



## Animal Representation in Advertising – A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Indian and Global Trends

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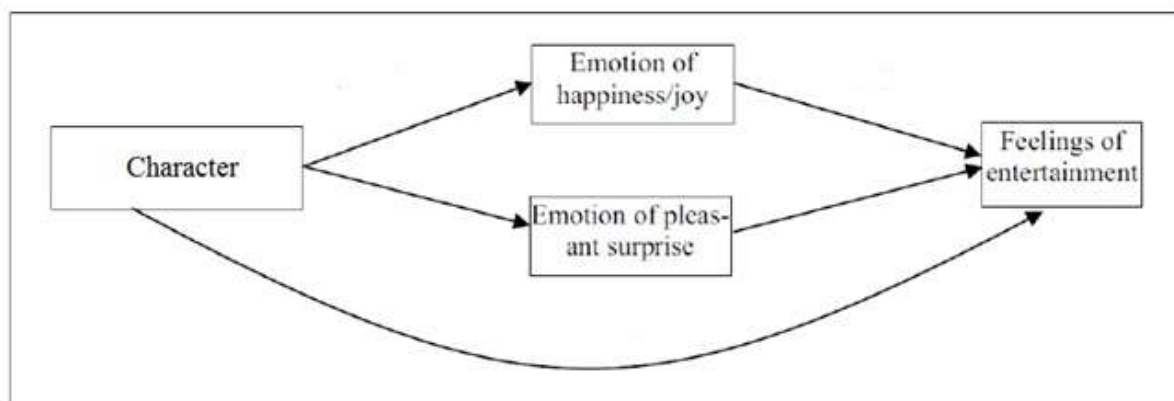
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Article History	Abstract
Received: 06 June 2023 Revised: 25 July 2023 Accepted: 21 Aug 2023	<i>Advertising is a powerful tool that shapes consumer behavior, influences public perception, and reflects societal values. Animals have been a common motif in advertising campaigns for decades, playing various roles from mascots to symbols of different brands and products. However, the use of animals in advertising raises ethical questions and concerns about the treatment and portrayal of animals. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of the use of animals in advertising, focusing on Indian and global trends. It explores the historical context, ethical considerations, legal regulations, cultural influences, and recent shifts in the use of animals in advertising. The analysis offers insights into the evolving relationship between animals and advertising in India and its alignment with or deviation from global practices.</i>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	<b>Keywords:</b> Advertising, Animal, Ethics, Indian and Global Trends

### 1. Introduction

Advertising is an essential component of modern consumer society, employing a diverse range of techniques to capture the attention of target audiences. One common and recurrent technique involves the use of animals as symbols, spokespeople, or characters in advertisements. Animals have been featured in advertising campaigns for various reasons, including their ability to evoke emotions, create memorable associations, convey messages without words. The use of animals in advertising suggests that advertisers can positively affect consumers' views by linking a brand with an alluring cue or stimulus, even if that stimulus has nothing to do with the product and offers no product information (Lancendorfer, Atkin, & Reece, 2008). In short, animals are used as a source of entertainment (Fig. 1). However, the use of animals in advertising is not without its controversies. Ethical concerns, such as animal welfare, misrepresentation, and the reinforcement of stereotypes, have led to increased scrutiny of such practices globally. For better understanding the effects of animal use in advertising, a model is put out. According to the paradigm, the world as it is culturally constructed is made up of numerous entities that can have symbolic value. The media then informs the customer about these symbols and their meanings by connecting them to specific products (Spears, Mowen, & Chakraborty, 1996).



*Fig.1 Mediation effect of positive emotions in the relationship between character (animal or human) and feelings of entertainment (Keller & Gierl, 2020)*

To catch the audience's attention and promote the good or service being promoted, advertisers employ a variety of strategies. The employment of animals in advertisements is one of the strategies that marketing experts utilize the most frequently. Because consumers are drawn to and fascinated by animals, this strategy is frequently used. The majority of people also find animals fascinating and a part of nature. As a result, it has been proposed that employing animals to promote products could boost sales since customers connect the brand with the animal. Research has also revealed that using animals in advertisements is not always done for brand reasons. In particular, the use of animals includes a range of psychological, neurological, behavioral, and emotional characteristics (Stone, 2014).

This paper examines the use of animals in advertising, with a specific focus on India and its alignment with global trends. The paper explores the historical and cultural context of animal use in advertising, the ethical considerations surrounding this practice, the legal regulations governing it, and the evolving trends in both India and the global advertising landscape.

### **Objectives**

- To compare historical trends of animal use in advertising in India and globally.
- To evaluate ethical considerations and cultural influences on animal use in advertising.
- To analyze legal regulations governing animal use in advertising in India and globally.
- To examine recent shifts in advertising practices regarding animals in both contexts.

### **Historical Context**

#### **Global Historical Trends**

The use of animals in advertising has a long history, dating back to the early 20th century. In the United States, for example, animals like the Kellogg's rooster, the Geico gecko, and the Budweiser Clydesdales have become iconic brand symbols over the years. These animals have been carefully selected and cultivated to establish strong brand recognition and emotional connections with consumers.

#### **Historical Trends in India**

In India, the use of animals in advertising can be traced back to the mid-20th century when television made its debut. Early advertisements often featured domestic animals, such as cows and elephants, symbolizing rural life and traditional values. However, as the Indian advertising industry evolved, so did the use of animals in advertisements. Tigers, elephants, and peacocks were used to represent India's rich cultural heritage.

### **Ethical Considerations**

#### **Global Ethical Concerns**

The use of animals in advertising globally has sparked ethical concerns regarding their treatment, portrayal, and the potential harm caused by their inclusion. Some of the key ethical concerns include:

- (a) Exploitation: Animals may be subjected to stress, discomfort, or harm during the production of advertisements, including transportation, confinement, and handling.
- (b) Misrepresentation: Animals are often anthropomorphized or presented in unrealistic scenarios, potentially misleading consumers about their natural behaviors and characteristics.
- (c) Stereotyping: Animals in advertising can reinforce stereotypes, promoting harmful views about certain species and perpetuating societal biases.

The French clothing brand Lacoste introduced its first line of polo T-shirts in 2018 without the crocodile insignia for which it is best known. Instead, it collaborated with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to produce 10 distinct types of limited-edition T-shirts with endangered species as logos (Jessica, 2020).

### **Ethical Considerations in India**

In India, ethical concerns regarding the use of animals in advertising have grown in prominence in recent years. The country has a diverse cultural and religious landscape that influences attitudes towards animals, often emphasizing respect and reverence. Some of the ethical concerns specific to India include:

- (a) Cultural Sensitivity: The use of certain animals, like cows and elephants, in advertisements can be considered disrespectful and offensive due to their sacred status in Hinduism.
- (b) Animal Welfare: Concerns have been raised about the treatment of animals used in ad shoots, leading to increased awareness of animal welfare issues.
- (c) Legal Framework: India has implemented legal regulations, such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, which govern the treatment of animals and their use in advertising.

### **Legal Regulations**

#### **Global Legal Framework**

Countries around the world have different legal frameworks governing the use of animals in advertising. These regulations often aim to strike a balance between protecting animal welfare and allowing for creative freedom in advertising. Key legal considerations include:

- (a) Animal Welfare Laws: Many countries have specific laws and regulations that prohibit cruelty to animals and ensure their welfare during advertising productions.
- (b) Use of Wild Animals: The use of wild or exotic animals in advertising is more strictly regulated due to conservation concerns and potential risks to public safety.
- (c) Codes of Practice: Advertising industry associations often establish codes of practice that guide the ethical use of animals in advertising campaigns.

Many of the advertisements featured many themes, illustrating the nuanced, multifaceted messages about animals in advertising as well as the various values and purposes that people attribute to various species of non-human animals, supporting the political economy of the United States. Last but not least, the majority of animal representations did not anthropomorphize; those that did were often a part of a multi-themed message that used animals as allegories. Many of the animal imagery served to promote racial and gender stereotypes in people (Lerner & Kalof, 2005).

#### **Legal Regulations in India**

In India, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, is the primary legislation governing the treatment of animals, including their use in advertising. This act mandates that animals should not be subjected to unnecessary suffering or cruelty during any form of human use, including advertising. The Central Zoo Authority of India also regulates the use of animals in advertisements and film productions involving animals.

#### **Cultural Influences**

In this study, the use of animal symbolism in marketing communications is theoretically grounded on psychoanalysis. Animal emblems are still used in modern commercial messaging despite their increased visual, indirect, and implicit content. By immediately triggering and connecting archetypal ideas in customers' brains, the incorporation of animal symbols assists to activate the cultural schema that the

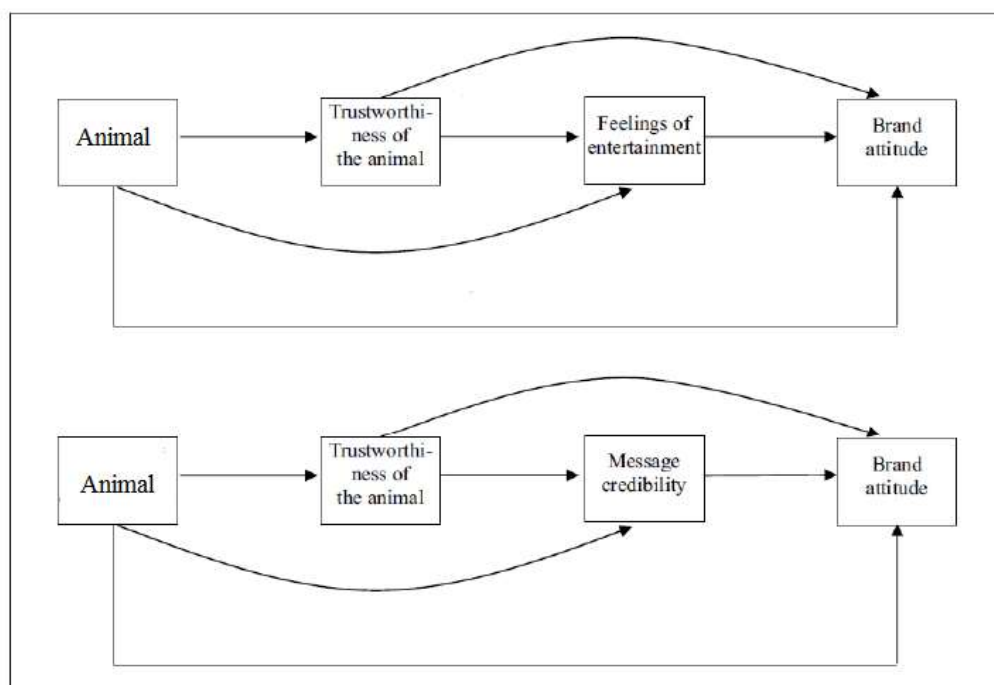
brand stands for. Effectively implementing cultural schema related to a brand helps build brand equity by increasing brand engagement (Lloyd & Woodside, 2013).

### Global Cultural Influences

Cultural norms and values play a significant role in shaping the use of animals in advertising. In many Western countries, animals are often portrayed as companions, sources of entertainment, or symbols of freedom. However, cultural attitudes towards animals can vary widely across different regions and societies.

### Cultural Influences in India

India's rich cultural diversity and religious traditions have a profound impact on the use of animals in advertising. Cows, for instance, are revered in Hinduism and are considered a symbol of purity. As a result, the use of cows in advertising can be met with strong opposition from certain segments of the Indian population. Conversely, animals like elephants and peacocks are often used to evoke a sense of cultural pride and heritage. In India, Vodafone used a pug to promote its services. The pug, known for its trustworthiness, became the long-standing face of the brand for its entertainment value and lent credibility to the brand message (Fig. 2).



*Fig. 2 Mediation effects of animal trustworthiness in the relationship between animal suitability as a pet and components of the attitude toward the advertisement (Keller & Gierl, 2020)*

### Recent Shifts in Advertising Trends

With the Internet evolving into a popular sharing platform, quantifiable data will help us better understand how viewers will respond. With consideration of three areas of study, a fresh viewpoint on the usage of live animals in advertising is presented. They are: (1) the use of animals in advertisements; (2) the inclusion of animals in daily life; and (3) the growth of brand loyalty (Braunwart, 2015).

### Global Shifts

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in global advertising trends concerning the use of animals. Brands are increasingly adopting a more ethical and sustainable approach by promoting responsible animal care and environmental stewardship. This shift is driven by consumer demand for socially conscious and environmentally friendly products and marketing practices.

## **Shifts in India**

India has also witnessed a shift in advertising trends regarding the use of animals. Brands are becoming more sensitive to cultural and ethical concerns, avoiding the use of sacred or revered animals in advertisements. Additionally, there is a growing awareness of animal welfare issues, prompting brands to ensure that animals used in advertising are treated with care and respect.

### **Comparative Analysis: India vs Global Trends**

#### **(a) Treatment of Animals**

Comparatively, global advertising practices tend to place a stronger emphasis on the welfare of animals used in advertising. Many Western countries have robust animal welfare laws and industry standards that regulate the treatment of animals during ad shoots. In contrast, while India has legal provisions in place, there is still room for improvement in the enforcement of these regulations to ensure better treatment of animals.

#### **(b) Cultural Sensitivity**

India's unique cultural and religious landscape requires advertisers to be more attuned to the sensitivities surrounding the use of animals in advertising. While some global brands may inadvertently offend local sentiments, Indian advertisers are generally more cautious in this regard. However, both global and Indian advertisers need to continue adapting to changing cultural norms and expectations.

#### **(c) Ethical Shifts**

Both India and global advertising landscapes are experiencing a shift towards more ethical practices in animal advertising. Consumers are increasingly conscious of how animals are treated in advertisements, and brands are responding by adopting responsible and transparent approaches. This shift reflects a growing global awareness of animal welfare and ethical considerations.

#### **(d) Legal Framework**

While both India and many global regions have legal regulations governing the use of animals in advertising, there can be significant differences in enforcement and penalties for non-compliance. It is essential for India to strengthen its enforcement mechanisms to ensure that animal welfare laws are adhered to consistently in the advertising industry.

### **Ethical Advertising with Animals – Cases from India and the World**

#### **PETA's Anti-Fur Campaigns**

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is an organization known for its global campaigns against the use of animal fur in fashion. PETA's advertisements feature shocking imagery of animal cruelty in the fur industry, aiming to raise awareness about the harm caused to animals. These campaigns illustrate the global trend of using advertising to advocate for animal rights. The tactics used by PETA to generate social noise—a sort of public discourse that is compelling enough to be "heard"—in society. Shock advertising is a popular strategy for creating social buzz. When PETA uses violent video footage of animal abuse to make its point, it has the effect of a magic bullet because it causes feelings of "shock" (Matusitz & Forrester, 2013).

#### **Amul's Avoidance of Cows**

Amul, a dairy brand in India, is careful not to use cows, a sacred animal in Hinduism, in their advertisements. They promote their products without featuring cows to avoid any potential cultural insensitivity. This reflects India's unique cultural context in advertising.

#### **Titan Raga's "Khud Se Naya Rishta" Campaign**

Titan Raga, a watch brand, ran a campaign where they used a CGI elephant to promote their watches. The ad emphasized the brand's commitment to animal welfare and the protection of elephants in India. This example showcases how Indian brands are increasingly sensitive to animal welfare concerns in their advertising.

These examples illustrate the contrasting trends in the use of animals in advertising between India and the global context. While global trends often emphasize ethical considerations, environmental responsibility, and animal rights, Indian advertising tends to focus more on cultural sensitivity, respect for sacred animals, and evolving cultural norms.

This ongoing evolution in advertising trends highlights the need for continual research and analysis to understand the complex interplay between cultural, ethical, and global factors in the use of animals in advertising. It also underscores the importance of adapting advertising practices to reflect the values and expectations of a diverse and changing global audience.

## **2. Conclusion**

The use of animals in advertising is a complex and evolving practice that reflects cultural, ethical, and legal considerations. While global advertising trends have historically shaped the use of animals in advertisements, India's unique cultural and religious landscape has led to distinct practices and sensitivities. Both India and the global advertising landscape are currently experiencing shifts towards more ethical and responsible approaches to using animals in advertising, driven by changing consumer preferences and societal awareness.

To strike a balance between creativity and ethical considerations, advertisers in India and other countries must continue to adapt their practices. Strengthening legal regulations and enforcement mechanisms, promoting cultural sensitivity, and prioritizing animal welfare will be key factors in shaping the future of animal use in advertising. As consumer awareness and expectations continue to evolve, the advertising industry must ensure that its portrayal and treatment of animals align with the values of a compassionate and responsible society.

The use of animals in advertising is a multifaceted issue that requires careful consideration of cultural, ethical, and legal factors. While India and the global advertising industry have seen shifts towards more ethical practices, there is still work to be done to ensure the responsible and compassionate use of animals in advertising.

Through a combination of strengthened legal regulations, industry self-regulation, consumer education, and cultural sensitivity, India can continue to align its practices with global trends while respecting its unique cultural and religious landscape. As the advertising landscape continues to evolve, the ethical treatment and portrayal of animals should remain a priority, reflecting the values of a society that cares for its animal companions and treasures its cultural heritage.

## **Recommendations for the Future**

To further align India's practices with global trends and address ethical concerns surrounding the use of animals in advertising, several recommendations can be considered:

- (1) **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** India should enhance its legal regulations related to the use of animals in advertising, ensuring that they are comprehensive, enforceable, and aligned with international standards. This includes specifying clear guidelines for the treatment and welfare of animals involved in ad shoots.
- (2) **Enhanced Enforcement:** Authorities responsible for overseeing animal welfare and advertising standards should receive additional resources and training to enforce existing regulations effectively. Regular inspections and penalties for non-compliance should be implemented to deter unethical practices.
- (3) **Industry Self-Regulation:** Advertising industry associations in India should collaborate to establish and enforce a code of conduct for the ethical use of animals in advertising. This code should include guidelines for treatment, portrayal, and cultural sensitivity.
- (4) **Promoting Alternatives:** Encouraging the use of alternative methods, such as CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery), animatronics, and virtual reality, can reduce the need for live animals in advertising, addressing ethical concerns and reducing logistical challenges.

(5) Consumer Education: Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can inform consumers about the ethical considerations surrounding animal use in advertising. Informed consumers are more likely to support brands that prioritize responsible practices.

(6) Collaboration with Animal Welfare Organizations: Advertisers and brands should collaborate with animal welfare organizations to ensure that animals used in advertising are treated with care and respect. These organizations can provide expertise on animal welfare and help monitor compliance with ethical standards.

(7) Cultural Sensitivity Training: Advertisers should invest in cultural sensitivity training for creative teams to avoid unintentional cultural insensitivity when using animals in advertising, particularly when dealing with sacred or revered animals.

Paid and public service advertising is being used by those who support animal protection to advance these causes. One marketing strategy, the graphic depiction of animal pain, has stirred much debate both inside and outside the animal rights community. According to research, the strategy may be successful in motivating those who see the commercial to take action in favor of animals. Tactic portrayals of animal suffering and the reversal of human-animal features and circumstances through therianthropic and atypical anthropomorphic images are two more advertising techniques that may be able to inspire more compassionate treatment of animals (Jones, 2015).

### **Future Research**

Advertisements show a high propensity to view animalistic conduct as undesirable. There are some intriguing questions raised by this technique. Do customers respond more favorably to advertisements that use an animal metaphor? What kind of animal and what kind of mental imagery are more beneficial when this happens? What psychological process underlies this? The impact of the animal metaphor on persuasion is yet unknown, despite the fact that more and more companies are using animal traits to portray irritating behavior in their public ad campaigns (Huang & Hsieh, 2023).

Businesses should consider how well green products and animal imagery complement one another when selling environmentally friendly goods if they want to improve the effectiveness of their green advertising (Wang, Ming, & Zhang, 2020). To further understand the dynamics of animal use in advertising, future research could explore the following areas:

- 1) Consumer Attitudes: Conduct surveys and studies to gauge consumer attitudes and preferences regarding the use of animals in advertising, both in India and other countries. This research can help advertisers tailor their strategies to align with consumer expectations.
- 2) Comparative Analysis: Continue to monitor and analyze the evolving trends in the use of animals in advertising, comparing India's practices with global trends to identify areas of convergence and divergence.
- 3) Impact on Brand Perception: Investigate the impact of ethical considerations and animal welfare practices on brand perception, loyalty, and purchasing behavior among consumers.
- 4) Case Studies: Examine specific case studies of successful advertising campaigns that ethically used animals to understand best practices and strategies that resonate with consumers.
- 5) Cultural Dynamics: Explore the intricate cultural and religious nuances that influence the use of animals in advertising, providing insights into how brands can navigate these complexities.

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