

Q&A: Catering to millennial consumers with raw food pet company Maev

Article

Katie Spies

Founder and CEO at Maev



Pet ownership boomed during the pandemic, and we forecast US ecommerce sales for the pet category to have double-digit growth through 2025. Insider Intelligence spoke with Katie

Spies, founder and CEO at raw dog food brand Maev, about shifting consumer demographics and her mission to create a pet brand for the millennial consumer.

Insider Intelligence: What consumer shifts have you seen within the pet market?

Katie Spies: The market for pet products has exploded in the past several years with dog and cat food passing \$100 billion in market size. Part of that was driven by population growth: One-fourth of all Americans got a dog during COVID-19, and the dog population grew 5.5%. Half of millennials now have a dog, which means the target consumer looks very different today than they did 10 years ago given that they're younger.

II: What factors matter most to these younger pet owners, and how do you communicate those?

KS: The millennial consumer thinks about transparency and credibility as more top-of-mind brand values than others. Some millennial consumers care about formal authority sources, but many are skeptical as they are aware that some brands pay for those formal authority sources like a vet office or an industry board that pushes products.

We do our research on informal authority sources like looking at reviews, user-generated photos and testimonials, actual reviews from friends, and referrals from friends as those matter a lot to a millennial consumer. We find that our customer base is very curious and is willing to get into the weeds of education.

Many dog owners are more educated on the benefits of raw nutrition than they were five or 10 years ago, but the biggest challenge for us is building educational content to provide the credibility and trust that our product has high efficacy. Consumers don't want to see a textbook on the website, and they don't want to be hit with deeply complicated scientific information in a Facebook ad.

Our challenge is taking complex nutrition information and consumerizing it in an informal, digestible way and doing that with a credible lens as we're formulated by vets. Most dog food companies aren't formulated by board-certified vets. We have had to show our credibility around user-generated content and reviews and testimonials from real users.

II: What's your outlook for the pet market in the coming years?

KS: The natural products industry has shifted from cleaner ingredients toward a lens of actual efficacy and using science to make products that improve health, and the same thing has to happen for pets. We've seen the better-for-you segment of the pet aisle explode, and there

are so many new brands. but we need to have a scientific approach toward advocacy and work with vet teams to find actual health benefits that your dog will see with new products.

As a consumer, I love brands and finding products that say something meaningful to me. In the pet space, brand image is often an afterthought. Most of the brands in the pet market are relatively undifferentiated. They don't look and feel the same way that brands in human categories like fashion, beauty, or skincare do. We see that come out in the data where the pet aisle has one of the lowest scores of brand awareness in all of grocery. Pet brands just don't mean the same thing that brands in other categories do, and it's because we're not building pet brands the same way.