

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

3 strategies for winning China's luxury pet race

August 4, 2021



When it comes to animal accessories and clothing not to be confused with the animal's fancy additional extras heritage houses must consider their value beyond the product. Image courtesy of Moncler x Poldo Dog Couture

By [Lisa Nan](#)

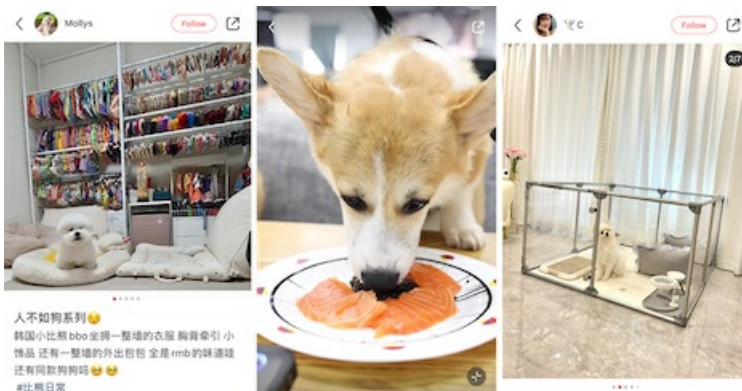
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Netizens showcasing their luxurious lifestyles on local social platforms is nothing new. But the latest images taking Weibo by storm are not selfies they are posts showing pets in lavish surroundings, such as dogs consuming sophisticated meals in Herms bowls or cats strolling down the street in Goyard pet collars.

Best of all, one netizen even posted an image of their rabbit boarding a plane in a Louis Vuitton carrier bag.

Unsurprisingly, the hashtag #Doglivingbetterthanhuman (狗比人生活得好) has amassed 550,000 user-generated posts on the popular social platform, Little Red Book.

These furry animal parents are becoming a new breed of power purchasers, with dog and cat ownership increasing by 300 percent since 2013, growing the pet economy to a dizzying 400 percent.



Little Red Book users show off the luxurious lifestyles of their pets, from caviar meals to designer accessories. Image credit: Screenshots, Little Red Book

The **domestic pet market** is expected to reach \$66.8 billion by 2023, according to market research firm Frost & Sullivan. That not only means fluffy animal owners are devoting a significant amount of time to their puppies, but

also that they are willing to spend money on luxury products for them to use and, more importantly, show off.

Unlike previous generations, today's pet owners consider their creatures to be friends, family members, or in some cases, surrogate children. And, as citizens look to help ease the loneliness from **China's falling birth rate** and a growing **'singlehood' trend**, the market's rapid growth and enormous demand for pet pampering suggest a substantial untapped opportunity for luxury brands.

Here, *Jing Daily* proposes three strategies that luxury brands can leverage in China's chongwu' economy ().

To sell pet accessories, brands must not forget storytelling

When it comes to animal accessories and clothing not to be confused with the animal's fancy additional extras heritage houses must consider their value beyond the product.

Owners not only buy into the superior craftsmanship of luxury brands, but they also seek out meaningful gadgets for their spoiled creatures.

Despite being in its early stages, the local 300-billion-yuan pet market is already crowded with items like **Moncler's Poldo dog puffy coat**, Tiffany's signature blue cat bowl, and Prada's Re-Nylon dog backpack all recent efforts from top luxury players.

Still, the storied luxury house Goyard enjoys an exclusive position in the sector, thanks to its strong bond with furry animals.



Tiffany & Co. offers stylish pet collars, name tags, and bowls in its iconic blue. Image courtesy of Tiffany & Co.

In fact, the Parisian leathermaker was one of the first brands to develop a pet accessories range in the late 19th century.

Robert Goyard's "Chic du Chien" line, created for his beloved French bulldog, was immediately met with great success at the time, becoming a "must-have" for the era's chicest pets.

To this day, consumers still appreciate that narrative, allowing Goyard to top the prestigious pet accessory list.

Maisons that wish to leverage the sector should not view pet accessories as a separate category.

Instead, it should be seen as an integrated category, especially considering the pet-and-owner-outfit-match trend that may also boost a ready-to-wear division.

Make your store pet-friendly

With an increasing number of households in China adopting cats and dogs exceeding 100 million in the country's urban areas in 2020 pet owners now want animal-friendly stores where they can bring their furry companions.

Regular coffee shops are no longer the first choice for young consumers. Instead, they are opting for pet cafs, where they can bring their four-legged friends or even play with onsite pets.

Starbucks took the lead in 2018, when it **opened pet-friendly stores** in Chengdu and Shenzhen, and subsequently, in other major cities. Then, Hey Tea followed suit by launching its first dog caf in Shenzhen last year. And now, numerous luxury hotels, such as the Mandarin Oriental, the W Hotel, and the Intercontinental Hotel, also allow animal guests.

Given this spike, creating designated spaces and facilities within their boutiques for shoppers' fluffy companions could be a potential pathway to attracting wealthy pet parents.

Gloria Gan, a lifestyle research analyst at market research agency Mintel, explains that consumers are now

exploring ways to share the pleasures of life with their pets, not just their friends or loved ones.

"The opening of pet-friendly stores by luxury brands will definitely be a hot topic," she said.

Therefore, to stay relevant to pet owners, heritage houses can go a step further than simply releasing animal accessories by opening a pet-oriented caf pop-up store.

Reaching pet owners on social media

In the past two years, a new breed of stars has emerged from live broadcasts. These include Puppet cat, Shiba dog and Angora rabbit.

According to data from the "2020 Kuaishou Pet Ecology Report," pet livestreaming reached 16,000 hours in a single month, meaning that every 5.4 seconds, a four-legged theme is broadcasted live.

These furry KOLs are garnering lots of attention from local netizens and can help companies spread their stories by reaching targeted audiences.

According to Topclout, more than 83 percent of local pet owners use pet-related social media to learn how to take care of their furry companions. WeChat pages are popular, while 25 percent follow content on Weibo and Douyin.

Usually, people born in the 1990s are the main viewers of [cute animal content online](#) even if they do not have any pets. Often, when they see brands associated with adorable creatures, it improves their perception of the company.

"To young consumers, sharing pet videos or photos on social media or livestream platforms is an increasingly popular way to entertain as well as de-stress," Ms. Gan said, citing data from Mintel.

Additionally, local Gen Zers are already shifting their focus from common domestic animals, such as dogs and cats, to less common choices like ducks, pigs and alpacas.

Collaborating with these less usual pet-KOLs is also likely to help brands garner significant exposure among desired audiences.

Despite representing a niche portion of domestic animals, Gen Zers are enjoying this kind of related content, meaning that as pet choices move outside the box, it will become time for brands to do the same.

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