Reflection on 'Stop the Traffic' As a Campaign to End Human Trafficking

Introduction

STOP THE TRAFFIK is a campaign coalition which aims to bring an end to human trafficking across the world. This human rights campaign was founded in 2006 by Steve Chalke MBE, a British Baptist minister, the founder of the Oasis Charitable Trust, a former United Nations' Special Adviser on Human Trafficking and a social activist. Initially, STOP THE TRAFFIK was established as a two-year campaign to coincide with the 200th year since of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (1807), however after receiving a significant amount of support from activists worldwide, it presented 1.5 million signatures to the UN in 2008 and continued its work against human trafficking.

Relevance

In terms of its relevance, STOP THE TRAFFIK has been a highly suitable campaign for working against human trafficking across the globe. The fundamental goal of the organisation is “to create a world where people are not bought and sold.” They aim to rescue victims, prosecute traffickers, and raise awareness on ways to prevent human trafficking for happening. The organisation targets all of the various methods of human trafficking, such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, labour exploitation, forced marriage, organ harvesting, forced criminality, drug trade and the use child soldiers. This indicates that STOP THE TRAFFIK is effective in its area of focus as the various methods they use to fight this violation of human rights strongly reflect this.

STOP THE TRAFFIK works to bring about change in the following areas: prevention of human trafficking, knowledge of signs and how to respond to them appropriately, behaviour when coming across potential trafficking situations in order to prevent them, and encouraging the anti-trafficking sector to collaborate and share their data and findings. The organisation’s use of target social media awareness campaigns has also been highly effective in improving the public’s understanding of the human rights violation. They were able to reach 5.75 million people around the world through 11 social media campaigns between 2017-18.

STOP THE TRAFFIK has also trained 20,000 first-line employees in banks, the NHS, NGOs and businesses, to spot signs of trafficking and ways of preventing them. This is done through both face-to-face and e-Learning programmes, indicating the sustainability of the organisation’s model, as it has adopted both traditional and modern teaching methods in its plight against modern slavery and human trafficking.

Effectiveness

Since its creation in 2006, STOP THE TRAFFIK has been one of the most effective organisations against human trafficking around the world. Their campaigns have reached over 6 million people across the globe, helping to raise awareness against the issue.[footnoteRef:0]

Over six months in 2019, STOP THE TRAFFIK worked with Robin Brady and Dr. Ruth Van Dyke to conduct an extensive evaluation of their work and model. The findings were highly positive as they proved that their campaigns had been successful in raising awareness and stopping potential cases through preventative means, although the rates of human trafficking have actually increased rather than decreased since STOP THE TRAFFIK was established This is due to the fact that human trafficking is the most widespread and fastest growing crime in the world, affecting an estimated 40 million men, women, and children each day. [0:] [1:] [2:] [3:]

This organisation has also held campaigns in 9 countries across 3 continents and their research and intelligence database holds over 61,000 cases of human trafficking. This is the most ‘granular’ human trafficking database in the world, incorporating multi-sector partner and open source data into their own dataset to accumulate such a high volume or records. This is massively beneficial for not only forming an understanding of the intricacies of human trafficking cases, but also for preventing them in the future. [4:]

The evaluation of Robin Brady and Dr. Ruth Van Dyke highlighted evidence that the work of STOP THE TRAFFIK has contributed towards an improved understanding of the risks of human trafficking in its audiences. This improved degree of understanding was observed at all levels and across diverse stakeholders within community partnerships, business and financial services partnerships, and its campaigning and policy influencing work. [5:]

A central part of the work undertaken by STOP THE TRAFFIK relates to improving intelligence related to the risk of human trafficking and modern slavery. It is evident that the most effective work STOP THE TRAFFIK has engaged in, in order to disrupt modern slavery and human trafficking at a global level has been the analysis and evidence submitted in support of the UK Modern Slavery Act. This legislative framework has helped mobilise not only its own work, but the work of many of its partners and, where appropriate, their supply chains.

Efficiency

The campaign showed better efficiency in Lincolnshire, UK with 92% of the potential audience reached. But in the Lithuanian campaign, only 52% of the potential audience was reached (Stop The Traffic, 2019). However, the potential audience of the Lithuanian campaign was higher by 978,985, so relative to potential audience size, both statistics could be considered to be high.

Stop the Traffik reported that they only conducted their campaign via one social media platform, Facebook (Stop The Traffik, 2019), when it may have benefitted from platforms such as Instagram that make use of more viral features such as the ‘Explore’ page and hashtags that are able to spread posts easily. One study found that NGO’s (Non-Governmental Organisations) benefit from concurrently using several social media platforms to spread their message, suggesting this method would have increased their campaign spread (Boyle et al, 2017).

Their evaluation deemed the video to be efficient in raising awareness, educating people and helping them feel equipped to deal with a potential human trafficking scenario. It also applauded the campaign for using an average human trafficking situation rather than an extreme one, as it shows how simply people can be tricked or exploited into human trafficking. ‘People described the story as familiar and recognisable and, crucially, not overly dramatic so as to alienate’ (Stop

The Traffik, 2019). The scenario made people feel the problem wasn't out of reach and was instead a real issue that may be happening around them, which can empower audiences.

Audiences reported desires for a longer campaign that would have the ability to educate more and stabilise long term engagement: 'there was a desire amongst audience members and partners for a series of campaigns to deepen knowledge' (Stop The Traffik, 2019). While the initial campaign may have caused an engagement, this has the chance of subsiding if the campaign is not followed up. Research has found that 'repeated exposure' to a campaign can lead to more long-term change (Dumesnil and Verger 2009, Snyder 2007). So, the campaign may have benefitted from a longer duration.

Follow-up questions indicated that 21% of the Lincolnshire audience would have behaved differently in a potential trafficking situation, while 31% of the Lithuanian viewers reported the same (Stop The Traffik, 2019).So, though less of the Lithuan audience was reached, more reported that their future behaviour would be influenced. Unfortunately these figures are relatively low, the reason for which cannot be determined. It could be due to audience unwillingness, not feeling equipped, or the video lacking clarity in directing suitable behaviours.

Also, there is no evidence that, while audiences have said their future behaviour will be influenced by the video, whether these will be permanent effects. No follow-up research has taken place that indicates these behavioural changes have taken place.

Citizen's Advice stated that their Lincolnshire branch saw a rise in calls to their phone line regarding workers' rights in the UK, though it was not determined whether those calls made were in concern for themselves (as the video may have made them question their own employment conditions) or those in potential human trafficking scenarios. It was also found to be a one-off increase, as no short- or long-term evaluation saw consistent increases in engagement.

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Stop the Traffik's evaluation measured impact in terms of levels of 'relevant action' being taken by their audience, such as discussing the subject amongst family and friends, or talking to employers about labour exploitation, which increases conversation and spreads awareness. The UK audience reported a 64% to perform these actions, while 53% of the Lithuanian audience reported the same (Stop The Traffik, 2019).

Impact was also measured by actions taken by external companies, such as banks. Santander worked to increase their efforts in preventing human trafficking; they plan on delivering training to 30 employees in their Lincolnshire branch to identify exploitation cases. Stop the Traffik have explained that banks to play a crucial role in preventing human trafficking, as the nature of work allows them to observe cash flows that can indicate human traffiking situations (Stop The Traffik, 2019).

Actions were also seen to occur on a larger scale, as the UK embassy in Vilnius held meetings with stakeholders and partners to discuss future action to be taken against human trafficking,

though the details of these meetings were not stated.

Conclusion

Overall, the success of the campaign is questionable. Though the campaign did reach their audiences, no short-term or long-term impacts were really identified within their future behaviours. Though some steps were seen to be taken by larger bodies, they were quite minimal or the details of their actions unclear. Stop the Traffik has been working against this issue since 2006, yet human trafficking is only becoming a more common crime *statistic*. This indicates the complexity and large-scale nature of the problem that may require more direct, long term campaigns to affect change in both communities, companies and government organisations.One of Stop the Traffik's campaign slogans is that 'We Cannot Stop What We Cannot See' (Stop the Traffik, 2020), leading us to the conclusion that if any action is to be taken in tackling the issue for good, awareness remains a key factor, which we identified could be achieved through longer-term campaigns and use of further social media platforms.

Group Members

What kind of challenges did your group encounter in working on this assignment and how did you overcome them? Please respond in no more than 100 words.

There were several human rights issues to choose from and we had different preferences as to which issue to tackle; we solved this by assigning each of us to research our preferred topic and present the results to see which issue was more suitable to discuss. Also, face-to-face meetings were suspended due to COVID-19. We tackled this by staying in touch via WhatsApp and keeping each other updated whilst discussing any issues. We also used a joint Google Doc so that we could see each other's progress in completing our sections so that our overall piece was comprehensive.

Bibliography

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