Beyond good intentions: 
**Polar Tourism as a driver of emotion and philanthropic behaviour change**

This research assesses the value of travelling to conservation. Further, it explores whether connection to nature is the mechanism by which wildlife travel is converted into donations.

1. **Rationale and research questions**

Climate change provides a rationale to visit areas like the Polar Regions before they disappear, but the act of travelling to threatened areas raises the spectre of tourists loving an already dying destination to an early death. This research aims to critique the power of emotional connection to nature and wildlife as experienced in tourism settings as a key driver of philanthropic giving.

**Research objectives:**
1. Identify the key factors underpinning emotional connections to nature and wildlife within the tourist experience.
2. Investigate the correlation between emotional connection to nature and philanthropic behaviour.
3. Determine the extent to which ‘last chance travel destinations’ and/or encounters with endangered animals in the wild, increases tourists’ long-term philanthropic behaviour.

2. **Conceptual framework**

- The main hypothesis: that connection to nature/place is the mechanism by which tourism is converted into donations. The strength of participant’s egocentric or altruistic orientations is also considered.

3. **Mixed Methods** – A sample of recent wildlife travellers (including polar tourists) will be...

1. Surveyed using a semi-structured online questionnaire
2. Sequentially followed by in-depth interviews using researcher-led photo-elicitation

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis** will test participants’ relationships between the following multiple variables; the travel experience (e.g. onsite activities, species seen, destination’s beauty), levels of connection to nature and philanthropic behaviour (donation history).

**Regression analysis** will calculate the significance of connection to nature as a possible explanation as to why travel has a positive impact on philanthropy.

4. **Anticipated Results and Impacts** (preliminary results expected summer 2018)

**Academic contributions to knowledge**
- To be the first study to use Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, and Kaplan, 1989) to link greater connectedness of nature with unfamiliar landscapes and species within a short-term travel experience. Whilst this theory’s focus relates to international travel, it can also only been tested on participants and their local familiar environments.
- To understand the extent to which last chance travel destinations and/or encounters with endangered animals in the wild, are more influential in connecting people to nature or whether such areas lead to greater behavioural change. Whilst wildlife tourism is focused on the visitation of national parks no research has demonstrated these designated sites/species create a stronger impact.
- Go beyond measuring good intentions and record actual philanthropic values donated by collaborating with a tour operator and ask tourists retrospectively about their travel and subsequent philanthropic behaviours.

**Practical contributions for industry**
- Reveal the value wildlife tourism creates towards conservation.
- Provide suggestions for tour operators and destinations on types of activities/factors of an experience that are most influential in encouraging greater connection to nature.
- Identify links between donating, trip satisfaction and repeat visitation.
- Facilitate greater collaboration between the tour operators and non-profit sectors.

**References:**
- Quark Expeditions have raised an average of $150,000 each season for charity by hosting a charity auction of unique memories, photographs and maps from that expedition on board its ships returning from their polar voyages (Quark, 2017).
- 1. Of the 1,000 wild mammal species listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature, at least 5% rely on tourism revenue to survive (Buckley, 2017).
- 2. Quark Expeditions have raised an average of $550,000 each season for charity by hosting a charity auction of unique memories, photographs and maps from that expedition on board its ships returning from their polar voyages (Quark, 2017).
- 3. Nature-based tourists in Galapagos identified an average of $150 (USD) as the value they were individually willing to donate in support for the islands’ conservation (Hodkinson et al, 2016).