



The 7 trends in pet accessories

The pet accessories market is one characterised by change, with trends and innovations as major drivers. We've been taking a look at some of the latest and most exciting developments.

1 - Food

Pet food products are undergoing even further diversification as they follow trending human diets and food fads, such as Keto diets and home baking. New and popular products are human confectionery that has been converted into pet treats and pet-safe boxes of chocolate. Sales of pet-friendly baking mixes, for pet owners to bake pet treats, are also on the increase.

2 - Smart bowls

Smart bowls are the ideal solution for pet owners of greedy cats or for those who want their pets to eat at regular intervals during the day. A bowl can be programmed to respond to a pet's microchip, ensuring that only the designated pet gets access to the food. As the pet approaches the bowl, a microchip (or collar tag) opens the bowl lid. With pet obesity on the increase and becoming a major problem for pet health, it is expected that sales of smart bowls will rise significantly.

For pet owners living in hotter climates, smart water bowls offer their pets a fresh supply of water. What's more, the bowl can be programmed to chill the water to a specific temperature! Smart bowls offer pet owners peace of mind: no longer having to worry about whether their four-legged friends are getting enough (or too much!) food and water.

3 - Pet houses

Gone are the days of humble dog beds and cat cushions! Stylish designer pet houses have become pieces of aesthetic furniture: an eye-catcher in every pet owner's home. Of course, there is no guarantee that pets will choose to use such a house! Because, as all cat owners know, felines tend to pick and choose their own nook or cranny in which to sleep. So, it is probably safe to say that pet houses are more for the benefit of humans than for their pets. Although some pet houses claim they can help put fearful pets at ease by blocking noise (fireworks). Some even play music. Wonder if the play list includes Rossini's Cats duet?

4 - Wearable tech

As technology advances and becomes wearable, many pet tech devices are coming to market. Take the Autoslide pet device that opens a patio door as a pet approaches. Using the wearable tag, the pet triggers the door mechanism from up to 10 feet (3 meters)

distance. Smart pet doors are another innovation, saving the need and effort to constantly get up to let the cat in or out. A door can be opened and closed using a smartphone app.

Intelligent collars that monitor dogs' and cats' every move are also becoming widely available. The collar contains a device that measures the amount of exercise a pet is getting and can compare this data with the pet's weight, age and other health data. In this way, it is easy to monitor a pet's health.

Pet owners will love the possibility to access such data on their smartphone, especially if their dog is in pet day care or let out by a dog walker.

Tracking devices are also becoming an essential care item for pet owners. Those afraid their pet might go missing, can attach such a device to their dog's collar. Tracing is done using a smartphone app.

Last, but not least, there's the next generation cat bell: Digibell. The bell detects and processes cat movements and sounds an alert to warn prey on time. Not so nice for the cat, but more so for local wildlife. On the upside for our furry friends, Digibell's sleek design and full range of clip-on colours looks great on any cat!

5 - Keeping it clean

Because most pet owners love their pets but hate pet hair, vacuum cleaner manufacturers are offering pet-specific technologies and add-ons.

One such is Samsung's NaviBot that uses a patented technology designed to pick up pet hair. The NaviBot also features a HEPA filter, which helps trap fine particles of pet dander, other allergens, and dust. This is especially useful for people with allergies or asthma.

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Similarly, Dyson vacuum cleaners feature Root Cyclone technology. Powerful centrifugal forces force pet hair into the vacuum cleaner bin, where a filter traps microscopic allergens. A vacuum-assisted grooming tool is sold as add-on.

6 - Social networks

Platforms for dog owners to link up with one another and go for walks together, or for non-dog owners to 'borrow' a dog, are becoming increasingly popular.

From an industry perspective, this offers interesting opportunities to promote pet services within such environments. Recently, online music provider Spotify teamed up with a German animal shelter. The idea is to assess dogs based on their musical preference and pair them with similar music loving owners.

But, with data on the musical preferences of dogs being scarce, this initiative is best considered a worthwhile charitable cause, rather than a pet-friendly trend.

7 - Interactive monitoring

With many pet owners out to work every day, monitoring equipment allows them to keep a check on their pets. New are the two-way system cameras that enable pets and their owners to see and hear each other. A treat dispenser rewards pets for 'communicating'. Such devices are likely to appeal to the pet owner rather than their pet. Although voices probably do sound familiar, it is not clear to which extent pets recognise their owners from a screen. A drawback could be that pets are left alone for longer periods. Dog owners, especially, might decide to skip day care or dog walking services. ♦



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