

Factors Promoting Pet Economic Development among Youth in the COVID-19

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Abstract

With spreading of COVID-19, more people choose to stay at home and live with pets. In terms of the diversification of information acquisition methods and the influence of self-media platforms on young people, pets have become a major way for contemporary young people to vent pressure and release their feelings. As more and more people pay more attention to pets, a large number of pet peripheral derivatives have gradually emerged to form a pet commodity industry chain, such as pet staple food, pet snacks, pet toys, pet clothing, nutrition, beauty, etc. Through research on pet related materials, the research found that pet consumption has a very large and complete system, and the main force for pet consumption is mostly young people. Based on the background of such a consumption environment, this article takes the analysis of the reasons that affect young people's consumption of pets as the starting point, and uses questionnaires to investigate and analyze the reasons why young people consume pets. From platform, peer, advertising, social interaction, and companionship, five Factors conduct empirical research to explore the reasons why young people consume pets. SEM analysis results show that companionship, platform, and social interaction have a significant impact on purchase intention, while peers and advertising have no effect on purchase intention. This article will further study the factors that affect young people's consumption of pets and how these factors affect young people's consumption of pets.

Keywords: Pet consumption; Accompany; Socialize; Peer.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are a series of commonalities in the lives of people in the epidemic, such as stress in life and work, loneliness, anxiety, and so on. The spread of the global epidemic makes people feel insignificant, and fast-paced work makes young people lack enough time for in-depth socialization. During the epidemic, people-to-person contact has decreased, and the development of the Internet has weakened real social interaction to a certain extent. These factors have exacerbated the loneliness of young people [1]. As more and more people regard pet ownership as a relaxing way of life during the epidemic, the pet economy has risen even more. Young people have higher requirements for the service, types, quality and user experience of pet products. Their investments in pet supplies, pet entertainment, pet food, etc. continue and continue to increase [2]. The growth in the number of pets and consumption of pet supplies among young pet owners has promoted innovation and progress in the entire pet consumer market.

The rise of selling pets and sharing breeding experience through the social medias has enabled more and more people to keep pets. The young people's concept of pet raising has changed. Their emotional consumption of pets has increased, which has transformed the role of pets into emotional companionship. Pet owners give more emotions to their pets, and pets are no longer just animals but as family members [3]. Many large companies have entered the pet market and have begun to invest heavily in media promotion, develop online and offline marketing channels, and provide opportunities for rapid development of the pet economy. Consumers are also taught how to fine-tune pets so as to enhance their pet consumption concepts and diversify their consumption categories. Many young people leave their hometowns to study abroad or go to work [4]. For these large numbers of single young people, compared to being alone for a long time, interacting with pets can reduce their anxiety, depression and loneliness, and improve their happiness. sense. Young people who lack

company have diverse characteristics, and they are more willing to consume for pets. Therefore, it is more meaningful to study the consumption behavior of pet products among young people.

From the perspective of pet consumption structure, pet food consumption accounts for the highest proportion of pet consumption structure, and various staple foods such as grain-free, fresh meat, freeze-dried food, canned staple food, prescription food, and low-calorie food are emerging one after another [5]. Pets need different nutrients at different life stages. Therefore, those kitten foods designed for kittens, prescription foods designed for neutered or sick cats, etc. are increasingly recognized by consumers. For example, prescription food has higher protein content

and lower fat content than ordinary adult cat food, and can increase water consumption and urine production. In the consumer health products, a series of health products such as hair removal products, hair removal cream, cat grass tablets, etc. have appeared. For dogs, basic immunity and calcium supplements have become the most popular nutritional products for pets online in the past. In addition, the demand for dog grooming remains strong [6]. In addition, in the past year, the nutrient demand and tear-stain removal products has increased rapidly. Another major expenditure of pet consumption is pet medical care. Pet medical service business has received more and more attention, with the highest penetration rate of sickness visits and vaccination.

Table-1: Pet consumptions

Types	Products	Functions
Pet staple food	Dry food, wet food, freeze-dried food, etc.	Energy & nutrients
Pet snacks	canned food, freeze-dried, dried meat, etc.	Interaction & training
Health products	nutritional creams, calcium tablets, trace elements, etc	Development & treatment
Pet grooming	bathing, trimming, cutting nails, etc.	Beauty & body shape
Pet training	Training classes	Better behaviors
Pet fostering	Pet hotel	Helping owners
Pet fostering	vaccines, deworming, surgery, etc.	Health care
Pet insurance	medical insurance & owner liability insurance	prevention of pet injuries
Pet funerals	funerals, cremation, etc.	Comforting owners
Pet toys	Pet toys	Entertainment

2. Hypotheses

With the rapid development of the Internet, people have a great dependence on the Internet for food, clothing, housing and transportation. In recent years, e-commerce has developed rapidly. Various shopping platforms have provided us with many options for pet products [7]. At the same time, pet owners have provided more options for pet consumption. In field research and online search data, it is found that some high-end cat and dog food can only be sold in physical stores with the authorization of the manufacturer. Therefore, compared with physical pet supply stores, pet owners have more choices on e-commerce platforms. Economic ability and high-quality requirements for pet supplies to purchase pet supplies, so the role of e-commerce platforms is obvious [8]. The post-80s and post-90s pet raising army prefers diversified channels for obtaining pet information through these apps with strong social attributes [9]. Such as pet products recommendation by Internet celebrity, product discount promotion, etc. Some Internet celebrities recommend a certain pet product when making a video. Such an advertisement will make fans who follow them pay more attention to the product, stimulate the pet owner's desire to consume, and generate purchase motivation. Combining the results of the platform's influence on the purchase intention of pet supplies, therefore, it is proposed:

H1: Internet celebrity promotion has a positive effect on the purchase intention of pet products.

In the case of the same age and the same pet, the communication between the two parties will be easier, able to accept each other's suggestions or opinions on pet raising, and accept the pet supplies recommended by the other party. Between the one who keeps pets and the peers who do not raise pets, those who do not have pets will be curious about pets, and there is a certain probability that they will try to raise pets because of the influence of their peers [10]. There is a relationship of recommendation and being recommended between the two peers of the pet raising. There is the same emotional confession among peers, and it is probabilistic that the other party's interest in pets and pet supplies and their willingness to purchase will be correspondingly increased. The question-and-answer method among youth essentially allows people of the same young age to accept pets or pet products. Young people will use personal judgment and use conditions to promote and recommend to more people accordingly, and then form a large network of relationships [11]. Similarly, under the influence of the Internet platform, more young peers are using social media for group reference with consumers, and peers act as product experts to deliver product information to consumers [12]. Deepen the familiarity of consumers with buying intentions to the product, and increase

consumers' willingness to buy due to the touting of peers. Combining the results of the influence of peers on the purchase intention of pet supplies, it is proposed:

H2: Peers have a positive effect on the purchase intention of pet products.

Like other advertisements, the advertising of pet supplies is mainly used to push the product's characteristics, functions, and uses, as well as the supplier to push it to consumers, so as to attract consumers' attention and interest, so as to make consumers purchase motives [13]. The difference between pet supplies advertisements and other advertisements is that they will not be placed on traditional mass media such as television, but will be targeted at young pet owners and placed on apps commonly used by young people, such as various APP opening advertisements. A full-screen advertisement will be loaded when the APP is opened, which can be a dynamic advertisement video or a static advertisement image. This type of advertisement can leave a deep impression on consumers, thereby enhancing product awareness [14]. The big data of all kinds of APPs will then follow the big data in the background to accurately deliver advertisements to consumers [15, 16]. If a user likes a pet video, more pet videos will be recommended to the user. The cloud computing in the background of the shopping APP will push more pet products after users search for similar pet products, so that they can carry out secondary marketing to consumers and push precise positioning. Therefore, advertisements for pet supplies in app programs will more precisely attract the attention of pet owners. The audience has a deep memory and stimulates the consumer's desire to consume, which will have a great possibility of purchasing motivation. Combining with the structure of the influence of advertisements on the purchase intention of pet products, it is proposed: H3:

H3: Advertising has a positive influence on the purchase intention of pet products.

As the pace of life accelerates and the pressure of social competition increases, the post-80s and post-90s generations especially need emotional and spiritual sustenance. Nowadays, pets have changed their roles, as young people's children or partners, becoming a kind of emotional companionship and sustenance for them [17]. Spending money for pets has also become a popular consumption among young people. The "loneliness" brought by fierce social competition to young people is very strong, and they need more company. On the one hand, increasing economic pressure makes it difficult for young people to consume luxury goods, such as apartments and cars [18]. On the other hand, more young people choose to marry late, or even decide not to marry. Therefore, they feel lonelier, need more company, and are more willing to consume for the things they like. Combined with the influence structure

of companionship on the purchase intention of pet products, it is proposed:

H4: Companionship has a positive influence on the purchase intention of pet products.

The old generations did not have the networks like today, and the communication is backward, mainly relying on offline, face-to-face communication. However, with the development of network technology, face-to-face communication between people has become less [19]. Most of the communication among young people relies on social media. For young people, pets are a nice social media tool. They can communicate on the topic of pets, which allows people to break through the barriers of space and time to communicate. The social media is a platform for people to communicate and participate in each other. Learn and exchange knowledge about pet keeping, and provide technical support for pet owners to meet their social needs. Scattered individuals who raise pets can connect through the Internet and Internet social products [20]. An online community is formed, where people who are not raising pets can raise pets in internet cloud to get some spiritual comfort. People who raise pets can share their knowledge during the raising period, exchange experiences with each other, and gain emotional resonance. Therefore, pets can shorten the distance between people, and invisibly promote people to engage in social activities. Thus, it is proposed:

H5: Social interaction has a significant positive influence on the purchase intention of pet products.

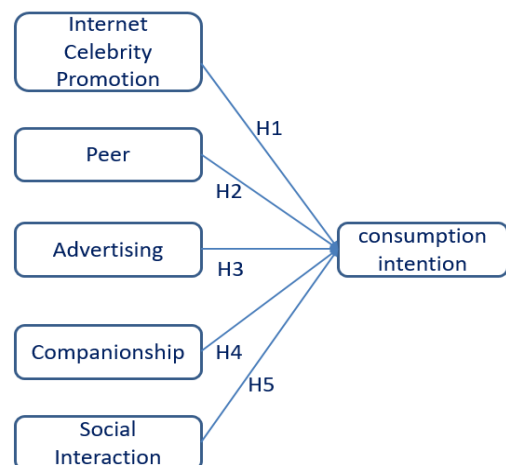


Fig-1: Research Model

3. METHODOLOGY, MEASUREMENT AND DATA ANALYSIS

This research mainly adopts empirical analysis research methods to clarify the significance and reliability of the above hypotheses. We design a series of questions based on the above hypotheses, and mainly use social medias to invite those who meet the requirements across China. The questionnaire is mainly

divided into two parts: individual characteristic variables (basic information) and individual subjective factors. The personal subjective part uses a seven-point Likert scale to measure people's attitudes, from very accepting to very unacceptable as 7 points, 6 points, 5 points, 4 points, 3 points, 2 points, and 1 point respectively. In order to ensure that the results of the questionnaire are fair and credible, three question items

are set for the each of the five hypothetical factors mentioned above.

Table 2 indicates that there are 263 volunteers in this survey. Interestingly, more than half of them are men.66.5% of them are students, and 65.7% are less than 22. 65.4% of their salary is under 500\$, which indicates that most of the young people don't have enough money to make high-end consumption.

Table-2: Demographic Analysis

Category	Subject	N	%
Gender	Male	148	54.3%
	Female	120	45.7%
Occupation	Students	175	66.5%
	Civil Servant	5	1.9%
	Teachers	21	7.9%
	Freelance	33	12.5%
Age	others	29	11.2%
	18-22	173	65.7%
	22-30	77	29.2%
	30-35	9	3.4%
Salary	Above 35	4	1.7%
	< 500\$	172	65.4%
	501-1200\$	58	22.0%
	1201-1500\$	20	7.6%
	>1500\$	13	5.0%

The reliability test values are listed in Table 2, where values of cronbachs-alpha and composite reliability are greater than 0.7[21], and value of AVE is

greater than 0.5 [22], therefore it proves the reliability of the model.

Table -3: Convergent Validity, Composite Reliabilities testing results

Construct	Cronbachs Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
ICP	0.858	0.914	0.780
Peer	0.881	0.926	0.807
Advertising	0.876	0.924	0.802
Companionship	0.863	0.916	0.785
Social interaction	0.837	0.902	0.754
Consumption intention	0.877	0.924	0.803

Table 3 shows that the load of these projects is higher than that of other projects. This step proves the validity of the model [23]. Therefore, all relevant tests

have proved the reliability and effectiveness of the model for structural model evaluation [24].

Table-4 Correlation Matrix and Square Roots of AVE

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
ICP	0.883					
Peer	0.211	0.898				
ADV	0.152	0.231	0.895			
Com	0.406	0.371	0.475	0.886		
SI	0.318	0.319	0.541	0.077	0.868	
CI	0.122	0.431	0.171	0.492	0.433	0.896

Table 4 indicates that three of the five hypotheses are supported. The relationships between

ICP and CI, companionship and CI, social interaction and CI are highly significant. Relationships between

peer and CI, advertising and CI are not significant. This proves that young people are actively motivated by internet celebrity and social situations to improve consume intention to pet products. When they decide to select a pet product, they will focus on word of mouth

from internet celebrities. Most of the young people expect for better companionship before they decide to pet products. And they can put a lot of effort into sharing pet information in order to achieve better social interactions [25].

Table-5 Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Paths	Estimate	t-value
H1	ICP →consumption intention	0.311	2.451*
H2	Peer →consumption intention	0.023	0.476
H3	Advertising →consumption intention	0.021	0.610
H4	Companionship →consumption intention	0.550	14.001**
H5	Social interaction →consumption intention	0.311	6.234**

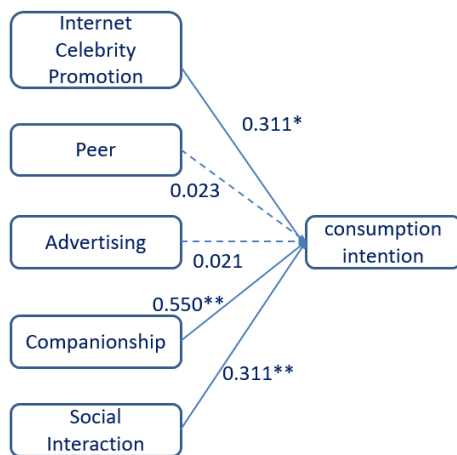


Fig-2: Structural Model (Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$)

4. DISCUSSION

The rapid development of social media has spawned a variety of Internet celebrities to provide convenience for consumers to purchase pet products. Commodities from all over the world can reach consumers through the recommendation of Internet celebrities. Behind these internet celebrities, there are big data calculations, which accurately locate consumers and conduct secondary sales to consumers and stimulates consumers' desire to consume more, so that consumers who own pets have more channels to learn about raising pets [25]. These Internet celebrities promote pet products for pet consumers from different perspectives, and increase the purchase intention of pet owners. In an era without social media, suggestions among peer friends may be more acceptable to consumers. However, in the age of advanced information, young people can obtain information from books or the Internet. Today, with the development of the Internet, peer-to-peer advice is no longer the first choice, and the information consumers need can be obtained through the Internet. For pet products consumers, the evaluation of pet products on the Internet is more of a reference for consumers, rather

than suggestions from peers or friends [26]. Contemporary young people have a higher level of education, more independent thinking, more rational consumption thinking, and will not follow crowd consumption or blind consumption. They pay more attention to the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of commodities.

Advertising is the product of media products, used to promote products or increase the visibility of businesses. In the research model, advertising does not hold true for purchase intention. In the younger generation, advertising is almost everywhere. The younger generation has the ability to distinguish between true and false, and has been able to understand that there are false propaganda and excessive propaganda in advertising, which is unreliable. They believe more in experiences [27]. Therefore, product reviews are extremely important in online platforms. Consumers are more concerned about the comments of other customers, such as whether the pet food that pets like or not, whether the pet toys they buy are attractive to pets, etc. Research has proved that most pet owners regard their pets as their own children, followed by their relatives. Pet owners believe that pets and their family members are their emotional dependence and companionship. Young people, especially groups of young people drifting away, need companionship and sustenance. They are separated from their families and wandering away for better opportunities. They want more of a caring and a comfort. Thinking that there is still a cat or a dog waiting for them at home, the feeling of loneliness in their heart will be reduced a lot. Transportation has become more and more convenient, but the cost of living has become higher and higher. Many young people, especially young people from other places wandering in stressful cities, especially need companionship and sustenance [28]. Choosing to keep a pet as a companion is a wise choice of many young people living in other places.

In today's society, with the development of the economy and the advancement of urbanization, the communication between people is decreasing, and many neighbors who live on the opposite side do not know it [29]. The development of the Internet has enabled people to have more online entertainment activities, and people's social needs can also be completed online. The emergence of pets can promote the combination of online and offline interpersonal communication. The emergence of pets allows people to get to know more people who keep pets and give them the opportunity to take the first step in communication. For example, to raise a dog, the dog's habit is to go out and consume energy, which forces the owner of the dog to go out of the house instead of staying at home. In this way, in the process of walking the dog, you will get to know more pet owners who also walk the dog, meet more people with the same hobbies, and expand the social circle. Therefore, pets play a role as a bond in social interaction. In addition, keeping pets will also enable pet owners to have more conversation topics with other people in the social circle. The development of the Internet has also provided pet owners with an online pet social APP, which can expand their social circle while exchanging information for their pets.

5. CONCLUSION

This study found that contemporary young people are obviously lonely and need sustenance and companionship. Although the development of the Internet has shortened the distance between people, it has broken the distance in space. However, the real needs of contemporary young people can still be reached, touched, and a friend who can accompany them every day. Therefore, we must pay attention to the loneliness and emptiness of contemporary young people. The increase in life pressure and the increase in the cost of living have doubled the survival pressure of the new generation of young people. Big cities are lively and lonely for young people from other places. Life in a big city is always full of hope and hardship at the same time. In order to earn a living, the hardships of being alone, the narrow and monotonous lifestyle of life in social circles, have caused the emptiness of emotional life and spirituality. This lack of emotion makes people's need for pet companionship a rigid demand. People need dogs, the most loyal friends of mankind, to fill the gaps in friendship in reality, and clingy lovers like cats to fill the gaps in emotions. To some extent, pets make up for people's loneliness and emotional emptiness. Although people spend a lot of money on pets, people still feel that the pets that accompany them deserve the best care.

For these young pet owners, pets are a spice for loneliness and loneliness. Some people are single, then pets become their silent emotional partners; some people choose not to have children, so the role of pets is their children. The pet owners have paid money, time,

energy, and feelings for raising pets, and they also enjoy the company and feedback of pets to themselves. Therefore, in contemporary society, we must not only see the phenomenon of more and more young people owning pets, but also the social phenomenon behind it. The rapid development of society and the increase in living costs have caused young people to lack friends. The company of lovers and family members has to work hard to survive for life. Although pets can replace the company of these people and eliminate the feeling of emptiness and loneliness in the hearts of young people, this is only temporary and cannot fundamentally solve these social problems. A good society is not only to satisfy people's material life, but more importantly, to enrich their spiritual life and no longer be empty. Therefore, these social problems still need us to continue to work hard to solve, so that our society will be better developed.

This study also has the following limitations. First of all, most of the respondents of the questionnaire are college students. Future research should pay more attention to young people who have just joined the job because they are the loneliest young group. Secondly, the preference of different income groups for different kinds of pets is also the direction of future research. Finally, when young people go to another city, what the fate of their pets will be is also a future research topic.

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