

SOURCE INFORMATION FORM

EXAMPLE 1: EMPIRICAL STUDY IN IMRAD FORMA

1. **Bibliographic Citation** in APA Format:

Acikalin, M. Y., Watson, K. K., Fitzsimons, G. J., & Platt, M. L. (2018). Rhesus Macaques Form Preferences for Brand Logos Through Sex and Social Status Based Advertising. *PLOS ONE*, 13(2). doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0193055

2. **Who?** Describe the authors' fields and qualifications.

Business Schools (Acikalin, Fitzsimons, Pratt); Cognitive Science (Watson); Neuroscience; Psychology (Pratt)

3. **What?** Describe what the authors want to find out. What analytical questions or hypotheses do they propose?

Advertising appeals often invoke sexuality and status as ways to make their products appealing. To what degree does this follow from "ancestral biological mechanisms"?

4. **Why?** Motive. Why are they doing this? Why should we care?

Sex sells, but, "the origins of the effectiveness of sex and status in advertising remain a puzzle." Some argue that this involves the invocation of "cultural norms," but there haven't been studies of this from an evolutionary perspective.

5. **How?** What form does the investigation take? Scientific experiments? Close readings of texts? Comparison to other examples?

The scientists showed monkeys "brand logos repeatedly paired with images of macaque genitals and high status monkeys" to see if their reactions would parallel humans'.

6. **Thesis/Results/Findings/Position.** Restate the position that the authors take, the thesis or theses and major claims that they argue; or the results of their experiments.

Monkeys do "form preferences for brand logos repeatedly paired with images of macaque genitals and high status monkeys" and this persists even when "choosing them provided no tangible rewards." The "results endorse the hypothesis that the power of sex and status in advertising emerges from the spontaneous engagement of shared, ancestral neural circuits that prioritize information useful for navigating the social environment.

7. **So what?** What do the authors think is the larger significance of their findings?

Although "socialization and culturally-specific sex roles [affect] behavior," the results suggest "that in humans there is likely a strong biological drive"—an evolutionary response—that explains "responses elicited by appeals to sex and status, which may be amplified or muted by social experience." "Sex sells" is not just a cultural response; it's also fundamental biology.

8. **Limitations:** What limitations, if any, to the authors ascribe to their findings?

The researchers could not account for menstrual cycling of the females during the assessment because it was too irregular and equivocal, but "previous results suggests that ... the amount of redness in the image, ... a signal of estrous in rhesus macaques," would make no difference. The experiments used "arbitrary brand logos, without diving deeper into ... 'brand preferences'" that depend on many complex factors in humans. Obviously, "there are limitations ... to how much we can generalize these results to human behavior, [but] the behavioral nuances and neural mechanisms underlying simple conditioning ... are known to be virtually identical." The researchers conclude that their "fundamental finding that social images are sufficient to induce approach behavior towards brand logos in monkeys therefore has important implications for understanding the extent to which human responses to sex in advertising could be driven by similar associations."

9. **Your Notes.** Perhaps the evolutionary factor explains why we instinctively think that sex in advertising is effective even if the research is sometimes equivocal. On the other hand, this experiment combined sexual appeals with indications of higher status; does sex in advertising always make that correlation? What if the appeal is simply titillation?