Understanding the public perception of sharks as a tool for their conservation


Public opinion can play a crucial role in wildlife conservation
Sharks have always evoked in human contrasting feeling, from fear to fascination
Understanding public perception and attitude can contribute to the development of management actions

Method
An online questionnaire available in 20 languages, distributed by emails, authors’ webpages, social networks (Facebook, …), magazines, etc.
13 questions to evaluate public attitude towards sharks (Kellert, 1985)
Demographic and social background questions
5 questions to assess respondents’ knowledge

Preliminary results in the first year
Almost half of the respondents did not have basic knowledge on sharks’ biology and ecology
The perception of the public towards sharks was found to be related to respondents’ knowledge: higher knowledge promotes interest and decreases fear
The majority of respondents recognized the important ecological role of sharks and agreed that they should be protected
Certain biases on the sample exist, due to the method used, however the number of responses can overcome these limitations

Find the questionnaire in 20 languages… Help us to spread the word!!!

1. Sharks are dangerous for humans (Negativistic)
2. Sharks are beautiful (Aesthetic)
3. Sharks can feel the pain just like humans (Humanistic)
4. It is necessary to adopt safety policy against shark attacks (Dominionistic)
5. We should manage sharks’ populations to sustain other fish stocks (Dominionistic)
6. Sharks are important for the functioning of the marine ecosystems (Ecologistic)
7. It is necessary to protect sharks as part of biodiversity for next generations (Utilitarian)
8. I wouldn’t approach a shark in the wild cause I am scared (Negativistic)
9. I wouldn’t like to go shark watching (from boats or underwater) (Negativistic)
10. I would like to learn more about the biology of sharks (Scientific)
11. Sharks are important attractions in aquariums (Utilitarian)
12. Fishing sharks for food is wrong (Moralistic)
13. Hunting sharks for human safety is wrong (Moralistic)