

Investigating the Effects of Wording on Perceptions of Online Dog Adoption

Advertisements

Sarah M. Barker¹, Allison L. Martin¹, Angela S. Kelling², Megan L. Wilson³, & Suma Mallavarapu¹

1 Department of Psychological Science, Kennesaw State University

2 Department of Psychology, University of Houston Clear-Lake

3 Department Psychology, Georgia State University

Abstract

Dog adoption advertisements provide important behavioral and physical information about each dog to potential adopters. As potential adopters increasingly use the internet to find their next pet (Workman & Hoffman, 2015), online adoption advertisements have become an important part of the pet adoption process. Online adoption advertisements vary considerably on dimensions such as length, content, tone, and formatting. Previous research has found that the wording of advertisements can impact adoption rates, with more analytic advertisements (those containing fewer social or storytelling words) raising the probability of a pet being adopted (Markowitz, 2020). To assess attitudes toward adoption advertisements, we surveyed 562 college students from three universities (Kennesaw State University, Georgia State University, and University of Houston-Clear Lake) regarding their opinions of fictitious adoptions advertisements. Each participant saw a basic advertisement and either advertisements with straightforward (to the point with few storytelling words) or cute (more descriptive with more storytelling words) wording. Students indicated what they liked and disliked, what stood out to them, and what challenges about each dog they gathered from the advertisements in a free-response format. We will perform a qualitative, thematic analysis of participant responses, analyzing the data to help to identify which aspects of the advertisements were most informative and likeable to the reader.

Ideally this research can inform shelters of the best ways to write adoption advertisements to be more explanatory and appealing to potential adopters.

Keywords: adoption, advertisement, attitudes, dog, wording, qualitative analysis