

"Cyber Pet Raising": A Study on the Internet Community of Interest from the Perspective of Post-subcultural

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Abstract: *As a spiritual home for contemporary youth, the emergence of the community of "Cyber pet raising" has important cultural significance. From the perspective of post-subcultural theory, this paper studies the social media presentation of "Cyber pet raising" members, and concludes that technological and cultural factors lay the foundation for the formation of the community, and through the establishment of intimate relationships, sharing and interaction, and identity, the community can be operated and developed. However, in the cyber virtual space, members become more mobile, and style of the community is no longer obvious, shifting from a collective grand narrative to individual emotional experience and identity.*

Keywords: Cyber pet raising; Subcultural community; Identity; Pet videos.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the innovation of Internet technology and the prosperity of social media, great changes have taken place in people's way of life. The communication and interaction based on virtual communities have driven the diversified development of subcultural communities, and formed many communities with the same interest and emotions as the core. "Cyber pet raising" is one of the media wonders, and lovers addicted to pet videos have become a unique subcultural community in Cyberspace. As an important companion and spiritual support in people's daily lives, pets have been proven to have a positive impact on people's lives, like relieving their loneliness and healing their emotions. However, there are still many people who cannot keep their own pets due to various constraints and can only watch pictures or videos of pets through social media and video platforms in an immersive way to get virtual compensation such as "cloud-sucking cats" and "cloud-jerking dogs" and psychological satisfaction.

As an emerging youth subculture, the members of the "Cyber pet raising" are active in Cyberspace, presenting the postmodern characteristics of transience, mobility, and heterogeneity. At the same time, the political resistance in the traditional interpretation of the subculture is fading, and people focus more on personal identity rather than collective norms such as class and gender, developing into a colorful new tribe of fun. The new tribe has developed into a diverse and interesting one. Through the study of the "cyber pet raising" community, this paper analyzed how the members have built up this community and gradually developed a sense of identity amid in mobility, what characteristics the community has and what social problems it reflects, explore the new development of youth subculture and the lifestyle of young people in Cyberspace.

1.1 "Cyber Pet Raising" Phenomenon

"Cyber pet raising" refers to the act of people watching pet pictures or videos posted by pet bloggers on the Internet through their computers or cell phones every day as an alternative to keeping pets in real life (Runan Zhou & Minyi Chen,2018). Currently, the research on the phenomenon of "cyber pet raising" has paid more attention to the study of "cyber cat raising". For Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the Internet, the most unexpected application of the Internet is Kittens. From the perspective of the audience, Jessica explored the relationship between personality traits and watching cat videos online, as well as motivations and outcomes of emotional regulation and procrastination tendencies (Myrick, J. G.,2015). As for the cat video itself, O'Meara, R. believes that the cat behaves more naturally and realistically in the video, and because the shooting techniques and equipment are not professional, the cat has a feeling of "escaping from surveillance", thus giving viewers the same sense of freedom.(O'Meara, R.,2014)Some scholars have also analyzed the evolution, types of expression and psychological factors of "cyber cat raising" from the perspective of cultural logic and visual representation practices (Runan Zhou & Minyi Chen, 2018).

Nowadays, not only cats, but also dogs, hamsters, and many other online pets have emerged. Zekun Zhou and others have explored the social dynamics and psychological impact of watching online activities such as pet videos or live streaming and found that watching pets online has a positive impact on subjective well-being and may be effective in alleviating loneliness and stress (Zhou,Z.,Yin,D.,&Gao,Q.,2020).The development of Internet technology builds people's lives with new digital logic. Mobile media brings together different kinds and forms of pets in the same mobile space. People take what they want and get a sense of satisfaction from different pets. And people's attention has shaped many online celebrity pets, and they start to watch pet videos frequently and regularly under the dual support of psychology and technology and make up for the psychological regret that they can't keep pets in the way of "cyber pet raising".

1.2 The community of "Cyber Pet Raising "

In the view of Andy Bennett and other post-subculture theorists, the changes in the contemporary social environment have had a profound impact on youth culture, leading to "cultural fragmentation and diversification," emphasizing new tribes, lifestyles, and scenes. The concept of new-tribes was first proposed by French sociologist Michael Maffesoli and later introduced by Andy into post-subculture theory. The new-tribes no longer emphasize the rigidity of organization, but a certain atmosphere and mentality, and self-expression through lifestyle. People began to pay attention to the virtual community identity in the network era. (Xiru Sun & Donglin Wang, 2019)

The community of "Cyber Pet Raising " is more compatible with the new tribe in the post-subcultural perspective. Interest and emotion become the main driving force for people to participate in cultural activities, emphasizing the shared exchange of experiences. Stephen Redhead argues that post-subcultural theoretical research needs to break away from the socially bound model and focus on individual people and the meaning of individual subcultural practices. The maintenance of the "cyber pet raising" interest group relies on interest and emotion rather than group and political consciousness and is no longer a political act with a sense of resistance, but a consumer choice process with self-identification.

2. FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY CONSTRUCTION

2.1 Technology

According to the media scientist Marshall McLuhan, the most important thing about media is not rooted in the various issues related to cultural content, but in the technical media of communication. The development of media technology has profoundly influenced the mode of information dissemination and shaped the "re-tribalization" of people. The development of Internet technology and the application of social media have realized the peer-to-peer mode of mutual broadcasting, and the group interaction of the mutual broadcasting mode has made the Internet a natural community (Qi Cai, 2014). Technology breaks down the constraints that bind people to extend outward and expands the possibilities of social interaction. In this process, the members of the "cyber pet raising" have realized the communication and interaction of people across time and space, and have found groups with which they have something in common through various factors such as interests, beliefs, and identity, and have expanded the scale of interaction space through their cultural appeal. And in this way, virtual communities are formed.

At the same time, under the logic of algorithm as a mediating technology, people who share the same interests are increasingly easy to connect together. This similarity with interests as the main feature becomes an implicit connection that brings together otherwise unfamiliar users under the same type of label to realize the possibility of establishing social relationships (Guoming Yu, 2020). The algorithm technology not only facilitates the connection between people and people, realizing the possibility of interesting group construction, but also realizes the connection between people and content. When you show interest in pet videos, the platform will learn your preferences and frequently push relevant content, so that you gradually fall into it, unknowingly become a member of the "cyber pet raising".

2.2 Social Factor

Great changes has taken place in social structure besides the technology. The development of urbanization has changed the state of settlement. Thus the heterogeneity of people's living space has greatly increased. Living in a fluid and changing reality of space, people to a certain extent lack of the sense of security brought by the original intimate relationship. At the same time, in the fast-paced, profit-seeking rhythm of society, people are under increasing mental pressure. Individuals in a structurally diverse society are in urgent need of a safe space to seek a warm sense of belonging and to realize their sense of self-belonging. Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined community" suggests that even if people never know and hear about all the members, each member has a beautiful vision.

The members of "Cyber pet raising" have built a mutual identity through the sharing of pet videos and the imagination of their pets, and they are maintained by their emotions, achieving a virtual social reunion. Most of the pet videos show the cute, warm, and funny characteristics of pets, and emphasize the healing nature of pets. But at the same time, the absence of the body makes it difficult for members to understand the hardship and effort behind pet ownership, presenting an incompleteness and passivity of viewing, which also puts people in an infinite imaginary space. "Cyber pet raising" strips people out of the daily context of pet ownership, which requires a lot of effort, and just enjoy the warmth and healing brought by pets, immersing themselves in the charm of pets shaped by images. The "Cyber pet raising" is an infinite space of imagination.

3. COMMUNITY OPERATION

3.1 Establishment of intimate relationship

In modern society, pets play an increasingly important role in people's daily lives. More and more people treat pets as their own children and give them various personality labels, and because of their almost instinctive companionship, they are inevitably partially equated with humans in the description process. In pet videos, creators consciously highlight the characteristics of their

pets and anthropomorphize the animals to promote emotional communication. Every cat in the house of Internet celebrity of pet blogger called "Hua Hua and the three cats" has their own "cat persona", followers have their own preferences and also look for pets with similar personalities to their own. The pet features project their own psychology and gain a similar sense of closeness. At the same time, the pet video often takes the pet as the first point of view for content narration, and the media builds a bridge between the fans and the pets directly. According to the different pet personalities, the cyber pet raising members will have corresponding names and expressions. Although there is no real intimate contact, but through the image video to achieve the night and day together, becoming the relatives "watching the children grow up". By watching fragmented pet videos, members of "cyber pet raising" participate in their pets' daily lives and know their pets' habits, hobbies and characteristics well, building a virtual intimate relationship across platforms and owners. Along with the growth and changes of pets, this intimacy will continue to deepen, creating a healing shelter world for people. The influence of pet videos on "cloud adopters" does not stop at the specific messages conveyed by the images, but focuses more on the spiritual and emotional experience. People get to know their pets, gain companionship, and gradually pay more attention and emotion to them, eventually establishing a virtual intimate identity with their pets and becoming a member of the interest-related community.

3.2 Sharing and interaction

Through virtual interaction with pets, members in the same group establish an intimate relationship. This intimate relationship also makes members share common emotions, which becomes the basis of mutual connection, and they gather through pet videos for frequent and close interpersonal communication. Members will actively share information about their pets' videos, and in some fan groups of net pets. In some fan groups of pets, there are administrators to remind and notify everyone of new videos, and there are also members share their favorite pet videos or pictures with others. The virtual presence communication among the members of "cloud pet raising" can also be realized by means of on-screen comment or live broadcast. In addition to expressing their love for their pets, people also share their knowledge of pet training and the role of pets in their own company. "Members of "cyber pet raising" share information and at the same time realize a common experience of emotions. The interaction between members is not only for the purpose of telling information, but also for the expression of common emotions.

Many members will make secondary creation of their favorite pet videos, which not only reflects the happiness of the author of "cyber pet raising", but also helps to gather group awareness through the transmission of the work among the community. The secondary creation of pet videos can be divided into video creations and picture creations. The video creations breaks up the original video and splices the material together according to a new narrative logic, which resonates with the members of "cyber pet raising", so as to realize the reunion and revelry of members. The most prominent part of the picture creation is the production of expression packs. "cyber pet raising" members will make corresponding expression packs according to the personality characteristics and expressions of their pets to express their emotions and attitudes.

3.3 Construction of identity

Community members build up a sense of dependence on their pets through the process of "cyber pet raising" day after day. And intensify this feeling through interaction with other members. Members establish self-identity in virtual interaction with pets, group identity in interaction with others. In pet videos, many pets have their own anthropomorphic "persona" and become a projection of many people's own idealized personalities. "Viewers can easily project their own emotions onto the cat", and the interpretation of the video is mixed with subjective emotions. The video's interpretation is mixed with subjective emotions and "becomes a kind of self-projection and emotional outlet" (Runan Zhou&Minyi Chen,2018). At the same time, according to pet cyber raising, people also realized the identity of their ideal life. Most members are eager to have their own pets, but due to economic, family and other realistic pressure, they can not achieve this desire. They only can through pet cyber raising to imagine a better future life, to make up for the existing deficiencies. Members use "we will have a cat", "we will have a dog" and other slogans to deepen the identification with this ideal life, and deepen the emotional identity of the community.

"Cyber pet raising" members gain satisfaction by watching pet videos and a sense of belonging through communication and interaction with others. In social identity theory, people will categorize themselves or others, and when "cyber pet raising" members classify themselves or others as a specific group, it is the process of forming a "cyber pet raising" community. The most important thing in the community is the common feeling of emotion and intimacy. Some pet blogger has set up a WeChat group and regularly organizes "Weekend Emotional Conference", where members may share trivial matters, vent their worries and receive comfort and encouragement from other members, creating the warmth and belonging between members. The "cyber pet raising" has become a social and common language, and also represents an emotional identity, unconsciously bringing people closer to each other and intensifying the cohesion between the whole community.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY

4.1 Liquidity and Style dissolution

Under the theoretical paradigm of post-subculture, youth subculture presents many differences from the earlier subcultural groups in terms of style representation and practice logic. In the cyber virtual space, the activity space of the community has lost its fixedness. The activity space of the members has shifted from specific places such as streets and dance halls to virtual

Internet scenes, transforming from solid community to liquid community. Jeff Starr argues that scene is an improvised, temporary, strategic cultural space resulting from social behavior, and contains changes and flows. Even though they have their own preferred pets, they still move around in different social platforms and travel between different images, making it difficult to find traces. They live by pet, and their social behavior is more mobile, becoming a nomadic community in cyberspace. The scene of pet videos is a freely accessible Internet space, open to "cyber pet raising" members, and there is no partition to prevent access. Everything is free, this mobility to a certain extent weakened the value of the existence of style, "cyber pet raising" community does not have a distinctive identity. The "Cyber pet raising" community does not have a distinctive style, and members do not use style to mark their identity, but focus more on a spiritual resonance, emphasizing shared emotions and similar feeling structures.

4.2 Rebellion Dissipation and Self-Healing

Polhemus argues that contemporary youth subcultures exist in the theme parks and street markets, where various styles and even opposing subcultural styles are displayed on the shelves for people to choose and buy. Members of "cyber pet raising" roam in pet videos, which is no longer an expression of political identity and intention, but evolves into a mobile identity that has nothing to do with politics. What this kind of behavior emphasizes is the recognition of their own way of life. People expect a kind of cure and belonging in the community, pay attention to their inner satisfaction and personal spirit, and no longer devote themselves to the confrontational cultural practice of common belief. The social homogeneity of pet people is obvious. Most of them are "empty nest youth" who live alone far away from their relatives, facing the pressure of social competition and a lonely way of life. They have become accustomed to such an environment and can only seek new ways to ease their anxiety and seek a safe haven for self-protection. In the "cyber pet raising" community, members can get the companionship of cute pets, but also in the group to obtain a sense of identity and belonging, and escape from reality by immersing in the virtual world. "

5. DISCUSSION

The "decentralized" nature of the Internet society allows different types of subcultures to blossom, giving rise to many interest-related groups. They no longer boast of grand narratives of cultural significance, but rather turn to individual experiences and lives. "Cyber pet raising" community is reasonably generated by a variety of factors such as interest and technology. Members get the virtual intimate experience of pet companionship and gradually build up a sense of identity in the communication and interaction among members. This is the affirmation of members for their own lifestyles and belonging to group members, which not only relieves the anxiety and pressure of life, but also expands and strengthens interpersonal relationships. However, "cyber pet raising" community completes socialization in the form of virtual physical presence. Individuals are extremely mobile, behind which the representational meaning and value judgment gradually deviate from the traditional subculture of "edge" and "resistance". The members pay more attention to their own emotional experience and identity, and find a place for themselves in a public space full of mobility, confronting difficult issues in a relatively relaxed way. "Cyber pet raising" has become a means of self-healing, finding an emotional outlet in the unresolved pressure of reality, free oneself to be a happy pet owner in cyberspace.

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