Ethical Guidelines for Animals in Tourism, a Belmont Report Adaptation

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ethical guidelines have long been utilized to ensure the responsible and ethical behaviour of humans while protecting rights and minimizing harm to those involved. Throughout history, various forms of ethical guidelines have been established to suit the needs of humans, ultimately leading to the development of applicable documents to ensure the protection of participants involved. In the domain of human research, The Belmont Report was developed by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research (Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), 2022). This report serves as a foundational document to ensure that research with human subjects is conducted in accordance with the outlined principles. Three main principles are outlined within the report: the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), 2022). These principles were selected due to their acceptance in cultural traditions and relevance in research involving human subjects (Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), 2022).

Animals, despite historically categorized and defined as living beings that are not plant, nor human, despite being similar in many ways (Carr et al., 2018). Regardless of these similarities, the rights and welfare concerns of humans are placed above those of non-human beings. As a result of the traditional view of animals as beings lacking sentience, from a legal perspective, animals have comparative rights to inanimate objects (Carr et al., 2018). Human beings have historically neglected recognizing animals as sentient beings, capable of experiencing emotions and feelings, like our own (Carr et al., 2019). This has allowed us to further differentiate ourselves from animals and to utilize them for our own benefit with minimal concern and regulation. While initially formulated for ethical considerations in human research, Fennell (2022b) has advocated for adapting the three main principles of The Belmont Report

within the context of animal-based tourism to ensure the protection and welfare of animals involved.

Animals have long been utilized as a form of entertainment for humans in both controlled captive environments and within their natural habitats. Widespread interest has led to a rapid rise in the use of animals in various forms of tourism worldwide. Some common forms of animal use in tourism include zoos, aquaria, wildlife sanctuaries, circuses, and sport. Despite the clear intrigue humans possess for the animal kingdom, most tourists do not understand the consequences of animal-based tourism. A study in 2017 released by World Animal Protection exposed the suffering and cruelty of 26 popular wildlife entertainment venues in Bali, Lombok, and Gili Trawangan, Indonesia (World Animal Protection, 2020). During this study, more than 1,500 animals were observed suffering in captive conditions, while forced to provide a source of entertainment for tourists. Some of the reported welfare issues included extreme restraint, participation in potentially harmful activities, non-existent or insufficient veterinary care, and inadequate nutrition (World Animal Protection, 2020). Fortunately, organizations such as World Animal Protection have developed assessment tools such as the Animal Protection Index (API), in which indicators are used to determine how countries score in animal protection and welfare. The API developed by World Animal Protection is assessed according to 10 indicators, further separated into 4 goals, addressing key animal welfare challenges (World Animal Protection, 2020):

- Recognition of animal sentience and prohibition of animal suffering
- Presence of animal welfare legislation
- Establishment of supportive government bodies
- Support for international animal welfare standards

The most widely recognized animal welfare standards are developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), which publishes international health standards for animals, animal product trade, and biological standards (World Organisation for Animal Health, 2016). These codes address a broad spectrum of animal welfare issues, including the quality of veterinary services, the safety of animal food production, and the humane treatment of animals in various contexts. However, despite the comprehensive nature of the OIE's guidelines, which cover an array of welfare concerns, the specific ethical considerations related to animals used in tourism are notable absent.

The purpose of this study is to address a gap in the existing literature by exploring the possibilities of developing a universally applicable set of ethical guidelines for animals in the animal-based tourism industry, through the adaption of the Belmont Report. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following overarching research question:

1. Can the Belmont Report principles be applied to suit the needs of animals in the tourism industry?

To address this research question, scholars with expertise in the sub-fields of animal-based tourism and animal ethics will be asked to provide feedback on the modified Belmont Report principles through a qualitative Delphi-survey technique. The objective of this study is to develop a set of ethical guidelines for the protection of animals in tourism, informed through the feedback provided in the classical Delphi-study The proposed ethical guidelines will provide a structured set of standards to follow for animal-based tourism operators and provide tourists a base of knowledge to enable informed decision-making processes. The proposed adaption of the Belmont Report's principles represents a promising stride towards increased ethical regulation in

both literature and practice, aiming to establish a universally applicable code of ethics tailored to the needs of animals within the animal-based tourism industry (Fennell 2022b).

Through the integration of the Belmont Report's principles into the discourse surrounding animal-based tourism, this not only underscores the ethical need of prioritizing animal welfare but also serves as a resource for fostering greater awareness and action toward promoting responsible and sustainable practices within the industry. In doing so, this study not only enriches the scholarly discourse in the field but also offers practical guidance and standards that can be utilized to inform policymaking, regulatory measures, and organizational practices aimed at advancing the ethical treatment of animals in tourism settings.

The findings of this study reflect an animal welfare perspective rather than an animal rights perspective. An animal welfare perspective emphasizes the need to ensure that animals used in tourism are treated humanely, with their physical and psychological needs being met to the greatest extent possible. This approach focuses on improving the conditions under which animals are kept and utilized, without necessarily challenging the legitimacy of using animals for human purposes (Fraser, 2008). The welfare perspective seeks to minimize harm and maximize the well-being of animals, making it compatible with the continued use of animals in tourism, if ethical guidelines are strictly followed (Fraser, 2008; Küçükaltan, 2019).

On the other hand, an animal rights perspective would advocate for the intrinsic rights of animals to live free from exploitation, which challenges the very foundation of using animals in tourism (Carr et al., 2018). From this viewpoint, the use of animals for human entertainment or profit could be seen as unethical, regardless of how well the animals are treated (Küçükaltan, 2019). Since this study does not appear to advocate for the abolition of animal use in tourism but

rather for the development of ethical guidelines to regulate it, the animal welfare perspective is more aligned with the study's objectives.

In developing a code of ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism, it is crucial to emphasize the welfare approach, as it provides a framework for improving the treatment of animals while acknowledging their continued use. This approach aligns with the existing ethical guidelines and standards in various sectors, where the focus is on ensuring that animals are not subjected to unnecessary suffering and that their welfare is a priority in all tourism-related activities (Fraser, 2008; Mellor et al., 2020)

Identified Gap

Literature recognizing the use of animals in tourism activities has been accompanied by a growing recognition of the ethical dilemmas it poses. While numerous studies have explored various aspects of animal-based tourism, there remains a gap in the literature concerning comprehensive ethical guidelines for the protection of animals within the tourism industry (Fennell, 2024; Miao & Wang, 2020; Moorhouse, 2017). Despite increased awareness of animal welfare concerns, the lack of universally agreed-upon ethical standards only creates opportunities for the continued exploitation and harm of animals engaged in tourism activities. A particular gap presenting challenges in the global adoption of ethical considerations for animals in tourism is the disparities between practice, policy, and education, and the tourism knowledge produced by researchers (Fennell et al., 2024). A recent study examined the treatment of animals in global hospitality and tourism settings, in relation to the current research in the field (Fennell et al., 2024). The study identifies animal ethics scholarship as a vacant niche within post-secondary institutions, urging for a space for animal ethics in education. Through examining the

literature, expertise on animal ethics is lacking considerably, and this niche should be considered to advance current curriculums (Fennell et al., 2024).

One key area where this gap is particularly pronounced in the lack of consensus on what constitutes ethical treatment of animals in tourism settings. While some guidelines exist, they often vary significantly between regions and species, and are not consistently enforced. Whale watching for example has grown in popularity significantly since the 1990's, providing both economic and conservation benefits for coastal communities and countries (Garrod & Fennell, 2004). Though overtime, the welfare concerns of these close encounters demanded regulation. In 2004 a study was conducted to analyze the current regulation of these activities, findings from this study identified concerning disparities among the codes of conduct. Disparities include geographical biases, regulatory frameworks, and the level of commitment to voluntary codes (Garrod & Fennell, 2004). Such disparities raise additional concerns about the adequacy of current regulations in safeguarding animals involved in tourism.

Moreover, the current literature predominantly focuses on documenting the negative impacts of animal tourism without providing clear pathways for improvement. While studies highlighting the suffering of animals used in tourism settings are essential for raising awareness, there is a pressing need for research that goes beyond identification of problems to offer viable solutions (Higham & Lück, 2019).

Two significant declarations are utilized to protect human subjects in research, no such declaration had been developed for animals, a call for action noted by researchers (Fennell, 2022b). As the literature begins to acknowledge animals as sentient beings with the right to autonomy, given the similarities between humans and animals, the differences in protective policies need to be addressed (Carr et al., 2018; Fennell, 2022b). Ethical guidelines grounded in

empirical evidence and expert consensus are urgently needed to inform policy development and industry practices aimed at safeguarding the welfare of animals in tourism.

Importance

The recognition of animals as sentient beings in research, capable of emotion and awareness, marks a pivotal shift in our understanding of our relationship with non-human beings. Despite this, the tourism industry continues to mask unethical treatment as entertainment and once-in-a-lifetime experiences, allowing industry around the world to profit from these injustices. Emerging literature has called for universally applicable standards for tourism operators to address these issues in a systematic way. Through establishing criteria for responsible and ethical animal interactions, the development of these standards would help to prevent the exploitation and mistreatment of animals in tourism. In recognizing animals as sentient and autonomous beings deserving of respect and consideration these guidelines will help foster a positive change in the ways animals are both perceived and treated within the tourism industry.

This development would also benefit tourism operators working with animals. Through aligning their practices with ethical principles and animal welfare standards, operators can enhance their reputation, attract conscientious travellers, and contribute to sustainable tourism practices. Ultimately, investing in ethical standards not only promotes the well-being of animals but also fosters long-term success and resilience for tourism operators in an increasingly competitive market.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the rapid growth of animal use across various industries and the considerable increase in research over the last half century, animal ethics remains relatively under-explored area within tourism literature (Mkono & Hughes, 2024). This is evident given the ethical complexities and welfare concerns associated with the integration of animals into the tourism industry. The following review of literature aims to highlight relevant and recent scholarly discourse in animal-based tourism, with a particular focus on animal rights and welfare, animal ethics, and theoretical developments in the field.

Animal-based Tourism

Animal-based tourism refers to activities where tourists observe, interact, or engage with animals in natural or controlled environments (Fennell, 2015). In recent years, there has been a notable surge in interest and participation in animal-based tourism activities, reflecting the increasing desire for unique and immersive travel experiences. According to a study in 2015, up to 6 million people visit wildlife tourist attractions annually, and animal-based tourism is assumed to only intensify in the future as a result of urbanization (Moorhouse et al., 2015a; Carr & Broom, 2018).

Growing interest in animal-based tourism has prompted a revaluation of the ethical implications of animal use in entertainment, particularly within the tourism industry. Animals feature in various tourism experiences, ranging from wildlife viewing and ecotourism to competitive events and interactive encounters (Fennell, 2012a). Across the globe, tourism operators capitalize on this fascination by offering diverse opportunities for viewing and interacting with various species (Carr et al., 2018). The global appeal of these attractions is

evident, with approximately 10% of the world's population visiting zoos and aquaria annually (American Humane, 2023). However, while tourism offers unparalleled opportunities for humans to connect with wildlife and experience nature like never before, it also poses significant ethical considerations for the treatment of animals involved. These include the exploitation of animals for financial gain and their confinement in captivity..

While tourism presents opportunities for conservation and appreciation, it also presents challenges in ensuring the ethical treatment of animals within the industry. Additional studies have highlighted the negative effects of captivity on animal welfare (Mellor et al., 2020), and the importance of implementing strict regulations and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the welfare of animals in tourism (Duffy & Moore, 2011).

Animal Ethics

Scholars have recently turned their attention to animal ethics, which considers the moral acceptability of the use of animals in different contexts, including their use of tourism activities (Collins et al., 2008, p.752). This branch of study addresses questions of moral responsibility towards animals (Fennell, 2012a). Focus on the ethical consideration of the treatment of animals used in tourism has only recently gained traction in academia.

In the realm of global tourism ethics, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) plays a pivotal role in shaping industry standards and promoting responsible practices. The UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism serves as a fundamental framework guiding responsible and sustainable tourism practices worldwide. Established in 1999, this voluntary code outlines principles aimed to promote environmentally friendly, socially inclusive, culturally respectful, and economically viable tourism (UN tourism, n.d.). Despite the aim of this document to be sustainable tourism promotion, noticeably absent from the environmental

discourse is any substantial mention of animals, aside from the imperative to conserve endangered wildlife species (Fennell, 2014).

Researchers have long acknowledged animals as, in some capacity, sentient beings' cable of consent through nonverbal communication. For the purpose of this review of literature, sentience is referred to as encompassing consciousness though, self-awareness, active agency, and the experience of feelings as more than just survival measures (Carr et al., 2018). Despite animal sentience being widely recognized within the literature, this remains fairly dismissed in policy and regulation. Fennell (2022b) argues that (1) it is we humans who fail to understand animal-expressed indicators, and (2) we ignore these indicators in the pursuit of individual and organizational interests through pleasure and profit. Previous work highlighted that animal welfare can be measured through physical and emotional indicators such as "boredom, exhaustion, grief, thirst, and hunger" (Fennell, 2013). These non-verbal indicators are prominent in recent literary discourse, recognizing that animals can communicate in non-verbal ways. The continued failure to understand animal-expressed indicators not only disregards the well-being of animals but also reflects the broader ethical issues of prioritizing human interests, particularly pleasure and profit, over the welfare of sentient beings (Fennell, 2013).

Rights and Welfare

As animals are continuously utilized for various purposes within the tourism sector, the rights and welfare of these animals becomes an evident area of concern. In scholarly literature, studies delving into animal rights, animal welfare, and animal ethics have only recently begun to emerge (Fennell, 2012a). Though the terms "animal rights" and "animal welfare" are often used interchangeably, they are two wholly different concepts (Animal Welfare Education, 2023).

Welfare considerations focus primarily on the general well-being and treatment of individual animals involved in tourism activities. This encompasses any and all concerns for physical health, mental well-being, freedom from distress, and the ability for an animal to express natural behaviours. Welfare also considers how animals are housed, handled, and utilized within tourism settings, ensuring that they are not subjected to suffering or harm. Research suggests that animals pay a heavy price for entertaining the public and providing the industry with financial benefit. Perhaps the most harmful welfare concern is that unethical practices in controlling and training animals for tourism purposes happen behind closed doors. Some scholars have noted that while rights may be perceived as the ideal approach to animal-human interactions by many, welfare is likely the most rational approach at present (Fennell, 2022b). Recently, scholars have developed various ways to measure the success or failure of animal welfare, such as the Five Freedoms framework, and the Five Domains model, and are often referred to by both scientists and advocates in the field of animal welfare (Animal Welfare Education, 2023).

Animal rights is premised on the notion that many or all sentient animals have moral worth independent of their value to humans. The inherent worth of animals grants them fundamental rights, much like those of humans. Animal rights philosophy argues that animals should not be used by humans for any reason (Animal Welfare Education, 2023).

Deontological Ethics

There are three main strands of deontological ethics: theological ethics (including the golden rule), Kantian ethics, and social contract ethics. Theological ethics focus on divine commandments or spiritual principles, often encapsulated by the golden rule: “Treat others as

you would like to be treated." Kantian ethics, based on the work of Immanuel Kant, emphasizes universal maxims and the moral duty to treat individuals as ends in themselves, not merely as means to an end. Meanwhile, social contract ethics derive from the idea that moral rules arise from agreements or contracts within a society and that all parties are obliged to adhere to these rules to maintain social order and fairness (Alexander & Moore, 2020).

Among these, social contract ethics is particularly significant in the context of developing ethical guidelines for tourism. As Garrod and Fennell (2004) argue in their analysis of whale-watching practices, social contract ethics provides a robust framework for understanding the moral obligations that stakeholders in tourism have toward the animals involved. They suggest that ethical guidelines grounded in social contract theory can help ensure a fair and mutually beneficial relationship between humans and animals by setting clear expectations for behaviour and accountability.

Recent scholarly contributions have expanded on the application of deontological ethics in tourism and animal welfare. Fennell (2012) underscores the significance of adopting a deontological approach to ethical tourism by arguing that it allows for a principled stance on the treatment of animals, one that does not merely weigh costs and benefits but instead emphasizes inherent moral duties to prevent harm. This contrasts with utilitarian approaches, which may justify harmful practices if they result in a greater overall benefit.

In their study of whale-watching practices, Garrod and Fennell (2004) illustrate how a deontological framework, particularly one based on social contract ethics, could be employed to create a code of conduct that respects the rights and welfare of whales. They argue that such a framework would involve a commitment from all parties to avoid actions that harm whales, even if these actions could lead to economic gains. This idea aligns with Kantian ethics, where the

treatment of whales (or any animal) should be guided by a duty not to exploit or harm sentient beings for mere pleasure or profit. Kline (2018) has expanded on this discussion by highlighting the relevance of Kantian ethics to tourism, suggesting that ethical codes should focus on treating animals with dignity and respect, as ends in themselves. This perspective supports the development of policies and guidelines that consider the welfare of animals as paramount, rather than secondary to economic and recreational interests.

The emphasis on deontological ethics in the literature suggests a shift toward creating ethical guidelines that are not contingent on outcomes but instead grounded in fundamental moral duties toward animals. This approach is crucial for developing a universal code of ethics for the use of animals in tourism that ensures all stakeholders adhere to principles of respect, fairness, and non-exploitation, as emphasized by social contract ethics (Fennell, 2012; Garrod & Fennell, 2004). Such a code would demand transparency, accountability, and a commitment to upholding the inherent rights of animals, regardless of economic considerations.

Existing Guidelines

Though the current state of guidelines and regulations safeguarding animals in tourism needs to be revaluated on a global scale, it is important to note significant regulations have been developed through governing bodies.

In terms of practical applications, existing guidelines, such as those developed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and the World Animal Protection organization, provide frameworks that can be adapted to various tourism contexts. These guidelines typically focus on minimizing the negative impacts of tourism on wildlife, ensuring that animals are not subjected to harmful practices, and promoting the conservation of natural habitats. However, the literature suggests that these guidelines are often not fully implemented or enforced, leading to

ongoing concerns about the welfare of animals in tourism settings (World Animal Protection, 2016).

In the case of sled dogs, studies by Kuhl et al. (2021) emphasize the necessity for comprehensive welfare guidelines that address the specific needs of these animals, including their physical and mental well-being. Sled dogs, often used in long-distance races and tours, are subject to intense physical demands, which necessitates a framework for their care. The Finnish guidelines propose standards for housing, feeding, training, and veterinary care, aiming to prevent over exploitation and ensure that the dogs' welfare is prioritized even in commercial tourism contexts.

Furthermore, the literature on ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism discusses the challenges of implementing these guidelines in a way that is both culturally sensitive and universally applicable. Research by Moorhouse et al. (2015b) highlights the difficulty of applying uniform ethical standards across different cultural contexts, where perceptions of animals and their roles in society vary widely. This complexity necessitates the development of guidelines that are adaptable to local customs and practices while maintaining core ethical principles that protect animals from harm.

Welfare Theory

The utilization of animals in tourism necessitates fresh perspectives on the intricate dynamics of animal-human relationships to steer toward sustainable and responsible practices. Recent studies have demonstrated the inconsistencies between people's desire to be good and moral, and their unethical behaviours when it comes to the use of animals in tourism (Moorhouse et al., 2017; Fennell 2022a). Despite innate human tendencies to appreciate nature and prioritize animal welfare, our behaviours are often influenced by akrasia, where pleasure-

seeking overrides ethical considerations (Fennell, 2015). The following provides a reduced examination of relevant theoretical developments in the field of animals in tourism.

The Five Freedoms framework is the earliest model developed to evaluate animal welfare (Animal Welfare Education, 2023)**.** Developed by the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC), previously known as the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC), this model is widely recognized in both theory and practice, as a useful tool to measure animal welfare, primarily in farming, through determining if an animal has five key freedoms (FAWC, 2019). These freedoms are freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury or disease, freedom to express normal behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress. Additionally, the development of the Five Domains model has been recently updated to further evaluate the positive and negative impacts on animal welfare based in relation to human behaviour. Originally formulated in 1994, this model of animal welfare assessment has been continuously updated and revaluated to adapt to scientific developments (Mellor et al., 2020).

Emerging discourse in the field of animal ethics in tourism recognizes the challenges in assessing the welfare of animal use. Until recently, the most cited development in addressing these challenges has been The Five Domains model of animal welfare. These domains are comprised of (1) considerations of nutritional factors and their corresponding impacts, guiding towards an ideal body condition score; (2) evaluations of the physical environment and their effects, encompassing factors like fresh air, adequate ventilation, and shelter that shield against harsh conditions; (3) assessments of health-related aspects and their consequences, covering elements such as hygiene, diseases, injuries, and accessibility to veterinary and healthcare aid; (4) examinations of behavioural dynamics, spanning interactions with the surrounding environment, with fellow animals, and with human counterparts; and (5) evaluations of an

animals mental state in relation to overall welfare (Mellor et al., 2020). More recently, these indicators have been utilized to indicate how animals can assent or dissent to their use in tourism (Fennell, 2022). This theoretical development explores the concept of asymmetric agency, recognizing the contrast between the agency of human and animal participants in shared events.

Additionally, research suggests that tourists struggle to accurately assess the welfare of animals in tourism, despite moral instincts (Fennell, 2022a; von Essen et al., 2020). Generally, those who visit tourist attractions featuring animals do not understand their impacts on wildlife, resulting in easily digestible promotional materials that misrepresent ethical standards in the industry (Fennell, 2022c). Addressing this issue, The Animal Welfare Literacy Framework for Tourism, adapted from the UNESCOs (1977) AKASA framework, is proposed by Fennell (2022a). This theoretical framework, employed in the context of elephant tourism in Thailand, addresses five essential components to meet environmental education objectives: awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills, and action to empower tourists with the ability to make informed decisions and take responsible actions (Fennell, 2022).

The closest development in relation to a code of ethics for animals in tourism is the Integrative Social Contracts Theory, a moral theory developed to address the limitations of traditional ethical frameworks in complex business practices. This theory aims to reconcile two dominant moral traditions: the rights-based approach of deontological ethics and the consequentialist approach of utilitarianism. Integrative Social Contracts Theory proposes that ethical standards emerge from a dynamic interaction between local, culturally specific “micro” social contracts and universal “macro” principles that reflect shared human values (Fennell, 2022c). In essence, it argues for the integration of local norms and global principles to guide decision making in cultural and organizational contexts. This theory provides a framework that

recognizes the importance of both cultural diversity and universal ethical principles in addressing ethical dilemmas in both business, and society (Fennell, 2022c). Within this theory, hypernorms are identified as overarching moral principles that transcend local cultural norms and serve as universal standards guiding ethical behaviours that can be applied in almost every context. An initial application of Integrative Social Contracts Theory was conducted in relation to tourism in 2018 (Fennell, 2022c). This study adapts key hypernorms to confront persistent cross-cultural issues surrounding the use of animals in tourism. These hypernorms encompass principles such as the pinnacle of practice, recognition of beneficence, non-maleficence, enhancing literacy and education, justice, recognizing agency and self-determination, and animal-informed consent (Fennell, 2022c). The identified hypernorms within the study outline similar principles to those of the Belmont Report, or various other codes of ethical guidelines for the protection of humans.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To gain a better understanding of the known barriers and adaptations necessary in the creation of a code of ethical guidelines that effectively applies to animals in the tourism industry, I employed a classical Delphi study. The Delphi study is a structured technique designed to build expert consensus on complex policy issues, which has been applied in conservation research (Maini et al., 2023). Several studies in tourism have effectively utilized the Delphi method to address various industry challenges. For instance, Garrod (2012) applied the Delphi method in the context of ecotourism, responding to Deng et al.'s evaluation system for ecotourism destinations. Ocampo et al. (2018) employed a fuzzy Delphi approach to develop sustainable ecotourism indicators for a Philippine perspective. More recently, Yoopetch, Kongarchapatara, and Nimsai (2023) used the Delphi method for tourism forecasting, with significant implications for sustainable tourism development. In another study, Zhou et al. (2023) utilized the method to establish a value evaluation system for health and wellness tourism resources, contributing to the refinement of China's official tourism resource evaluation criteria. These examples demonstrate the versatility and effectiveness of the Delphi method in advancing research across different areas of tourism. This specific method was deployed as the main aim of this research was to move toward consensus on the adaptability of The Belmont Report principles if they were to be applied to the animal-based tourism industry. The Delphi approach allows for the anonymous collection of responses from the expert panel, while limiting potential biases and dominance. Additionally, the classical Delphi method is utilized in this study to encourage forward thinking to address ongoing challenges faced within the animal-based tourism industry.

The sampling strategy in this study is purposive, as it targets recent scholarly contributors in the field of animal ethics and tourism. As the study of animal ethics is relatively new to

tourism literature, the expert participants chosen for this study are contributors to the publishing of a recent article, “Tourism, animals & the vacant niche: a scoping review and pedagogical agenda” (Fennell et al., 2024). The expert participants were chosen specifically due to their intricate and informed knowledge of the subject matter. The Delphi-survey study is comprised of three rounds of surveys; each survey following the first is developed using previous responses. The initial survey poses a series of open-ended questions on the Belmont Report principles and their applicability and adaptability to animals in tourism, as well as the importance of Fennell’s (2022) 7 hypernorms. These initial questions aimed to explore foundational concepts prior to refining subsequent questions based on participation feedback. Each round of the study was administered via email, directly to participants for easy access. Each survey was estimated to take approximately 15 minutes to complete, with the hopes to retain participant feedback.

The research aimed to collect reliable consensus opinions from scholarly experts in the field of animal ethics and tourism to address the adaptability of the Belmont Report principles in this project.

Due to the adaptive nature of the classical Delphi-method, the initial round of data collected was then used to create the following rounds of statements, which participants were asked to rate based on importance on a five-point Likert scale. Following receiving the Round 2 feedback, only the statements that received consensus were retained for Round 3 distribution, further moving toward expert agreement.

To further analyse the qualitative data provided through the three rounds of survey questions, a basic analysis of frequency distributions was conducted to identify any patterns or trends in the data. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data gathered in Round 1 as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns. After each round of

surveys, the responses were examined for recurring themes that represented core concerns and priorities of the expert participants. The data was further placed into table format to effectively display the expert opinions for consideration and viewing.

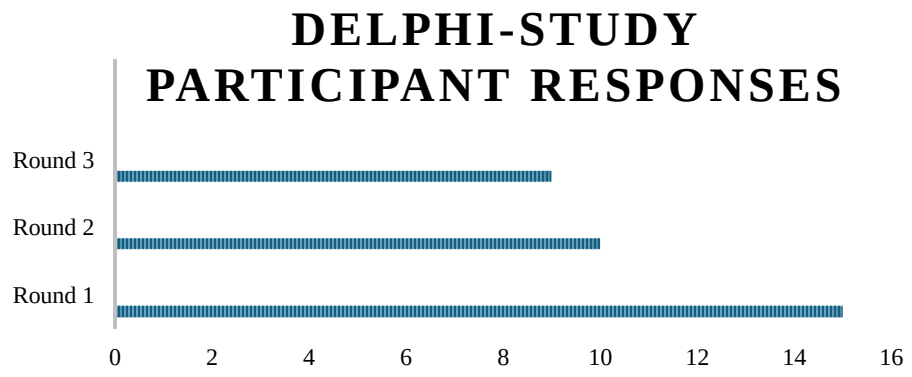
Consent and Ethics

The study will only include individuals who agree to take the survey after reviewing information in the invitation letter and addressing any other concern they have with the researchers. A consent agreement will be included in the Letter of Invitation which will be emailed to contact persons. As participants are unable to sign any physical consent form, they will be informed that their decision to proceed to answer the survey is an indication of their consent to participate. However, they can withdraw their participation at any point in time during the survey. This research study had received approval from the Social Science Research Ethics Board as of March 4th, 2024.

Design and Implementation

The study utilized a classical Delphi method and was conducted in three rounds. The initial round contained a series of open-ended questions pertaining to the research questions, receiving a total of 15 participant responses. The following round received 10 participant responses, while the last round recorded a total of 9 responses (Figure 1). All three rounds of this study were completed between late April and late July 2024.

Figure 1: Responses Recorded per Round of the Delphi-study



Consensus

Round 2 and 3 consensus for this study is determined by 75% or more experts either agreeing or strongly agreeing with a statement on a Likert scale of 5 i.e. ≥ 75% of the experts select 4 or 5 on the Likert scale and the mean of each item is ≥ 3.5.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the scope of this analysis in animal tourism ethics. Future research may delve deeper into specific aspects of animal tourism ethics, consider additional perspectives, and explore case studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of current research in the field. All relevant material, including further insights and contributions from the broader literature perspectives is included in the discussion and conclusion sections of this paper.

3.1. Rounds of the Delphi Study and Data Analysis

In the initial round of the Delphi-study, experts identified two major themes based on initial responses, these were principle adaptations and additional inclusions. Within these major themes,

five key insights and opinions were developed which were then used to shape the statements circulated in Rounds 2 and 3. By Round 3, consensus was achieved for 58.8% (20/34) of the original 34 statements introduced in Round 2.

Round 1

Round 1 of this study was developed based on an analysis of current literature and the identification of the research gap, producing 6 open-ended questions. The questions were administered to participants through direct email addresses with the initial Invitation of Participation. 15 expert responses were received before concluding the initial round for response recording and further analysis of responses were transferred into a Microsoft Word document.

Due to the specificity of our research questions, the two themes for further analysis were clear based on initial responses. In the context of this study, "themes" are determined based on the primary areas of focus that are associated with the research questions. To determine the specific statements retained and distributed in the subsequent rounds of the survey, the first step involved the identification of distinct and unique concepts presented.

Theme 1: Principle Adaptations

Theme 2: Additional Inclusions

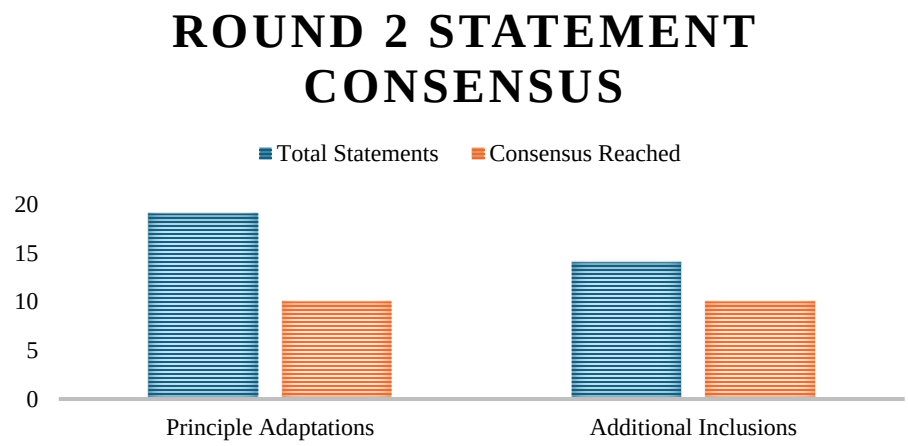
Round 2

Round 2 of the Delphi study was conducted using Microsoft Word, again distributed among participants via email address. For this round, experts were allotted a time frame of two weeks to complete the survey and submit for analysis. In total, 33 statements from 2 themes were

provided to the expert participants to assess their agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale provided to participants ranged from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree and was estimated to take 15 minutes to complete. The experts were also provided a summary of responses from Round 1, clearly identifying the themes and key insights discovered through the initial responses. Closing off Round 2, 10 expert responses were received, and the data was transported to a Microsoft Excel sheet for further analysis.

During the data analysis, the mean, standard deviation, and agreement percentage based on the previously established consensus criteria were calculated. Each statement was evaluated and retained for the next round if it met the consensus criteria. After analyzing the data from Round 2, consensus was reach on 20 out of 33 statements (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of Total Statements and Consensus Achieved in Round 2

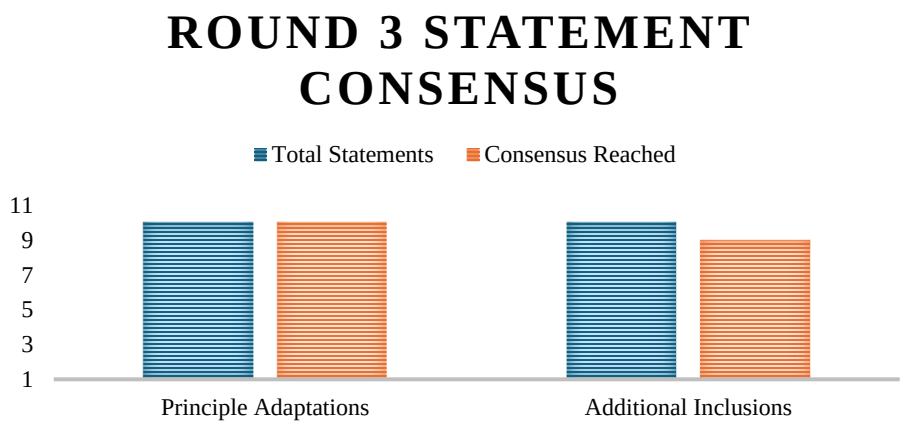


As the goal of Round 3 was to reach consensus, statements that achieved 100% agreement and met the required mean value for consensus were not included in Round 3.

Round 3

In Round 3 of the Delphi study, 20 statements were retained from Round 2 were circulated along with feedback, including means, standard deviations, and group means for each statement. The primary objective of this round was to reassess choices based on group feedback, allowing participants to either retain or modify their original responses. This round was also conducted using Microsoft Word. Responses were received after the allotted two weeks from 9 participants, and the data was recorded and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. After Round 3, consensus was reached on 19/20 statements (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of Total Statements and Consensus Achieved in Round 3



CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The 34 statements generated after Round 1 are thoroughly analyzed in the results section, where they are categorized by specific themes to provide a clear and structured overview. A thematic analysis was employed to identify and organize these themes, ensuring that the retained themes used throughout the study accurately reflects the underlying patterns in the collected data. For each theme, key findings are summarized to capture the most significant insights derived from the data. To emphasize the statements that hold the highest importance within the group, those with the highest mean values and percentage agreement are highlighted in bullet points, showcasing the areas where there was a strong consensus among participants. In addition to these summaries, detailed result tables are included here. These tables provide a deeper look into the data by displaying the mean values and percentage agreement for each statement across the final two rounds of analysis, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the group's priorities and the evolution of their agreement throughout the study. This layered approach ensures that the most critical aspects of the analysis are both highlighted and supported by detailed data, offering a complete picture of the consensus through the process. Following the analysis of Round 2 responses, 20 statements reached the previously identified consensus points. These 20 statements were retained for Round 3 distribution, with the aim to move toward complete 100% participant consensus.

Theme 1: Principle Adaptations

The expert feedback gathered in Round 1 of the Delphi study revealed a diverse array of potential adaptations to the existing principles of The Belmont Report. This initial round of

responses provided insights highlighting various perspectives and considerations for updating the report's guidelines. To better understand these perspectives, the feedback has been further analyzed and categorized according to each specific principle of The Belmont Report. In doing so, the distinct suggestions and critiques related to each principle are clearly articulated, offering a detailed view of the areas where experts believe adaptations may be necessary. This focused approach ensures the nuances of feedback are fully captured, providing a solid foundation for subsequent rounds of analysis and discussion.

- Insight 1: Respect for Persons
    - Many respondents identified the barriers to non-human animals providing consent to their use in tourism, while others suggest that a shift to recognizing animal sentience and agency, independent organizations should be capable of interpreting non-verbal communication. Additionally, others note that not all species register equally on the spectrum of sentience.
    - Several participants have suggested a slight modification in the language used in The Belmont Report to be more applicable to animals in tourism. For example, changing this principle to "Respect for Individuals".
- Insight 2: Beneficence
    - Several respondents believe that the Beneficence principle can be easily adapted to apply to animals in tourism, while some believe that harm is inevitable in some forms of tourism (ex. Animals as food or Spanish Bull Fighting).

        - Various respondents also believe that this principle has a more species-level focus, rather than individual, while some believe that a shift of focus is necessary to ensure the individual needs of species are not placed below the needs of species in every case.
    - Insight 3: Justice
        - Many respondents believe that the definition and measurement of burdens in tourism are difficult to determine, in this case most respondents suggest a shift to a focus on just processes.
        - Quite a few respondents believe that tourism should reward animals through both direct (e.g., providing funds for wildlife rehabilitation) and indirect (e.g., raising conservation awareness) means.

Based on the insights provided by experts in Round 1, 16 unique principle adaptations were identified. Due to the inconsistency in responses, a standard question for each principle was also retained for Round 2, totaling 19 statements. By Round 3, consensus was achieved for 52% (*n* = 10/19) of the principle adaptations identified in the initial round of responses. According to the expert panel, the three principles (Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice) of The Belmont Report can be effectively adapted to apply to animals used in tourism with the following key adaptation considerations:

1) A language shift is necessary in the adaptation of The Belmont Report principles to apply to animals used in tourism,
2) Animals are recognized as capable of non-verbal communications,

3) The handling and treatment of animals in tourism should be humane and considerate of their natural instincts,
4) Independent actors/organizations should be responsible for measuring the benefits/negative effects of individual animal involvement in tourism activities.

Theme 2: Additional Inclusions

In addition to the insights provided in the initial round regarding potential adaptations of the current principles, insights also emerged regarding additional inclusions that are not already mentioned in existing forms of ethical guidelines. These insights were highlighted by participants as inclusions that may be necessary in the accessibility or overall success of a development of ethical guidelines for animals used in tourism.

- Insight 4: Other Notable Inclusions
    - Many participants believe that all seven hypernorms for animal-based tourism (Fennell, 2022) are imperative in developing a set of ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism. Though, in responses that did not include all seven, the mentioned hypernorms were: pinnacle of practice, non-maleficence, recognizing animal sentience and agency, animal-informed consent, and enhance literacy and education.
- Insight 5: Practicality of Application
    - While some participants believe that a universal scope for guidelines provide a solid foundation for a shift in the industry, others are

concerned about the needs of certain species being too specific in this context.

- Many participants have recognized the importance of input and feedback to be collected from stakeholders around the world to ensure "buy-in" participation on a global scale, while others have also noted the cross-cultural barriers present in the tourism industry, especially regarding the treatment of animals.

Experts identified 15 unique additional inclusions that are not highlighted in the existing Belmont Report but were noted as important to consider for this adaptation. By Round 3, consensus was achieved for 66% (n = 10/15) of the additional inclusions. According to the expert panel, key inclusions for the principle adaptations of The Belmont Report include:

1) All seven hypernorms developed by Fennell (2022) are essential in developing an ethical code of guidelines for animal use in tourism,
2) Increased stakeholder literacy and education is essential for an ethical animal-based tourism industry,
3) A universal code would have to be sufficiently adaptable to diverse cultural contexts while upholding core ethical principles,
4) For a universal code to be effective, it must be developed with input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism operators, animal welfare experts. Conservationists, and local communities,
5) "Do no harm" is an achievable and realistic principle to adopt,

6) Cultural sensitivity and respect are important aspects ensuring respect for both animals and cultural heritage.

Table 1: Statistical Results of Rounds 2 and 3 of the Delphi-study

Mean and standard deviation represents experts' agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). Agreement denotes the percentage of experts who agree or strongly agree with each statement (shaded rows denote statements on which consensus, defines as mean ≥3.5 and ≥75% of panelists agreeing or strongly agreeing was achieved).

		Round 2			**Round 3**		
Theme	**Statement**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Agreement**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Agreement**
Principle Adaption *10/10 Consensus in Round 3*	The Respect for Persons principle of The Belmont Report can be adapted to apply to animals used in tourism.	4.3	0.94	90%	4.55	0.52	100%
	The Beneficence principle of The Belmont Report can be adapted to apply to animals used in tourism.	4.3	0.94	90%	4.66	0.50	100%
	The Justice principle of The Belmont Report can be adapted to apply to animals used in tourism.	4.4	0.96	90%	4.55	0.52	100%
	To accept/adapt the principles of The Belmont Report, animal use in tourism in any capacity (apart	3.0	1.15	40%			

	from wildlife viewing) would be deemed unethical.						
	Protecting animals from physical harm, stress, or disruption of natural behaviours while participating in tourism activities is impossible.	2.7	1.15	20%			
	A code of ethics for animals in tourism should be applicable on an individual level, rather than organization based.	3.8	0.91	50%			
	Unless an animal used in tourism is already desensitized to human interaction, informed consent is impossible to determine.	2.7	1.33	30%			
	A language shift is necessary in the adoption of The Belmont Report principles to apply to animals used in tourism.	4.22	0.66	88%	4.33	0.50	100%
	Revising the language in ethical guidelines for animals used in tourism reflects an artificial distinction between humans and animals.	2.6	1.07	30%			
	Individuals of all species should be recognized as ‘persons’.	3.5	1.08	50%			

	Animals are capable of non-verbal communication.	4.7	0.67	90%	4.66	0.50	100%
	Wild animals and “owned” animals have differing needs.	3.8	0.91	70%			
	The handling and treatment of animals in tourism should be humane and considerate of their natural instincts	4.7	0.61	90%	4.77	0.44	100%
	Only in extreme cases of endangered species status would the participation in tourism benefits outweigh the costs.	2.2	1.03	10%			
	In most cases, harm to individual animals in tourism settings can be avoided.	3.7	1.25	70%			
	A percentage of the proceeds made from animal use in tourism should be directly or indirectly given back to animal conservation efforts.	4.6	0.51	100%			
	A percentage of the proceeds made from animal use in tourism should be directly or indirectly given back to the care of individual animals.	4.7	0.48	100%			
	Animals should have the right to	4.7	0.48	100%			

	withdraw from participating in any tourism activity through displays of resistance.						
	Independent actors/organizations should be responsible for measuring the benefits/negative effects of individual animal involvement in tourism activities.	4.3	0.82	80%	4.66	0.50	100%
Additional Inclusions *9/10 Consensus in Round 3*	All seven hypernorms developed by Fennell (2022) are essential in developing an ethical code of guidelines for animal use in tourism.	4.2	0.91	90%	4.44	0.52	100%
	All non-human animals have the capacity to feel sensations, consciousness, and able to act, intentionally, on their own.	4.1	1.28	70%			
	Animal-informed consent can be determined for animals participating in tourism.	4.0	1.05	70%			
	Increased stakeholder literacy and education is essential for an ethical animal-based tourism industry.	4.7	0.67	90%	4.88	0.33	100%

	Animal-informed consent should have limitations, overseen by a guardian.	3.3	1.15	40%			
	Presuming that all animals have agency, creates space in any guideline of ethical principles for unexpected sensational and conscious capacities that we are currently unaware of.	4.3	0.23	100%			
	Ethical principles should include conserving the animal's natural habitat and ensuring that tourism does not contribute to environmental degradation.	4.8	0.42	100%			
	Operators should be open about their practices and held accountable for following ethical guidelines.	4.9	0.31	100%			
	A universal code would have to be sufficiently adaptable to diverse cultural contexts while upholding core ethical principles.	4.4	0.96	90%	4.77	0.44	100%
	For a universal code to be effective, it must be developed with input from a	4.4	0.96	90%	4.88	0.33	100%

	diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism operators, animal welfare experts, conservationists, and local communities.						
	Animal based tourism that focuses on non-domesticated animals should not ignore the roles of suffering and hardship in natural systems and natural selection.	3.8	1.03	60%			
	Individual animals have the right to fair treatment, regardless of species benefit.	4.6	0.26	100%			
	"Do no harm" is an achievable and realistic principle to adopt.	4.2	0.78	80%	4.33	0.50	100%
	Cultural sensitivity and respect are important aspects ensuring respect for both animals and cultural heritage.	4.1	0.87	90%	4.33	0.70	88%

The expert participants of the classical Delphi study reached consensus on 52% (*n* = 10/19) of the principle adaptations identified in the initial round of responses. According to the expert panel, the three principles (Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice) of The Belmont Report can be effectively adapted to apply to animals used in tourism with key considerations which are further explored in the discussion section below.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This classical Delphi study aimed at highlighting the adaptability of The Belmont Report principles to fill the gap in existing animal ethics literature, pushing the agenda forward for the development of a code of ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism. The discussion section highlights the key statements associated with the two main themes derived from the results of this study in relation to existing literature.

Based on the varied backgrounds of the expert participants in the study group, various unique responses were received from the initial open-ended questions. This section explores these adaptations further with support from recent literature and policy developments.

Theme 1: Principle Adaptations

A language shift is necessary in the adaptation of The Belmont Report principles to apply to animals used in tourism,

Firstly, many participants addressed the need to alter the language utilized within The Belmont Report to better suit animals, rather than human research participants. However, though a necessary change in language was discussed by several experts, the discussions differed from each other dramatically. Apart from the obvious changes in participant acknowledgement, the language used within a code of ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism is vital in the success of implementation. Recent literature has recommended a change in the way animal health needs are communicated to tourists, exploring more accessible systems of delivering important information to those that lack prior knowledge and experience with animal welfare (Fennell, 2023). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of communicating in ways that are more

easily understood, adopting systems that the average person is exposed to daily can encourage and promote sustainable forms of tourism (Fennell, 2023). Scholars in animal welfare have long acknowledged the challenges associated with using specific vocabulary when discussing the needs of animals, whether in a wild, domestic or captive setting. Welfare, for example, is a term often used in animal sciences, however, has maintained varied definitions dependent on area of expertise (Clegg et al., 2021). From a more practical perspective, encouraging cross-disciplinary progress in understanding and protecting the welfare of animals necessitates an agreement on common language (Beausoleil et al., 2018). The overall understanding of animal welfare can directly influence the approach taken to assess and evaluate the welfare of animals used in tourism. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of ensuring the language utilized within guidelines is correct and accessible to the general public for optimal usage.

The handling and treatment of animals in tourism should be humane and considerate of their natural instincts,

Second, an adaption should ensure that handling and treatment of animals in tourism is humane and considerate of each species natural behaviours and instincts for increased welfare. This principle is increasingly recognized in both ethical discourse and practical guidelines for animal tourism. The need for humane treatment stems from a growing understanding of animal sentience and the recognition that animals experience a wide range of emotions, including pain, fear, and pleasure. Ensuring that tourism practices align with the natural instincts and behaviours of animals is not only a moral obligation but also essential for the sustainability of tourism operations.

The existing literature emphasizes the importance of respecting the natural behaviours of animals to avoid causing unnecessary stress or harm. Fennell (2013) highlights the significance of adopting a welfare-centric approach in tourism, where the physical and psychological well-being of animals is prioritized. It is argued that practices which force animals to perform unnatural behaviours, or subject them to environments that do not cater to their instincts, can lead to significant distress and long-term harm. This is supported by studies on animal behaviour, which demonstrate that animals thrive when allowed to engage in natural activities, such as foraging, socializing, and resting (Carlstead & Shepherdson, 2000).

Encouraging humane treatment standards is also closely linked to the ethical concept of species-specific welfare. This approach acknowledges that different species have different needs and natural behaviours, and therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to animal welfare in tourism is inadequate (Broom, 2010). For instance, elephants have complex social structures and require large spaces to roam, much like they have in the wild, while birds may need opportunities for flight and social interaction with others of their kind. Tourism practices that ignore these species-specific needs can cause severe stress, leading to both physical and psychological problems for the animals involved.

Furthermore, the ethical imperative to treat animals humanely is increasingly reflected in consumer expectations. There is a growing demand for ethical tourism experiences, where the welfare of animals is visibly prioritized. Research by Packer and Ballantyne (2012) suggests that tourists are becoming more aware of animal welfare issues and are more likely to support tourism operators who demonstrate a commitment to humane and ethical practices. This shift in consumer behaviour underscores the need for the tourism industry to adopt practices that are both ethically sound and responsive to the natural instincts of animals.

Animals are capable of non-verbal communication.

The recognition of animals' ability to communicate through non-verbal cues and behaviour is acknowledged as a crucial factor in developing a code of ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism. Experts agree that understanding and interpreting these non-verbal communications are essential for ensuring that animal welfare is protected and that their needs and preferences are respected. This recognition aligns with the broader ethical framework that considers animals as sentient beings with intrinsic value, capable of experiencing emotions and expressing them through behaviour. As such, the ability to recognize and respond to these cues is vital in adapting ethical principles to the specific context of animal-based tourism.

Recent scholarly contributions emphasize the importance of non-verbal communication in understanding animal welfare. For instance, Proctor (2012) argues that animals use a wide range of behaviours to communicate their emotional states, including signs of stress, discomfort, and contentment. Recognizing these cues allows for more informed and compassionate decision-making, ensuring that the animals are not subjected to activities that cause them distress or harm. By incorporating this understanding into a code of ethical guidelines, tourism operators can be better equipped to create environments that promote positive experiences for animals, aligning with the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence.

According to Fennell (2020), acknowledging that animals can express their preferences and discomforts through behaviour is fundamental to respecting animal agency. This perspective challenges traditional views that see animals as passive objects in tourism, instead positioning them as active participants whose signals must be interpreted and respected. Through integrating these insights into ethical guidelines, the tourism industry can move toward practices that genuinely respect and respond to the needs of animals. The practical application of recognizing

non-verbal communication in animals extends to the training and education of those involved in tourism. As Fijn (2018) highlights, tourism operators, guides, and staff must be trained to recognize and interpret these behaviours accurately.

Independent actors/organizations should be responsible for measuring the benefits/negative effects of individual animal involvement in tourism activities.

Lastly, experts agreed that for a code of ethical guidelines to be established from the adaptation of the existing Belmont Report principles, justice can only be determined and measured through independent actors or organizations. The involvement of independent entities minimizes potential conflicts of interest that may arise from those who profit from animals used in tourism. This separation is essential for maintaining objectivity and fairness, particularly in a field where economic interests often overshadow animal welfare.

The adaptation of The Belmont Report principles to the context of animal tourism provides a relevant framework for ensuring justice. The principle of justice, as outlined in The Belmont Report, emphasizes the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of research among all participants (OHRP), 2022). In the context of animal tourism, this translates to ensuring that the benefits of tourism do not come at the expense of the animals' well-being.

The literature supports the need for independent oversight in ethical decision-marking. Lyu and Zhang (2018) discuss the challenges of determining who should have the authority to make ethical decisions, particularly when potential conflicts of interest are present, and lives are on the line. Their research, although focused on the medical field and human patients, highlights the universal nature of this dilemma across different sectors, including the applicability to animals used in tourism. By delegating the responsibility of ethical assessment to independent

organizations, the industry can better align with the principles of justice, ensuring that animal welfare is indeed prioritized. Moreover, the involvement of independent actors in measuring the impact of tourism on animals can lead to more credible and transparent outcomes. Research by Jamal and Getz (1995) on community-based tourism management underscores the importance of involving neutral parties in the evaluation process to gain the trust of stakeholders and the public. This approach enhances the credibility of the assessments, while also ensuring that the findings are widely accepted and implemented.

Theme 2: Additional Inclusions

All seven hypernorms developed by Fennell (2022) are essential in developing an ethical code of guidelines for animal use in tourism,

The seven hypernorms developed by Fennell (2022) are widely recognized among the expert group as fundamental in establishing an ethical framework for the use of animals in tourism, as they address both the welfare of animals and the responsibilities of those who engage with them. These norms provide a comprehensive framework that ensured ethical practices are upheld across various contexts and cultures.

The "Pinnacle of Practice" hypernorms serves as a benchmark for excellence in animal care and management in tourism. This principle aligns with the growing body of literature emphasizing the importance of setting high standards to ensure the best possible conditions for animals. Through striving for the pinnacle of practice, tourism operators commit to continuously improving their practices, ensuring that animals are treated with the highest level of care and respect.

The “Recognition of Beneficence” and “Non-maleficence” hypernorms together create a balanced approach to ethical decision-making in animal tourism. Beneficence involves actively promoting the well-being of animals, while non-maleficence focuses on avoiding harm. These principles are widely supported in ethical literature, particularly in discussions around animal welfare (Fraser, 2008). By incorporating these norms into the adaptation of The Belmont Report existing Beneficence principle, the development not only aims to prevent harm but also contribute positively to the lives of animals involved in tourism.

“Enhance Literacy and Education” is another key hypernorm that emphasizes the importance of educating both tourism operators and the public about ethical practices in animal-based tourism. Literature in environmental education highlights the role of knowledge sharing in shaping attitudes and behaviours toward animals (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011). By enhancing literacy and education, this hypernorm ensures that all stakeholders are informed decision-makers regarding the ethical implications of their actions, leading to more responsible and sustainable tourism practices. This principle is explored in more depth below.

The hypernorms of “Justice” and “Recognition of Animal Agency” can be easily implemented into the existing principle of Justice in The Belmont Report to address the moral obligations humans have towards animals. Justice in this context involves fairness and equity in the treatment of animals, ensuring that they are not exploited or unfairly burdened by tourism activities. The recognition of animal agency, as previously discussed in the literature review of this paper, is widely recognized as a major hurdle in animal ethics advancement, further acknowledging treat animals have their own interests and capacities, which should be respected. This perspective in increasingly supported by literature that advocates for a more empathetic and rights-based approach to animal welfare (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011).

Finally, “Animal-Informed Consent” is perhaps the most innovative of the hypernorms, as it challenges traditional notions of consent by suggesting that animals, through nonverbal communication, should be able to express their willingness to participate in tourism activities. This norm is supported by emerging research that explores the ways in which animals can communicate preferences and aversions (Broom, 2010). Through advocating for animal-informed consent, Fennell pushes the boundaries of ethical tourism, encouraging practices that are not only humane but also responsive to the needs and desires of the animals themselves.

Increased stakeholder literacy and education is essential for an ethical animal-based tourism industry,

Increased stakeholder literacy and education are crucial for developing an ethical animal-based tourism industry. Tourists often lack the proper tools to recognize mistreatment and poor welfare conditions, posing significant challenges to ensuring ethical practices for animals in tourism (Fennell, 2022a; von Essen et al., 2020). This knowledge gap often leads to unintentional support for the exploitation of animals within the industry. Without education tools and transparency, tourists may inadvertently contribute to the suffering of animals, making it crucial for the industry to implement rigorous welfare standards and provide visitors with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions (Fennell, 2022a; von Essen et al., 2020). As the tourism industry continues to grow, the ethical treatment of animals has become a significant concern for both operators and consumers. Ensuring that all stakeholders, including tourists, tourism operators, and local communities, are well-educated about animal welfare is fundamental to fostering a more humane and sustainable approach to animal use in tourism. This principle aligns

with broader trends in tourism management, where education is viewed as a key driver of ethical behaviour and sustainable practices.

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders towards animal welfare. Research indicates that increased awareness and understanding of animal behaviour, needs, and welfare can lead to more responsible and ethical tourism practices (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011). When stakeholders are educated about the natural behaviours and needs of animals, they are more likely to engage in practices that respect these aspects, thereby enhancing the overall welfare of animals involved in tourism. For instance, tourists who understand the negative impacts of activities, such as riding elephants or taking photos with captive wildlife, are more likely to choose ethical alternatives that do not harm animals.

A universal code would have to be sufficiently adaptable to diverse cultural contexts while upholding core ethical principles,

The balance between universality and cultural sensitivity is essential for ensuring that the code is both effective and widely accepted across different regions and cultural settings. Ethical principles such as respect for animal welfare, justice, and beneficence are fundamental, but their application may vary depending on local customs, beliefs, and practices. Therefore, a universal code must be flexible enough to accommodate these variations without compromising its ethical foundations.

The challenge of creating a universal code that is culturally adaptable is well-documented in the literature. Beauchamp and Childress (2013) discuss the importance of principles-based ethics in healthcare, noting that while core principles such as autonomy, beneficence, and justice are universally recognized, their interpretation and application can differ across cultural contexts.

This concept is directly applicable to animal tourism, where cultural perceptions of animals and their roles can significantly influence ethical considerations. For example, in some cultures, certain animals are revered and protected, while in others, they may be seen primarily as resources for human use. A universal code must navigate these cultural differences by providing guidelines that are flexible yet anchored in core ethical principles.

Moreover, the adaptability of a universal code is crucial for its implementation and acceptance. Fennell (2012) highlights the need for ethical tourism frameworks to be context-sensitive, recognizing that a general approach is unlikely to be effective in a global industry as diverse as tourism. It is argued that ethical guidelines must be tailored to fit the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts in which they are applied. This means that while the core principles of the code-such as the humane treatment of animals and the prevention of harm-must remain consistent, the methods of achieving these principles may vary depending on local conditions and culture. For instance, in some regions, traditional practices involving animals may need to be modifies or gradually phased out in favor of more humane alternatives that still respect cultural heritage, this concept is discussed in more depth below.

For a universal code to be effective, it must be developed with input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism operators, animal welfare experts. Conservationists, and local communities,

For a universal code of ethics to be established and effective, it is essential that it be developed with input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism operators, animal welfare experts, conservationists, and local communities. The inclusion of these varied perspectives ensures that the code is comprehensive, practical, and reflective of the complex realities faced by those involved in and affected by animal tourism. This participatory approach

not only enhances the legitimacy of the code but also increases the likelihood of its successful implementation across different contexts.

The importance of stakeholder engagement in policy development is well supported in literature. Jamal and Getz (1995) argue that collaboration among stakeholders is crucial for developing policies that are both effective and widely accepted. In the context of animal tourism, this means that a universal code must be informed by those who directly interact with animals, such as tourism operators and local communities, as well as experts in animal welfare and conservation who can provide scientific and ethical guidance. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that the code addresses the practical challenges of implementing ethical guidelines while upholding the highest standards of animal welfare.

The practicality of developing a universal code with input from diverse stakeholders lies in the ability to create policies that are both contextually relevant and grounded in ethical principles. For example, tourism operators can provide insights into the operational realities of animal use in tourism, including the economic pressures and logistical challenges faced. By understanding these practicalities, the code can offer feasible guidelines that tourism operators are more likely to adopt. On the other hand, animal welfare experts and conservationists can. Ensure that the code is based on the latest scientific understanding of animal behaviour and conservation needs, thereby aligning the guidelines with best practices in animal care and environmental sustainability (Fennell, 2012).

Local communities are another critical stakeholder group whose input is necessary for the development of an effective code of ethical guidelines. These communities often have deep cultural ties to the animals involved in tourism and may rely on animal-based tourism for their livelihoods. Engaging with local communities allows the code to reflect their values and

traditions while promoting ethical treatment of animals. Furthermore, local communities can play a vital role in monitoring and enforcing ethical guidelines, as they are often the ones most directly involved with the animals and can provide real-time feedback on the effectiveness of the guidelines (Weaver & Lawton, 2010).

To effectively develop a code of ethical guidelines in this context, it must include mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement and feedback. This can be achieved through the establishment of advisory committees or working groups that bring together representatives from each stakeholder group to oversee the code's implementation and adjust as needed. Additionally, the code should include provisions for education and training, ensuring that all stakeholders are informed about the ethical guidelines and equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to adhere to them (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011). These measures not only facilitate the practical application of the code but also foster a sense of ownership and commitment among stakeholders, increasing the likelihood of sustained ethical practices in animal tourism.

"Do no harm" is an achievable and realistic principle to adopt,

Experts agreed that the principle of "do no harm" is both achievable and realistic for adoption in the context of animal use in tourism, particularly when viewed through the lens of the Beneficence principle of The Belmont Report. Beneficence, a core ethical principle, requires that actions should not only avoid causing harm but should actively contribute to the well-being of others – in this case, the animals involved in tourism. Adopting the "do not harm" principle in practical terms means implementing policies and practices that prevent any physical,

psychological, or environmental harm to animals, while promoting their welfare and natural behaviours.

The practicality of this principle regarding animals used in tourism is supported by the literature in the field, which emphasizes that tourism activities can and should be designed to minimize negative impacts on animals. Fennell (2013) discusses the importance of aligning tourism practices with ethical principles, arguing that it is entirely feasible for tourism operators to adopt practices that prevent harm to animals. This can include ensuring that animals are not subjected to stressful conditions, providing environments that meet their physical needs, and avoiding activities that exploit or endanger them.

In terms of practical application, the Beneficence principle, which underpins the "do no harm" approach, can be realized through several key strategies. First, tourism operators can implement strict guidelines for animal interactions that prioritize the animals' well-being. For instance, activities such as riding elephants, swimming with dolphins, or handing wild animals should be carefully regulated or avoided altogether, as these activities can cause significant stress and harm to the animals involved (Moorehouse et al., 2015). Instead, operators can focus on creating experiences that allow animals in their natural habitats from a safe distance, which aligns with their instinctual needs and minimizes the risk of harm.

Adopting this principle means ensuring that animals are not only protected from direct harm but are also provided with environments that support their overall well-being. This aligns with the Beneficence principle's requirement to actively promote the good of others. For example, enclosures for captive animals should be designed to mimic natural habitats as closely as possible, providing opportunities for animals to engage in behaviours essential to their physical and mental health (Carlstead & Shepherdson, 2000). By creating environments that

cater to the animals' needs, tourism operators can enhance their welfare while fulfilling the ethical obligation to do no harm.

In addition, the "do no harm" principle should extend to the broader ecosystem in which animals live. This means that tourism activities should not only avoid harming individual animals, but also take steps to protect their habitats from degradation. For instance, ensuring that tourism infrastructure and activities do not lead to habitat destruction or pollution is critical for the long-term sustainability of both the animals and the tourism industry (Weaver & Lawton, 2010). Through adopting environmentally responsible practices, tourism operators can contribute to the overall health of the ecosystem, thereby fulfilling the Beneficence principle's call to do good. The implementation of this principle in practical terms also requires ongoing monitoring and assessment to ensure that tourism practices remain aligned with ethical standards. This could involve regular welfare assessments conducted by independent experts to identify potential harms, as discussed previously.

Cultural sensitivity and respect are important aspects ensuring respect for both animals and cultural heritage.

Cultural sensitivity and respect are crucial components in ensuring that both animals and cultural heritage are treated with dignity and care in the context of animal use in tourism. The relationship between cultural practices and animal welfare presents a complex ethical landscape, where the need to preserve cultural traditions must be balanced with the obligation to protect animals from harm. Incorporating cultural sensitivity into the development of a code of ethical guidelines for animal use in tourism not only honors the cultural heritage of local communities but also promotes the responsible and humane treatment of animals, which is essential for sustainable and ethical tourism practices. Robinson and Smith (2006) emphasize that tourism

activities, particularly those involving animals, are often intertwined with the cultural identities and traditions of local communities. These practices can hold significant cultural, religious, or economic value, and any efforts to regulate or modify them must be approached with respect and understanding. In some cultures, animals play a central role in rituals, festivals, and daily life, and these practices have been passed down through generations. To ensure that ethical guidelines are both effective and respectful, they must be developed in close consultation with local communities, taking into account the cultural significance of these practices.

Cultural sensitivity is not only important for respecting cultural heritage but also for fostering a cooperative approach to animal welfare. By recognizing and valuing the cultural practices of local communities, tourism operators and policymakers can work collaboratively with these communities to find solutions that protect both animals and cultural traditions. This cooperative approach can lead to the development of tourism practices that are culturally appropriate and ethically sound, such as modifying certain traditional practices to reduce harm to animals without undermining cultural significance (Weaver & Lawton, 2010). For example, rather than banning certain practices, which could lead to resistance and cultural loss, stakeholders could work together to adapt these practices in ways that minimize harm while maintaining their cultural integrity.

The practical implementation of cultural sensitivity in ethical guidelines can take various forms. One approach is to include cultural assessments as part of the process of developing and enforcing animal welfare standards. These assessments would involve consultations with cultural leaders, community members, and other stakeholders to ensure that the guidelines are culturally appropriate and respectful. This process aid in the identification of potential conflicts between

existing cultural practices and animal welfare and actively provide a framework for resolving these conflicts (Fennell, 2013).

Educating tourists about the cultural significance of certain practices can foster greater respect for both the animals and the people involved. Adopting an approach incorporating education would further align with the broader principle of Beneficence, as it promotes positive outcomes for both animals and humans by encouraging ethical and culturally informed behaviour. For example, tourism operators can provide information on the cultural background of certain animal-related practices and explain how these practices have evolved over time to ensure the welfare of the animals involved (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011).

Proposed Ethical Guidelines

The following section presents a comprehensive table of proposed ethical guidelines for animals used in tourism, developed through the adaptation of the Belmont Report principles and informed by expert consensus opinions. These guidelines aim to provide an ethical framework that addresses the unique challenges and responsibilities associated with the use of animals in tourism. By integrating the foundational principles of respect for welfare, beneficence, and justice, alongside Fennell's seven hypernorms (2022), this table offers a practical and culturally sensitive approach to ethical decision-making in tourism settings. The proposed guidelines are designed to ensure that the welfare of animals is prioritized, their agency respected, and that tourism practices are aligned with both ethical principles and the diverse cultural contexts in which they operate.

Table 2: Proposed Ethical Guidelines for Animal Use in Tourism, Adapted from The Belmont Report and Informed by Expert Consensus Opinions

Principle	Guideline	Action/Implementation
Respect for Welfare	Humane and considerate treatment of animals, respecting their natural instincts and non-verbal communication.	*Ensure that animal handling practices align with their natural behaviours; all staff working with animals should be trained to recognize and respond to non-verbal ques and resistance.*
	Animals have the rights to withdraw from participation in tourism activities at any time.	*Monitor animals for signs of resistance or stress and allow them to disengage from activities without penalty or force.*
	Regularly enhance literacy and education among stakeholders about animal welfare and ethics.	*Provide continuous education and training programs for staff, tourists, and operators on animal welfare, ethical practices, and recognizing animal communication.*
Beneficence	Promote conservation efforts and protect natural habitats.	*Allocate a percentage of tourism proceeds to conservation projects and environmental protection; ensure tourism activities do not harm the animal's natural habitat.*

	Ensure that tourism practices do not contribute to environmental degradation.	*Implement eco-friendly practices and minimize the environmental footprint of tourism activities.*
	Uphold the "Do No Harm" principle by actively preventing and mitigating any potential harm to animals involved in tourism activities.	*Train staff to identify and avoid practices that may cause harm to animals; regularly assess and adjust practices to prevent physical harm or cause stress.*
Justice	Fair treatment of all animals, regardless of species benefit or popularity.	*Apply consistent ethical standards across all species; ensure that each species receives the same level or care and consideration.*
	Operators should be transparent about their practices and held accountable for ethical compliance.	*Require operators to publicly disclose their practices; establish independent audits to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines.*
	Independent actors or organizations should measure the benefits and negative effects of animal involvement in tourism.	*Engage independent animal welfare experts to conduct regular assessments of animal welfare in tourism settings, report findings to the public.*
	A percentage of the proceeds should be allocated to the care	*Dedicate a portion of tourism revenue to cover veterinary care,*

	and well-being of the individual animals involved in tourism.	*enrichment activities, and overall well-being of the animals.*
	Ensure cultural sensitivity and respect by acknowledging and integrating local cultural practices and heritage.	*Collaborate with local communities to adapt practices that respect cultural heritage while safeguarding animal welfare; involve local stakeholders in decision making.*

The proposed code of ethical guidelines for the protection of animals in the tourism industry represents a practical framework that integrates the foundational principles of The Belmont Report, with Fennell's seven hypernorms (2022). By emphasizing the humane treatment of animals, promoting their well-being, ensuring fairness, and fostering transparency and accountability, those code aims to guide tourism operators, stakeholders, and the broader community toward more ethical and sustainable practices. The guidelines recognize animals as sentient beings capable of non-verbal communication, advocate for their right to withdraw from participation in tourism activities and stress the importance of conserving natural habitats and contributing to broader conservation efforts.

This code is not just a set of abstract principles but a practical tool that can be implemented across various cultural contexts and tourism settings. It provides actionable steps, ensuring that animal welfare is prioritized, and that tourism activities contribute positively to both animals and the environment. Through adopting this code, the tourism industry can move towards a more ethical, responsible, and sustainable future, where the well-being of animals is central to all operations and decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study represents a significant step forward in addressing a notable gap in the existing scholarly literature concerning the ethical treatment of animals within the tourism industry. A thorough examination of the existing Belmont Report principles, designed for human research ethics, was conducted through the lens of animal-based tourism experts to provide a foundation for the development of an applicable set of guidelines for this context. The research question posed, whether the Belmont Report principles could be effectively applied to the welfare of animals in tourism, was explored through a classical Delphi study method. The purpose of this study was to open discussion for the potential adaptation of The Belmont Report principles to develop a code of ethical guidelines for the protection of animals in the tourism industry. Through three rounds of surveys, a consensus was reached among expert participants regarding the essential components of such a development.

The findings indicate that any effective ethical framework for animal use in tourism must be consider and include beneficence, non-maleficence, cultural sensitivity, and stakeholder engagement. The consensus among experts underscores that these principles are feasible in theory but may be difficult to implement on a global scale. Despite the complexities of policy development and guideline adoption in the tourism industry, consensus among experts highlights the imperative nature of prioritizing animal welfare, respecting cultural traditions, and involving a more diverse range of stakeholders in the development and implementation processes.

Looking forward, the next steps for research in this development should focus on several key areas. First, empirical studies are needed to assess the effectiveness of existing ethical guidelines regarding more species-specific models; in doing so, forms of best practice can be identified to then be incorporated into a universal code. Second, research should explore the

specific challenges and opportunities associated with implementing these guidelines across different cultural and environmental contexts. This includes investigating how traditional practices can be adapted to align with modern ethical standard without compromising cultural heritage. Finally, further exploration is required into the role of independent organizations in monitoring and enforcing ethical practices to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of guidelines. The credibility and effectiveness of the proposed guidelines will depend heavily on the establishment of oversight mechanisms, ideally managed by impartial and independent entities. Additionally, the results of this study emphasize the importance of education and environmental literacy among stakeholders, particularly in local communities and tourism operators. Developing educational programs and training modules tailored to the unique needs of different regions will be essential for promoting the widespread adoption of a code of ethical guidelines for animals in tourism.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for Round 1 of the Delphi Study

The Belmont Report: Key Principles
https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html

The Belmont Report, published by the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research, outlines ethical principles and guidelines for research involving human subjects. Its fundamental principles are:

1. **Respect for Persons:** This principle emphasizes the autonomy and dignity of individuals. It entails acknowledging individuals' capacity for self-determination and their right to make informed decisions about their participation in research. Respect for persons requires obtaining informed consent and protecting those with diminished autonomy.

2. **Beneficence:** The principle of beneficence requires researchers to maximize benefits and minimize potential harms to individuals. Researchers should prioritize the well-being of participants and ensure that the potential benefits of the research outweigh any risks.

3. **Justice:** Justice focuses on the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of research. It necessitates treating individuals fairly and ensuring equitable access to the benefits of research. Justice also involves avoiding exploitation and ensuring that vulnerable populations are not unfairly targeted or excluded from research opportunities.

Section 1: The Belmont Report

How might the three basic principles of the Belmont Report be adapted, if at all, to addressing ethical considerations for animals used in tourism?

Respect for Persons:

Beneficence:

Justice:

Section 2: Fennell (2022) Hypernorms

Fennell (2022) developed seven hypernorms for animal-based tourism:

1. **Pinnacle of practice** (State-of-the-art theory and practice in animal tourism but also other disciplinary domains (e.g., ethology).

2. **Recognition of beneficence** (Ethical operators who embrace new thinking and practice should be recognized for their efforts).

3. **Non-maleficence** (Includes the principle of "do no harm", with emphasis on eliminating animal pain and suffering).

4. **Enhance literacy and education** (Enhance the literacy of all stakeholders is essential for an informed Animal-based tourism industry).

5. **Justice** (Commitment to moving from no justice or shallow justice to deeper levels based on changing values and priorities in the use of animals).

6. **Recognition of animal sentience and agency** (Capacity to feel sensations, consciousness, and able to act, intentionally, on their own).

7. **Animal-informed** consent (Detection of psychological and physiological signposts for the willingness to participate in an activity).

Apart from beneficence and justice which are already included as Belmont Report principles, do you believe that any of the of the other five hypernorms are imperative to a guideline of ethical principles for animal-based tourism? Please specify.

Section 3: Research Gap

Are there any additional ethical principles or guidelines not covered in the Belmont Report or identified in Fennell's seven hypernorms that should be considered for the ethical treatment of animals used in tourism? Please specify.

In your opinion, is it possible to establish a universal code of ethics for animal-based tourism? Please explain.
