

The New York Times Presents: Broken Horses

Active Response Strategy

In recent years, the power of documentary filmmaking to shape public perception and influence policy has become unmistakably clear.

As we approach Hulu's release of "The New York Times Presents: Broken Horses" on April 26, the requirement for the industry to take immediate and serious action cannot be overstated.

Light Up Racing will be initiating an active response strategy to:

1. Counteract misinformation, and
2. Offer transparency around valid criticisms.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

'Broken Horses' has the potential for significant public backlash against horse racing, echoing the impacts seen from the following documentaries:

- "Blackfish" led to a seismic shift in public opinion regarding marine life in captivity, causing widespread backlash against SeaWorld and similar establishments. It not only irreversibly affected attendance and profits but resulted in significant policy changes.
- The ABC Australia exposé on the live export of cattle unveiled disturbing practices, leading to a rigorous debate over welfare standards and immediate bans.
- The Four Corners documentary on greyhound racing in Australia exposed unethical treatment of animals, resulting in the NSW government initially moving to ban the sport altogether.

These examples illustrate how quickly an industry can be thrown into survival mode following public outcry perpetuating from a documentary – regardless if the content has been unfairly sensationalized. Each brought to light systemic issues within their respective industries, sparking public outcry, legislative changes, and putting their very existence at risk.

Documentary Distribution & Influence

The way Americans watch TV has changed:

- 51% of people use streaming services only, 68% under 30s.
- 70% watch documentaries a few times a month and 25% at least once a week.
- 65% of documentary viewers prefer consuming content on streaming platforms, 78% among 19 to 45-year-olds.

Documentaries not only serve as a source of information but also play a significant role in shaping viewers' worldviews, especially among younger audiences:

- 70% reported sharing something they learned in a documentary with others.
- Millennials are notably influenced by documentaries, with 57% reporting they have inspired them to change their lives (40% non-millennials), and 51% use documentary evidence to persuade others (39% non-millennials).

This shift impacts how viewers decide what to watch, encouraging more research before selecting:

- 80% of viewers will research reviews and ratings online or require a peer recommendation before viewing a piece of long-form content.

'The New York Times Presents' series:

- Has higher demand than 85.9% of all Reality titles in the United States.
- 2.0 times the demand of the average TV series in the United States.

ACTIVE RESPONSE STRATEGY

It's vital for industry stakeholders to understand the significant potential of this documentary film to cause major and irreparable damage to horse racing. Light Up Racing (LUR) intends to coordinate an organised active response campaign to attempt to mitigate the perception negativity on behalf of the industry.

We have proactively reached out to the producers of Broken Horses to offer fact-checking services. A copy of the letter is attached as an appendix.

Immediately following the documentary's release, a communications plan will be developed in partnership with industry stakeholders. This strategy will leverage the outcomes of fact-checking to point out misinformation, factual mistakes, and errors in context, as well as to feature initiatives demonstrating advancements on vital industry matters. The plan, along with advice on the best practices for communication and spreading the word effectively for maximum reach, will be distributed to allow full industry community involvement.

Implementing the campaign immediately post-release is crucial, as early narratives have a powerful effect on public perception. False information can quickly become entrenched in public discourse, and individuals are prone to embrace information that aligns with their preconceived notions and biases. Once misinformation is accepted, altering their perceptions becomes increasingly difficult, even when they are confronted with verifiable facts.

There are two strategies to attempt to mitigate the effects, to be executed in tandem:

1. COUNTERACT MISINFORMATION

A swift reaction that corrects factual errors can utilize the very networks and mechanisms that propagate false information to spread truth and affirmative messages. Since the majority of individuals rely on social proof and reviews before deciding to engage with extensive content, querying the documentary's reliability through the exposure of factual inaccuracies may deter potential viewers.

2. TRANSPARENT PROGRESS

It is important a comprehensive PR strategy is also initiated that openly acknowledges the industry's issues and engages in dialogue with the public, showing the concrete steps taken towards reform.

Being willing to communicate signals a strong commitment to accountability and continuous improvement. This proactive stance can assist in mitigating potential backlash by showing that the industry is not only aware of its shortcomings but is also actively working to rectify them. A clear outline of steps already taken, along with future plans, can help counteract negative narratives.

Implementation Plan

Preparation

- Pre-empt misinformation that could be potentially presented and prepare accurate facts to cross-check.
- Have a robust media monitoring system in place to identify misinformation and the channels of distribution.
- Establish profiles within community groups and forums ahead of the documentary release.

Rapid Response Team

- LUR Research team to fact-check and prepare the communications plan immediately after release.
- LUR Content team to execute a content plan that will respond to misinformation, equipped with accurate facts, figures, and narratives.

Community Engagement

- Mobilize the industry network to address misinformation on social platforms, in forums and community chats, and amplify accurate information and positive stories.

Transparency

- It's important that leadership and all industry stakeholders are open and honest about issues, and be willing to engage in constructive conversation publicly.

Step 1: Fact Check

The first step is to quickly assemble accurate data, scientific research, and expert opinions to cross-check content presented in the documentary for accuracy as soon as possible following release.

We will ensure all information is up-to-date and reputable.

- As soon as the documentary is available for viewing, the LUR team will transcribe the dialogue.
- Content will be flagged in three levels of urgency for fact-checking.
- We will require assistance and resources provided by industry stakeholders to review:
 - Statistics, data visualizations, and numerical claims.
 - Potential biases or the inclusion of misinformation.
 - Interpretations of scientific research are consistent with the conclusions of the studies themselves and are acknowledged by the respected scientific community.
 - Context and origin of visual materials to prevent misleading representations.
 - Quotes are not taken out of context and accurately reflect the speaker's intended message.
- We will then create detailed outlines of the issues acknowledged and specific actions taken in response, including timelines, progress updates, and future commitments.

The LUR Research Team will be headed up by Dr Jeff Berk, who will consult with specialist veterinarians on specific topics while working with stakeholders to access required data and verify information.

Step 2: Prepare Content

We will develop a clear counter-narrative communications plan that addresses the documentary's claims point by point.

- Write articles and opinion pieces in varying tones for news sites, media review services, social media, racing industry publications and scientific communities.
- Produce a variety of content, including short videos, infographics, and short-form grabs that debunk false claims.
- Arrange for experts to give interviews on TV, radio, and online media platforms to counteract inaccuracies and explain changes the industry has made.

- Offering PR support to individuals featured who may not have been portrayed in a favorable light or feel their statements were taken out of context, *if they have not intentionally bought the integrity of horse racing into disrepute.*

We will use storytelling to make the accurate information relatable and understandable to a general audience.

Stakeholder assistance in content production will be important to ensure maximum quality and impact in a short timeframe.

Step 3: Distribute

Social media is where much of the public discourse and opinion formation occurs online. We will consistently monitor social media, news comments, and forum discussions for mentions of the documentary to address misinformation promptly.

- This guideline will be circulated widely to industry groups, encouraging them to engage with the public across various platforms, including social media, industry forums, press releases, and public forums, to ensure the message reaches a wide audience, via a wide range of brands and formats.
- We will push out content across as many social media channels as possible, encouraging individuals in the LUR community to share content, address misinformation and engage in constructive online dialogue.
- Drive a campaign for the industry community network to flood their personal social media channels with positivity, stories that specifically counter misinformation, and examples of progress.
- Actively participate in online forums, threads, and community groups where the documentary is being discussed. Profiles on Reddit, Quora, Rotten Tomatoes, IMBD etc. will be established and posts developed leading into the documentary release. *If a forum is flooded on one topic by 'new' accounts, there is a high risk of profiles being blocked.*

A dedicated effort by the LUR grassroots community is a crucial key to the success of this distribution strategy.

We will assess feedback and be prepared to adapt strategies accordingly. The reaction to the public response will be scaled to the level required as public discussions evolve.

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

Given LUR's constrained budget and recent inception, support and assistance from stakeholders for this comprehensive campaign is crucial for maximizing its effectiveness.

Here are several areas that industry organisations can help:

- Grow the LUR community network before the documentary comes out. A bigger network means wider distribution and a more significant impact.
- Help produce content and invest in paid media to boost the visibility of correct messaging.
- Assist with access to data and research for fast fact-checking.
- Utilise analytics tools to determine how the campaigns are influencing the conversation.
- Access media monitoring services to track engagement across key channels.

This strategy requires coordination, resources, and dedication, but by working together as an industry – from individual leaders, to organisations and by empowering our army of ambassadors, we can systematically address the misinformation and educate the public, making it possible to mitigate the negative impact.

Connect with Us



Our website

www.lightupracing.com



Our e-mail

hello@lightupracing.com



Social media handle

[@lightupracing](#)



LIGHT UP RACING

996 E New Circle Rd

Unit #153, Lexington, KY 40505

hello@lightupracing.com

March 28 2024

**Esther Dere, Ken Druckerman and Banks Tarver
Left/Right
39 West 19th St., 9th Floor
New York, NY 10011**

Dear Ms Dere, Mr Druckerman and Mr Tarver,

We are writing to you on behalf of Light Up Racing, a non-profit organization dedicated to the wellbeing of horse racing and the best interest of the horse. Our mission is to ensure that the public receives accurate and unbiased information regarding the horse racing industry and its affiliated sectors.

We have come to understand that your upcoming documentary, "Broken Horses," aims to delve into the intricacies and issues surrounding the horse racing industry. While we applaud your efforts to bring attention to this subject, we also recognize the profound impact that media representations can have on public perception and, subsequently, the lives and welfare of those involved in the industry.

Considering the significant audience your documentary is poised to reach, we feel that it is imperative that it is accurate and does not convey any incorrect or misleading statements or perceptions. We trust that you have these same goals and that you want to ensure that the documentary lives up to the high standards of your organization. Given the highly technical nature of some of the subject matter and terminology used in the horse industry, it is certainly possible that misleading information could be conveyed, even if done so unintentionally.

In this spirit, we kindly request the opportunity to view "Broken Horses" prior to its public release. Our aim is to engage in a constructive dialogue with your team, ensuring that the documentary portrays the most accurate, fair, and balanced depiction of horse racing.



LIGHT UP RACING

996 E New Circle Rd

Unit #153, Lexington, KY 40505

hello@lightupracing.com

Our concern is the potential for misinformation or inaccuracies to be promoted, which even if unintentional, could result in irreparable damage to the image of horse racing and those featured within it. Such outcomes not only affect the livelihoods of countless individuals but also potentially jeopardize the welfare of the horses at the heart of this industry.

Our request is made in the spirit of collaboration and mutual respect, with the shared goal of fostering a more informed and compassionate understanding of horse racing among the general public. We believe that by working together, we can help to prevent the dissemination of misinformation and contribute to a narrative that accurately reflects the complexities of the industry.

To facilitate this process, we are prepared to offer our expertise and resources in fact-checking and providing accurate information. We have significant information and resources rooted in scientific research and data that we will be glad to share or direct you to if necessary. We assure you that our intentions are rooted solely in the pursuit of truth and the well-being of all parties involved in horse racing.

We look forward to the possibility of collaborating with you and your team. Please feel free to contact Dr Jeff Berk directly at +1 (352) 843-3030 or via email at hello@lightupracing.com to discuss this matter further or to arrange a viewing.

Thank you for considering our request.

Yours sincerely,

Directors
Light Up Racing

Price Bell
Dr Jeff Berk
Christina Blacker
Roderick Wachman
Jason Litt