicating the problem statement and explains how and why the research questions were formulated. Also, it specifically discusses and clarifies the structure of the thesis in order to signpost the narrative and highlight each chapter's main features.

This thesis focuses on the persuasive power of environmental documentary films/programmes, focusing on the rhetorical elements of marine life documentary that can lead to changes in the attitude and/or behaviour of viewers. The academic study of marine life documentary filmmaking is a significant issue that has been explored widely from diverse perspectives. Specifically, the present study introduces the blue documentary (BD), a term that represents the marine life documentary which solely focuses on the subject of marine life extinction, whilst other environmental documentary studies look at the damage to the environment as a whole (see Sub-chapter 2.8). It also explores the rhetorical elements (the credibility, emotionality and rationality of the evidence in persuading people that what they are seeing about marine life extinction is both true and important – see Sub-chapter 2.10.1). In so doing the study also looks at the effective rhetorical elements between the imported documentaries covering foreign issues, or local documentaries looking at local issues, as a tool for understanding and promoting a change in attitudes and perceptions of marine life conservation among Malaysians.

### 1.2 Background of the study

Malaysia is one of the largest maritime countries in South-East Asia and its marine space plays a very significant role in the development of the Malaysian economy through its international trade. This marine space is also fundamental to Malaysian people's livelihoods and sustenance due to its rich natural resources and diversity, such as the coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses, mudflats and estuaries as well as the countless species of marine life. Fundamentally, the major components that generate the Malaysian economy are the fisheries and other maritime sectors such as the oil, gas and shipping industries and, of course, tourism. The tourism industry has become 'the second highest foreign currency

earner for the nation, with 25.7 million tourists visiting Malaysia in 2015' and, at the same time, increasing national income among the local people (Lee 2010; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016, p. 27).

Furthermore, it has been forecast that the number of international tourists in Malaysia will increase to around 1,400 million by 2020 (Christ *et al.* 2003). However, previous studies have reported that the tourism industry can put marine life at risk, as activities such as scuba diving can harm coral reefs, while boating or swimming with marine life such as dolphins can affect their natural behaviour as well as alter their reproductive behaviour. Also, the increasing number of tourists will increase the generation of solid waste (Muhammad and Fatimah 2015; Ray and Ray 2004).

As a result, marine life is facing a serious threat of extinction, due to the various activities for economic gain which involve marine spaces, activities which have openly affected the ocean's ecosystems. This is increasingly recognised as a serious national conservation concern (Azima *et al.* 2012; Muhammad and Fatimah 2015; Ray and Ray 2004). It has been reported in previous studies that many marine life species were listed as endangered by the WorldWildlife Fund (WWF) – these include marine turtles (the loggerhead, hawksbill, Olive Ridley, green and leatherback turtles), sea cows (*dugong*), coral reefs as well as marine fish (Abd. Mutalib and Fadzly 2015; Abd Mutalib *et al.* 2015; Lee 2010; Mazlan *et al.* 2005; Wycherley 1970). Similarly, Gumal *et al.* (2008) found that marine turtle nesting declined by 95 per cent between 1950 and 1987. This has been supported by a report from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (2016), stating that there are only four marine turtle species left in Malaysia and that the leatherback turtle is considered locally extinct due to the uncontrolled overharvesting of their eggs.

In addition, marine fish are also declining in number due to overfishing, by-catching and habitat modification, which leads to 16 marine species being gradually threatened (Chong *et al.* 2010; Davies *et al.* 2009; Mazlan *et al.* 2005). Chong *et al.* (2010, p. 1) claimed that '48 % of the recorded marine fishes belonging to 186 families in Malaysia are threatened by largely habitat loss or modification, overfishing and by-catching'. In support of this, Ahmad *et al.* (2016) claimed that about 78 per cent of Malaysians consumed fish every week and that the fish consumption in Malaysia was the second-highest after Japan, based on the annual consumption *per capita* among the Asian nations, and ranked as the fifth-highest in the world.

Therefore, the issue of marine life conservation in Malaysia has received considerable critical attention in terms of the regulations and technical strategies used in protected marine areas to prevent the extinction of certain species (Abd Mutalib *et al.* 2015; Arai 2014; Ming 2014; Scigliano 2016). To be more specific, it was reported in earlier studies that Malaysian local species are threatened by two types of danger: (i) the indirect threat of habitat loss through economic activities or natural occurrence and (ii) direct threats through hunting the living species for protein before the species can be reproduced, as well as animal captivity (Gumal *et al.* 2008; Wycherley 1970). This view is supported by Thomas *et al.* (2008, p. 32), who argued that safeguarding protected areas is not the only strategy for biodiversity conservation because 'threatened species are caused by specific threats such as hunting'. Saharuddin (1995, p. 124) further elaborated on this by stating that:

The government has to take into serious consideration the over-exploited status of the inshore fisheries. Before any further development is undertaken, logical and practical conservation measures should be the principal objective in managing the fisheries. It is envisaged that the present technical conservation measures are insufficient to guarantee a long-lasting sustainable fishery, and what the industry needs is comprehensive measures which specifically address conservation issues.

This recent evidence suggests that there is relatively limited knowledge and awareness amongst Malaysians of what is happening to marine life (see Sub-chapter 2.3.2); in consequence, support for conservation from the general public is needed, given how serious the condition is (Lee 2010). The same concern has also been highlighted in the National Policy on Biological Diversity (2016–2025) by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (2016, p. 10):

There is a general lack of awareness on the importance of biodiversity throughout the country as well as significant knowledge gaps.

A primary concern about the general public's lack of knowledge concerning marine life extinction has been a hindrance to conservation efforts for many years and, therefore, a suitable media platform for disseminating information about this alarming issue is arguably needed in order to avoid future damage. According to Professor Dan Distel, Director of the Ocean Genome Legacy (OGL):

The ocean is the world's most influential ecosystem, but least understood. It contains a species network on which all life depends for foods, climate, as well as oxygen. In order to protect this vital natural resource from the threat of global warming, habitat destruction, over-fishing, and pollution, we will need a better understanding of the diversity of marine life (Portal of the National University of Malaysia (UKM), 8 May 2014).

A broader perspective has been adopted by Starosielski (2013, p. 161), who argued that media platforms, specifically films, are significant in disseminating knowledge about unreachable marine life:

Filmmaking was important, not because it could save the ocean, but because it could reveal how the ocean would save us.

The evidence above supports the increased popularity of the use of the media – particularly documentary films/programmes – in disseminating the environmental content (conditions and issues) to the general public (see Sub-chapter 2.7). As Abd. Mutalib *et al.* (2013, p. 62) claim, education and awareness programmes are crucial, especially when utilising communication channels such as the television to spread awareness. For example, various initiatives and research on the effects of documentary films/programmes across continents have been carried out by marine experts seeking to preserve marine life and to disseminate knowledge about the dying ocean to the people (Palmer 2008; Prnjat 2016). It has been demonstrated that documentary films can stimulate pro-conservation behaviour among viewers (Fortner 1985; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Kidd and Kidd 1997; Levinson *et al.* 2016; Stoddard 2009). For example, in western countries, regardless of whether the documentaries are produced by big corporations with high budgets or by independent filmmakers such as activists or NGOs with low budgets, both productions are capable of instilling conservation awareness amongst the viewers (Holbert *et al.* 2003).

However, little is known about the role of the media as a platform for changing attitudes towards conservation, particularly in relation to marine life conservation (see Sub-chapter 2.7). Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the role of the documentary film as an agent in the promotion of a public change in attitude and perceptions and thus to potentially encourage social change towards the conservation of marine life by Malaysians.

### 1.3 The Problem

Despite the limited knowledge on actual marine life extinction, as reported previously (Lee 2010; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016), there is still, today, a lack of clear priorities on the part of Malaysian media practitioners – due to the limited media coverage and discussion – in raising public awareness of the importance of marine life conservation. Moreover, a major problem in Malaysia is the minimum use by key local media players of platforms from which to inform the general public about this alarming crisis. This is due to the fact that current marine conservation is only focused on legal mechanisms such as the regulation of fisheries, coastal development and pollution, as well as maintaining the enforcement of protected areas (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016).

Meanwhile, educational programmes, particularly documentaries, have received relatively little attention by key local media players (Asiah *et al.* 2009), which has not been helpful when it comes to marine life conservation, as the urgency of this issue has not been broadcast through one of the strongest platforms for knowledge dissemination. This is due to the low demand for and high cost of documentary productions. Many TV stations and filmmakers hesitate to invest their money in programmes that will not benefit them, as they are unable to attract the audiences desired by advertisers. It is undeniable that a huge sum of money is needed for a documentary to be produced. This problem was revealed by Megat (2004), in his thesis, 'Political Economy of Malaysian Documentary', in which he claimed that among the factors contributing to why television stations are not interested in broadcasting local documentary programmes, including those produced by the Film National Malaysia (FNM), were the lack of research, poor-quality visuals, low support for local documentaries by the general public and the high cost of production with a low profit in return from local television stations. The slow growth of the Malaysian documentary industry (Asiah *et al.* 2009; Megat 2004) is the result of the poor quality and high production costs of local documentaries, which has led television stations to import documentaries produced by the Western filmmakers.

Despite the fact that documentary programmes, particularly those in the science and nature genres, have proved very popular amongst audiences (87.7 per cent) of watching preferences as documented in a study by Asiah *et al.* (2009), this scenario still does not contribute much to the debate about marine life conservation. This is mainly attributed to the current trend adopted by the local documentary industry of producing a small number of local documentaries and importing a high number of foreign documentaries that provide

limited contextual connection with the viewers. This trend is based on many factors, among which (i) the increasing number of television channels that need to be filled with instant programmes, (ii) the lower price and (iii) the easy accessibility (Asiah *et al.* 2009). This is something also highlighted by Wright (2010, p. 464), who argues that:

One of the issues with using films produced for a Western audience... is that messages can be misinterpreted. This is especially true for conservation films that take a particular perspective on an environmental problem, placing them in a cultural and situational context.

However, no previous study has compared viewers' perceptions of foreign as against local documentary films/programmes on marine life conservation among the general public in Malaysia. This limited context has prompted me to investigate the issue of regionality in my focus-group discussions (see Sub-chapter 3.2.1). Sherrow (2010), too, has suggested that new partnerships across different disciplines and boundaries between the various parties are essential in marine life conservation, which requires the involvement of government agencies, producers and filmmakers from private TV stations, academics, scientific communities, non-profit organisations (NGOs) and activists. Following this observation about the lack of context in the literature, I wanted to find out which rhetorical tools were effective in conveying the issues that influenced people in their perceptions of marine life destruction and what they remembered months after they had viewed blue documentary films/programmes. I also wanted to find out how effective a documentary is in presenting marine life extinction issues from both a Malaysian and a Western perspective? Can local marine life extinction issues raise viewers' awareness towards marine life conservation? Do geographical locations (urban, rural and coastal areas) play an important role in viewers' documentary viewing experience?

In responding to these questions, the present study looks at the relationship between the rhetorical elements of ethical appeal (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos) and rational appeal (logos) in blue documentary filmmaking (see Sub-chapter 2.10.1) and their effectiveness in persuading people of the truth and importance of issues of marine life extinction. I also looked at whether the locality of the issue represented in the local production can have a greater influence compared to the foreign production in raising the public's awareness of or attitude towards marine life conservation.

## 1.4 Research questions

RQ 1: Which rhetorical elements of ethical appeal (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos) and rational appeal (logos) are effective in raising viewers' awareness of the need for marine life conservation?

- i. How effective is the rhetorical element of ethos?
- ii. How effective is the rhetorical element of pathos?
- iii. How effective is the rhetorical element of logos?
- iv. How important is the issue of locality in persuading viewers of the need for marine life conservation?

RQ 2: What are the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements, and how have the latter helped to change viewer's outlook on marine life conservation?

- i. How does the blue documentary affect viewers' knowledge of the marine life extinction issue?
- ii. How does the blue documentary affect viewer's emotions about the marine life extinction issue?
- iii. How does the blue documentary affect viewers' attitudes towards the marine life extinction issue?

RQ 3: Two months later, what are the viewer's responses in reply to whether or not these rhetorical elements have changed their attitudes towards marine life conservation?

- i. Does the documentary stimulate long-term positive perceptions of and attitudes among viewers towards marine life conservation?

## **1.5 Significance of the study and its contribution to knowledge**

A number of noteworthy contributions emerge from this study. They include:

- 1) This thesis suggests that, in the case of environmental and marine life documentaries, locally grounded media content plays an important role in influencing audiences. This theoretical contribution suggests that the rhetorical elements of persuasive communication can have different impacts on different target groups. It suggests that the locality of the issue and the language of production offer additional variables that could be incorporated into rhetorical theory.
- 2) The methodological approach adopted in this research project yields rich and valuable data on the relationship between media and audience reception. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, this study offers reliable data from a longitudinal study involving a large number of respondents from among the general public in Malaysia. This study makes no claim to represent Malaysian citizens as a whole, but it does reveal that media content can affect perceptions, emotions, and possible long-term attitudes among its audiences, leading to a more positive stance on marine life conservation. Most previous studies in this area have been largely quantitative in their approach, in sharp contrast to the nature of this research.
- 3) The empirical evidence reveals the effectiveness of various rhetorical elements in raising awareness of the importance of marine life conservation among viewers of documentaries. It reveals significant and lasting changes in perceptions and attitudes over a period of time, something that has not been highlighted in previous studies because of their quantitative approach.

More details in support of these claims are presented throughout this thesis and insight on the significance of the study, can be obtained in the concluding chapter of this thesis (see Sub-chapter 7.4).



## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

In order to meet the research aims and findings and to answer the main research questions, the thesis is divided into seven chapters, as listed below.

### **Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 introduces the background information to the study, the problem statement and the three main and the subsidiary research questions, significance and contribution of the study to knowledge, as well as further outlining the structure of the thesis.

### **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 is presented in three parts. Part I discusses the background to the Malaysian context, by looking specifically at the importance of marine resources to the people, at government policies and the management aspects of conservation, the key issues for marine life conservation and the involvement of NGOs for marine life conservation. It also discusses communication on the environment in the Malaysian media, the development of the Malaysian documentary industry and its key players, the representation of marine life extinction in Malaysian documentaries, as well as the challenges in the production and the broadcasting of the marine life documentary in Malaysia. Part II examines media effects, looking specifically at documentary and social change, the global trend of the documentary as an agent for social change in conservation, the role of documentary films/programmes in conservation, as well as the definition of the blue documentary. Part III discusses the concept of persuasion and rhetoric in documentaries as an agent for change in peoples' perceptions of issues of truth, such as the authority of 'truth' in documentaries, as well as the indexicality of the image. This section also discusses the functions of rhetoric as a powerful means of persuasion and the importance of presenting local issues to combat marine life extinction.

### **Chapter 3**

This methodology chapter focuses on the research design and methods used to conduct the study through six focus-group discussions and 72 semi-structured interviews. The justification for the research approach is demonstrated with reference to the secondary research literature, where issues regarding audience perceptions of marine life documentary production proved to be especially worthy of investigation. Next, it provides operational details on the scope of the study setting and subject, the selection of the respondents, the materials under study, the conducting of the pilot study, procedures for the questionnaire

and data analysis, the ethical considerations, and the strategies for achieving the reliability and validity of the data collected.

#### **Chapter 4**

This chapter presents and analyses the data from the focus-group discussions. The main findings in answer to research question 1 (RQ1) are set out, in terms of the effectiveness of rhetorical elements in blue documentaries at raising viewers' awareness of marine life conservation. This chapter starts with the three main rhetorical tools that are effective in promoting respondents' conservation awareness; they consist of ethos (ethical appeal), pathos (emotional appeal) and logos (rational appeal), and each of these main tools were clarified by sub-tools. The chapter illustrates pathos (emotional appeal) as the largest contributor to the viewers' positive perceptions of marine life conservation.

#### **Chapter 5**

This chapter presents and analyses the findings in answer to research question 2 (RQ2), in terms of the viewers' responses to the rhetorical elements found. The findings from my focus group illustrate the significant changes occurring in the post-viewing experiences of the respondents' education, emotions and attitude towards marine life conservation. The discussion provides insights into the viewers' documentary viewing experiences, demonstrating rhetorical elements that work to persuade viewers to make positive changes to their stance on marine life conservation.

#### **Chapter 6**

This chapter focuses on research question three (RQ3), in terms of the positive perceptions two months later that lead to attitudinal changes by the viewers towards marine life conservation. This chapter also includes the pre-viewing experiences, asserting that there were significant positive changes experienced by the viewers towards marine life conservation.

#### **Chapter 7**

The final chapter discusses the originality of the study by generating and examining the key arguments across earlier chapters. The chapter then addresses the implications of the study, including its significance and contributions. The strengths and limitations of the study are acknowledged. In addition, recommendations for future study are also set out in this chapter.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the interdisciplinary perspectives of the documentary as an agent in promoting a change in attitudes towards and perceptions of marine life conservation in Malaysia. It is divided into three sections. Part I discusses the background of Malaysia as a maritime country by looking specifically at the importance of marine resources to the people, government policies and the management aspects of conservation. It is important to include this information because marine life is on the verge of extinction in Malaysia, which is why it is so significant to study this topic. In addition, the chapter discusses the key issues and the involvement of NGOs in marine life conservation. This information is relevant to the context of this study because of the limited attention to government agencies on this issue, which makes the active contribution of NGOs very welcome. Focusing on the documentary industry in Malaysia, this section will examine its development and its key players, the ways in which these key players present environmental issues and marine life extinction in their documentaries, as well as the challenges faced in the production and broadcasting of marine life documentaries in Malaysia.

Part II discusses media effects by looking specifically at the documentary and social change. It also discusses the global trend of the documentary as an agent for social change in conservation, and the role played by documentary films/programmes on both the public's perceptions of and attitudes towards conservation, as well as behavioural change. This section also introduces the blue documentary (BD), defining the term and its function. Lastly, Part III discusses the concept of persuasion and rhetoric in the documentary as an agent in the promotion of a change in attitude towards and perceptions of marine life conservation, the authority of 'truth' in the documentary, the indexicality of the visual image, persuasive communications, the functions of rhetoric as a powerful means of persuasion, as well as the rhetorical rudiments in documentaries for social change. The chapter concludes with a discussion between the literature and empirical study, on the documentary as a window to preserve marine life.

## PART I

### 2.2 Background to Malaysia

Malaysia is a democratic country which is separated by the South China Sea into two regions: the Peninsular and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), which is more commonly known as Malaysian Borneo (Teo and Fauzi 2006), with a land area of 330,323 k<sup>2</sup> (127,720 m<sup>2</sup>). The country's landmass is surrounded by a 4,675-kilometre coastline – 2,031 kilometres in the Peninsular and 2,778 kilometres in East Malaysia (Arif and Khairun 2012) – which is approximately equivalent to a 574,000-k<sup>2</sup> area of beach (Lee 2010). Malaysia shares terrestrial borders with Thailand, Brunei and Indonesia and a maritime border with Singapore, Vietnam, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines (Teo and Fauzi 2006) which are surrounded by four major bodies of water – the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea, the Sulu Sea and the Sulawesi Sea (WWF Malaysia 2016). Figure 2.1 shows Malaysia – one of the largest and richest maritime regions and owners of marine resources in South-East Asia (Muhammad and Fatimah 2015).

Figure 2.1: Malaysia geographical area



Source: World Atlas (2017)

Demographically, Malaysia is made up of 13 states and three federal territories (see Figure 2.1), with a total population of over 32 million people, making it the 44<sup>th</sup> most populous

country in the world (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2018). The country's capital city is Kuala Lumpur, while Putrajaya is the seat of the federal government. Thus, with its strategic geographical area and a large marine space compared to its land mass, Malaysia is recognised as one of 17 mega-diverse countries (the largest and richest marine ecosystem) in the world. It is home to a high number of coastal resources, endemic marine life species and biodiversity, as well as one of the integral parts of the ecological Coral Triangle (Abdullah *et al.* 2015; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016; WWF Global 2017).

### **2.3 The importance of marine resources to Malaysia**

Marine resources are significant for the economy of Malaysia and the livelihoods of the people. With a population of over 32 million and a 4,675-kilometre coastline (Lee 2010), Malaysian coastal regions have become the setting of major socio-economic activities for national development, such as 'urbanization, agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, oil and gas industry, transportation and communication, tourism, recreation, and others' (Abdullah *et al.* 2015). For instance, in 2015, the fisheries sector contributed 10.7 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with a total production of marine fish landings exceeding 1,486,100 tonnes (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2016). Therefore, the marine fishing industry is crucial to the country's coastal livelihood through the supply of an important source of cheap animal protein (seafood) – fish, molluscs, crustaceans, echinoderms as well as other fish species (Arif and Khairun 2012). However, future projections have indicated that fish production from captured marine fisheries will become unreliable as many fish stocks will either have been over-exploited or will have reached maximum yields (National Intelligence Council Report 2013).

The coastal areas also play an integral role in the tourism industry. In 2014, Malaysia was awarded the title of the 11<sup>th</sup> Most Visited Country in the World by The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The country's tourism industry is the sixth-largest contributor to the national economy, with a total of RM 161 billion (14.9 per cent of GDP). The strategic geographical areas that feature beautiful coral islands are an integral part of Malaysia's tourist attractions and stimulate significant economic growth (Muhammad and Fatimah 2015). However, a number of studies reported that the urbanization, industrialization, as well as various economic and human activities are affecting the environment, consequently resulting in climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss, and habitat destruction on the coastal environment and livelihood (Aiken and Leigh 1988; Arif and Khairun 2012; Wycherley 1970). The major environmental issues include accelerated sedimentation, the

disposal of raw sewage, the discharge of industrial, agricultural and petroleum waste, oil spills, the degradation of coral reefs, coral bleaching, over-fishing and pollution (Aiken and Leigh 1988; Teo and Fauzi 2006).

Consequently, the enormous sea area upon which the national economy is highly dependent needs immediate and sustainable conservation plans, particularly with regards to the issue of marine life extinction. In addressing this devastating ecological destruction issue, Abdullah *et al.* (2015, p. 133) have asserted that marine administration is significant in governing the 'natural environment, maintaining conservation and managing the resources' of the coastal areas. Therefore, given the importance of marine life sustainability to the country, the present study might provide information which could enhance citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards it. Thus, it is important for the present study to examine the relationship between the government and its policy governing marine life sustainability.

### **2.3.1 Government policies and management for the conservation of marine resources**

Marine management in Malaysia involves various departments at different government levels (federal, state and local), stakeholders, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academics. Hamzah (1979) cited in Chuan (1982, p. 4) reported that, in the mid-1950s, the government initially had 'little awareness or concern about the detrimental effects on the natural environment'. This view was supported by Aiken and Leigh (1988) who asserted that rapid economic development, particularly in the coastal cities, had had a profound and negative impact on both the terrestrial and aquatic systems, resulting from the government's lack of awareness of environmental sustainability in its choice to become a developed nation. The lack of environmental concern by the government continued until the early 1970s, while national economic activities caused environmental problems such as deterioration in some areas, and severe water pollution affecting many river and ocean systems (Chuan 1982; Foo 2013). Under these circumstances, the government re-examined their policy and management for environmental sustainability. Following that, the Third Malaysian Plan (1975-1980) has included strategies to begin dealing with environmental protection and preservation as part of the national environmental policy (Chuan 1982; Foo 2013). According to Chuan (1982, p. 4), the following factors in the consideration of the country's environmental policy have been outlined in the Third Malaysian Plan:

- (a) the impact that population growth and man's activities in resource development, industrialisation and urbanisation have on the environment;
- (b) the critical importance of maintaining the quality of the environment relative to the needs of the population, particularly about the productive capacity of the country's land resources in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and water:
- (c) the need to maintain a healthy environment for human habitation:
- (d) the need to preserve the country's unique and diverse natural heritage, all of which contribute to the quality of life; and
- (e) the interdependence of social, cultural, economic, biological and physical factors in determining the ecology of man.

Meanwhile, explicit marine conservation has been part of species conservation and managed since 1963 by the Malaysian government (Saharudin 1995). For instance, in the early 1980s, due to the decline in marine fishery resources caused by over-exploitation by foreign and local trawlers, the Malaysian government acted by securing the marine areas as the most important resources for the Malaysian economy. The value of the fisheries sector is significant as a source of animal protein, employment and an earner of foreign exchange (Mazlan *et al.* 2005; Saharudin 1995). Therefore, the explicit legislature for marine life exploitation was the Fisheries Act 1963, which was later replaced by the Fisheries Act 1985, enacted in May of the same year (Saharudin 1995), which included provisions on the protection of fisheries and marine turtles. The Fisheries Act 1985 was regulated as 'an act relating to fisheries, including the conservation, management and development of maritime and estuarine fishing and fisheries, in Malaysian fisheries waters, to turtles and riverine fishing in Malaysia and to matters connected therewith or incidental thereto' (Fisheries Act 1985, p. 7).

In addition, a marine conservation plan was put in place through the introduction of Fisheries Prohibited Areas (FPAs), and the gazetting of marine parks in 1989 (Department of Marine Park Malaysia 2016). The marine park was legislated under Parts 41 to 45 of the Fisheries Act 1985. It was governed by a three-tier administrative system consisting of the federal government, the state government and the local authorities. The objective was 'to protect, conserve and manage in perpetuity the various marine eco-systems, habitats and endangered marine life' (Department of Marine Park Malaysia 2016). To date, there are 42 marine parks (Department of Marine Park Malaysia 2016) along the Malaysian coastline, with additional parks proposed (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016; Thomas 2016).

The establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as well as the marine parks, which are administered by the authorities in protecting marine resources, is seen as a significant effort, while demonstrating that the Malaysian government has prevention programmes in place to protect endangered marine life species, particularly the coral reefs, fish, sea turtles, sea cows and sharks. By law, there are two legislations applicable to protected marine areas, namely the Environmental Quality Act 1974 and the Fisheries Act 1985 (Muhibudin and Mohamed 2014), as indicated in the table below:

**Table 2.1: Legislation for marine sustainability**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Legislation</b>
1983	Agriculture	Dept of Fisheries	Fisheries Prohibited Area (FPA)	Fisheries Act 1963 (revised) Fisheries Act 1985
1989	Agriculture	Dept of Fisheries	Marine Park	Fisheries Act 1985
2004	Natural Resources and Environment (NRE)	–	Marine Park	Fisheries Act 1985 Environmental Quality Act 1974
2006	Natural Resources and Environment (NRE)	Dept of Marine Park Malaysia (DMPM)	Marine Park	Fisheries Act 1985

Source: Department of Marine Park Malaysia (2016)

In addition, Malaysia joined the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1998, together with 196 other countries, in an effort to protect the nation's natural resources (Mukhtar and Mustafa 2012; Wan Talaat *et al.* 2013). In response to this, the first objective for the establishment of the National Policy on Biological Diversity 2016–2025 (NPBD) by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) was to empower Malaysians' (stakeholders and the general public) commitment to preserving biodiversity (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016). Therefore, beginning in 2016, the federal government, through the NRE, led the department in implementing the National Policy on Biological Diversity and was responsible for the coordination of the various federal ministries, as well as for liaising and coordinating with state governments and supranational bodies. This role was coordinated through the Federal Cabinet, the National Biodiversity Council and the National Steering Committee for NPBD (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016, p. 97).

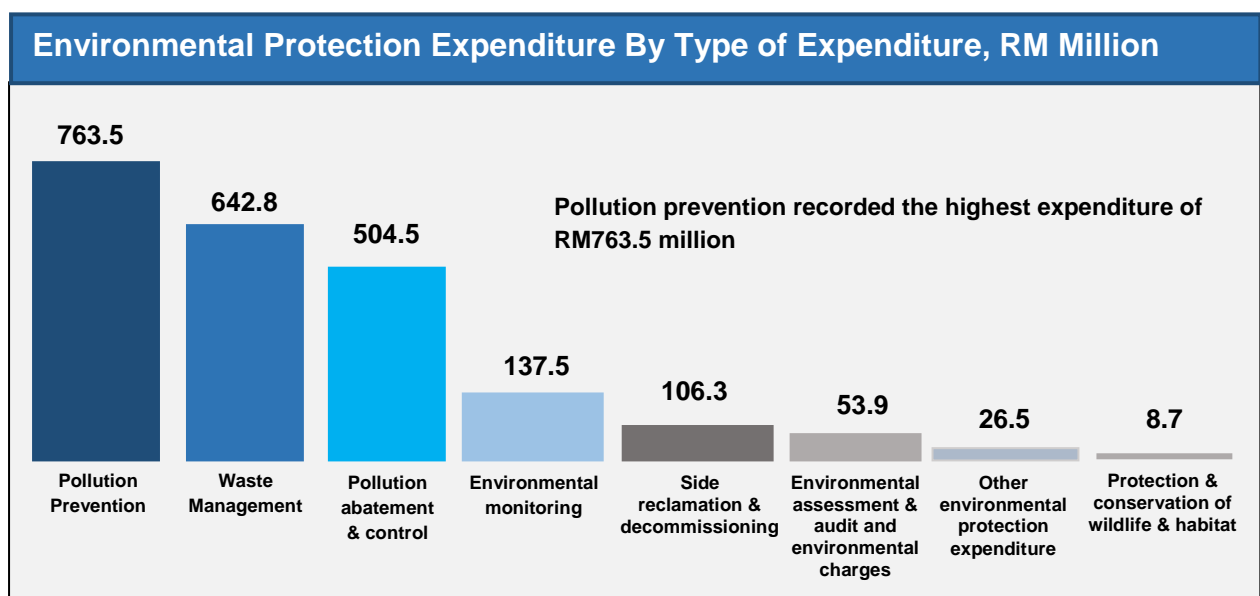


As mentioned above, the current legislations and policies that govern marine life sustainability are evidence that the government has given a priority and commitment to conservation. However, marine life extinction is still happening at an alarming rate due to several problems which will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

### 2.3.2 Key issues for marine life conservation

It is not an easy task for the government and the responsible parties to find solutions to the alarming crisis of marine life extinction. In fact, the establishment of Marine Parks, which was thought to be the most appropriate way to tackle this issue, has not improved the situation. Many previous studies indicated that the current legislation is inadequate in tackling this issue due to several difficulties (Mazlan *et al.* 2005; Chong *et al.* 2010; Nagulendran *et al.* 2016). Firstly, the funds allocated for habitat conservation and species protection is relatively low as compared to other environmental sectors. According to the report on the Survey of Malaysian Environmental Protection Expenditure 2015, a total of RM2.244 billion (approximately £406 million) has been spent for environmental protection, which has an increase by 0.3 percent as compared to the year 2013 (www.statistics.gov.my, 2016). Out of the RM 2.244 billion, only RM 8.7 million (approximately £1.5 million) was spent on the protection and conservation of the wildlife and its habitat (www.statistics.gov.my, 2016), which includes the marine life. Figure 2.2 shows the allocated funding for species protection and conservation, including marine life.

Figure 2.2: Government expenditure for environmental protection



Source : (www.statistics.gov.my, 2016)

This view is supported by Nagulendran *et al.* (2016, p. 13), who claimed that the lack of funds on biodiversity conservation became an issue years ago, as the government prioritised investment in the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters. Out of 198 countries, 'Malaysia has been ranked as the seventh most underfunded for biodiversity conservation'. Similarly, a study suggested that the government and all the responsible parties should have made more provisions for marine life sustainability, by conserving fish habitat, strengthening the current legislative framework, supporting more research and instilling an awareness of marine life extinction due to human activities (Chong *et al.* 2010). Thus, the lack of funding for species protection, coupled with the small number of awareness campaigns for conservation compared to other environmental sectors, can be seen as a threat to the sustainability of the country's marine biodiversity.

Consequently, it could be argued that the limited knowledge amongst the Malaysian population about marine life extinction has been overlooked by the government due to the fact that funding for environmental protection is spent on combating pollution and on waste management (see Figure 2.2). Also, the government has paid little attention to the medium that could inform the public about the devastating situation of marine life extinction particularly any media campaign. The government ought to have been aware of these challenges as it joined the Convention on Biological Diversity in a national effort to protect marine resources (refer to Sub-chapter 2.3.1). However, its (lack of) dedication to the sustainability of marine life is evident in the limited number of environmental communications, campaigns and empirical studies on the importance of environmental and marine life conservation. For instance, in first-world countries, conservation efforts are championed by activists and NGOs who voice the importance of conservation to the government as well as the people (see Sub-chapter 2.3.3) and whose viewpoints are sometimes in opposition to government policy. This shows that the commitment and support from various parties, including the government, stakeholders, NGOs and the public, in persuading them to be involved actively in conservation efforts is crucial and the current conservation strategies need to be reformed. Hence, the efforts of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) and activists to collaborating with various agencies for conservation are deemed practical in informing the public as well as other responsible parties about ecological destruction. This information is important in the context of this study because it shows the limited involvement of the government in sustainability, which will be explained in detail in the next sub-chapter.

### **2.3.3 The role of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) in marine life conservation in Malaysia**

At the moment, there are a number of ENGOS working on the protection of the environment and natural resources in Malaysia. These organisations are working alongside government agencies and stakeholders to organise outreach programmes and campaigns for public awareness, through a shared objective to preserve the environment and protect local marine biodiversity. This is in line with that mentioned by Foo (2013), who stated that both the government and ENGOS in Malaysia are working continuously on national efforts to organise environmental programmes for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. Among the ENGOS are shown in the table below.

**Table 2.2: Environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) in Malaysia**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of organisation</b>	<b>Year of establishment</b>	<b>Level</b>
1	Blue Life Ecoservices Bhd	n.d	Local
2	Borneo Resources Institute Malaysia (BRIMAS)	n.d	Local
3	Borneo Ecotourism Solutions and Technologies Society (BEST)	2007	Local
4	Centre for Environment, Technology & Development, Malaysia (CETDEM)	1985	Local
5	Children's Environmental Heritage Foundation (YAWA)	1990	Local
6	Ecocentric Transitions	n.d	Local
7	Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM)	1974	Local
8	Future Alam Borneo (FAB)	n.d	Local
9	Global Environment Centre (GEC)	1998	Local
10	Green Earth Society (GES)	2014	Local
11	Landskap Malaysia	2009	Local
12	Malaysian Green & Blue Environmental protection Society	2011	Local
13	Malaysian Karst Society	n.d	Local
14	Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)	1940	Local
15	Malaysian Society of Marine Sciences (MSMS)	1975	Local
16	MareCet	2012	Local

17	Marine Research Foundation, Malaysia	1951	Local
17	Partners of Community Organisations (PACOS)	n.d	Local
18	Pertubuhan Alam Sekitar EcoKnights Kuala Lumpur & Selangor (EcoKnights)	2005	Local
19	Reef Check Malaysia	1996	Local
20	Sabah Wetlands Conservation Society (WCS)	1980	Local
21	Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)	1977	Local
22	Sustainable Development Network Malaysia (SUSDEN)	1995	Local
23	Tatana Roots	2009	Local
24	The Penang Institute	1997	Local
25	Third World Network (Malaysia Office)	1984	International
26	TRAFFIC Southeast Asia	1991	International
27	Treat Every Environment Special Sdn Bhd (TrEES)	1995	Local
28	Tropical Rainforest Conservation & Research Centre (TRCRC)	2009	Local
29	Water Watch Penang (WWP)	1997	Local
30	Wetlands International (Malaysia)	1983	International
31	Wildlife Conservation and Science Malaysia	2010	Local
31	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Malaysia	1972	International
32	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	1948	International

Source : Malaysian Environmental NGOs, ENSEARCH (2018)

Though there is a high number of ENGOs established in Malaysia as listed above, there is only a small percentage that focuses solely on marine life sustainability, as compared to inland sustainability as shown in the table below.

**Table 2.3: Environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) for marine sustainability in Malaysia**

No.	Name of organisation	Year of establishment	Level
1	Blue Life Ecoservices Bhd.	n.d	Local
2	Environmental Management and Research Association of Malaysia (ENSEARCH)	1984	Local
3	Environmental Protection Society Malaysia	1974	Local

	(EPSM)		
4	Global Environment Centre (GEC)	1998	Local
5	MareCet	2012	Local
6	Pertubuhan Alam Sekitar Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor (EcoKnights)	2005	Local
7	Reef Check Malaysia	1996	Local

Source : Malaysian Environmental NGOs, ENSEARCH (2018)

These ENGOs, as shown in Table 2.3 above, are known for their marine life conservation efforts, spearheaded by experts and academics who publish many scientific studies on endangered marine life species at both local and international levels. Therefore, it is crucial that knowledge about these organisations be disseminated to the public, who have no access to the information and no direct contacts with the unreachable marine life species. Apart from this, many environmental campaigns have been organised to encourage public involvement while, at the same time, raising awareness of the importance of marine life sustainability. However, marine life extinction is still advancing at an alarming rate and the mechanism used to stimulate conservation awareness is believed to be inadequate in preventing it. This is in line with a broader perspective put forward by Adenle *et al.* (2015), who stated that the engagement of the government, together with its agencies and other stakeholders, is crucial for the development of a biodiversity strategy and that the media is a significant medium through which to announce these strategies to the general public and shape their opinion on the importance of biodiversity conservation.

With regards to this, there is increased popularity in the use of the media, especially documentary films/programmes, in disseminating their environmental content to the public. According to Hughes (2011), there are a number of factors needed for a documentary to be a mainstream form of environmental communication; these include (i) the increasing popularity of the documentary as a genre, (ii) the development of a post-ideological form of critical mass community activism through social networking to create alliances between different interest groups, particularly in the United States, and (iii) a focus on the preservation of wilderness and agricultural communities, supporting the argument that what is needed is a modernisation of both technology and environmental regulation in order to solve environmental issues. For example, collaboration between different parties and interest groups on the issue of conservation are prevalent in eco-documentaries such as *Sharkwater* (2006), *An Inconvenient Truth* (AIT) (2006) and *Mission Blue* (2014), which were all produced by international NGOs.

Having said that, documentaries on marine life could document, educate, raise awareness of and bring about change to the issue of marine life extinction for the Malaysian public. Taking this stance, this study asserts that environmental communication in the Malaysian media must be addressed, as I will explain in detail in the next sub-chapter.

## **2.4 Environmental communication in the Malaysian media**

Environmental communication has been discussed in previous studies (Aida Nasirah *et al.* 2014; Mohamad Saifudin 2016; Nagulendran *et al.* 2016), in which print media such as newspapers have received considerable attention when reporting environmental problems in developing countries. Mohamad Saifudin (2016) found that the images were crucial for presenting the reality of environmental problems to the public. He also claimed that the media and ENGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund have shared two common strategies in environmental communication – campaigns and collaboration with other stakeholders. Meanwhile, the limited knowledge on the environment, media laws and ownership, as well as funding, were classified as barriers to environmental communication. This is in line with Nagulendran *et al.* (2016). Similarly, Aida Nasirah *et al.* (2014) claimed that photographs are one of the main features used for environmental communication in most online campaigns (websites) by ENGOs.

Thus, collaboration between the media and ENGOs in reporting the exploitation of the environment by irresponsible parties through websites, newspapers and news coverage have proven to be fruitful, with the suspension of the licences for projects by big corporations – such as the Lynas power plant, the Sturgeon fish-farming project and bauxite mining in Pahang (Mohamad Saifudin *et al.* 2017) – that have a negative impact on environmental sustainability. Recent studies by Mohamad Saifudin *et al.* suggest that environmental communication in the form of visuals presented by the media – such as newspapers and websites – can contribute to social change. This is clearly evident in public participation in conservation movements brought about by pressuring the responsible parties, particularly the government, to withdraw any project that affected the environment. However, no attempt has been made in previous studies to quantify other media in Malaysia, particularly documentary films/programmes, in their reporting of environmental problems for the purpose of conservation.

Since the Griersonian era, the documentary has been known as a means of educational knowledge dissemination for the general public, involving three categories of speech acts –

the moving image, sound and the spoken word (Aguayo 2005). Aguayo claimed that 'documentary film and video as a rhetorical force of social change is not a new concept, but one that is rarely interrogated by theorists (2005, p. 106). As stated by Kahana (2008, p. 1):

Since the late 1920s and early 1930s, when filmmakers and critics in the United States, England and other Western industrial nations began regularly to use the term 'documentary' to refer to a discrete practice of filmmaking, it has been understood as a form of democratic and social pedagogy.

Therefore, the function of the documentary as an agent in promoting conservation and a change in attitudes towards and perceptions of marine life conservation by the Malaysian public as well as by the government is crucial. In response to that, it is now necessary to examine the role of Malaysian documentary films/programmes for marine life sustainability as a whole, as well as comparing the top-down (government to public) and the bottom-up (public to government) approaches to the Malaysian documentary industry, which will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

## **2.5 The development of the Malaysian documentary industry and its key players**

In Malaysia, the documentary has become a tool for propaganda and public persuasion since the 1920s as part of the British colonialism strategy. The British introduced the Malayan Film Unit (MFU) as an avenue to spread British ideology throughout Malaya (the former name of Malaysia). As noted by Megat (2004), the British used documentaries as a tool for propaganda to control power and as a war strategy to fight the Communist Party during their colonisation of Malaya. Similarly, Putri Tasnim (2012, p. 3) claims that 'the MFU documentaries are mostly propagandistic in nature, to help the British win the public's heart by making films that educate the people of all races to understand the ways of living, to promote public education towards the progress of self-government and to combat illiteracy'.

After gaining independence in 1957, the development of the Malaysian documentary industry as an informative tool has continued, in line with British intentions, to influence and educate people about the policy, history and economic development of the existing government (Asiah *et al.* 2009). This view is supported by Herwina *et al.* (2010), who wrote that the documentary film is treated as a cultural product, with a number of documentaries representing the historical, national and cultural events of Malaysia, produced in order to portray a positive image of the current government.

In addition, the establishment of Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) in 1963, with two television channels – TV1 and TV2 – continued this practice until the government's monopolisation of the broadcasting industry ended in 1984 through the establishment of the first private television station, TV3, or what is now known as Media Prima Berhad. This was followed by ASTRO, a paying television service, in 1996 and, later, by many other production houses. Thus, ownership of the Malaysian documentary industry is divided into three – the government-owned station (RTM), the commercial or private stations (ASTRO and Media Prima Berhad) and other production houses, including independent filmmakers (known as the activists) and indie filmmakers (Abu Hassan and Abdul 2013). In most cases, production houses and indie filmmakers or activists were very much dependent on government funding or grants when producing a documentary. Likewise, Chiu (2013) held the view that the Asian documentary filmmaking industry is shaped by its long history of authoritarian rule, and can generally be divided into two categories: one that is monopolised by the socially dominant groups of the ruling government or those with commercial interests (top-down cinema) and the independent groups of the underprivileged.

Apart from these three stations, the key players in the documentary industry are regulated by two government agencies – the National Film Department of Malaysia (FNM) and the National Film Development Corporation (FINAS) – both placed under the administration of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia or MCMC (FINAS 2016). These agencies are responsible for various media-related practices of the film and broadcasting industry, including documentaries, indicating the significance and importance of the government's aid and support for the industry. Similarly, Rampal (2005) notes that the government's role is vital for the success of the film industry through its continued support and aid to ensure its sustainability. Benjamin (1976) as cited in Asiah *et al.* (2009) claims that the birth of a documentary is very much dependent on its development and expansion. Most production houses and independent filmmakers are reliant on the limited funding or grant provided by the said key players. This scenario is one that is also faced by other documentary-makers, including those making marine life documentaries that present the issue of marine life extinction. Hence, it is important to discuss the representation of environmental issues, particularly on marine life extinction, in Malaysian documentaries in order to understand the context of the present study.



### **2.5.1 The representation of marine life extinction in the Malaysian documentary**

Environmental and species degradation, particularly marine life extinction, is considered as a controversial issue because natural resources are vital for the Malaysian government in boosting the country's economic performance (see Sub-chapter 2.3). As Saharuddin (1995) found, one of the biggest challenges for the Malaysian government in managing the country's marine resources is conservation. Similarly, Mohamad Saifudin *et al.* (2017, p. 13) claim that 'not every environmental topic can be freely talked about or written in public. The environmental issues that are associated with the government, politicians or "big names" in Malaysia are not exposed'.

This view is supported by Rao (2013, p. 45), who looked at films as a government arm and therefore 'if a film was found hostile towards the government's policies and aspirations, the films had to be censored or banned from public viewing'. Hence, any reports on the detrimental effects of natural resources, particularly in the form of a documentary, can tarnish the government's image of Malaysia as a tourist destination, both regionally and globally. For this reason, the low number of environmental documentaries made by local producers, including FINAS, as well as the high rate of importation of documentaries from abroad (see Sub-chapter 2.5.2), have raised questions regarding the government's policy in supporting marine life conservation. This can be seen in the scenarios of local broadcasting stations consisting of (1) the government TV station – TV1 – which broadcasts documentary programmes about the environment such as *Simfoni Alam*, but in which only a few episodes represent environmental degradation; (2) the private TV station TV3, which shows documentary programmes such as *Majalah 3*, but only covers environmental problems alternately with other issues within one episode; and (3) ASTRO, which broadcasts Western documentary programmes through various imported satellite channels such as National Geographic and NatGeo Wild.

On the other hand, the advance of technology in documentary filmmaking has opened more avenues for independent filmmakers to reach a greater audience (Chiu 2013, p. 205). New screening venues are invented and many independent documentaries filmmakers' resort to screening tours, community-oriented venues, schools and film festivals to increase the visibility of their work. This strategy is also largely practiced by environmentalists and NGOs in marine conservation, in raising public awareness towards environmental and species sustainability. This is exemplified by the initiatives of the EcoKnights, an ENGO established in 2005 which organised eco-film festivals as part of their efforts to encourage local and

international independent filmmakers to contribute their work for environmental sustainability (EcoKnights 2017). Apart from this, the Community Communication Centre (KOMAS) launched the Freedom Film Fest (FFF) in 2003, which served as a platform for silent voices among the public to exercise their rights. Nor should we forget social media such as websites, Facebook pages, blogs and YouTube, which are particularly helpful in creating alternative screening opportunities for these groups (Baumgärtel 2012 cited in Chiu 2013, p. 206).

### **2.5.2 Challenges in the production and broadcasting of the marine life documentary in Malaysia**

There are a number of challenges that have subsequently hampered the development of marine life documentaries in Malaysia. First and foremost, the documentary is not considered a profitable commodity to the industry key players, and has received limited support in terms of marketing, funding and skills from many parties, including government agencies. As Boon (2008, p. 4) argued, despite having good directors, documentary films cannot be produced without financial, practical and intellectual contributions from the responsible parties. Similarly, a number of researchers have reported that the small market and the limited recognition received from the industry's key players and people have resulted in the slow growth of the documentary industry. As Putri Tasmin (2012) argued, in recent years, documentaries have not received much recognition from the government or the people, and have been ranked the lowest, compared to other genres, in most Malaysians' to-watch list. In the same vein, Asiah *et al.* (2009, p. 23) asserted that documentaries are not acknowledged as a commodity by many parties, the production does not involve all parties, there is usually a limited budget and just a small market, although the viewing rate for documentary programme among the urban population was high – at 94.6 per cent – with the environmental and science documentaries as the preferred choice of viewers. This study suggested that Malaysians have a high viewing preference for documentaries related to nature and the environment, which raises the issue of recent trends in the local documentary industry.

Secondly, the dominance of the government-owned television stations, private stations and commercial-interest productions in the documentary industry has resulted in the decline of this medium. Documentary-making is relatively expensive and professional skills are required in producing it, providing avenues for the government and commercial corporates to monopolise this industry. For example, the privatisation of broadcasting has created an

unstable market for the local documentary industry in the past decade and its value as a generic identifier of educational medium has reduced. It was found in a number of studies that filmmakers and production houses tend to make fiction films, animation films, entertainment programmes and soap operas objectively, for commercial profit, a notion that is supported by Asiah *et al.* (2009).

Similarly, Yu (2012) as cited in Chiu (2013, p. 207), claimed that the biggest challenges for Asian documentary-makers are the limited distribution channels and the constant unstable production environment. These have surpassed film and television production influenced by Western concepts, such as fiction films, docusoaps and various reality programmes into Asian countries (Bagust 2008). Following this, various adaptations of Western entertainment and reality programmes – such as the Mentor Milenia, Akademi Fantasia and the Malaysian Idol, to name but a few – have been produced in Malaysia. Until now, Malaysian film and television industry players have been continuously competing to produce entertainment-based programmes. Meanwhile, the production of documentary or factual programmes about the risks of the destruction of marine life which environmental debates discuss, including at the policy or individual levels for environmental behaviour, receive substantially less coverage (Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009), including in Malaysia.

Thirdly, the high numbers of imported films and documentaries from Western and European countries have hampered the growth of local documentaries and resulted in a competitive market for local filmmakers and producers. According to Asiah *et al.* (2009), the trend of importing Western-produced documentaries by local television stations can be attributed to a number of factors, which include (i) the increasing number of television channels in need of instant programmes (ii) their cheaper purchase price and (iii) their easy accessibility. A list of documentary films as well as other genres of importations for local viewing in the past ten years is presented in Table 2.4 below.

**Table 2.4: List of documentary films and other genres of importations**

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Type of Film										
Animation	3	15	433	1,757	838	534	181	362	1	114
Fiction	2,004	3,809	9,793	6,915	1,308	902	3,465	1,155	792	1,006
Documentary	1,839	543	1,250	1,135	524	492	211	271	80	87
Entertainment	439	0	967	1,294	471	306	230	213	298	92
Comedy	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Reality TV	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Others	247	63	465	220	210	3	520	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,534</b>	<b>4,431</b>	<b>12,910</b>	<b>11,321</b>	<b>3,356</b>	<b>2,237</b>	<b>4,607</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>1,299</b>

Source: National Film Development Corporation Malaysia, FINAS (2018).

This scenario is made more complicated by the fact that empirical study of the documentary is still very limited in Malaysia and is not an area that has been explored extensively. In fact, the first PhD thesis about the documentary industry was published in 2004 by Megat Al-Imran Yasin. Megat discussed the political economy of the Malaysian documentary, by highlighting the factors that have contributed to the slow growth of this industry. These include strict censorship, limited funding, market and skills, the low quality of the productions as well as their high cost. Years later, in 2008, a book written by Ubaidullah on the principles of documentary film in Malaysia was published by FINAS. Then, in 2009, a book about the Malaysian documentary scene by Asiah *et al.* was published (Abu Hassan and Abdul 2013). This was followed by a Master's dissertation by Abdullah (2015), which thoroughly discussed Malaysian documentary production.

Apart from this, there are also limited studies about documentaries, particularly from the aspects of production and audience reception. In Malaysia, the documentary is considered as a non-fiction film but is placed under one umbrella along with other film genres – fiction, short and animation films (Asiah *et al.* 2009). Therefore, it is quite challenging to find any existing literature on documentaries alone, i.e. without the inclusion of other genres of film. This is exemplified in a study by Rao (2013) on film censorship in contemporary Malaysia as

well as a study by Jamaluddin *et al.* (2014) which looked into the challenges and potential of the Malaysian film industry, for which quality, creativity and technology were found to be the greatest challenges. In addition, there are studies such as that by Noraini *et al.* (2015) which discusses the behavioural patterns of East Malaysian film-viewers and which found that various genres of film are significant to attract viewers to watch films, especially during their family leisure time and holiday activities. Herwina *et al.* (2010) on the other hand, conducted a study on the effect of globalisation on the Malaysian film industry, indicating that the former presented a major threat to the latter due to the intense competition that it poses to local producers. Meanwhile, Putri Tasnim (2012) specifically discuss the creative treatment of actuality in the Malaysian documentary, where Malaysians are witnessing the rise of activists and independent filmmakers through a platform called 'The Freedom Film Fest', which seek to include social issues, especially those about the environment, into socially relevant films. These publications demonstrate that there is a big gap in the existing literature on Malaysian documentaries, particularly on audience reception and social change. The scarcity of studies in the field is also an indication that the documentary is a relatively insignificant genre for local filmmakers and researchers.

All of this suggests that the role of the documentary film/programme in informing people about marine life extinction is not fully recognised in Malaysia. It is for this reason; I believe that the general public's limited knowledge of the issue is one of the explanations for the lack of action to prevent the destruction of marine life. Summing up the research above, previous studies have looked at the political economy and distribution of documentaries, which obviously influences the production of this medium. However, the main purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the role of the documentary as an agent in the promotion of changes in attitude towards and perceptions of marine life conservation. The hope is that it will potentially encourage social change concerning the conservation of marine life by Malaysians. Part II will specifically discuss media effects and the role of documentary and social change.

## PART II

### 2.6 Media effects

Studies on media effects are based on the assumption that a media report, be it in print, broadcast or on the internet, has significant influence on its audience, yet there is little agreement on its assumed effects. According to Esser (2008, p. 2892), there are four phases of media effects. The first phase (World War I to the end of the 1930s) was characterised by the effects of the media on the population being an exceedingly strong way to shape opinions and beliefs, to change life habits and to mould audience behaviour according to the will of their controllers. The second phase (the end of the 1930s to the end of the 1960s) was characterised as a period in which the media was less influential. The third phase (the end of the 1960s through to the end of the 1970s) was characterised as a time of rediscovery of strong media effects. The fourth phase (the standard media effects in history extends through to the present time) is characterised by the media exerting their greatest influence when they become involved in the process of constructing sense and meaning. These phases indicate that the media effects theory has tended to posit different levels of strong and weak effects that can exert an influence on an audience's views and beliefs on a specific topic, including that of environmental conservation.

Potter (2012, p. 47) defined media effects as:

The processes and products of media influence that act directly on targets (individuals and macro units of society and institutions) as well as indirectly on targets through other units. These effects can be intentional or unintentional on the part of both the media senders as well as the target receivers. They can be manifested or hidden from natural observation. They are constant and ongoing. And they are shaped not just by the media influence but within a constellation of other factors that act in concert with the media influence.

This broad definition serves as a good starting point for establishing the role of documentary films/programmes on marine life, known in this study as blue documentaries (see Sub-chapter 2.8), in affecting perceptions and thus potentially encouraging long term attitudinal changes about marine life conservation.

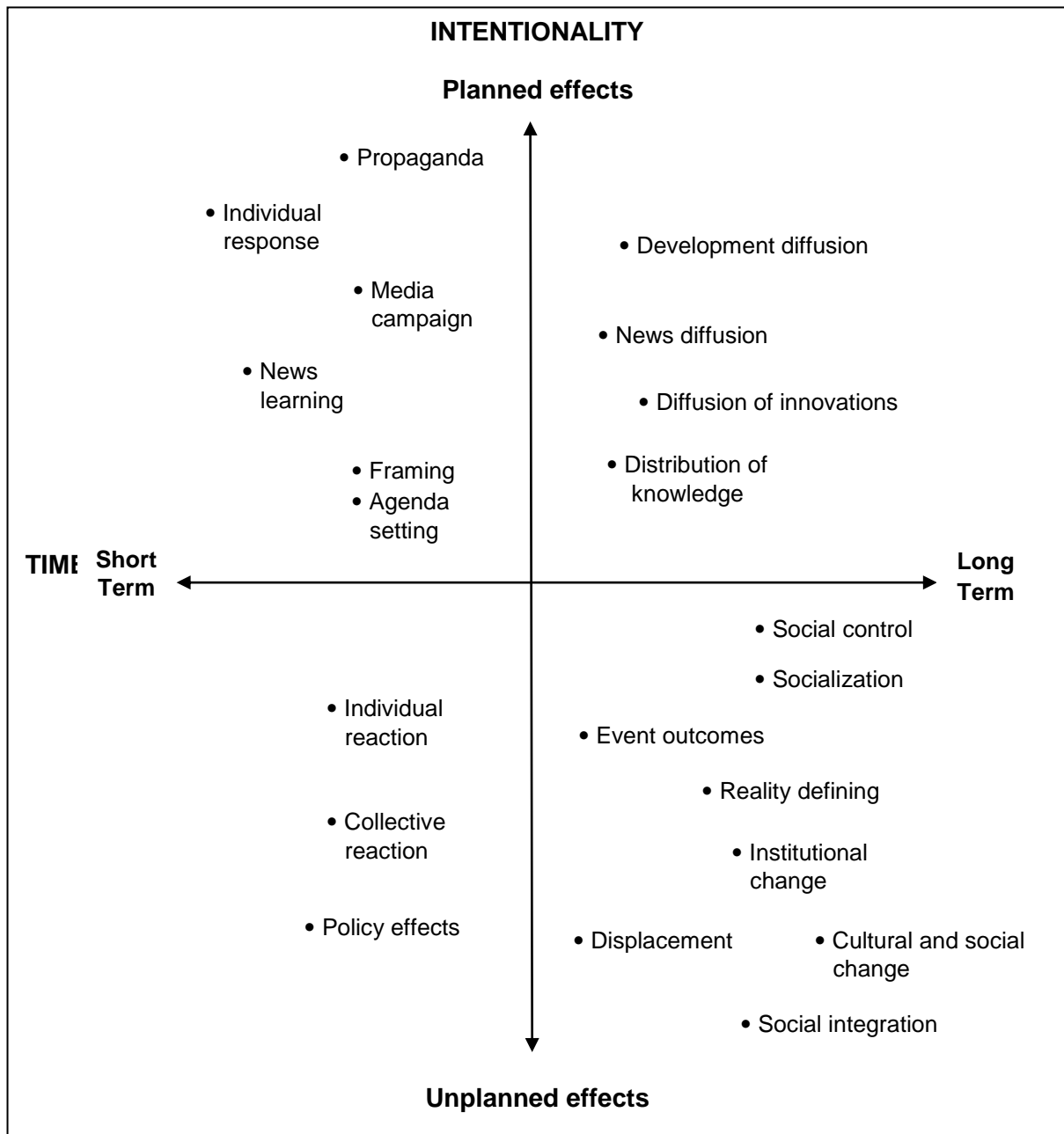
As Beaudoin (2007) claims, media effects can be separated into three types consisting of cognitive effects (attitudes and beliefs), affective effects (emotional responses) and behavioural effects (pro- and anti-social action). He also claims that the significance of these cognitive and affective effects rests on the degree to which they influence behavioural effects (2007, p. 696). Similarly, Potter (2012) claims that there are six types of media effects at the individual level, consisting of:

- the cognitive effect (media exposure exerting an influence on an individual's mental processes or the product of those mental processes; typically involves the acquisition, processing and storage of information);
- the belief effect (media exposure exerting an influence on an individual's perception of the probability that an object or event is associated with a given attribute);
- the attitudinal effect (with media exposure exerting an influence on an individual's evaluative judgement; this typically involves providing people with elements to evaluate or shaping standards of evaluation);
- the affective effect (whereby media exposure exerts an influence on an individual's feelings such as emotions and moods);
- the physiological effect (in which media exposure exercises an influence on an individual's automatic bodily responses to stimuli); and
- the behavioural effect (with media exposure having an influence on an individual's actions).

Moreover, McQuail (2010, p. 466) organised media effects into four criteria (see Figure 2.3 for a summary), consisting of:

- planned and short-term (propaganda, individual responses, media campaigns, news learning, framing, agenda-setting);
- unplanned and short-term (individual reaction, collective reaction, policy effects);
- planned and long-term (development diffusion, news diffusion, diffusion of innovations, distribution of knowledge); and
- unplanned and long-term (social control, socialisation, event outcomes, reality defining and construction of meaning, displacement, cultural and social change, social integration).

**Figure 2.3: A typology of media effects**



Source: McQuail's Mass Communication Theory (2010)

Meanwhile, the term 'affective turn' has been used by a number of authors to understand the relationship between feeling and the individual or spheres of experience (bodily experience), embodiment and subjectivity and challenge the study of emotions. According to Smith (2011, p. 1), critics associated with affective turn defined it as 'the preconscious feelings and impulses are altered by smells, hormones, gestures, and images, and that these affective incitements change depending upon the qualitative conditions of social relations'. Smith (2011, p. 1) suggests that 'what we imagine to be individual and specific – impulses,



attitudes, emotions, and feelings – in fact have a social, historical, and therefore shared dimension’.

This study will examine the effect of broadcast media, particularly documentary films/programmes, as it arguably plays a significant role in the determination of the audience’s perception, emotions, attitude and/or behaviour towards marine life conservation. The study aims to do so by examining the effective rhetorical elements that contribute to media effects. This leads to a discussion of the role that documentary films/programmes play in promoting social change, particularly in terms of environmental conservation movements (see next sub-chapter).

## **2.7 The documentary and social change – environmental conservation movement**

The environmental conservation movement has been active in recent documentary filmmaking, both at the corporate and the independent level. In previous studies, it was reported that many parties, including activists, have been utilising the documentary as a tool for intervening in the public sphere to bring about social change, particularly on the issue of environmental destruction while, at the same time, stimulating the conservation movement (Castillo and Egea 2015; Olesen 2008; Robé *et al.* 2016; Viviani 2014; Whiteman 2009).

It is important to make clear what defines social change in the context of this study. Social change can refer to positive changes in the general public, including their perceptions, emotions, attitudes and/or behaviour towards environmental conservation movement. Thus, efforts to promote or further marine life conservation, as demonstrated by the respondents in this study after their documentary viewing experiences (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6), can be a significant indicator of the effects of documentary films/programmes on the environmental conservation movement.

There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of persuasive communication in advancing the cause of environmental conservation (see Sub-chapter 2.9 on the conclusive concept of persuasion and rhetoric). As Renov (2004, p. 130) claims:

Due to its rhetorical potency as a tool for nation building, public education, and advocacy, the documentary form has consistently been harnessed to the manufacture of social consent.

Similarly, Aguayo (2005, n.p) studied the reality of historical materials, carried out interviews with filmmakers, activists and public officials, and assessed the distribution pattern of the documentary text. Aguayo found that:

In rhetorical studies, the persuasive model of communication is conceptualised in two ways as a constitutive and/or instrumental text. In practice, the function of the activist documentary film and video utilises both persuasive models of persuasion, illuminating the false dichotomy placed between these theoretical constructs in practice. Persuasion is both constitutive and instrumental; it not only defines our world but functions to create it with action.

For example, Guggenheim's documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* (AIT) produced in 2006, which sparked intense environmental debate internationally and has successfully raised public awareness about global warming. The persuasive communication through photo footage and slide shows of Al Gore's presentation in the AIT invited us to certify the credentials of the activist, to learn how he transformed himself into someone who is qualified as an 'expert' to speak and represent the historical events based on his travels and his conversations (Rosteck and Frentz 2009). AIT has resulted in a public backlashing of the government, industrial operations and people's daily activities, calling for immediate conservation action to halt global warming.

Although there are uncertainties about the persuasive impact of documentary films/programmes on the environmental conservation movement – particularly in Malaysia, given the scarcity of empirical studies on the topic (see Sub-chapter 2.5.2) – it is clear that media discourses such as the environmental rhetoric found in AIT are invigorating public debates. Next, this study will discuss the global trend in documentary practices in marine life conservation.

### ***2.7.1 The global trend of the documentary as an agent for social change concerning marine life conservation***

Various initiatives and research studies across the continents have been carried out by marine experts in a bid to preserve marine life. The knowledge about the dying ocean has been communicated to the people (Palmer 2008; Prnjat 2016). For example, in Western countries, regardless of whether the documentaries are produced by big corporations with high budgets, or independent filmmakers such as activists or NGOs on low budgets, both

productions are capable of instilling conservation awareness amongst the viewers (Holbert *et al.* 2003). The level or extent of this conservation awareness can translate into further conservation actions being taken, for example by giving donations, becoming an activist or volunteering for marine sustainability (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009). Holbert *et al.* (2003, p. 191) found that eco-documentaries influenced pro-conservation behaviour amongst audiences by encouraging them 'to recycle, to purchase products that are environmentally friendly, and to be more energy efficient in their daily routines'. This view is supported by Janpol and Dilts (2016, p. 94), who experimented with two types of documentary and found that respondents who viewed a video about dolphins displayed a positive, pro-conservation behaviour as compared to the group who watched the film about bridge construction. Similarly, Hofman and Hughes (2018) claimed that conservation documentaries about marine environments have the potential to influence viewers' attitudes and behavioural intentions, and that post-viewing support materials can have lasting impacts on behaviour.

Meanwhile, a broader perspective has been adopted by Marcus and Stoddard (2009, p. 284), who argued that 'documentary films are uniquely engaging' due to the compelling audio-visual content that enabled a large range of environmental issues to reach wider audiences across the globe. Also, previous studies have reported that people are being informed about environmental problems as a result of documentary viewing experiences (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Elkington and Maher 2015; Hughes 2011; Mills 2010). Similarly, it has been reinforced that documentary films can stimulate pro-conservation awareness and behaviour among the viewers (Fortner 1985; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Kidd and Kidd 1997; Levinson *et al.* 2016; Stoddard 2009). A notable example of this conjunction has been demonstrated in *An Inconvenient Truth* (AIT) (2006), which secured worldwide interest in environmental problems while, at the same time, motivating both the political decision-makers as well as the general public to address the urgency of global warming in Taiwan (Lin 2013). Lin also found that viewers perceived the effects of AIT to be stronger, due to several factors – the desirability of the message, the perceived message quality and sensation value, the sensation-seeking tendency as well as the self-perceived environmental knowledge. This has consequently increased the willingness of the people to act and stop global warming by supporting the distribution of the film and other future productions that advocate for similar causes.

Hence, this study argues that documentary films/programmes have powerful elements and functions that encourage marine life conservation movements in the form of awareness,

attitude and/or behaviour. As Elkington and Maher (2015) have claimed, audio-visual content is effective in triggering an audience's excitement and acts as 'bridging material' between factual contents and audiences in an educational setting. Through a study of the BBC wildlife documentary series, *Nature's Great Events* (2009), it was found that the role of wildlife documentaries is vital in informing citizens of and engaging them in environmental debates and fits the global agenda of many conservationist objectives, particularly concerning the present-day environmental issues of marine pollution and habitat extinction (Mills 2010). Audio-visual aids are therefore crucial for audiences' reception and interpretation of conservation messages, since they shape people's varied perceptions and trigger a response to social change. This leads to two related but distinct discussions of the role of documentary films/programmes about conservation – one related to perceptions and attitudes (see Sub-chapter 2.7.2) and the other to inciting behavioural change (see Sub-chapter 2.7.3).

## **2.7.2 The role of documentary films/programmes in conservation – targeting perceptions or attitudes**

The role of documentary films/programmes can be categorised as targeting change in perceptions or attitudes towards conservation in the following ways: (i) encouraging positive relationships between humans and nature, and (ii) serving as a platform for knowledge dissemination about conservation. This sub-chapter includes work from Nurul Hidayah (2017).

### **2.7.2.1 Encouraging positive relationships between humans and nature**

Recent evidence has suggested that the environmental documentary or eco-documentary encourages positive relationships between humans and nature (Elkington and Maher 2015; Mills 2010). As Blewitt (2011) suggests that environmental and conservation issues need to be disseminated in a more positive manner in the mainstream media, particularly in non-fiction productions such as documentary films/programmes, as this medium is possibly created a public pedagogy for a positive relationship between humans and non-humans. Similarly, (Hughes 2011) claims that an eco-documentary frames can alter audiences' perceptions and persuade them to be more positive towards other species through the knowledge gained; it can create a mutually cognitive environment, which is an effective way to raise awareness on environmental issues. For example, Rob Stewart's documentary film, *Sharkwater* (2006), sparked a positive relationship between sharks and humans through the

representation of a shared environment in a scene where Stewart was swimming with the sharks. This image portrays positive relationships between humans and the natural world while, at the same time, rejecting the stereotypical assumptions of sharks as a dangerous species. This stereotype of wild animals, found in many fiction films such as *Jaws* (1975), leads to the assumption that human beings should not be in a shared environment with sharks.

The concept of a mutual cognitive environment, as considered by Sperber and Wilson (1995) in their *Relevance, Communication and Cognition* theory, is relevant to the present study of human-non-human relationships. In this study, it emerged that anthropomorphic representations of animals played a role in influencing viewers' positive feelings towards other creatures. I have more to say about the anthropomorphism in part III (see Sub-chapter 2.11.5).

#### **2.7.2.2 A platform for knowledge dissemination about conservation**

Documentary films/programmes can be considered as a platform for knowledge dissemination on conservation in the 'public sphere'. Global accessibility through various websites enables viewers to watch the documentary without any restrictions, while the advanced broadcasting technology used in environmental documentary films with great aesthetic, societal and educational values encourages viewers' participation in global environmental movements (Marcus and Stoddard 2007; Mills 2010). Ouimet and Kopnina (2015, p. 325) claimed that the relationships between human and non-human species are 'too complicated to be generalized and in practice will likely need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis'. In support of this, Morar and Peterlicean (2012) argued that the degradation of biodiversity requires environmental communication in order to raise public awareness, and that, by making documentaries to represent environmental issues in society, particularly among youth, future damage to the environment can be avoided.

This view is supported by Doyle (2011) as cited in McAuliffe *et al.* (2014), who claimed that the audio-visual form of the documentary allows the representation of complex information leading to a greater edification and even creativity in presenting the information, data and evidence of current controversial environmental issues, compared to mere images, written texts (textbooks), other media and even teachers, in raising public conservation awareness (Merkt *et al.* 2011; Pereira and Carneiro 2014). To further strengthen this notion, Frank (2013) asserted that educators and philosophers of education should recognise the

educational function of a documentary film as a learning material through which to presenting the unfamiliar world that cannot be reached by people who do not have the required qualifications and expertise. Thus, the importance of the documentary as a means of disseminating environmental messages about marine life conservation to the masses has been acknowledged in Western countries through the increasing number of environmental documentaries and film festivals around the world (Palmer 2008; Prnjat 2016).

### **2.7.3 The role of documentary films/programmes in conservation – inciting behavioural change**

The role of documentary films/programmes can also be categorised as inciting behavioural change towards conservation in the following ways: (i) donations to conservation funds, and (ii) providing a platform for collaborations. This sub-chapter includes work from Nurul Hidayah (2017).

#### **2.7.3.1 Rousing donations to conservation funds**

The positive relationship between humans and nature contributes to significant social outcomes as the documentary can increase the public's donation behaviour towards conservation foundations. Arendt and Matthes (2016) found that the viewing experience of participants who watched a nature documentary has led to a tendency for them to donate more to organisations with causes revolving around animals, nature and environmental protection. Likewise, Janpol and Dilts (2016) carried out fieldwork among college students of psychology, and found that those subjects who watched the documentary film about marine life displayed a greater tendency to donate their money to save the dolphins and had a greater ability to associate their self-concept with the natural environment. They experimented with two types of documentary film – *Explore the Wildlife Kingdom: Dolphins, Tribes of the Sea* (2006) and *Really Big Bridges* (2007) – in which the former focuses on nature and the latter on bridge construction. Following this, the subjects were provided with one dollar's worth of tickets for donations, with which they can choose to donate to either the 'Save the Dolphins Fund' or the 'Save the Bridges Fund'. It was then found that subjects who watched the dolphin video had a greater tendency to associate their self-concept with the natural environment, compared to the group who watched the bridge construction film (Janpol and Dilts 2016).

Hence, the behaviour towards conservation among viewers, through donating money to conservation foundations, is found to be directly connected to the distant suffering that they witnessed in the film. Boltanski (1999) introduced the term 'politics of pity', in which television uses images and language to render the spectacle of suffering not only comprehensible but also ethically acceptable for the spectators (Chouliaraki 2006). This triggers the spectator's sympathy towards the unfortunate subject represented in the media and, even with the very limited knowledge that they have on the subject being shown, they are willing to act upon it (Boltanski 1999, p. 10). As highlighted by Chouliaraki (2006, p. 8), the public showcases distant suffering through three categories consisting of multimodality (the properties of language and imagery that construe the spectacle of suffering on screen), space-time (the representation of proximity/distance to the scene of suffering), and agency (the representation of action on the sufferer's misfortune).

We can therefore see that actions taken by viewers to donate money to conservation foundations (agencies) are a result of the distant suffering viewed in onscreen representations in a documentary film. Previous studies (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Janpol and Dilts 2016) have not dealt with the factors that influence the viewer's perception of their donation behaviour after watching these documentaries.

Having said that, it is important to look deeper into the factors that encourage the donation behaviour by examining the rhetorical convention at play in the documentary, which becomes the starting point for my discussion of the concept of persuasion and rhetorical strategies at great length in another sub-chapter (refer to Sub-chapter 2.9).

### **2.7.3.2 A platform for collaboration**

Documentary films/programmes can initiate collaboration between different parties involved in conserving the environment, including filmmakers, oceanologists, environmentalists, conservationists, activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It has been reported in a number of previous studies that a documentary is considered as a vehicle for presenting different opinions, while retaining 'a sense of unity' among the people; it is also considered by the community as an effective medium for transmitting information and raising conservation awareness among spectators (Chavez *et al.* 2004; Kidd and Kidd 1997; Levinson *et al.* 2016). This is in line with Sherrow's (2010) notion that there are five principle opportunities for preserving endangered species by:

- recognising and encouraging conservation projects and conservation education into research;
- encouraging the publication of conservation education in mainstream journals;
- persuading dedicated experts or scientists to become conservation educators or conservationists;
- developing partnership collaboration across typical boundaries; and
- collaborating across studies, disciplines and continents in order to share the possible actions needed.

This finding is significant to the present study, whereby, in order to encourage the conservation movement, a single party's opinion needs to be avoided. For example, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) has proved that a coalition between different interest groups can bring about a balance between the different fields of expertise in representing the environmental issue of climate change. A survey result indicated that 64 per cent of climate scientists regarded the film as a robust representational medium concerning environmental issues such as global warming, climate change, loss of biodiversity and ocean acidification (Beattie and McGuire 2011; Farnsworth and Lichter 2012; Lin 2013).

Similarly, the documentary *Sharkwater* (2006) is also a decent example of a successful collaboration between different experts – including activists, institutions, media practitioners and the public – in their attempts to conserve shark species. Rob Stewart, the director of *Sharkwater*, joined the conservationists and the crew of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's boat, *Ocean Warrior*, to investigate why people are killing sharks (Shewry 2013, p. 49). In the same way, a newly released documentary, *A Plastic Ocean* (2016), was made with the involvement of many parties. These consisted of an international team of adventurers, scientists, researchers and ocean ambassadors, during its production process (research, filmmaking, distribution), with the objective to establish the public's awareness while encouraging public action on the importance of the over-usage of the plastic that is causing environmental pollution in the ocean.

By the same token, in a content analysis study conducted by Evans (2015), based on the 55 episodes of the *Shark Week* programme on the Discovery Channel, which were aired between 2001 and 2012, it was found that, after partnering with scientists and marine conservation foundations, more scientific frames were incorporated into the programme, along with some alterations to its narrative elements. This initiative was taken following



criticism of the Discovery Channel for the unrealistic narratives in their programme. According to Elperin (2012), cited in Evans (2015, p. 267), it was asserted that:

In 2010, in the wake of criticism from conservationists and scientists that *Shark Week* presented an unrealistic narrative about sharks that could damage efforts to save sharks from extinction, the Discovery Channel partnered with conservation organisations and announced that it would revamp some of its programming to reflect a more accurate portrayal of sharks.

In the context of the present study, collaboration between the different interest groups when representing environmental issues, particularly on marine species sustainability, is vital in film narratives to avoid non-verified information being delivered to spectators. This is because documentary films/programmes create a 'space' and allows different interest groups to come together.

In conclusion, documentary films/programmes play an important role in disseminating information about environmental conservation to the general public. As Harness and Drossman (2011) have pointed out, viewers of non-fiction television programmes are more likely to relate to environmental concerns. However, the nature of the documentary as an important mechanism for marine life conservation movement, particularly in Malaysia, remains unclear. To date, there has been no reliable evidence to show that the documentary can initiate an interest in conservation amongst Malaysians, especially for marine life, due to the limited literature on documentary studies. Lee (2010) found that, in spite of the acknowledgement of the importance of having a sustainable marine life in ensuring the continuation of the human species, the Malaysian government and most of the country's citizens are not motivated to take conservation action due to their lack of knowledge and information on marine life extinction. This situation begs the question of whether environmental documentaries on specific subject matters – particularly on marine life extinction – can persuade people to change their attitudes towards and perceptions of marine life conservation by Malaysians.

Hence, before examining the concept of persuasion and rhetoric in marine life documentaries (see Sub-chapter 2.9), I need to clarify exactly what the differences are between inland conservation and marine life conservation in documentary films. This is because several documentaries focusing specifically on marine life conservation – like *Sharkwater*, *A Plastic Ocean* and *Blue Planet* – are continually being produced. Hence, this

research will look at the rhetorical elements of blue documentaries, which represent the issue of marine life extinction, making them different to any other documentary. A detailed explanation of the term 'blue documentaries' will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

## **2.8 The definition of the blue documentary**

Both inland and marine biodiversity are considered to be part of the environment, but they are in fact separate entities that exemplify different species conservation issues. This study focuses specifically on the representation of marine life extinction in documentary filmmaking. My concern here is neither nit-picking the differences nor historical context of environmental or eco-documentary. Instead, my study subjected to the representation of marine life extinction in documentary filmmaking and worthy separate recognition, focusing specifically on conservation and sustainability. This has eventually led to the narrow definition of the term 'blue documentary'. Like the term 'green documentary' (Hughes 2014), the blue documentary is relatively new – I first used it in a conference paper, in which I explicitly focused on marine life or ocean eco-system preservation (Nurul Hidayah 2017). In the rest of this research, the acronym BD will be used for blue documentary.

The term raises several questions: What is a blue documentary? What is the origin of the term? When did it come into use? To answer all these questions, we need to scrutinise the theories and previous research which explain the terminology. Initially, this term derived from the Blue Marine Foundation movement, as well as Dr Sylvia Earle's Mission Blue and its philosophy, which is to preserve and protect the ocean.

Mission Blue is an initiative of the Sylvia Earle Alliance to ignite public support for the protection of Hope Spots – special places that are vital to the health of the ocean... through the creation of a global network of marine protected areas to safeguard 20% of the ocean by 2020 (Mission Blue 2016, n.p).

The term blue documentary (BD) is relatively new and not come to use until now, however, a number of documentaries focusing on the subject of ocean sustainability, specifically marine life conservation, are commonly and continuously being produced decades ago in first-world countries such as the U.S. and Britain. These include *Atlantis* (1991), *The Living Sea* (1995), *The Blue Planet* (2001), *Exploring the Reef* (2003), *Deep Blue* (2003), *Aliens of the Deep* (2005), *Sharkwater* (2006), *The Unforeseen* (2007), *The Cove* (2009), *Mission Blue* (2014), *Sonic Sea* (2016), *A Plastic Ocean* (2016) and *Sharkwater Extinction* (2018). Through the

blue documentary, the notable figures in underwater filmmaking – *inter alia* Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Andy Byatt, David Attenborough and Rob Stewart – have managed to bring together academics and marine experts to collaborate in BD filmmaking, in order to inform the public about the dying ocean. Accordingly, the award-winning blue documentary filmmaker of *Sharkwater*, Rob Stewart, stated that:

I was working as a wildlife photographer and had published articles on what was happening to sharks around the world after I discovered illegal shark fishing in the Galapagos... I realised there's got to be a better way to reach people. Print clearly wasn't the most powerful medium I could be using, so I decided to make a film ([www.sharkwater.com](http://www.sharkwater.com)).

Rob Stewart's decision to make the blue documentary *Sharkwater* is seen as an impactful way of disseminating knowledge and informing the public about the illegal shark-finning industry in the Galapagos. As noted by Brunel *et al.* (2001), cited in Sodhi *et al.* (2008, p.1-5), the documentary is a crucial and trustworthy medium through which to raise public awareness (Marcus and Stoddard 2009; Sodhi *et al.* 2008). This view is in line with *Sharkwater*, where the objectives of its production were met through the creation of conservation groups, a change in government policy and the empowerment of youth in marine life conservation, particularly of the shark species ([www.sharkwater.com](http://www.sharkwater.com)). The influence of the BD *Sharkwater* is demonstrated by the many programmes and campaigns that have been organised to prevent shark-finning and shark-poaching activities, especially in Malaysia, where the World Wildlife Fund Malaysia organised the Shark Campaign, inspired by the conservation efforts of *Sharkwater* (WWF Malaysia 2016).

The blue documentary warrants further detailed exploration of its rhetorical elements (see Sub-chapter 2.11) in documentary studies, since it specifically examines the audience reception of marine life conservation. My study also suggests that the theoretical basis of BD filmmaking relies heavily on the persuasive communication of its rhetorical elements – ethos, pathos and logos (see Sub-chapter 2.10.1), which have a significant impact on the viewer's conservation stance (see chapter 4, 5 and 6).

Having defined what is meant by the term 'blue documentary', the discussion will now move on to the concept of persuasion and rhetoric in documentaries, looking specifically at persuasive communication, the authority of 'truth' in a documentary, rhetorical theory as a

powerful means of persuasion for conservation movement and the rhetorical elements involved in documentary filmmaking about marine life conservation.

## **PART III**

### **2.9 The concept of persuasion and rhetoric in the documentary**

In the last ten years, the relationship between the human and the natural world has been communicated through a persuasive mechanism of documentaries – a medium which has initiated critical debates over the representation of reality or factual accuracy of the issues in question. For example, in first-world countries such as the UK, the US and Australia, the ‘persuasive powers’ of the documentary are widely acknowledged as a social agent of change in shaping, changing and manipulating public opinion, emotions, behaviour and action on the environment (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, cited in Hughes 2014, p. 12; Simpson 2008).

To make a documentary is, therefore, to persuade the viewer that what appears to be *is* (Vaughan 1999, cited in Bruzzi 2006, p. 17).

Hence, in the context of this study, it is important to determine what constitutes ‘truth’ in a BD when persuading viewers to change their attitudes and perceptions – thus potentially encouraging social change concerning marine life conservation.

#### **2.9.1 The authority of ‘truth’ in a documentary**

Due to the persuasive powers of the conservation documentary, a range of debates has arisen about the balance between the creativity of filmmakers and the authenticity of the historical world. It is best to start this debate with the Grierson legacy of the ‘creative treatment of actuality’, which has expanded the representation of ‘truth’ in documentary filmmaking. Numerous studies have attempted to explain the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ based on their own context (Corner 1996; Nichols 2001; Renov 1993, 2004; Winston 1995). For example, Winston (1995, p. 15) has separated and defined the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ into three genres: creative as an art, treatment as drama and actuality as a science or historical event which is unchangeable in documentary filmmaking. However, Corner (1996, p. 32) counters Winston’s delineation of the ‘creative treatment of actuality’, by asserting that dramatisation, which is the act of merging ‘actuality’ and ‘entertainment’, is a

form of art and is becoming more popular in documentary filmmaking. Meanwhile, Nichols (2001, p. 6) claims the 'creative treatment of actuality' in documentary practice, by indicating 'creative treatment' as a licence of fiction, while 'actuality' is the practitioner's responsibility, in expressing actual situations and events.

In addition, Renov (1993, 2004) claims, like Winston, that history can be represented within a fictional diegesis, where it must be 'dramatised' in order to convince the audience of the evidence. However, the representation strategy is made safe through the power of direct address and public appeal, which is extensively withheld in history. Renov (2004, p. 22) also pointed out that fiction and non-fiction are entangled together, and that the documentary parades fictive elements (style, structure) to establish meanings and effects to viewers. In the same vein, Montagu (1966) as cited in Winston (1995, p. 14) described actuality as the raw material (experience) that must pass through the consciousness of the creative artist (filmmaker), before being transformed by labour with technical accordance and aesthetic laws into an art product. In contrast, Bruzzi (2006, p. 26) asserted that archive materials (historical footage) have been primarily deployed in two ways – both illustratively (as a part of an historical exposition to complement other elements such as interviews and voice-overs) and critically (as part of a more politicised historical argument or debate). Bruzzi also asserted the relationship between style and authenticity, in the sense that 'the less polished the film, the more credible it will be found' (2006, p. 17).

Also, according to Nichols (1991, p. 108), the leading figures of early documentary development – Vertov, Grierson, Rotha, Flaherty, and Lorentz – all eulogised the documentary as a viable contributor to the discourse of sobriety, in which the relationship between the historical reality and its representation [usually involving aesthetical values], might affect the credibility of the film. Renov (2004, p. 23) claimed that his belief in the 'discourse of sobriety' is as relevant as pleasure, desire and appeals to the imaginary, even of the delirium cited by Nichols (1991, p. 108).

Based on previous studies, I argued that, until today, the primary perspectives of the documentary canon, such the legacy of Grierson, Rotha, Flaherty, Vertov and Lorentz, have been changed in terms of the creativity of a filmmaker, which plays a major role in organising the rhetorical approach through diverse genre, technological innovations and other filmmaking technique, particularly to persuading viewers of the need for social change concerning the issue of ecological destruction. Also, the positivist attitude towards truth has also changed because the representation of truth in a BD implicates both fictional and non-

fictional elements through several rhetorical strategies. These latter comprise the voice-over (narrator), visuals (images), archive footage (statistics, history), characters and sound – all narrated according to the filmmakers' creativity. Also, it is significant to note that 'truth' can be manipulated and distorted because the facts and the visual image (see Sub-chapter 2.9.2) can be interpreted differently; allowing the filmmaker's creativity to interpret the historical reality. In general, documentary films can be considered persuasive, but the debate in many documentary writings is about the balance between how much 'reality' and how much 'creativity' you should have in making a documentary film/programme.

Hence, from a diverse perspective, this present study asserts that truth can refer to the credibility of the information that people are seeing in a BD, which is both true and important for marine life conservation. This is because the relationship between the 'reality' and the 'creativity' of an issue represented in documentary filmmaking needs to be bound by their objectives and potential effects on the audience. Therefore, the debate between the representation of reality or truth and persuasive rudiments has led me to examine the strength of the indexicality of the image (authenticity, historical image or footage, legitimation) in documentary filmmaking, which will be explained in the next sub-chapter.

### **2.9.2 *The indexicality of the visual image***

Indexicality has become a significant notion for cinema studies. As such, documentary films/programmes profoundly rely on the power of the indexical relation between recorded images and the natural world to explain the relationship between a photographic image and the represented object. Indexicality is a term associated with Charles S. Peirce's theory of semiotics, which set up a system of classification for signs and describes how they convey their signification (Dobbs 2012, p. 1). Dobbs also stated that, in the 1960s, Roland Barthes' *Elements of Semiology* (1964) examined some of the key aspects of Peirce's theory, but in relation to the photographic image, giving rise to a school of thought that analyses all imagery as a visual sign system. Barthes (1964) stated that the sign is a compound of a signifier and a signified. There are three types of sign: (i) iconic signs (the meaning is based on the likeness of the form), (ii) indexical signs (with a direct link between the sign and the meaning of the sign), and (iii) symbolic signs (which have an arbitrary link). All these signs can convey two types of meaning – signifier (centred on its degree of 'reality', in which it is not 'a thing' but a mental representation of the 'thing') and signified (the idea of meaning being expressed by that signifier) (1964, p. 39). Later, many film scholars relate the theory of semiology to a research audience's reception of a film, in which the concept of the index

relates to the issues of realism as an aesthetic, in part due to the connection which the index has with the real (Dobbs 2012, p. 1). Barthes also phrased the index as an 'attribute to a sense of "having been there" which means that all photographs are associated with the past tense' (Dobbs 2012, p. 2).

In the context of this study, the theory of semiology can be applied in BD filmmaking to look for deeper meanings in what the viewers see when forming a representation of the issue of marine life extinction. For example, an index of the image of a plastic bag in a BD can be signified as debris, but the meaning of the plastic bag can be a signifier for irresponsible human behaviour towards the ocean. I also argue that an individual's cultural or geographical background and social experience are closely connected when interpreting and understanding an image in a documentary, because the images are not individual, still images but moving images that carry a wealth of signs that communicate messages. Also, my study involves different geographical locations of the respondents, which allows room for comparison based on their reception of foreign and local BDs with their locations/cultures, concerning their marine life conservation stance.

According to Nichols (2008, p. 1):

The optical properties of cameras, lenses, and recording media, from film to memory cards, capture aspects of the world with great precision, in which it allows the indexical image to serve as documentary evidence, as footage from surveillance cameras demonstrates.

Also, Poremba (2009, p. 3) states that:

... indexicality has two common configurations, pure indication (pointing to 'that there'), and a more causal understanding of seeing through an image to the referent in the world to which it is bound. It can also be conceived both technically – as a literal, physical link between object and image – and broadly, as compelling evidence for the existence of a referent.

In the context of this study, the important issues are what images make viewers react and how these visual images move people to change their conservation stance. For example, moving images in a BD work by representing the evidence of marine life extinction through

visual rhetoric such as animal suffering, plastic pollution and aesthetic details in order to persuade the viewers about this issue.

As Rose (2016, p. 2–3) claims, ‘visual is central to the cultural construction of social life... they interpret the world... they represent it... the ways... what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed’. She also argues that visual imagery is ‘never innocent; it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges’ (p. 23). She offers five aspects (visualising social difference, how images are looked at, differentiating visual cultures, the circulation of images, and the agency of images) of an analytical framework in understanding how images have social effects, which summarise as follows:

An image may have its own visual effects; these effects, through the ways of seeing mobilised by the image, are crucial in the production and reproduction of visions of social difference; but these effects always intersect with the social context of viewing, with how the image is circulated, and with the visualities spectators bring to their viewing (p. 22).

In this study, the social context of viewing, the circulation of images and visualities of the spectators can be applied in looking at the narrative images in documentary film and what they can do to bring changes on the human-non-human relationship. As Bousé (2003) argues that the social effects of narrative images in wildlife films can create a false intimacy between the audience and the animals as subject, which raise ethical questions regarding the representation of nature and science. He also claims that the filmmaker’s creativity that used standard practice of Hollywood films challenged the value of the scientific truth in most wildlife film – such as close-up shots ‘for the purpose of telling a story, and for promoting feelings of emotional involvement and intimacy with the characters in that story’ (p. 123). He asserts that close-up shots in wildlife films, in engaging the audience with animals, have six functions: (i) to provide information, (ii) to establish character, (iii) to establish a point-of-view and to initiate narrative, (iv) to indicate feelings and emotions, (v) to portray a subjective experience and (vi) to create intimacy and identification.

As my findings demonstrated (see Chapter 5), both Rose’s and Bousé’s arguments on the visual image – customarily constructed for it to have a social effect and emotional involvement – can be relevant to BD filmmaking when looking for the deeper meanings of the persuasive messages which these visual images give to viewers’ understanding and interpretation of the issue represented.



Like Rose and Bousé, Nichols (2008, p. 1), too, claims that:

The offsetting fact that images can be creatively altered... allows for expressive or persuasive intent to complicate the relation of the documentary image to reality. Documentaries are not raw documents... they are complex forms of communication and... They convey something of their creator's goals or intentions. Caution must be exercised in assessing how images serve as evidence.

In this thesis, films that are traditionally associated with realism, such as documentary films/programmes, have been given this quality based on their adherence to filming images with minimal manipulation, maintaining the highest degree of accuracy to what we would visually see if we had been there ourselves (Dobbs 2012). As Stafford (1991) cited in (Rose 2016, p. 3) stated, 'the construction of scientific knowledges about the world has become more and more based on images rather than on written texts'.

The indication of the construction of images relates to the BD filmmaking for social change vis-à-vis environmental or species conservation, as they use persuasive elements to represent the marine life extinction issue, particularly through the rhetorical images/visuals (see Sub-chapter 2.11), in order to appeal to the viewers' emotions and to persuade a change in perceptions, attitudes or behaviour towards their conservation stance. This is supported by Pearson *et al.* (2011), who recognise that the use of visual media can have a significant pro-conservation effect (attitudes, values and, to some extent, behaviour), on environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, the representation of reality and the filmmaker's creativity in disseminating the 'truth' about marine life extinction in the making of a BD film needs to be bound by its objectives and potential effect on the audience. Hence, the debate on the relationship between the representation of reality and that of creativity, including the indexical image has led me to contemplate these terms in BD filmmaking as dividable into three sections: accuracy of actuality (authenticity, historical image or footage legitimation), creativity (aesthetics, rhetoric, narratives and mimesis) and change (perceptions, emotions, attitudes). This study also finds that 'creative treatment' refers to the 'creativity' imposed by filmmakers in representing the 'truth' to the audience, while 'actuality', refutes the 'real world' beyond drama, beyond art, where the truth or actual event took place. These derivatives signify the affiliation of persuasive communication and rhetorical elements in BD filmmaking as agents in promoting a change in attitudes and perceptions and thus potentially to

encourage social change concerning marine life conservation, which will be discussed in the rest of this chapter.

## **2.10 Persuasive communication**

Persuasion has been broadly defined by a number of scholars. Simons (2001, p. 7) clearly stated that persuasion is a 'human communication designed as a form of attempted influence in the sense that it seeks to alter the way others think, feel, or act', while Hogan (1996, p. 20) perceived persuasion as 'the ability to induce beliefs and values in other people by influencing their thoughts and actions through specific strategies'. Similarly, Fogg (2003, p. 15) defined persuasion as 'the attempt to change attitudes or behaviours or both'. In addition, persuasion is seen by Bettinghaus and Cody (1994, p. 5) as a 'conscious effort by one individual or group to change the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour (of a receiver) of another individual or group of individuals through the transmission of some messages at influencing the thoughts or actions'. Lulofs (1991, p. 5), meanwhile, looked at persuasion as 'the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols to create meanings in a situation of mutual influence, in which the original goals of the participants are to affect changes in the beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviours of the other participants'.

From the diverse concept of persuasion, I conclude that persuasion is the process of verbal and non-verbal messages in the form of audio-visual content in a documentary, which influences viewers' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviour, while driving them to take further action in response to the issues presented. This classification of persuasion explains the media effect in the context of this study, as that which the BD could have on the viewers' conservation stance. Also, I argue that persuasive communication plays a significant role in BD filmmaking, which employs various persuasive elements to represent reality and to change people's perceptions of and attitudes towards marine life conservation.

As Stiff and Mongeau (2003, p. 10) indicated:

Persuasive communication can be defined as any message that is intended to shape, reinforce or change the response of another, or others.

This view is supported by Hogan (1996) who stated that persuasive communication is central in influencing other people. In the same vein, Nichols (2001, p. 49-60) reported that there are five persuasive approaches involved – when making a documentary – in

transmitting voices to persuade the viewers and change their perceptions and attitudes. These approaches are guided by Aristotelian principles: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. First and foremost, viewers can be convinced through invention, a technique which is used to support an argument in a documentary, in which the filmmaker is required to discover the two forms of evidence, namely the artificial and the nonartificial proof). Artificial proof consists of ethos (ethical proof), pathos (emotional proof) and logos (rational proof), which appeal to the audiences' emotional state, while non-artificial proofs are reference to the facts of the matter, in the form of ideas, beliefs and facts – witnesses, documents (photographs or archival footage), confessions, physical evidence (fingerprints, hair or blood samples, DNA and so forth). This view is supported by Hazel (2005), who claimed that ethos is the image of integrity and can be the strongest facet of a persuader to an audience and such an image should imply competence, integrity and rapport.

Secondly, viewers can be convinced through the arrangement of a rhetorical speech organised to the maximum effect through two characteristics; (i) stating an issue (the inclusion of arguments for and against, black or white, right or wrong, true or false, and guilty or innocent) and (ii) making an argument about it (the balance between certainty and ambiguity, classic alternation between appeals to evidence and appeals to audiences, factual appeals and emotional appeals). In addition, style (in the form of camera angle, composition, lighting, acting, sound and editing) is crucial for the filmmaker as it makes it easier for the documentary voice to speak to his or her audience, not in a purely factual, didactic way but in an expressive, rhetorically or poetically powerful manner. Apart from this, memory is also crucial as a persuasive approach. Memory is stimulated in two ways; (i) the film itself provides a tangible 'memory theatre' of its own, and (ii) viewers draw on what they have already seen to interpret what they currently see.

Finally, viewers can also be persuaded through delivery, the combined expressions and gestures that accompanied what was said and the way it was said during the filmmaking. Non-verbal communication is significant for this division, particularly during interviews, as the body language speaks louder than words in expressing the interviewees' or experts' views on the matter. Eloquence (an index of the clarity of an argument) and decorum (the effectiveness of an argumentative strategy) are also significant for delivery although they may, to a certain extent, be a hindrance when expressing one's true idea about the topic discussed. Eloquence and decorum measure 'what works'; they stress the pragmatic, result-oriented nature of rhetoric in general (Nichols 2001, p. 60). In simple words, we can contend that these persuasive communications in documentary filmmaking can be reinforced with the

evidence of the arguments made, through the planning of the available material rhetorically, presented through the technical skills of the filmmakers, accompanied by the viewers' levels of retention and experience, and complemented through an effective language of communication of the issues presented.

Comparatively, with regard to changing the public's opinion, Marquis (2013) indicated that there are several persuasion strategies that are applied in documentary filmmaking, which are based on a three-tier process of text performance consisting of (i) everyday performance shaped by (ii) filmic performance, within (iii) documentary performance. These tiers were derived from the everyday communicative activity such as language (verbal communication) and extra-linguistics (gesture, facial expression, intonation) which has been framed, influenced by and/or tailored to the camera through communicative behaviours such as spontaneous behaviour performance (the facial, the gestural, the corporeal – or postural – and the vocal), and then carried out within specific non-fiction film frameworks through communicative primacy (such as the interview, the enacted scene, the voice-over).

On a different note, with regards to the potential of the documentary as an agent for social change, Stewart *et al.* (2007, p. 49) asserted that there are six persuasive roles that must be performed for a social movement to be achieved: (1) transforming perceptions of reality; (2) altering self-perceptions of protesters; (3) legitimizing the movement; (4) prescribing courses of action; (5) mobilizing for action; and (6) sustaining the movement. These persuasive roles, however, must be based on three fundamental programmes which include the degree of change desired, the exigencies of the rhetorical situation, and the stage of the movement. It should be pointed out that a documentary filmmaking process requires the issues to be communicated to the viewers with integrity using factual evidence, which may vary according to the research process from the professionals, supported by rhetoric that appeals emotionally as well as cognitively, and formed through technical filmmaking skills by experts.

Therefore, Nichols' (1991, p. 13) three distinct points in defining the documentary, which include the filmmaker (practitioners or experts), the text (narrative structure), and the viewer (benefitting parties) are commendable to my study. Firstly, history is not changeable, but its interpretation is variable, and filmmakers are also bound to institutional practices in representing a particular subject. However, they can control certain variables in the preparation, and during the shooting, such as through the scripts and rehearsals (Nichols 1991, p.13). Secondly, a documentary structure depends on the evidentiary editing to shape the informing logic (representation, issue or argument) about the historical world (Nichols

1991, p.19). For example, *Mission Blue* started with the extinction of the marine eco-system, tracked by the subject representation (interviews, historical footage) and provided the solutions for audience engagement. Thirdly, viewers cultivate 'procedures of rhetorical engagement' of conception and clarification through primary motivations (text realism), functional motivations (justification of arguments), and intertextual motivations (anticipated presence and formal-image contribution) to what they see. These conventions guide the response and provide a starting point to the processing of the information conveyed by the text (Nichols 1991, p. 25).

Taken together, my own view is that persuasive communication can be functional in understanding the deeper meanings of the visual rhetoric ploys identified in the previous studies, which includes the construction of the historical reality about marine life extinction issue (authenticity or historical footage) and the employment of the indexicality of the narrative images (animal suffering, plastic pollution and aesthetic details) to form the evidence in the BD filmmaking, looking specifically at the research text in the present study – comprises the *Mission Blue* (MB) and *Lestari Ujana Marin* (LUM) (see Sub-chapter 3.6). Hence, it is necessary for me to examine the rhetorical strategy as a powerful means of persuasion in blue documentary filmmaking, in an attempt to stimulate the viewers' awareness of marine life extinction, which may subsequently lead to a change in his or her perceptions of and attitude towards conservation, as discussed in the next sub-chapter.

### ***2.10.1 Rhetoric as a powerful means of persuasion in a documentary as an agent for conservation***

In making meaning, rhetoric is concerned with the details that facilitate communication and persuasion – used by some scholars as tools for theorising persuasion, authority, asymmetrical power relationships and political activity (Andrus 2013). Baker and Ellece (2011, p. 91) described persuasion as the attempt to influence people to change their perceptions, attitudes towards people, ideas or the world in general through arguments which involve speakers adopting persuasive strategies to convince the listeners of the validity of what he or she is saying, which Aristotle regarded as rhetoric.

Initially, the term 'rhetoric' was developed from the Aristotelian view, in which it is described as human persuadability through man's unique attribute – the capacity to exercise his rational faculty (Campbell 1970). Also, rhetoric, according to Aristotle, is defined as 'the art of discovering, in any given case, the available means of persuasion' (Benjamin 1997, p. 42).

Therefore, in studying rhetoric in a documentary, it is important to know what constitutes a rhetorical discourse, in which the roots of its development are divided into four cohorts – ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary rhetoric. In this study, the Aristotle medieval rhetorical trio (ethos, pathos and logos) is employed in understanding the language/symbol used in blue documentaries since the environmental documentary not only educates but also persuades viewers to make social change in order to protect the environment. Aristotle classified proof into two categories, consisting of the inartistic proof (physical evidence that is not created by rhetoric), and the artistic proof (which involves rhetoric to create the proof). Likewise, Benjamin (1997, p. 57) asserted that the ‘three techniques of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are meant for informing, moving, and inspiring audiences’.

Here, artistic proof of ethos (a source’s credibility), pathos (use of emotional appeals) and logos (use of logical or rational appeals) is deemed to be the most relevant to this study when looking for deeper meanings and understanding of the effectiveness of multimodality of documentary discourse on the audience’s reception concerning environmental conservation movement – for example, the rhetorical elements of animal suffering (see Sub-chapter 2.11.2) that are formed in a BD to represent the historical reality of the marine life extinction issue. Here, the historical reality can refer to the actual reality of the issue of marine life extinction, but it is precarious to claim that the representation of marine life extinction in the BD is reflecting the actual situation. I believe that it involves the rhetorical strategy and techniques in order to persuade viewers to take a positive conservation stance.

Campbell (1970, p. 97–98) asserted that rhetorical theories are based on the ‘ontological assumption that man is capable of and subject to persuasion because he is, by nature, a rational being, and therefore, rhetoric is the art of reasoned discourse or argumentation’. By the same token, Nichols (1991) claimed that rhetoric is the means through which the author attempts to convey his or her viewpoint persuasively to the viewer. Similarly, Hauser (1986, p. 3) stated that:

Rhetoric is a communication that attempts to coordinate social action. Its goal is to influence human choices on specific matters that require immediate attention. [...] Rhetoric is concerned with managing verbal symbols, whether spoken or written. [...] ... music and dance also can exert influence.

Thus, it can be argued that the rhetorical form of a blue documentary, which comprises visual, sound and ecological narratives, is formed with the Aristotelian idea of constructing

an informative mode of persuasive communication that drives viewers to social action. As Hauser (1986) in his book *'Introduction to Rhetorical Theory'* claimed, it is crucial for the message giver to have good organisation of the communication symbol (verbal: oral or written), as well as good music composition in order to integrate social action.

Moreover, the idea of the management of symbols (Hauser 1986) is similar to that of Bruzzi and Corner. As Bruzzi (2006, p. 17) asserted that rhetorical form allows filmmakers to 'access the "document" or "record" the historical reality through representation or interpretation'. Likewise, Corner (1996, p. 30) affirmed that contemporary documentary discourse is essential for the evidence representation of an issue, that the various "communicative modes of documentarism holds implications for its form, as well as the affective and cognitive character of documentary reception, understanding and use". Corner has provided a useful analytic foundation for studying the language used in documentaries, in which he argued that the modalities of documentary language can be divided into two discourses, consisting of visual and speech. Visual discourses can be categorised into four modes – evidential mode 1 (reactive observationalism), evidential mode 2 (proactive observationalism), evidential mode 3 (illustrative) and associative mode. Speech, on the other hand, can be categorised into three modes – evidential mode 1 (overheard exchange), evidential mode 2 (testimony), and the expository mode (p. 27). By the same token, Nichols (2001, p. 582) asserted that documentary filmmaking constitutes three elements consisting of 'photographic realism, narrative structure, and modernist fragmentation along with a new emphasis on the rhetoric of social persuasion'.

Apart from visual and speech as proposed by Corner, I also believe that music plays a crucial role for documentary language in BD filmmaking in encouraging marine life conservation. As Jones (2012) argued that, in discourse, language is not working alone, as it is always accompanied by other communicative modes in producing and constructing the intended meaning, and these include images, music, and non-verbal behaviour especially in analysing the discourse in a documentary. According to Nichols (2016, p. 91) 'music [in documentaries] can be a valuable complement to bring argument alive, to give greater intensity, to engage the viewer to the point of heightened attention'. Donnelly (2001, p. 3) also asserts that most films were accompanied by 'vibrant and living form of music that breathes in harmony [in order] to provide a high degree of emotional impact for mass audience'.

In the same vein, Mervyn (2015) indicated the challenges faced by the composer in writing music to complement underwater images in order to dramatise them. Likewise, Kalinak (2010, p.1) claims that film music can:

Establish setting, specifying a particular time and place; it can fashion a mood and create atmosphere; it can call attention to elements onscreen or offscreen, thus clarifying matters of plot and narrative progression; it can reinforce or foreshadow narrative developments and contribute to the way we respond to them; it can elucidate characters' motivations and help us to know what they are thinking; it can contribute to the creation of emotions, sometimes only dimly realized in the images, both for the characters to emote and for audiences to feel.

Therefore, I argue that language in making blue documentaries that represent the historical reality of the human–non-human relationship is not only restricted to the written form but also leans more towards multimodality, which combines text, speech, visuals, sound and music in the meaning-making process of the issues represented, particularly marine life extinction. As Smail (2014, p. 195) claims, 'the representation of animals in the documentary is bound to other elements that constitute the rhetorical and generic framework of the text, such as voice-over, interviews, and editing'. Also, the idea of 'documentary' form in this study is not so much about the textual document but, rather, more about audio-visual communicative modes. Thus, in examining the production elements of a BD in persuading viewers, Aristotle's *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotions) and *logos* (rationality) of an argument made can be important analogies for the representation of the historical reality of marine life extinction. Thus, these rhetorical elements of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* enable me to construct the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.4) in examining the audience's perspectives on the effectiveness of these rhetorical elements on their marine life conservation stance, in line with my research questions in this study (see Sub-chapter 1.4).

Having said that, rhetorical strategy through audio-visuals is a key feature through which a blue documentary discourse can represent its marine life extinction message and, at the same time, enhance the public's understanding of the intended issues to be delivered. As Corner (1996) claimed, the documentary has become a central element in broadcasting by being informative and critical, as well as becoming the source of knowledge and pleasure, which audio-visual messages in the form of text, visual (images), audio (voiceover) and sound (music) interchange respectively in the rhetorical discourse during documentary filmmaking. It is because arguments, facts, figures and trustworthy participants have been



used to create evidence in representing the historical reality in environmental documentaries, in order to change viewers' beliefs, so that they can take social action on the issues represented. For example, Aaltonen (2014, p. 63) considered *An Inconvenient Truth* as a rhetorical environmental documentary, as the arguments and claims made about global warming were done in many ways by including the objective, natural facts, as well as subjective, explicit, implicit, and supportive indirect claims.

However, the strength of a documentary, which is in its rhetorical elements, goes beyond its educational and entertainment functions, as it becomes the driving force of possible actions to be taken by the public in environmental and species conservation. These new conjunctions have been debated in the contemporary documentary on ecological destruction, in representing a complex concession between human and non-human relations, on environmental awareness and documentary filmmaking.

As a number of authors have reported the analysis of rhetoric in their discourse studies, where Dadugblor (2016) has used rhetorical discourse analysis (RDA) to examine a president's speech to an audience, while masking her/his action for political gain. The rhetorical discourse analysis is also used in legal proceedings in examining the role of the professional eyewitness (Stygall 2001). Meanwhile, Aaltonen (2014) conducted a study on environmental documentaries by using rhetorical forms and expressions. He claimed that, 'in documentary film rhetoric, narrative and other means of expression intertwine with each other [...] in order to argue, prove, demonstrate and convince the audience about a particular point' (p. 61). He also mentioned that rhetoric in a documentary film involves not only oral text, but also multimodal text to persuade viewers. On the other hand, Livesey (2002) employed rhetorical discourse analysis in her global warming study in which she claimed that rhetorical and discursive methods can reveal distinct aspects of the same set of 'texts'. Also, findings by Rowley and Johnson (2016) have revealed that anthropomorphism can become an analytical tool for rhetoric in the *Blackfish* documentary and offers a crucial connection in human and non-human relationships.

None of the studies reviewed thus far, however, have considered how the rhetoric of ecological destruction, specifically on marine life extinction, has affected the general public's perception and attitude towards conservation. This reveals a big gap in the study of the subject, relating to the audience reception of the documentary films/programmes on environmental conservation stance. Therefore, I argue that rhetoric is an important element to be considered when studying a documentary for the purpose of marine life conservation

and a number of empirical findings from previous studies have enabled me to determine the rhetorical elements employed (see Sub-chapter 2.11), though this subject is limited considering the context of my study and may be complex to deconstruct, especially when it involves non-human species. Hence, I will look at its importance and examine their function in documentary filmmaking as an effort to persuade viewers towards marine life conservation, as discussed in the next sub-chapter.

## **2.11 The rhetorical elements in documentaries inclining marine life conservation**

As reported in previous studies, there are several rhetorical elements employed in documentary filmmaking to stimulate environmental or species pro-conservation – the visual rhetoric of the underwater world/marine life, animal suffering, aesthetical values, autobiographical narratives, anthropomorphism and the locality of the issue represented.

### **2.11.1 Visual rhetoric of the underwater world/marine life: pathos**

As previously mentioned (see sub-chapter 2.9.2), visual image can have a powerful influence on viewers' emotions, yet little is known about its effectiveness in underlying these aspects of marine life conservation. As Iyer *et al.* (2014) claimed, manipulating the content of terrorism images directly shapes individuals' perceptions, emotions, and political attitudes about terrorism. Meanwhile, in my study, the images/visuals have great power in nature documentaries, as they are often acknowledged for their visual rhetoric in appealing to, engaging and persuading the audience's emotions and hopefully leading to changes in their beliefs, opinions and attitudes towards conservation. This notion is strengthened by Jamieson (1985, p. 112), who argues that the intention to influence or persuade others using visual images requires a knowledge of various techniques for it to have the desired effect and therefore I will study the power of the image on marine life conservation from the direction of visual rhetoric.

Foss (2006, pp. 304–306) divides visual rhetoric into two aspects; (i) a communicative artefact, in which it is 'a product individuals create as they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating [...] such as the purposive production or arrangement of colours, forms, and other elements to communicate with an audience', and (ii) a perspective, in which 'it constitutes a theoretical perspective' that involves the symbolic process by which images perform communication, such as the 'colours, lines, textures, and rhythms in an artefact, provide a basis for the audience to infer the existence of images, emotions, and ideas'.

Meanwhile, Ahn (2018, p. 68-74) claims that there are six dominant visual rhetorical modes in environmental documentaries – apocalyptic, jeremiad, hopeful, environmental nostalgia, sublime and environmental melodrama. For example, (i) apocalyptic mode can be defined as ‘images implying an impending ecological crisis and depicting catastrophic effects’, (ii) jeremiad mode as ‘images attributing human behaviour as the cause of environmental crises’, (iii) hopeful mode as ‘positive images providing eco-friendly solutions’, (iv) environmental nostalgia mode as ‘images of natural environments used to evoke an emotive response in relation to loss or potential loss of the same’, (v) sublime mode as ‘images used to develop awareness of a particularly magnificent landscape, natural object or creature, and by extension to aid the development of personal connection with the same’, and (vi) environmental melodrama mode as ‘sensationalizing social actors as a means to draw emotive responses’ (p.74).

In my study, visual rhetoric constitutes an important element in BD filmmaking that forms evidence of familiar characteristic between human and marine life, inviting the audience to be engaged with the subject represented. Under these circumstances, this study is concerned with the representation of human–non-human relations in documentary films/programmes to look for deeper meaning on how the visual rhetoric may possibly change the treatment towards animals, particularly in the effort of conserving marine life species.

Several scholars have recently focused on the relationship between the human and the non-human with the image of animals in visual culture – in communicating the issues of environmental or species sustainability. These scholars include Belinda Smaill (2014, 2016), John Berger (1980), Jonathan Burt (2002), Helen Hughes (2014), John Blewitt (2010) and Sean Cubitt (2005). Berger (1980) alienated the structure of human–animal relations based on a linguistic/textual notion of the symbolic animal. However, Burt (2005, p. 213) argues that the representation of animals in the form of a visual image is linked to their treatment by stating that:

Animals need to be seen to be treated correctly, which was an important and measurable criterion of welfare and an index of what it was to be a visibly civilised society. It was also increasingly the case that those practices involving animal death, most notably slaughter, and scientific experiment became less and less visible in the public domain... In fact, animal welfare politics has been highly dependent on illustrations, photographs and film for the power of its message and its success.

Likewise, Smaill (2016) claims that, in a documentary, moving images through the on-screen transformation of animal bodies (such as in agriculture, fishing or the food industry) offer a visual assault on the viewers, whereby these ‘transformations are central to the affective force’ (p. 47–48). Smaill also asserts that the non-fiction moving image ‘is profoundly imbued with the potential for capturing or preserving life’ (Smaill 2016, p. 71). She points to two major aspects of the representation of species extinction:

- (i) ‘representations of loss and decline have the potential to reduce likelihood for imagining alternative features, entrapping us and our non-human others, and (ii) representation can tend towards advocacy or rendering species loss in ways that are allied with a more complex and open future’ (p. 2–3)

For me, Smaill and Burt’s claim shows the relevance of my argument on the relationship between animal suffering and humans as a powerful rhetorical element for conservation – on the perspective of the danger to or extinction of the non-human species with ‘politics of pity’ (Boltanski 1999) and distant suffering (Chouliaraki 2006). This indicates that it is important to examine both the moving images of animal suffering and the representation of habitat/species’ decline through studying viewers’ direct perspectives on how BDs appeal to their pro-conservation stance (see Chapter 4). I have more to say about animal suffering in the next sub-chapter (see Sub-chapter 2.11.2).

Under these circumstances, this study is concerned with the effectiveness of visual rhetoric in the blue documentary, and how most BD filmmakers move viewers by framing the underwater world with human existence to stimulate conservation awareness. For example, in *Sharkwater* (2006), produced by Rob Stewart (an expert diver and underwater photographer), he framed 3-minute opening credits of the film narration, with the aim of raising shark conservation awareness by disseminating information on shark-finning to the public, and this has been a powerful device to bring objects together, in order to communicate the effects of shark-finning (Hughes 2011, p. 735).

You’re told your whole life, since you were a kid, ‘sharks are dangerous’. You are warned about venturing too far into the ocean – but then finally you are under water, and you see the thing that you were taught your whole life to fear, and it is perfect, and it does not want to hurt you, and it is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen, and your whole world changes.

The visual rhetoric through the flowing sequence of images of Stewart swimming with the shark and resting on one knee in clear water on the ocean floor with his arms around the shark is enhanced with the narration of Stewart's voiceover (see above). It creates a persuasive message to overcome the fear of sharks and to get to know the species. This visual rhetoric is framed powerfully in persuading and changing viewers' perceptions, in order to educate and inform people about the predators and provide a balanced account. Hence, imagery as a persuasive communication technique shows that humans can have direct contact with the most dangerous species in the ocean, while upholding the notion that this species should be treated with sensitivity and encourage a positive relationship between human and non-human species (see Sub-chapter 2.7.2.1).

Moreover, Hughes (2011) claims that, by including humans and animals in a shared physical environment, together with a presentation of a first-person account of the journey towards activism, a producer can create a visual framework for audiences to engage in and test the various cognitive positions presented by the film. The audience can compare this scenario with the knowledge they already hold, as pointed out by Nichols (2001), as the viewers' retention of a shark that it is aggressive towards humans. The importance of its overall argument is the representation of the physical world of the shark, as well as the body of the shark that is under threat. This footage relies on human cognition to recognise the position of the filmmakers and their intention to persuade but, at the same time, it allows the viewers to develop their own interpretation of the film's content and perhaps to form a contrary opinion on the basis of what is represented.

Therefore, all the previously mentioned studies suggest that there is still a need to research an audience's reception of the imagery of the underwater world/marine life in a BD and how far this visual rhetoric can persuade them to engage in marine life conservation – a gap which I hope to fill with this study. It is also relevant to look at the visual rhetoric of animal suffering, which is a common practice of most makers of recent nature documentaries – an issue which is discussed in the next sub-chapter.

### **2.11.2 Animal suffering as a result of dehumanisation: pathos**

Marine life is considered unfamiliar to the public, and is only being exposed through small TV screens, smartphones or electronic gadgets in their comfort zone. It thus requires an impactful message to stimulate the public's conservation awareness. There is some evidence to suggest that the element of animal suffering can trigger an audience's emotions, based on the knowledge they have acquired, which leads to a change in their attitude and/or behaviour (Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Simpson 2008; Smail 2014; 2016; Smith 2014). This persuasive communication might evoke sympathy, sadness, anger, guilt or disappointment even though the object of the communication is of a different species to humans.

As Bredemeier *et al.* (2007, p. 241) claim:

Knowledge, awareness and attitudes are not enough to effect behaviour change. Emotions and moral convictions also influence actions and have to be taken into consideration in the communication process.

In addition, according to Cialdini (2001) and Combs and Nimmo (1993) cited in Simpson (2008, p. 104), the persuasive film calls attention to certain facts, not through education, but instead by frequently provoking emotion over reason. This view is supported by Smith (2014, p. 224), who claimed that 'documentaries have the potential to show us the world we know, but not quite as we know it, and eliciting powerful emotions, which have the capacity to transform our understanding of the world'. She conducted a study to examine the educational power of the documentary on race, identity and racism, including *A Child of Our Time* (2005), *Eye of the Storm* (1971), *Panorama* (2009), *ABC News: Primetime Live* (1991), and *How racist are you?* (2009). Smith reported that 'students' responses to particular documentaries contain a range of emotions, from shock, surprise and anger to fear, frustration and resentment, and finally to passion and a determination to act' (2014, p. 234). She also claimed that the conceptual lens from these documentaries, which was chosen by teachers, 'can harness these emotions to transform students' attitude and understanding' of the context of the study (2014, p. 234).

Under these circumstances, the rhetoric of animal suffering through representing the human as an antagonistic character due to his or her activities of over-consumption, exploitation, over-fishing and pollution has been employed in many blue documentaries such as

*Sharkwater* (2006), *The Cove* (2009) *The End of The Line* (2009) and *Mission Blue* (2014). Thus, our emotion is inevitably turned into guilt, sadness and anger, which eventually leads to further action, either internal or external, depending on the effectiveness of the messages delivered. This view is supported by Hazel (2005), who wrote that guilt can be a potent emotional tool for the persuader, and leads people to act by giving, and motivating people to change their habits. This notion can be linked to the distant suffering – mentioned in Part II of this chapter (see Sub-chapter 2.7.3.1) by Boltanski (1999), who asserts that television uses images and language to render a spectacle of suffering which is not only comprehensible but also ethically acceptable for the viewers (Chouliaraki 2006, p. 2). It triggers the spectator's sympathy for the unfortunate subject represented in the media. This view is supported by Dencik and Allan (2017, p. 1180–1181), who asserted that, in order to raise the visibility of a certain issue, 'the visual representation of distant suffering [...] needs to be sufficiently revealing to mobilise protest while respectful of evolving normative limits'.

Lockwood (2016) conducted a study on the affective and emotional qualities of visual and graphic forms of animal suffering to express the human's relation to the planet in a documentary entitled *Cowspiracy* (2014). The objective of the documentary was to encourage social movement for environmental sustainability and animal rights by using "emotion work" for its audience, through providing an immediate commentary, via Anderson's narrative. Anderson narrated the traumatic event of witnessing the slaughter of living, sentient animals in order 'to make sense of the affective state' of trauma (Lockwood 2016, p. 744). It was found that the visuals and film narratives triggered viewers' emotions and sentiments such as fear or guilt, or positive emotions such as hope, belonging, and belief. This emotion can change a viewer's identity based on two areas consisting of threatened identity, and imagery. Gould (2010, p. 34) indicated that Anderson's narration in this documentary provides the 'emotional pedagogy' of moving from a position of witness (watching the duck slaughter) to activist (saving the chicken and turning vegan) stimulated by the affective energy, full of 'potential', led by the emotional processing of the affective state. In this sense, the documentary *Cowspiracy* suggests that the animal suffering as a result of the immoralities of humanity as an antagonistic character can be effective in persuading audiences to adopt behavioural change and perhaps follow vegan lifestyle practices.

This notion is strengthened by Smaill (2014), who asserts that the representation of species extinction supported the sentimental contract by Rabinowitz (1999), who argues that the viewer is asked to join in solidarity with the interviewees/activists onscreen to share in the

empathy and passion they exude. Smaill experimented with two documentaries that focus on a marine life form, *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) and *The Cove* (2009) – one is concerned with ecosystems and human rights and the other explores animal rights and the plight of the dolphin. Smaill (2014, p. 116) claims that both films are central to the formulation of an emotional political address to the audience through rhetorical arguments of:

The passion of and empathy for the activists and the dolphin [killing and slaughtering] or the recognition of the web of social crises that accompanies the disgust and horror evoked by the fish carcass.

I found Smaill's argument is closely relevant to my study as she focuses on rhetorical arguments of emotion to address the audience in eco-documentaries concerning marine life species. However, her study was limited to the discussion of rhetorical arguments from the perspectives of people who have a knowledge background of media; whilst, my study is more interested in underpinning the perspectives of the general public (who have limited information about media studies) in assessing the rhetorical elements and how these can affect the general public's conservation stance.

All these studies suggest that the representation of reality about species extinction through animal suffering can persuade an audience, thus signifying the importance of examining this rhetoric on audience's perceptions of or attitude changes towards the marine life extinction issue (see Sub-chapter 4.3).

### **2.11.3 Aesthetic values: pathos**

The complex relationship between human and non-human in a documentary is represented through the aesthetic details, especially in underwater filmmaking, where it offers pleasure to the viewers and appeals to viewers' emotions. Despite the availability of archive footage to represent the reality of historical events, filmmakers also film current events by inserting the aesthetic details in order to evoke a viewers' desire to know, or the 'epistophilia' of unreachable marine life. Nichols (1991, p. 180) claimed that the nourishment of the 'aesthetics of epistophilia' is taken through visual aesthetic by attaching the camera's gaze to the creative-connotative human agency. This view is supported by Renov (2004) who asserted that the documentary is an amalgam window that shapes viewers' understanding of another world; into another subjectivity with coherence and aesthetic details. Similarly, Corner (2005, p. 51) stated that the pictorial, aural and narratological are crucial to appeal to



viewers' emotions, in which these elements simultaneously created an aesthetic experience with the feeling of pleasure and the ability to vividly imagine the actual event.

On the other hand, documentary filmmakers denote the aesthetic values by directly providing the viewers with the information on the subject through the voice-over. Ivakhiv (2013, p. 181) stated that the use of aesthetic values through multiple screens, textual intertitles, spoken or whispered voice-overs and multiple formats (video, photographic stills, and animated or digitally manipulated imaginary) and an overflow of intertextual quotations have become the vehicles for viewers' pleasure and information. At this stage, the aesthetic elements of the voice-over or narrator (voice of God commentary) appeal to the viewers through a persuasive communication, to convince their emotions and imagination of the desire to know, to create links between recorded sound and images. Likewise, Chovanec (2016) stated that the representation of expertise through the voice is between the presenter, the expert and the voice-over, and these voices are integral factors appealing to documentary viewers.

In addition, the complex camera work needed in representing marine life requires the filmmaker's creativity and skills in filming the intended message of the splendid underwater visual from the perspective of the non-human species and putting it into an audio-visual frame to be displayed to the viewers. For example, many blockbuster documentaries, such as *Sharkwater* and *Mission Blue*, have presented unreachable species of marine life in the deep ocean surrounded by countless phytoplankton, allowing viewers to learn about other species – which can be considered as a privilege as they probably cannot experience it in real life. Instead, they have the privilege of watching it all in their personal space (living room, classroom), or in open spaces (the cinema, a film festival). In addition, the filmmakers grasped the aesthetic of the marine life deep in the ocean before and after being destroyed – satisfying the desire for knowledge of why and how this occurs, while presenting the major issues of the marine ecosystem as a result of human activities (exploitation, pollution and over-consumption). As Smaill (2014) claims, conservation documentaries that focus on marine life powerfully facilitate the desire for knowledge, which revolves around the visual evidence of perpetrators' motivations in killing the dolphin.

In the context of this study, the aesthetic values – a documentary is either aesthetically pleasing or unpleasing – I argue, can encourage knowledge acquisition about the unfamiliar underwater world and have become a rhetoric in documentary filmmaking. However, previous studies have not dealt with which elements work – in the direct experience of the

viewers' desire to know about the issue of marine life extinction – to persuade them to conserve marine life.

#### **2.11.4 The autobiographical narrative: pathos**

Rhetorical narrative plays a significant role in documentary filmmaking aimed at social change. In the blue documentary, there are powerful narratives that can persuade people to feel or act in a certain way, in line with the issue of marine life conservation. Firstly, an autobiography or a 'heroic' narrative is the most common rhetoric and has been employed in most environmental documentaries as the biggest contribution to the viewers' understanding, as well as their change of perceptions and behaviour with the hope of redemption on the issues represented. Chang (2017, p. 97) held the view that the rhetoric of hope and redemption is more suited to jolting the audience out of a sense of despair and inspiring them to change. Documentary film should be targeted at the transformation of personal melancholic pathos into a meaningful documentary activism in order to change the audience. Similarly, Hughes (2014, p. 119) found that many eco-documentaries were 'an audio-visual version of the personal intuitive process' through the use of the 'arguments of the documentary' with the same narrative pattern containing the 'life story of a presenter or a participant in the film'. As Bahk (2011, p. 10) asserts:

It is plausible that narrative films [...] involving human characters could facilitate constructive learning in 'education for sustainability' through eliciting intense emotional, empathic reactions to environmental issues portrayed.

For example, a documentary that employs autobiographical narrative – such as *Sharkwater* (2006), *Pirate of the Sea* (2008), *The Cove* (2009), *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), and *Mission Blue* (2014) to name but a few – has been found to be effective in stimulating social change towards ecological destruction. Bordwell (1985) cited in Hess (2007) found that a biographical film can reach out to and engage broad audiences in a way that helps the audience to understand the story and draws them in mentally and emotionally. This view is supported by Hughes (2014, p. 120), who asserted that an autobiographical narrative is usually used in most documentaries with the objective of encouraging social change towards ecological destruction, in bringing 'together the narrative commentary, the verbal evidence of experts, and the visual evidence of impacts on the environment as a process of taking viewers through a simulation of a personal journey towards conviction and activism of the presenter', and 'the reasoning is left for the viewer to complete'.

In this regard, the environmental rhetoric of global warming issues in an award-winning documentary, AIT, was made by featuring the journey of Al Gore, the former Vice-President of the United States, as part of the narrative of the story. Rosteck and Frenz (2009, p. 4) showed that the AIT can be a 'potential rhetorical strategy in terms of a narrative form of personal transformation', which act as a 'suasory' agent 'for political decision by offering its audience a template for action'. They also claimed that this rhetoric represented 'the bounded sets of genres as a contemporary form of the political jeremiad, personal narrative, and science documentary, which are positioned under monomyth' (2009, p. 4). This monomyth genre travels through three stages consisting of departure, initiation and return within the two dimensions of mythic narrative frame; (i) a chronology of archetypal heroism and accomplishment which provides the film with form and universal appeal, and (ii) a homologous personal chronology of the presenter's growth and change, which provides an experiential template based on one exemplary life story (2009, p. 5).

In the same vein, a detailed analysis of AIT by Eckersley (2007, p. 439) showed that it was produced to convince the Americans, and anyone else that 'the problem of global warming is deadly serious, frighteningly real and already under way' by framing Al Gore's remarkable personal narrative of his decades of effort to disseminate knowledge of the drawbacks of global warming; the circulation of this message has been widely received by the global audience. Davis Guggenheim's creativity as the filmmaker of AIT was fully utilised in turning Al Gore's lectures, and recounting his political career and personal journey of more than 30 years in tackling global warming, into a powerful narrative that has convinced a sceptical American audience of the seriousness of this issue. This view is supported by Moser and Dilling (2010) cited in McAuliffe et al. (2014, p. 3) who wrote that the "lack of direct experience" of global warming and climate change issues, makes it "fundamentally a problem that requires signalling, illustrating, and explaining by those who have expert knowledge to those who do not". Therefore, the representations of global warming through artificial proofs (ethos, pathos and logos), including a compelling song, were employed extensively in AIT. This view is supported by Simpson (2008), who conducted a study on the psychology of persuasion, and he found that students' perspectives changed after watching a clip from AIT, indicating that documentary films can be a persuasive tool in changing viewers' viewpoints on the issues represented. Lastly, AIT has been successful in persuading Americans about global warming and the urgent need for conservation action.

Moreover, the autobiographical narrative is also noticeable in the making of blue documentaries in presenting marine life extinction. As Smail (2014, p. 105) claims, *The*

Cove tells the story of Ric O'Barry, a most vocal and committed activist, and his 'transformation from the dolphin trainer for the television series *Flipper* in the 1960s to marine advocate in the present day'. Also, this rhetoric can be seen in *Sharkwater* and *Mission Blue*, as both documentaries use the narrative of the personal journeys of the subjects – Rob Stewart and Sylvia Earle – and highlight their dedication to and enthusiasm for conservation. In *Sharkwater*, Rob Stewart, as the filmmaker himself, employed his personal journey in combating the illegal shark-finning industry, filming the shark as a victim of its over-consumption by humans. This film manages to persuade viewers to change their perception and realise that the shark is not a threat to humans, but that the human is in fact dangerous to sharks; thus, encouraging viewers' pro-conservation behaviour. In *Mission Blue*, the lifetime journey of Sylvia Earle in conserving marine life was represented rhetorically through her scientific discoveries, her collaborative efforts, and her personal life, and concluded with her current and future goals as well as her hope that future generations will conserve marine life.

On the other hand, the opposite character and the supporting character of the heroic figure also play a significant role in the rhetorical narrative of the issue represented. This view is supported by Kääpä (2010) who asserted that the rhetoric of the human as an antagonistic character represented through his/her misconduct towards the environment can grab viewers' attention. In his focus-group discussion, he used two documentaries – *The Day After Tomorrow* (Roland Emmerich's blockbuster on the catastrophic effects of climate change) and *Still Life* (Jia Zhang-Ke's exploration of the displacement caused by the Three Gorges Dam project in Central China). It was found that *The Day After Tomorrow* contains lengthy unsubtle speeches connecting the visually stunning scenes of destruction with human compliance with climate change. *Still Life* is similarly spectacular in its reliance on expansive vistas of demolition and relocation, framed by the backdrop of the Three Gorges. Narratively, the two texts could not be more different, with *The Day After Tomorrow* favouring a linear cause-and-effect progression. *Still Life*, on the other hand, constructs an ambiguous narrative that captures the sense of ongoing uncertainty amidst social transformation. These differences may be able to explain some of the overwhelming identification of *The Day After Tomorrow's* environmental rhetoric of de-humanisation over *Still Life*. Yet, the environmentalism of *Still Life* is not elusive, as underlined by the frequent use of the character 'chai'/'tear down' on the soon-to-be demolished buildings, accompanied by imagery of rising water levels. Throughout the length of the documentary, we are made to focus on human misuse of the environment in the name of progress, the build-up of its implication, and the toll this takes on individual lives.

However, there is no specific research reporting on the rhetorical narrative in blue documentaries, on whether autobiographical narrative as well as the supporting character, including the antagonist, can be effective in changing the viewer's perception of or attitude towards the importance of conserving marine life, an omission which my study tries to fill.

### **2.11.5 Anthropomorphism: pathos**

In the last ten years, there has been an increasing interest in anthropomorphising animals (the application of human characteristics to non-humans) as a rhetoric in BD filmmaking in order to fortify its persuasive communication to appeal to an audience's emotions, and as a topic of debate amongst scholars. It has been reported in previous studies that the use of anthropomorphism in a documentary that portrays non-human miseries based on human nature has enabled filmmakers to grab viewers' attention and change people's perceptions of human immoralities. This scenario creates a familiar feeling of the human's own character, as well as appealing to the viewers' empathetic emotions, which subsequently motivated them to take the necessary conservation action for marine life (Fortner 1985; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Sisson and Kimport 2016).

According to Guthrie (1997, p. 51), anthropomorphism can be defined as the 'attribution of human characteristics to non-human things or events' to gain viewers' empathy. Evans (2015) found that it is quite common to see the anthropomorphising of animals in documentaries, used to create an emotional connection between non-humans and viewers. Similarly, Adcroft (2010, p. 5) claimed that the humanising of non-human objects from their real nature into reel nature as a 'means of placing animals into an understandable human cultural and social context' is effective for the public in triggering their empathy towards species conservation. This view is supported by Hughes (2014), who asserted that the eco-documentary does not bring scientific experts to cite studies on the capacity of animals to suffer in the story but relies on the empathy of viewers and their general knowledge about the species represented.

Correspondingly, previous studies have reported that a deeper empathy towards animals can be instilled in the viewers. This can be done by representing the recognizable and identifiable human characteristics from the animal's behaviour; highlighting the idea of a happy family, an aggressive male and a maternal female, for instance, as well as reinforcing the concepts of class and gender that exist in the dominant human culture (Bousé 1998; 2000; King 1996; Pierson 2005; Porter 2006). This can be seen in wildlife/blue-chip films that

commonly anthropomorphise animals for their dramatic narrative. As Bousé (1998, p. 133) claims, most contemporary wildlife filmmaking is remarkably influenced by Disney's animated narrative framework – 'dramatic narrative, engaging characters, and family dynamics' – synonymous techniques used in a wildlife series of Walt Disney's *True Life Adventures* (1948–1960). *True Life Adventures* not only contains information and wonder but also relies on its dramatic narrative and comic plots to make it appealing. Through anthropomorphic animals – as they are adorable and cute species and engaging characters through having names – the film was commercially successful and even subsequently distributed for use in the classroom. This notion is strengthened by Bagust (2008, p. 219) who found that, since the 1960s, animals have often been anthropomorphised as a dramatic narrative in 'blue-chip' documentary texts (own narratives convention):

Alongside (i) the depiction of mega-fauna, especially large predators; (ii) visual splendour and spectacular scenery; (iii) the absence of history and politics; (iv) the absence of people (except occasionally tribal, pre-industrial or 'natural' people, including park rangers); (v) the absence of explicit references to the scientific method (although its application is implicit).

My own view is that the BD filmmaking engage with the same dramatic narratives as those explored by Bagust (2008), in terms of the animals have often been anthropomorphised in BD filmmaking, by signifying the animals suffering that is similar to human. However, in terms of the absence of people is irrelevant to this study because BD filmmaking frequently visualise human assault on marine life and its habitat through over-consumption, pollution and shark-finning. As highlighted in many previous studies, the increased popularity in the employment of anthropomorphism in documentaries in a bid to engage audiences with non-human species suggests that filmmakers are also actively using these elements to grab viewers' attention on the issues of marine life extinction. This is evident in blue documentaries such as *The Blue Planet* (2001), *March of the Penguins* (2005), *Oceans* (2010) and *Planet Earth Series* (2006), which elicited empathy from their audiences and simultaneously allowed generations of viewers to form a good general understanding of nature and the ecosystem, while increasing their willingness to associate themselves with efforts to create a better natural environment (Adcroft 2010). For example, the anthropomorphising of the shark has been employed in the documentary *Sharkwater* in order to persuade and change the public's fear of sharks, as well as to portray the sharks' suffering as a result from human actions of merciless shark-finning. *Sharkwater* proved that a shared environment between humans and the most dangerous marine species is possible

by portraying a close relationship between these two subjects, such as through eye contact, hugging, touching and swimming together – this is similar to a relationship between two humans, without causing any harm to the human. Regarding this, Hughes (2011, p. 741) claimed that:

The visual evidence [...] has an affective power which continues to reverberate through the image, embedded within the rhetorical structure of the film as a whole, allowing the viewer to identify with the shark as well as the person in the frame, provoking questions about the shark's perceptions and subjectivity, its sense of touch, hearing, of vision, of fear [...] the evidence that sharks are not aggressive towards humans [...] in encouraging empathy with the shark [...] through a voice-over narrative that situates sharks as part of the evolution of life on earth.

The narrative of humans and sharks in a single frame indicates that a documentary can give an impression to a viewer of what it would be like to be able to communicate with sharks, as well as to be involved in activities with marine life species, based on their viewing experiences. It can be argued that the anthropomorphism of animals has become vital in today's blue documentary filmmaking to appeal to viewers' empathy in the effort to raise pro-conservation awareness.

Hence, the adoption of anthropomorphism as a persuasive means of communication can be relevant in BD filmmaking when looking for deeper meanings between the representation of unfamiliar species of marine life and their environment and the change in the audience's perceptions or emotions. This may result in a more permanent perception and attitude change towards conservation. Previous studies have tended to overlook this fact from an audience's perspective, a gap that I intend to fill with the present study.

#### ***2.11.6 The importance of representing local marine life extinction as an issue for social change: pathos***

In the context of this study, it is arguable that the locality of the issues represented in a documentary with regards to culture and the geographical factors both have a significant contribution to make, in instilling viewer's awareness as well as in initiating further action for marine life conservation to be taken. Benjamin (1997, p. 202–203) found that the 'geographic location of the audience is vitally important in their perceptions, [in which] this feature enable the persuaders to choose topics and expressions that fit closely to the nature

of the audience'. Similarly, Hazel (2005, p. 12) asserted that 'the secret of persuasion is the careful analysis of an audience's wants, attitudes, values, beliefs, and group norms'.

Moreover, Harcup and O'Neill (2017) revisited Galtung and Ruge's (1965) taxonomy of news values and updated a contemporary set into 15 requirements. They proposed that potential news stories must generally satisfy one and preferably more of these requirements, including the relevance of the story to the audience. They defined relevance as 'stories about groups or nations perceived to be influential with, or culturally or historically familiar to, the audience' (p.1482). This view is supported by Smith (2014) who wrote that expository documentaries of older documentaries, or those filmed overseas have the potential to encourage viewers to feel distanced from the film's message. In addition, Lulofs (1991, p. 52) suggested that culture is among the three important elements in the persuasion process, apart from context, people and messages:

Cultures creates identification, in which a persuader regardless individual, a group, or an organization [...] there is a need to create a sense of familiarity with the audience [...] by referring to common experiences, values, or stories, the persuader can show the audience that a common bond exists. The context provides specific expectations for behaviour which the events take place geographically.

Furthermore, Rogan *et al.* (2005) claimed that places can generate intimate relationships between people and their environments. Through a qualitative study, it was brought to our attention that viewers' knowledge about their own surroundings is crucial for environmental conservation action. In support of this they also highlighted that 'places instil personal meanings, act as vehicles for learning and personal growth that represent family continuity, provide places of spiritual significance and emotional regulation, and can shape people's environmental values in maintaining social relationships' (2005, p. 147). This view was supported by Easton *et al.* (2009) who revealed that there are three factors that can persuade an individual's pro-environmental behaviour – the biophysical context, education and personal cost. On the same note, Muhammad and Fatimah (2015, p. 143) stated that 'conservation and poverty reduction should be tackled together' due to people living in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) being highly dependent on natural resources for their income. This indicates that there is a need to understand Malaysians' various perceptions of blue documentary films/programmes, particularly those Malaysians from different geographical locations of reception and those living near the marine life protected areas (Lee 2010; Muhammad and Fatimah 2015).



Taken together, all the studies reviewed thus far suggest that the relevance to the issue presented in a documentary to an audience or in this study – known as the locality of an issue – is an important factor in educating the public about conservation. In this study, the locality of the issue can be defined as a domestic event, in which the audience shares the biophysical surroundings such as a coastal, rural or urban area, or whether marine life extinction as represented in the BD is an issue in the country that they live in. As Gaines (1999) explains, when a documentary audience is sufficiently engaged emotionally, members are more likely to act on the issue being represented because ‘it’s aesthetic of similarity establishes a continuity between the world of the screen and the world of the audience’ (1999, p. 92). Also, Butcher (2003) stated that the use of familiar content on television is more effective in procuring an audience. This view is fundamental to Malaysians, considering that the issue of local marine life extinction is at a devastating stage, and it is important to examine the relationship between the locality of an issue as a causal factor for emotional or attitudinal change towards conservation among the BD viewers.

For example, the locality of the issue is evident in the Great Apes Film Initiative (GAFI). GAFI, a non-governmental organisation established in 2004 by Madelaine Westwood, aimed at utilising the educational power of the wildlife film to promote conservation awareness for the great ape species in developing countries, while reaching local and global audiences (GAFI 2016). GAFI has had particular success while collaborating with the Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS) and the Orangutan Information Centre (OIC) in Indonesia, producing a documentary about Indonesian local ape extinction. The following year, *Losing Tomorrow* (2005) was produced by Patrick Rouxel as the basis of an environmental awareness roadshow across North Sumatra. The audio-visual content with the messages on how extensive logging has resulted in the extinction of the local apes, as portrayed in the film, has stimulated Indonesians into taking preservation action for the ape species; they appealed to GAFI as a platform from which to convey their concerns about the negative consequences of deforestation to their President. A second film was then produced, with the title *Dear Mr. President* (2005), which GAFI made sure President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono received. In 2007, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Bali, President Yudhoyono used this film to launch Indonesia’s Orangutan Conservation Strategy and Action Plan and pledged serious support from his government (Wright 2010).

Despite the fact that the documentaries were produced by a Western conservation organisation and filmmakers, the rhetoric of locality in the documentary that represented the

local apes' extinction has played a major role as a persuasive communication in stimulating pro-conservation awareness, as has been done by Indonesians. This study is considered crucial in examining the effects of a documentary on species conservation in South-East Asia that supports local conservation movements. This scenario also signified the relevance of the objectives of my study in examining the deeper meaning of the rhetorical function and the possibility of portraying local marine life in a documentary in order to raise marine life conservation awareness among Malaysians.

Although the studies mentioned above identified locality elements as vital in educating the public, the focus of GAFI's documentary is on inland primates and creates a niche in the public's awareness of marine life extinction, which is far more serious in Malaysia. This raises the question of whether having domestic marine life issues represented in a documentary is more effective for marine life conservation awareness in Malaysia, as compared to using documentaries from foreign countries with species that do not belong to the region – a common practice in the Malaysian documentary industry (see Chapter 2.5.2). To date, no research has been found which examines the audience's viewing experience and reception of the marine life documentary. I do this by considering the ways in which local issues are represented and their potential to sustain long-term marine life conservation awareness as compared to the foreign documentary. Equally, the diverse geographical location of the respondents involved can produce different research outcomes, indicating that there is a need to understand these rhetorical aspects of marine life conservation, all of which will be determined by the present study.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the main features of eco-documentaries on social change with a view to gaining insights into the concept of persuasion and its rhetorical strategy. It began with the reviewing of a number of previous studies on the continued lack of awareness of marine life extinction among the general public, particularly in Malaysia. This included limited knowledge about marine life extinction and limited funds for biodiversity conservation. Whilst there is a substantial literature on public attitudes to the environment and scholarly work asserting that documentaries have a powerful influence upon the public perception of the need to protect the environment and other species, there is little conclusive evidence from an audience's perspective on the effectiveness of the documentary in raising marine life conservation awareness. Whilst, there are a few studies that looked at the concept of rhetorical investigation as a powerful means of persuasion in documentary film (Aaltonen

2014; Aguayo 2005; Ahn 2018; Rosteck and Frentz 2009), however, to my knowledge, no-one has ever looked at how far the concept of rhetoric and its elements as a powerful means of persuasion in documentary filmmaking can be taken from the direct perspective of the audience viewing experience concerning environmental or species conservation.

Thus, the blue documentary (BD) is seen as a means through which discovery related to these factors can be made. Also, the representation of marine life extinction in local documentary production is demarcated and scarcely acknowledged for its function on species conservation, thus indicating a gap in knowledge. I argue that, in the audience reception studies, it is fundamental to examine which rhetorical elements in BD filmmaking are effective in raising viewers' awareness of the need for marine life conservation and the viewers' responses on these elements towards their marine life conservation stance – in considering the high budget and limited funding available for producing a conservation documentary for social change.

Studies of contemporary eco-documentaries show a significant relationship between media effects and the rhetorical elements at play in influencing viewers' perceptions, emotions, attitudes and/or behaviour on the environmental conservation movement, along with a detailed investigation of numerous critiques authorising these changes. These changes are significant enough that they should be examined further to aid our understanding and to look for deeper meanings in the most powerful rhetorical elements to be utilised in promoting future marine life conservation. My review of the literature has also revealed that eco-documentaries are contested over their truth claims and the credibility of their representation of the historical reality about environmental issues.

Under these circumstances, I discovered that Aristotelian principles of rhetorical trio (ethos – source's credibility, pathos – use of emotional appeals – and logos – use of rational appeals) and Bill Nichols's five persuasive approaches in documentary filmmaking (invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery) are the most relevant in attempting to meet the aim and objectives of the present study. Thus, findings from previous studies about persuasive communication and the rhetorical elements employed in most eco-documentaries – which include the visual rhetoric of the underwater world/marine life, animal suffering, aesthetic values, the autobiographical narrative, anthropomorphism and locality of an issue – showed further gaps in its persuasive function in influencing the public marine life pro-conservation stance.

This thesis has argued that, due to the limited discussion of the impacts of eco-documentaries on conservation, there is a need to examine the audience's direct perspective and viewing experiences on the role of the documentary as an agent in promoting a change in attitudes and perceptions and thus potentially encouraging social change about the conservation of marine life by Malaysians. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the rhetorical element in foreign and local BD production in promoting marine life conservation, about the viewers' responses to these elements and whether the blue documentary can contribute to long-term changes in the public's perceptions of or attitudes towards marine life conservation (see Sub-chapter 1.4 for research questions).

Hence, the theoretical discussion of the concept of persuasion and rhetoric in documentary filmmaking guides me to construct the empirical elements of the inquiry in order to achieve the aim of my study. These include research designs, approaches, methodological framework, the study material, formulated research questions and data analysis, as discussed in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGIES

### 3.1 Overview of the research design

This chapter discusses the methodological approach adopted for this study. As mentioned previously, this research investigates the role of the blue documentary (BD) as an agent deployed to promote a change in attitude towards and perceptions of the conservation of marine life by Malaysians and thus potentially to encourage social change. The study also looks at the rhetorical elements that are effective in raising conservation awareness, including the relationships between the different types of representation – namely, the local and the foreign issues surrounding marine life extinction. Therefore, based on my research questions (see Sub-chapter 1.4), a qualitative approach has been undertaken for this empirical research, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the audience reception of BD on social change. The chapter also discusses my methodological framework, the scope of the study setting and subject, the selection of respondents, the materials under study, the conducting of the pilot study, the procedures for questionnaire and data analysis, the ethical considerations and, finally, the strategies employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected.

### 3.2 The qualitative research approach

Many previous studies have employed various methods – such as surveys, content analysis and participant observation – for investigating the documentary viewing experience and its impact on environmental conservation awareness (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Beattie and McGuire 2011; Farnsworth and Lichter 2012; Fortner 1985; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Hughes 2011; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Kaapa 2010; Lin 2013; Morar and Peterlicean 2012; Nolan 2010; Prnjat 2016). However, a critical gap is the paucity of systematic research about which rhetorical elements of documentary films are effective in encouraging viewers to adopt a conservation stance. As mentioned in the literature review, the use of short clips or extracts instead of entire documentary films/programmes in the previous studies may have resulted in a serious omission on the effectiveness of the documentary from an audience perspective, particularly in marine life documentaries on conservation. Unlike the approach adopted in previous studies, I argue that it is significant to

show the entire documentary film/programme in order to identify what the recipient is reacting to; instead of a collection of rhetorical devices picked out by the researcher.

In studying an audience's reception of a documentary, it is difficult to produce good research by measuring or surveying the audience's viewpoints statistically, as it is necessary to collect rich data. Thus, a qualitative approach was significant, for this study, in providing insights into the respondents' viewing experience in documentaries about marine life extinction. As Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 49) pointed out, this method 'allows the researcher to view behaviour in a natural setting without the artificiality that sometimes surrounds experimental or survey research'. This view is supported by Mytton *et al.* (2016, p. 163), who state that qualitative research is used to 'discover or understand human attributes, attitudes and behaviour in a more explanatory or interpretive way'. They further claim that qualitative research is valuable in understanding human behaviour as influenced by media messages, a method that can provide in-depth findings with broader social perspectives. In addition, Barbour (2007, p. xii) summarises qualitative research:

Qualitative research is intended to approach the world 'out there' [...] and to understand, describe, and [...] to explain social phenomena 'from the inside' in a number of ways. [...] by analysing experiences of individuals or groups [...] by analysing interactions and communications in the making [...] by analysing documents (text, images, film or music).

Hence, to understand, describe, explain and analyse documentary films/programmes, interactions, communications and the experiences of individuals and groups in relation to their viewing experiences of blue documentaries on marine life conservation, I found that the qualitative research approach was the most appropriate for my study. It also allowed me to construct additional information and questions during the fieldwork which were beneficial during the data analysis stage and which deepened my understanding of the situation under investigation. Hence, the data for this study were collected using two qualitative methods – (i) focus-group discussions and (ii) in-depth interviews.

### **3.2.1 Focus-group discussions**

Focus-group discussions are significant for this study in analysing and determining the changes that occurred in terms of the respondents' awareness, emotions, attitudes and behaviour. A focus-group allows a qualitative researcher to analyse the actual perceptions

of, attitude towards and behaviour of the issue under investigation. Many scholars rely on the focus group as a tool with which to probe people's responses to and interpretations and personal experiences of, media messages (Lindlof and Taylor 2002); this method can also be a useful strategy in 'understanding audience attitudes and behaviour' (Wimmer and Dominick 2006, p. 128). In addition, the strength of a focus group lies in the interaction between respondents within the group, which is not to be found in an individual interview (Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Mytton *et al.* 2016). Similarly, Priest (2010, p. 104) claimed that focus-group respondents can 'react to one another naturally', as well as to the interviewer, resulting in a richer set of data to be generated. For example, a discussion after watching documentary films/programmes can be a platform for the viewers to exchange their experiences and generate rich data on the factors that contributed to their change in perceptions, attitude or experiences, something which is lacking in individual interviews. Hence, in examining viewers' changes in attitude towards marine life conservation, this method has enabled me to obtain a rich dataset and to analyse and discuss the occurrence in the respondents' awareness or emotions which lead to further attitude change, months after their original documentary viewing experiences of the given topic.

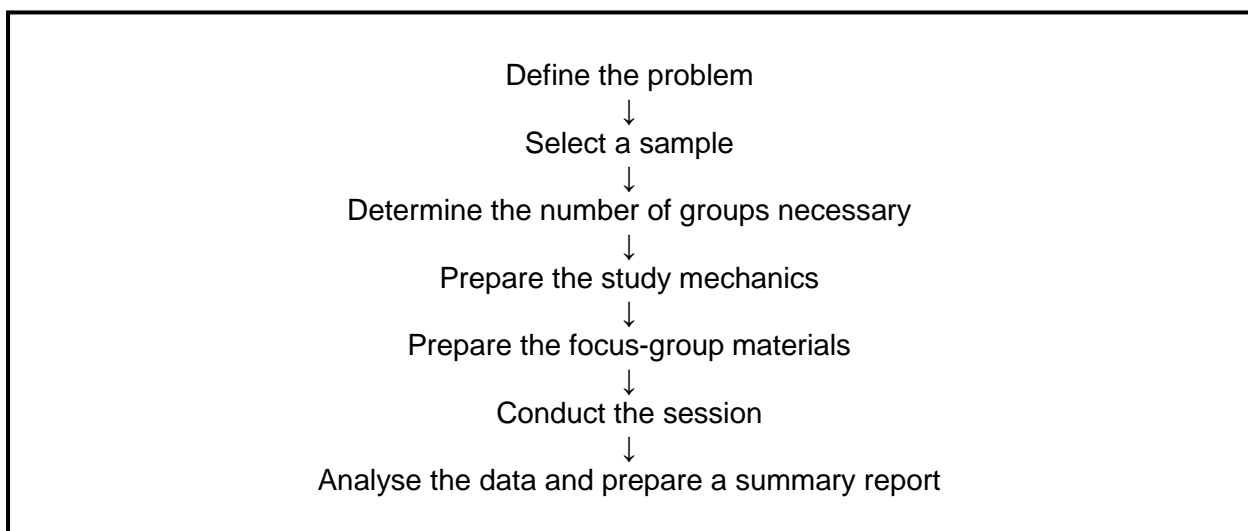
As the present study involves investigations into the watching of blue documentaries presenting local and foreign content about marine life extinction, it was important to select the data from viewers who shared similar criteria (see Sub-chapter 3.5). According to Krueger and Casey (2000), cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 129), a focus-group can be characterised as follows: (i) it involves people, (ii) the recruited people possess certain characteristics of interest to the researcher, (iii) it provides qualitative data and (iv) it has a focal topic of discussion. In addition, Mytton *et al.* (2016) claimed that, in recruiting focus-group participants, it is only logical to allocate those with similar interests in different groups, in order to get a variety of points of views. The combination of different individuals with certain criteria in a focus group can result in a range of opinions and worldviews (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Hence, in order to determine whether conservation awareness of marine life extinction has been instilled or not in BD viewers and to measure the extent of people's awareness after watching them, different groups of Malaysians from three geographical locations were recruited in this study (see Sub-chapter 3.4). Their various viewpoints can provide significant data and meet the objectives of this research, which include the discovery of:

- 1) the rhetorical elements that are effective in raising viewers' awareness of the need for marine life conservation;

- 2) the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements, in relation to their educational, emotional and attitudinal outlook on marine life conservation; and
- 3) two months later, their responses in reply to whether or not these rhetorical elements have changed their attitudes towards marine life conservation.

A qualitative researcher must thus consider several procedures prior to conducting focus-group discussions in order to ensure that the data obtained on the topic under investigation are rich and comprehensive. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 131), there are seven steps in a focus-group discussion and each step is crucial in order to produce a trustworthy research outcome, as shown below:

**Figure 3.1: Seven steps of focus-group discussion**



Source: Mass Media Research (2006)

### **3.2.1.1 Defining the problem**

A focus-group discussion is conducted based on the problem and the research gap identified in a study field. Mytton *et al.* (2016) stated that any research project starts with the definition of the problems or issues to be addressed within a focus-group discussion. Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 131) also assert that 'a well-defined problem is established on the basis of previous investigation or out of curiosity'. In this study, a problem has been identified (see Sub-chapter 1.3) due to a gap in the study field, as well as my own curiosity about the current phenomenon of endangered marine life species and the relatively low level of conservation awareness among Malaysians.



Therefore, the documentary is seen by first-world countries as an effective medium through which to stimulate environmental awareness, particularly by informing the public about marine life extinction. However, the difference between the small numbers of documentary films/programmes about marine life conservation produced locally in Malaysia and the high number of imported environmental documentaries is noticeable. Therefore, it is my aim to investigate the effective rhetorical elements between the imported documentaries covering foreign issues, or local documentaries looking at local issues, in promoting a change in attitudes and perceptions and thus in potentially encouraging social change towards marine life conservation. Apart from that, this study has been conducted to test whether different geographical backgrounds – such as urban, coastal or rural areas – can be a determining factor in these rhetorical elements being effective for the viewers when examining their responses to what is familiar to them or whether distance has an effect on their reception.

#### **3.2.1.2 Selecting a sample**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), focus groups involve small samples and the researcher must ensure that the respondents are grouped together based on their interests and the purpose of the focus group, as well as the objectives of the study. Hence, I have considered a number of criteria based on purposive sampling when selecting the respondents for my focus-group discussions (see Sub-chapter 3.5.1.1).

#### **3.2.1.3 Determining the number of groups**

In this study, I conducted six focus-group discussions which consisted of (i) a group shown a documentary with foreign content (*Mission Blue*) and (ii) a group shown a documentary produced locally (*Lestari Ujana Marin*) (see Sub-chapter 3.5.1.1). Wimmer and Dominick (2006) claim that a focus group should be conducted with as many groups as possible (normally three or more focus groups on the same topic) in order to identify and compare the similarities or differences that exist, until data saturation is reached – in which there are no more new findings or elements introduced within the discussions.

#### **3.2.1.4 Preparing the study mechanics**

There are a number of procedures that need to be taken into consideration prior to conducting focus-group discussions. For this study, I used several types of mechanics, which include documentary films/programmes (*Mission Blue* and *Lestari Ujana Marin*), the

respondents, the facilities at the location of the documentary screening and the focus-group discussions, as well as the recording tools (see Sub-chapters 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6). As Wimmer and Dominick (2006) highlighted, the technicalities for a focus group are crucial and include the process of recruiting the respondents, making reservations for the facilities (location), and indicating the appropriate recording tools (video or audio recorders) to be used.

### **3.2.1.5 Preparing the focus-group materials**

Apart from the focus-group mechanics, the study materials are also crucial in conducting an effective focus-group discussion. Many scholars claim that the key factor for a successful focus group is a high dependency on the competence and skills of the leader, moderator or researcher (Mytton *et al.* 2016; Priest 2010; Wimmer and Dominick 2006). In this study, I have taken on the role of moderator, and have led the discussion in an unstructured way centred on the topic under investigation. It is important to note that this came with some serious practical considerations.

Firstly, a moderator has to be presentable and neutral – an important factor in focus-group discussions. Priest (2010, p. 107) asserted that a moderator must be ‘pleasant, friendly, interested, professional, and objective’, and keep the conversation flowing as long as possible, depending on the group’s size, without heavily influencing the respondents’ responses. Similarly, Mytton *et al.* (2016, p. 168) stated that a good moderator keeps a low profile to ensure that the attitudes and opinions of each of the respondents’ present are heard. He or she must also avoid the urge to express personal opinions or to react negatively towards a respondent’s responses. Having said that, the researcher must remain neutral and lead the discussion fairly by giving an equal opportunity to everyone present to voice their opinions and interact with each other – including the moderator – about their documentary viewing experience without leaving out any single piece of information.

Secondly, a moderator must ensure that the seating arrangement is conducive to an effective discussion. Therefore, before making venue reservations, I ensured that all the facilities, including the seating arrangements in the room, were appropriate and suitable for a focus-group discussion (see Sub-chapter 3.4). As Mytton *et al.* (2016, p. 168) suggested, respondents should be seated in a semicircle to facilitate conversation, enhance the feeling of equality in enabling everyone’s responses to be heard and ensure that a good quality of discussion can be recorded.

Thirdly, a good focus-group discussion should be conducted within an appropriate timeframe and therefore the moderator must ensure that a discussion is not too short and not too long. Hence the duration of the focus-group discussions in my study was more than one hour but less than three hours. As previous scholars (Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Mytton *et al.* 2016; Priest 2010) have claimed, effective focus-group discussions normally last between one and three hours depending on the size of the group (longer than this is not advisable as it might cause the respondents to lose focus and feel tired). I adhered to all these criteria.

Lastly, a moderator must prepare a set of questions – unstructured in nature – to guide the focus-group discussion. Hence, in this study, I prepared a set of questions (see Sub-chapter 3.8), which I used in leading the discussion and encouraging respondents' participation in the session, all the while remaining neutral by not disturbing the discussion with my own point of view or argument on the topic under investigation. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) claimed that a skilful moderator can make focus-group discussions valuable by preparing a list of broad and refined questions and by requesting clarification on unclear responses from the respondents. Generally, a moderator initiates the focus-group discussion with general questions before moving on to more specific topics (Mytton *et al.* 2016; Wimmer and Dominick 2006). Meanwhile Krueger and Casey (2000), as cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 132), highlighted elements which are important for a moderator to have considered when asking these questions; these include a sound conversation, appropriate use of vocabulary, easy, clear and short questions, only one topic at a time and the provision of clear directions on how to answer the questions.

### **3.2.1.6 Conducting the session**

The location is crucial for a focus-group discussion; the researcher must ensure that the location is within a reachable distance for respondents and is well-equipped, thus encouraging respondents' participation. For my study, I provided a conducive and healthy environment to avoid any disturbances (emotionally or physically) by arranging study sites with good facilities – with lavatories and prayer rooms. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), in most situations, a focus-group discussion is conducted in a well-equipped room such as a conference room or a hotel. The focus-group sessions in my study took between one and three hours, with an additional documentary screening session prior to the focus-group discussions. Thus, I also provided lunch boxes and refreshments for the respondents, in order to maintain their energy levels and as a way of expressing my gratitude for their

participation. Lastly, the respondents gave their consent to voluntarily participate in this study, for which they agreed to give six hours of their time.

### **3.2.1.7 Analysing the data and preparing a summary report**

Data obtained through any research method must be documented, analysed and summarised in order to produce trustworthy findings and research outcomes. Therefore, the discussions were recorded and documented using a video and an audio recorder for each round of data collection. Then, I summarised and transcribed the recorded audio and video file. The transcribed document was then reported and analysed, to produce a novel research outcome, by categorising the information under a specific main theme and several sub-themes, a procedure known as thematic analysis (see Sub-chapter 3.8).

As Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 133) claimed, a researcher organising a focus group should write a brief synopsis and interpretation of the participants' responses and transcribe and categorise all the information arising from the discussion. Similarly, Baker and Ellece (2011, p. 47) stated that the interaction in a focus-group discussion must then be 'recorded, transcribed, and analysed'. Also, it is necessary for focus-group discussions to be documented in order to ensure that the researcher can focus on the discussion without being distracted by the need to take notes during the proceedings, and for the documented discussion to be reviewed repeatedly during the process of analysis (Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Mytton *et al.* 2016; Priest 2010; Wimmer and Dominick 2006). It is important to note that not all the research questions in this study can be answered solely through focus-group discussions. According to Morgan (1997), as cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 131), a focus-group method can be either '(i) self-contained, (ii) supplementary and (iii) multimethod'. Similarly, Flick (2007, p. 313) asserted that a focus group is integrated in multiple qualitative methods and that an individual interview is considered as a strong integrated method alongside the focus group in order to produce enhanced qualitative data analysis.

Hence, in this study, I treat the focus-group discussions as a mixed method, which I used to gather rich data on the various respondents' viewpoints. The results from this method were combined with the in-depth interview data (see Sub-chapter 3.2.2) when establishing the main theme and sub-themes during the analysis and discussion process. This mixed method also ensures the validity and richness of the data and more in-depth research outcomes on

the role of the documentary in stimulating a change in attitudes and perceptions and thus to potentially encourage social change towards the conservation of marine life by Malaysians.

### **3.2.2 *The in-depth interview***

Besides focus-group discussions, the semi-structured interview was selected to meet the objectives of this study, by evaluating the potential attitudinal change, two months later, in respondents' documentary viewing experiences. The in-depth interviews for this study were conducted in two stages; (i) before the documentary screening, and (ii) two months after the screening had taken place. These were carried out with the intention of identifying the prior and subsequent levels of awareness, perceptions of or attitude changes resulting from the documentary screening. In-depth interviews are deemed appropriate for this study for several reasons.

Firstly, an in-depth interview encourages the respondents to freely speak of their experiences based on their interest, involvement, satisfaction and social reality, something which cannot be done during focus-group discussions. This view is supported by Mytton *et al.* (2016), who asserted that an in-depth interview is very useful in investigating people's personal reactions and can provide rich data on the subject under study.

The second factor is very much attributed to the location of the respondents – in this study they came from three geographical locations comprising the urban, the coastal and the rural. Twumasi (2001, p. 35) suggested that the in-depth interview is suitable for all populations, especially 'in collecting data from rural and illiterate people'. Hence, the respondents' opinions and their various points of views are significant when investigating the role of the documentary as an agent in the promotion of a change in attitudes and perceptions towards marine life conservation by Malaysians.

Thirdly, an in-depth interview enabled me to formulate semi-structured questions both before and during the interview process. As Wimmer and Dominick (2006) asserted, an in-depth interview allows the interviewer to construct additional questions on the scene based on the respondents' answers. Therefore, semi-structured questions were formulated (see Appendix 1), to guide me during the interview process and give me a better understanding, while gaining rich information from the respondents. Deacon *et al.* (1999, p. 65) stated that semi-structured questions seek to promote an active, open-ended dialogue that resembles everyday conversation; however, the researcher still controls the situation by referring to an

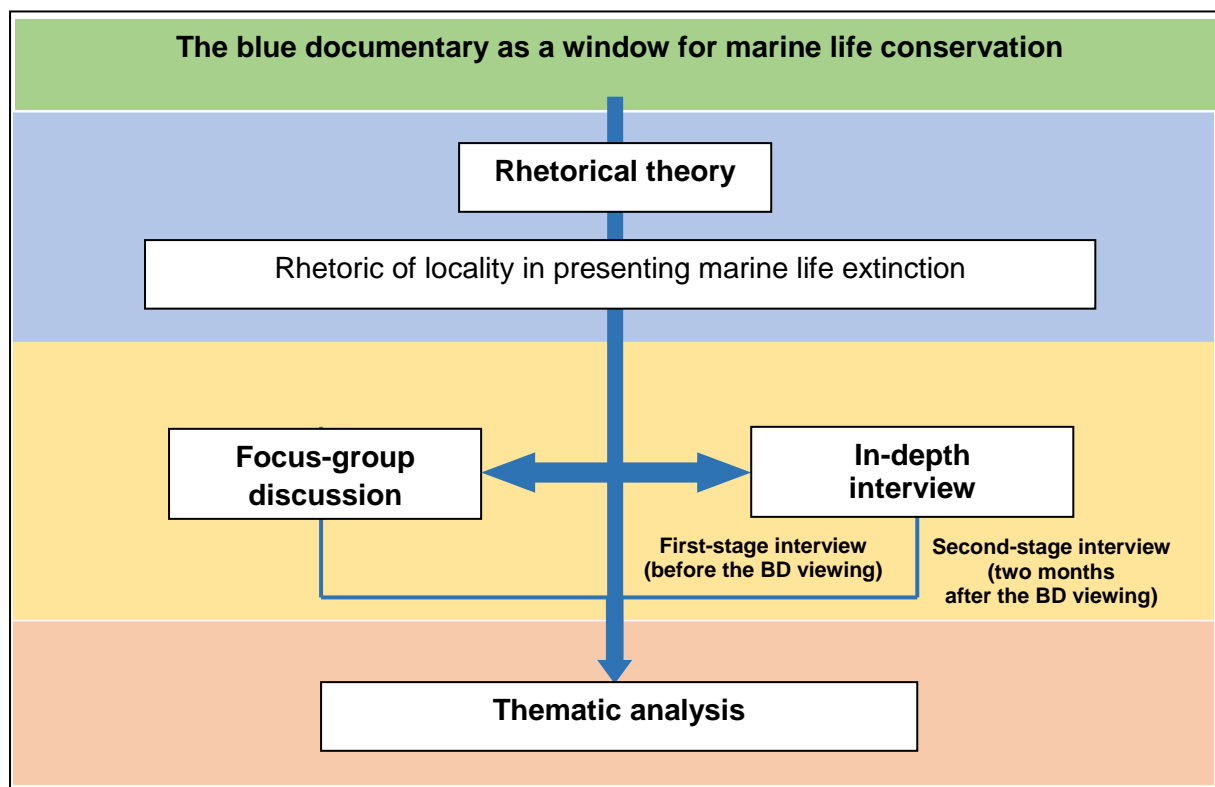
interview guide that is prepared beforehand. I therefore also created additional questions on the site based on my respondents' responses and behaviour during the interviews. This strategy was repeated for each respondent until data saturation was reached.

To conclude, the interview process should create a discussion between the respondent and the researcher; the researcher has to be flexible in order to establish a good rapport between him- or herself and the interviewee by using appropriate language, having the right attitude and remaining objective during the whole interview process.

### 3.3 Methodological framework

A dual-method qualitative approach was employed to seek answers to the three main research questions of this study (see Sub-chapter 1.4). These included focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews. As proposed by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), it is obligatory for the qualitative researcher to clarify the importance of the connections between each method used in the study context, as shown in the figure below.

**Figure 3.2: Methodological framework of a blue documentary inclining marine life conservation**



To start with, I conducted the first stage of the in-depth interview (refer to the Appendix 1 for the list of questions) followed by the documentary screening, in order to gain information on the respondents' individual awareness and experiences before watching the BDs. To further enhance any changes during the BD screening on the respondents' perceptions of conservation, any ambiguity during the first stage of the in-depth interviews and documentary screening was clarified in the focus-group discussions (see the Appendix 1 for the focus-group questions). To reach a point of data saturation, both sessions were conducted until there were repetitions in the answers given and no new points of view were emerging. Next, all the details of the dialogue in the first stage of the in-depth interview sessions and focus-group discussions were documented using an audio recorder and a video camera. Then, the recorded materials were documented and transcribed. I then used the recorded materials, as well as the interview and focus-group-discussion transcripts, to gain a clearer understanding of and better insights into each of the responses received.

In addition, I conducted post-viewing interviews two months after the documentary viewing (see the Appendix 1 for the interview questions). This enabled me to identify the respondents' changes in attitudes towards or perceptions of marine life conservation. This data collection process was repeated for each respondent in every location. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) claimed that qualitative research is primarily inductive, emergent and unruly, and that the researcher undertakes similar steps or processes until an astute clarification of the data collected is reached. This process was followed, so I thus examined my data through thematic analysis. The data were grouped into the themes and sub-themes which emerged in response to the research questions. In this study the analysis is limited to that of the focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted in three geographical locations in Malaysia with an urban, rural or coastal population.

### **3.4 The study setting and subject**

The study setting and the subjects involved provided a significant contribution and served as a determinant in the successful conclusion of my research. In this study, the three states in Malaysia were Kuala Lumpur, Johor and Terengganu, selected as they represented the population from three different areas – (i) the urban area, (ii) the rural area and (iii) the coastal area. For each area, a specific location was selected for recruiting respondents – (i) the Klang Valley to represent the urban area, (ii) Felda Kemelah to represent the rural area and (iii) Kuala Besut to represent the coastal area. The respondents were recruited through various means, which included correspondence with representatives, phone calls, e-mails

and instant messaging services such as WhatsApp. For example, I managed to contact the public relation officers at the District Offices of Felda Kemelah and Kuala Besut. From our correspondence, I was given full permission to proceed with the recruitment of respondents for my study and was given the contact details of the person in charge in each area. With the assistance of the person in charge, 12 respondents from rural areas and 12 from coastal areas were recruited. Meanwhile, another 12 respondents residing in the Klang Valley were recruited via e-mail and social-networking websites as well as instant messaging services (WhatsApp).

The Klang Valley was deemed as an appropriate location to represent the Malaysian urban population because it is located at the heart of the economy in Malaysia and is far from the coastal and rural areas (Inside Malaysia 2012). Meanwhile, the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) is a government agency that is responsible for eradicating poverty in rural areas by redeveloping the land to create villages and plantation areas and naming them FELDA. This population generates its income through the cultivation of palm oil and rubber (FELDA 2017). Based on this fact, I selected Felda Kemelah in Segamat, Johor, to represent the population of the rural area. In contrast, Kuala Besut is situated in Terengganu, one of the states on the East Coast of the Peninsular Malaysia (Coral Cay Conservation 2003). This site was appropriate to represent the coastal population in the study due to its geographical location. The reason for selecting these diverse locations was to assess the audiences' reception of locality in the issues represented (how they responded to what is familiar to them or whether distance influenced their reception of the issue). The topic concerned the issue of marine life extinction within different geographical locations, environments and experiences; a significant way of meeting the objectives of the present research, as well as to suit my time and financial constraints.

On the other hand, the room requirements were twofold: firstly, technical facilities consisting of a computer and a projector were needed in order to screen the documentary; secondly an environment without any outside interference was also essential in order to make the room conducive to interviews. In this study, I provided my own technical tools (computer and projector) and reserved a room in a community hall for respondents from rural and coastal areas. Meanwhile, for the urban population, I reserved a meeting room owned by the Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS), a government department for social welfare, in Kuala Lumpur for the documentary screening session and the focus-group discussions, while the in-depth interviews were carried out at various locations based on the respondents' accessibility and suitability.



### 3.5 Respondent selection

A sampling strategy is normally used in qualitative research as a way of minimising the time and efforts spent on a project. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) stated that it is impossible to examine an entire population in a project due to costs, resources and time constraints; therefore, a sample is taken which is representative of the young population. This is further strengthened by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), who asserted that a sampling strategy is used by qualitative researchers to direct them to the significant factors (what and who) to be considered during the discussion and interviewing process.

Thus, in my study, I used non-probability sampling in selecting my respondents, with purposive sampling as the specific method. Schwandt (1997) cited in Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 122), described non-probability sampling as 'sites or cases that are chosen because there may be good reason to believe that what goes in there is critical to understanding some process or concept, or elaborating some established theory'. Similarly, Babbie (2010) asserted that purposive sampling facilitates an open interaction between the researcher and the respondents, in which those to be interviewed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment in choosing the one that is the most accurately related to the research or representatives of the population studied. Similarly, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) claimed that most qualitative researchers are directed by purposive sampling, which enables them to concentrate on the values and social meanings of people in a specific cultural context. Thus, the respondents selected are based on the characteristics set out below that enabled them to contribute to the present study. All were:

- 1) Malaysians residing in the Klang Valley, Felda Kemelah and Kuala Besut;
- 2) young population (aged 21–35 years old);
- 3) of any ethnicity and marital status; and
- 4) voluntary participants in the research.

There were no specific requirements for the respondents in this study, because it focused on geographic location and the timescale of perceptions or attitude changes in the audience, and not on demographic differences such as ethnicity. A young population aged 21–35 years old was chosen because this age group was considered as the young generation in Malaysia. According to Asiah *et al.* (2009), early adulthood (25–34 years old) was the largest audience (98.7 per cent) for documentary films/programmes in Malaysia; thus, in the present study, this age is considered as a young population. In addition, voluntary participation was

important in order to avoid ethical problems. I explained to each respondent that the nature of this research was only to identify the relationships between documentary viewing and marine life conservation awareness. Once they had agreed to participate, the respondents underwent the documentary screening, focus group discussion, and two stages of in-depth interview sessions.

### **3.5.1 Sample size**

In qualitative research, there are no rules of thumb to dictate the number of respondents in a sample. According to Merriam (1998), the number of respondents involved is solely dependent on the questions being asked, the data gathered, the progress of the analysis and the resources that the researcher has; the sampling will be terminated once no new information surfaces or reaches a point of saturation – in other words, once the current information is being repeated and there is no further information appearing in the data gathering process.

Similarly, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) claimed that a qualitative researcher is responsible for deciding when to terminate the fieldwork. This may be governed by a number of factors which include time constraints, a depletion in funding, and the need to finish a thesis or the fact that the data quality had been achieved. Snow (1980) cited in Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 224), asserted that there are three techniques for identifying 'information sufficiency'; these include (i) taken-for-grantedness (the researcher is no longer surprised by the respondents' actions), (ii) theoretical saturation (the researcher reaches a point where no more features appear in a conceptual framework) and (iii) heightened confidence (the researcher's observations and findings enlighten the emergent questions and propositions).

#### **3.5.1.1 Sample size for focus-group discussions**

A good focus-group discussion should be carried out with an appropriate number of respondents to ensure its success. Hence, in this study, I decided that the sample size for my discussions would be six respondents per group, in order to control the flow of the discussion and allow each respondent's opinion to be heard. For each location, there were two focus-groups based on the different types of documentary screened, (i) *Mission Blue* (foreign content), and (ii) *Lestari Ujana Marin* (local content). Thus, there were 36 respondents in total – six respondents for each focus group – making a total of 12

representatives of the urban population, 12 of the rural population and 12 of the coastal population.

As previous studies reported (Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Wimmer and Dominick 2006), the optimal size for a focus group is between six and 12 respondents. To further strengthen the notion, Mytton *et al.* (2016) stated that a focus group can involve six to ten people and suggested that eight respondents is the ideal number. Too few respondents (six or below) or too large a number (more than 12 respondents) is not advisable and should be avoided in order to maintain the diverse range of useful comments and interests and the development of the discussion within a group where everyone present can be heard (Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Mytton *et al.* 2016).

It was my intention to conduct more focus groups in each location; however, due to financial and time constraints, I only managed to conduct six. However, I ensured that all the respondents had gone through the first stage of in-depth interviews as well as the documentary screening prior to participating in the focus-group discussion.

### **3.5.1.2 Sample size for the in-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews were carried out with the same respondents from the focus-group discussion – 36 respondents in all. However, there were two stages of in-depth interviews; before the documentary screening and two months later (see Sub-chapter 3.2.2). This sampling strategy was repeated until data saturation was reached for each population of the target areas (see Table 3.1) – i.e. those in urban, rural and coastal areas. In total, there were 72 in-depth interviews for this study.

### **3.5.1.3 Respondent identification**

In this study, data were obtained from the six focus-group discussions and 72 in-depth interviews, across three populations – coastal, rural, and urban. Here, the respondents were signified as population A, B, C, D, E, and F, and the respondents will be tagged as 1 to 6, in order to identify each respondent groups, and this tagging will be used for the rest of the chapters including in the findings and analysis, as follows:

**Table 3.1: Respondent identification**

Population	Area and documentary viewed	Tagging
Population A	Coastal population who watched the foreign BD, <i>Mission Blue</i> (MB)	A1 to A6
Population B	Coastal population who watched the local BD, <i>Lestari Ujana Marin</i> (LUM)	B1 to B6
Population C	Rural population who watched the foreign BD, <i>Mission Blue</i> (MB)	C1 to C6
Population D	Rural population who watched the local BD, <i>Lestari Ujana Marin</i> (LUM)	D1 to D6
Population E	Urban population who watched the foreign BD, <i>Mission Blue</i> (MB)	E1 to E6
Population F	Urban population who watched the local BD, <i>Lestari Ujana Marin</i> (LUM)	F1 to F6

### 3.6 The materials under study

Two documentaries were used in order to investigate the role played by the blue documentary as an agent in the promotion of a change in attitudes and perceptions towards the conservation of marine life by Malaysians. I managed to obtain permission from the producers and responsible parties to use two documentaries for academic purposes – *Lestari Ujana Marin* or *The Sustainable Marine Park* (representing local content) and *Mission Blue* (representing foreign content). The reason behind the selection of these two documentaries was due to their representation of the issue of marine life extinction without involving inland and other wildlife species, which was significant enough to generate a credible research outcome based on the objectives of the present study.

Firstly, *Lestari Ujana Marin* (LUM) was produced in 2014 and was 25 minutes long. This documentary is one of the episodes of *Simfoni Alam*, a documentary series that was launched in 2010 by Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). *Simfoni Alam* was broadcast every Tuesday through Channel TV1 and covered various topics including nature issues, wildlife, discoveries, culture, the environment, tourism, science and technology as well as current issues. *Lestari Ujana Marin* was selected due to its relevance to this study in terms of marine life extinction, in which it represented the conservation journey and efforts of Mr

Nasrulkhakim, a marine research officer and his team, to save the polluted ocean. This documentary won a local award for Best Video Documentary at the Malaysian Journalist Night in 2015. In seeking permission to obtain a copy of the *Simfoni Alam* documentary, I contacted Mr Rosli Nordin, the producer of *Simfoni Alam* and Mrs Rapitah Sulaiman, the producer of the *Lestari Ujana Marin* from Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). They were both very cooperative and provided me with a copy of the programme by email without imposing any charges.

Meanwhile, *Mission Blue* (MB) was produced by Netflix in 2014 and was 95 minutes long. The release of this documentary was through collaboration between Netflix, an internet television network, and the Mission Blue Organisation. It was launched by Dr Sylvia Earle, an American oceanographer. The documentary represented Earle's personal journey with her team and their efforts to conserve the polluted ocean through Hope Spots – ecologically unique areas of the ocean designated for protection under a global conservation campaign. This documentary won the 2015 News and Documentary Award, at the Emmy Awards for Outstanding Editing. I contacted the Mission Blue organisation in order to get permission to use a copy of the documentary film for academic purposes. The director of strategic partnership of the Mission Blue Organisation, Mrs Deb Castellana, was very cooperative and gave me permission to use the documentary with the requirement that no admission fee be taken during the screening.

Communications with the producers and representatives of *Lestari Ujana Marin* and *Mission Blue* were carried out through social media and e-mail. Hence, the geographical boundaries between me, the materials under study and the study subject (the United Kingdom, California and Malaysia) were not a barrier because of the various ways I could communicate with people via digital technology such as WhatsApp messenger, email or other social-media platforms. To conclude, these documentaries were significant, especially during the screening process, as they were used as materials for data collection, which enabled me to analyse the changes felt by the respondents, both before and after the screening process, through focus-group discussions and two stages of in-depth interviews.

### **3.7 Conducting the pilot study and starting fieldwork**

I began my fieldwork in the three different states in the peninsular Malaysia – Kuala Lumpur (Klang Valley), Terengganu (Kuala Besut) and Johor (Felda Kemelah) – by collecting my data (see Sub-chapter 3.4). Before the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted in

order to pre-analyse the respondents' understanding of the purpose of the study and to test the questions I had formulated which would be posed in the actual data collection. The pilot study was conducted:

- 1) to determine whether the respondents understood the focus-group and interview questions and the context of the study;
- 2) to improve the focus-group and interview questions prior to the actual data collection; and
- 3) to test whether the information provided by the respondents would enable me to sufficiently answer my research questions.

As a result, the pilot study provided me with an insight into the respondents' knowledge and experiences of documentary viewing within the context of the study. According to Lewis and Ritchie (2005), the data and information collected from a pilot study can be included in the main dataset or reconsidered if there is a radical change in the research. In support of this, I decided *not* to include the data gathered from the pilot study in the dataset. This decision was made because, in my pilot study, I found that some improvements were required, particularly in revising the questions (see Appendix 1) for both the focus-group discussions and the in-depth interviews. This meant that I had to review and revise several questions in order to enable the audiences to understand them. Apart from this, there was additional equipment needed, such as a cable for the projector, in order to ensure the smoothness of the documentary screening, all of which I duly addressed.

### **3.8 Questionnaire and data analysis: the procedure**

It is important to lay out the assessment guidelines and principles which governed the process of data collection and formulated research questions as well as data analysis throughout this study.

#### **3.8.1 *The questionnaire***

In this study, the questions were designed to test the rhetorical elements derived from the theory of Aristotle and Nichols, which consisted of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* (see Sub-chapter 2.10.1), in order to examine which elements would elicit a change in Malaysians' attitudes towards and perceptions of marine life conservation. Firstly, the *ethos* or ethical appeal signified the credibility of the evidence in persuading people that what they are seeing in the

BD is both true and important. This included the viewers trusting in the authority of the information given and the use of the right language for the target audience to ensure greater message comprehension of the issue of marine life extinction. In the context of this study, the right language can be defined as the conversant language of the audience – such as Malay. For example, the knowledge of marine life extinction and the comprehensible language spoken by the main and the supporting characters played a significant role in validating the credibility of the expert evidence and in persuading the public to act in a certain way, in line with the issue raised.

Secondly, the *pathos* or emotional appeal signified the elements that trigger emotional reactions in the audience, including but not limited to feelings of sympathy, sadness, anger, hope and disappointment. In line with the issues raised in this study, the criteria were focused on the ways in which a viewer's feelings are invoked and persuaded by BD messages specifically through the narrative of the issues represented, combined with the use of music and provocative images. Meanwhile, the *logos* or rational appeal signified the reason for or rationality behind the arguments made in persuading people that what they are seeing in a BD is both true and important, including the scientific discoveries such as facts and figures relating to the information given. For example, the rationality of the arguments can be reasoned through images, verbal or written data in order to trigger an audience's responses and greater understanding of the issue represented.

This study also assessed the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements – looking at their educational, emotional and attitudinal changes – and analysed their reactions to how they obtained new information about marine life extinction/conservation. In addition, I examined whether they showed any emotional reaction towards the marine life extinction issue, or if they demonstrated any tendency to act in a certain way for the sake of marine life conservation.

Lastly, to discover the viewer's responses two months later to these rhetorical elements on their attitude changes towards marine life conservation, I evaluated whether their attitudinal changes shown immediately after their BD's viewing experiences had been sustained or not. The questions asked during the data collection process and the guidelines on the viewer's responses for each research question are shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: List of criteria for the questionnaire**

Research question	Criteria
Which rhetorical elements of ethical appeal (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos) and rational appeal (logos) are effective in raising viewers' awareness of the need for marine life conservation?	<p><b>Ethos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion about the credibility of the evidence in the documentary relating to marine life extinction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Pathos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion about elements that trigger a person's emotions relating to marine life extinction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Logos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion about the rationality of the arguments made both true and important, relating to marine life extinction.</li> </ul>
What are the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements, and how have the latter helped to change viewer's outlook on marine life conservation?	<p><b>Educational changes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion about new information learnt from this documentary.</li> </ul> <p><b>Emotional changes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion about emotional involvement during documentary viewing experiences.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attitudinal changes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion about the attitudinal experience after documentary viewing.</li> </ul>
Two months later, what are the viewer's responses in reply to whether or not these rhetorical elements have changed their attitudes towards marine life conservation?	<p><b>Pre-viewing experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Question of awareness and perception of and attitude towards marine life conservation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Post-viewing experiences/action taken:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Question about attitude changes up to now.</li> </ul>

Thus, the research questions and supplementary questions (the questionnaire) for the focus group and in-depth interviews were formed largely based on this premise (see Appendix 1). It is important to note that, without missing any single question, I managed to put all the questions to each of the respondents involved. All the data collected from the six focus-



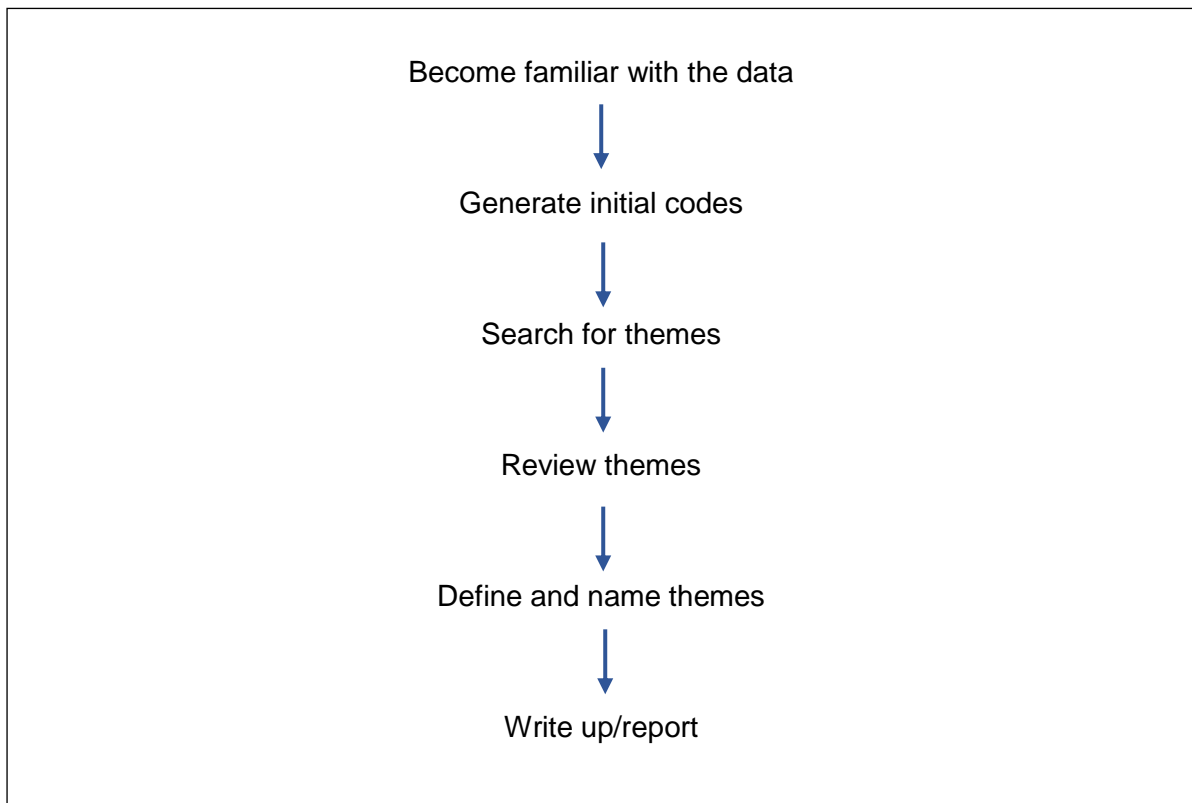
group discussions and 72 in-depth interviews were analysed by using thematic analysis, which will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

### **3.8.2 Procedure for data analysis: thematic analysis**

This study is based on six focus-group discussions, each lasting two hours, and 72 in-depth interviews, each lasting one hour. I employed thematic analysis in order to identify, interpret and analyse the important and interesting patterns which emerged from the data. As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) claimed, 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set'. The data extracted forms the main themes and sub-themes driven by the research questions; these consist of (1) which rhetorical elements of ethical appeal (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos) and rational appeal (logos) are effective in raising viewers' awareness of marine life conservation, (2) what the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements are, in relation to their educational, emotional and attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation, and (3) two months later, what the viewer's responses are to these rhetorical elements of their attitude changes towards marine life conservation.

Braun and Clarke (2006) designate six steps of a practical framework in doing thematic analysis whereby the phases can be used simultaneously in dealing with a lot of the data in this study. Thus, I employed this framework in doing the thematic analysis for this study, as shown in Figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3: Six-step framework for doing thematic analysis**



*Source:* Using thematic analysis in psychology (2006)

Firstly, I familiarised myself with the data obtained from the focus group and interviews by reading and re-reading the transcriptions of them. At this stage, I jotted down the early patterns and impressions which emerged from the data before taking any further steps. Secondly, I started to organise the data in a systematic way, minimising them into more meaningful and relevant categories – a process known as coding. This was determined by the research questions and segmented according to the interesting viewpoints, for which I used open coding by modifying and developing the code throughout the process. This process was undertaken manually without using any qualitative data analysis software; I simply used pens and highlighters to work through hard copies of the transcripts. Thirdly, the main themes and sub-themes were then categorised based on their significance to the research questions. At this stage, the preliminary themes were first defined by overlapping codes and then examining the codes that clearly fitted together to form a theme. For example, I had several codes in relation to the effective rhetorical elements in the documentary. I collated these and formed the main themes and sub-themes that addressed specific research questions. Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 indicate the main themes and sub-themes that were identified in the data set.

**Table 3.3: Preliminary themes and codes driven by effective rhetorical elements in BDs**

Theme: Ethos (ethical appeal)	Theme: Ethos (emotional appeal)	Theme: Logos (rational appeal)
<p><b>Codes:</b> Words/phrases associated with:</p> <p>Expert, experience, the journey, techniques, other people with the main characters, understand the language used.</p>	<p><b>Codes:</b> Words/phrases associated with:</p> <p>Beauty, various marine life, the suffering, the plastic pollution of familiar debris, the music, the journey of the characters, the body language, the relevance to the issue, feel close/familiar with the issue, local issue, our place/country, marine life eco-systems similar to that of human's social context.</p>	<p><b>Codes:</b> Words/phrases associated with:</p> <p>The image makes better understanding, images were helpful, written facts include numbers, figures and statistics.</p>

**Table 3.4: Preliminary themes and codes driven by viewers' responses to the rhetorical elements in BDs**

Theme: Educational changes	Theme: Emotional changes	Theme: Attitudinal changes
<p><b>Codes:</b> Any response related to words/phrases about marine life conservation:</p> <p>Learn, teach, know something, more knowledge, I did not know before, find out, understand, inform, acquire, notice, it helps, news, give, expose, introduce, and first time.</p>	<p><b>Codes:</b> Any response related to words/phrases about marine life conservation:</p> <p>Feel, angry, sad, annoyed, love, sympathy, pity, feel sorry, upset, disappointed, awe, guilt, frustrated, furious, embarrass, curiosity, worry, responsible, excite, respect, surprise and thankful.</p>	<p><b>Codes:</b> Any response related to words/phrases about marine life conservation:</p> <p>I will share, I will tell, I will promote, I will do, I will start, I will join, I need to inform, I need to change, I want to protect, I want to join, I want to keep, might eat, to contribute, to use, to join, to</p>

		stop, to take, to change, to reduce, to avoid, to suggest, to find, to contact, to organize, to be a volunteer, to donate, to collect, to manage, to bring, to recycle, to propose, to know, to educate, and to be careful.
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**Table 3.5: Preliminary themes and codes driven by attitude change towards marine life conservation two months later**

<b>Theme: Attitude change</b>
<p><b>Codes:</b> Any attitude change related to marine life conservation:</p> <p>I shared, I reduced, I promoted, used less, I collected, I recycled, I separated plastics, I disposed, I became stricter in recycling, I no longer eat, I stop eating, I search information, I read, I joined, I participated, I donated, I tried to contact.</p>

Next, I reviewed, evaluated and revised preliminary themes that were identified in the previous step. At this stage, I gathered all the data and codes that were relevant to the main themes and sub-themes, by using the cut-and-paste technique in Word documents and in hard copies. The themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data were coded in tables in Microsoft Word, where each theme was considered in the context of this study. I then finalised the themes by identifying the importance of each main one and extracted the relevant sub-themes in relation to each other. Lastly, I began to report and analyse my findings by categorising them into three main chapters (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethics is an important issue in a qualitative research approach whereby a researcher must adhere to a number of criteria before entering the study site in order to avoid any adverse effects on the respondents involved. As my research involved two types of qualitative approach – focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews – it was therefore crucial to

clarify the ethical concerns to ensure that both me and my respondents' rights, as well as the instrument used in the study, were protected. According to Wetherell *et al.* (2001), there are three categories of ethical consideration, consisting of codes of ethical practice issued by professional associations, informed consent and participants' legal rights. Lewis and Ritchie (2005) identify four stages of ethical issues in conducting qualitative research – informed consent, privacy protection and safety protection for the respondents and the researcher. Hence, for this study, I took all the necessary steps to ensure that all ethical guidelines were adhered to before work commenced in the field. These included (i) following the guidelines of ethical practice issued by the university, (ii) voluntary participation (ii) protection of privacy, and (iv) safety of the people (be they the researcher, the respondents or the gatekeepers) and other related material engaged in the study context (see next sub-chapter).

### **3.9.1 Guidelines of ethical practice issued by the university**

I was required to submit an ethics approval form to the university's ethical committee in order to ensure that the terms and conditions outlined were adhered to. I complied with all the guidelines listed on the form and obtained approval from the ethics committee to proceed with my fieldwork (see Appendix 6). Among these ethical criteria were the informed consent, voluntary participation and the confidentiality of the respondent's identity, as well as safety precautions for both myself and the respondents involved. This stage is crucial for the researcher to ensure the anonymity and safety of the respondents during fieldwork and any future publication. This is in line with what was said by Wetherell *et al.* (2001) – that it is a researcher's responsibility to guarantee respondents' privacy from any violation, in order to continue with the proposed project.

### **3.9.2 Voluntary participation**

It is important for the researcher to obtain the consent of the respondents and organisations involved in the study and to state that their contribution is voluntary. Many authors (*inter alia* Lewis and Ritchie 2005; Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Wetherell *et al.* 2001; Wimmer and Dominick 2006) claim that it is compulsory for a qualitative researcher to be accepted and given access to their respondents' lives by obtaining informed consent. In the humanities, respondents allow themselves to be studied by a researcher with whom they have never been personally or professionally engaged and it is not easy to willingly spend valuable time being involved in a study. The researcher must provide the respondents with all the necessary information, stating the purpose of the study – i.e. the objectives, the funder, the

research team involvement and how the data will be used – and also outlining the time frame required for the research (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). The respondents must understand that their participation in the study is voluntary, including their right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the research. Therefore, I obtained the respondents' consent through a form which they each signed, indicating that they were participating voluntarily in the study (see Appendix 3).

Another aspect to consider is that my study involved the screening of documentaries lasting 95 minutes for *Mission Blue* and 25 minutes for *Lestari Ujana Marin*, a length of time which might impede on the voluntary participation of the respondents. In this regard, according to the American Psychological Association (APA), a new ethics code should be formulated to increase voluntary participation in a study, a code consisting of the research details, respondents' rights, the potential risk, the researcher's contact information and incentives for participation (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). In support of this, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) claimed that a token of appreciation in return of favour – time and effort – is a common practice in humanities research – an attempt to establish a good relationship between the respondents and the researcher. Having said that, I realised that the respondents involved in my study were people from rural and coastal areas whose income is highly dependent on their daily work. They willingly sacrificed their working time to participate in the study, which made me feel that I should provide each of them with a token of appreciation for their contribution to the study. Apart from that, an official letter from me also carried the name of the faculty and the university of which I was a representative, a letter informing my participants that the data collection procedure was solely for academic purposes and indicating that their involvement in the study could be of public benefit in the future.

Meanwhile, for the documentary screening, I required consent from both organisations – the Mission Blue Organisation and Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). I sent official letters to these organisations to seek their approval to use two documentary films/programmes (*Mission Blue* and *Lestari Ujana Marin*) for academic purposes. Consent was obtained from the person in charge of the programme in the organisation, with whom I was in contact by e-mail and WhatsApp messenger (see Sub-chapter 3.6).

### **3.9.3 Protection of privacy**

It is necessary for me to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents in my study. Lewis and Ritchie (2005) defined anonymity as protecting the identity of the

respondent Similarly, Wimmer and Dominick (2006) asserted that, at this stage, the researcher is obliged to respect the respondents' privacy by ensuring that their identity – age, occupation and gender – would not be revealed in any way. The respondents have the right to know by whom, what and how the information provided will be accessed (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). Thus, the researcher must minimise ethical problems by protecting and preserving the respondents' identity by not revealing it to other parties, especially since their informed consent forms contained details of their personal background, and by withdrawing any data not needed in the study. Thus, in order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, I did not report any personal particulars – name, age, gender, ethnicity or occupation – that represented or characterised my respondents' backgrounds in the present study.

#### **3.9.4 Safety of the people and other related materials**

Finally, any project can expose the researcher, or the respondents involved in a study to harm or danger, which can affect them mentally, emotionally or physically both during and after the study. The researcher is obliged to minimise any potential risk by carefully considering any health and safety incidents that may occur during the fieldwork. Possible risks can be classified as venue arrangements, time management and the respondents' emotional involvement with the researcher during the focus-group discussions and interview sessions. According to Lewis and Ritchie (2005), a researcher must protect the respondents and him- or herself from any harm by increasing awareness of the risks taken during the process of data-gathering. This ethical stage was particularly crucial because, in my study, I travelled throughout the peninsular Malaysia to places with which I was not familiar, including Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu, and Johor, where each of the selected study areas was located. In addition, the respondents comprised Malaysians from different locations, which brings with it the potential for tension – a possibility that I took into consideration in order to avoid any harm to the respondents.

Thus, I needed to be able to verify the relevant and irrelevant detail from the respondents during the data-gathering process and to prioritise that information which provided the most insightful findings on the issue being studied. I was also well prepared before conducting the fieldwork, to the extent of arranging for a colleague to attend all stages of the data collection. I took the necessary steps to ensure that my colleague was seated at a distance from where the data-gathering process was taking place in order to avoid discomfort amongst the respondents. Finally, I also took the initiative to ensure that the respondents, as well as the location selected for the study, were free from the risk of crime, war and natural disaster.

### **3.10 Strategies to achieve reliability and validity**

In qualitative studies, the credibility of a finding is crucial to ensure that researchers feel confident with their findings and research outcomes. A qualitative researcher must be committed to his or her task during the fieldwork to avoid being questioned on the credibility of the research, in terms of the completeness of the data, the selective perception and reactivity (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). Thus, reliability and validity issues are of great importance in qualitative research in determining the trustworthiness and power of the research (Dusick 2011; Mytton *et al.* 2016; Wimmer and Dominick 2006), upon which this study is based.

#### **3.10.1 The validity of the data**

According to Merriam (1998), there are two types of validity – the internal and the external – in which the internal deals with how the research findings match the reality, while the external validity looks at whether the findings of a study can be applied to other situations. Similarly, Mytton *et al.* (2016, p. 180) defined ‘validity as the degree to which what we find through research corresponds to reality’. On the other hand, to achieve data reliability or trustworthiness in the present study, I was also very much dependent on reliability. Merriam (1998) looked on reliability as the degree to which the findings from a study can be replicated in the future. A qualitative researcher can increase the reliability of his or her research by employing three techniques made up of the investigator’s position, triangulation and the audit trail. Similarly, Wimmer and Dominick (2006) pointed out that a qualitative researcher attained trustworthiness of the study through five aspects – the multiple methods of data collection, the audit trail, members’ checks, the research team and the debriefing. Therefore, several techniques were adopted in my study in order to achieve validity and increase the trustworthiness of my research outcomes.

First of all, I used members’ checks and peer examination strategies to enhance the internal validity of the research. For the members’ checks, I took the transcribed data back to the respondents for them to verify the information provided. In addition, I also subjected myself to peer examination, from which I obtained feedback on the emerging findings of my study, to increase its internal validity (Merriam 1998). I adopted this strategy by inviting a colleague to attend the listening session and data transcription. In addition, I took all the necessary actions to include all the information provided by the respondents, by recording and documenting any form of data that could help to increase the internal validity of my study.



Apart from that, I also invited my supervisors to scrutinise the transcribed data and themes that derived from my study.

As suggested by Merriam (1998), a researcher can increase the external validity of his or her research by providing a thick and rich description that enables readers to verify how closely their situation is to that of the research. In so doing, I extracted the audio-visual data from the video camera and voice recorders used during the focus-group discussions and the in-depth interviews and transcribed them into words. At the same time, I formed a main theme and sub-themes in my data transcription, for readers to understand the associated themes by including quotes obtained from the data collection to support the findings.

To further strengthen the validity of the data obtained, I resorted to a mixed method in my qualitative approach, which consisted of focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews. These methods enable a qualitative researcher to examine a topic from various qualitative techniques and perspectives, something which helps to build the confidence to present the research outcomes (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). In so doing, I was able to identify the rhetorical elements used in the blue documentary film/programme as an agent in the promotion of a change in attitude and perceptions and thus potentially to encourage social change concerning the conservation of marine life by Malaysians.

### **3.10.2 *The reliability of the data***

A researcher can achieve reliability by employing the technique of an investigator to explain the assumptions and theories behind the study. Thus, I entered the study field without having any pre-conceived ideas about the Malaysian general public, enabling me to avoid any inaccuracy in my research outcomes, even though the viewers were from different geographical backgrounds. At this stage, it was crucial for me to be neutral in ensuring that there were no elements of prejudice in the results of my study.

In addition, I used an audit trail technique, which enables others to examine the thought processes involved in my work (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). I appointed independent judges – colleagues from the same department as me – to authenticate the findings of the study, providing them with and reporting the details of how the data were collected, categories were derived and decisions were made throughout the study (Merriam 1998). Finally, I used the debriefing technique to ensure the reliability of the findings. This provided the opportunity for people from different fields to question the meanings, methods and

interpretations of my findings (Wimmer and Dominick 2006), through presenting papers at conferences, seminars and workshops. In conclusion, the credibility of a research outcome is significant and can be achieved through the extra attention paid by the qualitative researcher throughout the research process.

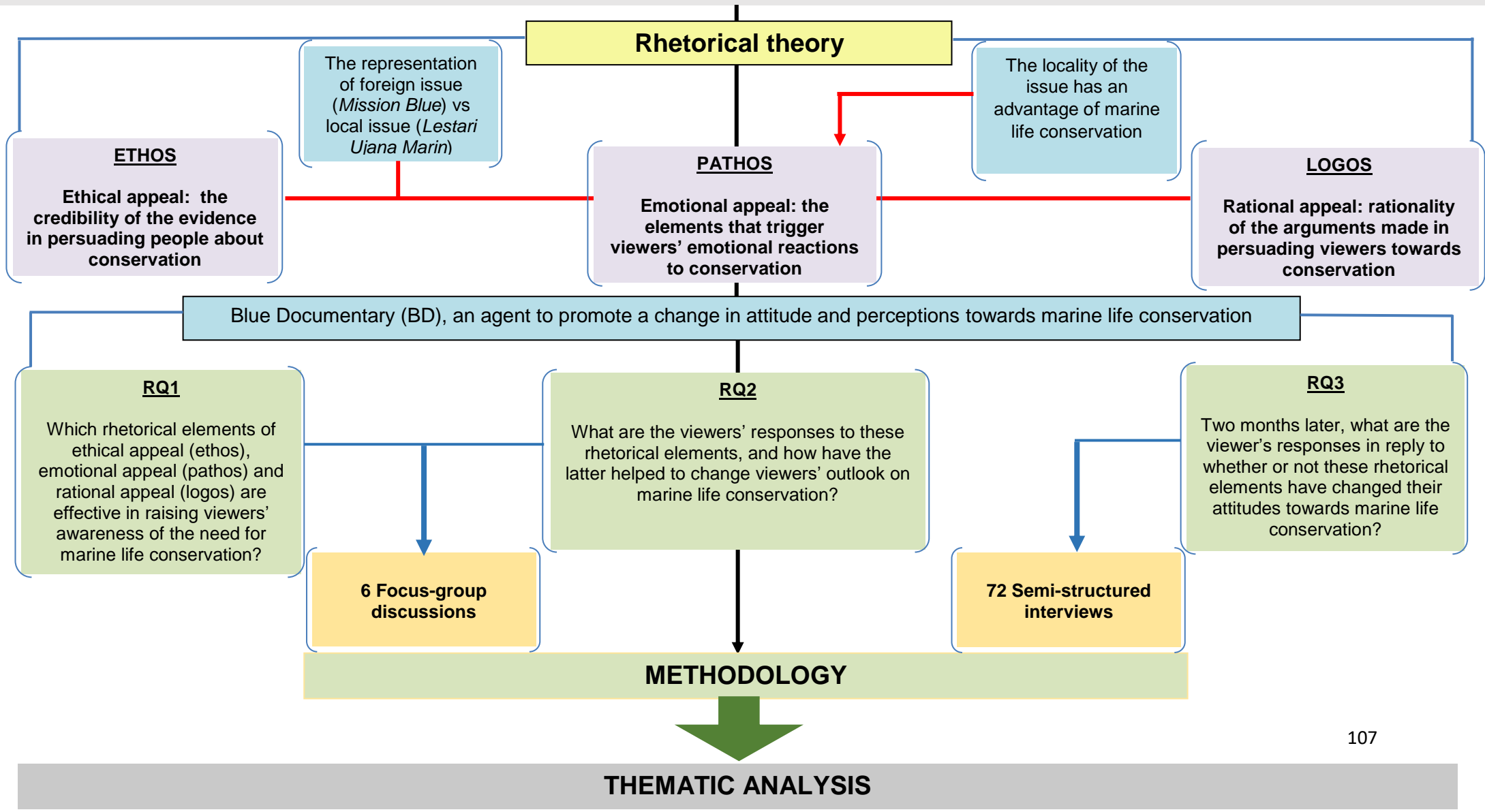
### **3.11 Conclusion**

In summary, the selection of a qualitative approach, through focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews, is justified by the obtention of rich data on the audience reception of the role of blue documentaries as an agent in the promotion of a change in attitude towards and perceptions of marine life conservation, which may not be feasible through any other methods. Furthermore, this method helped me to develop trustworthy findings through thematic analysis – without using any additional data-processing software – by examining the rhetorical elements effective in raising viewers' awareness of marine life conservation, the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements in relation to their educational, emotional and attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation and, two months later, of their responses concerning their attitude change about marine life conservation resulting from their BD viewing experiences. All this is summarised in the conceptual framework below (see Figure 3.4), and the findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Figure 3.4: Conceptual framework

**‘RHETORICAL THEORY’**  
**VIEWERS’ RECEPTION OF BLUE DOCUMENTARIES ON MARINE LIFE CONSERVATION**

- Key issues for marine life conservation in Malaysia
- Documentary and persuasion
- Rhetorical elements in documentaries



# **CHAPTER 4**

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **The rhetorical elements in blue documentaries which raise viewers' awareness of marine life conservation**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses the findings for Research Question 1 (RQ1), obtained by studying the rhetorical elements in blue documentaries which were effective in raising viewers' awareness of marine life conservation. Grounded in rhetorical theory that conjugates Aristotelian' views, as well as Bill Nichols's viewpoints on rhetoric in documentary filmmaking, this study has demonstrated that rhetoric is a key element in persuading and eliciting a change in perceptions of marine life conservation. Obtained through six focus-group discussions, I found that there were a number of rhetorical elements in blue documentaries (BDs) that were effective in raising conservation awareness; these are ethos (ethical appeal), pathos (emotional appeal) and logos (rational appeal). This supports Benjamin (1997 p. 57), who asserts that these 'three techniques of ethos, pathos, and logos are meant for informing, moving and inspiring audiences'. Hence, this chapter is classified into these three main techniques: (i) the ethos, (ii) the pathos and (iii) the logos, followed by sub-themes, all of which will be discussed throughout this chapter.

#### **4.2 The ethos**

In my study, I found that the reproduction of facts was one of the strongest rhetorical elements in persuading viewers to change their awareness of marine life conservation. This outcome was reached through the respondents' claims that this element had appealed to them. This finding confirms that ethos (ethical appeal), as a powerful element in documentary filmmaking, is associated with Nichols' five persuasive approaches (2001), consisting of invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery (see Sub-chapter 2.10), in which invention has been identified in my study. In addition, the finding corroborates Hazel's (2005) thoughts as he suggested that ethos is the image of integrity and can be the strongest facet of a persuader to an audience, and such an image should transmit competence, integrity and rapport. Thus, my study found that there are a number of ethical appeals in the making of a BD film that are effective in invoking a change in viewers'

perceptions of marine life conservation – (i) expert knowledge, (ii) the supporting character and (iii) the language.

#### **4.2.1 Expert knowledge**

This study discovered that expert knowledge can be classed as credible evidence to a BD's viewers when representing the issue of marine life extinction. This element was used in both BDs (*Mission Blue* – MB and *Lestari Ujana Marin* – LUM) in representing both international and local marine life extinction issues. This practice in BD filmmaking is an effective tool through which the reputation and relevant experience of the experts can verify the factual accuracy; it has become the strongest facet in persuading viewers. This is a notion acknowledged by all my respondents in the present study, regardless of their location, and all indicated that the profound knowledge of the experts in both BDs has influenced their constructive reception of the issue represented. This finding further supports the idea of the representation of reality and of the filmmaker's creativity in disseminating information about the polemic of marine life degradation (Rosteck and Frenz 2009) using the expert's personal journey (Hughes 2014). For example, this element can be seen in most educational documentary films, in which the expert knowledge is highlighted by indicating that there are people who devote their lives to tackle the marine life extinction issue which has been demonstrated in many previously produced eco-documentaries such as *Sharkwater* (2006), *Pirate of the Sea* (2008), *The Cove* (2009), and *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006).

Likewise, my findings were supported by Chovanec (2016, p. 18) who stated that the presentation of expertise through the voice is shared between the presenter, the expert, and the voice-over, and that these voices are integral factors appealing to documentary viewers. As Chovanec found that the graded phenomena (first, second, third and fourth parties) between the sources of expertise operated differently: (i) the voice-over, as an external narrator, provides authoritative information in a unifying structural element that connects the individual scenes and provides 'pedagogic' commentary, (ii) the experts, crucial in constituting repositories of ultimate expert knowledge that can be drawn on locally for specific issues, (iii) the presenter, as a semi-expert who possesses substantial expertise which coaches the experts through their own specialism to share their expertise in diverse ways, and (iv) the audience, consisting of lay participants who benefit from the expertise knowledge that is mediated through the documentary.

The element of expert knowledge is evident in this study, as the information and experience of the experts represented in MB influenced all six of the respondents from populations A, C and E, as these representatives show:

A6: Sylvia tackled this problem herself... That was why the message delivered to us was clear... If this was told by other people, the intended message may not be the same. But, when she shared her own experience of going to sea and witnessing things with her own eyes, the delivery was clearer and more reachable to us.

C1: It is interesting because the expert herself was featured in the documentary to deliver everything, and I think the character of Sylvia is very important. I only focused on what she was doing because she is an expert in that. So, when anyone asks, she can answer them.

E4: Because of Sylvia, we got the benefit of knowing everything under the ocean. Because of Sylvia we got to know the specimens... whatever species are living under the sea. She started to explore from day 1 and she never stopped until now. I mean, thanks to her.

Also, the same insight into the importance of expert knowledge in influencing conservation awareness was provided by all six respondents who watched LUM. They indicated that the expert is the mediator between them, and the issue represented, each representative of populations B, D and F stating:

B2: Mr Nasrul's direct experience was shared with other people, and it was very encouraging to see that.

D2: I think Mr Nasrul is very important in this documentary. He helped me to understand what happened and how we can contribute to protecting our ocean. He is a messenger. If we just watched it without Mr Nasrul's story of his journey with his friends, then there would be no expert. There's no one who can persuade us. It would be just like watching the other tourism documentary, telling us about the beauty of the ocean.

F4: For me, Mr Nasrul's character was powerful because he was superior to the others, he knows his job scope very well... an expert. He knew the strategy to conserve and when he was asked, he could explain clearly without stuttering.

Hence, the reliable information and experience of the experts can be categorised as a powerful rhetoric used in both BDs, providing the authority of the factual accuracy of marine life extinction issues. This element is applicable in persuading viewers to change their perceptions and to be more positive about marine life conservation; therefore, it is beneficial for documentary filmmakers to employ this element in order to promote greater change.

#### ***4.2.2 The role of supporting characters in enhancing the main character's knowledge***

This study discovered that the supporting characters play significant roles in heightening the authority of the factual accuracy conveyed by the expert. All 36 respondents claimed that the supporting characters help to emphasise the main character as a passionate individual who is saving the ocean as well as marine life. Moreover, in a documentary, people who play the characters are regarded as social actors (Nichols 1991), and my study revealed that the supporting roles in a BD are similar to the fictional elements used in most non-factual programmes, something known as a foil. Like a foil, the supporting characters in a BD are formed as a backup to enhance and highlight the importance of the main character's qualities, such as their knowledge, experience and expertise.

This is a notion acknowledged by all the respondents in my study who had watched either the local or the foreign BD, whereby the supporting character has enhanced the main's character strength and passion towards their conservation effort and, at the same time, educates the viewers about the importance of protecting marine life. Tamara describes the foils as 'a character in a story who is contrasted with another character' (2010, p. 61) – such as a protagonist and an antagonist. However, unlike in fiction films where the actors are paid by the filmmakers to play certain roles, non-fiction performances are the 'spontaneous actions of individuals captured in private by a hidden camera, which only become communicative performances by virtue of being framed and displayed for a film audience' (Marquis 2013, p. 46). This finding further supports Nichols' (2001) idea of the persuasive approach through the invention of non-artificial proofs, which act as a witness to the main character's message claim and the style of the artificial proofs, in which the supporting characters' poetic acting gives voice to the expert's knowledge and experience.

As all six respondents from populations A, C and E claimed, the supporting character highlighted the importance of the expert knowledge portrayed by the main character, and at the same time contributed to the viewers' understanding of marine life conservation. They claimed that:

A2: There was a guy who was on the same boat with Sylvia. He was quite funny because I could see that he was feeling seasick, but Sylvia was calmly sipping her coffee while on the boat, as the ocean has become her second home. She felt comfortable on the boat, unlike the guy. There was also an engineer who helped her to assemble her diving gear so that she could go into the ocean.

C2: Another one is the guy who was always by Sylvia's side... He said, 'Sylvia has been diving and knew about the ocean before me... even before I was born'. He also asked, 'Why haven't I met her earlier?' So, his character was really helpful in showing that Sylvia is really an expert and has expert knowledge about the ocean. That man regarded Sylvia as his example. He looked up to her because of her determination to save the ocean. So, that inspired him and other people, including us.

E4: I mean, it shows Sylvia's personality... compared to that guy who had just started going to the ocean, when Sylvia had already devoted herself to that. So, it's like Sylvia's daily routine... Ocean is like her cup of tea.

In addition, the contribution of the supporting characters was also strengthened by all six respondents in populations B, D, and F, who stated that it helped to increase their understanding and awareness of the importance of marine life conservation:

B4: It was sad when they were on the boat, where they were in silence. They were very good at acting, with the fatter one really good at showing a sad face.

D5: We can understand what they felt at that time because previously it was so beautiful, and they were very excited by the sight. But when they dived again, all the beautiful things... the corals were missing.

F2: I like to see their spirit, together with Mr Nasrul, in protecting and conserving marine life. We must be grateful to them because, among many people, they are the chosen individuals to do such work. And we can see that, when they saw all the



beautiful things that were not there anymore, they were sad, right? We can still relate to them. It is because they do all those things, protect marine life, they do all the work and of course they feel close to it. We can also feel it.

Hence, the supporting characters in BDs, in their role as a chorus backing up the main character's expertise, helped to further enhance the importance of conserving marine life; this can contribute to the viewers' reception of the information contained in a BD. It also contributes to pro-conservation awareness among Malaysians, regardless of their geographical location. Therefore, the supporting characters are also crucial and need to be considered in future BD filmmaking in order to support the authority of the factual accuracy represented and encourage a greater result in conservation.

#### ***4.2.3 The importance of language in altering perceptions of marine life conservation***

This study revealed that language plays a major role in viewers' comprehension of the intended message presented in a BD. This is because any evidence or claim made in a BD is disseminated through discourse and, therefore, it is important to employ the right language for the target audience. Also, language through verbal and written information is an important persuasive element in BD filmmaking, due to its significant contribution to increasing the viewers' comprehension of the message/the factual accuracy represented. As a consequence, the majority of the respondents, mainly those from the coastal and the rural areas, who watched the foreign BD did not share their watching experience in the early stages of the discussion, because they did not understand the content of the documentary, which resulted in their impeded comprehension of the issue addressed. They claimed that they could only decipher less than 50 per cent of the messages while, for the urban population, it was about 85 per cent. In contrast, most of the respondents who watched the local BD had no difficulty in understanding the message, because it used a local language – the Malay language – and their reception of the documentary's message was substantial. This finding confirms the use of the right language – which can be understood by the target audience – as part of the delivery process (Nichols 2001), in order to facilitate greater comprehension of the information about marine life extinction represented in the BD.

In expressing this, all six respondents from populations A and C indicated their difficulties which led to them losing interest through not being able to understand the message given in the foreign BD, because it was in English which they were unable to understand:

A1: I could only understand, like, 30 per cent, with the help of the images. There were dialogues that I could not understand, such as the scene where two people were talking to each other. The dialogue made me feel really sleepy and I lost interest in watching it because I could not understand it. So, I found that scene was so boring to watch.

Therefore, it was not surprising that one intermittent section of footage from the fiction film *Jaws* (1975) which clearly indicated the fictive elements through speech in MB, could not be differentiated by the respondents due to the language problem; they assumed that the footage was part of the message's claim in the BD that the shark is a dangerous species. In fact, the footage was shown to further strengthen the notion that sharks are not a dangerous species, as opposed to the stereotype character depicted in the film *Jaws*. The use of this footage, it is hoped, will further strengthen the message – which was to provoke sympathy among the audience, in case they had not fully understood it due to the language barrier. One respondent stated that:

A5: At the beginning of this video they said that, when he went diving, the sharks around him were not dangerous and did not harm him. But it showed that if we disturb the sharks, they will attack us back...

A similar viewpoint was put forward by members of population C; their comprehension of the message in the foreign BD was aided by the visual elements as well as the music, rather than from the language used. They stated that the strong regional accent had been one of the factors that limited their understanding, as evident in this statement:

C5: I only understood 50 per cent because the strong accent made me unable to understand, and they spoke too fast, making it difficult for me to catch up on important information.

On the other hand, five of the six respondents from population E had a different perspective on this issue. They were able to grasp more than 50 per cent of the message conveyed, compared to that received by the coastal and rural respondents. For the urban population, the scientific jargon used in the documentary was the most significant barrier in understanding the message, rather than the language itself. One of the respondents stated that:

E3: ... there were a lot of scientific words which of course I did not really understand. For me, I only understood about 85 per cent of the message in this documentary.

Meanwhile, none of the 18 respondents who watched the local BD faced any difficulties in terms of language proficiency. Despite the different dialect used by the characters, all of the respondents were content with the language used in LUM. These similar viewpoints have strengthened the suitability of the language used in the local documentary, indicating that Malaysia is in need of more BDs in the local language, in order to increase their understanding of the message concerning the marine life extinction issue, as exemplified by representatives from populations B, D and F:

B3: I could understand the language that was conveyed to us earlier. Although he used a little bit of basic English, we could still understand because we also attended school.

D4: For us, the Malays, we could understand even though they spoke with a Borneo accent, especially Mr Nasrul, right? We could still understand because they still used the Malay language.

F5: I could understand and was very comfortable with the language used. Based on the pronunciation, I could tell that Mr Nasrul is from Sabah, but I could still understand what he was talking about.

To conclude, language is a significant element in making the message about the marine life extinction effective for the audience's reception, as it can affect their understanding. This can lead to a different level of pro-conservation awareness among those viewers from different geographical locations (see Chapter 5). The prime example of this is language used in both the foreign and the local BD; however, only the urban population could easily comprehend the language used to transmit the message in the foreign BD. Meanwhile, despite the strong regional dialect used in the local BD, Malaysians were more comfortable watching a documentary in a local language, especially the Malay language, because it is easier to understand the message being delivered.

### **4.3 The pathos**

This study revealed that the use of emotional evidence (pathos) in BD filmmaking is highly effective in changing viewers' perceptions and attitudes and encouraging them to be more positive towards the issue of marine life extinction. The emotional appeal was much influenced by the politics of emotion that conjugated the 'creative treatment of actuality' based on earlier documentary production (Corner 1996; Nichols 2001; Renov 1993, 2004; Winston 1995). Mossner (2013, p. 110) also stated that:

There are many different ways in which such emotional appeals that can be made. We may react emotionally to something we see (like a beautiful landscape, a tortured animal, or a dead person), something we hear (like death cries or stimulating music), or our emotional response may be the result of our cognitive understanding of something we learn through either sound or images.

In the literature it is claimed that there are six elements of pathos (emotional appeal) often utilised by eco-documentary filmmakers. The present study extends this and demonstrates that there are, in fact, *eight* elements of pathos in BD filmmaking, each of which effectively appealed to my respondents' emotions about the marine life extinction issue. The main elements of emotional appeal (pathos) are: (i) the locality of the issue, (ii) the autobiographical narrative, (iii) the animal suffering, (iv) the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, (v) anthropomorphism, (vi) the aesthetic value of marine life, (vii) the body language of the characters and (viii) the music.

#### **4.3.1 The locality of the issue**

Familiarity with the issue represented is a key persuasive element affecting viewers' emotions. In this study, it came as a surprise to find that the locality of an issue was the most powerful rhetoric in BD filmmaking, especially in attempting to change viewers' perceptions of and attitudes towards conservation. Here, the locality of the issue is defined as a domestic event, either because the audience shares the physical surroundings or because marine life extinction as represented in the BD is an issue in the country that they live in. This finding may be explained through the different viewpoints expressed by the majority of the respondents after viewing the foreign and the local BD – in which the locality of the issue represented in the latter has more advantages compared to the foreign BD, in changing viewers' perceptions of marine life conservation – i.e. not just in raising awareness, but in

appealing to their emotions too. As mentioned in the literature review, the present study was designed to determine the effect of the representation of local issues as an important rhetoric in persuading the public about taking a marine life pro-conservation stance (Easton *et al.* 2009; Rogan *et al.* 2005). This finding is consistent with other studies (Benjamin 1997; Easton *et al.* 2009; Hazel 2005; Rogan *et al.* 2005; Smith 2014) which suggest that a mutual social environment can potentially affect a documentary's message and therefore it is important to select a subject that is familiar to the target audience, so that they do not experience any detachment from the message given.

This study also discovered that the local issue of marine life extinction has lessened the viewers' detachment from the message given (BD as a mediator) and created a closeness between the documentary texts and the audience. For example, marine life extinction represented in the local BD – such as the marine turtle, a popular delicacy among Malaysians – has resulted in significant changes in the audience's emotions and perceptions of conservation awareness; the audience is made to feel sad by watching the tangible situation of local marine life that they never knew about. This findings confirmed the notion of the news values by Harcup and O'Neill (2017, p. 1482) about the relevance of the story to the audience can be powerful, which described as 'stories about groups or nations perceived to be influential with, or culturally or historically familiar to, the audience'. As in Lulofs (1991), culture is considered as a significant catalyst for persuasion, whereby it is necessary to represent the common bond (a sense of belonging) with the audience to produce a greater impact. This conjunction of using local issues as a significant catalyst for pro-conservation has been demonstrated by the Great Apes Film Initiative (GAFI) through their environmental campaign, in which the rhetoric of the extinction of local apes' was used in documentary film as their mediator in engaging Indonesians with the ape conservation movement.

In support of this, I found that the locality of the issue played a major role in getting the audience's attention and making it appeal to their emotions. All six respondents from population B who watched LUM indicated that the local content provided them with a different level of awareness, particularly in terms of the sense of belonging to the species:

B3: I have seen documentaries on the Discovery channel, but they were not about our place... Not on local issues. So, we could see and take the lesson to be learned, but the awareness was not the same as what we gained from watching this video. This video lets us know about our own environment and the accessible techniques to conserve marine life. So, a documentary like this one makes us aware that this is our

place. We feel more associated with it... We are more affectionate, more emotional because that is our place that we love. Our emotion was affected by that because we saw what was going on at the place that we live in, and we felt sad by watching all the things that are happening to our marine life. If it was not about our country, it would be just a matter of the viewing experience and gaining knowledge, but not about awareness.

The same view was also aired by all six respondents from populations D and F, who stated that LUM represented an issue that was familiar to them, so that it effectively reached out to their emotions about marine life conservation:

D2: When it is happening in Malaysia, we, as Malaysians, would feel more impacted by the video... like when we watched this video just now... At least, we have the feeling of wanting to take care and protect it, as they have done in the video.

F6: For me the local issue is very important in educating me about conserving marine life. It is because, when I watched this documentary, I could still feel sad despite the low quality of the film. Before this I did not have any knowledge on this issue; however, these things have opened my eyes about our country's need to deal with marine life. For example, all this while, I thought that the coral reefs were being protected, but they were actually not.

This notion is further supported by five out of the six respondents from population A, who watched the foreign BD, and who stated that they would be more affected if the issue highlighted in a BD was about their own country; it would be a greater influence on their pro-conservation awareness.

A4: If you want to make a lesson, to make our people aware, you have to use video about our local issues... a local documentary... The most important thing is that it is a local issue, because our emotions will be more affected... the feeling of love will be more heightened. If the issue is about other places, we just simply view it.

In addition, the other respondent from population A expressed confusion over the marine life extinction issue shown in the foreign BD, about which they have little knowledge, and questioned whether this was happening in Malaysia. The respondent even suggested that it is important to have a local BD in order to better understand the situation of local marine life.

A4: They never saw the condition of our sea. They should dive into our ocean so that we all know what is inside it. Maybe there is a lot more rubbish in our ocean, who knows? If you look at our seashore, there is a lot of rubbish, so it is not impossible that it would end up in the ocean, as shown in this video.

Similarly, five out of the six respondents from population C argued that, instead of watching BDs about foreign issues, it is crucial for them to watch one representing local marine life extinction, in order to give them more knowledge about it:

C4: If we had known that there are Malaysians who conserve our environment, then we would have supported them. However, we have limited exposure to local experts in environmental conservation like Sylvia. The Americans try so hard to produce this kind of documentary, but not Malaysians. I rarely watch any local documentary that is similar to this concept.

This is further supported by all six respondents of population E, who stated that the locality of the issue is important in educating people and instilling conservation awareness for immediate possible action to be taken.

E3: Geographically, the issue represented was not related to us because we don't live there, and I have never been to Galapagos. But, if the issue represented was from our country, such as in Labuan or Terengganu or anywhere in the country for that matter... at least we can feel that we can do something because we cannot go to the Gulf of Mexico and do something there. So, I think we can watch this kind of documentary, but it must be close to us... on an issue that is close to our society.

All the evidence above shows that the locality of an issue is the most powerful rhetoric in appealing to viewers' emotions about marine life conservation. In general, the respondents were affected by the mutual social environment (country) that created a familiarity with the issue presented, unlike that in the foreign BD. Therefore, this element should be seriously considered in any future documentary filmmaking, particularly in local productions.

### **4.3.2 *The autobiographical narrative***

In my research, I discovered that the autobiographical narrative was treated as a potent rhetoric by my respondents. Based on their viewing experience, all 36 respondents from all populations described it as a powerful rhetoric influencing them to think about marine life pro-conservation. As implied by Arthur (1993) and Dowmunt (2013), autobiographical filmmaking confronts the orator with his/her acquaintances such as families, friends and colleagues, and this confrontation preceded the 'reflexive quality', signifying the authenticity and truth claims. This could be attributed to the personal journey, experience and the inspiring conservation actions by the main and the supporting characters that have effectively appealed to viewers' emotions, hope and admiration. This finding corroborates the ideas of Chang (2017), Eckersley (2007), Hughes (2014) and Rosteck and Frenz (2009), who suggested that an autobiographical narrative is normally used in documentaries with the objective to encourage social change towards ecological destruction; in this, 'heroic' narrative ties in with the authoritative character in most earlier documentary filmmaking.

In addition, this finding also supports one of Sherrow's (2010) five principle opportunities for preserving endangered species, by promoting the notion that having a dedicated expert or scientist as a conservation educator or conservationist is significant for species' sustainability. For example, the experience, skills, passion, dedication and expertise, represented through the prominent figures in both BDs, namely Dr Sylvia Earle (foreign BD) and Mr Nasrulhakim (local BD), all influenced viewers' emotional reactions. The quest of a 78-year-old woman to preserve marine life – which began in her childhood – has changed the perceptions of many on the seriousness of marine life extinction. That, as well as the ocean conservation efforts made by Sylvia and her team through the Global Hope Spots campaign, has been the backbone of the story told by the filmmaker. As claimed by all six respondents from populations A, C and E, who watched MB:

A1: I am excited about the enthusiasm and spirit shown by Sylvia, from when she was a child until now, for conserving marine life by always going to sea. Her life story is inspiring. She does a lot of research and speaks her mind about this issue to other people. I can see that Sylvia is very old, but her love of the ocean and marine life is abundant. Sylvia's work is very challenging. She only thinks about her work, how to save marine life; she focuses on what she wants without being afraid of anything.



C1: The most interesting thing was the way Sylvia made a collection of seaweed, even though seaweed was not around anymore, with the hope that the next generation would still know and be able to see it again. That's interesting to me. The development of her character from childhood until she had her own children made me wonder how a person can be like her. So, I have high respect for that woman, who showed her passion and hard work trying to save marine life.

E2: That is why they always portray her since she was a kid, her childhood pictures, her adulthood pictures, pictures of her marriage... and then suddenly she is already old. I mean... she has a hunchback... like... she looked small compared to before... we can see her physical change, but she still continues to devote herself to saving the ocean. Her life story has actually been inspiring since she was just a child.

All six respondents from populations B, D and F, who watched the local BD also indicated that the journey of Nasrulkhkim, a marine research officer, together with his team, and their building of frameworks to re-plant the coral reefs and save the polluted ocean, had gained their interest and instilled in the viewers an awareness of the marine life extinction issue. This autobiographical narrative in the local BD is not so very different from the foreign BD, which started with the journey of Nasrulkhkim as an icon of conservation in saving the coral reefs damaged by irresponsible fisherman, who fished illegally using bombs. These irresponsible activities have destroyed the main character's conservation efforts for years and left the sea floor like a graveyard. Consequently, this narrative offers the audience an immediate emotional reaction of hope and encouragement in response to the relentless efforts presented by Nasrulkhkim – creating empathy among the viewers and leading to a greater understanding of the importance of protecting marine life. As representatives from populations B, D, and F stated:

B2: Mr Nasrul's efforts to save marine life such as coral reefs and turtles by building a new framework to re-plant the coral reefs were very interesting. The passion and effort were so strong... he was willing to travel into the ocean – which is very far away but could still smile and show his satisfaction. Mr Nasrul's direct experience was shared with other people, and it was very encouraging to see it. I think it was more interesting with the explanation given by Mr Nasrul, such as him telling a story about what he wanted to convey and show us. He made us better understand what he said.

D5: Mr Nasrul's life experience of saving marine life mesmerised me. He knew many things that we did not know. I learned so many things from what he said. It was really interesting when they built the frame to plant the coral reefs from scratch. So, together with other people, Mr Nasrul showed both stages – when they first started to build a new one and also the one that they had already built earlier. So, I can see that their efforts are worth it because, when they revisited the one that they planted a long time ago, there were a lot of reefs on the frame.

F2: Mr Nasrul's character was so impactful because, throughout his journey, he discovered all the conservation methods, such as building a framework for coral reefs. His experience in conserving the coral reefs by showing the techniques of before and after was helpful for us, and managed to get through to us, triggering emotions such as anger, upset, sadness and disappointment. So, his journey has encouraged me to at least contribute something to our environment.

Hence, an autobiographical narrative is a powerful rhetorical element, from the viewers' perspective, in encouraging their pro-conservation awareness, eventually leading to long-term attitude change (see Chapter 6). In fact, the autobiographical narrative, through the emphasis on the main character's passion for and endurance in protecting marine life, has inspired and evoked emotional reactions among my respondents. This result matches those observed in earlier studies, whereby the representation of a first-person account of the journey towards activism can create a visual framework for audiences to engage with and test the various cognitive positions presented in the film, while comparing these with the knowledge they already held (Hughes 2011; Nichols 2001). Thus, it is important for the Malaysian documentary industry to discover individuals with a strong background in environmental protection to be featured in BDs, in order to have a greater impact on viewers' emotions while, at the same time, encouraging their pro-conservation awareness.

### **4.3.3 *Animal suffering as a powerful rhetoric in a BD***

The animal suffering in a BD can be considered as one of the most crucial rhetorical elements that stir up viewers' emotions by invoking their responsibility towards marine life conservation (see Sub-chapter 5.3.5). This study produced results which corroborate the findings of previous work in this field, in which the 'documentary offers spectators a more proximate, active, and complex mediated experience of distant suffering' compared to other TV programmes (Scott 2014, p. 3). This finding further supports the idea of Boltanski's

(1999, p. 10) politics of pity and distant suffering, which enabled a politics of emotion that triggered the spectators' sympathy towards the unfortunate subject represented in the media; even with their very limited knowledge on the subject being shown, they are willing to act upon it. Boltanski described suffering in three areas, consisting of pamphleteering (anger that resulted in pity, leading to condemnation towards the perpetrator), philanthropy (pity that resulted in touching), and sublimation (either/both) (Scott 2014, p. 4). Thus, the rhetoric of animal suffering can act as a tool that stimulates dramatic tension among viewers – where BDs invites viewers to witness the human exploitation of sharks and the inhumane acts towards marine life and its environment, by representing the calamitous effects of plastic pollution, over-fishing and shark-finning that cause the destruction. This study confirms that the rhetoric of animal suffering is associated with the first type of suffering – pamphleteering – whereby all six respondents in each population demonstrated their anger by condemning the immoral action of the perpetrators against the unfortunate marine life. The respondents also experienced mixed emotions, such as sadness, anger, guilt and feeling sorry, while watching the marine life suffering due to human activities. Moreover, this rhetoric is a part of a structure representing the world of marine life, which relies on human cognition in allowing the viewers to develop their own interpretation of the film's content to form a contrary opinion based on non-human suffering. This finding is in line with previous studies in which it was indicated that the representation of animal suffering in the documentary could trigger people's emotions and encourage them to take further action based on the knowledge they gained and to change their behaviour (Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Scott 2014; Simpson 2008; Smaill 2014; 2016; Smith 2014). This finding also corroborates the ideas of Smaill (2014), who claimed that marine life documentaries centralise the formulation of an emotional political address to an audience through rhetorical arguments of the visual assaults on animals, such as killing and slaughtering.

In support of this, all the respondents from populations A, C and E claimed that they were affected by the particular scene of animal suffering, which was about shark-finning. MB gave the impression that the shark-finning industry is illegal, by showing both old footage as well as recent images of sharks being slaughtered and left to bleed to death, thus showing the seriousness of the issue while, at the same time, dispelling the stereotype of the human as the sharks' prey. They described this phenomenon as a disturbing event:

A3: Another one was when they cut the fish. They were very cruel because they took the fin, but released the body of the fish back into the ocean. Their tyranny was unacceptable... there was one old scene when they cut the fish... it was full of blood

while they were laughing. It was like a game for them... like a hobby. They did not feel any sympathy towards the fish.

C4: I felt sad, especially during the shark-finning scene, when they threw back the body of the shark after they had taken the fin.

E3: ... the shark-finning where they tortured and killed the shark. That had the biggest impact on us. I didn't know that they cut the fin and then released the body back. They just throw it like that... I felt guilty because we are also human, and people who did that are also of our kind.

**Picture 4.1: Screenshot of the shark-finning activity shown in MB**



Disturbing scenes such as this, from MB, which can be viewed from minutes 35:21 to 36:10, and 1:07:24 to 1:08:18, received extensive criticism from the majority of the respondents. This indicates pamphleteering suffering by making clear the immorality of human activities towards sharks and other marine life which, at the same time, results in distant suffering. The combination of human greed and the agony faced by marine life, presented within 1 minute 43 seconds invoked the anger and sympathy of the audience; the suffering of others – in this case the animals as the unfortunate victims. There was a similarity between the perceptions of animal suffering expressed by the majority of the respondents in this study with those described by Smail (2007) as the wounded attachment through the pain of others

towards another human being. Therefore, animal suffering can be seen as distant suffering, which eventually led the BDs audience to feel the pain of others.

Besides this, animal suffering is also a notion acknowledged by all six respondents from populations B, D and F, who watched the local BD and this rhetoric, it is argued, has become a persuasive element for their pro-conservation stance. LUM represented fishing activities as immoral due to the use of bombs to catch fish, which has directly resulted in the destruction of coral reefs. This emotional narrative was accompanied by an image of years of efforts to re-plant the coral reefs made by the main characters – all now worthless and destroyed. This element evoked a feeling of disappointment and anger towards the perpetrators by portraying a tangible reality of marine life. Populations B, D, and F had similar viewpoints:

B2: Apparently many coral reefs were damaged on the sea floor. Before this, we did not know the condition of our beach nearby that was damaged because we only see what is on the surface. Fish sources will be affected the most.

D3: ... when they blasted the ocean just to catch the fish. Not only the big fish, but the smaller fish also died. The coral reefs were also destroyed. Their efforts to protect the coral by replanting it were also ruined. Everything was ruined. It made me realise that this should not happen.

F3: When I saw the impact of human activities, putting the species one by one in danger. When I saw the empty place where the coral reefs used to be back in the day, it made me feel sad. The exploitation of marine life may be small in scale, but the impact was big. Before this we did not know about conditions in the ocean but, in actual fact, some places were empty and not as beautiful as they were before.

**Picture 4.2: Screenshot of the fish dead from the use of a bomb, as shown in LUM**



This disturbing scene in LUM, which can be viewed between minutes 14:01 and 17:55 received extensive criticism from the majority of the respondents. In this scene, the filmmakers showed simultaneous visual images of coral reefs being re-planted after having been destroyed using fish bombs. It triggered the audience's pamphleteering response, evident in the denunciation of the irresponsible fishermen, eventually resulting in distant suffering. The combination of human greed, which caused the suffering of others, and the agony faced by marine life, represented in 3 minutes 50 seconds, resulted in anger and sympathy from the viewers.

Therefore, the rhetoric of animal suffering contributed to respondents' pro-conservation awareness, regardless of geographical location and experience. This finding confirms the association between animal suffering and distant suffering through documentary viewing experiences that can result in an increase of awareness of the issue represented (Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Scott 2014; Simpson 2008; Smith 2014; Smail 2007). However, previous studies have not shed any light on the way in which this rhetorical element can influence the public's attitude towards conservation, a gap that is now filled by the present study (see Chapter 5).

#### **4.3.4 The visual metaphor of plastic pollution**

This study also found that the visual evidence of plastic pollution could be considered as a crucial tool in persuading people about pro-conservation, something which has not been reported in previous studies. Even though plastic pollution is also part of the cause of animal suffering, it can be a rhetoric in its own right due to the strong emotional reaction shown by the respondents. This result matches those observed in earlier studies on persuasive methods of invention by Nichols (2001), through visual evidence of the human contribution to ocean pollution. As the present study demonstrated that the traces of human existence on the ocean floor, with its abundance of debris such as plastic chairs and plastic bags, have resulted in a feeling of guilt among the respondents. Moreover, as speculated by Bredemeier *et al.* (2007), apart from knowledge in the communication process, viewers' behaviour can also be affected by emotions and moral conviction. Thus, this study validates the ideas of Bredemeier *et al.* (2007) through the representation of plastic pollution in a marine environment. In other words, the audience recognises plastic products which are a part of their daily routine and the visual evidence of plastics in the ocean was familiar debris to that which they used. Thus, it is argued that this rhetoric is significant in appealing to the viewers' feelings of guilt and to encourage their high moral responsibility.

In support of this, all six respondents from populations A, C and E asserted that human violation of the environment could be traced everywhere in the sea, invoking their awareness and responsibility towards conservation. The representation of debris everywhere, not only on the shore but also on the sea floor, appealed to the viewers' emotions about the reality of plastic as an item that is not disposable. It made them aware of the pollution which resulted from their human activities and became one of the biggest contributors to their pro-conservation awareness:

A5: In terms of pollution... When I see a lot of debris... It tells us that we should keep the ocean clean especially in the middle of the sea. So, we should take care of our environment such as our seashore and beaches, so that the ocean can be protected while, at the same time, marine life will be preserved.

C4: When I saw all the plastic that ended up in the ocean, I realised that the environment has been polluted and marine life was also affected... the fish could not breathe properly. So, I think this factor can harm marine life.

E2: We never thought that there would be rubbish under the sea, because normally we can see it floating, like, for example, plastic bottles, plastic bags, or maybe nappies. So, it was seriously tragic... the fish have to live with it. It has alerted us to the real situation of what was happening to marine life.

**Picture 4.3: Screenshot of the debris in the ocean as shown in MB**



This particular scene, which can be viewed between minutes 28:57 and 29:46, showed plastic pollution, such as plastic bags, fertilizer bags, plastic chairs and bottles, that was washed onto the sea floor, indicating that irresponsible plastic disposal has had a bad impact on the ocean and its environment. The combination of the human's irresponsible disposal of plastic and the pollution presented within 49 seconds made the respondent feel guilty, leading to their new intention to manage their waste properly and change their waste disposal habits (see Chapter 6).

Similarly, the rhetoric of plastic pollution as a persuasive message is also acknowledged by all six respondents from populations B, D and F, who watched the local BD. All said that the evidence of plastic in the ocean in that particular scene appealed to their feelings of guilt and frustration:

B5: ...when they showed the plastic and said that it will not go anywhere and will stay in the ocean. It means that the rubbish will stay in the ocean and marine life such as



fish will eat it. ... the plastic won't go anywhere and will end up in the fish's tummy. So, that made me want to change and not throw plastics into the ocean anymore.

D2: There was a lot of plastic in the ocean. It was really uncomfortable to see that.

F4: The scene showed the rubbish in the ocean. That part affected me in so many ways. I thought that they just showed a little bit of the rubbish but, in reality, it was worse than that.

**Picture 4.4: Screenshot of a scene of the debris in the ocean, shown in LUM**



This particular scene, which can be viewed between minutes 04:10 and 05:10, presented plastic pollution, exemplified by plastic bags and food packaging that were washed onto the sea floor, damaging the coral reefs. This led to the audience feeling uncomfortable. The combination of irresponsible human waste disposal and pollution represented within 60 seconds resulted in them feeling guilty and pledging to be more responsible in managing their waste in the future.

Hence, the rhetorical element of plastic pollution, which causes marine life extinction, has played a significant role in raising the public's pro-conservation awareness, regardless of the geographical location of the Malaysian viewers. This element should be seriously considered

in future BD filmmaking, with the objective to encourage greater change in perceptions of and attitudes towards conservation.

#### **4.3.5 Anthropomorphism**

My research has revealed that anthropomorphism is another crucial tool that appealed to viewers' emotions. The adaptation of human characteristics to marine life has become a means to display an understandable social context in order to gain viewers' empathy. A possible explanation for this result may be due to the representation of similar patterns between marine life ecosystems and humans, where the filmmakers humanised the way that animals experience pain, thus demonstrating the reciprocal needs of marine life, as well as portraying the marine life ecosystem as a city (Bousé 1998; 2000; King 1996; Pierson 2005; Porter 2006). Through this, a better identification with animals can be taught to the BD viewers, by representing recognisable animal behaviour alongside that of humans – such as the coral reefs as a home for other marine life, the suffering due to cuts and family ties. This result matches earlier studies of the employment of anthropomorphism by BDs filmmakers to connect an audience with a non-human species and gain a greater emotional reaction (Fortner 1985; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Sisson and Kimport 2016).

In addition, my findings seem consistent with those of other researchers, whereby anthropomorphism is a common technique used for dramatic narrative in documentary filmmaking to connect marine life with the viewers, as indicated by Adcroft (2010), Evans (2015), Hughes (2014) and Rowley and Johnson (2016). This rhetoric has been demonstrated in earlier eco-documentaries – such as *The Blue Planet* (2001), *March of the Penguins* (2005), *Oceans* (2010) and *Planet Earth Series* (2006) – that incline social change towards environmental protection. Therefore, I argue that the employment of anthropomorphism can be found through speech acts in a BD filmmaking because it yields emotional reactions of empathy, which can later result in an increased awareness of marine life conservation among viewers. This finding further supports the idea of Siegal (2006, p. 221):

As science becomes increasingly accepting of filmmakers' needs to communicate with broader audiences via vivid and accessible language that contains metaphors and analogies, which are or may be anthropomorphic, we should see increased cooperation between science and media in aid of conservation efforts.

To further strengthen this, the majority of my respondents (five out of six) from populations C and E claimed that they were affected by the anthropomorphism, which was not the case for population A. This inconsistency among the groups may be due to their different educational backgrounds, whereby the majority of the respondents from the coastal population left education after primary school and had a low level of English competence. As the narrative of anthropomorphism was structured through the speech act, the coastal population's grasp of the concept of anthropomorphism was weak. On the other hand, those in population C indicated that the anthropomorphism of marine life was the factor that changed their perception of the species. The MB conveyed the rhetoric of anthropomorphism by humanising marine life eco-systems similar to those of the human social context presented by Sylvia – the concept of a place to live was relevant to them:

C6: One of the factors that affected me was the coral reefs... when Sylvia said that, 'coral needs fish, and fish need coral'. So, what it means is that when the coral reefs are dead, where would the fish go? So... If we don't have a place to live, imagine the fish?

In addition, the social concept of city life in the ocean, mentioned by the main character, conveyed the importance of the needs of all parties – from taxi drivers to doctors – for life continuation and this discourse has become a factor accounting for the audience's emotional reaction towards the message given. As E4 claimed:

E4: They said that the ocean is like New York City, and needed taxi drivers, doctors, nurses and whatever. So, in the ocean, they need each other... as I say – this is the circle of life. So, we need each other, in order for them to be healthy, to be alive, and sustain... so we have to save everything. Like, for example, she did research on each species of the sea plant. But, for us, we do not know which plant is for healings, which one is for food, or something like that. So, this is what I understood when she said the ocean is like New York City.

Based on the above statements, my respondents were influenced by the speech given by the characters, and this met the criteria for the persuasive methods posited by Nichols (2001), whereby the characters were making an argument with an emotional appeal towards the audience in order to raise their pro-conservation awareness.

To further strengthen this notion, five out of six respondents from populations B, D and F also expressed their agreement on the importance of the anthropomorphism employed in local BD filmmaking, because they connected the condition of marine life with their situation as human beings:

B1: It's like the coral reef is a home to other ocean life, such as fish. So, it is important to re-plant them so that the fish have a place to stay and find food.

D4: The coral is like a home to the fish. So, if there's no coral, there's no home for them. It's like us, if we do not have a house, we will be homeless. We sleep under a bridge and there would be a lot of threats from wild animals. So, the same goes for the fish.

F2: There are also cities in their world. The coral reefs are actually their city and we attacked their city. Therefore, they could not make a living anymore.

The above statement revealed that the attributing of human characteristics to marine life, such as the coral reefs as a home to the other marine ecosystems, has grabbed their attention and created the viewers' emotional attachment with the non-human species. They feel empathy towards marine life because their natural world was destroyed as a result of human activities. The respondents' recognition of human characteristics matches those of previous studies, where a deeper empathy towards animals was instilled in the viewers. This was done by representing recognisable and identifiable human characteristics in the animals' behaviour and highlighting the idea of a happy family, as well as reinforcing the concepts of class and gender that exist in the dominant human culture (Bousé 2000; King 1996; Pierson 2005; Porter 2006). Hence, the element of anthropomorphism contributes to respondents' marine life pro-conservation awareness, particularly in appealing to the emotions of who did not have direct experience or were far from the ocean. This supports the argument by Murray and Heumann (2013) that anthropomorphism can be a potent rhetorical tool that aids the marine life conservation movement.

#### **4.3.6 *The aesthetic values of marine life***

The aesthetic values of marine life in a BD film have brought about major differences in viewers' perspectives on pro-conservation awareness, because the richness of the marine life ally with the viewers' emotional reactions of excitement. According to five out of the six

respondents in each population, the aesthetic values of the marine environment have made their viewing experience more pleasurable, and they now have a contrary opinion on the issues, compared to their prior knowledge. Therefore, the richness of marine life has offered a long-distance touring experience via 'on screen visiting', which appealed to the viewers' constructive reception.

This finding further supports the idea of the complex relationship between humans and non-humans in underwater filmmaking, represented via aesthetic details to offer pleasure and evoke the viewers' desire to know or the 'epistophilia' of unreachable marine life (Chovanec 2016; Corner 2005; Ivakhiv 2013; Nichols 1991; Renov 2004). The beauty and novelty of the images in the BDs of the ocean floor, with its various marine life species, captivated viewers' excitement, as well as the desire to know more about these various species of fish and coral reefs.

During my research, I discovered that the coastal population was affected by the representation of various species of fish and other marine life in the BDs, which has made them realise the beauty of the marine environment. They regard marine biodiversity, with its colourful fish and coral reefs, as the most interesting things to be watched in the BDs, resulting in a feeling of self-responsibility to protect it. As respondents from population A and B claimed:

A4: I felt excited when I watched a scene that showed a group of fish, like in a round shape, and there was a cameraman in the middle of the school of fish. It felt like I wanted to experience it but, at the same time, I wanted to protect it for future generations. So that... they will not be threatened and stay pretty like that.

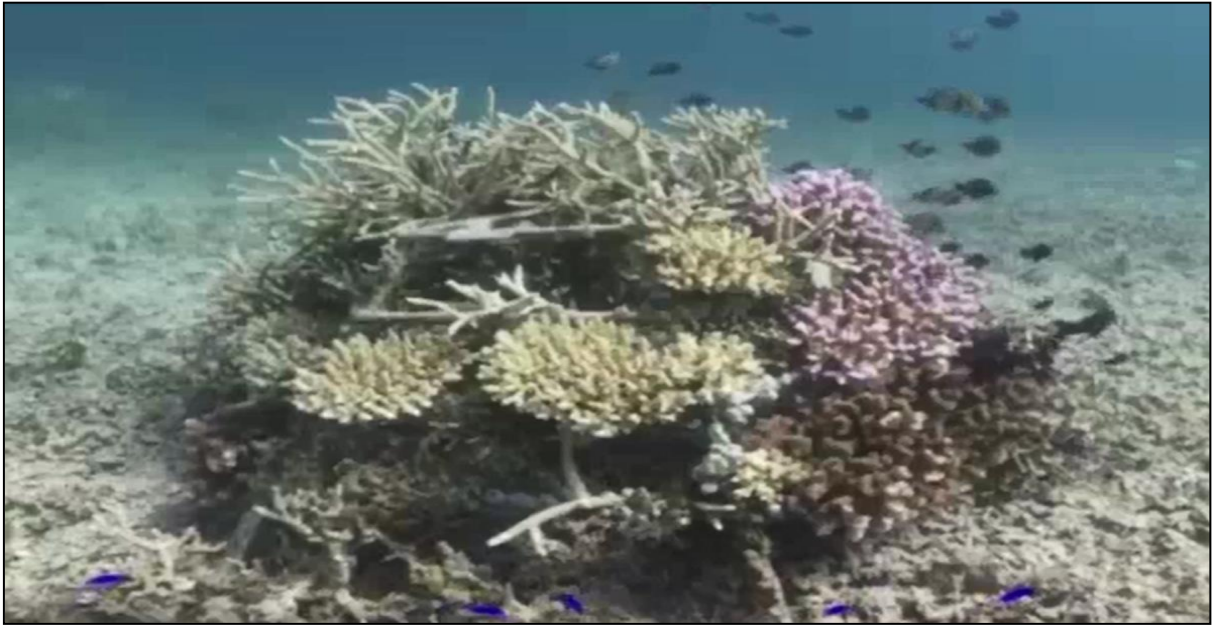
**Picture 4.5: Screenshot of the aesthetic of the underwater world, shown in MB**



This particular scene, which can be viewed between minutes 1:12:15 and 1:14:00, represented aesthetic details of the underwater world captured with the cameraman and Sylvia in one frame, approaching a big school of fish and other marine life at a National Marine Park in Cabo Pulmo, Mexico. The richness of the marine life changed the respondents' moral perceptions and attitudes, gaining the acceptance of their responsibility to protect it. There are several similar scenes showing marine biodiversity in MB, which appealed to the respondents' emotions.

B5: I felt excited when I watched the colourful fish with their stripes. Their colour was beautiful, especially the small blue fish which was near to the coral reefs. Like fireworks... It got up from the sand and expanded.

**Picture 4.6: Screenshot of the aesthetic of the underwater world, shown in LUM**

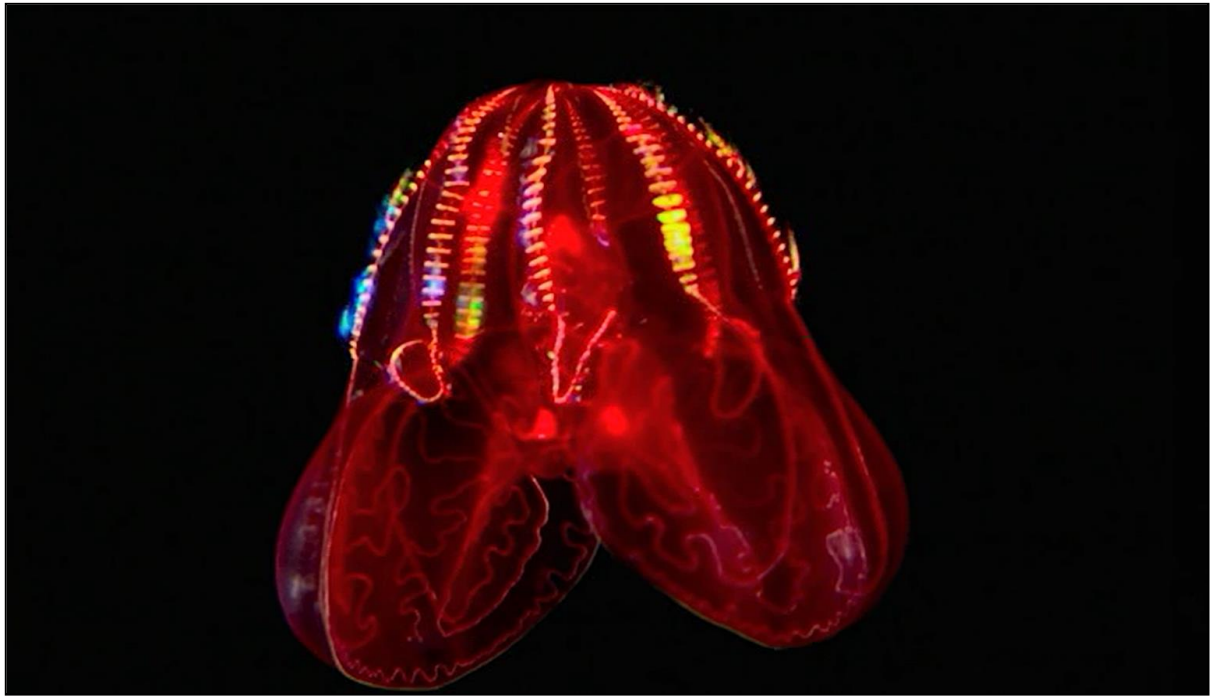


This particular scene, available between minutes 14:55 and 16:25, shows vibrant and colourful marine life playing near the coral reef framework re-built by Nasrulhakim and his team. This aesthetic scene, represented simultaneously with the richness of the marine life, shows the success of the conservation effort. This dramatic narrative offered a pleasurable viewing experience for the viewers, triggered by the beauty of the marine environment.

Likewise, the majority of the rural population (five out of six of the respondents) were also fascinated by the richness of marine life, and it became a powerful reason for them to protect it. As respondent C3 said:

C3: There was a scene where Sylvia dived onto the sea floor and it was really dark, but suddenly Sylvia was smiling because there was a lot of light coming from the fish and other marine species. It was so magical.

**Picture 4.7: Screenshot of the aesthetic of the underwater world, shown in MB**



This particular scene, shown between minutes 51:30 and 53:10, presented the vibrant and colourful marine life, while simultaneously providing Sylvia's dramatic narrative of the excitement she felt, a combination that offered a pleasurable viewing experience of the underwater world. This was a great experience for the respondents, witnessing the beauty of the marine environment.

D1: The beauty of the ocean really attracted me to watch this documentary, especially the many fish in various colours and the living coral reefs; it made me want to go there and protect it. If we really protect it, it will sustain its beauty and the area.



**Picture 4.8: Screenshot of the aesthetic of the underwater world, shown in MB**



The representation of the beauty of the sea floor showing the fish enjoying the living coral reefs, between minutes 19:40 and 22:28, becomes an effective element in maintaining respondents' interest and encouraging them to continue watching the BD. This on-screen aesthetic experience provided a new perspective on the living things on the sea floor that were not visible to the viewers, unlike the inland habitat. The viewers demonstrated the tendency to protect marine life, which is believed to be an indication of their increased pro-conservation awareness. Providing great exposure about the unreachable species of marine life to the public is deemed important, as it may help to reduce the numbers on the list of endangered species. A BD is seen as a primary mediator for such a conservation effort.

The aesthetic values also triggered different emotional reactions, driven by respondents' curiosity about marine life, which was something that they had not experienced before. This indicates that aesthetic values can also form the novelty of the visuals, by turning this pleasant experience into a desire to know more about marine life. This finding further supports the idea of the aesthetic details evoking the viewers' desire to know, or the 'epistophilia' of the unreachable marine life (Bruzzi 2014; Chovanec 2016; Corner 2005; Ivakhiv 2013; Nichols 1991; Renov 2004). This is in line with what viewers in population E said, in that the unfamiliar species and colourful marine life made them keen to know more about the species:

E6: For me, the most interesting part about this documentary was being able to see all the species that I have never seen before. The diversity of marine life such as whales, sharks, a group of yellow fish... which I have never heard of before... And then, as the documentary said, 'there are a lot of species that have not actually been explored yet in the ocean... Deep down'. So, when it was revealed in this documentary, from there we found out that there are many marine species.

Even those in population F expressed similar increased interest and love for the country due to the representation of the richness of the local marine biodiversity, something that they had never seen or experienced in their life:

F6: There is a sense of pride in seeing Malaysia having such a beautiful marine ecosystem. I never expected that Malaysia had something like that. For example, in the video it was stated that Semporna Island has the richest marine biodiversity in the world. So, I feel very honoured to know that our country has something to be proud of.

Hence, we can conclude that the aesthetic value – the richness of the marine life – is a powerful rhetoric that can be associated with mixed emotional reactions and which offered a variety of emotional experiences to different populations. This has led the coastal and rural population to feel a responsibility to protect and maintain this beauty, without any additional interest. In contrast, the novelty of the visuals of aesthetic marine ecosystems has encouraged the urban population to know more about marine life. The difference found within the various geographical locations shows that the novelty, in the form of aesthetic pleasure can encourage different perceptions and attitude – in this case, the aspiration to know more and the tendency to protect marine life. This suggests that this rhetoric should be considered in future BD filmmaking with the objective of educating citizens about the destruction of the ecosystem in the hope that it will lead to greater conservation awareness.

#### **4.3.7 *The body language***

The body language of the main and supporting characters arguably contributed to evoking viewers' emotional reactions towards conservation awareness; their non-verbal communication, including facial expressions, helped the audiences to understand the message in the BDs. This finding further supports the idea of non-verbal communication to create meaning (Lulofs 1991) as a significant persuasive method of delivery (Nichols 2001)

and filmic performance (Marquis 2013) by expressing the characters' viewpoints and acting as a support to the expert experience and knowledge of the issue represented in a documentary (see Sub-chapter 4.3.1).

Therefore, the viewers responded emotionally to the characters' body language in a particular scene, a notion which was acknowledged by five out of the six respondents from the coastal and rural populations but not the urban population:

A5: There was a scene where Sylvia dived into the ocean, but after she came back from her diving, her face was gloomy and she walked back onto the boat showing her hunched back. At that moment, my feeling was quite weird. I felt sad as well as guilty.

**Picture 4.9: Screenshot of Sylvia's hunched shoulders, shown in MB**



This particular scene shows Sylvia after she has taken a dive to the sea floor, where she found a decreased number of marine life and many dead coral reefs. Continuing from her devastating experience of witnessing the loss of valuable marine life, this scene gives the impression that the conservation efforts made by Sylvia and her team had been a waste of time and effort. This evoked feelings of sadness and guilt in the viewers. This can be seen as a persuasive strategy used in BD filmmaking, in altering people's beliefs on the issue represented (Bettinghaus and Cody 1994; Fogg 2003; Hogan 1996; Lulofs 1991; Simons 2001; Stiff and Mongeau 2003).

Likewise, population C was affected by the characters' facial expressions:

C1: One scene that made me sad was when she dived into the ocean and saw nothing, in a place which previously had a lot of marine life. When she wanted to dive, she looked so excited, but when she was back on the boat, she stayed silent and had red eyes. She looked very different before and after the diving. From her facial expression I could tell that she was upset. Looking at her made my heart ache. If I were her, I would be crying.

**Picture 4.10: Screenshot of a scene of Sylvia's facial expression, shown in MB**



This is a scene showing Sylvia climbing back on the boat after her dive. Her crying and grieving expression indicate her frustration for the years of effort she has put in to preserving marine life, particularly the coral reefs, efforts which have not paid off. Her expression caused disappointment for the viewers.

In addition, five of the six respondents from populations B and D also aired a similar viewpoint, indicating the particular scene in the local BD where the body language aroused their emotions:

B4: The message reached us because he was a nature lover, especially their facial expressions were really on point when they were sad and happy. For example, there was a drama like they were disappointed... where they sat on the boat after their diving.

D2: There was one scene that showed the sad face of the guy... when they dived into the ocean and they saw that the coral reefs were already dead. The last time they dived, all the coral reefs were still intact. They seemed frustrated by that situation. We felt that they were very angry and feeling frustrated.

**Picture 4.11: Screenshot of Nasrulhakim's facial expression, shown in LUM**



In this scene, Nasrulhakim, the main character, is seen with his colleague, who dived with him to check on the coral reefs that they had replanted several months before. However, they were disappointed because they found that the coral reefs were destroyed; communicated by using a close-up shot in order to appeal to the viewers. Their faraway look, which came from the frustration of having their efforts wasted, tells the audience of their disappointment. The frustration was further enhanced by the fact that it was the human exploitation of marine resources that caused the destruction, an emotion that was shared by the respondents. The scene above is evidence of a successful attempt at evoking respondents' emotional reactions through body language. This finding corroborated the notion by Bousé (2003) of the dramatic narrative through the close-up shots 'for the purpose of telling a story, and for promoting feelings of emotional involvement and intimacy with the characters in that story' (p. 123).

Therefore, body language such as facial expressions can be considered as a dramatic narrative, suggesting an important element in appealing to viewers' emotions, by enhancing a character's viewpoint about the issue represented. This tool, it is argued, contributes to the viewers' message reception in the dramatic narrative technique employed in the BD and it is crucial that it be considered in future BD filmmaking.

#### **4.3.8 Music contributes to BD viewers' heightened emotions**

Another finding from my research is that, in BD filmmaking, we cannot underestimate the importance of the selection of music, which has its own strength in catering to viewers' emotions. This is evident in the reported change in the respondents' reactions to a number of scenes accompanied by music and further supports the idea of music as an influential rhetorical element that contributes to the formation of viewers' perceptions and appeals to their emotions about the issue represented (Scott 2003 cited in Bagust 2008, p. 220; Sean Cubitt cited in Ivakhiv 2013, p. 211; Lok 2010). It also affirms the argument of Nichols (2014, p. x) that:

Music is part of the heart and soul of film form that strives to represent what it feels like to experience the world from a particular angle, and music in documentaries, can be a valuable complement to bring argument alive, to give greater intensity, to engage the viewer to the point of heightened attention.

Similarly, Corner (2015, p. 135) highlighted that:

Music performs some of the referential and formal tasks that it does in fictional narratives, but it plays upon and beneath the record of the real, as an agency both of expansion and of focus, gives its use in documentary accounts a distinctive role [...] which involve entering the expositional design with a contrastive, iconic or comic force.

Similarly, in the context of my research, music writing to accompany underwater images was re-created to dramatise the pictures in more conventional ways and its authenticity may be plausible (Cooke 2015, p. 108). In support of this, four out of six respondents from each of populations A, C and E claimed that the music in MB effectively rendered plausible the main character's humanity as well as humans' brutality towards marine life; this was preferable to the use of dialogue, due to the language barrier, and evoked feelings of sadness, anger and

resentment in response to the scenes watched. There are similarities between the emotions expressed by the respondents in this study and those described by Rogers (2015, p. 11), who stated that ‘the connective power of music by presenting complex and fragmented visual narratives that progress without the help of voice over is a common technique to the nature documentary’. This is evident through the claim made by each representative of populations A, C, and E:

A4: Yes... I found all the music in the video very suitable to each scene and situation... more helpful in making us feel emotional. Even though I did not understand what they were saying, the music helped me to feel sad, happy, thrilled and angry. For example, one of the scenes was of oil spilling and there was slow music... more like sad. So, when I watched that scene, I felt quite sad.

C3: I think when the music was loud, it showed how the pollution really happened. It meant that the music used was not intended to frighten us but to alert us to a hidden fact that we needed to know. Another one, there was one scene that showed Sylvia's back after diving, and it indicated that Sylvia was sad because, when she dived, she saw that there were no more coral reefs in the spot where she used to dive several years ago. There was music... very slow and sad. I could feel that she was sad... I also felt upset...

E5: I found music does have impact on my emotions, especially during the shark-finning... The music really depicted... anxious feelings? Like your heart was pounding really hard. Music can present that kind of feeling.

To further strengthen this notion, the majority of my respondents (four out of six) from populations B, and D aired similar views about the music used in the local BD, which appealed to their feelings of sadness, and were a great help in interpreting the facial expression of the characters. In accordance with the present result, previous studies demonstrated that music is one of the most powerful emotional prompts in film in creating and resonating with emotions between the screen and the audience, in which the audience become more invested when they recognise an emotion associated with a character or an event, encouraging them to empathise with the onscreen character (Kalinak 2010, p. 4). This is evident in the claims made by the respondents:

B6: Music can arouse my emotions... in terms of the pictures together with the video shown in accordance to the music. For example, when he talked about the dead coral reefs. It made us feel sad when looking at his face, with the background music while showing him being silent and staring into the distance. We also felt sad when looking at his face.

D5: ... when they talked about the destruction of the coral reefs and we just looked at that, like nothing happened. With the help of sound and music, we could feel more of their sadness... So, music can help us to feel their disappointment.

However, population F had a different viewpoint about the music used in the local BD, in which they felt that the music selected was not interesting and did not have any impact on their emotions, due to the lack of variety in the music choice, which made the viewers feel bored and sleepy:

F4: The music was sometimes flat. I feel that they only used a few pieces of music and kept repeating them for the whole video. The music used was not impressive.

We can thus conclude that music is helpful in adding to the intensity of the issue being disseminated, as that it can appeal to viewer's emotions, which eventually would also increase their pro-conservation awareness. The coastal, rural and urban populations all expressed similar emotional responses towards the music in the BD, for both the foreign and the local BD. However, it has been highlighted that the choice of music in the local BD did not contribute much to the enhancement of the seriousness of the issue, making it less impactful to the viewers. This finding may help us to recognise the importance of the selection of music for each scene, as it can enhance an event or a character's emotional development. This indicates that music should be carefully considered in future BD filmmaking in order to appeal to the viewers' emotions, and bring about greater change in their perceptions of and attitudes towards conservation.



#### **4.4 The logos**

The rational appeal (logos) was also an important factor that contributed to the viewers' marine life conservation awareness. This was acknowledged by my respondents, with all 36 respondents from the coastal, rural and urban populations demonstrating that the logical evidence found had performed a significant function that enhanced the credibility of the message claims made by the characters in the BD through (i) the image and (ii) the written facts. These elements brought a deeper understanding to the different groups of people, especially in terms of the English language for Malaysians, a factor not debated in previous studies.

##### ***4.4.1 Image as the most prominent logical form of appeal in communicating marine life extinction***

The image in a BD is a crucial rhetoric in raising respondents' awareness of the issue of marine life extinction. This result matches those observed in earlier studies on the various techniques used in representing a visual rhetoric of marine life extinction (Hughes 2011; Jamieson 1985). In my research, all 36 respondents claimed that the visuals had helped them to understand the message of the documentary. Both BDs contained explicit images of the underwater world through the simultaneous representation of the threats, the solutions and the aesthetic of marine life ecosystems. This helped the respondents to gain a clear picture of the actual situation in the underwater world, substituting for the respondents' lack of English language proficiency (see Sub-chapter 4.2.3). This finding further supports the assertion of Mohamad Saifudin (2016) that images were crucial for environmental communication in presenting the actuality of environmental problems to the public.

In addition, this finding reinforces previous studies on the relationship of the power of the image with the reality (Dobbs 2012; Nichols 2008; Poremba 2009; Rose 2016; Rosteck and Frentz 2009; Smaill 2016), as it can be compelling evidence in informing viewers on the issue of marine life extinction. It supported the representation of films, photo footages and slide shows of Al Gore's presentation, without involving any interviews; it certified him as an expert in conveying the message about global warming in the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (Rosteck and Frentz 2009). Smaill (2016, p. 47–48) also corroborates the use of moving documentary images through the on-screen transformation of animal bodies, including those of visual assault (such as in agriculture, fishing or the food industry), 'transformations [which] are central to the affective force'.

To further strengthen the notion, all six respondents from populations A, C and E who watched MB pointed out that the images of the marine life and underwater world had appealed to their emotions and increased their understanding of the message claim, even though they did not have a very good command of the English language:

A4: Most of the visuals can be easily understood... the waste disposal, including the plastic, the oil spill, human cruelty towards marine life and so on. All of these were helpful for me to get the idea of this video; although I did not understand the way they spoke, I could understand some of the pictures and visuals.

C4: I think the images helped me to understand the message. From the image, we could see that there is marine life in the deep ocean – I can't believe that they exist. Like the coral reefs, they looked different before and after.

E1: I think the visuals helped me to understand the message of this documentary effectively. I noticed one scene where they showed Sylvia walking on the deck of the boat and they captured her back. At that time, I thought that they wanted to portray the back of a warrior and how she fought for the marines. She devoted herself to the conservation of marine life.

All six respondents from populations B, D and F, who watched LUM, confirmed this by their similar stance on this issue. However, they had the advantage over the group who watched MB. They did not have any difficulties in understanding the language because they agreed that the visuals enhanced their comprehension:

B2: I think the visuals were good in conveying the information about conserving marine life such as the coral reefs... For us to learn what we should do to protect them.

D4: First of all, the images of coral reefs are really beautiful, right? But then, after being bombed and so on, I felt sad and at the same time angry because the video showed the empty ocean floor... Because the beauty of it was not there anymore.

F4: The image helped me to understand more, as I could see how they catch fish by using a bomb. It shows the visual of how the bomb went straight to the bottom of the

ocean floor. All dead! They showed the process. If not, I would not know about the impacts of this action.

In sum, the images are vital in BD filmmaking for enhancing viewer's comprehension of the film's main message, particularly for those who are not very fluent in English. It is important to note that, even though the respondents who watched this foreign BD did not fully understand the language, the images helped to enhance their comprehension of the main message, which led them to increase their awareness of the state of despair that marine life is in.

#### ***4.4.2 Written facts as another important logical appeal in communications on marine life extinction***

According to my respondents, written facts significantly contributed to their understanding of the message being conveyed; several messages with facts and figures could be understood not because of the speech but because of the data presented as subtitles in the BD. The results from my research match those discovered in earlier studies – i.e., that the explicit facts or claims and the textual intertitles became rhetorical elements in appealing to viewers (Aaltonen 2014; Ivakhiv 2013). Similarly, Lineberger (2001) stated that television captions appeared to help the viewers, especially children, to focus on the central elements of a story. However, my respondents highlighted that there were many important facts that they missed during their documentary viewing because there was no text or description written on the screen to describe what was being said.

Having said that, all six respondents from each of populations A, C and E claimed that the written form was important in informing them about the factual message claims in the BD:

A2: The text in the video – such as numbers and facts – is important and this information in writing is necessary because, as we saw in the video, the percentage of fish in the world between 1985 and 2014 decreased drastically. I was shocked by that percentage and it made us realise that we need to control our fish intake and reduce fishing.

C5: It portrayed the statistics about the comparison between the 1950s and 2014. From this, I could see that the coral reefs are tragically decreasing. It affected me.

Another population was the shark species, where they showed that the percentage of sharks had decreased from 10 per cent to 5 per cent because of uncontrolled fishing.

E3: I also think that text and all the written facts are 100 per cent important because we are not experts in this. So, we need a little bit of input, such as the statistics shown in the documentary... And then everybody who speaks, we will ask... 'Eh, who's he?' But, when they started talking, their name and their position were stated. So, okay, we know... why they are related to the issue.

Similarly, all six respondents from populations B, D and F indicated that they missed some important information because there were no statistics and facts stated in written form in the local BD:

B5: The text helped, and we could see what the person looked like because their name was written, although the face was not shown when he talked. However, I missed the numbers of how many divers are allowed to enter the ocean at a time.

D6: ... the facts in terms of statistics are better shown in text. Because if it is written, we can remember the numbers better instead of the speech.

F4: The documentary mentioned the number of coral reef species as well as the name of the species. I think there were 40 or 44 species of coral reef in general, but I cannot remember because it was too fast. I think it is better if the statistics or something that has a scientific name is written. So, when we see the numbers, it is easier for us to remember them instead of just listening to the information.

Hence, we can conclude that the facts and figures represented in written form are crucial in supporting the factual accuracy in a BD filmmaking, as it increases the viewers' comprehension of the message addressed, particularly, in this case, of marine life extinction. This finding indicates that future BD filmmaking should consider using written subtitles in order to yield a greater understanding about conservation.

## 4.5 Conclusion

In sum, the rhetorical elements discovered in BD filmmaking contributed to a greater viewing experience for my respondents, opening an avenue to a new form of audience reception for social change in the documentary film/programme, particularly on marine life conservation. There are three categories of rhetorical element that contribute to promoting conservation awareness: (i) the ethos (ethical appeal), (ii) the pathos (emotional appeal), and (iii) the logos (rational appeal). The ethos that effectively confirms the factual accuracy of the marine life extinction issue in the BD comprises (i) the expert knowledge, (ii) the supporting characters and (iii) the language. The pathos that appealed to the viewer's emotions covers (i) the locality of the issue, (ii) the autobiographical narrative, (iii) the animal suffering, (iv) the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, (v) anthropomorphism, (vi) the aesthetic values of marine life, (vii) the body language of the characters and (viii) the music. Lastly, the logos that effectively validate the factual accuracy about marine life extinction include (i) the images and (ii) the written facts. Hence, it is significant to examine the employment of these rhetorical elements in BD filmmaking in igniting viewers' responses in terms of their educational, emotional and attitudinal changes about marine life conservation, which will be discussed in the next chapter (see Chapter 5).

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **The viewers' responses to the rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos and logos, in relation to their marine life conservation stance**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

As discovered in Chapter 4, the rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos, and logos in the BD powerfully conveyed the factual accuracy of the marine life extinction issue, which appeared to be accurate because of its rhetorical persuasion of the viewers. This chapter is based on data obtained from six focus-group discussions right after their BD's viewing experiences, where viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos, and logos, in relation to their marine life conservation stance, were revealed. This chapter is divided into three main themes, comprising (i) the educational changes towards marine life conservation, (ii) the emotional changes towards marine life conservation, and (iii) the attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation, followed by sub-themes which will be discussed throughout this chapter.

#### **5.2 Educational changes towards marine life conservation**

From my research, I found that blue documentaries can be associated with increased knowledge about marine life conservation. According to Catania (1992), learning can be translated as behavioural change – in other words, when someone gains new knowledge, their behaviour concerning the issue changes. I believe that knowledge gained about marine life extinction can be seen to create a positive relationship between an increased pro-conservation awareness and the mediated communication of a BD. For example, the BD increased my respondents' knowledge – i.e., the information gained by the respondents is translated into a tendency to change their attitude about the issue (refer to Sub-chapter 5.3). This finding supports those from previous research in this field which link the eco-documentary with pro-conservation awareness (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Castillo and Egea 2015; Elkington and Maher 2015; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Hughes 2011; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Mills 2010; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009; Olesen 2008; Robé *et al.* 2016; Viviani 2014; Whiteman 2009). However, it is important to note that the responses of the different populations in Malaysia varied concerning both the local and the foreign documentaries, particularly in their different levels of educational change. Following

this and based on the respondents' responses, several new findings have emerged on the educational changes resulting from the BD viewing experiences, which saw the BD as a provider of (i) additional information about marine life, (ii) knowledge about threats to marine life, (iii) the effects of human activities on marine life, (iv) the existence of marine protected areas, (v) the shark-finning industry, (vi) the richness of marine life and its species, (vii) the importance of a BD as a curricular material in providing early exposure to marine life extinction, (viii) the importance of conservation campaigns to the public and (ix) the limited educational TV programmes on marine life extinction in Malaysia.

### **5.2.1. As a provider of additional information about marine life**

I found that my respondents had limited knowledge about marine life extinction, with all 36 claiming that, before viewing the BDs, they had had no exposure to this issue (see Appendix 2). This finding was expected because, as mentioned in the literature review, there are many challenges in the Malaysian documentary industry (see Sub-chapter 2.5.2), one of which is the lack of support from the government as well as other commercial corporate bodies for marketing, funding and skills for documentaries on environmental communication (Mohamad Saifudin 2016; Nagulendran *et al.* 2016). These challenges have become evident in the general public's limited knowledge about the degradation of marine life species, as demonstrated in this finding. BDs are found to have exposed them to this issue and increased their awareness, a result which is similar to that of previous research on eco-cinema as an educational agent for environmental problems (Castillo and Egea 2015; Olesen 2008; Robé *et al.* 2016; Viviani 2014; Whiteman 2009). This finding can also be associated with the first strand of persuasive roles for social movement to be achieved, as proposed by Stewart *et al.* (2007), in which the BD transformed viewers' perceptions of reality in relation to the disastrous situation of marine life. The additional information about marine life can thus be seen as a positive impact of someone's BD viewing experiences.

In addition, all six respondents, regardless of location, agreed that the local BD exposed them to information about the re-planting of the coral reefs as well as about the various species of reefs. This information was delivered through the use of the ethos of expert knowledge, in which the expert demonstrated the conservation technique of coral reef re-planting, while the pathos of the aesthetical values, through the richness of marine life, enlightened them about the various species of coral reefs. Populations B, D and F responded to these elements by claiming that:

B4: Before this, I didn't even know what marine life is but, after watching this, I know that it includes coral reefs, fish... I also learned about the different coral reefs... in terms of the forms, there are 44 different types of coral that vary in their shape. There is also coral reef re-planting because the coral reefs were destroyed.

D3: Before this I did not know that coral is sensitive. Before this, I thought that it is strong because it looks like a rock, right? But it's really soft and vivid in the ocean like other plants. I also did not know that we can plant corals.

F1: I have gained a lot of knowledge from this documentary, such as to how to protect and what we can do to save our marine life. Actually, we can re-plant the coral reefs.

The foreign BD, through the pathos of animal suffering and plastic pollution, also provided additional information about ocean calamities, such as shark finning, overfishing, rotten rubbish and plastic bags, and successfully added to the respondents' existing knowledge about marine life and its ecosystem, as five out of six respondents from populations A, C and E who watched the MB claimed:

A1: I never knew that, on the sea floor, there was so many rubbish that came from the land. The most unexpected things were the tyre and the plastic chair. I think the chair looked like a leisure chair at a resort. Then, when beach erosion occurred, the tide swept it into the ocean.

C6: I didn't know that over-fishing and shark-finning could cause the extinction of marine life.

E6: This documentary gives us a lot of information that we, who are not familiar with marine life, did not know before. There are new things that have opened our minds to it, such as the rubbish in the ocean, and the shark-fin activity.

It is important to note that the local and foreign BDs provided different information to the viewers; the ethos and pathos in the local BD exposed the respondents to new information about re-planting the coral reefs as well as the various species of marine life, while the foreign BD offered information on ocean pollution and shark-finning. These rhetorical elements were found to be effective in showing the unfamiliar marine environment to the



viewers and, at the same time, resulted in positive changes to their knowledge about marine life extinction.

### **5.2.2 Knowledge about threats to marine life**

During this study, I found that the BDs provided information about the threats to marine life. Through the screening, the respondents discovered that the waste from the agricultural industry, plastics, over-fishing, tourism, rising temperatures, over-consumption and fish bombing are among the factors that cause marine life extinction. These findings support the notion of Mills (2010) on the role of wildlife documentaries in informing citizens about environmental disputes. This result also endorsed Hofman and Hughes' (2018, p. 531) study, as the documentary watching experience can 'enhance viewers' knowledge of threats to ocean environments... as well as perceived levels of conservation learning'.

All six of my respondents from populations B, D, and F who watched the local BD revealed that their increased knowledge of the threats to marine life was through the pathos of animal suffering and plastic pollution. They also claimed that the fishing technique in Malaysia is inappropriate because they use bombs and nets, which may lead to them capturing all sizes of fish, as well as causing the death of other fish and coral reefs – in the end resulting in a decreasing number of fish:

B6: I think the threats to marine life can be attributed to three factors. One is pollution by plastic garbage. The second is the bombing or over-fishing... I mean excessive fishing. Third is tourism, due to the divers swimming so close to and touching the coral reefs, which can harm them.

D4: Even throwing away one piece of plastic will have an impact on the ocean.

F5: Never expected that a fish bomb could destroy all the life in the ocean. From the surface, it seems okay, right? But, in the ocean it is really bad. I really did not expect it.

Similarly, the foreign BD also provided information on the threats to marine life through the pathos of animal suffering and plastic pollution. All six respondents from populations A, C, and E revealed that the suffering of marine life – shown through inland activities including

the agricultural industry, rubbish, tourism and rising temperatures – have exposed them to this threat:

A5: I learned something by watching this video, about the agricultural industry, the garbage in the river; all of these informed me about the real causes of marine life extinction. This did not only come from the beach, but also from our own houses through the plastic that we use every day.

The rural population can relate better to the agricultural industry, which relies heavily on the use of fertilisers, as their daily income is very much dependent on it:

C4: Another effect is from the agricultural industry... At the beginning of the documentary, there was the farming industry, right? So, farming requires fertiliser. The fertilizer is absorbed into the ground. Then it will flow into the sea. It is similar to us, because we... villagers always use a fertiliser in farming, especially for the palm trees. Before, I didn't know about this.

E3: We always thought that it was because of cars, because of factories... So, we have pollution, we have haze, but then we didn't know that actually it is just the surface, we didn't see it underwater. Underwater, there's a lot of plastic. Before this, we were not really exposed to this kind of documentary.

It is possible, therefore, that the rhetoric of pathos, through animal suffering and plastic pollution, is amongst the strongest facets of rhetoric in both BDs, where it disseminates information about the threats to marine life. These rhetorical elements are considered to be crucial in future BD filmmaking, as it can directly expose the public to the threats to marine life.

### **5.2.3 *The effects of human activities on marine life***

This study also found that the BDs provided the viewers with information about the negative effects of human activities on marine life. Though human activities through threats to marine life have been mentioned previously, I believe that it is important to establish a specific theme for this issue due to the fact that all 36 of my respondents pointed out that they were surprised to find out that human activities are the biggest threat to marine life; at the same time, they were able to relate the activities shown to those in their daily lives. They also

revealed that the BDs made them realise that it is over-fishing, tourism, industrial waste, nuclear tests and many other human activities that threaten marine life species and their environment. This finding confirms that the BD can persuade viewers that the tourism industry is associated with the risk to marine life (Muhammad and Fatimah 2015; Ray and Ray 2004).

All 12 respondents from the coastal population indicated that human activities have seriously contributed to marine life extinction, and that they were deeply moved by the pathos of marine life suffering caused by the trawlers shown in MB, while bombing activities, and tourist harmed other marine life – including coral reefs – as shown in LUM:

A6: Over-fishing is also terrible. They use trawlers to catch the fish and that's why many fish are becoming extinct. Worse, they use a vacuum to suck all the fish into their boat.

B2: ... maybe people who were carrying out bombing activities, snorkelling and diving in the ocean did not realise that the activity would affect the coral reefs. Maybe they thought that the activity would only affect the ocean surface but, in actual fact, it also affects marine life down at the bottom of the ocean.

The rural population in its entirety also discussed this issue from a changed perspective, talking about how human activities can negatively affect marine life. Their response was associated with the rhetoric of animal suffering through the agricultural industry, represented in both BDs, in which the daily activity of palm tree farming is their source of income:

C6: I also think that our activities can cause pollution... because when we use pesticides, they will be absorbed into the ground. So, they will affect marine life.

D5: I didn't know that our farming activities could harm the coral reefs until I saw the fertiliser bag in the ocean which similar to what I have used.

The 12 viewers from the urban population also expressed similar viewpoints – an indication of the effective rhetoric of animal suffering that exposed my respondents to the negative impact of the tuna-fishing industry as well as to that of bombing on marine life:

E5: I had no idea that the tuna industry could also affect marine life. That is new for me. A new perspective from watching... about our consumption.

F5: Bombing activities are seriously disastrous and can kill not only fish but also other marine life.

Therefore, it is my impression that the rhetorical elements of pathos, through animal suffering, is one of the strongest facets of rhetoric in a BD – it can disseminate information on the human activities damaging marine life. This rhetoric is considered to be crucial in future BD filmmaking, as the respondents can reflect on how their daily routines can also affect marine life.

#### **5.2.4 The existence of marine protected areas (MPAs)**

The BDs also exposed the viewers to the existence of marine protected areas. Prior to this, the majority (30 out of 36) of the respondents possessed but limited knowledge about established marine protected areas, particularly about Marine Parks in Malaysia. However, this changed after their watching experiences. As mentioned in the problem statement (see Sub-chapter 1.3), the public's lack of knowledge of marine life and its environment in Malaysia was apparent. I found that the BDs provided the viewers with information on the existence of marine protected areas, though a small number of the respondents did have some prior knowledge of them. This finding supports the idea of Starosielski (2013), who indicated that filmmaking is significant in conveying the importance of marine life and its environment to the people.

Four out of six respondents across all populations revealed similar viewpoints; they were not aware of the existence of marine protected areas, both at the international and the national levels. I believe that these changes stem from the ethical appeal of ethos through the expert knowledge shown in the BDs; in them, the experts – Sylvia (MB) and Nasrulkhakim (LUM) – conveyed knowledge and information on the prohibited activities that cannot be carried out within the protected areas. As those from populations A, C and E, who watched the foreign BD, claimed:

A2: Before this I didn't know about this kind of place. But now, I think it's a protected area to preserve marine life, including fish, turtles, crabs and coral reefs. It means a place in which is illegal to do any actions that could harm marine life.

C3: I know that Sylvia wanted to establish more Hope Spots... It's like a reserve or a sea area protected from any human activities... like a jungle, a forest reserve. So, people can't catch fish in the Hope Spot area. It's a place where fish and other marine life can survive.

E4: A new thing that I learned from this documentary is that there are a lot of Hope Spots... this is a kind of area to protect marine life.

Meanwhile, the local BD had the advantage in disseminating information on marine protected areas because it was not only the rhetoric of ethos through the expert knowledge, but also the rhetoric of pathos through the locality of the issue, and the logos through the image of a yellow buoy as the marking point for local marine protected areas – the Marine Park – which supported the argument made by the main characters. This rhetorical persuasion strengthened the factual accuracy they conveyed. As populations B, D and F, who watched the local BD, stated:

B2: I didn't know that we have a Marine Park. But Mr Nasrul said that, if it is a yellow buoy, the area cannot be trespassed by a boat because it is a restricted area to protect coral reefs. We do not know where it is specifically located. For example, in the video they said that one of the marine parks is located on Sipadan Island.

D5: From the documentary, I noticed that there's a yellow ball on the ocean surface. It means that it's a sensitive area and ships are not allowed to enter that area. So, fishing activities are prohibited because it can destroy the coral reefs and other species. But, I didn't know its function before this. Now, I know.

F4: The Bakungan Island that they mentioned in the video, I have never heard of it. So, basically there are a lot of places that are being protected. So, we know a lot today. Like a ball in the ocean is a sign that the place is protected.

I would suggest, therefore, that the rhetoric of ethos (expert knowledge), pathos (locality of the issue) and logos (image) were effective in providing information to the public on marine protected areas (MPAs), through the introduction of the Hope Spot (global MPAs), and the Marine Park (national MPAs). In addition, LUM provided additional information on allocated areas with an image marked with a yellow buoy as a signifier of this area as a demarcation for the invaders. This evidence shows that a BD can be an effective medium in delivering not

only information about global MPAs but also other related information involving this protected area, particularly on national MPAs. This finding supports the notion of Rose (2016, p. 22) that:

The image may have its own visual effects; these effects, through the ways of seeing mobilised by the image, are crucial in the production and reproduction of visions of social difference; but these effects always intersect with the social context of viewing, with how the image is circulated, and with the visualities spectators bring to their viewing.

### **5.2.5 The shark-finning industry**

The foreign BD put the limelight on the shark-finning industry, which was previously unnoticed by the public. Prior to this, the respondents were not aware of this disastrous activity that has caused marine life extinction. Most of the respondents who watched the MB indicated that the shark-finning industry uses inhumane treatment on marine life, which was never made known to the public, particularly in Malaysia. I believe that the rhetoric of pathos through animal suffering resulted in this stance because the representation of shark-finning stimulated the dramatic tension triggered by human exploitation of the shark species (Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Scott 2014; Simpson 2008; Smith 2014). This has resulted in distant suffering from the viewers' perspective that added to their prior knowledge of the threat of marine life extinction. This result matches those observed by Shewry (2013), where the producer of the documentary *Sharkwater* (2006) framed the hidden economic activities of the shark-finning industry, by revealing the illegality, corruption, violence and moral unacceptability of the lies behind the plight of sharks.

All six respondents from the coastal population claimed that the representation of the shark-finning industry reminded them of a similar activity that was carried out by some of their community members. This is due to the location that they are in, which is known for its dependence on marine life resources for income (Muhammad and Fatimah 2015). This information reminded them of something that they already witnessed in the past, with the additional information about the high demand that catalysed this activity. As one of the respondents stated:

A3: In this video, it showed shark-finning. What I can remember, there were also shark-finning activities in our area not so long ago. But now I can't see it anymore.

However, I never knew that it's a really popular food among the Chinese, and Japanese and this led to the shark-finning.

Populations C and E also highlighted that the rhetoric of shark-finning in the MB enabled them to realise that the shark as an important species among marine life, and that the high demand for this species is causing an alarming and devastating impact on it:

C3: ... like the shark-finning itself, they are significant in their own way to the ecosystem. For example, if the shark population is small... then it will affect other species because shark eat other species... so it will disturb the food chain in the marine ecosystem.

E2: It has successfully emphasised the factors that affect marine life. This documentary, it ... speaks at another level. Over-fishing, and shark-finning which are related to overpopulation and demand.

To sum up, the rhetoric of animal suffering has become a contributing factor in giving my respondents additional information on the high demand for foods and protein as the catalyst for shark-finning. In addition, shark-finning has also succeeded in reminding the coastal population of familiar events experienced by them in the past, an indication that a relevant issue can be a significant factor enabling a BD's viewers to relate to the issue represented. This finding supports the idea that the growing Malaysian population has consequently affected environmental sustainability, particularly with its increasing need for food and protein (Chong *et al.* 2010; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016; Wright *et al.* 2015).

### **5.2.6 *The richness of marine life and its species***

The BDs have provided viewers, especially those from the coastal and rural populations, with knowledge about the diversity of marine life species. Prior to this, the majority of the respondents had not been exposed to the varieties of marine life species. This finding is related to the rhetoric of pathos, in which the aesthetical values represented through the richness of the marine life, as well as the novelty of the image, offered viewers a pleasant watching experience (see Sub-chapter 4.4.6). This finding is in agreement with Corner (2005) and Ivakhiv (2013), who stated that the aesthetical value offered in a documentary consisting of audio-visual images are crucial in appealing to viewers' emotions and in

creating the feeling of pleasure and desire to know more about this species and its environment.

As evidence, all my 12 respondents from the coastal and the rural populations who watched the foreign BD claimed that they were mesmerised by the richness of marine life and the novelty of the image shown, which gave them more information about these species:

A3: Honestly, watching this helped me to know what's inside the ocean. The deeper the sea, the more and more species that we never knew existed are available, including the various species of fish... marine life that can actually reflect beautiful light from their bodies, and other strange sea plants.

C6: One of the scenes helped me to realise that we have many species of marine life, especially fish. There are fish that produce and reflect light in the ocean... Like a fun fair in the ocean.

Furthermore, this finding is also related to the rhetoric of pathos of the locality of the issue, whereby LUM made the viewers realise that Malaysia has one of the richest marine biodiversity in the world, something that they did not know; at the same time, this increased their patriotism, as all my 12 respondents from the coastal and rural populations who watched the local BD testify:

B4: I know that our country is one of the most attractive countries in terms of its biodiversity, especially on Sipadan Island. In this documentary, it was said that it is actually one of the best in the world, and this can be seen in the various species shown, especially the coral reefs and many fish. That was why, in my earlier interview, I did not think that the marine life was threatened because the islands in our country are among the best in the world.

D1: It is news to me that our country is among those with the richest marine biodiversity, especially for coral reefs. They found many types of mushroom in the ocean... There are also mushrooms.

From the findings, it is evident that the rhetorical tools of pathos, comprising the aesthetical values and the locality of the issue, can bring changes by giving additional information to the public on the richness of marine life, be it locally or globally. Meanwhile, the locality of the



issue has not only provided information on the richness of the country's marine life, but has also become a reason for increased patriotism in terms of responsibility to protect the country's iconic species among the public, something which has never been discussed before. As highlighted by Saharuddin (1995), one of the biggest challenges for the Malaysian government in managing the country's marine resources is conservation; my impression is that this finding helps the Malaysian government to overcome the issue. Thus, this finding is unexpected and suggests that the rhetoric of pathos has become the biggest contributor in providing the public with additional information on the richness of marine life, resulting in increased patriotism to protect the country's iconic marine species – a significant filler of the knowledge gap/problem that I highlighted in my study (see Sub-chapter 1.3).

### ***5.2.7 The importance of the BD as a curricular material with which to provide early exposure to marine life extinction***

BDs have enhanced viewers' awareness of the importance of early exposure to marine life extinction for the younger generation. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority (33 out of 36) of the respondents from all populations agreed that a BD can be a significant instrument in a school curriculum and beneficial as a learning material in disseminating knowledge about marine life extinction. The result is consistent with those from previous studies (Frank 2013), suggesting that the educational function of a documentary film in presenting an areas of the world to which few are routinely exposed such as marine life and its environment should be acknowledged by educators. This finding further supports the idea of the Malaysian citizen as not motivated to take conservation action due to the lack of knowledge and information on marine life extinction, in spite of the acknowledgement of the importance of having a sustainable marine life for the continuation of the human race (Lee 2010).

As the majority (five out of six respondents) from populations A, C, and E indicated that MB changed their perceptions of the importance of early exposure to the marine life extinction issue, unlike them, who received this information at a later stage. These changes associated with the rhetoric of the ethos of expert knowledge and the pathos of the aesthetical values of the richness of marine life, are noted by them:

A2: So, it is important to nurture our children when they are still in school, so that it will be more impactful for them to love and protect marine life. This kind of information in this video should be included as a learning material in school. It will

trigger more excitement in the students compared to just listening to the explanation by the teachers. The students can see various marine life... When I was small, the teacher asked me to draw fish and coral reefs. I could draw them because I'd seen them on TV.

C1: To me... it is very good if it's being introduced at school level because, as the saying goes, 'strike while the iron's hot', right? So, I think this awareness should be instilled since childhood because children can easily remember what they watch, and it can develop into a habit. Just like Sylvia, she had been exposed to this since she was a child. So, it is necessary to expose school children to the environment, to protect the environment.

E2: I think it should be one of the materials for students to learn about marine life extinction, especially for kids. That's why at school they should have the National Geographic's CD and documentaries like this in order to instil awareness from an early age... Some of the subject syllabus can be revised.

Likewise, the local BD also left all 18 respondents from populations B, D and F with the same perception of the importance of using a BD to provide early exposure for school children. It is believed that the ethos of the expert knowledge and the pathos of plastic pollution contributed to this perception change, as they stated:

B3: It is important for it to be included as a school subject because exposure, for the school, is necessary. It means that they should be exposed to plastic pollution in the ocean, starting at primary school, then in secondary school and on to the next level. That's really important... getting started in school because an early awareness is important.

D6: It gives awareness to people like us. This is because, by watching this documentary, we know, and we saw how our actions can impact on marine life. We must tell our children... tell people who are not aware of this situation. So, I think it's important to provide an early education for our children because, when we were young, we were not exposed to the importance of the corals.

F3: Awareness should start from childhood because it is easier to educate children. It is the most suitable learning age. So, from a wider perspective, this documentary is

good for student education and can be included as a learning material, so that more students can benefit from this information.

We can therefore argue that, in general, most respondents saw the role of documentary as a crucial agent in instilling marine life conservation awareness at an early age. Based on the viewers' responses, the rhetorical elements of the ethos of expert knowledge and the pathos of the aesthetical values of marine life, as well as the rhetoric of plastic pollution, stressed to the viewers the importance of having early exposure to marine life extinction. This finding supports the idea of the documentary as a catalyst for positive conservation awareness and behaviour (Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016).

### **5.2.8 *The importance of conservation campaigns to the public***

This study asserts that BDs can be a means of informing the general public of the importance of conservation campaigns. The framing of the marine life extinction issue through the rhetoric of pathos in the BDs has led to the realisation among the viewers of the limited number of conservation campaigns about marine life in Malaysia. These challenges were mentioned in the National Policy on Biological Diversity (2016–2025) by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) of Malaysia (2016), which stated that the lack of awareness of the importance of biodiversity at the national level is worrisome. In addition, Saharuddin (1995) also highlighted one of the biggest challenges for the Malaysian government in managing the country's marine resources is conservation. Thus, this finding confirms the association between the significant knowledge gaps about biodiversity conservation, especially on marine life extinction, and the lack of exposure to the public at an early age (see Sub-chapter 5.2.7). Based on the evidence from this study, I believe that it is not because the campaign is not being waged but because the existing small-scale outreach campaigning such as the distribution of pamphlets, advertising and community programmes were unable to reach the masses. Thus, in my opinion, a large-scale programme to reach a wider audience through a documentary film/programme would be significant in invoking marine life conservation awareness in the public.

As highlighted by the majority (10 out of 12 respondents) from the coastal population, the BDs made them understand the importance of the conservation campaign, as a reason for overcoming their lack of awareness of the current condition of marine life. This can be associated with the rhetoric of animal suffering and plastic pollution in disseminating awareness of this disastrous issue:

A2: Conservation awareness is important because people did not know about the marine life extinction issue. Everyone thinks that there's still a lot of marine life because the ocean is big. So, we should instil awareness in the public of the importance of marine life through campaigns, so that, together, we can protect it from any harm as a result from our activities.

B6: ... it is important to organise awareness campaigns such as getting people to love the sea, plants and marine life because people do not know how to protect them. This kind of documentary is important to make people realise about over-fishing and pollution in our country.

This was further supported by the majority (eight out of 12 respondents) from the rural population, who also realised the importance of campaigns in increasing awareness of the need to protect marine life for future generations. The rhetorical elements of the autobiographical narrative, animal suffering and plastic pollution, all contributed to these changes among the rural respondents; as they do not live near the sea, the BD has helped them through the dissemination of information on the marine life issue:

C3: ... like the way Sylvia preserves the sea grass. Like, the coral reefs between the dead and the living. Like, picking up the garbage, cleaning our beaches and so on... We can't let marine life become extinct and we should conserve it and future generations will have exposure to this issue. So, if we have this kind of documentary, they can watch it and know about these various species and the importance of preserving marine life... so that they can appreciate it.

D2: Now, I can feel that it is important to expose our children and youth to this information. The exposure to marine life extinction is very important to our children.... Because we don't live near the sea, they might not know what coral reefs are. Sometimes, when we went to the beach, we didn't even notice that what we found was coral reef. So, it is possible for children nowadays to not know about it.

Similarly, the BDs have also changed the perception of the majority (10 out of 12 respondents) from the urban population of the importance of having the right exposure in order to instil marine life conservation awareness. They demonstrated that the rhetorical element of animal suffering and plastic pollution has provided significant information on marine life degradation, and made them aware that this situation should be curbed:

E6: The new thing that I have learned is... we did not know that our daily routine, our activities... like we enjoy seafood, we eat tuna and whatever, right? Actually, how much can it affect marine life? Therefore, it is important to expose ordinary people like us, who are not directly involved in this ocean pollution, to the marine life that is extinct, or has been threatened.

F6: We should be aware. Some people just do not think about the environment. They simply throw rubbish away, without realising that it can seriously impact the environment. It can destroy many things or even cause death to certain species of marine life.

It can be said that the emotional appeal (pathos) plays a significant role for the respondents in recognising the importance of a marine life conservation campaign. The coastal and urban populations in my study were persuaded by the representation of animal suffering and plastic pollution, while the rural population were persuaded by the rhetoric of the autobiographical narrative, animal suffering and plastic pollution. This finding supports the idea of the documentary as a catalyst for positive conservation awareness and behaviour (Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016).

### **5.2.9 The limited educational TV programmes on marine life extinction in Malaysia**

In this study, a significant finding was highlighted by the respondents – that there were very few educational TV programmes available in Malaysia, particularly on marine life extinction. As a result, all 36 respondents had no or very little experience of watching them on national TV channels. This corresponds with what has been discussed about the challenges faced by the Malaysian documentary industry (see Sub-chapter 2.5.2), confirming the association between the Malaysian documentary industry receiving limited support from parties and the lack of educational TV programmes (Asiah *et al.* 2009; Putri Tasnim 2012). This also resulted in the Malaysian public having limited exposure to marine life and its environment. It also corroborates the idea of Harness and Drossman (2011), who suggested that those who view non-fiction television programmes are more likely to relate to environmental concerns compared to those who watch more entertainment programmes.

As evidence, all six respondents from the coastal population claimed that the rhetorical elements of animal suffering and plastic pollution in the MB was an eye-opener to them, confirming their lack of experience of watching programmes of this nature:

A2: It is very necessary to have this kind of programme to make us realise and be aware of the poor condition of our marine life. We do not know the condition of beaches near us – whether they are damaged or not – like the one shown in this documentary. This is because we have never followed any diving or snorkelling activities on the islands or in the sea and this makes us unaware of the situation. During this time, we only know that the marine life around our peninsular is as beautiful as it is because it is protected. We haven't heard that the coral reefs in our coastal waters have been destroyed, as shown in this documentary.

In addition, all six respondents from each of populations B, C and D also expressed their disappointment at the lack of representation of marine life issues on local TV channels. The respondents reported having their first experience of watching marine life extinction programmes through this documentary screening, in which they were exposed to it through the rhetoric of animal suffering, the locality of the issue and plastic pollution:

B4: This is my first time watching something like this. I thought the ocean was in a good condition as I only watched shows about the wonderful location. But they did not mention the destruction. TV1 may show it, but very rarely. *Majalah 3* also shows this kind of video, like the pollution, but it only covers the land and not the ocean.

C3: In Malaysia, we don't have our own documentaries like this, like *National Geographic*. Even though we have it, I don't think its topic is marine life extinction. For example, in the programme *Majalah 3*, they sometimes have three or four topics in an episode, in which no particular topic is covered comprehensively. So, normally, we don't have local explorations of marine life, okay? As I told you before, only *National Geographic* is going to show this kind of thing, we don't have TV3 doing this kind of thing... I mean, in order to save our own marine life. I'm not talking about the world, I'm talking about... Malaysia... our own marine life. So that's why we just appreciate the beauty. We don't participate in conservation because we don't have a clue about marine life.

D4: Yes, there's nothing that shows that our coral reefs are ruined. Never. I think the same goes with Astro, right? Have you ever watched it on Astro? I don't think that there's a documentary that shows marine life extinction. Most of the programme that I watch would always show beautiful things, people snorkelling... like everything is

okay. For example, TV Al-Hijrah only shows the beauty of our ocean and beaches, right?

The same concern was also expressed by all six respondents from populations E and F, who also noticed the limited educational TV programmes on marine life extinction on the local channel, after being exposed to the rhetoric of the expert knowledge, animal suffering and the locality of the issue:

E3: I think the lack of exposure has also created a lack of awareness. As I said before, there is a lack of TV channels that show this kind of documentary or programme. But, how many TV channels do we have? ASTRO channel, HyppTV, Android TV and so on. And then there is the Internet and stuff like that... but seriously, we do not know about it. We don't know because there's no documentary about it. There's no one who speaks up. There's nobody to tell us.

F1: I've seen documentaries, many times, but only those about beautiful islands and fish. But, they did not talk about the bombs or pollution like this one does. The entertainment programmes and educational programmes like this documentary should be more balanced. But, right now there isn't really much... For this kind of awareness, a programme like this is really very little.

This finding emphasises the importance of the rhetorical elements – the ethos of the expert knowledge and pathos of animal suffering, the locality of the issue, plastic pollution, and the aesthetical values – in prompting my respondents to notice the lack of educational TV programmes on local channels, which led to the public's lack of exposure to the marine environment. The BD has been an eye-opener on the issue of marine life extinction, and this is a serious concern for the government to investigate the function of media or any effort from media practitioner or conservationist to tackle the degradation of natural resources, particularly from pollution.

### 5.3 Emotional changes towards marine life conservation

Through my study, I found that blue documentaries elicited strong emotional changes in my respondents, encouraging them, through their viewing experiences, to be more positive towards marine life conservation. Thus, I believed that the BDs triggered the viewers' emotions through its rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos and logos, whereby these elements play a significant factor in persuading viewers to change their perceptions to be more positive towards conservation. Like their existing emotions prior to the information received through BD, they did not feel anything due to their limited knowledge and exposure to marine life extinction. This finding endorses previous study (Hofman and Hughes 2018, p. 532), who asserted that the environmental documentary:

Prompts emotional reactions and a sense of connection with the environments depicted [...] feeling a strong sense of wonder or awe, a sad or angry response to environmental problems, and surprise at hearing something new or unexpected.

This is consistent with findings by Chouliaraki (2006) and Boltanski (1999), who highlighted the ability of television, using images and language to portray suffering, to stimulate people's emotions through a 'politics of pity' towards the unfortunate subjects represented in the media. There is some evidence to suggest that the representation of animal suffering can trigger people's emotions, encouraging them to take further action, based on the knowledge they gained and to change their behaviour (Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Simpson 2008). This view supports Smith (2014, p. 224), who claimed that documentaries have the potential to show 'us the world we know, but not quite as we know it, and eliciting powerful emotions, which have the capacity to transform our understanding of the world'.

Similarly, Cialdini (2001) promotes the idea that persuasive films call attention to certain facts, not through education but, instead, by frequently provoking emotions over reason. In the same vein, Corner (2005) argued that viewers' emotions can be appealed to, through the aesthetic rudiments of pictorial, aural and narratological elements, to ignite the feeling of pleasure. Chang (2017) holds the view that the rhetoric of hope and redemption is more suited to jolt the audience out of a sense of despair. Meanwhile, the autobiographical narrative of the personal journey of the presenter was also found to be effective in appealing to viewers' emotions (Hughes 2014; Rosteck and Frentz 2009). Likewise, Mossner (2013) asserted that the main character in a documentary film plays an important role as he or she allows the viewers to experience emotional contagion, which influences them and enables



them to react directly with the character's (or sometimes the animal's) facial expressions, movements and voice – the viewers will feel a similar emotion to that shown. Apart from that, previous studies also indicated that the emotional connection between human and non-human species – such as feelings of pity and empathy – can be created through anthropomorphism (Adcroft 2010; Bagust 2008; Evans 2015; Hughes 2014).

This finding further supports the idea of Benjamin (1997), who asserted that in a documentary the audience can be informed, moved or inspired through the techniques of ethos, pathos and logos. Thus, my impression is that there are a number of rhetorical elements in BD filmmaking that have contributed to the emergence of new findings on the positive emotional changes experienced by BD viewers towards marine life conservation. This conjunction can be grasped through the respondents' emotional reactions during BD viewing, which are governed by the analysis criteria (see Sub-chapter 3.8) of the present study – (i) sympathy, (ii) disappointment/sadness, (iii) anger, (iv) guilt, (v) responsibility and (vi) gratefulness/respect for conservationists, which will be discussed further by looking specifically at the rhetorical tools involved.

### **5.3.1 Sympathy**

The blue documentary can be a tool prompting viewers to feel sympathy for marine life, because the rhetorical persuasion has represented the marine life environment damaged due to human activities. It is believed that the rhetorical elements of the ethos through supporting characters and the pathos through the autobiographical narrative, animal suffering, plastic pollution, solemn music and body language of the main character were among the factors that ignited viewers' sympathy for marine life as demonstrated by all 36 respondents. These elements are more powerful due to the remarkable characters talking of their journey (autobiographical narratives of Sylvia and Nasrulhakim) towards what they know about marine life extinction (including the animal suffering and pollution), not only through their own experiences but also through their body language. This is reinforced by the reaction of the supporting characters, confirming the factual accuracy of the information delivered. This finding corroborates that of Smaill (2014), who asserts that the representation of species extinction supported the sentimental contract by Rabinowitz (1999), in which the viewer is asked to join in solidarity with the interviewees/activists onscreen to share in the empathy and passion they exude.

Likewise, this finding validates previous studies (Hughes 2014; Rosteck and Frentz 2009; Smaill 2014), as most eco-documentaries represent dramatic narratives of the personal journey of an experts or activist with their continuous efforts to protect and conserve marine life from inhumane activities (exploitation, pollution, over-consumption). This view supports the idea of a 'politics of pity' through distant suffering presented by Chouliaraki (2006) and Boltanski (1999), in which the film frame included the helplessness of the characters in saving marine life from the inhumane activities of the protagonist, effectively triggering the viewers' sympathy towards the unfortunate marine life represented in the BDs. In addition, Mossner (2013, p. 110) indicated that the characters in a documentary elicit viewers' sympathy through imagining themselves in the character's situation and through compassion for their fate and it is more powerful because 'viewers know that it is not acted in the professional sense, but an untrained person is speaking about her real experiences, memories, hopes, and fears in the actual world'.

As evidence, all six respondents from each of populations A, C and E who watched the foreign BD, expressed their sympathy towards the condition of the marine life. This feeling can be associated with the rhetorical elements of the supporting characters, the autobiographical narrative, animal suffering, plastic pollution, body language of the characters and music:

A3: I pity the marine life because humans had caused their home to be polluted. I also feel sorry for Sylvia and her teammates, when they wanted to save the fish that were being caught by the boat but were not able to. They could only watch the fish being sucked into the boat because they were being chased by the fisherman. The music makes me sympathise when watching them.

C5: I feel sorry for her because she chose not to eat fish, unlike us. There was one scene where Sylvia was attending a talk show and the host was mocking Sylvia for her choice of not eating fish and the audience was laughing at his question. At that time, I thought that he did not understand how Sylvia felt, he did not experience what Sylvia went through.

E3: I feel pity because there's no humanity. When I see shark-finning and the music made it more thrilling... It is an unacceptable thing... Maybe because that's part of their job... But it seemed like they felt nothing about that... their victims are creatures who have no power to protect themselves.

Moreover, all six respondents from populations B, D and F who watched the local BD experienced a similar emotional reaction of sympathy, by responding to the rhetoric of the animal suffering and plastic pollution:

B3: When I looked at the life of the fish, they seemed to be free to go anywhere. So, I pity them for what is happening to their environment with all the floating plastic. It is not safe anymore because of humans.

D6: But still, I feel sorry for the fish that were bombed because, due to human greed, the fish and the coral reefs became victims of the situation.

F1: I feel pity for marine life because we contribute to negative things. If we say we do not throw any trash away, we are lying, right? Because sometimes we were quite ignorant in managing or recycling the plastic that we use. Then, everyone can be blamed for the pollution because only humans use plastic. Animals do not use plastic.

We can thus conclude that the rhetoric of the ethos of the supporting characters and the pathos of autobiographical narrative, animal suffering, plastic pollution, body language of the characters and solemn music are the strongest elements evoking feelings of pity or sympathy among BD viewers. However, my respondents reacted to different rhetorical elements in both BDs – *MB* (the supporting characters, the autobiographical narrative, animal suffering, plastic pollution, body language of the characters and music); *LUM* (the animal suffering and plastic pollution) – indicating a significant reason for the contribution of these elements to be included in future BD filmmaking to persuade the right target audience.

### **5.3.2 Disappointment/sadness**

This study also discovered that the respondents felt disappointed because of the harmful human activities on marine life which caused them to feel upset about what they have witnessed in the BDs. I believe that the emotional appeal (pathos) of animal suffering, plastic pollution, aesthetical values and body language played a significant role in invoking this emotion. This was evident for all 36 respondents, regardless of their geographical location in Malaysia, who showed great disappointment about the current issue faced by marine life and its environment. This finding validates (Hofman and Hughes 2018) who asserted that the

environmental documentary triggers emotional reactions such as sad as a response to environmental problems.

As populations A, C and E, who watched the foreign BD, indicated that their disappointment was triggered by the rhetorical elements of animal suffering, the body language of the character and the music. Moreover, this rhetoric helped the rural population to bridge the language barrier, as the BD was in English. A representative from each population claimed that:

A1: The way they catch the fish by vacuuming it into the boat. There was a large group of fish being sucked in only a second. The fish wanted to run away but they couldn't because they were being trapped in a net... the music made it sadder. Then, I could see the change in that woman's face as she watched all that happening in front of her eyes... like she was really upset and had given up. If I were in her place, I would cry a lot.

C1: I felt sad... There was a scene where Sylvia put up her hand as though she was trying to catch something, but I didn't understand what she was saying. However, I could feel her emotion because she looked sad, her eyes were full of tears.

E2: The shark-finning and slaughtering for me... very upsetting and the music was very thrilling... I mean they just cut the fins off and throw the sharks back into the sea... the shark will die slowly and suffer for a long time.

All six respondents from populations B, D and F, who watched the local BD, had a similar view on this emotional change. However, their response was related to the rhetoric of the locality of the issue, aesthetic values and plastic pollution:

B6: When they showed two different situations, between beautiful marine life and pollution, it made me sad, looking at our marine life. If we do not take care of it, it will be damaged and dead.

D3: A scene that showed the coral reefs were destroyed ... and he looked sad. I felt disappointed as well when watching this part.

F1: There was a sad part... when they finished their diving and went back to the boat. In that scene, it looked as though they were mourning the loss of our coral reefs. Everyone in the boat was sad... I could see their sad expression. I also felt a bit sad watching that scene because I could see their efforts to replant the coral reefs from the beginning.

I suggest that the rhetorical elements of pathos (animal suffering, locality of the issue, aesthetic values, plastic pollution, body language of the characters and the music) are the strongest in appealing to viewers' emotions of sadness or disappointment. Meanwhile, the locality of the issue, which establishes an emotional attachment with what is familiar to the viewers, is a powerful element with which to evoke the respondents' disappointment over the condition of local marine life extinction. This finding validates previous studies (Benjamin 1997; Butcher 2003; Gaines 1999; Harcup and O'Neill 2017; Hazel 2005; Lulofs 1991; Rogan *et al.* 2005; Smith 2014; Wright 2010) which incline that familiarity with the subject or locality of an issue is a crucial factor in any media in order to influence people on any issue represented. It is also noticeable that body language can be more powerful if it is accompanied by a language and music appropriate to the target audience, particularly for the foreign BD, where this factor is believed to produce a greater understanding of the given issue for Malaysians.

### **5.3.3 Anger**

The reality of marine life extinction as shown in the BDs triggered feelings of anger among my respondents. This emotion was expressed by all 36 respondents across all three populations in Malaysia during the focus-group discussion. Anger was aroused in response to the rhetorical elements of the ethos (supporting characters) and pathos (animal suffering), by inhumane activities such as nuclear testing, fish-bombing, over-fishing and shark-finning. This finding justifies that of (Hofman and Hughes 2018), who asserted that the environmental documentary triggers emotional reactions such as anger as a response to environmental problems.

In support, all 18 respondents who watched the foreign BD expressed their anger as a response to the rhetoric of animal suffering (pathos), triggered by the irresponsible behaviour shown by the supporting characters (ethos) of the protagonist. This was highlighted by populations A, C and E, who stated that:

A5: When I saw the nuclear test in the ocean, I felt angry. They were not supposed to conduct the nuclear test in the sea. It can make the fish die and become extinct.

C6: The scene of the shark-finning... kind of made me furious. There are other sources of food that you can eat... Another one, they caught the fish using nets... and there's one small fish... probably they don't want it, then they will just throw the fish back into the ocean... leaving the fish to either continue to live in the sea or die.

E1: I felt really angry and wanted to punch those people who destroyed the oceans. It was very upsetting for me to see this... especially in the first two minutes about the shark-finning... That was very disturbing... They just cut the fin off while laughing like they did not care at all... that thing affected me most.

Similarly, all 18 respondents who watched the local BD agreed that the rhetorical elements of animal suffering (pathos) and the supporting characters (ethos) of the human greed shown by the protagonist were the strongest in evoking their anger. The scene where the fisherman used bombs to catch the fish was mentioned by populations B, D and F:

B1: ... there was a bomb that they placed in the water. He wanted all the fish to die... it did not matter to him whether they were edible fish or not. But for them, they wanted all the fish to die so that it's easy for them to catch it. The act is selfish.

D2: "I felt really angry when I saw they used a bomb to catch the fish. But then it struck me that the cause of the fishermen's action in using a bomb to catch the fish is us. It is because there is a growing demand for fresh fish in the market... From this video, we can see that the impact was not only on the fish but also on the sea floor, including the coral reefs and other marine life.

F4: I felt angry when I saw the fisherman using bombs to catch the fish. They could use a net instead, but they were too greedy, and this has affected other species too, including the coral reefs.

Having said that, it is proven that the rhetoric of the ethos of the protagonist character and the pathos of the animal suffering, such as fish-bombing, in the local BD, as well as the nuclear testing, over-fishing and shark-finning in the foreign BD, were the most effective in triggering viewers' anger over the injustice to the non-human species.

### **5.3.4 Guilt**

This study revealed a significant emotional reaction of guilt following the BD viewing, felt by all 36 respondents and triggered by the detrimental consequences to marine life. This finding supports Chouliaraki (2006), who argued that guilt comes with responsibility. If no action is taken after a documentary viewing, then we can say that the viewers are only feeling angry and guilty. If action is taken, then there is an element of responsibility that comes with it (see Sub-chapter 5.3.5). Thus, it is believed that the feeling of guilt drove their attitudinal change towards taking responsibility for conservation (see Sub-chapter 5.4). This finding agrees with that of Hazel (2005), who proposed that guilt can be a potent emotional tool which leads people to act by giving and motivating them to change their habits.

All six respondents from population A said that their guilt was prompted by the rhetoric of animal suffering (pathos), anthropomorphism (pathos) and the image (logos), in which the body of the shark, covered in blood, is related to the pain of the human when covered in blood. This finding supports the outcome of previous research in this brain area which links the humanising of non-human objects to make them effective for the public (Adcroft 2010). One of the respondents stated:

A4: When they cut the fin off the shark, I felt really guilty because I knew that people eat shark-fin soup. It's really popular. I can see the shark body is covered in blood. It must hurt it so much.

In addition, all six respondents from population C responded that they felt guilty due to the autobiographical narrative (pathos) and the body language of the character (pathos) of the main character's journey – an old woman pleaded that the cruelty of other human beings towards marine life should not take place:

C5: I felt guilty watching Sylvia because, at that age, she is still trying to protect the ocean. I could see that Sylvia was on the verge of crying from looking at the amount of marine life sold at the market when they went to Asian countries. We, the young people, still have the ability and energy, but we don't have the courage to be like her. At least be a volunteer, right?

Likewise, all six respondents from each of populations B and D responded with a feeling of guilt to the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) and the locality of the issue (pathos), in which

the representation of familiar debris such as plastic bags in the deep ocean was relevant to their daily usage:

B6: I felt really guilty when I saw that there were many plastic items on the sea floor... The beach is covered with garbage and bottles. During the interview, I did say that I never dumped any garbage. But, when I watched this video, I realised that I did throw away plastic bags similar to the rubbish shown in the video. So, I feel guilty now. It made me remember what I did.

D4: When I saw that there was a lot of rubbish, especially plastic in the ocean, I felt guilty because maybe we are among the people who contributed to this situation.

On top of this, all of six respondents from populations E and F expressed their guilt when they witnessed the animal suffering (pathos) caused by the humans' superiority and greediness towards marine life:

E1: What I got from there is that we humans, we think we are superior to other creatures. The feelings of the other creatures are beneath us. So that's satisfaction, like we control everything but in the wrong way. This makes me feel embarrassed about being a human.

F1: I feel quite guilty because we demand fish, and that's why the fishermen became greedy and tried to catch more fish and other seafood. It's all because of us. For example, I eat seafood at least once a month. Of course, the demand for seafood from people has led them to using shortcuts to catch the fish.

I propose that the emotional appeal (pathos) of animal suffering, anthropomorphism, autobiographical narrative, body language of the character and plastic pollution all have a strong impact on eliciting feelings of guilt among BD viewers. Also, it is important to note that the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) and the locality of the issue (pathos) reflected the respondents' daily usage of plastic bags. Meanwhile, the image (logos) empowered the emotional appeal (pathos) that aroused the respondents' guilt. Such rhetoric needs to be considered in future BD filmmaking, because the feeling of guilt can lead the respondents to take moral obligations or responsibility for marine life conservation (see Chapter 6).



### **5.3.5 Responsibility**

Through my study, I discovered that the BDs had aroused a moral obligation towards marine life, resulting in the viewers feeling responsible for protecting it from extinction. This study has produced results that corroborate the findings of a great deal of previous work in this field, where a documentary can instil in the viewer a sense of responsibility for environmental conservation (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Fortner 1985; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Kidd and Kidd 1997; Levinson *et al.* 2016; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009; Stoddard 2007).

As evidence, five out of six respondents from populations A, C, and E, who watched the foreign BD, now feel obligated to protect marine life. It is believed that the pathos of animal suffering and plastic pollution, as well as the ethos of the language used in MB, respectively, appealed to their emotion of guilt, which eventually led them to take the responsibility for protecting marine life:

A2: It made me want to protect them from extinction, so that we can always see them. For example, in the video, we could see that it was getting worse, many coral reefs had become extinct. Over-fishing can make the fish extinct in a short time. Therefore, we have to preserve them so that they can be sustained.

C6: In the video just now, I heard them say that 'the ocean is dying'. So, I felt responsible to protect it and worry at the same time.

E3: When I go to the beach after this, I will ensure that anything that I take will be disposed of properly, so that the rubbish from the food container or any plastic will not be simply thrown anywhere, especially not end up in the ocean as shown in the video. Now, I know that it might end up in the ocean.

On the same note, all six respondents from populations B, D and F, who watched the local BD, also expressed a feeling of responsibility in their methods of plastic disposal. I believe that the viewers were responding to the pathos of plastic pollution and the locality of the issue, where their feeling of guilt when witnessing polluted beaches in their country triggered them to do something good:

B4: It's about our responsibility. As shown in the video, plastic can be confused with jellyfish because it looks just like jellyfish. That is why the turtles mistake it for jellyfish. So, we hear and see on TV that the marine turtle is on the verge of extinction. Now I know why, because the turtles thought that plastic was a jellyfish and many turtles in our country died because they ate the wrong food. So, the change should begin with ourselves, our actions... the first step to protect them should come from us.

D5: Yes. I think we contribute to pollution, because we are using plastic and it is very similar to that shown in the ocean. There's a lot of grocery shopping bags, such as the yellow one. I always use them. We are the cause, right? So, of course we are the ones who should change this.

F3: I think it is our responsibility to make society aware of this situation. I'm afraid that, later in the future, we won't have them anymore... the fish, turtles and coral reefs in our ocean were dying because of the plastic.

I suggest that there are several rhetorical elements in a BD that can heighten viewers' moral obligations towards marine life conservation – the language and the pathos (animal suffering and plastic pollution) – indicating that a combination of these elements can effectively inform viewers of marine life degradation. It is also important to note that the rhetoric of the locality of the issue (pathos) can increase the viewers' responsibility because they are aware that the ocean pollution is correlated to their harmful daily activities and feel obligated to conserve marine life.

### **5.3.6 *Gratefulness/respect for conservationists***

Remarkably, I discovered that my respondents experienced a feeling of appreciation for conservationists. This is evident from the focus-group discussions, in which the majority, in one way or another, felt indebted to those people who fight for marine life conservation, as well as for their efforts in providing useful information about the marine life represented in the BDs. This finding matches earlier observations, which showed that the rhetoric of hope and redemption through the representation of the autobiographical narrative, and the presenter's personal journey can be effective in jolting the audience's emotions out of a sense of despair (Chang 2017; Hughes 2014; Rosteck and Frentz 2009). In my impression, the rhetoric of ethos (expert knowledge and supporting characters) and pathos (autobiographical narrative),

have contributed to this conjunction, making the BD viewers very grateful and, at the same time, very respectful of marine conservationists.

The majority (30 out of 36) of the respondents from all the populations expressed their respect and admiration for the characters represented in the two BDs. I believe that the ethos of the expert knowledge and the pathos of the autobiographical narrative, including the personal journey, determination, courage and passion shown by the main character – namely Nasrulhakim (local BD) and Sylvia (foreign BD) – which were then strengthened by the supporting characters (ethos), have given the viewers hope for the marine life extinction issue:

A2: I really respected their courage in saving the marine life. For example, there was a scene when they wanted to dive, but the fishermen told them to leave that place. Then, they saw a school of fish being sucked into a big vacuum machine.

B5: This video introduced us to the people who are really caring about protecting the ocean. Before this, I did not know that there are important people like Mr Nasrul who always check the condition of the ocean. I feel great to see some people actually spending their time in protecting the ocean.

C1: I have respect for Sylvia. I feel proud of her and the others... because there are people like her. Even though she was too old... I think around 80, she still attempted to save the marine life.

D3: It is a blessing to have people like them due to their efforts to maintain the coral reefs. So that they are okay and are always protected.

E4: I am grateful for people like Sylvia and her team, because these people made us realise that we should do something to protect marine life. Due to her age, I think it is the time to have more people to help them to protect the marine life and the ocean.

F6: This kind of information is limited because no one told us about it and this video made me realise that there is a group of people who are trying to protect the ocean. They should be rewarded for their efforts because not many people are willing to do that.

In conclusion, then, we can see that the ethos of expert knowledge and the supporting characters, together with the pathos of autobiographical narrative, are significant rhetorical elements in changing viewers' emotions and encouraging them to be more positive towards marine life conservation. This signifies that the experts in the field of marine conservation need to be carefully selected in future BD filmmaking, as they have a profound influence over viewers' sentiments about conservation.

#### **5.4 Attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation**

This study has also revealed a significant finding concerning the potential of the BD in changing viewers' positive attitudes towards marine life conservation. Right after BD's viewing experiences, all 36 of my respondents claimed that the BD had increased their aspiration to change their attitudes towards conservation – such as through keeping the beach clean, managing waste properly, organising collective efforts in the community ('*gotong-royong*'), and taking care of the coral reefs. This result might be explained by the fact that the rhetorical elements in the BD significantly persuaded the respondents to change their attitude, which corroborates the idea of Simons (2001), Lulofs (1994) and Hogan (1996), who all argued that persuasion is an attempt by an individual or group to influence other people's attitudes, beliefs or behaviours. Thus, these results are consistent with those from other studies, suggesting that eco-documentaries can influence pro-conservation attitudes and behaviour in an audience (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009).

Governed by the analysis criteria (see Sub-chapter 3.8.2) of the present study, there are several new findings which have emerged on the attitudinal changes among the viewers, resulting from their BD viewing experiences, more specifically their aspiration: (i) to spread new knowledge on conservation, (ii) to be involved in conservation activities, (iii) to educate children, (iv) to explore marine life, (v) to contact organisations responsible for conservation, (vi) to volunteer for conservation action, (vii) to organise outreach programmes for the public, and their intention (viii) to reduce plastic usage in daily life, (ix) to recycle, (x) to reduce their seafood consumption, (xi) to change their habits when going to the beach, and (xii) to make donations.

#### **5.4.1 *The aspiration to spread new knowledge about conservation***

The most prominent attitudinal change discovered from watching the BDs is the aspiration to share new knowledge on marine life conservation with other people. This finding can be explained by the fact that all 36 respondents reportedly want to share the knowledge gained from the BDs, especially with their family members, friends, children, colleagues, their community as well as the people around them. This result supports that of a previous study (Hofman and Hughes 2018) which shows that the immediate reaction after watching the environmental documentary is to share with others about environmental issues. In my study, I assert that the rhetorical elements of the ethos, the pathos, and the logos have persuaded the viewers to spread the information on marine life extinction to other people.

This is evident across all populations, all of whom expressed the intention to change their attitude after watching the BDs:

A3: I will share whatever I watched, my experience and the knowledge that I gained today with my family, so that they will also know about this.

B1: I need to share this information with those who are close to me... First of all, my family and my friends.

C2: I will tell my family, siblings, close relatives. I feel like I want to show this documentary to everyone and bring it back to show it to my siblings.

D6: We are far from the sea, so we don't know what to do except to advise our family members, friends and the people around us. Education is also important... I need to educate my family about throwing rubbish away recklessly.

E3: I will definitely, 100 per cent, share the knowledge that I have gained with others. For example, I will promote conservation activities that we can do, such as recycling. I mean for sure; everything starts at home... So, I will share this with my kids and my sister.

F4: So, we, five to six people, who are already aware of this situation, we can tell everyone... we can make them realise what is happening to our marine life. We must remind each other.

It would seem, then, that the aspiration to share the new knowledge gained with other people was motivated by viewing the BDs; implying that various rhetorical elements, particularly of expert knowledge and the detrimental images of marine life are important to be disseminated to the general public.

#### **5.4.2 The aspiration to be involved in conservation activities**

I also found that a BD can encourage respondents to be involved in conservation activities, evident by the majority (30 of my respondents) in their intention to manage waste and dispose of it properly across all populations. This study confirmed that BDs are associated with positive attitude and behavioural change towards conservation (Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003).

Firstly, five out of six respondents from populations A, C and E indicated that the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) and the image (logos) represented in the foreign BD, have made them want to protect this species and its environment:

A6: I know that I have to do something to protect the marine life. I want to take care of it. At least I will do something such as managing my garbage properly, so that it will not end up in the sea, as shown in the video.

C5: This documentary has not only shown me the problem of marine life extinction, but also the solution. So, we can slowly start doing what was being suggested. For example, we can join any conservation movement, or maybe suggest to the FELDA that they organise an event to collect the rubbish.

E5: Of course, I will try my best to contribute to conservation. For example, in terms of... [*Alhamdulillah*] since Selangor has already practiced the 'no plastic bags' policy, so I already carry my own shopping bags everywhere.... So now I'm looking for other alternatives... like recycling, as presented in this documentary.

Likewise, five out of six respondents from populations B, D, and F, who were exposed to the local marine life extinction issue as shown in the local BD, also expressed similar intentions of being more cautious in their actions towards the environment in the future. I believe that the tendency to change their attitude was instilled by the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos):

B2: I need to change my behaviour. I have to go to the beach to pick up the trash and clean the beach. For example, I will not throw any rubbish anywhere and it is not only ourselves but if there are other people around us, like in public places, I will also tell them about the impact of our actions.

D1: I feel that I want to protect them more. So, next time I need to be more careful with my actions. I need to be more cautious when I go to the beach. I need to avoid things that can adversely affect the oceans and its life. I need to make myself an agent for public awareness. For example, when we go to the beach and we see people throwing rubbish, we can advise them instead of remaining silent when watching that.

F4: If ALLAH wills it, maybe I will join activities to collect rubbish and practice recycling more seriously. If I'm going to the beach and see any trash, I will remember that, okay, I've seen something like that which can cause pollution to the coral reefs and so on. It should start from us, right? For example, if there are people who throw rubbish in front of us, we can advise them to pick it up. But if the rubbish is already there, we can help to dispose of it properly.

To conclude, the elements of pathos of plastic pollution and logos of the images are among the most powerful, persuasive messages that can change the viewers' intentions to be more positive in associating themselves with conservation activities; these tools should be highly considered in future BD filmmaking.

#### **5.4.3 *The aspiration to educate children about marine life conservation***

Surprisingly, the BDs can also result in the respondents' desire to educate children. It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be due to the fact that the majority (30 out of 36 of the respondents) now regard marine life extinction as a serious issue for future generations. It is believed that they were responding to the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) as a disastrous factor that causes the degradation of marine life, as well as to the aesthetic values (pathos) of the richness of marine life.

The majority (four out of six respondents) from populations A, B, C and D, (five out of 6 for populations E and F) indicated that the information about marine life extinction should be shared with children:

A3: We can share this information with our children. If they are going to the beach for a picnic, they should be more careful in handling their waste, especially plastic.

B5: I will share this information with my children so that they will be aware of what is going to happen to them in the future if they do not protect the ocean. Bottles of mineral water must be disposed of properly and they should not be lazy about picking up the rubbish if they see any. They might have no chance of eating fish and seeing turtles with their own eyes.

C5: ... at least I will tell my children about managing their rubbish disposal properly.

D4: For me, I will educate my daughter to be more careful in throwing away rubbish. There is a bin, throw the trash in it. Wherever we are, either at home or at school, she has to be disciplined about it.

E4: ... begin with small things especially with my kids. Starting from now, when they're still kids, I will explain... like me, before I knew about the turtles, but for my kids, I will explain not only about the turtles, but everything about marine life, including the importance of the coral reefs, seaweed, fish and so on.

F2: I will tell those who are close to us, especially my children, about the various species in the ocean and that we should protect them from pollution, especially plastic.

In my impression, therefore, the rhetorical elements of pathos through plastic pollution and aesthetic values are among the strongest elements in changing a parent's attitude to educating their children about the importance of marine life conservation, signifying the importance of having BDs to transmit the knowledge for greater awareness towards marine life conservation.

#### **5.4.4 *The aspiration to explore marine life***

The intention to explore marine life was discovered in the present study, particularly for all 12 respondents from the coastal area – populations A and B. They have shown a great interest in exploring the sea and its inhabitants. This attitude change has been triggered by the rhetoric of aesthetic value (pathos) of the richness of marine life. This finding supports the



idea of Renov (2004) who asserted that the documentary is an amalgam window that shapes viewers' understanding of another world; into another subjectivity with coherence and aesthetic details. As the viewers indicate:

A6: I also want to personally explore and experience marine life so that I can appreciate it better. I want to see it up close with my own eyes.

B2: I want to protect it. I want to go to the sea to plant the coral reefs. If given the opportunity, I feel that I want to take care of it.

From the above, we can ascertain that the rhetoric of aesthetic value (pathos) resulted in the coastal population – but not other populations – exploring marine life, an outcome which is very much attributed to their geographical location. Pathos also plays a significant role in changing a viewer's attitude towards marine life conservation, confirming the relevance of the issue represented having a direct influence on the change of perceptions and attitudes of a particular public (see Sub-chapter 2.11.6). This finding reinforced the notion that location represented in the BD can be a powerful tool to persuade people to take a positive attitude towards the issue represented, particularly on conservation (Butcher 2003; Easton *et al.* 2009; Gaines 1999; Harcup and O'Neill 2017; Rogan *et al.* 2005; Smith 2014).

#### **5.4.5 *The aspiration to contact responsible organisations for conservation***

Surprisingly, through this study, I discovered that conservation organisations or any Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOS) can rely on the BD as an agent for social change, where they can connect with the general public. The majority (24 out of 36) of the respondents expressed their intention to contact organisations responsible for conservation in the future. The viewers are believed to be responding to the rhetoric of expert knowledge (ethos), the locality of the issue (pathos), and the image (logos) shared about marine protected areas, information about which was limited before their BD viewing experiences.

This was first conveyed by the majority (four out of six respondents) from populations A and E, who watched the foreign BD; they expressed their intention to contact any relevant organisation, stating that:

A6: We can suggest to any conservation organisation that they put on a conservation campaign, even though I'm not sure which organisations are related to marine conservation in Malaysia.

E4: Before this, I didn't have any intention of finding out if there is an organisation for this. It has triggered me to find out what their initiatives are, or if there is anything that we can do to support them in this because, individually, there is nothing much that we can do but, within an organisation, there's a lot that we can contribute to.

The same interest was expressed by the majority (five out of six respondents) from populations B, D, and F, who said that watching the local BD was the push factor for them to have the intention of contacting the local responsible organisations, as way of showing their support:

B3: As the video showed the Marine Park, I can try to contact them. For the NGO, I have never been exposed to any NGO in the cause of protecting marine life. If I have the information, then I can join their activities.

D3: I will try to figure out which agencies I can join... for conservation. As a starting point, maybe I can contact the Marine Park?

F4: Maybe I will contact the Marine Park if we want to organise any event. And be a volunteer, yes. Like the example that I gave to students. Students can collaborate with the BTN, right? The Biro Tatanegara, because I have organised a programme with the Biro Tatanegara. So, it will provide all the equipment such as tents. So, for all the programmes that we want to organise, we can collaborate with them, including the budget.

However, the majority (four out of six respondents) from population C seemed to be a bit sceptical about contacting NGOs or any related conservation organisation because of their detachment from the issue represented, as they watched the foreign BD:

C1: I don't think that our contribution will be to the extent of contacting the conservation organisations. We can just contribute among ourselves, our family and our own community.

In sum, then, the rhetorical elements of expert knowledge (ethos), the locality of the issue (pathos), and the image (logos) shared on marine protected areas, especially in the local context, persuaded the respondents to change their attitude and to contact the responsible organisations represented in the BD. Furthermore, unlike the foreign BD, the viewers of the local BD showed great interest in contacting Marine Park – a government agency responsible for marine sustainability – indicating that the locality of the issue is more advantageous in persuading viewers of this conjunction; validating the relationship of the news values with the familiarity or relevance of the issue in the media (Butcher 2003; Easton *et al.* 2009; Gaines 1999; Harcup and O'Neill 2017; Rogan *et al.* 2005; Smith 2014), as a key for persuasive communication about conservation.

#### **5.4.6 *The aspiration to be a volunteer for conservation***

The BD has the power to change respondents' attitudes and to contribute their time as a volunteer for any conservation efforts. This confirms the finding on the association between documentary viewing and volunteering activities (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009). In my study the aspiration to be a volunteer, particularly in cleaning up the environment, was expressed by five out of six respondents from the rural and urban population, but nothing from the coastal population. This attitude change is believed to be associated with the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos):

C3: Like he said, we can suggest to the university or the community of this village that they organise a campaign. Organize a group of volunteers to clean our environment. We can be a volunteer... during our free time.

D3: FELDA itself can organise a collective effort by the community at the beach... to clean the beach.

E3: ... as for myself, I'll try to be a volunteer, but then... my husband and I have very limited time to join any volunteering activities. So, I just try to contribute by collecting things on the beach.

F1: This thing is interesting, if they need people, and we must be able to join. We can... how to say it... if we dive, we can join the team to protect marine life as volunteers... volunteers in the programme there. So, it means that, when we have a

diving licence, we can join them... become volunteers to re-plant the coral reefs and collect the rubbish on the sea floor.

Note that the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) has persuaded people among the rural and urban populations to become a volunteer for conservation activities. This finding further endorses the fact that the visual evidence of the human contribution to ocean pollution is crucial when presenting the actuality of environmental problems to the public (Mohamad Saifudin 2016; Nichols 2001). However, this is not the case for the coastal population, indicating that geographical location also plays a significant role in the persuasive message, including for donations (see Sub-chapter 5.4.12).

#### ***5.4.7 The aspiration to organise outreach programmes***

BDs have also prompted my respondents to organise outreach programmes for marine life conservation. This finding was unexpected and suggests that the BDs were the reason for this attitudinal change among the viewers, due to its rhetorical elements (ethos, pathos and logos) represented, which resulted in a pleasant viewing experience and, at the same time, gave them additional knowledge on marine life extinction.

All 36 of my respondents expressed the intention to organise outreach programmes, particularly in screening the BD to the local community. They found the BD to be a resourceful medium in spreading knowledge on the marine life extinction issue:

A1: We can propose this programme to important departments such as Puteri Umno or the Department of Fisheries, to persuade them to organise conservation programmes, so that the issue becomes more widespread. We also can organise collective efforts by the community; at the same time, we can screen this kind of documentary to the participants.

B4: This kind of programme should be carried out widely and we can suggest it to our community leader.

C3: We can personally ask our community leader to organise conservation programmes because the awareness is not only for us, but for everyone. So, we kindly suggest a conservation programme for our environment.

D2: It is better to organise activities to build conservation awareness among FELDA residences. That's the only way that we can help in conservation, by educating our community to not throw anything away that can pollute our environment.

E6: I think we should have an organisation that can help ordinary people like us, who do not know what kind of action we can take, and by showing this documentary to a wider audience it helps us to know more about this issue.

F4: I think if we've been given an opportunity to organise an event... a conservation programme for marine life, by bringing this documentary and showing it to other people... maybe in school or university, then awareness will be spread widely.

The rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos and logos representing information about marine life extinction is an important consideration when encouraging a positive attitude towards marine life conservation; this medium has not been able yet to fulfil its potential in the local documentary industry. Thus, this study suggests that an educational programme like the blue documentary is still relevant in this modern world, and that the responsible parties, including policymakers and filmmakers, should recognise and utilise this medium to encourage a greater awareness of marine life conservation. This finding confirms that educators and philosophers of education should recognise the educational function of a documentary film as a learning material through which to present an unfamiliar world that cannot be reached by people who do not have the required qualifications and expertise (Frank 2013).

#### ***5.4.8 The intention to reduce plastic usage in daily life***

My study revealed that plastic usage was the biggest concern in marine life conservation for my respondents. This claim is made because all 36 respondents were moved by the representation of marine pollution due to plastic and vowed to reduce its usage. This finding is consistent with those of other studies (Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003) and suggests that documentaries can encourage audiences to purchase things that are environmentally friendly, particularly in an effort to reduce plastic products.

In support, all 36 respondents collectively agreed on the importance of having a proper method for plastic disposal; at the same time, they wanted to reduce its usage in the future. It is believed that they were responding to the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos):

A1: I want to keep the sea area clean and for that I need to reduce my daily plastic usage.

B5: It will not happen again. Even though the plastic is this size (showing a sweet packet), I will not throw it anywhere like I have done up to now. I need to use plastic with more caution.

C4: One is to reduce the use of plastic. As we can see from the video, in foreign countries, they don't wrap things in plastic anymore. They use boxes to bring their shopping home.

D4: First of all, I have to stop using plastic. So, if I go anywhere or buy something, I will try to use something else, like a basket or a bag. Plastic bags might be possible because we can bring our own bags or box for grocery shopping.

E3: I still use a lot of plastic for my business, I use it for my own products. Meaning for packaging... for my nuts, for my fruits. So, for daily usage, except for my business, yes, I can 100 per cent contribute by not using plastic bags when I go grocery shopping and so on.

F6: The change should come from ourselves, by reducing our plastic usage. I think it is a change that I can make personally.

Therefore, I suggest that the rhetoric of plastic pollution is a key tool in persuading people to reduce their plastic usage, a factor which should be seriously considered in future BD filmmaking. Again, this finding validated the fact that visual evidence of the human contribution to ocean pollution is crucial in presenting the actuality of environmental problems to the public (Mohamad Saifudin 2016; Nichols 2001). This study has shed new light on tackling the lack of awareness of the global plastic pollution issue, particularly in the ocean.

#### **5.4.9 The intention to recycle**

Through this research, I discovered that BDs can inspire the respondents to be more responsible towards the environment by demonstrating an intention to recycle. The majority (29 out of 36) of the respondents expressed this intention but this was not the case for the

urban population who watched the local BD. This result is a response to the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) by the respondents, where the representation of plastics that end up in the ocean is believed to have persuaded them to change their attitude on this matter. This finding supports the association between the BD viewing experience and positive recycling activities (Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003).

This attitudinal change was expressed by respondents across all populations who watched the foreign BD and local BD. They voiced similar intentions to recycle, except for the urban population who watched local BD:

A3: ... every weekend we can have recycling and cleaning activities at the beach to collect all the rubbish.

B6: From this video, we already know that plastic such as nappies and plastic bags can cause pollution, so we have to manage them properly. For example, we can recycle them or maybe reuse them.

C3: I will recycle all the plastic that I have used because it can harm marine life... More plastic can cause more marine life to suffer.

D1: Before this, I burned all the garbage in my backyard. But, after this, I will collect it and recycle the bits that I think I can use again.

E2: From individual contributions, maybe when we stop throwing rubbish everywhere, and we start recycling properly... It may look like a small step, but its impact is long-lasting... sustainable... So, if everyone does it, maybe this thing will be good for our future. Even though production will continue, when we recycle, these kinds of things will be reduced. One step closer.

F4: I am not sure because there's no recycle bin around here.

Therefore, the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos) is the most crucial element in persuading the viewers to recycle – this study suggests that it is a significant element to be considered in future BD filmmaking in order to encourage the active participation of the public in recycling activities. Once more, this finding has reinforced the fact that visual evidence of the

human contribution to ocean pollution is crucial when presenting the actuality of environmental problems to the public (Mohamad Saifudin 2016; Nichols 2001).

#### **5.4.10 *The intention to reduce seafood consumption***

Another revelation, an unanticipated finding, was that the BD influenced the respondents to reduce their intake of seafood in their diet. This is evident in the fact that the majority (32 out of 36) of the respondents from the coastal, rural and urban areas showed a significant attitudinal change during the focus-group discussions on this matter. This result is associated with the viewers' response towards the rhetoric of pathos, through animal suffering, autobiographical narrative and the locality of the issue represented.

Following that, four out of six of the respondents from populations A, C, and E, who watched the foreign BD, expressed their intention to reduce their consumption of seafood but not to the extent of becoming a vegetarian, as practised by the main character in the MB, due to the easy access to marine life sources around them. This change is believed to be a response to the pathos of animal suffering through over-fishing, and the autobiographical narrative, where the main character, Sylvia, showed that she did not consume any seafood, in line with her determination to protecting it. The respondents were influenced by these tools and want to contribute to lessening the demand for fish:

A3: Fish is necessary for us because it is the easiest food to get in this village and it has become my main source of protein since I was small. I don't think I will stop its intake like Sylvia did, but I might eat less – maybe from five fish, I can reduce it to three so that I can become a factor in decreasing the demand for fish.

C5: Eating fish or other seafood is normal for me... I don't think that I can change to the extent that Sylvia did. She didn't eat any marine life. I still need to eat fish, but I think the intake would be less... It will be less than before.

In addition, population E expressed their willingness to reduce their marine life intake by resorting to alternative resources:

E2: ... it's not like I'm going to turn into a vegetarian like Sylvia, because she said that she stopped eating fish. But, now at least... We are going to reduce our intake and find seafood that is not threatened and about to become extinct. For example, you



can stop eating fish caught from the ocean because we can eat freshwater fish...  
About the need for protein, we can get it from other sources and not only fish.

Meanwhile, the local BD also encouraged the majority (five out of six respondents) from populations B, D and F to not only reduce but to completely exclude the endangered species – especially fish and marine turtle eggs – from their diet, as marine turtle is listed as one of the country's iconic species. It is believed that this attitudinal change is a response to the pathos of the locality of the issue, as well as animal suffering, through the dissemination of the information on the bad impacts of seafood consumption on the endangered local habitat:

B1: I will not eat fish after this. I have had enough fish already and I cannot see them suffering just because of human want to eat them.

D4: I will try to avoid the endangered species. For example, before this, I ate turtle eggs. But not anymore. I will not even look at them.

F3: As for me, shark fin is delicious, especially the soup. But, I will not eat it because before this I did not realise that it is a threatened species.

To conclude, we can see that the rhetoric of pathos – the animal suffering, the autobiographical narrative and the locality of the issue – have been highly effective in persuading people to change their attitude, in terms of reducing their marine life consumption. This finding provides a positive outcome to the Malaysian consumption of fish – 78 per cent or at least twice a week – as highlighted by Nurul Izzah *et al.* (2016). In addition, I found that the rhetoric of the locality of the issue represented in the local BD became the biggest contributor for the respondents, particularly those of the coastal population, in encouraging them to not include marine life species in their diet, though they come from a group where the main source of food and income is seafood. As claimed by Arif and Khairun (2012), the marine fishing industry is crucial for coastal livelihoods, through the supply of an important source of cheap animal protein (seafood and other fish species). Hence, the present study has shown that the locality of the issue, accompanied by animal suffering and autobiographical narrative, has been successful in persuading the respondents to not only reduce, but to commit to a zero consumption of endangered marine life. This study bridges the gap in this brain area, which links persuasive communication messages and seafood consumption patterns among documentary viewers (Hofman and Hughes 2018).

#### **5.4.11 The intention to change habitual practices at the beach**

Surprisingly, this study revealed that the respondents' desire to go to the beach has increased but with a different mindset, which is to stop trashing the ocean. Previously, many respondents went to the beach for recreation (see Appendix 2); however, after watching the BDs, their attitude has changed and become more positive towards conservation. This is because the majority (29 out of 36) of the respondents have the intention to inform other people about the negative impacts of throwing trash everywhere and wanting to collect rubbish if they see it on the beach. This finding is in agreement with previous studies (Fortner 1985; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Kidd and Kidd 1997; Levinson *et al.* 2016; Stoddard 2007), which showed that documentary films can stimulate pro-conservation awareness and behaviour among the viewers.

In support of this finding, the majority (four out of six respondents) from populations A, C, and E, who watched the foreign BD, expressed the intention to change their habitual practices when going to the beach; prior to the BD viewing, they merely regarded the beach as a relaxing place (see Appendix 2). The habitual changes are believed to be associated with the rhetoric of animal suffering (pathos) and plastic pollution (pathos):

A4: There are many beaches here but, before this, I went there to release my stress and for picnics. But this time I will try to collect the rubbish if I see any of it. I will try to advise other people if I see anyone throwing rubbish everywhere.

C5: Before this, I went to the beach to relax, release my stress... but this time, I think I will help more. In terms of picking up the rubbish when I go to the beach or to an island. When I am on holiday, I will ask my children to collect the rubbish at the beach and not throw away any rubbish that we use.

E6: ... we can change... when we travel to the island or the beaches, and we do scuba diving, or snorkelling... then you are going to get sunburnt, but you don't want to be dark. So, you put on UV protection, you put on sunscreen and stuff like that. This is the effect. This can be considered pollution because once you go into the sea, the chemical goes into the sea as well. So, this is a thing that you should know – how to substitute your things in order to contribute to protecting the ocean from any harm.

Additionally, the majority (five out of six respondents) from populations B, D, and F, who watched the local BD, also demonstrated a similar interest in visiting the beaches, indicating their attitude change prior to and after watching the BD. This is in response to the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos), the locality of the issue (pathos), and the aesthetic values (pathos) of the richness of marine life:

B6: I want to go and organise a sports day at the beach and, at the same time, spread awareness about the cleanliness of the beach. It will be more attractive because the breeze carrying the fresh air without any rubbish will make the scenery more beautiful.

D5: For me, the beach is a source of inspiration. So, once a month I will try to go there. But, after this, I need to control my activities because, before this, we simply threw our rubbish down, but this time, when I see other people doing it, I will collect it up so that our beach can be kept clean and pretty.

F4: I will still go to the beach, but will take my kids to educate them and show them that we must appreciate the beauty of a clean beach... For their knowledge. Well, they are still kids and they may not understand it. So, I have to show them the beach and the marine life because they cannot imagine it if we only tell them about it.

In my impression, then, the rhetoric of pathos through animal suffering and plastic pollution in the foreign BD has persuasively encouraged the respondents to change their habitual practices – particularly to be more positive towards conservation when visiting the beaches. Meanwhile, the rhetoric of the locality of the issue represented in the local BD has been an added value in persuading the respondents to have a positive attitude towards conservation when visiting the beaches within Malaysia. I suggest that a BD can be an agent for conservation awareness, due to its potential in changing respondents' attitudes towards marine life conservation.

#### **5.4.12 The drive to make donations**

My study also found that a BD can lead people to make donations. The majority (24 out of 36) of the respondents, particularly those from the rural and the urban populations, have shown great interest in donating their money to fund any conservation efforts, something that was not expressed by the coastal population. This result matches those observed in the previous studies, in which the documentary can increase donation behaviour to conservation foundations (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009).

All six respondents from populations C and D, demonstrated their willingness to donate to marine life conservation. Such an attitudinal change was their immediate response to the rhetoric of animal suffering (pathos) and plastic pollution (pathos) because they wanted to combat marine life extinction:

C1: Most likely I can also donate if I know the channel to do so... because we are far from the sea. So, by donating our money, we are a step closer to helping other people to clean up and tackle this problem.

D5: Like FELDA itself, when anything happens in our country, we also collect donations from the settlers, and we send the donation on behalf of FELDA. So, it's the same for this issue, we can contribute our money for conservation.

Likewise, this attitudinal change was also shown by all six respondents from populations E and F, in their response to the rhetoric of plastic pollution (pathos):

E4: ... before this, I donated to the WWF... Every month. So, after this maybe... I will find an organisation related to marine life conservation and do the same. Or even if someone asks for a donation to produce this kind of documentary in our country, we can make donations like the WWF did.

F1: Before this, if anyone asked for a donation, normally in the shopping mall, I was quite reluctant to give one. Normally, they ask for a donation for the orphanage. But now I will give it because I know where the money goes. But not many people ask for donations for conservation, right?

This finding strengthens the fact that geographical location makes a significant contribution in persuading respondents to change their attitude (Butcher 2003; Easton *et al.* 2009; Gaines 1999; Harcup and O'Neill 2017; Rogan *et al.* 2005; Smith 2014), because the tendency to make donations was only experienced by the rural and urban populations, and it is unlikely that the coastal population will cooperate, signifying the need for further study among this population on this conjunction.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Having understood the rhetorical elements in a blue documentary (BD) and their function in affecting the viewer's responses, it becomes obvious that this medium is a fundamental tool for social change in the marine life conservation movement. It is because the ethos (the expert knowledge, the supporting characters, and the language), the pathos (the locality of the issue, the autobiographical narrative, the animal suffering, the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, the anthropomorphism, the aesthetic values of the marine life, the body language of the characters and the music), as well as the logos (the image, and the written facts) have been driving factors for Malaysians to make the educational, emotional and attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation.

Firstly, the educational changes include (i) the viewer becoming a provider for additional information about marine life, (ii) knowledge about threats to marine life, (iii) the effects of human activities on marine life, (iv) the existence of marine protected areas, (v) the shark-finning industry, (vi) the richness of marine life and its species, (vii) the importance of a BD as a curricular material in providing early exposure to marine life extinction, (viii) the importance of conservation campaigns to the public and (iv) the limited educational TV programmes on marine life extinction in the country.

In addition, the emotional changes include respondent's feelings of (i) sympathy, (ii) disappointment/sadness, (iii) anger, (iv) guilt, (v) responsibility, and (vi) gratefulness/respect for the conservationists. Lastly, the attitudinal changes include the intention to (i) spread new knowledge of conservation, (ii) be involved in conservation activities, (iii) educate the children, (iv) explore marine life, (v) contact organisations responsible for conservation, (vi) be a volunteer for conservation, (vii) organise outreach programmes for the public, (viii) reduce plastic usage in daily life, (ix) recycle, (x) reduce seafood consumption, (xi) change habitual practices when going to the beach, and (xii) push the drive to make a donation.

To conclude, a blue documentary can be considered as a powerful agent in the promotion of a change in attitude and perceptions and thus to potentially encourage social change in the conservation movement of marine life by Malaysians, indicating the pathos (emotional appeal), particularly the locality of the issue and plastic pollution, as the strongest element in this conjunction. All of these are significant to be considered by the government, filmmakers, conservationists and ENGOs to take a right and effective technique to approach and at the same time enrich the conservation movement among the general public. Hence, with the potent rhetorical elements uncovered, I believe that this medium can stimulate a long-term attitudinal change by the public towards marine life conservation, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### **The viewers' perceptions, two months later, of their attitudinal change towards marine life conservation**

##### **6.1 Introduction**

Obtained from 72 semi-structured interviews conducted in two stages – the pre- and post-viewing two months later of the two BDs – the data revealing the viewers' long-term perceptions and attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation are discussed in this chapter. As demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, there are powerful rhetorical elements in BDs that aroused the viewers' educational, emotional and attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation; two months later, the respondents told me that their attitudinal changes had been sustained through real action taken towards marine life conservation.

Previous studies have shown that the documentary can only have a short-term effect on viewers' pro-conservation awareness of the environment (Nolan 2010) but, to some extent, I find my findings to be somewhat consistent with the results of Hofman and Hughes (2018, p. 532), who showed that the documentary can produce long-term pro-conservation behaviour with the assistance of 'post-viewing supports, such as reminders, prompts and strategies'. In the same vein, Mustafa and Yusoff (2011) claimed that knowledge alone is insufficient in encouraging long-term behavioural changes; however, a robust and optimistic mind-set on any issue, accompanied by support from people close to a person, can be a significant stimulus for long-term behavioural change. Similarly, Bredemeier *et al.* (2007) stated that, apart from knowledge, awareness and attitude, emotions and moral conviction can also be significant factors that can affect behaviour change.

In contradiction to the previous finding, as mentioned above (Hofman and Hughes 2018; Mustafa and Yusoff 2011), a new finding emerged from my study which showed that, without any added support, a BD can be a powerful stimulus for sustained action towards marine life conservation. However, before discussing the action taken, it is important to report the major changes between the pre-viewing BD experiences and, two months later, the post-viewing experiences of the viewers about marine life conservation. In the pre-viewing interview, all six respondents in each population (urban, rural and coastal areas) showed strong evidence

of Malaysians having a low awareness of marine life extinction and very limited knowledge about marine life.

This can be further categorised as Malaysians having limited knowledge of the threats to marine life, a high consumption of marine life as a main source of food, an extensive use of plastic, an irresponsible means of rubbish disposal and minimal recycling efforts. In addition, a high consumption of endangered marine life species, a poor attitude towards the environment and a generally low expectation of the educational function of a documentary were also found. However, these will not be discussed in detail in this chapter, as an in-depth explanation of them can be found in Appendix 2. The strong evidence of the viewers' limited knowledge of marine life in their pre-viewing BD's experiences is significantly different to their greater awareness of the issue two months later, suggesting that a BD is capable of sustaining pro-conservation awareness and practices, which will be discussed in detail in the next sub-chapter.

## **6.2 Long-term positive changes in perceptions and attitudes towards marine life conservation**

It is significant to note the importance of new information on, or knowledge about, marine life extinction when it is conveyed to the general public, as my results show that it has the possibility to lead to long-term positive change in the perceptions of and attitudes towards environmental conservation movement. The changes experienced by my respondents, as noted at the individual level, are that (i) they informed other people of what they know about marine life conservation, (ii) they have reduced their plastic usage, (iii) they have become more responsible towards beach preservation, (iv) they became interested in any initiatives to recycle, (v) they managed their waste and rubbish properly, (vi) they reduced their seafood consumption and (vii) they were in pursuit of additional knowledge on marine life conservation.

However, the lack of intervention from responsible parties and the limited number of organisations for conservation, have led my respondents to experience difficulties in achieving social change through (viii) participation in mass conservation activities, (ix) methods of donation and (x) contact with the appropriate organisations. These results suggest that the BD can be a powerful device for promoting social change because it performs four persuasive roles in achieving the social movement, as proposed by Stewart *et al.* (2007) – i.e. consisting of legitimising the movement, prescribing courses of action,



mobilising for action and sustaining the movement. These results also echoed those of McQuail (2010), Beaudoin (2007) and Potter (2012) concerning the categories of media effects – planned and short-term effects through news learning about the marine life extinction and the viewer's responses in terms of their educational, emotional and attitudinal changes; planned and long-term effects through the distribution of knowledge by informing other people about this issue; and unplanned and long-term effects through the reality defining social change of marine life conservation movement. Therefore, the action taken to help marine life conservation at the individual and communal levels, as claimed by the BD's viewers two months after their viewing experiences, indicates that positive social change concerning environmental conservation might be possible.

### **6.2.1 *Informing others about marine life conservation***

The results of my research showed that the dissemination of knowledge on marine life conservation, two months after the BD viewings, is dynamically taking place among my respondents. This is evidenced by the majority of the respondents from all populations, demonstrating how they shared the information represented in the BDs with their family members, friends, colleagues and neighbours, as well as on their social media. This study confirms the association between BDs and pedagogic values, due to its potential as a knowledge dissemination platform (Fortner 1985; Nurul Hidayah 2017). This finding further supports the idea of Mills (2010), who argued that good aesthetic, societal and educational values in documentary films encourage viewers' participation in global environmental movements, informing and engaging citizens in environmental debates.

Five of the six respondents from the coastal population said that they had shared the information gained from the BD viewing with their family members, including parents, children, partners, siblings and friends and colleagues:

A4: ... I shared this information with my family members, parents, siblings and friends.

B6: I told my office mate about the beauty of the marine life that has been destroyed because people did not protect it. I also told my husband, children and nephews not to throw anything away when we visit the beach. I shared with them about the impact of plastic pollution on marine life and the ocean – such as how it ruined coral reefs –

about the chemical that can be produced by plastic, and about the fish and other marine life eating the plastic, which will eventually cause their extinction.

In addition, the majority (five of the six respondents) from the rural and urban populations who watched the local BD were more likely to share the knowledge gained about marine life conservation on their social media, as well as with people around them, including family members and friends.

D4: I've shared the information from the documentary with my family members and friends. Then, I told my husband right after I came back from the interview. So, he was the first person who knew what I did that day. I also shared on my Twitter and Facebook accounts that marine life is as important as life on the land.

F6: I've shared the information on my Twitter account and on Instagram. I told them it is important to protect the environment because everything we do to our environment will end up in the sea. Also, I shared the information with my roommate, housemates and even with my family members. For example, my friend has an activity that takes place at Port Dickson beach, so I told her to clean the beach after their activity because all the plastics and rubbish are dangerous to marine life.

Meanwhile, four out of six from each of the rural and urban populations who watched the foreign BD did not share the knowledge gained on their social media but more with people around them, including students, family members and friends:

C3: ... right after the interview took place, I shared it with my younger brother, he's in form 1. So far, he liked what I shared with him. I also told my parents and my friends, including the friends that I went to Terengganu with. I shared with them about the danger of plastic usage because before this I thought it was just a trivial matter.

E1: ... in the past two months, I have shared the stories with my husband, sisters, students, friends and a few of my colleagues. So, I shared with them indirectly... spontaneously, not like you sit there, and I lecture. But, with my students, I gave a formal lecture because that day we were discussing an article from a book about sharks. So, through that I shared information about shark-finning with them and then shared details about the documentary and asked them to watch it.

We can thus conclude that the ethos, the pathos, and the logos in the BDs promoted significant changes among the public. Their pledge to share knowledge about conservation in the past two months has been translated into real action taken by them becoming agents for knowledge dissemination about marine life conservation, both through direct communication and on social media platforms. Also, it is important to note that the local BD was more effective in influencing the respondents, particularly those from rural and urban populations, to spread the information about marine life conservation on their social media, indicating that virtual knowledge-sharing had also taken place two months after the BD viewing.

### **6.2.2 Reduction in the use of plastics**

Another important finding from my study is that the BDs encouraged a minimal use of plastic products as demonstrated by all respondents in my study. There are similarities in the positive attitude towards the environment shown by the majority of my respondents, regardless of which population group, and that of Hofman and Hughes' (2018) and Holbert *et al.*' (2003) participants, where eco-documentaries had influenced them to purchase products that are environmentally friendly. This habitual change may be attributed to the strong emotional appeal used in showing marine pollution (see Sub-chapter 4.3.4) that moves the respondents to pledge for the intention to reduce the plastic usage right after their BD viewing experience (see Sub-chapter 5.4.8).

In my study, this intention has been translated into real action taken as all respondents from all populations identified a significant reduction of plastic usage in their daily lives in the two months after their BD viewing experiences, especially in their use of plastic bags and other plastic products:

A4: I used less plastic after I watched that documentary. For example, I did not take plastic bags given by the cashier if I bought just two to three things. But, if I bought many things, I still use plastic bags, but I collect them and do not throw them out but keep re-using them. I also do not buy any plastic plates anymore because, before this, I went to the RM2 shop and bought plastic plates. I'd rather choose plates made from glass so that I can re-use them again next time.

B2: "My plastics usage and purchases have lessened because I realised that they can threaten marine life. For example, for my business I just reuse any existing

plastic bags that I collected to put in the fish crackers that I sell to the customers, so that I do not feel guilty.

C5: I tried to reduce my plastic usage. For example, I take my own bags when I go grocery shopping because I think it is much easier now to not deal with a lot of plastic when I get home.

D3: Indeed, I have used less plastic in the past two months. For example, when I bought anything, I'd rather put it in the basket. Now, I prepare a basket in my car. If I go to any store by motorcycle, I just put whatever I bought in my motorcycle basket.

E2: I have reduced my use of plastic when I go shopping, and everything that may pollute the land and also the air or the ocean itself. So, I try to avoid using plastic. It's one of those things that I try to change.

F5: In the past two months, I have rarely used plastic. If I desperately need it, then I'll buy it, when I forget to carry a large bag or something that matches the item I bought at that time. But so far, if I want to go to the supermarket or buy anything, if it's small, I'd rather put it in a bag, and if I knew I'd buy a lot of stuff I would take a paper bag from home.

My impression is that the emotional appeal against plastic pollution represented in the BD has become one of the most powerful influences in reducing plastic usage by the general public. This result is significant for the Malaysian local authorities, validating the idea that negative attitudes towards the new regulation banning plastics, disseminated through printed material such as posters and banners, as reported by Mustafa and Yusoff (2011), might be eradicated by utilising a BD to promote less plastic usage in the long term by the general public.

### **6.2.3 *They become more responsible about beach preservation***

My results showed that the BDs encouraged my respondents to have a relatively better level of moral responsibility when they go to the beach, as they have a better picture of how plastic can threaten marine life. The responsibility felt right after the BD viewing experience in the previous chapter (see Sub-chapter 5.3.5) was a great influence in persuading the respondents to be more responsible towards beach preservation in the following two

months, as exemplified by their willingness to pick up other people's rubbish when spending leisure time at the beach. This finding supports the idea of the influence of the documentary in encouraging moral responsibility – in acts such as by picking up other people's litter – using post-viewing support for long-term conservation behaviour (Hofman and Hughes 2018).

Accordingly, 10 out of 12 of the respondents from the coastal population spoke of their activities in conserving marine life:

A3: Whenever I see rubbish on the beach, which was probably thrown by visitors, it reminds me of the documentary. Sometimes I go to the beach to pick up plastic if I am not busy with work and study.

B5: I behave differently now when I visit the beach after I watched the documentary. For example, before this, when I went to the beach, I would throw everything that I brought with me on the beach. But now I collect up the plastic or anything that I see on the beach and put it into the bin. The rubbish is such an eyesore.

These views also surfaced in eight of the 12 respondents from the rural population who were known to have geographic boundaries to the marine environment, and where their desire to reduce pollution has led them to clean the beaches:

C2: Yes. I went to Port Dickson because there is a Fish Gallery there. When I was there, I saw some rubbish on the beach and I picked it up and threw it into the provided rubbish bin. My friend also followed suit in collecting the rubbish. I've changed a lot since I watched the documentary. I've become more responsible because I do not want to be one of the contributors to ocean pollution.

D6: "Recently, on my way home from my friend's wedding, I visited a beach in Melaka. But I saw a lot of rubbish and I picked up as much as I could, because I just happened to drop by there.

Similarly, four out of six respondents from the urban population, who watched the foreign BD, also displayed a similar pattern in their attitudes towards marine life conservation, with an added value when visiting beaches:

E4: I just went to the beach this morning because I have someone else with me who wanted to visit the beach. So, yeah! That was a while, but of course I enjoyed the scene, except that we can still see some people throwing rubbish everywhere. That's quite disappointing. So, what I did was simply pick it up and put it into the rubbish bin. It's not hard.

Meanwhile, five of the six respondents from the urban population, who watched the local BD, reportedly did not have any opportunity to go to the beach, due to their work commitments, as well as the distance from the sea:

F2: After watching the documentary, I do want to visit the beach because I want to see whether they are being polluted or not. But because of my work, I could not go.

We can see, therefore, that the emotional appeal of the aesthetic values of the richness of marine life, animal suffering and of plastic pollution, and the locality of the issue represented in the BDs, have the potential to motivate the public and encourage a strong sense of moral responsibility for marine life conservation by cleaning the beaches. This suggests that any outreach programme involving BD screening can be practiced by conservation organisations, in order to persuade the public to participate in volunteering activities, particularly beach cleaning, and can promote litter-free beaches.

#### **6.2.4 *They became interested in any initiatives to recycle***

From this study, it was found that a BD can be a powerful stimulus in giving the respondents the initiative to recycle. This result may be explained by the fact that all 36 respondents demonstrated that they made minimal recycling efforts in their initial interview (see Appendix 2). However, two months after their BD viewing experience, they revealed a strong commitment to recycling, even without additional support, transformed their intention to recycle (see Sub-chapter 5.4.9) into real action taken. This finding corresponds to those of previous studies that have examined the effect of the documentary in stimulating frequent recycling habits (Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003).

Since then, a variety of recycling initiatives have been put forward by all my respondents from all populations, because recycling facilities were not fully available in their neighbourhood:

A3: Sometimes, I recycle my rubbish, such as plastic bottles and plastic bags. But it is quite hard to find the recycling bin in this area, maybe because we are not in the city. So, what I normally do is I sort the rubbish into different categories and throw them into the main rubbish bin.

B1: No, because there's no facility for recycling in this area. There is only the green garbage bin from the local council. So, I do not know where to recycle. But I collect bottles and I sell them.

C6: Yes. There is no doubt that this documentary has encouraged me to recycle, because there are recycling bins provided here such as the orange and the green bins. So, right now I am trying my best to put any rubbish that can be recycled in there. I also use plastics several times instead of once because I found it disturbing to throw away plastic bags that can still be used.

D4: "Before this, I just threw away all the rubbish, but now I collect it, and use it again and again. So, it's not that I throw it away and buy another – no more such things. I recycle whatever can be used. For example, I recycle any food containers made from plastic because it can be washed and used again. Before this it was just about cleanliness, but now it's about cleanliness as well as awareness. Also, I used to throw glass and bulbs anywhere, but now I put it into the recycling bin.

E6: I tend to be stricter in my recycling, as I separate the trash into recyclable items like paper, plastic and glass. Also, I try to find recycle bins when we go out for shopping and everything, instead of finding the regular one.... there are a few things made of plastic that can be reused. Usually bottles, I will try to reuse them such as turning them into small pots that I can use for planting.

F3: In the past, I was lazy about recycling but, after watching the documentary, it enlightened me on the importance of recycling. I have practiced recycling at home. For example, in my home area, there are no recycling bins provided. So, I split my own garbage into plastic, bottles, paper and food waste, and send them to the recycling centre. If there are items I do not use, I will contact the person at the recycling company. If I have free time at the weekend, I just send them to the recycling centre by myself.

In my opinion, the emotional appeal concerning plastic pollution is the most powerful rhetoric in sustaining the attitude of or initiative to recycle among the public. However, the appeal also suggests that recycling facilities are not fully available in developing countries such as Malaysia. However, this has not stopped the public from recycling because the BD has encouraged them to find alternatives, such as reusing plastic products several times before disposing of them. This finding signifies a lack of support for conservation by the government and indicates that the Malaysian local authorities or related environmental organisations should note the importance of providing and improving the existing recycling facilities in the country.

### **6.2.5 *They managed waste and rubbish properly***

The present study also discovered that the habit of irresponsible rubbish disposal among the respondents have been changed because the BDs had encouraged the public to manage waste and rubbish properly, by practising an environmentally friendly disposal approach. This result can be seen across the board among all 36 respondents, manifest in the action taken during the two months following their viewing experiences. This finding supports the idea by Hofman and Hughes (2018) of careful disposal behaviour resulting from documentary viewing. My respondents avowed:

A2: Now, I am not throwing rubbish or any disposal anywhere. Before this, I just simply left it wherever I liked when I went to the beach. For example, if I ate something, I just left all the rubbish there. But, not anymore... I try my best to find a rubbish bin. If I cannot find a bin, I throw it away on my way home when I come across one, or I just take it home. I become more responsible when I think about the marine turtles, dolphins and all the other creatures.

B5: In the past, I did not dispose of my rubbish in the bin. I would just throw it in my backyard or burn it. Nowadays, I've become more careful because I live near the sea, and it can directly pollute the ocean. I do not want our marine life to be extinct.

C2: After I watched the documentary, I segregated the rubbish into categories and threw them in the rubbish bin or put them into the recycle bin. I am the one who is doing that, because my wife is pregnant, so I do not allow her to do all these things. So, this thing has become a habit now because I cannot see any rubbish being thrown everywhere.



D6: Now, I put a small bin in my car, or I always have a plastic bag so that any rubbish in the car can be put in there. I am not sure, but I feel much better when I do that. Previously, I did not even pay attention to this.

E5: I became stricter about recycling at home, or at least in my room because I share an apartment with two housemates. So, I did my part to make sure that my rubbish is separated, so that it goes into the right rubbish bins. I started practicing with four bins at home. So, meaning there's one for paper waste, one for glass waste, one for plastic waste and one for food waste. So, this is the thing that I have been practicing since then. So, I throw it into the proper bins.

F1: I am more concerned with managing garbage and so on because, for me, it has a great impact on pollution and can destroy marine life. So, I gather the garbage, I tie it up, and I put it in the trash bins. In doing so, I can help the people who collect the garbage as well as their management. I do not dump it anywhere.

In conclusion, we can see that the emotional appeal of animal suffering and plastic pollution in the BDs have empowered the public, regardless of location, to be more responsible in managing their waste and rubbish disposal. This finding should be taken seriously by the Malaysian local authorities, who should create educational programmes as a way to improve waste disposal methods among the public.

### **6.2.6 A reduction in seafood consumption**

Surprisingly, it was found that there was a reduction in seafood consumption among the respondents, probably due to the emotional disturbance that they experienced after watching the BDs, and the fact that the marine life represented in the BDs are their staple diet. This attitude transformed the viewer's intention to reduce seafood consumption right after their BD viewing experience (see Sub-chapter 5.4.10) into real action taken after two months. This finding confirms that the rhetorical element of animal suffering in a BD is associated with the distant suffering experienced by the respondents (Boltanski 1999; Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Simpson 2008; Smith 2014). This finding has bridged the gap left by previous studies (Hofman and Hughes 2018) about seafood consumption, in the sense that a majority of my respondents have significantly changed their daily diet as part of a long-term plan by reducing and, in some cases, totally stopping their consumption of endangered marine life and other types of fish. This was particularly true for those who

watched the local BD, indicating a further positive attitude towards conservation. This is a finding that should be highlighted, as the representation of local issues in a BD is seen as having more influence on the viewers.

In my study, too, four out of six respondents from each population who watched MB have reportedly consumed less marine life such as fish, due to feelings of guilt:

A6: That day I went to the fish complex, and there were a lot of fish. But I feel guilty about eating it. It reminded me of the scene in the documentary where they cut the fish up alive. Now, I no longer eat fish... making me rarely eat fish. I am not sure about it, but it makes me uncomfortable to eat fish.

C5: Yes, I do not eat fish... I mean I rarely eat it. I would rather eat chicken. I just feel sorry for the fish.

E6: I haven't eaten tuna and salmon for the past two months because I remember the human cruelty towards them. Before this, I liked to eat it, especially to make wraps and sandwiches. But now, I'm not sure, I feel sympathy and guilt and tend to reduce the quantity if I do eat it. After all, it's not even my daily menu, so I don't mind.

Meanwhile, the influence of a local issue is more apparent to the majority (five out of six respondents) from all populations who watched the LUM, which has resulted in zero marine life consumption, particularly of endangered species such as marine turtle eggs:

B3: Normally, I love turtle eggs, and they are seasonal. When they are in season, I always asked people where to buy them cheaply. But even though they are in season right now, I have not eaten any. I feel guilty, sorry and really bad, which makes me unable to eat them after I watched the documentary.

D1: I feel sorry about consuming any seafood and other marine life. I feel sorry, especially for the marine turtle eggs and fish, so it makes me stop eating fish.

F3: Previously, I ate without even thinking about the catching process of the marine life. It makes me think that if we consume marine products every day, they will be depleting... less and less. So, I eat more chicken instead of fish because I feel sorry for them.

I would suggest that the viewers' emotional reactions, particularly the feelings of sympathy, guilt and sadness experienced during the BD viewing, have continued for some time now, demonstrating that these emotions have the possibility to encourage the taking of long-term action towards less or zero marine life consumption. This finding is confirmed by Chouliaraki (2006), who argues that guilt comes with responsibility. My respondents demonstrated their feelings of guilt about the issue of marine life extinction (see Sub-chapter 5.3.4) and at the same time felt responsible for it (see Sub-chapter 5.3.5); they thus transformed their feelings into actions by consuming less marine life to support the conservation movement. This view is also supported by Hazel (2005), who wrote that guilt can be a potent emotional tool for the persuader, and leads people to act by giving, and motivating people to change their habits. This finding may help us to understand that a connection exists between the mediator of a BD (particularly in representing the local marine life extinction issue and other rhetorical elements) and the possibility of long-term positive attitude towards marine life conservation among the general public.

### **6.2.7 Pursuit of additional knowledge in the marine life conservation**

This study has revealed that the local BD encouraged majority of my respondents to seek additional knowledge about marine life conservation in the two months following the viewing of the film; however, this was not the case for the coastal and rural populations who watched the foreign BD – although this is probably attributable to the language barrier. A possible explanation for these results may be the respondents having new experiences of the unfamiliar marine environment, as reported in the previous chapter (see Sub-chapter 5.2.1). The issue represented had previously received limited coverage on mainstream television channels, but seeing it spoken of in the BD has led to their growing interest in finding out more about this environment. This result is consistent with those observed in an earlier study (Hofman and Hughes 2018) and suggests that a BD can be a stimulus to the general public in searching for additional information about the environment, particularly on marine life, through other media platforms.

All 18 of my respondents from the coastal, rural and urban population who watched the local BD shared this with me:

B5: Nowadays I feel interested to know more about marine life. It's like I want to learn more about how to protect it. So, sometimes I search my Facebook, where I came

across and now follow a page about the ocean, but I do not remember the name of the page. Sometimes, I also use Google to find out about it.

D6: Indeed, I want to know more about marine life extinction because of what already happened. We have to tackle it... That is why I did some research on it. But there's not much about local marine life on the Internet. I've found several departments, but they were more related to tourism.

F4: I have also been looking for information through Google regarding marine life in Malaysia. So, I found a lot of news, but not so much about extinction. It's more on reporting about floods and less information about marine life.

Meanwhile, only the urban population who watched the foreign BD showed an increased interest in looking for more information related to marine life. Clearly the language barrier was not an issue for them, but it is very unlikely that it was not an issue for the coastal and rural population who watched the same documentary. As one of the respondents from population E stated:

E3: After being interviewed last time, I became aware of this issue and saw many updates on extinction. I also read something about a few rare species. So, I thought I would get more ideas on this issue. After I watched the documentary, I felt inspired to help these people and joined one group on Facebook... it's called 4Ocean. I saw updates on 4Oceans's Facebook, and I just liked the group page... Sometimes, I try to find out about local organisations, or something related to our local issue, but unfortunately, I couldn't find any, or maybe my way of searching is not very good. That's the reason why I couldn't find resourceful information about our marine life.

The ethical appeal of expert knowledge has obviously influenced the respondents who watched the local BD, encouraging them to pursue additional knowledge on marine life conservation over the two months following the viewing. We can thus see that a local BD can be an eye-opener into marine life extinction for the general public and suggests that a BD alone can be a significant device promoting the long-term search for additional information. This finding is confirmed by Smaill (2014), who suggests that the conservation documentaries that focus on marine life powerfully facilitate the desire for knowledge, which revolves around the visual evidences of human exploitation on animals. Also, this finding is supported by Renov (2004) who asserted that the documentary is an amalgam window that

shapes viewers' understanding of another world. However, the function of the Internet, particularly social media, as another important platform in these circumstances cannot be ignored.

### **6.2.8 Participation in mass conservation activities**

As a result of my interviews and focus groups, I found that BDs can stimulate Malaysian viewers' long-term contributions to mass conservation activities but on the condition that the responsible parties are involved in organising them. The limited interventions by responsible parties and the lack of exposure to local conservation organisations are why the coastal and rural respondents who watched the foreign BD have not been moved to get involved in mass conservation activities. For this reason, their desire to be involved in conservation activities, as demonstrated right after their BD viewing experience (see Sub-chapter 5.4.2), has not transformed into real action. This finding is supported by Lee (2010), who argues that the Malaysian government and most of its citizens are not motivated to take preservation action in response to environmental degradation, due to the lack of knowledge and information on the issues, particularly from local conservation organisations.

Therefore, four of the six respondents from the coastal and rural populations who watched the foreign BD said they were not contributing to any mass conservation activities, as there was limited information and exposure on this in their neighbourhood:

A3: I have not participated in any activity because there were no parties to organise it.

C6: "No, not really [I have not participated] because I did not find any programme related to conservation around here.

On the contrary, the majority (five out of six respondents) from the same population who watched the local BD spoke of their participation in mass conservation activities when they joined a collective effort organised by their community leader and other organisations:

B4: I joined the collective effort to clear all the rubbish near the jetty. It was organised by our village head, so I just joined them with the hope that I could avoid pollution and extinction of the coral reefs. Indeed, there's no campaign to eradicate this issue,

but the collective efforts can be a part of my contribution to protect marine life from plastic pollution.

D2: I participated in one of the '*gotong-royong*' (collective efforts) organised by one of the kindergartens here. So, I joined them to collect garbage and waste around this village, such as at the hall and on the streets. So, I remember that there was a scene in the documentary about this activity, which makes me aware of how important it is not to cause pollution to our environment as one of the efforts to save marine life. So, I went there to give my support to my daughter as well as to educate her in protecting the environment together.

Meanwhile, both BDs managed to encourage the majority (five out of six respondents) from urban population to participate in mass conservation activities:

E5: I participated in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and '*gotong-royong*' (collective efforts) around the orphanage and around my residence. Although the '*gotong-royong*' activity does not involve the sea area, the value shown in the documentary is to work together for a better life.

F2: I participated in a lot of '*gotong-royong*' (collective efforts) within my neighbourhood. As I told you earlier, one of the things that I remember from the documentary was that pollution on the ground can also affect marine life. So, it affects my life and I changed it. If not us, who would start? So, as the people say... role models by example.

Evidently, then, the emotional appeal of plastic pollution has influenced my respondents to participate in mass conservation activities. This finding suggests that a BD does have the potential to stimulate conservation activities by the public, but it must be initiated by the parties responsible for organising these activities, such as mass cleaning or collective efforts known as '*gotong-royong*'. I suggest that immediate attention needs to be given to this issue by the authorities, in response to the serious lack of public awareness of the importance of biodiversity, particularly on marine life extinction (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment 2016, Saharuddin 1995).

### **6.2.9 Methods of donation**

Contrary to other studies, I found that only a minority of the respondents were willing to donate to the conservation and protection issue in the two months after watching the BDs. Therefore, my findings do not fully support previous research on positive donation behaviour towards the environment and nature (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Janpol and Dilts 2016). Even though most of my respondents demonstrated a great interest in making a donation right after their BD viewing experience (see Sub-chapter 5.4.12), their failure to do so may be due to the unavailability of donation platforms, as well as to the limited information available to my respondents on conservation organisations. This has prevented them from donating, a factor which has not been discussed in previous studies.

Thus, it was that four out of six respondents from each population indicated that the BDs were unable to motivate them to donate due to the lack of information on the available platforms or facilities for making such a contribution. Additionally, they were not in the habit of making donations, as they stated when questioned on whether they donated or not:

A4: No, because there's no campaign or people asking for money for conservation.

B1: No, because I did not find anyone or any campaign that collects money for it. Most probably because I stay in this area. So, you have to provide a platform for people like me to make a donation, because I don't know where to contribute my money.

C3: "No, because I do not know where to donate it, and there are no activities to protect marine life being carried out here.

D2: I don't think I have made any donations in the past two months. I don't know where to contribute. For example, the orphanage, we know the channel for making a contribution. But for conservation, I don't know which platform is available for donations.

F5: "Not yet because there's no people from that kind of organisation or related to marine life that have asked us to fund. I did not get any information about the marine life fund. I did not find any of them.

On the other hand, a different view was expressed by the majority (five out of six) of the urban respondents who watched the foreign BD:

E1: Yes, after I watched that documentary, I donated to conservation efforts but only once. But I did not remember the organisation's name... that was the only time I bumped into them. I mean... I was approached personally by a volunteer who came to me and explained about their organisation and programmes, which are generally about preserving nature and the environment. So, they were collecting funds for their programmes and I gave them some.

In my impression, this finding calls for conservation organisations and local authorities to approach potential donors personally or publicly throughout the country, in order to raise funds for marine life conservation, an aspect that should also be considered in the management of wildlife species and environmental sustainability.

#### **6.2.10 Contact with conservation organisations**

My research revealed that no contact with conservation organisations was made two months after the BD viewing, unlike the intention demonstrated by my respondents, right after their BD viewing experiences (see Sub-chapter 5.4.5). This result may be an indication of the lack of outreach programmes and campaigns offered by conservation organisations, as well as the limited number of environmental organisations established in Malaysia that focus on marine sustainability. This, in turn, made my respondents shy away from them. This finding further supports the idea that limited knowledge and information on environmental degradation has led Malaysian citizens to not be motivated to take conservation action (Lee 2010).

Following this, the majority (five out of six respondents) from populations A and B, when asked if they had contacted other organisations, reported that there was no available information on conservation organisations:

A4: Not yet because I did not find any conservation organisations. Possibly, I am not exposed to this kind of organisation. What I have found is all about the forest and not marine life.

B2: No, I have not heard of any related organisations.



Meanwhile, two-thirds of my respondents from populations C and D, when asked if they had tried to contact these organisations, said that their efforts were unfortunately met with negative responses:

C1: No, because I just got a little bit of information when I went to the gallery. So, I got some information about NGOs, but when I tried to contact them through WhatsApp, I saw that the message had been read with a blue tick as an indication. But I did not receive any feedback. Maybe they're busy.

D6: I don't think I contacted any organisation. But I have spoken to FELDA and their staff, to organise some programmes to clean the village.

Likewise, a similar viewpoint was conveyed by the majority (four out of six respondents) from populations E and F, who spoke of the lack of campaigns by conservation organisations, which had acted as a hindrance:

E2: So far, no. Unfortunately, I didn't see any organisation doing something like this. Maybe there is someone who tries to save the ocean, but I think they didn't go public to get us to see this... how we can help our own oceans?

F5: No, because I think it is too extreme for me to contact any organisation because I do not have enough time to find an organisation or to call them.

To conclude, one of the issues that emerged from these findings is the general public's lack of familiarity with marine life conservation organisations. This shows that it is important for these organisations to approach the public and to include information about these organisations in future BD filmmaking.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

The objectives of the present study were met through these findings, indicating that the blue documentary (BD) is potentially a key persuasive device for social change in relation to marine life conservation movement by the general public in Malaysia. These changes can be categorised into three different aspects: (i) at the individual level, (ii) local issues increase positive attitudes at the individual level, and (iii) intervention is needed from the responsible parties for greater social change. Firstly, the positive attitudinal changes at the individual

level can be seen through how viewers informed other people about marine life conservation, reduced their plastic usage, took more responsibility for beach preservation, were interested in initiatives to recycle and managed their waste and rubbish properly.

In addition, this study has provided reliable evidence on the importance of representing local issues in a BD, as they will have a more positive attitude towards marine life conservation in the long run, especially where it has become a factor for minimal and even zero consumption of seafood and marine life endangered species; they will also seek additional knowledge of the marine life conservation. This result suggests that the local documentary industry, particularly the government agency of FINAS and RTM should concentrate on producing blue documentaries in order to promote large scale positive attitudes towards marine life conservation in the future.

Meanwhile, the lack of intervention by the responsible parties and the limited exposure to local marine life conservation organisations has resulted in the public being reluctant to participate in mass conservation activities, making small donations and hesitating to contact conservation organisations. This situation indicates a general lack of support and campaigns by the local authorities and conservation organisations about marine life extinction in Malaysia. In conclusion, we can see that a BD is vital in promoting a change in attitudes and perceptions and can thus potentially encourage Malaysians' social change concerning the marine life conservation movement.

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This thesis was designed to investigate both the effective rhetorical elements in blue documentaries (BDs) and the viewers' responses to the effect of these rhetorical elements on their education, emotions and attitude. This was followed, two months later, by accounts of their attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation. The data were obtained from 36 respondents during three data-collection process (pre-interviews before the BD screening, focus-group discussions immediately after and post-interviews two months later). This yielded six focus-group discussions and 72 in-depth interviews – a large sample for a longitudinal study.

### **7.2 Summary of key arguments and discussion**

I discovered that the blue documentary (BD) invites concern about the environment and encourages people to think positively about conservation – particularly of marine life, because it gave viewers the opportunity to discover the detrimental aspects of this unfamiliar world, thus making it different from any other nature documentaries that show beautiful marine creatures. This result demonstrates that the dissemination of knowledge and information about marine life extinction which is generally unreachable by the public is vital in engaging and encouraging the viewers towards marine life conservation movement.

My empirical evidence (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6) has shown that a BD can be considered as a powerful persuasive medium for promoting an environmental conservation movement due to the distinctive rhetorical elements of ethos (ethical appeals), pathos (emotional appeals) and logos (rational appeals) that have significantly convinced the viewers' educational, emotional and attitudinal changes towards the issue of marine life extinction. This suggests that the emotional appeal – particularly the locality of the issue represented – is the strongest element for this conjunction among Malaysians. In addition, the evidence of marine life extinction in the portrayal of the human exploitation of marine life habitats through a destructive visual imagery of plastic pollution, animal suffering and anthropomorphism offered a new perspective that forms a positive relationship between humans and the natural world. The narrative of the conservationist personal journey in the BD also changes the

perception of many that some humans are exploiting this habitat for economic reasons, signifying the importance of heroic narrative in communicating and informing the public about conservation.

This thesis differs from earlier studies on the topic of the audience reception of the eco-documentaries and its impacts on viewers (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Nisbet and Aufderheide 2009) due to its methodological approach – such as a survey, content analysis and participant observation – that limits insight to be gained into the direct perspectives of the audience. Although previous studies assert that eco-documentaries can increase awareness, attitudes and even behaviour towards conservation, a critical gap is the paucity of systematic research about which elements of documentary films are effective in encouraging viewers to adopt a conservation stance.

Therefore, the importance and strength of the present study lie in its investigation of the viewers' direct perspectives on which rhetorical elements are effective in raising awareness, what the response is and how rhetorical elements helped to change viewers' educational, emotional and attitudinal outlooks on marine life conservation. For example, my findings confirm previous studies (Arendt and Matthes 2016; Janpol and Dilts 2016) which show that a BD can encourage viewers to have a tendency to make donation for conservation. However, insights into the key factors encouraging a real donation to be made by the viewers are influenced by the availability of the donation platform – not the case for my respondents due to the limited donation platforms in their neighbourhood. This, in turn, suggests that it is important for the responsible parties, especially ENGOs, to widen their approach and to reach out to more people in collecting conservation funds.

In addition, this thesis also contends that geographical location and social experience play a significant role in viewers interpreting and understanding the message in the BD. For example, this thesis claims that both local and foreign BD productions share remarkably similar persuasive filmmaking techniques and narratives; however the differences were in their news values and the viewers' comprehension of the message, as the local BD (LUM) made viewers feel more engaged and close to the message represented, unlike the detachment from the message which resulted from watching the MB. This, in turn, exerts an influence on the level of message comprehension, as the coastal and rural populations were having difficulties in understanding and interpreting the message contained in the MB, limiting any possibility for further action being taken towards the environmental conservation

movement. This thesis emphasises that the causes of the lack of conservation awareness – particularly marine life extinction – among Malaysian public are its ineffective medium and continuous practices of importing and screening foreign eco-documentaries in the country. Not only that, but this thesis highlighted the fact that viewers' geographical location can result in different attitude changes, as shown by the coastal population, which demonstrated a high interest in exploring marine life – not the case for the other population due to the former's geographical intimacy with the marine life habitat.

Surprisingly, this thesis also sheds new light on this topic, in which, without any added support, the BD alone can result in a possible long-term pro-conservation attitude at the individual level – a departure from previous studies' assertions of the short-term effect of eco-documentaries on the audience (Beattie and McGuire 2011; Farnsworth and Lichter 2012; Fortner 1985; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Hughes 2011; Janpol and Dilts 2016; Kaapa 2010; Lin 2013; Morar and Peterlicean 2012; Nolan 2010; Prnjat 2016), and additional support is needed after the eco-documentary viewing experiences for long-term behaviour changes to take place (Hofman and Hughes 2018).

The limited utilisation of documentary films/programmes in earlier studies – for instance, the use of short clips or extracts instead of entire documentaries, possibly because of time and financial constraints – may have resulted in this conclusion. Meanwhile, this study employed a systematic qualitative approach that included pre-interviews before the BD screening, focus-group discussions immediately after and post-interviews two months later. This approach enabled me to bridge this gap and suggest that rhetorical elements can be useful to encourage greater pro-conservation awareness and movement among the general public. Furthermore, this study reveals that intervention from the responsible parties is needed for the mass environmental conservation movement, indicating that the public need support from the various parties if they are to be involved in voluntary conservation activity.

This thesis also indicates that a BD can have a significant role in persuading an audience's emotions or even the possibility of a long-term positive perceptions and/or attitude towards marine life conservation, and in verifying the potential for a BD to be a potent medium in promoting pro-conservation by the Malaysian public. Hence, the key arguments for this study are discussed within three contexts, based on my research questions (see Chapter 1.4): which rhetorical elements are effective in raising viewers' awareness of the need for marine life conservation, what the viewers' responses to these elements were and the viewers'

attitudinal changes in the two months following their blue documentary (BD) viewing experience – as concluded in the next sub-chapter.

### ***7.2.1 The ethical, emotional and rational appeals raised public awareness of marine life conservation, with the emotional appeal as the strongest element***

In general, I discovered that the key rhetorical elements in a BD consist of the ethical, emotional and rational appeals; in my study, they have effectively persuaded viewers about, as well as increased their awareness of, marine life conservation. Above all, it is significant to note that the emotional appeal is the strongest rhetoric at play in blue documentary filmmaking.

#### **7.2.1.1 Emotional appeal as the strongest element in persuading BD viewers of the need for marine life conservation**

Most nature documentaries, including blue documentaries, focus on emotional appeal in order to move the audience to act in a certain way, depending on the issues raised. As previous studies have also shown, emotional appeal is constantly used in eco-documentaries, including the rhetoric of animal suffering (Burt 2005; Hazel 2005; Kaapa 2010; Lockwood 2016; Simpson 2008; Smail 2016; 2014; Smith 2014), the aesthetic experience (Corner 2005; Ivakhiv 2013; Nichols 1991; Renov 2004), the autobiographical narrative (Chang 2017; Eckersley 2007; Hughes 2014; Rosteck and Frenz 2009; Smail 2014), anthropomorphism (Adcroft 2010; Bagust 2008; Bousé 2000; Evans 2015; Guthrie 1997; Hughes 2011; King 1996; Pierson 2005; Porter 2006; Rowley and Johnson 2016) and music (Donnelly 2001; Kalinak 2010; Mervyn 2015; Nichols 2016).

However, my study has extended the discussion of emotional appeal as the strongest element triggering viewers' responses and persuading them to prevent marine life extinction. The underlying factors in the emotional appeal were the locality of the issue, the autobiographical narrative, the animal suffering, the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, anthropomorphism, the aesthetic values of the marine life, the body language of the characters and the music as shown in the Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1: Emotional appeal (pathos) in a BD to encourage people’s conservation**

<b>P a t h o s</b>	<b>Locality of the issue</b>	<b>Autobiographic narrative</b>	<b>Animal suffering</b>	<b>Plastic pollution</b>
	A sense of belonging by living in the same country or biophysical surroundings	A feeling of hope and admiration	A sympathy for the unfortunate marine life	Uncomfortable feeling lead to a high moral responsibility for disposal habits
	<b>Music</b>	<b>Body language of the character</b>	<b>Aesthetic values</b>	<b>Anthropomorphism</b>
	Creates and resonates emotions between the screen and the audience	Enhance the information and contributed to the tension	Increase curiosity and desire to know more about marine life	An emotional attachment to marine life

The locality of the issue was found to be a key appealing factor because it allowed the viewers to feel part of a mutual social environment (a sense of belonging by living in the same country or biophysical surroundings). It also created a closeness between the message and the audience and, at the same time, reduced the audience’s detachment compared to a foreign issue. It is argued here that the locality of an issue is vital in enriching the relevance of a BD.

Secondly, the autobiographical narrative through the main and the supporting characters’ journey has promoted the determination and the efforts they have put into conservation while, at the same time, raising viewers’ feelings of hope and admiration for these experts. Thirdly, the animal suffering evoked viewers’ sympathy for the unfortunate marine life. This sympathy has allowed viewers to experience distant suffering; they found the plastic pollution, over-fishing and shark-finning to be disturbing and expressed their anger by condemning the immoral human actions of the perpetrators.

Fourthly, the visual image of plastic pollution, which has never been debated in any previous study, had a significant influence on the viewers’ emotions because of their dislike of seeing it. It gave them an uncomfortable feeling, which later turned to guilt – for instance, the traces of human existence on the ocean floor, with the abundance of familiar debris such as plastic

bags, as represented in the local BD, encouraged viewers to take on a high moral responsibility for the general public's disposal habits. Next, anthropomorphism encouraged an emotional attachment to marine life, showing recognisable marine life behaviour and comparing it to that of humans in an understandable social context. For example, the suffering caused by cuts and habitat destruction, as well as any tragedy that occurred, including shark-finning and pollution, aroused the viewers' empathy.

Then, the aesthetic values seen through the richness of marine life, which excited the viewers while endorsing the novelty of the images, have been a driving factor in increasing the viewers' curiosity and desire to know more about this species. We then have the body language of the character, which enhanced the information by adding the character's facial expressions, contributing to the tension and convincing viewers that what they are seeing is both true and important for conservation. Lastly, the music is effectively appealing to viewers' emotions, as it creates and resonates emotions between the screen and the audience – such as by enhancing viewers' sadness. At the same time, the music highlights the facial expressions of the characters when facing the challenges that come with marine life extinction issues.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the rhetorical elements in blue documentary filmmaking are effective in raising conservation awareness because of their representation of marine life extinction, awakening the public's realisation of these harmful human activities. This result indicates that the rhetorical elements – the locality of the issue, the autobiographical narrative, the animal suffering, the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, anthropomorphism, the aesthetic values, the body language of the characters and the music – need to be considered in future BD filmmaking, in order to stimulate greater social change towards marine life conservation.

#### **7.2.1.2 Ethical appeal is important in confirming the factual accuracy of the BD for marine life conservation**

I have also found that there are three ethical appeals that are effective in alerting viewers to the need for marine life conservation: expert knowledge, the supporting characters and the language. These three elements have helped the viewers to give a constructive reception to the marine life extinction issue, as shown in the Figure 7.2. These findings are found to be similar to those in previous studies – the expert knowledge of the main character (Nichols



1991) and of the supporting characters (Kaapa 2010) are constantly being used in most nature documentaries.

**Figure 7.2: Ethical appeal (logos) in a BD to encourage people’s conservation**

E t h o s	<b>Expert knowledge</b>	<b>Supporting character</b>	<b>Language</b>
	A reliable source for the audience	Enhance the main character’s expertise	Language can affect different levels of conservation awareness

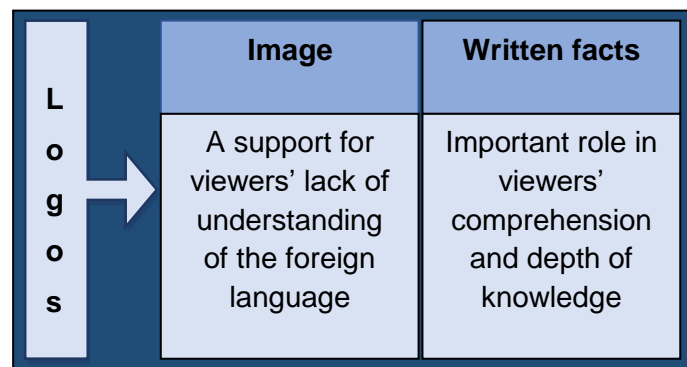
The relevance of the expert’s knowledge and the supporting characters in documentary filmmaking is clearly supported by my findings, as I have shown that the expert’s knowledge allowed my respondents to understand the marine life extinction issue from a reliable source and that the supporting characters enhanced the main character’s expertise on the topic. This finding indicates that the characters chosen in BD filmmaking have a big impact on viewers’ responses to marine life conservation.

In addition, another finding is perhaps obvious – documentary films/programmes in English must be subtitled in the Malay language because this plays a major role in increasing viewers’ comprehension of the message represented in a BD, which can lead to different levels of conservation awareness depending on the various locations of the respondents. The results of my investigation show that the use of the English language in the foreign BD impeded my respondents’ understanding of the main message, particularly the non-native English speakers such as Malaysians, indicating the different English language proficiency levels amongst them. The use of a language familiar to the public is thus important to ensure a better understanding of the issue addressed. Thus, my findings suggest that, to encourage greater social change in marine life conservation, documentary productions should consider producing more local BDs or subtitled foreign BDs to ensure the public’s greater understanding of the issue.

### 7.2.1.3 The rational appeal enhanced the factual accuracy in the BD

In this study, the rational appeal comprises the image and the written facts, which have emerged as reliable elements backing the factual accuracy of the ethical appeal on the marine life extinction issue. Without these elements, the information would not be fully received. Collectively, the rhetoric of the images, particularly animal imagery (Berger 1980; Blewitt 2010; Burt 2002; Cubitt 2005; Hughes 2011; 2014 Jamieson 1985; Rosteck and Frentz 2009; Smaill 2016; 2014) and the written facts (Aaltonen 2014; Ivakhiv 2013) are clearly similar to those in previous studies, in that they effectively strengthen the factual accuracy of a BD.

**Figure 7.3: Rational appeal (logos) in a BD to encourage people’s conservation**



Moreover, I found that the images are vital in BD filmmaking in enhancing people’s comprehension of its main message, particularly for those who are not very fluent in the English language. Their limited English proficiency has been the reason why many informative messages conveyed verbally in English in the foreign BD did not reach the viewers, indicating that images can make up for the viewers’ lack of understanding of the foreign language. The importance of image in constructing the scientific knowledge for better message comprehension in a documentary is supported by the previous studies (Stafford 1991 cited in Rose 2016, p. 3; Pearson *et al.* 2011).

In addition, this study has shown that written facts play a significant role in viewers’ comprehension of the message; any information containing scientific facts, figures and terms represented in written form all enhanced the message given. This finding suggests that the common practice in many Western documentaries and films of focusing on visual storytelling is still the strongest means of conveying information. However, I contend that scientific facts appearing as text on screen, play an important role in viewers’ comprehension and depth of

knowledge. This finding is consistent with the textual intertitles and captions that helped viewers to focus on the story described by Aaltonen (2014), Ivakhiv (2013) and Lineberger (2001). Several respondents in my study wanted more information about scientific terms and scientific data that were used in the BDs in written form. This shows that textual representation of facts will help filmmakers communicate scientific information to viewers in a great value.

To conclude, all the above should be taken into consideration in future BD filmmaking when aiming for greater comprehension by viewers of the message given in the BD. Hence, I believe that the proper use of ethical, emotional and rational appeal, as I discovered, does have a great impact in persuading the public to embrace greater social change concerning environmental and species conservation movement, and confirms the importance of this medium over any other media as an effective platform (Doyle 2011 as cited in McAuliffe *et al.* 2014; Merkt *et al.* 2011; Pereira and Carneiro 2014) which should be featured in educational programmes and curriculum systems (Frank 2013) to encourage nation-building about marine life sustainability.

### ***7.2.2 The positive change in the viewers' education, emotions and attitude towards marine life conservation***

The ethical, emotional and rational appeal discovered above have resulted in positive changes in viewers' education, emotions and attitudes towards marine life conservation, as supported by previous research (Harness and Drossman 2011; Hofman and Hughes 2018; Holbert *et al.* 2003; Hughes 2011; Mills 2010). However, this study also found that the BD gave viewers the opportunity to explore the detrimental aspects of marine life, thus making it different from other nature documentaries that show beautiful marine creatures. This result shows that the dissemination of knowledge and information about marine life extinction that is generally unreachable by the public is vital in engaging and encouraging educational, emotional and attitudinal changes among the viewers towards marine life conservation.

Firstly, I have shown that the BD viewers experienced positive educational change about marine life because they were provided with new knowledge; I have also demonstrated the importance of the BD as curricular material to give people an early exposure to marine life extinction. This information was channelled through the ethical appeal of the expert knowledge, together with the emotional appeal of the aesthetic values and the visual metaphor of plastic pollution. In addition, the BD provided the public with knowledge about

the threats to marine life, including information on the negative effects of human activities as well as on the shark-finning industry. These educational changes were channelled through the emotional appeal of the animal suffering, the visual images of plastic pollution and the aesthetical values. The BD also conveys information about the various species of marine life, about the importance of conservation campaigns to the public as well as becoming an eye-opener on the limited educational TV programmes about marine life extinction in the country. These educational changes were distributed through the combination of the emotional appeal of the animal suffering, the visuals of plastic pollution, the aesthetic values of the richness of marine life and the locality of the issue. It is also significant to point out that the rhetoric of the locality in the issue represented, together with the aesthetic values of the richness of marine life in the local BD have increased patriotism among the viewers due to the realisation that Malaysia has one of the largest marine eco-systems in the world, and indicating a need to have local BDs to encourage greater social change towards marine life conservation.

Secondly, I found that my BD viewers displayed strong emotional changes towards marine life conservation. It is evidence that the disappointment and sadness felt by the viewers was triggered through animal suffering, the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, the music, the aesthetic values and the locality of the issue, indicating that the emotional appeal alone can be a powerful tool for this conjunction. Meanwhile, the feelings of sympathy, anger, guilt and responsibility for marine life conservation, as well as a gratefulness/respect for the conservationists were elicited through the supporting characters, the autobiographical narrative, the animal suffering, the visual metaphor of plastic pollution, the music and the locality of the issue, indicating that the ethical appeal combined together with emotional appeal can be powerful tools for greater emotional changes. This result also shows that the viewers' feelings of guilt and responsibility for conserving marine life were evoked by the rhetorical trio of the locality of the issue, the animal suffering and the visual metaphor of plastic pollution. This indicates that a strong emotional reaction, mostly stimulated by the emotional appeal (pathos), belies the fact that this rhetorical element has become the strongest persuasive power in convincing the public to respond to marine life conservation.

Lastly, this study has also shown that my BD viewers exhibited a tendency for positive attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation. This is because the BD inspired the public's desire to educate their children, to explore marine life, to be a volunteer for a conservation movement, to reduce plastic usage in daily life, to recycle, to reduce their seafood consumption, to change habitual practices when going to the beach and to donate

to charitable organisations. These changes were stimulated through the emotional appeal of plastic pollution and animal suffering, the aesthetical values and the locality of the issue. Also, the public was encouraged to participate in conservation activities through the rhetoric of plastic pollution, animal suffering, the aesthetical values and the locality of the issue together with the rational appeal through the images, indicating that visual images are a powerful force in persuading the public on this issue. Meanwhile, the combination of ethical (ethos), emotional (pathos) and rational appeals (logos) pushed the public to spread their new knowledge on conservation, to contact responsible organisations for conservation and for organising outreach programmes for the public. In addition, one significant finding which emerged from this study is that the emotional appeal through the locality of the issue increased the viewers' tendency to lessen their marine life consumption, especially of endangered species such as marine turtle eggs and shark fin. This study also revealed that the coastal population was the most reluctant about becoming a volunteer for organisation activities as well as in donating, indicating that geographical location plays a significant role in igniting attitudinal changes among the public (see Sub-chapter 7.2.3).

To conclude, this research has filled the knowledge gap left by previous studies on the effective rhetorical elements in a documentary that influence public education, emotions and attitude, persuading them to become more positive towards marine life conservation. The findings reveal that the locality of the issue represented is a significant factor in the sense of moral and national responsibility experienced by respondents, concerning the protection of the country's iconic species. These results suggest that it is important to engage people to what matters to them by representing domestic events and issues within countries so that the audiences can share the physical surroundings in the BD; my research has proved that this element is vital in stimulating social change towards marine life conservation. Hence, the current trend of local media key players particularly Malaysia, in importing environmental documentary from Western countries is not relevant (see Sub-chapter 1.3), as my finding shows that the locality of the issue represented is the most effective rhetoric to promote marine life conservation. Thus, these results can inform the key players in the local conservation movement to utilise these elements in their environmental communication with the public.

### ***7.2.3 The public's long-term positive perceptions and/or attitudinal changes towards marine life conservation***

This study identified a number of sustained perceptions and/or attitude changes among the respondents, attesting to the BD's potential as an agent for long-term marine life conservation. At a broad level, it is important to note that it is vital for new information and knowledge about marine life extinction be conveyed to the public in order to develop and sustain pro-conservation attitudes. In doing this, I would suggest that BD films have to be made accessible in classrooms, schools, community events, public places, and even the cinema. I argue that it is significant to show the entire documentary film/programme, unlike the methodology adopted in previous studies. However, if extracts are to be shown rather than complete films, my study suggests that they should be chosen with a view to including specific rhetorical elements that move viewers powerfully, such as locality of the issue, plastic pollution and animal suffering.

This finding contradicts those from previous studies on the short-term impact of documentaries on environmental awareness (Nolan 2010) but is consistent with the long-term impact described by Hofman and Hughes (2018). I argue that emotional appeal is the most powerful element in encouraging a sustained perceptions and/or attitude towards conservation at the individual level and it is importance to acknowledge that most studies find that emotion is the strongest rhetorical tool in documentaries – therefore BD's are no different; however the insight of audience's perspective about which emotional appeal can be powerful to influence conservation, make this study different from the other. The relevance of the issue represented to the audience (the locality of the issue, as it can ignite a sense of belonging) is another stimulus for a further sustained positive perceptions and/or attitude at the individual level. Meanwhile, interventions from responsible parties are needed for the public's greater participation in a mass conservation movement.

Therefore, a BD can encourage long-term perceptions and/or attitudinal changes towards conservation in three ways: (i) at the individual level, (ii) through local issues which further the positive attitude at the individual level, and (iii) intervention from the parties responsible for greater social change. Firstly, over the two months since viewing the BDs, my respondents changed their attitude at the individual level, as they informed other people about marine life conservation, reduced their plastic usage, were more responsible towards beach preservation, were interested in initiatives to recycle, and managed their waste and rubbish properly. This could be accomplished through the representation of the natural world

– particularly the rhetoric of animal suffering, and visual image of plastic pollution – as detrimentally affected by human activities; this is particularly effective in persuading viewers. In general, this suggests that emotional attachment can yield greater social change.

Secondly, the relevance or familiarity between the issue represented and the viewers – in this study known as the locality of the issue – has encouraged further attitudinal change at the individual level, includes less marine life consumption in their daily diet, and has even resulted in a zero consumption of endangered marine life species among the coastal population. It has also stimulated the pursuit of additional knowledge on marine life conservation among the public. This assertion has filled a knowledge gap left by a previous study (Hofman and Hughes 2018) on the effects of a documentary on marine life consumption. Thus, the present study has shown that the locality of the issue represented has made a significant contribution to environmental and species sustainability, as its relevance and association for the people has led their long-term change in attitudes to marine life conservation.

Lastly, the interventions from responsible parties, such as organising conservation activities, collecting funds and reaching out to the public, have emerged as reliable stimulants for a sustainable attitudinal change towards conservation at the general or communal level. These include participation in mass conservation activities, making donations and making actual contact with conservation organisations. To some extent, these findings reinforce the relevance of post-viewing support in terms of reminders, prompts and strategies (Hofman and Hughes 2018), and support from close people (Mustafa and Yusoff 2011); these act as a significant stimulus for a long-term behavioural change towards conservation. Meanwhile, the present study indicates that, with new information or knowledge, the general public do not have any difficulties in conserving marine life on their own in the long run. These results suggest that the general public's poor participation in conservation activities is due to the lack of provision by policymakers and responsible parties in promoting this issue to the masses.

Taken together, we can conclude that the effective rhetorical elements in BD filmmaking, particularly the locality of the issue and the destructive visual imagery of animal suffering and plastic pollution, have become the most powerful elements that promote pro-conservation awareness and a long-term pro-conservation perception and attitude among the public, signifying the importance of the use of BD in promoting a greater environmental conservation movement in the future.

### **7.3 Implication of the study**

This study has a number of significant implications for policymakers, media practitioners and media research. These implications will be discussed in accordance with government policies on marine conservation, key media player practices, as well as documentary studies, particularly on theoretical considerations.

Firstly, the evidence from this study suggests that there is a relatively low awareness among the general public in Malaysia of marine life conservation due to limited media exposure and the small number of awareness campaigns throughout the country. I therefore call for the government, its agencies and other policymakers to concentrate on conserving marine life, an environment that the country relies on for regional and international economic activities. This finding was supported by Lee (2010), who stated that the Malaysian government and most of its citizens are not motivated to take conservation action due to the lack of knowledge and information on marine life extinction, albeit knowing the importance of having a sustainable marine life.

Meanwhile, O'Bryhim and Parsons (2015) indicated that, if there were an increase in public knowledge, then marine life conservation, especially on shark species, can be achieved. They went on to say that it is important to ensure that the media conveys accurate and unbiased information about the marine life extinction issue to the people. Thus, the evidence from my study suggests that the amendment of government policies and the management of the conservation of marine resources is necessary – i.e., by increasing the funding for species protection and conservation. This funding is also important for media practitioners so that they can produce local educational programmes such as the blue documentary. In doing so, the new and additional information or knowledge regarding marine life can be disseminated to the public. My study has shown that these programmes can inform the public of the government department that specifically focuses on marine life sustainability, and the existence of places such as Marine Parks. Thus, I believe that the adoption of audio-visual information, such as documentary films or programmes, by the government, can be one way to increase marine life conservation awareness.

Secondly, key media players should represent the marine life extinction issue through audio-visual information, and make these programmes available to the general public, as I found this platform to be rhetorically effective in promoting a change in perceptions of and attitudes towards marine life conservation. An educational programme involves high production costs



– a finding which is crucial in order to ensure that an accurate tool is employed. Thus, the future of documentary filmmaking for species conservation in Malaysia needs institutional collaboration between many parties, as a documentary can be a vehicle for the unity of different opinions among the people and to transmit information and raise conservation awareness (Chavez *et al.* 2004; Levinson *et al.* 2016), something which is clearly supported by the current findings. The collaboration could involve government agencies such as the National Film Department of Malaysia (FNM), and the National Film Development Corporation (FINAS); the government-owned television station Radio Television Malaysia (RTM), private stations (ASTRO, MEDIA PRIMA), production houses and independent filmmakers. Together they could cover various aspects, which include funding, skills, technology, equipment for and techniques of underwater filmmaking, as well as broadcasting this issue widely for greater social change.

Lastly, the findings can be used to develop interdisciplinary research between the media and environmental or species sustainability actors, aimed at finding a persuasive communication channel through studying rhetorical theory for greater social change. Filmmakers or media researchers require continuous variables for their existing knowledge and practice of persuasive communication. Although rhetoric is used in all documentary-making, mine is the first study to report on the employment of rhetorical theory and its persuasive power from the public's direct perspective on their increased awareness of marine life conservation. My findings have indicated that the three rhetorical elements of ethical, emotional and rational appeal should be taken into account in studying educational films for social change. This is because these rhetorical tools are powerful in stimulating a long-term desire to overcome the environmental degradation issue. Moreover, the persuasion strategies in documentary filmmaking for social change are always constructed from a Western outlook – such as those by Nichols (2001), Marquis (2013), and Stewart *et al.* (2007). However, it is interesting to note that the locality of the issue, together with the richness of the marine life in a particular geographical region, can actually become a persuasive rhetoric that possibly increases feelings of responsibility to protect the country's iconic species, such as marine turtles and coral reefs.

#### **7.4 Significance of the study**

As previously stated, I used rhetorical theory that conjugates Aristotelian' views, as well as Bill Nichols's viewpoints on the rhetorical trio of ethos, pathos and logos to explore the advantages of the documentary film/programme, and to identify which rhetorical elements

are effective in promoting a change in perceptions and attitudes and thus potentially encouraging social change towards marine life conservation. A number of significant factors have emerged from this study which support the role of the documentary in social change, and they are relevant equally to the government and its agencies, other organisations, key media industry players and documentary-makers, non-governmental organisations, researchers and students, as well as the general public.

Firstly, the results of my study will inform the government and its agencies, including the Department of Marine Parks, when exercising their role of regulating marine species conservation. This can be in the form of reviewing their conservation policy and standard operating procedures (SOP), particularly for Marine Park Malaysia and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (APMM). In addition, it could potentially be a means for the government to achieve its national biodiversity objectives. The findings could be used to increase environmental awareness among Malaysians, particularly of endangered species, be they marine life or other wildlife species, by screening blue documentaries in public places such as schools, higher learning institutions and local television.

Secondly, my findings provide an exciting opportunity for the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), as a marine-focused university which is reputed nationally and respected globally, to advance the public's understanding of the media as a tool for social change, as well as to provide new perspectives on the reception of the media and its message on conservation. A new field study course utilising underwater filmmaking for marine life sustainability could be developed as part of the curriculum offered by UMT. In addition, as a higher learning institution, UMT could also produce graduates to add to the existing number of people who dedicate their lives to sheltering and protecting Malaysia's marine life for future generations.

Thirdly, this study can benefit filmmakers from all organisations, including government TV stations, private TV stations, production houses, independent filmmakers and activists. These creative groups can use the findings from my study to urge the government to provide funding, technical facilities and equipment to aid the production of blue documentaries. This study also paves the way for collaboration between experts in different fields, such as filmmakers, oceanologists, and non-governmental organisations, all concerned with disseminating knowledge on environmental conservation for future generations.

Besides, the findings should make an important contribution to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists, in terms of how they can expand their methods of

instilling conservation awareness among their target groups, where a direct approach to the public is welcome. The screening of blue documentaries could be part of their conservation programmes, aimed at different levels of society, from those in kindergarten and primary school to those in secondary schools, higher learning institutions (universities or colleges) and, in particular, environmental organisations, in a bid to encourage pro-conservation, which would include collecting donations for the existing conservation fund.

In addition, the findings from my study are also important for scholars and individuals whose interest is on the sustainability of endangered species. The study can also be expanded and specialised in species conservation. It will benefit the younger generations, especially research students, as this finding can expose them to the reality of the condition of marine life and may trigger their interest. From the aspect of media effects, this study can generate new perspectives amongst students on how media can be used as a tool for marine environmental protection. Finally, the findings from my study can be used as academic references or material for a review exercise among themselves in the future.

Finally, marine life is facing a serious threat of extinction as a result of human activities and natural events. Therefore, Malaysian citizens can use the findings to foster new perspectives on the protection of marine life, as well as to increase their accountability in sustaining the marine environment by participating in volunteering activities. This study will form a point of reference for future generations of Malaysians, enabling them to obtain information, handle and prevent any potential destruction of our marine ecosystem.

## **7.5 Limitations of the study**

The findings in this report are subject to at least four limitations – the study design, study setting, study sampling and study instruments.

### **7.5.1 Study design**

The study was designed as qualitative research with focus-group discussions and two stages of in-depth interviews (pre- and post-documentary viewing experiences). It has generated rich data on the public's viewpoints and opinions on the effective rhetorical elements in blue documentaries, resulting in a positive change in their perceptions of and attitudes towards marine life conservation. However, clear statistical data are yet to be yielded since the aim of the present study was to obtain richer data on the audience's

viewing experiences, rather than to conduct a wider study. Nevertheless, the current study contributes to our understanding of the role of the blue documentary in marine life conservation in Malaysia, which can be viewed as a starting point for further research.

### **7.5.2 Study setting**

The study was conducted in the peninsular Malaysia. Three states – Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu and Johor – were selected as the locations of the study, representing the population from three different areas: (i) the urban area, (ii) the rural area, and (iii) the coastal area. Thus, although the study setting was limited to the peninsular Malaysia, future research could include East Malaysia or Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak), thus providing potential opportunities to examine BDs on a wider scale. This could possibly generate more variables in future investigations. Another limitation of this study were my time and financial constraints – a duration of two months for a longitudinal study can be considered as relatively short, and a longer duration of the investigation should be encouraged in order to yield greater variability.

### **7.5.3 Study sampling**

Non-probability sampling by means of purposive sampling as the specific method has been employed in this study. This type of sampling is considered as the strongest for qualitative research, as the units to be interviewed are selected on the basis that they are the most accurately related to the research or representative of the population while, at the same time, enabling the researcher to concentrate on the values and social meanings of the people in a specific cultural context (Babbie 2010; Lindlof and Taylor 2002). This sampling made it possible for me to include all the respondents who met the inclusion criteria of the study: Malaysians residing in the Klang Valley, Felda Kemelah and Kuala Besut, a young population (aged 21–35 years old), of any ethnicity and marital status and their voluntary participation. Apart from that, in previous research, a statistical sample on an urban population and students was a common limitation, and this has impeded the rich data obtained on the variables that may influence a full investigation on the rhetorical elements that impacted public conservation awareness of the need for greater social change. However, qualitative methods also involve very small numbers and are hardly representative of a nation.

#### **7.5.4 Study materials**

The study was carried out using two documentaries, *Lestari Ujana Marin* or The Sustainable Marine Park (representing local content), and *Mission Blue* (representing foreign content). Unfortunately, the duration, quality and language for both documentaries varied greatly due to the limited number of local BDs in Malaysia. This calls for more local underwater filmmaking, whose end products can be used as study materials in the future.

#### **7.6 Recommendations for future research**

The findings have shown a clear relationship between the role of the documentary film/programme and species conservation awareness among the general public in Malaysia. Empirically, the focus-group discussions and the two stages of semi-structured interviews strengthened each other in elucidating the powerful rhetorical elements that appealed to the public's education, emotions and attitude, and consequently contributed to the positive relationship between the blue documentary and marine life conservation. This finding has shown the ability of the blue documentary to empower local marine life conservation movements in Malaysia. However, this is the first study to report on the advantages of blue documentaries on long-term marine life pro-conservation awareness, perceptions and attitudes, and this claim still needs additional investigation to further strengthen the notion. Thus, I suggest that further study can be carried out through documentary screenings led by responsible parties, such as government agencies working on the Marine Park or other non-governmental organisations, enabling them to assess mass conservation activities among the general public.

In terms of methodological enhancement, it would be interesting to compare small-screen BD viewing experiences with mass screening experiences within the same population, particularly a coastal population, with statistical evidence, instead of qualitative. Since this longitudinal study together with my qualitative approach has resulted in financial burdens for me, employing a method which requires less cost is highly recommended for future research. Thus, a quantitative approach via an online survey over a longer period of time, in relation to respondents' BD viewing experiences, or qualitative observation of the viewers' social media accounts, are two methods that could be considered. The different approach suggested above may be able to produce more variables for the impacts that a non-fiction film or programme has on the issue of marine life extinction among the general public.

Moreover, further research in this field could contribute to the development of a rhetorical theory on the ecological catastrophe. Thus, it is suggested that future research to be focused on the investigation of underwater non-fiction filmmaking through discourse analysis from an expert's standpoint to strengthen the educational function of these media. Finally, a change in the direction of the investigation could be made in future research, to attain the perspectives of other organisations or practitioners – such as filmmakers, academics, students, activists, policymakers and public officials – on the blue documentary discourse for social change. This investigation would allow for various viewpoints, from different levels of educational or professional backgrounds, to be expressed.

## **7.7 Summary**

This qualitative study investigated the rhetorical function of the blue documentary and its relationship with marine life conservation and its impact on the general public in Malaysia. The current study does not support published literature on the short-term impact of the documentary film on people's behaviour but confirms that the rhetoric of the marine ecological catastrophe, particularly if it is a home affair, can be a stimulus for a long-term marine life pro-conservation awareness, perception and attitude. The rhetorical elements, the public's response to these rhetorical elements on their educational, emotional and attitudinal changes, and their long-term attitude towards conservation have been identified, and the implications, limitations, significance and recommendations for future research have been presented. In conclusion, then, my study facilitates a new direction for policymakers, media practitioners, and non-governmental organisations to implement outreach conservation programmes at the national level, while conducting a holistic assessment and implementation of the relevant strategies to correct the general lack of awareness on marine life extinction.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Focus group and interview procedure**

Interview procedure guides the researcher in conducting six focus group discussions and 72 in-depth interviews (two stages interview session). Thus, the formulated research questions and supplementary questions for the focus groups and in-depth interviews as identified in the literature review, were derived from the concept of rhetorical theory. Hence, the data on the effective rhetorical elements, the viewer's responses to these rhetorical elements, as well as two months later of attitudinal changes taken towards marine life conservation by the respondents were assessed through the questions, as listed below:

#### **Focus Group Discussion**

##### **Respondent's Details**

1. Age
2. Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Marital Status
5. Hometown
6. Area

##### **Discussion - Questions**

**RQ 1: Which rhetorical elements of ethical appeal (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos) and rational appeal (logos) are effective in raising viewers' awareness of the need for marine life conservation?**

##### **1. Ethos (Ethical appeal)**

1. What do you think about this documentary?
2. Have you learned new knowledge from this documentary? Please discuss.
3. Can you tell me the most interesting thing about this documentary?
4. Do you find that the characters in the documentary give an impact towards the message in that documentary? Please discuss about the character.
5. Can you understand the language used in the documentary?
6. Based on your opinion, what are the main messages behind this documentary?
7. Do you think that you can get the messages better if they use or translated this

documentary into your own language?

8. Do you think that you would understand the message better if this documentary was in your own language?
9. Do you think the current language use is difficult for you to understand the message in this documentary?

## **2. Pathos (Emotional appeal)**

1. What do you feel after watching this documentary?
2. Can you discuss the changes of your emotion after watching this documentary?
3. What are the elements in this documentary that excite you?
4. Does music in this documentary helps you to feel emotional? Please discuss.
5. In your opinion, based on the documentary, which is the most powerful scene that change or influence you to conserve marine life?
6. Do you find the aesthetic elements are effective in persuading your pro-conservation behaviour?
7. Do you think that the issues related to you are more important compared to the foreign documentary?
8. Do you think that the issues represented are relate to you personally?
9. Do you find the beauty of marine life is effective in persuading your pro-conservation behaviour?
10. Do you find that picture or visual move your emotion towards pro-conservation behaviour?
11. Do you find any elements interest your emotion to change your behaviour towards conservation action?
12. Do you find that music background move your emotion towards the message represented in that documentary?

## **3. Logos (Rational appeal)**

1. Does text display in this documentary important for you? Please discuss.
2. Does speech in this documentary encourage you for conservation awareness? Please discuss.
3. Does the visual help you understand the message of this documentary effectively? Please discuss.
4. Do you think that these four elements (music, text, speech and visual) are important elements for you to stay focused in watching this documentary?
5. What factors in this documentary that increase your conservation awareness?

**RQ 2: What are the viewers' responses to these rhetorical elements, and how have the latter helped to change viewers' outlook on marine life conservation?**

**1. Educational changes**

1. What is your opinion after watching this documentary?
2. Does your perception change towards marine life? In what terms? Please discuss.
3. Do you learn something new by watching this documentary that you didn't know before?
4. Do you think that the documentary helps to increase your awareness towards marine life conservation? In what terms? Please discuss
5. Do you understand the objectives of this documentary?

**2. Emotional changes**

1. Did you enjoy watching this documentary?
2. Do you feel sad, angry or emotional while watching this documentary? Please discuss.
3. Currently, how would you describe your feeling towards marine life extinction issues?

**3. Attitudinal changes**

1. Do you think your behaviour will change in conserving marine life?
2. Will you take any conservation action after watching this documentary? Please discuss.
3. Will you contribute to any conservation organization as a result of your watching experience of this documentary? Please discuss.
4. Will you recycle your plastics, or waste? Please discuss.
5. Would you consider becoming a vegetarian after watching this documentary?
6. Will you donate your money to the conservation organization or any conservation activities after watching it?
7. What will you do after watching this documentary?
8. Will you tell your family, friends or your acquaintances about this documentary?
9. Will you contact any organization to extend your concern about marine life?
10. Will you throw trash into the ocean?
11. Will you go to the beach after this?

## First Stage Interview

### Respondent's Details

1. Age
2. Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Marital Status
5. Hometown
6. Area

### Interview Questions

**RQ 3: Two months later, what are the viewer's responses in reply to whether or not these rhetorical elements have changed their attitudes towards marine life conservation?**

1. Do you know what marine life is?
2. What is your source of information for marine life?
3. Is it from television program? Please explain which program?
4. Do you know that marine life species is facing a serious issue of extinction?
5. Do you know what marine life species are currently endangered?
6. Can you describe your first encounter with marine life?
7. Are you involved in any conservation activities? If yes, please explain further.
8. Can you explain to me your daily activities?
9. In your daily activities, did you purchase things made of plastic?
10. Do you know that your daily activities can harm marine life?
11. In your opinion, what can cause marine life extinction?
12. Is there any interesting experience between you and any marine life species?
13. Do you always go to any beach?
14. Are the islands one of your favourite holiday destination?
15. What is your food preference?
16. Do you prefer fish over the other meat?
17. Do you always eat seafood? If yes, please explain.
18. Do you like turtle eggs?



19. Do you eat turtle eggs?
20. What are other marine life species that you eat?
21. Do you think that you will learn something after watching this documentary?
22. Do you think that this documentary can increase your conservation awareness?
23. Do you think that this documentary can change your behaviour towards conservation?
24. In your opinion, will you take any conservation action after watching this documentary?
25. Do you think that this documentary will make you cry?
26. Will you willing to pay any fees/subscribe to any channel, for example, Netflix, or Amazon in order to watch these types of documentary?

## Second Stage Interview

### Respondent's Details

1. Age
2. Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Marital Status
5. Hometown
6. Area

### Interview Questions

**RQ 3: Two months later, what are the viewer's responses in reply to whether or not these rhetorical elements have changed their attitudes towards marine life conservation?**

1. Do you still remember the content of the documentary that you have watched?
2. Do you still feeling emotional by that documentary content?
3. How will you describe your feeling now about marine life extinction issues?
4. Have you made any donation to any organization for marine life conservation in the past two months?
5. Have you been involved in any conservation activities? Can you name and elaborate?
6. Do you share the content and information from the documentary that you have Watched to your social media account?
7. Do you share the content and information from the documentary that you have watched to your family or friend's account?
8. Have you contacted any conservation action?
9. Have you read or watch about marine life extinction issues? If so, can you share what do you feel about it?
10. Do you still have the same feelings that you have immediately after watching the documentary? If the answer is no, what has been changed?
11. Have you changed your lifestyle after watching the documentary? If yes, please elaborate in what ways this has been changed?
12. Do you purchase things in plastic form?
13. Do you throw your rubbish in proper bin?

14. Do you recycle your rubbish?
15. Have you visited any beach or islands recently? If so, why?
16. Do you eat fish or other sea life?
17. How you manage your trash for the past two months?
18. How did you change after watching the documentary about marine life extinction?  
For example: your behaviour, way of thinking, lifestyle, career wise, or economic activities/income?
19. What is your opinion in general to protect/preserve marine life extinction?
20. What is the significance of this documentary in educating you about marine life conservation?
21. What are the biggest changes in yourselves after watching this documentary towards marine life conservation?

## **Appendix 2: The respondents' low level of awareness of marine life extinction in their BD pre-viewing experience**

This section is the continuation of Sub-chapter 6.1 and is numbered accordingly. Primarily, a low level of awareness of marine life extinction is reportedly evident among Malaysians. This can be further categorised as their (i) having limited knowledge of the threats to marine life, (ii) having a high consumption of marine life as a main source of food, (iii) making an extensive use of plastic, (iv) having an irresponsible means of rubbish disposal, (v) making minimal recycling efforts, (vi) continuing their consumption of endangered marine life species, (xii) poor attitude towards the environment, and (xiii) generally low expectations of the educational function of a documentary. These results match those observed in earlier studies, which show that wide-ranging conservation methods are needed rather than a sole dependence on the technical tools for sustainable marine life species (Saharuddin 1995).

### **6.1.1 Limited knowledge of the threats to marine life**

Through this study, I discovered that Malaysians, particularly those residing in the rural and coastal areas, possess limited knowledge of the threats to marine life, particularly of its extinction. They demonstrated an awareness of basic information about marine life, such as the habitat, and could identify a small number of marine life species that were familiar. These findings support the discoveries of Abd. Mutalib *et al.* (2013), who found such a lack of understanding of the importance of marine turtle species among the local people in Malaysia.

Accordingly, all 12 respondents from the coastal population indicated their limited understanding of marine life:

A5: Marine life is the life in the sea, for example fish, plants, marine turtles. I know about it because it can be seen easily here. My house is near to the sea. But, I did not know that marine life is facing extinction and I am not sure about the threats to it. I do not have any idea of it.

B4: I know about marine life such as fish, dolphin and squid and so on. I know it from the fishermen around here, or the television, and I can see a lot of it at the fresh food market or on the jetty. The threats? I do not know much about that matter. I am sorry. But, I know that the turtle is being threatened.

All 12 respondents from the rural population displayed a similar pattern of existing knowledge about marine life, indicating a lack of information about this habitat, including threats to marine life:

C5: Hmm... Marine life is about animals living in the sea, for example fish, squid and all that. I know that our marine life is now threatened with extinction, as seen in the media, newspapers, sometimes on TV. For example, the marine turtles. But, I do not know why it is becoming extinct, and which particular species are threatened by extinction.

D1: It's about the aquatic life, living in water... as long as they are living in water, either in the river or the sea. For example, fish, squid, crab and more. I know that some of it is extinct because I always ate Lai fish when I was a child... it's from the river, but it is quite hard to find it now. I think, maybe it is becoming extinct because of the pollution.

However, the majority of the respondents (10 out of 12) from the urban population reported that their existing knowledge of and exposure to marine life was at a moderate level, which can be attributed to the relatively wider exposure to environmental issues in foreign media, such as the documentaries on the *National Geographic* channel:

E3: What I understand about marine life is like... about the ocean, about the living things in the oceans. My understanding of living things is not only what we call animals, it's also about corals, it's also about seaweed. Something like that. And then whatever happened under the ocean. For example, the nature of the turtle, the nature of the crab or where seafood is coming from? I admit and I can see that marine life is on the verge of extinction. But of course I didn't witness it with my own eyes, but then I saw in the news, like, whales dying, and when they do post-mortems, there's 30 plastic bags inside the whales and stuff like that. Like certain areas, especially in Thailand. There's too much dead coral due to the large number of visitors. So, yes, I am totally aware of the extinction because sometimes I watch it on the news, such as the BBC or the *National Geographic* on Astro. For myself, I know about it, but the awareness is less. Like, I live in Kuala Lumpur, and it's far from the sea. So the awareness is less and there are still many fish. The obvious species that is threatened is the marine turtle, that's all. So, maybe the exposure is lacking because

people are not aware of the causes and they are still doing things that can harm and endanger marine life.

F6: Marine life is everything that lives in the sea. For example, fish, coral reefs, and everything in the ocean. That's all. I know this because I watched the *National Geographic* and the *Nat Geo Wild* on Astro. Marine life is actually facing extinction because of the oil-spilling, pollution and killing of the marine turtles, sea cows and sharks.

### **6.1.2 A high consumption of marine life as a main source of food**

I can also report, from my data, that the main source of food for Malaysian citizens is marine life. This finding is not surprising because Malaysia is a country that has 4,675 kilometres of coastline, and the marine life, especially the fish, are the main source of economic growth. This finding is in agreement with those of previous studies, which showed that the decline in marine fish is due to over-fishing, by-catch, habitat modification, and high fish consumption, both domestically and globally (Ahmad *et al.* 2016; Chong *et al.* 2010; Davies *et al.* 2009; Mazlan *et al.* 2005).

As evidence, all 12 respondents from the coastal population said that:

A3: I can say that I eat fish, squid, prawn, anchovies and so on almost every day. I always eat it in Nasi Lemak for breakfast, or for lunch. It is easy to get around here, but nowadays the price is quite expensive and the size of the fish is quite small. I'm not sure why.

B4: "I have a seafood cracker and fish fritters business. So, of course I use fish and I always buy fish every day from the complex because my business opens every day. I need fish to run my business. I cannot do my business without fish, especially during the monsoon season from November to January. I have to close my business because the fishermen do not go to sea because it is dangerous. I also eat fish and chicken. It is a normal dish for us... my family. But meat is quite rare because it is expensive.

In addition, all 12 respondents from the rural population shared a similar view – that marine life or seafood has also become the main source of food for them:

C5: I like seafood such as fish, squid and prawn because it's delicious. I like seafood more than chicken or beef and I would prefer seafood more compared to anything. So, I always eat it. I eat it at least twice a week.

D1: Normally, it's my mother who always cooks for me and my family. Often, my mother cooks fish such as stingray, *Patin* [freshwater fish], vegetables, all of them. My mother cooks this almost every day. Yesterday, I ate squid at the food stall.

The majority of the respondents (10 out of 12) from the urban population showed a similar pattern in their diet. The food processed from marine life or fresh seafood has also become their main source because of the protein requirements and for health reasons:

E3: Well, I change every day, for example, one day chicken, one day beef, and one day fish. So not every day is the same thing. Like today, I cooked beef soup and I fried fish, fish salads and then eggs... omelette. Normally, I cook something with seafood twice a week for protein. I mean you need protein in order for you to balance everything. So, one of the things is there's no injection, there's no chemical in marine life. For example, chicken. They gave them injections in order for them to grow fast. The same goes for maybe lamb, maybe beef. So, with marine life, I'm not sure about now, but normally, it's like the ocean catch. Meaning, like, it's from the ocean – you straight away go to market and buy it from them. So, there's no injections involved.

F6: I am working so sometimes I eat fish at the restaurant and take tuna sandwiches to the office. I bought a lot of canned tuna as my food stock because I am quite busy with work. It is the easiest way to fill my empty stomach with a great source of protein. So, once a week, I will eat anything and other seafood products.

### **6.1.3 An extensive use of plastic**

This study has revealed that the use of plastic among Malaysians is alarming and if this practice continues, it can cause more environmental pollution in the future. In the world of retail in Malaysia, plastic, especially plastic bags, are very much becoming part of any business activity, which lead to the over consumption of plastic bags among Malaysian public. This of course hampers any efforts to protect marine life.

As evidence, all 36 respondents reported their extensive use of plastic in their daily life:

A1: Of course. I buy all things in plastic such as plates, cups and everything because it is cheap. There's a lot of beautiful plastic products sold at the RM2 shop. I'm not sure about the fact that it can have a bad impact on marine life. I do not know.

B4: I run a fish crackers business, so I use a lot of plastic bags because I need to put my product in the bags. It's easy and cheap. If I buy things for making the crackers, then the plastic will definitely be included. For example, I buy vegetables in plastic, fish, and children's meals, all in plastic bags.

C5: Of course I use plastics. Like when I go to the shop or the supermarket, I must put all the things in plastic bags. I put trash in plastic bags. Always... like I put my rubbish in a black plastic bag, then throw the trash in the big rubbish bin on the street.

D1: It's normal to use plastic bags because everything is in plastic, such as food packaging and so on. It's hard to avoid buying or using it. For example, when I go to buy things, the cashier will give me plastic bags and I will just take them. I can't say no because I need it.

E3: If I go shopping, I buy goods in the form of plastic products. My plates are all made from plastic as well as plastic disposable cups, because I'm worried that the glass can be broken by my children at home. So, I always use plastic. Except for cooking, it is impossible to cook in plastic because it can melt, right? But, the bowls are all made from plastic. I rarely use glass in the house for my children's safety.

F6: Yes, I purchase plastic because... okay, I'm in retail. I have a shop. I sell dried fruit and nuts. I need to package my merchandise. Meaning, for example, I pack my apricots, I pack my pistachios, almonds and things like that into plastic bags. And also, I have to give plastic bags to my customers. So, yes, indirectly I purchase plastic bags.

#### **6.1.4 *An irresponsible rubbish disposal habit***

Another discovery I made through this study is the irresponsible rubbish disposal habits of Malaysians. A possible explanation for this is their limited knowledge of the threats to marine life (see Sub-chapter 6.2.1). I confirm that the irresponsible rubbish disposal behaviour of the



public is associated with the major environmental issues occurring in Malaysia (Aiken 1988; Teo and Fauzi 2006).

All 12 respondents from the coastal population indicated that:

A2: Sometimes, I throw rubbish in the bin or sometimes I burn it or bury it in my backyard. Yes, my house is near the sea, but it is okay because I bury it in my backyard. At least, I bury it.

B4: Normally, I just dispose of everything at my backyard and my husband will burn it if he is not busy.

Similarly, all 12 respondents from the rural population stated that:

C5: I'm not very particular in terms of my disposal. Sometime, I throw it in my car. I have kids so there is always rubbish in the car, and I will throw it out when I see any plastic in my car. Also, at home, I burn or bury the rubbish in my backyard.

D1: I keep the plastic and when there's a lot of it, I dump the trash behind the house. There is a garbage hole behind my house so I just tie the rubbish bags and throw them in the hole. Then, I burn it.

Meanwhile, 10 out of 12 respondents from the urban population reportedly had a more organised way of handling their rubbish:

E3: I collect all the rubbish and put it in plastic bags, and throw it in the bin in this neighbourhood. Nothing unusual.

F6: My dumping activities are just ordinary, whereby I collect all the rubbish and throw it in the bin at my apartment every day before going to work.

### **6.1.5 Minimal recycling efforts**

Respondents' minimal recycling efforts also became apparent in this study. A possible explanation for this result may be due to the limited recycling facilities provided by the local government, as well as the public's limited knowledge of the benefits of recycling.

All 12 respondents from the coastal population reported having limited recycling facilities in their neighbourhood:

A3: I never recycle. Just throw it away because I've never seen any recycle bin around here.

B4: I don't recycle. There's no facility in this area.

Likewise, all 12 respondents from the rural population indicated that they do not practice recycling, but dispose of their rubbish by burning it or burying it in their backyard:

C5: I just burn or bury the rubbish. I do not recycle.

D1: No, I do not recycle. I bury it in my backyard.

Meanwhile, the eight out of 12 respondents from the urban population seemed to be more familiar with recycling. However, their busy schedule resulted in their minimal efforts to recycle:

E3: I recycle but not every day. Whenever I feel like I want to do it, I will.

F6: No, because I am busy and just do what is necessary.

#### **6.1.6 *The consumption of endangered marine life species***

The majority of Malaysians, this study revealed, have sampled endangered marine life species at least once in their life. It is difficult to explain this result, but it could be due to the availability of the endangered species as well as to the influence of family members or friends in consuming this species.

As 10 respondents from the coastal population indicated, it is easy to buy marine turtle eggs in their neighbourhood:

A5: I eat marine turtle eggs. They are very easy to get it. There's a lot of eggs that can be found at the market. In fact, I can get them even cheaper from the fishermen who come back from the sea.

B4: Sometimes, I eat marine turtle eggs and shark-fin soup. I eat crab noodles. They are very popular dishes here and easy to buy.

Similarly, shark-fin soup and marine turtle eggs were also popular for the majority of the respondents (nine out of 12) from the rural population:

C5: I've eaten shark-fin soup and I've seen marine turtle eggs being sold in the market... at the Pasar Payang market in Terengganu. The eggs are delicious though.

D1: I've tasted shark-fin soup and marine turtle eggs. Nothing else.

In addition, eight out of 12 from the urban population said that the health benefits are the reason why they consume endangered marine life species:

E3: I just ate shark-fin soup because I tried it at the hotel. It's delicious. I've also seen people selling marine turtle eggs in public. I went to Kelantan and Terengganu, they do sell them openly in the market even though they are endangered.

F6: Yes. I've tasted marine turtle eggs, but I don't like them at all. I was a child at that time, around 11 or 12 years old, and it was quite easy to get them because my mum always bought them at the market. Well, I don't like them, but they say they're good for your health.

### **6.1.7 Poor attitude towards the environment**

Going to the beach is a popular leisure activity for Malaysians, particularly those residing in the coastal area. However, this study revealed that their lack of moral responsibility towards the environment is apparent. As evidence, all 12 respondents from the coastal population reported spending their free time at the beach:

A4: I visit beaches every day because I like the beach. We do not have any park here so the beach is the normal place for me to spend my free time. I saw a lot of rubbish on the beach, but I do not care about it because it was not me who threw it.

B4: I saw a lot of rubbish, but I just looked at it. I did not pick it up.

Similarly, 11 of the 12 respondents from the rural population reported their lack of concern towards the environment:

C5: I rarely go to the beach or the island because it is far from here. Maybe twice a year. I just go there to have fun.

D1: I rarely go to beach... In one year, maybe three times only. Sometimes, I go to the beach and I see a lot of garbage and it's dirty. I do not even swim or bathe because it's dirty. I did not pick up the trash, I just left it there. Why should I pick it up because I was not the one who threw it, right?

Ten out of 12 from the urban population indicated a similar attitude towards the polluted environment:

E3: Yes, I normally take my kids to Thailand, most of the time. For example, to Phuket, Krabi. Recently I went to... local destinations... Penang, and Perhentian Island. Yeah. So those are the places that I normally go to, maybe four to five times in a year. Well, it's normal for us to see rubbish on the beach. Food packaging, and so on. There are workers who collect it. So, I do not worry about it.

F6: I rarely visit any beach, but I'd love to do so. Sometimes, when I have my holidays, beaches or islands are the first places that come to mind. I just do normal leisure activities such as snorkelling and bathing.

#### **6.1.8 A generally low expectation of the educational function of a documentary**

In general, Malaysians have low expectations of the ability of a documentary to provide information about marine life extinction, and to encourage their conservation awareness. This result can be explained by the fact that all 36 respondents, regardless of population, expressed their uncertainty about the ability of a documentary to change their view about pro-conservation:

A3: I'm not sure. I have to watch it first.

B4: Maybe yes or maybe not because I've watched *National Geographic* and nothing has changed.

C5: I do not know. But, maybe it is.

D1: Maybe yes, but I am afraid that I will forget after I watch it.

E3: I'm not sure because I have to watch it; only then I will know. I have to see; only then will I know. Perhaps it can give me some knowledge that I do not know.

F6: Yes. Actually, the documentary is important for those who do not know, but it is difficult to find documentaries focusing on marine life, especially in Malaysia. I rarely come across any documentaries about marine life or any extinction issue in Malaysia.

I conclude, then, that, before their BD viewing experiences, my respondents had limited knowledge of the marine life extinction issue, indicating the lack of exposure to this among the Malaysian general public.

## Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

### Participant Consent Form

**Study Description:** The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationships between blue documentaries in representing marine life extinction issues towards pro-conservation behaviour. I need to collect data from Malaysian based on a different geographical area to examine either documentary can be a significant medium that encourage young generation like yourself for marine life pro-conservation behaviour.

**Respondent's participation:** You will be asked questions about your general knowledge of marine life extinction, your documentary viewing experiences, your opinions and also your behaviour towards conservation awareness. You're required to participate into three research/data collection process consist of:

- (i) A documentary screening
- (ii) A Focus group discussion
- (iii) Two stages of in-depth interviews

Due to the nature of the study, you will be contributing for about 3 to 6 hours of your time to complete your participation in the study. Please provide your general knowledge of the marine life extinction and answer every question based on your everyday life experience as well as your documentary viewing experiences. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be affected, by any means of disputes if you choose not to participate. Your participation will be anonymous and confidential. No discomfort, stress, or risks are anticipated.

As an informed participant of this research study, I agree to participate in the research entitled "Malaysian Accountability: Documentary as a Window to Preserve Marine Life" conducted by \_\_\_\_\_, in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at the \_\_\_\_\_, United Kingdom, (telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_) (email: \_\_\_\_\_).

**Based on the above statements, I understand that:**

- (1) My participation is voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of this participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research record, or destroyed.
- (2) During the data collection process, notes will be taken and the interviews will be recorded and documented for later transcription which allows the researcher treated any data as mine.
- (3) All data will be stored anonymously once it has been collected. Thus, I am giving my permission of my contribution in this study for the researcher to publish it in written and oral form (final report, article, journal, presentation, conferences) with the condition that my identity will be remained absolutely confidential and anonymous.

(4) This research has been approved by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee. This means it has been approved by a panel of professionals to make sure it meets high standards of the research ethics guidelines.

(5) All my questions about the study have been satisfactorily answered and I am aware of what my participation involves.  
I have read, understood the above, and voluntarily agree to take part in this study:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

I have explained the above and answered all questions asked by the participant:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Appendix 4: Documentary film/programme (Mission Blue)**



**Appendix 5: Documentary film/programme (Lestari Ujana Marin)**





## Appendix 6: University Official Letter to Organisation



Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies  
Ysgol Newyddiaduraeth, y Cyfryngau ac Astudiaethau  
Diwylliannol Caerdydd

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[www.cardiff.ac.uk/cy/journalism-media-cultural-studies/](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cy/journalism-media-cultural-studies/)

26<sup>th</sup> July 2017

To whom it may concern,

**Re: Nurul Hidayah Binti Mat (Student Number: 1561908)**

Please accept this letter as confirmation that the above student is currently in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the PhD programme in Journalism Studies here at the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies. The field work that Nurul will be conducting has been discussed and agreed by the school. Furthermore an ethical approval form has been signed and approved by the school's Ethics Committee.

Should you require any further information please contact me on the address below

Yours sincerely,

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM  
MEDIA AND CULTURAL STUDIES  
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY  
BUTE BUILDING  
CARDIFF CF10 3NB  
WALES

**Tim Pullham**  
Student Support and Programme Officer  
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Registered Charity, no. 1130295  
Cwm Gŵernodig, 19-1130295

## Appendix 7: Permission Letter



Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies  
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Diwyllianol Caerdydd

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27th July 2017

### RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

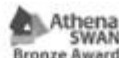
Dear Mr,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution/area of Felda Kemelah, Segamat, Johor Bharu. I am currently enrolled in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University, United Kingdom, and I am in the process of writing my Doctor of Philosophy's thesis. The study is entitled 'Malaysian Accountability: Documentary as a Window to Preserve Marine Life.

Therefore, I hope that your administration will allow me to recruit twelve (12) peoples or more from Felda kemelah, age between 21-35 years old. The recruited participants will be facing a documentary screening entitled 'Mission Blue' and Simfoni Alam, a focus group discussion and also in-depth interviews. Due to the nature of the study, all the recruited participants will be contributing their time for about 2 to 6 hours to complete their participation in the study. Interested individual or villagers, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form (copy enclosed) to be signed by themselves and returned it back to the researcher at the beginning of the study process. In addition, person who volunteer to participate will be provided with lunch, refreshment and token of appreciation for their contribution to the study.

If approval is granted, participants of the study will complete the documentary screening process in a community room or other quiet setting on the village/Felda Kemelah site. Therefore, I am asking your institutional permission to use a community room (any suitable room) in your area for the research purposes. The data collection process should take no longer than six (6) hours. The study results will be analyzed for the thesis project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your institution, area or the participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. If you agree, kindly contact me through my email address ([MatN@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:MatN@cardiff.ac.uk)). Alternatively, kindly contact me at +60142127117.



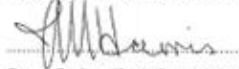
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Nural Hidayah Mat  
Researcher, Cardiff University, United Kingdom.

  
Cc: Dr. Janet Harris, Research Supervisor  
Department seal:

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