

aMAEzing Marketing Group, LLC–City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department– Illegal Pet Sales Awareness Campaign

According to the City of San Antonio’s Animal Care Services Department, breeding animals for the sole purpose of selling them leads to an increase in stray pets, which in turn undermines ACS’s work towards sustaining a “no-kill” animal shelter for the community. Illegal pet sales are particularly detrimental, as they operate unregulated and unchecked. To address this issue, ACS tapped aMAEzing Marketing Group for a campaign to raise public awareness and understanding of illegal pet sales in San Antonio, particularly among mass consumers (ages 18-65+), illegal buyers and illegal sellers. The campaign spanned six months, from February to July 2019.

Research

AMG dedicated the month of February to planning and preparation for the campaign, and research figured heavily into the process. Data sources included census information, traditional media numbers, social media statistics, ACS reports and a range of primary research that AMG conducted over eight years of executing other ACS awareness campaigns, such as responsible pet ownership, spay/neuter, microchipping and leash laws. This information directly informed the program-planning process and lead AMG to choose communication channels projected to have the highest interface with community members. This included San Antonio’s local ABC affiliate, KSAT TV, for television advertising, and KSAT Digital and Google for digital ads. Facebook was the focus for social media ads, and bus posters were chosen for outdoor marketing. AMG’s research also confirmed the need for bilingual collateral, as native Spanish-speakers constitute a large portion of San Antonio’s population.

Planning

In addition to research, campaign planning was driven by the client’s goals, which were two-fold:

1. Raise buyer awareness of illegal pet sales.
2. Raise seller awareness that ACS is imposing hefty citations for illegal pet sales and confiscating animals being sold illegally.

Building from these goals, AMG developed a strategy to optimize impact and reach to the City of San Antonio. This included quality creative products, as well as marketing efforts via TV, digital, social media and outdoor advertising. Strategic messaging for the campaign was planned around two themes in support of overall program goals:

1. Compare and contrast breaking the law within the context of illegal pet sales, particularly for buyers in danger of being scammed by illegal sellers.
2. Alert sellers that the City is watching and will take action against illegal pet sales.

As such, AMG planned marketing communication using the following key messages:

1. Mass consumers/buyers: “Don’t get scammed. Report illegal pet sales. Call 311.”
2. Sellers: “Illegal pet sellers…We see you. We’re coming.

Outreach in both English and Spanish constituted a critical part of the plan, given the community’s culturally diverse population. As for measuring success, AMG focused on impressions and click thru rates to determine increased awareness among target audiences.

Implementation

Creative

AMG handled all art work and graphic design for this campaign. Over the course of program implementation, AMG blanketed San Antonio’s public and media landscapes with effective creative and well-crafted, bilingual images that served as the foundation for marketing communications. Eye-catching fuchsia and green ads featured photos that punctuated the messages they conveyed. For example, ads

targeting buyers showed a tiny Yorkshire Terrier changing hands for a thick wad of cash. Those targeting illegal sellers displayed the imposing image of a law enforcement officer.

Television

In addition to the foundational creative, AMG produced a video ad warning consumers about illegal pet sales and encouraging them to report incidents to ACS. Building on the theme of comparing and contrasting breaking the law, the narrative highlighted illegal pet sales as tantamount to driving without a seatbelt or texting while driving. It also advised the public to protect themselves against the scams of illegal pet sellers. The spot ran on KSAT TV 33 times over the course of four months (March to June). This media buy proved to be successful with 191,000 gross impressions and a net reach of 148,350.

Digital

AMG worked with KSAT Digital to run a range of ads, including videos, run of site banners, and livestreams. These efforts produced a total of 461,365 impressions and an extraordinary 50.11% completion rate from March through June. Display ads on Google alone garnered nearly 2M impressions and drove more than 3,000 visits to the ACS website from March to July.

Social Media

Digital ads on Facebook ran from March to July and generated 814,224 gross impressions, with 447,011 from English-language ads and 367,213 from Spanish-language ads. The total cost for this impressive reach was \$1,300.

Outdoor

AMG collaborated with Clear Channel Outdoor to secure king-size posters of illegal pet sales ads for 20 buses operated by VIA, San Antonio's local public-transit system. Buses carried bilingual messaging across city roads and highways from March to June; July and August were then bonused by Clear Channel, providing an additional two months of added value. For a total cost of \$14,400, impressions from bus posters peaked at an estimated 3M.

Evaluation

The ACS campaign was extremely successful. Above all, AMG satisfied the client's need to raise awareness about illegal pet sales among mass consumers, illegal buyers and illegal sellers in the San Antonio community. Data demonstrating this success include overall gross impressions of 3.3M from TV, digital and social media ads; outdoor marketing added another estimated 3M impressions. Additionally, click thru rates drove more than 3,000 unique visits to the ACS website.

While these numbers clearly illustrate the success of AMG's efforts, perhaps the most notable outcome was an unexpected one. According to ACS, the goal for citations in fiscal year 2019 was 13,000. However, after AMG's awareness campaign, ACS exceeded this goal by 1,474, achieving a total of 14,474 citations in FY19. Not only did they beat the FY19 goal, they also significantly surpassed previous citation counts, which averaged 11,992 for FYs16-18. This marked increase in citations certainly can be correlated to the increase in awareness and reporting of illegal pet sales, which was stoked by AMG's successful ACS campaign.

Additionally, AMG met all deadlines and budget requirements. The campaign was completed within the allotted six-month timeframe and remained on budget at \$22,082.

AMG is exceptionally proud of our work on behalf of ACS for this campaign, and we are excited to share this success with our industry partners.