

Brand: Whiskas/Mars Petcare

Sector: Retail/FMCG

Primary Objective: Sales, web traffic

Formats Used: Social media, search, video

Background and Overview:

No industry can avoid adapting to the changes brought by the digital revolution, and the pet care category is no different, with 65% of growth being driven by online sales. In 2015, after many years prioritising mass reach from TV, Whiskas launched its first digital content foray: Kitten Kollege, seeking new ways of resonating with audiences.

Whiskas' first digital venture had been designed as an entertaining content series to respond to search queries around cat care. But Mars also needed to evolve Kitten Kollege from a UK pilot into a global platform that could drive engagement and sales.

The answer was K.I.T. - Kat Institute of Technology. A feline spin-off of Silicon Valley companies, K.I.T. is the pioneer in cat technology, behaviour and nutrition, and a broader creative conceit to offer cat care advice. The true challenge, however, lay in designing a content program that could drive visibility and engagement for the brand.

This is a story about how, through long-term commitment, Whiskas proved that brand building educational content can sell. The successful YouTube initiative reached 25% of UK cat owners and was deployed across 20 countries.

The approach taken also sparked a digital transformation of the wider Mars Petcare range.



What was the role of digital within the media mix?

An initial, global research phase involved pulling data from sources including Google and YouTube search queries, social listening and category audits.

After excluding a huge volume of 'funny cat videos', insights into important topics appeared.

An episodic content pillar was then created and supported by SEO, with the aim of driving awareness of K.I.T., while encouraging brand consideration with 'pull' content. The search-driven content needed to deliver actionable learnings as well as remaining humorous. The brand also developed funny 6" bumpers to retarget with and drive call-to-action.

In addition, Whiskas devised a series of animations, using the brand's trademark cat, the British Shorthair Silver Tabby.

Results/Achievements:

Launched in October 2017 in the UK, K.I.T. impacted sales by 3.6%, with a profit ROI of 3.2:1 – the best business result in the digital history of Mars.

It doubled positive sentiment, increased brand mentions by 537% and improved SEO rankings and website traffic, leading to a 104% rise in positive sentiment.

Having since been rolled out across 20 markets, it has garnered 33 million views and 166 million impressions in countries like Russia, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and India. It struck a cultural chord, too, earning Contagious, Fast Company, System1 and WARC awards.

By harnessing the power of search and combining it with cross-cultural sensibility, Whiskas cracked the formula of brand building educational content that sells.

Kitten Kollege and K.I.T. also led the way to the digital transformation of the brand, with Whiskas' digital spend having shifted from 10% to 29% since 2014, thereby helping the brand exploit the growth of online shopping.

What's the killer headline?

How Whiskas made cat content grow up to drive digital growth

