

Pet Influencers: Feature Analysis, Communication Effects, Governance Countermeasures, and Research on Pet Protection

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Abstract: This research aims to deeply analyze the characteristics and communication effects of pet influencers, propose targeted governance strategies, and simultaneously examine their impact on pet protection. Relevant theoretical foundations and research status are systematically sorted out through the literature research method. The content analysis method is employed to analyze the social media content of pet influencers, and the case analysis method is used to select typical pet influencer cases for in-depth exploration. The study finds that pet influencers can be categorized into three types: cute pets, skill-based pets, and personality-based pets. They exhibit significant communication effects in promoting pet culture, influencing social relationships, and driving the pet economy. However, current pet influencers face problems such as uneven content quality, over-commercialization, and insufficient protection of pet rights and interests. To address these issues, it is necessary to strengthen platform supervision, improve relevant laws and regulations, and enhance the literacy of bloggers. This research provides theoretical support and practical guidance for regulating the development of pet influencers and promoting pet protection.

Keywords: Pet influencers; Feature analysis; Communication effects; Governance countermeasures; Pet protection

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1. Research background

In recent years, with the improvement of social and economic levels and the diversification of residents' lifestyles, the pet industry has shown a rapid development trend. According to relevant data, the scale of China's pet market reached 300 billion yuan in 2020, with 73.55 million pet owners. Among them, 76.8% chose to raise cats and dogs, while the rest included exotic pets such as aquatic animals, reptiles, and rodents. This trend not only reflects the important status of pets in modern life but also lays the foundation for the rise of pet-related industries. At the

same time, the popularization of social media platforms has provided an opportunity for the rise of pet influencers. Internet platforms represented by Weibo and Douyin have become important carriers for the dissemination of pet content. Pet influencers have quickly attracted a large number of fans by sharing pets' daily lives, skill demonstrations, or interesting interactions.

2. Feature analysis of pet influencers

2.1. Type characteristics of pet influencers

2.1.1. Cute pets

Cute pet influencers take a lovely image as their core appeal. Their appearance characteristics usually include a round body, bright eyes, and soft fur, which can stimulate humans' desire for protection and emotional resonance. In terms of behavioral performance, cute pet influencers often win the audience's love through innocent actions, charming expressions, and coquettish behaviors^[1]. For example, Niuniu and Duanwu in "Huiyi Zhuanyong Xiaomajia" (Memory-Specific Little Vest) have accumulated a large number of fans on Weibo with their cute images and silly behaviors. The main reason for the popularity of such pet influencers is that they can relieve the pressure and anxiety of modern people and provide emotional comfort to the audience.

2.1.2. Skill-based pets

Skill-based pet influencers take well-trained special skills as their core competitiveness. Their performance content includes, but is not limited to, obeying commands, completing difficult movements, or participating in film and television productions. For example, Tianlang and Yingtao in *Police Flowers and Police Dogs*, and Xiaoqi in *Super Dog Xiaoqi* have gained countless fans in film and television works with their excellent performance skills, even surpassing the attention of human protagonists. The way such pet influencers attract fans mainly lies in the uniqueness and appreciation of their skills. The audience is often amazed by their exquisite performances and thus develops a sustained interest in following them.

2.1.3. Personality-based pets

Personality-based pet influencers stand out with their unique personality traits. Personalized labels such as funny, cold, and arrogant make them distinctive among numerous pet contents. For example, "Guomin Laoyuefugong" (National Father-in-Law) has attracted a large number of young audiences with his humorous language style and the display of pets' unique personalities^[3-4]. The fan groups of such pet influencers usually have distinct characteristics. They tend to pursue personalized content and show a high degree of recognition for the uniqueness of pets.

2.2. Characteristics of pet influencer-related content

2.2.1. Daily life records

The daily life records of pet influencers mainly cover pets' daily activities such as eating, playing, and sleeping, showing the natural state of pets through real and vivid images. The appeal of such content to fans lies in its ability to meet people's demand for "cloud pet-raising." Especially for those who cannot raise pets themselves due to time or space constraints, watching pet daily life videos has become a substitute for satisfaction.

2.2.2. Interaction and topic participation

The interaction methods between pet influencers and fans mainly include replying to comments, initiating

topic discussions, and organizing online activities. For example, the pet influencer has significantly improved fan participation and activity by regularly launching interactive activities and setting up prizes. The analysis of interaction effects shows that high-frequency interaction can not only enhance fan stickiness but also promote secondary communication, further expanding the influence of content.

3. Communication effects of pet influencers

3.1. Effects on pet culture dissemination

Firstly, pet influencers can promote the dissemination of pet-related knowledge. Through content output on their social media platforms, pet influencers have become important channels for the dissemination of knowledge, such as pet care and training. These contents are usually presented in the form of daily records, interactive videos, or pictures and texts, popularizing scientific pet-raising concepts and methods to the public. For example, “Huiyi Zhuanyong Xiaomajia” shares the daily life of pets “Niuniu” and “Duanwu” through Weibo, not only showing the daily behavioral habits of pets but also providing pet-raising experience through text descriptions, such as how to deal with pets’ health problems or behavioral training skills^[5-6]. This form of knowledge dissemination is highly practical and operable, which can effectively improve the public’s awareness of pet care. In addition, the professional background of pet influencers or the support of cooperative experts further strengthens the authority of their content, making them play an important role in popular science communication.

Secondly, they can shape pet cultural images. Through their unique image-shaping methods, pet influencers have profoundly influenced the cultural image of pets in the public’s mind. Cute pet roles in film and television works can further consolidate the cultural labels of pets being lovely and loyal through their cute appearance and delicate emotional expression. For example, movies such as *Hachiko: A Dog’s Story* and *Quill* tell the profound emotional bond between humans and pets, elevating the audience’s perception of pets from mere companions to beings with emotional value^[7-8]. The shaping of this cultural image not only improves the social status of pets but also lays the foundation for the wide dissemination of pet culture.

3.2. Effects on social relationships

Firstly, enhancing social interaction. Through their content creation and interaction with fans, pet influencers have significantly increased the activity and cohesion of online social groups. The algorithm recommendation mechanism of short video platforms such as Douyin allows high-quality content to quickly gain widespread attention, thereby attracting a large number of users to like, comment on, and forward relevant content. For example, cute pet short video creators build a new media communication matrix, release content simultaneously on multiple platforms, and guide fans to conduct secondary communication, forming a cross-platform social network^[9-10]. This interaction mode not only promotes communication between fans but also builds virtual communities through common interests, making users feel a sense of belonging and participation in the process of using social media.

Secondly, influencing interpersonal relationships. The existence of pet influencers has a profound impact on the relationships between people. On the one hand, pet-related topics have gradually become a common interest point in daily communication, especially among young groups, where phenomena such as “cloud cat-sucking” and “cloud pet-raising” have become increasingly prevalent. This phenomenon not only increases the breadth of interpersonal communication topics but also changes people’s pet-raising concepts to a certain extent. For example,

some fans choose adoption instead of purchase, inspired by pet influencers, thereby promoting the standardized development of the pet market ^[10-11]. On the other hand, the commercial operation mode of pet influencers also encourages fans to form new social connections in the consumption process, such as establishing contacts with others by participating in brand activities or public welfare projects, further expanding the dimensions of social relationships.

4. Existing problems and governance countermeasures in the pet influencer economy

4.1. Existing problems

With the rapid rise of the pet influencer phenomenon, the problems exposed in the process of content production and dissemination have gradually emerged. Firstly, the content quality of some pet influencers is uneven, with problems such as vulgarity and falseness. These problems not only mislead fans but also have a negative impact on the pets themselves. For example, some bloggers deliberately create exaggerated or unnatural video content for pets to attract traffic, and even fabricate false “cute points” through editing to cater to the audience’s curiosity ^[12]. Such content not only violates the ethical principle of spreading true information but also may lead fans to imitate inappropriate behaviors, further exacerbating harm to pets.

Secondly, the over-commercialization of pet influencers has become increasingly serious, which is one of the key problems restricting their sustainable development. In the pursuit of economic interests, some bloggers frequently engage in commercial cooperation, treating pets as profit-making tools while ignoring their actual needs and health conditions. For example, some pet influencers force pets to participate in long-term shooting or wear inappropriate clothing to meet brand promotion needs, which may not only damage the physical health of pets but also arouse fans’ doubts about the bloggers’ sense of responsibility.

Finally, insufficient protection of pet rights and interests is one of the core issues that needs to be addressed urgently in the field of pet influencers. In the operation process of pet influencers, pets are often placed in a high-intensity working environment, and their quality of life and health conditions are difficult to effectively guarantee. For example, some bloggers may restrict their normal living space or social needs to maintain the “persona” of pets, and even neglect basic medical care ^[13].

4.2. Governance countermeasures

To address the above problems, it is urgent to build a multi-level governance system from three aspects: platform supervision, improvement of laws and regulations, and enhancement of bloggers’ literacy. Firstly, social media platforms should strengthen the review of pet influencers’ content and establish a strict content supervision mechanism. Specifically, platforms can adopt a combination of artificial intelligence technology and manual review to conduct real-time monitoring of video and graphic content, and promptly detect and handle vulgar, false, or animal rights-infringing content. At the same time, platforms should set up user reporting channels to encourage fans to actively participate in supervision, forming a good situation of multi-party co-governance. In this way, the spread of bad content can be effectively curbed, and a clean online environment can be maintained.

Improving laws and regulations is an important measure to protect pet rights and interests and regulate the behavior of pet influencers. At present, China’s legal system for pet protection is not yet sound, especially since there are obvious gaps in the protection of pet rights and interests in commercial activities. Therefore, relevant departments should accelerate the formulation of special regulations for pet influencers, clarifying the

responsibilities and obligations of bloggers in the process of using pets, such as specifying the daily working time limit for pets and prohibiting harmful operations on pets^[14-15]. In addition, the punishment for illegal acts should be increased, and bad bloggers should be deterred through legal means to promote the standardized development of the industry.

5. Conclusion

Firstly, a summary of this research. Through a systematic discussion of pet influencers, this study comprehensively analyzes their type characteristics, content characteristics, and communication effects on social media. Pet influencers have attracted a large number of fans with their unique, cute images, special skills, or personalized performances, and have shown diverse communication characteristics through content forms such as recording daily life, interactive participation, and commercial cooperation. These characteristics not only make them a unique online cultural phenomenon but also have a profound communication impact on society. From the dissemination of pet culture to the shaping of social relationships, and then to the promotion of the pet economy, pet influencers have demonstrated significant communication value.

Secondly, research prospects. Although this study has conducted a relatively comprehensive discussion on the characteristics, communication effects, existing problems, and governance countermeasures of pet influencers, there are still many directions worthy of further research. Firstly, with the continuous development of social media technology and changes in user needs, the new development trends of pet influencers are worthy of attention. For example, the application of new technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) may bring innovations to the communication methods of pet influencers. Future research can explore how these technologies affect the characteristics and communication effects of pet influencers. Secondly, the governance countermeasures proposed in this study need to be verified in practice for their implementation effects. Therefore, tracking the actual implementation of governance countermeasures and their impact on the pet influencer industry will be an important direction for future research.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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