



An analysis of consumer perception and buying behaviour amongst millennial pet owners seeking out luxury pet products and services in Cape town.

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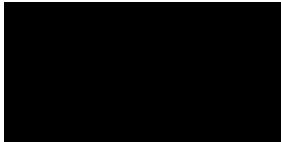
## **ABSTRACT**

The pet industry is experiencing substantial growth as more people start to own pets. The role that pets play in society today has changed considerably and pets are being increasingly considered as a part of the family. Despite the growth in the pet industry, very little is known in terms of what motivates pet owners to purchase certain pet products and services or how to strategically market to them. It was identified that attachment influences the type of relationship owners, and pets have. Findings revealed that pet owners with a high level of attachment to their pets chose to purchase luxury pet products and services. This is particularly true for millennials pet parents. In addition, findings pointed to social media as the best platform to market to millennial pet owners through the use of messaging that is authentic in order to resonate with them. Data was collected by qualitative means in the form of one on one in-depth interviews along with data that was gathered from an online survey. The data collection and analysis methods that were used were chosen because they align with the research goal/s and the research question/s for this study. The anticipated contribution is to potentially influence and / or improve practice within the luxury pet product and services industry.

Key words: human-pet relationships, attachment, human substitute, retail selection preferences, buying behaviour, luxury pet products and services

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.



Signature

Date 29November 2021

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The industry of pet related goods, products and services is experiencing substantial growth and as a result more and more people are starting to own pets. Khan (2019) affirms that the pet economy in South Africa has completely exploded, with 9.1 million dogs in South Africa and 2.4 million cats. The role that pets play in society today has changed considerably over the years as pets are being increasingly considered as a part of the family. As a result, pet humanisation has contributed to the growing trend of pet parenting, where according to Khan (2019) “pets today are seen as substitute children, particularly by lonely, hard-working millennials and young couples who cannot afford to have kids.” As a result Khan (2019) proclaims that tremendous business opportunities exist within this market and millennials in particular are an important demographic to consider. Millennials are the generation to watch as they account for the population spending the most on their pets. This is due to the fact that millennials see their pets as an extension of themselves and thus are willing to spend more on luxury products, “everyone wants their pets to be happy and healthy, but millennials want more human products for their pets,” as Khan (2019) asserts.

## 1.1 Rationale

According to Chen, Hung and Peng (2012), despite the growth that the pet industry is experiencing, very little is actually known in terms of what motivates pet owners to purchase luxury pet products and services or how to strategically market to them. Kestenbaum (2018) assert that the pet industry is indeed experiencing explosive growth and therefore is a lucrative market for marketers, entrepreneurs and business owners to tap into. Thus, marketers and business owners within the pet industry must understand the relationship that exists between pet owners and their pets and why millennial pet owners choose to purchase luxury pet products in order to market to them correctly.

For this reason, this study aims to equip marketers and business owners with the knowledge on how to strategically market to pet owners so they may take part in a

marketing opportunity that exists within the luxury pet products and services industry within South Africa.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Moreover, to establish the need for market research, one must first define the problem or opportunity that management faces, as Burns, Veeck and Bush (2017) assert. Defining the problem is an essential step in the marketing research process. By pinpointing the problem, one can formulate a problem statement. The research process may begin once there is a managerial problem or opportunity that demands action.

By way of Pauliuc and Fu (2018) who argue that different human-pet relationships lead to significantly different purchase motives, this study sets out to show that due to millennial pet owners having a high level of attachment to their pets, they actively seek out luxury pet products and services. Key theoretical frameworks and concepts will be discussed in an attempt to find solutions to the research problem outlined above.

## 1.3 Purpose Statement

The aims of research to a large extent determine the process and outcomes of the research, as Bezuidenhout, Rose-Marié, Davis, Corné and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) propose. As the title suggests, this study set out to uncover a number of factors that contribute to millennial pet owners perception and buying behaviour when choosing to purchase luxury pet products and services in Cape Town.

## 1.4 Research Question/s

In order to find answers to the research problem stated above, the researcher needed to ask the right research questions. Furthermore, research questions guided the researcher in terms of the appropriate research literature needing to be read, as Maree (2020) asserts, which will be discussed in the literature review section of this report. The research questions for this study include:

#### **1.4.1 Primary Research Question:**

Define and uncover the types of relationships between pet owners, their pets, and the marketers and business owners of high-end pet care.

#### **1.4.2 Secondary Research Questions:**

- How does the human-pet relationship that exists influence human purchasing patterns and behaviours?
- Why is there an increase in millennial pet owners actively seeking out non-essential pet products and services?
- How do marketers and businesses successfully segment and market to millennial pet owners in South Africa?

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

Similarly, research objectives informed the researcher precisely on what information was needing to be sourced and analysed in order to allow managers to make critical decisions relating to the problem, as Burns et al. (2017) add. The research objectives for this study include:

- To determine the types of relationships between pet owners, their pets, and the marketers and business owners of high-end pet care.
- To identify how the human-pet relationship influences purchasing preference and buying behaviour.
- To identify the reasons why millennials are increasingly seeking out luxury pet products and services.
- To distinguish what marketers and business owners need to do to market to millennial pet owners strategically

What's more, due to the study being qualitative in nature, an interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to ask the right kinds of questions in order to gain deeper knowledge on the topic at hand. Keeping this in mind, data was collected, analysed and interpreted in order to find the reasons why millennials are actively choosing to purchase high-end pet care products and services. The themes and concepts outlined in the literary review of this study provide the basis upon which the data findings were to be critically analysed, discussed and evaluated in order to triangulate the information gathered and transcribed. Moreover, additional findings which arose out of the data shall provide suggestions for further research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

A number of recent academic sources were identified (Annexure A) as integral to the study in order to provide the researcher with a deeper understanding into the research topic. In addition to Annexure A, academic sources used for the purposes of the literature review include recent academic journal and peer reviewed articles, periodicals, news articles, text books from seminal writers and significant chapters from academic publications. The literature review process included identifying, evaluating and analysing relevant academic sources whereby common theories and concepts were identified along with points of similarity and points of difference between sources that were analysed and discussed below.

### **2.1 Theoretical Foundation**

The questions one asks during the research process and the way in which one goes about acquiring knowledge is equally important to the existing information available on the topic to be researched. Theory is vital to any research study as it allows for a focused and deeper understanding of a phenomenon, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. Thus, the following theories have been identified by the researcher and were relevant to the study.

#### ***2.1.1 Anthropomorphism***

When considering the modern pet-owner relationship and the theory that has been written on the role that pets play in today's society, anthropomorphism is a term that comes up frequently. Studies indicate that pet owners view their pets as a close family member, friend, companion or child (Kanat-maymon et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019; Uccheddu et al., 2019; Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Honeycutt, 2018). "Pet owners invest a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money on their pets, often treating animals as though they were their own kin," (Kanat-maymon, Antebi & Zilcha-Mano, 2016: 69). Thus, as pet owners form close relationships with their companion animal/s it can be said that the attribution of human qualities and characteristics become bestowed upon the pet to the extent that should the pet die, the pet owner will grieve as if a human has passed, as Uccchedu et al. (2019) assert. Furthermore, studies show that pet owners consider themselves to be in a relationship with their pet and view them as a source of companionship, love, happiness, support and acceptance, as Kanat-

maymon et al., (2016) suggests. The theory around anthropomorphism helped guide the researcher in deciphering the type of relationship that exists between millennial pet owners and their pets and the level of attachment that exists between bonded owners and pets respectively. Furthermore, the theory around anthropomorphism allowed the researcher to effectively answer the research question/s and deduce that when a companion animal is in fact considered as a part of the family, the spend on luxury pet products and services will be substantially higher, as Park et al., (2019) add.

### ***2.1.2 Attachment Theory***

As a result of pet owners regarding their pets as family members, the above theory surrounding anthropomorphism and attachment theory are closely related and often mutually discussed. Attachment theory is based within psychological studies and seminal authors John Bowlby and Mary Salter Ainsworth are often cited when discussing the origins of attachment theory. Bowlby and Ainsworth's collaboration and joint contributions to attachment theory were of vital importance to the researcher as they form the basis upon which more recent authors formulate hypotheses in relation to attachment theory, as Bretherton (2015) adds. A large amount of literature has been written on attachment theory but, in relation to this study, research reveals that "owners are attached to their dogs mostly because the relationship provides the same, or even greater, sense of comfort and security, and reliable affection as close human relationships" Uccheddu et al.(2019: 933). Furthermore, much of the literature surrounding the human-pet relationship and attachment theory critically analyses and discusses the degree and type of attachment that exists between pet owner and pet (Kanat-maymon et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019; Uccheddu et al., 2019; Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Honeycutt, 2018). Thus, attachment theory served as a relevant theoretical framework that allowed the researcher to evaluate the degree and type of attachment that exists between pet owner and pet. In addition, data was analysed in order to deduce whether the level of attachment and buying behaviour are closely related. The researcher was ultimately able to draw parallels between the level of attachment and motive of pet owners when purchasing luxury pet products and services.

### **2.1.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Similarly, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is theoretically linked to both anthropomorphism and to attachment theory and was one of the key theories that underpin this study. Maslow's (1943, 1987) theory of human motivation has been met with both criticism and support, according to Taormina and Gao (2019). However due to its large number of citations it has generated a large amount of interest when studying human needs. According to Maslow's motivational hierarchy the 5 needs include: physiological; safety-security; belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Upon scrutiny of these 5 needs, it can be said that pets satisfy some of the most basic human needs. According to Honeycutt (2018), pets satisfy Maslow's physiological need as they, over time, have been assimilated into the family unit as family members. In addition, pets also satisfy Maslow's belongingness need as they function as companions or as the literature points out - attachment figures, who provide love and support and psychological well-being through strong emotional bonds with their humans (Taormina and Gao, 2019; Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Honeycutt, 2018). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provided the researcher with a theoretical framework that allowed for the assessment of motivation in relation to pet owners' retail selection preferences. Furthermore, upon closer analysis of the types of relationships that exist between pet owners and their pets, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs helped support the researchers' quest to provide solutions to the research problem. Thus, the researcher was equipped with the knowledge to deduce as to whether pet owners formulate close bonds with animals based on a basic human need and whether the needs satisfaction through a pet will motivate certain purchase behaviours.

## **2.2 Conceptualisation**

Conceptualisation allowed the researcher to identify and group common themes, concepts and ideas within the literature and make sense of the information within the broader theoretical frameworks that govern the topic being researched. The theory outlined above will also show how specific concepts are constructed and related, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests.

### ***2.1.1 Human-pet relationships***

On the basis of the review of the existing literature, the relationship that exists between a pet and its owner is two-fold, a functional one or an emotional one according to Pauliuc and Fu (2018). In addition, the literature looks at the dimensions of pet ownership and the degree to which owners are essentially bonded to their pets. Those relationships that are close and the level of attachment is high, constitute an emotional relationship, as Pauliuc and Fu (2018) add. According to the literature on anthropomorphism, owners who attribute human characteristics to pets are in the highest form of a bonded relationship that exists between pet and owner. Thus, it is noted that the concept of human-pet relationship is often discussed in relation to the theory of anthropomorphism. Furthermore, the literature also pays considerable attention to the positive effects of a bonded human-pet relationship, arguing that a relationship with a companion animal can help reduce loneliness, depression and anxiety, as Taormina and Goa (2019) assert. In this regard the human-pet relationship as previously mentioned relates to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in that humans long for close relationships with others in order to feel loved and accepted. Thus a close relationship with an animal companion can diminish feelings of isolation and can help individuals participate in new social activities, satisfying the need for belonging (Honeycutt, 2018; Taormina and Goa, 2018; Kanat-maymon, 2016).

### ***2.1.2 Human Substitute***

According to the literature on anthropomorphism, 'The term companion animal can be regarded as a concept that identifies a pet as a companion, family and a friend' (Park et al., 2019: 280). Due to the significance of this dimension, the literature makes reference to humans having custody battles over significant pets as well as appointing companion animals as best men at weddings (Honeycutt, 2018). The degree to which pets are made into human substitutes was of importance to the researcher in relation to the consumption patterns of pet owners. According to Park et al. (2019), when a pet is considered a family member and is essentially made into a human substitute, purchase motivation changes. Owners who regard their pets as family are prepared to indulge in luxury pet goods and services because of how highly the pet is regarded in the heart and mind of the consumer. Thus, human substitute, as a concept, was

integral to the study in order for the researcher to provide solutions to the research problem put forward by Pauliuc and Fu (2018).

### ***2.1.3 Human-pet bond***

Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of needs and in keeping with Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory, forming attachments with others, be it with humans or companion animals, can increase survival for those who develop belongingness, as Taormina and Goa (2019) argue. This is further iterated in the literature, as those who develop a strong human-pet bond have reported a greater sense of well-being (Kanat-maymon et al.; 2016; Park et al.; 2019). Pets serve as a safe haven or safe base where a bond exists between pet and pet owner, as Honeycutt (2018) adds. The bond can manifest as attachment over time and can have a significant effect on the behaviour and psychology of the pet owner. For instance, a pet owner may even suffer from 'attachment anxiety' whereby the owner becomes stressed if they are not in close proximity to their companion animal, as Honeycutt (2018) suggests. More so, animals can substitute as caregivers, where the pet ultimately takes on a parental role such as in the case of service dogs (Honeycutt, 2018). This in turn relates back to the literature provided by Ainsworth on attachment between parent and child. Therefore, it can be said that the theory on attachment theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, anthropomorphism, and human-pet bond are all closely related and as a result provided the researcher with a good theoretical grounding to investigate the type of relationship that exists between pet owners and their pets effectively.

### ***2.1.4 Consumer behaviour and retail selection preferences***

Based on theory supplied by seminal authors on consumer behaviour, namely Parumasur and Roberts-Lombard (2014) as well as the literature identified for this study, research indicates that the human-pet relationship has a direct effect on the pet owners' retail selection behaviours. Consumer behaviour may be defined as "a combination of activities and influences that occur before, during and after the purchase itself," (Parumasur and Roberts-Lombard, 2014: 2). Studies indicate that the human-pet relationship that exists, has a diverse effect on the pet owners' motives when choosing to purchase non-essential pet goods and services. This can include,

but is not limited to luxury pet hotel accommodations, pet spas, non-essential pet treatments, high quality pet food, high-end pet accessories and apparel (Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Park et al.; 2019). This is especially true amongst millennials and individuals living in urban areas where disposable income is high and pet owners are willing to spend more on their pets, as Pauliuc and Fu (2018) argue. The literature seems to point to a higher level of attachment equating to owners being willing to spend more on luxury items for their pets. Thus, the assessment of the level of attachment between pet owner and pet in addition to the retail selection preferences of pet owners was of importance so that the researcher was able to provide solutions to the research problem.

What's more, the process of identifying how the academic sources were both similar and different to one another, enabled the researcher to essentially identify main theories and concepts that were integral and relevant to the research study. The identified sources were similar in that each source discussed the theories of anthropomorphism and attachment theory respectively. In doing so, each source agreed that an emotional relationship exists between pet owner and pet and that in modern society pets have started to be regarded as part of the family. Furthermore, sources were similar in that they discussed attachment theory however not each and every source discussed attachment theory in relation to the relationship that exists between pet owner and pet. Furthermore some, and not all sources critically analysed and discussed the level of human to pet attachment in relation to consumer behaviour and retail selection preferences (Park, Shin and Park, 2019; Pauliuc and Fu, 2018). These particular sources were however most relevant in providing greater insight into the research problem. Furthermore the identified literature (Annexure A) similarly used qualitative means to gather their data (Kanat-maymon, Antebi and Zilcha-Mano, 2016; Park et al., 2019, Uccheddu, De Cataldo, Albertini, Coren, Da Graca Pereira, Haverbeke, Mills, Pierantoni, Riemer, Ronconi, Testoni and Pirrone 2019; Taormina and Gao, 2019) with only one source choosing to use quantitative data analysis for research purposes (Pauliuc and Fu, 2018). In addition, sources differed with regards to context. Two of the identified studies however took place in China (Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Taormina and Gao, 2019) whereas the rest were conducted in Israel, Korea and Italy respectively. Thus it became clear that sources were both similar and different in

their approaches to the research as well as the context in which the research took place.

Furthermore, the literature review enabled the researcher to identify gaps within the literature which the research study hoped to fill. The literature identified that there haven't been a large number of studies conducted on how pets can potentially satisfy basic human needs as Kanat-maymon (2016) suggests. Furthermore, there is currently hardly any research that has been conducted on the relationship that exists between pet and pet owner and how that relationship essentially influences pet consumer buying behaviour, as Pauliuc and Fu (2018) adds. In addition, the consumption behaviour of pet owners hasn't been studied in much detail and there is little to no academic or peer review articles available on how millennials in particular actively seek out luxury pet products and services. Current studies seem to focus on the increase in purchase of high-end commercial pet foods as pet owners look for organic high-quality alternatives for their pets. The researcher was able to identify various news articles that briefly discussed the buying behaviour of millennials when it came to luxury pet products and services that were relevant to the study, which provided support for research findings however no academic research studies from credible sources were found. Thus Park et al. (2019) argues that further research studies into pet services in particular is considered necessary. As a result of identifying gaps within the research, the researcher was able to adjust the focus of the study on the pet services industry to enable the study to significantly contribute to the existing research that's currently available on the research topic. For this reason, the focus of this study will include millennial pet owners as current research does not look specifically at millennial pet owners or their buying behaviour when it comes to actively seeking out and purchasing luxury pet products and services.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

This study utilised an interpretivist paradigm in order to gain an empathetic and in-depth understanding of human behaviour, particularly to discover why millennial pet owners choose to purchase luxury pet products and services. Furthermore, the research looked to better understand how to strategically market to millennial pet owners.

Due to the study being qualitative in nature, an interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to ask the right kinds of questions within a given context in order to gain deeper knowledge on the topic at hand, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al.; (2014) suggest. As previously outlined above, an interpretivist paradigm was used to uncover the types of relationships that essentially exist between pet owners, their pets, and the marketers and business owners of high-end pet care. Similarly, the research findings looked to answer how the type of human-pet relationship that exists, influences human purchasing patterns and behaviour; why there is an increase in millennial pet owners actively seeking out non-essential pet products and services and lastly how do marketers and businesses successfully segment and market to millennial pet owners in South Africa.

An epistemological position granted the researcher the knowledge and insight on how to better market to millennial pet owners which will provided valuable information to marketers and business owners wishing to grow their businesses' within the pet industry in South Africa.

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) reality is a social construct and it is experienced differently by everyone. For this reason, the belief that guided the study from an ontological position maintains that depending on personal circumstances, culture and experiences, people may or may not experience reality in the same way. Each pet owner has a unique relationship with their pet/s and the experiences that each owner has with their pet/s is a subjective one. Therefore, uniqueness was of great value to this study. An interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to account

for changes in reality due to dealing with human complexities, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) adds.

Furthermore, an axiological position allowed for the values and worldviews of the researcher along with those of the participants to be of importance to the study and the methodologies used to gather empirical data. Lastly, an interpretivist paradigm not only guided the aims of the research, outlined what counted as knowledge but also pointed to the methods of data collection that allowed for knowledge that was seen as valuable to the researcher as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggest.

### 3.2 Research Design

The chosen paradigm for the study ultimately informed the procedural plan that was adopted by the researcher to answer the research questions outlined above. The structure or design that was adopted for the study allowed the researcher to answer these questions validly, accurately, economically and in a trustworthy manner, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. Thus, the structure guided the researcher in terms of how to formulate the questions underpinning the research, how to collect data and lastly how to complete the data analysis. as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) adds.

Furthermore, the research design was determined by the approach the researcher wished to take, as Wiid and Diggines (2015) add. Due to the approach for this study being qualitative in nature, the study focused on exploring underlying reasons and motivations, in order to gain an effective apprehension of the topic.

### 3.3 Population

When considering the population, the research question and research problem needed to be addressed to determine “who” or “what” would help the researcher get the best answers to define the population for research, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. Pet owners, pet lovers and people who spoil their pets constituted the population for this study as they were defined as the total group of people from whom information was required (Wiid and Diggines, 2015). In addition, the population parameters needed to be set. These included; the nature of the population which

would include pet owners, pet lovers and people who spoil their pets; the size of the population which included all pet owners, pet lovers and people who spoil their pets and the unique characteristics of the population which included those pet owners and pet lovers who specifically purchase premium pet products and services.

Once the population parameters had been set and the population had been appropriately defined, the researcher distinguished between the target population and the accessible population, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. The target population included everyone and everything that fell within the population parameters, whereas the accessible population referred to the section of the population that the researcher had access to that could actually be included in the study, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) asserts. Thus, as previously mentioned, there were effectively two target populations for this study, the first being owners, business partners and managers of high-end dog day-cares and pet hotels and the second being millennials who own pets/ love pets. In the first instance, those owners, business partners and managers who were available to meet with the researcher to be interviewed formed part of the first accessible population. Similarly, those millennials who had access to the internet to complete an online survey that was sent out formed part of the second accessible population.

### 3.4 Sampling

Once the target population and accessible population had been identified, it became necessary to reduce the number of the accessible population into a manageable size, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. The purpose of the study and the fact that it is qualitative in nature helped determine the size of the sample. The sample unit for this study consisted of three high-end day-cares/pet hotels selected by the researcher. These included Vienna Village, Pooch and the @Frits Dog Hotel & Day-care as the initial top three day-care facilities. An additional dog day-care, namely Super Woof, was added to the list as a backup option in case any of the initial three fell through due to limitations. Furthermore millennial pet owners formed part of the second sample unit identified through an online survey sent out in the hopes of receiving

approximately 100 responses. The survey ran for a week and was effectively closed once 146 responses had been received.

Furthermore, non-probability sampling was used to determine the sample drawn from a section of the population. Non-probability sampling informed how many people were needed to be interviewed to allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem. Judgement sampling was used to select the owners and managers for the in-depth interviews. Judgement sampling allowed the researcher to selectively and deliberately pick the individuals representative of the population, as Wiid and Diggins (2015) points out. The Business owners and business managers formed part of the sample as the researcher had the belief that these individuals were best suited as a representative of the population based on their knowledge and experience of the research topic. In addition, quota sampling was used in order to select millennials as part of the online survey. Quota sampling is necessary in order to first use census data to classify the population according to relevant characteristics, in this case age was used to identify the millennial cohort, as Wiid and Diggins (2015) adds. Furthermore, quota sampling allowed the researcher to not only select a sample of the population who are millennials but also select a portion of the sample with certain characteristics - in this instance, a quota of the population of millennials who love their pets and spoil them.

In addition, non-probability sampling was chosen as the sampling method as generalisation was not an aim of this qualitative study and researcher bias needed to be limited in order for the study to be valid and reliable. Therefore, as a result of the chosen research approach, non-probability sampling was selected due to the fact that the findings of the study did not need to be generalised to the general population, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. This is especially true for studies that are qualitative and exploratory in nature and do not need to be generalised beyond the sample.

### 3.5 Data-Collection Method(s)

Hence, the researcher was interested in gathering data that speaks to the underlying

qualities of subjective experiences associated with complex, multi-faceted phenomena, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. The researcher collected data by means of unobtrusive research in order to explore, understand and describe phenomena. Thus, by qualitative means, data was collected in the form of one on one in-depth interviews that were semi-structured in nature along with data that was gathered from an online survey. The use of in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to collect qualitative data by means of questions that were aimed at aiding the researcher in understanding the views, opinions and beliefs of the participants. The use of semi-structured and open ended questions allowed for flexibility in the research process whilst also providing room for participants to elaborate on and clarify certain points therefore providing a detailed explanation to certain interview questions, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) adds. Thus, the interviews allowed the researcher to ask many questions and probe for in-depth answers, as Wiid and Diggins (2015) asserts.

A qualitative approach allowed participants to elaborate, providing the researcher with rich data for analysis aiding in deeper understanding, 'in doing a qualitative content analysis, the researcher is working in an interpretive paradigm with the goal of providing a thick description of the social reality mirrored in the text,' Du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014:191) confirms this. The answers that were provided as a result of the open ended interview questions were subjective in nature. This is due to the fact that the participants' backgrounds, circumstances and experiences differed. This was taken into account along with the fact that the participants themselves differed, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. The responsibility lay with the researcher to find common subjective themes and patterns that emerged in the data that had been collected despite the participants differing.

As a result of the fourth industrial revolution and as technology continues to develop, online surveys have become a popular data collection method for qualitative data collection. This has become even more true as we currently face a global pandemic whereby less people are comfortable taking part in face-to-face data collection methods. Covid 19 has effectively changed the way in which we live and communicate and as researchers this needs to be taken into consideration when deciding upon the best methods to collect complex and rich data. This was particularly true when it came to organising the in-depth interviews. The owner of Super Woof for instance insisted

on only doing an online interview as opposed to a face to face one as she didn't feel comfortable being interviewed in person until she was fully vaccinated. In addition, the use of an online survey was also selected due to it being a safe, easy, fast and inexpensive data collection method during Covid 19.

As a result of qualitative research being time consuming and due to the limited amount of time the researcher had available to complete the data collection, the researcher needed to make sure that the data collection methods chosen could be carried out timeously. For this reason the online survey was a great choice based on the fact that it was completed in a very short period of time, as Wiid and Diggines (2015) asserts. Furthermore, the responses from the participants were equally as quick and convenient with the questionnaire reportedly only taking eight minutes to complete.

The data collection methods that were proposed for this study, essentially determined the findings the researcher analysed in order to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the data collection methods outlined above and the data analysis methods that were used were chosen because they align with the research goal/s and the research question/s for this study. In doing so, the validity and trustworthiness of the qualitative study was ensured, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) argues.

### 3.6 Application of Data-Collection Method(s)

Once the data collection methods had been decided upon by the researcher it became necessary to implement the collection of the data from the two respective sample units. Due to the time limit and the researcher needing to collect a minimum of a 100 responses from participants the researcher decided to begin with the online survey. In order to make sure that the online survey asked the right questions in order to find the right answers, it became necessary to consult both the primary and secondary research questions for this study. The survey design also became increasingly important. Thus, the researcher made sure to set up the survey in such a way that there were no survey design issues which would affect the data being collected and the validity of the responses. Afterall, "the design of the questionnaire is an extremely important part of the research process since this is the instrument with which the data is generated," (Maree, 2020: 199). The researcher made sure to keep the time it took

respondents to fill out the questionnaire short and to ensure that the appearance of the questionnaire was user friendly. This meant that the questions needed to be clear and phrased well with no ambiguity. If a question is not carefully worded it may result in data that is meaningless, as Maree (2020) adds. The types of questions used in the questionnaire as well as the sequence of the questions were equally important. Furthermore, the researcher made sure to include a mixture of open and closed questions. The advantage of including open questions was so that the respondents could give honest answers and in detail and so that the respondents' thinking process may be revealed, as Maree (2020) adds. Ranking questions were also added to certain sections of the survey so that the researcher could explore how respondents rank certain issues in terms of their importance or preference. Furthermore, the researcher made use of the likert scale as it provided an additional measure of the respondents attitude. Due to the study being qualitative in nature, the survey design enabled the researcher to have control over the kinds of responses generated in order to find answers to complex phenomena.

Once the questionnaire was completed and sent out the researcher could move on to setting up the in-depth interviews with the specified dog day-care and pet hotel owners/managers. The process began by identifying high-end dog day-cares in Cape Town through secondary research. The researcher then had to cold call various facilities in order to ask whether the manager / business owner would be available and willing to take part in the study. For the most part this meant that a follow up email needed to be sent with additional information outlining the timings of the data collection and the attachment of the ethical clearance forms so that the manager/ owner could either agree to partake in the interview or decline. After the initial contact was made and the follow up emails sent the researcher started to have problems with accessibility; most of the day-cares did not initially respond or insisted that the interview questions be sent prior to agreeing to partake. This meant follow up emails and calls needed to be made in order to secure the in-depth interviews with at least three of the four day-cares outlined previously. This also impacted on the amount of time remaining to collect the data through in-depth interviews. The first interview was conducted at Vienna Village. Prior to the interview date and time, the researcher made sure to send through the ethical clearance (Annexure Z) and consent forms (Annexure J) for e-signing to ensure that consent was granted and that the purpose of the study

was communicated along with the permission to record the session (Annexure K) with the business owner. The researcher also made sure to inform the business owner of the estimated duration of the interview and asked that the business owner make herself available in a quiet, stress-free environment to ensure the best possible responses. The same was communicated for the remaining interviews which followed the same format. Thus it becomes clear how the researcher went about collecting the data from the respective sample units making sure to collect the data both responsibly and ethically whilst ensuring the validity and trustworthiness of the data collected.

Furthermore, the procedures that were followed for the collection of the data ensured that the data was collected ethically and responsibly. These procedures included asking the in-depth interview participants for their consent to be interviewed along with their permission to record the interviews. Participants were also informed that if at any stage during the interview they felt uncomfortable for any reason and no longer wished to continue they needed to inform the researcher and the interview process would be stopped. The researcher made sure to get the verbal as well as written consent of the participants before proceeding with the in-depth interviews. In addition, participants were also informed that their identity and that of their business's would remain anonymous and that none of the research would be used in any way that could potentially harm the reputation of their perspective businesses.

The researcher made sure to record all in-depth interviews using recording software, making sure to back up the copies of each recording safely for transcribing purposes. Once all three in-depth interviews were recorded and backed up the researcher could begin to transcribe the data. Data was transcribed (Annexure B, Annexure C and Annexure D) via Ai software which empowers its users with real-time transcription meeting notes. The transcribed interviews allowed the researcher to analyse the in-depth interviews using content analysis

### 3.7 Data-Analysis Method(s)

Hence, once data was effectively collected, the researcher needed to transcribe, analyse, interpret and present the data in order to produce findings to effectively answer the research question, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. Due to the nature of qualitative research, data analysis is a time consuming, rigorous and systematic process. For this study, the researcher will utilise the method of content analysis (Annexure E) to analyse data gathered through qualitative means. Content analysis allows the researcher to summarise the data 'in terms of common words, phrases, themes or patterns that will aid understanding and interpretation of what is emerging' (Maree, 2020: 124). Content analysis will allow the researcher to make sense of a large amount of text by bringing order, structure and meaning to the data, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) adds.

Both the in-depth interviews and the online survey (Annexure F) were analysed via content analysis as it allowed for all written and verbal responses to be transcribed. As previously mentioned, the in-depth interviews were recorded to allow for the data to be transcribed later on in the research process. The researcher transcribed the in-depth interview data by identifying narrative strings and developing codes that assisted in identifying emerging patterns or themes that emerged out of the data (Annexure E). This method allowed for data analysis to take place in a systematic manner. Once the data had been successfully transcribed and analysed through coding, the researcher took on a deductive approach in order to move from the general to the specific, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. The literature and conceptual framework that underpins this study guided the analysis of the data to move from general to specific. In addition, the theory previously outlined in the literature review assisted the researcher in assigning codes to the data enabling the researcher to adopt a funnel approach whilst interpreting and reducing the data.

Furthermore, it is through this process that the relevance and applicability of the concepts and theory that are specific to this study were tested and expanded upon, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) adds. Thus, as a result of using content analysis in order to make sense of the data collected from both the in-depth interviews and the online questionnaire, the researcher was able to rearrange and order the data into

meaningful categories to formulate research findings to assist in answering the research question/s.

## 4. RESULTS/FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Once the data was collected and transcribed using content analysis, findings started to emerge. The following section of this report will critically evaluate, discuss and interpret the findings of the study that were gathered by the researcher via qualitative data collection methods. The findings allowed the researcher to provide answers to the greater research problem whilst answering the research objectives set out in the research proposal. The findings allowed the researcher uncover a number of factors that contribute to millennial pet owners perception and buying behaviour when looking to purchase luxury pet products and services in Cape Town.

### 4.1 Presentation of Findings

In order to critically analyse and discuss the research findings further on in this paper, it becomes necessary to present the research findings graphically in order to better understand them in the broader context of the research problem, question/s and the objectives for the study. Data Analysis allowed the researcher to sift through the data collected. Once the data was collected, the researcher had to sort, select and organise the information through the method of content analysis in order to provide better understanding of the phenomenon under study, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggest. Words, phrases, concepts and themes were identified, coded and categorised in order to pick up commonalities and differences between the three in-depth interviews and the online survey.

| Interview Question                                                                                                        | Dog Daycare 1 (V)                                                                     | Dog Daycare 2 (P)                                                                     | Dog Daycare 3 (F)                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are some of the reasons your customers have mentioned that they are looking for a daycare service for their dogs?    | • Pet can't be left home alone                                                        | • Pet can't be left home alone                                                        | • Pet can't be left home alone                                                        |
| What makes your daycare particularly luxury or high-end?                                                                  | • 24/7 constant supervision & a human always present to comfort the dog & check on it | • 24/7 constant supervision & a human always present to comfort the dog & check on it | • 24/7 constant supervision & a human always present to comfort the dog & check on it |
| What is the most popular luxury service or add on in your opinion                                                         | • Constant communication with pet owner                                               | • Constant communication with pet owner                                               | • Constant communication with pet owner                                               |
| Do your clients consider their dogs to be a part of the family? A fur baby or animal companion?                           | • Pet as family member, fur baby, part of the family                                  | • Pet as family member, fur baby, part of the family                                  | • Pet as family member, fur baby, part of the family                                  |
| Once a client has developed a relationship with our business and trust has been established, they will keep coming back?  | • Rapport & brand loyalty established                                                 | • Rapport & brand loyalty established                                                 | • Rapport & brand loyalty established                                                 |
| How have your clients heard about you?                                                                                    | • Word of mouth                                                                       | • Word of mouth                                                                       | • Word of mouth                                                                       |
| Is your daycare considered a home away from home?                                                                         | • Home away from home                                                                 | • Home away from home                                                                 | • Home away from home                                                                 |
| Have you noticed an increase in millennial pet owners actively seeking out luxury pet products and services in Cape Town. | • Yes, for a number of reasons                                                        | • Yes, for a number of reasons                                                        | • Yes, for a number of reasons                                                        |

Figure 1: Found Themes in Common

I consider my pet to be a part of the family

146 responses

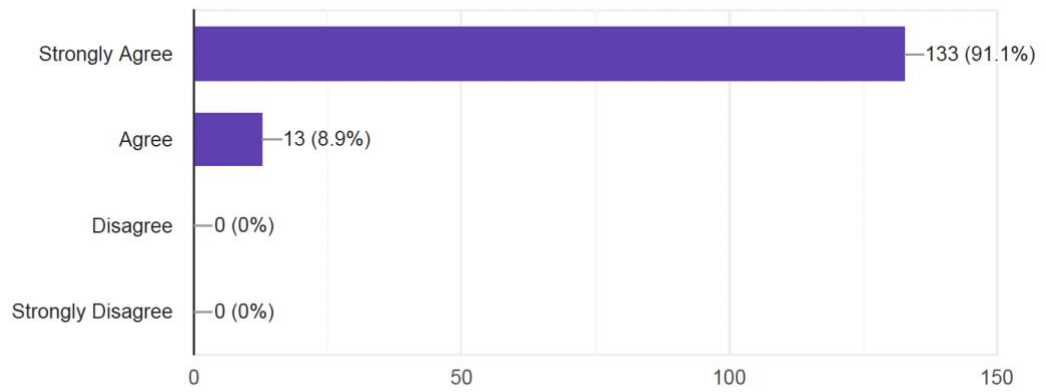


Figure 2: Pet as Part of the Family

Do you consider yourself to be attached to your pet?

146 responses

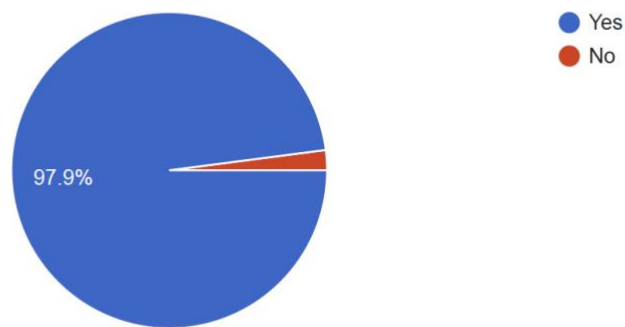


Figure 3: Pet Attachment

On a scale of 1 to 5 rate your attachment to your pet

146 responses

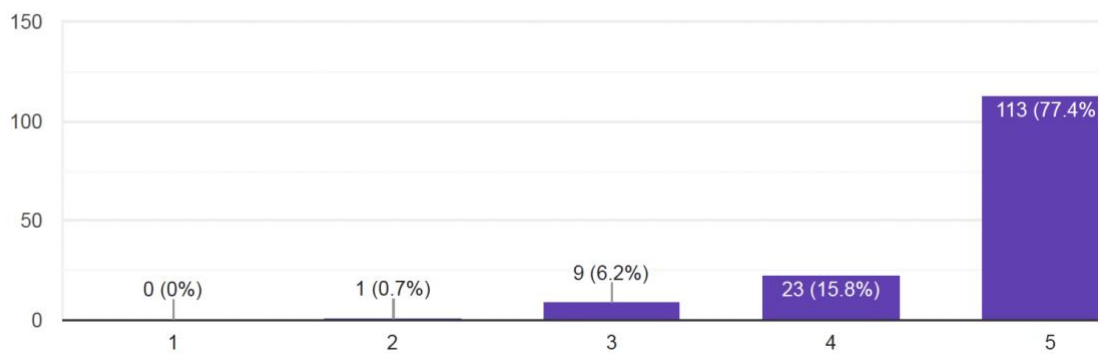


Figure 4: Pet Attachment Likert Scale

Do you ever purchase luxury pet products and services for your pet. If answer is yes, how often?

146 responses

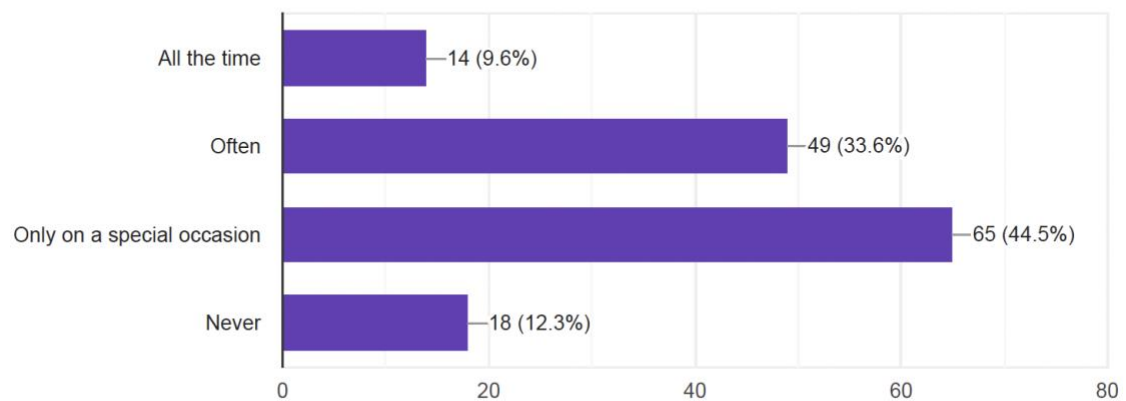


Figure 5: Luxury Pet Product and Services Purchasing Behaviour

Do you ever spoil your pet instead of yourself

146 responses

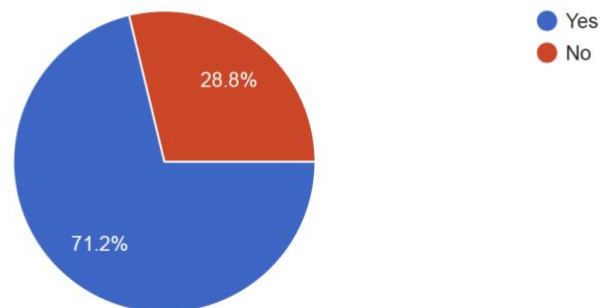


Figure 6: Pet Owner Spoils Purchasing Behaviour

## 4.2 Interpretation of Findings

In order to interpret the findings of this study it becomes necessary to relook the reason for wanting to conduct the study in the first place. A marketing opportunity exists for marketers within the luxury pet products and services industry in South Africa. According to Kestenbaum (2018), the pet industry is indeed experiencing explosive growth and therefore is a lucrative market for marketers, entrepreneurs and business owners to tap into. However, as previously outlined little is known on how to actually market to millennial pet owners correctly, who are actively seeking out luxury pet products and services for a number of reasons.

By pinpointing the research problem above one can address the problem statement which guides the focus for the study below :

By way of Pauliuc and Fu (2018) who argue that different human-pet relationships lead to significantly different purchase motives, this study sets out to uncover a number of different factors that contribute to millennial pet owners perception and buying behaviour when looking to purchase luxury pet products and services in Cape Town.

Thus, let's begin by discussing the key factors that play a significant role in contributing to millennial purchasing decisions within the luxury pet category. Findings reveal that due to millennials no longer being able to afford free-standing homes where pets are

able to roam freely in the garden, pets and pet owners respectively are being confined to apartments without gardens. As a result, all three dog day-cares reported that the main driving force for pet owners needing day-care services was due to the fact that pet owners are not able to leave their pets home alone for long periods of time. In addition, findings showed that the days where dogs are left alone outside in the garden are long gone due to the fact that pet owners consider their pets to be part of the family, a fur baby or an animal companion. The online survey revealed that 91.1 % of respondents consider their pet to be part of the family, whereas 46% regard their pet to be their best friend and 99.3 % consider their pet to be a great companion.

Because many dog lovers no longer treat dogs as dogs, but treat them as their own family, pet owners are particularly picky when selecting the right dog day-care or pet hotel service for their pets. In addition, the findings showed that due to the fact that millennials are choosing not to have children or deciding to have children later on in life, pets are incredibly being treated like children. Business owner of dog day-care 1 stated, "People feel sorry for dogs, they treating them more like children. In the past your dog use to be left outside. Now it's kind of frowned upon. No one has an outside dog anymore, they sleep inside. The dog is the child." It is because dogs are being treated by millennials like children that the findings show that all three dog day-cares consider themselves to be luxury based on the fact that they provide 24/7 constant supervision. Much like children, pet owners feel that their dogs need to be watched and cared for at all hours of the day.

Furthermore, findings showed that due to a high level of attachment to their pets, owners felt that only the best will do with a high preference to quality when choosing products and services. In addition, 71.2 % of owners even admit spoiling their pets instead of themselves with 44.5 % of owners choosing to spoil their pets on a special occasion. Pauliuc and Fu (2018) suggest that the intensity of peoples attachment towards their pets has changed over the years and "with closer attachment to something, a person will be more likely to seek proximity of the object and also show passionate devotion to it, such as paying extra money," Pauliuc and Fu (2018:26). This brings us to the primary research question for this study which asks the researcher to define and uncover the types of relationships between pet owners, their pets, and the marketers and business owners of high-end pet care. The type of relationship that was

uncovered between pet owner and pet for all three dog day-cares was one of high emotional attachment (5/5 or 4/5) with a significant bond being established between pet owner and pet. Whilst 97.9 % of online survey respondents consider themselves to be attached to their pets, most reported they missed their pet if they weren't with them. Due to a high level of attachment to their pets, findings showed that all three dog day-cares' relationships with their clients are based around constant communication with pet owners as to the whereabouts and wellbeing of their pets. This ensures that a relationship based on trust and constant communication is established between business owners and pet parents. As a result rapport and brand loyalty is established with clients insisting on staying with preferred and trusted dog day-cares.

### 4.3 Findings in context

| Themes / Concepts of the study                    | Dog Daycare 1 (VV)                                                                                                                                                           | Dog Daycare 2 (P)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Dog Daycare 3 (F)                                                                                                                                                  | Online Survey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anthropomorphism<br>(Human-pet relationship)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pet owner regards pet as fur baby and as part of the family</li> </ul>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pet owner regards pet as part of the family</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pet owner regards pet as fur baby and as part of the family</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most consider their pet to be part of the family 91.1%</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Attachment Theory<br>(Human substitute)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most pet owners rate their level of attachment as 5/5</li> </ul>                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most pet owners rate their level of attachment as 4/5</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most pet owners rate their level of attachment as 5/5</li> </ul>                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most pet owners rate their level of attachment as 5/5 - 77.4%</li> <li>Most pet owners miss their pets when they are not with them</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           |
| Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs<br>(Human pet bond)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belongingness need - pet as companion</li> <li>Pet owner and pet share a strong bond</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belongingness need - pet as companion</li> <li>Pet owner and pet share a strong bond</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belongingness need - pet as companion</li> <li>Pet owner and pet share a strong bond</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychological need - pet as a source of happiness 91.8%</li> <li>Most pet owners agree that owning a pet decreases stress - 90.4%</li> <li>Most pet owners look to their pets as a source of affection 90.4%</li> <li>Pet owner and pet share a strong bond</li> </ul>                  |
| Consumer behaviour & retail selection preferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of attachment is extremely high so willing to spend more on luxury products and services where only the best will do</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of attachment is high and products and services are selected based on owners personal preferences and personality</li> <li>Daycares are chosen that mirror pet owners home environment &amp; routine</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of attachment is high so willing to spend more on luxury products and services where only the best will do</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most pet owners purchase luxury pet products and services on a special occasion - 90.4%</li> <li>Most pet owners choose to spoil their pets even when they know they can't afford to - 38.4%</li> <li>Most pet owners choose to spoil their pets instead of themselves 71.2%</li> </ul> |

Figure 7: Proposed Themes and Corresponding Findings

In order to make sense of the findings gathered, they need to relate to the theories and concepts outlined in the literature review of the study. Conceptualisation allowed the researcher to identify and group common themes, concepts and ideas within the literature and then further in relation to the findings of the study to make sense of the information within the broader theoretical frameworks that govern the topic being

researched, as Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. The table above (Figure 7) shows how specific themes and concepts are linked to the literature as well as how the findings of the study link up and relate.

Thus let's begin by unpacking the themes and or concepts that the literature supports in relation to the key findings of the study. When considering the modern pet-owner relationship and the theory that has been written on the role that pets play in today's society, anthropomorphism is a term that comes up frequently. Studies indicate that pet owners view their pets as a close family member, friend, companion or child (Kanat-maymon et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019; Uccheddu et al., 2019; Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Honeycutt, 2018). As previously discussed the theory around anthropomorphism lines up and links directly with the findings of the research whereby pet owners regard their pets as members of the family. "The term companion animal can be regarded as a concept that identifies a pet as a companion, a family member and a friend," Park et al (2019:280) on anthropomorphism adds. The theme of anthropomorphism speaks directly to the human-pet relationship dynamic for most millennials owning pets as well as clients of all three dog day-cares.

As a result of pet owners regarding their pets as family members, the above theory surrounding anthropomorphism and attachment theory are closely related and often mutually discussed. As previously mentioned in the literature review, a large amount of literature has been written on attachment theory but, in relation to this study, research reveals that "owners are attached to their dogs mostly because the relationship provides the same, or even greater, sense of comfort and security, and reliable affection as close human relationships" Uccheddu et al.(2019: 933). Furthermore, much of the literature surrounding the human-pet relationship and attachment theory critically analyses and discusses the degree and type of attachment that exists between pet owner and pet (Kanat-maymon et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019; Uccheddu et al., 2019; Pauliuc and Fu, 2018; Honeycutt, 2018). As the findings suggest most pet owners rate their level of attachment as a 5/5 on the likert scale with 5 being extremely attached and 1 not at all attached. Furthermore the literature argues that the higher the level of attachment the more inclined the pet owner is to seek out luxury goods and services. This sentiment presented itself in the findings of the study

whereby owners with high attachment to pets insist on “only the best will do for their fur baby”.

In addition, according to Park et al. (2019), when a pet is considered a family member and is essentially made into a human substitute, purchase motivation changes. Owners who regard their pets as family are prepared to indulge in luxury pet goods and services because of how highly the pet is regarded in the heart and mind of the consumer. This was found to be true as findings revealed that consumer behaviour and retail selection preferences related to the level of attachment of owners to pets.

Similarly, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is theoretically linked to both anthropomorphism and to attachment theory and is one of the key theories that underpin the study as unpacked and previously discussed in the literature review. Most owners from the online survey said that they share a strong bond with their pet with 90.4 % turning to their pets as a source of love and affection, linking the findings with Maslow's belongingness and affection need. Honeycutt (2018:4) suggests that "the affection need is the desire to love and be loved. It includes desiring close relationships and bonding with others. Pets provide a source of love and desire the same." Furthermore Honeycutt (2018) suggests that in terms of Maslow's psychological needs, dogs have been assimilated into the human family as companions. Lastly with 58.9 % of pet owners reporting that they use baby talk when speaking to their pets further links the findings with Maslow's affection need. “An intriguing example of the affectionate need is the affectionate bond between parents and the use of baby-talk with infants. Research indicating how baby and pet talk resemble each other which represent affection, bonding, and encouragement” Honeycutt (2018: 4), reiterates the findings in relation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

## 4.4 Research Question, Problem & Objectives

| Objectives of the study                                                                                                                   | Dog Daycare 1 (VV)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Dog Daycare 2 (P)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Dog Daycare 3 (F)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Online Survey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. To determine the types of relationships between pet owners, their pets and the marketers and business owners of high-end pet care (O1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner &amp; pet : Extremely high level of emotional attachment (5 out of 5) with a strong bond established.</li> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner, marketers &amp; business owners of high-end pet care: Trust and rapport established with pet owners being brand loyal.</li> <li>Relationship is based off open and frequent communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner &amp; pet : High level of attachment (4 out of 5) with a significant bond established</li> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner, marketers &amp; business owners of high-end pet care: Trust and rapport established with pet owners being brand loyal.</li> <li>Relationship is based off open and frequent communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner &amp; pet : Extremely high level of emotional attachment (5 out of 5) with a strong bond established.</li> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner, marketers &amp; business owners of high-end pet care: Trust and rapport established with pet owners being brand loyal.</li> <li>Relationship is based off open and frequent communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner &amp; pet : Extremely high level of emotional attachment (5 out of 5) with a strong bond established.</li> <li>Type of relationship between pet owner, marketers &amp; business owners of high-end pet care: Trust and rapport established with pet owners being brand loyal.</li> <li>Relationship is strengthened through authentic communication</li> </ul> |
| 2. To identify how the human-pet relationship influences purchasing preference & buying behaviour (O2)                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only the best will do with a high preference for luxury goods and services</li> <li>Brand loyal - won't switch daycares once trust is established</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchasing preference in accordance with the personality of the pet owner</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only the best will do with a high preference for luxury goods and services</li> <li>Brand loyal - won't switch daycares once trust is established</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most pet owners consider quality to be the most important factor when buying pet products/services 80.8 %</li> <li>Most pet owners purchase luxury pet products and services on a special occasion 44.5%</li> <li>Most owners choose to spoil their pets even when they know they can't afford to 38.4%</li> </ul>                                                                                    |
| 3. To identify the reasons why millennials are actively seeking out luxury pet products & services (O3)                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a result of social media</li> <li>Pet influencers</li> <li>Due to societal trends</li> <li>Millennials aren't having children or are choosing to have them later on - as a result the pet is treated like a child &amp; only the best will do</li> <li>Rise in dog adoption resulting in more millennials looking for quality daycares &amp; pet hotels</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a result of social media</li> <li>Due to societal trends</li> <li>Millennials can't afford free standing homes so dogs are confined in an apartment with no garden</li> <li>Pet industry marketing leading to pet owners becoming more conscious of products and services that contribute to the well being of their pet</li> </ul>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a result of social media</li> <li>Millennials are becoming more and more concerned about the happiness, well being &amp; comfort of their pets so they are requesting luxury add ons, products and services</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most respondents are millennials 63.7 %</li> <li>Most pet owners do not have children to spoil 63 %</li> <li>Most pet owners choose to spoil their pets instead of themselves 71.2 %</li> <li>Most pet owners consider quality to be the most important factor when buying pet products/services 80.8 %</li> </ul>                                                                                    |
| 4. To distinguish what marketers and business owners need to do to market to millennial pet owners strategically (O4)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to market themselves on social media</li> <li>Marketing communication messaging needs to be authentic in order to resonate and engage the target audience</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to market themselves on social media</li> <li>Marketing communication messaging needs to be authentic in order to resonate and engage the target audience</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to market themselves on social media</li> <li>Marketing communication messaging needs to be authentic in order to resonate and engage the target audience</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to market themselves on social media</li> <li>Marketing communication messaging needs to be authentic in order to resonate and engage the target audience</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Figure 8: Research Objectives and Corresponding Findings

The above table (Figure 8) shows the objectives of the study in relation to the corresponding findings that came out of the research gathered via three in-depth interviews with the owners and or managers of luxury dog day-cares in Cape Town and an online survey that gathered responses from 146 respondents – 63.7% of which were millennials. The corresponding key findings from each dog day-care in the table above provide insightful answers to each objective of the study respectfully. All four research objectives were met and the researcher found key findings to answer the primary research question for the study. Thus the findings answered what the set out to find whilst also providing additional findings. Research objective three in particular – to identify the reasons why millennials are actively seeking out luxury pet products and services, provided some additional findings that came as a surprise to the researcher which are summarised below:

According to the findings:

- millennials are choosing to send their dogs to high-end luxury daycares and pet hotels as there is a stigma around sending your beloved family member to a “dingy, dark and cold kennel.”
- Millennials are actively seeking out luxury daycares due to an increase in dog adoption. Millennials are following the current adoption trend as they look to “Adopt Don’t Shop”
- One of the three dog daycares interviewed only caters for small dogs. The findings suggest that the smaller the dog and the higher the level of attachment the more likely the owner is to treat the pet like a human child and seek out daycares who do the same. Examples include giving the dog a bedtime biscuit, singing goodnight to it and tucking it in surrounded by soft Himalayan night lights and tranquil music playing.
- In daycares where attachment is high and trust has been built, clients refuse to take their dogs anywhere else. If the daycare is full over the holidays, pet owners will move their holiday dates to accommodate the dog.
- In daycares where attachment of owners to pets isn't as high, daycare owners choose to not celebrate the dogs birthday and the pet owners do not regard themselves as the pets mom or dad.
- Daycares where attachment is high and pet owners have established brand loyalty, business owners have expressed that they don't wish to advertise as they are fearful that the daycare / pet hotel won't be able to keep up with the demand of new fussy clients.

Furthermore the additional findings provided great insight into the primary research question and helped the researcher find some of the answers to the research problem. Despite two out of the three dog day-cares being hesitant to advertise due to already struggling to keep up with the demand, the findings indicated that the best way to strategically market to millennials is on social media. With 82% of millennials ranking social media as their preferred and most used platform, marketers can look to reach them on social with messaging that is authentic in order to resonate with them.

I am most likely to respond to ads on social media that are authentic and engaging

146 responses

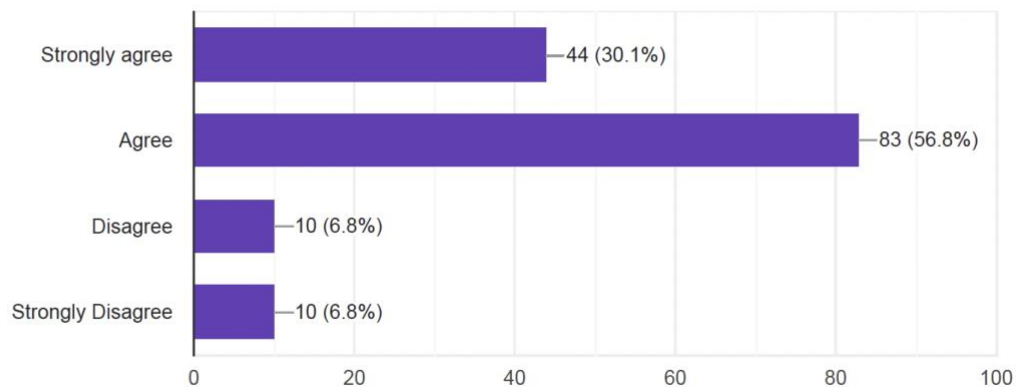


Figure 9: Millennials and Social Media

#### 4.5 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

It was through the use of unobtrusive data collection methods that the data was collected without the researcher directly affecting the research findings. This brings us to the importance of validity, reliability and trustworthiness in research. The concepts of validity and reliability are most commonly used in quantitative research because they relate to the measurability of the data, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. Due to the fact that this study is qualitative in nature, the researcher needed to maintain the trustworthiness of the research results. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is made up of four criteria, namely credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability. The researcher made sure to adhere to these criteria in order to allow the findings of the research to be trustworthy.

What's more, in order to ensure and enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings the following measures should be taken by the researcher. To increase credibility, the researcher should spend a prolonged amount of time with the participants in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their lives, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) asserts. Due to time constraints the researcher wasn't able to spend large amounts of time with the participants. It is suggested that for further studies, enough time be allocated so that the researcher may be able to really immerse themselves

within the environment to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. However through the use of in-depth interviews with business owners and or managers of high-end dog day-cares and pet hotels, the researcher was able to gain a better understanding of the phenomena by drawing on the managers and business owners experience from spending a prolonged amount of time in the pet industry. Furthermore Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests that credibility may be increased through the use of triangulation where more than one data collection method is used. Thus, through the use of two separate data collection methods namely, in-depth interviews along with the use of online surveys, the researcher was able to enhance the credibility of the study. In addition, the researcher has described the research process in detail within this report so that others may have the opportunity to scrutinise the research design, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) adds. Therefore the above mentioned research tactics allowed the researcher to enhance the trustworthiness of the study so that others who analyse the data can come to similar conclusions in future studies.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, the key findings of the research enabled the researcher to reach the research goals that were set in the research proposal for this study as well as find the answers to the research question/s in a quest to solve the research problem. In addition to answering the research questions, the researcher also came across additional findings that came as a surprise during the research process. The reasons as to why millennials are actively seeking out luxury pet products provided rich territory for new findings as outlined above as well as for suggestions for future research.

### 5.1 Anticipated contribution

In order to discuss the anticipated contribution of this study, it becomes necessary to first consider the objective of this study. This study set out to show that the higher the pet owners' attachment to their pet, the more likely they are to purchase luxury pet products and services. In addition, the study set out to show that pet owners see their pets as human substitutes for children, siblings and friends.

As previously outlined in the literature review, gaps in the research exist. According to Park et al (2019), research has only been conducted on some of the pet related markets. There is little to no research studies that have been conducted on luxury pet services. Hence, the anticipated contribution of this particular study is to potentially influence and / or improve practice within the luxury pet product and services industry. Furthermore, the study suggested ways in which marketers can better strategically market to millennial pet owners who spoil their pets through social media messaging that is authentic in order to resonate with them.

### 5.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical research is vital so that others may use the findings for future studies, as Wiidand Diggines (2015) suggest. No ethical challenges were identified for this study; however, the researcher needed to get consent from respondents to gather data and

ensure anonymity and confidentiality. It was the responsibility of the researcher to collect data ethically and to act with integrity. The professional conduct of the researcher was as important to the research as was the validity and the trustworthiness of the research. It was essential that the researcher adhered to ethical practices in order to practice research in a responsible way, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) asserts.

Thus, in order to conduct research ethically the researcher needed to be mindful of how the participants may be affected as there are a number of ethical issues that affect the participants in research. These include, but are not limited to informed consent, collecting data from participants, dealing with sensitive topics, avoiding harm and avoiding deception. Thus the researcher made sure to ensure that the participants know that they are taking part in a research study and made sure to inform them as to how the data would be used to inform the study. The researcher also informed the participants that their identities and personal information were to be protected, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggests. This was particularly important as the PoPI act is now in effect in South Africa.

Furthermore, the researcher did not provide any incentives of any kind so as to not distort the results in any way. Lastly, the researcher made sure not to harm the respondents or their respective businesses in any way. This included making sure to not expose any facts that may harm the reputation or business relationships of the dog day-care and pet hotels specified in the study. Thus, by adhering to the above mentioned ethical considerations, the researcher will ensure that the research got done ethically and responsibly.

### 5.3 Limitations and Delimitations

Despite the careful decisions the researcher took when conducting the research, there will always be things out of the researchers control. We refer to these as limitations, as Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) maintains. For this study there were a number of limitations that arose that needed to be taken into account below

The first limitation that arose during the data collection process was time. Due to the issue the researcher had with accessibility, only two out of the three dog day-cares

were available for in-depth interviews before the cut-off date. This was due to the time frame in which the data analysis needed to occur not coinciding with the busy schedules of the business owners. Furthermore due to the short time frame in which the research needed to be concluded, factors such as the researcher not being able to spend large amounts of time with the participants to enhance credibility also acted as a limitation. Due to time being a limitation, there is a limit to the amount of data collection methods the researcher could use to collect data. Thus, further research would benefit from conducting a focus group with the clientele of selected high-end dog day-cares and pet hotels. By adding an additional data collection method, the researcher will increase the trustworthiness of the research findings through even greater triangulation.

In addition to time being a limitation, Covid 19 served as a second limitation whereby the researcher needed to conduct one of the in-depth interviews online as opposed to face to face. As previously mentioned one of the dog day-care owners was only available once she had been fully vaccinated, also adding to the limitation of time.

Accessibility was another limitation which was out of the researchers control. As time went on, it became increasingly difficult to get hold of the business owners who had not yet agreed to the interviews. One in particular was only accessible through her personal assistant which made direct contact difficult.

With the above in mind, when discussing limitations, it also becomes necessary to discuss delimitations set by the researcher. Due to budget constraints, the researcher does not have the financial resources to conduct the study outside of the Western Cape. For this reason the high-end dog day-care and pet hotels identified by the researcher for this study were all located in Cape Town. Future research would benefit from looking at other high-end pet service providers in the wider parts of Southern Africa.

A further delimitation exists in terms of the research design. This study does not include a quantitative component as the researcher does not wish to quantify the data but rather to find meaning within it. These parameters were set by the researcher to further focus the study and to ensure that the study is completed on time. As a result

of discussing the limitations and delimitations of the study it becomes clear that there were a number of limiting factors that the researcher had to face when collecting the data for this study, however limiting, it is necessary to announce such limitations early on into the research process.

What's more, based on the analysis and interpretation of the findings the researcher would like to suggest the following future research to be conducted within this research topic. As a result of this study looking to uncover a number of reasons as to why millennials look to buy luxury products and services for their pets – a high level of attachment came up as a key contributing factor when it came to the purchasing of luxury pet products and services. Due to attachment being an overbearing factor within this study, future studies could look towards attachment as a casual factor for a positivist study.

The findings of this study also suggested that the smaller the dog the more likely it is to be treated as a child. This was revealed due to the fact that the day-care with the highest emotional attachment between pet parent and pet was a day-care that only catered for small dogs. Future studies could ascertain whether this is in fact true.

Lastly, as there is little research on how attachment to pets actually influences pet owners buying behaviour within this category, future studies could look to uncover these motivations in more detail. According to Park et al. (2019) purchasing attributes such as quality, price, reputation and sales environment have been considered in previous studies, but other attributes may also affect attachment to pets and as a result should be explored.

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**ANNEXURES:**

Annexure X - final research report summary document below . Additional Annexures attached as separate PDF documents along with submission

## ANNEXURE X: FINAL RESEARCH REPORT / THESIS SUMMARY DOCUMENT

**TITLE:** An analysis of consumer perception and buying behaviour amongst millennial pet owners seeking out luxury pet products and services in Cape town.

| Research Purpose/<br>Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Primary Research Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Research Rationale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Seminal Authors/<br>Sources                                                                                                                                                                 | Literature Review –<br>Conceptual Framework                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Paradigm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Data Collection Method(s)                                                                                                                                                                                       | Ethics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Key Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| To discover the reasons behind why millennial pet owners choose to purchase luxury pet products and services                                                                                                                                                                                         | Define and uncover the types of relationships that exist between, pet owners, their pets, and the marketers and business owners of high-end pet care                                                                                                                                                                                               | This study is important because the pet industry is a large and lucrative market that is currently booming in South Africa. It is important for marketers & business owners to understand why millennial pet owners choose to buy luxury pet products in order to market to them properly | Bretherton (1992) - "The origins of attachment theory"<br><br>Parumasur, S and Roberts-Lombard, M (2014) - "Consumer Behaviour"<br><br>Wiid, J. and Diggines,C. 2015 - "Marketing Research" | <b>Theme 1:</b><br><br>Bretherton (1992) - "The origins of attachment theory"<br><br><b>Theme 2:</b><br><br>Pauliuc, D and Fu, Y. 2018. A study on the attachment in between owner and pet and its influence on the consumption of pet food | Interpretivism<br><br><b>Epistemology:</b><br><br>The researcher hopes that this study grants society the knowledge to better understand how to market to millennial pet owners<br><br><b>Ontology:</b><br><br>The belief that guides this study is that based on personal circumstances, culture and experiences, people experience reality differently | <div>Qualitative</div> <div>Population</div> <div>Target population 1: owners &amp; managers of high-end dog daycares<br/>Target Population 2: millennials who own pets, love pets and spoil their pets<br/>Accessible population 1: Interviews : owners / business partners/ managers available for interview<br/>Accessible population 2: online survey - those with access to internet have time to fill out the online survey</div> | <div>One on one interviews that will be semi structured in nature</div> <div>Online surveys</div>                                                                                                               | in order to conduct research ethically the researcher needed to be mindful of how the participants may be affected as there are a number of ethical issues that affect the participants in research. These include, but are not limited to informed consent, collecting data from participants, dealing with sensitive topics, avoiding harm and avoiding deception. Furthermore, the researcher collected data in an ethical, responsible manner | <div>The higher the pet owners attachment to their pet, the more likely they are to purchase luxury pet products and services</div> <div>Pets owners see thier pets as human substitutes, for children, siblings and friends</div> | <div>Due to attachment being an overbearing factor within this study, future studies could look towards attachment as a casual factor for a Positivist study.</div> <div>The findings of this study suggested that the smaller the dog the more likely it is to be treated as a child. Findings revealed the highest emotional attachment between pet parent and pet was at day-care that only catered for small dogs. Future studies could ascertain whether this is in fact true.</div> |
| Research Problem                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Secondary Questions/<br>Hypotheses/<br>Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Key Concepts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Key Theories                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Theme 3:</b><br><br>Parumasur, S and Roberts-Lombard, M (2014) - "Consumer Behaviour"                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Theme 4:</b><br><br>Honeycutt, J.M. (2018). Animals as family members                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Theme 5:</b><br><br>Robert Taormina and Jennifer Gao. 2019. Maslow and the motivation Hierarchy: Measuring satisfaction of the needs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Sampling                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Data Analysis Method(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Limitations                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Key Contribution                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| By way of Pauliuc and Fu (2018) who argue that different human-pet relationships lead to significantly different purchase motives, the study aims to show that due to millennial pet owners having a high level of attachment to their pets, they actively seek out luxury pet products and services | SQ1: How does the human-pet relationship that exists influence human purchasing patterns and behaviours?<br>SQ2: Why is there an increase in millennial pet owners actively seeking out non-essential pet products and services?<br>SQ3: How do marketers and businesses successfully segment and market to millennial pet owners in South Africa? | <div>Human-pet relationships</div> <div>Human substitute</div> <div>Attachment</div> <div>Consumption values and retail selection preferences</div>                                                                                                                                       | <div>Attachement theory</div> <div>Anthropomorphism</div> <div>Consumer studies</div> <div>Maslows Hierarchy of needs</div>                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <div>Non Probability</div> <div>Size:</div> <div>The sample consisted of three high-end dog daycare facilities in Cape Town</div> <div>Millennials taking part in online survey: 146 respondents in total</div> | <div>Unit of Analysis:</div> <div>Interviews: Owner/ Manager of high-end Dog Daycare</div> <div>Online surveys: millennial pet owners</div> <div>Data analysis method(s):</div> <div>Method: content analysis seeking out common narratives, words and common themes</div>                                                                                                                                                                        | <div>Time</div> <div>geographic limitationions</div> <div>Covid: Teams interviews</div> <div>Accessibility</div> <div>Load shedding</div> <div>Delimitations - Scope of the study - Cape Town &amp; only</div>                     | <div>The contribution of my study is to potentially influence and/ or improve practice within the luxury pet product and services industry</div> <div>According to Park et al. (2019) purchasing attributes such as quality, price, reputation and sales environment have been considered in previous studies. But other attributes may also affect attachment to pets and as a result should be explored.</div>                                                                          |