



Cat People vs. Dog People

Connie's Weekly Newsletter

Ask people whether they are a dog person or cat person and chances are you will get a quick answer and lively discussion at your next party. For years you have heard statements that cat people are different than dog people, much of what has been said has been pure opinion with no basis in fact. You probably have heard that being a dog person is an example of masculinity and being a cat person is an example of femininity. While promoted in popular culture this particular belief is widely conflicted in the existing research. Is preferring dogs over cats like making a choice between Coke or Pepsi, Ford or Chevrolet, Nike or Reebok or is this preference a stronger personality predictor? In fact preference over pet ownership actually can tell us a lot about the person beyond masculine and feminine traits.

The nature of why people prefer cats or dogs is a topic that has been a subject of increased research in recent years. The largest study conducted was at the University of Texas using the Big Five Framework (a widely used and well-validated instrument) collecting information from 4,565 volunteers. The study was framed as a broad test of personality, not as a test of dog vs. cat people providing results that were more complete and accurate than any study conducted previously.

In some areas the results were expected and in others surprising. Those individuals who defined themselves as dog people are more extroverted and more relaxed and agreeable however they also tend to be more closed to new experiences and more closed minded overall than cat people. Cat people are more introverted, and more anxious generally however they are more open to new experiences and also more impulsive.

How do animal welfare organizations use this information to benefit themselves within their adoption programs, investor population, and retail sales? Another area of interest is in developing strategies to keep a pet in the home using the general personality traits of the dog vs cat owner.

Examine your marketing program in relation to adoptions. It may make sense to tailor your adoption strategies and advertisements to dog owners vs. cat owners, a cat person will be more likely to take a chance on a very different type of cat than what they already own while a dog person will most likely want what they already have.

While conducting adoption interviews your cat people will need increased access to quiet areas that are private than what you will need for dog people for both populations to be comfortable during an interview.

Building specific strategies around your investors (donors) and their personality types dependent on being either a cat or dog person could also lend it to being more successful with your fundraising. Building targeted donor pieces based on what type of animal was adopted would also make sense based on this research.

In your retail stores, taking the chance on unusual and different cat toys and items would make sense as our cat people are more likely to give them a try and stock your tried and true dog items for those less open dog owners.

Knowing that cat people tend to be more impulsive yet more open vs. dog people being more extroverted it would be interesting to build different strategies to try to keep pets in the home based on these personality differences.

Understanding what motivates a person to make a decision can improve the overall experience for both animals and people. Regardless of a person's companion animal preference, helping them make the decision and have an enjoyable experience is a big step to increasing adoption rates, donations and retail sales.

Did you know?

A White Label Petango Store is a turnkey online store that is branded specifically for your organization. The store will allow your supporters to purchase food and pet products in the comfort of their own homes.

The purchasing experience is streamlined so that your organization benefits from every sale. Consider the number of adopters, donors and supporters that you have who already purchase pet products and significant revenue can be generated for you with just a few keystrokes.

Sincerely,

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