

Travel buddies: why we love travelling with our pets



Image source: Freepik (dog at the beach in summer)

Pets are more than just animals—they're cherished family members! The trend of bringing pets along on vacations is on the rise, reflecting the strong emotional bonds people share with their furry friends. But what drives some pet owners to take their animals on adventures, while others opt to leave them at home? Understanding these motivations sheds light on the evolving landscape of pet-inclusive travel.

This study, conducted by Desiree Thobakgale, a [master's](#) student from the [Department of Marketing Management](#), investigates the motives behind South African pet owners' intention to travel with their companion animals. The study draws on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and its key variables (attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control), and pet attachment.

Data was collected using an online survey targeting pet owners. The findings reveal that a positive attitude towards travelling with pets is the strongest predictor of pet owners' intention to include their pets in travel and leisure activities. While intuitively important, the level of pet attachment surprisingly did not significantly predict pet owners' intention to travel with their pets.

This distinction offers a fresh perspective on the factors motivating pet-inclusive travel, suggests that the personal outlook on the travel experience itself, rather than the emotional bond with the pet, is what most strongly shapes pet inclusive travel decisions.

The findings offer valuable insights for marketers and businesses in the travel sector, for example, campaigns that highlight the enjoyment and ease of traveling with pets can help foster positive attitudes and normalise pet-inclusive travel. Advertisements should focus on the emotional rewards of shared adventures, using storytelling to evoke the joy of bringing pets along. And, incentives such as discounts or special travel packages for pet owners could further encourage participation and strengthen social acceptance of pet-friendly travel. By understanding what truly motivates pet owners, businesses can better tailor their offerings and messaging, making pet-inclusive travel more appealing and accessible for everyone.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree specialising in Marketing Management in 2024](#) with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Desiree Thobakgale under the supervision of [Dr M.C. van der Merwe](#).