

Petdesign (The Netherlands)

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As a pet industry, we talk about the humanization trend and how this is partly responsible for the demand from consumers for more fashionable products for dogs and cats in particular, and besides, it's nice to have accessories that match your interior.

The fashion trend arose years ago in the fashion industry which was no longer releasing two collections per year, but instead, many collections in succession were launched on the market. This trend was then picked up by other industries such as products for the interior and for gardens. It is with good reason that more and more garden centres are also becoming suppliers of design products for both inside the home as well as outside. The pet industry is following this trend little by little. But is the industry really taking advantage of this trend? Are the pet-retail chains presenting an image of themselves geared towards consumers' predilection for fashionable accessories? According to Petdesign, this is limited to careful attempts for the time being. They have determined that the pet industry is starting to capitalise on this trend on an increasing basis, but that the look and feel of the stores is not changing in line these efforts. How can you successfully sell fashionable pet products if the interior and exterior of the pet store still have an old-fashioned appearance?

Fortunately, good initiatives are also being taken, and not by the pet retail chains, but by the independent retail businesses. They have seen this opportunity in the pet market and have had the courage to develop a different pet-retail formula. An example of this is Petdesign in the Netherlands.

Why a pet store focusing on fashionable products? In the autumn of 2006, the Schabos sisters started their own pet-retail formula that they designed themselves. It was of course a gamble since they had no experience in the pet world. The only experience they had was having their own dog, and the fact that they had noticed that the average pet store was unable to supply fun, fashionable products; in their eyes, these stores had a somewhat old-fashioned image.

However, once they started looking around on the Internet, they discovered that there were in fact many fun, original pet accessory products available. What they also noticed during their search was that these products focused primarily on dogs and cats, to the exclusion of the other pet groups. This is why Petdesign decided to focus on more than simply dogs and cats.

One of the Schabos sisters has a background in the



fashion retail industry, and is therefore knowledgeable about the ins and outs of retailing, and how to develop and introduce a range. This background is readily visible in the Petdesign store and even represents the essence of the store's image.

For example, part of the collar collection is displayed on ceramic heads of dogs. In short, they display fashionable pet products within the context of a fashionable shop image.

Since the normal retail trade sells practically no fashionable products, they decided to start their own distribution of these trendy products at the same time they opened the store, products they also planned to sell in their shop. They found most of these products in America as well as Italy and England. Within a year's time, these activities grew into 12 exclusive import agreements for Europe.

The starting point for the range is that all of the products must be good for dogs and cats, and that they must be fashionable and fit in well with consumers' interiors.

When the shop first opened in November 2006, Petdesign had a limited range of clothing since their understanding of the pet industry was that there was not much demand for these types of products. Since then, the clothing line has become their best-selling product



group. Make no mistake, Petdesign's turnover is nothing to sneeze at. This is evidenced by the two full-time employees, and on Saturdays, there are even four staff members working in the store, and even this number is barely enough to handle the store traffic. Even expensive dog and cat beds priced at € 750 each are selling like hotcakes.

The owners have also noticed that fun fashion products such as T-shirts for dogs are selling fast; these types of products are usually purchased as gifts for a dog or cat owner.

And what about the range of leads, a shop category that comprises over 400 different products! Why do these items sell so well? These are all fashion-oriented products, in varying price categories, all the way up to diamond-studded models, all of which are displayed in an attractive manner.

And then there are the feed dishes. Here, we are not talking about the well-known steel versions, but a range of truly fashionable dishes!

However, Petdesign offers more than just accessories, it also markets a complete range of OTC pet health care products, including pet dental care products. In addition, customers can also buy dog and cat snacks and the complete range of Royal Canin foods, including the 15 kg bags.

Ever seen a pet store with a lounge corner complete with shelves and shelves of books which consumers can peruse to obtain all sorts of information on their dogs and cats? This is also a unique feature one will find at Petdesign. Even the best bookstore can't compete with this.

The result after one year in business? The turnover has exceeded the forecasts. And the import department is bursting out of its seams and must be relocated to larger premises. ■

Who's next?

For further information:
www.petdesign.nl

