

What is shaping culture? Pet parents

I explore the edges of culture and how things are changing, providing valuable insights for brands wanting to understand who and what is shaping culture. Today, I explore the phenomenon of "pet parents": people who have transformed their relationships with their pets to that of 'kids'.

 By Brett Rogers 17 Feb 2020



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

Our relationships with animals have evolved over the last decade or so with many more people becoming more empathetic when it comes to our four-legged or scaly or feathery friends.

Granted, everyone has a grandmother or aunt who so loved animals she left a sizeable portion of her estate to the local SPCA when she died – or simply took in so many strays, her home was over-run when she was alive – but by-and-large as a society two or three decades ago, we primarily viewed animals as labourers and entertainers.

Today, many more of us view animals as sentient beings with emotions and feelings which not only matter but benefit us personally should we engage with them in an empathetic manner.

[Recent studies](#) show that pets, most notably dogs, of people who are stressed out or anxious, synchronise the stress markers of their owners, meaning that the pet feels the same amount of stress that the owner does, at the same time. This feeling of being connected to and having his stress alleviated by his pets is the case of rat dad, Felix.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH

What role do they play in your life?



Felix Robinson

Content Producer

When I come across too crazy I guess, to a certain degree they're sort of a stress reliever and its nice to have things that rely on you for their survival and appreciate you because of it. I guess that their biggest purpose is to **destress me** because there's nothing more relaxing than playing with them after a long hard day work and feeling them sort of **nuzzle in my ear** and I know that at least they care... god, thats so morbid.

[click to enlarge](#)

As we have become more parental in the relationship between us and our animals, so has our level of expenditure and desire to give them treats and special treatment. BowHaus Doggy Daycare & Sleep-over Centre, based in Woodstock in Cape Town and offering a dramatically different experience to kennels of old, has seen and been a part of this change.

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Its Friday and we are going to share a little puppy love with you ... cos who doesnt need puppy love before the weekend!! A hotel, a swimming pool, post operative care, play areas with a bunch of friends curated for your enjoyment ... honestly I think that I would prefer to be a hound than a human when you get treated so well. @bowhausdoggydaycare provides all of this and more for your furry friend As Pet Parenting becomes more common, the opportunities to treat your hound, rat, bunny, cat etc grow more and more. #hyhin #petparenting #newnorms #furbaby #furbabyparentlife #furbabygram #puppylove #puppy #petsofinstagram #alternativefamily #petparent #dogs_of_instagram

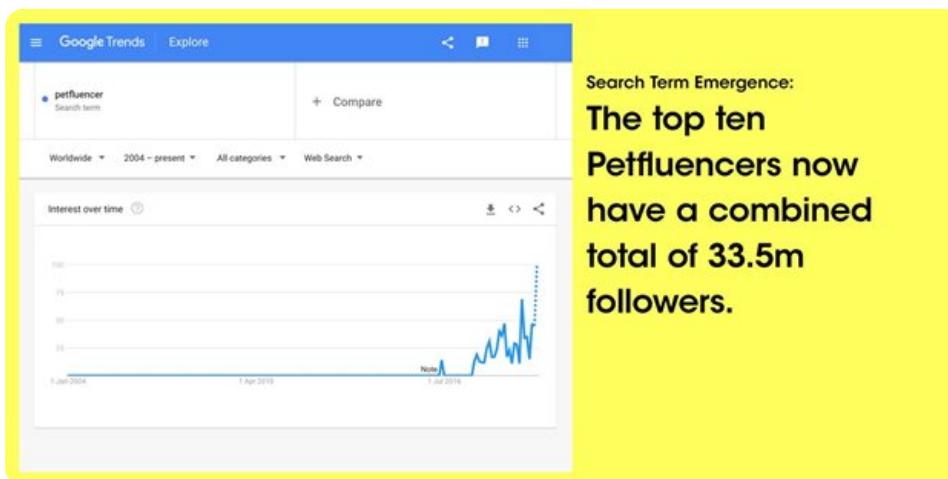
A post shared by in_ (@thisisin_) on Aug 23, 2019 at 5:55am PDT

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At BowHaus, the dog’s personality is assessed and engaged with, to ascertain their preferred style of treatment. There is a pool, and none of the dogs are restrained in kennels but roam free to play with ‘likeminded’ friends. Also on offer is after-surgery and old-age care. Owner Claire Mariotti-Thomas rationalises the need for BowHaus: “We’ve changed the way we live. We’re moving from rural and suburban areas into urbanised zones. We don’t have our extended families around us, so animals have become part of the family and are not ‘just an outside thing’ anymore.”

And part of loving someone or something is showing this love and spending money of them or it. Pet care big business, and not necessarily affected by global fiscal fluctuations, as pet parents continue to show the love even in the hard times. From toys, snacks, psychologists and masseurs to high luxury clothing products the list of products for sale is endless. Beer or wine for your furry friend? Yes, it’s available. Pet care books too, contribute to the incredibly large pet care market, expected to top \$269bn by 2025.

And ‘Petfluencers’ like @fletcher_schnauzer and @joffypom have become powerful entities in the marketing industry, with massive followings and huge endorsement deals.



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One person who couldn’t care less about the industry and just loves his dogs is DJ Grimehouse. He didn’t grow up in an environment where dogs were just yard protectors and the word ‘pet’ was never used. But, today, his dogs are the most important people in his life.

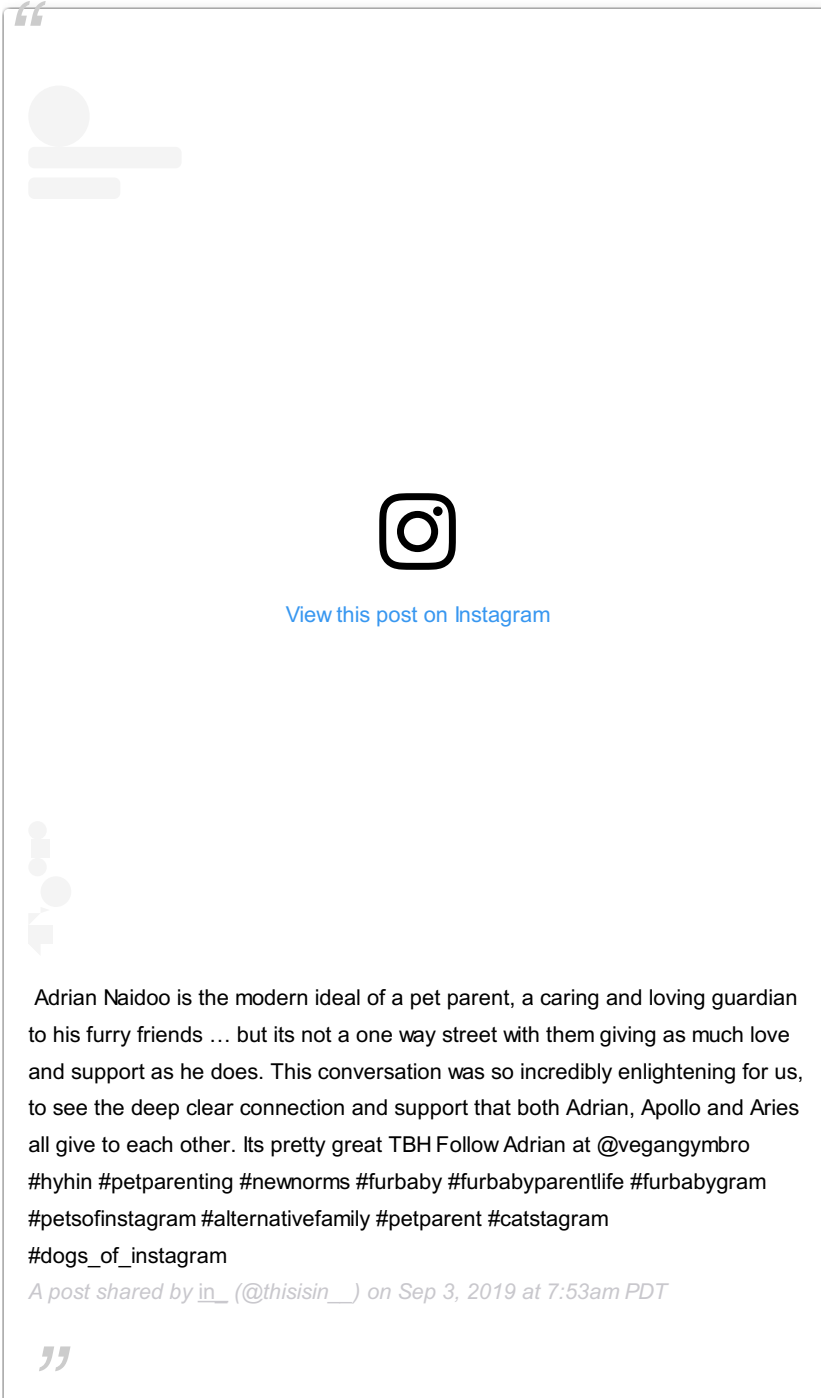
What kind of treats do your pets get?

I cannot go to the shop at all without bringing back something for them. **They know the drill already**, if it's not droewors from the counter, it'll be doggy biscuits, bones, and most of the time they're just eating human food with me. lol

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Dog daddy, Adrian Naidoo (@VeganGymBro on Instagram) also has an incredibly close relationship with his dogs, Aries and Apollo, who 'saved his life'. "The relationship between a pet owner and their pet transcends what it is. It becomes a soul-to-soul connection. I am firmly of the belief that, when you seek out a pet, you don't choose it, the pet chooses you and comes into your life for a very specific reason. Either they need to teach you something, or you need to teach them something."

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A placeholder for an Instagram post. It features a grey profile picture icon, a grey post image area, the Instagram logo, and a blue link that says "View this post on Instagram".

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Adrian Naidoo is the modern ideal of a pet parent, a caring and loving guardian to his furry friends ... but its not a one way street with them giving as much love and support as he does. This conversation was so incredibly enlightening for us, to see the deep clear connection and support that both Adrian, Apollo and Aries all give to each other. Its pretty great TBH Follow Adrian at @vegangymbro #hyhin #petparenting #newnorms #furbaby #furbabyparentlife #furbabygram #petsofinstagram #alternativefamily #petparent #catstagram #dogs_of_instagram

A post shared by in_ (@thisisin_) on Sep 3, 2019 at 7:53am PDT

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ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

Brett Rogers, culture lead at Cape Town advertising agency HaveYouHeard and content curator for In_, a channel of content, which showcases cultural forces that are changing the world. It aims to inform, inspire and entertain the viewer and does so with multimedia posts, including podcasts, videos, google trends, mini Q+A's and more. in_ talks to those interested in-depth cultural exploration and those curious about the world we live in. View my profile and articles...