



Attitudes of Dutch creative directors on the usage of companion animals in television advertising: an explorative study



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Abstract

The use of companion animals (CAs) in television commercials (TVCs) is popular. Following the ‘animal dialogue’ with the topic ‘animals in the media’ organized by the Center for Sustainable Animal Stewardship (CenSAS), uncertainties emerged about the welfare of the animals used. In addition, during this event there were questions about whether and to what extent TVCs with CAs can influence viewers’ behavior and attitudes toward animals.

This study investigates the views that creators of TVCs with CAs have on the use of CAs in TVCs. Four Dutch creative directors with experience in creating TVCs with CAs were interviewed via Microsoft Teams using a semi-structured interview design inspired by the ‘animal dialogue’. Content analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in 4 main categories: (1) popularity of companion animals in television commercials (2) animal welfare considerations, (3) effects of television commercials on the population of companion animals (4) attitudes toward the use of companion animals in television commercials. The present study shows that creative directors shift their responsibilities regarding animal welfare primarily to animal handlers (trainers). However, it is uncertain whether these animal handlers have sufficient animal welfare expertise. In addition, creative directors and scientific literature lack knowledge about the effect and extent to which TVCs can affect CA populations by changing people’s behavior or attitudes. In future studies, it would be interesting to gain more insight from animal handlers about animal welfare in this context. Also, it would also be useful to investigate which footage can lead to a negative and/or positive effect on the CA population.

Abbreviations

TVC: television commercial

CA: companion animal

Introduction

Swans in advertising for an airline, a cow doing a cannonball to promote milk and hamsters declaring love to each other in a Christmas commercial^{1, 2, 3}. Animals are popular in advertising and these are some winners of the ‘Gouden Loeki’; the Dutch public award for the best television commercial. From the beginning of the awards in 1995 until 2022, no less than 12 out of 27 winners featured an animal in the television commercial and this animal played a major role¹⁻¹³. In fact, the television commercials (TVCs) that won the last 5 years (2018-2022) all had an animal in the lead^{3, 9-12}.

Literature points out that animals can act as powerful communication tools to convey a particular message¹⁴⁻¹⁷. This is because animals have the ability to capture the viewer’s attention and generate an emotional response in the viewer. These properties create an often positive association in the viewer with the advertiser and they are more likely to buy the promoted product.

Despite the named positive effects, there are also dissenting voices from society that are concerned about the animals used. For example, the Dutch animal organization ‘Dier & Recht’ has been campaigning to stop advertisements featuring short-snouted dogs since 2018¹⁸. The organization is said to be afraid of encouraging the purchase of these dog breeds which are prone to health problems. Other animal organizations worry about the effects of depicting animals in certain situations or contexts in advertising. In 2021, the Dutch advisory body for companion animals (LICG) responded on Facebook to Albert Heijn’s advertising^{3, 19}. In this advertisement, two Syrian hamsters are put together because, according to the storyline, they are in love with each other. The LICG emphasizes that hamsters are solitary animals and should not be put together. This shows that LICG is concerned that the TVC may inspire viewers to

apply housing and management practices to their animals at home which are detrimental to the animals' welfare.

Watching a large number of Dutch television advertisements featuring animals, a number of other interesting aspects can be noticed. First, the products being promoted do mostly not seem to have a direct relevance to the species in question. For example, what does it benefit cats that there is a good Wi-Fi connection in the house²⁰? And what does it benefit dogs that handyman products are on sale²¹? Second, in some cases, animals in TVCs have been replaced by CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) or overtly largely edited^{3, 5, 20, 22, 23}. These representations of animals sometimes show exaggerated or human-associated facial expressions, body positions or behaviors, or on the contrary, it is almost indistinguishable from fake. In many other TVCs it is clearly visible that live animals have been used. Finally, it seems that in earlier years mainly wild animals gained popularity in TVCs, such as a lion or an elephant^{4, 8}. In contrast, in the most recent advertisements, the focus seems to be more on showing companion animals (CAs)^{3, 6, 9-12, 20-28}. A study by Mayo et al. investigated print advertising between 1994 and 2004 and concludes that dogs and cats are the most common animals depicted¹⁷. This study suggests that this is likely due to the fact that dogs and cats are the most popular CAs and they appeal to the widest audience. Another publication concludes that dogs catch the viewer's attention and evoke positive feelings²⁹.

How one views the use of animals for human purposes, such as advertising, is complex. Knight et al. describe that it mainly depends on the type of animal, the type of use and the characteristics of a person³⁰. For example, they point out that their participants considered animal use acceptable when no alternatives were available and when they believed the purpose to be necessary and beneficial to humans. Important personal factors turned out to be gender, females empathized more with animals, and personality. Also, the attractiveness of animals seemed to play a role. Finally, cognitive capacities of the animal, or assumptions about this, seemed to be another important factor in justifying using animals for human purposes.

Currently, there is no scientific literature on how people specifically view the use of CAs in TVCs. CAs have a high sociozoological position in modern society³¹. Generally, people feel responsible for CAs and the main goal of animal ownership is often for the animal to be happy and thrive. Animal welfare of CAs is therefore a topic to which importance is attached³².

A 2021 study by Hitchens et al. provides a risk analysis of animal welfare on movie sets, including those for filming commercials, based on the Five Domains Model by Mellor et al.: (1) nutrition, (2) physical environment, (3) health, (4) behavioral interactions and (5) mental state^{33, 34}. According to the authors, first three factors (nutrition, physical environment and health) can be measured, which makes them easier to assess than the other factors (behavioral interactions and mental state). Yet, in practice, it is often difficult to provide for physical environment and health to a sufficient degree. This is because animals can sometimes be exposed to risky environments and/or training. How the animal experiences it, factor (5); mental state, is more difficult to measure and can only be judged indirectly through behavior. According to the article, welfare problems can occur (1) to the animals used in the movie on set, (2) to the animals used in the movie off set and (3) to a wider population of animals, indirectly by influencing viewer behavior toward animals³³.

It is evident in literature that animals portrayed in media can change the behavior of people. A well-known example is the effect of the movie 101 Dalmatians. After this popular movie, the demand for Dalmatians to keep as CA increased tremendously³⁵. Unfortunately, this resulted in negative consequences for the dogs such as continued breeding of the breed and impulse purchases with dumping the animals shortly afterwards. The same effect appears to occur in other media portrayals of dogs as well³⁶.

Concerns about the effect of images on the CA population are also shared by the British Veterinary Association (BVA)³⁷. They published an article with welfare guidelines for the use of CAs in advertising. This is to prevent owners from replicating behavior seen in a TVC that could have a negative effect on

their own CA and the wider CA population. Similar to Hitchens et al., the guidelines also adopt the Five Domains Model by Mellor et al.^{33,34}. In the BVA guidelines, the original domains are described as ‘welfare needs’: (1) the need for a suitable environment (place to live), (2) the need for a suitable diet, (3) the needs to be able to exhibit normal behavior pattern, (4) the need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and (5) the need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. In the context of these five more general needs, the BVA guideline is very detailed about what should and should not be shown as far as animals are concerned in advertising. They discourage, for example, depicting dogs and cats with short muzzle or noses. Some other examples, that are less obvious, is that they recommend not to depict multi-cat households and they advise against depicting people or children hugging animals. However, scientific substantiation as to why these guidelines were arrived at is not presented.

The article by Hitchens et al. suggests that standardized legislation would be needed to ensure animal welfare on film sets. At present in the Netherlands, every party involved must comply with the Animals Act, but there is no specific legislation about working with animals on film sets³⁸⁻⁴⁰. Claims regarding animal suffering can be made under the Code Duurzaamheid (sustainability code) of the Reclame Code Commissie (Advertising Code Committee)⁴¹.

Regarding the effects of images with animals, it has been mentioned quite recently by the current outgoing Minister of agriculture, nature and food quality Piet Adema that there will be a display ban in 2023 of animals with external features from which they suffer⁴².

In the light of the possible concerns mentioned above, the lack of scientific literature and specific legislation, the Center for Sustainable Animal Stewardship (CenSAS) was curious to explore how society faces the use of animals in television advertisements. On November 29, 2022, CenSAS organized the annual event ‘de diierendialoog’ (the animal dialogue) for which professionals working with animals as well as members of the general public could sign up⁴³. In 2022, the theme was ‘animals in the media’ and two groups of participants engaged in a dialogue on the sub-topic ‘television advertising’. The facilitators of CenSAS presented participants with the question: how do we responsibly use CAs in TVCs?

A number of issues stood out⁴³. First, participants shared similar concerns as organizations such as ‘Dier & Recht’, i.e. that advertising could have a negative effect on the CA population (like an increase in purchase of bred-through animals). In addition, people questioned whether and in what way animal welfare is taken into account. Indeed, people expressed that there is a lot unclear to them regarding how TVCs are produced and what goes on ‘behind the scenes’.

This gap in knowledge gives reason to explore the process and the people involved in producing TVCs with CAs in more detail. Several parties are involved in creating such a television commercial. The main parties are: the advertiser, the advertising agency, the production company and the animal handler. In general, the advertiser (client) approaches the advertising agency. The creative director is the one who is in charge of this advertising agency and works with a team to transform the concept into the TVC. He or she is the one who is responsible for the final product. Usually, a production company is approached as well. In this company important positions are the director and the post-production technician. Lastly, in TVCs with animals an ‘animal handler’ can be deployed. These handlers train and supervise animals prior to the recordings and on set. It would be interesting to present the ambiguities that emerged among the participants of the animal dialogue to creative directors. Creative directors are after all the ones that are involved in this process from the beginning to the end. Creative directors are suitable informants to gain background information on how things go on behind the scenes. Because participants of the animal dialogue explained a lot is unclear, creative directors will be asked to tell more information about the often publicly invisible processes of TVC production. Since they are experts by experience, it is also interesting to explore their attitudes toward the use of CAs in TVCs. They will be asked in interviews about motivations for using CAs in TVCs and what they find (un)desirable. Also, it is interesting to discuss about animal welfare in this context. Earlier we talked about the fact that depicting animals could affect the perceptions and behavior of humans concerning animals. Whether creative directors take this

into account and what is their opinion about this subject is the last part of this thesis that will be discussed.

Methodology

Context

The aim of the study is to gain insight into how creative directors think about the use of CAs in TVCs and collect background information on the process of TVC production with animals. There is little scientific literature available on this subject, which is why an exploratory qualitative research design was chosen⁴⁴. In this way we were able to best explore the perspectives of the participants. By this, it will be possible to identify the moral questions this type of use of animals touches upon.

Data collection and analysis was done by one person: the author of this thesis. SCW is female, 26 years old, Dutch speaking and veterinary medicine master student at Utrecht University. The research was conducted as part of her graduate internship at the Center for Sustainable Animal Stewardship (CenSAS). The author took the ethics course at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and has no previous experience doing qualitative research. Prior to this research, SCW has studied a book about qualitative research⁴⁵. SCW was supervised by Giersberg, M.F. (MFG) during research and reporting. This guidance included two weekly meetings via MicroSoft Teams and providing written feedback on the report. The thesis supervisor, MFG, is female, trained as a veterinarian, and holds a post-graduate degree in veterinary science. She is employed as researcher animal welfare/sustainable animal stewardship at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. MFG is a native German speaker with high proficiency in English and Dutch.

Participants

We were interested in the insights of people who have experience working with CAs in TVCs. As there are many parties involved in developing a TVC, we were curious about the perceptions and opinions of creative directors. Creative directors, (1) are the head of an advertising agency, (2) are involved from the beginning to the end in terms of developing a TVC and (3) in addition, they play an important role in elaborating the content of the TVC. For these reasons, they can give us valuable information in the context of answering our research question.

To select suitable participants, who have experience with TVCs featuring CAs, a search was first conducted for relevant TVCs. Then it was researched which advertising agency and which creative director was behind the development of the TVC in question. Commercials were selected if they: (1) have been broadcasted on Dutch television in the past 10 years, (2) show a CA (dog or cat), (3) the animal has a major role in the TVC, (4) the TVC has a commercial purpose, (5) the product or service shown is not directed at animals, and (6) it was made in collaboration with a Dutch advertising agency. TVCs were searched via the Internet (YouTube, Google) using keywords such as “*advertising dog*” and “*television commercials overview*” and by watching current TVCs (on Dutch television).

Initially, 7 relevant advertisements were selected. Google was used to find out which advertising agency was behind the production by using search terms such as “*advertising (advertiser’s name) cat advertising agency*”. These advertising agencies were approached by e-mail through an introduction letter explaining the study. The yield from this was: 1 participation, 1 cancellation and 5 e-mails without responses. A reminder email was sent two weeks later which yielded no responses. A more direct approach was then taken to send a personal chat message to the relevant creative director via LinkedIn. Here, the survey was introduced in a more informal and less elaborate way to make it more appealing. Also, in this case, I specifically suggested some dates the participants could choose from. Finally, the message emphasized that it might be of interest to them because they will receive the study results. Through this approach, 11 more creative directors were approached. This yielded 3 participations, 4 cancellations and 3 messages

without responses. Two (of the 3 messages without responses) approached initially indicated they wanted to participate but I did not get in touch with them later.

Thus, a total of 4 creative directors participated in the interviews. Initially the goal was set at a sample size of 4-5 respondents. Indeed, a sample size of 4 participants may already be sufficient to paint a complete picture when there is a specific cultural context and the participants have a certain amount of expertise about the domain⁴⁶. After the fourth interview, I noticed that many of the same recurring answers were already given by the different participants, a sign that saturation is reached. Because of this reason and the limited time of the study, I chose not to seek a fifth participant.

Data collection

The data was collected through in-depth interviews. Seidman 2013 emphasizes, “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (cited from Taylor et al., 2023^{47, 48}). A semi-structured interview design was chosen to cover important topics and to also give participants an opportunity to bring up new topics. The interview design was developed based on the Interview Protocol Refinement Framework of Castillo-Montoya’s 2016 article⁴⁹. Based on the research question and the ‘animal dialogue’, mentioned in the introduction, a number of sub-research questions were devised on which, in turn, the interview questions were based.

The author of this thesis was present at one of the two ‘animal dialogue’ sessions concerning the subject CAs in TVCs. This was a conversation of 6 people with one moderator and one note-taker (the author of this thesis). The participants were first shown a TVC by Volkswagen that featured a Bordeaux dog²⁶. The dog adopts typical human postures and performs human actions: e.g. it sits on a bench in the tree and leans against a tree in a human sitting pose. Participants engaged in dialogue with each other about (1) their impression of the TVC and (2) what would be an ideal image for them in terms of using CAs in TVCs. During this 120-minute dialogue, the author of this thesis typed along as much as possible with what was said.

The other group with 6 people was shown a TVC by sneaker brand Skechers⁵⁰. This TVC showed a French Bulldog competing in a race with Greyhounds. The dog is wearing shoes and doing a dance. The format of this ‘animal dialogue’ session was the same as described above.

Notes from both dialogues were taken and sub-research questions were devised based on the most salient and recurring topics. Interview questions were phrased by creating an interview protocol matrix⁴⁹. This matrix was conducted to check to what extent the sub-questions corresponded to the interview questions so that all topics would be covered (see **appendix 1**).

The researcher had no previous experience conducting interviews. The researcher immersed herself in interview techniques by extensively analyzing four interviews broadcasted by the Dutch television program ‘Zomergasten’. SCW took notes on what stood out about interview techniques and included this while conducting the interviews. For example, the different purposes of questions were noted e.g. defining and checking questions. The interview design was then practiced with two volunteers and asked for feedback according to the protocol of Castillo-Montoya (2016)⁴⁹. The first volunteer was a recent psychology graduate with experience in conversation techniques. The second person was a lay person (neither experience with scientific research nor the topic). Following this feedback, the interview questions were modified where necessary and tips regarding interview techniques were included. A final interview design was made and checked by the thesis supervisor (MFG) after which the interview design was finished. It was decided to not practice the interview design with someone from the field (a creative director) because it was too difficult to get in touch with this target group.

After the creative directors signed up, they were sent a consent form which they had to sign in order to participate. This form contained information regarding assurance of pseudonymity and the aim of the study (see **appendix 2**). Participants were informed about the privacy statement and data management plan of this research (see **appendix 3, 4**).

The interviews were conducted between April 28 and May 16, 2023. They lasted between 26 and 45 minutes and averaged 38 minutes in length. The choice was made to conduct the interviews all digitally through Microsoft Teams. This is very accessible to the interviewees, saves travel time and is common and widely used since the Corona pandemic⁵¹. Disadvantages encountered were sometimes talking through each other and poor internet connectivity. Permission for audio recording was asked prior to the interview. All participants consented. The audio was recorded with an iPhone 11 using the fixed application 'dictaphone'. Participants were also asked beforehand if everything was clear to them regarding assurance of pseudonymity and participation in the study. The interview was conducted by the author of this thesis. The interview protocol was used as a guide but it was also frequently deviated from it and sometimes not all questions were asked.

After the interview, the audio recordings were immediately uploaded to the OneDrive of the Utrecht University student account and deleted from the phone. Then the audio recordings were immediately transcribed using verbatim transcription (including 'uh' and stop words). These transcripts were also stored on this OneDrive. Upon completion of this study, these files will be removed from the OneDrive and stored on the CenSAS OneDrive for 10 years. Care will be taken of this date by the thesis supervisor (MFG).

Data analysis

It was chosen to analyze the transcripts by the method of content analysis based on the step-by-step plan of Bengtsson et al. (2016) and Erlingsson et al. (2017)^{52, 53}. Content analysis was chosen because it is a fairly easy to understand analysis method for the inexperienced qualitative researcher. Also, it is an appropriate form of analysis in line with the semi-structured interview design.

First, the transcripts were read extensively. The transcripts were then imported into NVIVO 20. Meaning units were selected at random spots in random transcripts by using Google's random number allocator. It was randomly determined which of the four transcripts would be analyzed and on which line to start and to end. When this was determined meaning units were selected in this section of the transcript. When all meaning units of all transcripts were determined, these meaning units were put in a table and the meaning units were condensed. Subsequently, codes were assigned to all condensations. By re-reading and ordering the different codes, preliminary categories were created.

Then the codes were reordered and subcategories were created. When ordering the codes into categories, these codes were always related to the original transcript. The analysis was done in Dutch to stay as close as possible to the original transcripts.

When the analysis was finished, a further post-selection was made to determine what topics were interesting in the context of answering the research question. The researcher asked herself what was really relevant, what stood out and what were recurring topics in the various interviews. Per category, different codes were selected. Subsequently, the corresponding meaning units were re-read in the context of the transcript and a running and logical story was formed of these meaning units.

Reporting

Quotes were selected that supported the text. These quotes should provide the reader more details and/or giving them an illustrative example. By creating the quotes some meaning units were expanded or shortened where relevant. Sometimes parts were omitted where not relevant, which is indicated by [...]. Occasionally anonymity was compromised due to full citations and therefore brackets were added to indicate what was approximately said, such as (dog). In addition, stop words, affirming words (such as 'yes' or 'hmm') and 'uh's' were removed to aid readability. Direct quotes were translated to English by the author of the thesis and checked by the supervisor.

Results

Four interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams (Table 1).

Participant	Date	Duration
P1	28 th of April 2023	45 min
P2	8 th of May 2023	36 min
P3	9 th of May 2023	44 min
P4	16 th of May 2023	26 min

Table 1: Details of the interviews, in chronological order.

The analysis yielded four main categories: (1) popularity of companion animals in television commercials (2) animal welfare considerations, (3) effects of television commercials on the companion animal population (4) attitudes toward the use of companion animals in television commercials.

1. Popularity of companion animals in television commercials

The analysis of the interviews showed that CAs can act as a symbol in TVCs: they can represent something such as a particular message. This explains why CAs are used in TVCs promoting products that are not necessarily relevant to animals. One participant, for instance, was involved in a production in which a group of dogs was used as a symbol for ‘chaos’.

The interviews revealed that the use of CAs in TVCs often generate impact: the viewer remembers the TVC better. This impact makes consumers more likely to buy the promoted product. In other words, TVCs with CAs brings success. The interviewees have had experience of this success themselves and expressed that it is common knowledge in the advertising industry that animals bring success. A number of interviewees (n=2) describe that success from a previous TVC featuring a CA is a reason for them to choose an animal again in the TVC next time. Indeed, the interviews indicate that success is the aspiration and an important motivator to arrive at certain choices:

“[...] we actually always judge: ‘what’s good for the idea?’ [...] for the for the impact we’re aiming for.” (P3)

One explanation mentioned in the interviews as to why animals attract such attention is that seeing CAs evokes positive feelings. It was added by one interviewee (P4) that capitalizing on emotion is the strongest weapon to influence people through advertising. Interviewees get reactions from viewers that they experience TVCs with animals as ‘cute’ and/or as ‘funny’. The bond between humans and CAs is also cited by the interviewees and that, for example, recognizing your own CA will evoke positive feelings as affection.

A striking statement from one of the interviews was that those positive effects that an animal provides should not be a stand-alone goal. The condition for using an animal for this interviewee was that one must be able to explain your choice based on the concept of the TVC:

“It’s very cute and it also has a good effect [...] But it’s certainly not a goal in itself to pursuit an effect. That you think: ‘oh people will find that very cute’, so go ahead and use an animal [...] That’s a choice, but I think if it’s not relevant to the idea then I don’t think it’s [...] necessary.” (P1)

2. Animal welfare considerations

2.1 Participants' perspective

Participants were aware of animal welfare being a topic that is alive in society these days. The interviewees indicated that they take societal concerns seriously, and thus animal welfare is taken into account. The majority (n=3) defined the meaning of 'animal welfare' implicitly as the absence of mistreatment:

"I never had any idea that an animal was, uh well how do you say that, badly mistreated or you know badly treated or something." (P4)

One of the participants revealed that in addition to this definition, the animals should be treated well (P1). It was also explained by this participant that it is important that animals enjoy it. This participant illustrated their considerations regarding the actions to be performed by the animals when taking animal welfare into account:

"See, now if I had thought in a script of, 'well, we're going to throw a dog' or something [...] Yeah, then [...] I'm not even going to think of it, but then [...] you know it can't be done and certainly you can't make it [...] And if [...] you would make that, that's not nice for that dog" (P1)

2.3 Responsibility for animal welfare

Interviewees explained that the process of creating a TVC roughly consists of: (1) the preparation, (2) the production (filmmaking) and (3) the post-production (processing). The creative director conceives, often in a team, the concept idea of the TVC and monitors this idea throughout the process. Prior to producing a film with an animal, the plans are discussed with the advertiser (the client), the production company and the animal handler. Animal handlers are the suppliers (and sometimes owners) of the used animals, they prepare the animal through training and they guide the animal during the production day(s). During these mentioned meetings, the creative directors discuss the possible realization of an idea with an animal. In this context, animal welfare is also discussed and it was made clear that the responsibility for this lies with the animal handler:

"[...] they (animal handler) determines [...] the limitation of what an animal can do. And that, of course, is also very much discussed in advance." (P3)

"[...] in this case we also [...] obviously, pretty quickly talked about it all having to be [...] 'animal friendly' and as good as possible [...] There are special people for that, too; they are called animal trainers or animal handlers" (P2)

During filming, it is the job of the creative director to intervene where they feel it is necessary to guard the idea (originated in the preparation phase). Consultation with the animal handler therefore often takes a negotiating form. However, the animal handler is taken seriously and is finally in charge of the animal:

"We're actually always a bit the annoying ones on set trying to push a bit because you want to have the perfect shot, your money shot it is called [...] And that's usually just a negotiation so there's just a conversation with each other like: 'well, what's more possible?'" (P4)

The creative directors assumed that the animal handler pays close attention to animal welfare and acts in the best interest of the animal. The interviewees also had good experiences about the way animal handlers deal with animals. However, it is an assumption that the animal handlers always consider animal welfare, so there is some uncertainty about this:

“I assume that everything is going well. [...] then I hope you can prove me right about that, that [...] all is well. [...] So that is why it is very good that you are investigating that” (P1)

Nevertheless, there was a lot of confidence that the animal handler has the best interests for the animal at heart. The interviewees mentioned that the animal handler will not have an interest in mistreating the used animals. This is because the used animals are often owned by the animal handlers themselves. Besides that, the participants mentioned that they will not hire an animal handler again if it turns out that they do not take good care of the animals. Besides giving the responsibility to the animal handler for paying attention to animal welfare, one of the interviewees explained that the creative director himself also pays attention to animal welfare:

“So I would, if I didn’t like that [...]. Then that is also talked about.” (P3)

According to one of the interviewees, the presence of the animal’s owner also plays a role in influencing animal welfare. An owner can indicate when the animal does or does not like the situation, as the owner knows their animal best. It was also assumed that the animal would be more at ease with its owner in sight:

“That’s why owners are so good with dogs, so to speak. They really know what their dog... They know that animal and they just know well if he likes this or not.” (P1)

Furthermore, the advertiser seems to play a role as well in choices regarding CAs in TVCs. Interviewees described that the size of the enterprise matters: if an advertiser is a large company or/and well-known, they will not want to harm animals and take animal welfare into account.

There are many parties involved in making a TVC with CAs. The interviewees considered that the responsibility regarding animal welfare lies with all parties involved. However, one of the interviewees believed that the animal handler has the final responsibility for the animal:

“Yes, I think with all parties involved, where ultimately the one who is responsible for bringing animals to the set: that is the company of the ‘animal handling’ [...] they are responsible for delivering the animals.” (P2)

2.3 Production conditions

The interviewees mentioned a number of factors that potentially affect animal welfare during the process. During the preparation, one of these factors is the training beforehand. The training prepares the animal for the actions it will perform during the filming day. This is done through rewards such as food. According to the creative directors, such training has a positive influence on how the animal will experience the set:

“[...] that dog could do anything, they had trained it so well and it was super relaxed and it was super laid back.” (P2)

During the production day(s), there are several factors that can affect animal welfare. The animal handlers play a major role in this. They are consulted on what is possible. For example, they limit the time the animal is on the set and/or actions it has to perform. The animal handler uses tight timings: breaks are inserted so that the animal is only on the set for a short time. The animal handler also ensures that the acts are simple tricks that can be performed using toys and/or rewards such as food.

Another factor that influences animal welfare during production is the condition on set. The interviewees explained that care is taken to make it comfortable for the animal. This includes that filming takes place in a quiet place, for example in a green studio, with few people around:

“[...] that cat is then again deliberately kept in veeery select company. We were not even there ourselves. So only the cat trainer (animal handler), so the people who know that cat are there and the director watches from a distance [...]” (P2).

The participants also explained that a number of production tricks can be used to unburden the animal on the set. For example, an individual role can be fulfilled by using multiple animals. These animals resemble each other, making the viewer think that only one animal has been used. In this way, the individual animal has to spend less time on the set and thus perform fewer actions. It was mentioned by one of the interviewees that this has an additional advantage for production: with using more animals there is a higher chance that at least one animal will cooperate.

“But what is also possible for example [...] that the viewer sees different ones again and again so to speak. [...] And that’s actually a kind of alternation so that you don’t [...] overburden so to speak. That was the way we did that.” (P3)

When multiple animals need to be present in the TVC, another way to reduce the load is to double the animals in post-production. These animals will have to look like each other as well. In this way, the viewer will believe that more animals were filmed than were actually present. In this way there will be a net reduction in the number of animals needed on set:

“By the way, there were only five of them and if you count them you might see twenty of them but they all doubled [...] So recorded and then we pasted them all in. So it’s only a few [dogs] that have really been there.” (P1)

Improved technology of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) has also created more opportunities. One of the advantages, in terms of taking animal welfare into account, is to digitally modify the filmed animal. By doing this the animal would have to perform fewer actions itself. Moreover, a shorter time on set is sufficient because cut-paste and slow-down-acceleration can be done in post-production:

“Actually most of the cat is all fake. [...] Basically the cat has been just present for the shoot. We did use the head of it and it bit of the body.” (P4)

“Actually, it always goes in this way, you know. [...] I have been in advertising for seventeen years now and I have filmed quite a few animals.” (P4)

2.4 Animal characteristics

Beforehand, creative directors think about the appearance of the animal they think fits in the concept they want to realize. In this stage, sometimes a certain type of breed is deliberately selected or not selected because of purebred issues. There was no consensus within the group of participants-regarding the awareness of health issues of purebred dogs and cats. One interviewee was aware of purebred dog issues (P1). Another participant said not to know anything about breeds. This participant mentioned not to care about breeds because the animal is not selected based on breed type but is selected based on appealing characteristics (P4). The majority of participants were initially unaware of issues of certain breeds. However, they were informed about issues by the animal handlers. They mentioned that they take issues around breeds into consideration when choosing a particular animal:

“[...] as you start talking with an ‘animal handler’ for example, things come up that can, so to speak, lead to well, for example what you just now indicate: ‘you could go for doggie A or doggie B for example, but doggie A there are now issues around [...] where it might be better to choose doggie B’. And then of course we take that [...]seriously [...]” (P3)

2.5 Evaluation and control of animal welfare

A frequently mentioned indicator to evaluate how the animal experiences the situation was its intrinsic motivation to perform an action. According to the interviewees, if an animal performs actions without instructions that will be an indication that the animal even likes it.

Conversely, it was mentioned that it is often noticeable when the animal reaches its limit. In that case, the animal no longer cooperates and/or starts to behave differently in a negative way. Participants added that dogs are easier to read in this sense than cats.

Based on the animals behavior it is often possible to make conclusions about its experiences. Though, it was stated by one interviewee that one will never have certainty that the animal will not experience the situation as adverse:

“And often I notice: yes, [...] that is of course the primitive nature of the animal, it will automatically indicate if it doesn’t want it anymore. But you never know. If a dog has been belittled from an early age and does everything you say.” (P4)

The creative directors were convinced that animal welfare is taken well into account in the advertising industry in the Netherlands. Regarding external control, it was mentioned that a viewer can always file a complaint, including one about animal suffering, through the Reclame Code Commissie (RCC). Besides the regulation via the RCC, participants were not aware of specific laws and regulations for the use of animals in advertising in the Netherlands.

Despite the fact that the interviewees believed that animal welfare is taken into account in the industry, they could not exclude the possibility that in some cases less attention is paid to it. All interviewees agreed that an external check on animal welfare would not be a bad idea. For example, rules about maximum hours spent on the set, as is currently the case with children.

One of the arguments given for measurement control was: ‘there are always dubious types walking around in society’ (P1). This participant meant that a minor part of society, including people working in the advertisement industry, will have bad intentions. Because of this it would be preferable to set rules to prevent those people from mistreating animals.

Added by another interviewee was that some productions have more setbacks, for example a lack of money (P3). If less money is involved, animal welfare will perhaps have less priority.

Furthermore, participants describe that society today demands that animal welfare is taken into account. Fixed rules would provide more clarity towards society about this, now, invisible field of TVC productions. In this way, lay people will get a view about animal welfare in the advertising industry:

“Yes, I would understand that there would be something of a guide to what you should adhere to. [...] if only to show: it is taken more seriously and there is something of a record [...] which has to be signed by an ‘animal handler’: that the welfare of the animals was good.[...]. Just because it kind of creates an awareness of [...]: ‘okay, but there also has to be a report or something written soon and yes, then I have to be able to check off everything, [...] that it didn’t harm the animal, or isn’t stressful [...]’” (P3)

Lastly, some Dutch productions do not take place in the Netherlands. One of the participants thought they may push animals more abroad. According to this interviewee, this is something to keep in mind when thinking about external control of Dutch TVCs with CAs (P4).

3. Effects of television commercials on the companion animal population

The interviewees exchanged thoughts about possible effects of TVCs on people’s behavior or attitudes towards CAs. These reflections go beyond the concerns for the animals filmed for the TVC. TVCs are generally pre-tested to a group of people on how they perceive the commercial. One interviewee described that during that testing, questions are also asked whether there is any possibility that people’s behavior toward animals could be negatively affected (P1). When issues are then brought to light on this topic, there is room to reflect on them. The possibility of an TVC being interpreted in a way that would have negative consequences for the animal should therefore be excluded:

“[...] we also know that if you’re going to tell something or show something, even though it’s only one person who misinterprets something [...] Right? That the behavior is going to be affected in a wrong way, then [...]we don’t do it” (P1)

Two of the participants told that they feel that they are role models in terms of depicting animals (P1 and P3). The other participants did not discuss about this topic. One of the participants defined this 'being a role model' as that the creative director should not exceed moral standards (P1). Thus, this participant would not depict animals in a way that does not conform to the vision of society:

“You’ve mentioned the word ethics a couple of times and so have I, and [...]we always look at that, you know: whether it’s right what we’re doing.” (P1)

Another interviewee explained that there is also research being done on whether by portraying animals in a certain way you are not setting the wrong example:

“But yes, there is always an analysis like: ‘okay, but the choice for this dog or for this (animal), well what does that mean?’, ‘what is going around (animals)?’, ‘can that be a disadvantage for us?’, ‘can that be negative?’, ‘can we then turn it this way...?’. I think that was also for example with the (exotic CA) that for example at first we also thought of: ‘yes, we must have that one at home because that is nice when it lies next to the fireplace.’. And then we do research, ‘well, so that’s very, very bad for (exotic animals).’ Well and so those are things you don’t do. [...] But then you choose for a setting that at least is not harmful for the animal and so that we also don’t set the wrong example. [...] So I think that’s the short answer: we are aware of being a kind of role model and we do try to use the animal, the choice of an animal or the role of the animal in such a way that it, yes, doesn’t give the wrong example.” (P3)

One participant had experience with receiving feedback from society about a particular presentation of a CA in a TVC (P2). In this example, the complaint was filed by an animal rights organisation. It was about a brachycephalic dog because this breed type is known to have health problems, especially respiratory problems. Therefore, the submitter of this complaint felt it was wrong to potentially encourage the popularity of such an animal through such portrayal. The interviewee described that such a complaint is dealt with care and the complaint is taken into account next time:

“[...] that has been a lesson because when we thought: ‘oh, yes wait a moment there is a complaint about that. Then next time we use a dog we have to be careful that we double check that again’” (P2)

Another participant wanted to prevent the purchase of certain breeds by deliberately not using certain pedigree dogs in their TVCs:

“[...] that has to do with the norm. Because you could say: ‘well, the doggie is already alive and it’s already there, right?’ But no, so we want to prevent someone looking at that and then might say: ‘oh, that one’s cute! I want that one too!’” (P1)

Interviewees were uncertain about whether and to which extent people will actually change their behavior and attitude towards animals due to watching a TVC. After all, this will happen without the presence of the interviewees. Therefore, the participants found it difficult to assess whether TVCs could possibly lead to negative effects on the CA population. However, they generally considered the negative consequences for the CA population to be minor. For example, one interviewee was asked if owners would want to mimic the TVC with their own CA (context: the animal was post-processed with CGI and performed a human activity):

“Yeah I always find that very difficult [...] no idea. I don’t think so. I honestly think people will miss out on that. I also think [...] if you are going to try that then [...] you find out very quickly that it’s not going to work out. [...] I haven’t seen it back either or anything like that or heard it back.” (P2)

Two interviewees shared the opinion that the current manner of some owners handling their CA is abnormal. One of them did not think that this is a result of TVCs:

“Quite honestly I think that anyway animals, owners are kind of screwed up somehow haha. [...] How they treat their animals or that they think anyway that it’s all just normal that dogs do their business everywhere and stuff, and cats. [...] So I, yes I think that anyway [...], that they see them differently than just as their pet so to speak. More like a child, I think. [...]” (P4)

Besides the potential that TVCs could cause negative effects, advertising could also cause positive effects on the CA population. One interviewee took action themselves by starting a campaign separate from TVCs to bring attention to certain disadvantaged animals. According to this interviewee, it feels good to do something meaningful for the animals:

“[...] And again, you notice that people appreciate you for that. That you don’t just steal from the cuteness of an animal, but also give something back. [...] Yes, that’s something that also just feels good and [...] advertising has of course in the base always tried to make something famous, to eventually get more sales out of it. But that’s where a kitten or a dog obviously doesn’t necessarily get better from, so with that the advertiser gets better. So that you can do something, yes well ‘in return’ sounds very

heavy, but yes we always investigate whether the opportunity is there to do something sympathetic.”
(P3)

4. Attitudes toward the use of companion animals in television commercials

4.1 Pros and cons

The creative directors stood behind their choices regarding the use of animals in their TVCs. They were positive about the use of animals in advertising for a number of reasons. One reason was that animals are also trained and played with at home; just like in TVCs. If the consensus is that it is okay to train animals at home and play with them, then it would also not be a problem to train animals for a TVC. When talking about dogs, it was mentioned that dogs are service animals: they would have an intrinsic motivation to work for people. Therefore, dogs would probably enjoy performing actions during a commercial production. Another reason mentioned is that animals are unaware of being shot for a TVC. They, according to one interviewee, do not realize what is actually happening mainly because of the favorable conditions created. The animal is distracted with rewards and filming takes place deliberately in a quiet setting:

“So that cat is actually just with the people it normally lives with for a while on an outing haha.”
(P2)

One of the participants demanded some basic conditions for the use of animals in advertising:

“As long as it is indeed done with respect and with [...] love and without misery. And really with pleasure, actually. And then everybody can benefit from that.” (P1)

It is notable that, in terms of attitude toward the use of animals in TVCs, one interviewee made a distinction between animals in a private and in a professional context. This interviewee indicated that you would go further when your work is concerned. In this example, the question was whether it is desirable to have animals wearing accessories in advertising:

“Uhm, well well very honestly: in my private life I’m like, ‘yeah, just let that dog be free’. In the professional field I don’t necessarily have a lot of trouble with that or something. As long as the animal doesn’t [...] get annoyed or [...] aggressive from it or anything. Yeah. Why not?” (P4)

Despite having positive experiences with animal welfare in advertising, there were also some objections mentioned for using CAs in TVCs.

One interviewee felt it is only necessary to use an animal if it is actually relevant to the idea. The animal should not be used purely because of its “cuteness” to create a positive effect.

Furthermore, the objection is raised that people benefit from the animal and its actions, while the animal itself does not benefit

Finally, one participant mentioned that it is not natural behavior for animals to walk in front of a camera (P4):

“[...]I think it’s just [...] for everyone more desirable to just [...] go 3D’ing it completely. [...] And that we don’t have to use any more animals at all, so that [...] I prefer that; much easier. And better for the animal too, then it can just play outside or whatever. [...] Just being an animal. [...] Of course it basically doesn’t make any sense at all the animals are walking around on movie sets.” (P4)

4.2 Alternative for using living animals

Although participants experienced few issues regarding animal welfare of CAs used for TVCs, the option of using alternatives for living animals is mentioned. Nowadays, animals can be replaced completely by 3D-models. Such a 3D model can then be inserted into a shot, and in this way no animals need to be used. A number of interviewees mentioned that it is easier to go for such a 3D model instead of filming a real animal. A lot of time and work goes into editing a real animal. Other reasons according to the creative directors for replacing animals with such 3D models are that the technology is so professional nowadays that it seems almost completely realistic, and moreover it is getting cheaper and cheaper:

“[...] I think that’s right the future of cats and animals in general in advertising. That it ends up just all being fake” (P4)

Besides animal welfare as motivation to choose for (a combination with) CGI, there were other incentives for the interviewees. One reason given for choosing for digital animation is that it allows more and different actions which would be difficult or impossible to achieve in real life:

“No, ethically anyway but also because it’s easy. Because it’s just, actually it’s just a hell to film with the animals. [...] Yeah, no it’s just really hard. So that animals just don’t do what you want.” (P4)

Sometimes certain ideas for a story arise that cannot be executed by an animal, no matter how hard you would train. An example would be certain anthropomorphic features or actions. Combining a real animal with CGI offers the opportunity to create the illusion that the animal does possess these characteristics or does perform these human actions.

However, some interviewees experience disadvantages when using CGI. One of the interviewees mentioned that the filming is less spontaneous and that this will affect the output. CGI, according to these interviewees, is associated with a different feeling and can have a negative influence on the story you want to tell because it is not real:

“[...] At that moment, we really had a feeling of: ‘well, if you’re going to do that in CGI, then maybe you’re going to parody it a little bit’ or ‘then it’s going to be too laughable’. There’s that risk in it. Or you have to do it that well, but then again you need a lot of time slash money for that and well that wasn’t there in either case. But actually, it wasn’t our preference because we wanted to tell a real story and then it feels more logical to choose a real dog for that than to make it on the computer.” (P3)

Discussion

There is not much known about the process of using CAs for TVCs in both society and science. Ethical concerns were raised during ‘the animal dialogue’ about animal welfare and possible negative effects on the CA population by altering people’s behavior and perception toward animals⁴³. The aim of this study is to explore how creators of commercials, in this case creative directors, view animal welfare and the possible effects TVCs on the CA population. By investigating this, we aim to detect whether and which areas of socio-ethical concern are possibly involved. Content analysis of the interviews with creative directors resulted in four main categories: (1) popularity of companion animals in television commercials (2) animal welfare considerations, (3) effects of television commercials on the companion animal

population (4) attitudes toward the use of companion animals in television commercials. These topics will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Popularity of companion animals in television commercials

Similar to the introduction, positive feelings toward the promoted product were named by the participants. These positive feelings are also described in scientific literature^{14, 29, 54, 55}. Portrayed animals are for instance found to be appealing because they can function to symbolize different kinds of qualities, like loyalty and strength⁵⁴. People have the tendency to evaluate advertisements as positive when the filmed animals are accompanied by people, especially when animals show affective social behavior toward humans^{54, 55}. More specifically, dogs in advertising catch viewers' attention and lead to a positive attitude toward the advertisement because people generally see them as family members or friends²⁹.

Talking about the relationship people have with CAs, one reason for the occurrence of these positive feelings mentioned by the interviewees as well is the warm connection people experience with their own CAs. Finding recognition regarding one's own CA would evoke this feeling. It is known that when owners interact with their own dog that this produces an increase in the hormone oxytocin and a decrease in cortisol in the blood: the respective 'cuddle' and stress hormones⁵⁶. Another study measured oxytocin levels in urine of humans interacting with random dogs; here no increased levels were seen⁵⁷. What hormone response is evoked by seeing images of CAs is, to our knowledge, not described in the current literature. It would be logical that when you see a certain representation on television (a CA) of something you consider positive in your immediate environment (your own CA) that you also consider that image as something positive. There may also be a hormonal response that matches this positive feeling. Though, this suggestion needs further investigation.

Animal welfare considerations

Regarding animal welfare, creative directors mainly base their choices on what society finds desirable and what not. One reason they consider society's opinion important may be that the viewer's judgment is important because it is inextricably linked to the TVC's success. If a viewer had some reservations about animal welfare, then such a viewer would most likely be more negative towards the advertised brand and less likely to buy a product. From that point of view, one could say that the parties making a TVC have an intrinsic motivation to act according to society's norm, thus including animal welfare. In this way, among other things, self-regulation is currently taking place. However, it has to be said that the production of such a TVC (what happens on set) is mostly invisible to the viewer. Sometimes we see that a behind-the-scenes film is made, to probably provide more transparency in this area^{58, 59}.

The Dutch Advertising Code (NRC), regulations on advertising, Article 2 states: '*Advertising shall be in accordance with the law, truth, good taste and decency*⁶⁰. *Good taste and decency should be judged whether according to the current general social views the expression exceeds the limits of the permissible, also in view of the manner in which it is published and the effect it thereby has on the public.*' The NRC hereby recognizes that the content of advertising must be in accordance with prevailing norms in society. This code is very broad, 'good taste and decency' leaves much room for interpretation and different groups of society may think differently about this.

A number of critical notes need to be mentioned when making trade-offs regarding animal welfare based on the general view of society. First of all, not everyone is fully informed about animal welfare. In other words, society sometimes does not know what 'good animal welfare' is about⁶¹. Taking the example of

brachycephalic dogs, awareness about inherent breed-related health issues increased significantly after educational interventions⁶². This shows that prior to these interventions, not everyone could have a well reasoned opinion about this topic. Second, there is no consensus in society about the term ‘animal welfare’. For example, the Dutch law applies a different definition of animal welfare comparing to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Utrecht University. The Dutch law defines animal welfare as the absence of suffering, whereas the Faculty stresses the animal’s ability to adapt to be in a positive state⁶³.⁶⁴ Since there is no consensus in society, it may be difficult for the advertising agency to translate the vision of society to practice. Additionally, it stands out that participants are not uniform in their definitions of animal welfare either. The participants named several aspects that are important when considering animal welfare in TVCs. First, the owner of the animal is mentioned; they have an important role in setting boundaries on the set. The participants explained that the owner knows the animal well and can therefore read their CA and indicate what the animal does and does not like. The question is, however, whether the owner always interprets that behavior correctly. The article by Tami et al., 2009 describes that experience with animals without any theoretical knowledge does not guarantee correct labeling of dog behavior⁶⁵. In addition to consequences for animal welfare due to incorrect interpretation of behavior, potentially dangerous situations such as biting incidents can arise due to failure of recognizing aggression⁶⁵.

Another factor that was mentioned was the influence of the animal handler. This person is in charge when it comes to choices concerning the animal. Thereby, creative directors shift (part) of the responsibility for animal welfare on these persons and away from themselves. Additionally, it is relied upon that this animal handler has knowledge of animals. One interviewee said that if they think the animal handler or owner did not act in the best interest of the used animal, they would intervene. Again, it is not known whether creative directors are sufficiently knowledgeable.

Interviewees pointed out that CAs would be more at ease if they were in the presence of the people they are familiar with. In the literature it is shown that dogs have higher oxytocin levels when they have a positive interaction with their owner⁵⁶. In addition, the article by Horn et al., 2013 shows that social familiarity by itself is not responsible for dogs’ increased attention to their owners, as they only paid more attention to those familiar people with whom they also had a close relationship⁶⁶. The bond the animal has with the owner can indeed have a positive impact on the animal’s well-being, however, it must be a bond of trust⁶⁷.

It was stated that one way to judge whether the animal likes the situation on the TVC set is whether the animal voluntarily performs the tricks. However, such intrinsic motivation does not need immediately mean that the animal has a positive association with it. This is dependent on the training techniques applied. One can condition an animal (classically or operantly) using positive and negative reinforcement. It is known that positive reinforcement is more effective than negative reinforcement and also associated with a positive impact on animal welfare⁶⁸. When an animal is trained using negative reinforcement training techniques, it will perform a behavior with a motivation of fear: ‘fear of punishment to come’⁶⁸. With positive reinforcement, a relationship of trust is more central. However, which training techniques were used for the CA in the TVC does not seem to be known by the creative directors.

The interviewees also assumed that when animals exhibit play behavior, they enjoy the situation. However, the article by Sommerville et al., 2017 claims that play behavior is not necessarily an indicator of positive well-being in dogs⁶⁹. Indeed, play behavior is heterogeneous in nature and the different types

and stages of play have different welfare implications. Indeed, play behavior also occurs in an aggression context.

On the other hand, some concerns regarding animal welfare were mentioned as well. One of the participants indicated that they sometimes film abroad. This participant mentioned that perhaps abroad, people are less strict about animal welfare. It is well known that views regarding animal welfare of companion animals indeed depend on culture and geography^{70, 71}. Regulations will differ as well. European countries do not have specific regulations regarding animals in advertising, but they have general laws that protect animal welfare and prohibit animal cruelty^{33, 71-74}. These laws are often lacking in non-European countries such as Africa⁷⁰.

It was also indicated that advertisers with less budget may have fewer resources to safeguard animal welfare. It is well known that less budget is in some contexts a risk for animal welfare. In the Netherlands, CAs are for instance not insured for veterinary care by default. Therefore, it depends on the owner's budget to what extent veterinary care can be provided⁷⁵.

Many of the discussed aspects to safeguard animal welfare cost money: scheduling more time for filming days, creating suitable conditions, offering training beforehand, hiring an animal handler, possibly using more animals. The likelihood that smaller productions will cut back on this depends on how much importance is attached to animal welfare by the parties involved.

What do we learn from this section?

- Welfare can be defined in different ways
- Creative directors shift responsibilities for animal welfare
- It is uncertain whether the responsible persons have expertise in animal welfare
- We do not know about the trainings methods on set
- It is difficult to judge whether animals on set are in a positive or acceptable state of welfare.

What do we need?

- Proven expertise of the people involved
- Responsibilities need to be made explicit
- Trainings methods need to be transparent and approved
- Maybe an audit from an external person.

Effects of television commercials on the companion animal population

The participants do not really know whether TVCs with CAs effect the CA population and if so, to what extent. They aim to avoid negative effects, mainly because this would decrease the success of the TVCs. There is no scientific literature on the effects of TVCs with CAs on the CA population. However, there is some literature on the effects of movies with animals or animal representations.

One effect is that a popular movie featuring pedigree CAs can lead to an increase in purchases of that breed³³. In the introduction, 101 Dalmatians was mentioned as an example, and it applies also to other films such as 'finding nemo', after which the demand to purchase clownfish increased²⁸. This led to wildlife trade and harm to the coral reef ecosystem⁷⁶. Looking at purebred dogs, we see more health problems in this group of animals compared to mongrel dogs, depending on the type of breed animal to a greater or lesser extent⁷⁷.

Another consequence is that impulse purchases of an animal can be stimulated through movies³³. A consequence of this is that people may regret the purchase and dump the animal. This has consequences for the individual animal, as animals have on average high stress levels in shelters⁷⁸. Another consequence is that animals are dumped after impulse purchases when they grow older (and being less 'cute'). This happened to some pigs after the movie 'babe'³³.

Besides video, it is also known that images can have effects; they can change people's perception and behavior toward animals⁷⁹. When people are for instance exposed to images of wild cats engaging in friendly interactions with people, they are more likely to engage in interactions with these animals in real life themselves⁷⁹. This, of course, can create dangerous situations.

Another possibly consequence of TVCs with CAs is people replicating the video with their own dog or cat. For example, anthropomorphism in TVCs, for instance a CA performing human actions and/or possessing human characteristics, can distort perceptions of the general public⁸⁰. Anthropomorphism has this potential to generate misleading messages and may lead to unpredictable effects on human behavior and perception toward animals⁸⁰. The article by (reference) discusses the effect of anthropomorphizing wild animals. It concludes that people seem more likely to want to interact with wild and dangerous animals after seeing (friendly) images of wild animals on social media. In what way anthropomorphism of CAs in TVCs has an effect and to what extent is not entirely clear from the current literature. Therefore, it is difficult to provide solid recommendations on this topic. The article by Grasso et al., 2020 states that creators of TVCs featuring animals should critically examine whether their video has the potential to harm the welfare of other animals³². Here, the responsibility regarding the issue is placed on the creators of the advertising. However, again,, the question is whether these creators can sufficiently assess which images will affect the animal welfare of the CA population.

As discussed earlier, dogs and cats are, since the last century, high on the sociozoological ladder³¹. In Western countries they are now generally seen as part of the family⁸¹. This development could work out in a positive way for the animal. Though, in some cases treating and seeing CA as children could have consequences for animal welfare⁸². These are cases where, for example, one punishes behavior that belongs to the intrinsic animal species. Another example is when owners care for or pamper the animal in a way that is detrimental to the animal's health, e.g. giving too many treats.

In addition to potential negative effects, one participant indicated that we should not forget that advertising or other ways of using marketing can also contribute to positive effects on the CA population. An example is to encourage people to adopt animals from the shelter. As animals generally experience higher stress levels in shelters, for this population, it would contribute positively to welfare if animals would be rehomed sooner and more frequently⁷⁸. Talking about the effects of anthropomorphism again, it is also known from literature that media can contribute positively to people's knowledge of conservation and animal protection^{83, 84}.

What do we learn from this section?

- Depicting animals in the media can possibly lead to negative effects on CA population like
 - Increased demand of purebred CAs, leading to possibly ill-considered purchases (with higher chances to dump the animal) and some of them having (severe) health issues
- Anthropomorphism of animals in media can lead to distorted perceptions, though in what way and to what extent is unknown

- Depicting animals in media has the potential to improve net animal welfare when a conscious effort is made to do so

What do we need?

- Prevent to depict purebred CAs and CAs with health issues in TVCs, choose cross breeds and healthy animals instead
- More knowledge about which images lead to what effect and to what extent and spreading this information to creators

Attitudes toward the use of companion animals in television commercials

Participants argued that if we find it morally acceptable to train animals at home it should also be morally acceptable to use CAs for TVCs. Using CAs for TVCs is justified on the basis of a similar situation that is already widespread. Indeed, most of the general public probably do not see training one's CAs as a threat to animal welfare. However, cats are usually not trained at home, so the argument here is less valid. Also, the interpretation of training CAs at home will differ from CAs for TVCs.

First, the setting differs: CAs for TVCs are exposed to stimuli that they are not normally exposed to, for instance unfamiliar objects, cameras and lights. These things can potentially pose a threat if there are many unfamiliar stimuli and/or the animal is sensitive to them. Interviewees also raised the objection, that it is not the natural behavior for CAs to walk on a movie set. What defines natural behavior for CAs is difficult to say. A companion animal is also exposed to environments and situations at home that it would not encounter as a wolf, and besides that the wolf is no longer comparable to the domesticated dog. As for the term 'natural behavior', different definitions of it circulate⁸⁵. One of the definitions Bracke's article suggests is: *'behavior shown in nature as opposed to shown in 'artificial' or 'high-tech' environments'*. This definition can be applied when CAs are used for TVCs because animals are exposed to an environment where technology (e.g. cameras) is involved and artificial settings are created.

The second difference between training CAs at home and training CAs for TVCs is the purpose. In particular, the purpose of training animals at home is for the animal to be obedient and to be able to live with each other: something that generally benefits both parties. One of the discussed objections of CAs in TVCs is that the individual animal does not benefit like humans do. It is employed to perform actions but does not receive a salary like human employees. The statement that the animal does not benefit is contradictory though, as it was also mentioned that the animal was thought to have fun on the set. What happens here is that humans are compared to animals in the light of equivalence. Singer writes on this subject that the effort to achieve equivalence between humans and animals, however, does not involve equal treatment⁸⁶. This is because there are differences between humans and animals: these differences will have to be taken into account in the rights the animal possesses. In the context of TVCs, a CA has nothing to gain from having a salary, but an animal can however be rewarded with other things such as treats, play and fun which in this case also creates a degree of equivalence. There are currently other contexts where dogs are used to do certain 'work', for instance therapy dogs and police dogs. In these contexts, animal welfare is seen to be closely observed⁸⁷. Possibly because the animal gives us something, it is considered important to treat animals well.

Another concern indicated is that the advertised products are not CA-related. These products such as cars²⁶, drugstore items²⁴ or telephone subscriptions²³ will not benefit the CA population either, only humans will benefit. Here, one could argue that by definition, companion animals serve as a means to

fulfill a purpose of humans: namely, to provide companionship. However, in recent decades, animals are increasingly seen as family members with their own intrinsic value and more people seem to oppose the proposition that the animal is a utility for humans^{31, 81}. On the other hand, if we see CAs as family members, it is natural that they also appear in TVCs as TVCs reflect society⁸⁸. For example, cars concern the whole family.

With children, the moral objection of ‘privacy’ often turns into a discussion whether or not it is desirable to include them in commercials, but also for instance in movies⁸⁹. Concerning animals, one of the participants told that the animal does not realize that it is being filmed. According to this, the animal would not care whether or not they have privacy in terms of being portrayed in the media. If we take a look at the definition of privacy it includes: ‘*someone’s right to keep their personal matters and relationships secret*’⁹⁰. Just like humans, animals do sometimes also have an incentive not to share their ‘personal matters’ with the (human) public. Literature supports the statement that animals sometimes profit from having some kind of privacy^{91, 92}. Pepper 2020 describes that animals share with humans the reason why privacy is important to them both. Both have an interest in having control over how they presents themselves⁹¹. The article by Paci et al., 2022 also talks about security in the context of privacy: animals possess all kinds of mechanisms to ensure their safety⁹². Human technology can potentially harm these mechanisms.

Finally, the distinction made between private and professional opinion is interesting. Money and other interests of the advertising agency and other parties involved will probably play a role in this. The overall goal of creative directors is launching a successful campaign. In the literature, this phenomenon of having a gap between the normative expectations attached to a job and the individual moral compass is well known⁹³. The article by (reference) also describes that this can lead to ‘moral stress’. Certain available resources to negotiate enable the worker to maintain their ethical integrity. An important resource is power. In this case, the creative director is high in the hierarchy and can make important decisions. Still, they have obligations towards the client: the advertiser. One would also want to have the best shot because it influences the success of the TVC, and thus the satisfaction of the client. This may be at the expense of the personal moral considerations of the creative director.

Nowadays, it is an option to replace animals in TVCs with realistic 3D models. Most viewers will still be able to tell the difference between real and fake but there will probably be viewers who do not. Since animals in CGI and advertising often possess anthropomorphic features or perform actions, this may contribute to a distorted perception regarding CAs^{79, 80}. In the future, CGI may appear even more realistic and the distinction between real and fake will be even less easy to make. Thus, while CGI may reduce the welfare impact for the animal(s) being used for TVCs, effects on the CA population may be the same, for instance. an increased popularity of purchasing pedigree CAs.

What do we learn from this section?

- There may be differences between training CAs at home and training for a TVC: in setting and purpose
- CAs may potentially benefit from privacy
- Professional and personal views may differ
- Realistic 3D models may possibly have similar effects on the CA population

What do we need?

- A familiar and comfortable environment for the used animal
- Reward the used animal
- Take privacy of CAs into account
- Prevent moral distress in the producers of TVCs
- Keep in mind that CGI can potentially have the same effects on the CA population

Limitations

It is possible that respondents have a greater affinity for animals than the average creative director, and that is why they chose to participate. Another motive is that they want to be transparent and/or are interested in the results. Those advertising agencies that have less affinity with animals and/or want to be less transparent (e.g., because it is worse regulated there for the animal) will have been less inclined to participate. Creative directors will benefit from speaking positively on the subject. After all, animals in advertising bring them success. However, the participants were very comprehensive in their answers and expressed a sincere desire to do their fair share, so it does not seem that participants distorted their answers.

Interview questions (and sub-research questions) were based on the ‘animal dialogue’ and two advertising films: this is a select group of people who have some kind of affinity with animals and therefore may be more critical of the use of animals in advertising than the general population^{26, 43, 50}. Because only two TVCs were discussed, which were not randomly selected by us, other ‘issues’ regarding advertising may have been missed in this study and it does not sketch out a global picture.

Also, there will probably be a difference between the personal view of the advertiser on the subject and the view taken by the advertising agency. This sometimes intertwined in the interviews.

Finally, this research concerns dogs as well as cats. However, in terms of scientific literature, the discussion mainly focuses on the dog. This is because little literature has been written about cats on these subjects. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that cats and dogs are different from each other and recommendations for one species do not apply to the other. Cats have a very different domestication history and are generally more timid and less easily trained than dogs⁹⁴.

Future research

Creative directors determine the concept and script of the TVC, but the animal handlers are in charge of the conditions for the animals. The creative directors actually watch on the sidelines, with the animal handler taking care of everything concerning the animal. In further research, it would be interesting to interview animal handlers about the base of their choices when it comes to animal welfare. Other interesting topics to investigate are what definition for animal welfare they use, what training techniques they use, what their background and/or experience with animals is, whether there are large differences among animal handlers and whether an animal handler is always employed in an advertising film.

Regarding the effect of images with animals on people, there is much that is still unknown. Some images are known to distort people’s perceptions such as anthropomorphism, but to what extent this can negatively affect CAs is not known^{81, 82}. It would be interesting to investigate which images of CAs can have a negative or positive effect and to what extent.

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Appendix 1

Interview protocol matrix using the method of Castillo-Montoya 2016

Interview questions	Sub-questions							
	Background info ¹	Desirability ²	Importance ³	Popularity CA in TVC ⁴	Beware animal welfare ⁵	Perception animal welfare ⁶	Beware impact CA population ⁷	Perception impact CA population ⁸
Q1	X							
Q2a.				X				
Q2b.		X	X					
Q2c.		X	X					
Q3a.						X		
Q3b.	X							
Q3c.	X							
Q4						X		
Q5a.							X	X
Q5b.							X	X
Q5c.							X	X
Q5d.							X	X
Q5e.					X	X	X	X
Q5f.								X

Q6a.						X		
Q6b.						X		
Q7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

1. What can creative directors tell us about the behind-the-scenes process regarding the use of CA in TVC?
2. To what extent think creative directors its desirable to use CA in TVC?
3. To what extent think creative directors its important for them to use (and keep using) CA in TVC?
4. Why do creative directors choose to use CA in TVC?
5. Are creative directors aware of animal welfare when CA are used in TVC?
6. When think creative directors that animal welfare is taking into account concerning CA in TVC?
7. Are creative directors aware that TVC featuring CA can affect the CA population by altering peoples behaviour and/or attitude?
8. When think creative directors that above consequence is taken into consideration?

Appendix 2

Blanco consent form



Universiteit Utrecht

TOESTEMMINGSFORMULIER

Interviews over dieren in reclame

(onderdeel van MA thesis project Sophie van Wely)

1. Ik verklaar hierbij op voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over het doel van het onderzoek. Ik heb de privacyverklaring overhandigd gekregen en heb hier geen verdere vragen over.

2. Als ik vragen had over mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek, heb ik daar bevredigende antwoorden op ontvangen.
3. Ik begrijp dat schriftelijke uittreksels uit dit interview in toekomstige academische publicaties, presentaties en workshops kunnen worden gebruikt, maar mijn identiteit blijft altijd anoniem.
4. Ik begrijp dat video-/audio-opnamen van dit interview kunnen worden gemaakt:
 - Ik **geef toestemming** om video-/audio-opnamen te maken van dit interview
 - Ik **geef geen toestemming** om video-/audio-opnamen te maken van dit interview
5. Ik begrijp dat ik mijn medewerking aan dit onderzoek kan stoppen op ieder moment en zonder opgave van reden.
6. Ik heb het bovenstaande gelezen en ga akkoord met deelname aan deze studie.

Naam: _____

Handtekening: _____

Datum: _____

Nadere informatie: vragen kunt u contact opnemen met Sophie van Wely (s.c.vanwely@uu.nl) of dr. Mona Giersberg (m.f.giersberg@uu.nl).

Heeft u een klacht over dit onderzoek of het interview, dan kunt u een e-mail sturen naar de klachtenfunctionaris van de Universiteit Utrecht: privacy@uu.nl

Appendix 3

Privacy statement



Universiteit Utrecht

PRIVACYVERKLARING

Interviews over dieren in reclame

(onderdeel van MA thesis project Sophie van Wely)

Het onderzoek "Gebruik van dieren in reclame" wordt uitgevoerd aan de Faculteit Diergeneeskunde van de Universiteit Utrecht. In deze privacyverklaring wordt uitgelegd hoe onze organisatie de gegevens gebruikt die wij van u verzamelen als u deelneemt aan deze enquête. Voor meer informatie zie: <https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/praktische-zaken/privacy/privacyverklaring>

Welke gegevens verzamelen we?

Voor dit onderzoek verzamelen wij de volgende gegevens:

- E-mail adres (contactopname)
- Persoonsgegevens op het toestemmingsformulier (naam)
- Video- en/of audio-opnames (indien toestemming is gegeven)
- Notulen van de interviews (indien geen toestemming voor opname is gegeven)

Hoe verzamelen wij uw gegevens?

Wij verzamelen gegevens en verwerken gegevens wanneer u:

- Het toestemmingsformulier voor interviews over "Dieren in reclame" ondertekent.
- Toestemming geeft voor video- en/of audio-opnames tijdens de interviews.

Hoe gebruiken we uw gegevens?

We verzamelen gegevens zodat we onderzoek kunnen doen naar houding ten opzichte van het gebruik van dieren in reclame. Daarom moeten we:

- Uw toestemming beheren om deel te nemen aan het project en om al dan niet video- en/of audio-opnames te maken.
- Transcripties van de video- en/of audio-opnames maken en analyseren.
- Schriftelijke uittreksels van de interviews publiceren in toekomstige wetenschappelijke publicaties, presentaties en workshops (er wordt geen informatie gepubliceerd die tot uw persoon herleidbaar is).

Hoe en hoe lang bewaren wij uw gegevens?

Video- en/of audio opnames van de interviews worden verwijderd na transcriptie. Notulen en transcripties van de interviews worden tot 5 jaar na publicatie van het onderzoek bewaard.

U hebt het recht om op elk moment en om elke reden uw medewerking aan dit onderzoek te stoppen.

Als u een gedetailleerd datamanagementplan wilt ontvangen of als u niet langer aan het onderzoek wilt deelnemen, kunt u een e-mail sturen naar: m.f.giersberg@uu.nl

Wie heeft toegang tot uw gegevens?

Voor de realisatie van het project is het noodzakelijk dat de volgende personen toegang hebben tot uw gegevens:

- Sophie van Wely, studente MA gezelschapsdieren, Universiteit Utrecht, s.c.vanwely@uu.nl (verzameling, opslag, beheer en analyse van gegevens).

- Dr. Mona Giersberg, universitair docent, Universiteit Utrecht, m.f.giersberg@uu.nl (verzameling, opslag, beheer en analyse van gegevens).
- Uw persoonsgegevens worden niet doorgegeven buiten de Europese Economische Ruimte of aan derden.

Wat zijn uw rechten inzake gegevensbescherming en overdraagbaarheid?

Wij willen ervoor zorgen dat u volledig op de hoogte bent van al uw rechten op het gebied van gegevensbescherming. Elke deelnemer aan het project heeft recht op het volgende:

Het recht op toegang - U heeft het recht om ons om kopieën van uw persoonsgegevens te vragen.

Het recht op rectificatie - U heeft het recht om ons te verzoeken alle informatie te corrigeren die volgens u onjuist is. U heeft ook het recht om ons te vragen de informatie aan te vullen die volgens u onvolledig is.

Het recht op wissen - U hebt het recht ons te verzoeken uw persoonsgegevens te wissen.

Het recht op beperking van de verwerking - U hebt het recht om ons te verzoeken de verwerking van uw persoonsgegevens te beperken.

Het recht om bezwaar te maken tegen de verwerking - U heeft het recht om bezwaar te maken tegen onze verwerking van uw persoonsgegevens.

Als u een verzoek indient, hebben wij een maand de tijd om u te antwoorden. Als u een van deze rechten wilt uitoefenen, kunt u contact met ons opnemen via: privacy@uu.nl

Hoe ons te contacteren

Als u vragen hebt over het privacy beleid van onze organisaties, de gegevens die wij over u bewaren of als u een van uw rechten op het gebied van gegevensbescherming wilt uitoefenen, aarzel dan niet om contact met ons op te nemen: privacy@uu.nl

Appendix 4

Data management plan



Universiteit Utrecht

Data management plan

Interviews on attitudes of advertisers toward the use of animals in video advertising

(part of MA thesis project Sophie van Wely)

1 Description dataset	
1.1 Description of collected/generated data that is considered relevant for reuse	<p>Generated within this part of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Video-)recordings of interviews – Transcripts of (video-)recorded interviews – Coding and further analyses of transcripts <p>Readme files will be created for the relevant data files, containing a description of the columns and the origin of the data. A working document will be prepared for the analyzed data, describing how the raw data has been processed.</p>
1.2 Type and format of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minutes of interviews with professionals in the laying hens sector (on paper) – Scanned minutes of interviews (pdf-files) – Video and audio recordings of interviews (MP4-files) – Transcripts of (video-)recorded interviews (Word-files) – Readme files with descriptions of the data files (txt-files)
1.3 Researchers/research groups who are interested in the generated data becoming available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Researchers interested in the use of animals in advertisements
2 Data storage	
During the study	
2.1 Size of data and place of storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Size (video-)recordings and other data: 100 GB – Data on paper are scanned and stored digitally – Digital data are stored on the institutional network drive. This drive is backed up once

		per day. This service is provided by the IT services of Utrecht University
2.2	Is there sufficient storage capacity during the study?	Yes
	Is there sufficient back-up capacity during the study?	Yes
	Frequency and place of back-ups and responsibility for this process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The UU network drive is automatically backed up once per day. This service is provided by the IT services of Utrecht University
2.3	Facilities for data storage (IT or other) which are present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The network of Utrecht University is available for the storage of digital files
After the study		
2.4	Indicate in which repository the data is stored, which type of repository this is and provide the URL If the data is not stored at a repository, indicate how the data is made findable, accessible and reusable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data are stored on the institutional network drive of Utrecht University, not in a repository - Data will be made accessible for third parties only for checking publication results, not for reuse
2.5	How long can the data and (where applicable) associated software be stored ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data is stored -wherever possible- in file formats that can be read for a long time and that do not depend on specific software, such as txt files - (Video)recordings will be deleted after transcription - Minutes of the interviews, transcripts and read-me files are stored for 5 years after publication

2.6 Facilities for data storage (and for related software) which are present	– The network of Utrecht University is available for storing and archiving of digital files
3 Data availability	
3.1 Is the dataset, or part of it, open access available for reuse after the end of the study?	– No, data are not suitable for open access availability and reuse because interviewees cannot be asked consent for further data use as the context and aims of these future projects are not known yet

Appendix 4

Interview protocol matrix using the method of Castillo-Montoya 2016

<i>Interview questions</i>	<i>Sub-questions</i>							
	Background info ¹	Desirability ²	Importance ³	Popularity CA in TVC ⁴	Beware animal welfare ⁵	Perception animal welfare ⁶	Beware impact CA population ⁷	Perception impact CA population ⁸
Q1	X							
Q2a.				X				
Q2b.		X	X					
Q2c.		X	X					
Q3a.						X		

Q3b.	X							
Q3c.	X							
Q4						X		
Q5a.							X	X
Q5b.							X	X
Q5c.							X	X
Q5d.							X	X
Q5e.					X	X	X	X
Q5f.								X
Q6a.						X		
Q6b.						X		
Q7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

1. What can creative directors tell us about the behind-the-scenes process regarding the use of CAs in TVCs?
2. To what extent think creative directors it is desirable to use CAs in TVCs?
3. To what extent creative directors think it is important for them to use (and keep using) CAs in TVCs?
4. Why do creative directors choose to use CAs in TVCs?
5. Are creative directors aware of animal welfare when CAs are used in TVCs?
6. What can creative directors tell us about how animal welfare is considered in practice?
7. Are creative directors aware that TVCs featuring CAs can affect the CA population by altering people's behavior and/or perception?
8. What can creative directors tell us about how the above is considered in practice?