Competitive Analysis: PetGoodies.com
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

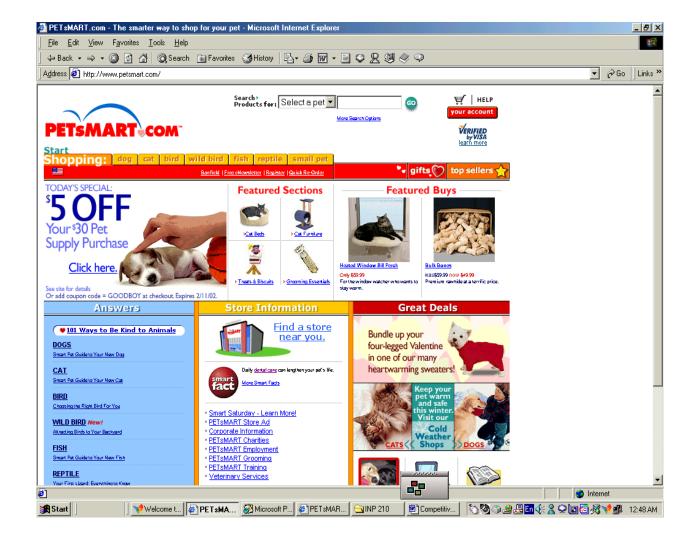
The competitive analysis was conducted to aid in the development of PetGoodies.com, an online pet supplies store. This analysis is focused on three main competitors: PETsMART.com, Drs. Foster & Smith, and JB Wholesale Pet Supplies.

The existence of these competitors indicates that there is a large market for selling pet supplies and products online. Two of the competitors offer not just pet supplies, but also books, magazines, videotapes as well as an extensive online database of pet resources, including information on pet education, training and health care. This suggests that PetGoodies.com might benefit from extending its product offering beyond main pet supplies. One of the competitors also offers a Pond category, a wide selection of water plants resources, which could be good content for PetGoodies.com.

There are some common labeling and organizational schemes for product browsing within three competitors. Further examination of these schemes will likely prove helpful in determining the content for PetGoodies.com.

Certain content and functionality appear to be common and should be included in the PetGoodies.com website:

- Grouping of products by pet category
- Selling books, magazines and videotapes with pet content
- Providing online articles on pet subjects
- Providing links to other valuable pet resources
- Providing a quick search by product number (for returning customers) and keyword
- Allowing users to comment on products
- Offering an affiliate program
- Supporting online tracking order status
- Offering various shipping options
- Offering specials and sale items



CONTENT/FUNCTIONALITY

The site offers a broad assortment of pet supplies and products. The site has a very extensive database of different product subcategories.

PRODUCTS OFFERED:

Pet supplies scoped by pet category:

- Dog
- Cat
- Bird
- Wild bird
- Fish
- Reptile
- Small pet

Each of these categories offers a wide selection of supplies. These supplies are organized into "department stores". The main departments (subcategories) include:

- Clothing
- Beds
- Collars and leashes
- Clean up
- Feeding
- Grooming
- Health Care
- Containment
- Toys and treats
- Training
- New pet
- Specialty shops

Additionally the website offers the following accessories within some pet categories:

- Books, magazines and videos
- Decorations
- Lighting and Heating
- Cages

The other categories include:

- Gifts
- Top sellers
- Special treats
- Monthly hot deals

TECHNOLOGY USED

- Database-driven website
- Active Server Pages technology used to retrieve content from the database
- Secure shopping cart
- Registration for returning customers
- Use of cookies to track customer information and for personalization
- Quick Reorder form for returning customers
- Online order status checking and package tracking
- Sign-in for free eNewsletter
- Cat and dog food calculator

SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY

- Scoped search by pet category
- Search by product name or article
- Each subcategory within a pet category offers a browsable list of products (including a picture of each product)
- Keyword search is available
- Help for browsers with older versions of Netscape or Internet Explorer

ORDERING OPTIONS

- Online ordering
- Phone ordering
- Major credit cards are accepted
- Standard shipping options are offered
- Gift certificates are available
- Cancel or change order within three hours of placing the order

SUPPORTING CONTENT:

- Company information
- Terms and Conditions
- Privacy and Security Policy
- Return Policy
- Shipping Information
- Message boards and chats
- Helpdesk
- Affiliate Program
- Frequently asked questions
- Articles

- Job Listings
- PETsMART store locator
- Links to other PETsMART store services (training, grooming, veterinary centers)

STRENGTHS

The greatest strength of this website is the well-organized content linked to the large database of pet supplies. The site allows browsing a broad list of categories and provides additional information about related pet topics in Answers and Articles sections.

Specific strengths include:

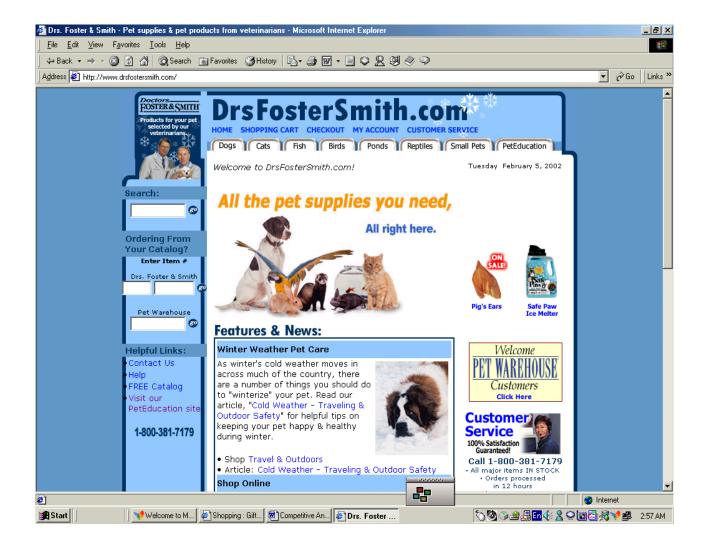
- Shopping cart account information is available on every page
- The main pet categories are available from the navigation bar on every page
- Navigation bar with department categories is available on every page
- Excellent cross-linking:
 - o Purchasing items are available from many pages
 - o Each item is linked to an article related to this particular item. The article contains a valuable information on how to make a right product choice (in terms of size, for example) and installation of the product
 - o Larger image of the purchasing item opens in a separate window
- Pages load fast
- Link to Home page is available from each page
- Tasteful graphics
- All products have thumbnails
- Product information is divided into logical sections

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Though the site has an excellent navigation system for product and category search, some other services are not easy to find. The layout might benefit from some changes.

Specific areas for improvement include the following:

- Links to forum boards and chat rooms are not available from navigation bar or menu
- Articles are only available when purchasing item is selected
- The fixed-width, left-aligned layout leaves a significant amount of white space to the right of the page content at higher resolutions
- The amount of links could be overwhelming for the user



CONTENT/FUNCTIONALITY

Drs. Foster & Smith website offers additionally to the basic pet categories (cats, dogs, birds, reptiles, fish and small pets) the Pond category, which includes a broad selection of products, accessories and plants. The site also provides a link to the Pet Education website which contains extensive resources on pet health, training, care and behavior.

PRODUCTS OFFERED:

Pet supplies scoped by pet category:

- Dogs
- Cats
- Birds
- Fish
- Reptiles
- Small pets

Two other categories include:

- Ponds
- Pet Education

Each pet category contains the groups of products that are specific for this category. Some of the products are grouped in the following categories:

- Grooming and Coat care
- Healthcare
- Dishes and Feeders
- Furniture and Beds
- Toys
- Litter boxes and accessories
- Flea and tick products
- Travel items
- Vaccines, medications
- Vitamins and nutrition
- Books
- Gifts and memorials

Each category contains subcategories with a listing of products. Each product is accompanied by a picture and a detailed description.

TECHNOLOGY USED:

- Database-driven website
- Active Server Pages technology used to retrieve content from the database

- Secure shopping cart
- Users can bookmark the page
- Users can e-mail a friend the URL of a specific page
- Ability to comment on the product
- Live Help allows to ask a question about particular product or order
- Use of cookies to identify returning customers and track items placed in their shopping cards

SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY:

- Quick search by pet category name
- Ability to search by item number
- Search in each pet category scoped by subcategory (Grooming, Healthcare, Cleaning, etc.)
- General search

ORDERING OPTIONS:

- Three ordering options are available: Express Checkout, Remember Me, and Shop Anonymously
- Various shipping options such as Standard Ground (within 7 business days), Expedited Priority Postal (2-4 business days), FedEx® 2 Day Air, and FedEx® Overnight Air (next business day)
- Order a free catalog
- No minimum order
- No additional freight on heavy or oversized items
- Customer service support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Major credit cards accepted

SUPPORTING CONTENT:

- Contact Us
- Company Information
- Help
- Customer Service phone number and e-mail address
- Privacy and Security Policy
- Service and Guarantee Policy
- Ordering and Shipping Information
- Permission for other companies to link to this website
- Features and News
- Doctors' Specials featuring sale items
- Customer Favorites
- Link to Pet Education site with an extensive pool of resources

STRENGTHS

The strength of this website is in its good navigation system and simplicity. Global navigation bar is easily discernible and is available from every page. The users are faced with several options available for search:

- search by item number which is very convenient for returning customers
- search by keyword provides the closest results. If the particular item is not found, tips for search are offered.
- Search by pet category

The simplicity stems from the horizontal global navigation bar at the top of the page and clear division of content within categories.

Other strengths include:

- Detailed description of each product
- Shopping cart and unit information is available on every page
- Help information is available on every page
- Pages are not overloaded with information
- Availability of different shipping options, including express shipping
- Link to Pet Education website (by the same company) with an extensive information on deceases, nutrition, care and training for each pet category

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The areas for improvement center mainly around design issues such as layout, colors and quality of graphics. The low resolution images are used that takes away from the quality of overall design. The best way would be to provide thumbnails of each item with the ability to see the larger and clearer image by clicking it.

Specific areas for improvement include:

- The categories in the global navigation bar require more consistency and should be limited to the types of pets only. Pet Education link can be a stand alone category
- Page layout should be improved. Too much space is wasted on left and right margins of the page
- Different selection of colors would be easier on the eyes (especially background).
 Some of the important links at the top of the page such as Home, Shopping Cart, etc. are almost the same color as the background, which makes it hard to distinguish them
- No order tracking feature



CONTENT/FUNCTIONALITY

JB Wholesale Pet Supplies was chosen as the third competitor because it focuses exclusively on selling pet products. It does not offer additional information on pet topics such as education, training health.

PRODUCTS OFFERED

The products are grouped into categories such as:

- Toys
- Beds
- Dog's clothing
- Health Care
- Training
- Home, Travel, Outdoors
- Dental Care
- Bowls and Feeders
- Grooming Supplies
- Shampoo
- Bones and Treats
- Carriers

The supplies are limited to mostly cats and dogs.

Some other categories include:

- New Items
- Closeout Items
- Specials
- Valentines Items
- Specials
- Information Library (contains a very limited information on some pet topics)

TECHNOLOGY USED

- Database-driven website
- Secure Shopping Card
- Order a free catalog

SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY

- Quick search by product name
- Search by product category

ORDERING OPTIONS

- Some items are shipped directly from the manufacturer
- Expedited as well as air shipments are available

SUPPORTING CONTENT

- Contact information
- Security and Privacy Policy
- Return Policy
- Customer Service
- How to Order information
- Affiliate Program
- Satisfaction Guarantee

STRENGTHS

The site provides a large selection of products for cats and dogs at lower prices. The site is not overloaded with additional information on pets or links to other sites. Most products have thumbnails. The images are clear.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The site lacks consistency within product categories. The categories are not logically grouped. Two separate categories for cats and dogs are not necessary since all products are assumed to be for cats and dogs. The site will benefit from clear labeling.

Specific areas for improvement include:

- There are errors in coding where coding is visible on the page
- Couple of links are not working
- The navigation bar on the left is too long. The main search categories should be available without scrolling
- Products are only limited to cats and dogs. Other pet product categories are not represented