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Consumer reaction on pet friendly hospitality marketing strategies

Findings from an exploratory study in Portugal

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Dissertation

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CONSUMER REACTION ON PET FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY MARKETING STRATEGIES

By

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Master Thesis presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Data-Driven Marketing, with a specialization in Data-Driven Marketing Intelligence

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STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledge the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

Catarina Bernardes Pereira

Lisbon, 2023

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my supervisor Teodora *Szabo-Douat*, for guiding me through this journey and for all the patience and availability. She was always very positive and supportive, which motivated me even more to complete this important milestone in my life.

Also, would like to dedicate this work to the biggest pillars in my life: my family and my boyfriend. Thank you for inspiring me with your knowledge and for all of the emotional support that you gave me.

To all of my friends and co-workers that saw me stressing about this dissertation, thank you for still being here for me! I bet it was not easy.

Last but not least, even though it will never understand this, thank to my furry friend for inspiring me to come up with this topic. Hopefully one day, Tommy joins me to every hotel!

ABSTRACT

The present thesis analyzes the consumer reaction on pet friendly hospitality marketing strategies In Portugal, such as: consumer emotions, brand awareness, consumer brand identification, word of mouth and brand loyalty. The main objective of this study is to understand how these marketing constructs are influencing consumers behaviors and decisions when considering pet friendly accommodations. Tourism has been growing and it is important to be aware of new business opportunities, such as the pet friendly hospitality, for which demand has been growing. The research was done by using a quantitative approach, that revealed that the marketing strategies positively influence the customer's willingness to stay in pet-friendly hotels, which provides important insights to the existing literature.

KEYWORDS

Pet friendly hospitality; Consumer behavior; Consumer emotions; Brand awareness; Consumer brand identification; Word of mouth; Brand loyalty.

Sustainable Development Goals (SGD)



INDEX

1. Introduction	1
2. Literature review	2
2.1. Pet attachment in the past few years	2
2.2. Tourism Phenomena and Pet friendly hospitality tourism	3
2.2.1. Pet friendly hospitality practices	5
2.2.2. Pet friendly hospitality rules	5
2.2.3. Pet friendly hospitality in Portugal	6
2.3. Importance of marketing strategies from the consumer perspective, for pet friendly hospitality	7
3. Methodology	10
3.1. Participants	10
3.2. Procedure	11
3.3. Measurement	11
3.4. Results and discussion	13
4. Conclusions	18
5. Limitations and recommendations for future research	20
Bibliographical references	21
Appendix A: Online questionnaire	25
Appendix B: Correlations and internal consistency tables	29
Appendix c: Anova test tables	32
Appendix D: Additional study insights tables	36

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1- Total number of overnight stays, in Portugal (2019-2022).....	4
Table 2-Pet friendly hospitality hotels in Portugal: Main Rules and practices	6
Table 3-Descriptive statistics of the sociodemographic data of the participants	10
Table 4- Constructs Literature Review	12
Table 5-Willingness to pet friendly accommodation	14
Table 6- Main reasons for not to staying in a pet friendly hotel	14
Table 7-Willingness to pay pet friendly hotel	16

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1- Theoretical model	9
Figure 2-pet friendly hospitality brands written by the participants.....	16

LIST OF GRAPHICS

Graphic 1- Number of adopted pets, in Portugal (2018-2020).....	2
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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered to be one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Shanker, 2008). Despite some adverse events like terrorism (Mohsin et al., 2016) attacks, flu scares, tourism has been characterized by its uniqueness, dynamics and resilience, so it is important to be aware of new business opportunities. The recent proof of tourism resilience (Mohsin et al., 2016), is that even with the Covid-19 pandemic period affecting a lot of sectors, especially the tourism one, this sector has been rapidly recovering (Rahman et al., 2021).

However, this pandemic period left an enormous negative mental health issue on individuals, since lockdowns were imposed by governments, in order to control the spread of the virus, which made people feel lonely (Rahman et al., 2021). This social distancing and lockdowns further lead to depressions, anxiety, boredom and loneliness (Rahman et al., 2021). One way that people found to cope with those mental health issues was to adopt a pet, so they would feel more accompanied and they would know that they had the mission to take care of their pets every day (Bussolari, Currin-McCulloch, et al., 2021).

It is proved that the attachment that humans can get to a dog can be one of the strongest connections ever felt, decreasing the sense of loneliness (Bussolari, Currin-McCulloch, et al., 2021). Nowadays, people are more concerned about pets (Kirillova et al., 2015). It has been shown that individuals have been treating their pets as a family member (Kirillova et al., 2015), since they provide joy, companion, promote well-being and the feeling of security (Sable, 2013).

Consequently, the attachment to pets can positively influence owners' motivation to take them on vacation (Hung, Chen, & Peng, 2016). Therefore, a recent type tourism characterized by the emotional bond of owners and pets is increasing, which is the pet friendly one. (Kirillova, Lee, & Lehto, 2015).

Despite the growing demand for pet friendly accommodations, it is still unclear how can pet friendly marketing strategies influence consumer behavior. There are some literatures regarding the hospitality benefits and constrains from travelling with pets (Kirillova et al., 2015), relatively the fast development of this segment (Bajramović & Lejla, 2021), the potential pet friendly portability (Y. Chen, 2018) and also regarding the new tendencies from this pet friendly hospitality that might attract more pet owners (Buhalis & Chan, 2023).

Nevertheless, there is still a lack of academic study regarding examining the consumer reaction on the marketing strategies arising from the pet friendly hospitality segment, in Portugal. Therefore, this study will focus on the following main research questions: "How are consumers reacting to pet friendly hospitality segment?" and "How are the hospitality pet-friendly strategies impacting on consumers behavior?"

This investigation contributes to the literature since it has three important objectives. It will evaluate the impact of pet-friendly marketing strategies on customer behavior and decision process, by measuring the importance of consumer emotions, brand awareness, consumer brand identification, word of mouth and brand loyalty. It will also investigate the factors that influence Portuguese consumers' decision-making processes when choosing pet-friendly accommodations and thirdly, will provide some marketing hospitality insights to develop this research topic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. PET ATTACHMENT IN THE PAST FEW YEARS

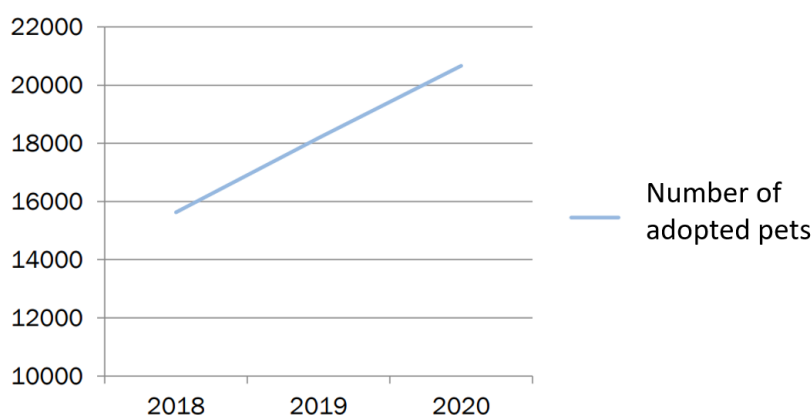
Pets have always been considered as humans' closest companions. Dogs are among one of the earliest domesticated animals that shared more interactions with humans. Also, studies have proved that owning pets has several advantages for people, including enhancing their health and well-being (Apaolaza et al., 2022). Pet owners appear to have lower levels of mental stress, loneliness, sadness, depression, systolic blood pressure and blood cholesterol (Cutt et al., 2007).

Many owners feel that they love their pets unconditionally, which may lead to them finding comfort in their pet (Liu-Pham et al., 2022). An increasing number of people consider their pet as family member and this has also been contributing to the fact that pets of all sizes and breeds have become very popular. (Kirillova et al., 2015)

Due to covid-19, people had to be isolated in their homes, which led to a mental health detriment. (Martos Martinez-Caja et al., 2022), such as increase in depression and anxiety (Taylor & Asmundson, 2020). These aspects made many of them look to their pets as a companion, providing a sense gave them comfort and safety (Bussolari, Currin-McCulloch, et al., 2021). These were the main reasons for the increase in pet adoption numbers (Bussolari, Currin-McCulloch, et al., 2021).

Following the worldwide trend, in Portugal it was noticed an increase number of pet adoptions from 2018 to 2020, with a total amount of 20 664 pets adopted in 2020, which was 32.2% higher than in 2018, (cf. graphic 1) (Republica Portuguesa, 2020). Also, according to *Sistema de Informação de Animais e Companhia* there are currently more than 3 million pets registered and identified as a companion pet (SIAC – Base de Dados SIAC, 2022).

Graphic 1- Number of adopted pets, in Portugal (2018-2020)



2.2. TOURISM PHENOMENA AND PET FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY TOURISM

Tourism is a social, economic and cultural phenomena that can be described as the activities of people visiting and residing for not more than one year continuously in areas other than their regular environment for leisure, business, and other purposes (UNWTO, 2008).

In the past few years, tourism has been showing a steadily increase all across the world, demonstrating that the tourist industry is dynamic and resilient. This increase can be explained by a variety of factors (UNWTO, 2020).

Sharing daily activities on social media has become a habit for people all over the world, due to the rapid advancements in technology and the expanding availability and accessibility of digital channels for information and media distribution (Ramadania et al., 2021). Therefore, people have been sharing on social media publications with descriptions and opinions about their lifestyle (Ramadania et al., 2021). Consequently, certain activities such as travelling have become more popular and trendier, since individuals tend to publish pictures to show the places they visit, influencing others to travel. (RATNASARI et al., 2020)

Another reason that might explain the tourism growth, is the general adoption of low-cost airlines to multiple destinations, which made travelling more affordable (Davison & Ryley, 2010). Also, the online travel booking suppliers have made the booking process this easy and simple (Bogdanovych et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, in 2020 the tourism sector was significantly impacted by the covid-19 (UNWTO, 2023), due to border and travel restrictions, with several countries reporting declines in both domestic and international travel. Because of the lockdowns, many firms lost income and consequently a lot of people lost their jobs. (Gössling et al., 2020) It was one of the biggest crises in the history of tourism, for instance, data shows that worldwide arrivals between January and May of 2021 were 85% lower than the homologous period in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021).

However, tourism is known for its resilience (Mohsin et al., 2016) and when the majority of the travel restrictions were taken off and with the administration of the vaccines, lots of people felt more secure to travel again (Kaewkitipong et al., 2021). The tourism activity in many regions of Europe have recovered to pre-pandemic levels by spring 2022, since individuals desire to get away from home and to meet new places. (Comité das Regiões Europeu, 2023). Plus, it is also expected that international arrivals reach 80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels by 2023 (UNWTO, 2022).

In Portugal, the tourism activity has grown significantly in the past few years, bringing millions of tourists to this country. Portugal is characterized by its beaches, historic cities and scenic landscapes. It is also very famous for its gastronomy, history and welcoming citizens (Visit Portugal, 2023). Even though Portugal hasn't also reached to the pre-pandemic tourism levels, the arrivals are increasing, as it can be seen in the table 1 below (TravelBI, 2023). Moreover, it is likely that Portugal reach the pre pandemic levels soon, since it was considered to be in the TOP 10 of European favourite countries for travellers next choice (TravelBI, 2022).

Table 1- Total number of overnight stays, in Portugal (2019-2022)

Year	Total number of overnight stays
2019	70.2M
2020	25.8M
2021	61.6M
2022	69.6M

As generic tourism grows globally, the demand for pet friendly hospitality tourism also follows that trend, nevertheless this market segment is still in a very early stage of development (Bajramović & Lejla, 2021). Pet friendly hospitality concerns about hospitality properties that allow some types of pets to accompany their owners during their stay (Kirillova et al., 2015). The hospitality property offers conditions so the pets can stay accommodate with their owners (Kirillova et al., 2015). Nevertheless, this definition may vary depending on the pets that are permitted (Alves et al., 2022).

The number of people who choose to take their pets to holidays, or even to small trips and walks, has increased significantly in past few years (Alves et al., 2022) and the attachment to pets can positively influence owners' motivation to take them on vacation (Hung et al., 2016). However, it still seems that owners have not been encouraged enough to take their pets with them, whenever they go on vacation or to small walks. (Bajramović & Lejla, 2021). This can be explained with the lack of certification properties that allow pets and also with the lack of information regarding this type of hospitality segment (Bajramović & Lejla, 2021).

Since this market segment is still developing (Bajramović & Lejla, 2021), this gives room for hotels to adopt this concept and to differentiate from the competition (Kirillova et al., 2015). Also, it has been showed that pet owners would be more loyal to a hotel chain if they allowed pets during their stay (Y. Chen, 2018). Thereby, since this market segment is increasing, hospitality and tourism businesses should aspire to not only comfortably accommodate tourists and their pets, but also to use these services to emotionally connect with their potential clients. (Kirillova et al., 2015). Pets are a direct business opportunity to increase revenue per room. Pet tourists spend more nights, 3 on average, than non-pet tourists, which is 2 on average (Y. Chen, 2018). This could lead to further customer retainment and satisfaction. (Kirillova et al., 2015)

However, there are still a few constrains regarding the pet friendly hospitality, due to the fact that pets are incapable of self-care and traveling with pets usually involves more uncertainties and constraints than other forms of tourism (Ying et al., 2021). Also, another constrain are the high

expenses when travelling with pets (Kirillova et al., 2015) and the poor facilities that are offered for the pets and pet owners (Ying et al., 2021). Plus, pet owners get uncomfortable by the fact that some people might not like pets or be afraid of them (Ying et al., 2021). Nevertheless, one of the biggest constraints are the lack of pet friendly hospitality information and advertisement (Ying et al., 2021). This way, a lot of pet owners give up on the idea of bringing their pet with them when travelling, because they have poor access to information for this type of tourism (A. H. Chen et al., 2014).

2.2.1. Pet friendly hospitality practices

Worldwide, the number of services that allow the presence of pets is growing, and these services extend beyond hospitality accommodation, such as shops, restaurants, airports, among others (Alves et al., 2022). The tourism industry has been improving its accommodations to support pet friendly hospitality, in order to make it easier for the owners to travel with their pets and also to keep up with this developing pet friendly market (Alves et al., 2022).

Tendencies have shown that some hospitality companies have been designing their hotels to be pet friendly (Pandey & Kulshrestha, 2021). Some hotels already offer pet amenities such as pet bed, water bowls, food and wipes (Buhalis & Chan, 2023). Hotels make sure that all of the food are from well-known brands, since the quality of these amenities plays a crucial role in customer hotel trust and pet experience (Buhalis & Chan, 2023). For hygiene matters, some hotels have been removing the room carpets to improve cleaning process. Plus, the housekeeping department plays a very important role for this pet segment, since they are the ones that guarantee that the room is in hygiene conditions to be used (Buhalis & Chan, 2023).

In most of the pet friendly hotels, pets are allowed in their owner's rooms and sometimes in gardens or special pet's playgrounds (Buhalis & Chan, 2023). Some hotels have been designing some playgrounds for pets, where they can play and socialize with others pets, often controlled by specialized pet-friendly staff (Buhalis & Chan, 2023).

2.2.2. Pet friendly hospitality rules

Hotels that accept pets must implement pet policies, so guest with and without pets feel comfortable and safe (Kim et al., 2017). Pet policies may vary from hotels, nevertheless, most of them ask clients to read and sign a pet-related terms and conditions and ask for a refundable payment deposit for possible pet damages (Buhalis & Chan, 2023). Additionally, pet owners should be informed about all of their responsibilities, pet facilities and local veterinarians, in case it's needed (Kim et al., 2017).

In the public areas of the hotel, pets must be kept on a leash or held in arms (Buhalis & Chan, 2023), since this pet friendly hospitality process mustn't compromise all guests and hotel workers safety (Kim et al., 2017). Thereby, there are some pet restrictions related to their physical characteristics such as breed, weight and number of pets allowed in the hotel room (Kim et al., 2017). Normally, these types of restrictions don't apply to service dogs, since they are professionally trained to perform in a safely way (Kim et al., 2017).

2.2.3. Pet friendly hospitality in Portugal

In Portugal, there are already some hotels that are pet friendly and that present some specific facilities that allow pet owners to bring their pets, such as some hotels that belong to the *Pestana Group*, *Accor*, *NH hotels* and *The Yeatman hotel*. The table below shows some examples of the main hotel rules and practices, that can be found on the online pages of these Portuguese pet friendly hotels.

Table 2-Pet friendly hospitality hotels in Portugal: Main Rules and practices

Pet Friendly Hospitality accommodations in Portugal	Main hotel Rules	Main hotel practices:
<i>Mamma shelter, Accor group</i> (Accor, 2023)	• One dog or one cat allowed per room up to 12kg; • Pet fee of 25€ per night; • Pets must be vaccinated, have the microchip and well behaved; • Pets must be kept in a leash in public areas; • Pets are not allowed to be left alone in the room, or if so, reception be warned about it; • Owners are fully responsible for any damage; • Potentially dangerous breeds must use muzzle; • In case of any inconvenience caused by pets, the hotel staff reserves the right to cancel the client and pet stay; • The rules indicating in which spaces pets are not allowed do not apply for guide dogs	• Water and food bowl, bed • Pets are allowed in the restaurant • Exclusive rooms
<i>Pestana Vintage Porto</i> , (Pestana Hotel Group, 2023)	• One dog or one cat allowed per room up to 15kg; • Pet fee of 25€ per night; • Pets must be vaccinated, have the microchip and well behaved; • Pets are not allowed to be left alone in the room for more than 1h, or if so, reception be warned about it; • Potentially dangerous breeds are not allowed • Pets must be kept in a leash in public areas; • Pets are not allowed in the wellness and restaurant area • In case of any inconvenience caused by pets, the hotel staff reserves the right to cancel the client and pet stay; • The rules indicating in which spaces pets are not allowed do not apply for guide dogs • Owners are fully responsible for any damage;	• Exclusive rooms • Water and food bowls

<i>Tivoli Avenida</i> <i>Liberdade Lisboa,</i> <i>NH hotels (Tivoli,</i> 2023)	• Maximum of 2 pets per room up to 25kg; • Pet fee of 25€ per night; • Pets cannot be left alone in the room, except in the owner's meal time. If they need to be left alone in the room besides that time, reception must be warned about it. Cats can be left alone in the room, but owners are full responsible for any damage; • Pets must be vaccinated, have the microchip and well behaved; • Pets must be kept in a leash in public areas; • Pets are not allowed in the SPA and restaurant areas • Owners are full responsible for any hotel damage; • In case of any inconvenience caused by pets, the hotel staff reserves the right to cancel the client and pet stay; • The rules indicating in which spaces pets are not allowed do not apply for guide dogs	• Water and food bowls, pet bed; • Recommendation of pet services in the area; • Exclusive rooms • Litter box for cats
<i>The Yeatman hotel</i> (The Yeatman Hotel, 2023)	• One dog or one cat allowed per room up to 20kg; • Pet fee of 40€ per night; • Pets must be kept in a leash in public areas; • Pets are not allowed in the SPA, dining and events area; • Pets must be vaccinated, have the microchip and well behaved; • Pets cannot be left alone in the room, except in the owner's meal time. If they need to be left alone in the room besides that time, reception must be warned about it. • In case of any inconvenience caused by pets, the hotel staff reserves the right to cancel the client and pet stay; • The rules indicating in which spaces pets are not allowed do not apply for guide dogs	• Pet sitting service • Exclusive rooms; • Pet bed, welcome pet kit, water and food bowl, surprise VIP treatment

2.3. IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING STRATEGIES FROM THE CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE, FOR PET FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY

From the consumer perspective, a brand should create positive attitude when recalling and identifying for a product or service (Todor, 2014). This positive attitude towards a brand can only be built when the customer experience or creates some contact with the brand (Todor, 2014). In order to create brand loyalty, the brand should be able to express and create awareness about its services, personality and values so customers can identify with it and see the brand as a part of own identity (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Therefore, consumer brand identification is very important to retain customers, since the attachment to the brand might lead to repeated purchases (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012).

Also, brand loyalty helps enhancing word of mouth (WOM), since WOM is the process of sharing opinions, recommendations and experiences. WOM is perceived as a reliable source that influences consumers' intentions to purchase, since those shared opinions often come from family, friends or other trusted people (Kundu & Rajan, 2016). Plus, the spread of WOM has emotional antecedents,

since positive and negative emotions will have a different impact and interpretation on consumers. When a consumer recall and recommend some product or service, it will also bring back their memories and emotions that they felt when they were experiencing it (Söderlund & Rosengren, 2007).

When a hotel aims to affirm its identity and to stay competitive, it is important to improve its image and positioning in the market, in order to have points of uniqueness that makes possible to stand out from competitors (Aripova, 2021). Also, this will make it possible for the hotel brand to set some associations and awareness to their clients (Aripova, 2021).

The pet friendly segment it is characterized by the emotional bond of owners and pets. Pet owners might feel a lot of emotions by bringing their pet on vacation such as happiness, concern, relief, interest, among others. (Kirillova et al., 2015) Thereby, an emotional marketing approach must be set, so the owners would be willing to pay for the pet's stay and become loyal to that hotel brand. (Kirillova et al., 2015).

In order to analyze the marketing behavior regarding the pet friendly hospitably segment, some hypotheses were done, to observe how consumers are reacting to it, measuring the following variables: Consumer emotions, brand awareness, consumer brand identification, word of mouth and brand loyalty.

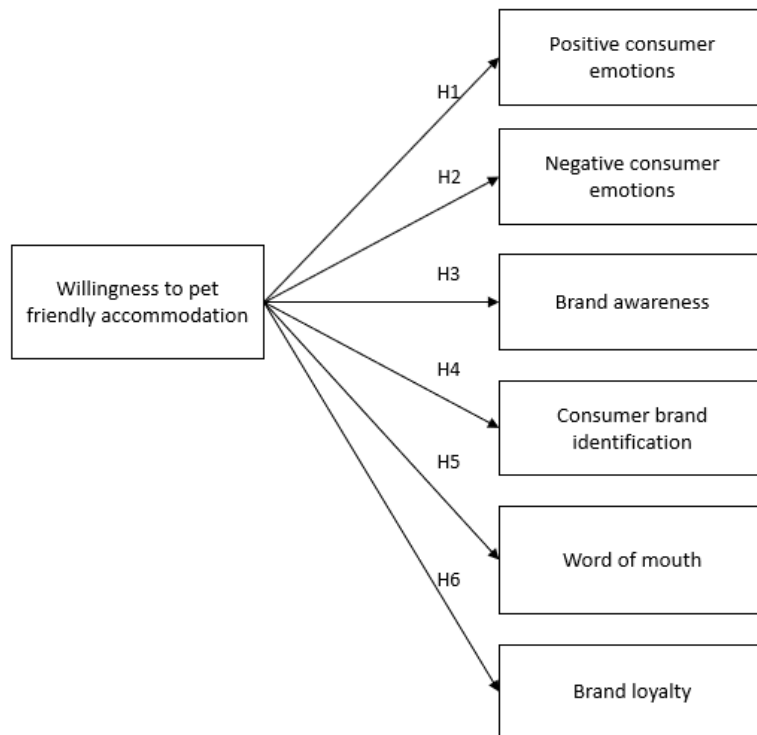


Figure 1- Theoretical model

H1: Pet friendly hospitality positively affects positive consumer emotions, such as: happiness and relief;

H2: Pet friendly hospitality positively affects negative consumer emotions, such as: discomfort, disgust, insecurity and concern;

H3: Pet friendly hospitality positively affects brand awareness;

H4: Pet friendly hospitality positively affects consumer brand identification;

H5: Pet friendly hospitality positively affects consumer's word of mouth;

H6: Pet friendly hospitality positively affects consumer's brand loyalty;

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The sample of this study consisted on 197 participants with Portuguese nationality, ranging in age from 18 to 82 years old. Regarding the location of the respondents, 1.6% (N=3) are from Aveiro, 3.6% (N=7) from Braga, 0.5% (N=1) from Coimbra, 0.5% (N=1) from Faro, 1% (N=2) from Guarda, 1.6% (N=3) from Leiria, 69.4% (N=134) from Lisboa, 8.3% (N=16) from Porto, 3.1% (N=6) from Santarém, 8.3% (N=16) from Setúbal, 0.5% (N=1) from Vila Real, 1% (N=2) from Região Autónoma da Madeira e 0.5% (N=1) from Região Autónoma dos Açores. There were no registered participants from the others districts of Portugal, such as Beja, Évora, Portalegre, Castelo Branco, Viseu, Bragança and Viana do Castelo. The remaining sociodemographic data can be found in Table 3.

Table 3-Descriptive statistics of the sociodemographic data of the participants

		N	Valid percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Gender (N=193)	Male	77	39.9	-	-
	Female	116	60.1	-	-
	Other	0	0	-	-
Age	-	189	-	30.773	13.323
Education level (N=193)	Elementary education	1	0.5	-	-
	High education	45	23.3	-	-
	Bachelor's degree	106	54.9	-	-
	Master's degree	39	20.2	-	-
	Doctorate degree	2	1	-	-
Profession (N=193)	Student	55	28.5	-	-
	Employee	81	42.0	-	-
	Self-employed worker	10	5.2	-	-
	Student worker	37	19.2	-	-
	Unemployed	5	2.6	-	-
	Retired	5	2.6	-	-

Annual Income (N=193)	<8000	76	39.4	-	-
	8.000- 14.999	37	19.2	-	-
	15.000- 24.999	39	20.2	-	-
	25.000- 44.999	24	12.4	-	-
	45.000- 74.999	10	5.2	-	-
	75.000- 99.999	3	1.6	-	-
	>100.000	4	2.1	-	-

3.2. PROCEDURE

For this quantitative and exploratory study, an electronic survey was used, through Qualtrics software. Most of the questions were adapted from previous scientific and academic research, (cf. Table 4). The questionnaire was made available in Portuguese and designed to be answered in a time frame of 3-5 minutes. The data was collected from 10th until 22nd of May, through social media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, e-mail).

At the first page of the questionnaire, participants were exposed to an informed consent. As such, they were made aware of the objectives of the study, as well as the data privacy information. Moreover, participants were informed that their participation was fully voluntary and not monetarily compensated (cf. Appendix A, to see full survey)

3.3. MEASUREMENT

Concerning consumer emotions, this variable was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective was to measure some emotions that consumers might feel when they know the hotel is pet friendly such as happiness, relief, concern, disgust, discomfort and insecurity. For this construct, the positive and the negative emotions were divided into different groups. For the positive emotions it was considered happiness and relief and for negative ones it was considered concern, disgust, insecurity and discomfort.

For the positive emotions it was done a correlation among the two items ($r = 0.803$, $p < 0.01$), which indicates the presence of a strong positive correlation, suggesting when the level of happiness increases it is likely that the level of relief also increases, and vice versa. In addition, and since the p-value was lower than 0.01, this means that this correlation is statistically significant (cf. Appendix B table 1). Regarding the negative emotions the Cronbach Alpha was ($\alpha = 0.894$), which means that the values of the internal reliability for the four items of negative emotions were good (cf. Appendix B, table 2).

Regarding brand awareness, the variable was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective of this item was to measure whether consumers know about pet friendly hospitality advertisement. Also, participants were asked to write a pet friendly hospitality brand, in case of knowing some.

As for consumer brand identification, this variable was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The aim was to measure if consumers would associate themselves with hotel brands that were pet friendly and to assess the impression resulting from it. For these matters, it was done a correlation among these two items ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.01$), that represents a high degree of correlation, which indicates that consumers that recall themselves of pet friendly hospitality brands will likely have a good impression it, and vice versa. Plus, the p-value was lower than 0.01 which means that this correlation is statistically significant (cf. Appendix B table 3).

Concerning word-of-mouth, this one was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The goal was to measure whether a positive experience, consumers would recommend pet friendly hospitality brands to pet and non-pet owners. To ascertain, it was done a correlation among these two items ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$) which indicates a moderate correlation. Nevertheless, the p-value was below 0.01, meaning that the result is statistically significant. Therefore, consumers that had a good experience in a pet friendly hospitality brand tend to recommend it to pet and non-pet owners, and vice versa (cf. Appendix B, table 4).

Brand loyalty was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective of measuring this item was to understand if in case of a positive experience, consumers would return to a hospitality pet friendly brand.

Table 4- Constructs Literature Review

Constructs	Description	Scale	Authors
Consumer Emotions	Positive emotions: Relief and happiness; Negative emotions: Disgusts, concern, insecurity, discomfort	Likert	(Smith & Bolton, 2002)
Brand Awareness	Knowledge of pet friendly advertising campaigns	Likert	(Alhaddad, 2015)
	Knowledge of pet friendly hospitality brands	(Open question)	-
Consumer brand identification	Identify with the pet friendly hotel brand concept and get a good impression of it	Likert	(Popp & Woratschek, 2017)

Word of mouth	Encourage sharing the positive experience in a pet friendly hotel to pet and non-pet owners	Likert	-
Brand loyalty	Interest to stay in the same pet friendly hotel brand in the future	Likert	(Popp & Woratschek, 2017)
Pet friendly hospitality	Willingness to stay in a pet friendly hotel;	Yes/no/maybe	-
	Owning pets; *	Yes/No	-
	Reason for not wanting to stay in a pet friendly hotel*	Likert	-
Willingness to pay*	Pet fees per night per pet; *	Interval Range	-
	Reasons for those fees*	Likert	-
*Additional insights to the study			

3.4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To provide a study analysis context, out of 197 participants, 67% owns a pet and 80.7% were willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel, 11.7% maybe and 7.6% wouldn't stay at a pet friendly hotel (cf. table 18 Appendix C). Also, as it can be seen in the table below, the data suggests that the participants that have pets are willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel and significant percentage, 19.8%, from those who don't own pets are also willing to stay in an hotel that accepts pets.

Table 5-Willingness to pet friendly accommodation

		Willingness to pet friendly accommodation (%)			
		Yes	No	Maybe	Total (%)
Do you have pets? (%)	Yes	60.9%	1%	5.1%	67%
	No	19.8%	6.6%	6.6%	33%
Total (%)		80.7%	7.6%	11.7%	100%

As an insightful addition to this study, it was asked to those who weren't willing to stay in a hotel that accepts pets and to those who said maybe, what were the main reasons for not wanting or for being undecided. Out of all of the reasons, the lack of hygiene and pet noise concern were highlighted. 47.4% partially agree and 28.9% totally agree being concerned about the lack of hygiene, and 44.7% totally being concerned about the pet noises and 42.1% partially agreed on it. The following data can be check on the table below.

Table 6- Main reasons for not to staying in a pet friendly hotel

	Lack of hygiene	Do not like pets	Fear of pets	Concern of noise	Allergies
Totally agree	28.9%	7.9%	13.2%	44.7%	10.5%
Partially agree	47.4%	10.5%	21.1%	42.1%	23.7%
Moderately agree	7.9%	-	7.9%	2.6%	5.3%
Do not agree	10.5%	23.7%	15.8%	5.3%	5.3%
Do not agree at all	5.3%	57.9%	42.1%	5.3%	55.3%

In order to analyse the hypotheses previously presented in the theoretical model, some statistics testes were done to examine the data collected.

The validation or rejection of the hypotheses will be supported by the result of the p value, since it can be defined as the probability of observing the given value of the test statistic of the null hypothesis (Ferreira & Patino, 2015). To examine the relationship among the dependent and independent variable, willingness to stay in a pet friendly hotel, an ANOVA test was conducted to determine the statical differences among the three levels of willingness to stay in a pet friendly hotel (yes, maybe, no).

Regarding positive emotions, the study revealed significant differences among all the groups [$F(2.194) = 69.629$ $p < 0.01$]. The answer yes was superior ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.82$), followed by the answer maybe ($M=3.33$, $SD=0.98$) and last the answer no ($M=1.67$, $SD=0.89$), meaning that participants

willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel tend to experience stronger positive emotions, such as relief and happiness. This result is proving support of H1 (cf. Appendix C, table 1).

Concerning the negative emotions, the study demonstrated significant differences among all the groups [$F(2,194) = 92.835, p < 0.01$]. The answer no was superior ($M=3.93, SD=0.64$), followed by the answer maybe ($M=2.28, SD=0.92$) and last the answer yes ($M=1.47, SD=0.67$). This is revealing that the participants that are not willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel tend to experience stronger negative emotions, such as concern, discomfort, disgust and insecurity. This result is proving support of H2 (cf. Appendix C, table 2).

As for brand awareness, $F(2,194) = 2.815, p=0.06$. The answer maybe was higher ($M=2.13, SD=1.10$), followed by the answer yes ($M=2.06, SD=1.21$) and last the answer no ($M=1.33, SD=0.72$). The study revealed to be marginally significant among the groups (Pritschet et al., 2016). This outcome means that participants that answered maybe or yes to be willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel, are more aware of pet friendly hospitality brand advertisement campaigns, than who said no, proving support for H6 (cf. Appendix C, table 3). Furthermore, in case of knowing any, participants were asked to identify one pet friendly hospitality brand. Out of the 197 answers, only 29 answered yes, representing 14.7%. The figure below, shows the pet friendly hospitality brands written by the participants.

Regarding consumer brand identification, the study indicated significant differences among all the groups [$F(2,194) = 87.020, p < 0.01$]. The answer yes was higher ($M=4.33, SD=0.74$) followed by the answer maybe ($M=3.41, SD=0.65$) and last the answer no ($M=1.87, SD=0.69$). This outcome means that participants willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel tend to identify themselves with that pet friendly hotel brand. This result is proving support of H3 (cf. Appendix C, table 4).

About word of mouth the study revealed significant differences among all the groups [$F(2,194) = 24.265, p < 0.01$]. The answer yes was higher ($M=4.54, SD=0.57$), followed by the answer maybe ($M=3.98, SD=0.78$) and last the answer no ($M=3.40, SD=1.31$). This indicates that participants willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel tend to share recommendations regarding their experience. This result is proving support of H5 (cf. Appendix C, table 5).

Regarding brand loyalty the study demonstrated significant differences among all the groups [$F(2,194) = 89.492, p < 0.01$]. The answer yes was higher ($M=4.43, SD=0.73$), followed by the answer maybe ($M=3.74, SD=0.69$) and last the answer no ($M=1.80, SD=1.10$). This represents that participants willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel are more likely to turn into a loyal client, by returning to that pet friendly hotel brand. This result is proving support of H4 (cf. Appendix C, table 6).



Figure 2-pet friendly hospitality brands written by the participants

As other additional insight to this study, the sample revealed that the participants that own pets, have higher levels on their income since 12% earns more than 45.000€ year. Regarding the participants that don't have pets only 2% earn more than 45.000 year (cf. table 2 Appendix D). Nevertheless, having pets or not, the majority of the participant's income was more concentrated in less than 8.000€ year: those who have pets represent 40% and those who don't own pets 38%. This data can be explained by the fact that even though a lot of people from different ages answered to the survey, most of the responses are from the ages of 18-24: 51% of this interval age range have pets and 40% don't (cf. table 3 Appendix D). Also, almost 50% of the responses come from students or work-students (cf. table 4 Appendix D).

As for the participants who answered yes or maybe whether they would be willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel, those were asked how much would they be willing to spend per hotel night, per pet. Out of the 182 participants, 54.9% would be willing to pay less than 20€, 40.7% would pay between 21€-50€, 2.7% would pay 51€-80€ and 1.6% would pay between 81€-100€.

Table 7-Willingness to pay pet friendly hotel

	Frequency	Valid percentage
≤20€	100	54.9
21-50€	74	40.7
51-80€	5	2.7
81-100€	3	1.6
101-130€	-	-
≥131€	-	-
Total	182	100.0

Participants believe that the room cleanliness is an important factor that contributes for the fee, since 56,6% said it was very important and 34.6% said it was important. They also think pet amenities

are very important 39% and important 36.8%. Participants also agreed that the category of the hotel might contribute for this fee since 18.1% said it was very important, and 44 said it was important. For the size and pet weight the importance opinions were more dispersed (cf. table 5 Appendix D).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the present study was to analyse the relationship of the participants willingness to stay in pet friendly hotels and the several dependent variables such as: consumer emotions (positive and negative), brand awareness, consumer brand identification, word of mouth and brand loyalty. These insights would support the investigation on the consumers' reaction to these marketing constructs and their influence on the willingness to stay in a hotel that accepts pets. The study presented significant differences among the diverse groups, which brought relevant contributions to this field.

From the study sample, the vast majority of the participants would stay in a pet friendly hotel, even though they don't have pets. This result is important, since it can be an argument for bigger investments in marketing strategies for this segment, since the dependent variables demonstrated positive results towards the pet friendly hospitality category.

As for the positive consumer emotions, data showed that individuals that are willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel would feel higher levels of happiness and relief than the others. This outcome can be linked to the companion of their pets and to the emotional experiences that they might associate with a hotel that accepts them. Regarding the negative emotions, it was revealed that the participants who are willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel reported lower levels of discomfort, concern, disgust and insecurity. Considering that the positive emotions are higher in intensity and frequency than the negative ones, hotels could adopt marketing strategies that focus on the emotional connection between the pet owners and their pets, attracting customers from this segment. For the small share of respondents that were not willing to stay in pet friendly hotels and who also reported negative emotions about this concept, the marketing approach should aim to provide an image of a hotel that is clean and safe for every guest. However, the scale of this group is not significant enough for hotels to focus on marketing strategies that are oriented exclusively for this group.

As for brand awareness, and even though this result was marginally significant among the groups, participants willing to stay in a pet friendly hospitality brand have more access to advertisement campaigns than the others. This outcome makes sense since people who look for pet friendly hotels tend to search more about it, nevertheless only a few participants could recall for a pet friendly hospitality brand. This might be a stimulus for hotels to enhance their pet friendly campaigns.

Concerning word of mouth, the research revealed that people willing to stay in a pet friendly brand hospitality would recommend this accommodation to pet and non-pet owners. Given the fact that people often recommend to their social circle their positive experiences, influencing others to look for them, it is important to ensure that all guests have a great stay.

Regarding brand loyalty participants that were willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel demonstrated higher levels on a pet friendly hospitality brand than the others. This means that they would be willing to return to that hotel brand, revealing an interesting insight for hotels, in the sense that the experience can be tailored for the customers using different methods that attend the pets' and their owner's needs (e.g., food and water bowls, pet welcome kits, pet beds), contributing to a remarkable and seamless experience that would lead to deeper brand loyalty. Furthermore, the results indicated that participants who were willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel would identify themselves and have

a good impression in pet friendly hospitality brands, enhancing once again the emotional and self-identity in a brand, fuelling the desire to return.

From this sample study, hotels could adjust their marketing strategies to generate emotional and digital awareness for their pet friendly offering. These findings contribute for the existing literature regarding pet friendly topic, analyse the consumer reaction on the present marketing strategies and also give some insights for the hospitality sector, in order to meet consumers' needs.

5. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEACRH

Although this research contributes for the pet friendly hospitality marketing field, it presents some limitations that must be acknowledged, in order to a achieve a deep understanding of its implications and future recommendations.

Firstly, some of the dependent variable constructs were measured by using one item. For future research and in order to have a more exhaustive and compelling study, more items per construct could be measured to enhance the validity of the results. Also, due to the lack of academic research on pet friendly hospitality marketing, new scales could be provided to measure upcoming constructs to enrich and validate the hypotheses.

Secondly, brand awareness hypothesis construct was marginally significant. Future studies could use a larger and diverse sample, to provide more statistical data to generalize the results.

Lastly, the study was conducted using a quantitative approach. Future research could pursue a qualitative approach, such as in depth or focus groups, to obtain further insights around the consumer reaction on this field. Combining a quantitative and qualitative research in the future could produce new and relevant information for this subject.

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APPENDIX A: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire and data collection are part of my master's dissertation in Data-Driven Marketing Intelligence at Nova Information Management School (NOVA IMS) university.

The aim of this study is to gather data on consumers' reactions to marketing and branding strategies in the pet-friendly hotel market in Portugal. For better understanding, a pet-friendly hotel is characterized by providing suitable conditions for accommodating pets, following the rules established by each establishment.

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous, and you are free to decide whether or not to participate. You may also withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. All responses will be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes.

Informed Consent Statement:

I declare that I am 18 years old or older and agree to participate in this research. I have been informed that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from the questionnaire without any penalties or consequences. I understand that the collected data will be treated confidentially. Furthermore, I am aware that I need to assess my own responses and that this study does not involve any significant risks.

- ☐ I agree to participate in this survey
- ☐ I do not agree to participate in this survey

Q1. Do you have pets?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q2. Would you be willing to stay in a pet friendly hotel?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Q3. (Matrix Table) From 1 to 5, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree", how much do you agree with the following information:

- Feel happy to know that the hotel is pet friendly
- Feel relief to know that the hotel is pet friendly
- Feel concerned to know that the hotel is pet friendly
- Feel discomfort to know that the hotel is pet friendly
- Feel bothered to know that the hotel is pet friendly
- Feel disgust to know that the hotel is pet friendly

Q4. (Matrix Table to the ones who answered “No” and “Maybe” to Q2) From 1 to 5, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree", how much do you agree with the following information:

- I am concerned of the lack of hygiene
- I don't like pets
- I am afraid of pets
- I am concerned of the pet noise
- I am allergic to pet fur

Q5. (To the ones who answered “yes” and “maybe”) In most pet-friendly hotels in Portugal, it is common for them to charge an additional fee per pet, per night. How much would you be willing to pay, per night, for a pet?

- ☐ ≤20€
- ☐ 21-50€
- ☐ 51-80€
- ☐ 81-100€
- ☐ 101-130€
- ☐ ≥131€

Q6. (Matrix Table to the ones who answered “yes” and “maybe”) From 1 to 5, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree, evaluate the level of importance regarding the factors that might influence this additional fee per pet, per night, in a hotel.

- Pet amenities (such as water and food bowl)
- Weight and size of the pet
- Room cleanliness
- Hotel category

Q7. Q3. (Matrix Table) From 1 to 5, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree", how much do you agree with the following information:

- Would return to a pet friendly hotel brand
- In case of positive experience, would recommend a hotel brand to pet owners
- In case of positive experience, would recommend a hotel brand to non-pet owners
- I would have a good impression of a hotel brand that is pet-friendly
- I identify myself with hotel pet friendly brands
- I have knowledge of pet friendly hospitality advertisement campaigns

Q8. Do you know any pet friendly hotel brand?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q9 (to the ones who said “yes” to Q8): Which one do you know? _____

Q10. Location :

- ☐ Aveiro
- ☐ Beja
- ☐ Braga
- ☐ Bragança
- ☐ Castelo Branco
- ☐ Coimbra
- ☐ Évora
- ☐ Faro
- ☐ Guarda
- ☐ Leiria
- ☐ Lisboa
- ☐ Portalegre
- ☐ Porto
- ☐ Santarém
- ☐ Setúbal
- ☐ Viana do Castelo
- ☐ Vila Real
- ☐ Viseu
- ☐ Região Autónoma da Madeira
- ☐ Região Autónoma dos Açores

Q10. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

Q11. Please, type your age: _____

Education:

- ☐ Elementary school
- ☐ Primary education
- ☐ Highschool
- ☐ Bachelor degree
- ☐ Master degree
- ☐ Doctorate degree

Profession:

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Student worker
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired

APPENDIX B: Correlations and internal consistency tables

Table 1-Positive consumer emoticons correlation

		Level of agreement: feel happy to know that the hotel accepts pets	Level of agreement: feel relief to know that the hotel accepts pets
Level of agreement: feel happy to know that the hotel accepts pets	Pearson correlation	1	0.803**
	P-value (two-tailed)		<0.01
	N	197	197
Level of agreement: feel relief to know that the hotel accepts pets	Pearson correlation	0.803**	1
	P-value (two-tailed)	<0.01	
	N	197	197
*Correlation is significant in the level 0.01 (two-tailed)			

Table 2-Negative consumer emotions internal consistency

		N	%
Cases	Valid	197	100%
	Excluded*	0	,0
	Total	197	100.0
*Exclude list based on all procedure variables			
Statistics of reliability			
Cronbach Alpha		N of items	
0.894		4	

Table 3-Consumer brand identification correlation

		Level of agreement: Good impression out of a pet friendly hospitality brand	Level of agreement: Identify myself with pet friendly hotel brands
Level of agreement: Good impression out of a pet friendly hospitality brand	Pearson correlation	1	0.702**
	P-value (two-tailed)		<0.01
	N	197	197
Identify myself with pet friendly hotel brands	Pearson correlation	0.702**	1
	P-value (two-tailed)	<0.01	
	N	197	197
*Correlation is significant in the level 0.01 (two-tailed)			

Table 4-Word of mouth correlation

		Level of agreement: In case of positive experience, would recommend pet friendly hotel to those who have pets	Level of agreement: In case of positive experience, would recommend pet friendly hotel to those who don't have pets
Level of agreement: In case of positive experience, would recommend pet friendly hotel to those who have pets	Pearson correlation	1	0.572**
	P-value (two-tailed)		<0.01
	N	197	197
Level of agreement: In case of positive experience, would recommend pet friendly hotel to those who don't have pets	Pearson correlation	0.572**	1
	P-value (two-tailed)	<0.01	
	N	197	197
*Correlation is significant in the level 0.01 (two-tailed)			

APPENDIX C: Anova test tables

Table 1 -Positive consumer emotions

Descriptive

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	159	4.2327	0.06523
No	15	1.6667	0.22713
Maybe	23	3.3261	0.20519
Total	197	3.393	0.7865

ANOVA

	df	Z	p-value
Among groups	2	69.629	<0.01
Groups	194		
Total	196		

Table 2-Negative consumer emotions

Descriptive

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	159	1.4686	0.66605
No	15	3.9333	0.64411
Maybe	23	2.2826	0.92412
Total	197	1.7513	0.97235

ANOVA

	df	Z	p-value
Among groups	2	92.835	<0.01
Groups	194		
Total	196		

Table 3-Brand awareness

Descriptive

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	159	2.06	0.096
No	15	1.33	0.187
Maybe	23	2.13	0.229
Total	197	2.02	0.084

ANOVA

	df	Z	p-value
Among groups	2	2.815	<0.01
Groups	194		
Total	196		

Table 4-Consumer brand identification

Descriptive

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	159	4.3302	0.74168
No	15	1.8667	0.69351
Maybe	23	3.4130	0.68510
Total	197	4.0355	1.00319

ANOVA

	df	Z	p-value
Among groups	2	87.020	<0.01
Groups	194		
Total	196		

Table 5-Word of mouth

Descriptive

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	159	4.5409	0.57083
No	15	3.4000	1.31203
Maybe	23	3.9783	0.77574
Total	197	4.3883	0.75269

ANOVA

	df	Z	p-value
Among groups	2	24.265	<0.01
Groups	194		
Total	196		

Table 6- Brand Loyalty

Descriptive

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Yes	159	4.43	0.725
No	15	1.80	1.014
Maybe	23	3.74	0.689
Total	197	4.15	1.029

ANOVA

	df	Z	p-value
Among groups	2	89.492	<0.01
Groups	194		
Total	196		

APPENDIX D: Additional study insights tables

Table 1-Pet ownership

	Frequency	Valid percentage
Sim	132	67.0
Não	65	33.0
Total	197	100.0

Table 2- Income: Pet owners versus non-pet owners

	Pet owners	Non pet owners
<8.000€	40%	38%
8.000-14.000€	18%	21%
15.000€-24.999€	19%	22%
25.000€-44.999€	10%	17%
45.000-74.999€	8%	-
75.000€-99.999€	2%	-
>100.000€	2%	2%

Table 3- Age: Pet owners versus non pet owners

	Pet owners	Non pet owners
18	11%	13%
19	-	3%
20	2%	2%
21	3%	2%
22	10%	3%
23	11%	5%
24	13%	13%
25	5%	5%
26	3%	6%
27	6%	8%
28	2%	2%
29	4%	3%
30	1%	3%
31	2%	-
32	-	2%
33	1%	2%
34	-	2%
35	1%	-
36	1%	2%
39	1%	-
40	-	2%
41	2%	2%
42	-	3%
44	5%	-
45	2%	2%
46	2%	2%
47	1%	-
48	1%	2%
49	2%	-
50	2%	-
51	-	2%
52	1%	2%
53	2%	-

54	3%	3%
55	-	3%
60	1%	-
61	-	2%
67	-	2%
69	1%	-
77	-	2%
82	1%	2%

Table 4-Profession: Pet owners versus non-pet owners

	Pet owners	Non pet owners
Student	28%	29%
Employee	46%	33%
Self-employed worker	4%	8%
Student worker	19%	19%
Unemployed	1%	6%
Retired	2%	5%

Table 5-Willingness to pay: influencing factors

	Pet amenities	Size and weight	Room cleanliness	Hotel Category
Very Important	39%	17.6%	56.6%	18.1
Important	36.8%	32.4%	34.6%	44%
Moderately	13.2%	24.2%	8.2%	23.6%
Not important	8.2%	14.8%	0.5%	9.3%
Not important at all	2.7%	11%	-	4.9%