

Boomerang pet survey highlights role of pets within families

Boomerang Africa, channel and home of popular animal characters like Tom and Jerry, Scooby-Doo and Bugs Bunny, has released the results of a new study looking at the role pets and animals play in family life.



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Conducted in six countries (South Africa, France, Italy, Sweden, Turkey and the UK), the study revealed that locally, 72% of South African families laugh at least once a day because of something their pet does, citing kissing, licking or chasing someone or something, hiding and jumping out at someone and human-like behaviour as some of the most common causes of laughter. The most common reasons parents cited for getting a family pet was to teach their children about responsibility.

The survey revealed that kids in South Africa do the most pet-related chores compared to other countries: they said they were the most likely to play with, but also clean up after and exercise, their pets. Added to this, 41% of parents claimed their pet had brought the family together, 44% said their pet reduced stress and 25% felt their pet had made family members more caring and considerate. An amazing 67% of children consider their pets to be their best friend. Furthermore, with a whopping 89%, the most common family pets proved to be dogs followed by cats, fish and birds across urban and rural South Africa.

Therapeutic for children

Dogs, cats, and “pocket pets” like ferrets, birds, or lizards are therapeutic for children who struggle with any disability: physical, behavioural and developmental. Most people are familiar with therapy dogs. Dogs are regularly cited as having a natural affinity with humans and have been known to reduce depression and anxiety. Claire Voges, social worker and animal-assisted practitioner at Pawz and Play says, “The benefits of interacting with a companion animal, especially a dog have been well researched. What is fascinating is that the health benefits are reciprocal – both the dog and the human after interacting, have increased levels of dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin – these are the happy chemicals that are released in the brain.”

Looking specifically at the impact of on-screen animals, more than half of South African parents (59%) said they let their children watch TV shows and videos featuring animals because they educate about nature, with almost half also stating that it's because animals make their children laugh and smile. Educating about emotions (41%) and because animal programming tends to be about safer topics (21%) were also referenced among the most common reasons.

Digital documenting of one's pets has become incredibly common too, with 80% of parents and kids admitting they take photos or videos of their pet at least once a week – emulating the global phenomenon achieved by hilarious animal videos online, as well as a raft of “famous” animal Instagramers that now exist on the social media platform.

Strategic use of animals

Thanks to this study, Boomerang is now able to tailor their experiences and shows to reflect the results seen, in order to fully gauge families across Africa. The Boomerang *Mini Zoo* and the *Safari Comedy Show* are two examples of how Boomerang aims to attract and win the hearts of their consumers. Through the strategic use of animals, comedic humour and locally selected talent, the channel is slowly giving their audience what they want to see through a series of relevant, local experiences on and off the screen.

Jaime Ondarza, senior vice president Southern Europe and Africa says: “This study is a sweet little reminder that it's the small things that can really bring families together through laughter and happiness. We are really proud to say that we are the TV incarnation of just that – a channel where families can sit together, smile, laugh and learn whilst having fun!”

In addition, Ondarza states that “At Boomerang, we constantly strive to reinforce the love that families have with our characters (and their cousins) on and off screen. 2017 has been a great year so far; with our animal pet focus approach, we have successfully rolled out our nation-wide Boomerang Mini Mobile Zoo activation, followed by the channels unique, and locally produced series of shorts using Tumi Morake and Eric Omundi as the main animal voices behind the *Safari Comedy Show*.”

The *Safari Comedy Show*, launching on 17 July 2017, is a series of locally produced shorts and one of Boomerang's first local productions to make use of familiar, locally relevant talent to voiceover clips of some of Africa's most hilarious animals. For more on Boomerang, click [here](#).

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