

Animal-companion depictions in women's magazine advertising


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Abstract

Via a content analysis of 1398 advertisements that include both people and pets and that appeared in women's magazines over a period of four decades, this study examines the changing roles played by companion animals and the changes in themes used in these advertisements. Considering both the pictures and text, the study codes advertisements for themes, pet roles, whether or not the pet appears on a leash, and the physical location of the pet. These data show the movement of companion animals from outdoor protectors and companions to loved family

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communications strategies to allow for societal trends that influence consumers' self-identities.

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1. Introduction

A special bond exists between humans and some animal species, predominantly dogs and cats. Fossil remains of domesticated dogs date from the preagricultural Mesolithic period — about 12,000 years ago. The beginnings of the domestic cat are harder to pinpoint, but one educated estimate places the first domestic cat at about 7000 B.C. (Hirschman, 1994; Messent and Serpell, 1981; Palmer, 2000; Schneck and Caravan, 2000; Serpell, 1986).

The number of pets in United States households is increasing. No figures are available on the number of pets in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century; however, articles in women's magazines during that decade offer some indication of the general perceptions of pets during those years. For example, a 1922 article, "A One Man Dog," extols the dog as companion and as hero in saving his master's life (Roe, 1922). In 1928, the U.S. had more than 5000 pet shops (Evans, 1928), and

the article "Toward the Dog Days" gives many reasons why dogs are one's best friend (Parker, 1928).

By 1947, there were 16 million dogs in the U.S. (Ratcliff, 1947). Articles such as "A Pet is Part of Growing Up" encourage parents to let their children have pets. This author writes, "But if your child has his heart set on a pet — and there is no hardship involved — let him have it. He will be missing an integral part of childhood if you refuse. A pet is part of growing up — and functional too" (Sager, 1946). By the late 1960s, about 50 million Americans owned pets (Beatty 1968); and by 1978, 40 million families had at least one dog, while 23 million had cats. Dr. Boris Levinson (1973) writes, "Pets upgrade the quality of life, bring us closer to nature, provide companionship, and emphasize the fact that animals must be accepted as desirable participants in society." By 1987, the U.S. pet population included 52.4 million dogs and 54.6 million cats (American Veterinary Medical Association, 1993).

An American Pet Products Manufacturers Association survey (APPMA, 2005) reports that 69.1 million U.S. households have at least one companion animal, compared to 54 million in 1993, and that 92% of these households consider their pets to be members of the family. These intense feelings for pets translate into a large and growing consumer market with \$36.3 billion spent on pets in 2005 and projected sales of \$38.4 billion for 2006 (APPMA, 2006). These expenditures on pets range from veterinary visits and food to hotels and spa visits. Legislation in the U.S. is also

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focusing on companion animals. The Antifreeze Bittering Act of 2005 that protects both children and pets from ingesting sweet smelling and tasting antifreeze, the Pet Animal Welfare Statute of 2005 requiring state inspection of puppy mills, and the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act proposed in reaction to the plight of many companion animals after hurricane Katrina (Humane Society of the United States, 2006) reflect the new status of pets in the lives of Americans.

A number of research studies in disciplines such as psychology (Gage and Christensen, 2001; Staats and Horner, 1999; Wilson, 1991) and sociology (Ray, 1982; Sanders and Arluke, 1993) address various aspects of human–animal companionship. Belk's (1988) inclusion of pets as a possession/self-extension category (despite their dubious designation as possessions) began a research stream in marketing that explores the issue of companion animals. Hirschman (1994) identifies themes from interviews of pet owners. These themes include animals as friends, self, family members, teachers of children, and inside vs. outside. Aylesworth, Chapman, and Dobscha (1999) develop a framework for organizing the human–animal relationship in a consumption context. Holbrook, Stephens, Day, Holbrook, and Strazar (2001) use a collective stereographic photo essay to identify seven themes: opportunity to appreciate nature and to experience wildlife; opportunity for inspiration and learning; opportunity to be childlike and playful; opportunity to be altruistic and nurturing; opportunity for companionship, caring, comfort, and/or calmness; opportunity to parent; and opportunity to strengthen bonds with other humans. The role of companion animals in advertising has received less attention. Lerner and Kalof (1999) examine the dominant messages about animals in television commercials and identify six dominant themes in the ads – animals as loved ones, animals as symbols, animals as tools, animals as allegories, animals as nuisances, and animals in nature.

This study explores the role that animals play in magazine advertising messages, beginning in the 1920s (a decade when advertising volume increased and major change occurred in the use of advertising in the U.S.) Before that time, advertising had mainly consisted of a straight-selling message, with only a few ads including simple illustrations of the product. Advertising became more complex during the 1920s and changed focus from the straight-selling messages of earlier years to messages that center on the consumer and on how a product contributes to an individual's self-identity (Fowles, 1996; Wernick, 1992).

With advertising messages beginning to focus on the consumer and the contribution of products to self-identity, the idea of including companion animals in these messages took form. McCracken (1986) proposes the idea of the cultural construction of meaning through products, discussing the importance of material objects as symbolic presentations of the self to others and as ways that consumers construct and bolster their self-concepts. Belk (1988) includes pets as a possession/self-extension category, and Fowles (1996) includes pets as part of the commodity self. Advertising gives meaning to products and communicates the “possession as self-extension” to consumers. An exploration of the changes in the depiction of animal companions in magazine advertising over many years adds an important element to this literature. Self-image congruence models posit that consumers are

more likely to be attracted to an advertised product when the value-expressive elements of the message match their self-identity (Reed, 2004). This study explores the thematic changes in advertisements that include both people and companion animals, as well as the roles these animals play in magazine advertising through the years. Scholars and practitioners need a deeper understanding of how advertising is used to appeal to consumers through societal trends. The study also provides scholars and practitioners with a method for transforming qualitative data so that they can be rigorously investigated using a quantitative approach.

2. Hypotheses

Sanders (1990) stresses the importance of what Goffman labeled “with markers” or “tie signs” signifying a relationship between two parties – including leashes, mutual gaze, physical contact, and so forth. The depiction of pets indoors – without leashes and being touched by people – indicates a change in the relationship between people and their companion animals. Also, surveys show that people in the U.S. perceive their companion animals as members of the family and that they show more affection toward their pets than they have in the past. Of the original twenty-eight themes identified in the coding, the two that are most likely to reflect this change are Family and Love. Therefore, it is expected that, over the years, all advertisements in women's magazines that include people and pets

H1. Show these pets more frequently indoors.

H2. Show the people and pets touching more frequently.

H3. Show the pets on a leash less frequently.

H4. Increasingly use the theme of “family”.

H5. Increasingly use the theme of “love”.

For advertisements featuring products other than pet foods and supplies, it is expected that advertisements including people and pets in women's magazines

H6. More frequently use the pet to depict companionship or friendship.

H7. More frequently use the pet to depict childhood.

3. The study

The study includes a content analysis of elements (both images and text), themes, and the roles of pets in magazine advertisements over time. Appropriate magazines were selected for photocopying advertisements that showed at least one person and one pet. These ads were coded, with the results analyzed and interpreted in the context of the times in which they appeared.

4. The magazines

Three magazines were chosen for this study – *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *McCall's* – all in continuous circulation since the late 1800s. *McCall's* began publication as *The Queen* in 1873, later becoming *The Queen of*

Fashion, then *McCall's*, and ultimately *Rosie* until it ceased publication in 2002. *Ladies' Home Journal* was introduced in 1883, followed in 1885 by *Good Housekeeping* (Peterson, 1964). These three magazines have reached a large segment of the consumer market. Although labeled “women’s magazines” (Zuckerman, 1998), they are also read by many men and children in the homes where they are available. These three magazines also attract a significant amount of advertising revenue. Finally, these magazines are important in the culture of the United States and in the growth of the advertising industry. Until the late 1800s, there were few outlets for advertising other than newspapers (Fowles, 1996). From the 1920s through the 1940s, magazines were women’s major link with the larger society in which they lived, providing them with information and advice that could not be found elsewhere.

5. The advertisements

The year 1920 is pivotal in the transition from an agricultural to a production-and-consumption economy – spurring a growth in advertising. Therefore, the study analyzes all 1,398 advertisements from all issues of the three magazines during the 1920s, 1940s, 1960s, and 1980s that show at least one pet and one person. Of the total ads, 337 are for pet foods and supplies, and 1061 advertise other products.

6. Coding

Three coders including one of the authors free-coded all the ads, and a fourth coder free-coded only the ads from the 1920s, identifying twenty-eight themes. Two of the coders who coded all of the ads are old enough for exposure to advertising during the 1940s. The fourth coder, who coded only the ads from the 1920s, is old enough to have been exposed to advertising during this decade and, though in her late 80s, remains active and mentally sharp. This additional coder was included to gain an informed perspective on these early ads so that the coding would include the unique nuances of the time in which they appeared.

Advertisements for general (non-pet) products were coded for advertising theme, pet role, whether the person and pet were touching, whether the pet was wearing a leash, and the location of the pet (indoors, outdoors, in a car, unknown). Ads for pet food and products were coded for all of the above, excluding “pet role.” In pet-food and supplies ads, the role of the pet is the consumer or user of the product. Possible themes and pet roles were discussed before the coding began, and the coders were instructed to consider each advertisement as a whole or the meaning of the visuals and copy together.

Inter-rater reliabilities among the three coders for all ads were 91% for ad themes, 93% for pet roles, and 97% for touching, leash, and location. Agreements among all four coders for the ads from the 1920s were 89% for ad themes, 91% for pet roles, and 95% for touching, leash, and location. All of these reliabilities are above the satisfactory reliability coefficients of over 85% suggested by Kassirjian (1977). One of the authors resolved disagreements through discussions with the coders.

7. Analysis

The data consist of binary variables where the value one (zero) indicates that the magazine ad does (does not) possess a defining characteristic such as family theme, love theme, role of pet depicting childhood, role of pet depicting companion/friend, person and pet touching, pet on leash, and/or pet located indoors.

Letting x_{it} be the value of the binary variable for ad i at time t , our model is given by, $x_{it} = \pi_t + u_{it}$; $i = 1, 2, \dots, n_i$; $t = 1, 2, 3, 4$. The study assumes that the observations are distributed independently across ads and over time. The variance of the binary variable depends on the mean at time t and is given by $\text{Var}(x_{it}) = \pi_t(1 - \pi_t)$. The operative null hypothesis is that the proportion (π_t) of ads with a given characteristic has not changed from the 1920s to the 1980s – $H_0: \pi_t = \pi$, for each decade. To test for an overall trend in the proportion of the ad characteristic, consider the alternative model – $\pi_t = \pi + \beta t$ or $x_{it} = \pi + \beta t + u_{it}$, where the hypothesis is $H_1: \beta \neq 0$ for the variables family theme, love theme, role depicting childhood, role depicting companion/ friend, and touching. For the variables leash and indoors, the hypothesis is $H_1: \beta \leq 0$.

Although the dependent variable is binary, the study uses ordinary least squares (OLS) rather than probit or logit to estimate the trend model for three reasons. First, OLS produces unbiased and consistent estimates of π and β ; second, OLS does not require a specific distributional assumption for u_{it} ; third, OLS coefficient estimates provide more easily interpretable results. Because the study uses White’s (1980) heteroskedasticity consistent covariance estimator to calculate the standard errors, reported t -statistics are valid under both the null and alternative hypotheses.

8. Results

Table 1 reports pair-wise correlations among the variables. The sample correlations of the trend variable with the themes, location, and roles of the ads suggest that, over time, the magazines contained higher proportions of pet-product ads, ads locating pets and people inside, ads depicting love themes, and ads with people and pets touching. They also suggest declines in ads with the theme of family, with pets depicted in childhood or companion roles, and with animals on leashes. Ads with love themes appear more likely to cast pets as consumers rather than as companions or as depictions of childhood. Finally, as one would expect, the correlations show that ads locating pets and people inside are less likely to depict pets on leashes.

Table 2 shows the regression results for all ad themes, location, leash use, and pets’ role as consumer (pet-product ads). A statistically significant overall trend exists in each dependent variable except for ads portraying a family theme. The proportions of all ads with a theme of love, with persons and pets touching, and with a location indoors have tended to increase over the four decades. On average, every two decades during the sample period, themes of love in pet ads increased by four percentage points; ads with persons and animals touching increased by about twelve percentage points; and ads with pets

Table 1
Simple pair-wise correlations in advertising with pet(s) and person(s) from *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *McCall's*

	Family	Love	Childhood	Companion	Touch	Leash	Inside	Pet prods	Trend
Family	1.00								
Love	-.028	1.00							
Childhood	.044	-.149	1.00						
Companion	-.125	-.251	.412	1.00					
Touch	.014	.138	-.107	-.144	1.00				
Leash	-.064	-.082	-.037	.240	-.179	1.00			
Inside	.029	-.070	.0311	-.088	.102	-.298	1.00		
Pet prods	-.138	.308	-.481	-.678	.224	-.172	.011	1.00	
Trend	-.166	.207	-.276	-.359	.267	-.166	.166	.464	1.00

shown indoors increased by seven percentage points. Separate trend analyses for pet products and non-pet products produce the same qualitative results with one exception. Although no perceptible trend appears in the proportion of ads for pet products with a family theme over the sample period, the proportion of non-pet product ads with a family theme increases by a statistically significant two percentage points every twenty years. These results support our hypotheses, outlined in the previous section, that the portrayal of persons with their animal companions reflects the changing role of pets in the household.

The study finds strong support for the hypothesis that magazine ads including people and pets show fewer pets on leashes in the later sample period. On average, the proportion of ads with animal companions on leashes has decreased by about 4.3 percentage points every twenty years. In the 1920s, 6% of ads set indoors depicted pets on leashes, and 35% of ads with non-indoor settings depicted pets on leashes. For indoor locations, the proportion of leashed animals has fallen by an average of one percentage point every two decades; and for non-indoor locations, the proportion of leashed animals has fallen by an average of 5.8 percentage points every two decades. In each case, the estimated downward trend in the proportion of ads with pets on leashes differs significantly from zero. These results further support our hypothesis that, as U.S. households view their pets more as family members, magazine ads increasingly show pets without leashes regardless of where the ad locates the people and pets.

The data analyses do not support two of our hypotheses. Specifically, contrary to our two hypotheses regarding the depiction of pets' roles in general ads reflecting the changing role of pets in society, the proportions of ads using the pet to depict childhood or as a companion/friend decrease slightly over this time period. The estimated proportion of magazine ads with the pet in a child-like role falls by about 3.3 percentage points every 20 years, while the proportion with the pet depicted as a companion/friend decreases by 2.8% every twenty-year period.

Although the data analysis shows significant trends in six of the seven variables of interest, the trend model restricts the average change in the ad characteristic from the 1920s to 1940s to be the same as the average change between the 1940s and the 1960s and between the 1960s and the 1980s. The authors relax this assumption by estimating separate means for each of the four decades and testing the null hypothesis of mean equality across all decades and between pairs of decades. Table 3 reports these results.

The relatively constant proportion of all ads with family themes supports the conclusion from the trend model (Table 2). Roughly 6% of magazine ads for both pet and non-pet products each decade have had a family theme. No statistically significant difference in this estimate occurs between any pair of decades; nor can we reject the joint hypothesis that the proportions are equal. The proportion of ads with a theme of love is the same over the 1920s as it is over the 1940s; however, this proportion rises a significant 8% by the 1960s and 3% more by the 1980s.

The trend model (Table 2) suggests that using pets to depict childhood or as companions/friends in non-pet-product ads declined by an average of about three percentage points every twenty years from the 1920s through the 1980s. But examination of Table 3 reveals a slightly different story. First, though the relative importance of pets as depictions of childhood or as companions/friends in non-pet-product ads peaked in the 1920s, its decline was not uniform over the period. Second, though the proportion of these ads declined significantly in the 1980s compared to the 1920s, most ads in the 1980s still depicts pets as an integral part of childhood or as companions/friends.

The proportion of ads with pets and people indoors increased substantially from its 1920s level of 43% to its 1940s level of 64%. From that moment on, the point estimates show little change, consistent with equal means in the 40s, 60s, and 80s. The proportion of ads with pets on leashes remained at about 15% through the 1920s and 1940s, but fell by a statistically significant 9% by the 1960s, where it remained through the

Table 2
Trends in advertisements with pet(s) and person(s) from *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *McCall's*

	Regression trend coefficient	Stand. error	t-ratio	p-value
<i>Theme</i>				
Family	.0015	.00565	.2610	.794
Love	.0437	.00558	7.830	.000
Touching	.117	.01093	10.68	.000
On leash	-.043	.00689	-6.28	.000
<i>Location</i>				
Indoors	.0713	.01142	6.24	.000
Pet products	.1761	.00855	20.61	.000
<i>Pet's role in general ads</i>				
Childhood	-.033	.01402	-2.32	.021
Companion or friend	-.028	.01162	-2.42	.016

Standard errors allow for heteroskedasticity across time periods.

Table 3
Summary Statistics for Advertisements with Pet(s) and Person(s) from *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *McCall's*

	1920s (n=272)		1940s (n=404)		1960s (n=266)		1980s (n=456)		F-test of Equal means ¹
	Mean	Stand. error	Mean	Stand. error	Mean	Stand. error	Mean	Stand. error	
<i>Theme</i>									
Family	.055	.01387	.067	.01244	.061	.01461	.064	.01144	.138
Love	.007	.00519	.007	.00428	.090	.01759	.121	.01527	23.42***
Touching	.209	.02472	.331	.02345	.564	.03046	.544	.02335	41.10***
On Leash	.151	.02173	.148	.01771	.056	.01417	.039	.00913	15.06***
<i>Location</i>									
Indoors	.434	.03010	.641	.02389	.673	.02882	.691	.02167	18.58***
Pet products	.000	.0000	.079	.01345	.297	.02807	.496	.02344	132.56***
<i>Pet's role in general ads</i>									
	1920s (n=272)		1940s (n=372)		1960s (n=187)		1980s (n=230)		
Childhood	.610	.02962	.551	.02582	.556	.03643	.500	.03304	2.07
Companion friend	.827	.02296	.793	.02103	.722	.03285	.756	.02836	2.79**

¹Value of F-test statistic where * denotes rejection of the null hypothesis at the 10% significance level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

1980s. Persons and their animal companions touch more in ads from the 1940s than the 1920s, and this statistically significant increase continues into the 1960s. The proportion of ads with animals and persons touching remains at about 56% throughout the 1960s and 1980s.

9. Discussion

The results of the study support the first three hypotheses. Over the years, the advertisements in the study show pets more frequently indoors, more often being touched by people, and less often on a leash (Fig. 1). During the 1920s, animal companions are depicted in advertising as separate from people through the use of space, a leash, and/or being outside the home. Clothes, cars, and shoes are the products most often seen in these ads, and these are often outdoor products. For example, ads for children's clothing frequently show a boy and his dog playing outside, and ads for women's apparel show women outdoors in stylish outfits accompanied by a dog on a leash such as an Afghan or a Poodle. Advertisements of this era depict pets as either accessories to people or as substitute playmates for children. World War II defined the epoch of the 1940s, with

many men away from home for long periods of time. The women and children left behind were likely to relax the rules on having pets inside the house. These years saw an increase in the number of ads showing the animal companion indoors, such as an ad for Coca-Cola depicting a returning soldier sitting before his hearth with his dog by his feet. Some resistance to showing people and pets touching still appeared, as in an ad for Listerine picturing a baby in a military hat with a dog sitting some distance from him. The inclusion of leashes in the ads decreased only slightly during this time, with leashes generally seen in ads for women's clothing, shoes, and hosiery. The number of pets shown indoors increased slightly in the 1960s, while the number of ads depicting people and pets touching grew significantly during this decade, generally in ads picturing a woman or a child touching or holding a pet. Only 6% of the ads during this period show a pet on a leash. During the 1980s, the depiction of pets in the home increased significantly. A Danville bedding ad pictures a dog with a girl in her bedroom, and a series of Bayer ads show a boy sick in bed with his dog lying next to him while his Mother gives him aspirin. Animals in ads of this period not only move inside the home but into people's bedrooms and even into their beds.

The results do not support the hypothesis proposing that ads including both people and pets have used a family theme more often over the years. However, analysis of only the ads for products other than pet foods and supplies does show a statistically significant increase in the use of this theme. In the 1920s, ads using a family theme were generally among the few showing the pet inside the home. Minneapolis-Honeywell's ad for home heaters used this theme in its ad with copy including the line "Your family deserves them." A Shredded Wheat ad of this period pictures a young girl at a kitchen table with a small dog on the floor at her feet and the copy "That is why the whole family likes the crisp, flavory shreds of whole wheat with good rich milk, and perhaps fresh fruit or jam." During the 1940s, the family theme often appeared in conjunction with a war message. Along with a picture of a woman in a military uniform, the headline of a Nabisco Shredded Wheat ad proclaimed, "I'm

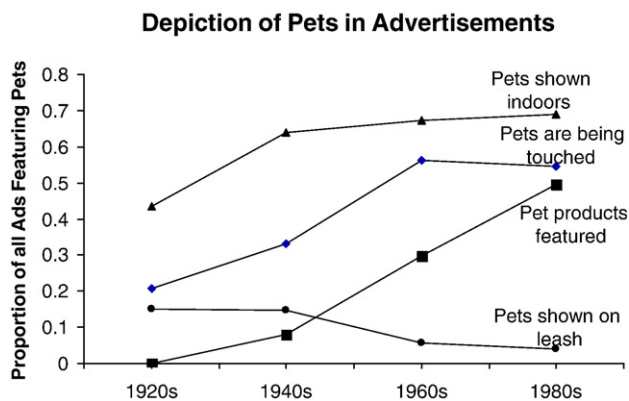


Fig. 1.

no part-time wife! It's up to me to keep my family fit with nutritious foods." The 1960s, a decade of youth, saw 70 million children from the post-WWII baby boom become teenagers and young adults. This youth orientation influenced the advertising of the time. The family theme recurred in ads for children's products. For example, an ad for Buster Brown shoes includes the line "Dressy enough for a Family Portrait"; and Kawai pianos headline contains the challenge "If you really love your family show it!" In the 1980s, the baby boomers became adults, and the popular press labeled them the "Me Generation." The family theme appeared in such ads as one from Maytag appliances that asked, "Between her family and her job, who has time to wait around for repairmen?" The ads for pet foods and supplies did not use this theme over the years except for one Purina One dog food ad of the 1980s with the copy "When your dog is more than just a pet." Therefore, over the years, animal companions were more often depicted as members of the family in ads for general products.

As hypothesized, the theme of love appears more often over the years. In the 1920s, this theme surfaced in ads for Looby children's clothes with the theme "For Your Own Best Loved Kiddie" and for Woodbury Soap with the headline "Youth and Love." Advertisers in the 1940s continued to use this theme, as seen in an ad for Gorham sterling silver that asks, "Has Love Crossed Your Palm With Silver?" During the 1960s, the decade of youth and the individual, many ads used the love theme, as in a Health-tex ad for children's clothes: "What is Love? When we love a pet, we tell him by patting and taking good care of him." In the 1960s, the love theme began to appear in ads for pet foods and supplies. A Purina Dog Chow ad included the line "All you add is love." In the 1980s, the ads for pet foods and supplies became even more explicit. For example, a Skippy dog-food ad proclaimed, "Because you love your dog."

Contrary to the sixth hypothesis, the use of pets to depict companionship or friendship decreased slightly over the years. In the 1920s, an ad for Bradley Quality Books pictured a boy sitting close to a dog, with the text stating that "Rick the boy, befriends Ruddy, the shipwrecked dog, and is well repaid by the animal's devotion." Ford cars used a woman and a dog in front of an automobile with the headline "Companion of her holidays." In the 1940s, Squibb Pharmaceuticals ran a series of ads that directly addressed this theme. The text of one ad read, "Let no one deprive a boy of the character-building companionship of his dog." In another: "The man relies on the loyalty and intelligence of his companion. The dog has faith in the friendship of the man." Ads in the 1960s also included the theme of companionship or friendship. An ad for Texize cleaner showed a picture of a dog with the text "This is my friend Albert"; and Cosco showed a baby in a high chair with the words "holds court for a fluffy friend." In the 1980s, advertisers continued to use this theme. A Fruit of the Loom ad showed pictures of a man holding a puppy that gets bigger in each picture until it is a full-grown dog, while Isotoner presented a dog with a slipper in its mouth and the caption "This year give woman's best friend." Pet-food and supplies ads also used animals in this role during the 1980s. An ad for Purina Cat Food began, "When you make friends with a kitten you've made a friend for life."

Failing to support the last hypothesis, the use of pets to depict childhood – though decreasing somewhat over the years – remained an important use of pets in advertising. The majority of these ads convey this idea through their pictures, usually showing children at play with their pet. In the 1920s, this theme appeared in ads for everything from children's clothing to rust-free homes. The ads of the 1940s continued to use pictures of children and pets playing together but included a few ads that explicitly drew the connection between pets and childhood. In an ad for Squibb Pharmaceuticals, the text asked, "Why do we print a picture of a boy and his dog? It is to remind you that in this changing world there are some things that never change. Things such as the loyalty and devotion of a boy and dog to each other." An ad for Fels-Naptha soap began, "Take a robust boy, aged eight or thereabouts, add one inquisitive pooch..." During the 1960s, along with pictures of children and pets at play, some advertisers addressed this idea in their text. A General Electric ad starts with "Kids like... Dogs, dolls, ice cream, other kids, cowboys." Although pets depict childhood throughout the years, this practice declined between the 1920s and the 1980s. In the ads of the 1980s, no text addressed this connection, but some ads still used pictures to convey this idea.

10. Implications

The results of this study should interest practitioners because they provide information useful in creating or (re)positioning products to appeal to consumers' self-identities. Over the years, consumers' perceptions of animal companions have evolved from the status of accessories or substitute playmates for children to that of family members. More people every year bring animals into their lives and view this as adoption rather than ownership. With more empty nesters and single people now identifying themselves as a family if they have companion animals in their home, the definition of family continues to evolve. Many products would benefit from a positioning and marketing-communications strategy that allows for trends such as this. In addition, this study provides both practitioners and scholars with a means to transform qualitative data in order to perform rigorous quantitative tests.

11. Limitations and future research

The use of only four decades of data is a limitation. The fact that important events have occurred during decades that the study excludes may omit important information on what has influenced media-advertising expenditures in the following decades. Beginning in the 1950s, widespread availability of television precipitated a major decline in magazine advertising. Magazines' share of expenditures on national advertising dropped from 16.6% in 1949 to 12.8% in 1960, with expenditures on television advertising rising from virtually nothing in the late 1940s to more than \$1.7 billion in 1963 (Peterson, 1964). To fully complete the picture of pet usage in advertising over the years, television advertisements including people and pets should be examined.

The study does not include the 2000s, because this decade has yet to end and because comparisons of a partial decade with

the other complete decades would be problematic. In addition *McCall's/Rosie* was discontinued in 2002 so that only two magazines would be included for this decade rather than the three of previous decades. This limitation has been addressed with the inclusion of other relevant current information on the pet industry and pet-related legislation. With recent survey data, as well as more information on pet ownership and the pet-products industry, it is possible to track pet-related societal trends more easily than previously.

Finally, other significant historical trends (e.g., changing household structures, changes in ethnic minority populations) are factors to consider in looking at the historical development of the markets that engage human consumers and their companion animals.

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