

Exploring the Communication Impact of New Media Platforms Based on Pet-Based Short Videos

Yuchen Zhou

School of media, culture and communication, New York University, New York, United States
Corresponding author: yz9738@nyu.edu

Abstract:

In recent years, pet short videos have attracted a large number of viewers as a popular topic, and as a result, have raised awareness of pets and stray animals. However, to shoot eye-catching video content, some creators abuse or abandon pets. These problems not only cause harm to the animals but also trigger a social crisis of trust, accompanied by ethical and legal issues. This paper explores the reasons for the popularity of pet-based short videos and the positive and negative impacts on the public and society of this issue. The study will adopt a case study research method to analyze the overall influence of pet bloggers by collecting relevant videos from short video platforms; meanwhile, popular videos and comments involving pet abuse and other incidents will be analyzed for content and public opinion. The final results of the study show that although pet short videos can effectively raise public concern about pets and stray animals, their negative ethical and social effects cannot be ignored, such as pet abuse and blind pet ownership, which hurt society. Future research should further focus on how to improve the ecology of short-form pet content thereby mitigating the negative social and animal impacts of pet-based short-form videos, thus enabling more positive impacts of video communication.

Keywords: Pet bloggers; Online Pet Ownership; dog and cat abuse; pet economy; crisis of trust.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of society and the increasing pressure of people's lives, more and more young people are surrounded by a sense of loneliness in the face of cumbersome socialization, so they pay more attention to the satisfaction of the spirit. Therefore, pets are regarded by the public as a kind of spiritual solace and family-like companionship. With the rise of short video platforms, many cute and funny dogs and cats have become a new generation of "netizens". "Online Pet Ownership" is becoming a new trend, attracting much attention and bringing huge traffic. Many netizens have been moved by the videos of rescuing stray cats and dogs and have donated to the cause. These pets with unique charms allow people to be comforted by their souls while raising awareness of stray cats and dogs. However, to shoot interesting images, some people may gain attention by abusing pet cats and dogs, or rescuing cats and dogs using posing, thus taking advantage of the sympathy of netizens to cheat money, and some netizens will blindly keep pets after watching interested and cute pet cat and dog videos, but abandon them because they are contrary to their ideals or because they can't be responsible for them, and some pet

cat and dog vendors also shoot videos to lure consumption of pet products They make profits from it. These problems cause harm to animals and trigger a crisis of social trust and people's anger. In this paper, one will explore the communication effect of short videos of pet dogs and cats on new media platforms, analyze the positive and negative impact in the process of their dissemination, and demonstrate the unethical behaviors under the network dividend through some case studies, to promote the development of a healthier short video ecosystem and policies related to animal protection measures.

2. Background

2.1 User Demand

In 2005, the first cat video on the Internet, Pajamas and Nick Drake, was released on YouTube by Steve Chen, one of its founders, and the cute pet area became an unmissable segment of short video platforms. Only the Douyin platform, 2020 short video content marketing trends "white paper" in the data show that pet key opinion leaders (referred to as KOL) in the existing content categories ranked 10th, Jieyin fastest increase in powder in the top 500 KOL content types, the number of cute pet KOL has

accounted for 3.11% [1]. People who live alone or have limited social circles can find great emotional support and a sense of belonging through their real-life pets, which can reduce stress and depression. They can also project human feelings onto their pets and receive emotional rewards, as well as meet other people who own the same breed of pet or have the same hobbies while owning a pet [2]. The persistence of attachment, irreplaceability, emotional overtones, the need for proximity and contact, and the search for a sense of security constitute “personal characteristics” in the theory of use and gratification, which motivate individuals to develop a need for media contact [3]. Since attachment is enduring, users’ frequent viewing of pet videos and intimate fantasies drive the need for media contact, which is one of the main reasons why pet videos are so popular.

2.2 Content Classification and Characteristics

The pet short videos on the Douyin platform are categorized into four types: drama interpretation, daily sharing, knowledge science, and goodies evaluation [4]. It can be summarized that in the short video platform, the subject of posting pet short videos is usually the owner of the pet, and the video content is more of a life record. Unlike beauty, science, or entertainment-themed short videos, pet short videos usually do not have a professional team behind them, but are based on the daily life of the owner and the pet dogs and cats, which are then attributed to different categories and content distribution through personal filming and editing. “Cooking for Dogs,” “Puppy Eating Podcasts,” “Bathing Kittens,” and other features have gained a lot of traffic and attention, and these videos will give viewers an immersive pet ownership experience and visual. These videos will give viewers an immersive pet ownership experience and visual enjoyment. The dubbed funny pet videos give pets the charm of personification, through music, special effects, and voice changes to give viewers the illusion of communicating directly with their dogs and cats. Drama interpretation of short videos will give them a sense of relaxation and pleasure, while also obtaining spiritual comfort. Popular science and goodies testing videos will let viewers increase their knowledge of pets so that they can raise their cats and dogs more scientifically and healthily and have more knowledge to rescue cats and dogs in their daily lives. The most famous of these bloggers is “Old Crazy Yang”, who has 3,226,000 followers on the Douyin platform and specializes in cat and dog rescue activities. He is known by netizens as “the ceiling of the rescue station”. Organized and initiated by blogger “This Meow is called Rabbit”, “Cat Virtue Academy” is a private organization that rescues stray cats and publishes videos of stray cats they catch and adopt. The

organization helps more than 200 kittens a year and has set up its hospital in 2022. This content and information provide a very positive platform for cat and dog lovers to communicate and share.

3. Negative Effects

3.1 Animal Cruelty

Some accounts have an extremely considerable influence in the process of their development, including the Shake Tone platform account “Talking Liu Er Dou” with a total of 35.341 millions fans, “Golden Retriever ‘Egg Yolk’” with 25.65 millions fans, “Wang Puff” with 22.553 millions fans, these accounts have gained huge traffic and attention. The goods class account, such as “egg treasure Z” although only 770 thousand fans, reached a total sales of 1.35 million orders, a total commission of 13.75 million. One can see that in the era of rapid development of the Internet, short video platforms bring huge profits. This is beginning to make some people who do not love cats and dogs to gain profits and attention, fake the persona of a favorite cat and dog, and even abuse of cats and dogs or pose for filming, to achieve the purpose of deception and profit.

In late 2022, pet blogger “Fatty Scientist”, who has 6 million followers, was outed for abusing a puppy in a video. At that time, the account had posted 1,183 videos, of which the top video had 1,263,000 likes, and he would often post videos of him disciplining his dog while his pet dog was standing very well-behaved and pitifully admitting his mistakes, and his cute performance attracted the attention of many netizens. On July 28, netizens exposed that there was abuse of his pet dog inside the latest work of “XiaoPang Scientist”, who posted a video of himself singing, while his pet dog bared his teeth in the video, thus creating a funny atmosphere. However, netizens questioned the slow playback of the “XiaoPang Scientist” in the clothes to hide a needle, in the appeasement of the puppy took the opportunity to pull down the needle, through the needle to make the dog struggling growl, to shoot a funny video to gain attention. Although the follow-up small fat scientists issued a video that they do not have the behavior of dog abuse, the video shows all the content is performed. But netizens in the past video found that he was suspected of using pins to tie the dog, and three years later, the red dog’s small fat teeth appeared several broken, netizens questioned whether this is not a normal phenomenon, and denounced the small fat owner using the dog eyeballs to earn traffic, but there are a lot of netizens under the slogan of “save the XiaoPang” to open a live or Send video, to a certain extent, into a blindly follow the trend of traffic, resulting in a bad influence.

The owner of the famous cat “YanZai”, “JvSang”, who has 451,000 followers across the internet, was reported to have taken two teddies for adoption and tortured them. It was revealed that in the name of the adoption of two teddy dogs to be abused, one brown teddy was poured gasoline and burned to death, and the other black teddy was dragged by a motorcycle, the means of extreme cruelty. And shot video network distribution for profit, was arrested by the police, and blocked on his Shake account. Some netizens pointed out that the pupils of “YanZai” in all online videos are in a large, black, rounded state, and suspected that they were maliciously dropping dilated pupil medicine to make cats look cute and thus attracting fans, resulting in “YanZai’s” blindness, which was later confirmed to be untrue information. However, this suspicion triggered a wave of cyber violence against pet cat bloggers, and some netizens also suspected and attacked the owners of many cats who are naturally insensitive to the external environment and would naturally have large, round pupils, but in fact, the cat’s pupils will automatically become bigger in a dim environment to absorb more light to see their surroundings. A lot of unhinged attacks have affected many cat bloggers so much that they have been posting videos to prove themselves, causing chaos on the internet.

“WangQianFei” is a controversial blogger on the Shakey Voice platform with 1.01 million followers, mainly features her son and a group of cats, a dog, and a duck in the house, often showing funny and heartwarming scenes of life, which are loved by netizens. But the videos posted on June 20 and 25, 2024 caused great controversy. the 20th video shows the boy making doodles, with three adult cats placed on the stovetop, snuggled together and motionless, including a blue cat holding a pet duck with its head down in a state of lethargy, and a few newborn kittens placed in an iron plate, and the cats do not move at all when the boy blows flour on them. The 25th video shows the boy doing his homework, and the blue cat holding the duck, lying on its back on a stack of books on the desk, motionless and in a drowsy state. This is not in line with the normal habits of cats, and all the cats in the camera show a plane ear state, which is a kind of fear and unhappy performance, which caused netizens’ attention and debate, they suspect that the blogger in the shooting of the video before the pets at home hit the pets to cause them to behave because of the fear of psychology, and there is a suspected to give cats to feed medicine to cause them to fall asleep and posed for the camera. In the face of these doubts, what the blogger has done so far is to delete the comments and hide the video, without giving enough evidence to prove themselves.

3.2 Blind Pet-Keeping and False Rescue Prob-

lems

The popularity of pet blogger videos will attract many people to keep their dogs and cats or other pets, but there is a gap between the reality of real breeding and the record of the good life on the Internet. Faced with disobedient cats and dogs or expensive medical costs, many people will choose to abandon them. Some unauthorized pets purchased by minors sometimes face unacceptable parents, which results in the abandonment of the pet. According to the World Health Organization in 2023, there are currently more than 200 million stray animals worldwide, of which China accounts for more than 40 million, or 20% of the global total [5]. Most of these stray pets originate from being actively abandoned or lost by their owners. Stray pets live in areas with high human traffic, and pets that have not been vaccinated and are abandoned, or that have diseases of their own, can increase the risk of infectious diseases among pets or human-pet co-morbidities. In the face of such a situation, China lacks official management and regulations for stray animals. Some people deal with stray pets by cooking, beating, and killing them, which can lead to increased conflicts between humans and animals [5].

On the Douyin platform, many people will rescue cats and dogs, or adopt stray animals, and publish the corresponding video clips. For example, the video of rescuing cats in the rain received 4.009 million likes, “FufuFanzi” adopted the XiaoQiLinZhi has become a netizen, 10 months gained 896,000 fans, the adoption of rescue kittens and puppies of the video is very popular with the audience. And many of their favorite viewers take the initiative to adopt rescue cats and dogs. But people who make money from the so-called “stray code” have also appeared. A blogger, “Wangwang Zai”, released a video of rescuing a puppy that had fallen into the water, in which he said that he saw a child throwing stones at the puppy and then rescued the puppy and adopted it, and people were very touched by it, and because of the blogger’s kindness, the video gained 607,000 likes. However, it was subsequently revealed that the blogger’s entire video was a self-directed hoax, in which the blogger first adopted the puppy and then threw the puppy into the water herself, pretending to rescue a stray dog to win people’s goodwill to gain traffic and attention. Although the percentage of people willing to adopt pets has grown significantly in recent years, the actual number of adoptions is much lower than the number of pet purchases [5]. The lack of safeguards in the adoption process and the frequent occurrence of “adoption scams” have led some people to distrust adoption. In addition, some accounts will take advantage of people’s sympathy to cheat money. Douyin often brushes to the

so-called rescue cats and dogs' live room. This live room is usually presented in a narrow room, which is crowded with cats and dogs, there is no space for activities and no real anchor, but from time to time the pop-up screen will float over the "there are stray cats and dog food for sale, to buy them and give love", is a kind of donation behavior in disguise. But when some netizens questioned "Is this a pet rescue center?" "Are dogs and cats available for adoption?" there would be no reply. It's hard not to suspect that it's a scam to take advantage of people's sympathy by collecting cats and dogs.

3.3 Positive and Negative Aspects of the Pet Economy

Compared to these suspected animal abuse and substantial deception. The pet economy is also an important part of the mix. The size of China's "pet economy" industry will reach 592.8 billion yuan in 2023, accounting for 2.44% of gross domestic product (GDP). At the same time, the White Paper estimates that China's urban pet (dogs and cats) consumption market will reach 361.3 billion yuan in 2026 [1]. In the context of the rapid development of the network, the pet economy has been a spurt of growth, a lot of pet sales and pet cat and dog supplies companies also began to enter the pet short video track, the launch their own company "star" cats and dogs, to do popularization of the video, gained a high degree of attention and in the live sale of goods in the harvest. With the development of modern science and technology and people more and more healthy pet concepts of shaping, many people are willing to buy more nutritious dog food and will buy pet nutrition and supplies at a high price, which to a certain extent is a good thing, on behalf of the status of family pets to improve the construction of a more advanced social framework. However, there is no lack of business that will be through false information and take advantage of people's psychology to induce consumption, the use of the Internet to create a cocoon of information, through the so-called advanced pet theory to distort the purpose of consumption [6].

According to Fromm's theory of alienated consumption. In layman's terms, it means that when people buy and use commodities, they are no longer trying to satisfy their actual needs, but rather they are attracted by the commodities, become dependent on them, and even use them to define their own identity and value. In this case, commodities are no longer tools, but the dominant force controlling people's lives, and people lose control of their real needs in the consumption trap [6]. In the pet economy, especially in the sale of pets, the sale of pet supplies, and pet socializing activities, businessmen achieve alienated consumption and distort the normal concept of consump-

tion through induced consumption, hunger marketing, and sales activities in the name of science and technology. By advocating high-quality consumption and hyping pet breeds and technological pet goods, consumers are prompted to purchase higher-priced and higher-end products. In some videos released by merchants, the price and type of highly pedigreed dog and cat pets or pet goods are linked to the social class of the purchaser, in words to satisfy consumer vanity, which to a certain extent will lead to blind comparison and bragging mentality. This defeats the original purpose of caring for pets, which is to obtain physical and mental health benefits. The distorted demand for ownership, the guidance of pet bandwagon bloggers, and the bundled sales of live bandwagons all exacerbate human anxiety and financial burdens, and to a certain extent affect the healthy development of the pet economy.

4. Improvement Measures

Short video platforms and regulators that want to make positive changes need to systematically design and implement four aspects: platform management review system, policy and regulation promulgation, user self-discipline and public supervision, and animal protection publicity. Short video platforms can utilize a combination of artificial intelligence and manual review to strengthen the review of video content. Different accounts that often have the same background and the same information are quickly identified to reduce suspected fraudulent behavior. And delete videos involving animal cruelty or inappropriate behavior, establish a convenient reporting mechanism to encourage users to report inappropriate videos, set up appropriate rewards, and quickly verify the information to quickly deal with the reported content, the uploading of videos of animal cruelty and fraudulent behavior of the user to implement such as blocking and restricting the release of the authority of the penalties. At the same time, guidelines can be placed under the videos published with pet content, encouraging and reminding creators to publish healthy and positive pet content, and the platform provides traffic to help recommend quality content.

Policies and regulations can promote relevant legislation by posting content or proposing ideas, clarifying the legal responsibility of animal cruelty and increasing penalties on the platform, and jointly combating and resisting animal cruelty through cooperation with animal protection organizations and governmental departments, to the point of exorbitant penalties and solutions.

User self-discipline and public monitoring need to increase education and publicity through platforms and social media to let users know more about proper pet ownership, enhance their sense of responsibility, advo-

cate civilized Internet access, and avoid posting and disseminating inappropriate content. In addition, an online community monitoring mechanism should be established to encourage users to actively report inappropriate videos and publicly handle the reported information. Animal protection publicity can be done by sharing positive cases and increasing the exposure of well-known commentators to let netizens know about more successful animal rescue and adoption stories, as well as healthy and professional scientific knowledge about pet raising and care, and animal protection-themed activities can be organized during special festivals, such as pet supplies science exhibitions, public welfare fundraising, adoption days, etc., to attract public attention and participation. And can be organized in the network platform to open voluntary explanation services, so that netizens have more ideas and awareness about animal protection. Through these measures, to create a healthy and positive short video ecological environment, to promote the development of the cause of animal protection, and to eliminate the emergence of more harmful behaviors.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that pet short videos have significant communication effects and receive high traffic and attention on new media platforms due to their fun, creativity, and emotional resonance. These videos have not only generated positive impacts such as higher public awareness and protection of pets and stray animals, but also raised ethical and legal issues of pet abuse for traffic and profit, as well as abandonment of pets due to blind pet ownership. This study provides practical suggestions for short video creators, platform operators, and policy-makers to minimize the negative effects through content audits, reporting mechanisms, and policy regulations for pet-based short videos. Future research should focus on the analysis of diverse platforms to compare the dissemination effects of pet-based short videos on different plat-

forms; and explore the long-term effects of such videos on viewer behavior and social attitudes, such as the increase in pet adoption rates and animal protection awareness; explore the reduction of pet abuse and blind pet ownership through regulation and education; and incorporate AI and big data technologies to enhance content auditing and ethical supervision more comprehensively and systematically in the future. Through these measures, aim to promote a healthy short video ecosystem and the cause of animal protection.

References

- [1] Zhu Y. China's urban pet (dogs and cats) consumption market will reach RMB 361.3 billion in 2026: Creating "people and pets together" to help "its economy" develop, industry white paper shows. Wenweipo, 2024, 17: 002.
- [2] Simonetti D.J. Pet & pray: The transforming power of grace and communion through God's beloved creatures (Doctoral dissertation). University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary, Graduate School of Theology, 2018.
- [3] Yuan Z. Study on behavioral practice and emotional satisfaction of mimicry pet attachment: Based on the observation of the phenomenon of "cloud pet raising" on video platform (Master's thesis). Wuhan University, 2023.
- [4] Wang X. Analysis of the reasons for the popularity of pet-related short videos on Douyin. College of Arts and Letters, Xi'an University of Finance and Economics, 2022, 13(22): 105-108.
- [5] Deng S., Cao R., Zhou J., Chen Y. Study on the awareness and attitudes of urban residents toward pet adoption in the context of contemporary society. *Interdisciplinary Science Letters*, 2023, 7(2): 32-36.
- [6] Chen W. Interpretation of pet economy Simonetti D.J. Pet & pray: The transforming power of grace and communion through God's beloved creatures (Doctoral dissertation). University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary, Graduate School of Theology, 2018.