WEB BASED MARKETING PLAN FOR THE POLISHED PET BOARDING KENNEL IN SANTA MARIA, CA

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The great recession in the United States has caused consumers to change their spending habits. They are spending less while shopping more (McCully 2011). The recession comes at a time when consumers had already become accustomed to increasing levels of service from sellers of goods and services as businesses incorporate new technologies to attract customers and improve cost efficiencies. Customers are now accustomed to and expect price competitiveness, excellent service, 24 hour availability, convenience and value added amenities. For a business to compete in this environment, it must continually find innovative strategies in the utilization of existing and developing technologies and applications to distinguish it from competitors. At the forefront of these technologies and applications are the internet and social media networking (Daniasa 2010).

As a case study, the pet care industry is no exception to these market place realities. Pet owners constitute 60% of the American population, 84% of which think of their pets as part of their family. There is an increasing demand for pet care services as people have become more attached to their pets (Stark 2000). It is not uncommon for pet owners to change their lifestyles to accommodate the comfort and wellbeing of their pets. Some find it emotionally tolling to leave

their pets while they're away, as they would a child. Pet owners often shape their travel plans around their pets. Some pet owners take their pets to "doggie daycare" daily, either at a boarding facility or a pet sitter while they are working (Hung 2011). In spite of the recession, it is documented that traveling pet owners are willing to incur costs to care for their animals (Kittner 2008).

It is not surprising that pet care industry sales exceeded 23 billion dollars in 2000 (Stark 2000). With this amount of money up for grabs, pet supply stores, veterinarian offices, kennels and doggie spas face increasing competition for a share of these revenues. To rise above and achieve a competitive advantage, some boarding facilities are going beyond basic services, now offering luxurious kennels, homemade meals, spa treatments, 24 hour video surveillance, a more outdoorsy "experience" for active pets, and the list goes on (Kittner 2008).

Ultimately, it doesn't matter what a business offers unless customers are aware. The internet, including social media networking, are at the marketing forefront because many customers have decided this is frequently a preferred method of acquiring information and effective way by which to communicate. Since many if not most business are using these tools, how they are used can greatly distinguish one business from another (Daniasa 2010).

Problem Statement

Would the innovative use of web-based marketing including social media networking and the creation of an interactive business website benefit The Polished Pet, a dog and cat boarding kennel in Santa Maria, CA?

Hypothesis

Increased web presence will benefit The Polished Pet, as there is evidence that an increasing number of people are using the internet. Marketing to this new target market will be an effective strategy to ensuring the financial success of The Polished Pet.

1. A consumer majority agree that they would take advantage of online promotions and web-based planning options if they were made available.

2. Consumers will board their pets more often if these online promotions are made available.

3. A consumer majority agree that they use the internet to find information about a business, that a businesses' web presence is important, and they equate a well-designed website with a well run business.

4. A consumer majority agree that they use social media networking on a regular basis.

Objectives

1. To determine the influential factors in pet owners decisions to board their pet at a kennel.

2. To measure how often pet owners board their pets and whether or not interactive features and online promotions would cause them to board their pets more.

3. To assess what pet owners would find useful and valuable on a kennel website.

4. To gauge pet owner attitudes towards the importance of well maintained business websites and business web presence.

Justification

As an increasingly high percentage of businesses utilize websites and social media networking as educational, marketing and sales tools, consumers become more expectative and reliant on this virtual presence as a useful, convenient and non-threatening means of acquiring information as a means to making an informed purchase of a product or service. Consumers may soon consider a strong virtual presence a minimum prerequisite for a business to be considered legitimate and competitive. If this premise becomes real, then a business must not only have a strong web presence, but also distinguish itself in the virtual world from its competitors. Just as a brick and mortar business may try to stand out by having noticeable signage, an appealing façade, professional landscaping, etc., the business will now need to implement comparable distinguishing factors in its virtual space. As a parallel, it would seem logical that a well designed, easy to use, frequently updated, interactive web site would attract and retain more clients than one that is none of those. It should follow that a company that uses social media networking such as Facebook or Twitter in interesting and innovative ways will attract many more followers than one that does not (Hasley 2010).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to Nicole Singleton, marketing director at Pet Care Services Association, a trade group for pet care related businesses, the pet care industry is growing in spite of the significant down turn in the economy (Kittner 2008). Owners of pet care related businesses are competing for the billions of dollars that are spent each year by owners on their pets. Adequate market share is essential for survival. A virtual (web-based) presence is the latest marketing phenomena that businesses are developing to gain a competitive edge.

Web-Based Marketing

The exponential growth of the internet makes it a medium that cannot be ignored. Globally, the number of websites increased from 23,000 in 1995 to 55 million in 2007. In the United States alone, internet sales went from zero in 1995 to over $50 billion in 2004 (Schibrowsky, et al 2007). In 2010, US internet sales reached $191 billion, representing 7% of all retail sales. By

2014 this figure is projected to reach almost $250 billion, representing 8% of all retail sales. These figures do not include off line sales that resulted from online research. It is estimated that as much as $917 billion in offline sales were "Web-influenced" (Schonfield 2010).

A well-designed business website benefits business and consumer alike. A business can benefit in many ways including increased sales. The business through its website offers 24 hour access to information. They can present the image they desire with graphics and a mission and vision statement. A website can be easily modified should there be the need. Customers realize the convenience of shopping, communicating and researching anywhere, anytime. Researchers define convenience as "the time and effort consumers use in purchasing a product or service" (Brown 1990). Research shows convenience as a major factor in buying decisions by consumers (Izquierdo-Yusta, et al 2011).

Website Design

Having a website may not be enough. There is much evidence and research suggesting that a well-designed website will attract customers while a poorly designed site will scare them off. Research shows that satisfied users spend a longer time per visit and are more likely to recommend a good website to others (Zhang 2000). On the other hand, research carried out by OnePoll suggests that 70% of consumers say they would not buy from a company that has a poorly designed website. Website visitors equate a poorly maintained or designed website with a poorly run business (Hosea 2011). Many factors contribute to a well-designed website. These include easy navigational features, good layout, use of colors and images, interactive features, understandable content and even entertainment value.

One study concluded that "the Internet is fundamentally an information medium" and that there is a significant and direct relationship between the quality of accessible information and the ability by the visitor to make a decision. Quality information was defined as that which is "quality in terms of accuracy, timeliness, completeness, relevance and consistency" (Gregg 2010). The same study, in an effort to scientifically identify quality content, made conclusions based on a survey instrument which determined which "information cues are most commonly presented by business to consumer websites". Additionally, the study determined which of these website cues, or options, visitors most often reacted to. It also claimed that this study "laid the groundwork" for future surveys that will attempt to determine what content website visitors would like to see on a website (Gregg 2010). With the increasing use of smart phones and tablets, many websites have mobile versions for easy navigation with those devices (Hosea 2011).

Social Media Networking

People, and by default, consumers, are gathering in virtual space in mind boggling numbers. In 2010 there were over 500 million Facebook users. In its first 4 years of existence, 10 billion messages, or "tweets" were sent via Twitter. About 80% of surveyed consumers have at least one social networking site that they visit on a regular basis (Baird, et al 2010). It is no surprise that businesses want to be where potential customers are, and as a result, businesses are joining them by droves on social media networking websites.

A survey done by IBM for Business Value reached an interesting conclusion. Prior to the presence of social media, businesses were used to dictating Customer Relationship Management

(CRM). This model typically dictates what a business needs to do to get "close" to its customers. The survey found that customers aren't that interested in a "close" relationship with businesses or brands. Seventy percent said they used social media outlets to connect with family and friends, while only 23 percent said the same of businesses and brands. When interacting with a business via social media, customers were mainly focused on looking for a "tangible benefit" in return for their time and effort, like coupons or discounts (Baird, et al 2010).

Innovative Marketing Strategies

There is no doubt that social media marketing has enormous potential. Just as developing a website distinguishes a business from its competitors, social media has the potential to further distinguish a business by reaching consumers where they gather in great numbers. For example, the ice cream chain, Cold Stone Creamery, offered a link on social media website, Facebook, which enabled visitors to send gift cards to their friends from Cold Stones Facebook page. The gift is delivered virtually, with a personalized message and instructions on how to redeem their treats at any one of 1500 stores nationwide. Not only does this type of marketing have enormous potential, it is low cost to implement and takes little effort to reach a large number of consumers. Expectedly, a little effort transfers into a large return. In Cold Stone Creamery's case, franchisees saw the results within weeks in the form of thousands of dollars of sales. Because social media is relatively new and unique, businesses are just beginning to learn how to optimize their efforts in an attempt to turn this virtual presence into profits for their businesses. The study suggests that businesses need to develop a "social CRM" policy in order to fully realize the potential of these new marketing strategies (Heller-Baird, et al 2010).

Interactive business websites are being utilized by businesses of all natures. Animal Care Clinic, a small animal veterinary practice in San Luis Obispo, CA, is one of the many businesses participating in this unique type of marketing strategy. Through the Animal Care Clinic Online Store, customers have the option to order prescription refills for their pets and purchase pet food and other items. Their customers have 24/7 access to the virtual store, and can purchase their items directly on the secure website and have them shipped the next day. The online store can be accessed through the Clinic's website, where customers must first sign up for a personalized "Pet Portal." This allows the customer to view their pet's current health information, make boarding and appointment reservations, post photos of their pet, request prescription refills, and manage their pet's information. Through their personalized Pet Portal, the customer can view the Clinic's pet-health library, providing them with veterinarian approved information (Animal Care Clinic 2011).

Wildfire is a social media marketing app which was designed as a tool to businesses who wish to grow, engage, and monetize their customers on social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Due to these practical tools, industries have grown more than ever before in the past year. Social media marketing was accepted by business-to-business companies in 2011, and the virtual world gained cutting edge moments with the introduction of Google +, Facebook timelines, and the iPhone 4. Wildfire's team of marketing strategists helps the largest, most popular brands in the world stay on top by advising them on the latest and greatest social marketing strategies. Wildfire's team noted a "dramatic rise in clients' needs to set specific marketing objectives for each social campaign." The objectives for the social campaign were: Growth, Engagement, and Monetization. Growth involves the brand presence, including the number of fans, followers, likes, and subscribers). Engagement involves the brand followers,

including comments, shares, and posts. Monetization involves fans, including leaders and sales. The team expects a shift from the emphasis on growth to emphasis on engagement in 2012. Predictions for 2012 also include an industry move towards an "integrated social campaign approach," which is often centered on a popular icon in the industry. So Delicious recently launched a campaign formed around Jillian Michaels, a celebrity who communicates to consumers about the brand and the theme, "changing one's life." From just 3 months of campaign, So Delicious grew its fan base by an astonishing 1000%, increased sales by 74% and its category share by 60% (Grinberg 2012).

Consumer Survey Methods

Consumer surveys are user friendly methods of data gathering, and are often used to provide accurate, low cost feedback to businesses. A survey is composed with the specific business issues and objectives in mind. They act as a sort of model that is analyzed before the business commits capital to marketing strategies, infrastructure, equipment and/or inventories. Often created and administered by a market research director, consumer surveys can relay information back to businesses, specifying exactly what consumers think about aspects of a business. The most common consumer survey methods utilized are paper-based surveys, web-based surveys, or a combination of the two. Studies have analyzed which survey methods receive the highest consumer response rates, as well as which methods are most cost effective, accurate and user friendly, all in an effort to discover meaningful data and results. It is proven that the best response rates come from implementing a combination of paper-based surveys and web-based surveys. The second highest response rates come from a solely web-based survey method, which is in fact the least costly to administer. The lowest response rates come from a solely paper-based survey method, which is more costly than the web-based method, but less costly

than the combination of the two methods. It should also be noted that the type of data gathering survey method should be chosen based on the specific characteristics of the individual business (Greenlaw 2009).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Procedures for Data Collection

In order to determine if the innovative use of web-based marketing including social media networking and the creation of an interactive business website would benefit The Polished Pet, it is necessary to gauge pet owner attitudes towards the importance of well maintained business websites and business web presence, determine how often pet owners board their pets, and determine the influential factors in pet owners decisions to board their pet at a kennel. Ultimately, a 14 question consumer survey was designed, reflective of the objectives, and will be administered to clients of The Polished Pet.

Paper-based surveys will be distributed to clients of The Polished Pet, in Santa Maria, CA, and web-based surveys will be available online on Facebook, where anyone can participate. The online survey will be linked to SurveyMonkey.com, so that the results can be directly recorded. Once 100 surveys are collected, the data collection period will end. The Polished Pet is well established, and has a sufficient clientele base to provide a meaningful sample.

The sample size of n=100 was chosen based on Lenth's software, *Java Applets for Power and Sample Size*, which was designed to determine effective sample size. Due to the nature of this study and the span of time allotted for collecting and analyzing data, a sample size of 100 was chosen (Lenth 2006). The data will be collected during a three week period between January 2012 and February 2012. Paper surveys will be administered at The Polished Pet during this data collection period, and will be administered by kennel staff. The customers will be asked by a staff member if they would like to take a survey about web-based marketing as it pertains to The Polished Pet, and notified that the surveys are part of a senior project by a Cal Poly Agribusiness/Marketing student. The clients will have the option to participate, or not. Should the client wish to complete the survey at another time, they will be given a survey with a stamped return envelope. A stack of cards with the link to the survey online will be available to customers who opt not to take the survey on the spot. Surveys will be administered in a simple random sample method, where each client chosen to complete the survey will have the same probability of being selected as other clients.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Once the data has been collected, it will be organized, analyzed, and manipulated to reflect the objectives of this study. These objectives include: determining the influential factors in pet owners decisions to board their pet at a kennel, measuring how often pet owners board their pets, whether or not interactive features and online promotions would cause them to board their pets at the facility more often more, assessing what pet owners would find useful and valuable on a kennel website, and gauging pet owner attitudes towards the importance of well

maintained business websites and business web presence. The data will then be analyzed to test the validity of the hypothesis that increased web presence and social media interaction will positively affect gross revenues to The Polished Pet.

Survey data be analyzed using the Analysis Center through Surveymonkey, a program that is capable of manipulating survey data, computing percentages, averages, response counts, and cross tabulations between questions. Before analysis can begin, it is necessary to manually input the results from the paper-based surveys into Surveymonkey under the Responses tab. A target market can be defined by the consumer's age, gender, marital status, level of education, employment status and income. A cross tabulation will be run crossing age with the other survey questions.

To determine the influential factors in pet owners' decisions to board their pet at a kennel, survey question 2, "Which characteristics are influential in your decision to board your pet at a kennel," is analyzed by its average rating. A rating of 1 is "Not Influential," while a rating of 3 is "Very Influential." The characteristics with the ratings closest to 3 are the top influential characteristics. To measure how often pet owners board their pets and whether or not interactive features and online promotions would cause them to board their pets more, the following survey questions are manipulated: Question 3, "How many days do you board your pet per year," Question 4a, "Which online promotions would you likely take advantage of it made available," and Question 4b, "How many more days would you board your pet if those options were made available." To assess what pet owners would find useful and valuable on a kennel website, Question 5 can be analyzed by the items with the top percentages. To gauge pet owner attitudes towards the importance of well maintained business websites and business web

presence, Questions 8a and 8b will be analyzed by the average response on each item. The average response for this particular question will explain how strongly the respondent agrees or disagrees with each statement about business web-presence.

Assumptions

It is assumed that survey participants will complete the surveys truthfully and honestly, and will understand the questions the way they were meant to be understood. It is assumed that the data was accurately entered into Surveymonkey before analysis. The population chosen is assumed to be an accurate representation of pet owners in Santa Maria, CA, and the data is assumed to reflect their tastes and preferences.

Limitations

The results of the survey are limited to current and prospective customers who were willing to take the survey. The survey participants are mainly over 21 years old, as younger people board their pets less due to monetary concerns, or their parents are financially responsible for family pets. The results found in the surveys are not necessarily representative of areas outside Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, as most of the surveys we administered at The Polished Pet in Santa Maria, CA; however the survey results are likely to be useful to businesses similar in nature.

Chapter 4

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

To test the validity of the hypothesis, it is important to know the demographics of the respondents who participated in the survey. Of the respondents, 92% board their pet(s) at The Polished Pet. Over half of the respondents were between 40 and 59 years old. Females made up 63.4% of respondents, while males made up 37.6%. Regarding marital status, 69% of respondents answered that they are married. Regarding education, 79.4% of respondents attended at least some college or higher. Employed respondents make up 69.7%. Household income was slightly scattered, as 22.9% reported a total annual income between $40,000-59,000, 25.3% reported a total annual income of $60,000-79,000, and 24.1% reported total annual incomes of $100,000 or more. Regarding the number of days pets are boarded each year, on average, respondents reported 9.85 days per year.

Table 1_ Age

	Response Percent	Response Count
under 21	2.0%	2
21-29	12.7%	13
30-39	10.8%	11
40-49	25.5%	26
50-59	**32.4%**	**33**
60+	18.6%	19

Table 2 Highest Level of Education Completed

	Response Percent	Response Count
Grade school or less	0.0%	0
Some high school	2.1%	2
High school graduate	19.6%	19
Some college	29.9%	29
College graduate	**39.2%**	**38**
Post graduate work	10.3%	10

Table 3 Household Income Before Taxes

	Response Percent	Response Count
Under $20,000	9.6%	8
$20,000-39,000	6.0%	5
$40,000-59,000	22.9%	19
$60,000-79,000	**25.3%**	**21**
$80,000-99,000	12.0%	10
$100,000 or more	24.1%	20

To more specifically test, and accept or reject the hypotheses, and to communicate and interpret the results of this study, a close look is taken at each hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: A consumer majority agree that they would take advantage of online promotions and web-based planning options if they were made available.

A response percent revealed that a consumer majority agreed that they would take advantage of the following promotions:

Receive newsletters and coupons via email, receive updates and pictures of pet during their stay, and make boarding reservations online. Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Table 4 Promotions that would be taken Advantage of if Available

	Response Percent	Response Count
Receive newsletters and coupons via email	**56.4%**	**53**
Receive updates and pictures of pet during their stay	**67.0%**	**63**
Follow my kennel on Facebook	31.9%	30
Make boarding reservations online	**69.1%**	**65**
Update your pet's records online	47.9%	45
Register your pet(s) for their own personal page on the kennel website	12.8%	12
Other	1.1%	1

A cross tabulation of Promotions and Aged determined that consumers ages 40-49 and 60+ are most likely to take advantage of receiving newsletters and coupons via email. Consumers 40-59 are most likely to take advantage of receiving updates and pictures of their pets during their stay, to follow their kennel on Facebook, and update their pets' records online. Consumers ages 30-49 are most likely to take advantage of making boarding reservations online.

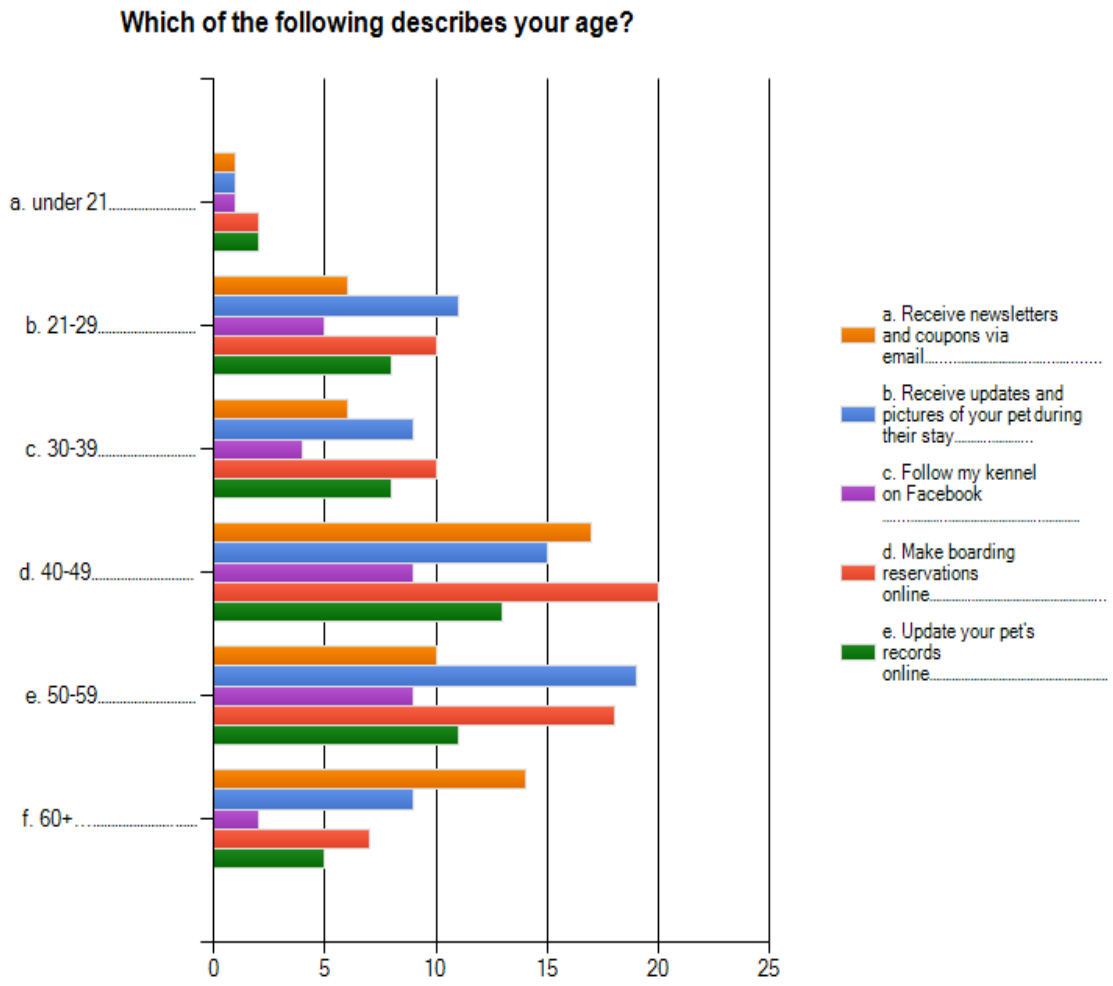

FIGURE 1 Promotions that would be taken Advantage of, and Age

Hypothesis 2: Consumers will board their pets more often if these online promotions are made available.

On average, consumers reported that they would board pet(s) 0.444444 more days per year if online promotions and web based planning options were made available. Hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Hypothesis 3: A consumer majority agree they use the internet to find information about a business, that a businesses' web presence is important, and they equate a well-designed website with a well run business.

Of 101 respondents, 98 reported that they use the internet to find information about businesses. Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

An average revealed that consumers somewhat agree that an instructive, well maintained website is important to them, that they visit business websites when shopping for new businesses to learn about them, and that they enjoy the convenience of the internet and make purchases and reservations online if possible.

Table 5 Consumer Opinions of Business Web Presence

	1	2	3	4	5	Average Response
An instructive, well maintained website is very important to me	0.0% (0)	1.0%(1)	24.8%(25)	38.6% (9)	35.6%(36)	**4.09**
When shopping for a new business, I visit their website to learn about the business	0.0% (0)	2.0% (2)	8.9% (9)	26.7% (27)	62.4%(63)	**4.50**
I enjoy the convenience of the internet, and make purchases and reservations online, if possible	1.0% (1)	4.0% (4)	13.9%(14)	30.7% (31)	50.5%(51)	**4.26**
I would be more likely to do business with a company that has a well maintained website	1.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	37.6%(38)	38.6% (39)	22.8%(23)	3.82
No website is better than a poorly maintained website	4.0% (4)	12.1% (12)	26.3% (26)	29.3% (29)	28.3%(28)	3.66
A poorly maintained website is better than no website at all	26.5%(26)	20.4% (20)	40.8%(40)	11.2% (11)	1.0% (1)	2.40

Note: Questions rated on the following scale: 1 Strongly disagree, 2 Somewhat disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Somewhat agree, 5 Strongly agree.

A response percent revealed that consumers reported that Pricing, a Photo Gallery, Boarding Options and Services, and Customer ratings are the most valuable items on a kennel website.

Table 6 Most Valuable on Kennel Website

	Response Percent	Response Count
Mission and Vision Statement	40.0%	40
Photo Gallery	**91.0%**	91
Pricing	**94.0%**	94
Boarding Options and Services	**81.0%**	81
Events Calendar	49.0%	49
Discussion Board	38.0%	38
Customer Ratings	**61.0%**	61
Links to social media websites	11.0%	11
Other	0.0%	0

An average revealed that Quality, Reputation, Easy to Contact, Prompt Service, and Price, are the most influential characteristics in the decision to board a pet at a kennel.

Table 7 Characteristics Influential in Decision to Board Pet

	Not Influential	Neutral	Very Influential	Rating Response Count	
Price	5.9% (6)	16.8% (17)	77.2% (78)	**2.71**	101
Quality	0.0% (0)	2.0% (2)	98.0% (100)	**2.98**	102
Local business/affiliations	23.9% (22)	51.1% (47)	25.0% (23)	2.01	92
Convenience	12.0% (11)	37.0% (34)	51.1% (47)	2.39	92
Packages/Discounts	18.3% (17)	34.4% (32)	47.3% (44)	2.29	93
Easy to contact	2.1% (2)	14.4% (14)	83.5% (81)	**2.81**	97
Prompt service	1.0% (1)	18.8% (18)	80.2% (77)	**2.79**	96
Reputation	0.0% (0)	5.0% (5)	95.0% (95)	**2.95**	100
Web presence	34.0% (32)	36.2% (34)	29.8% (28)	1.96	94
Modern technologies	25.0% (23)	50.0% (46)	25.0% (23)	2.00	92
Other	20.0% (1)	20.0% (1)	60.0% (3)	2.40	5

Note: Question ranked on the scale 1=Not Influential, 2=Neutral, 3=Very Influential.

Hypothesis 4: A consumer majority agree that they use social media networking on a regular basis.

A cross tabulation of social media users and age was conducted to determine that a consumer majority of 62% use social media websites on a regular basis. Hypothesis 4 was accepted. Consumers ages 30-39 use social media the most, closely followed by ages 21-29 years.

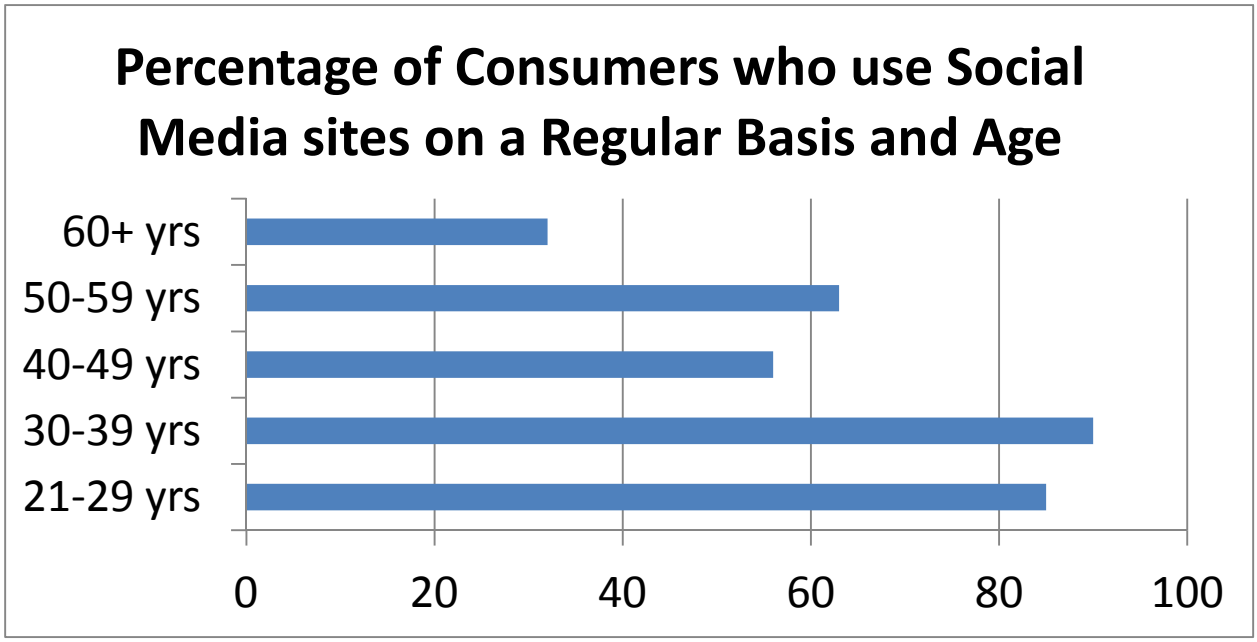

FIGURE 2 Social Media Usage and Age

A response percentage determined that the majority of respondents who use social media on a regular basis use Facebook.

Table 8 Most Used Social Media Websites

	Response Percent	Response Count
Facebook	**67.4%**	**62**
Twitter	9.8%	9
None	32.6%	30
Other	3.3%	3

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In attempt to determine if increased web presence including the innovative use of web-based marketing including social media networking and the creation of an interactive business website would benefit The Polished Pet, a consumer survey was designed and administered to clients of The Polished Pet. After analysis through SurveyMonkey's Analysis Center, the following results were determined:

Hypothesis1: (Accept) A consumer majority agree that they would take advantage of online promotions and web-based planning options if they were made available.

Hypothesis 2: (Accept) Consumers will board their pets more often if these online promotions are made available.

Hypothesis 3: (Accept) A consumer majority agree that they use the internet to find information about a business, that a businesses' web presence is important, and they equate a well-designed website with a well run business.

Hypothesis 4: (Accept) A consumer majority agree that they use social media networking on a regular basis.

Conclusions

As 92% of respondents reported boarding their pet(s) at The Polished Pet, the following conclusions can be taken as a being specific to The Polished Pet's clientele. The following is accepted as an accurate representation of the demographics of The Polished Pets clientele:

- The response rate of 63% female
- The most common response age being 40-59 years
- The marital status "married" constituting nearly 70%
- The level of education response rate of 80% having attended at least some college
- The employment rate of 70%
- The reported total annual income between $40,000-59,000, 25.3% reported a total annual income of $60,000-79,000, and 24.1% reported total annual incomes of $100,000 or more
- The average number of days pets are boarded per year is 9.85 days

In conclusion of Hypothesis 1, it is determined that the online promotions and planning options they were interested in were: Receive newsletters and coupons via email, receive updates and pictures of pet during their stay, and make boarding reservations online.

The cross tabulation between age and interest in online promotions was able to determine consumers ages 40-49 and 60+ are most likely to take advantage of receiving newsletters and coupons via email, consumers 40-59 are most likely to take advantage of receiving updates and pictures of their pets during their stay, to follow their kennel on Facebook, and update their pets' records online, and consumers ages 30-49 are most likely to take advantage of making boarding

reservations online. This is useful information, as it gives some basis for which age group could be successfully marketed to in order to benefit The Polished Pet.

In conclusion of Hypothesis 2, respondents reported that they would board their pets, on average, 0.444444 more days per year if the online promotions and planning options from Hypothesis 1were offered.

In conclusion of Hypothesis 3, a majority of 98% reported that they use the internet to find information about businesses. An average of consumers somewhat agree that an instructive, well maintained website is important to them, that they visit business websites when shopping for new businesses to learn about them, and that they enjoy the convenience of the internet and make purchases and reservations online if possible.

In conclusion of Hypothesis 4, a cross tabulation of social media users and age was conducted to determine that a consumer majority of 62% use social media websites on a regular basis, and the vast majority use Facebook.

Recommendations

It is recommended that The Polished Pet offer the following online promotions and planning options, and market mainly to ages 40-60 years old, as they make up the majority of clients. The respondents in that age range reported interest in receiving online newsletters and coupons via email, receiving picture updates, following The Polished Pet's Facebook page, updating records online, and making boarding reservations online. I recommend that these promotions and

planning options be implemented. By offering these promotions, they could increase their boarding rates by 0.444444 days per person, per year.

It is recommended that The Polished Pet create a user-friendly, interactive website, keeping in mind that the factors that draw people to a kennel are quality, reputation, ease of communication, prompt service, and price. The website should contain with the following features:

- Pricing
- Photo Gallery
- Boarding Options and Services
- Customer ratings

It is recommended that The Polished Pet create an informative Facebook page. Facebook is a good marketing tool, as 62% of clients of all age groups reported using social media on a regular basis. Facebook is a good medium for communication with clients in a non-threatening, convenient way. The Facebook page can easily be linked to the kennel website, which not only provides clients and prospective clients with a sense of easy communication, but also enables them to see the businesses reputation with the other clients who use the site. When boarding a pet, people often look to others who have had experience with the business before making a decision.

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Appendix

Hello, my name is Lauren Frias, and I am an Agribusiness/Marketing student at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. I would greatly appreciate your help completing this survey for my senior project.

1a. Do you board your pet at a kennel? _____

1b. If yes, where?
a. The Polished Pet, in Santa Maria, CA
b. Other _____

Please rate question 2 based on the following scale:

1=Not Influential, 2=Neutral, 3=Very Influential

2. Which characteristics are influential in your decision to board your pet at a kennel?

	(Rate 1-3)
a. Price……	____
b. Quality……	____
c. Local business/affiliations……..	____
d. Convenience……...	____
e. Packages/Discounts……	____
f. Easy to contact……	____
g. Prompt service……	____
h. Reputation……..	____
i. Web presence……..	____
j. Modern technologies...……	____
k. Other _____.....	____

3. About how many <u>days</u> do you board your pet <u>per year</u>? _____

4a. Which of the following online promotions would you likely take advantage of if they were made available by your kennel? **(Circle all that apply)**

a. Receive newsletters and coupons via email…...……..…..….....1
b. Receive updates and pictures of your pet during their stay……..…….....2
c. Follow my kennel on Facebook …...……..……..……3
d. Make boarding reservations online…….……...4
e. Update your pet's records online……5
f. Register your pet(s) for their own personal page on kennel website……..6
g. Other _____.....7

4b. How many **more** days per year would you board your pet if those options were made available? _____

5. Your kennel is considering creating a business website. What would you like to see on your kennel's website? **(Circle all that apply)**

a. Mission and Vision Statement..……1
b. Photo Gallery……..…2
c. Pricing…...…….....3
d. Boarding Options and Services…….4
e. Events Calendar..……...5
f. Discussion Board……...6
g. Customer Ratings……..7
h. Links to social media websites…….. ……..8
i. Other _____.....9

In this portion of the survey, we are interested in your thoughts about businesses and the importance of web presence.

6a. Do you use the internet to find information about businesses? _____

6b. If not, why? _____

7a. Do you use social media websites on a regular basis? _____

7b. If yes, which one(s)?

a. Facebook
b. Twitter
c. None
d. Other _____

Please rate questions 8a and 8b based on the following scale:

1 Strongly disagree
2 Somewhat disagree
3 Neutral
4 Somewhat agree
5 Strongly agree

8a.
a. An instructive, well maintained website is very important to me…1…2…3…4…5

b. When shopping for a new business, I visit their website to learn about the business.
…….……....1…2…3…4…5

c. I enjoy the convenience of the internet, and make purchases and reservations online, if possible..……..1…2…3…4…5

8b.
a. I would be more likely to do business with a company that has a well maintained website……...……...1…2…3…4…5

g. No website is better than a poorly maintained website....…….1…2…3…4…5

h. A poorly maintained website is better than no website at all……1…2…3…4…5

The following information is necessary for statistical analysis only, and will be held entirely confidential.

9. Which of the following describes your age?
a. under 21……1
b. 21-29…….2
c. 30-39…….3
d. 40-49…….4
e. 50-59…….5
f. 60+...…….……6

10. Are you?
a. male…….1
b. female……..2

11. Are you?
a. married……1
b. living with a partner……2
c. single……3
d. widowed…….4

12. Please state your highest level of education you have completed?
a. Grade school or less…….1
b. Some high school…….2
c. High school graduate……3
d. Some college……4
e. College graduate……..5
f. Post graduate work……...6

13. Are you:
a. Employed full time……..1
b. Employed part time…….....2
c. Student……3
d. Retired……4
c. Unemployed……..…..5

14. Into which of the following ranges does your total household income fall before taxes?

a. Under $20,000……1
b. $20,000-39,000……..2
d. $40,000-59,000……..3
f. $60,000-79,000……..4
g. $80,000-99,000……..5
h. $100,000 or more……...6

Thank you for your time!