

“Be Kind To Everyone” They Said
A Study of the Relationship Between Exploitation & Sexualization of Animals & Women In
Media & Advertising

By

Alexis Beberman

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C. Ray Borck, Sponsor

Matthew Immergut, Second Reader

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The Exploitation of Women and Animals in Media

Patriarchal ethics naturalizes and normalizes violence and permits the oppression of other beings.

Introduction

Being a feminist in today's society I am typically looked down on for my body and sexuality. Growing up vegetarian I understood and constantly knew what was going on around me in the nonhuman rights movement. I haven't been repeatedly offended by organizations like PETA for their advertisements that would exploit women and make them feel less than they deserve in order to serve a mission statement.

When sitting in Sociology Junior Seminar, we were handed a questionnaire of general topics and asked to think of a question for two of the topics. One being animals and the other art. When thinking about animals, I wasn't so interested in researching them by itself but something that ties to a bigger picture in society. Then I thought “How does the exploitation of women and animals relate?” My professor handed back our questionnaires with comments and on mine she states “Seems difficult, but definitely the most interesting and original one I've heard in a long time.” This is how I knew I needed to pursue it, something that no one else has thought of. And then the research started and I realized how much this topic truly is not researched. There is still little to no information based on the topic, more so analyzing than anything. The whole idea for this research was to explore how language, imagery and advertising plays its part in exploiting both women and animal.

Exploitation is the action or fact of mistreating someone to benefit from their work (Oxford Dictionaries). So this left me with the question of, does the exploitation of animals relate

to the exploitation and sexualization of women? While researching that, I was brought to the research question I now have: Does Exploitation and Sexualization of Women in Nonhuman Rights Organizations Advertising Support Their Mission Statement? The answer is no. It hurts their mission statement while being hurtful to women and unethical. The way women are mistreated in advertising and media in order to try and gain attention for a vegan lifestyle and animal rights is morally wrong as well. Nonhuman Rights organizations have exploited women to gain attention and donations. The effect it generates crosses lines of Animal and Women's Rights, derogatory language, discrimination of men and people of color, exploiting a woman's body and more.

Literature Review

This reviews other research and readings on how animals and women’s rights, though similar, are used to contradict each other and exploit one another. Nonhuman rights groups market themselves in a “sex sell” approach in order to gain attention to their mission of saving the animals, meanwhile exploiting women in order to do so. Brands such as PETA have marketed themselves with ads exploiting a woman's sexuality stating that men would be last longer in bed when going vegan. PETA has even gone as far as making commercials of women having sex with men and showing the “difference” between a vegan lover and nonvegan lover. I will analyze how organizations such as PETA exploit women’s bodies (especially white thin bodied women) to try and gain from it. Then I will be reviewing language that dates back as long as we can recall that directly associates women with animals in demeaning ways. Marketers use language to shame women into converting to a vegan lifestyle or embarrass them for their life habits.

Women’s vs. Animal Rights

Many have experienced their rights being stripped from them, especially in today’s age. Many have also experienced their rights being exploited and used from someone else’s gain and then being discarded. Whether when experiencing domestic abuse, sexualization, dehumanization or other. This unfortunately often is the case for animals and women. What I personally have noticed from nonhuman rights organizations such as PETA there have been a huge amount of attempts to gain rights for animals at the cost of continuing exploitation of women. That being said, because they think it is the way to obtain attention for animal rights

movements it contradicts their mission of equality/non-violence and serves harm to furthering their agenda meant to promote rights being respected.

Studies show that children who have fathers that domestically abuse their family often are also subjected to animal abuse and often commit a crime of animal abuse themselves. Though animal abuse is not a ‘requirement’ for men to commit the crime of domestic abuse against their significant others and family, it is statistically proven that animal abuse is the first crime committed by abusers (Patterson-Kane et al. 2009). By abusing someone or an animal you begin to strip away their ownership they have over their own body, this is where they begin to lose their rights. Women of color, particular weights, and the LGBTQ+ community are especially targeted for abuse and stripped of their ownership and rights that are owed to them. Nonhuman rights organizations advertisement and marketing teams such as PETA’s Animal Times/VegNews, Ms. Magazine, and Bust Magazine support women advertising themselves to gain attention and money for their missions of a vegan lifestyle and protecting animals. When over 300 magazine covers from the listed organizations were analyzed it as found that 87.3% had covers of women that were both white and thin (Wrenn et al. 2016).

Through the Ethical Review Review Committee of the University of Queensland in Australia and the Mechanical Turk in the United States, there was a cross-cultural study done to see arousal rates and dehumanization statistics. It gave evidence towards PETA specifically focusing on the explicitly on the dehumanization of women in their advertisements. Their research shows that though the arousal rates were higher when using this advertising strategy of exploiting a woman's rights and body, the process of depriving women of their human qualities was significantly related to the support of PETA.

The research provided above shows three different research techniques to provide one unified point. Women are dehumanized and stripped in order to support the mission of nonhuman rights organizations. Women and animals rights are treated as the same and manipulated in unethical terms in order to ‘serve a greater good’. Which personally, I believe is completely untrue and just another way to bring in more money. The purpose is to try to find a universal attraction from the general public to support the cause of nonhuman rights but meanwhile, they manipulate women and exploit them to do so.

‘Sex Sells’

Sex influences society. The appeals saw in the various settings to elicit feelings from the public are grabbed through the sexual eye. Sex has been used in advertising to try and get attention to the cause. Using a sexual appeal in advertising allows arousal rates to boost circulation whether it is retweeted on Twitter or catches the eye of drivers and passengers when driving past a billboard. But using sex in advertising also allows discrimination against some genders and races due to stereotyping the ‘wanted’ appeal. And advertising teams still to this day prefer to use the sex appeal to grab attention, though some research shows that it actually reduces support for ethical campaigns.

Advertisements produced by PETA tend to target sensitive body imagery. Its focus is to make someone look, whether it is because it is a naked woman or a disturbing image. There has been the “Girls Gone Wild” phenomenon with women flashing the camera with utters for breast and the “Save the Whales” campaign featuring a bigger body type woman on a beach (Wrenn 2013).

It was found that 87.3% of nonhuman rights supporting organization magazine covers are found to have strictly targeted their advertisements with white thin bodies women as their focus(Wrenn et al. 2016). Organizations like PETA use a woman’s body in order to gain focus from the public but when featuring a bigger body typed woman as the focus it typically is not in a good way. They are known for demeaning women of larger body type. It is a tactic to not only promote “Saving the Whales,”



but also to discredit women of more significant weights and body shame them into losing weight by going vegan (Wrenn 2013). Displaying this billboard in New York City shamed women who resembled the model in the picture and scared women from gaining weight.

A woman’s sex and body is taken advantage of in nonhuman rights movements for social justice and recognition. Nonhuman rights activist organizations seem to find that using sex in advertisements sells their promotion to the general public, and the research provided above

shows otherwise. Sex does bring attention to the table, but just because people are paying attention does not mean it is ethical.

Language

Language is a powerful tool that we use to communicate, and the words that we use carry strong connotations. Some of the word choices one makes can draw more attention to a specific topic, as touched on previously. Women and animals compared, and the word choice is primarily negative or used to get the point across and seem more interesting. The words used to describe women are often animals that a woman is meant to target and embarrass women.

It is easy for someone to discredit and demean someone with the use of a single word. PETA finds a great use of terminology to demean women. Using the language of “Save the Whales,” which was mentioned before but has great use and is a prime example, specifically is targeting women that are ‘fat.’ By using language that is specific to targeting sensitive body image and women of greater weight, it tries to humiliate them while also promoting a specific cause. PETA also has advertised a vegan advertisement of “Milk Gone Wild,” using wordplay to attract attention from others relating itself to the “Girls Gone Wild” show that is known for women showing their breast regularly. Within that advertisement, it is a commercial that has women at a car wash in daisy dukes and crop tops with udders for breast continuously being flashed. (Wrenn 2013).

The terminology is used to grab attention from a general audience, but it goes unnoticed how it strips women of their womanhood and confidence. The language of a social butterfly, bitch, cow, dog, queen bee and more all relate women back to animals in a demeaning way.

When analyzing this terminology, it shows the ‘Women as Animal’ category of patriarchal epithets (Adams & Donovan 2006). Some labels specifically relate to a woman's appearance such as ‘dogs’ relating to ugliness and ‘cows’ relating to being overweight. Then there is terminology that refers to a woman's stupidity such as being a ‘dumb bunny.’ And if a woman, who also sometimes referred to as a woman but a ‘chick,’ fickle or frivolous she is related to a ‘social butterfly’ (Adams & Donovan 2006).

Language has a significant impact on the exploitation of women by explicitly using animal terminology to strip a woman of her femininity. By referring to women as animals, it implies a woman is inferior to others and does not deserve equal consideration or respect. When using such language, animals are in the same category of oppression as women.

Methodology

Throughout this project I many curveballs have been thrown my way and I have realized not everything is always going to go your way. The original plan for my method of research was to do a ethnography at PETA rallies and watch how women express themselves at those rallies. Whether they choose to use their bodies for the mission at hand or verbally express their promotion for veganism and non-animal cruelty. I also planned on conducting in depth interviews with those who attend rallies and find out how they feel about PETA’s advertisement strategies that use womens bodies to gain attention and ask why they support PETA no matter what they display in media while also asking them to help snowball my interview with others who don’t attend rallies but support PETA or those who used to attend rallies that way I could ask why they no longer attend.

Attending a few rallies, I did not realize how hard it would be to speak to those actively participating. They made it known that they are too busy to be spoken to and are hard core PETA supporters and believe in anything they do. I had conducted only a couple of interviews and gained very little infortmation. I believe that I was given more time and had the funds to travel more to rallies other than in New York City I could’ve gained more access to more people and information. With more time I probably could have gotten a good representation of why women support PETA and their advertisements or why they don’t but still support the cause for different reasoning. I could have accessed the information to the question of why these women were using their bodies during those rallies. And I also probably could have accessed the information of why certain women now stopped attending rallies and stopped giving their support to PETA. But, that is all ‘what if’ and cannot be answered. I had to look for a Plan B.

I now had to face doing research and methods based on content analysis in an inductive way. Going with an inductive method allowed me to examine the social world and develop theories after observing and watching. I began studying advertisements that included billboards, commercials, magazine covers, photoshoots and other marketing materials. Then I scrolled through PETAs Twitter and Instagrams to find information and evidence that support my research question. Going through their social media provides what they say about their branding and how they want to represent themselves on an everyday basis. Going at the research qualitatively involved the social phenomena that we're focusing on which trying to understand the social processes in context. Though it takes longer to gather data, it provides a better understanding of the work and pays attention to the subjective nature of human life.

Findings & Analysis

The material found through the content analysis has been broken up into the themes previously stated through the literature review. This includes, women vs. animal rights, sex, and language. Each theme provides evidence to how women are exploited and sexualized in advertisements to gain attention for a nonhuman rights mission.

Women vs. Animal Rights

Women’s rights and opinions have been used in order to try and gain attention and support for nonhuman rights. Whether a woman is a feminist or using the choices women were given with their bodies against them, PETA has found a way to exploit their rights and the voice women were given after fighting for so long.



In this billboard plastered for thousands to see, PETA tells women they cannot call themselves feminist if they choose to eat eggs. Or them using a huge feminist icon that many still look up to in order to gain attention to a vegan lifestyle and influence the change, as if Rosie the

Rivetera ever promoted a vegan lifestyle and not the right for women to have equality. Feminism is the advocacy of womens rights on the basis of equality of sexes. Their marketing is trying to shame women who consider themselves feminist because they eat dairy and eggs, meanwhile a woman fighting for her right to be treated equal has nothing to do with scrambled eggs and chocolate milk on a Sunday morning.



In an advertisement such as this one, PETA suggest that if you are pro-life you should be a vegan. This advertisement is ethically wrong in multiple ways. One being the fact that they are exploiting a womans choice on whether she can or cannot have an abortion and do what she wants with her body. Now, abusing the fact that if you personally do support pro-life you need to be vegan because if you believe in saving a childs life you need to save everything. Exploiting what a woman should be able to do with her body is not their point to be used for attention and should not be used into shaming people to live a vegan lifestyle. PETA has come to the point of comparing rape victims to animals and comparing discrimination between women and animals the same.

It is understandable to want to catch the eye of the public with advertisement. It is also understandable to want to use current political topics to play along with what is happening in society. But to use a womans right to equality and what to do with their body after years of

fighting for that voice and that choice is unethical. To use a woman's traumatic experience against her to support a vegan lifestyle is morbid and disgraceful.

‘Sex Sells’

Sexuality and gender is often used to manipulate advertising and audiences in order to gain attention. A woman's body is used as the main focus for advertisements in hopes of gaining attention from a broader audience than those interested in joining the vegan and vegetarian lifestyle.



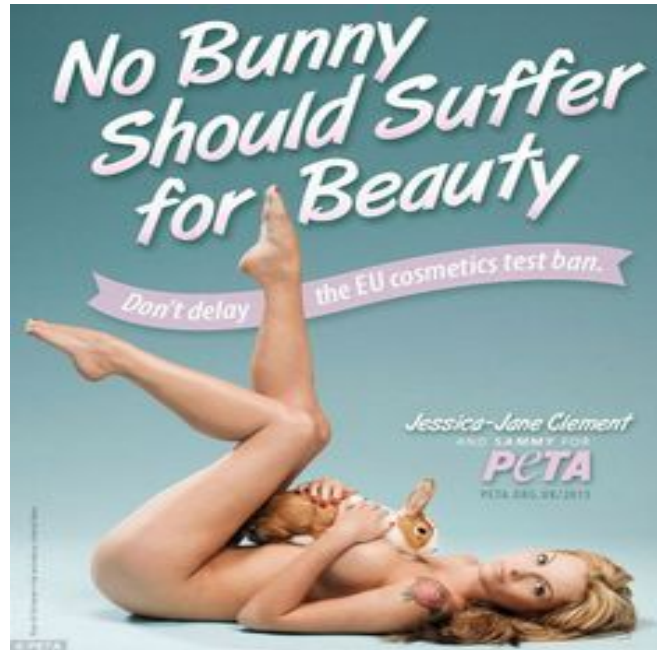
Above is an advertisement made by PETA where they painted a woman's naked body stating “Save the Earth: Go Vegan.” This suggests that by going vegan you can save the naked woman behind the paint, while also promoting saving the planet we’re sitting on rather than advertising our actual planet and the suffering it is going through. They don’t display the damage happening to our Earth, but a naked woman with the print of the world painted on her.

PETA has also had ads banned from playing when submitting commercials to the Super Bowl that have been considered “too racy.” In 2009 PETA produced a commercial “Veggie Love” trying to show the ‘irresistable’ powers of vegaterian sex life. In the commercial naked women strut around while licking vegetables and sexualizing the food as if they are sex toys, while providing breaks to state that vegaterians have a “better sex life.” This was deemed too racy to be commercialized, especially during the Super Bowl, and was banned from further playing. This advertisement was trying to shame peoples sex lives and allowed men to think that if they go vegetarian they could end up having sex with one of the women in the video or someone that resembles those women. It also shamed men in thinking that they were satisfying enough, decreasing confidence and stamina. Then, 7 years later in 2016 PETA tried producing another commerial during the Super Bowl “Last Longer.” This commercial shows off two sets of a woman and man having sex, one being meat eaters and one being vegan. Suggesting that men will last longer and please women more if they were to adapt to a vegan lifestyle and that if you eat meat you will not be able to satisfy your partner and leave alone. This also was banned for being too racy for the audience and was stopped from playing on TV programs.

Sex is used to shame or encourage people to better themselves. Many feel bad about themselves and began doubting their sexual pleasure and needs because of the demeaning manor PETA provided through production and advertisements. Sex is normal, and being used to shame someone or shame their body is unfair and cruel.

Language

Animal terminology is often used to discriminate women and make them feel less than they are. One major advertisement states to me how much they try to use language to make women feel as though they should adapt to the vegan lifestyle.



White blonde haired women that are attracted to darker skin toned men are typically known as “snow bunnies.” It is used to point out women who fit the role and label them as such. PETA used in advertisement this label in order to point out a woman that fits the description while naked saying “No Bunny Should Suffer.” Referring not only to the woman laying in the picture but the bunny sitting on her naked body. This is to appeal to those who are interested in the “snow bunny” label, the women who fit the description, and play as comedic relief to those who understand it. Even those who don’t understand the meaning see a woman laying naked and their eyes are automatically drawn to the picture just because a woman is naked.

Language is used to catch the attention of those who can laugh or understand their meaning. Then sex is used for the eye appeal and arousal to gain attention to their cause. Those it

is not right, they believe it is effective. No matter the controversy and uproars PETA has faced they have not stopped exploiting women in such a way.

Conclusion

The exploitation of animals does relate to the exploitation and sexualization of women. The exploitation and sexualization of women in advertising is used to discriminate, demean and shame people into adapting into a vegan lifestyle or gain the attention of a broader audience. Overall, the literature provides prime examples of how companies, teachers and the general terminology in language strips a woman of her femininity. Without the research of this topic, it would be hard to point out to others how wrong these things truly are. It affects more than just women. It affects all sociologist, feminist, nonhuman rights activist and anyone who respects women more than only slightly.

The literature provided still have little information based on the topic. From other research found outside of the articles mentioned, there are not many. There is a huge gap within the investigation of this topic, and this is what I plan to address in future research. Instead of the analyzing of advertisements more needs to do. Researching terminology of language more concerning women and animals, comparing and researching how women fought for their rights and how people fight for animals rights and investigating this topic more overall. This way more extensive research can be provided for others to come, filling the gap and providing more insight to sociologist, feminist and animal rights activist.

I plan on continuing this research in order to conduct an ethnography and in-depth interviews in order to continue providing more information on the topic for the public. The content analysis that I have conduct made me feel ashamed for how PETA’s advertising team sees women and how they feel as though their productions are okay. This research being done is so others can realize the problems within this production strategy, and hopefully influence

nonhuman rights organizations and begin advertising themselves in a way that serves their purpose while treating others with kindness and compassion. PETA has tweeted that we must “be kind to everyone,” yet still cannot find it in themselves to treat women and their bodies kindly or fairly in any manor. Instead, we are shamed for our bodies and choices and told to adapt or suffer.



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