Research Inspiration
(Peer-reviewed, Open Access and indexed)
Journal home page: www.researchinspiration.com
ISSN: 2455-443X, Vol. 10, Issue-IV, Sep. 2025

Needs-Based Marketing in the Pet Industry: Applying Maslow's Hierarchy to Predict Consumer Spending Patterns

Zixuan Zhang[a, *]
[a] *Student, Department of LPS, University of Pennsylvania, Wuhan, 430050, China.*

KEYWORDS
Needs-based marketing, Pet industry, Maslow's hierarchy, consumer behavior, spending patterns, brand strategy.

ABSTRACT
The pet industry has witnessed remarkable growth, driven by evolving consumer preferences and the increasing humanization of pets. This study examines needs-based marketing in the pet sector by applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs to understand and predict consumer spending patterns. The research highlights how pet owners' purchases extend beyond basic physiological and safety needs, reflecting social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. From premium nutrition and healthcare to luxury accessories and experiential services, spending choices illustrate the role of emotional and psychological fulfillment. By integrating Maslow's framework with consumer behavior analysis, the study offers insights into strategic marketing approaches that can enhance brand positioning and foster stronger consumer-pet bonds.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, pet ownership has emerged as a defining feature of modern consumer culture (Peter & Olson, 1983). According to data from the American Pet Products Association (APPA), U.S. consumer spending on pets reached $147 billion in 2023, nearly doubling from $72.6 billion in 2018. Similarly, in China, the pet industry grew from 14 billion yuan in 2010 to over 270 billion yuan by 2022, with pet-related consumption expanding rapidly among younger urban populations. Market research by Statista indicates that over 60% of households in developed economies now own at least one pet, and pet-related spending is increasingly categorized not only as a necessity but also as a form of lifestyle consumption encompassing premium food, pet fashion, grooming services, and even pet insurance. This surge reflects a broader cultural shift wherein pets are regarded as family members, leading to emotionalized spending behaviors and the emergence of what scholars call the "humanization" of pets within consumer capitalism. This cultural evolution has been accompanied by the rapid expansion of the global pet economy, which now exceeds $250 billion annually (Statista, 2024). Spending encompasses both essential goods such as nutrition, veterinary care, and hygiene and discretionary services including grooming, enrichment, training, and luxury products. As the pet industry continues to diversify, understanding the drivers of consumer behavior in this sector has become increasingly

*** Corresponding author**
E-mail: 3046242849@qq.com (Zixuan Zhang).
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8298-7220
DOI: https://doi.org/10.53724/inspiration/v10n4.02
Received 05th July 2025; Accepted 18th August 2025
Available online 30th Sep. 2025

important to researchers, marketers, and policymakers alike.

Despite the ubiquity of pet ownership, notable difference exists in how individuals allocate financial resources to their pets. Some owners invest heavily, purchasing premium products and elective services, while others limit their spending to minimal or functional necessities (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008). Traditional explanatory variables such as income, age, and pet type provide only partial insight into this variation (Boya et al., 2015; Tesfom & Birch, 2010). Although prior research has addressed economic and demographic factors, there has been relatively little theoretical engagement with the psychological motivations that may underpin different patterns of pet-related consumption. In particular, few studies have systematically applied motivational frameworks from psychology to explain how and why consumers vary in their spending behaviors within the pet domain.

This study proposes that Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943; 1971) offers a useful theoretical lens through which to understand the psychological determinants of pet spending. Originally designed to explain the progression of human motivation from basic survival to self-actualization Maslow's framework has been increasingly adapted to interpret consumer behavior, particularly in identity-relevant or emotionally expressive domains. Building on this tradition, recent research has begun to link Maslow's hierarchy explicitly with psychological connections in consumer behavior, such as Benti and Stadtmann's exploration of emotional and motivational needs within virtual pet interactions(Benti & Stadtmann, 2021). However, their work primarily investigates digital consumption contexts, leaving open the question of whether similar motivational linkages apply to tangible, real-world pet ownership and associated spending behaviors. Our study addresses this gap by systematically applying Maslow's hierarchy to explain how individuals at different levels of psychological need fulfillment assign distinct meanings to pet ownership, thereby engaging in different patterns of real-world pet-related consumption.

Accordingly, this study aims to address the following research questions: (1) How do psychological need levels shape the emotional roles pets play in consumers' lives? (2) How do these emotional roles translate into specific types and degrees of spending? (3) Can Maslow's framework be extended to model pet-related consumer segmentation in a theoretically robust and practically relevant way?

This paper makes three key contributions. First, it extends motivational theory into a novel empirical domain by applying Maslow's hierarchy to explain pet-related consumer behavior. Second, it develops a set of testable propositions linking psychological needs to distinct emotional attachments and consumption patterns. Third, it offers practical implications for market segmentation and communication strategy in the pet industry, suggesting that psychological profiles may be more informative than traditional demographic categories.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Literature review section reviews relevant literature on Maslow's hierarchy, consumer motivation, and the role of pets in identity formation, culminating in three theoretical propositions. Results and Discussion section integrates these propositions into a broader model that accounts for contextual moderators such as life stage, cultural orientation, and financial capacity. Conclusion section concludes by summarizing the theoretical contributions, practical implications, and opportunities for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Consumer Motivation

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a foundational theory in psychology, proposing a structured progression of human motivation from basic physiological needs through safety, love and belonging, esteem, and ultimately self-actualization (Hunt, 1992; Maslow, 1943, 1971). Although originally developed to explain human motivation more broadly, Maslow's hierarchy has increasingly been adapted to consumer research contexts (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Solomon et al., 2020). For instance, Tay and Diener (2011) conducted an extensive global study involving over 60,000 participants across 123 countries, demonstrating that Maslow's hierarchical structure robustly predicts subjective well-being and life satisfaction in various cultural and economic environments(Tay & Diener, 2011). This finding underscores the universality and relevance of Maslow's model in understanding human behaviors and perceptions worldwide. Brands aligning their offerings strategically with distinct motivational levels can effectively meet consumers' underlying psychological needs, thus enhancing market resonance and consumer satisfaction.

Consumers engage with products and brands not merely for their practical functionality but also for symbolic, expressive, and identity-related purposes linked to their psychological needs (Solomon et al., 2020). Arnould and Thompson (2005) emphasize that consumers deliberately select products reflecting their internal motivational states and identity aspirations, such as comfort-oriented products at lower motivational stages, community-enhancing offerings at intermediate stages, and niche, ethical, or identity-affirming products at higher stages. This conceptual framework allows marketers to understand complex consumer behaviors beyond demographic variables, integrating deep motivational insights into strategic market segmentation.

2.2 Pets as Part of the Extended Self

Belk introduced the concept of the "extended self," asserting that consumers incorporate personal possessions and relationships into their identities, significantly shaping their sense of self (Belk, 1988). Within consumer behavior research, pets have increasingly been recognized as integral components of this extended self-concept, embodying emotional ties, identity construction, and social affiliation (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008). Pets, consequently, are no longer merely animals; they represent emotional stability, companionship, and family identity (Boya et al., 2015). This perception of pets as part of the extended self suggests profound implications for consumer behaviors, transcending purely functional or economic considerations (Hirschman, 1994).

Consumers driven by lower-level psychological needs, such as physiological and safety concerns, tend to prioritize essential pet care items, including nutritious pet food, healthcare products, and comfort-oriented accessories(Hirschman, 1994). Hirschman's (1994) empirical research highlighted those consumers at this motivational level often regard pets as critical sources of emotional assurance and personal security, prompting consistent investment in products that ensure pets' well-being and comfort. All of these discussions lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals driven by lower-level psychological needs (physiological and safety needs) view pets as integral parts of their self-concept, investing significantly in essential pet care products such as nutritious food, healthcare, and comfort-oriented accessories.

2.3 Psychological Needs and Pet Consumption

At the intermediate motivational stages, consumers predominantly motivated by social belonging and relational need's view pets primarily as social companions or secondary sources of emotional support. Consequently, these individuals typically adopt more practical and restrained spending behaviors (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008; Tesfom & Birch, 2010). Fournier and Lee support this perspective, arguing that socially driven consumers prefer practical consumption choices aimed at facilitating social integration rather than pursuing luxury or conspicuous consumption(Fournier & Lee, 2009). This motivational insight is particularly critical for marketers in designing communication strategies and product offerings that align with consumers' functional preferences and relational objectives.

Furthermore, consumers at this motivational stage prioritize community engagement and social validation, choosing pet-related products that facilitate interaction and shared experiences within their social networks. Practical pet accessories, routine healthcare products, and accessible grooming services typically characterize this consumer segment, reflecting a balanced approach between practicality and emotional connection. All of these discussions lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Individuals whose dominant psychological needs revolve around social belonging and relational connection are more likely to prioritize practical and moderate pet-related spending, typically avoiding luxury expenditures.

2.4 High-Level Needs: Self-Actualization and Value-Based Pet Spending

At higher motivational stages, including esteem and self-actualization, consumers increasingly perceive pets as vehicles for personal expression, ethical alignment, and identity signaling (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Benti & Stadtmann, 2021). Consumers motivated by self-actualization actively seek pet-related products and services aligned with their ethical principles, broader social commitments, and unique identity narratives. For example, sustainability-focused pet products have gained popularity among consumers prioritizing ecological responsibility (White et al., 2019). Similarly, animal welfare-oriented products, such as ethically sourced pet food and cruelty-free grooming services, resonate deeply with consumers committed to animal rights and ethical consumption (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007).

Moreover, socially responsible pet ownership practices, such as ethical pet adoption, charitable support to animal welfare organizations, and preference for certified humane brands, exemplify high-level consumer motivations (Solomon et al., 2020). Hirschman (1994) further elaborates that these consumers often favor specialized, premium products carrying symbolic meanings that reinforce their identity aspirations, social values, and ethical considerations. The preference for niche products, such as organic pet food, eco-friendly accessories, or specialized training programs, reflects an intricate interplay between ethical values, personal identity, and consumption behaviors, illustrating the nuanced motivations at this psychological stage. All of these discussions lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Individuals driven by higher-level psychological needs (esteem and self-actualization) prefer pet-related products and services reflecting ethical values, identity congruence, and self-expression, such as sustainability-focused offerings, ethical pet adoption practices, and specialized wellness services.

Based on the literature review and integrative discussion, this study proposes a conceptual framework as follows.

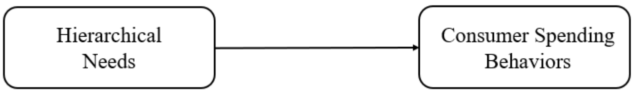

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to empirically examine the relationship between psychological need levels, emotional roles of pets, and patterns of pet-related consumer spending. Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we operationalized three motivational levels—(1) physiological and safety needs, (2) social belonging, and (3) esteem and self-actualization—and examined their association with both essential and discretionary pet expenditures. The aim was to test the proposed hypotheses by quantitatively assessing whether differences in psychological need fulfillment correspond to distinct consumer spending behaviors in the pet industry.

3.2 Participants and Sampling Procedure

We recruited participants through online consumer research platforms and pet owner community groups across major urban centers in China. Eligibility criteria required respondents to be at least 18 years old, currently own at least one pet, and have made pet-related purchases in the past 12 months. A total of 300 valid responses were collected after excluding incomplete or inconsistent submissions. The final sample consisted of 48% female and 52% male respondents, with an average age of 32 years (SD =4.35). Participants reported varying annual household incomes and represented a range of pet ownership types (e.g., dogs, cats, small mammals, reptiles).

3.3 Measures

Psychological Needs

Psychological need levels were measured using an adapted version of the Need Satisfaction Scale

(Deci & Ryan, 2013) aligned with Maslow's hierarchy. Items were grouped into three categories:

Lower-level needs. Physiological and safety (e.g., "I feel that my basic security and stability are met through my current lifestyle").

Mid-level needs. Social belonging (e.g., "I feel a strong sense of connection with others").

Higher-level needs. Esteem and self-actualization (e.g., "I strive to realize my full potential and live according to my values").

Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Mean scores were computed for each level, and participants were assigned to their dominant motivational category based on the highest mean score.

Pet-Related Expenditure

Participants reported their average monthly pet-related spending in six categories: food, veterinary care, hygiene/maintenance, grooming services, enrichment/training, and luxury or premium products. Following prior consumer segmentation research, these categories were collapsed into two indices:

Essential spending (food, veterinary care, hygiene/maintenance).

Discretionary spending (grooming, enrichment/training, luxury/premium items).

Ethical value products (sustainability-focused offerings, ethical pet adoption practices, and specialized wellness services).

Control Variables

We controlled age, gender, household income, education, and type of pet owned, as these variables have been shown to influence pet-related spending.

3.4 Procedure

Data were collected via an online questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics. The survey was administered in English/Chinese or bilingual versions, using back-translation procedures to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence. After providing informed consent, participants completed demographic items, followed by the psychological needs scale and expenditure questions. Average completion time was approximately 15 minutes.

3.5 Data Analysis

We employed a regression analysis to examine differences in spending patterns across motivational levels, testing H1–H3. Specifically, multiple regression models were then conducted to examine whether emotional role perceptions mediated the relationship between psychological needs and spending behaviors, controlling demographic covariates. All analyses were performed using SPSS, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The final sample (N = 300, see Table 1) consisted of 48% female and 52% male respondents, with a mean age of 32 years (SD = 4.35). Based on their highest mean score across the three psychological need dimensions, participants were categorized into three groups: Lower-level needs (physiological and safety; n = 98), Mid-level needs (social belonging; n = 102), and High-level needs (esteem and self-actualization; n = 100).

Monthly spending was aggregated into three indices Essential, Discretionary, and Ethical value-oriented products. Descriptive statistics revealed patterns consistent with our theoretical expectations. Lower-level need consumers reported the highest mean essential spending (M = 407.57, SD = 110.08) and comparatively low discretionary (M = 107.80, SD = 70.83) and ethical spending (M = 40.51, SD = 32.22). Mid-level need consumers demonstrated moderate levels across all categories (Essential: M = 302.16, SD = 103.90; Discretionary: M = 116.05, SD = 95.48; Ethical: M = 65.05, SD = 38.78). In contrast, high-level need consumers spent the least on essentials (M = 216.49, SD = 108.43) but reported the highest discretionary (M = 308.47, SD = 92.35) and ethical spending (M = 178.29, SD = 74.97). These descriptive trends provide preliminary support for H1–H3.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Essential spending	308.03	132.41	—				
2. Discretionary spending	177.50	127.08	–.42***	—			
3. Ethical spending	94.78	79.40	–.48***	.56***	—		
4. Age	32.00	4.35	.05	.02	–.03	—	
5. Gender (1 = male)	—	—	–.06	.04	.01	.02	—

4.2 Regression Analysis

To further test the hypotheses and quantify effect sizes, we estimated separate OLS regression models for each spending category, using the Lower-level group as the reference category and including dummy variables for Mid- and High-level needs (see Table 3). For Essential spending, both Mid-level (β = –105.41, p < .001) and High-level (β = –191.08, p < .001) groups spent significantly less than the Lower-level group (R^2 = .346). For Discretionary spending, the Mid-level group spent significantly more than the Lower-level group (β = 200.66, p < .001). For Ethical spending, both Mid-level (β = 24.54, p = .001) and High-level (β = 137.78, p < .001) groups reported significantly higher spending than the Lower-level group (R^2 = .571).

The analyses jointly support all three hypotheses: (H1) lower-level need consumers prioritize essential spending, (H2) mid-level need consumers maintain moderate, practical spending patterns, and (H3) high-level need consumers allocate more resources to discretionary and ethical purchases.

Table 3. OLS Regression Predicting Spending from Psychological Need Level (Lower-Level as Reference)

DV	Predictor	B	SE B	t	p	R^2
Essential	Constant (Lower)	407.57	10.85	37.57	< .001	.346
	Mid-level	–105.41	15.20	–6.93	< .001	
	High-level	–191.08	15.27	–12.51	< .001	
Discretionary	Constant (Lower)	107.80	8.80	12.25	< .001	.534
	Mid-level	200.66	12.38	16.21	< .001	
	High-level	8.24	12.32	0.67	.503	
Ethical	Constant (Lower)	40.51	5.27	7.69	< .001	.571
	Mid-level	24.54	7.38	3.32	.001	
	High-level	137.78	7.42	18.57	< .001	

5. Discussion

5.1 Integrative Mechanism: Life Stage and Emotional Substitution

The relationship between psychological needs and pet-related consumption behaviors is dynamic and evolves across different life stages. Young adults, particularly those in solitary living arrangements or transitional life phases, frequently perceive pets as essential companions fulfilling emotional support needs traditionally met through human relationships (Bennett & Rohlf, 2007; Dotson & Hyatt, 2008). For these individuals, pets serve as emotional substitutes, promoting substantial emotional investment and related expenditures. In contrast, midlife consumers often experience dense social networks through family or professional engagements, resulting in moderated emotional dependence on pets and, consequently, more practical, restrained spending behaviors (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Tesfom & Birch, 2010).

In later life stages, especially post-retirement or after significant life transitions such as spouse loss, pets once again gain heightened emotional significance. Elderly individuals frequently invest substantially in pet products and services to maintain emotional security and companionship, reflecting a return to intensive emotional substitution and increased pet-related spending (Krause-Parello, 2012). According to a 2021 survey conducted by the National Council on Aging, 68% of pet-owning adults aged 65 and above reported spending over $1,200 annually on pet-related expenses, with 74% citing emotional companionship as the primary motivation for such investment (Dubuque, 2020). These life-stage variations suggest marketers should strategically tailor product offerings and marketing communications to align with consumers' evolving psychological and emotional needs over the lifespan.

5.2 Cultural and Economic Considerations

Cultural context significantly modulates the application and predictive validity of Maslow's hierarchical model concerning pet-related consumption behaviors. Individualistic cultures, which prioritize personal identity, independence, and self-expression, often encourage viewing pets as integral parts of personal identity, leading to substantial investment in pet care products and services aligned with identity expression and emotional needs (Belk, 1988; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Conversely, collectivistic cultures, emphasizing familial and community bonds, might moderate the intensity of pet attachment and related expenditures, particularly when pets' roles are perceived as secondary to human relationships (Hofstede, 2001; Sharma, 2010). A comparative survey of pet owners in China and the United States revealed distinct cultural differences in pet-related attitudes and expenditures. In the typically individualistic cultural context (e.g., the U.S.), over 72% of respondents stated that "pets are an important part of their personal identity," with approximately 65% spending more than $1,500 annually on pet products and services. In contrast, within the collectivist cultural context (e.g., China), only 38% of respondents viewed pets as an extension of their identity, and their average annual expenditure remained below $900.

Economic capacity also significantly influences how psychological needs translate into pet-related spending behaviors. Financial constraints may limit the expression of psychological motivations through consumption, prompting consumers to prioritize essential and practical pet expenditures over luxury or identity-signaling options (Prawitz et al., 2006). Conversely, higher economic resources enable individuals to actualize deeper psychological motivations through discretionary spending on premium, specialized, or ethical pet products and services, reflecting identity and value alignment (Solomon et al., 2020; White et al., 2019). In a consumption behavior survey encompassing five income brackets and targeting 1,000 pet owners, 61% of respondents with annual incomes exceeding ¥200,000 RMB reported purchasing "non-essential yet value-aligned or identity-expressive pet products," whereas only 22% of those earning below ¥50,000 RMB expressed similar motivations, with their expenditures concentrated on essentials such as food and vaccinations. The study highlights that financial capacity not only diversifies pet-related consumption categories but also significantly enhances owners' ability to translate emotional attachments and personal values into concrete purchasing behaviors.

6. Conclusion and Future Research

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study systematically integrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs into the analysis of consumer behavior in the pet industry, offering nuanced insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying pet-related expenditures. Consumers are classified into three motivational levels—physiological and safety needs, social belonging, and esteem and self-actualization—each exhibiting distinct behavioral patterns. At the lower level, individuals prioritize essential pet care products and services that ensure comfort, health, and security, such as durable pet shelters or health insurance. The mid-level "social belonging" group demonstrates behaviors that position pets as active agents of social interaction and emotional bonding. For example, pet ownership may facilitate friendships through shared activities like dog walking, foster companionship for individuals living alone, strengthen the perception of pets as "family members," and enhance social identity through the sharing of pet-related content on social media. Such patterns resonate with symbolic interactionism and social identity theory, highlighting the role of pets in mediating interpersonal connections and reinforcing group membership. At the highest motivational stage, consumers gravitate toward ethically aligned, identity-expressive, and specialized pet-related products and services—such as eco-friendly pet food, luxury grooming, or artisanal accessories—that serve as symbols of self-concept and personal values.

Theoretically, this research extends Maslow's motivational hierarchy beyond its traditional application in consumer studies by shifting the analytical emphasis from functional product attributes to the underlying psychological structure of consumption. It complements existing perspectives, such as Belk's "extended self" theory, by explicitly mapping how psychological need levels correspond to differentiated patterns of pet-related spending. In doing so, it fills a gap in the literature by offering a systematic framework for segmenting pet consumers according to psychological hierarchies.

Practically, the findings inform differentiated marketing strategies aligned with the motivational profiles of each consumer segment. For lower-level consumers, strategies should emphasize safety, durability, and reliability, such as promoting pet health insurance or robust housing products. For the mid-level group, marketers can highlight social interaction and community engagement through pet clubs, group activities, or online pet-sharing platforms. For high-level consumers, brand narratives should foreground sustainability, ethical sourcing, and exclusivity, appealing to identity-driven and values-based purchasing. From a behavioral economics perspective, the study also underscores how psychological preferences—such as emotional consumption or reciprocity motives—can be leveraged to design interventions that convert latent motivations into concrete purchasing behaviors.

6.2 Practical Implications

Practitioners and marketers can leverage insights from this study to segment consumers more precisely based on psychological motivations rather than solely demographic attributes. For consumers primarily motivated by basic physiological and safety needs, purchasing behavior often focuses on products and services that guarantee health, comfort, and security. Typical preferences include natural and ingredient-transparent pet food, durable pet shelters, regular veterinary check-ups, or comprehensive pet health insurance. Marketing messages for this group should emphasize reliability and protection, ideally delivered through trusted channels such as veterinary endorsements, offline specialty stores, or official brand websites to enhance perceived credibility.

Those driven by social motivations tend to engage in consumption behaviors that strengthen interpersonal connections and community participation. Examples include enrolling pets in group training classes, participating in pet-friendly social events, and purchasing aesthetically appealing accessories to share on social media. This segment responds best to campaigns delivered through interactive community platforms such as WeChat groups, Xiaohongshu, or Instagram where peer engagement and social recognition reinforce purchase intent.

For consumers at the self-actualization level, spending patterns reflect a pursuit of ethical alignment, identity expression, and exclusivity. Common choices include sustainably sourced premium pet food, bespoke pet fashion, or luxury grooming and wellness services. Communications targeting this segment should highlight brand narratives, environmental commitments, and certifications such as Carbon Neutral or Fair Trade, using long-form storytelling, brand documentaries, or purpose-driven campaigns to foster deep emotional resonance.

Importantly, consumer motivations are not static; they shift over the life course. For instance, younger consumers may prioritize social integration, while older consumers may increasingly value safety, companionship, or ethical considerations. Firms should therefore adopt dynamic segmentation strategies, supported by CRM systems and marketing automation tools, to track motivational shifts over time and adapt product offerings, messaging, and channels accordingly. By aligning both content and delivery formats to evolving psychological profiles, businesses can optimize consumer engagement, strengthen brand loyalty, and sustain long-term market relevance.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study, while comprehensive, is subject to several limitations that future research should address. First, the conceptual model derived from Maslow's hierarchy was primarily theoretical. Future research should empirically test and validate the proposed motivational framework using quantitative data from diverse geographic and cultural contexts to enhance the model's robustness and generalizability, consistent with prior research highlighting cultural impacts on consumer behavior (Hofstede, 2001).

Second, this research did not account fully for dynamic interactions between motivational levels and external moderating variables such as economic fluctuations, technological advancements, or shifts in cultural perceptions of pets. For example, during periods of economic downturn, consumers who were previously driven by self-actualization motives such as purchasing premium, ethically sourced pet products may temporarily shift toward prioritizing basic safety and cost-efficiency, opting instead for more affordable, essential pet care items. Such shifts illustrate that motivational hierarchies are not fixed but can be re-prioritized in response to macroeconomic conditions, thereby influencing both short-term consumption patterns and long-term brand loyalty. Subsequent studies could longitudinally investigate how these external factors influence motivational dynamics and consumer spending behaviors over time, building on longitudinal findings from Tay and Diener regarding dynamic motivational changes and subjective well-being(Tay & Diener, 2011).

Third, the current study primarily focuses on individual consumers. Future studies could explore household-level decision-making processes regarding pet expenditures, examining the interplay between individual motivations within family units and its impact on. Such an approach would provide a more holistic understanding of pet-related consumption, as household members may hold divergent or complementary motivations—such as one member prioritizing cost efficiency while another emphasizes companionship or ethical considerations ultimately shaping purchasing outcomes through negotiation, compromise, or shared values.

Looking ahead, pet-related consumer behavior is likely to be shaped by a combination of factors, including increasing human–pet emotional bonds, rising ethical and sustainability concerns, and the growing influence of digital platforms on purchasing decisions. In conclusion, this study lays the groundwork for integrating motivational psychology into pet-related consumer research, offering actionable insights for academia and industry alike, while highlighting critical avenues for future exploration.

7. References

1. Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. Journal of Consumer Research, 31(4), 868–882. https://doi.org/10.1086/426626
2. Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. Journal of Consumer Research, 15(2), 139–168. https://doi.org/10.1086/209154
3. Bennett, P. C., & Rohlf, V. I. (2007). Owner-companion dog interactions: Relationships between demographic variables, potentially problematic behaviors, training engagement, and shared activities. Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 102(1–2), 65–84. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2006.03.009
4. Benti, B. S., & Stadtmann, G. (2021). Animal crossing: New horizons meets "Maslow's pyramid." Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 3(5), 1172–1179. https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.322
5. Boya, U. O., Dotson, M. J., & Hyatt, E. M. (2015). Dimensions of the dog–human relationship: A segmentation approach. Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing, 23(1), 14–25. https://doi.org/10.1057/jt.2015.1
6. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. Springer Science & Business Media.
7. Dotson, M. J., & Hyatt, E. M. (2008). Understanding dog–human companionship. Journal of Business Research, 61(5), 457–466. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.07.019
8. Dubuque, E. (2020). Multifamily Amenity Wars: defining their current state in luxury urban markets and determining impacts of COVID-19. PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
9. Fournier, S., & Lee, L. (2009). Getting brand communities right. Harvard Business Review, 87(4), 105–111.
10. Hirschman, E. C. (1994). Consumers and their animal companions. Journal of Consumer Research, 20(4), 616–632. https://doi.org/10.1086/209374
11. Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
12. Hunt, S. D. (1992). On the service-dominant logic of marketing. Journal of Marketing, 56(4), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299205600401
13. Krause-Parello, C. A. (2012). Pet ownership and older women: The relationships among loneliness, pet attachment support, human social support, and depressed mood. Geriatric Nursing, 33(3), 194–203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2011.12.005
14. Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review, 50(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346
15. Maslow, A. H. (1971). The farther reaches of human nature. Viking Press.
16. Peter, J. P., & Olson, J. C. (1983). Consumer Behavior: Marketing Strategy Perspectives. Irwin.
17. Prawitz, A. D., Kalkowski, J. C., & Cohart, J. (2006). Responses to economic pressure by low-income families: Financial distress and economic behaviors. Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 27(1), 143–161. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-005-9004-0
18. Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. Journal of Consumer Research, 22(1), 43–61. https://doi.org/10.1086/209434
19. Sharma, P. (2010). Measuring personal cultural orientations: Scale development and validation. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 38(6), 787–806. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0184-7
20. Solomon, M. R., Bamossy, G. J., Askegaard, S., & Hogg, M. K. (2020). Consumer Behaviour: A European Perspective (7th ed.). Pearson Education. https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/subject-catalog/p/consumer-behaviour-a-european-perspective/P200000001586/9781292318107
21. Statista. (2024). Global pet care market value from 2018 to 2027. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1044386/pet-care-market-value-worldwide/
22. Tay, L., & Diener, E. (2011). Needs and subjective well-being around the world. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101(2), 354–365. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023779
23. Tesfom, G., & Birch, N. J. (2010). Do switching barriers in the retail banking industry influence bank customers in different age groups differently? Journal of Services Marketing, 24(5), 371–380. https://doi.org/10.1108/08876041011060557
24. White, K., Habib, R., & Hardisty, D. J. (2019). How to SHIFT consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: A literature review and guiding framework. Journal of Marketing, 83(3), 22–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649

****