

The Joy of Cats

(‘only cat owners will understand’ 😊)

A case study for our Sparks methodology

August 2022

discover.ai





A note from Sophie

Cat content is one of the most searched things on Google, the most circulated and watched of viral videos. There are famous cats out there with their own blogs and millions of followers. Cats feature in mythology, in legend, in political history, in poetry, novels and stories, old and new. Chat to people who have, or have had cats, and they'll talk you to tears. Losing my own cat Dora just a few days ago, coincidentally as we started to look at this makes writing this particularly poignant. I confess her loss has temporarily unhinged me. But it has also opened me up to a shower of stories from people, who like me, have loved and lost a cat. It's been fascinating, distracting and soothing hearing your stories.

Your cucumber eating cat, Whiskey. Lilith who liked to bring you your socks, had her babies in your bed and age 20 was buried in the forest where the Lily of the Valley grow. Your big cat, Cous-Cous, who slept deeply on his back with his legs brazenly akimbo. Milo, killer-cat, bringer of dead owls and rabbits that he shoved under the front door mat regularly. Your Juno who simply was so loving and had the softest tortoiseshell fur imaginable. And my own Dora whose small body and big character inched her way into every little corner of my life – at work on endless Zoom calls she'd settle herself on my shoulders and sometimes wash my hair or my neck... when I took my coffee to my hanging basket chair on the terrace she'd come at a racing canter, scoot up the basket framework over my head and push her paws through, tapping at my head. When I boiled the milk for my morning coffee ritual she'd meow and look pointedly at her Snoopy saucer. When I looked for her outside and called "Dora, Dora" she'd appear racing down the garden, blue eyes shining and little painted face 'pointing' at me intently.

These cats! What is it about these cats? All these stories convince me even more of some sort of special relationship we have with our cats. Perhaps because there is a special selectiveness, a sort of slippery elusiveness about the love of a cat. They have us every time.

Using our Discover.ai platform and gathering in content from hundreds of online sources, from bloggers to journalists, social media chit chat to forums and advice sites, we set off to discover – what is it about these cats? Why are cats the subject of mystique and legend; why do witches and crazy cat ladies like me have and hold our cats so close; why are our cats so intensely precious to us; how do you characterize the intense, special, sharp pleasure and pain of this kind of closeness with a cat?



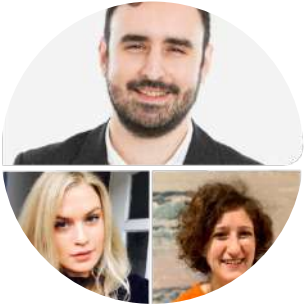
In loving memory of Dora ❤️

Sparks: How it works



Question

Define the intractable question at the heart of your growth challenge



Expertise

Our analysis is qualitative & 100% human, accelerated by AI technology



Sources

Sample diverse & rich global sources that gets you thinking in new ways



Discovery

Explore patterns and make unexpected connections & creative leaps...fast



Sparks

Stretchy Sparks are the start-point for new thinking & ideation

Using our Sparks methodology to surface the most lively ideas & themes around the relationship between cats & their humans



A way to quickly jump into the corners of the internet to surface and skim the incredible array of content online to offer up stretchy inspiration for your creative challenges

Our question

“What do the rich narratives and discourse that play out online around pet ownership reveal specifically about our unique relationship with our pet cats?”

Our sourcing areas

Broad and stretchy sourcing areas from social media listening, cultural journalism and magazines, category specific consumer blogs, and new and emergent brands in the cat care space

I CHOOSE YOU

The specialness of an animal who is so free, and in some ways so beautifully wild, choosing you.

Idea Sparks

Cats' perceived independence and their ability to take care of themselves, their instinctive desire to roam and hunt, and the striking resemblance we see in them to their big cat relatives, reminds cat lovers of the privilege it is to be loved by a cat

- To have a strong sense of acceptance, belonging and attachment between cat and human
- For an animal with wild tendencies and famed for their independence to come back to you/your home for comfort and security
- Activations that speak to this realisation will resonate with cat lovers



WILD BEINGS WHO LOVED YOU

TO ALL WHO HAVE LOST CATS - THEY LOVED YOU - THEY ARE WILD BEINGS - LOVE THE TIME YOU HAD TOGETHER - YOU MIGHT NOT SEE THEM AGAIN BUT YOU WILL ALWAYS FEEL THEM FOREVER

Source
Social Media



ESSENCE OF THE WILD CAT

Never before was there such an effort to breed an entirely domestic cat which can offer the spotted beauty of the wild cats while maintaining the lovely, predictable disposition of the domestic cat

Source
USA



A CAT COMES INTO YOUR LIFE

When a cat comes into your life and chooses you

Source
USA



MARKINGS SIMILAR TO WILD CATS

Here's a list of mesmerizing cat breeds that have markings and facial features similar to wild cats, such as tigers, lions, cheetahs, and leopards (but without the thirst to kill.)

Source
USA



A MEMBER OF HER FELINE FAMILY

Many studies suggest that your furry friend actually sees you as a member of her feline family that is, as an over-large cat (who's not particularly good at hunting)

Source
UK



BEYOND CAT & 'OWNER'

The desire for cat enthusiasts – and society more broadly – to understand the complex social dynamic that exists between cats and their caregivers, to deepen the relationship and bond, and get beneath the stereotype that cats are solely aloof and couldn't care less.

Idea Sparks

Cats are stereotyped as aloof and often seen as much less willing or capable of having a deep emotional bond with, especially compared to their doggy counterparts. But cat enthusiasts will disagree; what an owner puts in with regards love and affection, they will get back

- Our relationship with our cats is sophisticated and complex, rich and multifaceted – the stereotype of the aloof detached cat does them a disservice, but a sense that cats offer a slightly more elusive love versus dogs
- Research by the University of Lincoln suggests 5 types of cat-owner relationship exists – including codependence and friendship – and is a product of the dynamic between human caregiver and cat, as well as personality features
- Activations that speak to the complex and intimate dynamic between cat and caregiver that dispels the stereotype will win the hearts of cat lovers



UNIQUE CONNECTIONS

Eve Davies, who runs the competition, said: 'Whilst we tend to think of our relationship with cats as that of pet and owner, cats and humans can have a huge variety of unique connections with each other and we would love to see this reflected in the entries

[Source](#)
UK



CATS VS DOGS

Cat owners will claim this is all nonsense, of course, and that their bond with their cat is as strong as any dog owner's

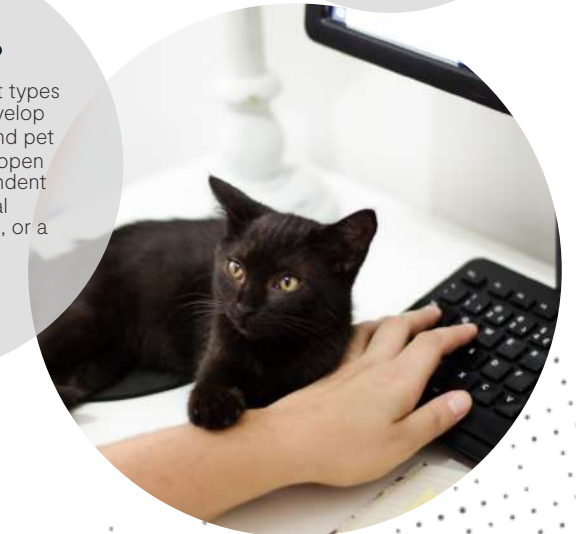
[Source](#)
UK



5 TYPES OF RELATIONSHIP

explored the five different types of relationships cats develop with their owners: Pets and pet parents will develop an open relationship, a co-dependent relationship, a casual relationship, a friendship, or a remote relationship

[Source](#)
USA



BLINKING WITH AFFECTION

If you want to improve your relationship with your cat try and hold their gaze while slowly blinking at them, this is a way in which cats communicate affection

[Source](#)
UK



CATS OWNING HUMANS

The Catnip Times is a cat lifestyle and advocacy site, designed to strengthen the bond between humans and the cats who own them

[Source](#)
USA



CAT PARENTS

The commitment we show to our pet cats when we regard ourselves as 'cat parents'; our cats becoming almost a proxy for children.

Idea Sparks

Assuming the role of provider to our cats – of food, safety, care, enrichment and love – feels uniquely parental and speaks to a familial form of love the ancient Greeks named 'storge'

- The language of 'cat mom' and 'cat dad' is permeating online discourse, shifting the stereotype of 'crazy cat lady'
- Innovation in cat care is a growing trend, signaling cat owners' willingness to invest in and commit to our cat's health, environment and enrichment
- Intense feelings and expressions of love towards our cats, and the affection returned by them debunks the notion that cats are always cool and detached, and that the relationship can be reciprocal
- With a decreasing birth rate in many western countries, existential concerns around climate change alongside affordability of homes and smaller living spaces may in part be behind this shift towards 'cats as kids'
- Activations that lean into the cat-parent mindset to acknowledge this familial love



LOVE BEING A CAT MOM

GONNA HAVE A CRY
THEY REALLY WOKE ME
UP JUST TO SLEEP
BESIDE ME I LOVE
BEING A CAT MOM
Social Media
OTHER

EXCELLENT CAT DAD

The Hubby is an excellent cat dad; he does all of the cat food bowl washing, and loves to supply them all with catnip
Source
USA



I LOVE HER TOO MUCH

YALL I GOT A CAT AND NOW IM HAVING ISSUES BECAUSE IM WORRIED IM NOT BEING A GOOD CAT MOM I LOVE HER TOO MUCH HELP
Social Media
OTHER



CAT PARENT

If cats can sense sadness
As a cat parent, saying our last goodbyes to our feline friends could be the hardest
Source
USA

SWIPE RIGHT FOR CAT DAD

On Tinder, men who describe themselves as a cat dad in their bio probably receive more right swipes than successful doctors and Ryan Gosling look-alikes combined
Source
USA



OUR ROCKS

When the bond between cat and human is such that our furry friends become our rocks – from the companionship and emotional comfort they provide daily, to the exceptional duties of a service cat, cats can be core to our happiness and safety.

Idea Sparks

Cats aren't takers; they don't just see humans as a source of food; instead, they have the capacity to be an emotional, and even practical, support

- Cats offer companionship – and a vital source of love, comfort and attachment for those at risk of loneliness, such as the elderly
- When a cat's presence is said to turn a house into a home; the domestic cosiness that they confer
- Service cats and emotional support cats are a 'thing', demonstrating their capacity to bring stability and a constant source of support
- Activations that recognise the power of cats in providing support & companionship will turn existing cat stereotypes on their head



CAT CAFES

I don't think you need to feel guilty about going to have your coffee and hang out with the cats; it may seem a luxury, but this is the perfect place especially for those who can't have a cat where they live at present, or who are missing a feline friend who is far away or who has passed away

Source
UK



EMOTIONAL SUPPORT CAT

I JUST WALKED BY SOMEONE WHO HAD THEIR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT CAT SITTING ON THE OUTSIDE TABLE THEY WERE AT AND I SAID THEIR CAT WAS CUTE AND THEY LET ME PET HIM

Social Media
OTHER



CUDDLE PARTNER

A survey of 2,000 cat and dog owners in relationships discovered a quarter would prefer to cuddle up on the sofa with their furry friend than their significant other

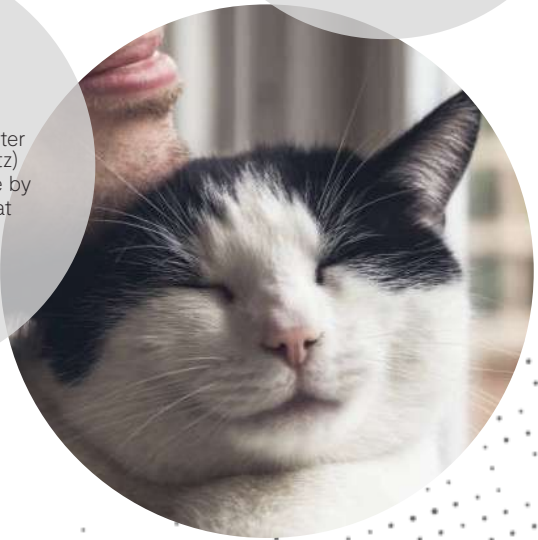
Social Media
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A TRUE COMPANION CAT

I adopted a shelter cat (shelter princess!) Lil Missy (aka Fitz) and she has changed our life by being a true companion cat

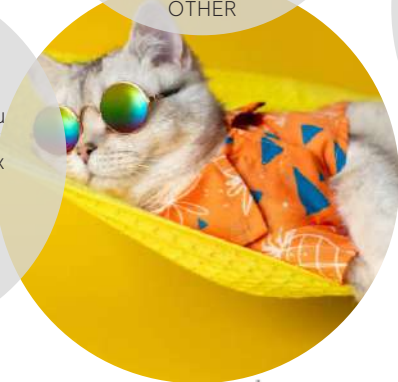
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RELAX & UNWIND

Any cat owner will tell you just how much their furry friend helps them to relax and unwind

Source
USA



PURRFECTLY SOOTHING

The power of cats' purrs and displays of affection towards their human that help to soothe our nerves and reduce stress and anxiety makes pet cats a particularly powerful source of comfort.

Idea Sparks

The act of petting a cat, and hearing and feeling their mesmerising and rhythmic purr is believed to promote strong hormonal shifts in our bodies, reducing cortisol and supporting heart health

- Increased 'happy' hormones like oxytocin helps lower stress and blood pressure – studies suggest that cat owners have a significantly reduced chance of heart attacks
- The frequency of a cat purr / vibrational stimulation is believed to aid healing, especially of soft tissue
- Wellness devices are now available that mimic the purring sensation/frequency to calm the vagus nerve – see Sensate
- Therapy cats are used across settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes, to provide a calming presence
- Activations that tap into the healing power of a cat's presence and purrs will resonate in today's anxiety-ridden society



REDUCE ANXIETY

This #StressAwarenessMonth, we'd like to know how your #cat helps keep you calm or perhaps reduces #stress and #anxiety in your life

[Social Media](#)

OTHER



CALM THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Scientific evidence also shows that a cat's purr can calm your nervous system and Lower stress and anxiety

[Source](#)

USA



PURRS & HEADBUTTS

Their purrs and headbutts melt away all moments of stress and anxiety

[Source](#)

USA

THERAPY CATS

It's a therapy cat for Tamaki mostly, and all three love it very very much

[Social Media](#)

OTHER



KEEPING YOU ACTIVE & SOCIAL

A pet can add structure to your day, keep you active and social, just a cat Many of us share an intense love and bond with our animal companions

[Source](#)

USA



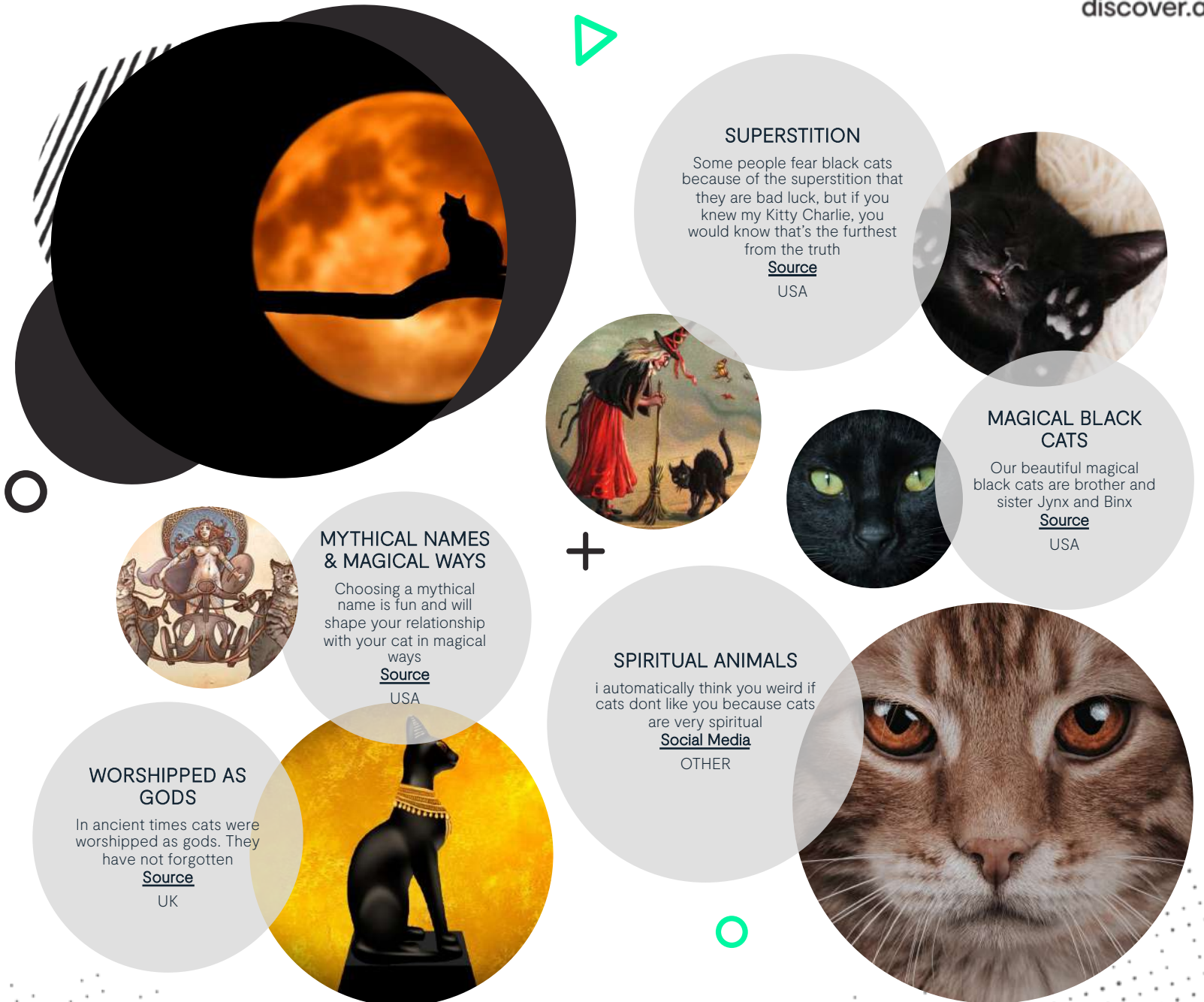
MAGICAL & MYSTERIOUS BEINGS

Culturally, cats have been seen as magical, spiritual, powerful creatures dating back millennia. Their perceived magical and mystical qualities still shape the relationship we have with our feline friends today.

Idea Sparks

Cats can be a very spiritual animal for people, offering us many different benefits. But they can also be viewed through the wary lens of superstition

- In ancient Egypt, cats were considered sacred animals and were often depicted in paintings and sculptures. They were believed to be the representatives of the goddess Bastet and were therefore treated with great respect
- Some people believe that cats are spiritual guides that can help us connect with the spiritual world, while others believe that cats are able to help us tap into our own intuition and psychic abilities
- Some people also believe that cats can help us to find our inner peace and calmness and can be a source of comfort and support in times of need
- Black cats are associated with superstition and bad luck, and have been harder to rehome as a result – National Black Cat Day in UK & US aims to champion black cats
- Activations that speak to this spiritual and magical aura will capture this unique perception we have of cats



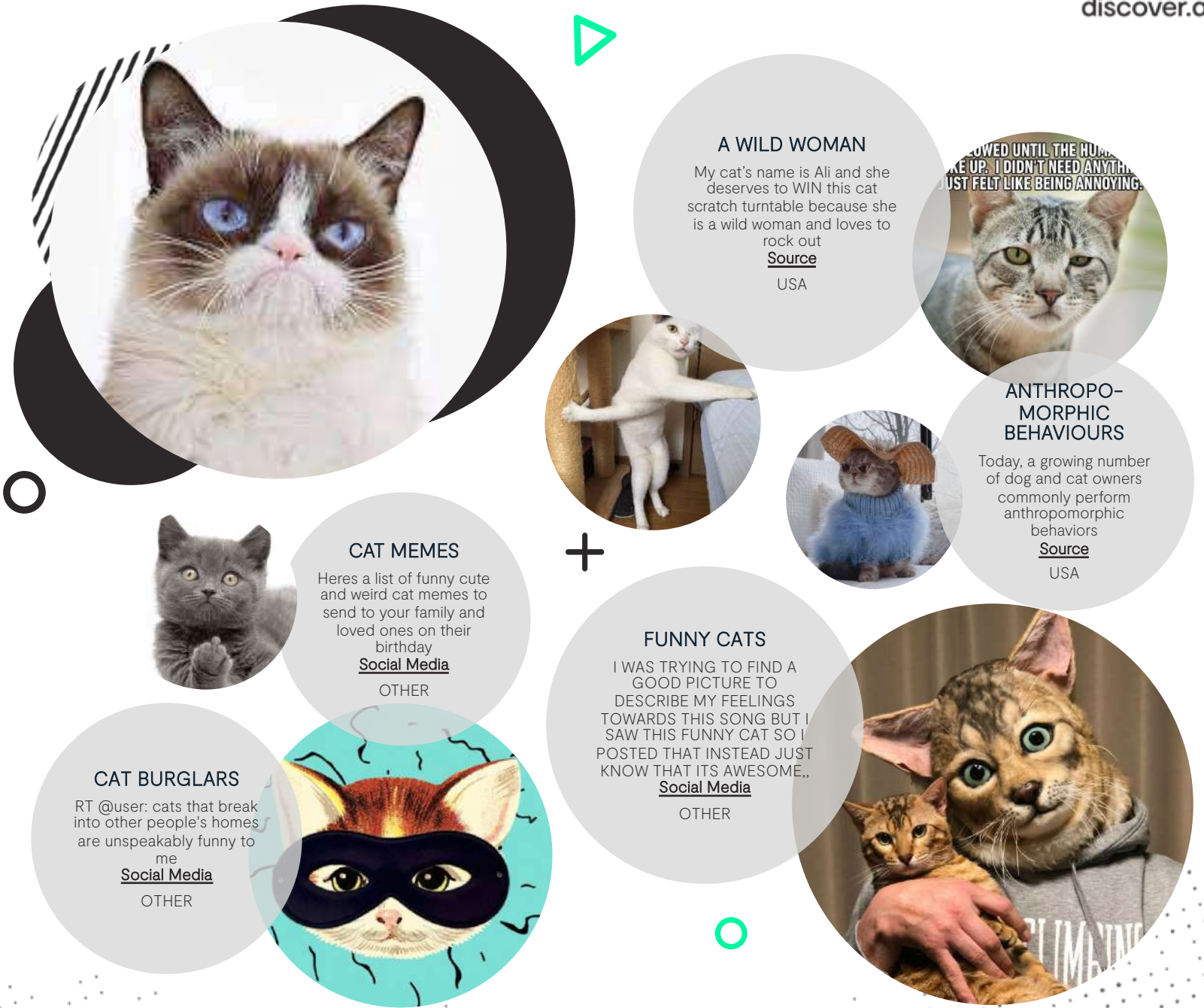
COMEDY CATS

We love to anthropomorphise them, and the associated online cat content keeps the world hooked. Grumpy Cat, you're gone but not forgotten.

Idea Sparks

The ways we perceive and stereotype cats makes for compelling online content, evoking humour and positive feelings

- We heavily anthropomorphise cats – typically assigning them & dialing up characteristics linked to arrogance, antagonism and silliness, which all sounds rather negative but is in fact seen as hugely endearing
- Videos and memes that highlight cat quirks and characteristics – cat as 'jerks', cats with 'egos', cats 'finding themselves funny', cats doing funny things etc. dominate cat content
- But recent shifts in cat content show that cats aren't just the star of the show – cats are becoming the audience, as owners seek out Cat TV to keep their cats entertained
- Activations that celebrate our cat's unique and endearing characteristics in a lighthearted way will create a fun and engaging campaign that speaks to this universal appreciation of cats



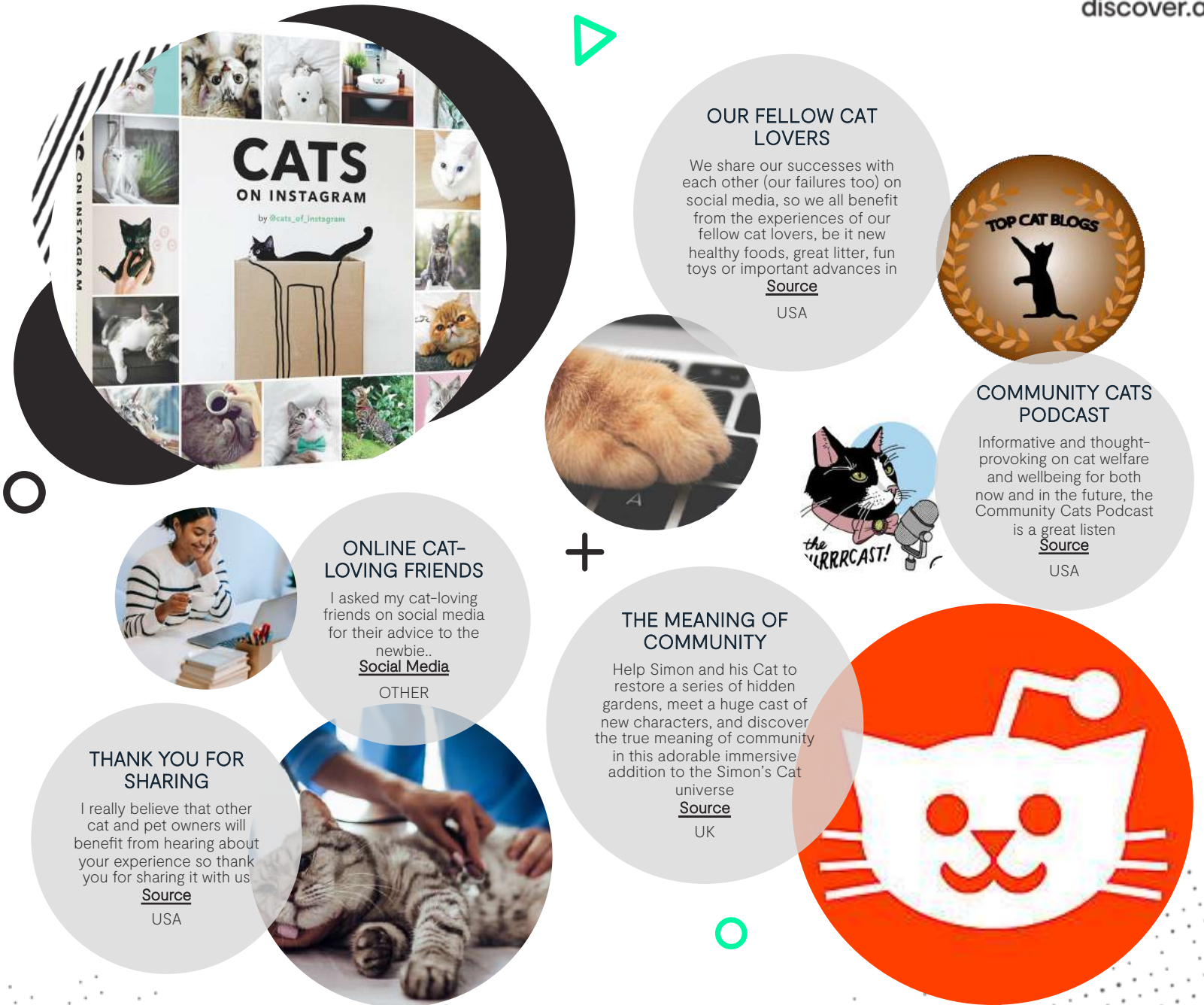
CATSNET

The corner of the internet where a thriving cat community lives – a bit like Mumsnet, there’s an online tour de force where cat owners look to each other for help, advice and connection.

Idea Sparks

The internet is made up of communities; whether fandoms, parenting bloggers or cat owners, there is a home online for anyone to find their tribe

- The pleasure, learning and sense of connection that comes from being part of a warm and engaged cat community
- A channel for sharing experiences, asking questions or sharing in the joy – and sadness – of loving our feline friends
- The types of questions asked of the internet & communities reflect owners desire to be the best cat carers they can be: What are some good foods for cats? What are some fun things to do with cats? What shape food bowl is best? What’s the best litter to use?
- Activations that engage with cat communities or speak to the idea of community and a shared love of cats will drive a powerful emotional message



THE GRIEF WHEN THEY GO

Losing a beloved cat is losing a member of your family. And when one goes missing or is lost to a traffic accident, it is especially heartbreaking; this is the inherent risk you take when you love a cat.

Idea Sparks

The pain and loss felt when a beloved cat passes is deep and real

- Cats are generally seen as low maintenance versus dogs; they're capable of looking after themselves up to a point, but their instinct to roam, especially in urban areas, leaves them – and by extension, us – vulnerable
- Unlike dogs, which are leashed and 'contained', cats are often free to do their own thing; we can't control and contain cats in the way that we do dogs
- Like when family members pass away, we memorialise our cats, and we recognize the grief attached to the loss – greeting cards, memorial stones and jewelry reflect the cat shaped hole they leave in our lives
- Activations that speak to the reality of these beloved connections – respecting the depth of relationship rather than superficially reflecting it – will resonate



ENDURE THE PAIN & SADNESS

never lose hope and especially never give up looking I've personally had to ask myself the question, How to find my lost cat and endure the pain and sadness of losing a beloved furry friend, so I understand what it's like to lose hope after several days or weeks
[Source](#)
 USA



FOREVER MISSED

Unfortunately my beloved cat Whiskas passed away in November 2020 aged 15 1/2, he was my best friend from when we got him at 8 weeks when I was 7, forever loved and forever missed
[Source](#)
 UK



NOT FUNNY

My cousin decided it would be so FUCKING FUNNY TO SAY MY CAT DIED AS AN APRIL FOOLS JOKE
[Social Media](#)
 OTHER



LOSING A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY

Losing a pet cat is much like losing any other member of the family and knowing how to react and what to do to ease your grief can feel like a challenge
[Source](#)
 UK



MEMORIAL BRACELETS

We crafted a unique and symbolic bracelet that memorializes the relationship you have with a cat who has passed on
[Source](#)
 USA





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