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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF USING ANIMALS IN ADVERTISING

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Synopsis: Research has shown that brand identity is only one reason advertisers use animals to promote their products or services. Specifically, the use of animals to market products encompasses several psychological perceptions including cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components. This study examined the prevalence of animals in current advertisements.

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Abstract

Advertisers use various tactics to grab the audience's attention and promote the product or service being marketed. One of the most often used tactics of marketing professionals is the appearance of animals in the advertisement. McCutchen (2005) suggested this tactic is common because consumers are attracted to, and fascinated by animals. Additionally, most people find animals captivating and part of nature (Wilson, 1984; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Therefore, using animals has been suggested as a way to increase sales because consumers associate the brand with the animal. However, research has also shown that brand identity is only one reason advertisers use animals. Specifically, the use of animals encompasses several psychological aspects including neurological, behavioral, and emotional components. Thus, this study examined the use of animals in current advertisements.

The Psychology of Using Animals in Advertising

The objective of advertisers is to use the most effective way to sell products/services. To accomplish this objective, they try many tactics to grab the audience's attention. One of the earliest tactics used in advertising was color in 1946. The findings indicated that color had no significant effect on consumer purchasing behavior (Warner & Franzen, 1946). In contrast, Strick, Holland, van Baaren, and Knippenberg (2009, 2012) found that color successfully lowered the resistance consumers experienced regarding advertisements. Humor has also been shown to reduce psychological opposition to public service announcements (Skalski, Tamborini, Glazer, & Smith, 2009). Ironically, studies have shown that humor was effective without the consumers' conscious awareness, a phenomenon termed as subliminal stimulation in the early 1900s (Hollingsworth, 1913). Sublimation is still widely used as an advertisement tactic. For instance, anyone who has been to a movie theater has had an image of popcorn flash on the screen during the pre-film previews. Theater owners believe these subliminal images increase sales of their popcorn products, however, no research exists to support this claim. In contrast, empirical evidence was reported by the Coca-Cola Company. Sales of their products increased after the words "Drink Coca-Cola" appeared for 1/3,000 of a second during pre-movie advertisements (McConnell, Cutler, & McNeil, 1958).

Other tactics found to be successful in motivating consumer purchasing behavior include violence, sex, and emotion. Specifically, when violence or sex was included, the participants remembered more television commercials and had better recall of the product/service being advertised (Bushman, 2005; Fried & Johanson, 2008). Similar results were found when emotion was included in advertisements. That is, when emotion was used in the advertisement, consumers increased their buying behavior of the product/service (Kneer, Hemme, & Bente, 2011). The

most common means of exhibiting these tactics is through the use of visual images. Visual images are intended to encourage viewers to purchase the product/service. However, for an image to be effective it must first be associated with the product and brand name. Underwood and Schulz (1960) suggested that paired-associative learning is the basis of the product-brand name link and must be acquired before it can be effective in advertising. Once this association has been established in consumers, advertisers can use the paired images to elicit recall of the product/service and brand. Thus, establishing an association between visual images, the products/services, or the brand name is the first step to increasing sales. Marketing professionals hope that once this association is established, the mere image will result in increased sales of the product/service in the future.

Visual images included in advertisements may directly or indirectly relate to the product/service, appear in the forefront or exist in the background, and vary in the amount of visual time. For instance, automotive insurance companies could use an image of a family driving to their vacation spot in an effort to stress the importance of having adequate vehicular coverage in case of an accident. However, the same insurance company may include an image of a parent handing over the keys to the family car to a newly licensed teenage driver. The implication is that the parent should purchase enough insurance to cover all of the expenses incurred if the teenager has an accident while driving. In addition to the visual implications, television commercials alter the amount of time the image is displayed during the advertisement. For example, the advertisement may show an automobile during the entire length of the commercial or only include a glimpse of it during the 30 second time frame.

Of the numerous visual images available to advertisers, the use of animals has recently been reported to be one of the most common. Spears and Germain (2007) viewed print

advertisements from 1900-2000 in the United States. Their results revealed that animals were used to dictate the zeitgeist of each decade. For instance, 1940-1950 advertisers used animal themes reflecting strong family relationships, prosperity, and consumer spending. The authors argued these themes were due to the recovery efforts of the country after World Wars I and II. However, as the century came to a close, the majority of studies examining the use of animals focused on anthropomorphism (endearing them with human characteristics) and its effectiveness on consumer behavior rather than the animals themselves (Amos, 2010).

McCutchen (2005) reported that consumers are naturally attracted to animals. In addition, most people find animals fascinating (Hirschman, 1994; Sanders & Hirschman, 1996). This view is not new and was first proposed by Wilson (1984) as the *biophilia* hypothesis. Specifically, the theory suggests that humans are genetically predisposed to attend to, be attracted by, and be drawn to other living beings such as animals. This attraction to animals can be exploited by marketing officials to entice consumers to purchase the products/services they are promoting. Ironically, the use of animals as marketing tools is not new. Brown (2010) reported that Leo Burnett, a very successful adman, is considered the mastermind of using animals in advertisements. He developed the well-known characters of Tony the Tiger, Charlie Tuna, and Morris the Cat during the 1950s. These characters are still seen in current American television commercials. Dubbed “brand mascots” these characters serve to establish an association between the animal and the brand name of the product/service (Brown, 2010).

Brand identity suggests consumers are more likely to remember the product and be expected to purchase it in the future (Kanungo, 1969; Brown, 2010). Taco Bell saw increased sales when they included a Chihuahua dog in their commercials. The dog became the symbol of the company until it died and new commercials had to be created. Brand identity is not only an

American phenomenon but has been used in Britain. For example, British consumers voted the television commercial which included a Meerkat as the third most popular in 2009. Zoo attendance at the Meerkat enclosure increased dramatically during the same time period.

In addition to brand identity, the culture directly affects how animals are used in advertising. In every culture, consumers understand the characteristics associated with various animals. Previous research findings examining the cultural meaning of animals suggested that humans identify with animal characters because they possess standard human qualities (Neal, 1985; Sax, 1988). For example, bees are symbols of industriousness, doves are common symbols of peace, and foxes personify cunningness (Robin, 1932). In Japan, the trade character dubbed “Hello Kitty” has become to symbolize the Asian cultural traits of socialization and enjoyment. The advantage of using these animal cultural meanings is that consumers identify with them and unconsciously associate them to the product/service. Therefore, products/services linked to these animal images elicit culturally acceptable emotions which, in turn, may increase sales and revenues (Phillips, 1996). Regardless of the cost, marketing professionals argue that the profits are better when animals are included in the advertisement. For example, the cost of a 30 second Super Bowl commercial for Budweiser products, many of which use horses, can run as high as 3.5 to 3.8 million dollars. Yet, Steinberg (2013) reported that the publicity value far outweighs the cost.

Some brand name-product/service associations make logical sense whereas others do not. For example, a tire company showing animals as road hazards can stress the safety factor of their tires when braking quickly. In contrast, using a tiger to promote the purchase of Frosted Flakes cereal, a bear for Snuggle dryer sheets, a dog (Spuds McKenzie) for alcoholic products, and a duck for insurance does not seem to follow logic. Yet, using animals in such comical ways and

portraying them with anthropomorphic behaviors are common marketing tools and have been found to be effective (Amos, 2010). Guthrie (1995) suggested anthropomorphic animals are successful because they follow the principles of the theories of evolution and evolutionary psychology.

Darwin's theory of evolution (1872) suggests that the similarity between humans and animals direct a majority of human behavior and emotions. He believed that the commonality between species is innate and serves as a link between humans and animals. Evolutionary psychology suggests that any behavior which served as a means of survival became innate and exists in modern day humans. This includes the connection humans have with animals. From a marketing perspective, the use of anthropomorphic animals serves to grab the viewer's attention in an effort to prompt consumer behavior thus increasing sales, boosting profits, and enhancing brand awareness. Although not as much is known regarding the use of real animals in television commercials, many successful advertisers use animal characteristics to dictate the qualities associated with the product/service. For example, brands associated with the tiger may prompt consumers to think of the product as being strong, powerful, or authoritative whereas dog provokes feelings of family, loyalty, and unconditional acceptance.

Due to the popularity of advertisements containing animals, psychological researchers have recently begun to use neurological evidence to examine brain functioning while exposed to positive and negative stimuli in an effort to understand the lure of animals. Additionally, a better understanding of the neurological underpinnings of stimuli may offer explanations of why the use of animals is economically effective. Finally, neurological evidence is needed to determine the psychological influences of animals used in advertising. Specifically, do animals provoke

behavioral or emotional responses from the viewer and how do these translate into increased sales and profits.

Neurological Evidence

From a neurological standpoint, understanding how the brain processes images is important to the success of the advertisements, products/services, and sales. Killgore and Yurgelen-Todd (2004) reported that the amygdala processed positive stimuli differently than negative stimuli. Cook, Warren, Pajot, Schairer, and Leuchter (2011) examined brain activation patterns while humans were exposed to advertising images. They found that stimuli did not have to be consciously perceived to entice purchasing behavior. For instance, stimuli presented outside of conscious awareness were found to influence the viewer's self-image and increased sales of the product being advertised (Jennings, Geis, & Brown, 1980).

Davison (1993a, 1993b) and Fox (1991) found that humans exhibited left frontal activity while watching videos containing positive scenes and right frontal activity while viewing negative scenes. When left frontal activity was high, participants tended to recall more of the commercial. Likewise, Sutton and Davidson (1997) used psychometric tests to measure behavior. They found increased approach-related behavior when the left frontal lobe was activated. In contrast, electroencephalograph (EEG) data revealed that right frontal activity was more prominent during negative emotional experiences and resulted in avoidance behavior (Jones & Fox, 1992). Additionally, EEG scans have shown that the human brain detects negatively expressive faces more than positively emotional ones (Whalen et al., 1998). However, the use of negative portrayals of animals may actually increase sales because the viewer is provoked into action in an attempt to change the situation. For instance, animal shelters often

show images of animals in crowded cages in an effort to entice the viewer to adopt them. Therefore, viewing animals in distress may result in increased donations for the cause.

In addition to frontal lobe activation, Phillips (1996) suggested that cognitive maps are triggered when certain animals are used in advertisements. She suggested that animals with humanlike facial expressions and social behavior attract the viewer's attention. Her study used a gorilla because it was the first animal found to have personality traits similar to humans. She suggested that these traits were due to the ancestral ties of primates, a central concept of Darwin's theory of evolution. Her results supported activation of cognitive maps when using gorillas in advertisements but not when other animals such as raccoons were included.

Another cognitive tactic commonly used in advertisements is the presence of baby animals with neotenic features. Studies have indicated that humans are drawn to infants and animals that have the "cuteness" trait referred to as the Kwepi doll effect (Lorenz, 1943). Due to the hypothesis that humans are genetically predisposed to respond when exposed to these traits, marketing professionals often use baby animals in their advertisements. Gibson (2009) argued that domesticated animals are used more often than their wild equivalent because the cuteness factor catches consumers' attention. In addition, culturally meaningful animals are also viewed as more likable. The benefit of using existing cultural meanings of animal traits is that the advertiser does not have to educate the public about the characteristics before using them. This speeds up the association between the animal and product/service which translates into increased company profits sooner. Based on the neurological evidence of the effect that positive and negative images have on consumer purchasing behavior, Aaker and Day (1974) suggested that advertisements could change the consumers' attitude toward a product/service. These attitude

changes are hypothesized to prompt behavioral responses. In addition, the attitude change may be the result of emotional implications of the image which then translates into altered behavior.

Behavioral Perspective

From a behavioral perspective, animals are important visual tools to prompt purchasing of the product/service. Simply stated, animals have a positive allure to them and they grab viewers' attention. Research has shown that positive images provoke approach-related behaviors in humans (Sutton & Davidson, 1997). Therefore, advertisements using animals in humorous, symbolic, and attention getting manners are viewed as behavioral tactics. Similarly, the animal may be used as a symbol of power, strength, or status. Likewise, the presence of animals in advertisements places the persuasion process in motion and lessens the consumers' resistance.

The type of animal included in the advertisement is also important to marketing professionals. Animal mannerisms can reflect the characteristics of the product/service, as well as, imply human personality traits. Marketing professionals use this connection between type of animal and human personality trait to reach specific viewing audiences. For instance, research has shown that men with a cat were considered nicer, more stylish, and more active than if they had a dog. In contrast, the reverse was shown for women (Budge, Spicer, Jones, & St. George, 1996). Thus, pairing the correct animal with the product has implications for the future sales of the product/service. Incongruent animal-human pairs could result in decreased sales of the product/service.

Many marketing executives argue that advertisements using animals increases sales revenue by provoking positive emotions. Results of EEG studies have shown that when positive emotions were evoked during television commercials, the participants chose the product more often (Ohme, Reykowska, Wiener, & Choromanska, 2009). Anheuser-Busch has been very

successful in using animals as positive stimuli in their advertisements. Specifically, they use Clydesdale horses as a symbol of power and strength which covertly insinuates that consuming Budweiser will make a person powerful, confident, and strong. Therefore, it seems that positive emotional content is more closely related to the behavioral perspective than the emotional perspective. However, marketing professionals could affect consumer buying behavior by insinuating maltreatment of animals as a means of bringing awareness to animal abuse. These tactics are intended to play on the consumers' emotions as a way to increase sales.

Emotional Perspective

Emotion-provoking experiences and stimuli have been shown to be remembered better than neutral events (Paz, Pelletier, Bauer, & Pare, 2006). In addition, researchers have found that humans are affected more by negative images than positive ones (Vermeulen & Odendaal, 1993). Thus, advertisers often use negative images of animals to elicit emotional reactions as a means of provoking behavioral responses from consumers. Specifically, it is common advertising practice for animal shelters to include images of abused animals in their advertisements for adoptions. However, the emotional perspective also suggests that certain positive emotions may encourage sales of their products/services. For instance, animals that evoke loyalty, friendliness, and human-pet attachment are commonly used in advertisements. These emotions are considered as interactive and pertain to relationships. Thus, it is predicted that these emotions will spur the viewer to buy the product/service which otherwise may be overlooked at the store.

Spears and Germain (2007) analyzed 1,223 print advertisements during the 1900-2000 time period. They found that advertisements during each decade portrayed animals popular in the social zeitgeist of the era. For instance, during the 1940s at the height of WWII, animals were

depicted as being strong, energetic, and dominant yet involved in loyal relationships. Dogs and horses were the most commonly used animals during the 100 year span. However, the social era of each decade influenced how the animal was depicted. Dogs emerged as companions after the 1950s, whereas horses were pictured as strength, transportation, and war symbols prior to this decade.

Phillips (1996) suggested that trade characters attract attention, enhance identification of and memory for products, and achieve promotional continuity because of their emotional qualities. Trade characters also possess learned cultural meanings. American children are exposed to animals in cartoons and movies at an early age. For example, the *Lion King* depicted lions as animated, friendly, and supportive of others. However, children from Africa who are exposed to live lions may view them as frightening, powerful, and vicious. Thus, using a lion in a television commercial may lure Americans to purchase the product/service but deter African consumers. In addition, environmental and weather conditions also determine what will attract attention. Human-penguin interaction may not work in tropical climates as attractions to products/services, but are identifiable in Alaska. To overcome this obstacle, the entertainment industry often changes these perceptions. Movies such as *Ice Age* and *Happy Feet* showed animated penguins, mammoths, and sloths. Stewart and Furse (1986) found that commercials including images of talking animals and dancing products were rated higher. Phillips (1996) suggested that these types of trade characters were effective communication and advertising tools.

Upshaw (1995) reported that consumers develop affection for and emotional ties to brands that include animals in their advertisements. Affective attachments to brands enhance brand commitment and loyalty (Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer, 1995). Chaudhuri and Holbrook

(2001) suggested that these affective attachments promote emotional ties to the brand, greater brand commitments, and increased consumer loyalty. The findings also suggested that emotional ties serve to enhance motivational factors (Sutton & Davidson, 1997) because they make consumers happy, joyful, and affectionate (Dick & Basu, 1994). Brain imaging techniques support these affective findings. Because humans have been shown to experience positive emotions for animals, marketers use them to stimulate a positive association between the animal and brand. Brand loyalty then results in increased market share and consumer trust in the brand. Thus, animals promote buying behavior. Finally, commercials using animals score above the average in brand preference (Stewart & Furse, 1986).

All of these previous findings suggest that animals influence buyer behavior. However a search of the literature did not reveal any findings regarding the prevalence of animals in advertisements in the 21st century. Additionally, no research could be located that included both anthropomorphic animals and real animals. Therefore, this study was an explorative analysis of the use of animals in advertising. The advertisements were analyzed for adhering to behavioral and emotional perspectives. It was hypothesized that the use of animals, either real or cartoon caricatures, are quite frequent in American television commercials. It was also hypothesized that the majority of commercials use animals in a behavioral perspective rather than emotional ones

Method

Participants. Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Psychological Statistics, Social Psychology, and Motivation courses during the Spring semester, 2013, at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Enid, Alva, Woodward, and Ponca City, OK collected advertisement data. They were provided with a datasheet to collect the information from television commercials, newspaper and magazine advertisements, radio announcements, and

social media. They collected the date, time, product being advertised, animals used including if it was real, animated, or both, and a short description of the advertisement.

Design and Analysis. The data was collected using time sampling. Due to the large volume of television data (98%) in relation to all other advertisements, only the televised commercials were used in the analyses. The commercials appeared on television between January-April, 2013. The animals were entered as singular regardless of the number of animals included in the advertisement. This was done because the focus of the study was to examine animal species in general not the number of each the marketing professional included in the commercial.

The data was entered in SPSS and the content of the commercials were defined as being either behavioral or emotional. Behavioral commercials were defined as those which included animals as a means of prompting the viewer to purchase the product based on its ability to grab the audiences' attention, used as a cultural or status symbol, or evoked positive emotions such as humor. Emotional commercials were those that used emotion as a means of prompting the view to buy the product/service. Specifically, if the animal was used as a tool to evoke sadness or fear, insinuate human-animal bonding, or as a symbol of national pride such as the eagle and flag, then the commercial was rated as emotional. Three females were provided with the definition of the behavioral and emotional perspectives and instructed to rate the commercials. The data were analyzed from an exploratory viewpoint using descriptive statistical analyses of frequency and crosstabs, Chi-square, and content analysis.

Results

The results of the frequency analysis revealed the most common animals used in advertising, the most reported companies, and the most advertised products. The Top 5 most

occurring animals (Figure 1), companies (Figure 2), and products (Figure 3) were then examined as a percentage of the total advertisements.

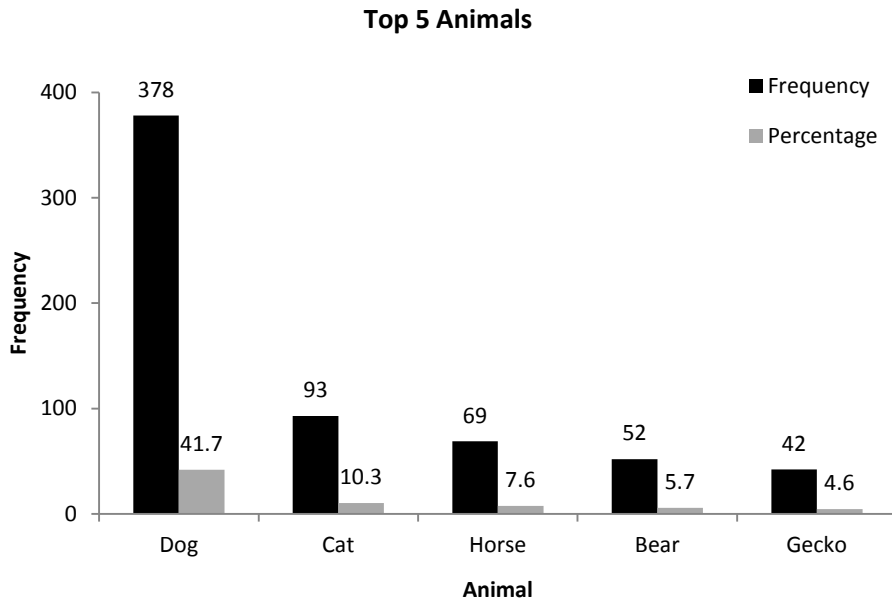


Figure 1. Top 5 animals used in the commercials.

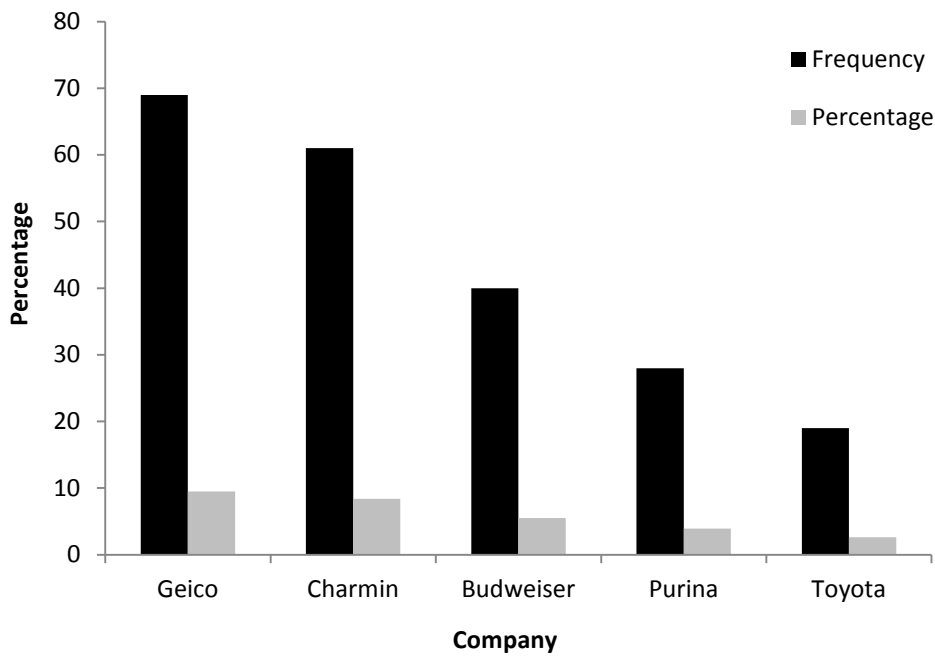


Figure 2. The most advertised companies in the commercials.

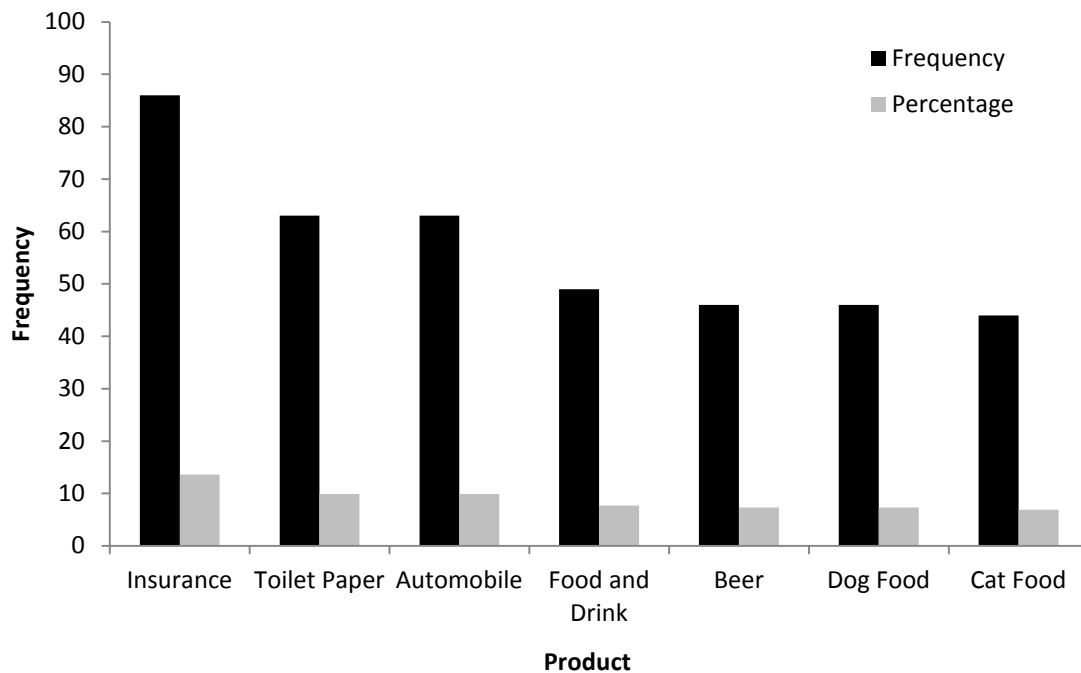


Figure 3. The most occurring products advertised in the commercials.

The viewer comments were analyzed using content analysis. Several prevalent themes emerged and were the basis of the perspective analysis. Specifically, if the animal was described as being used to grab the viewer's attention, elicit positive emotions, or used in a humorous way, then the commercial was rated as behavioral. However, if the animal was used to evoke a negative emotion from the viewer, used as an indicator of human-animal attachment or bonding, or as a symbol of national pride such as an eagle or a flag then the commercial was rated as emotional. Inter-rater reliability statistics indicated a high rate of agreement between the raters. The SPSS intraclass correlation coefficient results revealed .948 and .956 (lower bound, upper bound) at the 95% confidence interval. Figure 4 presents the results of the behavioral and emotional perspective. Additionally, Crosstab analysis of the data revealed more commercials used real rather than cartoon animals. The specie also affected how the animal was portrayed.

For example, dogs were most often portrayed as real whereas the bear and gecko were depicted as cartoon characters. Finally, the results of the perspective Chi-square statistics indicated a significance for animal species ($\chi^2 = 552.036, p < .05$).

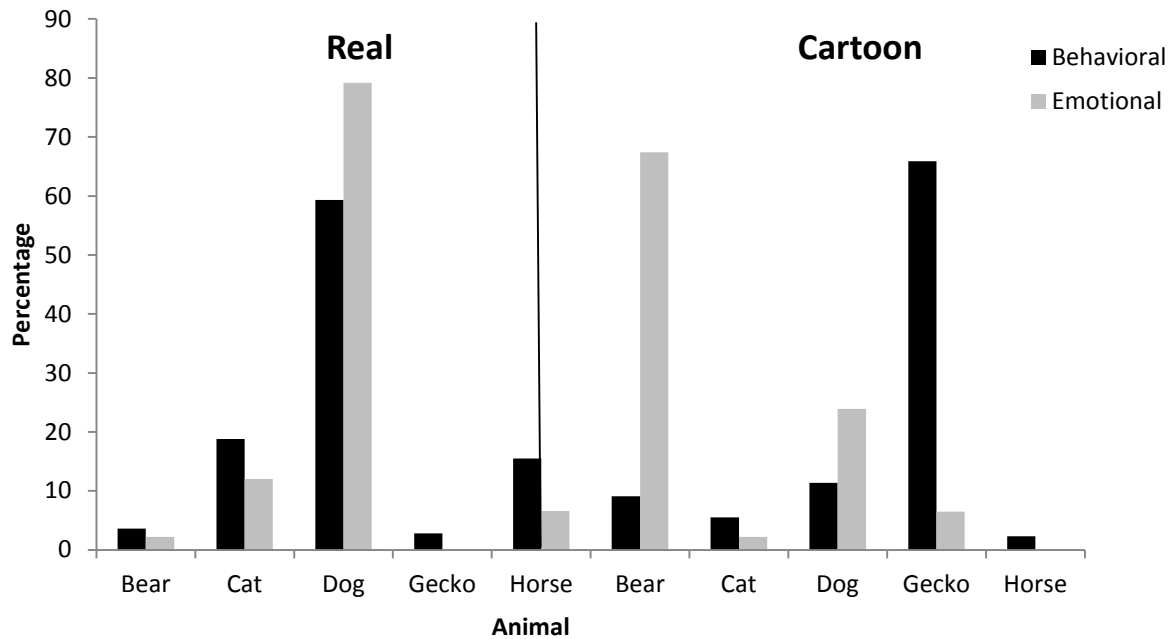


Figure 2. Top 5 animals depicted as real or cartoon characters and rated from a behavioral or emotional perspective.

Finally, the distribution of the Top 5 used animals were examined using the SPSS Crosstabs function to determine the various companies and products they represented. All of the products that were considered human food or drink (excluding beer) were combined (Table 1) however the animal products were left as separate entries. Table 2 presents the final Crosstabs analysis of the combined animal products of food, treats, and medications with a section including animal rescue advertisements.

Table 1

Product	Company	Animal					Total
		Bear	Cat	Dog	Gecko	Horse	
Insurance	Carmax	0	0	4	0	0	88
	Chevrolet	0	0	1	0	0	
	Corolla	0	0	1	0	0	
	Dodge	0	0	0	0	3	
	Drivetime.com	0	1	0	0	0	
	AARP	0	0	1	0	0	
	Allstate	0	0	2	0	0	
	Geico	0	0	0	68	1	
	MetLife	0	0	12	0	0	
	State Farm	0	0	1	0	0	
	Travelers	0	0	3	0	0	
Toilet paper	Charmin	55	0	0	6	0	63
	Cottenelle	0	0	2	0	0	
Automobile	Ford	0	0	0	0	1	62
	GMC	0	0	4	0	1	
	Honda	0	1	1	0	0	
	Hyundai	1	0	2	0	0	
	Jeep	0	0	2	0	0	
	Subaru	0	0	11	0	0	
	Suzuki	0	0	2	0	0	
	Toyota	0	2	13	0	4	
	Volkswagon	0	0	7	0	0	
Food	7-UP	0	2	0	0	0	51
	Birds eye	2	0	0	0	0	
	Burger King	0	0	1	0	0	
	Bush's Beans	0	0	15	0	0	
	Campbells	0	0	1	0	0	
	Dominos	0	0	0	0	1	
	Doritos	0	0	12	0	0	
	Dr. Pepper	7	0	0	0	0	
	Dunkin Donut	0	0	1	0	0	
	Got Milk	0	1	0	0	0	
	Haribo	4	0	0	0	0	
	Nature Bounty	0	0	1	0	0	
	Orbit	0	0	0	0	1	
	Pepsi	0	0	1	0	0	
	Taco Mayo	0	0	1	0	0	
Beer	Budweiser	0	2	10	0	28	46
	Coors	0	0	3	0	0	
	Dodge	0	0	1	0	0	
	Heiniken	0	0	1	0	0	
	Stroh	0	0	1	0	0	

Note. Products that were considered human food or drink (excluding beer) were combined.

Table 2

Product	Company	Animal					Total
		Bear	Cat	Dog	Gecko	Horse	
Dog Food	Alpo	0	0	1	0	0	46
	Blue	0	0	4	0	0	
	Cesar	0	0	8	0	0	
	Hills Ideal	0	0	1	0	0	
	Iams	0	0	11	0	0	
	Pedigree	0	0	5	0	0	
	Purina	0	0	15	0	0	
	Wellness	0	0	1	0	0	
Cat Food	Affinity	0	1	0	0	0	44
	Fancy Feast	0	11	0	0	0	
	Friskies	0	3	0	0	0	
	Iams	0	7	0	0	0	
	Meow Mix	0	6	0	0	0	
	Purina	0	13	0	0	0	
	Sheba	0	3	0	0	0	
Pet Medication	1800Petmeds	0	0	13	0	0	23
	Advantix	0	0	6	0	0	
	Vectva 3D	0	0	4	0	0	
Animal Products	Petsmart	0	0	13	0	0	23
	Frontline	0	0	8	0	0	
	Sheba	0	1	0	0	0	
	Tidy Cats	0	1	0	0	0	
Dog Treats & Cat Treats	Purina	0	0	5	0	0	26
	Beggin Strips	0	0	12	0	0	
	Milos	0	0	1	0	0	
	Kitchen	0	0	1	0	0	
	Milos	0	0	1	0	0	
	Kitchen	0	2	0	0	0	
	Minties	0	1	0	0	0	
	Temptations	0	2	0	0	0	
	Whiskas	0	1	0	0	0	
Dog Medication	Cosequin	0	0	1	0	0	14
	K9Advantix	0	0	10	0	0	
	Seresto	0	0	3	0	0	
Animal Rescue	Shelter	0	1	0	0	0	11
	SPCA	0	2	6	0	0	
	ASPCA	0	0	2	0	0	

Note. The pooled animal products including food, treats, and medications.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that real animals are used in commercials more often than cartoon animals. Also, dogs are the most commonly used animal in advertising followed by the cat, horse, bear, and gecko. However, this finding could be different if the data was collected for a longer period of time or during a different season. For example, this data was collected from January-April and included three holidays – Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, and Easter. Although not considered a holiday, the Super Bowl was also televised during this period which could account for the large number of advertisements using horses. Specifically, Budweiser often uses Clydesdale horses in their Super Bowl commercials.

The results of the analyses also revealed that the viewers were more likely to attach emotional descriptions to commercials which contained negative scenes or insinuated an attachment between the animal and human. For instance, the ASPCA commercials were always described as using pictures of “sad looking” dogs and cats. This anthropomorphic description of animals is commonly held by the general public but debated by the scientific community. However, marketing officials are charged with influencing the viewing audience not researchers thus anthropomorphic images and portrayals are widely used to sell products/services. In contrast, commercials that used animals in humorous or commonplace ways were more likely to be described in behavioral terms. For example, Geico Insurance has adopted a cartoon depiction of a gecko as their brand mascot. The viewers’ descriptions of these commercials were positive, amusing, and comical.

The results of the viewers’ comments were then analyzed by three independent raters for portraying either a behavioral or emotional perspective. If the commercial used the animal as a background prop, portrayed it in humorous or comical ways, or as a cultural/societal symbol, the

raters were told to categorize it as behavioral. In contrast, if the animal was used to evoke an emotion, depict attachment or bonding between the animal-human, or in negatively anthropomorphic ways, the raters were instructed to label it as emotional. The inter-rater reliability results indicated approximately 95% agreement between the three raters. Additionally, more commercials were rated behavioral than as emotional. This was not surprising considering the way animals are used to advertise products. Research has shown that humans tend to recall positive information more often than negative material. Likewise, more details are remembered when positive stimuli are presented to viewers. Thus, marketing professionals use animals in comical ways in an attempt to grab the audience's attention and influence their buying decisions. This is not to say that advertisers refrain from using negative images of animals. However, when used negatively, the advertiser is doing so in an effort to evoke an emotional response which then results in behavioral actions. Similarly, animals depicted as attachment or bonding figures for humans are often used to stimulate consumer action. From a marketing perspective, increased sales are the endpoint for the emotion-behavior association.

Although the results of this study indicate that animals are commonly used to sell products/services, several limitations must be addressed. First, there was quite a lot of overlap in the recorded commercials. The overlap was expected because numerous viewers participated in the data collection. However, the overlap did not detract from the purpose of the study. Rather, the intent of this study was to determine the percentage of commercials that use animals from those that did not use them. Thus, the data provided insight into the types of animals used, the species of animals included, and the frequency of animal use. Secondly, the viewers' comments were then used to understand their perceptions of the animal as being a behavioral tool or emotional stimulus. Future studies should limit the number of viewers in an effort to eliminate

the overlap and repetition of commercials. The current study included three females to rate the behavioral or emotional perspective. Future research should also include male points of view. Additionally, experimentally designed studies would offer better answers and support to questions still unanswered by this study. Specifically, do emotional advertisements result in greater consumer attention? If not, do the humorous commercials result in increased consumer purchasing of the product/service? Are real animals more effective than cartoon animals in eliciting emotions from the viewers? Do these emotion-provoking commercials translate into increased sales and profits for the company? A future study should include equal number of commercials for each animal specie and allow participants to rate them as behavioral or emotional. This experimental manipulation would then allow for inferential statistics. Specifically, a 2-way ANOVA would determine if there is a significant difference in perspective based on the animal specie used and whether it was real or cartoon.

Finally, future studies should limit the types of animals used to better understand the qualities of the species. For instance, do dogs possess better qualities or traits than horses for certain products? Do cats portray personas more attuned to some products/services than, for instance, rabbits? Likewise, are there qualities of real animals that are more accommodating to products/services than cartoon animals? By understanding these and other questions, marketing professionals are better able to psychologically manipulate the consumer into purchasing the products/services. Increased purchasing of the products/services means more profits for the company and perhaps more satisfaction for the consumer.

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