



HBCA

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR CHANGE FOR ANIMALS

CASE STUDY

TICKLING IS TORTURE

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONAL ANIMAL RESCUE

COUNTRY GLOBAL (ONLINE)

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Project Background

In June 2015, International Animal Rescue launched 'Tickling is Torture' – a campaign to educate and raise awareness of the cruel reality behind viral videos of slow lorises being kept as pets. The campaign website can be found at: www.ticklingistorture.org.

The slow loris in Indonesia is in serious danger of extinction and the greatest threat to its survival is the illegal trade in wildlife. Its huge brown eyes and soft fur make this small nocturnal primate highly prized as a pet and the victim of an online craze created by videos on YouTube and Facebook.

Videos showing pet slow lorises being tickled, brushed, pole dancing and fed rice balls have become an online sensation. They have been viewed and shared by millions of people who are misled into believing these videos show a happy animal that makes a great pet. As a result, the last few years have seen a dramatic increase in the demand for slow lorises as pets. The key objective of this campaign was: 'To change people's perception of the slow loris pet trade and educate them on the impact viral videos were having on the welfare and conservation status of the species.'



Overview of Intervention

Steps were taken to actively change people's perception of the slow loris pet trade, and to encourage them to take a stand to expose the truth behind seemingly 'cute' online videos.

We produced a video and microsite to expose the truth behind the most popular videos and provide more information about the pet trade and how people can take action.

We urged people NOT to like or share videos of slow lorises being kept as pets, but to instead, share our campaign video and educate people about the realities.

We asked people to 'sign a pledge' to make a promise to help expose the truth and to share our campaign page, instead of the harmful videos.

Welfare Concerns

The slow loris pet trade, which is fueled by online 'viral videos', generates numerous concerns for welfare (at all stages from capture to market to home). In order for slow lorises to be sold as pets, they are poached from the wild, crammed into overcrowded crates and shipped long distances, often alongside the bodies of other lorises that have died. Those that survive the journey are taken to loud, bright markets – a terrifying environment for a shy nocturnal animal. Before they are sold, their teeth are ripped out with pliers, using no anesthetic. After all this, the slow loris is subjected to a life behind bars filled with pain, frustration and fear. In a study by Anna Nekaris, 100 online videos of pet slow lorises were assessed, and every single one was found to be violating the five freedoms.

Achievements

The campaign video has received over 47 million views to date with over half a million people signing the pledge not to 'like' or 'share' any videos showing a slow loris being kept as a pet. The number of pledges continues to grow daily.

In addition, comments on videos of pet slow lorises have gone from being the majority 'Aww so cute, I want one' to 'this is cruel, please learn the truth about this video', with large numbers of people instead commenting asking for the video to be taken down or pointing people to our campaign page. For some examples of this, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZ5ACLVjYwM>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpV7L--cQ8s>

The campaign has greatly improved our google rankings to a primary position when searching 'slow loris pet'. Since the launch, it is no longer possible to watch a video of a slow loris being kept as a pet without in some way coming across this campaign.

Challenges

The main challenges arose as a result of the success of the campaign from a digital development and fulfilment side.

Sustainability

The campaign was launched in 2015, yet two years on it continues to thrive. We continue to have new people signing the pledge every day, and regularly have high peaks in campaign activity. Sustainability is a key component of this campaign and to this day, people continue to sign the pledge, buy t-shirts and make donations thanks to the growing and lasting nature of this campaign.

Lessons to Pass On

Focus on producing highly sharable and engaging content – this is the key to making a big impact and improving chances of creating something with the potential to go viral on social media. Involving celebrities that people trust will also help to give credibility to the message.



Links

www.ticklingistorture.org – Campaign page

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61ugzi3K_Tk&feature=youtu.be – discusses impact of the campaign.



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Valuable information is not easily accessible to those planning and involved with projects aiming to apply HBC theories and principles. Hence, HBCA is developing a resource that provides an overview of interventions and the lessons we can learn from them. If you have a case study to submit or any enquiries about this case study, please get in touch.