

## Reaching Millennials: Implications for Advertisers of Competitive Sporting Events that Use Animals

Jackie Hill

Mallory Mobly

Billy R. McKim

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### Abstract

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### Keywords

Advertising, Animal Welfare, Rodeo, Social Cognitive Theory, Sports

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## Key Words

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## Literature Review

### Animal Welfare

Coleman (2008) suggested there are various levels of animal welfare. However, the literature is void of studies investigating Millennials' perceptions of animal welfare in competitive sporting events. A thorough understanding of animal welfare and how animals are treated in competitive sporting events could lead to improved marketing and advertising strategies for rodeo and non-rodeo events.

"Animal welfare is ensuring that an animal's physical state, mental state, and ability to fulfill natural needs and desires are considered and attended to" (Bousfield & Brown, 2010, p. 1). According to Coleman (2008), there is a widespread belief across all of the animal sectors in which there is data that animal welfare is important. Additionally, animal use has been the subject of many empirical studies. Research exists for animals used in research and food production, but little is known about the perceptions of animals used for competitive sporting events. For example, Driscoll (1992) concluded that pet owners considered animal research as less acceptable than those who did not own pets. Although previous studies have focused on various issues of animal welfare, none have solely described the public's perceptions of animals being used in rodeo events and how these perceptions may influence advertising, specifically image selection, in the rodeo industry.

According to the International Finance Corporation (2006), higher animal welfare standards are considered a prerequisite for enhancing business efficiency and profitability, satisfying internal markets, and meeting consumer expectations in regard to animal-related businesses. Animal welfare policies are implemented in the rodeo industry as recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association (Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association, 2000). Therefore, cowboys cannot achieve high scores without peak performance from their “animal athlete” counterparts (PRCA, n.d.). Additionally, the PRCA has an Animal Welfare Committee to review all PRCA animal-related policies and issues (PRCA, 2000).

### **Rodeo Advertising**

The literature lacks studies investigating rodeo advertising or consumer relationship-building. The advertising of rodeos is a potentially difficult task, and failure is possible. Advertising failure can be associated with one or more of the following reasons: 1) lack of interest in or understanding of customers; 2) improper blending of product, place, price, and promotion; 3) lack of understanding of or adjustment to the marketing environment (Perreault, Cannon, & McCarthy, 2009).

A thorough understanding of customers allows companies to more effectively communicate with them (Injazz & Popovich, 2003). Better communication will improve retention rates and, therefore, allow a company to build a relationship with its customers (Injazz & Popovich, 2003). Studying perceptions of animal use in competitive sporting events may allow companies and marketers to better target audiences.

In addition to understanding customers, marketers must consider the Four Ps: product, place, price, and promotion (Perreault et al., 2009). Marketers must produce products desired by consumers, make them available at a place that is easily accessible at an attractive price, and use promotion to communicate the advantages of the product over the competition (Yudelson, 1999). Marketers may use the Four Ps as a basic framework to market the entertainment derived from sports and to decrease the risk of business failure.

Lastly, to prevent business failure, marketers should strive to understand and adjust to the marketing environment. In recent years, the marketing environment has adapted to include members of the Millennial generation. According to Nielsen (2014), the Millennial generation makes up 24% of the U.S. population and is projected to make up 46% of the U.S. workforce in 2020 (Lynch, 2008). Millennials are technologically connected and will often endorse brands to which they can personally relate (Nielsen, 2014). Little research investigating Millennials' perceptions of animals in competitive sporting events exists. Therefore, there is a void in understanding the most effective strategies in the rodeo industry for targeting Millennials.

In addition to targeting the Millennial generation, marketers should also consider consumers' gender. Reportedly, gender plays a role in attitudes toward animal use. Mathews and Herzog (1997) studied the personalities of 99 undergraduates and reported that women generally had more positive attitudes toward animals than men did. Herzog (2007) conducted further research on gender differences in human-animal interactions and found in 31 cases that women were more sympathetic to animals than men. Women clearly represent a substantial grouping in the community with regard to attitudes about animal welfare and show more empathy to animals (Karniol, Gabay, Ochion, & Harari, 1998).

Moreover, women make up about 51% of the nearly four million people who attend PRCA-sponsored rodeos across the United States (PRCA, n.d.). Each year, more than 600 rodeos

are sanctioned by the PRCA (PRCA, n.d.), most of which are held in the Western United States (Daneshvary, Schwer, & Rickman, 1993). PRCA's broad audience includes several generations and, as a group, is demographically similar to NASCAR fans (PRCA, n.d.). As NASCAR has grown in popularity, its fan demographic has become diverse, and although formerly concentrated in the Southeastern United States, NASCAR has spread to different areas of the country (Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008). Although NASCAR fans are similar to and lend insight into rodeo fans, the regional differences should be considered.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this mixed method, multi-modal case study was to describe Millennial college students' perceptions of acceptable animal images in advertising for competitive sporting events. Developing an empirical understanding of Millennials' perception of animals in competitive sporting events will fill a void in literature and may lead to a more comprehensive understanding of rodeo perceptions. Moreover, an investigation of what Millennials consider to be acceptable images may lead to improvements in rodeo advertising.

**RQ1:** Does gender affect how Millennials perceive the use of animals in competitive sporting events?

**RO1.1:** Describe Millennials' perceptions of the use of animals in competitive sporting events by gender.

**RO1.2:** Compare Millennials' perceptions of the use of animals in competitive sporting events by gender.

**RQ2:** Do Millennials' perceptions of the use of animals differ among various competitive sporting events?

**RO2.1:** Describe Millennials' perceptions of the use of animals in rodeo events and non-rodeo events.

**RO2.2:** Compare Millennials' perceptions of use of animals in rodeo events and non-rodeo events.

## **Methods**

### **Participant Characteristics**

According to Nielsen (2014), the Millennial generation makes up 24% of the U.S. population. "And [although] many are still climbing the income ladder, this group's size and age range highlights its long-term purchase power" (Nielsen, 2014). For this reason, we chose the Millennial generation as the sample for this study. A sample of 177 participants was included in this study (51% male, 49% female) and was derived from intercept data collection. The target population for this study included students from Arizona State University, California State University-Fresno, Texas A&M University, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-San Diego, and University of Texas. A breakdown of the sample population by gender for each university is presented in Table 1. Male and female participants were similarly represented at each university.

Table 1

*Description of Subjects by Campus and Sex*

	Male		Female		Total*	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
University of Texas	26	29.0	24	27.6	50	28.4
Texas A&M University	20	22.2	18	20.7	38	21.5
Arizona State University	12	13.3	13	14.9	25	14.1
University of California, San Diego	10	11.1	12	13.8	22	12.4
California State University, Fresno	4	4.4	8	9.2	12	6.8
University of California, Berkeley	18	20.0	12	13.8	30	16.9
Total**	90	100.0	87	100.0	177	100.0

*Note.* \* Column totals are noted for each university. \*\*Row totals are noted for gender and total.

**Design**

We used a cross-sectional, case study design to describe Millennials' perceptions of the use and treatment of animals in competitive sporting events. Data were collected using a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative), multimodal (iPad video and paper questionnaire) approach. This study was based on two independent variables (gender and event type). The dependent variables for this study were 1) acceptability for animals to be used in sporting events, and 2) belief that animals are being treated kindly in sporting events.

**Instrumentation**

As part of a larger mixed-method, multimodal case study, this study focused on the quantitative strand. Data for this study were collected using paper questionnaires and electronic media (video clips). The parts of the questionnaire applicable to this study included the following sections:

**Section 1**

In the first section of the questionnaire, a series of 5-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) were used to measure participant reactions when shown a series of rodeo and non-rodeo video clips. Each video clip contained a different competitive sporting event involving an animal (e.g., bull riding, mutton bustin', and dock dogs). For each video clip, participants selected the option (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) that best described their beliefs toward the following statements:

1. I believe it is completely acceptable for animals to be used in this event.
2. Animals in this event are being treated kindly.

**Section 2**

The last section of the questionnaire consisted of six demographic questions asking each participant's classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student), age, zip code, gender, race, and annual family household income.

To estimate the reliability of the questionnaire, we pilot tested the instrument on the Texas A&M University campus ( $n = 48$ ). The questionnaire used in the pilot test was double-sided and consisted of the scales participants used to measure their reaction to the video clips (section one). The demographic section of the questionnaire (section two) was not added until after the pilot testing of the instrument because the questions were not considered to be summative items.

### **Validity and reliability.**

For this study, inter-rater agreement (reliability) was assessed using kappa ( $k$ ) statistics. To test the causal impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables, we created a questionnaire consisting of 20 items with corresponding 5-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Pilot test data were entered into Microsoft Excel and then imported into IBM® SPSS® Statistics version 21.0 for analysis. Based on the guidelines from Altman (1999), and adapted from Landis and Koch (1977), a  $k$  of 0.74 represented a substantial strength of agreement. Furthermore, because  $p < .001$ , the  $k$  coefficient is statistically significantly different from zero.

### **Video selection.**

Another component of the larger study involved a content analysis to select videos depicting the use of animals in competitive sporting events. Because of the number of competitive sporting events that include the use of animals, only widely recognized events by the general public were included in this study (e.g., bull riding, horse racing, and dog sledding). It should be noted that the events “calf roping” and “tie-down roping” are the same event and were both included in this study. This event’s name changed from “calf roping” to “tie-down roping” after a PRCA board decision in 2005 (C. Schonholtz, personal communication, May 5, 2015). This change was enacted to more accurately describe the event (C. Schonholtz, personal communication, May 5, 2015). After choosing the events, we searched publically accessible video clips on YouTube. We selected video clips that depicted each sporting event as it would normally happen, absent of any extreme circumstances. We were concerned that depictions of extreme circumstances of an event could potentially cause error in participant responses. Once the videos clips were selected, we used Adobe® Premier Pro CS6, a video editing software, to continuously stream the four to eight second video clips in one video. Each video clip demonstrated the basic concept of each sporting event under typical conditions.

As each clip played, the video number was displayed on the bottom of the iPad screen and corresponded to the video number on the questionnaire to prevent confusion. Following each video clip, a screen noting “Please answer the questions for video (number)” appeared for 15 seconds, allowing the participant time to respond to the two corresponding questions listed on the paper questionnaire. Participants who were familiar with iPads were allowed the opportunity to skip the 15-second pause. Therefore, in some cases the participant did not use the entire 15-second pause and proceeded to the next question.

In the pilot study, 16 video clips were tested. Based on feedback from the participants, we decided to reduce the number of video clips included in the questionnaire by dividing it into two series with 10 video clips each. Of the 10 clips, four remained constant in both video series for a basis of comparison. Based on the results of the pilot study data, we selected two clips that were perceived as most negative (bull riding and calf roping) and two clips that were perceived as most positive (dock dogs and pig racing). We randomly assigned the remaining videos to one of the

two series (see Table 2) with the assumption that the middle range events would have comparable reactions if the most extreme events do. To test this assumption, we used t-tests to compare the mean scores of four videos common to both series (bull riding, calf roping, dock dogs, and pig racing). A Bonferroni correction was used to adjust the alpha value for multiple comparisons (inflated alpha). Subsequently, there were no significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 2

<i>Video Series Breakdown</i>		
	Video Series 1	Video Series 2
Clip 1	Bull riding	Bull riding
Clip 2	Horse racing	Dog racing
Clip 3	Bareback riding	Saddle bronc
Clip 4	Dock dogs	Dock dogs
Clip 5	Mutton bustin'	Steer wrestling
Clip 6	Dog agility	Dog sledding
Clip 7	Calf roping	Calf roping
Clip 8	Barrel racing	Cross country eventing
Clip 9	Team roping	Tie-down roping
Clip 10	Pig racing	Pig racing

## Results

### Data Analyses

We analyzed the data using IBM® SPSS® Statistics version 21.0 and followed the multivariate analysis procedures noted by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Descriptive statistics (Min, Max,  $M$ , SD) were calculated for the dependent variables in RO1.1 and RO1.2. MANOVA, or multivariate analysis of variance, was used to address RO1.1 and RO1.2 by comparing the summated means (acceptability and treatment) by Millennial gender. For the MANOVA, the Hotelling's trace statistic ( $T^2$ ) was used because it is considered the most robust when comparing two equal groups (Field, 2009). Two paired-samples t-tests were used to address RO2.1 and RO2.2 by comparing the summated means (acceptability and treatment) by event type (rodeo events vs. non-rodeo events). Bonferroni correction was used to adjust the alpha value for multiple comparisons (inflated alpha). Subsequently, there were no significant differences ( $p < 0.03$ ). Cohen's  $d$  was calculated and reported as an indicator of effect size.

### Research Objective 1.1

The purpose of the first research objective was to describe how each gender perceived the use of animals in competitive sporting events. As depicted in Tables 3 and 4, both males and females displayed a somewhat neutral reaction to the events depicted in the study. The sport of cross country eventing was the most positively perceived event for female participants. For the questions based on acceptability and treatment, female participants responded more positively than male participants.



Results for individual events are listed in Table 3, by question. When interpreting mean scores, it is important to note the Likert value 3 is a neutral or I am indifferent score, whereas 1 was the most negative reaction and 5 was the most positive reaction.

Table 3

*Perceived Levels of Acceptability of Animal Use in Sports Events by Sex*

Event	Male				Female			
	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Bareback riding	1	5	2.23	1.14	1	5	2.38	1.22
Barrel racing	1	5	3.34	1.00	1	5	3.84	1.14
Bull riding	1	5	2.59	1.26	1	5	2.57	1.20
Dock dogs	1	5	3.78	1.11	1	5	3.86	1.13
Dog agility	1	5	3.74	1.07	1	5	3.62	1.31
Dog racing	1	5	3.39	1.02	1	5	3.37	1.30
Dog sledding	1	5	3.60	1.04	1	5	3.55	1.34
Eventing	1	5	3.57	1.01	1	5	4.05	1.10
Horse racing	1	5	3.45	1.12	1	5	3.39	1.24
Mutton bustin'	1	5	2.63	1.22	1	5	2.11	1.37
Pig racing	1	5	1.90	1.15	1	5	1.63	1.04
Saddle bronc	1	5	2.42	1.24	1	5	2.33	1.21
Steer wrestling	1	5	2.51	1.13	1	5	1.81	1.20
Team roping	1	5	1.76	1.04	1	5	1.71	1.16
Tie-down roping	1	5	1.94	1.17	1	5	1.82	1.15

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4

*Perceived Levels of Treatment of Animals Used in Sports Events by Sex*

Event	Male				Female			
	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Bareback riding	1	5	2.14	1.06	1	5	2.20	1.06
Barrel racing	1	5	3.26	1.09	1	5	3.73	1.20
Bull riding	1	5	2.29	1.18	1	5	2.25	1.16
Dock dogs	1	5	3.70	1.16	1	5	3.83	1.15
Dog agility	1	5	3.59	1.14	1	5	3.58	1.34
Dog racing	1	5	3.29	1.07	1	5	3.28	1.32
Dog sledding	1	5	3.39	1.08	1	5	3.48	1.36
Eventing	1	5	3.48	1.05	1	5	3.95	1.23
Horse racing	1	5	3.28	1.14	1	5	3.24	1.25
Mutton bustin'	1	5	2.48	1.12	1	5	1.97	1.24
Pig racing	1	5	1.74	0.97	1	4	1.43	0.74
Saddle bronc	1	5	2.19	1.11	1	5	2.22	1.11
Steer wrestling	1	5	2.25	1.11	1	5	1.64	0.97
Team roping	1	5	1.66	0.89	1	4	1.46	0.83
Tie-down roping	1	5	1.73	1.08	1	5	1.58	0.92

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

**Research Objective 1.2**

The purpose of RO1.2 was to compare the differences between each gender's perceptions of the use of animals in competitive sporting events. A MANOVA was used compare the summated means (acceptability and treatment) by gender. Box's test of equality of covariance was not significant ( $p = .146$ ), which was an indicator that the assumption of equality of covariance was violated. Results of the MANOVA indicated no significant effect of gender on individuals' perception of the use of animals in competitive sporting events:  $T^2 = 0.007$ ;  $F(2, 191) = 0.625$ ;  $p = 0.536$ ;  $1 - B = 0.154$ ).

**Research Objective 2.1**

The purpose of RO2.1 was to describe the perceptions of animals used in rodeo and non-rodeo events. As depicted in Tables 5 and 6, the sporting events were divided into two groups: 1) rodeo events, and 2) non-rodeo events. On average, participants perceived animals competing in rodeo events as less acceptable than animals competing in non-rodeo events (see Tables 5 and 6). Looking at the individual events, several points stand out. For example, barrel racing was the rodeo event most positively perceived, based on its acceptability and treatment ratings. Although the mean scores associated with acceptability ( $M = 3.65$ ;  $SD = 1.10$ ) and treatment ( $M = 3.54$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ) were considered neutral, when compared to the mean scores of other rodeo events, barrel racing was the most widely accepted. Additionally, team roping had an associated mean of 1.80 ( $SD = 1.15$ ) and was perceived by participants as least acceptable of all the rodeo events. Participants, on average, did not believe the animals involved in team roping were treated kindly, which was indicated by the event's mean score. Based on the mean scores for both questions, team roping was categorized as the event participants perceived most negatively.

When analyzing data for non-rodeo events, participants, on average, did not have particularly negative or positive reactions. However, it should be noted that when comparing the mean scores for treatment and acceptability of non-rodeo events to rodeo events, non-rodeo events were viewed positively. However, participants did not indicate that they considered non-rodeo events positive but rather more positive than rodeo events.

Table 5

*Perceived Levels of Acceptability of Animal Use in Sports Events*

Event	<i>n</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Rodeo Events (summated)</i>	196	1	5	2.45	1.07
Barrel racing	142	1	5	3.65	1.10
Mutton bustin'	143	1	5	2.47	1.38
Bull riding	194	1	5	2.63	1.23
Bareback riding	143	1	5	2.38	1.22
Saddle bronc	145	1	5	2.39	1.23
Steer wrestling	145	1	5	2.20	1.23
Tie-down roping	194	1	5	1.94	1.21
Team roping	143	1	5	1.80	1.15
<i>Non-Rodeo Events (summated)</i>	196	1	5	3.68	0.94
Dog agility	194	1	5	3.86	1.11
Dock dogs	144	1	5	3.80	1.08
Dog sledding	143	1	5	3.74	1.20
Eventing	145	1	5	3.59	1.19
Horse racing	143	1	5	3.45	1.16
Dog racing	145	1	5	3.38	1.15
Pig racing	194	1	5	3.40	1.23

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 6

*Perceived Levels of Treatment of Animals Used in Sports Events*

Event	<i>n</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Rodeo Events (summated)</i>	195	1	5	2.20	0.91
Barrel racing	142	1	5	3.54	1.17
Mutton bustin'	143	1	5	2.33	1.29
Bull riding	19	1	5	2.31	1.19
Bareback riding	143	1	5	2.24	1.09
Saddle bronc	145	1	5	2.21	1.11
Steer wrestling	145	1	5	1.99	1.11
Tie-down roping	194	1	5	1.69	1.03
Team roping	142	1	5	1.59	0.92
<i>Non-Rodeo Events (summated)</i>	196	1	5	3.55	0.95
Dog agility	194	1	5	3.81	1.16
Dock dogs	144	1	5	3.71	1.16
Dog sledding	142	1	5	3.65	1.25
Eventing	145	1	5	3.44	1.21
Horse racing	143	1	5	3.29	1.18
Dog racing	145	1	5	3.28	1.19
Pig racing	194	1	5	3.23	1.26

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Agree

### Research Objective 2.2

The purpose of RO2.2 was to compare perceptions of the use of animals in rodeo and non-rodeo events. Two paired-samples t-tests were used to compare the summated means (acceptability and treatment) by event type (rodeo events vs. non-rodeo events). Based on the results of the t- tests, individuals' perceptions of the acceptability for animals to be used in sporting events significantly differed ( $p < 0.03$ ) between rodeo events ( $M = 2.45$ ;  $SD = 1.07$ ) and non-rodeo events ( $M = 3.68$ ;  $SD = 0.94$ ),  $t = -21.98$ ;  $df = 196$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Further, Cohen's effect size value ( $d = 1.22$ ) indicated a large practical significance. Individuals' perceptions that animals are being treated kindly in sporting events significantly differed ( $p < 0.03$ ) between rodeo events ( $M = 2.20$ ;  $SD = 0.91$ ) and non-rodeo events ( $M = 3.55$ ;  $SD = 0.95$ ),  $t = -25.45$ ;  $df = 195$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Further, Cohen's effect size value ( $d = 1.45$ ) suggested a large practical significance.

## Discussion

### Research Objectives 1.1 and 1.2

According to Mathews and Herzog (1997), a person's gender reportedly influences how he or she perceives animal use. Studies have found that women are generally more sympathetic to the use of animals (Mathews & Herzog, 1997) and the treatment of animals (Herzog, 2007) than men. However, in this study, Millennials' gender did not significantly influence how participants perceived each competitive sporting event. Each gender's mean scores for acceptability and treatment indicated an indifferent attitude for each sporting event. It is not until the sample is analyzed as a whole that significant differences existed. Practitioners should make note of the

findings of this study; particularly, gender does not always influence Millennials' perceptions of animal use. Ultimately, marketing strategies should be focused on the sporting event, whether it be a rodeo or non-rodeo event.

### **Research Objectives 2.1 and 2.2**

For this study, barrel racing was the rodeo event in which study participants perceived most positively. Conversely, rodeo events that involved calves, including steer wrestling, tie-down roping, and team roping, were perceived most negatively. Practitioners would be well served to not solely focus on these events that involve calves in their marketing strategies. Objectionable events may entail negative consequences for advertisers because the public may not be familiar with the sport being advertised.

### **Recommendations**

Future researchers may gain a better understanding of animal welfare in competitive sporting events by collecting qualitative data on this topic. Qualitative insight would provide researchers and industry professionals an opportunity to better understand why the sample population in this study reacted to the videos the way they did. Gaining insight as to why the sample perceived some events more negatively than others would assist marketers in targeting messages to the appropriate audiences. Furthermore, additional research on video images could lead to a better understanding of the best still images to use in multi-media advertisements.

As previously mentioned in this study, marketers should consider the Four *Ps* (Perreault et al., 2009) when communicating their product to consumers. For marketers to make the best decision regarding their product, place, price, and promotion, they must first have a basic understanding of their customers and/or target audience. Referring to the characteristics of advertising failure stated by Perreault et al. (2009), this study has identified the importance of marketers understanding their customers. A thorough understanding of customers and the market environment will allow marketers to blend rodeo advertising with the proper product, place, price, and promotion.

Marketers should advise rodeo organizations on which video images are best for advertising purposes. In addition, marketers should assist rodeo organizations in choosing the least negative image for each rodeo event. For example, if a rodeo organization chooses to advertise a roping event, Millennials would likely perceive roping events as the least acceptable, based on the results of this study. Similarly, Millennials would likely not perceive using animals in roping events as kind treatment of animals. The results of this study suggest participants perceived roping events as the least acceptable. Participants also perceived that the animals used in roping events were not being treated kindly. Therefore, if rodeos use video images of the rope being pulled tightly on the calf, it may leave consumers with a negative perception of the event. Marketers may use these findings to provide more value to their rodeo clients by suggesting video images that will provide the most positive consumer reaction. The results of this study should be used to expand the limited research for competitive sports involving animals and to develop visual rhetoric frameworks for the rodeo industry.

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### **About the Authors**

Jackie Hill's research is focused on media marketing and targeted communications.

Mallory Mobly's research is focused on marketing livestock shows and rodeos. Her experience in the agricultural industry has driven her to pursue a career in agricultural marketing.

Billy McKim's research is focused on research design and methods, audience analysis, and engagement.