



A pet sitting app for Hill's Pet Nutrition



Insight

Dogs are treasured family members and studies have found that leaving canines behind for any period of time can cause emotional distress and separation anxiety for both owners and pets alike. The State of U.S. Pet Travel study recently found that 74 percent of pet owners spend part of their vacations agonising over the pets they've left behind. Owners tend to fear for both the mental and physical health of their dogs while they're gone.

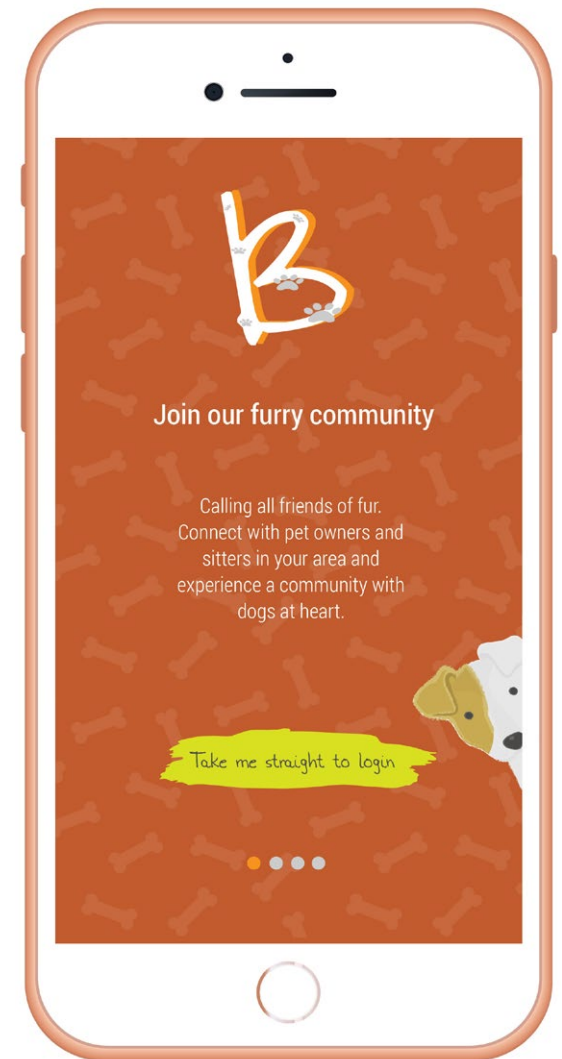
This festive season, many dog owners will face the same dilemma of finding adequate pet care for their furry family members while they are away on holiday or visiting friends and relatives. For most of them, it's a difficult task to find the ideal pet sitter that will provide the best care. Adding to that, dogs are not fond of change, don't like when their family is gone and often don't like intruders in their space. Pet owners want to feel like their chosen pet sitter is the ideal candidate to take care of their dog(s) – a trustworthy individual, or fellow dog lover, who is dedicated to establishing a connection with their dog(s) in order to mitigate any anxiety and concerns.

Concept

Bark tells the story of a series of unique tails, or tales, and creates a community around people who adore dogs. The app provides a pet care service customised to dog personalities.

Bark is a digital meeting place that connects dog owners and sitters through the seven dog personalities, as identified by Hill's Pet Nutrition. Through the app, a dog owner can set up a profile, hand pick pet sitters in their area suited to their dog's personality, rate sitters, read reviews and share testimonials. Similarly, sitters can create a profile, choose which dog personality they are willing to care for, share Bark-related stories and write reviews. According to this information, the app then matches owners with sitters who 'tagged' the same dog personality.

What follows is an exploration of the Bark app together with insights behind the choice of the channel, the copy, design and ultimately the advertising campaign.





Upon completing the installation, the app user is introduced to the Bark universe. If they have already registered, they can continue straight to login. The users are distinguished between pet owners and pet sitters. The Bark app primarily targets those in higher Living Standard Measure (LSM) groups. Irrespective of their age, race and sex, they own a pet and a smart phone and are able to afford the expense of a pet care service. Having said this, the app's tone is conversational as to appeal to a wide age group - from teenagers to older people. Hill's Pet Nutrition functions at the core of the app, as such the app can be marketed to their existing customer base.



The seven Bark buddies are an integral part of the Bark brand and essentially brings it to life. These seven characters are based on the seven main breed classes as identified by Hill's Pet Nutrition.

Please see Ollila, E. n.d. *Dog Traits & Personalities for the Seven Breed Classes*. [O]. Available: <https://www.hillspet.com/dog-care/behavior-appearance/how-dog-personalities-vary-based-on-breed> (Accessed 15 November 2018).

A persona was created to represent each breed. Apart from giving the Bark app character, they act as the glue of the campaign, which does not only want to create a platform for people to find pet sitters, but create a community – “friends of fur”. More than this, it reiterates the informal tone of the brand and provides entertainment.



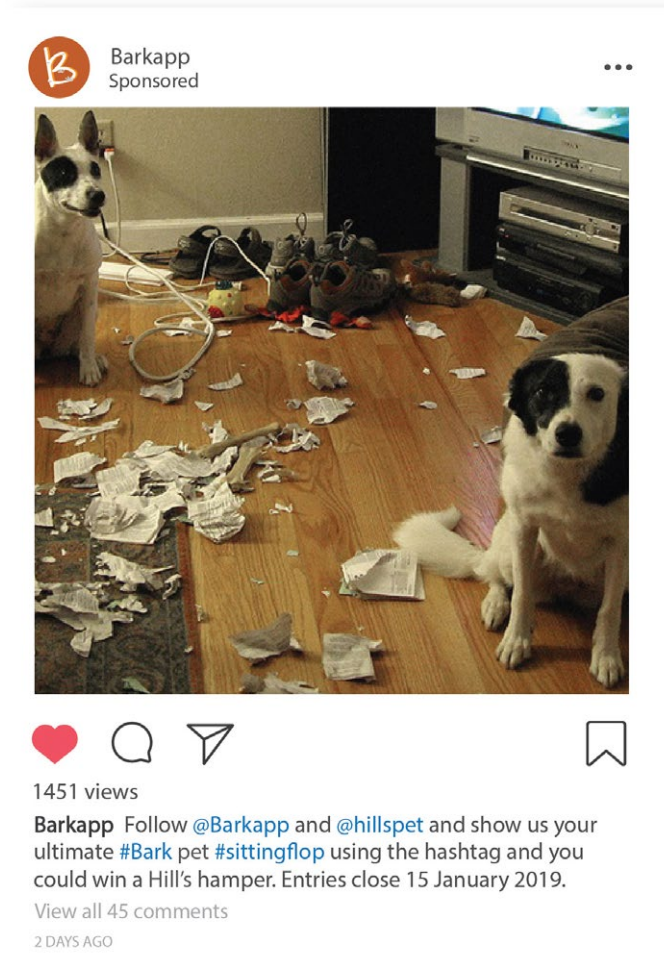
The user can click on the call to action in order to learn more about the personality. Ollila's (n.d.) article can be reworked for the app in order to provide more factual information. Othello's personality, for example, would state that this is a group of diverse dogs that can be trained, require space and are friendly. Breeds that belong to the group include the Akita, Boxer, Great Dane, Mastiff, Portuguese Water Dog, Saint Bernard, Samoyed, and Siberian Husky.

Users become enticed by funny the pet #sittingflops short stories. People will be encouraged to enter the competition in order to get their stories featured on the app.



The campaign aims to differentiate itself by highlighting community as it's core value while also exaggerating why pet sitters and owners should choose Bark, and not just ask a family member or neighbour. In doing so, it provides another entertainment element with #sittingflops, a feature on the app, as well as on social media.

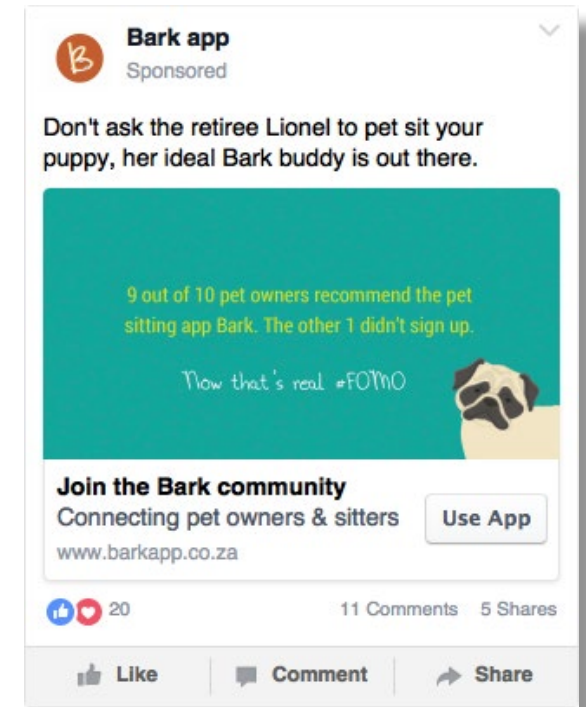
An Instagram ad for the Bark app that encourages and incentivises Instagram users to interact with both the Bark and the Hill's brand by sharing a picture of their worst or funniest #sittingflop. The Instagram page for Bark will ultimately act as the public face of the brand and support the app as a whole. It will provide Instagram users with entertainment and advertise the brand in such a way that does not feel intrusive. Bark's social media becomes a supporting tool in building the community.



The seven Bark buddies provide a source of endless content for social media. Each of them will have their own Instagram page (and their own voice) apart from the main Bark Instagram page. Each dog's story will be chronicled on their respective pages where they go on adventures with their pet owners as well as their pet sitters, and more.

In doing so, Instagram followers might become invested in these dogs' lives and constantly stay engaged with the brand and the community. In this example, Savannah's caption eases her owner's concerns of having to leave her behind in a tone true to her personality description.

The campaign can even go as far as to create pet sitter characters for each of the seven buddies, thereby constructing an interrelated 'big story'.



Even though this Facebook ad is primarily text based, it manages to get a message across with an ad that is easily digestible and has a simplistic call to action. The opportunity exists to also turn #sittingflops into a series of short films that can be showcased. The campaign can then use these short videos as ads on Facebook.

Hill's Pet Nutrition is constantly present on Bark. There is a Hill's section on the app dedicated to sharing pet nutrition information. This is also linked to the seven Bark buddies, and their chosen food or diet is explained, as well as other relevant information. App users can also claim exclusive discounts and vouchers for Hill's pet food when they are registered on the app. This essentially means that Hill's pet nutrition is constantly advertised on the app.



Pet owners can find pet sitters and pet sitters can find pet owners based on what they are registered as. Results will show their ideal matches.

The blog is a value add that provides app users with information they might need or find interesting.

The Bark lounge and Bark board serve similar purposes. The lounge functions a lot like the explore function on Instagram where you can find other dog lovers and share photos. The board is a chat room that acts as a support service. It seems necessary to note this as both these features become add ons that support the Bark community and distinguishes Bark from competitors.

Example of a pet owner's profile

Additional information can be given here, such as that Jeff and Dizzy live in an apartment, but there's a dog-friendly park nearby that they usually visit

A short description of Dizzy, her likes and dislikes, her favourite toy etc.

A short bio of Jeff and why he signed up with Bark

Bark values mutual feedback, much like Airbnb, both pet sitters and owners can rate one another

Jeff's average paws out of five paws. In this case, his rating is still low since he is a new member



The owner indicates his dog's name and breed

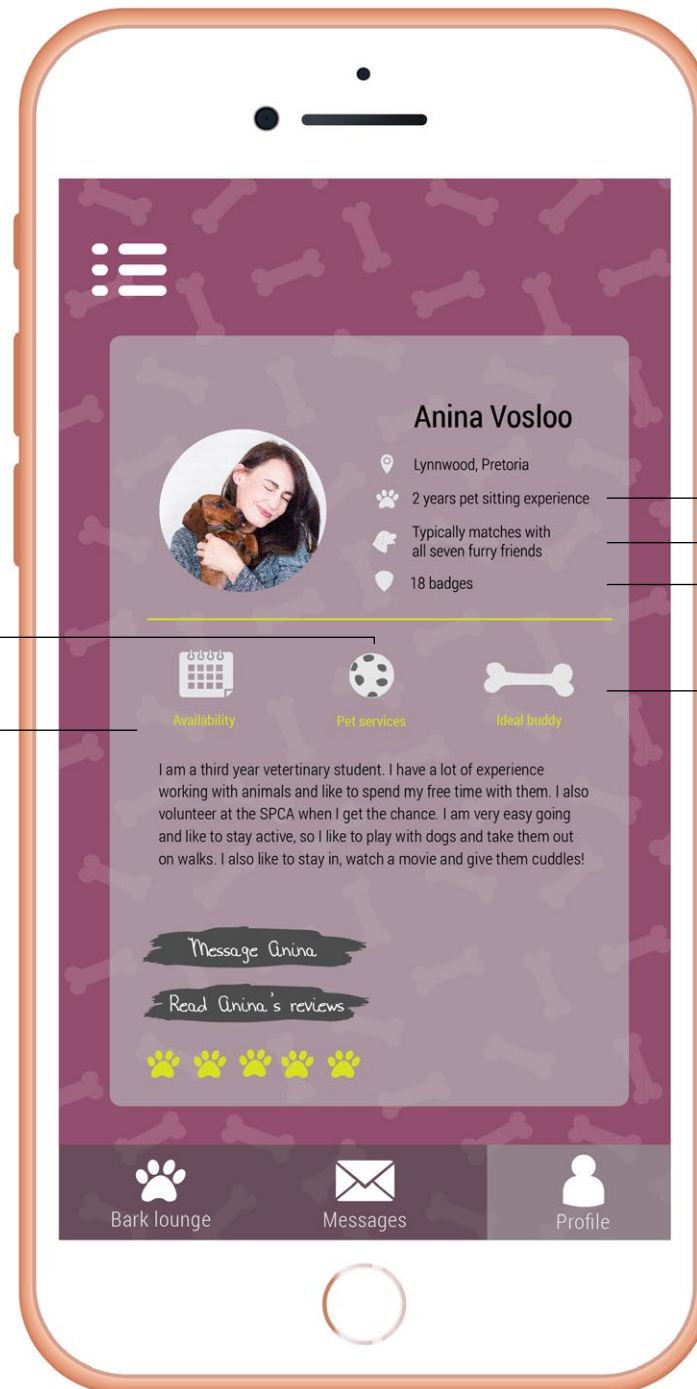
His ideal match as selected from the seven Bark buddies is shown

His 'Barks' are how many times he has used Bark to successfully find a pet sitter

The pet owner, Jeff, can give certain logistical information, such as his domestic worker comes every Wednesday or Dizzy needs to finish her antibiotics prescription

This shows Anina's customised pet services, such as she loves taking a buddy out for walks, she loves to swim with them etc.

Pet owners can check Anina's availability



Upon registering, pet sitters have to get verified via email, as well as indicate their pet sitting experience

In this case, the pet sitter matches with all seven Bark buddies because she is a vet student

A pet sitter's badges indicate how many Bark sits they have completed

This tells a bit more about Anina's ideal buddy, for example, does she prefer small dogs to big dogs or does she prefer taking care of puppies

Concluding remarks

Through the creation of this app and the seven Bark buddies identified by Hill's Pets, the ethos of both the Bark and the Hill's brand becomes apparent. In doing so, the Bark app carries over a key message surrounding the compassionate care for dogs. Bark ultimately tells the story of a series of unique tails, or tales, and creates a community around people who adore dogs.