Animals as Metaphors

A Framework to Bridge Animals, Objects, and Services

HIGHLIGHT: People perceive Financial Services as Turtle, Fish, and Lizard. How can we improve the service to become as friendly as a dog?

A Design Research Tool Created By Isaac Hsu

Summary

The purpose of the metaphorical framework is to help designers identify problems and design opportunities after understanding people's perceptions. Once we identified (i) where animals and products (goods and services) have been plotted, (ii) identify the overlapping of animals and products (goods and services), in-depth interviews with participants are required. This will help us to gain a thorough understanding of their perceptions of animals and product (goods and services), especially when we focus on the overlaps/connections between two different categories.

Metaphor

Creating metaphors allows us to make sense of reality, illustrate how we think about things, and pose problems we later try to solve, according to Donald Schön (p. 137, 1979). The field of linguistics suggests that "metaphor is a pervasive feature of language. We use metaphors to talk about the world in both familiar and innovative ways, and in contexts ranging from everyday conversation to literature and scientific theorizing"

2x2 Metaphorical Map

Domestic Animals

1. Dog
2. Cat
3. Bird
4. Horse
5. Fish
6. Rabbit
7. Turtles
8. Poutlary(Chicken, Turkey, Duck, etc)
9. Hamster
10. Guinea Pig
11. Lizard
12. Snake

High

Level of Interaction

Low

Less   Level of Relationship   More

Products

(Goods or Services)

High

Level of Interaction

Low

Less   Level of Relationship   More

The categories have to be separated into different pages: One category for one page that contains a list with a map beside (see image below). First, it should contain the list of 12 animals and a map. Once we are clear about the product (good or services) (Figure 23) that we want to assess, we can go ahead and start creating the following page of the 2 x 2 matrix survey/exercise.

Adapting the Tool

Inanimate Objects

1. Laptops
2. Smart phones
3. TV
4. Car
5. Air conditioner
6. Dishwasher
7. Clothes washer
8. Coffee
9. Books
10. Newspaper

High

Low

Level of Interaction

Less   Level of Relationship   More
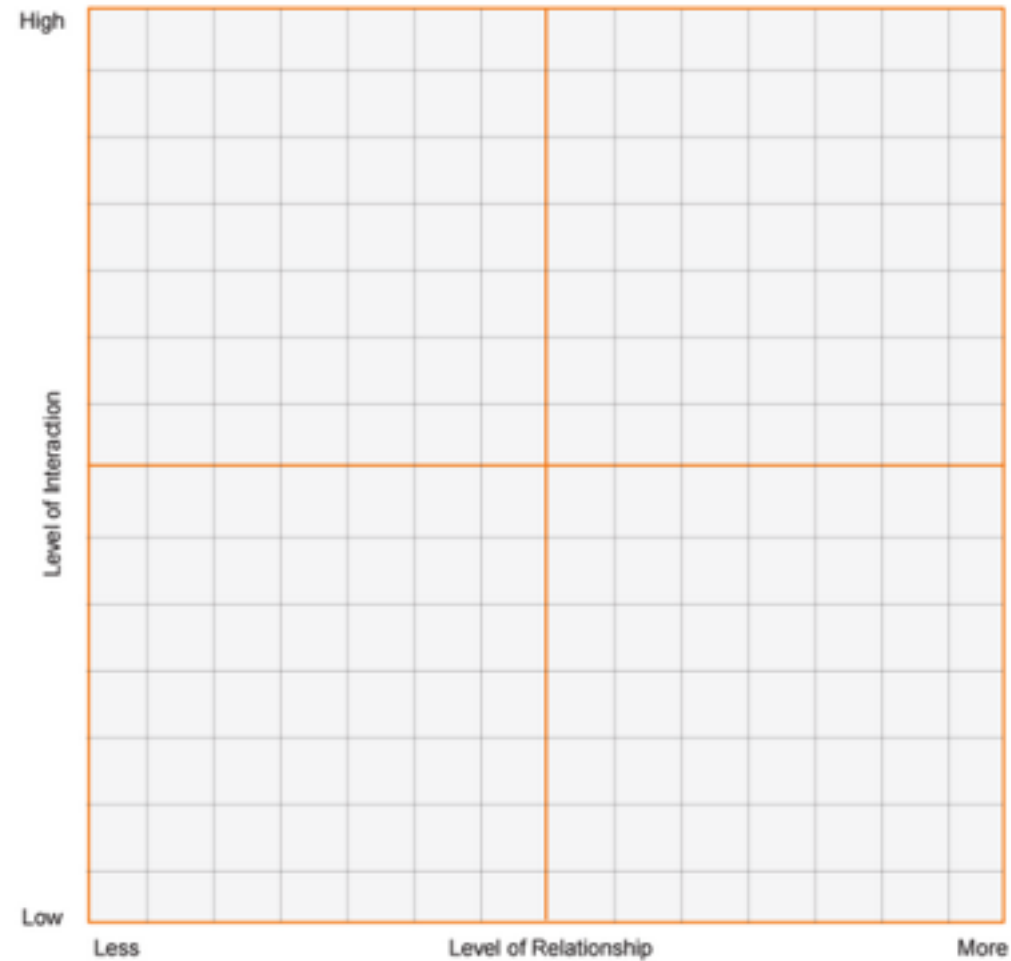
Services

1. Barbershop
2. Hospital
3. Online Shopping
4. Finical Service
5. Tax Service
6. Pet Care Services
7. Bridal Services
8. Moving Service
9. Dry Cleaning
10. Catering Services

High

Low

Level of Interaction

Less   Level of Relationship   More
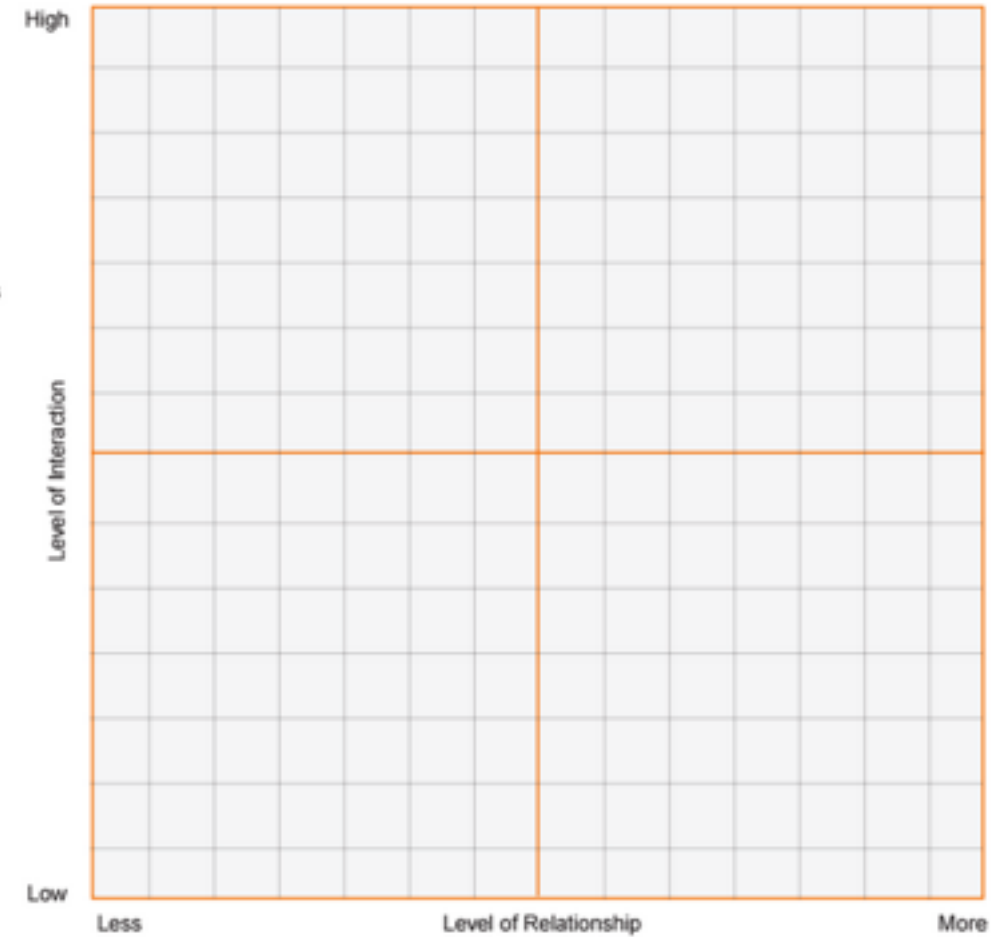
The purpose of choosing the top twelve animals and top ten objects/service is to ensure that the participants have a generalized and familiar experience or knowledge to which to refer while plotting their choices. Hence, the outcome of the perceptual map will be more relevant and significant. For instance, abalone would be more difficult for general participants to make decisions about since less it is a less familiar object.

What I discovered

After collecting results from 50 participants, people unconsciously overlap/plot animals, services, and objects on same coordinates while considering the level of interaction and relationship,

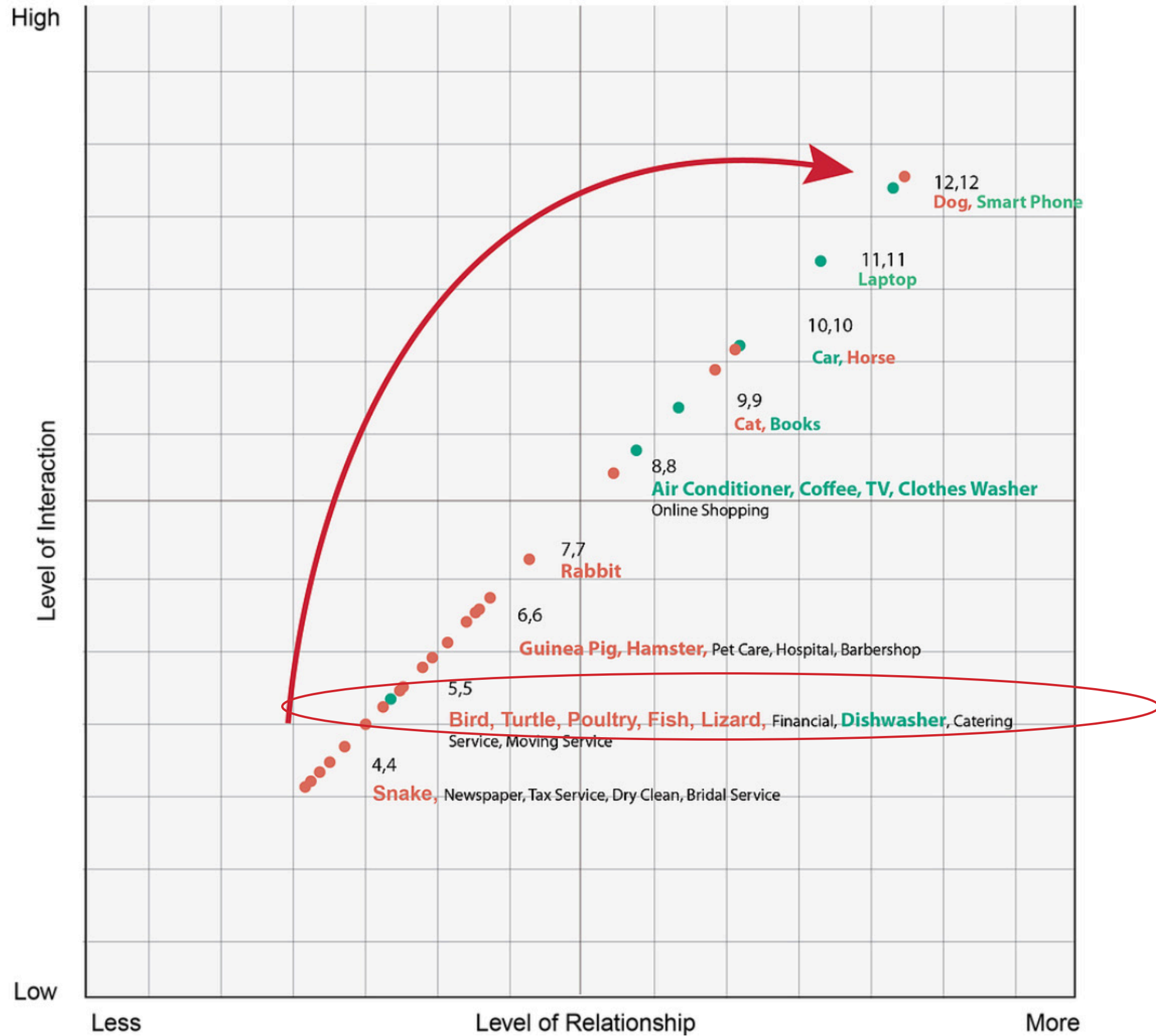| Animals	as	Product (Goods or Services)
Dog		Smart Phone
(Alone but very close to dog)		Laptop
Horse		Car
Cat		Book
(Alone and center of the map)		Air Conditioner, Coffee, TV, Clothes washer, Online Shopping
Rabbit		(Alone and center of the map)
Guinea Pig, Hamster		Pet Care, Hospital, Barbershop
Bird, Turtle, Fish, Lizard, Poutlary		Financial Service, Catering Service, Moving Service
Snake		Tax Service, Dry Clean, Bridal Service, Newspaper

How can service designers take advantage of it?

The table in previous page indicates people perceive Financial Services as Turtle, Fish, and Lizards. According to my interviews, participants shared their bad experiences with financial services and they also unintentionally drew connections in the 2x2 survey/exercise.

Animals	Attributes
Dog	Loyalty, Friendly, Compassion, Unconditional love, Playful
Cat	Friendly, Curious, Quiet, Independent, calm
Bird	Playful, Friendly, Freedom, Active
Horse	Speed, Active, Strong, Freedom
Fish	Responsive, flexible, active, slow
Rabbit	Independent, Active, Calm, Bored
Turtle	Slow, patient, Independent, Bored
chicken	Independent, Active,
Hamster	Cute, Smoothing
Guinea Pig	Cute, Smoothing
Lizard	Responsive, Cold blooded, Cunning

The table illustrates the common perception of pets shared by my participants and attributes identified by the National Geographic Animal Encyclopedia: 2,500 Animals with Photos, Maps, and More! (2012). It is still a valuable insight for anyone to reference once they have created their own version of 2 x 2 metaphorical map. However, the perceptions of animals might be slightly different depending on the project, timing and location of the research.

Take away

Level of Interaction — axis (High / Low)

Level of Relationship — axis (Less / More)

12,12
Dog, **Smart Phone**

11,11
Laptop

10,10
Car, **Horse**

9,9
Cat, Books

8,8
Air Conditioner, Coffee, TV, Clothes Washer
Online Shopping

7,7
Rabbit

6,6
Guinea Pig, Hamster, Pet Care, Hospital, Barbershop

5,5
Bird, Turtle, Poultry, Fish, Lizard, Financial, **Dishwasher,** Catering
Service, Moving Service

4,4
Snake, Newspaper, Tax Service, Dry Clean, Bridal Service

Financial services should learn from dogs to become Loyalty, friendly, compassion, unconditional love, and playfulness

Improve financial services from turtle-like, lizard-like to Dog-like