

The Utilization of Scripts in Designing Charity Promotion Strategy: The Case of Animals

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The purpose of this study is to explore the usefulness of scripts in the promotional materials of animal welfare charitable organizations. A content of the printed promotional material used, over a two-year period, by eighty-two animal welfare charitable organizations that is sent to current and potential donors through the mail was analyzed. The paper indicates how scripts can be of value in selecting promotion ingredients. The results can serve as a guide and a thinking stimulant for those who are designing animal welfare promotions. The utilization of scripts as a means of selecting points for animal charity programs appears to have considerable potential.

Keywords: Scripts, charities, promotion, content analysis, animals

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to depict and exemplify a process designed to improve the promotion activities of animal welfare charitable organizations that vie for financial support, volunteer help, encouraging signing petitions to governmental offices, and other activities through advertising, publicity, and related actions. Of course, charities also use promotion in an effort to alter human behavior, such as adopting animals from shelters, rescuing animal victims of cruelty, and neutering pets. The activities which may be improved include promotion, theme and appeal choice, copy design, and selection of promotion objectives. A second objective of the study described here is to illustrate this process--combining content analysis with the use of scripts--through an animal charity example. However, any charity could employ the process. In turn, the methodology can be employed for use in market segmentation and/or emulation of competitor marketing strategies.

In this paper, the term "promotion manager" refers to those who determine the content of the promotions used to generate support for particular charities. In specific cases, the promotion manager may be an employee of the charity, an advertising or public relations agency employee, or a task force or committee charged with determining promotion content. In turn, the desired promotion material can be conveyed through advertisements, social media, public relations publications, and sales promotion devices.

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Today virtually all charities are confronted with substantial competition, some from close rivals and others from marketers of different goods and services (Lloyd, 2012). Thus, a dog rescue charity must compete with other dog rescue charities, other animal focused organizations, other entities that focus on assisting homo sapiens or the physical environment, and indeed numerous other goods and services. It has also been reported that hundreds of new organizations are joining the charity sector every year; about 1.44 million nonprofit organizations were registered with the Internal Revenue Service in 2012 (Stride and Lee, 2007; McKeever and Pettijohn, 2014). Some sources propose that the proliferation of charities is creating a huge competition for donor dollars (Sczudlo, Stamp, and Egger, 2006). Hence, attracting micro-donations through advertising has become a challenge to charity marketers (Chang and Lee, 2010).

There is a continuous need for charities to acquire new supporters, reactivate lapsed donors and encourage donors to make further gifts through campaigns that attract public attention, differentiate a charity from other fundraising organizations and distinguish current marketing activities from those undertaken in the past (Bennett and Savani, 2011). To complicate the competitive situation, charities face special competition from the private sector which focuses on social responsibility (Harris, 2011). And, during difficult economic times, when consumers are confronted with reduced income levels, monetary contributions to charities normally decline (Roberts, 2009).

Past experience indicates that advertising and other forms of promotion are needed if animal charities are to achieve objectives, such as fund raising, pet adoption,

and neuter implementation (Liu and Wang, 2010). Appeals to emotion through advertising can help the charity remain visible, see that the charity “makes a difference,” deserve financial contributions and behavioral support, and other important goals (Roberts, 2009). In addition, online promotion campaigns through emails, online advertising, and social networking can be useful (Carson, 2009; Williams, 2012). Direct mail is also a widely-employed vehicle (Diepen, Donkers, and Franses, 2009). However, only a moderate number of studies have been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of advertising by charities (Nelson and Viela, 2009). And more research is needed on how much to spend on charity promotion (Smith and Schwarz, 2012).

A qualification is required at this point. Axiomatically, much of the marketing literature and comment dictates that promotion should be designed in such a manner that it appeals to target customers. For charities, the targets include potential donors, volunteers, legislators, and the public at large. However, effective strategy goes beyond that of considering the target customer as the sole primary stakeholder. Marketers in the private sector are well aware that their promotions must be designed in light of the efforts of their rivals. Much of the marketing guerilla warfare literature focuses on this reality. The same is true for charities. The current study concentrates on competitors as a primary stakeholder—one that must receive substantial attention, in order to develop strategies that lead to essential goals. The discussion in this paper does not deny the need to consider the target customer in designing promotion material, however.

The study described in subsequent pages is based upon a content analysis of the printed promotion material that is sent to current and potential donors and other contributors through the mail. Similar studies could be made for promotions that appear online, on television, and other media. It appears to be reasonable, however, to assume that most of the findings of the present inquiry would be applicable to the charities, regardless of which media were employed to carry the messages.

Literature Review

A consideration of the literature on promoting the objectives and programs of animal charities can be instructive in providing guidelines for practitioners. This section sets forth an overview of a variety of strategies, tactics, and insights that have appeared in the literature. Some of these have been quite successful and competing organizations may benefit from emulating their actions. One example, for instance, is to generate excitement by personalizing advertising messages. The animal welfare charity RSPCA ran TV ads that asked people to vote for their favorite mistreated animal, with the message “I’m An Animal, Help Me Out” -- demonstrating how donations by people can make a difference in animals’ lives (Edginton-Vigus, 2007). It is possible, of course, that other charities might avoid using the same strategies and tactics as do competitors. Rather than emulating

others, they can distinguish their offerings by being different.

A possible strategy is to encourage individuals to make donations in wills to favorite charities. This is the largest single source of voluntary income for charities (Wise, 2005). Another important source of funds is to partner with companies that are willing to combine their merchandising offers with charitable support (Ryan, 2012; Smith, 2006). A variation on this is to enter into a partnership with a television channel for an affinity card promotion, through a bank card. Some organizations provide accounting information which reveals the percentage of donated funds that go into helping programs, rather than into administration, advertising, and other peripheral avenues (Van der Heijden, 2013).

Charities may find it useful to direct their promotions to motivations relating as to who is helped by giving. In this regard, many appeals are characterized as “help self” --aimed at improving oneself in some manner. Or, the thrust can be on “help other” --encouraging the public to donate time or money. Help-self appeals tend to be effective for men in the U.S. whereas help others (eliciting altruistic feelings) tend to be more successful for women (Nelson and Vilela, 2009).

Animal charities may decide that they should use advertising that illustrates how they differ from competitors in their services. Comparative advertisements can enhance consumers’ perceptions of the advertised brand and differentiate the brands by lowering consumer perceptions of other brands on the featured attribute (Pechmann and Ratneshwar, 1991). Of course, charities may also decide to employ their advertising as a vehicle for carrying messages that are similar to those of successful rivals, especially those that are close competitors. Thus, both strategies are possible.

Various charities have found it useful to communicate success stories to potential donors. Some individuals will more readily contribute to an organization that has a track record of getting things accomplished than one that has few accomplishments (Liu and Wang, 2010). One very successful application of this strategy was a promotion program illustrating the success of a charity in helping abandoned cats and kittens (Anonymous, 2006).

Other strategies and tactics have been used by pet charities and may be beneficial to others. Some organizations, for example have impressed donors by reporting their administration costs to them (Pallotta and Ricketts, 2012). Others use humor, such as a pantomime horse on a treadmill and an emu warming up for a run, to deal with uncomfortable subject matter (Hammond, 2004; Bennett, 2007). Still others are toning down the negative emotional impact of their messages--finding that “shock charity” does not move the public to donate (Pudelek, 2012; Bainbridge, 2003).

Scripts are not new to the marketing and promotion fields—they have been around for decades. However, a review of the animal welfare literature by the authors uncovered no employment of this treatment/device

during recent years. Perhaps it is relevant to ask “Are content analysis scripts still useful to practitioners and academics?” This paper attempts to provide some insights into the issue through an examination of the uses and development of scripts.

Rationale for Utilizing Scripts in Selecting Promotion Content

Scripts are learned routines developed for specific situations (Pitt, 1998). They are stored memories about behavior that is appropriate for reaching certain objectives (Mitchell, 1996). Essentially scripts consist of one’s own expected behavior and the behavior of others in a particular situation. While there is not a considerable body of animal welfare research that focuses upon the use of scripts, the contemporary research gives indirect support for script applications, because they have been employed in a variety of fields (Lyons, 2006).

In for profit organizations, talented promotion personnel develop a stockpile of knowledge, based upon their past achievements and failures. Research has shown that much of this knowledge is generic—it can be applied to various different situations and it can be utilized by more than one employee (Brett and Okumura, 1998). It appears logical, then, that inexperienced and unsuccessful employees could benefit from learning what experienced high-performers have assimilated.

In addition, both for profit and charity promotion managers can review their competitors’ promotions for strategies and tactics that they might employ in their own promotions, and based upon such reviews, develop promotion scripts. In turn, the written scripts which result from examining competitors’ actions can be studied and organized into meaningful categories. These categories represent methods, strategies, and tactics that have been effective. Logically, these methods, strategies, and tactics could be used by animal welfare charities to develop their own promotion programs. This form of script analysis was employed in the present manuscript.

There are several advantages open to animal protection managers who employ scripts to generate promotion programs (Mitchell *et al.*, 2000). One is that the topics can relate to what successful rivals do (Mahajan, 2005) – they are founded on what really occurs when well-designed promotion programs are discovered. Scripts provide specific details on the activities which rivals employ in an effort to reach their goals (Lyons, 2008; Lee, Lau, and Yu, 2005). The scripts are based upon facts, not abstract theories or subjective judgment. In addition, scripts can provide insights into successful rivals’ appeals to emotions, as well as factual knowledge (Kahler, Klontz, and Klintz, 2007).

Certainly, scripts are not unique to the charity field. Teachers, for instance, can employ learning scripts to facilitate collaboration in integrating new pedagogical methods into their work (Hamalainen and Hakkinen, 2010) Artists can learn how to adopt new approaches and experiences to their own practices through scripts designed for such learning (Jaffe, 2009). In biology,

scripts are employed to assist beginners in designing molecular modeling algorithms in an effective manner (Chaudhury, Lyskov, and Gray, 2010). In the science field, scripts supply graphical means for creating models and thus to eliminate problems typical for modeling in a textual manner (Balicki and Szyrka, 2010). Play writing scripts are sometimes formed, based on the works of successful writers and used to develop new plays and writers (Lane, 2010). For doctors, scripts furnish mental imagery to rehearse a surgical task symbolically, before actual performance (Arora *et al.*, 2010).

Previous periods have witnessed considerable use of scripts in sales training programs. Leigh and McGraw (1989), for example, probed into passing the procedural knowledge of industrial sales personnel to trainees. Shepherd and Rentz (1990) have reported upon a technique for assessing the cognitive processes and knowledge structures of expert sales representatives, so that these insights can be shared with other salespersons. Ainscough and DeCarlo (1996) describe a methodology using behavioral rules of multiple expert sales representatives to develop a flexible and systematic sales expert system for use in scripts. However, the recent literature is relatively silent on this topic.

The Employment of Scripts in Guiding Animal Protection Charity Promotion Designers

The script creation process is firmly grounded in motivation theory that describes how the process is attractive to promotion designers (Lyons, 2006). Scripts have been characterized as a source of action for acquiring legitimacy and creating organizational identity (Driori, Honig, and Sheaffer, 2009). Some companies have benefitted from research that emanates from psychologists (Rosa and Porac, 2002). This technique is based upon the premise that managers can learn through experience (Mitra, 2000). Various scripts are developed from the endeavors of highly successful rivals (Burns and Light, 2007; Mitchell, 1996), while others can be based on avoiding strategy or tactics of average or even marginal competitors. Some have found that this technique is especially useful when the organization is going through periods of evolutionary or even radical change (Pitt, 1998).

Scripts have demonstrated potential for training promotion personnel to improve their effectiveness in a variety of areas. They have been productive in preparing for increasing promotion productivity (Webster and Sundaram, 2009). In addition, use has been made of them in instructing individuals for encouraging entrepreneurship careers (Smith, Robert, and Mitchell, 2009). There are cases where scripts have provided significant improvement in writing skills (Conn, 2008; Sheldon and Willett, 2008). This technique has even been employed for learning superior negotiation skills with labor unions (Brett and Okumura, 1998).

The range of applications for script utilization is quite wide. For instance, one application is training in

creating new ventures (Mitchell *et al.*, 2000). Further, they have been used for instruction for handling crises, where incidents of success and failure can have a strong impact on organization viability (Brown, 1997). Also, they have focused on preparation for interaction with customers (Parker and Ward, 2000). A related adaptation is for creating and implementing methods and procedures to be utilized by marketing personnel (Friedman, 1998). In terms of more specific applications, script applications have been used for instructing auditors (Choo, 1996), realtors (Halpern, 1996), and business researchers (Goodwin and Ziegler, 1998). In some cases, the scripts have been utilized for online promotion applications (Bailin and Pena, 2007).

As of late, the animal charity literature has not addressed the use of scripts for selecting topics for promotion programs. The following discussion attempts to assist in fulfilling this void.

Determining Topics for Promotion Programs

Charity marketing managers and their advertising agencies can experience difficulty in determining what topics to incorporate in their promotion programs. Necessarily, they cannot cover every possible strategy and tactic. Rather they must restrict their efforts to topics which they perceive to be most important for organization goal achievement. The task of selecting what to cover can be demanding, as many theories and opinions on potentially useful inputs may exist.

There are a variety of sources which can be helpful in determining what topics to cover. Current employees, particularly those who are especially proficient, can be asked to describe the methods and techniques which have served them best. Managers who are responsible for the performance of the trainees can suggest favored topics. Other possibilities are to make use of consultants, relevant trade publications, and academic journals. All of these sources can be of value. Perhaps none of them should be neglected. Another possibility, that of using content analysis based scripts focusing on competitors' promotions, can have considerable merit.

Script Devising

This section deals with content analysis-based script development. This process is based upon study of the cognitive processes and knowledge structures of rivals' skilled, or expert personnel (Shepherd and Rentz, 1990).

In devising (initially creating) scripts, a sample of successful competitors is selected for analysis. In deciding which rivals are successful, it may be useful to use evidences of success, such as reputation in the industry, size, growth, media articles, and volume of promotion in the past. Next, advertisements used by each rival are examined and the topics of the advertisements recorded. These topics are arranged into categories that are homogeneous, and these make up the scripts of rivals. For instance, if a competitor's advertisement mentions extremely thin animals, the action might be assigned to a category called "underfed animals."

The categories are developed by reviewing each of the scripts under examination and gaining familiarity with the actions contained in them. Careful study can reveal similarities among the actions of different competitors, which can be generalized into categories.

The research analysts record the activities set forth in each of the competitor advertisements under study. One or several judge(s) reads the scripts and develops categories into which the activities in the scripts can be assigned. One category, for instance might be "showing photos of abused animals", while another could be "suggesting sending an animal rights petition to legislators." In the present study, only one analyst (the author) was involved, due to the objective nature of the analysis.

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The following process is used if more than one successful competitor's promotions are studied. If there is only one competitor who is being analyzed, the process is not needed. The number of competitors who mentioned activities that are included within each category item is tabulated. For example, five competitors may have mentioned an action which belongs in the "abusing animals" category. Ten may have mentioned actions which could be categorized as "mentally describing charity financial needs". This will make it possible to judge the popularity of each category.

An Application

Exhibit I sets forth a script for animal charity promotion. In turn, it can be used as an aid in designing promotion brochures, advertisements, and other promotion efforts (such as publicity and sales promotion programs). The script lists actions used, over a two-year period, by 82 animal charities that solicit funds (and sometimes actions, such as sending petitions to legislators and volunteering for work in animal rescue units). The actions mentioned in the script resulted from a content analysis of written promotions sent by mail to potential contributors. In turn, the content analysis was conducted by four graduate students with content analysis experience. They examined the written promotions prepared by the charities. The analysts were instructed to work independently and not to communicate with one another regarding their coding work. Duplicate written promotions were not analyzed.

Each of the categories included in the content analysis were included in developing the script by examining the numbers of activities sharing a common theme. For example, the category "mentioning charity sanctuary efforts" included activities such as

establishing, sanctuaries, operating sanctuaries, seeking animals needed sanctuary, and establishing no-kill policies for sanctuaries.

The analysts received three, two-hour training sessions in content analysis. They were briefed on the goals and techniques of the method. The analysts were asked to look for promotion issues that appeared in the promotions.

After the training sessions were concluded, the analysts appraised fifty promotions which were randomly drawn from the already weight category and denoted the promotion appeals that were set forth. A *chi-square test* of homogeneity of the classifications revealed that the analysts' categorizations did not differ significantly at the .05 level-furnishing evidence of inter-analyst reliability of the assessments.

Once the data had been tabulated and analyzed, two additional reliability checks were undertaken. Specifically, a comparison was made of the analysts' classifications. Further the analysts carried out a second classification for a random sample of 50 of the promotions that they had previously analyzed. This occurred three weeks after the first analysis and made possible a test-retest reliability check. All of the coefficients exceeded the 80% anchor levels set forth in the literature (Gross and Sheth, 1989; Kassarian, 1977) as suitable cutoff points. This evaluation of reliability was extended by calculating the estimate of reliability (I) developed by Perreault Leigh (1989). The calculated value was 842, surpassing the associated anchor level.

Exhibit I contains figures indicating the percentage of the organizations that produced written promotions containing the actions falling into each category. The material contained in the exhibit can serve as a guide and a thinking stimulant for those who are designing animal welfare promotions. Some activities, such as use photos, stress saving lives, and thanking donors, are widely used. Promotion managers who seek workable topics for mention might benefit by employing these activities associated with large percentages. The rationale is that, since many charities use these activities, there is prima facie evidence that they have proven merit. On the other hand, if promotion managers seek to differentiate the organization's strategies, tactics, and services from those of competitors, they might decide to select less widely-used activities, especially those of close competitors.

Of course, the mission and organizational commitments of the charity will be one of the determinants as to which activities should be included in the mix of promotions. For example, if a charity is heavily involved in animal rehabilitation, the promotion manager is likely to feature and highlight that activity in advertisements and other promotions.

Discussion

This paper has been concerned with the employment of content analysis based scripts by animal charity promotion managers, as a means of selecting content for devising advertising and other promotion programs. It is

evident that scripts have much to offer charity promotion managers and designers. The script creation process and supporting information give practitioners a considered view of some useful applications and generally add to the toolbox of managers (Lyons, 2006). The discussion above has embraced a generalized methodology for selecting relevant promotion topics and the potential value of scripts in this process. In turn, scripts were described and illustrated and a process for devising and making use of these tools was set forth through an example.

Some charity promotion managers might elect to restrict their content analysis based script analysis to close competitors only. Thus, a charity which is centered on dog welfare could consider only other charities that deal with dogs. This focus could assist such charities to develop competitive promotion programs that are attuned to specific sub-sector of the population of potential and actual rivals. The focus could be even more finely attuned by developing scripts for competitors that concentrate on dog adoption programs or on charities that serve particular geographic areas. Such adjustments might provide more desirable strategic inputs than content analyses that center on a wide variety of possible rivals, as is the case with the example presented in this paper.

Another possible use for content analysis based script analysis is to assist in identifying close competitors. It seems reasonable to assume that such competitors might feature themes and activities that are also featured by the present charity. Comparing scripts developed by rivals with those of the present charity could reveal similarities that signal focus on the same target market, such as individuals who are highly opposed to the use of product testing on animals by corporations or universities.

In another vein, charity promotion managers might opt to conduct content analysis based scripts from samples of charities in other fields, as an aid to acquiring innovative ideas for their own promotions. Hence, an animal script manager could conduct an analysis of promotions by environmental protection, cancer prevention, assistance of wounded military veterans, assistance to the needy, and other charities. The analysis could reveal themes and appeals that would be useful in animal protection promotions.

In sum, the utilization of scripts as a means of selecting points for animal charity programs appears to have considerable potential. The literature has been absent on this field during recent periods, but the techniques appear to possess lasting merit. Managers are well-advised to consider the use of this technique, as a means of enhancing their efforts.

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EXHIBIT 1 Animal Charity Promotion Script

Action	Percentage of Total
Overall theme is mainly positive	41.3
Overall theme is mainly negative	58.7
List website address	58.8
List email address	36.6
Mention no government funding, voluntary contributions only	29.5
Requesting monthly financial contribution pledges	42.0
Discouraging human activities that harm animals	25.0
Attempt to build compassion among audience members	93.0
Describe charity rescue efforts	45.6
Describe charity rehabilitation efforts	36.1
Describe charity sanctuary efforts	55.7
Suggest animal overpopulation problems	39.1
Request sending telephone calls, emails, or petitions to legislators	27.8
Describe lobbying efforts by the charity	23.2
Commenting on the admirable quality of animal behavior	58.1
Describe animal cruelty activities	88.0
Describe animal pain and suffering	72.5
Citing examples of animal affection for humans	25.5
Stress saving lives	92.3
Mention animal emotions, such as fear and mourning	66.4
Encourage animal adoptions by those who desire to assist animals	31.6
Use photographs	90.8
Use design illustrations	47.6
Give names of animals who have been mistreated or rescued	69.8
Issue membership card	19.9
Issue certificates to donors	8.2
Mention cooperative efforts with other charities	12.0
Cite instances of human sorrow, based on unfavorable animal treatment	16.6
Suggesting minimum donations of over \$30	11.7
Citing examples of animal contributions to human well-being	28.1
Suggest the need for educating humans on animal welfare	18.8
Stress urgent action needed by donors or volunteers	68.4
Describe animal neglect	48.1
List case histories of animal suffering	47.2
List case histories of animal rehabilitation	39.0
Describe charity financial status	8.9
Focus on animal testing in universities—medical and dental	33.3
Focus on animal testing by companies—product tests	27.6
Mention tax deductions capabilities for donations	38.4
Investigate possible incidences of animal protection law violations	15.5
Thank donors	46.2
Provide statistics	50.0
Urge local law enforcement action	24.5
Encourage staying alert to detect and report animal mistreatment	17.3
Photographing animal abuse incidents	19.7
Focus primarily on dogs	34.7
Focus primarily on cats	7.3
Focus primarily on horses	22.5
Focus primarily on farm and ranch animals	14.7
Focus primarily on wild animals	9.8
Focus primarily on other animals	4.9
Focus primarily on animals living in the U.S.	89.6
Focus on all animals	6.1
Provide gifts (stamps, bags, cards, etc.)	33.0
Urge vegetarian lifestyles	9.6
Use humor in promotions	15.8

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