

CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR INTO ADOPTING DOGS AND CATS FROM THE LOCAL ANIMAL SHELTER INSTEAD OF BUYING THEM

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Aims and objectives

The overall purpose was to encourage the adoption of cats and dogs instead of buying them, while discouraging their abandonment. Concretely, the project aspires to increase the number of pets adopted at our partner's facility.

Target group/focus

We had three main targets. The first one are people who may be interested in adopting a pet; these are aged between 30 and 60, thus we are mostly addressing family units, yet also single adults and couples. The target would benefit from the adoption both economically, because it is cheaper than buying the pet, and morally, due to the personal gratification.

The secondary target is the shelter: we wish they take the partnership with our project as an opportunity to reach a new and wider audience, which favors their public image.

Lastly, our final target is represented by individuals who adopted in the past from the facility: we desire that they share their positive experience, as it can be useful for others.

Project / Research focus

The "Mi aFIDO a te" project stems from the idea of five students attending the Social Marketing course at the University of Bologna. It is a wordplay between "affido", which refers to the pet adoption, and "fido" (the Italian word for "trust"), that is the key to the relationship between animal and human. The title takes inspiration from the aim of our project: to

encourage the adoption of cats and dogs by a potentially interested target. Firstly, we dealt with the collection of some data to comprehend the full extent of the problem: while 3.163 dogs were adopted in Emilia-Romagna in 2020, 7.771 new entries were registered into the shelters, which means those who found a home are in fact less than half.

The main reasons were the death (or hospitalization) of the owners, the abandonment because of the lack of time or financial reason and the change of habits post-COVID.

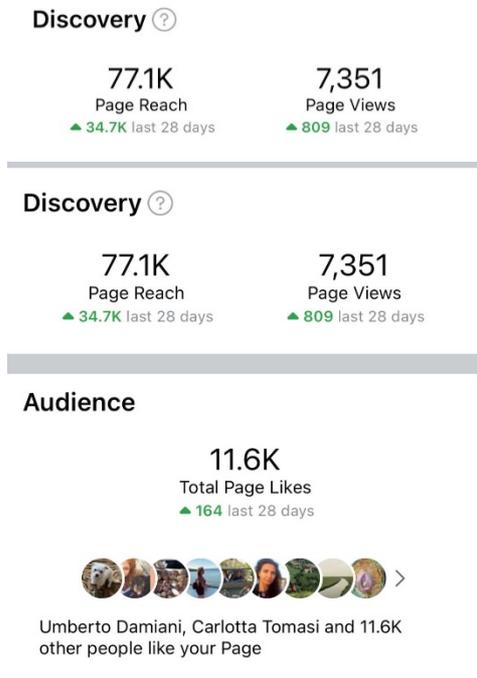
Eventually, during the pandemic there was an increase in pet purchases, since pet shops were often open to the public (both physical and online shops) in contrast to the shelters: sales increased by 100% compared to 2019, whereas most ENPA bodies stated that adoptions lagged.

Method / Approach

We structured our program in several stages. At first, we came in contact with the local shelter ("Canile/gattile comunale di Bologna e Castel Maggiore - TdB") and asked if they were willing to work with us. The outcome was positive, so we immediately set to work to better understand the issues. We acted as consultants for their social media channels, handling their communication strategies. The main focus of the project consisted in organizing an open day at the shelter, but unfortunately it was postponed due to Covid-19. Therefore we arranged a Facebook live event during which it was possible to present our project, but also to show the shelter and its guests, as well as some volunteers who serve at the facility. At the end, we submitted a survey to the participants, through which we collected some data on the project. Besides, we reached some of the people who adopted from the shelter, who shared their experience in the form of captioned images or short videos, which were then shared on our partner's social media channels. To further help the facility, we set up a donation box at a local pet store ("Pets") and with the help of the shelter's volunteers, we arranged a Christmas market where gadgets of various kinds can be bought.

Relevant data and graphics

Overall, we observed an higher engagement rate and a wider reach on the social media channels.



The live streaming was followed (either live or at a later time) by 940 people, eliciting shares and comments, including specific questions on the shelter's adoptable pets.

The survey highlights how the stream was helpful to all of the respondents in approaching the issue of adoptions, 74% of which feel more inclined to adopt, while 48% intend to.

As far as adoptions are concerned, the results will be visible in the long term due to the long procedures required for the animal adoption.

Conclusions and recommendations

The project gave us the opportunity to take concrete action on a current issue that is unfortunately underestimated as that of pet adoption. To this day, the purchase still prevails, but by working together on the cause and spreading the message, it is possible to make a long-term difference.

"Mi affIDO a te" will continue through the organization of other live streamings, and the market and donation box will stay until the end of December. We also plan to organize a physical open day whenever the situation will allow it. Therefore, we will continue to keep track of the adoptions that will take place and to support the work of our partners.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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