

Is There A Niche In  
The Market For  
'Vegetarian Petfood' ?

Stephen J. Boland  
John R. del Kisching  
9 November 88  
Adv 500 - Modern Adv. Probs  
Mid-semester Exam

Is there a niche in the market for 'Vegetarian Petfood'?

Our initial thoughts on the subject were positive. It is an original idea being that no other petfood manufacturer has put it out on the market thus far. We were intrigued by this unique concept which would introduce a new direction in the extremely competitive petfood market. In addition, this product would appeal to a whole new segment of prospective buyers.

Due to the fact that the general public has become much more health conscious, this product has the potential of being well supported. This is because when one sells petfood one must focus the attention solely on the owner. Our primary target market is the female head of household ranging from 35 to 55 years of age and in the mid to upper income bracket. The reason being that women, for the most part, are the ones who will be responsible for purchasing the petfood. Individuals at these ages and income levels tend to be more aware of and concerned with nutritional value. However, we are not limiting ourselves to this narrow sector of the population. In fact, our target market is much larger. Our secondary audience consists of vegetarians of all ages no matter what their income is.

This fact leads us into another positive attribute of 'Vegetarian Petfood'. Because of the ingredients (vegetables, cheese, eggs, etc.), the cost of manufacturing will be much less than

existing petfoods which are made up of meat by-products. Since it will obviously not cost much to produce, it gives us some flexibility in the pricing of the product. If research indicates that the demand is great among all income levels, then we can mass produce the product and sell it both at a competitive and inexpensive price. However, if the product only appeals to our primary target, then we will reposition the product as an upscale item. The novelty of a gourmet 'Vegetarian Petfood' may find a large niche in the marketplace.

Another reason why 'Vegetarian Petfood' may be successful is because of its diversity. Not only can we introduce a variety of flavors, but we can market it both in canned and dry food forms. We always have to keep in mind that we are selling the product to the owner who want the best for their pets. The owners think that because a balanced diet is right for them, it must be right for their pet.

Finally, from a marketing point of view, it will be beneficial for a leading manufacturer to be always one step ahead of the competition. So, this will enable a company to expand in a new direction to new prospective buyers.

Although we have stated the positive aspects of 'Vegetarian Petfood', we must seriously consider whether or not the whole market is ready for this radical new development. Getting back to the essential question, does this niche actually exist - will the product sell. That is our greatest concern.

After further consideration, we strongly feel that despite the positive elements for 'Vegetarian Petfood' - it simply will not work.

The primary reason that it will not work is that it contradicts all the laws of nature. Although pet owners would like to associate their animals as human beings, we must be realistic about the matter. Dogs and cats are animals. Despite the fact that humans would like to thrust their personal values on their pets, it will not work. Animals do not think like humans do, no matter how much humans want them to. Although pets may be domesticated, they are and always will be of a different breed from us.

Humans adopt a vegetarian lifestyle for two basic reasons. The first being that they feel that meat, especially red meat, is not healthy for them. They feel that the consumption of vegetables is a much more adequate and healthy way of nourishing their bodies.

The second reason is simply that humans have a conscience. Many individuals feel it is morally wrong to slaughter innocent animals in order to feed themselves. They are disgusted with the thought of eating these animals when there are clearly alternate sources of food.

However these two reasons do not apply to animals. One must face the fact that dogs and cats are carnivorous beasts. It is not more nutritious for them to consume vegetables as opposed to meat. Animals eat meat by nature - it is essential to their diet. As a

matter of fact, most dogs and cats do not enjoy the taste of vegetables. Although flavorings, additives, and preservatives may be used to enhance the taste of 'Vegetarian Petfood', we would be defeating the entire purpose of the product. By introducing artificial ingredients, we would be alienating our "natural-minded" consumers. As we previously stated, our target market is not the consumer - it is the purchaser.

Now addressing the second situation concerning the conscience of humans, this is not a factor for animals. Animals do not have a conscience. Animals cannot reason. The fact that they are consuming other animals does not morally affect them. They are simply not aware - they do not know the difference. By inherent nature, all animals adapt to the notion of survival of the fittest. The concept of vegetarianism clearly does not apply to pets despite the preference of their owners.

Again, we must ask ourselves whether or not the market is ready for this new development. With all the positive influences that we presented, we must keep in mind our main objective. That objective is that we have a task to carry out which is to sell the product.

There only need be one negative aspect to arise as a barrier to potential sales that will nullify the whole concept. The negative aspects we discussed clearly overshadow all the positive ones resulting in the failure of the niche for 'Vegetarian Petfood' in the market.

In conclusion, a manufacturer must

carefully evaluate all the advantages and disadvantages of developing a new product. Its goal must not only be to launch the product, but even more so, to continue sales and build up brand loyalty. We feel to the manufacturer that too much risk is involved. Based on our positive points, it may seem logical to launch the product. Initial sales may seem encouraging due to the novelty of the item, however, in the long run, the manufacturer will lose out. The bottom line is that if the pet is not satisfied and happy with the taste of 'Vegetarian Petfood', then its owner will not make a follow up purchase.

There is not a niche in the market for 'Vegetarian Petfood'.

Well reasoned, and well expressed.

A-