



Challenges while travelling with a pet companion

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Abstract

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<p>As pet ownership expands on a global level, the desire and need to include animal companions in travel is gaining popularity. This research-based thesis aims to gather in-depth insights into how pet owners feel about travelling with their pets and the challenges they face while doing so.</p> <p>A good comprehension on how pet owners perceive pet travel and what challenges they experience assists tourism businesses in providing better service. Identifying the occurring pain points that pet owners experience while travelling with their pets is a vital step toward improvement.</p> <p>In order to do so, the thesis utilized mixed research method, that combined both open and closed ended questions in a questionnaire. The questionnaire was directed to pet owners who reside in Western countries, regardless of whether they had recent pet travel experience or not.</p> <p>The result of the thesis presents pet owners' perceptions, as well as negative and positive aspects of pet travel from their perspective. The thesis concludes with recommendations for improving pet travel. In addition, it includes areas where further research could be required.</p>
Key words Pet travel, tourism, pets, travel experience, consumerism

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1 Introduction

Tourists are increasingly choosing to take their pets on vacation. Pet owners have a desire to take their pets on vacation because they are often regarded as members of the family in most countries around the globe. (Pet Travel Advisor 2023)

The global market for pet travel services was worth around 1.80 billion US dollars in 2022, and it is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 9.63 percent from 2023 to 2030. The growth can be explained by pet market trends, pet adoption rates, enthusiasm for travel after Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns et cetera. (Market Research Report 2023)

Hospitality is a field that includes various tourism-related services, as well as restaurants, events, entertainment et cetera. Hospitality is defined as providing hospitable experience for the guests and customers, that includes providing a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for all visitors. (Social Tables s.a.) As pet ownership is on the rise, how does the tourism industry take advantage of this change and are pet owners experiencing hospitable treatment? Are the products and services tailored for pets and their owners to ensure comfortable and positive stay?

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The thesis topic is pet travel. This research-based thesis will discuss pet owners' challenges and their perceptions towards travelling with their pets in 2023 in western countries. The aim of the thesis is to discover how pet owners feel about travelling with their pet, whether they are motivated to include their pets in their travels, possibilities in pet travel, what the positive sides are and what could need improvement in pet travel.

Research questions for this thesis include: What challenges pet owners face while travelling with their pets? How do pet owners perceive pet travel? What are the advantages and disadvantages of pet travel? With the help of these research questions limitations and positive sides regarding pet travel will be determined.

The thesis will demonstrate beneficial results for lodging establishments, transportation providers, eateries, tourist sights, and more. It aims to provide an improved understanding of pet owners and their preferences regarding pet travel.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of a theory part, where pet travel and consumerism will be discussed in a literature review. In the pet travel chapter, pet travel will be taken more into focus. In addition, the history of pet travel, reasons for pet travel, who are the pet owners and pet friendliness as a phenomenon will be discussed. Pet travel is strongly related to consumerism and since consumer trends change continually, consumerism will be discussed, along with subjects such as consumer behaviour, customer satisfaction and customer experience.

For the empirical part, mixed method research will be conducted with surveys distributed to pet owners online. The research chapter will cover the aim of the research, how the research was conducted, which tools were utilized, where survey was distributed to, target group, limitations et cetera. Based on the conducted research, outcomes of the research will be analysed, and appropriate recommendations will be provided by the thesis author.

To conclude, the final section of the thesis will conclude concluding thoughts and discuss the importance of the subject.

2 Travelling with a pet

Nowadays families and individual people are choosing to include their pet(s) in their travels. Travel activities have experienced extraordinary growth and tourism is viewed as major social and economic phenomenon. One of the most popular tourism trends in the world today is pet-friendly travel. (Pet Travel Advisor 2023)

The number of pets travelling is increasing each year. The United States is the country with most pet ownerships, with around 70 million cats and 74 million dogs kept as pets in 2023. In the United States, approximately 70 percent of households own a pet and around 78 percent of these households choose to take their pet with them when travelling. To compare that number with previous years, in 2018 the percentage was 37 percent and in 2008 the percentage was only 19 percent. (Dream Big Travel Far 2023; GlobalVetLink 2022)

A survey conducted in 2018 revealed that 63.7 percent of pet owners preferred travelling with a car, 28.3 percent preferred RV (recreational vehicle) and 6.3 percent an airplane as their form of transportation in the United States. (Global VetLink 2022)

Travelling with a pet companions got popularized in the late 1980s. Until end of the 1980s a few affluent travellers would bring their pet companion with them during travels. Tourists would stay at upper end hotels who agreed to cater tourists with pets. Cars were the dominant mode of transportation, until the late 1980s. (Pet Travel s.a.)

Allowing pets to board the airplane in the cabin area was permitted starting from 1989 when an airline attendant Gayle Martz from Trans World Airlines was frustrated about airline regulations regarding pet travel. She designed a bag to fit her small dog inside and what would also fit under a seat. Since the bag had measurements that were allowed onboard, it became the standard pet transportation bag size for airlines. Many airlines followed Trans World Airlines example and started to allow pets in cabin, since they were convinced that allowing pets onboard would increase passenger satisfaction. (Pet Travel s.a.)

In 2003 European Union took on new regulation regarding pet travel. From 2003 it was possible to travel to/from another European country that had low levels of rabies (such as the United Kingdom) without the pet needing to go to quarantine. This milestone improved transportation of pets between countries that have low levels of rabies. In the same year, Canada created world's first certificate programme for accommodations that are considered pet friendly. These milestones were the first indications that pet tourism is beginning to change the world. (Chen 2018, 8; Pet Travel s.a.)

In 2006, International Air Transport Association set regulations to ensure a safe flight for animals in the cargo hold. Furthermore, in order to make travellers more knowledgeable and the travel safer for pets, IATA (International Air Transport Association) set more stringent and precise rules regarding pet crate design and manufacture in 2008. Nevertheless, during the 1990s to early 2000s, pet owners mostly left their pets at home, which meant pet owners had to find reliable caretaker when the owners were travelling. (Pet Friendly Turismo 2022; Pet Travel s.a.)

In Finland, 2021 decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry about food hygiene consisted of important milestone for pet tourism. According to the decree, from 2021 it is permissible to bring a pet to places such as restaurants, indoor kiosks, or stores. Before 2021, it was not allowed to bring a pet, but from 2021 it is allowed, if owners in charge of the restaurant or any other place allow it. The pet owner is responsible for letting the restaurant know before entering a restaurant that they would like to bring a pet inside the restaurant. Those in charge of the restaurant have the sole discretion to refuse service to anyone who brings a pet, and this decision is entirely up to the owners of the restaurant. (Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetuselintarvikehygieniasta 318/2021; Ruokavirasto 2022)

Despite growing number of pet owners, many pet tourists feel anxious about travelling with their pet. This is caused by not finding appropriate mode of transportation, accommodation or locations that allow pets, causing disturbance to other people or monetary reasons. (Chen 2018, 14-16)

2.1 Pet owners

There are billions of pets globally. All over the world, including in emerging economies, the number of pets is uninterruptedly increasing. It is estimated that half a billion pets are kept in the United States, China, Brazil, and European countries alone. Dogs are more popular as pets than cats, with 471 million dogs and 373 million cats kept as pets worldwide in 2018. Other animals kept as pets include, rodents, reptiles etc... Rising income levels, demographic shifts and Covid-19 pandemic have contributed to the rise of pet ownerships. (Health For Animals 2021, 5-6)

According to a survey conducted in 2015, pet owners with higher income levels possess more willingness to travel with their pet(s) (earnings between 40.000 to 59.999 dollars and over 80.000 dollars). Pet owners with earnings less than 20.000 dollars were significantly less likely to travel with their pet(s). (Kirillova, Lehto & Lee 2015, 36).

The expansion of the middle class in emerging areas such as Central Asia, East Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South-East/South Asia is the primary cause of cultural change regarding pet ownership. Pet culture is becoming more popular in those areas, resulting in the prevalence of pet adoption and the adoption of pets as members of the family. In China, for example, pet ownership increased 113% from 2014 to 2019, at same time when birth rates decreased, and pet ownership restrictions were relaxed. Experts are estimating China to have the most pet owners by 2024. South Korea is also seeing a significant increase in pet ownership in Asia. Pet ownership in South Korea increased by 50% between 2014 and 2018. (Health For Animals 2021, 5-7)

Trends in pet ownership are associated to demographic changes. Millennials (people born between 1982 and 1994) are the fastest growing age group of pet owners. Millennials are more likely to postpone having children, work from home or in a hybrid setting, and have higher incomes and education levels. In the United States, millennials make up three-quarters of pet owners; in the United Kingdom, 35% of millennials claim to have a pet; and in China, millennials are responsible for half of all adopted dogs and cats. According to a study conducted in 2009, single Australians tend to take their pet with them to a holiday more than families. Although pets are common in families with children, socio-demographic groups such as single people, divorced and “empty nesters” show bigger attachment levels to their pets. (Carr & Cohen 1 October 2009; Health for Animals 2021, 8)

A 2016 study on consumer behaviour found that 31% of households in Finland had pets of some kind, with dogs and cats being the most common ones. In 2016, there were approximately 590,000 cats and 700,000 dogs living in Finland. Every third household owned a pet of some sort in 2016, the most common households to own a pet were families with children. Since 2012, there has been an increase in the number of households with pets in Finland. In Finland, dogs account for most pets. In 2016, there were approximately 509 000 dog-owning households, which is 60 000 more than in 2012. In 2016, there were approximately 371 000 households with cats, which is 15 000 more than in 2012. (Hiltunen 2017, 83; Tilastokeskus 2020).

Covid-19 had a remarkable effect on the number of pets adopted. In Australia, people found that the pandemic gave them an opportunity to adopt a pet and spend more time with them at home. There has been a substantial growth in pet owning households, with the number of pet-owning households expanded from 61% to 69% between years 2019 to 2021. Meaning that the number of pets in Australia grew from 28.5 million (in 2019) to 30.4 million (in 2021). (Animal Medicines Australia 2021, 4)

2.2 Reasons for travelling with a pet

Animals have been connected to humans for thousands of years and they play a big part in human history. Domestication of animals started around 14 000 years ago with wolves, ever since animals have been used as modes of transportation, cultivation helpers or as a livestock. Following the upper class, in the late eighteenth century the middle class started to keep domesticated animals as pets and so pet ownerships were becoming more common. (Chen 2018. 11)

Emotional attachment to pets implies to be the major reason why pet owners take their pets to leisure trips. Studies have proposed that humans can develop a strong attachment to their pets, occasionally stronger attachment to their pets than to other humans. Various academic settings have discussed benefits of bonding with a pet. (Lass-Hennemann, Schäfer & Sopp 21 February 2022)

A clear positive association between pet ownership and health promotion have been shown by the literature. By bringing feelings of comfort and safety and engorgement to do perform outdoor activities, pets play an important factor in pet owners physical health, as well as mental health promotion. Pets help in alleviation in symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness, that all have an effect on mental health. The health benefits of bonding with or owning a pet have been recognised already for many years, as pets commonly visit schools, hospitals, and prisons. (Kirillova, Lehto & Lee 2015, 26; Lass-Hennemann, Schäfer & Sopp 21 February 2022).

As growing number of households regard their pets as family members, more pet owners are refusing to travel without their pet. For example, 48% of American adult leisure travellers view their pets as part of family. To meet the demands of the pet owners, places such as lodging establishments revise their rules regarding pet policies. To attract versatile customer groups, shopping centres, eateries and parks offer pet-related services and products. (Kirillova, Lehto & Lee 2015, 25).

According to a survey conducted in 2009, pet owners tend to have feelings of guilt when leaving their pets behind for a holiday. As previously mentioned, pet owners consider their pets to be part of a family; therefore, pet owners feel sense of guilt about separating from their pets because they conclude that separation will cause depression and anxiety in the pet. When a pet is left behind, pet owners are inclined to worry and consider their pets during their vacation. As a consequence of it, some pet owners choose to travel with their pet. (Carr & Cohen 1 October 2009)

Some travellers with a pet also believe that having their pet as a travel companion will enhance their travel experience. Having their pet with them on a travel will make them (and their pet) happier and less worried and therefore create enhanced experience. (Kirillova, Lehto & Lee 2015, 35).

If their pet is not given proper and diligent care during the vacation or pet owners themselves are not able to provide good care for their pets, some pet owners will alter or cancel their trip. Furthermore, some pet owners will decline to stay for longer than initially planned if they are not traveling with their pet(s). (Kirillova, Lehto & Lee 2015, 35).

As travellers with pets are willing to pay more, if their pet receives good care and if the policies are less strict regarding pets, this could interpret to the accommodation and transportation providers or tourist attractions that if their policies are pet friendly and pet centred, this could mean more income and customers for their company, because pet owner feel comfortable during their stay with their pet. (Kirillova, Lehto & Lee 2015, 35).

2.3 Pet friendliness

By definition, pet-friendliness is a word that is used to describe a place where pets are allowed or a place that is applicable/convenient for pets. Pet-friendliness in locations, accommodations or modes of transportations means that a pet is permitted on the premises under certain conditions. As pet market is expanding and lucrative, the tourism industry sees an opportunity that can be utilized to grow tourism businesses (Cambridge Dictionary s.a.; Chen 2018, 7)

The hotel industry is experiencing pet-friendly boom, as it is recognized that pet owners are spending money on their pet that also means they are willing to spend money on hospitality. Pet-friendliness also enhances brand loyalty and likelihood that the guests with pets will rebook. In addition, to allowing a pet in the room, accommodation provides are offering amenities tailored to pets. Such amenities include water bowls, play areas, massages, beds toilets et cetera... Growing number of hotels offer menus for dogs, where the foods offered are especially made for dogs' palette. (Social Tables s.a.)

For hotels, allowing pets may present an opportunity to heighten revenue per available room, as an average guest with a pet spends more nights (2.56 nights) compared to a guest who does not have a pet (2.1 nights). Hotels can also ask for a pet fee to generate extra revenue and provide additional services to compete with competitors. Moreover, around 76 per cent of guests with pets become loyal to a hotel where their pet was welcome. Some lodging businesses, however, prohibit pets because they conclude risks and problems (such as excessive barking, damage to the furniture, allergies, uncleanliness, attacks etc.), pets pose outweigh the financial profits. Having pet friendly policies could also mean extra operational costs for the hotel such as, cleaning, sound-proof walls, fixing furniture, staff costs etc... (Chen 2018, 8-10)

In 2010, Disney opened its luxury resort that can accommodate up to 270 dogs. The oldest Scandinavian dog association, Finnish Kennel Club has signed a cooperation contract with Restel Oy, the company that owns over 240 restaurants and 49 hotels. Members of the club are approved to bring their pets to all their restaurants and hotels under the terms of the agreement. In addition, many upper-class hotels are loosening up their restrictions to accommodate pets. Kimpton Hotels, in the United States only main restriction regarding pets is that the pet needs to fit through the doors. Previously mentioned examples are examples of hotels that target pet owners. (Chen 2018, 15)

Regardless of increasing number of pet tourists, majority of customers do not bring a pet to a hotel. Hotel pet policies are important to establish, in order to provide consistent level of service for both pet tourists and non-pet tourist. These policies can include: no unleashed pets outside the guest room, no pets in pools or other recreational areas, pick up pets' waste, limited number of pets in one room etc... (Chen 2018, 14)

3 Consumerism

In economics, consumerism is a theory, where consumer spendings on goods and services is the main driver for economic expansion and serves as a central measure for successful capitalist economy. Due to the fact that consumer spending represents the largest portion of country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product), governments prompt consumer spendings, as a method to boost the GDP and overall output of the economy. (Duignan 2022).

There are two types of consuming entities that the term "consumer" can be used to refer to: the organizational consumer and the personal consumer. Organizational consumers include for-profit/non-profit companies, institutions (such as schools) and public sector organizations (such as government departments etc.). Personal consumers are individuals, who are purchasing products and services (such as food, clothing etc.) for their own usage, for the whole household (a car, a house) or for someone else. In most cases, personal consumers are also referred to as the end-users, since the individuals are buying these items for their final use, meaning that the items purchased will not be used to create another product. This thesis will focus on the personal consumer. (Carlson, Paladino, Shiffman & O'Cass 2014, 4)

Consumption has grown as a result of more individuals becoming wealthier compared to previous decades. From years 1960s to 2000 global household consumption has increased a fourfold. Consumption has increased also in Finland, Finnish people spent eleven times more money in the early 2000s compared to early 1900s. (Hiltunen 2017, 43)

The biggest consumption surge began after the Second World War and years of scarcity. Purchasing patterns can be analysed to detect change in consumption. Consumption has shifted from purchasing inescapable products (such as food and clothes) to optional consumption (such as hobby products, services, and entertainment products). (Hiltunen 2017, 43)

The global pet market is around 261 billion dollars, and it is expected to grow to around 350 billion dollars by 2027. In Finland, the pet market for dogs alone is estimated to be worth around half a billion euros. As pets are in growing popularity and considered as a family member in most modern households, pets have an effect on buying decision and consumer behaviour. Pets are considered best friends, protectors, or both. The expanding pet industry is evidence that pet owners are investing more money in their animals. (Eby 2023; Health for Animals 2021, 9; Hiltunen 2017, 83)

Growing demand is advantageous for both businesses that cater to pets by offering products and services and for pets themselves. Growing number of pet owners are choosing to buy high quality pet food and take of their pet's health. Also, health insurances for pets are in growing demand.

Despite current inflation rate, it is anticipated that the pet market will grow in the subsequent years. (Eby 2023; Health for Animals 2021, 9; Hiltunen 2017, 83)

Nowadays pet market does not solely consist of pet treats and food. Growing trends in pet industry are expanding and new trends appear continually. Wellness and health, accessories and grooming are just a few examples of emerging trends in versatile pet industry. (Eby 2023)

3.1 Consumer behaviour

The study of consumer behaviour examines how consumers spend their free resources, such as time, effort, and money, on services and goods. Consumer behaviour is an important aspect to study for any company, in order to sell their product or service, predict consumer behaviours and have a successful marketing strategy. (Amin, Yousaf, Santos 2018, 197; Carlson & al. 2014, 4)

Comprehension of tourist's motivational factors to travel and tourist behaviour provides help to service providers to adjust and augment their offers to appeal attractive to their target market. Tourism industry is considered notably vibrant, as it includes travelling for all sorts of purposes such as relaxation, work et cetera. Activity such as tourism has to contend with extensive range of consumer behaviours, as well as with external and internal forces that influence consumer behaviours. (Amin, Yousaf, Santos 2018, 197; Carlson & al. 2014, 4)

The study of the consumer, including mental, behavioural, and emotional responses, as well as the processes consumers go through when they choose, consume, and dispose of goods and services, is referred to as consumer behaviour. The idea is to discover what kind of behaviours do consumers display in each stage of consuming. (Carlson & al. 2014, 4)

This includes researching the consumers to learn about what they buy, how frequently they buy, where they buy, how they evaluate the product/service, why they buy, and so on. Study of consumer behaviour incorporates concepts from a variety of scientific disciplines, including biology, chemistry, economics, and psychology. (Radu 2023)

Consumer behaviour is influenced by factors such as (Carlson & al. 2014, 6):

- Psychological factors (attitudes and perceptions to a marketing message)
- Social factors (education level, family, social media, income level, friends etc.)
- Individual factors (Opinions and interests influenced by demographic factors ((age, culture, gender etc))

Consumer behaviour is affected by numerous other factors. Some of these factors also include of economic condition (good financial situation promotes purchasing, contrary to bad financial situation), marketing campaigns (good campaign can persuade consumers to buy), group influence (social psychology, what are others doing), personal preferences, purchasing capacity (can consumers afford this product?) (Radu 2023)

Below figure 1 shows Maslow's hierarchy of needs that depicts five human needs which influence human behaviour. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation and since motivation is strongly related to consumer behaviour it can be used to comprehend consumer behaviour. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was first introduced in 1943 and it continues to be the largely accepted theory for researchers who seek to understand human behaviour. (Amin & al. 2018, 197; Forbes 2019)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs posits that people have ubiquitous needs that need to be fulfilled, once the basic needs are fulfilled, humans start to create further desires. The pyramid is interpreted as lower layer (physiological needs) is most important for people and higher layers represent less important needs, thus forming a hierarchy. (Forbes 2019)

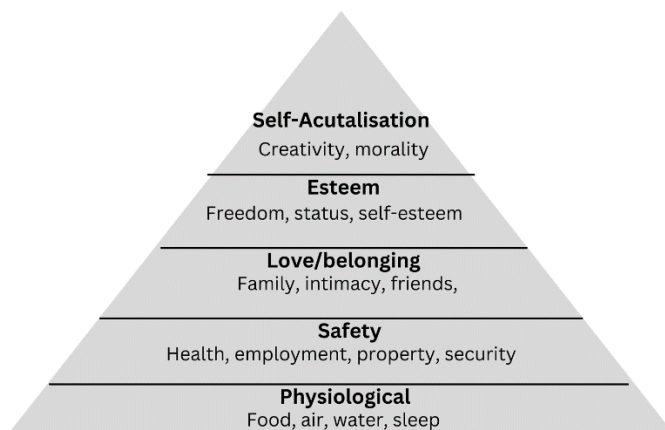


Figure 1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs (adapted from Mcleod, 2023)

Consumer behaviour research does not only provide understanding of consumer behaviour, but it also assists marketers to decide who to target: the payer, the consumer, or the buyer. Since the person who buys a product might not always be the person who also uses the product, through consumer behaviour research, marketers can detect who to market to. Marketers need to identify who is the person who influences the buying decision. (Carlson & al. 2014, 6)

3.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to a consumer's perception of the performance of a service or good in comparison to their expectations. Customers can have highly different expectations when eating at a high- end versus low-end restaurant, even though both are providing the same service. (Carlson & al. 2014, 20)

Customer satisfaction includes of customers past experiences, interactions with marketing stimuli and expectations. When customers' expectations are not met, customer experiences dissatisfaction. Contrary, when customer expectations are met, customer will be satisfied and when expectations are exceeded customer will be elated and satisfied. (Carlson & al. 2014, 20)

Company's main aim should be to satisfy their customers. Ratings and surveys can help companies to detect shortcomings and therefore enhance their services and products to satisfy their customers. (ASQ 2023)

3.3 Customer experience

Customers perceptions and correlated feelings brought up by both singular and continual interactions (that end up with a purchase or not) with a company's employees, channels, systems, or goods/services is referred to as customer experience. At every stage of the customer journey, customer experience targets on the relationship between the client and the business. (Carlson & al. 2014, 22; Gartner s.a.; Zendesk Blog 2023)

Customer experience has an influence on customer satisfaction and creates a positive brand attitude (how do consumers perceive the product, is it desired and is it filling the needs of consumers). A good understanding on how consumers feel about the service and product and to which extent consumers are satisfied is vital to discover through consumer research, in order for companies to gain competitive advantage. (Carlson & al. 2014, 22; Gartner s.a.)

Customer retention is gained through understanding what customers value. Loyal customers are vital for any company and loyal customer are created when customers feel like their needs are met and they receive value from the offerings. It is estimated that five per cent of retained customers can increase profits to about 100 per cent. (Carlson & al. 2014, 22)

3.4 Consumer trends

A consumer trend is a shift in consumer behaviour and attitudes. In other words, they are patterns in shopping habits, that change continually and gradually. Consumer trends shape the way consumers buy and what they buy. Consumer trends relate to how consumers are acting and what group of consumers are doing something at the same time. Usually, consumer trends are detected by experts through observations, consumer behaviour surveys, gathered data and studies. Consumer trends are visible once they become more apparent on the streets and everyday life. Social media and media contribute to growth in a consumer trend. (Hiltunen 2017, 63-64; Winter 2023)

Changes in group of people's personal and psychological factors, as well as changes in consumers' relationship with the community and environment influence consumer trends. Factors such as group dynamics, meaning how the trend takes off inside the group is also a crucial factor that relates to consumer trends. (Hiltunen 2017, 63-64)

It is highly beneficial for companies to be aware, detect and track consumer trends, in order to be relevant in the market. In a highly competitive market, companies who can understand larger context behind consumer trends as well as detect changes in consumer needs, values and wants are more probable to lead the market. (Ipsos Synthesio s.a.)

Consumer trends do not only effect buying decisions, but also how consumers perceive and use services and products. By begin aware of emerging and existing trends, companies can leverage ideas that inspire content creation and product innovation, create suitable marketing strategies and communications, find options to differentiate themselves from competitors, as well as remove themselves from declining trends and markets. (Ipsos Synthesio s.a.)

3.5 Consumer trends in pet market

Notable economic profits have been generated for the pet market as a result of evolving relationships between humans and their pets, allowing the industry to progress from commercializing pet food to pet wellness. Pet market has experienced considerable changes in during the past decade. A few decades ago, human food leftovers, a booth and a belt were considered good enough for a pet dog. A modern dog owner, however, chooses to dress up their dog, feed high quality pet food, moisturise its paws, use technology to communicate with their dog and purchase smart toys to activate their pets. Cats and dogs have shifted from being burglar alarms and mouse-catchers to being

considered as a family member: their health is being taken care of, they are spoiled, they are posted on social media, and their minds are kept stimulated through various trainings. (Chen 2018, 7; Hiltunen 2017, 83)

Nowadays, pet market is not limited to solely pet stores. Swimming halls, trimming services, massages and day-cares are just a few examples that the versatile pet market consists of. In the United States the pet market offerings are even further accomplished. New York Airport has a toilet just for the pets and Pet-Express Animal Transfer company offers transportation tailored for pets. CatGenie is a toilet for cats that is automated, Apollo-Peak creates wines for cats. Snuffle beer is a beer that is made for the dogs and their owners and has been around for more than 10 years. Pets have weight loss journey programmes, a radio, and beauty salons. Additionally, houses are built so that they cater suitably for family pets, that means having a shower or sleeping room solely for the family pet. One step further are the highly divisive plastic surgeries and Botox-injections for pets in South-Korea, that are in rapid growth. (Hiltunen 2017, 84; Snuffle Dog World 2023)

Products and services are made also for the pet owner. The owner can for example, have their pet's picture on a mug, blanket or in extreme cases have a gemstone made from their deceased pet's ashes. (Hiltunen 2017, 84)

In tourism trend, having a pet as a travel companion is more popular in central and southern Europe than in Finland. Nowadays, however dogs are welcome in eateries in Finland if the owner of the establishment allows it. (Hiltunen 2017, 85)

Dogs, including other various animals are used also in different service assignments. Senior homes, day-cares and schools have cats and dogs that people can pet. Libraries are visited by dogs, horses and guinea pigs. Petting a dog has a calming effect, for that reason, in hospitals dogs are brought in to calm down patients, in the United States, dogs can be brought into courtrooms to soothe witnesses and in Calgary Airport dog patrols help to calm boarding passengers. (Hiltunen 2017, 85)

4 Methodology

There exist numerous methodologic approaches that a researcher can utilize to conduct research. A suitable research approach is determined by several factors, such as the purpose of the research and objectives, research design, the available resources, and the type of questions to be answered. (Ponto 2015, 168) This chapter discusses methodology used to conduct research part of this thesis. The research aims to discover what sorts of experiences do pet owners have while travelling with their pet, as well as how motivated they are to travel with their pet and what are the limitations they meet while traveling with a pet.

The main research question this thesis aims to explore is: what challenges do pet owners face in 2023, while travelling with their pet? The aim of this thesis is to discover how do pet owners perceive pet travel and what are motivational factors that influence it. Sub-questions that support the thesis aim are what motivates pet owners to travel with their pet and how to increase motivation to travel with a pet. Selecting appropriate research questions benefits the research, since it helps to focus on one specific area of interest, select the best viewpoint or strategy to interpret it, as well as manage researchers' efforts. (Williams 2007, 65)

The chapter also discusses various research related topics, such as why was the chosen research method chosen, distinctions between different research methodologies, how was the research conducted, what does this method aim to achieve, how was the target group chosen, as well as how was the data for this research acquired and research's limitations. Based on the gathered data any shortcomings and advantages will be identified and appropriate recommendations provided by the author of the thesis.

4.1 Research methods

To conduct the thesis research, this thesis employs the mixed methods research. Mixed methods research is overall a knowledge approach that aims to take into account various standpoints, perspectives, and viewpoints from both quantitative and qualitative research attributes. (Gunasekare 2013, 361)

There exist two major approaches to conduct a mixed method research: mixed method and mixed model research. For example, in mixed model research specially, researcher could compose a survey that consists of both close-ended questions (quantitative data) and open-ended questions (qualitative data). In mixed method research, researchers can conduct research that consists of

two parts (qualitative and quantitative part). For example, researcher can conduct an experiment (quantitative) and afterwards conduct interviews with the participants (qualitative). (Gunasekare 2013, 362)

Quantitative and qualitative are oppositional to one another, qualitative research involving gathering and analysing non-numerical data (such as audios, texts, pictures) to comprehend experiences, opinions, and concepts. Contrary to qualitative research, quantitative research requires numerical data for statistical analysis. (Bhandari 2020; Gunasekare 2013, 361)

A mixed research method was chosen to address the inadequate representation of complicated concepts that this study aims to investigate additionally. Operational definitions in quantitative research method may restrict concepts such as moods or feelings to be adequately interpreted, meanwhile qualitative method elaborates these concepts more in depth. Overall, a mixed research method was chosen to receive more comprehensive results. (Ponto 2015, 170)

In addition, the author of the thesis was aiming to gather a large sample to conduct the research through an online questionnaire. Conducting interviews can be time consuming and thus impractical if the aim was to gather a large sample size. (Bhandari 2020; Ponto 2015, 170)

4.2 Qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research is utilized to comprehend how separate groups experience the world. There are various approaches to conduct qualitative research, some of them include: grounded theory, action research ethnography et cetera. These approaches share a few similarities but highlight a distinct perspective and aims. For instance, in grounded theory, researchers gather data on interest subject, after which they progress to establish theories inductively. In ethnography, researchers can engage with certain organizations or groups to comprehend their cultures. (Bhandari 2020)

Qualitative research methods include surveys with open-ended questions, interviews, observations, secondary research, and focus groups. Data can be analysed using different approaches (such as content analyses, textual analyses etc...), depending on what suits best for the research aim. (Bhandari 2020)

Quantitative research on the other hand collects quantifiable data to systematically investigate a group of people (also referred to as a sample population) using mathematical, computational, or statistical approaches. The main attribute of quantitative research is that the data can be depicted in numerical form. The aim of conducting quantitative research is to detect patterns, find averages

and make predictions. A good understanding of the result numbers can aid in forecasting future of a service or product and altering it accordingly. (QuestionPro s.a.)

Quantitative research methods can be employed in correlational, experimental, or descriptive research. Data for quantitative research method can be gathered from surveys, experiments, systematic observations, secondary research etc... Depending on the type of research, using operational definitions to convert abstract concepts (such as emotions and feelings) into measurable, quantifiable indicators (such as rating scales), is a common precondition for collecting quantitative data. (Bhandari 2020)

4.3 Data collection

Data collection method for this thesis research was determined to be an online questionnaire. Questionnaire is part of survey research, a data collection method that can be defined as an approach to collect information from sample group through their answers to different questions. Survey research can be conducted using qualitative (with open ended questions), quantitative (close ended questions) or both types of research strategies, referred to as mixed methods research. (Ponto 2015, 169)

Survey research have been primarily used to gather data from a large number of people. The purpose of this type of data collection is to quickly obtain data that depicts characteristics of a large sample group. (Ponto 2015, 168) For that reason, this thesis research also utilises online questionnaire to obtain information from a large target group relatively fast.

Questionnaires can be distributed to target group in paper form via mail or flyers, electronically via email, or via an Internet-based program, or distributed using both paper and electronic methods. Combining both distribution methods allows the responder to choose which method is most suitable for them. (Ponto 2015, 170) In this thesis research, however, questionnaire was distributed solely online to three Facebook groups that all consisted of different pet owners living in western countries.

The research employed voluntary response sampling, which means that the respondents answered the survey voluntarily rather than the author of the thesis choosing and contacting respondents individually. (McCombes 2019) The questionnaire was distributed as a public online survey through the thesis author's personal Facebook account.

A questionnaire was developed using Webropol 3.0 online reporting and survey tool. The questionnaire (appendix 1) consisted of overall 23 questions, however, questions and their amount were different, depending on if the respondent has travelled with their pet or not. 12 questions were directed to respondents who have not travelled with their pet in the last five years (appendix 2) and 21 questions were directed to respondents who have travelled with their pet in the last five years (appendix 3).

The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions, in order to get more in-depth answers. Open-ended questions allow respondents to respond in as much detail as they prefer using their own words. Close ended questions, however, allow respondents to select their answers from a list of predetermined responses. (Cint 2022)

Questionnaire also included two demographic questions. The term "demographic" refers to a specific group of people who share same or similar traits. Demographic questions help in differentiating and segmenting various groups, providing for a better comprehension of the target group. Demographic data are characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, et cetera... (Go Survey s.a.)

The questionnaire was distributed 14th of August and respondents had time to answer until 20th of August. Respondents were given information about what the questionnaire is about, who is it directed to, importance of the questionnaire, how long does completing of the questionnaire take as well as the confidentiality matters of the questionnaire, in order to encourage group members to take part in the survey.

4.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are two concepts that are used to determine quality of a research. In general terms, the main distinction between reliability and validity is that reliability tests consistency of a research, meaning similar results can be reproduced under the same conditions (in other words, precision of the research results). Validity tests the extent to which research results measure what the research claims to measure (in other words, accuracy of the research results). These concepts are closely associated with each other, but they are remaining as two different concepts. (Middleton, 2019)

There exists multiple research biases and errors that can have an effect on research results, and therefore on research reliability and validity. Bias is defined as any tendency that hinders the

objective assessment of a topic. Bias can appear in research when a systematic error is made during the testing or sampling by selecting and/or enhancing certain responses or results over other options. Bias can occur in any research stage, such as data collection, research design, even in stages like publication and data analysis. (Pannucci & Wilkins 2010, 620)

Researcher should aim to avoid or minimize biases and errors in their research. Despite this, it is particularly difficult to conduct research without some degree of bias. Begin aware and having a good understanding of different biases can help a researcher to minimize their occurrence. (Scribbr s.a.)

This thesis research was conducted with possible biases and errors considered. The data collection method chosen was an online survey with usage of voluntary response sampling, a type of non-probability sampling. The survey was a publicly open survey that was distributed to pet owners online through three pet ownership-themed (not travel-themed) Facebook groups, in order to reach the target group, who were the pet owners. Author of the thesis did not choose pet travel themed groups to avoid many respondents who may have too strong opinions regarding pet travel.

Voluntary response sampling, however, can yield biased responses by the respondents. Since people who choose to answer the survey can already possess strong opinions about the research topic, do it for ethical reasons et cetera. and therefore, give biased answers. (Question Pro s.a.)

In order to minimize biased answers, survey questions can be framed in a way that minimizes response bias. Questions should be kept short and simple, non-leading, simplified, with uncomplicated response options. Survey language should be kept understandable, without the use of high language, since the respondent will answer however, they personally understand the question. Additionally, researcher should not be influencing the answers, since it will produce irrelevant data. (Question Pro s.a.)

4.5 Analysis

Data analysis is pivotal stage of a research. Data analysis role is to conclude, extract true meaning from and interpret collected data from research to derive insights. Summarizing and interpreting data involves logical and/or statistical approaches. (Responsible Conduct of Research s.a.)

To conduct research data analysis, answers from qualitative questions are analysed using thematic approach, where the aim is to find patterns in the respondents' answers that appear repeatedly, after which similar patterns are labelled and grouped into themes. Webpols text mining

feature was additionally used to detect words that constantly came up in responses. (Caulfield 2019) Quantitative data however are analysed statistically.

Data were analysed using Webropol 3.0 reporting tool, the same online platform where survey was composed. To analyse qualitative data, Microsoft Excel is additionally used to illustrate themes for better data analysis and storage.

5 Research results

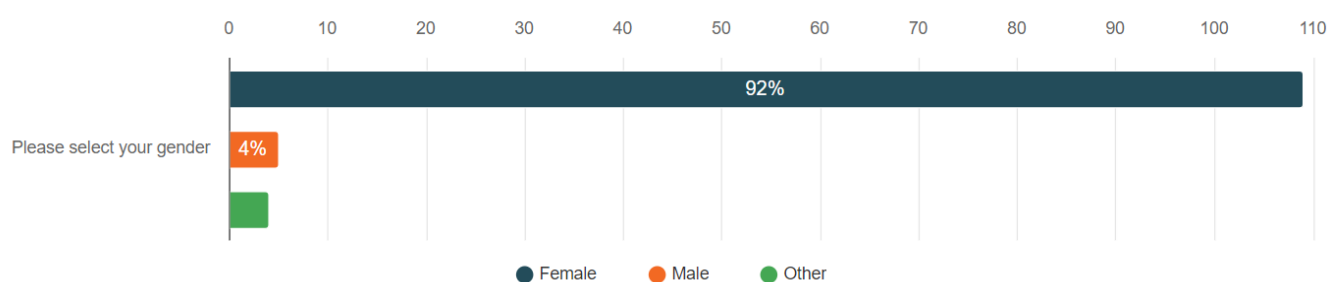
This chapter presents answers gathered from the questionnaire. For comprehensible presentation, the chapter is divided into four subchapters. Each subchapter discusses different part of a questionnaire such as respondents background, motives for travel, transportation and lodging modes and the positive and negative sides of pet travel. The questionnaire was distributed to pet owner's through three pet-ownership themed Facebook groups. The questionnaire was open from 14th to 20th of August. Majority of the questionnaires were submitted during the first few days.

The questionnaire was started by 138 respondents, but altogether 118 respondents answered the questionnaire to its full extent as well as submitted their answers. Response rate of the questionnaire was 85 percent. Questionnaire can be viewed in appendices (appendix 1).

5.1 Respondents background

In order to understand respondents background, a few demographic questions were asked. Respondents were asked about their gender, age, what pets do they own and whether they have travelled with their pet in the last five years or not.

First question asked in the questionnaire was about gender. Figure 2 depicts respondents gender groups. Female gender is the most dominant one in this questionnaire with 92,4 percent of respondents begin female. Male and other together made 7,6 percent of the respondents.



	Female	Male	Other
n	109	5	4
Percent	92,4%	4,2%	3,4%

Figure 2 Respondents gender (n= 118)

The research was able to elicit answers from pet owners of various age ranges. The biggest age range was 29-39 (36 percent of respondents), second biggest was 40-50 years of age (23 percent

of respondents). The least number of answers were gathered from older generations, people aged 51 to 70 answered the questionnaire the least. Questionnaire was not answered by anyone older than 70 years of age. Figure 3 depicts all the respondents age ranges.

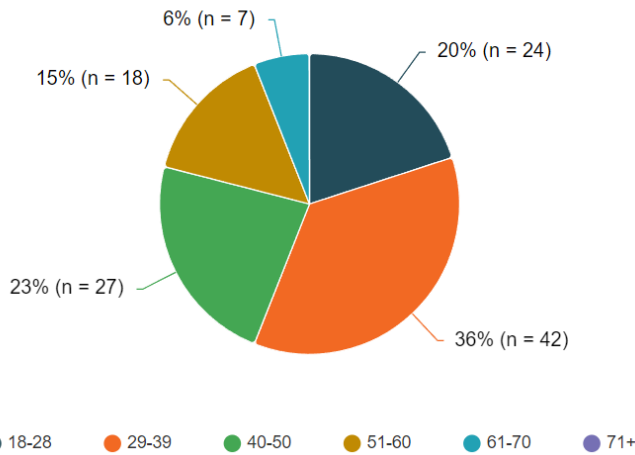


Figure 3 Respondents age ranges (n=118)

Over a half of the respondents owned cats (53 percent). Dog owners (42 percent) were the second biggest group (see figure 4). In text field (other), five respondents said that they own both, a cat and a dog. One respondent owned horses. One respondent said they own chickens additionally to cat and a dog. The amount of dog and cat owners in the biggest respondent age range (people aged 29 to 39) was even (20 cat and 20 dog owners).

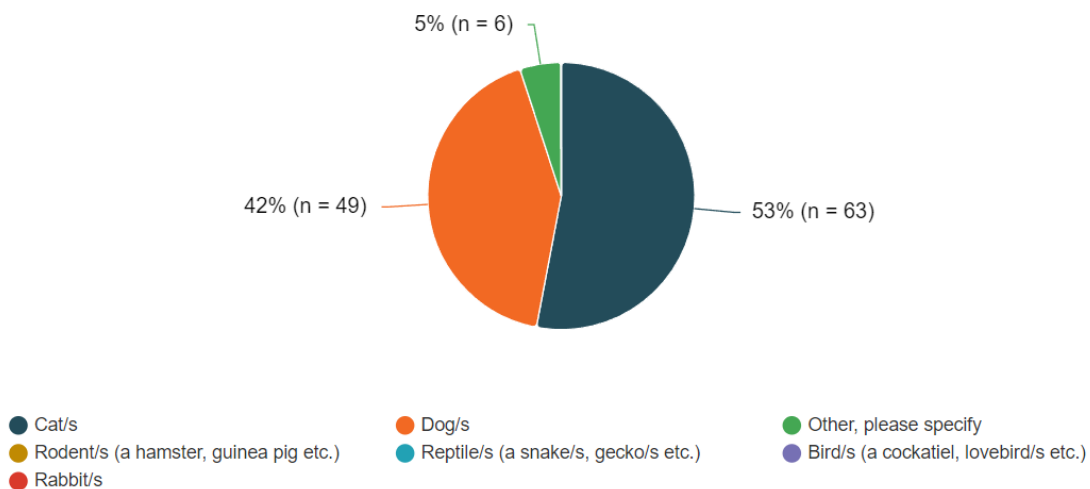


Figure 4 Pets owned by the respondents (n=118)

In order to get the most recent pet travel experience insights, respondents were asked whether they have travelled with their pet in the last five years. Most of the respondents (86 percent) said they have travelled with their pet, meanwhile 14 percent of the respondents have not. Notably all dog owners said they have travelled with their dog, meanwhile 74,6 percent of cat owners said they have travelled with their cat. Figure 5 illustrates answers given by the respondents.

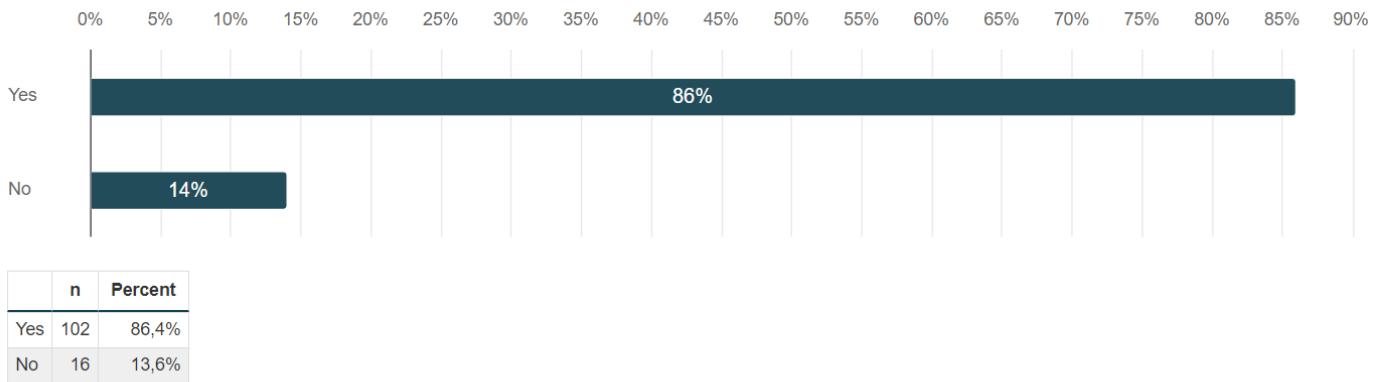


Figure 5 Number of respondents who have/have not travelled with a pet (n=118)

5.2 Motives for pet travel

Respondents were asked multiple travel motivation related questions. To know how attached respondents were to their pet, respondents were asked how true “I see my pet as a family member” is in their case. Respondents got to choose from a scale of zero to ten how much they agree with this statement. According to the results (figure 6), respondents mostly agree with the statement, with an average number of 9,6 agreement.

I see my pet as a family member

Number of respondents: 118

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
5,0	10,0	9,6	10,0	1138,0	0,9

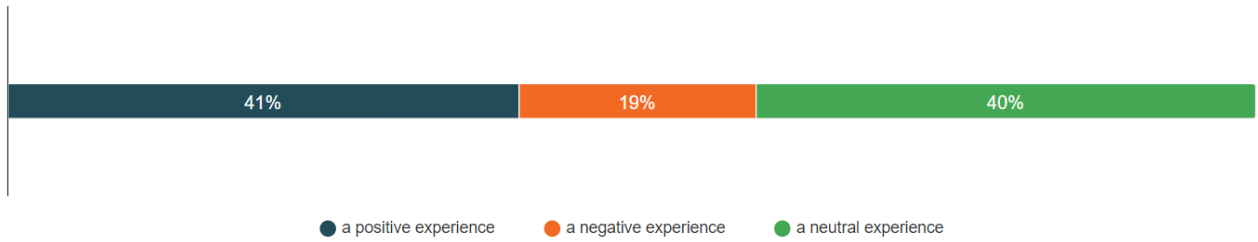
Figure 6 Agreement number of “I see my pet as a family member” (n=118)

Respondents were asked whether they perceive pet travel as a negative, positive or a neutral experience (figure 7). Respondents generally perceived pet travel as neutral (39,8 percent) and positive experience (40,7 percent), 19,5 percent of respondents said they see it as a negative experience. 57 percent of dog owners perceived pet travel as a positive experience, meanwhile only 27

percent of cat owners perceived it as a positive experience. Most cat owners (48 percent) perceived pet travel as a neutral experience, but most dog owners (57 percent) perceived pet travel as a positive experience.

I generally perceive pet travel as...

Number of respondents: 118



	n	Percent
a positive experience	48	40,7%
a negative experience	23	19,5%
a neutral experience	47	39,8%

Figure 7 Results to how pet owners perceive pet travel (n=118)

According to the results (figure 8), respondents (91,2 percent) mostly travel with their pet during holidays. Second most chosen answer was option other, in this written answer, most respondents said they travel for family and friends' visits, other reasons included, relocations, medical reasons and for breeding.

What was the purpose of your travel(s) with your pet?

Number of respondents: 102, selected answers: 118

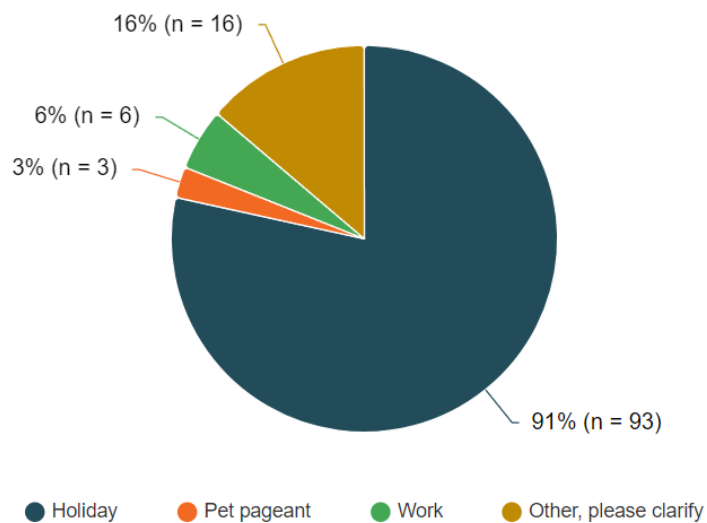


Figure 8 Reasons for pet travel (n=102)

Reasons for voluntary trips with a pet was asked from respondents who have travelled with their pet voluntarily. Respondents could choose multiple reasons. This question was not mandatory, since not all travels with a pet are voluntarily taken. As seen in figure 8, most popular answer to this questions was “ I feel bad for leaving my pet behind”, which was chosen 67 times. Second most common answer was “ I enjoy travelling with my pet”, chosen 41 times. In “Other” respondents most said they do it because their pet gets stressed without their owners, for longer trips, moving, price of a pet hotel is high and because they see their pet as a family member.

There was a difference between dog and cat owners’ answers. For both pet type owners most, common answer was “I feel bad for leaving my pet behind” but for second most common reason cat owners gave answer “Hard to find a pet sitter”, meanwhile dog owners gave an answer “I enjoy travelling with my pet”.

What motivates you to bring your pet along on a trip? (Involuntary trips, such as medical or pageant travel, NOT included.)
 Number of respondents: 100, selected answers: 208

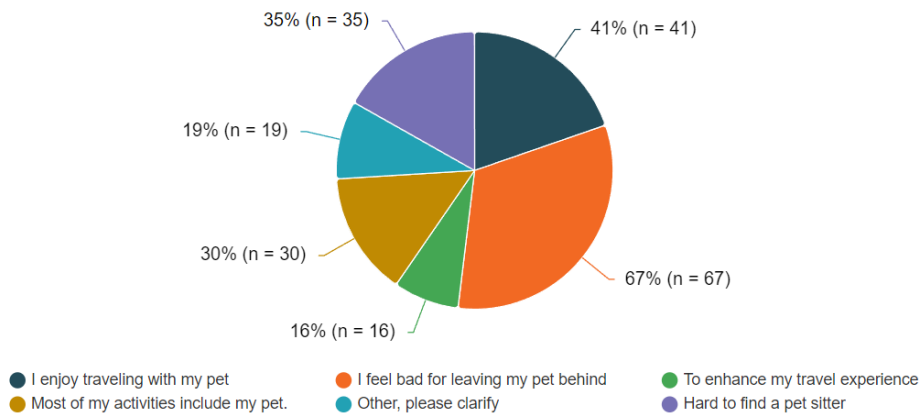


Figure 9 Reasons for voluntary travel (n=100)

Respondents who have not travelled with a pet in last five years were asked why they have not travelled (figure 10). Most pet owners (38 percent) said their pet finds travel stressful. Second most common answer was that the pet owner finds pet travel stressful. One respondent who chose option other, said that they have many pets and that travelling with one pet would be easier.

If you answered NO to the previous question 6, give reasoning to your answer

Number of respondents: 16

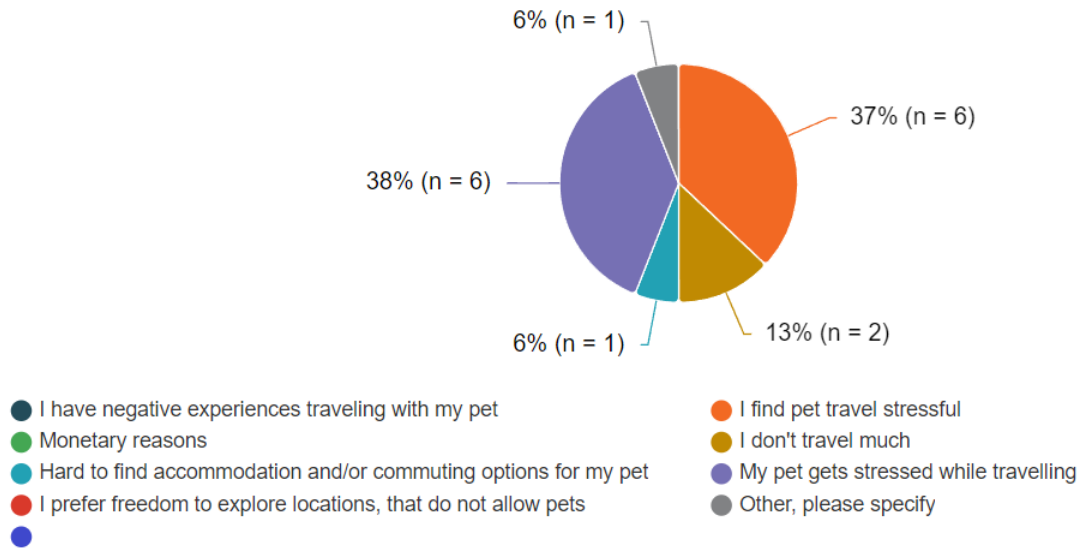


Figure 10 Reasons for not travelling with a pet (n=16)

Based on the responses (figure 11), respondents appreciated the most the ability to take their pet with them (44 percent). For both dog and cat owners this was the most popular answer. Cat owners however appreciated pet friendly policies more than dog owners (26 percent of cat owners).

What did you appreciate the most as a pet owner during your trip?

Number of respondents: 102

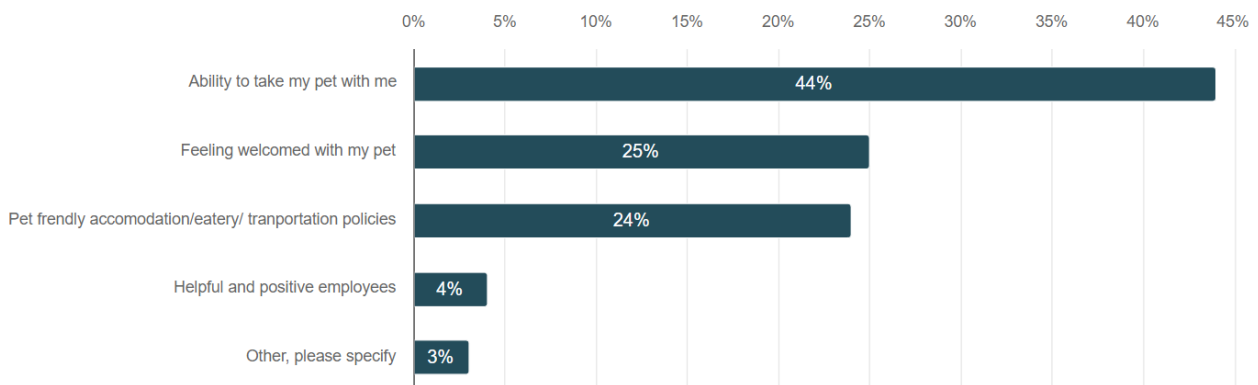


Figure 11 What did respondents appreciate most when travelling with a pet (n=102)

Pet owners were asked if they would use a tourism service that is known to be pet friendly, even when they travel without their pet. Respondents could agree or disagree from a scale of zero to ten. Results were slightly different compared to cat and dog owners (table 1). Dog owners were

slightly more likely to use (average agreement number 7,5), meanwhile cat owners were less likely to use (average agreement number 6,5)

I am more likely to use a tourism service from a company that is known to be pet friendly, even when I travel without a pet
Number of respondents: 118

	n	Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
Dog owners	49	1,0	10,0	7,5	8,0	368,0	2,8
Cat owners	63	0,0	10,0	6,5	8,0	411,0	3,1

Table 1 Likeliness to use a tourism service known to be pet friendly, cat and dog owners compared. (n=112)

According to the results, dog owners are more likely to take their pet with them on a next trip than cat owners (table 2). This question was asked from all the respondents, including respondents who have not travelled with a pet. Respondents who have not travelled with a pet gave 3,6 average agreement number, meanwhile respondents who have travelled with a pet gave average of 7,5 agreement number. Dog owners were more likely to take their dog with them on a next trip (average of 8,6) than cat owners (average of 6.2).

I would take my pet with me to my next trip

Number of respondents: 118

	n	Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
Dog owners	49	1,0	10,0	8,6	10,0	422,0	2,2
Cat owners	63	0,0	10,0	5,6	5,0	350,0	3,7

Table 2 Willingness to take a pet with on a next trip, dog vs cat owners (n=112)

5.3 Transportation and lodging modes

Respondents were asked how they usually travel with their pet. The aim of these questions was to figure out what modes of transport and lodging do pet owners prefer. These questions were only answered by respondents who have travelled with a pet, except for a last question (figure 15).

Majority of pet owners (41) have travelled with their pet more than ten times in the last five years (figure 12). Second most common answer was four to six times. Both cat and dog owners were frequent travellers, as "more than ten times" was the most popular answer for both pet type

owners, more dog owners however chose this option (53 percent), results in cat owners were more saturated.

How many times have you travelled with your pet in the last 5 years?
 Number of respondents: 102

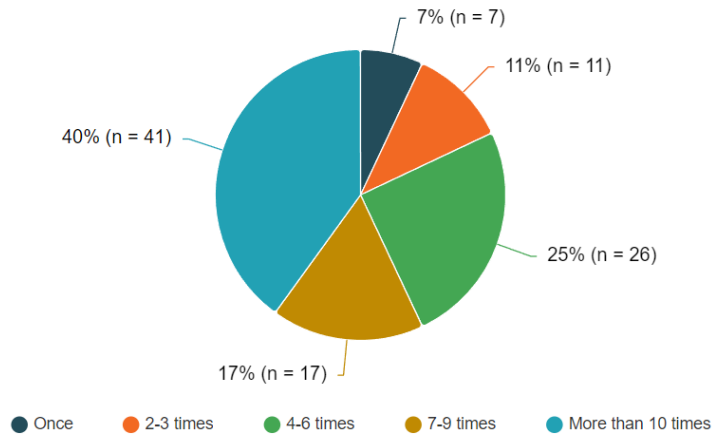


Figure 12 Times travelled in the last five years (n=102)

Pet owners were asked how they usually travel by (figure 13). Respondents could choose more than one answer. The most popular answer was by a car (91 percent). Second most popular answer was by plane (26 percent). Results were similar between cat and dog owners. Dog owners, however, travel 12 percent more on a plane than cat owners. Dog owners also travel more by ferry, 12 percent more than cat owners. In option “other” 12 respondents said they usually travel by train.

While traveling with my pet, I usually travel by...
 Number of respondents: 102, selected answers: 154

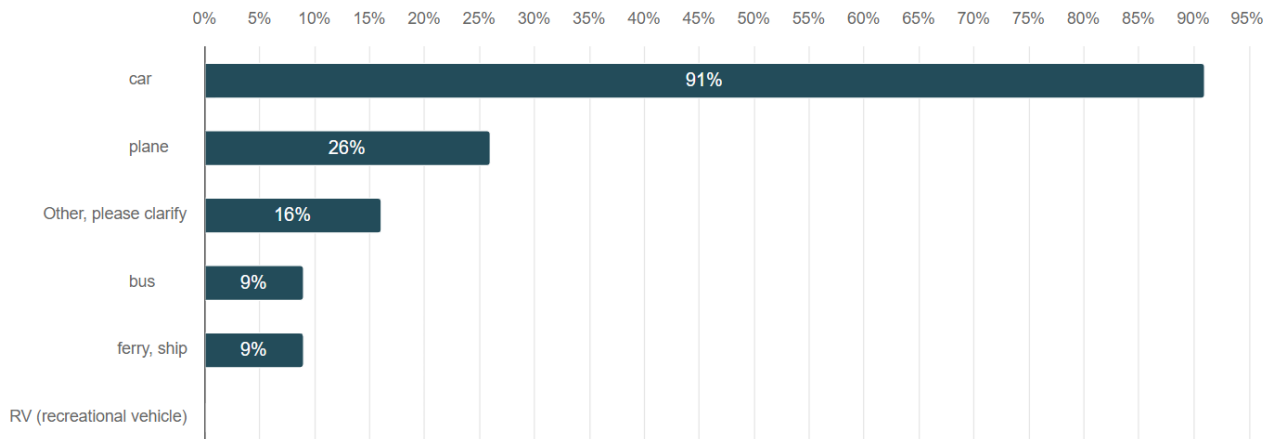


Figure 13 Modes of transportation (n=102)

Respondents usually (66 percent) stayed in family/friends' homes when travelling with a pet (figure 14). Second most common answer was a hotel. Respondents could choose more than one answer. 74 percent of cat owners chose in family/friend's house, meanwhile 59 percent of dog owners chose this option. More dog owners chose hotel as an option (59 percent) than cat owners (30 percent) .

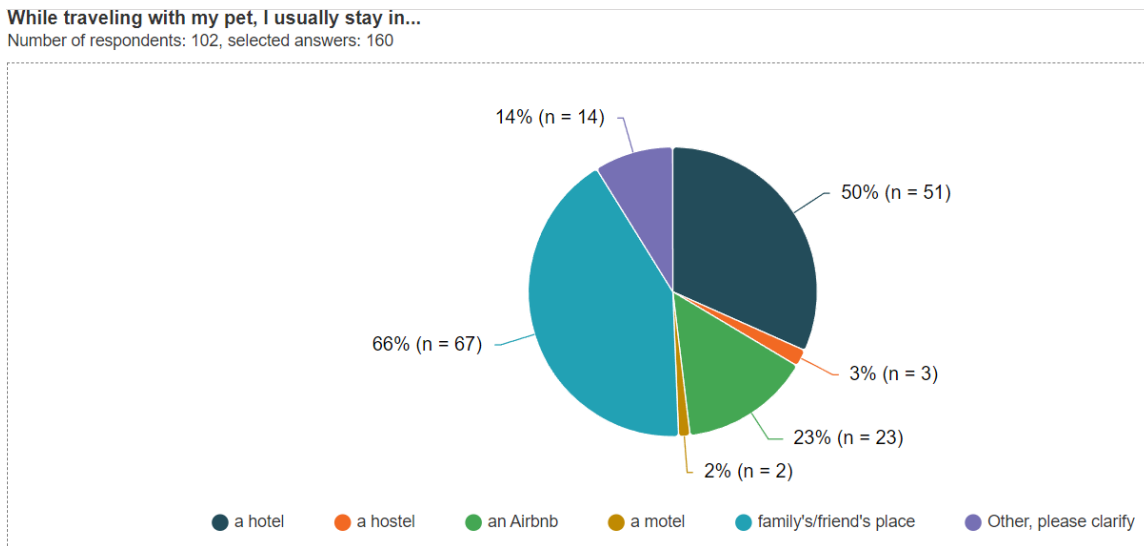


Figure 14 Accommodation during a trip (n=102)

According to the results, pet owners are willing to pay more for a service, if the provider offers a pet centred service. 92 percent of pet owners said they are willing, meanwhile, 8 percent of them said they are not willing. All respondents who have not travelled with a pet said they are willing to pay more. Respondents who have travelled with a pet 9 percent of them said they are not willing to pay more. Results were similar between cat and dog owners.

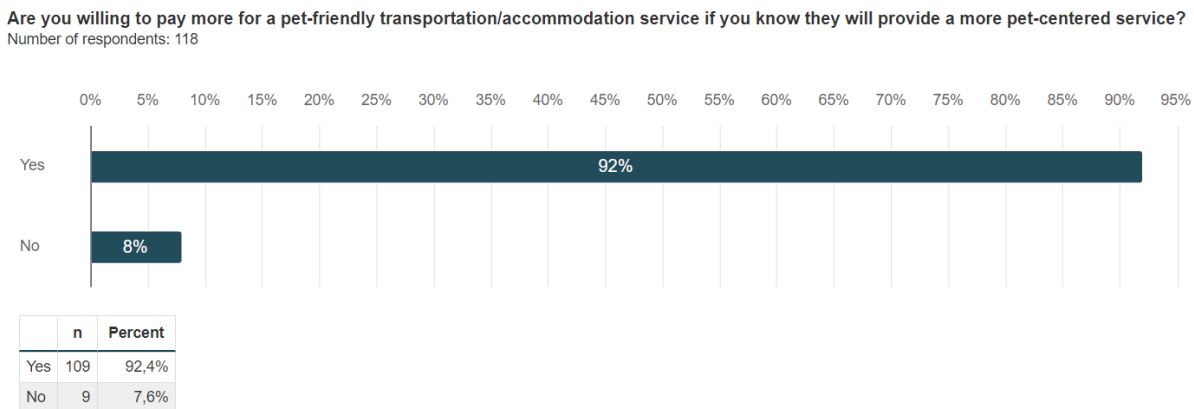


Figure 15 Respondents willingness to pay more for a pet centred tourism service (n=118)

5.4 Positive and negative sides of pet travel

Respondents who have recent pet travel experience were asked if their experience has been overall positive (figure 16). Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a question below and rate how well they agree with it. The average agreement number was 7,3. The average number was similar between dog and cat owners, but cat owners agreed to the question less. Dog owners agreed with 7.5 average , meanwhile cat owners agreed 7.0 average.

My experiences with pet travel have been overall positive

Number of respondents: 102

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
1,0	10,0	7,3	8,0	746,0	2,3

Figure 16 Respondents positive experience (n=102)

Level of hospitality was measured with a question in figure 17. The average agreement number for both cat and dog owners was 7,6. There was a slight difference between cat and dog owners in this question as well. Dog owners gave average 7,7 agreement, meanwhile cat owners 7,4.

Employees of selected lodging/commuting/eating establishments provided good service to my pet and me.

Number of respondents: 102

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
0,0	10,0	7,6	8,0	775,0	2,4

Figure 17 Level of employee hospitality (n=102)

Figure 18 is a question that was appointed to respondents who have not recently travelled with their pets. The question asked if they would consider travelling with a pet if the experience was made more accessible/comfortable for them. The average agreement was 5,4.

If the experience was made more comfortable and/or accessible for me, I would consider traveling with my pet.

Number of respondents: 16

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
0,0	10,0	5,4	5,0	87,0	3,9

Figure 18 Non-pet travellers willingness to travel (n=16)

Respondents who have travelled with a pet were asked to pick tourism sectors that have provided exceptionally good service while they travel, respondents could choose more than one option (figure 19). Accommodation providers were the most popular pick, which was picked 48 percent. Dog owners favoured accommodation providers (59 percent) and eateries (47 percent) the most, meanwhile cat owners picked eateries only 4 percent and accommodation providers 34 percent. The most popular answer cat owners chose was “None of these”, which was picked 38 percent. “Entertainment providers” was not picked by any pet owner group.

Which tourism sector has provided exceptionally good service when you travel with your pet?
Number of respondents: 102, selected answers: 128

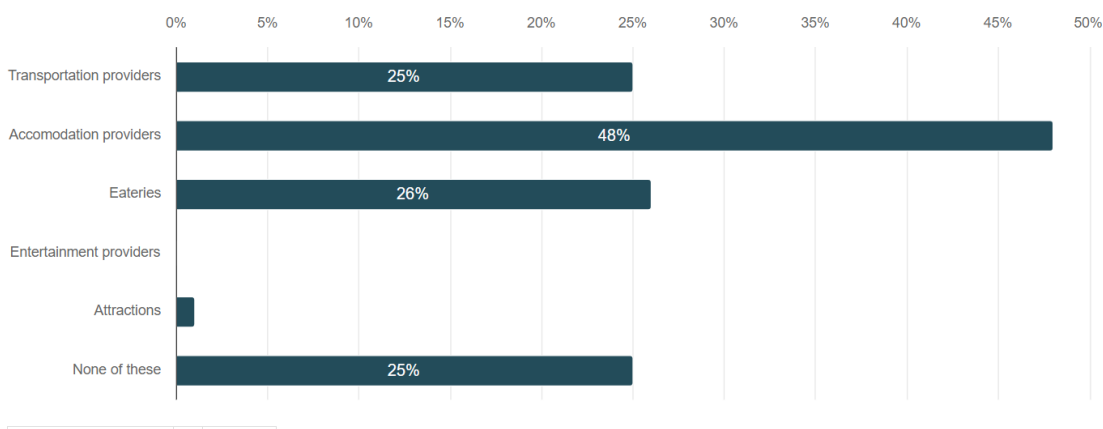


Figure 19 Tourism sectors who provided good services (n=102)

Respondents were asked which tourism sectors provided the poorest quality of service (figure 20). For dog owners' transportation and attractions got the most votes (both got picked 31 percent) “None of these” was also picked 31 percent by dog owners. Cat owners chose “none of these” the most with 64 percent. Second and third most picked answer by cat owners were eateries (17 percent) and transportation providers (15 percent). Accommodation providers got the least votes by all pet owners.

On the contrary, which tourism sector has provided the poorest quality service while traveling with your pet?
 Number of respondents: 102, selected answers: 128

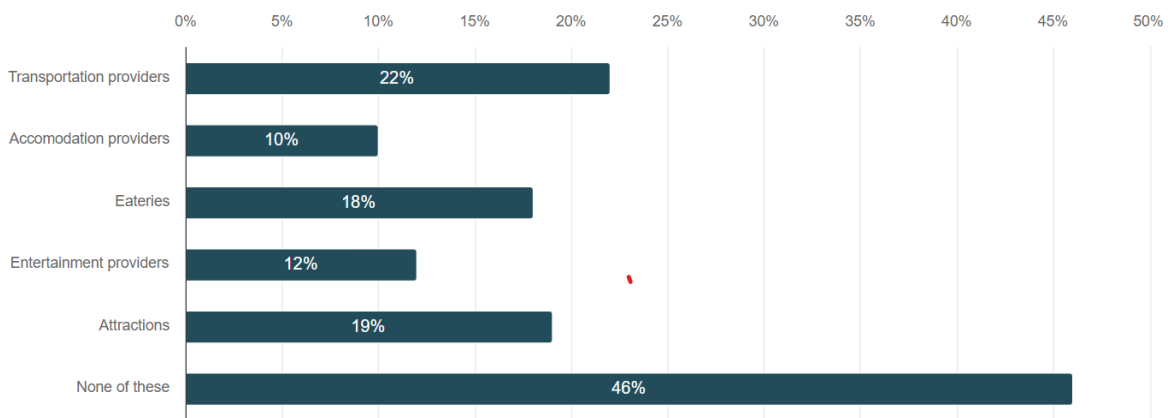


Figure 20 Sectors with poorest quality of service (n=102)

For an open-ended question, respondents could tell how their travel experience be improved (figure 21). Respondents could also pick an answer from the list. Most respondents chose to pick an answer from the list. Most common answer was “More pet friendly establishments” which was picked by 42 percent of respondents. For cat owners, most picked answer was “Additional services and spaces for pets”, chosen by 46 percent of cat owners. For dog owners, “More pet friendly establishments” was the most popular answer with 47 percent of dog owners chosen it. Five respondents gave their answer in a written form and answers are shown in table 3.

In your opinion or based on your experience, how could pet travel be improved to enhance your travel experience?
 Number of respondents: 118

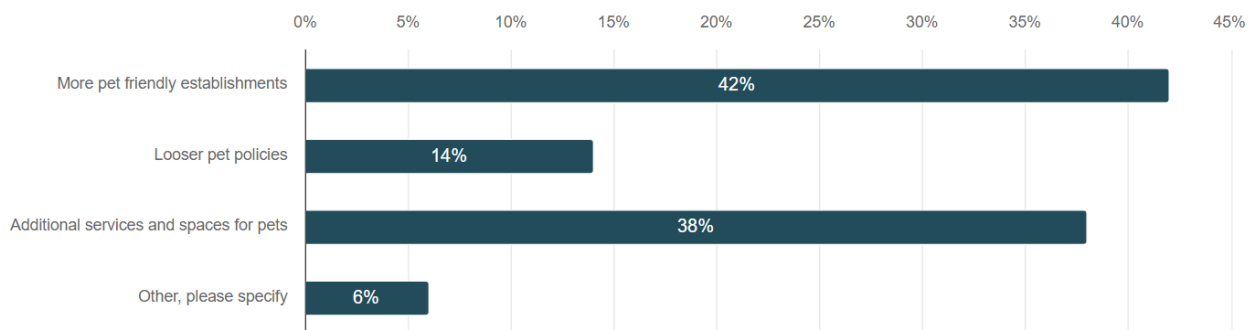


Figure 21 Ways how pet travel could be improved (n=118)

Open-ended answers
Clearer travel instructions
Pet-sitting service in hotels
Pet-friendly public transport, more room for bigger dogs
Ability to fly with a pet in a cabin
Too expensive hotel fees

Table 3 Open-ended answers to how pet travel could be improved (n=5)

Respondents were asked to provide more information about how pet travel could be improved in their own words. This question was entirely open-ended. The question was optional, overall, 45 respondents chose to answer this question. Table 4 illustrates most common themes that appeared in respondents' answers.

Most common theme that appeared was "Spaces for pets". In respondents' answers, the recurring desire for additional spaces for pets was evident, for example in airports, restaurants and hotels. Many respondents said they would appreciate if for example airports provided spaces where their pets could walk around more freely, defecate, urinate and play. Respondents additionally said that other transportation modes such as trains could provide cabins with shields to prevent pets from making eye contact with other pets. Additionally, hotels could provide outdoor spaces for pets.

The second most common answer was "More pet friendly establishments". Respondents stated that it is still difficult to find establishments that allow pets, especially cats, as some hotels only allow dogs. Additionally, many restaurants and bars do not permit pets.

The third most appeared answer was "Pet friendlier airline policies". Some respondents expressed that they would like to take their pet with them to the cabin, while some airlines do not allow pets at all.

Some respondents felt that the pet charges they pay to accommodation and transportation companies do not provide equal value for their money. This concern ranked as fourth most common answer. For instance, many hotels provide goodie bags solely for dogs, which can lack valuable items or that pet airline ticket costs a lot, but the pet is treated as a hand luggage.

The fifth most emerged answer was "Better pet policies", for example allowing to take a pet out from the transportation bag or reserving a quiet table in a restaurant when accompanied by a pet. This also encompasses clear instructions for pet owners on how to behave with their pet and clearer guidelines on how to travel with their pet. "Safer and better pet treatment" was as popular as previously mentioned answer. Many respondents felt that their pet is not treated as a family

member by the tourism companies, for example bigger pets are transported as cargo or smaller pets cannot have their own seat on an airplane.

According to the responses, cats are not as considered as dogs are. This response appeared as sixth most common answer.

Themes	Number of mentions
1. Spaces for pets	12
2. More pet friendly establishments	11
3. Pet-friendlier airline policies	10
4. Better value for pet charge	9
5. Better pet policies	5
5. Safer and better pet treatment	5
6. Take cats into consideration/cat-friendly places	4

Table 4 Improvements for pet travel, most commonly appeared answers (n=45)

6 Recommendations

According to the results, respondents highly appreciated the ability to take their pets with them to places they go to. Considering that most pet owners in this questionnaire considered their pet as a family member, one straightforward solution to improve pet travel would be to permit pets in more everyday places such as restaurants, cafes and stores. In other words, establishments that are essential for travel and do not have convincing reason for not allowing pets.

A few respondents mentioned in open-ended question, that the trip gets interrupted when they cannot go in certain places where they want to with their pets. Additionally, almost half of respondents chose “more pet friendly establishments” as an answer on how to improve pet travel, which was also the most chosen answer from multiple choice question.

Additionally, according to the results, majority of pet owners are willing to pay more for pet-centred service. Unfortunately, pet owners frequently described the pet charges they pay to tourism companies as not providing equal value for their money. That was true mostly for transportation companies.

More transportation companies, such as trains or buses that ask for extra pet fee, should consider providing pet owners seats with additional spaces for the owner and pet, possibly with shields that prevents pets eye contact with other pets, so that the owner would have uninterrupted journey.

Travellers with a pet should also be informed about what the pet fee includes in order to provide a better understanding of the fee. This information will also cover services that the pet owner might not know of, such as designed areas for pets on the train and cleaning fee.

Tourism companies could take advantage of the fact that pet owners are willing to pay more for pet centred service and design services that are tailored perfectly for pets and their owners needs. According to the results, respondents are willing to pay more if they feel their needs are taken into consideration, therefore companies should research pet owners needs more in depth and deliver services based on pet owners needs to satisfy their customers.

Providing information about nearby pet-friendly locations with an informative flier, when a guest with a pet is checking in to a hotel could be a way to demonstrate that the guest and their pet is taken into consideration. Having outdoor spaces solely for dogs and other pets could also make guests stay more relaxed.

The third theme that occurred multiple times was the differences between cat and dog owners, and differences in their pet needs. Many respondents noted that their cat gets stressed while travelling.

Cat owners who have not travelled with their cat, also described pet travel as stressful. Cat owners were also less likely to travel with their cats and perceived pet travel as a negative experience more than dog owners did. Even though cat owners are less likely to travel with their cats, cats still rank as the second most owned pets, and pet owners can travel with them voluntarily or involuntarily.

Ideally, tourism companies could take differences between cats and dogs into consideration when designing their services for pets and should try to not execute “one size fits all” idiom and allow room for more tailored services. Further research could be required to determine personalised needs of dog and cat owners (or other types of pet owners).

7 Conclusion

The thesis provided an overall conclusion on how pet travel could be improved based on the opinions of the pet owners. The main aim of the research was to gather valuable knowledge and in depth understanding on how pet owners view pet travel. Understanding pet owners from their point of view helps tourism companies to provide services and products that meet pet owners' values, expectations and needs.

The research was successfully conducted, as challenges of pet travel from pet owners' point of view were detected. The readers of this thesis can gain valuable insights into how pet owners perceive pet travel. The research showed that there still are a few areas in pet travel that need improvement, in pet owners' perspective.

The research resulted in a few identifications of business opportunities. Pet owners would be permitted entry to establishments such as stores, eateries, and other public spaces when they are accompanied by their pets, if the establishment provides pet holding boxes, with locks. With no need to decide whether to bring their pet along or not, or search for pet-friendly locations, this would make for a comfortable trip for the owner. It would also be safer option compared to leaving the pet outside.

Hotels could have a pet day care service, so that pet owners would not feel bad or worry over their pet when they are left alone in a hotel room. That would also minimize risk of property and noise damage as pets are always under supervision. It would additionally, bring in more profit as new service is provided.

Indoor and outdoor spaces in for example airports would make travel with pets easier for both the pet and the owner. Pet-designed areas in trains, planes and buses would also enhance the travel experience. Pet-designed areas should be designed so that they provide good value for money and fill the actual needs of pet travellers. Conducting further research on what pet owners require from pet-designed areas may be required. From this research, however, pet owners stated that need extra space, pets' own seat and protective shields in pet-designed areas.

Additionally, providing pet owners with informative flyers while checking in to a hotel, that includes information such as pet-fee walk-through, nearby pet-friendly locations and emergency veterinary contacts.

An important note, previously mentioned in the theoretical framework and subsequently reinforced by the research in this thesis, is that pet owners usually share a strong connection with their pets,

as they are considered family members. Consequently, while travelling, pet owners have high expectations regarding treatment, care and inclusion of their pets by tourism companies. Because of this reason companies should assure that pet owners and their pets receive best possible treatment, in order to maintain and improve their positive brand image.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire questions

1. Please select your gender *

- Female
- Male
- Other

2. Please select your age range *

- 18-28
- 29-39
- 40-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71+

3. What pet/s do you own? *

- Dog/s
 - Cat/s
 - Rodent/s (a hamster, guinea pig etc.)
 - Reptile/s (a snake/s, gecko/s etc.)
 - Bird/s (a cockatiel, lovebird/s etc.)
 - Rabbit/s
 - Other, please specify
-

4. I see my pet as a family member *



5. I generally perceive pet travel as... *

- a positive experience
- a negative experience
- a neutral experience

6. In the previous five years, have you traveled with your pet? *

- Yes
- No

7. How many times have you travelled with your pet in the last 5 years? *

- Once
- 2-3 times
- 4-6 times
- 7-9 times
- More than 10 times

8. While traveling with my pet, I usually travel by... *

- plane
 - car
 - bus
 - RV (recreational vehicle)
 - ferry, ship
 - Other, please clarify
-

9. While traveling with my pet, I usually stay in... *

- a hotel
 - a hostel
 - an Airbnb
 - a motel
 - family's/friend's place
 - Other, please clarify
-

10. What was the purpose of your travel(s) with your pet? *

- Holiday
 - Pet pageant
 - Work
 - Other, please clarify
-

11. What motivates you to bring your pet along on a trip? (Involuntary trips, such as medical or pageant travel, NOT included.)

- I enjoy traveling with my pet
 - I feel bad for leaving my pet behind
 - To enhance my travel experience
 - Most of my activities include my pet.
 - Other, please clarify
-
- Hard to find a pet sitter

12. If you answered NO to the previous question 6, give reasoning to your answer *

- I have negative experiences traveling with my pet
 - I find pet travel stressful
 - Monetary reasons
 - I don't travel much
 - Hard to find accommodation and/or commuting options for my pet
-

- My pet gets stressed while travelling
- I prefer freedom to explore locations, that do not allow pets
- Other, please specify _____
-

13. My experiences with pet travel have been overall positive *



14. Employees of selected lodging/commuting/eating establishments provided good service to my pet and me. *



15. If the experience was made more comfortable and/or accessible for me, I would consider traveling with my pet. *



16. Which tourism sector has provided exceptionally good service when you travel with your pet? *

- Transportation providers
- Accommodation providers
- Eateries
- Entertainment providers
- Attractions
- None of these

17. On the contrary, which tourism sector has provided the poorest quality service while traveling with your pet? *

- Transportation providers
- Accommodation providers
- Eateries
- Entertainment providers
- Attractions
- None of these

18. What did you appreciate the most as a pet owner during your trip? *

- Ability to take my pet with me
- Helpful and positive employees
- Pet friendly accommodation/eatery/ transportation policies
- Feeling welcomed with my pet
- Other, please specify

19. In your opinion or based on your experience, how could pet travel be improved to enhance your travel experience? *

- More pet friendly establishments
- Looser pet policies
- Additional services and spaces for pets
- Other, please specify

20. (Optional) In your own words, explain how pet travel could be improved, or provide additional information about your answer.

21. I am more likely to use a tourism service from a company that is known to be pet friendly, even when I travel without a pet *



22. Are you willing to pay more for a pet-friendly transportation/accommodation service if you know they will provide a more pet-centered service? *

- Yes
 No

23. I would take my pet with me to my next trip *

