

Faculty of **Faculty of**

**Humanities & Social Sciences**

**ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET – MSc AWSEL**

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| **Student Name: Shannon Noelle** | **Student Number: 1709240** |
| **Programme: MSc Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law** | **Year of Course: 2017-2018** |
| **Module Title: AW 7005** | **Module Code:**  |
| **Assessment (e.g., essay, report, portfolio): Blog** | **Due Date: 24.2.2018** |
|  **Name of Module Tutor:**  | **Date of Submission: 24.2.2018** |
| **Assessment Criteria** | **Exceptional** | **Excellent** | **Very Good** | **Good** | **Satisfactory** | **Weak** | **Very Weak** | **Not Applicable** |
| **Introduction**  |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Structure**  |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Application of theoretical and empirical information** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Knowledge and understanding of the topic** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Clarity of argument** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Originality** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Presentation style** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Grammar** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Spelling** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Use of Sources/Referencing** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Delivery of presentation** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Effective use of visual materials** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Conclusion** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Reference list (appropriate style)** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| **Overall presentation** |[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
| *Please make an appointment to see the tutor. If you are unable to make the appointment suggested opposite, please contact the tutor within five working days of the Assignment Return Date to arrange a more convenient date and time.* **Date**: / / **Time**: am/pm |
| *Please consider seeking assistance from Student Services.* |
| Further Comments: |
| Tutor’s Signature: Date: Provisional Mark\*:  |

**\*All assessment marks are provisional until confirmed by the Faculty Exam Board in the summer**



MSc Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law

## AW7005: Animal Welfare Issues II

## Assignment 2: Blog

[An Unlikely Market: Social Media’s Role in the Exotic Pet Trade](http://www.shannonnrivera.com/winchester/an-unlikely-market-social-medias-role-in-the-exotic-pet-trade)

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Shannon Noelle Rivera

February 23, 2018

Keeping exotic pets is an increasingly popular trend worldwide (12) with millions of wild animals entering the market each year (15). Many of these animals are brought into the pet industry from the international wildlife trade (14) bringing about devastating implications for both wildlife conservation and animal welfare (7). The internet is central in enabling this trade and unexpected sites are being shown to host virtual markets. Social media is a space with high traffic and high visibility, which seems like an unlikely medium for facilitating illegal activity, but that assumption is proving to be incorrect. The rise of social media has not only amplified the desire for exotic pets but it has provided an easily accessible platform to buy and sell wild animals. In order to understand the full scope of the impacts that social media has on wildlife, it is imperative to recognize and examine the gateways that are allowing the unsustainable exotic pet industry to propagate. Only then can action be taken to control this new online sector of the wildlife trade.

Since the creation of the internet, it has been used to foster illegal activity, including the buying and selling of exotic and endangered animals (13). Social media is a fairly new phenomenon; this technology has revolutionized the way the world communicates, but it has also created a new avenue for exploitation. Today, 2.46 billion people are connected across social media platforms (16) opening opportunities for a large cross-section of society to be exposed to ‘exotic’ animals that they would not have otherwise come into contact with. Social media posts displaying videos and photos of wild animals being handled and put in unnatural situations generate a demand for exotic pets. A popular example is in the case of the slow loris (Lorisidae*, Nycticebus*). Videos of ‘cute’ slow lorises kept as pets went viral on social media sites (8,9), igniting a prompt global demand for the primate. After the internet exposure, the species’ endangered status was elevated to “vulnerable”, with one of its greatest threats being the exotic pet trade (2) and the welfare of the individual animals that fell victim to the trade drastically diminished (9). There are a number of other scenarios where wildlife has been affected by social media crazes including pygmy marmosets, chimpanzees and cheetahs (1,4,11).

Social media has also transformed the way the world conducts business, but the internet is weakly regulated (13) and law enforcement has less control over these new virtual markets allowing for detrimental illegal activity to take place. Social media platforms provide accessible opportunities for the buying and selling of wildlife with their large network of consumers, readily available payment methods and lax enforcement impeding the process. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, are commonly used to facilitate the trade of wild animals (5,6), many times, in areas where a market did not previously exist. ‘AmazonPet’, a once popular Instagram business with over 43,000 followers, advertised chimps, orangutans and even gorillas as pets (5) even showing photos of these animals being blatantly smuggled across borders. In 2016, a 5-month investigation found that, in Malaysia alone, nearly 68,000 people were a part of Facebook groups trading in exotic species (6). These examples reflect a worldwide problem and highlight a recognizable need for further investigation.

To counter this growing issue, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has introduced social media protocols to their treaty (3) and some countries have taken action and enforced regulations on exotic pet ownership (1,10), but regulations are only one piece of the puzzle. It has been shown that social media sites facilitate both legal and illegal forms of the wildlife trade (6) and more comprehensive action is necessary. Governmental leaders and conservation agencies need to engage with relevant social media platforms to address the harmful activity involving wildlife that is occurring on their sites. Social media companies need to take on greater responsibility by creating stricter content guidelines and by helping conservation agencies identify perpetrators. With such an unprecedented reach, social media has the power to influence actions of billions of people. If managed carefully, the power of social media could be harnessed to assist with the conservation of species, rather than being another vessel aiding in species decline.

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