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CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AMONG DOG OWNERS

How trends spread from the US to small businesses in Finland

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Pets and especially dogs have received a bigger role in people's lives and thus in the media in the last ten years or so in Finland. This is why it is no wonder that the number of dogs is rising at the moment, as is pet-related consumption (Nurmela 2014). Dogs have more commodities for them now than ever before and the taking of dogs everywhere with the owner has increased, which can be seen from increased travelling related commodities, for instance. The fact that dogs are taken more and more into consideration has resulted in growth in the dog commodity market in Finland and thus broadening the market and opening it for new possibilities and innovations. This same phenomenon has been visible in the US and it can be seen that the excess way of consuming in the US has also spread to pets, especially to dogs (Cohen 2015).

Dog products and dog fashion has existed for a long time already and even though spending on dogs has increased just in the last ten years or so among the average people, among the royals and other nobilities, there have been dog commodities from ancient times. Around 3000 BCE dogs can be seen wearing collars and leashes in paintings and from this can be drawn that narrow collars with bows were in fashion for dogs and around 2500 BCE quadruple collars were in fashion. James Spratt was one of the first to produce dog commodities on a large scale. His company, Spratt's, was founded around 1860's and operated in the US and in the UK. It was most known for their dog biscuits, but it manufactured also leashes, collars, portable doghouses, potions to maintain dog's health and many other things. (Cunliffe 2005, 90-91, 110-111.)

Now, the supply for dogs is almost endless and more and more operators have entered the industry. As an example, in October 2017 it was reported that the global enterprise Ikea had launched a new furniture collection for dogs and cats. Even though Ikea launched products both for cats and for dogs, it launched about 20% more products for dogs than cats: 34 products were launched for cats and 41 products for dogs. (May 2017.) This can be seen as an indicator that dogs have more commodities available for them than cats, which is of course an indicator of a bigger demand overall. The fact that a huge global enterprise such as Ikea has seen the market gap and matched it accordingly tells that the dog commodity has a lot of potential to offer and the selection of commodities dog owners want for their dogs has broadened.

According to the editor in chief of Koiramme ("Our dogs") magazine, in the last thirty years how many dogs are registered per year and the economic situation have followed a pattern. The pattern itself might be surprising, as in an economic boom period less dogs are registered than in an economic decline period. (Lahti 2016.) Between

2006-2012 when the economic situation was declining in Finland, as it was worldwide, the money spent on pets grew. If you take the effect of inflation on the euro into consideration, the expenditure has, at least, stayed the same. So, the pet expenditure is not affected by economic decline periods, as many other fields of expenditure are, which is a reason why many marketers want to operate in this field and why businesses in this field could be very profitable for different operators. (Nurmela 2014.) This is why it is important to study in more detail what kind is the consumer behavior and trends in the market and this way understand how different operators could benefit from the market.

The number of dogs has increased in Finland in the last decade or so, and there are more innovations been created for them than ever before, some of which are even recognized worldwide (Suomi mainittu - - 2017). The pet commodity industry was a business of hundreds of millions of euros already in 2012, according to the national authority for collecting and compiling statistics on various fields of society and economy, Tilastokeskus. (Nurmela 2016.) The industry has shown signs of further growing as the meaning of pets in the economy has increased (Nurmela 2014.)

In addition to the very clear growth of the dog commodity market in the US, it is a good comparison country as many other trends have diffused from there to Europe (Gantz 2017). It has even gone to the point that there is a term “Americanization”, which illustrates well the massive role that the US has had on other countries, especially European ones. The Americanization can be seen for instance in American restaurant chains that can be found almost anywhere around the world. (Fraser 2014.) The sheer massive size of the dog commodity industry in the US and Americanization of Europe, suggests that most likely this industry in Finland has been influenced by it too.

1.2 Motivation to the study

I saw the need to study the dog commodity market in more detail, as I am a dog owner myself. I have noticed that there are increasing amounts of different types of products and services for dogs and also that many of the dog-owning consumers I know tend to consume a lot on their dogs and they also tend to do quite a lot impulse purchases related to their dogs. As the dog commodity market has grown in rather recent years, not a lot of studies on it have been done from a business point of view, but more from psychological point of view, for instance. However, it is important to study the industry and about the consumer behavior as where as how the trends spread to understand and target commodities for the customers most efficiently. To do the before mentioned, the trends themselves and behavior on the market has to be studied too. By representing some statistics, it is easy to argue how the market has grown and thus why it is important to

study it in more detail. For instance, the grown expenditure on pets can be seen from table 1.

Table 1 Private consumption's real growth on pet expenditure 2006-2012 in millions of euros, according to the national economy's accountancy (Nurmela 2014)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Pets and supplies	280	298	307	296	325	339	346
Pet food	182	192	200	189	202	210	218
Pets and their equipment	98	106	108	108	124	128	127

The expenditure on pets and their supplies has had the second fastest growth in the recreation and culture expenditure's category between 2006-2012. Despite the second place, the growth has been quite notable. One of the factors that influence the growth is surely the grown number of dogs in Finland. The subcategory that has experienced the most growth is "pets and supplies", but there has been clear growth on the other two subcategories, too. (Nurmela 2014.) In 2012 in these three categories alone, the pet market has been almost worth 700 million euros and the number of dogs has only been growing since (Nurmela 2016). As the growth in this market is clearly visible, table 2 shows how the growth of pet expenditures per household has divided between different kinds of households (Nurmela 2014).

Table 2 Pet expenditure per household 2006, 2012 and its development 2006-2012 (Nurmela 2014)

	€/2006	€/2012	Change% 2006-2012
One person household, under 65 years	64	102	60
Childless couple, under 65 years	213	280	31
Single parent household	136	225	65
Two-parent family	212	349	65
Senior household	47	72	55
Other households	165	240	45
All households	133	192	45

As we can see from table 2, the expenditure on pets has grown in every household type. The growth has been immense as the growth percentages are from 31% to 65%. Up to two household types have had the growth of 65% compared to 2006. The least growth was seen in the “childless couple” type, as it was 31%, which is still quite a lot. The euro amount that went into pets in 2012 per household, was 349 euros at its most and 72 euros at its least. The “two parent family” household type was the biggest spender and the senior household spent the least. Even though, the senior households’ expenditure was the lowest, it had risen 55% compared to 2006. In the “childless couple” type, the amount in 2012 was 280 euros, which is rather high compared to other types’ expenditure amounts. So even though it had risen the least, it had still the second highest amount of expenditure in euros. (Nurmela 2014.)

Similarly in the US, the amount of money spent on pets has grown a lot in the last 10 years, thus it comes as no surprise that the revenue of pet stores in the US has grown. In 2007 it was around 13 556 million USD and in 2017 it was 19 288 USD, so the growth has been immense, about 42% (Pet Store Revenue - -). The number of dogs has grown between 2006-2017 by far more than cats, for instance, as the first has grown about by 20% and the latter by only 8%. So, that suggests that the pet store revenue growth can be due to dog commodities. (Number of Dogs - -; Number of Cats.)

As is argued above in this chapter, the pet industry, and especially the dog commodity industry, is growing, both in Finland and the US. It has tripled in the 21st century and

is not showing any signs of stopping. The upkeep of a dog cost about a thousand euros a year and the acquisition of a purebred dog costs over a thousand euros on average. Some people have even spent over 4000 euros on pet acquisition alone in Finland (Nurmela 2014). Just the fact that people are willing to pay so much money to acquire the dog indicates that they are usually willing to spend money in the dog's upkeep too. (Pantsu 2013.)

The reason behind dog owners' spending on dogs can be found from their relationship with their dog and human-dog relationship is something that has been studied a lot (see for example Hens 2009; Blouin 2013). Some studies have been made about the trends and behaviors that can be seen in modern dog commodity market, but the Finnish aspect is still missing from the selection (see for example Vänskä 2014; 2016). The psychological and social effects of dogs have been studied a lot globally and also in Finnish context and a lot of positive effects of dog keeping have been found, especially on children. (Langinvainio et al. 2014, 3-4.) So, this study provides new aspects to the subject through a Finnish aspect and a business aspect to dog commodity market trends as well as the aspect of the US as a trend spreader. Even though there are many countries with dog consumerism culture, such as Japan, the US was chosen as the country to study as a trend setter as the media picture from there is very rich on dog commodities and it can be seen that other countries, for instance the before mentioned Japan, has gotten its influence from the Western consumerist culture in the first place (Vänskä 2014, 268). That is why the US is the other object of examination in this study.

1.3 Research question and sub questions

The subject of this study is "Consumer behavior among US dog owners: How trends spread to small businesses in Finland". This study aims to examine the prevailing dog market trends and the consumer behaviors related to that in the United States and see how those trends have affected the dog commodity market in Finland, if at all. I will examine the subject through both, the consumers' and the entrepreneurs' point of view in the theoretic part and in the empiric part of this study. This way a comprehensive picture of the current state of the dog commodity market in Finland and in the US can be provided as it is examined from supply and demand sides. Furthermore, this enables the observation of the prevalent situation in the market and thus representation of its possibilities to business owners as the balance of power in the market is shifting towards consumers in today's markets (Moynagh & Worsley 2002, 301).

From the subject I have formed a research question: What kind is the consumer behavior in the dog commodity market? This research question aims to find out the main factors that affect consumer behavior in this particular market and the reasons behind

the spreading of trends, which can be found consumer behavior. Filling this research gap can provide useful information for all operators in this industry, especially to small business owners.

This subject will be examined more thoroughly through the following sub questions:

1. What kinds of trends are prevalent in the dog commodity market in the US and Finland?
2. How do Finnish small businesses in the dog commodity market follow industry trends?
3. How do consumers follow dog commodity market trends?

With these sub questions the main subject will be easier to examine and thoroughly comprehend. By studying the prevalent trends in the dog commodity market, the context is made more approachable and on the other hand, the trends are necessary to understand as their spreading is studied. The studying of how entrepreneurs follow trends is paramount to this study to understand the supply side of the market. Of course, the demand side has to be taken into consideration too to achieve a coherent picture of the situation and thus it is studied how consumers follow trends. The following of trends in this market is closely related to the consumer behavior and this is why it is one focus point in this study too. This study will use qualitative methods in examining the subject in the empirical part.

Additionally, the studying of dog commodity market through trends can help find the reasons behind the trends and the prevalent themes dominating in the market and this way also future trends can be predicted better. It is important to find out if the current media picture portrays the trends similarly as the entrepreneurs and customers in this field to understand the market as well as possible and this way utilize the full potential it has to offer. In this study the understanding of the customer is also paramount and I want to go deeper and also find out the reasons why dog owners spend more on their dogs today as it helps to understand the prevalent trends and their spreading ways. Also, by studying the reasons, the market can be understood better and thus operators in the industry can market and target more efficiently and create more suitable commodities for today's dog owners.

I will study in what way the trends in the US affect the Finnish dog commodity market through small-sized pet businesses and keen dog-owners in Finland. I will find out how trends are followed and absorbed in the Finnish dog commodity market. To achieve the before mentioned, it is paramount to study the trends and the consumer behavior in this particular market as these are strongly linked to the way trends are spread in the market. The reason why it is good to focus on small enterprises instead of medium or large enterprises is that they are more agile and swift in their moves and thus en-

abling them to absorb trends faster into their business (Blackford 2003, 165). By studying small enterprises in this field, I am able to find out about more recent trends, the position of small enterprises in the industry and the reasons behind founding small enterprises in the field. Also, I focus on independent enterprises instead of chain stores, because independent stores are not bound to the will of the parent organization, but are able to make their own decisions regarding the business as they see most fit and thus are more open to new trends.

This study will address the prevailing trends only in the dog commodity market, even though some trends might be the same in other pet commodity markets. This study will also address only dog commodity market, meaning products and services that are meant for dogs, not the dog market where dogs themselves are bought and sold. Furthermore, the commodities in this study do not cover veterinary services even though veterinary services are a big part in the dog business (Nurmela 2014). This study aims to find out more about the trends in dog commodity market in small businesses, so even though, for example, many veterinary clinics also sell dog products such as dog food they do not fit the scope (Palvelut koirille). Moreover, dog insurances and other similar services are excluded from this study, as they are not commonly provided by small businesses or startups and are not directly meant for dogs to use.

The dog commodities can be divided into two types: commodities that are necessary for dogs and the commodities that dogs could easily live without, but might, for example, improve and support a dog's health. First type can be described as "necessities" and the second type as "extras". First type of commodities includes, for example, food, leash, and some services for a dog. Meaning the essential things one needs to take care of their dog. Commodities that belong to the latter type are, for example, cute clothes, dog carriers, and dog spas. These types of commodities are often designed also to please the owner, as well as, or even more than the dog itself. Another combining component in the latter type is the hedonic value that the owner receives from buying the commodity. (Chaudhuri 2001, 269.)

These categories intertwine in some points. For example, dog food. There are many different types of foods for dogs. There are many trends in human foods, for instance raw food that has spread also to dog food market. There are companies that provide complete raw food diets for dogs. (Raw Dog Food Brands.) This is just one example, but dog owners have today lots of options in trendy quality foods for their dogs. There are even services that bring freshly cooked pre-proportioned meals to one's door for one's dog every day. (Bender 2017.) Here can be seen an example of a dog commodity that belongs to both two types of dog commodities that are used in this study. This before mentioned service goes to the "extra" commodity type, because the daily transportation brings a luxury quality to the service, but it also to "necessities" type, in the sense that the dog food is essential for a dog.

It is essential to this study to go through some theoretical aspects of the dog market and this study starts with the elaboration of the theoretical framework. In it I am going to go through the important theoretical issues related to this study so the empiric side of this study will be easier to understand and the empiric side will be tied to it. First, in the theoretical framework, consumer behavior will be discussed and tied to this context. After consumer behavior the trends in this market and how they spread will be discussed and then human-dog relationship will be discussed and thus explained why the role of dogs is so big in today's society and thus why the market is only growing. Lastly, small businesses and their role in this market will be addressed. This theoretic frame will create a base for understanding the subject of dog commodity market trends in the US and in Finland. These will also help to understand the empirical part where the dog commodity market is observed from a Finnish small business point of view.

Methodological aspects will be gone through in the third part of this study. This study will be conducted as a qualitative study, but how and when different methods are used will be elaborated. After the methodology, the empirical side of this study will be presented. It is divided into four sub chapters where first the three different data sources are analyzed and lastly the three data sources will be analyzed and compared together. As the second to last chapter, there are the conclusions and there the before mentioned empiric findings will be discussed thoroughly and analyzed further. There will also be methodological considerations, exploration of this study's limitations, and suggestions for further research. Lastly, a summary of this study will be presented.

2 UNDERLYING FACTORS IN DOG COMMODITY MARKET

2.1 Consumer behavior

The understanding of consumer behavior in the dog commodity market is essential to understanding the trends and how they spread in the market as they are closely related. An individual consumer's behavior can result from numerous different things, one of the most influential being income level. Even though the income can determine the usable fund level, there are many other things that affect the consumer behavior and how consumers prioritize their spending. It is important to understand the motives behind spending in order to fully understand the market in question, here it being the dog commodity market in Finland and in the US.

Today's picture of western consuming is often seen and described as excessive and self-indulgent. Individualistic western society is seen as one of the reasons as the individualistic setting increases the probability of needing and consuming more (Lee et al. 2010, 567). People mimic each other's consuming and can fall to advertisements. All in all, consumer behavior is seen as self-centered. It is true that people can consume for the excitement of it, as it can make one feel good, but the case is not always how it seems at the first glance. Miller (1998, according to Moynagh & Worsley 2002, 294) found that the excessive consumption is often motivated by the need to please and make other people happy. Love was seen as a very frequent consuming motivator; consumers like to acquire goods for their close ones (Moynagh & Worsley 2002, 293-294).

Consuming can be seen as expressions of many things and many things can influence the way people consume, their consumer behavior. Emotions and reason play an integral part in consuming, in this study the main focus is on the emotions. Consuming can be seen, and is seen more and more in today's culture, as a way to express one's identity and status. It can be initiated by emotions, such as love and anger, and it can be seen as egoistic act and altruistic act. (Moynagh & Worsley 2002, 294-295.)

Bettman (1979, according to Chaudhuri 2001, 270) presents the information processing paradigm, which sees consumer behavior as rational and objective, whereas Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, according to Chaudhuri 2001, 270) presents the experiential paradigm, which proposes that consumer behavior is subjective and emotional. The information processing paradigm suggests that consumers, for instance, compare brands and base their consumption behavior on knowledge. In the experiential paradigm, non-tangible features are of paramount importance. Luxury goods purchases and other high pleasure providing goods are more likely to be explained with emotions' role in the consumer behavior, the "extra" type dog commodities can also fall to this category.

Celebrities often showcase very high-end dog commodities, which might not be a possibility for an average dog owner. Despite this, the luxury pet commodity market has also grown and with a faster pace than other pet commodities' growth, according to American Pet Product Association (APPA), even though luxury pet commodities can cost even more than \$400. (Luxury Merchandise Market — 2005, 166.) Luxury can be defined as a good that gives certain kind of extra satisfaction to a necessity and is something that not everyone can afford or have and that way ratifies higher status (Black et al. 2017b; Stearns 2008). Moon & Young (2008, 32) has created the Dynamic Model of Luxury Consumption, where they exhibit how network interactions flow and influence on a consumer.

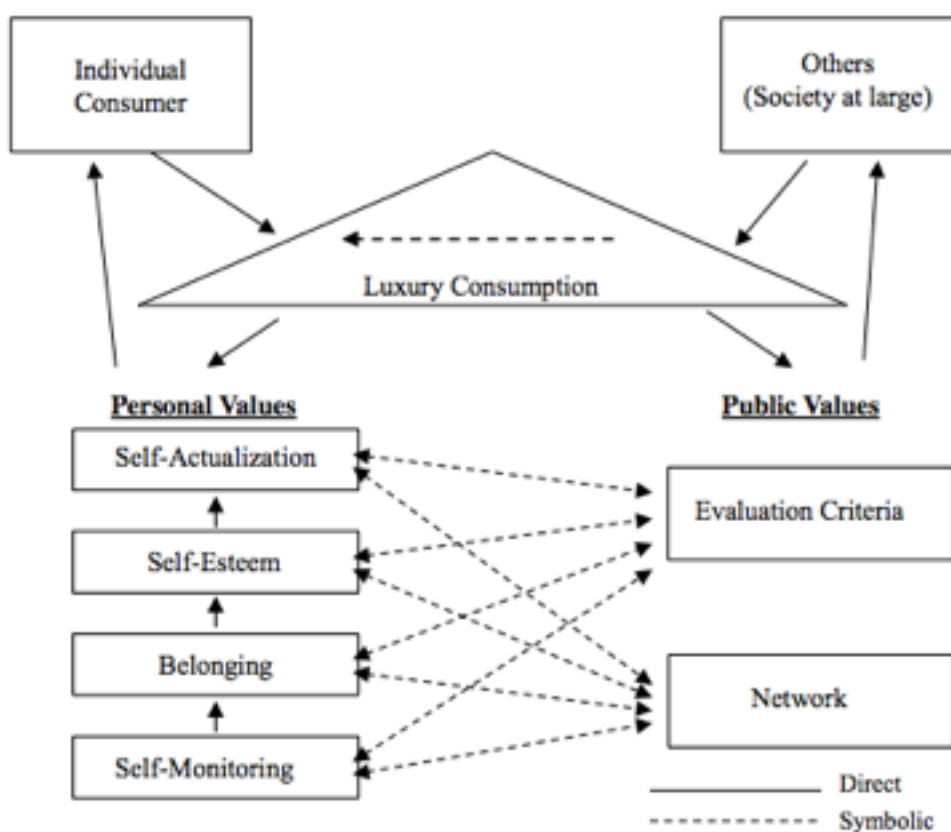


Figure 1 Dynamic model of luxury consumption (Moon & Young 2008, 32)

In luxury consumption context, there are many different variables as seen in figure 1. Most important ones are the consumers, the public and the luxury brands. The values of the individual consumers and the values of the public create an additional aspect to this model and influence on each other on a symbolic level. Luxury goods appeal to and fulfill individual's and public's values and social needs, so they have to be taken into consideration, and the meaning of the public is stronger in luxury consumption than in other types of consuming as the status symbolism is so related to it. Basically two interaction triangles can be seen in figure 1, even though it is visible that interactions take

place on more levels than just the two triangles. One triangle is between individual consumers, luxury consumption, and consumers' values, and the other triangle between the public, luxury consumption, and public's values. (Moon & Young 2008, 32, 35-36.)

In today's versatile market, retailers have many ways of gathering information about consumers and their behavior. The aim is to get understand the market in question and to gain competitive advantage and target consumers more and more specifically. Important is to understand the market in question well and utilize its characteristics. For instance, in the dog commodity market, goods are comparable to children's clothes and accessories in the sense that dog clothes, accessories and other goods are often bought without trying them on the dog. (Landmark& Sjøbakk 2017, 844.) Personality and the bond between consumers and their pets are also important in pet-related marketing. For instance, the slogans do not have that much importance themselves, but the values they suggest. (Ellson 2008, 573.)

Consumers express themselves through their pets too, so it was just a matter of time before dogs and other pets got their share of this consuming oriented culture in today's western societies. Just as with people, consuming on dog commodities can reinforce the relationship between a dog and its owner and the owner can get the fulfillment feel of it just alike when consuming on other goods. (Moynagh & Worsley 2002, 295.) This can also reinforces the humanization of dogs in the eyes of people, but this is not the case in all situations (Chen et al. 2012, 126).

Ridgway et al. (2008, 394-395) have found that there is a connection in the way consumers buy for themselves and how they consume on their pets. Consumers try to provide the same standards of living for their dogs as for themselves (Kumcu & Woolverton 2015, 225). The tendency of buying excessively for oneself has a positive correlation with consuming on one's pet frequently extra commodities such as toys and clothing. Consumers, who have a non-excessive buying tendency, were reported to have significantly lower frequency to buy for their pets. Also, the consumers, who have an excessive buying tendency, consume more money on pet commodities, excluding pet food. Excessive buyers use almost double the money on pet commodities than the non-excessive buyers.

So, the general consuming tendencies of consumers influence on their consuming on their pets, too. Nevertheless, consumers consume over twice as much on dogs than on cats on average and also buy over three times more frequently for their dogs than cats, regardless of their general buying tendencies. (Ridgway et al. 2008, 395.) The types of consumer behavior among pet owners can be divided into based on what are their motives to consume and how much they consume on their pets (Chen et al. 2012, 126). This type of division is important to make as Boya et al. (2012, 141) have found that traditional demographic segmentation does not apply in dog commodity market.

Chen et al. (2012, 126, 128-129) divides pet owners into three clusters: “Anthropomorphic owners who value quality”, “Attached owners who seek a service’s epistemic value” and “Owners who look for interaction and a service’s functional (economical) value”. They were the least people in the first cluster and the most in the last one, but the shares were not too different, about a third were in every cluster: 27.6%, 36% and 36.4% respectively. Figure 2 compares some characteristics in these clusters, the scale is from one to three, one being “greatest”, two “average” and three “lowest” among these clusters.

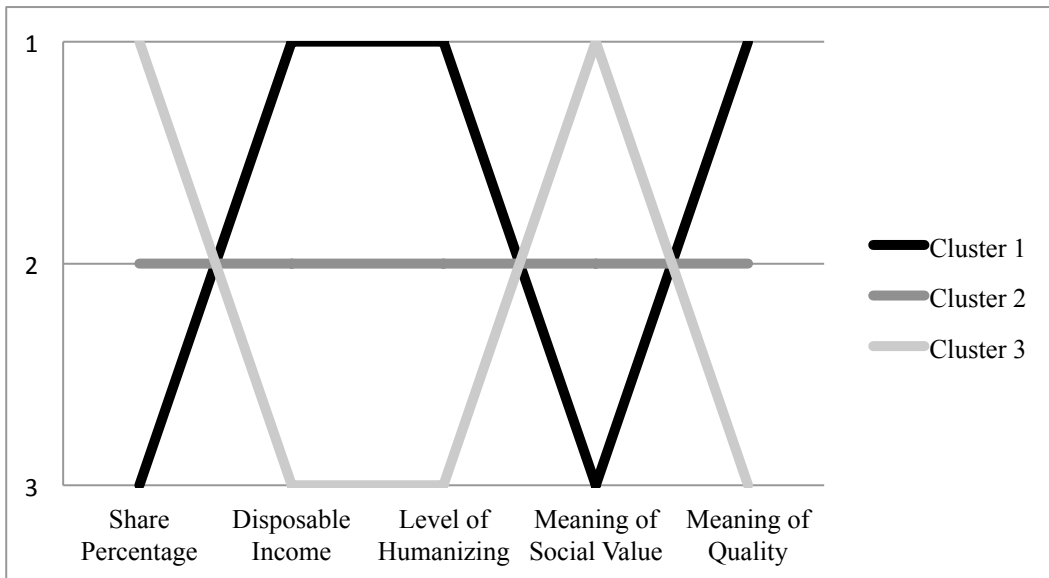


Figure 2 Pet owner cluster comparison (Chen et al. 2012, 126, 128-129)

In the first cluster were people who humanize their pets the most and feel that pets should be treated similarly as children. After this, it comes as no surprise that the ones belonging to this cluster spend the most money on pet commodities. They are also the most highly educated and have the most disposable incomes, in other words, higher-income people belong to this cluster. This cluster is the most likely one to try new services and the quality of the goods is considered paramount. (Chen et al. 2012, 126)

In the before mentioned cluster, people were evenly distributed among age groups and sexes, but in the second cluster, majority were women and the age was emphasized on those between 20-39 years old. Otherwise, Cluster 2 stays between Cluster 1 and 3 in the shown categories, for instance disposable income level is average. These pet owners are the most dedicated ones and they also look for quality goods for their pets, but there is more emphasis on the reason-based information that the marketers provide. (Chen et al. 2012, 128)

The third cluster consists of the owners who appreciate interaction with their pets and put emphasis on that, rather than on the amount they spend on pets. This cluster mostly

consists of people under 20 years old and between 40-59 years old with the lowest income and educational levels, as many are still students. In addition, a higher percentage of these pet owners are not the primary caretakers of their pets, which might explain the greatest value in share percentage and in the meaning of social value. The driving force behind a purchase decision is the ability to enhance pet's interactions and the economical value of the goods. (Chen et al. 2012, 129.)

The humanization of dogs is a driving factor in, for instance, spending on premium dog food and other non-necessity commodities (Boya et al 2015, 74). It has been found by Tesfom and Birch (2010, 910) that dog owners are more sensitive to human food than dog food when it comes to price, which means they are more likely buy more expensive food for their dogs than to themselves. Tesfom & Birch and Boya et al. (2015, 80) have both also found that dog owners focus more on the healthiness of their dogs' food than their own food's and that they are more loyal to dog food brands.

Chen et al. (2012, 126, 128-129) have also found some other pet market related characteristics related to the before mentioned clusters, as all of them present countless opportunities for operators in the pet industry. Clusters 1 and 2 seem to appreciate more similar things such as well-informed quality and some novelty value whereas Cluster 3 appreciates more the economical value, such as price. Targeting on Cluster 1 is more likely to succeed when pets are addressed as human beings looking for the best quality. In a pet store, Cluster 2 appreciates convenience and variety, and they want to feel that they have received value for their money. The last group is the hardest to target, one reason being the lowest resources, but a value and reason-based approach can affect well.

2.2 Emotions in consuming

Emotions can be regarded as a type of knowledge and consumers use all kinds of knowledge in the course of consuming. It is not knowledge gathered through books or product descriptions, but knowledge that consumers have gained from their own experiences. Emotions can tell about the value of a product or a service for the consumer in question and this way add to the value and make the purchase more likely. It hardly comes as a surprise that a negative emotional association to a certain brand, store, product et cetera, is most likely harmful for a retailer. On the other hand, if a very positive emotional association is established to some of the before mentioned, consumers might put more emphasis on their emotional knowledge than other forms of knowledge. (Chaudhuri 2001, 270-271, 275-276.)

Emotions can be measured in many ways, but most often positive and negative emotions are used as the key dimensions. This is a good beginning in exploring the effects

of emotions in consuming, but important nuances of emotions are left unexplored with only this kind of approach. Pride, sophistication and comfort are examples of nuances that might be missed (Kim et al. 2016, 5814). To avoid missed nuances, Laros and Steenkamp (2005, 1444) have made a hierarchal model for understanding and distinguishing consumer emotions.

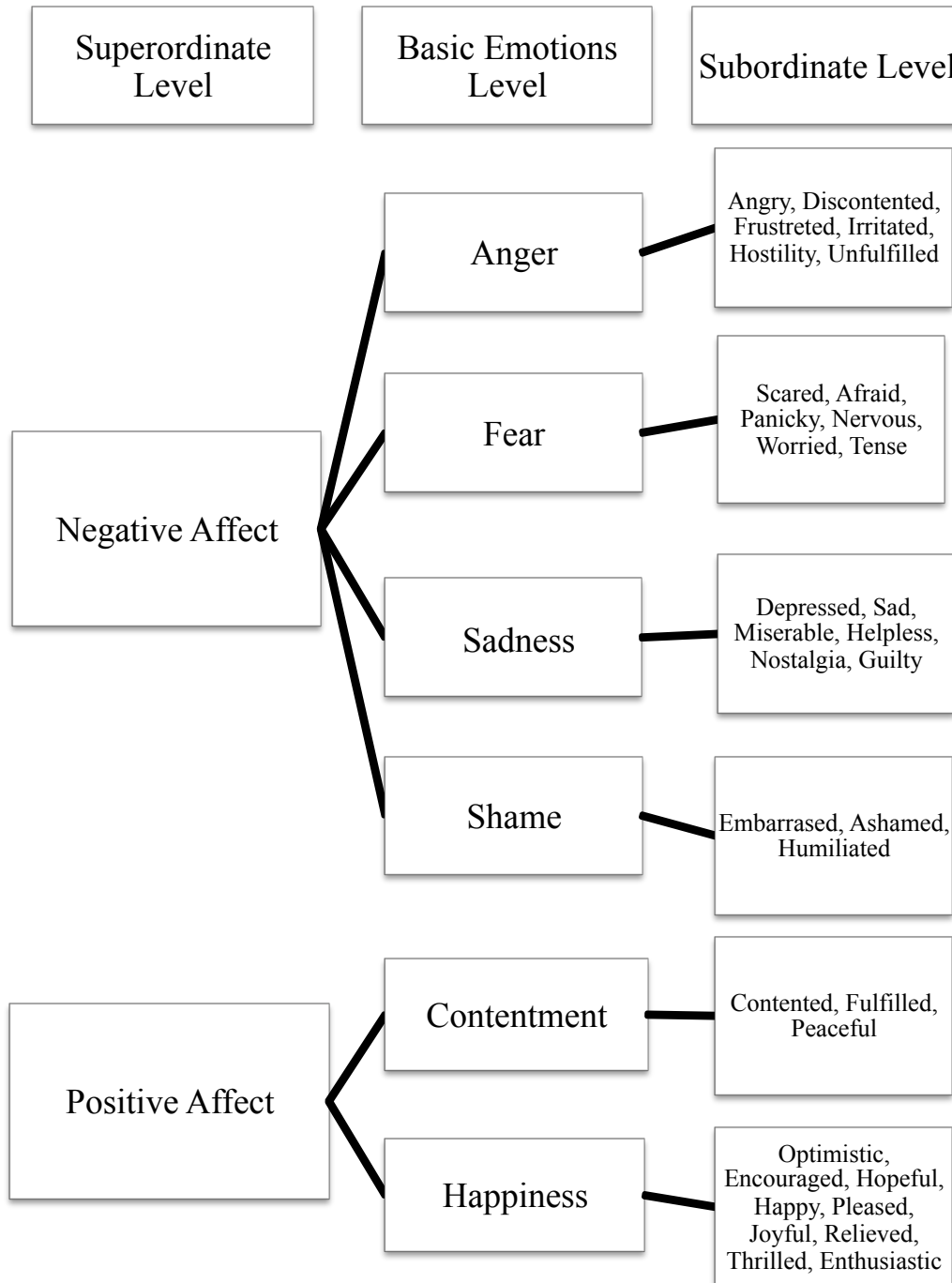


Figure 3 Hierarchal model for understanding and distinguishing consumer emotions (Laros and Steenkamp 2005, 1443-1444)

The model has three hierarchy levels: superordinate level, the level of basic emotions and the subordinate level. The superordinate level is the most commonly used in research and it is the most abstract one as it only differentiates emotions to have either positive or a negative affect. The basic emotions level consists of four negative and four positive emotions. In accordance with its name, the emotions are quite basic, such as sadness and contentment. The most profound level is the subordinate level and it entails total of 42 emotions. (Laros and Steenkamp 2005, 1444.)

Some emotions might not influence the consumers' behavior, but others can influence immensely. There are also differences in which emotions influence consumers' behavior when they have different shopping agendas. If consumers are only browsing and are not committed to the thought of actually making a purchase, happiness and anger are the most influential emotions. In turn, in a situation where a consumer has strong intentions towards making a purchase, the most influential emotions are comfort, sophistication and anger. Emotions such as comfort and sophistication can be viewed as "VIP" emotions, and they are present only in the latter situation. Another noteworthy thing is that anger is an emotion that is in both categories, from which can be concluded that it is very meaningful emotion in terms of consumer behavior. (Kim et al. 2016, 5814.)

Emotional knowledge can be defined as the knowledge of hedonic value it will provide for the consumer. The hedonic value itself can be defined as the amount of pleasure and enjoyment a consumer receives from a purchase. (Chaudhuri 2001, 270-271). This is why it is not surprising that consuming can be a method of managing emotions for a consumer. Consuming is related to feeling good and method of stress relief so this is quite an understandable occurrence. This occurrence is very normal and it is related exactly to the hedonic value of consuming. (Bui & Kemp 2013, 165.) This is also consistent with the suggestion that in emotional capitalism culture commodification of emotions is used, especially among the middle class consumers (Illouz 2007, 5).

In the field of luxury stores, a category in which some dog commodity retailers operate, a range of emotions can be found, even before entering the store. are important emotions for retailers to consider and to make work for their advantage as they might define. Here we can also see, that the emotions are not solemnly related to the product or service itself, it is a sum of emotions stemmed from many different sources. Sources can be the atmosphere of the consuming situation, prior experience of the store or some memory that comes to mind from a particular product. (Kim et al. 2016, 5814.)

Illouz (2007, 4) argues that the twentieth century capitalism itself is closely linked with emotions and through it "an intensely specialized emotional culture" has been evoked. The middle class consumers especially have been made to concentrate on their feelings, in relation to themselves and others. This occurrence has reached out to private lives of consumers, as well as to work lives. This has reinforced that humans' emotions

are so closely linked to consumers' behavior and consumers express their identities through consuming (Moynagh & Worsley 2002, 295).

Emotions are in a huge role when talking about dog commodity markets, because people are heavily emotionally invested in their pets (Vänskä 2014, 270). The term affective capitalism, which suggests the strong role of affection and emotions built inside capitalism, is in place in this context. (Illouz 2007, 4.) Dogs and other pets have been shown to influence their owners' behavior and mostly through emotions (Chen et al. 2012, 118). In the business context, the emotional attachment between a dog and its owner has been noticed and marketers are utilizing it, so they manage to target and market their goods correctly. (Vänskä 2016, 91.)

The picture that the contemporary dog commodity marketers create is that a good and caring dog owner consumes certain amount on their dog and that some commodities are a must for a modern dog. As the common picture of a caring and loving dog owner has evolved towards a more consuming one, so have the consuming behaviors of humans. No one wants to be a bad owner, of course, so they consume more to build a more positive dog owner picture of themselves. Of course, the well being of the dog is also important and the necessity commodities for a dog is easily explained with that, but the extra commodities are more likely to be explained with making dog owners feel guilty if they do not provide a certain thing for their dog. (Vänskä 2016, 80-81.) Consuming on one's dog gives the owner a feeling of being more than just an owner to the dog, the relationship forms differently and the owner can feel to have done something good for the dog and their relationship (Vänskä 2014, 270).

Dogs present countless business opportunities for marketers and retailers, and not always only in the dog commodity context (Chen et al. 2012, 118). Dog commodity advertisements naturally contain dogs, but marketers have realized that using dogs in other advertisements work in their favor too. So, dogs are used in all kind of advertisements, because they appeal to the emotional side of consumers. Even though working with a dog is trickier than working with a human, marketers have wanted to use them because they have proved to result in positive feelings in consumers about the advertisement and therefore about the brand itself. It has been studied that the appearance of a dog in an advertisement increases heuristic processing in a consumer. The increased heuristic processing is the cause of the positive feelings. (Chen et al. 2012, 118; Lancendorfer et al. 2008, 389-390.)

Marketers use a specific type of language in marketing for dog commodities. The language is very emotional and passionate, words such as "love" and "deserve" are used. An example in an dog commodity advertisement could be: "Don't your loved ones deserve the best?" Another intriguing fact in the dog commodity marketing is that the marketing uses same methods as in marketing for something stylish and sensuous for women. Also, same kind of advices and tips as in womens magazines are used in

advertising for dog commodities. Most likely the majority that consumes on dog commodities, such as fashion and other “extras”, are women, so from that point of view it is understandable that they focus on women. (Vänskä 2016, 82, 85-86.)

Vänskä (2016, 80-81, 91-92) argues that the bonding and building a relationship with a dog has been colored with the contemporary western consumerist culture and can now be described as “a total consumer experience”. Material objects are a way of showing emotions in human relationships, as well as in human-dog relationships. The dog commodity market is a very good example of using emotions and concretizing them into commodities and this way making the owners feel that dog commodities guarantee a better relationship with their dog. Though, it is important to note that in the dog commodity market, the emotions are not related to the commodities themselves. They are only the way to express emotions. When consuming on the consumer herself/himself, the emotions can reside on the commodities and the consuming themselves (Cabanas 2016, 476).

Humanlike services such as spas and hotels are becoming a bigger thing among dogs. Marketers are trying to normalize these habits to the dog world and they are reasoning the need for them by appealing to the same factors they would when marketing for humans. This is the new norm among the marketers in the dog commodity market. When a dog is a family member, or even a child, it deserves to be pampered from time to time and it has the right to get commodities for itself. This can well work on the consumers as the modern society enforces this kind of picture. (Vänskä 2016, 80.)

Another humanlike feature that has been internalized in the dog commodity culture is fashion. Of course, sometimes clothes are necessary for dogs, but the fashion media has normalized the use of costumes and other non-necessary clothes for dogs, too. Even though clothes for dogs have been normalized in some scale, the latter type of dog fashion can be described as a niche market. There are small luxury boutiques, huge retailers and everything in between for only dog fashion, just like for humans (Vänskä 2014, 267.) Especially small dogs have a lot of fashionable clothes and costumes to choose from. Even the well-known fashion magazine *Vogue* has addressed to the subject of dog fashion on multiple occasions and described how a fashionable dog can be essential to showcasing owner’s taste in fashion and the luxurious lifestyle one is leading. (Vänskä 2016, 82.)

2.3 Trends

According to Black et al. (2017a) trends are long-term movement in economic environments. The movement can be ascending or declining, which means that trends can be ascending or declining in nature. Doyle (2016) defines trends as consumer driven

movement in the economy that can be seen in short and long-term examination. A new consuming habit or direction that the consumers seem to be heading in their consuming, for example, can be defined as trend. Also, innovations and development in, for example, economic or technological fields, can generate new trends.

2.3.1 *Trend diffusion*

In this study, the trend spreading focuses strongly on (e)WOM and this is due to its strong role in today's world, where people are able to be in connection with each other all the time, regardless of the place, distance and time. Also, as the empirical part approaches the market through its media picture, it is logical to study one of the main media, the Internet, more closely. This rather (e)WOM emphasized approach also stems from the focus on small enterprises, to which especially informal networks and this way WOM too, hold a great value (Timmons et al. 2004, 13).

The Internet is a powerful source of information gathering and trend diffusing. As the Internet has made two-way communication between consumers and enterprises possible, the value of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has grown. Consumers can, for instance, rate products in an enterprises website and that way influence on another consumer's purchase decision. Enterprises have to take this into consideration in their strategy and try to maximize the benefit that can be derived from eWOM and other online possibilities. Through invalid online marketing many enterprises lose a lot of money, so the careful planning of online strategies is truly important (Li et al 2010, 302). The two-way communication and online shopping possibilities can add value for many customers, so in today's world, the lack of this possibility might give an outdated picture of an enterprise. (Raaij 1998, 7.) Online possibilities also enable the international business for an enterprise easier than before, which has to be taken into consideration in the strategy too. Even though consumers all around the world do not have the same consumer habits, there is a growing uniformity visible, which is good to acknowledge. (Ganesh 1998, 44.)

Trends spread in many ways; marketers can be behind the strong marketing of some trends, for instance. Word of mouth can be an effective tool for marketers and an easy information receiving method for consumers. Even though, trends and information have always spread through word of mouth (WOM), enterprises have started to fully understand and try to utilize its full potential only after the technological developments such, as the Internet. The essence of word of mouth marketing is in the finding the correct consumers that will spread the information onwards and, who has an influence on other consumers. (Li et al 2010, 302.) These kinds of consumers are called opinion leaders; they can influence large number of people within their network. When this kind of opin-

ion leader has been found, for instance by using various algorithms, the marketer can make sure whether the published information about its product or service is favorable or not. If it is the latter case, the enterprise can contact the person and try to repair the negative image to positive. (Li & Du 2011, 197.)

Among dog owners, however, it has been studied that information about new dog commodities, and thus trends, is spread powerfully through WOM. Dog owners talk to each other for example in dog parks, dog walks and other dog events, such as dog shows. Online social networks have an immense role in trend spreading in the dog owner communities. Dog owners have their own websites, such as Dogster.com. There are also countless of breed-specific, product specific, region-specific, and everything in between communities and groups in the also otherwise popular social medias, such as in Facebook and Twitter. (Trent 2009, 46.) These online communities and groups offer the possibility to influence to other dog owners and their purchasing decisions through eWOM. (Boya et al. 2012, 142.)

With regard to Chen et al.'s (2012, 126-128) dog owner clusters, different kinds of dog commodity related information search methods could be detected. For Cluster 1, "anthropomorphic owners who value quality", the print media is regarded as the most informative source of information, but Internet sources are also used moderately. Cluster 2, "attached owners who seek a service's epistemic value", sets a bit mote emphasis on the Internet sources, but the information search methods are very similar to Cluster 1's. Cluster 3, "owners who look for interaction and a service's functional (economical) value", differs most in the methods, as it uses mainly broadcast media, which is not as active channel as the other channels used by Cluster 1 and 2. It can be concluded that Cluster 3 puts less value on the source of information regarding pet commodities as the other clusters; these findings are consistent with the clusters' consumption values. Also, for dog owners and in general, the Internet's strong points as information source are novelty value and large range of content and the print media's is the trustworthiness.

As we can see from Chen et al. (2012, 126-128) the Internet is not the only source used to look for information about dog commodities. According to Meuter et al. (2013, 251-252) many marketers have put effort on their social media account and that way trying to benefit from two-way communication and eWOM. Their study highlights that even though eWOM is a modern way to spread information and trends, and market one's business, the traditional WOM should not be forgotten. WOM is found to be more powerful than eWOM, in situations where customers recommend things for each other. Of course the basic idea behind WOM and eWOM is the same: consumers talk to each other and spread information and opinions that can influence on the other consumer's purchase decision and attitude towards a certain product or service. The following table from Tham et al. (2013, 149) clarifies the main differences between WOM and eWOM.

Table 3 Summary of dimensional differences between WOM and eWOM (Tham et al. 2013, 149)

Dimensional Difference	WOM	eWOM
Source-Receiver Relationship	Known and established	Potentially unknown source and receiver
Channel Variety	Dependent on known source and existing source profile	Wider scope for unknown sources and range of source profiles
Information Recollection	Based on ability to recall	Representation restored online
Motivations for Disclosing Information	Assistance in making informed decisions	In addition to decision making, opportunity to socialize

From table 3 can be seen that WOM and eWOM do differ from each other and especially on the sources of the information. Overall, WOM knowledge is based on people that the consumer knows beforehand and the recollection of the recommendation or critique is based on the consumer's memory. In the case of eWOM, the information source can be, and most likely is, unknown to the consumer beforehand and the shared information is restored in the online service, where the consumer received the information. Interpersonal WOM is found to be more influential than eWOM (Meuter et al. 2013, 251). Both can be powerful and important ways to diffuse trends, as long as their characteristics are taken into consideration, though. (Tham et al. 2013, 149, 151.)

There is difference in who is the person that recommends or gives critique about the product or service to another. The most influential is WOM from close friends, because consumers are most likely to act on the recommendation, or not act on the purchase in case of critique, when close friends are in question. Other close relations, such as relatives and colleagues, were strongly influential too, unlike acquaintances; their influence was the weakest. This suggests that the flow of WOM is initiated by interaction between people in different types of social environment, which can be an online community in today's world, for instance, which explains the importance of eWOM. In the case of eWOM, the information comes mostly from acquaintances, but the volume of the information sources online can be the reason why acquaintances also influence strongly through eWOM (Tham et al. 2013, 149; Chen et al. 2012, 126). A bigger amount of positive feedback on one Internet site does not yield in more positive perception of the product or service in question, though. It is the volume of different sources and the multiple comments that are received through them that make eWOM influential (Meuter et al. 2013, 252-253). Also, acquaintances are meaningful in extending the connections between networks. (Reingen 1987, 214, 217.)

The quality of the eWOM source is also a meaningful factor. Information gathered from a marketer's website is not seen as trustworthy as information from Facebook friends or websites such as yelp.com or tripadvisor.fi. The reason is that the information and customer comments are somewhat in the control of the marketers unlike in the latter mentioned websites, for instance the customers might get some sort of rewards for recommending the enterprise. The latter mentioned are seen as unbiased and that is why as more reliable. An interesting finding is that Facebook friends as a mass are treated as acquaintances just like random consumers on some other unbiased website, when it comes to trust and attitude towards the eWOM. This might be due to the variety of relations in Facebook friends. (Meuter et al. 2013, 252-253.)

There are different kinds of roles for people when information is spread through WOM; intersector, bridge pillars, members and isolates. Intersectors are the ones who diffuse the information from one network to another by belonging to multiple networks. Bridge pillars are the ones that have relations to another person in another network and this way spreads information such as trends and product information. Members belong only to one network and do not have relations to another network, but receive and share information within the one network. Isolates are the ones who do not participate in information spreading, as they do not belong to any network. So through this web of connections information is spread widely. (Reingen 1987, 215-217.)

Leskovec et al. (2006, 380-381) have studied the diffusion of information and trends within a social network, where trends spread through viral marketing and WOM. They have created different kind of information diffusion cascades to illustrate the flow of WOM. Cascades vary in sizes and, for instance, product types affect them. These cascades illustrate collective behavior that starts from one consumer and spreads. They are generally rather small in size, but larger cascades do occur and originate from the smaller ones. An example is a blogger community where someone recommends something and it first spreads in the blogger network and eventually among mass media.

Table 4 Typical classes of cascades (Leskovec et al. 2006, 380)





Type of Cascade	Cascade Illustration
A Flat Cascade	
Recommending to the Same Set of People	
Recommending to Same Community	
A Large Cascade	

Table 4 shows simple illustrations of typical diffusion cascades that are activated by individuals. The nodes represent individuals and the lines represent relationships between individuals. The flat cascade illustrates a situation where an individual recommends something and the recommendation respondents act on the recommendation, but do not recommend it further. The second illustration is about a situation where within a group of friends, for example, two individuals recommend to the same people, but not to each other. The third type is similar to the second one, but in this cascade the individuals who recommend to the same people, and to a larger community, also recommend to each other. A large cascade is not as common as the other cascade types, as it requires more frequent interaction within community members. In general, products as books represent smaller cascades and products like DVD's represent larger cascades. (Leskovec et al. 2006, 378, 380-381.)

Other trend diffusion models are also available. Atik & Firat (2013, 837) have found that fashion's spreading has a historical background. They studied Simmel's (1904, 1957) theory called the trickle down theory and Veblen's (1899) theory of consuming on clothes to express. Both theories support the same idea that wearing fashionable clothes indicates high social status in the community. People from lower social status classes started to copy the fashion and this way fashion spread. Even though in modern western culture, social classes are not the same as in the beginning of the 20th century, the same trickle down pattern can be seen. Instead of upper class consumers, the fashion vanguards can be celebrities and bloggers that consumers follow on social media. As dog fashion is a growing and already an integral part of today's dog world, these trend diffusion ways are applicable also in the dog commodity market. Dog owners want to showcase wealth and status through clothing their dogs and trends are discovered from celebrities that showcase their dogs, such as Paris Hilton (Redmalm 2014, 93).

As has been shown in this chapter, there are many ways for trends to diffuse among small and eventually large groups of people. Some methods apply mostly in specific contexts and others are more generally applicable. Dog commodities are a large group of products and services that entail necessities, extras, and luxury goods, so there are different ways for trends to spread among dog owners. WOM and eWOM have been found to be powerful methods. Especially women were found to have a significantly positive attitude towards recommendations, both online and interpersonal. Interpersonal recommendations were found more positively, though. In all types of recommendations, women were more likely to try the recommended product or service. It can be concluded from here that women are more prone to the influence of recommendations, overall, than men. (Meuter et al. 2013, 251.)

2.3.2 Dog commodity market trends

According to Boya et al. (2012, 141) a distinguishable trend among dog owners is the humanization of them. This results in treating them as humans, which leads to, for example, shopping for them and pampering them. Williams (2007, 46) emphasizes the pampering of pets as the number one trend among the pet commodity market. As examples of the humanlike pet expenditure categories, he mentions pet memorials, transportation related products and winter gear. Winter gear is most likely focused on the dog commodities more than other pets, as dogs have to go outdoors throughout the year, unlike most other pets. This is also a category that can entail both necessities and extras.

The trend of humanizing dogs has gone as far as testicular implants for dogs, which goes completely to the extra commodity category. The motive behind this is the restoring of a dogs anatomical preciseness and retaining dogs' self-esteem. There are also braces for dogs to straighten their crooked teeth, an operation that not even all humans can afford for themselves or even want for themselves, let alone to their dogs. (Brady et al. 2007, 45-46.)

A rather surprising finding was made by Tesfom and Birch (2010, 910), which was that dog owners seem to be more concerned about their dog food's healthiness than their own food's healthiness. Even though it is surprising, the before mentioned dog related trends do endorse it. So it comes as no surprise that the majority of expenditure to dogs and cats goes to food and another major dog commodity trend is related to dog food. (Brady et al. 2007, 47.) This trend can be seen as a result of the before mentioned humanization of dogs as it is premium dog food (Kumcu & Woolverton 2015, 214).

There have been specialty foods for dogs before, but they have been mostly for dogs that medically require for specialty diets. Premium dog food, as other premium commodities are more and more linked to lifestyle preferences, nowadays. As in human

food world, increasingly healthy and specialty diets have become available and this is the case in the dog food world. The ongoing trends of sustainability, organic produce and naturalness has spread to dog food world too. The availability of these premium foods has also spread in the recent years, as is the supply of them. These specialty dog foods can be found even from big grocery stores in addition to pet stores and veterinary clinics. (Kumcu & Woolverton 2015, 214, 216.) Following figure 4 is a pie chart of the expenditures on dogs and cats, which illustrates, among others, the share of food expenses in all dog and cat related expenses (Brady et al. 2007, 47)

Expenditure on Dogs and Cats

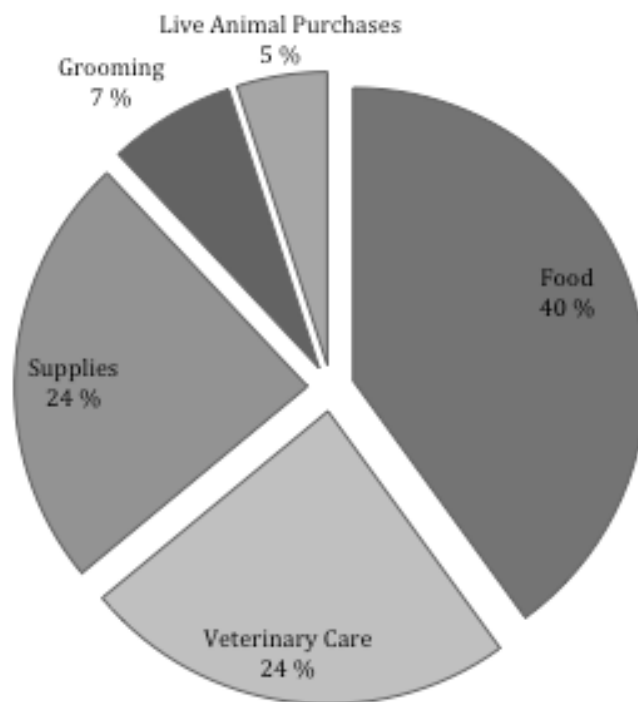


Figure 4 Expenditure on dogs and cats (Brady et al. 2007, 47)

It can be seen from figure 4 that the divide in expenditure on dogs and cats is quite logical, as food, 40%, and veterinary care, 24%, are on the top. But the percentage of supplies, 24%, is on the top too, on the same level as veterinary care, which is quite high. The grooming of a dog can be categorized mostly to the extra commodities, because grooming is not a necessity for a dog. Already in 2007 its share is 7%. Figure 4 is from 2007 and the supplies and grooming has only grown from there, so their growing importance is easily visible. Even though this study does not focus on live animal purchases or veterinary care, I have left their percentages in the figure to illustrate their share in the dog and cat market. (Brady et al. 2007, 47.)

2.4 Human-dog relationship

Dogs have been companions throughout time, but only since the 19th century that they have been considered primarily as companions. Before that dogs have had many roles, such as guarders, herders and hunters. (First Friends-- 2005.) Today dogs can be seen as friends and family members. Traditionally, the bond has been seen as master-slave relationship, but there are also different ways of interpreting the relationship between humans and dogs. According to Hens (2009, 3) there are three kinds of relationships in addition to the master-slave relationship. The others are employer-worker, parent-child and friend-friend relationships. In this study, I will focus mostly on the parent-child and friend-friend relationships.

It has been shown that dogs have many positive effects on their owners' health and owning a dog can fulfill psychological needs of humans. Recent study shows how dog ownership affects positively, for instance, to self-esteem and to the ability to express feelings. Almost half of the respondent women and third of the men said that owning a dog increases remarkably one's ability to empathize. Noteworthy was that owning a dog can also reduce loneliness and act as a substitute for missing relationships. This especially concerned unmarried people and female widows. It can be seen that people acquire dogs to get company and to get a relationship that they are not able to achieve otherwise. This way one's psychological needs get fulfilled. (Langinvainio 2016, 2-3.)

According to Bauman (2000, according to Redmalm 2014, 99), consumerism is related to human's identity and it is a way by which people try to fill a void caused by today's western, very individualistic, society. He also notes that shopping does not substitute real social bonds and that the temporary consumer is searching for a way for continuous identification with another individual. Redmalm (2014, 99) studies the dog breed Chihuahua in the contemporary western society, and argues that buying a Chihuahua can be seen to fill the void caused by today's individualistic society by offering continuous identification. Dogs can enforce the communal feel also with other people through dog hobbies and other activities (Langinvainio 2016, 51). So, Chihuahuas are a better substitute than other shopping and they are able to fill the void that other things you can buy cannot fill. This most likely applies to many other dog breeds too, but Chihuahuas were the focus of Redmalm's study.

This brings up an interesting opposition between the legal status of dogs and the media's condemnation of dogs' objectification. A dog can be seen to replace another individual, traditionally thought as a human, in the contemporary society, and can even challenge the human-animal divide, but in the eyes of law, dogs are considered as property. They do not have any juridical rights of their own, nor do any other animals, for that matter. (Redmalm 2004, 99, 107.) In the following Figure 5, some possible reasons

t'for the challenging of the human-animal divide are presented through Maslow's (1943, 372, 376, 380-2) hierarchy of needs.

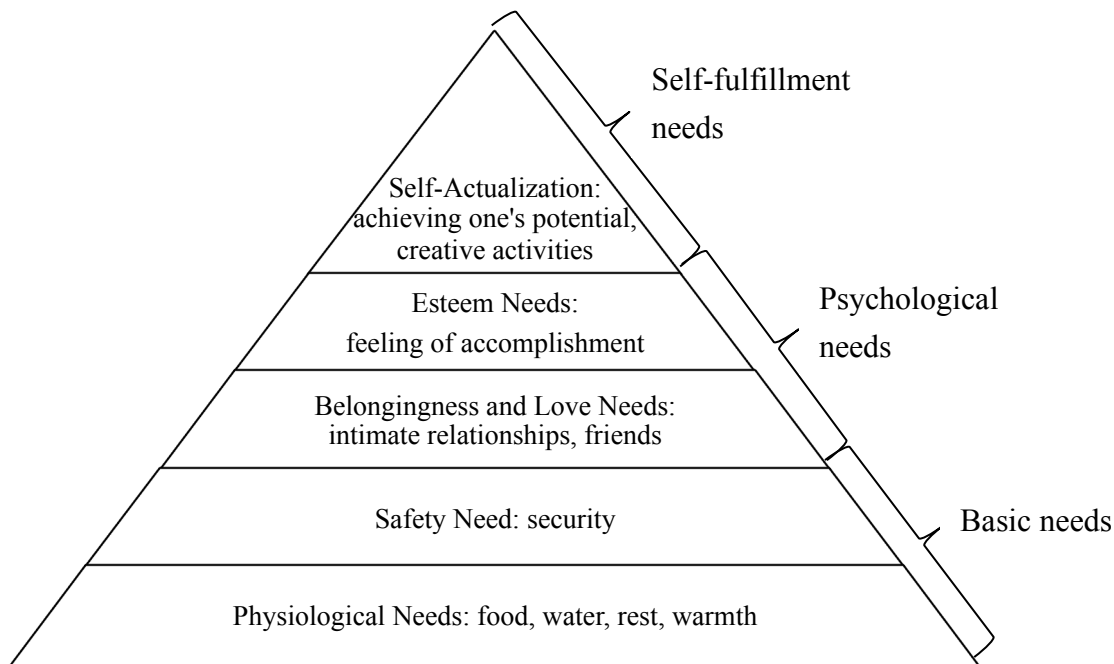


Figure 5 Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see for example Zakaria et al. 2014, 33; McLeod 2007)

According to Langinvainio (2016, 10) the positive effects of dogs can be viewed through Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There are five levels of needs in Maslow's theory: the need of self-actualization, the esteem needs, the love needs, the safety needs and physiological needs. The two latter needs go to basic needs that include things like security and food and water. The self-actualization needs are considered as self-fulfillment needs and the remaining two, the esteem needs and the love needs, are considered psychological needs. (Maslow 1943, 372, 376, 380-382.)

Dogs have been seen to fulfill at least the self-fulfillment needs and the psychological needs of humans. For instance, creative activities, which are included in the self-fulfillment needs, are easy to execute with dogs. Psychological needs include for instance different kinds of relationships and friends and feeling of accomplishment. As dog provides companionship, also these needs are being fulfilled. (Langinvainio 2016, 10; Maslow 1943, 380-2.)

On average, male dog owners have higher income than female dog owners, but dogs are common in every income level in Finland, as most likely also elsewhere too. Dog households are significantly fewer in the lower income households, though. (Langinvainio 2016, 28; Nurmela 2014.) So, dog keeping is more likely in higher income households. The level of income has been seen to affect the type of dog a house-

hold acquires. Generally speaking, lower income households (income < \$45,000), in the United States, as most likely also elsewhere, usually acquire bigger dogs to function as guards. A dog can bring security in lower income neighborhoods. Lower income households are about six times more likely to have a guard dog than high-income households (income > \$120,000). Almost all dogs, over 90%, were family or lap dogs in the high-income households. So, high-income households are more likely to buy a small lapdogs, which are more often the one's being spent on the most (Vänskä 2014, 267). (Lian & Mathis 2016, 612, 616-617.)

The dog-human relationship can be divided into four types, as mentioned in the introduction. The relationship categories are master-slave, employer-worker, parent-child and friend-friend relationships. Tuan (1984, according to Hens 2009, 4) sees the human's desire to dominate as the driving force behind the dog as a slave –relationship. The domination should not be seen as aggressive, but as associated with affection. Even though extravagant measures can be made to care for a dog, in this relationship type, dogs are meant for just human pleasure. This relationship type can be interpreted also in a way that pets are enslaved and they need to be liberated back to the wild. (Hens 2009, 4.)

The dog as a worker type is easy to understand as many dogs function as help dogs, police dogs and in many other “working” roles. In today's world, companion dogs can be seen as working dogs, for example in nursing homes. The working dog relationship can be considered as a successful human-animal relationship, as in many cases the dog itself also enjoys its tasks. A human domination aspect can be seen here too, as the dog has to perform the tasks that it is told. (Hens 2009, 6-7.)

A common language can be seen as a prerequisite for true friendship, but in a human-dog concept this has not been seen necessary. Just as in human-human friendships, humans and dogs can enjoy greatly each other's company and get comfort from that and fulfill some fundamental psychological needs (Langinvainio 2016, 3). Despite of this, the relationship has some major differences. One explainer to this is the short lifetime of dogs compared to humans; dogs are not as permanent as human friends might be. (Hens 2009, 8.)

Sometimes dogs can replace another human being in a relationship, as it is when dogs are considered as children. Even more specifically, usually as babies. Human children grow up and become autonomous, but dogs do not, so they are left to be treated as baby-like creatures and the relationship stays paternalistic. This relationship type is only growing stronger with today's consumer options for dogs. It has been made easy to see dogs as children as there are possibilities to clothe and treat them similarly. (Hens 2009, 7-8.) The dog fashion seems to mimic the fashion of little children with its abundance of color and playfulness (Vänskä 2014, 267). Vänskä (2016, 91) describes dogs as “co-

consuming lovmachines” and “eternal children”, when describing the current state of western dog culture. This goes well together with Hens’ thoughts of dogs as children.

The human desire to dominate can be detected from all the four relationship types. The long and successful history between humans and dogs cannot be explained only with human dominion, though. This is why it is good to remember that for many, the relationship with a dog can be blended between different types. (Hens 2009, 8.) In today’s versatile world, where dogs can be thought to question the human-animal divide, the traditional master-slave relationship between humans and dogs is not enough to define the relationship (Redmalm 2004, 99; Hens 2009, 8.)

2.5 Small enterprises

Often small enterprises are handled together with medium sized enterprises, as SMEs, small and medium sized enterprises. In this study, the focus is on small enterprises, which can be defined, for instance, by their size: less than 50 employees and annual turnover is maximum of 10 million euros or total assets are maximum of 10 million euros (Pienet ja--). A small enterprise can be considered as a micro enterprise if it employs fewer than 10 people. This contains all individual proprietorships, for instance. According to the European Commission, about 99% of enterprises are small enterprises. (Saunders et al. 2014, 136.)

The quantitative qualities of an enterprise do not always tell enough, though. The quantitative approach does not take into consideration the different sizes and states of different industries. For example, if a hairdressing saloon employs 10 people, it is considered quite big in its industry, but it is considered as a micro enterprise, according to statistics. (Shepherd & Wiklund 2005, 5.) Also, in niche markets, where small enterprises are strongly present, small enterprises can be quite big operators in the market even though they are not big in size. As there is not so much demand, the supply cannot be too big, either. For instance, some areas of dog commodity market can be considered niche markets. (Blackford 2003, 119.) It is important for small enterprise owners to be active in marketing and selling. It has been studied that especially in small pet stores suggestive selling and prompting the customer to make the purchase does increase the sales considerably. (Milligan & Hantula 2006, 41-42.)

Small enterprises are more agile and swifter in their moves and this is a crucial advantage to them comparing to larger enterprises (Blackford 2003, 165). They usually have a more simple enterprise structure than bigger companies and this way the information and decision-making moves faster. They also create opportunities at a lower risk level and almost all enterprises have to start at this level and continue to grow after-

wards. Small enterprises are an important thing for today's economy as they offer many jobs and enable new jobs. (Burciu 2015, 163.)

Even though it is usually thought that an entrepreneur wants to grow his/her business, there are many reasons for a small entrepreneur to keep the enterprise as small, too. (Shepherd & Wiklund 2005, 14.) Some enterprises, such as individual proprietorships, might be founded upon the idea that the business stays small. Motive behind this kind of enterprises can be the entrepreneur's want to express oneself, for instance through art or knitting dog wear, and make an extra living out of that hobby. It is thought that money is the biggest motivator for entrepreneurs, so that way it would be logical to assume that growth is the object. But in the case of small businesses, there can be also non-financial motives that are the most dominant motives. (Shepherd & Wiklund 2005, 14.)

The business is very individual centered, as is the small enterprise research. Small enterprises are very dependent on their manager, which is usually the founder. As the manager has a great influence on the business, but so does the environment. Larger enterprises can isolate themselves better from the negative effects of the environment, than small enterprises. This is an aspect to take into consideration in small enterprises. (Shepherd & Wiklund 2005, 14.) Also, the financial starting point varies a lot between small firms and is heavily dependent on the founder (Cooper 1981, 39).

The average entrepreneur, who founds a new enterprise, is aged between 30-39 years (Burciu 2015, 162). Despite this, there is a growing number of young entrepreneurs. The Finnish media, among others, has noticed this and especially new university student entrepreneurs have received a lot of attention. (Kuusela 2014, 13.) Holienka et al. (2016, 117) argue that there are two different motives behind founding a new enterprise at a young age: necessity-based and opportunity-based entrepreneurship. The necessity-driven entrepreneurs were motivated by the thought that being an entrepreneur is their best career choice and the opportunity-driven had other choices too, but wanted to explore a promising business opportunity. Not linked to age, the motivation to start a enterprise is because of the entrepreneurs personal abilities and knowledge, an idea that came from, for example, the needs of a prior workplace, or an opportunity presented by external environmental factors (Cooper 1981, 40).

Even though small enterprises can operate in rather small areas, the global aspect in today's business world makes it quite difficult to not to be international. If there is not direct business with some foreign operator, most likely the domestic operator the enterprise uses is in connection with a foreign enterprise. There is almost always international competition as in today's world you can easily order online from almost any place of the world (Li et al. 2010, 294). So, this is why it is important for small enterprises to acknowledge this and also that usually the most successful enterprises embrace the in-

ternationality and the possibilities that it bring, for example in converging western consumer habits. (Ganesh 1998, 45.)

Cooper (1981, 40) divides the development stages of a small enterprise into three: the start-up stage, the early-growth stage and the later-growth stage. A different kind of strategy applies to each stage, naturally. In the first stage, an enterprise aims to position itself in the industry, in the second stage it tests and stabilizes strategies, and in the third stage stabilization and diversification occurs. The start-up stage is a stage that every company must experience and a stage that not everyone lives through.

Start-up is basically a stage in a new company's lifespan (Cooper 1981, 40). It can be defined as a learning company, which is logical because in the early steps of an enterprise, it truly learns a lot. Steve Blank, an American business "guru", sees business models that are easily repeatable and easy to scale as the idea behind founding start-ups. Despite the multiple ways to define a start-up, the main idea behind it stays the same: an enterprise that starts from zero. The motivation to start an enterprise in this context is a rather clear business idea and the aim in developing the business is to reach the exit in a few years. The exit in this context means that the enterprise gets sold to a bigger enterprise and this way exits and as a result founders and others involved earn money. The before mentioned explains also why start-ups can be alluring to serial entrepreneurs, the enterprise's lifespan can be significantly shorter than a normal one's. (Kuusela 2013, 15, 19, 20.)

There have always been start-ups, but they have received more attention in the last ten years or so. The biggest enabler for the start-up boom is most likely the two-sided Internet interaction possibilities, which did not exist some twenty years ago. A characteristic to this modern start-up world is that it is born international, more ambitious and more straightforward than traditional entrepreneurship. The business structure is light and agile and the focus is in innovativeness. Biggest share of start-ups operate in wholesale and retail trade, and there are more and more computer and cell phone applications and other technology related business ideas that are developed in start-ups (Burciu 2015, 163). Also, the amount of young entrepreneurs in the start-up world has received quite a lot attention in the media. Despite this, the start-up world is not focused only on young entrepreneurs. (Kuusela 2013, 14, 19.)

As there are fewer employees in small enterprises, some employees might have to do different kinds of tasks that have their own employees in a large company. This might, of course, provide valuable work experience for many, but another thing that rises from this is the importance of human resource development in small enterprises. Smaller enterprises are more innovative and usually more open to learning. Learning can happen through entrepreneurial learning, which contains, for instance individual learning through programs. The learning is more informal in nature for SMEs, in general and the

most important learning for SME's is through social networks. (Saunders et al. 2014, 146.)

Networking is important to every enterprise, but it can be crucial to small enterprises. Broad networks are beneficial in many situations, but gathering knowledge is the number one meaning of suitable networks. In addition to it being an excellent knowledge bank, broad networks can enable that the network base keeps on growing by introducing useful entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to each other. Relations with networks are important to maintain so they are not lost. In the early stages, an enterprise might need help and guidance and this can be handled with sufficient and appropriate networks. The importance of friends and family should not be undermined as networks as they are important ones for most entrepreneurs. (Timmons et al. 2004, 13.)

Friends and family are seen as informal networks, and banks, consultants and industry associations are seen as formal ones. Both types of networks are important and they might support the enterprise from different angles. One formal network is external accountant, the importance of which to SME's has emerged above others. It has been studied that external accountants affect strongly the survival and growth of SME's. None of informal networks was seen to affect enterprise growth. (Watson 2012, 552-553.)

Differences between male and female SME entrepreneurs have been studied in terms of networking. The amount of networking is similar for both and both seem to generate same kinds of benefits for their enterprises through networking. Differences can be found in the type of networks that are gathered; females utilize more informal networks and males utilize more formal networks. Others operators in the industry are important informal networks that affect enterprise survival for male SME entrepreneurs, friends and family for female SME entrepreneurs. (Watson 2012, 552-553.)

2.6 Synthesis

In this chapter, many theories have been presented on consuming behavior, trend spreading and why people treat their dogs as humans nowadays. Also, the role of small businesses has been addressed. Different theories were also addresses to make the consumer behavior and trend diffusion in this particular market of dog commodities more understandable and thus making the following parts of this study well-grounded. Some theories were presented so they will set the theoretic framework for following parts of this studies and some theory base were provided to justify and rationalize the chosen foci of this study.

Different theories presented here will be applied to different parts of this study. Literature on consumer behavior brought up that consuming is strongly related to emo-

tions, which is crucial information regarding to this study, because it is important to understand the motivation behind consuming overall and especially consuming on pet dogs. Moynagh and Worsley (2002, 293-294) put emphasis on how people consume for their close ones and how people get positive feelings about consuming when they manage to get other people happy by consuming. Logically love was seen as a strong motivator behind consuming. Laros and Steenkamp (2005, 1443-1444) go even further by creating a three-level model to distinguish and understand different emotions in consumers. In this study, the aim is to distinguish consumer emotions seen through business owners' eyes and through dog owning consumers themselves at least on superordinate level, but on basic emotions level too.

The luxury aspect of dog commodity market is good to take into consideration, because there are many high-end commodities for dogs too. As Moynagh and Worsley (2002, 295) has brought up, people express themselves and can express a certain status through consuming. Consuming on luxury goods creates a picture of higher status and including one's dog into this luxury scene can reinforce one's higher status. Moon & Young (2008, 32) have created a Dynamic Model of Luxury Consumption, which showcases the different variables related to luxury consumption. These variables and the whole context of luxury consumption in the dog commodity market are viewed in this study in the US-Finland context.

In the aim of creating a coherent picture of the prevalent dog commodity market situation in Finland and the US, dog owning consumers are interviewed in this study too. In addition to understanding the motivation to consume in general, distinguishing different types of pet owners brings value to this study as it creates a basis for categorizing dog owners and their consumption. Chen et al. (2012, 126) have created three clusters depending on the motives to consume on pets and how much is consumed on pets. These clusters are a great way of getting more depth and understanding when it comes to analyzing dog-owning consumers' interviews. It is also important and interesting to see whether these clusters apply well in an only dog-specific context, as this study is.

As one of the research questions is how Finnish small business owners follow trends, different trend diffusion models are important to examine and to take into consideration when analyzing small businesses' interviews. Leskovec et al (2006, 380) introduces different cascade models in trend diffusion. In addition, Atik and Firat (2013, 837) study trend diffusion in fashion context highlighting the trickle down effect of fashion and trends from affluent consumers to lower-income consumers. Boya et al. (2012, 142) bring up how at least among the dog-owning consumers, WOM, especially eWOM, is popular. The influence of WOM will be examined in this study, both from small businesses point of view and consumers'.

As the human-dog relationship part may not be business-wise as giving as other theoretic parts, it has the role of making the relationship between a dog and a human under-

standable and thus explaining why people can treat dogs as they were humans and consume on them likewise. For instance, Boya et al. (2012, 142) have distinguished that a growing trend among dog owners is that dogs are humanized more and more. Langinvainio (2016, 10) sees that Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs explains the before mentioned with humans psychological needs, which also supports Redmalm's view. Redmalm (2014, 99) sees that as the western societies have become more and more individualistic dogs have been started to treat as more and more humanlike. As the explanation is that people substitute the human relationships that were provided from the more collective societies before with relationships with dogs. This explains the basis where the growing consuming on dogs has initiated from and this way provide a good basis for this study.

Understanding the big role of small businesses in today's economy and how hobbies are more easily turned into small businesses than other types of businesses explains well why the objective of this study focuses on small pet business owners in stead of focusing on big chain pet stores that are found, too (Shepherd & Wiklund 2005, 14). A trend in entrepreneurship is start-ups. Cooper (1981, 40) defines start-ups as stage in a company's life that every company has to go through, but they can be seen their own type of communal entrepreneurship too, as Feld (2013, 13) describes. The communal feel of small enterprises can be also seen in their networks according to Saunders et al. (2014, 146) as learning is described as more informal. This knowledge is essential to this study, so the probable mindset of Finnish small pet business owners' can be understood and to create a basic scenario for small business grounding to give contrast to the scenarios in the empiric part.

Based on all this gathered theoretic information, I have created a synthesis process flow map to illustrate the research question "how do trends spread from the US to the Finnish market", which will be the theoretic base for the following empiric parts. The synthesis shows how trends spread from the US to the Finnish market, consisting of small businesses and individual consumers in Finland in this specific dog commodity context.

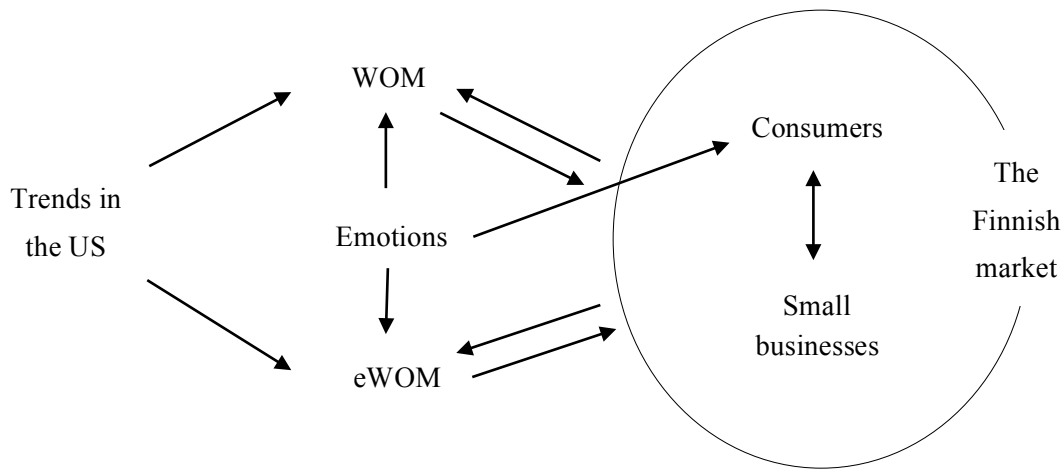


Figure 6 Synthesis of how do trends spread from the US to the Finnish market

There are basically seven points that interact with each other as the process flows. The process starts logically from trends in the US and ends up in the Finnish market. As proved before, emotions play an integral role in a dog-owning consumers consumer behavior and they determine how and what type of knowledge consumers will spread of a trend onwards, if at all. Emotions can be complex in this context as they can be seen as the emotions that make the consumers generate the (e)WOM or as the emotions that are derived from the received (e)WOM. Nevertheless, in this process the emotions illustrate both and thus there is an arrow between it and eWOM, it and WOM and it and trends in the US, the last one referring to the emotions that have influenced the generated and received (e)WOM of American consumers. American consumers are not in the center of this process and thus they are not illustrated separately.

Consumers have two ways of spreading knowledge; WOM and eWOM. Through WOM the knowledge can spread to networks, which entails formal and informal networks, and through eWOM to the Internet, which entails from homepages of pet stores to electronic networks such as social medias et cetera. These are the channels, through which the consumers also receive information about new trends too and that is why there are two-way arrows between the Finnish market and both the WOMs. It was proved that informal networks such as family and friends do play a big role in consumers' purchase decisions. Also, physiological and self-fulfillment needs are the driving forces behind an individual dog-owning consumer's consuming behavior and can be seen as a background variable in this process for consumers.

Through these same above-mentioned channels, small businesses can follow and absorb trends and also spread them similarly. For small businesses, the (e)WOM interac-

tion can be more with formal networks than compared to consumers' interactions. Though the role of informal networks for small enterprises can be much greater than to larger enterprises. Also, inside the Finnish market, the small businesses and the consumers can spread the US trends to each other's awareness. This means that the small business can also affect the spreading of the US trends by absorbing them and this way spreading them through its networks or posting a post about some new trendy commodity online. This way individual consumers may hear from it and thus the circle repeats itself. Another path for trend spreading from the US to small businesses in Finland is without the impact of an individual consumer. Trends can be absorbed directly from the US dog commodity operators. This can be the case, for instance in very recent trends that have not yet been absorbed by individual consumers in the US or in Finland. In every situation, there must be some kind of link through which a trend can be absorbed and this process map illustrates two of the most common ones: WOM and eWOM.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach

Researches can be conducted with a qualitative or quantitative research approach. These two approaches are usually seen as opposites to each other and there are many definitions and twofold divides for them. The differentiation and the opposition layout of them can be seen as pointless, though, when the quality of the research is in question. There are differences in opinions in whether qualitative or quantitative research is better and what are their benefits and disadvantages, but the main thing is to choose an appropriate research approach to the research subject in question. It is not impossible to combine both in a research, even though it is not as common as choosing only one approach (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 26). The correct approach depends completely on the subject, so quality researches can be made with both approaches. (Eskola & Suonranta 1998, 14-15.)

Quantitative research aims to generalize and quantify, and the key is in the quantity of data, so it does not match the aims of this particular research. Also, in quantitative approach there has to be a prior hypothesis to fill, which does not suit this particular study and thus is one of the main reasons why quantitative approach is not used. Qualitative approach studies the subject from a more subjective point of view as it tries to understand things in certain situations and this is exactly the aim in my study, to understand the dog commodity market and the operators in it, and thus qualitative approach is used. (Eskola & Suonranta 1998, 18.) This research approach will be fitting as it helps to find the prevalent trend situation in the US's and Finland's pet commodity market through the eyes of supply and demand side. This way a coherent picture of the market can be built as well as possible, and also, find out possibilities for operators in the market. The quality of the data is a key in this study, as qualitative research uses fewer data sources and the data is discretionary (Eskola & Suonranta 1998, 18).

3.2 Data collection

The main focus in this research is to study consumer trends in dog commodity market in the US and Finland and to see Finnish small pet businesses' and dog-owning consumers' views on the trends and how they spread. As the prevalent situation and the entrepreneurs' and consumer's view are not available through just one data collection method, I used two different kinds of methods in this research, content analysis and interviews. I did two sets of interviews, so there will be three data sources that I am using.

The data collected with two different methods will support each other in creating a coherent picture of the dog commodity market's consumer trends at the moment. The different methods also reinforce the reliability of the research as larger set of view angles are considered. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 38.)

3.2.1 Content analysis

In qualitative research, the use of secondary data is very common and it enables the analyzing of already existing data. The data can be collected for another purpose originally, but it does not mean that it is not applicable to another type of examination, quite the opposite even. (Eskola & Suonranta 1998, 118.) As examining data from a new angle, it can reveal unexpected views. It can also enable an easier method of approaching data that would be otherwise difficult to access or gather such as in this research the consumer trends in the US. (Dale et al. 1988, 3.)

The prevalent consumer trends among the US dog owners were examined through available Internet sources. I will examine the content of dog commodity market related statistics, non-scientific articles and blogs found on the Internet. As the aim is to find out the prevalent consumer trends in the market at the moment, I focused only on recent data from the last six years, 2012-2018. Content analysis in qualitative research can entail some quantification of data, but in this research the studied Internet content is not going to be measured, only described and analyzed for further meanings (Boréus & Bergström 2017, 24). To reach a systematic hold to the content analysis, I have gathered the analyzed sources in a table (Appendix 1), which elaborates the source reference (in text), source name, source type, complete reference information and to which country it is related. There are a few non-systematic sources and they are not included in the table, but are found within the text. These non-systematic sources are used to elaborate definitions et cetera and this is why they are needed in the analysis, but not essential to the source tables.

The searching of the data was completed through Google. I decided to use only one search engine to reach some level of systemacy and Google was chosen because it is a very common search engine worldwide. The used search phrases for the statistic, for instance, consisted of "dog market statistics", "pet store statistics" and variations of these in Finnish. For the non-scientific articles I used phrases such as "dog market" and "dog trend". And lastly for the blogs, I used as simple phrase as "dog blog" to see what kind of blogs emerged and there were listings of best dog blogs and different dog blogs. I chose not to look at listings as their grounds were not clear and I decided to look at a few blogs in the top results more closely as they must be popular and known as they come among the top results in a Google search that wide.

As an extreme example, there came up about 1 050 million results with the “dog blog” search, which is a very big number, but predictable as the search was very wide. Still, all the searches yielded over a thousand results. Of course, many of the results did not match for what I was looking for and it was literally impossible to go through all of them. So, I chose to concentrate of the first few pages, which I found matched best my purposes. Also, the act that a website comes in the top result suggest that it is most likely the best and most popular result for the search phrase in question. The chosen blogs are presented in the table 5.

Table 5 Blog information

Blog	Author	Post Frequency (2017)	Social Media Accounts	Country of Origin
Oh My Dog	Female	Once a month	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Youtube, Google+	The US
No Dog About It	Female	Weekly	Twitter, RSS feed	The US
All Things Dog	Female	Yearly	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, RSS feed	The US
The Dog Blog	Female and male	Once/twice a month	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Youtube, Google+	The US
Hertan, Kertun, Martan ja Pirkon blogi	Female	Twice a year	Instagram	Finland
Purematta paras	Female	Once/twice a month	Instagram, Facebook	Finland

There are similar features in most blogs and thus are easy to compare to each other, which is not always the case for statistics nor non-scientific articles. Majority of the authors were female, only in one blog there was a male author. The post frequency var-

ied a lot and there was some decline to be seen overall in the post frequencies, as many blogs had been around for many years and all the posts were still available. Every blog had some linked social media account, more of which will be explained in the chapter 4.1 Content analysis findings.

3.2.2 *Interviews*

The second method, which is used in the research, is an interview, which I have done in two different groups; entrepreneurs and consumers. Interviews must be the most common data collecting method that is used, both in qualitative and quantitative research approaches, because of the large range of types in interviews. Structured interviews are easier to quantify and this is why they are mainly used in quantitative research, and more open and deep interviews are types that are used mainly in qualitative research. Interviews are beneficial when the findings of the interview are going to be related to a larger context. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 34-35.)

I used semi-structured interview type in the interviews I conducted. This way I am able to receive the insights of a specific entrepreneur and dog-owning consumer, which can help me in painting a coherent picture of my topic. Semi-structured interview allows the focus to stay on the subject, as there is an interview frame (see Appendix 2 and 3), which is used. Also, the interview can be maintained as conversation-like so the interviewee can elaborate her thoughts as specifically as possible on the subject. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47-48.)

The first set of interviews is with the private small pet business entrepreneurs. I approached the entrepreneurs by calling them on telephone and presenting my study. The receiving of the call and this study was rather positive as I got five out of seven entrepreneurs I called to participate in this study. My aim was 4-5 entrepreneurs and I got the number that I wanted. Overall, the attitude towards studying this field and especially small private businesses was very positive. I also gathered the data from five different pet business entrepreneurs. All enterprises were small in size, private, and three out of five entrepreneurs focused only on dogs in their business and two entrepreneurs had a brick and mortar pet store, which offered commodities for other pets too. In the table 6 there are collected main information on the entrepreneurs.

Table 6 Entrepreneur information

Interviewee	Background	Enterprise	In business since	Commodity type	Selling method
Strömberg	Small-scale entrepreunering, Doctor of Economic Sciences	FitDog, Dagsmark Petfood	2006, 2016	Product	Brick and mortar, online
Heiskanen	Sales and marketing expert, Entrepreneur course	Tassuputiikki	2014	Product	Brick and mortar, online
Vehovaara	Holiday salesperson, entrepreneur course	Tassuklaani	2017	Product	Brick and mortar, online
Schüler	Teacher dog-related multimode course	Doghouse	2000	Service	Brick and mortar
Anonymous entrepreneur	Animal attendant	-	2016	Service	Brick and mortar

The entrepreneur that I interviewed first was Laura Strömberg and she is a founding partner and managing director in two dog businesses. One is Fit Dog Finland Ltd., a dietary supplement manufacturer for active dogs, and the other is Dagsmark Petfood Ltd., the only Finnish dry dog food manufacturer. The second interviewee was Merja Heiskanen, who has founded Tassuputiikki, originally in 2012 as an individual proprietorship and in 2014 along with a new business partner the enterprise was changed to limited company, Pet Team Oy by its official name. Tassuputiikki is a brick and mortar pet store that offers food and supplies to dogs and cats. Third interviewee was Anniina Vehovaara, who has founded Tassuklaani Oy in 2017, a brick and mortar pet store that offers food and supplies to dogs and various other pets. The fourth interviewee was Ann-Britt Schüler, who is a founder of Koirapäiväkoti Doghouse Ky. Her husband Kaj Schüler is also involved in the company and answered to some of the interview questions. The dog daycare was founded in 2009 and it was the first one in Finland. The fifth interviewee wished to stay anonymous and will be addressed as “Anonymous entrepre-

neur” from now on. Anonymous entrepreneur offers a selection of different services for dogs and has been active since 2016.

Three out of four of the semi-structured entrepreneur interviews were conducted as individual interviews and two entrepreneurs were interviewed at the same time for convenience reasons. The entrepreneur interviews took place at the entrepreneurs’ facilities in three of the four interviews, which gave me a possibility to observe some customer encounters too. One of the four entrepreneur interviews was conducted at a conference room in Turku School of Economics, as the entrepreneur’s facilities were not available. The consumer interviews were similarly semi-structured interviews, all of which were conducted as individual interviews. They took place in the interviewees’ homes, in a coffee shop and in Turku School of Economics.

The second set of interviews is with keen dog owners with active dog background, or with an American background, or both. Similarly as in the entrepreneur interviews, I approached some of the interviewees by calling them on the telephone, but also by contacting them on Facebook. I asked four consumers to participate in the interviews and all four agreed, which again shows the positive attitude towards studying this field. The four consumer informant interviewees consisted of four women who had had dogs in their life since childhood, and can be considered very keen dog owners and three out of four interviewees have lives in the US and thus are capable of giving information related to the dog commodity trends in the US as well as in Finland. Consumer informants were used experts in the dog commodity market’s consumer field to give as coherent picture of the market as possible. Information on them is presented in the table 7. Some of the information will be elaborated in more detail in chapter 4.3.

Table 7 Consumer informant information

Interviewee	Age	Position	Chen et al.'s most matching cluster type	Following of dog groups on social media	Buys primarily from
Moisio	23	Economics student	1	Daily-Weekly	Online
Karvonen	24	Occupational therapy student	2	Daily	Brick and mortar/ Online
Anonymous consumer	53	Principal	2	Non	Brick and mortar
Rajala	32	Day-care caretaker	2	Daily	Brick and mortar

The first interviewee, Hanna Moisio, is a Finnish 23-year-old student that has lived California for a year in 2011. The second, Kaisa Karvonen, is also a student and she is 24-year-old. She has lived in Illinois also for a year in 2011 and she takes her dogs to dog shows and does rally obedience with them. The third interviewee is a 53-year-old American principal, who has lived for instance in Hong Kong and Austria and currently lives in Finland. She wished to stay anonymous and thus she is referred to as “Anonymous consumer” from now on. The fourth and final interviewee is Susanna Rajala, she is a practical nurse and, together with her husband, the founder and administrator of a Facebook group called “Turun Chihuahuat” (Chihuahuas in Turku).

The interview frame for the interviews (Appendix 2; Appendix 3) adapted a bit along the interviews. The entrepreneurs’ interviews were conducted in a two-week time period and thus there was time to learn from the previous interviews and adapt the interview frame to match this study even better. The consumer interviews were conducted in a bit faster pace, as they were done within a week, leaving time for learning from the previous interviews too. Appendix 2, the interview frame for the entrepreneurs, and Appendix 3, the interview frame for consumers, was originally in Finnish as the interviewees were all Finnish speaking. I have translated the interview frames and quotes in English myself.

3.3 Data analysis

The aim of gathering information and analyzing it was to create new valuable knowledge of the subject in question. In this study, the aim was to find out what kind the consumer behavior is in the dog commodity market and that was executed through analyzing different types of Internet contents in dog commodity market and through interviews. The data analysis phase is important to keep in mind already when planning and conducting the data collection. In addition, it is important to start the analyzing of the data as soon as possible after the collection phase as the occasion and the atmosphere, for instance, is still in fresh memory. It is normal in qualitative research that the analyzing of the data starts already in the data collection phase as the interviewer or data collector receives the data and the initial thoughts are good to write down and reflect on them in the analyzing phase. Also a characteristic to qualitative research is that the data is analyzed in its original form, such as in text, not converted to another form and then analyzed. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 135-136.)

The content of the data collected from secondary Internet sources will be analyzed through thematizing in this research. Thematizing as a method means that the researcher studies the data with an eye on themes that recurs in the text or other data. So, themes will be searched from the data and they will be used as guidelines in the analyzing. (Eskola & Suonranta 1998, 175-176.) The aim in analyzing these different secondary sources is to build a picture of the prevalent dog commodity market in Finland and in the US. This functioned as the base that represents the media picture and some statistics of the market. To this base it was interesting and beneficial to compare the Finnish picture that has been received from the interviews as it brings the real life perspective of the people who are active in the market.

As the analyzing of the interview can start already in the interview situation and the interview type allows the conversation-like atmosphere, it is possible to specify some questions and make sure that the interviewees have understood the questions in the same matter as the interviewer. This also functions the other way around, the interviewee can make oneself understood correctly by explaining one's thought more thoroughly. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 137, 173.) This was also the case in this study. A few specifying questions were made by both sides and examples were given on some questions to ensure the understanding and flow of the conversation. Overall, the question were received and understood well.

Logically, the interviews in this research were also analyzed through thematizing; the focus was on the themes that arose throughout the interview and conclusions were based on them. The frames for the interviews (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3) were created based on the theoretical framework of this study, so logically the themes accompanied the themes in the theoretical part. Also, the frame of the interview has been analyzed

and categorized by themes that rose from the theoretical framework in the Operationalization table in (see Appendix 4). The analyzing of these interviews brought the needed insight of the market from the supply and demand side and this way enabled to form a coherent and a true picture of the dog commodity market in Finland and also in the US. The similarities and differences between the secondary data and interviews brought the depth to the analysis and thus enabled the study to fulfill its aim, which would not have been possible without the analysis methods.

3.4 Evaluation of the study

A struggle that emerges in most qualitative researches is that the analyzer influences the analyzing of the data and thus the findings, so it is mostly considered as subjective. There are ways to minimize the influence, though, and the subjectivity might not influence the quality of the research in any negative matter either, as it is one of qualitative research's characteristics. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 35.) The trustworthiness in this study is made possible through the thorough explaining of different steps and methods in this study. Another effort in making this study as trustworthy as possible is that the analyzed interviews have been sent to the interviewees to check the correct understanding of their interviews and that they feel that the message has stayed the same after translation from Finnish to English.

Mäkelä (1990, 47-48) has established well-known and used criteria for analyzing qualitative research. His criteria is meant to be used in researches that have a clear and limited data material, which is why they suit to this research and thus I am going to utilize his criteria in this research's evaluation. The four points in his criteria are:

- The significance of the data and its social or cultural place
- The sufficiency of the data
- The coverage of the data
- The assessability and repeatability of the data.

The first criteria basically evaluates whether the data is worth studying in the prevailing social and cultural surroundings. It is not always easy to know beforehand how valuable the knowledge derived from the research is, but it should have some kind of meaning, and in this particular research, it should produce some sort of value in a commercial sense. (Mäkelä 1990, 48.) This research subject is commercial by nature as it handles consumer behavior and consumer trends. It is also worthwhile as the focus of those before mentioned themes is the dog commodity market, which is a booming market (see for example Vänskä 2016, 76; Stewart 2017).

The second and third points in Mäkelä's (1990, 52-53) criteria are the sufficiency and the coverage of the data, which can be handled together. In qualitative research, the sufficiency and the coverage of the data is debatable and very much case specific. Generally speaking, the data should reach a saturation point, after which the offerings of the data do not bring additional value to the research, to be sufficient enough. Also, the data and its sources should not be picked at random, but to reason in an understandable manner. The data in this study does not get the possibility to start to repeat itself from all aspects. The content analysis of secondary Internet sources offers a possibility to do that, but this might not be the case in the interview data as there are nine interviewees. Five entrepreneur interviewees and four consumer interviewees offer the possibility to thoroughly study the interviewees views though, so it can be a very positive thing too and more adequate to this study. The reasoning behind these data collection methods is represented in the data collection chapter before.

The final point covers the assessability and repeatability of the data. In this point, the understandability of the reasoning process and interpretation methods is evaluated. The before mentioned aspects should be presented so clearly and logically that the research is able to be repeated and to land on the same conclusions. The classification of data is seen to add the intersubjectivity, and in this research this is done through thematizing the data. (Mäkelä 1990, 53-54.) The methods and processes used in this research will be explained throughout this research with utmost accuracy to ensure the logicity and repeatability of this research.

4 DOG COMMODITY MARKET

4.1 Market depiction

4.1.1 *The US*

There are almost 90 million pet dogs in the United States in 2017 as the same number in 2000 was 68 million pet dogs. So, there is a clear growth to be seen in the number of dogs between 2000-2017 as the number has increased with over 20%. (Number of dogs – – 2017.) In the US, 48% of households own dogs, and they are the most popular pets in there, as in many countries. As a comparison, 38% of US households own a cat, which is the second most popular pet. Millennials have been found to be the most active pet owners as 35% of them have pets. (The 2017-2018 APPA – – 2017.)

Most pet dogs are considered as companions and family members in the US, they are also used in many service tasks. The three most popular dog breeds in the US consist of rather big breeds, for instances of Golden Retriever. Compared to Finland, there are more small, more commonly pampered, breeds in the top ten breeds, though, such as Yorkshire Terrier (Rotujen rekisteröinnit 2006-2016). (Number of dogs – – 2017.) Family and lap dogs, which are usually smaller in size, are more commonly owned in higher income households in the US. Also, people from higher income backgrounds were reported to have grown up with a dog in the household more often than in lower income households. (Lian & Mathis 2016, 616.) So based on that it is not surprising that it has also been studied that millionaires in the US have more often dogs than other households on average. They also prefer dogs to cats, as 58% of millionaires have dogs and only 37% have cats. (Frank 2012.)

Millennials have also been found to be the ones who pamper their pets the most, in addition to owning the most pets. The trend of pampering dogs can be seen in statistics from the US; 31% of dog owners do have clothes for their dogs, and 10% purchase designer products to their dogs, which can be categorized as luxury commodities. This supports the thought that trend diffusion in the dog commodity market can be similar as in fashion. (The 2017-2018 APPA – – 2017.)

High-income households are the major consumer category in the pet market, as three-fifths of the spending is from this group. So, this is why the refining of the products to fit them to high-income households' needs is important and most profitable for marketers. As Atik and Firat (2013, 837) have found out, usually the lower income households follow trends among the higher-income ones, so marketers might have to adjust their commodities to make them available for the general public in the future.

The pet industry is growing in the US and the sales are projected to reach almost 92 billion USD in 2019, which is about 78 billion in euros (Valuuttalaskin; Stewart 2015). The amount of consuming on only dogs was 58 billion in 2014 and it has grown 70% from 2004, according to American Pet Product Association (APPA) (Vänskä 2016, 76). The annual growth in the market has been 2,4% on average between 2012-2017, even though grocery stores and similar have been competing in the same market. It is estimated that the industry keeps on growing still five years from now, in 2022. Despite that there are constantly new innovations in this market and more supply than ever before, the reason to the growth is seen mostly in the attitude of consumers towards their pets and thus pet commodities. Also, in general, the US economy has had positive growth in those years, so the overall situation of the economy of course has an effect too. The industry consists of about 17,500 enterprises, and enterprises such as Petco Animal Supplies Inc. and PetSmart Inc. have big market shares in the US pet industry. (Pet Stores in the US – 2017.)

As the US economy has improved, pet owners have started to increasingly put money on premium products for their pets and that is also where the industry gets its fuel in the future (Pet Stores in the US – 2017). The greatest deal of pet costs consist of pet food and 41% of dog owners is reported to buy premium foods for their dogs, which are naturally more expensive. (The 2017-2018 APPA – 2017; Number of dogs – 2017.) The pet food market is estimated to grow by 3,4% per year between 2017-2021. In 2017, the revenue is over 30 billion USD and in 2021 it is projected to be over 35 billion USD. The US is the number one revenue generator in pet food industry by far, as the second country is the United Kingdom with revenue of 4,7 billion USD. (Pet Food 2017.)

4.1.2 Finland

Dog is the most commonly owned pet in Finland. In the last ten years, about 45 000-50 000 dogs are registered yearly in the Finnish Kennel Club. (Koirarotujen rekisteröintimäärät 2006-2016). Its popularity has only grown between 2012 and 2016. In 2012, there were about 630 000 dogs in Finland, in 2014, there was about 650 000 dogs and in 2016 there are about 800 000 dogs (Langinvainio et al. 2014, 4.) Clear growth can be seen in the number of dogs. In comparison, in the same time period, this has not happened to cats, the second most popular pet in Finland. The number of cats has stayed at about 600 000. It is most common to have pets in homes that have children, or that are located in the countryside. (Nurmela 2016.)

The World Canine Organization called Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) has created an international categorization for dog breeds. It is used almost all over the

world and has ten categories. (Presentation of our organisation.) In the FCI 9 category are companion and toy dog breeds, which are usually the smallest ones (Koirarodut ja rotumääritelmät). None of these breeds are in the top ten dog breeds in Finland. About 80% of Finnish dogs are purebreds and the Labrador retriever was Finland's most common dog breed both in 2015 and in 2016 (Pantsu 2013). The top ten breeds consist of quite large breeds. But companion and toy dogs' popularity has increased steadily. For example, in the last few years, the registration number of Chihuahuas, an iconic pampered breed, has been around 1300. In 2010, the same number was only about 800 (Rotujen rekisteröinnit 2006-2016). Figure 7 represents the dog owning incidences in Finland in three columns, the first two of represent people who own or have owned a dog. As can be seen, dogs are popular in Finland. (Langinvainio et al. 2014, 8.)

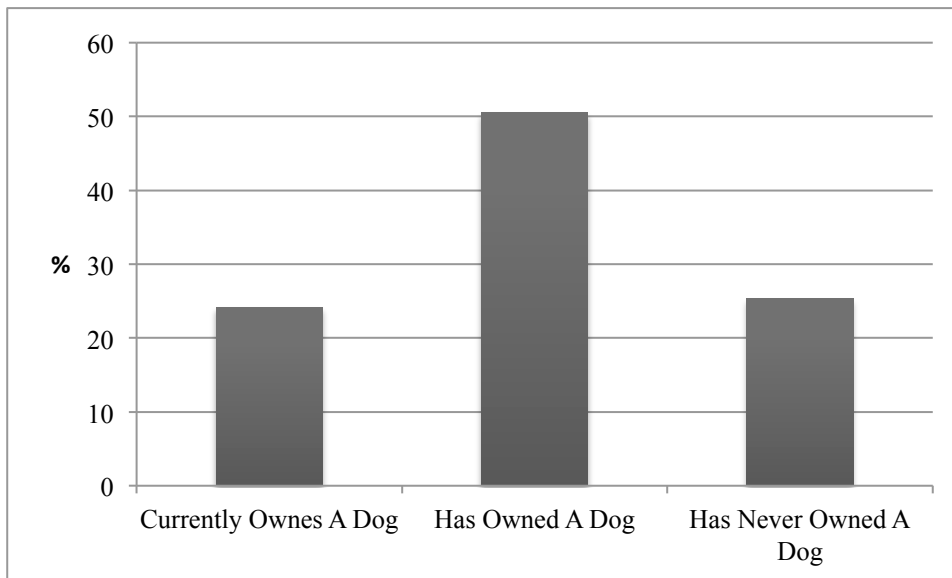


Figure 7 Dog ownership incidences in Finnish households (Langinvainio et al. 2014, 9)

Langinvainio et al. (2014, 8) have used data from Terveys 2000 –study in their own study. Terveys 2000 was conducted in 2000 so the data in this graph is a bit old, but still gives a good picture of the market. As the number of dogs in Finland has grown, it can be assumed that the percentages in the graph have not sank, to say the least (Nurmela 2016). Figure 7 shows the percentage of households in Finland that at that moment owned a dog, had previously owned a dog or had never owned a dog. According to this study, just over half (50,2%) of Finnish households have owned a dog and just under fourth (24,2%) currently owned a dog. Another fourth (25,3%) had never owned a dog. The fact that most Finnish households had owned or owned a dog indicates that Finland is quite a dog loving nation. (Langinvainio et al. 2014, 9.)

The distribution between sexes was very even as 49,9% of the dog owners were men and 50,1% were women. Women who had owned a dog were a bit older on average than men who had owned a dog. The men, who at the moment owned a dog, were slightly younger than women who owned a dog. There were no other notable differences in the ages and sexes of dog owners in those three categories. (Langinvainio et al. 2014, 10.)

In households with a maximum of four people, the amount of pets has grown between 2012 and 2016. The biggest change can be seen in household of two, where the amount of pets has grown with about 7%. Even though this data tells the growth percentage of pets in Finnish households, not only the growth of dogs, we can assume that the data applies to dogs quite well, as the amount of dogs has grown the most in that time period and the number of cats has not changed remarkably. In addition, in 2016, only about 2% of households had an aquarium or a terrarium, further indicating that the growth can be seen to be caused mainly because of the growth in the number of dogs. (Nurmela 2016.) In the following figure 8, the share of pets in different types of pet owning households is represented.

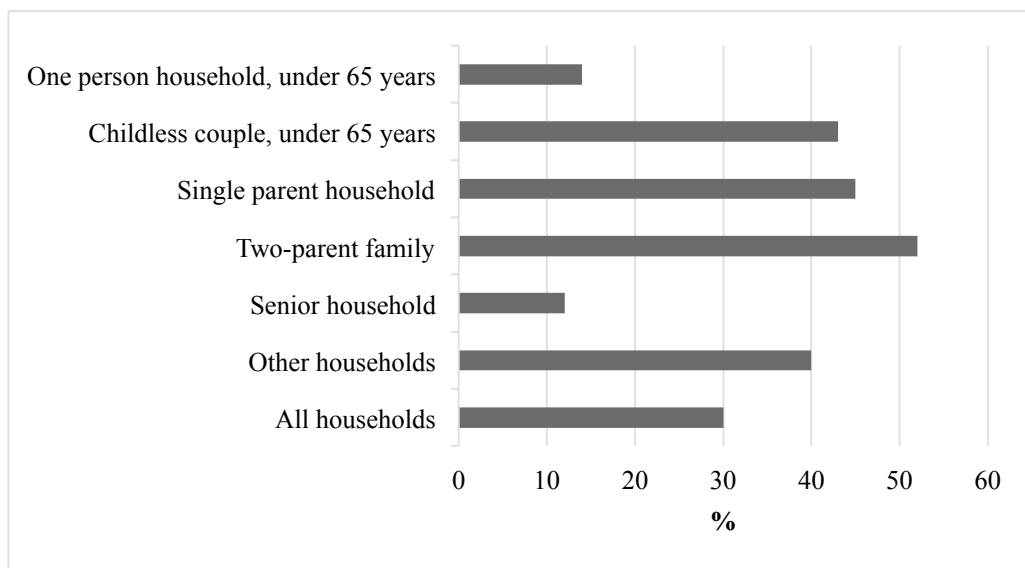


Figure 8 Type of pet household in percentages in 2012 (Nurmela 2014)

In 2012 in Finland, “Two parent family” household type owned the most pets and also spent the most on them. As we could see from the earlier figure, households with more than one person are more likely to have pets, and as so, also dogs. Also, households with children in them are in the top of pet owning households as about 45% to 52% of households with children have pets. (Nurmela 2014).

4.1.3 Trends

The number one trend that is visible in the dog commodity market, and is driving the whole market onward, is the humanizing of dogs. Dog friendly restaurants and hotels have become a norm as dogs travel more with their owners. Dogs are the most common pets to travel with and 17,5 million dog owners have stayed in dog friendly hotels with their dogs in 2017. 23% of millennial dog owners have admitted to throwing parties just for their dogs and 78% of all dog owners have bought at least one present for their dog. These are habits that are usually related to only human world, but have become increasingly present in the dog commodity market too. (The 2017-2018 APPA – 2017.) A habit that has been present in especially in the fashion world has emerged itself strongly to the dog and other pet world too is blogs.

There are numerous dog blogs in the Internet, some of which focus on merely sharing dog photos and videos, some on embracing the dog owner lifestyle and some are purely commercial ones. In the studied blogs here, there are blogs of every before mentioned category, but the lifestyle blogs seem to be the most common and popular ones. The Finnish lifestyle blogs seemed to focus more on health issues and economic matters, such as the costs of different activities and dog living in general. The American blogs were not as specific and down to earth, even though everyday living tips had a big role. This lifestyle type of blogs share both, pictures and text, but the main focus is on the blog texts. The texts handle everyday life with dogs and how to incorporate the pet dog into every day life and into one's values. The ecological and organic trends were also visible, as an example, one post on Oh My Dog! Blog called "The Zero Waste Pet" was all about how to live as environment friendly with ones dog and it also advertised same named e-book by the blog author. One differing element in the blogs were the authors, as four out of five studied here had the same author though the whole blog. The commercial one, run by a pet shop, was the only one that had multiple authors, including male ones.

Tips, and as a consequence, commodity recommendations were strongly present in all the studied blogs and in all the categories, overall. Even though in No Dog About It Blog the author said that "*I believe connecting with people, and building a relationship with my readers, is valuable. Promoting a product just so I can make money and someone else can get relatively cheap advertising hurts that connection. It also damages the trust that I have with my readers.*" there were advertisements in the blog, not within the blog posts, though. This can be a method, through which the author tries to make oneself look neutral when it comes to brands, even though the reality can be something else. The advertisement were either subtle ones within the text, such as mentioning what product they have used themselves and by clicking the name of the product you go to its website, and direct ones, which are on side banners. Events, such as dog fairs, were

promoted too, for instance through pictures from the event. The blogs of course advertised also other posts and merchandise of the authors, such as the e-book mentioned before. On the pet store's Dog Blog, the blog posts were created around some problems and how some products they offer are the solution for that particular problem.

As mentioned that dogs are taken into consideration in everyday life, and therefore it is no wonder that holidays, such as Christmas and Valentine's Day, affect the pet industry too an average consumer spent about 25 USD on their pets' Valentine's Day present in 2015, and the revenue on the pet market in total was over 700 million USD around Valentine's Day. In 2009 the amount per consumer was less than 13 USD, so the amount has doubled in five years. (Money spending for – – 2017.) In the All Things Dog Blog there are Halloween tips for dog owners, which include tips for best costumes for dogs and also tips for a successful trick or treat tour with one's dog. The including of dogs to holidays is clearly visible. In Finland, even a name day book has been created for dogs so their names can be celebrated just as humans' names (Saarelma 2011). Also, there is a national dog day every year on April 24th and it has been celebrated since 2007. Every year it has a different theme, such as "Child and dog", "Charity work" and "Healthy dog as a part of the society". The latest theme, which was on April 24th 2017, was "Finnish dog breeds". This goes quite well together with Finland's 100th birthday theme year. (Koiranpäivä 24.4.)

Facebook and other social media have been a place for keen dog owners to interact and share knowledge and photos of their dogs and there are some social media websites have been developed just for pet owners. This supports the role of eWOM in trend diffusion among dog owners and pet owners, overall. As social media has been seen to influence pet owners' purchasing decisions and the latest trends are visible there, pet marketers have added their activity on social media too. Appealing to dog owners' emotions through posting pet videos and pictures is a way marketers have found useful, such as in the case of Really Good Pet's Dog Blog. According to Packaged Facts, marketers also use actively email marketing, and it seems to be effective as 18% of pet owners said that a pet marketer's email has influenced their purchasing decision in the last 30 days. (Schmidt 2016.)

In every dog blog studied, there were also possibilities to follow the blog on some other social media, the most common ones were Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, for instance. The blogs use these other social media channels as supporting channels, which also exhibits the fact that to gain followers, one must be present all around the social media to reach as many followers as possible. It says in the All Things Dog Blog that it had had over 6,8 million visitors, but when this was, it does not say. It can only be assumed that the number has only grown since. The number one "petfluencer" is a Pomeranian dog with almost 6,5 million followers on Instagram (Von Kessel 2017). These numbers tell about the effect that blogs and social can potentially have.

Fashion is a field in dog commodity market where dogs have a visible role nowadays. Fashionable dogs represent certain lifestyles and also particular fashion commodities that can be in fashion for dogs and humans. (Vänskä 2016, 81.) There are even dog fashion shows, largest of which is probably The New York Pet Fashion Show, which took place again in February 2018. Even though the name says “pet” fashion, almost all “models” are dogs, which implies the strong role of dogs in the consumer culture compared to other pets. (Show info.) The opportunity to use dogs in fashion to promote a certain lifestyle and commodity has not been missed by big fashion operators. The known fashion magazine *Vogue* has featured dogs in it, and on its website, it has a dog’s fashion blog that features trending clothes and accessories for dogs and represents the dog’s life as a human’s (Yotka 2017). Fashion is also visible in the studied blogs, as dog clothing is present in most blogs.

Some other things in the dog commodity industry are trending too, for instance, aging pets and obese pets are objects that more dog owners have started to pay attention to. One way of trying to prolong dog’s age, and make an old dog’s life quality better is the before mentioned premium dog foods, which can also be a way to tackle obesity. There are plenty of different diet foods for dogs on the market as a bit over half of the American pet dogs are obese. Even a smart collar has been invented for dogs so that owners can monitor their dogs’ activity throughout the day, even when they are not at home (Ungerleider 2016). Marketers do offer many other solutions from dog vitamins to public indoor swimming pools for dogs too.

Dog and pet related terms have become more popular too, in these blogs, different kinds of terms used in the dog people world are found, one being the before mentioned “petfluencer”, for instance. The new terms have been created mostly by adding “dog” somewhere into a term, like “dog parent” and “doga”. Also, basic words are used in a dog context like writing about a goddaughter when referring to a dog. These exhibit the role that dogs have taken in today’s society rather well.

All in all, the biggest trend is still the bond between humans and their dogs and this trend does not seem to be declining in any way. Hens (2009, 7–8) describes the possibility of a very strong relationship between humans and their dogs, as they can even replace relationships with another human being. Marketers have noticed this and they use consumers’ emotions to their advantage, as they have understood that the driving force behind the consuming on pets is the affection or love that owners feel towards their pet, much like in human-human interaction (Stewart 2015). As social media has been seen to influence pet owners’ purchasing decisions and the latest trends are visible there, pet marketers have also added their activity on social media. Appealing to dog owners’ emotions through posting pet videos and pictures is a way marketers have found useful. According to Packaged Facts, marketers also use actively email marketing, and it seems

to be effective as 18% of pet owners said that a pet marketer's email had influenced their purchasing decision in the last 30 days (Schmidt 2016).

4.2 Entrepreneurs' view of the market

4.2.1 Dog commodity market and its development

One thing that came very clear from all the entrepreneurs was that the dog commodity market has changed a lot in the last ten to 15 years. Not all the entrepreneurs had experience from the field as an entrepreneur from such a long time, but as active dog owners they have observed the change even before starting the businesses. The change is mainly related to the notable growth of the market. A concrete example that came from two of the interviewees was that dog product shelves have grown in grocery stores immensely in the last ten years. This is just one example of the embodiment that the grown dog commodity culture has had. Entrepreneurs felt that the supply of commodities has grown immensely and there is just about anything found for dogs nowadays. It also came up that the growth is seen to be a bit bigger and faster in the dog product side compared to the dog service side.

Big operators such as known dog food brands and chain pet stores dominate this field very strongly and this was a unanimous opinion within the entrepreneurs. The large amount of small dog online stores, also Finnish ones, was mentioned, but not necessarily as competition. The interviewees started their businesses partially because of being dog enthusiasts and they told that many small dog operators contact them to try to sell their goods, often dog-related handicrafts, through them. So it has been noticed that there are a lot of small hobby-based enterprises within this market, which might indicate that the barrier to start, for instance, a small online shop or a handicraft business, is not too big for other dog enthusiasts. But all in all, there is no question on whether it is big or small operators that rule in this business, as it the big operators.

It is not easy being an entrepreneur in this field and the competition was seen intense as mentioned already when handling cooperation between businesses. The interviewees suspected that the competition would only get more intense in the years to come. The biggest competitions mentioned were online pet stores, pet store chains and foreign operators, which can intertwine with the before mentioned, but all can be separate threats too. The biggest competitions of course depend on the particular business in question, but these concerned all the businesses in some level.

Online stores were seen as a big threat to brick and mortar stores, not so much for the service providers and dog food manufacturer. The reason behind the competition was

the broad selection online stores can carry and convenience of shopping online. This was seen concerning especially dog clothes and this type of products. The non-necessary dog clothes, such as dresses for dogs, was believed to be purchased online abroad from the US or China and not always from pet operators, but from other consumers. The prices of online stores present the main competition for brick and mortar stores, as the case is in the chain pet stores and other foreign operators too. As the volumes are often bigger, they are able to get the prices lower than in small brick and mortar stores. Also, it has been noticed that many times a small independent pet store starts to sell something that is not in the chain stores, if found successful, the chains take the product to their selection and in worst case scenario, get an exclusive right to sell it, because they can promise big volumes. A growing trend among chain stores is that they take dog service providers into their business, such as groomers. This way there are both products and services available at one store. This is an aspect that small dog operators have already started to match, though.

As the future trend in pet businesses, the number of small independent brick and mortar stores was suspected to decline as they have already seen to have a struggle in the last 2-5 years, according to Strömberg. The surviving small independent brick and mortar stores, or “boutiques” were assumed to be the ones in city centers that are specialized in something particular. More and more business is being made online and that is why the interviewed stores had an online shop too, even though it did not have too big of a role in their business, at least yet. Another observation by Strömberg was that another contender for both brick and mortar stores and chain stores are hardware store-like hypermarkets that have started to increase their dog selection in the recent years.

In consideration of the future of the field, all the entrepreneurs believed in the ongoing growth of the dog commodity market. Vehovaara mentioned a positive characteristic to this field: *“In both, economic upturns and downturns, this market keeps on growing”* and she continues by saying that *“this is exceptional in comparison with other fields”*. Some of the entrepreneurs believed that the number of active dog owners would grow as the number of dogs grow and thus create more demand, for instance for dog services. An observation from Anonymous entrepreneur was that *“A few years ago nobody took their dogs to massages and swimming halls”* and continued by assessing that nowadays in some active dog circles, most of the dogs visit these and most dog owners at least acknowledge these type of services existence. Dog owners need different kind of equipment also in different dog hobbies, so this way the active dog owners would bring more demand to some niche dog commodity markets that are related to different hobbies such as hunting. It also came up that the most successful innovations might come from GPS-technology and nanotechnology for dogs wear. The collar, leash and clothing segment was not seen to have many other options to grow much further as there is so much selection already available. In the food segment, which is a very notable segment

in the dog commodity market, as every dog has to eat, future was seen to contain more sales in food supplements such as oils and vitamins for dogs and the continuing emphasis on ecological sustainability and healthiness of dog food.

4.2.2 *Reasons behind the business*

All of the entrepreneurs had a different kind of background before they became full-time entrepreneurs in pet market. Nevertheless, one thing was in common with all the entrepreneurs: interest for dogs. All of them had had a dog for a long time even before starting the businesses and most of them were active in different dog-related hobbies too. Interest in dogs, already broad dog-related networks, and noticing a gap in products on the supply side through own dog activity were mentioned as the key driving forces behind starting a business. Wanting to be an entrepreneur was not mentioned even once as the driving force, on the contrary, it was mentioned that entrepreneurship was something what they ended up with unintentionally, following their interest. Two of the entrepreneurs started their businesses first on the side with their full-time jobs and gradually made the dog-related business into their full-time job.

All of the interviewees' businesses are small in size, employing from one to eleven employees. Starting a business is also a way of employing oneself as an entrepreneur, as was the case in some of these enterprises. Not all the entrepreneurs had any commercial background so some had taken entrepreneurship classes, which were found to be helpful in these cases. Even though being entrepreneur was not the aim for most, once they were entrepreneurs, the aim was to excel in it. Not even one entrepreneur said that they had any doubts or regret regarding entrepreneurship, even though it came up in all interviews that entrepreneurship in this field is not easy.

Vehovaara said that without being a dog enthusiast oneself already before the business, one "*would not be on the same level with the customers*". Also other benefits came up in the interviews, one being the already existing networks through which it was easier to start marketing at first. Also, existing networks give an insight to the customer's mind and knowledge of the (niche) market, which gives advantage as one understands the customers and their needs better. The already existing networks and being an active dog owner came up also in the reasons why the businesses were founded, so their role is truly notable and somewhat facilitating. The existing networks and their knowledge were mentioned also to be helpful when deciding what to take into the store's supply.

There are different focus groups and some different aims within these businesses even though they all are small and independent businesses. Some target niche and some volume markets, as for example Strömberg's FitDog is clearly for a niche market and the aim in Dagsmark Dogfood are volume markets. Strömberg feels that not all busi-

nesses are ideal as big companies, some might be sufficient businesses already as small businesses when the target market is a niche market, which supports Blackford's (2003, 119) thoughts considering that small businesses can be big operators in their niche market. These two businesses work also as examples for different aims in the long run, as the prevalent small size works well and is sufficient for FitDog, the aim for Dagsmark Petfood is becoming a bigger business through volume markets. Even though Dagsmark Petfood started as a small start-up, this is meant to be just a stage in the businesses life as Cooper (1981, 40) also sees it. Mostly the entrepreneurs did not have a plan to grow their businesses, though, at the time at least.

They found being independent business a good thing, though the benefits of being part of a pet store chain were understood too. The main plus side of being an independent business in this field was the agility aspect. It was seen that small independent enterprises were more agile than ones that belong to a chain, because of the lack of "unnecessary" bureaucracy. The fact that the business structure is rather low due to the small number of employees also has an effect on the amount of bureaucracy. This was found to affect the swiftness of the decision-making and how fast the businesses can take in trends in the shape of different new dog products and services, this observation goes well hand in hand with Blackford's (2003, 165) thoughts on small businesses advantages. The risk to test different trends was found smaller as a small business than if the business was large.

These small businesses feel that it is most beneficial for them to manage their own marketing, for instance Google marketing. Li et al. (2010, 302) put emphasis on the possible financial losses than can occur from invalid online marketing, so the planning of online marketing is really important for small business owners. It rose up that many digimarketers try to target small businesses regarding handling their online marketing, but most entrepreneurs feel that they can handle it well enough themselves. There are a bit differing opinions on Google marketing and its benefits, but Vehovaara's comment on it summarizes well the discussion: *"if a person who doesn't have a strong interest for the commodity clicks (the link), it still costs us, but most (clicks) doesn't necessarily lead to anything"*. She continues by emphasizing the meaning of a correct focus group in the marketing. For instance, different dog fairs are mentioned as good places to market as the focus group is right away the correct one. Some external services were used though, for instance when summarizing activity regarding one's business on social media.

The ongoing trends and the entrepreneur's own values were in big role when deciding what to take into one's selection. For instance, the main thought for Heiskanen when considering what food to sell in her store was "Would I feed this to my own dogs?" If the answer was no, the dog food does not end up on the shelves. Heiskanen also gave great value to some of her dog expert friends, especially when talking about

dog food. Dog food was given a strong emphasis on Heiskanen's business, as about 70% of her sales come from dog food: *"There is a smaller profit margin in dog food, but it brings the most even income"*, states Heiskanen. But then, when considering the dog food manufacturing side, the steady availability of ingredients came up as a major restrainer of what to use in the food. The cost of ingredients and other supply was something that came up in most interviews as it can concern all manufacturing, retailing and service providing.

The interviewed business owners felt that it is not easy being a small business owner in this field, but some key issues regarding success in this field were mentioned too. The business has to have something to offer that not all other operators in the field already have, this way customers want to use that specific operator in the dog field. Heiskanen mentions that her dog food supply is something over which consumers come, even from a longer distance. This tactic also has another positive side to it: *"The thing in being a small operator in this field is that you have to find something in every product category that only you sell if you want to have a say in the price"* says Vehovaara. It comes as no surprise as the competition is hard that it is difficult to affect the price points when many others sell the same product. Other special features in independent businesses were the individuality and expertise within the entrepreneurs, like Heiskanen has heard from customers that her knowledge on dog nutrition in addition to the dog food supply, is something people come for in her store.

As the entrepreneurs see new needs and get new ideas from their daily work, they evolve their business accordingly. As an example, some of these interviewed businesses work together with dog service providers and provide these dog services in their facilities through other entrepreneurs and this way too try to meet the needs of customers. This decision might not be as easy and fast in bigger or in chain companies. What was worth noting, the interviewees did not feel that there was a lot of communality or cooperation between small businesses in this field besides this kind of cooperation. Interviewees felt that the small businesses are pretty much alone and do not receive support from other small pet businesses. Funnily enough, every entrepreneur said that it would be very beneficial to increase cooperation with other small independent pet businesses as chain pet stores are making the competition harder than before.

According to Strömberg *"It is crucial to increase networking (between businesses) in this field"*. She feels that every Finnish pet food operator would benefit from cooperation as it would bring a possibility to lobby their message of Finnish pet food and its good qualities. As the dog daycare is not too common in Finland at the moment, K. Schüler thinks that founding more daycares for dogs would not threaten their business, but on the contrary, make it a more known and normal thing and thus bring them more demand. A. Schüler described that *"In Finland, entrepreneurship is rather shy"* and this might be one of the reasons why entrepreneurs in this field do not work together

enough. In addition to shy entrepreneurship, it came up that businesses do not always see the benefits of cooperation as they are so competition driven. Competition is seen as an obstacle for working together and the positive results from working together are not seen at all or seen as too small in comparison with the competition.

As for entrepreneurial associations, almost all entrepreneurs were part of Suomen Yrittäjät ry (Finland's Entrepreneurs registered association), but not all. The reason was that the costs were seen as bigger than the benefits from the association. All in all, the benefits were not seen as big or not necessarily even as worthy. There were other kinds, more participatory associations and groups that were found to be more beneficial for the entrepreneurs. Also, different kinds of entrepreneurial Facebook pages were mentioned, such as female entrepreneurs and pet entrepreneurs. The groups differed from entrepreneurial themes to some being region-specific groups, some national and some international.

4.2.3 *Consumer behavior*

The overall image of how the interviewed entrepreneurs saw the modern consumer behavior in this field was attached to how consumers buy for themselves too. Strömberg described that *“the Western consuming hysteria has spread to the dog commodity market too”*. It was mentioned multiple times that there are different types of consumers in this field and the consumer behavior can vary immensely between these different types. The connecting factor was still seen to be in the fact that values in shopping have become similar both when shopping for humans and dogs. This can also be seen in prevalent trends in the dog commodity market, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

When discussed about different types of consumers among dog owners, not only one clear division between different dog owners could be distinguished. Many similar characteristics were brought up and based on them I have created a few different division basis based on the entrepreneurs description, almost all of which differ from Chen et al.'s (2012, 126, 128-129) pet owner cluster division. The only division that could be drawn from the interviews that was somewhat similar to Chen et al.'s cluster division was between the primary owner, secondary owner and a sitter. All these differ from each other in their consuming habits, but the primary owner and the sitter differ the most. The primary owner is the one who takes care of the dog on a daily basis and most likely understands its needs and restrictions best when it comes to commodities. In this group, the main focus in is dog food and other must have commodities, such as winter coat for a small or a short-haired dog. The secondary owner can be, for instance, a spouse or a parent of the primary dog owner and they tend to focus more on non-necessary things such as food treats in addition to the must have commodities. The third

group is the sitter, who may not own a dog at all themselves, but they purchase dog commodities, for example, for friends' dogs that they are taking care of. This is why this non-dog-owning group of consumers cannot be totally forgotten, even though they are a minority in this field. This group consumes mainly on toys, treats and other impulse purchases, not so much on necessary commodities. Also, products are more likely to be bought than services.

Another parallel consumer type division was between market buyers and pet store buyers. These differ so that the first buys dog food and other products from markets like hypermarkets, the others buy dog food and other products from pet stores and do not visit the pet aisles in the markets too much. Strömberg feels that the consumers deem that the dog food bought from a pet store is better quality than the dog food bought from a market, even though the pet aisles have grown remarkably in the last ten years. A third basis for division is how consumers interact with their dog; active dog owners and those who have a pet dog and these can be divided even further. The active dog owners differ based on whether their dog hobby is dog shows or other dog hobbies, such as hunting. As for the pet dog owners, they can be divided to those who only have one dog in their life and to those who have always had and will always have a dog. A. Schüler describes that the active dog owners may see their dogs more as "tools" in their hobby that they maintain and a bit less like a family member, which is more common for pet dog owners. These attitudes towards dogs are in a big role when considering consumer behavior. The fourth and final division that came up clearly in the interviews was between young and more mature dog owners. The biggest difference here was seen to be the values behind the shopping as younger dog owners have been seen as more sustainable development driven when the more mature owners did not seem to take these sustainable values into consideration as much when shopping for dogs. Younger were seen to follow more recent trends for instance in feeding dogs, as more mature ones were seen to believe that it is ok to feed dogs human's leftovers, for instance.

It was brought up that consumers might belong to different groups at once also, for instance when they have more than one dog and the other is just a pet dog and the other a hunting dog and this way consumer behavior differs depending on the dog. All in all, as we can see from the above listed divisions, there are many ways for entrepreneurs to see their customers and there are many ways of classifying dog owners based on their consumer behavior.

Each entrepreneur described their average customer and it was not as easy as one might think. As the average customer the pet dog owner from above mentioned divisions rose up as the most common. A pet dog owner that appreciates healthy quality food was the condensed customer description for the brick and mortar stores and the dog food manufacturer. Heiskanen tells that she has some dog foods in selection that others do not have and thus there are customers that come even from out of town to buy

food from her store. This enforces the finding of Tesfom and Birch (2010, 910) as they found that dog owners are very brand loyal when it comes to dog food, even more loyal than when considering their own food. The dog food supplement business and the dog service providing business had the active dog owners as the average customer as their markets are a bit more niche. In addition, the customer is more often female than male. Heiskanen also said that she thinks that she has above average of male customers as her business is situated in a building that has a male-dominant employee base and her customers are about 40% male and 60% female. Already from this can be drawn a conclusion that this field is female-dominant as all of the interviewed entrepreneurs are female too.

When bringing up observations on customer encounters Vehovaara tells that *"customers in this field open up to the personnel in a whole different way"*. The small talk often crosses the border of talking just about the products in hand to talking about more personal things such as the customers' dogs. Vehovaara adds: *"I have learned that if you ask them (customers) something about their pet, you stick to their mind. It is just so important to them."* Milligan and Hantula (2006, 41-42) has studied that especially in small pet stores suggestive selling and prompting the customer to make the purchase does increase the sales considerably, which is understandable and goes well hand in hand with Vehovaara's observation on how customers react to her small talk about their pets. A rather similar observation in the other interviewed brick and mortar pet store could be found: a customer came in the store when walking by, because her dog *"refused to walk past the store without going in"*. Then they walked around the store and talked about a recent dog show with the entrepreneur and left.

The interviewees described their own consuming on their dogs as rather "average" in many ways. Of course, most had noticed a difference between consuming before becoming an entrepreneur and after becoming one. In most cases the consuming had been bigger before the entrepreneurship. This is explained also with the dog hobbies that required different commodities, and now the entrepreneurs did not have the time nor as much interest in actively participating in dog hobbies as work takes so much time and is already so dog related. Before, many described that they bought pretty much everything for their dogs, especially different products, no matter what the price was. Now as entrepreneurs they focus a lot more on quality commodities and, maybe because of the existing networks, they use more services for their dogs' wellbeing, such as acupuncture and massage. In the after phase, the entrepreneurs have started to consume on dogs more restrainedly.

Some of the interviewees felt that income has a strong influence on consuming on dogs and it is most likely very accurate on most dog commodities, but when it comes to dog food Strömberg mentioned that they had made market research from which they found out that income level and education level do not have a significant influence on

what dog food people buy for their dogs. This supports the finding of Tesfom and Birch (2010, 910) as they found out that dog owners are more sensitive to their own food prices than to dog food prices. *“Even when unemployed, a dog owner might compromise on their own expenses and buy proper food for their dog”* states Strömberg and continues by elaborating that this is a trend that can be seen in children’s food and products too. It seems that children’s and pets’ commodities are similar in a way that people consume on them even in bad times, which does not seem to be the case in many fields.

Emotions were seen as a big influencer in the purchase decision making of dog owners and it came up that operators in the field consider the dog owners’ emotions very carefully when branding and advertising. Strömberg used commercial slogans as examples of how marketers try to appeal to the emotional side of dog owners, such as *“Only best for your dog”* type of slogans. Tesfom and Birch (2010, 910) found that the nutrition level in the major dog food brands does not actually vary too much, so it is because of the marketing that dog owners are so loyal to dog food brands. The reason why marketing influences dog owners so well might be because dogs are seen as parallel with children in some cases according to the interviewees.

Laros and Steenkamp (2005, 1443-1444) distinguish consumer emotions through a hierarchical model that divides emotions into three different levels: superordinate, basic emotions and subordinate level. The interviewees distinguished emotions from all the three levels of emotions. All of them felt that the emotions that were the most influential to making the consumers more prone to buying dog commodities seemed to be related to two different events: getting a new dog and a dog’s sickness or other well-being related issues. From superordinate level, many positive emotions were attached to the first mentioned event and negative emotions to the latter event. When going to the basic emotions level, the first event caused emotions of happiness and when going even further to subordinate level, the emotions were joyful, happy and enthusiastic that influenced the most. It was seen that the customer that was getting a new puppy was eager to purchase commodities and, not to put too fine a point on it, an easy group to sell to. In the latter event, the emotions on basic emotion level were fear and sadness and on the subordinate level, worried, afraid and helpless. When a dog is not feeling well, the worry in the owner makes one test different commodities in the hope that it would make the dog feel better.

Consumers in this market have started to utilize the Internet more, as in many other markets. Heiskanen tells that as she has the online shop many customers *“get to know the products first online and when they come to the store, the purchase decision has almost been made already”*. Despite the online activity, it might not lead to any real results, at least not right away. *“A consumer can click (a link) a hundred times before it leads to a final purchase”*, explains Vehovaara. This thought is also supported in the

interview with the Schölers as K.Schöler states that *"Even though we get likes on social media, we don't see it in the cash register"*.

4.2.4 Trends

A trend among the businesses in the field that came up in the interviews was that more and more dog business operators are centralizing their businesses under one roof. This means that, for instance, chains are taking some services into their offerings and thus the small businesses have to match this, even though it is usually not as easily possible because of more limited resources. For some of these smaller operators, the answer has been private dog service providers that operate in their facilities when scheduled, not so that they are in the facilities the whole workday, as in some chain stores.

A trend that already came up in the consumer behavior part was that the values in purchasing dog commodities have become more similar with when purchasing for oneself and for other people. Also, other trends from the human market have spread to dog market, such as environment friendliness, sustainable development thinking, gluten free food, supplements, and wellness services. Wellness services, such as massages and osteopathy, especially mimic treatments meant for people. Anonymous entrepreneur had noticed that dog owners have started to prefer more non-medical treatment methods for their dogs and also preventive methods are in bigger favor now. She had also noticed that massages and swimming halls have become more common for dogs in recent years: *"A few years back, dogs did not go to massages nor to swimming halls"*.

The first mentioned trends might stem from the humanizing of dogs trend that all the interviewees had noticed. They felt it affect their businesses in indirect ways, like when owners purchase treats to make dogs happy and other rather subtle ways. Vehovaara did not notice the effects of the trend too strongly as her business had been in business for less than a year, since 2017, when the humanizing trend was already strongly existing. As the trend had been prevalent the whole time, she could not distinguish effects caused from that. The trend of humanizing dogs has not gone past these entrepreneurs. They felt that in Finland, the humanizing is seen in how dog owners interpret their dogs; owners act like dogs are family members or children and that they have similar emotions as humans and act based on that. Vehovaara describes that this kind of behavior is in a way "twisted" and all the entrepreneurs felt that it is not always good for the dog when people do this. In Finland, the humanization is not completely similar as in the US, from the entrepreneurs' point of view. For instance, when in the US, especially small dogs, are clothed non-necessarily, as a result of humanization, in Finland that type of humanization is rather rare. *"The Finnish dog culture, it is rather rational, in the*

end” states A. Schüler and continues by “*it is a very small group that is interested in the extravagant pampering things and usually that is frowned upon in the dog circles*”.

In Finland, the entrepreneurs distinguished some characteristics in people who pamper and humanize their dog especially. They felt that it is often a person whose children have moved out of home and they are trying to fill the void left by the children with a dog. This description is consistent with Redmalm’s (2014, 99) thoughts on that a dog can be acquired to fill missing human relationships. Most commonly, it is seen that middle-aged and older people are most likely to humanize their dogs, not young people so much. Also, it came up that the entrepreneurs feel that the pampering side of this humanizing trend is more attached to smaller dogs.

According to the interviewees, there is everything for dogs in the US. The US seems to be ahead in everything related to dog commodities, in good and in bad, as it was said that all the craziest dog commodities come from there too. The culture presents itself as more ostentatious in general and this trend is also visible in the dog commodities. The dog market is on another level than in Finland and Strömberg figures that one explanation for that is that there are more extremely rich consumers who are willing to pay for diamond collars, for instance. This develops the commodity market in a whole different way than in Finland, where people are not that willing to pay for such extravagant commodities, at least not at the moment. Strömberg describes that in the US “*they are very innovative there*” and this is enabled by the broadness of the market. Also, as mentioned above, the humanizing of dogs is seen to be taken further and it is seen as more likely that dog owners humanize and consume on pampering commodities in the US than in Finland.

The Finnish dog commodities and trends related to them were described as rather down to earth. Practicality was an adjective used to describe Finnish dog commodity trends by many of the interviewed entrepreneurs, which is logical as the non-necessity, “extra” commodities are not as popular in here as they are in the US, for instance. A restrained “extra” trend that has been noticed in Finland is that dogs’ products, like dog bed, ought to match other décor in the house. But in general, the attitude towards extra dog commodities echoes the following. “*Extravagant pampering commodities do not fit into the Finnish culture,*” stated Anonymous entrepreneur when discussing the Finnish trends. Even though it can be seen as a very positive thing that there are many innovations on this field in the US, from the Finnish point of view, not all innovations are wanted here as they are not seen to be good for the dog or to suit the Finnish culture. As an example the dyeing of dog fur was mentioned.

4.2.5 *Trend diffusion*

The interviewees mentioned many different ways, through which they get information about new commodities in this field. Some information sources were in use for all of the interviewees and some were not, as is logical of course, as most the businesses are not alike, even though they operate in the same field. The main trend diffusion methods among dog commodity entrepreneurs were the Internet, WOM, dog shows, dog fairs, and industry reports. There were also differences in whether the entrepreneurs themselves actively looked for information about novelties and trends, and whether they received the information without looking for it themselves.

One can find anything from the Internet and all the entrepreneurs mentioned that they search for novelties through Google and try to look for new ideas for their business online. Even though the entrepreneurs receive information and ideas without their own active searching, the emphasis remains in their own activity. The searching methods can be rather unsystematic within the entrepreneurs; Strömberg says that *“It is difficult to do the searches systematically”*. She also sees consumer workshops as a possibility in the future in order to detect merging trends and customer preferences. The information received non-actively searching comes mostly from wholesalers and individual handcraftsmen that take contact in hope that they can sell something to the entrepreneurs, and also targeted advertisement. Information about new products was received also from wholesalers and other operators that the businesses already worked together with. An example is a parent company of a commodity that is on their selection already that informs about new commodities available. Entrepreneurs try to keep up with the ongoing trends and match their supply accordingly and when discussing about the reasons behind taking something into selection Vehovaara says that *“We have listened to our customers, if anything”*. Also, the surrounding networks that entail, for instance, various experts from the same field are found to be a good source when going over different options.

WOM and eWOM were mentioned to have an immense impact on this field. Li et al. (2010, 302) recognize WOM as an effective tool that has been always around and can act as an easy way for consumers to get information. They talk about how enterprises have just recently started to understand and utilize the potential it carries along eWOM, but it is clear that in this field, the potential and impact has been fully understood. As an example, Strömberg says that the whole FitDog brand has spread through word of mouth among active dog owners. A. Schüler says dog parks as an example where dog owners use effective WOM.

The greatest possibility in the social media can be seen as the two-way interaction and eWOM. Boya et al. (2012, 142) support the thought that online communities offer possibilities to influence other dog owners and their purchasing behavior and this has

not gone unseen with the entrepreneurs. All the interviewees felt that dog owners are very active on social media, especially the ones who are active also otherwise, for instance active in dog hobbies. Meuter et al. (2013, 251-252) says that marketers try to achieve benefits from two-way communication online and this is the case in Vehovaara's business. She told that for instance giving and receiving likes, commenting positive comments on pet photos, and posting pictures and business related information on social media such as Facebook and Instagram, are marketing methods that they use. A few customers have said that they have found their pet store through their Instagram activity.

Even though Vehovaara has noticed that activity in the social media can pay off, the general attitude towards active participation in social media, such as the before mentioned liking and commenting, was seen as a bit risky, even by Vehovaara herself. This strengthens the thought that came through with all the entrepreneurs; you have to be careful what you say in public, in other words, in social media, because you can easily be understood to mean something that you do not mean or that you like something that you support, some specific activity, for instance. All the entrepreneurs said that they follow, some even daily, dog related groups and sites, but others did not say to actively participate in social media activities, quite the contrary in fact. When discussing about social media Strömberg says that *"We do not take part in bickering type of conversations. If there are factual errors, we correct them"*, continuing with how it is important to leave some social media comments to their own value as there are always some people who do not engage in constructive communication, but the opposite. Vehovaara states *"We just have to hope that nothing negative has spread from us"*, which is in line with the thoughts of the other entrepreneurs.

All the businesses had a social media account at least on Facebook. It has been found to be a good marketing method as a supporting marketing channel and when the financial resources are limited, as is the case often in businesses in their beginnings. So, in addition to these different levels of online marketing through social media, there rose some other online marketing methods too. One was that all the businesses had their own websites where they shared information about themselves. Other methods were paid advertisements and search engine optimizations. Email newsletters to registered customers were also mentioned as a marketing method as were participating in dog fairs and shows. In those the participating people are automatically a more focused and more apt audience for their marketing.

Less used methods of marketing that were mentioned were advertisements in newspapers, billboards, and flyers left in various places, such as veterinary clinics. Also, one of the businesses was about to launch a television advertisement campaign and test how well that works. Especially the newspaper advertising was not found successful. Recommendations were also mentioned as a way to market, for instance a two-way recom-

mendation deal with another dog market operator was mentioned. K. Schöler believes that *"A Finn does not have the courage to try a service without recommendations"*. This thought is supported by Trent (2009, 46), who sees that WOM has a powerful role in trend diffusion in this field and thus this recommendation system as a marketing method, especially in Finland after taking in consideration K. Schöler's comment, is understandable.

Some of the entrepreneurs followed trends from abroad and from the US more and some less, one entrepreneur said that she does not really follow the American trends and another said that she was about to participate in a big dog fair there. When considering from where the trends come to Finland, the number one mentioned country was the US. Other countries were mentioned too, such as Sweden, the UK and the Benelux-countries, all of which are a part of the EU (for the time being). The interviewees were not sure whether some of the trends that they thought came from Europe actually originated from the US; some said that the trends originate from the US but come to Finland through European countries. One mention was that some influences regarding the clothing of dogs might come from Russia, it being Finland's neighboring country and having similar weather conditions. Otherwise there were no knowledge that trends would come from Asia or Africa, for instance.

The trends from the US caused opinions in both negative and positive directions. As mentioned before, not all trends from the US are wanted here and not all suit the Finnish culture. But on the other hand, it was said that the Americans are ahead of Finns in this field and that there are a lot of innovations. The comment from K. Schöler summarizes the situation well: *"Finns have an odd love/hate relationship with the US, first you have to laugh at everything American and then adopt them (trends) gradually (into the Finnish culture)"*. According to the interviewees, the average time for trends to diffuse from the American market to the Finnish was from one year to three years. When diffusing online the pace can be fast, but through European operators, for instance, it can take more time.

4.3 Consumers' view of the market

4.3.1 Dog commodity market and its development

None of the interviewees had followed the market in any particular way, but they all recognized the development that it has gone through. The themes that arose from the interviews were the growth and expansion of the dog commodity market. The product selection has grown immensely and there is about everything to be found for dogs now-

adays, in their opinion. The amount of services has grown for dogs, but this growth was not seen to be as big as the growth in products, at least not yet. The possibilities to have a hobby together with a dog was seen to have grown and more and more people do activities with their dogs, in addition to the more traditional dog shows.

The interviewees mentioned the growth of services in the field, but not many said to use any services, at first. When the interviews continued services such as puppy meetings, dog show trainings, and dog hotel were mentioned nevertheless. This indicates that not all services are seen as traditional services and thus might not be thought of when first considering the subject. A service that can be considered rather traditional in this field, grooming was mentioned twice and that was due to the fact that it was needed for the breeds in question. But overall, apart from dog hobbies, no services were used regularly. When talking about today's services for dogs, such as hotels for dogs, said that *"15 years ago people would have laughed at those things"*, which indicates strong development of this field in the last 15 years.

The Internet, brick and mortar stores and markets were the places mentioned were the interviewees buy their goods for their dogs. Most of them used multiple places to purchase their dog goods, except for Moisia, who told that she buys her dog goods only from online stores, and mainly from one specific online pet store due to the easiness of it and larger selection. Others used online pet stores in differing frequencies, mostly when shopping for something that is already familiar to the consumer or things, such as coats, which may not have that big selection in brick and mortar stores. Overall, brick and mortars were preferred, because one could see the product themselves and thus assess the suitability better. Also, the expertise of the personnel was valued highly and some of the consumers felt that they could find more suitable products with the personnel's help. As Anonymous consumer puts it: *"Usually I go into a pet store when I am looking for something specific and rather easily I have asked for help from the sales person, which is something I otherwise do very rarely when shopping"* Anonymous consumer's statements on the influence of sales person's activity support the study of Milligan & Hantula (2006, 41-42) as they found out that suggestive selling and prompting the customer to make a purchase does increase the sales considerably.

When it comes to private and chain stores, both were used rather evenly, even though the chain stores seemed to be a bit more used within this group. Private stores were seen to have a bit more knowledge on the field as they decide themselves about the selection they offer and thus they have gathered more knowledge on the products versus chains having a similar selection within all the stores. However, even though the expertise was appreciated, the chain stores were found more convenient for these consumers due to their locations within shopping centers, for instance, and longer opening hours. There was eagerness to visit more private stores, but they were usually closed earlier than chain stores.

All the interviewees had noticed that the selection in markets has grown immensely in the last ten to fifteen years, which indicates the grown demand of this sector as even grocery stores have had to answer the demand according to Anonymous consumer. Still, markets were used the least to buy products for dogs, because of its negative stigma. *“Market food already as a term is connected to being a bad dog owner”*, feels Rajala. Also, markets’ personnel is unlikely to have much knowledge in the pet field, which was one of the main reasons these consumers visited brick and mortar pet stores. The only things mentioned that can be bought from a market were treats for dogs.

The biggest expense seemed to be dog food for these consumers, which is quite understandable and in line with Brady et al.’s (2007, 47) demonstration of expenses on dogs and cats, as 40% was food expenses. The impression from the interviewees was that there is more supply, at least in the product sector, for smaller dogs than for medium or large dogs. This was seen to be because smaller dogs usually need more easily clothes in the winter than bigger dogs and they are taken with the owner to places more easily and often, so products for those needs are mostly for small dogs. In the interviewees’ case this was also accurate, the smaller dogs seemed to have more products, for instance, ones related to outdoors and travelling.

All these four women live together with their male spouses and the dogs are co-owned. The impression received from all the women, through them saying it directly or by them talking about how they visit pet stores and such, was that they are the ones in the household that actually make the decision about what to buy for the dog and the actual purchases. This might indicate the stronger role of women in this field, at least in these four cases.

The future of the dog commodity market was seen to continue to grow, as Rajala said: *“There is a growing trend in all this consuming (on dogs)”*. The future aspects of this market were seen as positive, emphasis being more on dog as a companion related trends and dog well being trends. Interviewees felt that dogs are taken to be a part of more and more human activities, so a possible future trend could be that dog would have their own equipment for humanlike activities, which would make it easier for a dog to participate a dog in human activities. These are brought up in the following thoughts as Anonymous consumer states, *“Dog would not use human versions of products but they would have their own”*, and Karvonen *“Dog well being will be a thing that is going to be invested in in a different way than before”*. Also, when discussing trends in the US, Moisio mentions sports together with dogs and that is something that *“is not seen yet in Finland”* and thus could be a future trend as the human-dog activities have become more popular. Moisio also adds that *“Maybe in the cute and clothing department there is not so much growth in the future, whereas in dog health department there is surely room for growth”*.

4.3.2 Consumer behavior

The picture received from these consumers was that dog owners tend to consume rather substantially on their dogs. Even a bit unnecessarily much, as Rajala says, *“I have noticed that in general, people consume quite a lot on their dogs, which might even be a bit unnecessary”*. This thought matches well with Lee et al.’s (2010, 567) picture of today’s western consuming in general too and with Vänskä’s (2016, 80-81) thoughts on the fact that the picture of a good dog owner in today’s world is someone who consumes even a bit too much on one’s dog. Moisio thinks about the overall picture that she has received of the market and the reality behind it as she says *“I am not sure whether it is the social media’s influence or not, but I feel that most people do consume on their dogs pretty much. Also, more fun and cute stuff is bought and dog can be seen even as an equal to a child.”* So, all interviewees had a feeling that average dog owners consume on somewhat unnecessary things for dogs, but some of them were not completely certain whether it is the reality or a distorted picture that the media has given, even though the consuming on pets has really grown in the recent years (Nurmela 2014).

Ridgway et al. (2008, 394-395) found that there is a connection on how consumers consume on themselves, and that consumers, who have a non-excessive buying tendency, were reported to have significantly lower frequency to buy for their pets. The interviewees supported some of these findings as they all thought that the way a person consumes generally is linked with how they consume on their dog, even though the general picture is rather consuming. But on the contrary to Ridgway et al.’s findings, three out of four of the interviewees that said that they have a non-excessive buying tendency in general, said that their consuming habits change when it comes to dogs and this was seen as quite normal in field. *“Compared to my normal consuming, I would say that when I consume on dogs, I am more impulsive. I can get easily enthusiastic about dog stuff and I buy them maybe more easily and with less consideration”*, describes Karvonen.

The motivations, what drives these consumers to select certain commodities, were various, as one can assume. However, some similar themes arose from the interviewees, one being quality, especially in dog food. Boya et al. (2015, 74) feel that humanizing dogs is the driving factor behind spending on quality premium dog food, but a lot of emphasis was put to the grown awareness of dog owners’ in the interviews, especially when it comes to dog food. Another thing that makes these dog owners purchase was a novelty. New types of toys or something else that they had not seen before and felt like their dog might enjoy that. When talking about products for dogs, Karvonen says that *“it is similar as in children’s products; you get excited about external things more easily”*. So, external things such as the product matching other home décor, cuteness et cetera, do matter, but in a rather small scale. The practicality is seen as the most im-

portant thing, in Finland at least. But in a situation where two products are equally practical and good, Moisio and Rajala both brought up that in those situations the cuter or funnier one to the owner wins.

It was also distinguishable that these dog owners tried to provide rather similar standard of living to their dogs as to themselves, as their consuming on their dogs echoed in their consuming on themselves, or was even greater. This is a finding, which Kumcu and Woolverton (2015, 225) studied and which illustrates the grown will to provide a similar standard of living to their dogs as to themselves. The financial situation of a consumer can influence, of course, but this phenomenon is still distinguishable. Also, according to Moynagh and Worsley (2002, 294-295) consuming is a way for a consumer to express oneself and illustrate one's identity and status. The interviewees found this to be accurate, especially in the US as Anonymous consumer stated that the trend of dog being "*an extension of its owner*" comes from the US.

Chen et al. (2012, 126,128-129) divides pet owners into three clusters: "Anthropomorphic owners who value quality", "Attached owners who seek a service's epistemic value" and "Owners who look for interaction and a service's functional (economical) value". Anonymous consumer and Karvonen fit quite well into Cluster 2 as they look for quality in goods, put emphasis on reason-based information, and overall use print media and Internet sources as information search methods. Anonymous consumer also partly fits Cluster 1, as she is highly educated, consumes somewhat on non-necessities and her statement "*I don't look at the price, I buy what I need or what I find nice to buy for it*" leans more towards Cluster 1. Rajala and Moisio fit somewhere in the middle of Cluster 1 and 2, as they have features from both. So, in these cases the cluster division is not totally applicable, even though it is directional.

Emotions were also a driving force behind some purchase decisions, such as impulse buys. When buying impulsively, the products are usually treats or toys for the dogs, but no services or more expensive products were mentioned. The impulse buys were related to both positive and negative feelings. When feeling positive, the consumers felt that they might not put so much thought to what they are buying. But on the other hand, when consumers said to feel negative feelings, buying something for their dog can cheer them up as the dog gets joy from it or as it means that with, for instance a toy, the owner can spend time with the dog and thus cheer oneself up. This last mentioned example supports Moynagh and Worsley's (2002, 295) findings how consuming on a dog can reinforce the relationship between a dog and its owner and the owner can get the fulfillment of consuming on dogs similarly to when consuming on other goods.

If considering feelings a bit more thoroughly than in the superordinate level with the help of Laros and Steenkamp's (2005, 1444) hierarchical model for understanding and distinguishing consumer emotions, some emotions were distinguished in the subordinate level that influence to these interviewees consumer behavior on this field. The most

notable influencer was being worried about one's dog and when worried, consumers purchase more. *"If it is about health, I will buy anything"* Rajala told and continued by *"In that kind of situation, you don't think about money"*. The "one must try one's everything" mentality was seen when concerning a dog's health. Other purchase increasing emotions were enthusiasm, joyfulness and guilt. The first ones were related to the acquiring of a dog, when the interviewees said that they purchased things already in advance and the thrill of getting a dog makes one purchase more easily. Guilt was related to the owner leaving a dog home alone and thus purchasing commodities that keep the dog as activated as possible and make its time alone as pleasant as possible. Disgust or irritation to a clash of personal values and some dog commodity was mentioned as a feeling, when seeing something that represents the opposite to one's values. An example from Moisio was that if she sees something that is very unnecessary or something that might be fun for the owner but even unpleasant to the dog, the feeling of disgust makes the purchase very much unlikely, as she does not value clothing dogs unnecessarily at all, for instance.

4.3.3 Trends

One of the first things that all the interviewees mentioned as a trend in Finland was raw food or half raw food diets for dogs. The interviewees had found that it is often marketed as a remedy for many health problems for dogs and also that this trend emphasizes the grown awareness and demands on dog food. Also well being services for dogs were seen as trendy at the moment and everything that intertwines the dog to the owner's everyday life more closely. Products similar to motorcycle dog carriers and services like dog yoga or a dobo, a Finnish hobby for dogs and their owners, which uses a gym ball, were seen as rather new trends and one's that might grow.

All the interviewees had noticed the trend of humanizing dogs and as Anonymous consumer said: *"The fact that there is discussion about people having to recall the fact that it is a dog and it doesn't act like humans tells that there is a lot of humanization of dogs"*. They also found differing causes for that, but the most emphasized were loneliness and substituting a child with a dog, either for the reason that a dog is an easier choice than a child or because of childlessness. Overall, they felt that a dog's status has grown more from a pet to a family member, a companion or to a friend. *"Five to ten years ago the humanizing trend was all about the cuteness of the dog with dresses and crowns, but today the course of humanizing dogs is more related to the dog being a companion, which is taken everywhere with you, not so much to the stuff anymore"*, considers Moisio. Anonymous consumer called her dog *"the apple of her eye"* and said that her dog is a family member and a friend to her as it gives so much to her and her

well-being. These thoughts and statements go well hand in hand with Langinvainio's (2016, 10) thoughts that a dog's positive effects can be reflected on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The psychological and self-fulfillment needs that incorporate self-actualization, esteem needs and belongingness and love needs came up in the interviews as reasons why dogs' status has grown and why they are more companions nowadays.

When talking about trends in the US and how they differ from Finland, the general picture was that in the US they are ahead of Finland in every aspect of this market as their dog commodity market is so much bigger. Also, as the culture is more extravagant there, so are the dog commodities, which make them sometimes ill-fitted to Finland. As an example, Anonymous consumer stated that *"In the US it (clothing dogs) is a fashion matter, so that the owner and the dog wear similar clothes and there is remarkably more bling bling than here (Finland), even though there is that here too"* and she continued with *"In Finland (clothing dogs) is kind of a trendy thing, but it is still very down to earth, as it is mostly raincoats and coats for warmth, but not so much for the stylishness"*. The picture received from the American dog commodity market is that it is very human pleasing centered and the humanization has still more emphasis on the materials than in the companion aspect. Overall, what Moisio said really sums it up quite well: *"In the US, the humanization is more related to materialism"*.

Trends such as dog weddings and birthday parties are seen to originate from the US, and these are not too common occasions in Finland, at least yet, but they do exist in here too. Rajala is throwing a birthday party for her elderly dog. She does admit that it is a very dog-humanizing thing to do, but she feels that the dog has deserved the party and as an elderly dog, all the time spent with the dog should be valued. She added that this is most likely the first and last time that she organizes such an event, though. Williams (2007, 46) highlights the trend of pampering as the number one trend in the dog commodity market, but even though these beforementioned pampering occasions are still current, it is visible from these interviewees that the pampering aspect has stepped back a bit in the last ten years. Also, the pampering is more easily related to smaller dogs as they are seen to be babyfied more often and they have more supply, at least on products.

A trend related to the humanization of dogs that the interviewees brought up were dog hotels, daycares and walkers. These were found to be increasingly popular in the US and only somewhat present in Finland. They said that dog walkers, for instance, are very present in American movies and media. These types of services are strongly related to a dog's well being, which is a growing category in this field in other aspects too, according to the interviewees. Another trend mentioned was DIY, do it yourself, types of products for dogs as Anonymous consumer mentioned that handicraft magazines have started to have patterns for dog wear in Finland and Rajala mentioned that they have built beds for their dogs themselves.

4.3.4 Trend diffusion

When considering how trends in the dog commodity market are diffused to the Finnish market Moisio states *“I think might be similar to what is behind trends in general; celebrities or social media personas have pictures online or paparazzi pictures of them spread with their dogs on brunches et cetera.”* This inclining that as their followers see these kinds of photos, they want to copy the celebrities’ behavior. Moisio’s depiction of the trend diffusion matches well Simmel’s trickle down theory that Atik and Firat (2013, 837) studied. The thought behind that theory is the same what Moisio explained: people from lower social status classes started to copy the fashion of upper class people and this way fashion spread. Even though there are not classes in the same way as was in Simmel’s time, the theory fits well the modern society when thinking about celebrities and bloggers followed through on media instead of upper class consumers.

It was noticed that dog owners are rather communal and active, for instance, on social media and different discussion forums. Experiences and peer support rose up as essential reasons why the interviewees were on dog related groups or followed dog-related sites. *“I have noticed that people try to get a lot of peer support and information about experiences from each other. The information of someone’s experience on some commodity is sought more than what experts and sales persons have to say about the commodity.”*, states Anonymous consumer. This is in line with the reasons stated by Rajala regarding why she and her husband founded the Facebook group for Chihuahua owners and to other small dog owners: she said that *“I think that I needed some peer support”* as it was her first dog of that breed. So peer support was mentioned as the biggest motivation in this case.

So it does not come as a surprise that the interviewees stated that when they search actively for information about some commodity on discussion forums, product reviews and experiences are valued. For some people these were the most important sources where to look for information, but to one of the interviewees, the more rational sources such as studies on the impact of some ingredient on dog food, were the most valued. Facebook groups that were not regularly actively followed were a source when searching for something particular as there is a search possibility within the groups. Rajala told that even though there is sometimes even bickering, these groups are a good source to ask for help and recommendations, which supports Boya et al.’s (2012, 142) findings that these online communities and groups offer the possibility to influence other dog owners and their purchasing decisions.

Rarely the interviewees started to search for information from commercials, which could be seen for instance in commercial emails. Schmidt (2016) reported that Packaged Facts had found that 18% of pet owners said that a pet marketer’s email has influenced their purchasing decision in the last 30 days, but these consumers said that they rarely

read any marketing emails and that they have a very small influence on their purchase decisions. Only two interviewees mentioned to even open the marketing emails and only when there happened to be a sale on something they needed already visible in the preview of the email. Again, it is important to take into considerations that there was only four interviewees, who are keen dog owners, so the situation can be different for not so keen and informed dog owners. More influential among these consumers was following of pet stores on social media and receiving the information there, as there the marketing blends into other social media mass and is reviewed almost daily while browsing one's social media account.

WOM was said to have a very big role in this market and that information was found to spread powerfully through it, as was also found by Trent (2009, 46). The interviewees mentioned that they often consult their friends who have dogs, for instance in a situation that they are looking for a new dog food. Dog parks were another place where information on different commodities was changed between dog owners. The reason for that was rather simple according to Moisio: *"You do not know anything else in common with an unknown dog owner, so it is an easy discussion subject in a dog park"*. She continues by emphasizing the fact that even in Finland, where people usually do not small talk or talk to strangers, people come to talk to you much easier when you have a dog. Especially other dog owners talk to each other even outside dog parks, through which information about new dog commodities, and thus trends, is spread. The role of WOM was seen to be big especially when it comes to services. Karvonen said that *"if a service gets praises, the praises direct other dog owners to that"*. But the coin has two sides; Karvonen emphasizes the influence of negative feedback *"if someone says something negative, it sticks to your mind very easily"*.

When considering the different WOM types, WOM and eWOM, the traditional WOM was found to be more reliable and thus more influential, which was the case also in Meuter et al.'s (2013, 251) findings. It was found by Tham et al. (2013, 149) and Chen et al. (2012, 126) that online communities and other information sources could also become more reliable and influential when there is volume in consistently similar opinions and experiences. This was exactly the same thing that came up in the interviews. On the other hand, when opinions and experiences on some commodity were differing or did not have volume, eWOM sources were not found a reliable source.

Trends spread in this market in many different ways, but WOM, eWOM and different marketing methods, such as online marketing seem to be the most influential ones. Trends spread also through dog shows, hobbies and fairs according to these interviewees. Especially international dog fairs were thought to have influence, but they were not events that these interviewees mentioned to visit, as opposed to dog shows. Karvonen takes one of her dogs to dog shows regularly and says that she does purchase products from the stands that are present there. She describes her purchases there as rather ran-

dom and ones that are not thought of beforehand. Rajala does not take her dogs to shows, but said that she visits them regularly though. So, even for dog owners who do not take their own dogs to dog shows, the marketing in the shows can be influential.

Within this group, paper marketing, apart from newspaper marketing, which no interviewee mentioned, was seen to be surprisingly efficient. Flyers in dog parks, especially on services, were found to be something that dog owners read as were the commercial leaflets that came through the post, sometimes within a dog magazine. These magazines were also mentioned as a source of information, not always on specific commodities, but in general.

When talking about the influence of the US on the dog commodity market in Finland and also in general, Anonymous consumer said that *“I don’t believe that trends from elsewhere end up there (the US), but vice versa”*. When specifying on the US’s influence on Finland, Moisio stated that she believes that *“the whole (Finnish) market is based on that”*. Despite this, some other countries in addition to the US, such as Russia and Japan, were mentioned as trend influencers to Finland. The interviewees felt that Finland has some trends of its own and characteristics in this field too, so not everything has come from abroad. These trends were, for instance, outdoors clothing for dogs and different kind of reflectors and light producing equipment such as s luminous collars and leashes. All in all, it seems that the US is seen as the biggest influencer to Finland in this field, even though Finnish innovations and influences from other countries are found too.

4.4 Discussion

Quite a lot similar themes rose up from these three data sources, but also some differences when studying how consumer trends spread from the US to the Finnish market. Similarities were found especially on how the three data sources found the prevalent trends and differences were found for instance when thinking what trends are prevalent and what are passing ones. The clear number one trend being the humanization of dogs, which can offer numerous possibilities in the market still in the future, both in products and services, but the role of services will most likely be more notable. This trend is seen to be due to the increased welfare in general and the increased loneliness of people, which can be due to the more and more individualistic western society. It also acts as an embodiment of today’s western culture as people can replace children with dogs, which may implicate the change in people’s traditional values, which have usually entailed a family with children. This trend has different forms of manifestation, for instance the before mentioned dog as a child, but in addition, dog as a companion that one takes everywhere, and dog as extension of the owner.

It is also very visible that a trend of consuming on dogs more has overall increased a lot. The increased consuming on dogs was seen as a grown trend to begin with and another trend that all the three data sources supported was for instance the humanization of dogs, which came apparent already on the theory chapter of this study. The humanization of dogs has become more and more common. It has developed new features in addition to the clothing and treating like a human, which is more popular in the US. New and growing features bring the seeing of dogs as companions, with whom to do activities and even travel with. Food was another thing that had different trends surrounding it, for instance, raw food was a trend that rose in the interviews, but the entrepreneurs felt it was a passing trend, whereas the consumers saw it as a prevalent trend. Different types of dog services, such as dog massages, were seen as prevalent trends and they were seen to increase.

It came up that the normal consuming habits of the dog owner do affect the consumer behavior when it comes to dog commodities, but there were also some indicators that consuming on dogs can be more substantial. Dog owners seem to consume at least with the same habits on dogs, but it also possible that they do not consider as much the purchases related to dogs and thus spend more easily on dog commodities than on other things, for example on themselves. Also, emotions were seen to have a big role on dog-related purchases. Especially two emotions were distinguished to increase dog-related purchases: worry and enthusiasm. Worry was related to dog's wellbeing and dog owners were seen to try their everything to make the dog feel better, similarly as they would if it was about a child. Enthusiasm was related to the getting of a new dog and all the purchases related to that. Bad mood in general was seen maybe more as an increasing factor in dog-related purchase, as one can get joy from purchasing and thus make oneself feel better. However, this study indicates that consumers tend to buy more impulse buys and in general when they are in a better mood.

Based on both, the entrepreneur and the consumer interviews, the role of sales personnel seem to be highlighted when visiting brick and mortar stores. The personnel in independent pet stores was seen somewhat more expert than the personnel in chain stores, main reason being that in independent stores, the owner chooses the selection they carry themselves and thus know more about it. Especially when buying something for the first time, brick and mortar stores were visited, if not for the expertise, to see and to be able to touch the products. The expertise is one of the driving forces why brick and mortar pet stores are valued so highly and this is also one of the reasons grocery markets are not ranked high when thinking about where to buy dog goods from. The quality of the market goods is not perceived as good as pet stores', but it was visible that this mindset had changed a bit to the positive direction.

In Finland, where people do not small talk, it is a notable discovery that in pet stores, there is a lot of small talk and even more profound interaction about pets between the customer and the sales person. This possibility to interact with other likeminded people and based on the interviews, the positive and engaging behavior of sales personnel, make the consumers return to a particular shop. Pets, and in this case, dogs, are something over which people generally and even more so in Finland, feel more comfortable to talk about and thus the trends and other dog related information spreads easily and thus making the role of WOM substantial.

It was found that these consumer informants valued experiences on the commodity they are looking for and they look for peer support when deciding on what to purchase. It was found that the role of WOM might be even greater when it comes to dog services and that dog owners might even require some kind of external spark in the shape of a friend recommending some service, to even try the service at all. In addition, different online sources were in very active use when searching for information, which can be even expected in today's internet-oriented society. These online sources, such as Facebook, were not always used actively for searching dog commodity information, but the interviewees were exposed to dog commodity information daily imperceptibly as they scroll their social media accounts where they follow dog sites. This making eWOM sometimes even a subtle way of trend spreading as consumers might not look for the information, but receive it anyways.

Finnish small businesses in the dog commodity industry follow market trends in different ways as can be expected, according to the findings in this study. Not all follow trends actively, though. Events such as dog shows and fairs are appreciated among the entrepreneurs, both national and international. Formal and informal networks also play an integral part when learning about new trends, sometimes formal and informal networks can intertwine as small businesses do not have too high a business structure. The one following method that everyone mentioned was the Internet, including social media, as is quite logical in today's world. Some followed and ordered industry statistics, but most did not. The trend following among small business owners seemed rather unsystematic overall, but it is important to mention that the trend following can be difficult to carry out systematically in general. One thing that was also important was that the entrepreneurs said they listened to the customers and gathered ideas of what to take into the selection from them. This can be seen as an advantage for small business owners as they are more agile and are able to change and modify their selection more easily, adjusting it to the demand better.

All the interviewed consumer informants followed trends through the Internet too and the role of Internet forums rose especially. This further indicated the strong need for peer support among consumers in this field, which also explains the important role of WOM in trend spreading. Trends are spread also when visiting pet stores and finding

new ideas from there. Marketers should keep in mind that to get consumers to their stores and this way increase sales and spread trends, print media such as newspapers and email newsletters seem to something that may not yield too much results among these consumers, but recommendations from other dog owners and positive social media behavior might just do that. The expert help of sales personnel should be highlighted, as this is the reason why consumers choose brick and mortar stores and especially independent ones.

A point that became apparent by both the interview sets was that traditional newspaper marketing does not appeal to today's consumers too strongly. This being said, it is surprising that flyers do seem to have an effect still, for instance in dog parks. This was a rather little used method among the entrepreneurs, because it might seem old-fashioned though it might still have value. Interestingly, this method was only used among the service providers, as it might be most efficient for them as their selection is easier to showcase in a small flyer. Entrepreneurs with small product selection thus could benefit from this method too, for instance in dog fairs and shows.

Marketers seem to have found the way to appeal to dog-owning consumers through their emotions by implying that their commodity is "the best" for dogs, for instance. Also, the increased activity of dog businesses on social media has been noticed and it has become a trend that businesses try to draw attention with dog pictures and videos, for instance. Overall, larger businesses in this field have begun to concentrate their operations under one roof more and more. This is something that also small businesses in this field are able to do, and already have done it with cooperation with other small business entrepreneurs in this field.

The number one country said to be the origin of most adapted trends was the US, among both the entrepreneurs and consumer informants. Some of the interviewees did not say they follow especially American trends, but suspected it to be the source as the market there is so vast. It was thought that the American dog commodity market is the main innovator, both in good and in bad. This suggests that the US will continue to be the number one country in this industry and this way will continue to influence the Finnish dog commodity market. The interviewees did see that there is also Finnish innovation in this market, mostly related to the somewhat special weather conditions in Finland, but also innovations that are suited to dog markets globally.

An important point came up in the consumer interviews: does the media picture received from the US match the real consumer behavior among dog owners in the US or is the extravagant picture of the consuming correct? Based on this study, the received media picture can be somewhat more concentrated on people with higher income and the average dog owner is probably a bit more down to earth in reality than deemed. Of course, there are a lot of luxury goods in the market and their role is most likely still growing, but the possibility that those kinds of commodities, such as jewelry for dogs,

would spread among the average people is rather small. Premium products can be a completely other thing, though. Many dog foods can be labeled as premium foods nowadays, for instance, and they are something that many average dog-owning consumers can afford and are even willing to pay some more for.

The future of this industry seems rather bright as it has grown strongly, especially in Finland, and the prognosis for future still looks good and all the interviews suggested that the industry keeps on growing. Even though the industry keeps on growing, the role of brick and mortar stores can become smaller and the role of shopping online bigger in the future. Also, as the trend of centralizing stores and services under one roof may continue, the bigger operators, for instance foreign chain stores, in the market can further strengthen their position in the market thus creating more competition for independent stores. The agility and expertise in the small and independent businesses will continue to be the advantage of them as is the domesticity, as it is highly valued aspect in today's Finland. There is much untapped potential in the market, especially in the dog service sector. Most likely more trends from the US will be adapted to the Finnish market, broadening the existing market in Finland and creating more growth. Future trends will most likely focus on commodities related to dog's health and to commodities that make it easier to involve a dog to the owner's everyday life.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Theoretical contributions

In this study the theoretical framework for understanding how trends spread in the dog commodity market is based on themes surrounding the subject, without which it is difficult to understand the whole context. The key components to understanding the context lay in consumer behavior, trends, especially trend diffusion, small businesses and human-dog relationship. One of the main theoretical contributions of this study was the theoretical framework, which was built on the before mentioned components enable the reader to reach a basic understanding of the subject and also to support the empiric part of this study. These components not only make the subject more understandable, but they complete each other too as the consumer behavior on the market is related to the prevalent trends on the market, for instance.

This study also sheds light to the fact why consumers consume on their dogs more than before. Behind this is more than anything the social change of today's society that sees dogs as a part of the community more than before the more and more individual-centered western society. So the cause for the increased consuming on dogs lies in the social change and in the longing for more communal living, in a way. The change in the way people think about dogs and their pets overall has lead to the upgraded status of dogs in many western societies, such as Finland and the US. So here again a theoretical contribution is seen, as the cause, or at least one of the main causes, for increased consuming has been distinguished and thus made more understandable.

In addition to the theoretical contribution on the dog commodity market's nature and the growth of it, this study also provides reinforcing theoretical knowledge on small businesses, and providing specific knowledge on this particular market. The main findings related to this were behind the findings of why small businesses are founded. When it comes to small businesses in this field, the personal interest of the entrepreneur and their prior activity in this field seemed to be the most powerful forces in this market, which was already implied in the theoretical framework and was supported in the empirical findings.

This study provided an overview, for instance, on different consumer types among dog owners. Some types were distinguished based on the empirical findings, but more precise one was represented on the theory chapter, to which the empiric findings were reflected on. The data in this study did not completely support the earlier findings in the theoretical frame related to consumer behavior of pet owners, for instance, which might imply that there are more variables to study in the consumer behavior of dog owners than pet owners in general.

Based on the studied theory here, a synthesis of how trends spread from the US to the Finnish market was created. This synthesis brings additional theoretical contribution on this subject as this synthesis offers a logical and understandable process picture of how trends spread in this context. In addition, a part of the theoretical contributions of this study are the detected research gaps, which are presented through the suggestions for future research and they will be introduced further on in the chapter 5.4.

5.2 Managerial implications

This research offers a coherent overview to the prevalent dog market trends focusing on consumer behavior and commodities in the dog commodity industry. Coherency is enabled through the studying of the trends and the related consumer behavior through the eyes of both entrepreneurs and consumers, in other words, from both supply and demand point of view. Even though the focus of this research is on pet dogs, it can be applicable in many aspects to other pets such as cats, for instance. This overview on the dog commodity market can be useful for online and brick and mortar dog commodity stores, and many other operators in the dog commodity market, as the prevalent and booming trends are represented and consumer behavior is studied and this way made easier to understand and thus to utilize in everyday operations, in sales situations, for instance.

The eagerness to participate in this study of the entrepreneurs also illustrates the importance of this study especially to small-scale entrepreneurs. Their interest towards the study was visible and some already found the interview situation as beneficial for their business. So, even the consideration of the interview questions on the entrepreneur interview frame (Appendix 2) can help the entrepreneurs to clarify their insight on the market, how their business fits the market, and how it will fit the market in the future. Also, the consideration of the customers based on the learnt knowledge can further help the business. Making a questionnaire to customers who visit the store or creating workshops together with the customers may bring more insight to the entrepreneurs on what the customers value and what they could do to take the business match the demand more precisely and this way make the business better.

Different types of pet-owning consumers are detected in this study, which can be very useful for operators in this industry in terms of marketing, for instance, as they plan their strategy and what kind of consumers to target. This research brings also knowledge on how to market to dog-owning consumers in the best manner, as it was found that worry and enthusiasm were emotions that urged dog owners to buy more and maybe even to try new things that they had not tried before. Operators could capitalize through this information and utilize it on their business as they see fit the best. It came

up that discussion forums and other peer rating and experience things are valued among customers. Entrepreneurs could enable a rating feature on online stores, so customers can rate them, and to increase information on their selection and thus make it more appealing to the customer.

As has been discovered in this study, the dog service sector is still rather small in Finland, but growing all the time. Operators now have the possibility to be the first to bring different dog services to Finland from abroad or create something suitable for the Finnish market, as there is not so much competition yet. Services that are meant for both the owner and the dog could be ones that are successful or services that enable the smooth everyday life with a dog. In addition, dog services that are traditionally meant for people could also suit the market well in Finland. Furthermore, in the product side, customized products for dogs could be a direction to go as individuality is appreciated in the market.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

The focus of this study was on pet dogs, but as a limitation to this study is the fact that many source materials addressed not only dogs, but also pets in general, or dogs and cats. There was sufficiently only pet dog data, too, so the focus could be maintained only on dogs. Also, as the majority of household pets are dogs in the US and Finland, so the pet-related data is very applicable to dogs. Another limitation is in the mentioned country-specific context of the study as the data may not be applicable internationally as the studied markets are the US and Finland. This is why a possible way to further study this industry could be on a global level or on another country level, one intriguing country in this field being Japan, for instance, as there is a grown dog pampering market.

Another limitation to this study is that there were only female interviewees. As has been brought up, the findings in this study suggest that this field has an emphasis more on female entrepreneurs and consumers. So, this study somewhat reifies the sex division on the dog commodity market as the participated entrepreneurs were all women. As this has been merely an observation in this study and not the focus, the division of sexes and its significance on female entrepreneurship could also be studied in more detail. When it comes to the interviewees, a quantitative research could be conducted focusing only on entrepreneurs or only on consumers to get a more specific overview on the supply or demand side of the market.

Furthermore, this research studied the prevalent trends and only few forecasts for the future were made, so another point of view to this whole subject could be the forecasts for future trends in the dog commodity market. Another further research suggestion is to conduct a quantitative research on dog-owning consumers and study their consuming

behavior on the dog commodity market in more detail. Consuming habits and trends could also be studied by the owner's age and by dog breeds, as it seems that there might be notable differences in what dog owners consume on, depending on the dog breed and its original use and purpose.

6 SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to answer to the question “What is the consumer behavior in the dog commodity market like?” the main context being Finland and the comparison country the US. It was studied through three sub questions, first of which being ”what kinds of trends are prevalent in the dog commodity market in the US and Finland?” and this was addressed in the content analysis findings and also in both the interview findings. The second sub question was “How do Finnish small businesses in the dog commodity market follow industry trends?” and this was addressed in the entrepreneur findings chapter. The third and last sub question was “How consumers follow dog commodity market trends?” and this was addressed in the consumer interview findings. The understanding of the market from both, the supply and demand sides makes it easier for operators to see the full potential of the market and thus benefit from it. The focus was on products and services for dogs and in small and independent businesses that operated in that field.

The theoretical frame consisted of knowledge on consumer behavior, emotions in consuming, trends and their diffusion ways, the human-dog relationship and small businesses. These themes supported the understanding of the dog commodity market, how it operates and what the driving forces behind the growth of the market are. One of the main discoveries here was the strong role of emotions in this market, for instance. A synthesis was created, based on which a process picture of how the trends spread from the US to Finland was created. WOM and eWOM were seen to have a substantial role in the spreading of trends in the dog commodity market

This study was conducted in a qualitative way to receive a deep insight into the market. This insight was created through three different data collection methods. The first was a content analysis on Internet sources considering dog commodity trends in the US and in Finland, the second was semi-structured interviews with five different small business entrepreneurs in the market and the third was semi-structured interviews with dog-owning consumer informants. This way a coherent and comprehensive picture of the market could be built as the supply and demand side of the market were studied without forgetting the influential media picture that is built around the market.

The empirical part of this study deepened the themes brought up in the theoretic framework and considers the subject from a practical point of view. Empiric part supported the discovery that emotions play an integral part in this market. Additionally, it was also found that, above all, worry and enthusiasm are emotions that make people purchase more dog commodities and that peer support is highly valued among consumers. The main prevalent trend was seen to be the humanization of dogs and there are different ways of humanizing dogs: dog as a child, dog as a companion and dog as an extension of oneself, for instance. Dog owners have started to demand more from dog

commodities as their knowledge on the subject has grown and dog food is something that is especially faced grown quality demand.

The conclusions of this study are that the US is a strong influencer and also seems to be the main influencer on the Finnish dog commodity market. The type of relationship between a dog and its owner is a major influencer on the consumer behavior in this market and different consumer types follow and spread trends in different ways. The Internet was the most used trend following method among entrepreneurs and consumer informants. Especially social media and discussion forums had a lot of value as they provide needed peer support. Also, it was found that the received media picture from the US dog commodity market does not accurately depict the average dog owner in the US, but rather the higher income households. Furthermore, there is still a lot of potential in this market, especially in the dog service sector. Health and a dog as a companion are themes that will most likely grow their roles in the market.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 DATA FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

Source Reference (in Text)	Source Name	Source Type	Complete Reference Information	Related to Which Country
Boyko 2017	All Things Dog Blog	Blog	Boyko, C. (2017) All Things Dog Blog – Strategies for Happy Dogs and Happy Families. < http://www.allthingsdogblog.com/ >, retrieved 27.3.2018.	The US
Eklöf 2018	Purematta Paras	Blog	Eklöf, J. (2018) Purematta Paras. < https://puremattaparas.fi/ >, retrieved 27.3.2018.	Finland
Frank 2012	CNBC	News Item	Frank, R. (2012) Why Millionaires Prefer Dogs Over Cats. CNBC 28.11.2012. < https://www.cnbc.com/id/49994333 >, retrieved 17.10.2017.	The US
Hallum 2018, Hempe 2017	Really Good Pets Shop	Commercial Blog	Hallum, D. – Hempe, A. (2018) The Dog Blog. Really Good Pets Shop. < https://reallygoodpetsshop.com/blogs/the-dog-blog > , retrieved 27.3.2018.	The US
Keski-Lusa, Heljä	Hertan, Kertun, Martan ja Pirkon blogi	Blog	Keskilusa, H. (2017) Hertan, Kertun, Martan ja Pirkon blogi. < http://herttakoiruus.blogspot.fi/p/omistaja.html >, retrieved 29.3.2018.	Finland

Koiranpäivä 24.4	Suomen Kennelliitto	News Article	Koiranpäivä 24.4. Suomen Kennelliitto. https://www.kennelliitto.fi/koirat/koiranpaiva-244 , retrieved 12.10.2017	Finland
Koirarodut ja rotumääritelmät	Suomen Kennelliitto	Definition	Koirarodut ja rotumääritelmät. Suomen Kennelliitto. < https://www.kennelliitto.fi/koirat/koisarodut-ja-rotumaaritelmät >, retrieved 9.10.2017.	Finland
Koirarotujen rekisteröintimäärät 2006-2016)	Koiramme	Statistic	Koirarotujen rekisteröintimäärät 2006-2016. Koiramme. < https://www.kennelliitto.fi/sites/default/files/media/0117rek_kaiikki.pdf >, retrieved 9.10.2017.	Finland
Langinvainio et al. 2014	Suomen Kennelliitto	Research Publication	Langinvainio, H. – Joutsenniemi, K. – Pankakoski, M. (2014) Koiranomistajuus Suomessa Tutkimus hyvinvointi- ja terveystekijöistä Terveys 2000 -aineiston valossa. Suomen Kennelliiton julkaisuja 1/ 2014, 11.12.2014. < https://www.kennelliitto.fi/sites/default/files/media/kennelliitto_julkaisu_koiranomistajuus_suomessa.pdf >, retrieved 9.10.2017.	Finland
Marton 2018	Oh My Dog Blog	Blog	Marton, M. (2018) Oh My Dog Blog. < http://ohmydogblog.com/ >, retrieved 27.3.2018.	The US
Melissa 2018 ?	No Dog About It Blog	Blog	No Dog About It Blog (2018). < https://nodogaboutit.wordpress.com/ >, retrieved 27.3.2018.	The US
Money spending for – – 2017	Statista	Statistic	Money spending for Valentine's Day gifts for pets 2008-2016. Statista. < https://www.statista.com/statistics/217846/money-spending-for-valentines-day-gifts-for-pets-	The US

			since-2008/>, retrieved 19.11.2017.	
Number of dogs – – 2017	Statista	Statistic	Number of dogs in the United States from 2000 to 2017 (in millions). Statista. < https://www.statista.com/statistics/198100/dogs-in-the-united-states-since-2000/ >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US
Nurmela 2014	Tieto & Trendit	Statistic/ News Item	Nurmela, J. (2014) Joka kolmannessa kodissa asuu lemmikki. Tieto&Trendit 2/2014. 15.4.2014 < http://tietotrendit.stat.fi/mag/mag/article/60/#_ga=2.235427913.935643193.1507737604-306855879.1507737604 >, retrieved 11.10.2017	Finland
Nurmela 2016	Tilastokeskukset	Statistic/ News Item	Nurmela, J. (2016) Autoilevien kotitalouksien osuus vakiintunut, lemmikkien omistaminen lisääntyy. Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT): Kotitalouksien kulutus 2016. Tilastokeskus, Helsinki 3.11.2016. < http://www.stat.fi/til/ktutk/2016/ktutk_2016_2016-11-03_tie_001_fi.html >, retrieved 11.10.2017.	Finland
Pantsu 2013	Yle	News Item	Pantsu, P. (2013) Koirien hemmottelu ja tarvikkekauppa kirittävät alaa miljardiluokkaan. Yle 13.5.2013. < https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-6572178 >, retrieved 12.10.2017.	Finland
Pet Food 2017	Statista	Statistic	Pet Food (2017) Statista. < https://www.statista.com/outlook/40130000/109/pet-food/united-states# >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US
Pet Stores in the US– 2017	Ibis World	Statistic	<i>Pet Stores in the US: Market Research Report (2017)</i> Ibis World.	The US

			< https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-trends/market-research-reports/retail-trade/miscellaneous-store-retailers/pet-stores.html >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	
Presentation of our organisation	FCI	Definition	Presentation of our organisation. Fédération Cynologique Internationale. < http://www.fci.be/en/Presentation-of-our-organisation-4.html >, retrieved 12.10.2017.	-
Rotujen rekisteröinnit 2006-2016	Suomen Kennelliitto	Statistic	Rotujen rekisteröinnit 2006-2016. Suomen Kennelliitto. < https://www.kennelliitto.fi/koirat/rotujen-rekisteroinnit-2006-2016 >, retrieved 9.10.2017.	Finland
Rotujen rekisteröinnit 2006-2016	Suomen Kennelliitto	Statistic	Rotujen rekisteröinnit 2006-2016. Suomen Kennelliitto. < https://www.kennelliitto.fi/koirat/rotujen-rekisteroinnit-2006-2016 >, retrieved 9.10.2017.	Finland
Saarelma 2011			Saarelma, M. (2011) <i>Koirien nimipäiväkirja</i> . Minerva Kustannus Oy.	Finland
Schmidt 2016	Market Research	Blog Entry	Schmidt, S. (2016) How Pet Retailers Engage Online Consumers. Market Research Blog 8.2.2016. < http://blog.marketresearch.com/how-pet-retailers-engage-online-consumers >, retrieved 18.11.2017.	The US
Show info	NY Pet Fashion Show	Informative	Show Info. New York Pet Fashion Show. < http://nypetfashionshow.com/index.php?id=show-info >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US
Stewart 2015	Market Research	Blog Entry	Stewart, C. (2015) Projected 2016 Trends in the Pet Industry. Market Research Blog 25.11.2015.	The US

			< http://blog.marketresearch.com/projected-2016-trends-in-the-pet-industry >, retrieved 18.11.2017.	
The 2017-2018 APPA -- 2017	APPA	Video	The 2017-2018 APPA Pet Owners Survey video. American Pet Products Association. < https://vimeo.com/orangetreeps/review/214716969/38f274fe6d >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US
Ungerleider 2016	Fast Company	News Item	Ungerleider, N. (2016) At The American Kennel Club, Wearables Are For The Dogs. Fast Company 26.9.2016. < https://www.fastcompany.com/3063837/at-the-american-kennel-club-wearables-are-for-the-dogs >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US
Von Kessel 2017	Statista	News Item/Statistic	Von Kessel, I. (2017) Petsagram: Instagram for Animals. Statista 29.8.2017. < https://www.statista.com/chart/10872/number-of-followers-of-the-most-popular-instagram-profiles-of-pets/ >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US
Yotka 2017	Vogue	Blog Entry	Yotka, S. (2017) Hector Browne, Fashion's Most Stylish Dog, Shares His Photo Diary From the Thom Browne Show. Vogue. < https://www.vogue.com/article/hector-browne-dog-thom-browne-new-york-fashion-week-fall-2017-ready-to-wear-photo-diary >, retrieved 19.11.2017.	The US

APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW FRAME FOR ENTREPRENEUR INTERVIEWS

1. How did you end up as an entrepreneur in the dog business?
2. What kind of career and education background do you have?
3. Do you own dogs?
4. How would you describe your business yourself?
5. How many employees you have at the moment?
6. How do you see the development of the dog commodity field in the last 10-20 years?
7. How do you see the future development of the field?
8. How do you see the role of small businesses in the field?
9. Is there a communal aspect among the small pet businesses in Finland?
10. How is the competition in this field?
11. How would you describe your average customer?
12. How would you describe yourself as a customer in this field?
13. Can you distinguish different dog owner types among your customers? If yes, what kinds of types?
14. In what kind of role are emotions in your customers' buying decision/in this field in general?
15. Can you distinguish specific emotions that affect the buying decision?
16. What are the dog business trends in Finland at the moment?
17. What are the dog business trends in the US at the moment?
18. Have you noticed a dog-humanizing trend in the field?
19. If yes, how do you see it has had an effect on your business?
20. If yes, why do you think consumers have started to humanize their dogs?
21. In what ways, do you think that dog owners humanize their dogs?
22. Through what channels do you hear from the novelties of the field?
23. Through what channels do you yourself actively search for novelties?
24. What makes you convinced that a certain commodity is worth adding to your selection?
25. What kind of role WOM has in this field?
26. What kind of role eWOM has in this field?
27. How often do you follow dog-related social media groups etc.?
28. What advertisement channels do you use?
29. In what entrepreneur associations are you?
30. Through what channels do you think dog commodity trends spread to Finland?
31. From where do you think dog commodity trends spread to Finland?

APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW FRAME FOR CONSUMER INTERVIEWS

1. Would you tell a bit about yourself and your background with dogs?
2. How do you think that the dog commodity market has developed in the last 10-15 years?
3. How would you describe your own shopping habits in general?
4. How would you describe your own shopping habits in the dog commodity market?
5. How would you describe the average consumer's shopping habits in the dog commodity market?
6. Where do you buy your dog products?
7. What kind of products do you have for your dog(s)?
8. What kinds of things you appreciate when buying dog products?
9. Do you use services for your dog(s)? (Excluding veterinary services)
10. Do you feel that emotions have a role in your buying decisions?
11. If yes, can you distinguish specific emotions that affect the buying decision?
12. What are the dog business trends in Finland at the moment?
13. What are the dog business trends in the US at the moment?
14. How do you see the future of the dog market?
15. Have you noticed a dog-humanizing trend in the field?
16. If yes, why do you think consumers have started to humanize their dogs?
17. In what ways do you think dog owners humanize their dogs in Finland?
18. Does it differ to humanization in the US?
19. How do you hear from novelties in the dog field?
20. Do you receive newsletters from some dog-related business?
21. If you start actively to look for dog commodity information yourself, where do you look for information?
22. What kind of role word of mouth has in this field?
23. What about electronic word of mouth?
24. Are you in any online dog groups?
25. If yes, how actively do you follow these groups?
26. From where do you think Finland's dog commodity market get influences?
27. Through what channels do you think dog commodity trends spread to Finland?
28. Do you feel that the media and trends from the US influence the Finnish dog market?

APPENDIX 4 THE OPERATIONALIZATION TABLE

Study objective	Sub questions	Literature	Themes	Entrepreneur interview questions	Consumer interview questions
What is the consumer behavior in the dog commodity market like?	1. What kinds of trends are prevalent in the dog commodity market in the US and Finland?	emotions in consuming, trends, consumer behavior	consumer behavior, consumer trends	11-15 6,7,16-29	3,4,5,8,10,11 2,7,9,12-15, 17,18
	2. How do Finnish small businesses in the dog commodity market follow industry trends?	trend diffusion, small enterprises	consumer behavior consumer trends trend diffusion small businesses human-dog relationship	11-15 6,7,16-19 22,23,25-30 1,2,4,5,8,9,10,24 3,12,18,20,21	
	3. How do consumers follow dog commodity market trends?	trend diffusion, consumer behavior, emotions in consuming, human dog relationship	consumer behavior consumer trends trend diffusion small businesses human-dog relationship		3,4,5,8,10,11 2,7,9,12-15,17,18 19-28 6 1, 16