

Lessons from Candy Crush for Veterinary Marketing

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Summary of the session presented at the SEVC 2025 Congress

Gamification: beyond entertainment

Gamification is the use of game elements in non-game contexts. Candy Crush applies these principles to hook players: progressive levels, visual rewards, clear goals, and a constant sense of progress. These same mechanisms can be integrated into veterinary loyalty programmes, reward systems for preventive visits, or educational campaigns for pet owners.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci), people are more motivated when three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Candy Crush achieves this by allowing players to choose paths, face challenges proportional to their skill level, and share achievements with others. Veterinary clinics can leverage these same principles to design experiences where the customer feels that they are making decisions, learning, and being part of something bigger than a simple commercial transaction.

Behavioural design: Fogg's model

B.J. Fogg's behaviour model proposes that behaviour occurs when three elements coincide: motivation, ability, and a trigger. If any of these fail, the action does not occur.

Applied to the clinic:

- Motivation: Is the client emotionally committed to their pet's well-being?
- Ability: Do we make the desired actions (such as scheduling a preventive visit) easy and accessible?
- Triggers: Do we remind them at the right time, through the right channel and in the right tone?

An effective campaign not only motivates, but also eliminates friction and appears at the right time.

Cognitive biases: the invisible trap

The human mind does not make decisions rationally. Decisions, even those concerning health, are influenced by cognitive biases that operate automatically. Understanding these mental shortcuts allows us to design more persuasive communications:

- Bandwagon effect: If lots of people are doing it, it must be good.
- Sunk cost: If I've already invested time or money, I should continue.
- Scarcity: What is limited seems more valuable.

By aligning our actions with these natural patterns of thought, we can make it easier for customers to say "yes" to decisions that benefit their pets.

Ethical persuasion: Cialdini's keys

Robert Cialdini's six principles of persuasion provide us with a powerful ethical basis for influencing decisions without manipulation:

1. Reciprocity: Giving something first (information, attention) creates a positive obligation.
2. Commitment and consistency: Those who commit to a health plan tend to stick to it.
3. Social proof: Showing that other customers trust us creates confidence.
4. Authority: Experience and certifications inspire confidence.
5. Sympathy: Human connection remains essential.
6. Scarcity: Exclusivity triggers urgency.

Together, these principles, when applied well, can transform the way a clinic communicates with its customers.

Conclusion

The inspiration for an effective marketing strategy does not always come from the veterinary sector. Games such as Candy Crush show us how to apply behavioural design principles, motivational theories and consumer psychology to create memorable, effective and emotionally rewarding experiences. This session offers a fresh perspective and practical tools to improve the bond between clinic and client, fostering lasting relationships based on trust, perceived value and intrinsic motivation.