



Pet Parenting **in a Pandemic**

The Sound | 2020

There's been a LOT of talk around how strange and surreal life is in the time of Covid-19.

But what about its impact on our Feline Friends, and the roles they play in our lives?

Around the world, Pet Parents are facing a plethora of new challenges and choices as they strive to keep their pets healthy and happy amid the ongoing crisis; experiencing new and amplified tensions as they try to navigate Pet Parenting in a Pandemic.

We've explored 10 of these tensions; looking at some of the challenges and opportunities they present for you to develop and deepen your relationship with Pet Parents.



10 Tensions

During a Pandemic:

1. Accelerated Adoption
2. Disrupted Domain
3. Feeding Feelings
4. Relaxed Routines
5. Playtime Potential
6. Enhanced Emotions
7. Sensitive Stomachs
8. Tentative Trials
9. Civilizing Cuisine
10. Holistic Health

“How do I balance my need to return to normal life (outside of the home), with my new cat’s need for attention, affection and routine after being with me 24/7?”



Accelerated Adoption.

Across the world, we’ve seen an unprecedented rise in the number of new Pet Parents and the growth of multi-pet households. Desire for companionship, welcome distraction and the emotional win of doing some good in the world, has created the perfect conditions for people to bring a new furry friend into their homes. As lockdown begins to ease and external distractions creep back in, new Pet Parents may struggle to balance the needs of their new cat with their desire to return to a full life outside the home.

Business: Questions to consider



01

How can we help new Pet Parents navigate the reality of pet parenthood? What guidance, support and products/services are likely to be needed?

02

How can we convert new Pet Parents into long-term brand loyalists, ensuring our portfolio meets the demand for additional products as the pet enters different growth stages?

03

How might the prospect of separation anxiety from lockdown liberation drive an increase in demand for remote viewing/interaction apps and platforms for pets?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

How is your new cat impacting your home and your life? What new dynamics are you seeing? What new emotions are you experiencing?

02

How has this new adventure in cat ownership compared to expectations? Are you feeling any doubts or regrets?

03

What changes do you anticipate making to help your cat adjust to less together-time once lockdown is over? Are you considering any new products or services to keep them happy and entertained?

“How do I balance my need for my cat to be near me, to distract, comfort and entertain me at all times, with their need for independence and isolation?”



Disrupted Domain.

With Pet Parents now home 24/7, cats are experiencing significant upheaval when it comes to territorial independence and their home ecosystem; parent-pet interactions are increasing exponentially each day, and safe spaces are visibly shrinking. While some cats are adjusting happily to this increased attention and engagement, others are finding this loss of control unsettling, profoundly impacting their health and wellbeing.



Business: Questions to consider

01

How can the rise of the indoor cat influence the innovation pipeline for food and accessories?

02

How will the need for environmental and interactive products increase post separation?

03

How do you feel at the prospect of less together-time with your cat as lockdown eases? Are you concerned about separation anxiety (for you and your cat)?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

Has the Coronavirus led to you keeping your cat indoors? How has this impacted their (and your) lives? How are they (and you) adjusting to this change in their territory and independence?

02

Has being at home impacted how, and how often, you interact with your cat? Are you noticing any changes in your cat's behavior as a result of the constant proximity and increased engagement?

03

Are you planning to keep your cat indoors once lockdown is over, and if so, are you making changes to their environment to keep them entertained and enriched?

“How do I balance the emotional reward and interaction I get from giving my cat lots of food and treats, with the potential health issues it may cause him?”



Feeding Feelings.

Comfort eating during lockdown isn't limited to Pet Parents; cats are also getting in on the action. As our feline friends experience increased levels of anxiety, stress and boredom, their predisposition to disinhibition (overeating due to something other than hunger) ramps up. This overindulgence, coupled with Pet Parents' propensity to increase treating during this time, is playing havoc with many cats' weight and digestive health.

Business: Questions to consider



01

Will the increase in demand for treats extend over the long term or will weight management and health issues through over-treating cause a drop off?

02

Will the need for more natural, healthy and hypoallergenic treats increase as Pet Parents see the impact of increased treating?

03

How will Pet Parents seek to manage their cats' weight and will there be an increased demand in calorie-controlled foods?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

Have you noticed any changes in your, and your cat's eating habits?

02

Have you changed how, when and what you feed your cat, and have you seen a rise in the number and variety of treats you're giving them?

03

How does giving your cat treats make you feel? How do they respond? Are there any particular cues or rituals you've developed around treats?

04

What role do you play in monitoring and managing your cat's weight?

“How do I balance my need for fluidity and relaxed routines in a time of disruption and high anxiety, with his need for stability and normalcy?”



Relaxed Routines.

For creatures of habit, both human and feline, everyday routines are their bedrock of emotional security and stability. As the weeks in captivity stretch on, and human routines continue to be disrupted (in some cases disappear entirely) cats are starting to feel the impact emotionally and physically. As meal times, play times and nap times fall victim to this breakdown of routine; some cats are left feeling discombobulated and anxious, leaving their owners concerned and confused about how to help them.

Business: Questions to consider



01

How can we help with establishing new routines and rituals that support both Pet Parent and cat?

02

How might existing products, platforms and digital assistants be adapted to provide behavioral nudges to support feeding, playing and sleeping routines?

03

What support can we provide Pet Parents with to help them understand the impact of routine disruption on their cats?



01

How have your routines changed since lockdown and how is this impacting your health and happiness?

02

Have you noticed any changes in your cat's routine around eating, sleeping and playtime? Have they exhibited any changes in demeanor and personality?

03

Have your own changes in routine affected the time, and the way, you engage with your cat? Have you created new habits that impact them?

Consumer: Areas to Explore

“How do I balance my need for more me-time as life returns to normal, with my cat’s expectation and need for regular stimulation and engagement?”



Playtime Potential.

Interactive playtime has long been a source of guilt for most feline Pet Parents. The demands of everyday life blended with the knowledge that most cats are predominantly self-entertaining, has led many to continually postpone the moment they have to brandish the feather wand or unearth the laser pointer. One positive consequence of this pandemic has been the rise of interactive playtime in feline households around the world.



01

How might the demand for interactive toys fuel innovation in this space?

02

How will playtime change once spare time becomes scarce?

03

How might the balance shift between interactive and self entertaining toys?

04

How might remote controlled toys (via app) play a role as lockdown eases?

05

How might we encourage and support increased interactive playtime to create a new habit that extends beyond lockdown?

Business: Questions to consider

**01**

Has the frequency and way you play with your cat changed since being at home? How has your relationship with your cat changed if you've engaged more?

02

What kinds of toys does your cat enjoy playing with? What sensory stimulation engages them the most? Have you created any homemade toys and/or used tech-based toys?

03

Do you treat your cat while playing? How do you anticipate the role of playtime changing post-Pandemic?

04

Do you connect treating with playing? How do you feel when playing/treating your cat?

Consumer:

Areas to Explore

“How do I balance my current emotional volatility with my cat’s need for calm and emotional constancy?”



Enhanced Emotions.

At a time when human emotions are running high, it’s inevitable for cats (already highly sensitive and attuned to the moods of their human housemates) to feel the impact. The longer Pet Parents are dealing with the emotional roller coaster of life in a pandemic, the greater the stress felt by their cats potentially triggering a compromised immune system, illness and behavioral issues. Right now, many Pet Parents are struggling to find ways to balance their own emotional needs with those of their cat.

Business: Questions to consider



01

Will the demand for anti-anxiety medication increase or are Pet Parents looking to more natural products (CBD oil, Catnip, Zylkene and pheromone supports) and lifestyle enhancers (thundershirts, calming collars) to alleviate cat anxiety?

02

Is there an increasing role and demand for calming foods and treats?

03

How can we help Pet Parents understand (and mitigate) the impact their emotional volatility is having on their cats?

04

How can we help Pet Parents diagnose and treat mild anxiety in their cats?

Consumer: Areas to Explore



01

Has your need for contact, comfort and support from your cat increased during this time? How has this need changed your behavior towards them?

02

Have you noticed your cat react to your changing emotional state? Does their behavior or demeanor change? Does the way you interact change depending on your mood/emotions?

03

Has your cat shown signs of anxiety, if so, what are they and how have you attempted to address it? Given the choice between natural methods and medication, which appeals most?

“How do I balance providing the right food to address sensitivity issues with his need for palatability and variety?”



Sensitive Stomachs.

Under normal circumstances some cats are prone to the occasional bout of sensitive stomach, but with the pandemic raging outside our doors, many are being subjected to a perfect storm of every potential trigger at once. Changes in diet, routine, environment and an increase in overall stress are leading to a rise in the number of reported cases of dietary sensitivity, food aversions and intolerances (symptoms similar to feline IBD) leaving many Pet Parents with unwell and very unhappy cats.

Business:

Questions to consider



01

How can you help Pet Parents navigate stress-triggered gastrointestinal upsets and provide advice and options to support episodes?

02

Will demand for long-term use of limited ingredients, hypoallergenic and sensitivity control foods increase as more cats display gastrointestinal issues triggered by stress?

03

Will Pet Parents be proactive in preventing upsets?

04

What roles do palatability and variety play in encouraging adherence to digestive-friendly foods?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

Has your cat had a significant change in appetite, feeding habits or episodes of digestive upset while you've been in lockdown? How are you coping with these changes?

02

Have you noticed any changes in the way your cat reacts to their food, particularly during times when you're feeling more anxious?

03

If your cat is experiencing a digestive upset, who do you go to for advice and guidance on how to help them through it?

04

Have you considered/tried hypoallergenic, anallergenic or novel protein foods when they're having an episode?

“How do I balance the desire or need to try a new food, with his potential negative reaction to a disruption in diet?”



Tentative Trials.

The disruption to manufacturing, the global supply chain and distribution channels is presenting both a challenge and opportunity for Pet Parents when it comes to their cats' diets. Awareness of the potential negative consequences of a quick switch in food has led to long-standing and wide-spread resistance to any form of food trial; however, lack of availability is forcing a rapidly growing number of Pet Parents to explore and experiment with their pets' diet for the first time.

Business: Questions to consider



01

How can you take advantage of this willingness-to-trial opportunity?

02

How can you protect your relationship with existing Pet Parents to ensure they return to your brand once supply chain issues are resolved?

03

How can you prevent Pet Parents from switching back to their original brand?

04

How can you capitalize on your single serve strategy to encourage trial and entrance to the brand portfolio?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

Has your cat's food supply been affected by the pandemic? Have you seen a temporary restriction in availability and if so, how have you coped? Has this impacted how you purchase your food (volume/frequency/where you purchase)?

02

If you've had to substitute your cat's usual food for another brand, how did you choose which one to try; what criteria were you basing your choice on?

03

How are alternative brands measuring up and would you consider a permanent switch from your usual food?

04

Would you be willing to trial more foods in the future?

“How do I balance my desire to give him a fresh, healthy and premium diet with my need to reduce spending on his food?”



Civilizing Cuisine.

As human meals become more of a ritual-based occasion in households across the world, many Pet Parents are extending this sense of occasion and focus of attention onto their cat’s meals; from seeking out ‘human-grade’ food to creating fresh feline-appropriate meals themselves. While humanization of cat food is getting a serious bump in momentum, some consumers face internal conflict as economic uncertainty forces them to consider trade-offs.



Business: Questions to consider

01

How can you leverage this increased level of engagement to connect and build a lasting dialogue with existing and potential Pet Parents to inform innovation?

02

How can you future proof your portfolio as D2C brands based on high quality and home delivery become more of an attractive alternative to Pet Parents?

03

How can you inform Pet Parents' decision making process as they seek to balance quality with cost consciousness?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

Has the way you think about or prepare your cat's food changed during recent weeks?

02

Have you experimented with new brands and food services or tried home cooking? Have you become more involved in researching and understanding ingredients and how your cat's food is made?

03

Has the time or way you feed your cat changed? Have new feeding habits, rituals or routines been established and do you see these continuing once you're no longer together 24/7?

04

Has the role of dry food played a bigger part in your cat's diet as availability of fresh food and ingredients becomes more limited?

“How do I maintain and protect his health and wellbeing needs, with a reduced budget and limited time?”



Holistic Health.

As Pet Parents have become more invested in protecting their own health and wellbeing during this time, they’ve also put more energy into exploring ways to keep their cat healthy and happy. From health clubs, insurance, feline activity monitoring apps to nutraceutical and protective treatment subscriptions, many are going all in on ensuring their companions’ health remains constant. As money becomes tighter, some Pet Parents may need to make choices balancing their own health needs with those of their cats.



Business: Questions to consider

- 01**
How might the extreme focus on the need for health insurance for humans drive renewed consideration and adoption of pet health insurance?
- 02**
How might the use of behavioral nudges and interventions by your brand support a Pet Parents' efforts to improve their pet's health?
- 03**
With the increase in community engagement around pets, how might you create a network effect with your pet tech to keep users engaged post pandemic?



Consumer: Areas to Explore

01

Have you changed the amount of money you've spent on health related products for your cat during lockdown?

02

How has awareness and concern for your own health impacted your attitude towards protecting your cat's health? Have you considered or purchased pet insurance or signed up to pet health programs?

03

What new health and wellbeing products/services, including preventive treatments, have you recently considered, and do you see yourself continuing as lockdown eases?

We get Pets.

Our passion for pets is deep rooted.

Our team of researchers, strategists and innovators are also adoring Pet Parents.

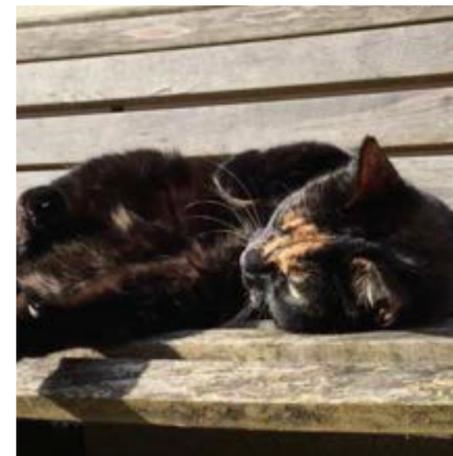
Which means when it comes to exploring the attitudes and behaviors of other Pet Parents, we see what others don't.

We're able to spot hidden patterns and instinctively know where to dig deeper, finding genuine opportunities for brands to develop and deepen the role they play in Pet Parents' lives.

Possibilities. Potential.

We're all things Pet.

We'd love to talk pets with you.



THE
SOUND

We get Pets

www.thesoundhq.com

Vancouver | New York | London | Chicago | Mumbai