

The Application of Digital Marketing in the Operation and Development of Pet Stores in China

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Abstract:

Pet stores have both opportunities and challenges as a result of the notable rise of the pet sector in China in recent years. Pet stores are increasingly using digital marketing techniques to successfully navigate this changing environment. The development and functioning of pet stores in China heavily depend on the use and impact of internet marketing. Pet stores can obtain a competitive edge in a highly competitive industry by studying digital marketing methods that will improve their brand awareness, customer engagement, sales growth, and operational efficiency. This study examines the use of digital marketing and its effects on the growth and operation of pet stores in China, analyzing and summarizing the body of prior research in the field. It studies at different consumer traits, profitability tactics, and operational methods. The effectiveness of several digital marketing techniques, such as content, display, search, and social media marketing, is also examined in this article. The study found that pet stores can improve their operational efficiency and brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales by implementing digital marketing methods. Social media marketing, search marketing, display marketing, and content marketing all demonstrate high effectiveness in achieving business objectives. All things considered, internet marketing gives pet stores the vital resources and techniques they need to overcome market obstacles.

Keywords: Digital marketing; pet store; China.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's pet industry has seen remarkable growth. China's pet economy reached an industry scale of 493.6 billion yuan in 2022, up 25.2% from the previous year [1]. This burgeoning market presents numerous opportunities for pet stores to thrive, but it also introduces unique challenges that require innovative strategies to overcome. Using internet marketing is one of the best strategies pet stores can use to negotiate this challenging environment. In China, as digital transformation permeates many industries, pet stores are utilizing digital tools to improve their operational effectiveness, interact with customers, and increase revenue.

The rise of the internet and mobile technology has fundamentally changed consumer behavior in China. With more than a billion internet users and a high smartphone adoption rate, Chinese customers are rapidly purchasing for pet-related goods and services on online platforms [2]. Pet stores face both an opportunity and a challenge as a result of this change. On the one hand, it provides access

to a sizable national customer base through a vast internet marketplace. On the other hand, it requires pet stores to adopt advanced digital marketing method to stand out in a crowded and competitive market.

Digital marketing encompasses a wide range of tactics and tools designed to reach and engage consumers through digital channels. For pet stores in China, this can include social media marketing, search marketing, display advertising, and content marketing, among others. Each of these strategies offers unique benefits and can meet the specific needs and goals of a pet store.

This research examines and summarizes the current literature to investigate the use and influence of digital marketing in the operation and growth of pet businesses in China. It begins by examining the different operational and profitable models of pet stores and their functions. It then discusses the role of digital marketing in increasing brand awareness, enhancing customer engagement, driving sales growth, and improving operational efficiency. Finally, it delves into specific digital marketing strategies that pet stores can implement to achieve their business objectives.

2. Analysis of Pet Store Operations and Profitability Models

2.1 Operational Models

In China, pet stores follow a variety of business models, each with its own set of benefits and challenges. The most common models include brick-and-mortar stores, online stores, and hybrid models that combine both physical and digital presence.

2.1.1 Brick-and-mortar stores

It describes a conventional street-side business that interacts directly with consumers to provide goods and services in an office or store space that it either owns or rents [3]. These stores frequently foster close relationships with the local community and provide services like veterinary care and grooming that need for physical presence. But in contrast to internet stores, they have higher overhead expenses and a smaller customer base.

2.1.2 Online stores

An online store is a website or app for electronic commerce where customers may view a catalog of goods and services and make electronic purchases [4]. Online stores frequently have cheaper operating expenses and can provide a wider selection of items. The two biggest obstacles are the intense competition and the requirement for efficient digital marketing techniques to increase website traffic and revenue.

2.1.3 Hybrid models

In the context of a pet store, a hybrid model blends traditional business techniques with data-driven strategies [5]. It uses physical places to provide services and experiences while utilizing them for product sales and client contact. This tactic offers a smooth buying experience that might boost loyalty from clients and give flexibility. It nevertheless necessitates a careful combining of online and offline operations.

2.2 Profitability Strategies

Pet businesses make most of their money from selling products and services, but they may also use a variety of tactics, including traditional and digital marketing techniques, to increase their profitability.

2.2.1 Promotional activities

Special sales events such as “618”, “Double 11”, and anniversaries can significantly boost product sales. These occasions can attract a large number of consumers seeking discounts and exclusive deals.

2.2.2 Bundled promotions

Bundled promotions refer to a marketing approach in which organizations offer multiple goods or services as a single, integrated unit [6]. Providing bundled discounts on complementary products can raise average order values and motivate buyers to buy more goods.

2.2.3 Grooming services

Offering pet grooming services can draw in repeat consumers who frequent the store. To reach a larger audience, these services could be promoted through digital platforms.

2.2.4 Veterinary care

In-store veterinarian services increase client loyalty in addition to bringing in more money. The advantages of routine veterinarian care can be better communicated to pet owners with the aid of digital marketing.

2.2.5 Training classes

Providing classes on pet training can be a big incentive for new pet owners. These classes are designed for both pet owners and their pets. For pets, it can provide basic obedience training, such as teaching pets commands of sit, stay, come, and heel. For pet owners, it can provide handling and care techniques, such as proper grooming, feeding, and health care for their pets. To quickly fill classes and reach a larger audience, these classes could be promoted online.

2.3 Consumer Characteristics

To create marketing techniques that work, it is essential to understand the traits of pet store customers. Key demographics include age, gender, income level, education level, and lifestyle.

2.3.1 Age

Pet owners in China span all age categories, with over 47% of them being in the 25–34 age bracket [7]. It is the largest group of pet owners [7]. It demonstrates that the pet sector is mostly driven by young individuals. This age group’s notable presence may be explained by the fact that they are probably more financially secure, tech aware, and willing to spend money on pet-related goods and services.

2.3.2 Gender

Although both sexes keep pets, women make up 61.3% of pet owners [8]. Women are a main target for marketing initiatives since they are more likely to purchase pet items and participate in pet care activities.

2.3.3 Income level

People in middle-class demographics account for 59% of pet owners [7]. Higher income levels are frequently asso-

ciated with higher pet expenditure levels, including higher-end goods and services.

2.3.4 Education level

In 2021, around 80% of Chinese pet owners had bachelor's degrees or more [7]. Consumers with higher levels of knowledge are more likely to look for information and to respond favorably to digital marketing initiatives that offer informative and helpful content on pet care.

2.3.5 Lifestyle

Online platforms are more popular among busy urban customers since they are convenient [9]. In contrast, suburban and rural consumers might prefer localized services [9]. Therefore, marketing strategies should focus on highlighting the ease and accessibility of online shopping and services.

3. Role and Impact of Digital Marketing

Pet stores may improve and expand their online brand presence with the aid of digital marketing. Pet stores can reach a larger audience and establish a strong brand identity that appeals to customers by using social media, search engines, and display advertisements.

3.1 Enhancing Customer Engagement

Engaging with clients online is essential to retaining current customers and drawing in potential customers. Pet stores can build a community around their business by interacting with customers directly on social media sites. Pet stores can maintain informed and engaged customers by providing helpful information like training videos, success stories, and pet care advice. Quickly answering queries and remarks from customers fosters confidence and demonstrates the store's appreciation for its customers. Furthermore, organizing online events, contests, and gifts may create a feeling of community, encouraging customers to engage with the company.

3.2 Driving Sales and Profits Growth

Efficient digital marketing strategies offer an opportunity to enhance sales and profitability by increasing traffic to both online and offline stores. Sales may be greatly increased by using individualized offers, promotional campaigns, and targeted advertising.

3.3 Improving Efficiency of Operation through Data-driven System

Pet stores may collect consumer feedback, evaluate the success of their plans, and make real-time adjustments to their approaches by utilizing data-driven digital market-

ing. As a result, operations become more effective and better match consumer demand.

4. Application Strategy of Digital Marketing in Pet Store Operation

4.1 Social Media Marketing

Pet businesses can communicate with consumers, share content, and advertise goods and services using social media marketing. Pet stores may improve their connections with potential clients by using WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok.

4.1.1 WeChat

Tencent created the instant messaging, social networking, and mobile payment app known as WeChat in Chinese [10]. WeChat is a widely used social networking platform in China, with a vast user base. WeChat Official Accounts are a useful tool for pet stores to provide material about pet care, product suggestions, promotions, and other topics to draw in customers. For instance, consistently sharing pet care tips, pet stories, and the newest product discounts can effectively boost user engagement. Furthermore, an online store can be established using WeChat Mini Programs, allowing users to conveniently buy pet supplies within WeChat.

4.1.2 Weibo

Chinese microblogging site Weibo, one of the largest social media platforms in China, was introduced by Sina Corporation on August 14, 2009 [11]. Weibo is a great place for pet stores to share news about new products, client comments, and interesting facts about pets because of its rapid information transmission and broad audience. Brand awareness may be quickly increased by, for example, distributing adorable pet videos and images or working with well-known pet bloggers on product evaluations and promotions.

4.1.3 TikTok

Short videos may be created, shared, and found on the social media site TikTok [12]. Pet stores can utilize captivating TikTok videos to visually represent their goods and services. To get the attention and shares of more pet supporters, some examples include making videos that illustrate how to use particular items, transforming pets after using them, or posting daily pet stories and maintenance advice.

4.2 Search Marketing

Paid search advertising (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO) are two components of search marketing

that work effectively to raise a pet store's online exposure and drive visitors to its website.

4.2.1 Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO makes the content easier for search engines to interpret, helps people locate the website and decide whether or not to visit it using a search engine [13]. For instance, utilizing pet-related keywords on the website and blog of the pet stores, such best cat food or dog grooming tips, might improve search engine relevancy. High-quality original content, improved website speed, and a greater mobile usability can further enhance SEO effectiveness.

4.2.2 Paid Search Advertising (SEM)

SEM is a digital marketing strategy that improves a website's exposure in search engine results pages (SERPs) [13]. Purchasing keyword ads allows pet stores to display advertisements prominently in search results, increasing brand visibility and click-through rates. For example, the pet store's advertisement may show up at the top of search results when people look for pet food or pet supplies, enticing them to visit the website. Using search engine advertisement targeting features, advertisements can be shown to specific geographic locations, age groups, or interest groups, improving advertisement effectiveness.

4.3 Display Marketing

Display advertising involves placing visually appealing advertisements on relevant websites and applications to reach a targeted audience.

4.3.1 Display advertisements

Online advertisements known as display ads include text, images, and a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that directs viewers to a website where they may purchase or find out more information about things [14]. Pet-related websites, forums, and applications may allow pet businesses to run display advertisements. Users who are interested in pets may click and follow advertisements on pet-related forums, pet care websites, and pet goods purchasing sites, for instance. With captivating visual effects and engaging information, display advertising may take many different forms, such as picture, video, and interactive ads, to grab viewers' attention and encourage interaction.

4.3.2 Remarketing advertisements

Using remarketing advertisements, it can target audiences that have already visited the website or interacted with the social media content [15]. For example, customers are more likely to make a purchase when they see the pet store's advertisements again when they use apps or ex-

plore other websites.

4.4 Content Marketing

Producing informative content, such blogs, videos, and articles, to attract consumers' interest, foster a sense of trust, and increase traffic to the pet store's website or physical location.

4.4.1 Blogs

Pet stores can create blogs on their websites and post pet-related content on a regular basis, including reviews of pet foods, care manuals, and training advice. Visitors that appreciate reading and studying may be drawn to the website as a result. Providing useful information fosters user confidence and increases product sales.

4.4.2 Video content

To draw in and keep consumers, consider making and sharing films regarding product usage and pet care. Creating lesson videos for pet grooming, product reviews, and training, for instance, and posting them on social media or video platforms, may draw viewers and encourage sharing.

4.4.3 E-books and guides

Making pet care e-books or manuals and making them available for free download as a useful marketing strategy. Pet stores can gather prospective customers' contact information for future marketing campaigns, for example, by creating a Pet Beginner's Guide that outlines fundamental knowledge and precautions for pet care and requests contact information from users in order to download.

5. Conclusion

Digital marketing has shown to be an effective strategy for utilizing possibilities and solving market difficulties in China's pet store business. According to this research, pet stores could greatly increase brand awareness, boost consumer engagement, drive sales growth, and improve operational efficiency by implementing advanced digital marketing methods. Pet stores may reach a wider audience and customize their marketing to particular consumer interests by using social media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok in combination with search, display, and content marketing.

The study shows that pet stores in China may achieve profitable and sustainable development via the use of digital marketing tactics. Pet stores may give their consumers more individualized and engaging experiences through social media marketing, which will increase customer loyalty and repeat business. While display marketing

helps draw in a larger audience with eye-catching advertisements, search marketing makes establishments readily findable to prospective customers actively looking for pet products and services. Additionally, content marketing increases consumer happiness and engagement by establishing authority and trust by giving pet owners useful information.

This study may help managers and owners of pet stores strategically use digital marketing to overcome obstacles in the industry. Businesses may maximize their marketing efforts, allocate resources more effectively, and ultimately achieve better business outcomes with the aid of the insights gathered from this study. Furthermore, this study advances the knowledge of digital marketing's function in the retail sector, especially in specialized pet stores.

However, this study does have many shortcomings. The digital world is changing quickly, so techniques that work today may fail tomorrow. Moreover, the results may not be as applicable to other economies with distinct consumer habits and digital marketing dynamics due to the study's exclusive emphasis on China. Future studies should look into how digital marketing affects pet store performance over the long run and how new technologies like big data analytics and artificial intelligence might improve digital marketing campaigns. In addition, comparative research conducted in various cultural and economic situations may offer a more thorough comprehension of the worldwide influence of internet marketing on the pet store sector.

In conclusion, pet businesses in China may benefit greatly from digital marketing; nevertheless, it is imperative that they remain flexible in response to the ever-evolving digital landscape and shifting consumer tastes. Pet stores can continue development and profitability while maintaining a competitive advantage by keeping up with the newest trends and technology.

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