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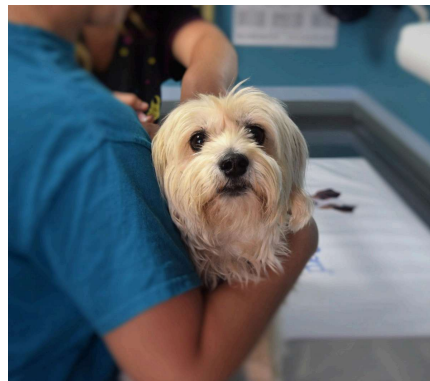
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Blog #3 Pets-as-People Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior

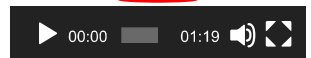
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Information Behaviors and Information Needs of the Pets-as-People Community

After observing the pet-as-people community, both as a member and from an objective perspective in terms of information-seeking behaviors and information needs. These information needs are generally grouped into two categories, Veterinary needs and non-veterinary needs; these two worlds sometimes overlap in areas such as homemade food with supplements and exotic additives for wellness and dietary needs of the pet (Marsh, 1998). Veterinary needs include but are not limited to pet

insurance, pet medication, pet care; while, non-veterinary needs include pet spas, pet outfits, pet accessories, and the most interesting has been the homemade dog food movement within the overall pet community. I have gathered so much information from articles online, social media, and referrals within this community; “collabot[ating] among diverse information providers” (Fisher & Fulton, 2022).



Information Needs

It often takes searching for a variety of things and on a variety of websites and social media apps to obtain the information sought after. The community information needs I have found are both community-based and problem-based because at times members of this community will discuss and seek out information about a specific medical issue one of our fur babies is having and discuss these results within the community, seeking collaboration in choosing the best (O'Brien, et al., 2022; Kogan, et al., 2012).

With over 2000 pet accessory companies to choose from in the United States alone not to mention all the global companies that ship, maintaining referrals within information communities is crucial (Marsh, 1998; Kogan, et al., 2012). For example, some companies may have accessories suitable for a certain type of pet or perhaps, it's a service that is sought after. In this case perhaps the search must include a variety of avenues such as referrals for a local pet spa or recommendation for a service like Zoomin Groomin (2023) to come directly to your doorstep; going further maybe drop your pet off for a pampering day at Dioji K-9 Resort and Athletic Club (2023). No matter what luxury or pet wellness need you may have the pets-as-people community has a way to find the answer.



Information Behavior: Everyday Life Information

Seeking (ELIS) model

The Everyday Life Information Seeking model (ELIS) by Savolainen (1995) is a good way to describe how the pets-as-people community might seek information for non-vet needs. For vet needs a pet owner may employ this methodology or the newer proposed online health information seeking behavior (HISB) intervention model by Solhjoo, et al., (2018). This community fits within this category because pet parents seek information for their fur babies' everyday needs. Many pet parents seek out information from factual information that can help create understanding around subjects from dietary needs, and medical needs to philosophical information such as what is their pets' quality of life (Agosto, & Hughes-Hassell, 2006). There are many other facets such as pet accessories, pet grooming, training, and boarding; the list of communal needs is well-rounded. Another related study uses this theorized ELIS model to describe the same search methods in the teen community (Agosto, & Hughes-Hassell, 2006). This related study demonstrates how this theory could be applied to a specific community. Yet another related study by Dankasa (2016) mapped out the information needs of Catholic clergy by examining how social constructs contribute to current practices etc. The figures in this study parallel those of the pet parent community separating needs into essential needs, occasional needs, and circumstantial needs (Dankasa, 2016, Figure 2.).

Information that is nonwork-related and used every day, falls within the ELIS model of information seeking. ELIS allows people to use their everyday habits and values to make life-changing choices (Agosto, & Hughes-Hassell, 2006). Savolainen (2008) uses the terms "way of life" defined as "the order of things" and "mastery of life" defined as the attitude one has in keeping things in

order. For example, it could be one of four options *Optimistic-cognitive*, *Pessimistic-cognitive*, *Defensive-affective*, and *Pessimistic-affective* to explain problem-solving in everyday life (Savolanien, 1995). Savolanien (2008), describes problem-solving behavior as “evaluat[ing] the importance of the problem at hand, select[ing] information sources and channels and seeking orienting and practical information. This theory focuses on specific characteristics instead of the more generic ones that previous theories encompassed answering the question of how to clarify nonwork information-seeking behaviors and their driving attitudes.

This model focuses on a specific type of information seeking but can be applied to a diverse set of communities. This type of information is based on problem-solving by way of funneling information into categories such as types of need and then applying the *Cognitive vs Affective* dimensions. The pets-as-people information seeking community seeks in much this same way, first distinguishing which pet needs are most important and what amount of time, money, effort the pet owner is willing to put into this way of life. Next, decide which sources and channels in which to seek this practical or orientating information (Savolanien, 2008).

This theory has been applied by several scholars (this is not an exhaustive list) including, Dankasa (2016) where it is applied to Catholic clergy, and Agosto & Hughes-Hassell (2006) where it is applied to urban teenagers. This theory in conjunction with Solhjoo’s, et al., (2018) HISB intervention model which has sparked interest in the veterinary/pet owner world by starting an initiative for veterinarians to give access to factual information sources directly to pet owners. A few insights from these sources are the self-reflection inside the community to grow in various senses of self, such as emotional self, social self, the physical self, etc. These each lead to specific types of searching and problem-solving. Connecting the dots between sense of self and the categories of pet needs allows the pet owner to have realistic views and information gathering based on their status in life such as living situation, finances, etc. This will be useful when understanding what the needs are for the pets-as-people community.

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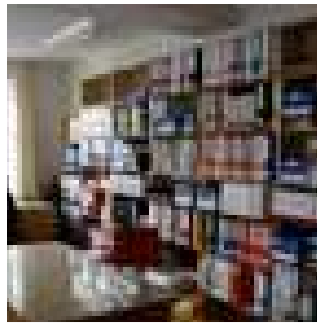
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