
Animal Welfare Advocacy and Viewers' Response

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to measure the viewers' response towards animal welfare advocacy television program, "Born to be Wild." Using descriptive method, the researchers conducted a survey to the 340 BS Criminology students. The results revealed that the level of animal welfare awareness of the respondents in terms of animal treatment, animal maintenance and animal supervision was high which indicated that the respondents frequently practice the advocacy program's goals. Moreover, viewers' response towards the advocacy program was high which indicated that after the respondents' watch the "Born to Wild", they made favorable actions for the animals. Results also showed a high correlation between the level of animal welfare advocacy of the program 'Born to be Wild' and the viewers' level of response. It was recommended for the television establishment to create more television programs with focus on the promotion of animal and environmental welfare.

Keywords: Animal welfare, Advocacy, Viewer's Response, University of Mindanao, Davao City

INTRODUCTION

As the field of science and technology continues to advance, human conditions come into a new age. While technological developments have affected almost every aspect of human life, at the other, it also brings devastation to life and nature.

In modern society, media play the role as facilitator of development, disseminator of information, and as agent of change. For years mankind has manipulated and neglected animals. They used animals for entertainment, for medical and scientific researches, for human consumption and for many other things. In any field, animals have always been there for humans to be exploited (The Naked Eye Films, 2006).

Different animal species around the globe today are faced with different levels and types of cruelty. Despite this alarming condition, humans failed to recognize the phenomenon, instead, they continue to give threats to these animals by destroying their habitats. Humans changed most ecosystems beyond recognition in a dramatically short space of time. The way society has sourced its food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel over the past 50 years has seriously degraded the animals' living environment (Singer, 2006).

Recent reports have warned that some 10-30% of the mammal, bird, and amphibian species are threatened to extinct because of human activity and now climate change. The current extinction rate is approaching 1,000 times the background rate and may climb to 10,000 times the background rate during the next century, if present trends continue past extinctions will happen again (Shah, 2013).

In the study of Plat (2008), he finds that the biodiversity crisis in the Philippines continues to pervade. More than half of the natural fauna in the Philippines faces the threat of extinction. Of the 1,137 bird,

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mammal and amphibian species endemic to the country, 592 are considered "threatened or endangered" along with 227 endemic species of flowering plants. Mother Nature Work (2009) identified two major threats of biodiversity in the Philippines- mining and mono-agriculture (plantations). These threats do not only endanger the animals' existence but also their habitat.

In Pangasinan, Philippines, seven people were arrested for butchering 49 dogs. The team of policemen rescued 22 out of 71 dogs found in the area. Of the forty-nine dogs killed, 26 were scorched in an open fire (Cardinoza, 2012). In Talisay, Cebu, animal welfare activists opposed the killing of stray dogs through the so-called "tambutso (tailpipe) gassing". "Tambutso gassing" is a method of trapping dogs inside an enclosed metal cage. A hose connected to the tailpipe of a gas-powered engine is then attached to the cage. The dogs get killed by the carbon monoxide emitted by the idling engine. The Cebu South Dogs Club Inc. (CSDC) wanted the "cruel" and "pitiless" practice. The group believed that 'tambutso gassing' is not among the prescribed methods of euthanasia or mercy killing in accordance with Republic Act 8485 or the Animal Welfare Act of the Philippines (Pateña, 2012).

Dalelo (2007) raised the concern and proposed that all people need to have a common understanding of the role played by human beings in reducing or worsens environmental deterioration. In the same vein, Woodhouse (2006) reiterated that the success of community-based wildlife conservation projects depends on attitudes held by the local community, which will in turn influence their level of participation and behavior.

This study was conducted to determine the influence of media program concerning animal welfare and environmental awareness to the practices of the viewers. This was centralized on the program "Born to be Wild" of GMA-7 Network. Also, this study may encourage other television networks to formulate programs that may help change the perspectives of people on animal welfare and environmental preservation.

Statement of the Problem

The researchers had undertaken this study to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of animal welfare advocacy of the program 'Born to be Wild' among the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Animal Treatment;
 - 1.2 Animal Maintenance;
 - 1.3 Animal Supervision?
2. What is the viewers' level of response to the advocacy of GMA-7's Program 'Born to be Wild'?
3. Is there a significant relationship between animal welfare advocacy and viewers' response?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on the following theories which were related on how strong the impact of media in creating animal welfare awareness.

Agenda Setting Theory developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). This theory contends that the media are instruments used to influence public opinion by 'setting the agenda in public discourse'. The theory further states that when issues are covered by the media as often as possible, the public would take them to be important. Though accepting the 'pervasive but not persuasive' statement as a truism of mass communication in a modern democratic society, researchers of agenda-setting insist that the media are nevertheless very persuasive in their unique way. But not as the long-discredited hypodermic-needle theory of media effects had warned in shaping and manipulating people's public attitudes - their likes and dislikes, pros and cons regarding political, economic, and social matters.

Media Effects Theory proposed by Frankfurt School of Social Researchers (n.d.). This theory deals with how media can affect society and how society affects the media. It contends that media contents can and will influence passive viewers.

The conceptual framework of the study showed the variables through a schematic diagram in Figure 1. The independent variables were animal welfare advocacy in terms of animal treatment, animal maintenance, and animal supervision while the dependent variables were the viewer's response towards the GMA-7's animal welfare and awareness program 'Born to be Wild'.

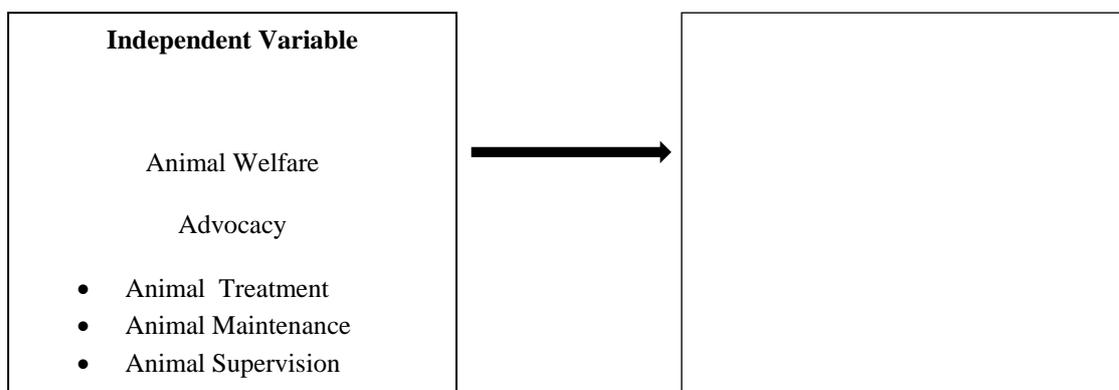


Figure1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant and beneficial to the following institutions and group of individuals:

GMA-7 Network. The result of this study will give them additional information about the viewers' response towards the advocacy of their animal welfare program. Thus, this will be of great inspiration to continue in their endeavor of promoting animal welfare program. Moreover, this will give an idea which aspect of the viewers' understanding of animal welfare need to be strengthened.

Media Practitioners. The result of this study will be of great help to remind them of their duties in disseminating information regarding the protection of the animals and the promotion of animal welfare.

Animal Welfare Advocates. The result of this study will aid them to draw people's attention on the subject of animal-related issues. This will serve as their basis on how to make the people aware and vigilant to animal treatment and welfare.

METHOD

This chapter presents the description of the research design, research subjects and data gathering procedures and statistical treatment of data.

Research Design

This study used the descriptive method because this study focused on the widespread condition and on how a viewer is influenced by the particular program. Key (2007) affirmed that descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables and conditions in a situation. Moreover, Agrawal (2008) pointed that descriptive research is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation. Further, Best and Khan (1993) said that descriptive research employs the process of disciplined inquiry through the gathering and analysis of empirical data, and each attempts to develop knowledge.

Research Subjects

This study considered 340 criminology students (1st year to 4th year) from the University of Mindanao, Matina Campus during the first semester school year 2013-2014.

The students were chosen because they were exposed to the fields of law enforcement, security administration, crime detection and prevention, and were knowledgeable of the animal welfare act.

Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study was in animal welfare advocacy and viewers' response. This study focused on determining the relationship between the animal welfare advocacy and viewers response. Further, it was focused on GMA-7's Program 'Born to be Wild'. The respondents of the study were 340 Criminology students of the University of Mindanao, Matina Campus during the first semester school year 2013-2014. Only those who have watched the "Born To Be Wild" were considered to answer the questionnaire.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was used in the data gathering to determine the influence of the program "Born to be Wild" to the criminology students of University of Mindanao. The research questionnaire was validated by external experts for validity and reliability of questions. The questionnaire obtained an overall rating of 4.0.

Data Gathering Procedures

The following procedures were observed by the researchers in the conduct of this study.

Validation of the survey questionnaire. The researchers' constructed questionnaire was given to external experts for content validation. This was done to make sure the validity and reliability of the instruments. Corrections and suggestions of the experts were adopted. After the revision of the questionnaire, a certificate of approval has been sought from the thesis coordinator.

Asking permission to conduct survey. To ensure the cooperation of the students and professors, the researchers had asked the permission of the Dean of the College of Criminal Justice Education.

Conducting the survey. The researchers secured a list of the total number of criminology students from the records and admission office. The researchers also asked the assistance of some of the professors who were in-charged of each class in the dissemination of questionnaires.

Analysis of data. The questionnaires were compiled and the data gathered were tallied thoroughly. The data were given to the assigned statistician for analysis and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data based on the statistical results.

Level of Animal Welfare Advocacy of the program "Born to be Wild" Among the Respondents

The level of animal welfare advocacy of the program "Born to be Wild" obtained an overall mean score of 3.87. This means that the animal welfare advocacy of the program 'Born to be Wild' has high ability to influence viewers' level of animal treatment, animal maintenance, and animal supervision.

More specifically, Animal Treatment got the overall mean score of 4.01. Under this indicator: *I give rewards to animals when they do good deeds, I respect animal's right, and I am gentle towards animals* obtained the highest mean score of 4.14 which is described as very high. This indicates that giving rewards to animals, respecting animals' rights, and being gentle towards animals are the most exercised animal treatment by the respondents.

On the other hand, the lowest mean score of 3.67 is obtained by the statement, *I spend time with my pet*. This indicates that the respondents spend lesser time with their pets.

With regards to animal maintenance, the overall mean score is 3.76. Under this indicator: *I feed my pets with animal foods regularly* got the highest mean score of 4.09 which is described as very high. This indicates that the respondents feed their animals regularly. Whereas, the lowest mean score of 3.29 is the statement, *I buy vitamins for the animals*. This indicates that providing vitamins to their pets are less executed.

Furthermore, animal supervision obtained an overall mean score of 3.83 which is considered as high. Under this indicator, *I regulate my animal's food and water intake* got the highest mean score of 4.00 which is considered as very high. This indicates that respondents supervise what the animals eat and drink frequently. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score of 3.47 is the statement, *I bring the animal to the veterinarians for vaccination*. This indicates that the respondents do not regularly attend or visit medical treatment and check up for their animals.

This led the researchers to conclude that, in terms of animal welfare, the advocacy of program "Born to be Wild" influenced the respondents' views on animal care. Sidhu (2013) averred that media communication which produces television programs can be accelerated by keeping in view the attitude of the people towards what they watch. Thus, if a person affects communication, he has established a common ground of understanding. Literally communication means to inform, to tell, to show or to spread information. It contributes to dialogue and social actions. It helps to build local capacities and allows people to apply what they learned on those programs.

Table1. Level of Animal Welfare Advocacy of the program "Born to be Wild" Among the Respondents

ANIMAL TREATMENT	Mean N= 340	Verbal Interpretation
I give rewards to animals when they do good deeds (e.g. I give the animal its favorite food).	4.14	Very High
I spend time with my pet (e.g. I play and talk with my pet).	3.67	High
I respect animal's right (e.g. I use animals for food, clothes, or medicine).	4.14	Very High
I let my pet move freely (e.g. I allow my pet to roam around the house).	3.96	High
I am gentle towards animals (e.g. I caress my pet).	4.14	Very High
TOTAL MEAN SCORE	4.01	Very High
ANIMAL MAINTENANCE		
I feed my pets with animal foods regularly.	4.09	Very High
I shower my pet regularly.	3.71	High
I give my pet proper grooming.	3.74	High
I provide them comfortable habitat.	3.96	High
I buy vitamins for the animals.	3.29	High
TOTAL MEAN SCORE	3.76	High
ANIMAL SUPERVISION		
I control the animal's behavior (e.g. I train my pet where to pee).	3.91	High
I supervised the animal's habitats (e.g. I check if it is clean or not)	3.88	High
I supervise my animals' body condition (e.g. I check if it feels well or not).	3.88	High
I bring the animal to the veterinarians for vaccination (e.g. Vaccination for anti-rabies).	3.47	High
I regulate my animal's food and water intake (e.g. I don't give food and drink that may cause sickness or death to the animal).	4.00	High
TOTAL MEAN SCORE	3.83	High
OVER-ALL MEAN SCORE	3.87	High

Level of Response to the Advocacy of GMA-7's Program 'Born to be Wild' Among the Respondents

The respondents' level of response to the advocacy of the GMA-7's program 'Born to be Wild' obtained an overall mean of 3.95 with a verbal interpretation of high. This indicates that the respondents' awareness to animal welfare and preservation after viewing 'Born to be Wild' is very evident. Moreover, among of all the respondents' responses, the statement, *becoming appreciative of the value of the distinct species* obtained an overall mean of 4.12 (very high). This means that the respondents were informed well and aware of what does "Born to be Wild" advocate to its viewers. Furthermore, viewers' response on *becoming interested in adopting animals* is high; however, it obtained the lowest overall mean of 3.69. This indicates that the respondents are less interested in adopting animals. They may be interested in buying animals to be their pets but not adopting animals which are strayed.

The findings agree to the reactive theory which describes the viewers as passive and simply a receptor of information delivered by the television (Anderson and Lorch 1983). This theory, which is derived from Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1977), suggests that the formal features of the television programming gain and maintain the viewer's attention. From there, the child's information processing system functions reactively and continued attention and comprehension take place more or less automatically. Furthermore, Blumler and Katz (1974) believed that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world. The idea that we simply use the media to satisfy a given need do not seem to fully recognize the power of the media in today's society.

Table2. Level of Response to the Advocacy of GMA-7's Program 'Born to be Wild' Among the Respondents

Items	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Viewers have learned to report animal cruelty to the authorities.	3.96	High
2. Viewers became interested in joining animal welfare activities such as caring for rescued and injured animals.	3.72	High
3. Viewers learned to help animals that are in need.	4.01	Very High
4. Viewers became interested in reading and watching things about animals.	4.00	Very High
5. Viewers became interested in adopting animals.	3.69	High
6. Viewers became willing to surrender illegal wildlife trade.	4.02	Very High

7. Viewers became willing to surrender illegally kept species.	3.99	High
8. Viewers became willing to respond to wildlife emergencies and rescue missions.	4.00	High
9. Viewers became appreciative of the value of these distinct species.	4.12	Very High
10. Viewers became aware of the different wildlife experiences.	4.06	Very High
OVER-ALL	3.95	High

Significant Relationship between Animal Welfare Advocacy and the Viewers’ Response

Shown in Table 3 is the significant relationship of animal welfare advocacy of the program ‘Born to be Wild’ among the Criminology Students in the University of Mindanao. As shown, the computed t-value is 15.232 and the computed r-value is 0.638 with a p-value of 0.000. This means that there is a high correlation between the level animal welfare advocacy of the program ‘Born to be Wild’ and the viewers’ level of response. Moreover, this implies that there is a significant relationship between the level of animal welfare advocacy of the program ‘Born to be Wild’ and the viewers’ level of response. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The result affirms the agenda setting theory of Wanta (1997) where this study is anchored. As stated, that when issues are covered by the media as often as possible, the public would take them to be important. The media are instruments used to influence public opinion by ‘setting the agenda’ in public discourse and are nevertheless very persuasive in their unique way. Furthermore, the result also confirm Gebner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) cultivation theory which states that television viewing has an effect on people’s perception, attitudes and values, since there is a significant influence between the level of animal welfare advocacy of the program ‘Born to be Wild’ and the viewers’ level of response.

This finding also agrees to the study of Davey (2006) conducted in China on Animal Welfare Consciousness that high percentage of the surveyed expressed empathy toward animals and opposed animal cruelty. Most of them believed that animals are sentient and have emotions. They deplored extreme cruelty against animals in the catering business, entertainment industry, wildlife farms and slaughter houses. They stood for better treatment of animals. It is time for a drastic change in China’s policy regarding animal protection. In America, Learning to Give (n.d.) pointed out the significant role of television in the promotion of awareness on the issue of animal cruelty. The best example cited was the programming of Discovery Network which showcased the work of animal investigators by producing shows like Animal Precinct, Animal Cops, and Animal Planet Heroes.

Table3. Significant Relationship between Animal Welfare Advocacy and the Viewers’ Response

Variables Correlated	r-value	Verbal Description	Computed t-value	P-Value	Decision on Ho	Significance Level
Level of Animal Welfare Advocacy of the Program ‘Born to be Wild’ vs. The viewers’ level of response	0.638*	High Correlation	15.232	0.000	Rejected	Significant

Legend: * Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed), n = 340

** t-value computed is significant @ $\alpha = 0.05$

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section are the conclusions and recommendations based on the results obtained.

Conclusions

On the light of the aforementioned findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The level of Animal Welfare Advocacy of the program “Born to be Wild” among selected BS Criminology students of the University of Mindanao in terms of animal treatment, animal maintenance and animal supervision is high which indicated that the respondents frequently observe the advocacy of the program.
2. The viewers’ response of the selected BS Criminology students towards the program ‘Born to be Wild’ is high which indicates that the actions or the response are done frequently.

3. There is a significant relationship on animal welfare advocacy of the program 'Born to be Wild' when analysed in terms of the viewers' response towards the program.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study the following recommendations are offered:

GMA-7 Network. They may come up with more animal welfare advocacy programs to reach wider audience since the program 'Born to be wild' has highly influenced the viewers. Moreover, they may visit schools and universities to promote their advocacy.

Media Practitioners. Since media is proven to be an influential tool to disseminate information and awareness, practitioners may use it more often to produce animal welfare programs such as 'Born to be Wild'.

Animal Welfare Advocates. Seeing a program 'Born to be Wild' is highly influential to the viewers in spreading animal welfare advocacy; they may utilize it to draw people's attention on the subjects related to animal issues.

UM Faculty and Students. It is recommended that animal welfare may be taught in the classroom so that everyone will be aware of the importance of each animal to the ecosystem.

UM Criminology Students. As they are taught inside the classroom of their role to serve and protect, the researchers recommend that they may perform their duties as authorized persons to discipline those unlawful citizens who harm the animals.

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