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THE DEVELOPMENT OF PET CULTURAL TOURISM AND PET-FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION SCENARIOS

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Abstract: With the continuous upgrading of residents' consumption concepts and the deepening trend of pet humanization, traditional pet consumption centered on food, medical care and daily supplies has gradually extended to the tourism and leisure field. Pet cultural tourism, as an emerging segmented track of the pet economy and cultural tourism industry, has formed a new consumption pattern featuring pet-friendly scenarios. More and more pet owners are willing to include pets in travel plans, driving the continuous expansion of pet-friendly hotels, scenic spots, themed activities and other supporting consumption scenarios. Based on the latest authoritative industry data and real domestic cases, this paper sorts out the connotation and industrial value of pet cultural tourism, analyzes the current development dilemmas of pet-friendly consumption scenarios, explores the driving factors of industrial development, and proposes targeted optimization strategies. The research aims to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for the standardized and high-quality development of pet cultural tourism and pet-friendly consumption scenarios.
Keywords: Pet cultural tourism; Pet-friendly scenarios; Consumption upgrade; Tourism integration; Emerging consumption economy

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, China's pet economy has entered a stage of refined and integrated development, and the concept of pets as family members has been deeply rooted among young consumer groups [1]. According to the 2026 China Pet Industry White Paper, the scale of China's urban pet consumption market reached 312.6 billion yuan in 2025, with the number of urban pet dogs and cats exceeding 120 million, laying a solid user foundation for the rise of pet cultural tourism [2]. Driven by emotional companionship needs, pet travel has transformed from a niche hobby into a mainstream emerging consumption trend. Official survey data verifies that 71% of domestic pet owners have a clear willingness to travel with their pets, and nearly half of pet owners have purchased pet-friendly tourism and leisure services, reflecting the huge market potential of pet cultural tourism [3].

With the continuous optimization of domestic pet travel supporting conditions, the industry development momentum is prominent. In 2024, 18.7% of pet owners formed stable pet travel consumption habits, and professional pet travel brands and customized travel routes have emerged rapidly [4]. Platform data shows that bookings for pet-friendly homestays during the 2025 May Day holiday increased by more than 80% year-on-year, which fully proves the rapid release of pet-friendly travel market demand [3]. Globally, the pet-friendly travel market reached US$90.5 billion in 2025, maintaining a stable high growth rate and demonstrating strong industrial development vitality [5]. However, compared with the mature foreign pet-friendly tourism system, China's pet cultural tourism industry is still in the initial stage, with fragmented scenario layout, inconsistent industry policies and uneven service quality, which restrict the sustainable development of the industry [6]. Therefore, it is urgent to systematically explore the development logic and optimization path of pet-friendly consumption scenarios.

1.2 Research Significance

In terms of theoretical significance, this paper takes the integrated development of pet economy and cultural tourism as the research perspective, focuses on the scenario construction and industrial innovation of pet cultural tourism, and enriches the research system of emerging emotional consumption and tourism integration. It makes up for the deficiency of domestic academic circles' insufficient attention to the practical development dilemmas and scenario optimization strategies of pet tourism. In terms of practical significance, combined with the latest industry data and typical cases, this study summarizes the current problems in the construction of domestic pet-friendly consumption scenarios, and puts forward targeted improvement measures, which can provide practical reference for tourism enterprises to carry out pet-friendly services and urban managers to formulate supporting industry norms.

2 OVERVIEW OF PET CULTURAL TOURISM AND PET-FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION SCENARIOS

2.1 Definition of Core Concepts

2.1.1 Pet cultural tourism

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Pet cultural tourism is an innovative integrated tourism format derived from the deep integration of pet emotional economy and modern leisure tourism [7]. Different from traditional tourism products that only serve human tourists, its core service object covers both tourists and their companion animals, focusing on creating an immersive interactive experience of human-pet co-travel and co-leisure. This type of tourism integrates pet-themed culture, parent-pet interaction experience and outdoor leisure tourism, with prominent emotional attribute and personalized characteristics.

2.1.2 Pet-friendly consumption scenarios

Pet-friendly consumption scenarios refer to inclusive public consumption spaces and standardized service systems that allow legal pets to enter and provide targeted supporting services. Covering tourism, accommodation, catering, leisure and other consumption fields, it is the basic carrier for the development of pet cultural tourism [8]. The core of scenario construction is to break the traditional "universal pet prohibition" rule in public spaces, balance public safety and personalized consumption needs, and realize the organic integration of pet keeping and urban leisure consumption.

2.2 Classification of Pet-Friendly Consumption Scenarios

Combined with the actual operation of the current market, domestic pet-friendly consumption scenarios can be divided into three mainstream types. The first is pet-friendly accommodation scenarios, including pet-friendly hotels, homestays and resorts, which provide professional pet beds, pet cleaning, pet feeding and other supporting services for traveling pet owners. The second is pet leisure and tourism scenarios, covering pet-friendly scenic spots, urban pet parks and outdoor camping bases, which are the core carrier of pet cultural tourism experience. The third is pet-themed activity scenarios, including pet cultural exhibitions, pet sports competitions and public welfare adoption activities, which gather popularity and drive the iterative upgrading of pet tourism consumption [4].

3 DRIVING FACTORS OF PET CULTURAL TOURISM INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Emotional Consumption Upgrade Driven by Pet Humanization

The humanization of pet identity is the core internal driving force for the booming development of pet cultural tourism [1]. With the transformation of modern family structure, single families and DINK families continue to increase, and pets have gradually become important family members and emotional sustenance of urban residents [2]. Most pet owners have strong emotional dependence on their pets, and are reluctant to separate from their pets during holidays and daily leisure, thus generating rigid demand for pet-accompanying travel. This emotional demand drives the continuous upgrading of pet consumption from material feeding to experiential and emotional tourism consumption.

3.2 Diversified Leisure Needs of Urban Residents

With the continuous improvement of residents' income level and leisure awareness, traditional single sightseeing tourism can no longer meet the personalized and diversified leisure needs of modern people. As an emerging experiential tourism product, pet cultural tourism has the characteristics of strong interaction, high happiness and strong sense of participation, which can meet the emotional experience needs of young groups [5]. It has gradually become a new popular choice for urban residents' weekend leisure and holiday travel.

3.3 Industrial Integration and Market Differentiation Competition

The traditional cultural tourism industry is faced with the dilemma of homogeneous product competition and insufficient incremental space. The integration with the pet economy helps tourism enterprises open up segmented blue ocean markets and realize differentiated competition. More and more scenic spots, homestay brands and commercial complexes actively layout pet-friendly scenarios, relying on pet economy to attract young consumer groups and enhance market competitiveness. The profit-driven market mechanism has effectively promoted the rapid expansion of pet cultural tourism industry scale.

4 DEVELOPMENT DILEMMAS OF PET-FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION SCENARIOS

4.1 Lack of Unified Industry Standards and Specifications

At present, China's pet cultural tourism industry is in a spontaneous development stage, and there is no unified national industry standard and management specification. The access conditions, service standards, safety specifications and charging rules of pet-friendly scenarios vary greatly in different regions and venues. Some businesses falsely label "pet-friendly" to attract customers without matching professional supporting services, resulting in uneven service quality and seriously affecting consumer experience.

4.2 Imperfect Pet-Friendly Supporting Infrastructure

The construction of urban pet-friendly public infrastructure lags far behind the growth rate of market demand [8]. Most scenic spots, parks and business districts lack special pet activity areas, pet disinfection facilities, pet defecation points and other supporting equipment. In addition, the supporting service system of pet travel is incomplete, and professional

links such as pet long-distance transportation, travel medical care and temporary foster care are insufficient, which greatly restricts the popularization of pet travel [5]. According to industry research, transportation restrictions and insufficient supporting facilities have become the biggest logistical bottlenecks restricting domestic pet-friendly travel [3].

4.3 Conflicts Between Public Governance and Pet Consumption

Pet-friendly consumption scenarios are located in public spaces, which are prone to interest conflicts between pet owners and non-pet tourists. Problems such as pet noise, random defecation and potential safety risks bring hidden dangers to public health and environmental management. Due to the lack of clear public management rules and responsibility division mechanism, many scenic spots adopt a one-size-fits-all pet prohibition policy, which hinders the sustainable development of pet-friendly consumption scenarios.

4.4 Single Scenario Operation and Insufficient Cultural Connotation

Most pet-friendly venues only simply open pet access rights, and the product form is single and homogeneous. Enterprises lack in-depth exploration of pet cultural connotation, and fail to design characteristic interactive projects and themed tourism products. The pet tourism industry stays at the shallow level of “allowing pets to enter”, and cannot form core cultural competitiveness and sustainable customer attraction, which resulting in low user stickiness.

5 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES

5.1 Establish Unified Industry Standards and Standardize Market Operation

Industry associations and competent authorities should formulate unified service standards and management norms for pet cultural tourism scenarios, as well as clarify pet access specifications, service processes and safety management systems [6]. Establish a grade evaluation system for pet-friendly venues, conduct regular assessment and supervision, and standardize the marketing behavior of enterprises is necessary.

5.2 Improve Infrastructure and Supporting Service System

Urban management and tourism departments should increase investment in pet-friendly infrastructure construction, and build special pet activity areas, disinfection stations and sanitary facilities in scenic spots, parks and leisure places [8]. Improve the whole-process supporting service system of pet travel, cultivate professional pet transportation and travel medical service teams, and optimize pet travel insurance products to reduce travel risks [5]. Policy dividends of high-speed rail and airline pet-friendly services in recent years further break the transportation barriers of pet travel.

5.3 Improve Public Governance Mechanism to Resolve Interest Conflicts

The government could formulate standardized pet tourism behavior norms, clarify the management responsibilities of operating units and the supervision obligations of pet owners. Implement differentiated management measures such as special pet activity areas and time periods to avoid mutual interference between different groups could also help [6]. We should strengthen public health and safety supervision, verify the validity of pet vaccination documents strictly, and foster a harmonious and inclusive public consumption atmosphere for pet cultural tourism.

5.4 Dig Deep Cultural Connotation and Enrich Scenario Forms

Tourism enterprises should take cultural empowerment as the core, dig deep into the connotation of pet companionship culture, and launch diversified pet-themed tourism activities as well as cultural products [1]. Besides, build differentiated pet-friendly scenario systems according to regional tourism characteristics to avoid homogeneous competition and enhance industrial core competitiveness could also support the development of pet cultural tourism [9].

6 CONCLUSION

Pet cultural tourism and pet-friendly consumption scenarios are important innovative forms of integrated development of pet economy and cultural tourism industry, which conform to the development trend of emotional consumption upgrading and personalized leisure tourism [2]. Driven by pet humanization demand, residents’ diversified leisure needs and industrial integration dividends, the pet tourism market maintains rapid growth and has long-term development potential [5]. Supported by real market data, pet-friendly travel has transformed into a structural consumption trend, driving the upgrading of tourism supply chains and visitor consumption levels [3]. However, the industry is faced with practical dilemmas such as missing industry standards, insufficient infrastructure, prominent public governance conflicts and shallow cultural development [6].

To promote the high-quality development of pet cultural tourism, it is necessary to take standardized system construction as the foundation, infrastructure optimization as the support, public governance innovation as the guarantee, and cultural scenario empowerment as the core. By working together, the government, industry associations and market

players can create more pet-friendly consumption scenarios, diversify industry formats, remove development obstacles, and bring new vitality to innovation in both the cultural tourism industry and the pet economy [8].

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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