

COMMENTARY

The Palau Legacy Pledge: A Case Study of Advertising, Tourism, and the Protection of the Environment

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Environmental challenges are affecting every aspect of our lives, especially among the world's largest industry: tourism. This chapter studies the application of creativity to a tourism campaign for the Republic of Palau, an island nation in the Pacific, in need of promoting tourism and educating visitors while protecting the environment. It is the story of four local activists who convinced their government to think creatively. The result is the Palau Legacy Project, a campaign that included a special pledge that visitors needed to sign to gain access to the island. The campaign was critically acclaimed, winning three Cannes Lions Grand Prix and seven D&AD Festival pencils, gathering over 280,000 pledges, 1.7 billion impressions, and \$6.2 million in earned media. Most importantly, it demonstrated how innovation, boldness and creativity make advertising an unstoppable force.

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Advertising and tourism

The advertising industry has been extensively researched and documented by social scientists for the last hundred years. One of the initial efforts in the field has been the measurement of the effectiveness of advertising. Thus, different models have emerged to explain how advertising works. Most of these models are hierarchical, explaining the response from consumers as a series of steps organised as a progression that should render a type of response to the message. One of the earliest models was AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) which was proposed by Strong in 1925 and widely adopted by the industry. The AIDA model explained that advertising worked first by grabbing the consumer's attention, then sparked an interest that would lead to a desire and, finally, an action, which translated as consumer behaviour adjusted to the consumer goods industries. Later on, new models appeared, such as DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results) that proposed four steps to achieve effectiveness in advertising: awareness, comprehension, conviction and action (Colley, 1961). These models have served as the theoretical framework for multiple revisions and adjustments to build an accurate understanding of the advertising process (Barry and

Howard, 1990). Other approaches include measuring the concept of conversion (McWilliams and Crompton, 1997), tracking (Siegel and Ziff-Levine, 1990), or purchase models (Kulendran and Dwyer, 2009).

However, in the tourism industry, these models have proven insufficient to include the complexity of such a layered consumer process, crucial for the health of the tourism industry (Park and Nicolau, 2015). Consumer behaviour in tourism has been widely studied, and there are multiple models to understand its complexity (Scott et al., 2014). These studies argued that measuring the effectiveness of advertising for the tourism industry could not merely be limited to tangible results, such as numbers of visitors or dollars spent on a destination. Instead, they emphasised intangibles such as brand awareness, destination awareness and recognition (Govers et al., 2007; McWilliams and Crompton, 1997; Byun and Jang, 2015).

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, worth US\$8.9 trillion yearly, 10.3% of the global GDP, and employing 10% of the jobs around the globe (WTTC, 2020). Tourism worldwide has developed in three phases: first, it was centred on the 'get-away' experience (1950–1970). Later on, it became destination-driven (1980–2000), then evolved into an experience-focused industry in the new century (Ward-Perkins, 2018). In this new context of experiences, advertising plays a fundamental role, and its impact has been extensively researched. Scholars agree that multiple variables impact the effectiveness of the advertising process, especially in light of the technological revolution of the twenty-first century. As global travel becomes increasingly available, destinations have doubled their efforts to attract visitors. Studies in the field emphasised the complicated nature of advertising for tourism because of the possibility of not receiving an immediate response from consumers (Wijaya, 2013). Many other authors, such as Weng and Huang (2018), have proposed updated revisions of traditional models to capture the nature of the process. For instance, the AUIDCA model adds two essential elements to the AIDA model: utilitarianism (what consumers will find useful in the message) and credibility (trust and brand reputation). The idea of trust as a core element of destination communication is also extensively researched and studied (Shavitt et al., 1998). Therefore, a destination must promote trust (Loda et al., 2005).

Tourism is the primary industry of Palau's island nation, its main source of income and employment. At the same time, it is also its main threat: year after year, thousands of tourists leave trash behind, interact with nature in harmful ways and pose a significant danger to the islands' delicate ecosystem. The local government had followed a communication strategy based on the consumer experience of the island and its natural beauty. Moreover, while the campaigns increased numbers of visitors, they did not solve the initial problem. Looking for a way to solve the problem, four local Palau residents with backgrounds in advertising and branding came up with an ingenious solution that would change their country's laws.

Through a non-traditional take on advertising for the tourism industry, a group of four local activists joined forces to suggest a different route: a bold campaign that gave control of the island to its visitors, and used creativity and ingenuity to turn around a negative message. With backgrounds in marketing and advertising, the four environmentalists who set to protect their island ended up changing the nation's laws and developed one of the world's most acclaimed advertising campaigns of 2017.

The Palau Pledge is an excellent case to illustrate the importance of trust in the communication process. It introduced a never-before-seen requirement from the audience, a commitment to support the philosophy of the island, the value of protecting the environment, and the fight to support the local culture. In other words, it is an extreme example of trust: it only works if the visitors are willing to submit their entry to the island to the pledge signature, a signature that will serve as the official visa to enter the country.

The Palau Pledge is an innovative example of disruption, a campaign with an impact powerful enough to modify the country's legislation. It sends a bold message beyond the traditional invitation to enjoy the stay: visitors to Palau are now entrusted with the future preservation of the island. As Collen Decourcy, Co-Chief Creative Officer at Wieden & Kennedy and president of the Titanium Lions Jury at Cannes Film Festival, explained, the Palau Pledge project 'went beyond messaging was not interrupted but integrated into the process. It changed the minds of governments and made them do something sustainable. It took pieces from everything we loved in the other Titanium winners and put them into this idea that's world-changing. This felt like something we should be thinking about moving forward.' (Diaz, 2018).

As we will see later, the innovation of the idea was rewarded with an enthusiastic reaction from the visitors and legislators, and set the tone for other similar island nations to be innovative and bold. The advertising industry's enthusiastic reception of the campaign is an indication of where the future of tourism advertising may be: in connecting trust and creativity.

Tourism in Palau: A blessing in disguise

The island nation of Palau is the thirteenth smallest country in the world. It is famous for its breathtaking beauty of three-hundred and forty islands as a focus of tourism in the South Pacific. The richness of its natural resources has granted Palau the unique privilege to receive in 2012 a UNESCO destination that protects its environment, one of the only six nations in the world to have received such denomination (UNESCO, 2017).

Palau is one of the biggest innovators in terms of environmental concern. In 1979, it became the first country in the world to vote for a nuclear veto, and in 2009, it became the world's first national shark sanctuary (PVA, 2016). Palau also signed the declaration at the *Our Ocean 2017* conference, organised by the European Union, aiming to 'inspire a new generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists and civil society to develop solutions and take action to promote sustainably managed oceans [...] underlining their commitment to joining forces to preserve corals and the lives of the many populations that depend on them' (FAP, 2017: 29).

Palau offers pristine beaches, breathtaking islands, and a paradisiac environment in what has rapidly become a sought-after high-end destination that has experienced a constant increase in visitors over the years. The privileged environment translates into a tourism industry that adds up to 85% of the nation's GDP, according to the World Trade Organization (D&AD, 2017), and 63.6% of the over eleven thousand-strong labour force of the country (Global Edge Knowledge, 2018). Tourist arrivals have grown in recent years, reaching a record of 160,000 in 2018, a figure to consider against the 21,685 inhabitants of the island (July 2020). The increase of tourism can be explained by the rise of air travel, the influx of Chinese travellers and the nation's proximity to Guam, the region's leading destination (CIA, 2019). As the Asian economies grew in the past decade, it suddenly became a more affordable destination for new waves of tourists.

However, many new visitors were not as environmentally concerned as in the past, which presented a problem for the island's fragile environment (Clarke, 2018). More visitors mean more irresponsible behaviour and lack of care for the flora, fauna and island ecosystem. Tourists leave trash behind them, destroy the coral reef, interact with the local animals in an unsustainable way and disrespect nature. The same people who sustained the economy of the island were also its primary threat.

In line with other natural destinations, Palau focused the advertising efforts on promoting a relaxed and active experience for visitors (Luo & Deng, 2008). The most significant campaign was the 2013 Palau Responsible Travel campaign which was launched with the financial support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation through Conservation International (FAP, 2013). The idea was to work 'with local communities to make the mechanism attractive to investors and to ensure that it meets the area's protection needs and the population's

socio-economic development needs' (FPA 2013: 13) and with the Marisla Foundation through the Global Greengrants Fund. The goal was to educate tourists about the environment and culture of Palau through a series of recommendations.

Two years later, Palau established the Palau National Marine Sanctuary with the mission to 'support the sustainability and balance between our natural resources and economic development, ensuring that all of what makes Palau the Pristine Paradise it is today, will last for generations to come. Stewardship of the ocean and working within the limits of the environment has always been the way of the Palauan people. Balancing growth and sustainability remains in the best interests of this nation and its people' (PVA, 2016: 9).

Nevertheless, these campaigns were not achieving the desired results. Nanae Singeo, co-founder of the Palau Legacy Project and currently the Managing Director at Palau Visitors Authority of the Government of Palau, expressed the urgency in the *Destination Think* Forum 2016: 'Sustainability so important here, because it's their lifeline, it's their culture. So, unless we can protect and embrace that, there's no more Palau. The people need the environment for their customary practices, and we're taught to conserve it' (PVA, 2016).

Despite the governmental efforts to educate the tourists through the Palau Responsible Tourism campaign, it soon became evident that the problem's complexity required a more creative solution. At least, that is what a group of four residents with a background in marketing and communication thought.

Laura Clarke is an Australian marketer who moved to Palau in 2015 with her husband, Lieutenant Commander Ben Fennell, of the Australian Navy Surveillance Adviser. With a background in marketing and advertising, she soon realised the challenge of the new waves of tourism and the lack of connection with the local Palauan understanding of the environment. Along with three other experts in marketing and communication, Nicolle Fagan, Jennifer Koskelin-Gibbons, and Nanae Singeo, Clarke decided to join forces and look for a creative solution to the problem, which resulted in the launching of the Palau Legacy Project in 2017 (Green, 2019).

The group had a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field and a passion for the environment. Nicolle Fagan worked in the Palau Project until she was offered a position as marketing director of the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium in Boston. Jennifer Koskelin-Gibbons is the president of the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy project in Palau. Nanae Singeo is the former managing director at Palau Visitors Authority of the Government of Palau. Together, they approached Palau's First Lady, Debbie Remengesau, with the idea that was about to change the history of their nation.

The Palau Legacy Project became a think tank that quickly identified the complexity of the local authorities' challenge: how to find a way to engage tourists in preserving the island without being rude. Singeo explained the need for a different campaign to further the impact of the Palau Responsible Tourism campaign:

Palau is a very small island nation, so capacity has been one of our challenges, along with management and how to communicate about them. I think it's really important that we know our limitations and our capacity. We're also identifying more appropriate or meaningful ways to convey our message, not necessarily to explain the 'dos and don'ts', but instead, 'Here's how we like to communicate to protect the environment and to protect the culture'. We're working on that particular campaign right now (PVA, 2016).

However, many inside the government met their approach with scepticism. The main concern was the potential hurt of such a campaign on the tourism industry, and whether tourists would be on board with the message or would feel 'policed' (D&AD, 2017).

The Palau Pledge Campaign vision

Through mutual connections, the Palau Legacy Project reached Host/Havas, the Sydney branch of the multinational ad group of Red Havas, to seek help with the campaign (Green, 2019). Seamus Higgins, Executive Creative Director of the agency, explained that the brief explained how the island had 'a huge influx of tourists since 2015, but they did not have the infrastructure set up to ensure the cumulative impact of these tourists was looked after properly. The biggest part of the brief was that we do not want to stop these tourists from coming, which is really important to our economy. We need to educate them so they can become aware of the collective impact they have placed on Palau' (Griner, 2018).

Higgins became the director of a collaborative project that lasted two years and involved a brief on the campaign and a return pitch of forty-seven ideas, including one that stood out for its creativity and boldness: to get the government to change the immigration laws of the island. Adam Freedman, Group Practice Head, was the leading creative mind behind the project at Host/Havas. With plenty of experience in public relations, social media and lifestyle, Freedman led a team of six creatives and designers to work on the campaign.

When Havas took on the project, they immediately studied Palau's benefits in establishing the campaign's central concept. The functional benefits were clear and had been used in previous communication from the local government. The campaign showcased the idea of presenting Palau as an opportunity to experience one of the world's last paradise islands. However, while previous campaigns had stopped there, Havas also explored the emotional and symbolic benefits. They quickly realised the possibility of establishing a meaningful emotional connection with the audience, providing an unmatched experience. The symbolic benefits of the campaign were also significant. Such an innovative idea was designed not just to surrender control, but to partner with the visitor and make them stewards of the island.

An added element of the challenge was the limited resources available for tourism, barely 1% of the nation's budget (PVA, 2016). Still, Laura Clarke had faith in the vision: 'a genuinely innovative solution which provides a significant first step to increasing awareness around eco-tourism practices and what the global community can do to collectively take greater responsibility and make a difference' (Freedman, 2018). From the beginning, it was clear to Havas that the campaign would require creativity and ingenuity also in the financial aspects: 'it was clear that we would not have the media budget to reach the tourists' markets around the world', explained Higgins at the Cannes Lions Festival, 'and that when it was offset against the fact that the problem of mass tourism, of unsustainable tourism, is a global problem, and there are countries dealing with it all around the world, we knew that if we were able to tap into something there, then this would be something that would raise an eye all around the world because they are all experiencing that problem' (Griner, 2018).

Havas looked for insight with constituencies, such as local business owners, educators, government officials, and, most importantly, Palau's children. For them in particular, they hosted workshops where they discovered the language and the Pledge's tone. Co-founder Laura Clarke explained that the campaign's underlying spirit was the local love and respect for the environment: 'they have been custodians of a culture of conservation for millennia. I think we can take away from this and try to talk to other politicians around the world about that this ancient cultural wisdom is something that we need to pay attention to. I think it's in a lot of cultures, but we ignore it. That's one of the big lessons: that we need to go back to the basics. We need to put the environment before profit' (Green, 2019).

Havas ECD Seamus Higgins, leader of the project, explained that the creative process inside the agency involved focusing on intercultural sensitivity: 'It became clear that there were vastly different cultural approaches to travelling between these nations [the five main tourist

markets for Palau]. But the team realised that the common ground was to appeal to tourists' humanity: 'Our starting point was that we need to change people's behaviour. To do that, we had to make a genuine human connection with them. We had to make sure that whatever we did, every single tourist would be forced to make that connection' (D&AD, 2017).

Campaign objectives

The campaign had two objectives. The first one was to develop a behaviour-changing solution to the problem. The goal was to educate visitors on their impact on the island's environment, but also provide them with practical, non-intrusive solutions to cooperate and turn the negative impact into a positive one. Instead of establishing a series of legislations and regulations, the visitors would simply 'police themselves'.

The second goal was what Higgins termed a 'human connection' to the island (Griner, 2018). Palau was establishing a meaningful connection with the visitors by surrendering control of the entire experience to them. The campaign took a risk by trusting visitors to align with the values of the island and its culture. Beyond that, visitors were asked to actively participate in the preservation of the local environment, traditions and culture.

Campaign tone

Because of the emotional connection desired from the audience, the tone of the campaign was soft, positive and emotional. It was built upon a conversation between the children of the island and the visitors. The participation of children in the campaign, one of its most significant features, not only added human depth and meaning but also allowed the community to embrace the campaign as their own. The idea to use children as the narrators of the pledge resonates with the thoughts shared by one of the co-founders of the Palau Legacy Project, Koskelin-Gibbons, as she explained that one of the main drives of the campaign was to protect their children. According to official sources, the Palau Pledge was added as educational content in schools through the Ministry of Education (palaupledge.com).

Havas introduced the concept of 'for those who follow' by asking visitors to do something for Palau's children, they ensured the emotional, human cut-through they wanted. Higgins explains, 'Suddenly it became very human. Nobody could deny wanting to leave a better world for our children. That's shared in every single culture. They set about looking at elements of institutional architecture that could be used, considering using the nation's currency, as was leveraging the name of the country itself, but eventually, the act of passing through customs won out. It would ensure that no tourist could enter Palau without encountering the campaign'. (D&AD, 2017).

The tone was designed to convey a profound, emotional message from the children of the island. The colour palette reflected the natural colours of the islands, the sea and the landscapes of the island: the pieces were filled with emerald, light green, blue and light brown tones. The text of the pledge draws its inspiration on the Palauan tradition of BUL. According to the official website, BUL is 'a moratorium declared by Palau's traditional leaders that places an immediate halt to the over-consumption or destruction of a species, place or thing' (palaupledge.com). It has become the symbol of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and the Palau Pledge, modern-day applications of a traditional BUL.

Campaign execution

The Palau Pledge campaign included a series of deliverables, including the physical stamp of the pledge, brochures and a passport booklet, a four-minute inflight video, a website and street signage. It became the first country in the world to require such a document as a legal form of immigration legislation.

One of the most remarkable features of the campaign is that it required a physical stamp to be used by immigration officials at the airport. The stamp included the text of the pledge and served as a new visa requirement to enter the islands. The pledge, written by the children of the island, asked visitors to embrace the culture, respect the environment and make sure that 'the only footprints I shall leave are those that will wash away'. The stamps were produced in five languages: Japanese, Korean, English, Chinese, and Taiwanese, according to the critical inbound visitors' markets of the island. The logo was created based on the Palau Flag and later abstracted to the 'sign here' box in the pledge. The pledge also allows the government the legal power to enforce fines up to one million dollars for visitors who disobey the regulations (Sachs, 2017). The agency also created training documents for the immigration authorities and customs personnel.

Tourists needed to sign a pledge of responsibility that was created with local children's cooperation and read as follows:

Children of Palau, I take this pledge as your guest,
to preserve and protect your beautiful and unique island home.
I vow to tread lightly, act kindly, and explore mindfully.
I shall not take what is not given.
I shall not harm what does not harm me.
The only footprints I shall leave are those that will wash away.

Havas ECD Higgins explained the use of the passport as a measure to add seriousness to the pledge: 'When people sign something they're much more likely to act on something than if they just verbalised it. The passport itself is a personal item, which is carried everywhere; by integrating the campaign directly into this document, it become intimate and powerful' (D&AD, 2017).

The campaign was supported by local governments, communities, and community groups. According to the official press release, the number of agencies and communities involved in the launch of the program included the Palau Conservation Society, the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and Friends of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Palau Visitors Authority, Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Industries and Commerce, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs (palaupledge.com).

The stamp in the passport was only the introduction to the pledge. The campaign also included eleven recommendations for tourists, using different printed formats, such as placards, posters, and outdoor signals and displayed all over the islands. These recommendations were similar to the ones included in the Palau Responsible Tourism campaign (2013): support local businesses and communities; learn about the culture and the people; get others to respect the custom; don't touch or step on coral; don't smoke in restricted areas; don't collect marine life souvenirs; don't feed the fish and sharks; don't drag fins over coral when swimming; don't take fruit or flowers from gardens; don't litter; and don't touch or chase the wildlife.

Another important collateral piece of the campaign was the official website (palaupledge.com), where, along with information about the campaign, visitors can sign the declaration. To this date, almost three hundred thousand signatures have been added. The website also includes a downloadable pre-designed poster for small businesses with recommendations, a three-page media kit with a summary of the campaign, an interview with Tommy E. Remengesau Jr President of Palau and contact information for media interested in covering the story.

One central piece in the campaign is a four-minute video displayed on all planes landing on the island (compulsory inflight video). The video is a folk story entitled 'The Giant', which

was produced by Havas and directed by award-winning director Evan Viera. Havas described the short film as ‘the story of a clumsy, careless giant – representative of mass tourism at its worst – who comes to Palau, wreaking environmental damage. The local children befriend him, teaching him to be eco-aware. The film introduces passengers to the Palau Pledge, an innovative and bold new entry visa process designed to save Palau’s environment. Every visitor to this stunning yet fragile island-country will be required to sign a passport eco-pledge before they can enter: a promise to protect Palau for future generations. Learn more about this immigration policy precedent at palaupledge.com’ (Havas, 2017).

‘The Giant’ starts with a panoramic view of the islands as a child sings a traditional Palau song. A group of four Palauan children stroll through the forest when they encounter a giant creature. One of the children begins the narration: ‘One day, a giant came to our home. He stomped on our reefs, gobbled up our precious animals, took fruit from our gardens, even stuffed his pockets with turtle shells’. All along, the children have curiously followed the giant, but are disappointed by his attitude. Later on, as the children play soccer, they make a discovery: ‘But we found out he did not mean to hurt us, he just did not know his own strength’. The children lose the ball in the trees and the giant returns it. This is the turning point in the relationship. ‘Why don’t you play with me?’, he says. ‘We are happy to have you, we said, but please understand, if you keep trampling, chasing, and snatching everything *you* love about our home, and everything *we* love about it will be gone, never to return’.

The next scene shows the giant reflecting on his impact on nature sitting atop of an island, looking at all the plastic garbage floating in the sea: ‘The giant went home and had a good thought about this. And he finally said: “What can I do, children, to help you keep Palau beautiful?”’. The giant then joins the children as they swim under a waterfall, play soccer, and run through the beach. The narration continues: ‘From that moment, children became friends with him. We took his hand and taught him how to take care of our island paradise. Touching, feeding, chasing, or taking away our bad animals is bad for our island’, the children say as the giant picks up a shellfish from the sea, only to return it after the kids wave their disapproval from the beach. ‘And you can’t step on the coral. It’s fragile, and if you break it, it takes years to grow again’. The giant then learns how to adapt to the island: ‘Soon the giant was living in harmony with our land, ocean, and people. And he promised to us, children, to be kind, and gentle, and think of our future. From that time, every footprint he made, washed gently away with the tides’.

The screen fades into white, and a message appears: ‘small acts have big effects. That’s why visitors now need to sign a pledge to protect Palau’s future’. A passport page appears with a signed pledge, to show visitors how to proceed. Then, a series of signatures on the pledge, using the same format found on the website, appear on the screen. As the signatures add up, the music fades away, and the final message, ‘Thank you and enjoy your stay’.

According to Laura Aldington, CEO of Havas, the execution of the campaign was another key to its success: ‘I just think the pride that people have in the campaign has been immense. There were lots of people in the agency that worked extremely hard on this campaign for a long time and I think that shows in the output that it has really been crafted with love’ (Griner, 2018).

The results

The Palau pledge became an immediate success in four different levels: first, it profoundly impacted the island’s tourism awareness. Secondly, it managed to gain tremendous media attention from outlets around the world, helping the spread of the island’s brand awareness. Thirdly, it received the top industry recognition, and lastly, and more important for the founders of the campaign, it inspired other nations to promote similar initiatives and

became a case study of success in applying creativity and innovation to the field of strategic communication.

The impact of the campaign on the island was noted from the day of the launch. Havas prepared a series of events that included a special greeting to the first group of visitors to the island at the airport by President Remengesau. Local children were invited to act as customs officers at the airport. For a campaign without a media budget, it reached the remarkable value of 1.7 billion media impressions and an estimate of \$6.2M in earned media from outlets all around the world such as *The Guardian*, *South China Morning Post*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, *Forbes*, *Yahoo News*, including specialised travel media outlets such as *National Geographic*, *Lonely Planet* and *Conde Nest Traveller*.

The reception from the visitors was overwhelmingly positive. According to Havas, 96% of tourists said 'the pledge made them consider their actions more closely, and 65 percent said they used its principles during their stay to remind others about the right way to protect the delicate environment' (Havas, 2018). The agency estimates that in ten years, more than two million tourists will sign the pledge (D&AD, 2017). So far, the number has reached 301,000 in three years. The campaign sought support from celebrities and environmental activists, from Secretary of State John Kerry to Rolling Stone's guitarist Keith Richards and actor Leonardo di Caprio (who has reached almost one million views on his posts on Instagram promoting the Palau Pledge).

More importantly, as Seamus Higgins, Executive Director at Host/Havas explained, the campaign has the 'incredible power to shape conversation and behaviour. With this power comes the responsibility to shape a better world for future generations to inherit. We can't ignore this any longer, and we have to do it at scale and in partnership with business. We are hugely honoured to continue working with the Palau Legacy Project and Palau's government, who had the bravery to do something no-one else had done, to solve a problem no-one else had solved' (Mitchell, 2019).

The disruptive approach in the creative process certainly brought dividends, as the campaign accumulated prizes in the two most important advertising festivals in the world: the Cannes Lions and the D&AD pencils. At Cannes, the campaign won three Cannes Lions Grand Prix, including the Titanium prize, and the Cannes Lions organisation donated 323,280 euros to the Palau Project to help with resources. At Cannes, the campaign was received with enthusiasm. As Philip Thomas, Chairman of the festival, expressed: 'We want to help great ideas to scale, and we're delighted to fund the growth of the Grand Prix-winning Palau Pledge with the proceeds of the entries into the SDG Lions. We believe that creativity can change the world, and it's a privilege to support this initiative and contribute to its efforts to have an even greater impact.' (Mitchell, 2019).

At the D&AD Pencil festival, the agency won seven D&AD pencils, including direct media, writing for design and advertising, and integrated categories. The campaign received \$60,000 in funding from the Australian government to back the next stage in its development (Bennett, 2018). Most importantly, it won the Black Pencil in Branding. Logically, the agency also received its share of recognition with the agency of the year prize at the Awards Festival (AdNews, 2018). Host/Havas ECD Seamus Higgins claims the Palau Pledge's success comes back to the unusual nature of the brief: 'It's something that doesn't really fit within the normal realms of advertising, but that's because it wasn't a normal brief at all – it was a genuine problem that needed solving with creative thinking' (D&AD, 2017).

The beautiful creativity of the campaign must not overshadow some areas of growth that could have worked better. First of all, the social media engagement with the campaign was quite low, especially compared with the media attention the campaign was able to gather in the first months of its existence. To this day, the activity in the official social media platforms

of the campaign is almost non-existent, and it is indeed a missed opportunity to engage and educate an audience that would be receptive to the project. As much as the celebrities helped bring media attention to the project, the social media platforms performed poorly (Facebook reaching only 665 likes, Instagram only 89 likes, Twitter with only with scattered mentions and hashtags). The second element the campaign could have improved is the data collection system through the website. To sign the pledge, the user only needs to scribble a signature on the website. The site does not require any additional information such as name, email address or country of origin. The website missed the opportunity to build a database of people interested in the project, connected to the ongoing conservation efforts of the island and overall advocates for the idea.

Lastly, the success of the campaign motivated Nicolle and her team to launch phase 2 of the project: 'bringing conservation into the national curriculum and initiating an accreditation scheme for local businesses that comply with the principles of the Palau Pledge. Together with the Palau Conservation Society, The Palau Legacy Project team has taken over one hundred science teachers on field trips to demonstrate the impact of destructive human activity on the local ecology' – as Fagan explained in the Global Forum for Young leaders in 2018 – 'These trips have inspired teachers to be more practical and local in their approach to teaching science in the classroom, to further emphasise the importance of conserving the natural environment' (One Young World, 2018).

Beyond industry recognition, the Palau Pledge has achieved a more important goal, as Singeo and Clarke explained in a workshop at D&AD Creative Awards. The Palau Pledge has inspired two other islands to create similar projects: The Tiaki Pledge in New Zealand (<https://tiakinewzealand.com>) and the Pono Pledge in Hawaii (<https://www.ponopledge.com>) (D&AD, 2017).

The future of the campaign is the expansion of the audience to include local businesses. In 2017, President Remengesau introduced the Responsible Tourism Education Act, which turned the pledge into law and held corporations accountable. Havas replicated the idea of the passport stamp for business, using the format of a certificate that stores and companies could display to show their adherence to the campaign. Another next step in the campaign was the creation of reusables branded with the pledge to sell to visitors. Havas is expanding the campaign using a four-step methodology (starting small, involving the audience, seeking partners, and showing early success).

The Palau Pledge is proof that ingenuity and innovation can and should play an essential role in producing advertising campaigns that look beyond the interest of the brand and engage with the audience. A campaign addressing the delicate balance between conservationism and capitalism also demanded a radical modification of the country's largest industry and income source. A campaign that was brought by four volunteers, without a media budget, but with a clear vision to tell a different story: one where the audience is not a mere spectator, but a participant. In the Palau Pledge is a beautiful example of co-shared responsibility, and the result is a spectacular example of innovation and creativity that will set the tone for the industry in the years to come.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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