

## THE ANALYSIS OF GENDER DIFFERENCES ON INFLUENTIAL FACTORS FOR DOG FOOD PURCHASING

การวิเคราะห์ความแตกต่างระหว่างหญิงและชายที่มีต่อปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้ออาหารสุนัข

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### Abstract

With the rising trend of humanizing pets, especially dogs, and vast market potential for premium dog food, this research explores the demographic characteristics of wet dog food consumers and looks at influential factors that have the impact on dog owners' purchasing decisions. There are two main categories of influential factors that this research looks at. The first group is related to experts that have knowledge or experiences with dog food. This group is comprised of breeders, veterinarians, specialty store staff, online dog forums, and family and friends. The second group is comprised of four marketing mixes – product, price, place, and promotion. For the purpose of segmentation, this research then further explores whether males and females are different in their spending of wet dog food, and whether they are influenced differently by breeders, veterinarians, specialty store staff, online dog forums, family and friends, and the four marketing mixes.

**Keywords:** Dog food, Purchasing Decision, Gender Difference, Thailand

### บทคัดย่อ

สืบเนื่องจากแนวโน้มการเลี้ยงสุนัขที่เพิ่มขึ้น รวมทั้งตลาดอาหารสุนัขระดับพรีเมียมที่มีการขยายตัวอย่างรวดเร็ว งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาข้อมูลพื้นฐานกลุ่มลูกค้าที่ซื้ออาหารสุนัขแบบเปียก รวมทั้งศึกษาถึงปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้ออาหารสุนัข โดยได้ศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลในสองกลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลุ่มผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านโภชนาการและสุขภาพของสัตว์เลี้ยง อันประกอบด้วยฟาร์มสุนัข สัตวแพทย์ พนักงานประจำร้านเฉพาะทางเกี่ยวกับสุนัข ออนไลน์ฟอรัมเกี่ยวกับสุนัข และครอบครัวและเพื่อน กลุ่มที่สองประกอบด้วยปัจจัยด้านส่วนผสมทางการตลาด ได้แก่ ผลิตภัณฑ์ ราคา สถานที่ และโปรโมชั่น นอกจากนี้งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ยังได้ทำการวิเคราะห์ต่อไปว่าปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพล

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ต่อการตัดสินใจซื้ออาหารสุนัข อันได้แก่ ฟาร์มสุนัข สัตวแพทย์ พนักงานประจำร้านเฉพาะทางเกี่ยวกับสุนัข ออนไลน์ ฟอรัมเกี่ยวกับสุนัข และครอบครัวและเพื่อน ปัจจัยด้านส่วนผสมทางการตลาดทั้งสี่มีความแตกต่างระหว่างกลุ่มผู้ซื้อ เพศหญิงและชายหรือไม่

**คำสำคัญ:** อาหารสุนัข การตัดสินใจซื้อ ความแตกต่างระหว่างเพศ ประเทศไทย

## Introduction

Currently, dogs are no longer viewed as just animals, but are considered as a family member (Nesheim & Nestle, 2010). Health and wellness of dogs have grown to become vital factors to dog owners. Moreover, the phenomenon of pet humanization is considered as one of the aspects that propels growth in the global pet food market, primarily in the premium pet food sector (Euromonitor International, 2011; Kumcu & Woolverton, 2010).

Thailand is following this global trend. Euromonitor International (2011) estimated that approximately 20 percent of households in Thailand own dogs, and the trend has been on the rise, leading to larger dog care market over the past years, of which commercial dog food has the highest value within the dog care market (Euromonitor International, 2011). Research by Anuwong (2012) highlighted the fact that the rise in pet ownership has been increasing simultaneously with the trend of one-child families as well as single member families. Moreover, people have become motivated to purchase higher quality dog that include human-grade ingredients and functional qualities, such as weight control, due to the persuasive marketing of these premium products.

Dog food can be classified into two main

types-non-prepared (a home-cooked meal) and prepared dog food. Prepared dog food sales has had an impressive growth. In 2011, the sales of dog food in Thailand stood at 9,922.5 Million Baht (approximately 277.83 Million USD) while in 2006, the value of sales was 5,256.8 Million Baht (approximately 147.19 Million USD) or an 88.56 percent increase (Euromonitor International, 2011).

Prepared dog food is considered as convenience for dog owners, and is believed to be more nutritious and tasty. Major dog food companies in the industry have attempted to distinguish their products by offering several options for the dog owners. This includes products made specifically for the dog's various life stages as well as products that target health issues like heart diseases and obesity. As for prepared dog food, it can be further classified into three main types – (1) dry, (2) wet, and (3) semi-moist or mixers (Pet University, n.d.). According to Euromonitor International (2011), dry food had a market share of 64.98 percent, followed by semi-moist or mixers at 20.93 percent, and wet food with a market share at 14.09 percent. It is explained that dry dog foods dominate the market due to its value for money, utility, and how it is widely available in the market. On the other hand, the way wet

foods are marketed is primarily focused on the ingredient's quality as well as the positive health benefits and are priced in the premium range.

### Research objectives

Considering the aforementioned potential market space together with a gap in the existing academic literature, which suggests there is currently little information available with regards to Thailand's pet food market, this research aims to

1. Explore the demographic characteristics of wet dog food consumers,
2. Analyse influential factors that impact their purchasing.
3. Explore whether or not males and females are different in their spending of wet dog food and if they are influenced by influential factors differently.

### Literature review

1. Key influencers on dog food purchasing decision

Based on the current literature, extensive research has been conducted to analyze how different influencers in which are valued by the consumer can affect their decision to purchase. However, very few have touched on dog food in particular. The following gives some reviews on influencers that can influence dog owners' buying decisions.

**Breeders:** The dog breeder is in charge of breeding process, initial raising the puppies prior to passing them to the dog owner (Rice, 2008). Pet breeders that are well-trained are

perceived to be an expert as they have been trained to know about the nutrition and how to take care of specific breeds of dogs. Different dogs require certain nutritional needs, hence the choice of food varies for most dogs (Rice, 2008). The dog breeders are the ones who can provide this information to the dog owners such as suggesting suitable brands for the dog. Therefore, since the dog owner will be receiving knowledge from an expert, as a result, this will influence the owner's food choice (Rice, 2008).

**Veterinarians:** Veterinarians offer pet's owners consultations and information about nutrition and dietary advice (Manteca et al., 2008). Veterinarian recommendations are extremely influential in the food choice, especially if it links with pet's health problems such as obesity (Suarez et al., 2012). Since veterinarians are known to be nutrition and health specialists for domestic animals, their opinion is highly valued hence owners are lenient towards following their nutritional recommendations. This is even more common in owners whose pets have serious health issues that can be made better through nutrition.

**Specialty store staff:** Even though pet breeders and veterinarians are experts, their main specialty does not involve the sale of dog food products. However, specialty store staff's role is to recommend and sell dog food, hence they most likely have knowledge in dog food as well. They can provide guidance and be able to recommend the various dog food brands in the store to the dog owners (Lemon, 2007). The staff can also offer suggestions on

special needs that are significant for premium dog food such as suitable food for puppies or old dog (Lemon, 2007).

Online dog forums: Other dog owners that post on online dog forums is yet another reference. Dog owners that read other user's posts on the forums that come in forms of comments, advices, and extended reviews can play a significant role in the decision of other buyers who have similar needs or are in similar circumstances. (Cheong & Morrison, 2008).

Family and friends: One of the very first sources of information people tend to seek is from family and friends. Moreover, the advice given usually affects people's purchasing decisions without much thought (Lee & Kacen, 2008). Research has proven that information obtained from family and friends clearly has a huge impact on pet owners' food option for their pets with special conditions, such as obesity (Suarez et al., 2012). A premium Swedish dog food brand has shown in their case study that family and friends influence brand acceptance as well as the use (Nilsson, Liashchenko & Andreasson, 2010).

## 2. Marketing Input Factors

The marketing mix is one framework to help in the understanding of the means by which marketers choose inputs to be included in the marketing strategies (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2008).

The quality of the products is viewed on the basis of benefits offered to consumers. Quality is considered as one of the most

significant aspects in consumers' decision making as the product is ultimately what the consumer purchases (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2008).

For pet food, the product's quality is comprised of the ingredients, food quality, and the packaging including the given information and how easy it is to open (Dibb, 2005). A world-wide pet food supplier, IAMS, promises to provide high quality ingredients and offer premium scientific formulations to target higher-income consumers. They also promise to come up with products specifically made for different pet needs (Van Gelder, 2004). Therefore, the characteristics of the pet food impacting customers' decisions can be divided into two groups including pet-oriented characteristics (such as nutrition and taste) and owner-oriented characteristics (such as ingredient quality, scientific formulations, packaging, and given information).

A study conducted by Nilsson, Liashchenko & Andreasson (2010) examined the buying behavior of customers in regards to premium dog food. The result has shown that consumers associate premium dog food with premium quality as it reinforces the consumer's purchasing process. Moreover, a study by Tesfom and Birch (2010) has revealed that consumers pay closer attention when purchasing healthy dog food than when purchasing healthy human food.

The concept of price element denotes specific price strategies or price attributes in comparison to other products within the market (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2008). The first pricing strategy is cost leadership which refers to setting the cheapest price in the market. The second

is penetration pricing whereby low prices are set in the beginning to attract market share. The third is premium pricing which is when the price set is higher than the main market price (Lamb, Hair & Mcdaniel, 2008). Budget on spending as well as psychological assessments of the product's importance are reasons to why consumers may purchase products based on price factors (Lamb, Hair & Mcdaniel, 2008).

The ideal type of price strategy for dog food has not been researched in depth yet. Although, there is a study suggesting that the demand for pet food is inelastic which means that it is bought without consideration of price (Prasad, 2010). Hence, penetration pricing and premium pricing can be implemented for dog food. The reason behind this is that dog owners have an affective component as they want their pets to have good health. For instance, IAMS uses premium pricing strategy and they assure their consumers that the ingredients used are premium and will improve their pet's health (Van Gelder, 2004).

Another element of the marketing strategy is place and it is concerned with the sales channel options that the products are sold (Lamb, Hair & Mcdaniel, 2008). Online retailers, general retailers such as supermarkets and convenience stores, and specialty retailers such as pet shops and veterinarian offices are examples of common sales channels for dog food. Although, general retailers are generally not the place for purchasing dog food, especially premium products (Nilsson, Liashchenko & Andreasson, 2010). Evident in a study from Sweden, most of the dog food sales were from

specialty retailers, with only approximately a third from supermarkets. The specialty retailers have added value compared to the other stores as they have the ability to provide professional recommendations which helps customers in their decision making process (Nilsson, Liashchenko & Andreasson, 2010). Therefore, choosing to go to specialist channels is most likely going to increase the customer's chance of buying the product as they will be receiving expert advice from the staff. Although, in the USA, the main dog food sales channels are supermarkets/hypermarkets as well as pet superstores as they have an extensive variety of products to offer their customers. The supermarkets/hypermarkets offer lower prices whereas the pet superstores offer professional recommendations. As for Thailand, department store/supermarket, pet clinics, and animal hospitals are the major sales channels. Dog owners often look to buy their dog food from stores that are closeby in the neighborhood (Euromonitor International, 2011).

Promotion, the last element of the marketing mix, has to do with the tools used in raising consumer awareness about a product and attracting them to try it (Lamb, Hair & Mcdaniel, 2008). Reduction in price, coupons, samples, and other offers are examples of typical approaches to promotion (Lamb, Hair & Mcdaniel, 2008). The purpose of promotion is to inform consumers about the product, provide them with information, and to get rid of the hurdles that prevent customers from trying the product.

Social media marketing has recently become a means for product promotions in the pet food

market (Kaplan, 2012). For instance, Kaplan (2012) gave an example of an automated dispenser set up in the sales channel (such as in the aisles of a store), distributing dog food samples when an email address or social media names have been given. Even though most companies have not implemented this strategy yet, it is proven to be extremely effective than the other traditional approaches. A research held by Dawes (2013) in product purchasing discovered that 58% of buyers of products that were offered at discount prices are regular buyers of the products, and most of the others have bought the product in the past year at least one more time.

### 3. Gender Differences

A significant amount of marketing research points out that gender is a factor that affects consumer buying behavior and indicates a gender difference in the consumer decision (Chen & Hu, 2012; Funk & Ndubisi, 2006; Gasiorowska, 2011; Lee & Kacen, 2008; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006).

Evident in a study by Bakewell & Mitchell (2006), males seek low-prices whereas females seek worthiness and value. Similarly, Chen & Hu (2012) have proven that males are much more sensitive towards price than females. Males tend to look for deals online and concentrate on products with ultra-low prices. Also a number of studies show males and females have differences in the style of shopping. Males tend to shop faster and pay attention on products that they want to buy as they dislike searching and trying things on. On the other hand,

females enjoy shopping more than males and like to wander around and try on products (Gasiorowska, 2011).

Furthermore, the research suggests that males are good at purchasing durable goods and do not enjoy shopping for basic necessities like food and clothes. In contrast, females tend to go shopping for temporary items such as items used for cooking, haircuts, and makeup. Although, other studies have proposed that shopping habits may not be the only influence on consumer decision differences between males and females. Color as well as packaging have been proven to affect both gender's purchase decision differently (Funk & Ndubisi, 2006; Lee & Kacen, 2008).

Based on the above literature review, the conceptual framework in this study is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework - Factors Influencing Buying Decision of Wet Dog Food



## Research methodology

This research employed a questionnaire survey. The respondents of this survey are dog owners who purchase wet dog food in Thailand. The survey was conducted at pet shops and pet hospitals in Bangkok. Due to time and budget constraints, the sampling technique was a convenience sampling methods. A total of 431 sets of questionnaires were collected.

The questionnaire is comprised of three parts. The first part contains questions related to demographic information and expenditure for their dogs. The second part contains questions related to key influencers. The last part contains questions related to factors of marketing mixes. In parts two and three, the five-level Likert scale was adopted. Every applicable data was tested for its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and acceptable values were designated as being higher than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The values of Cronbach's alpha in each part of this research ranged from 0.829 to 0.967 (Table 1). All passed the reliability criterion of 0.70.

**Table 1** Variables' the Reliability of Scales

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach' Alpha
Breeder	3	.829
Veterinarian	3	.882
Pet Shop Staff	3	.892
Website	3	.967
Family and Friends	3	.960
Product	3	.919

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach' Alpha
Price	3	.882
Place	3	.839
Promotion	3	.816

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools in SPSS were used in analyzing the data gathered. Descriptive statistic was utilized to scrutinize and exhibit the demographic data whereas inferential statistic was implemented to test the hypotheses and the tool used is Independent t-test.

## Results and discussion

As summarized in Table 2, out of 431 respondents, 328 respondents (76.1%) in this research are female, and 103 respondents (23.9%) are male. 201 respondents (46.6%) are between 20-30 years old, followed by 31-40 years old (158 respondents, 36.7%), 41-50 years old (72 respondents, 16.7%). 258 respondents (59.9%) received master degree, 160 respondents (37.1%) received bachelor degree, and 13 respondents (3%) have the education background lower than bachelor degree.

383 respondents (88.9%) are single. 48 respondents (11.1%) have been married. 291 respondents (67.5%) have no children. 85 respondents (19.7%) have only one child, 47 respondents (10.9%) have two children, and 8 respondents (1.9%) have more than two children.

**Table 2** Summary of Demographic Data of Respondents (total respondents = 431)

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	103	23.9
	Female	328	76.1
Age	20-30 years old	201	46.6
	31-40 years old	158	36.7
	41-50 years old	72	16.7
Education	Lower than bachelor degree	13	3.0
	Bachelor degree	160	37.1
	Master degree	258	59.9
	Total	431	100.0
Marital Status	Single	383	88.9
	Married	48	11.1
Number of Children	0	291	67.5
	1	85	19.7
	2	47	10.9
	More than 2	8	1.9
Income	Less than 15,000 Baht (approx. 420 USD)	5	1.2
	15,001-25,000 Baht (approx. 420.03-700 USD)	108	25.1
	25,001-35,000 Baht (approx. 700.03-980 USD)	56	13.0
	35,001-50,000 Baht (approx. 980.03-1,400 USD)	121	28.1
	50,001-80,000 Baht (approx. 1,400.03-2,240 USD)	94	21.8
	above 80,000 Baht (more than 2,240 USD)	47	10.9
Place to buy dog food	Pet shop	250	58.00
	Department store/ supermarket	217	50.34
	Clinic or animal hospital	82	19.03
	Online store	2	0.46

Income level of respondents varies. 121 respondents (28.1%) reported an income of 35,001-50,000 Baht per month (approximately 980.03-1,400 USD per month), 108 respondents (25.1%) have income between 15,001-25,000 Baht (approximately 420.03-700 USD per month), 94 respondents (21.8%) have income between 50,001-80,000 Baht (approximately 1,400.03-2,240 USD per month), and 5 respondents (1.2%) have income less than 15,000 Baht (approximately 420 USD per month).

250 respondents (58%) bought dog food from a pet shop, followed by department store (217 respondents, 50.34%), clinic or animal hospital (82 respondents, 19.03%), online store (2 respondents, 0.46%). It is worth noting that most of respondents buy dog food from more than one place.

The respondents were requested to state their expenditures per month on their dogs. It was found that the average spending for their dogs is 3,614.45 Baht/month (approximately 101.20 USD per month). The highest expenditure goes to dry food (1,086.82 Baht/month; approximately 30.43 USD per month), followed by healthcare 1,034.45 Baht/month; approximately 28.96 USD per month), wet food (771.46 Baht/month; approximately 21.60 USD per month), and accessories (721.72 Baht/month; approximately 20.21 USD per month). Regarding

the average spending of wet food, it is interesting to note that although the average spending per month stands at 771.46 Baht, the standard deviation of the wet food spending reaches 1,047.97 Baht. Details are demonstrated in Table 3.

**Table 3** Expenditure for Dogs (Baht per month)

Expenditures	Average (Baht/month)	Percentage	S.D.
Wet food	771.46	21.34	1,047.970
Dry food	1,086.82	30.07	1,081.615
Healthcare	1,034.45	28.62	906.348
Accessories	721.72	19.97	715.485
Total	3,614.45	100.00	

Regarding experts, this research finds that veterinarians are the most influential persons to drive dog food purchasing decision (mean = 3.33, S.D. = 0.77), followed by breeders (mean = 3.16, S.D. = 0.72), pet shop staff (mean = 3.14, S.D. = 0.69), websites (mean = 3.15, S.D. = 1.05), and family and friends (mean = 3.18, S.D. 0.97). For marketing mixes, price is the most influential factor (mean = 3.67, S.D. = 0.95), followed by product factor (mean = 3.59, S.D. = 0.93), place factor (mean = 3.59, S.D. = 0.80), and promotion factor (mean = 3.33, S.D. = 0.71). Details are shown in the following Table 4.

**Table 4** Summary of descriptive analysis for influential factors on wet dog food purchasing decision (N = 431)

Factors		Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
Experts	Breeder	1.00	5.00	3.16	0.72
	Veterinarian	1.00	5.00	3.33	0.77
	Pet Shop Staff	1.00	5.00	3.14	0.69
	Website	1.00	5.00	3.15	1.05
	Family and Friends	1.00	5.00	3.18	0.97
Marketing Mixes	Product	1.00	5.00	3.59	0.93
	Price	1.00	5.00	3.67	0.95
	Place	1.00	5.00	3.59	0.80
	Promotion	1.00	5.00	3.33	0.71

This research further examines whether the spending on wet dog food and key influential factors differ between male and female. The analysis shows that male respondents have the average expenditures on wet food for their dogs of 445.15 Baht per month (approximately 12.35 USD per month), whereas female respondents have the average expenditures of 873.93 Baht per month (approximately 24.47 USD per month), almost two times higher than male's spending. The result of Independent t-test proved that the spending between males and females is significantly different.

Regarding key influencers on wet dog food purchasing, it is found that males and females are influenced significantly differently by veterinarians, online forums/websites, and family and friends. Surprisingly, male respondents are influenced more by veterinarians, online forums/websites, and family and friends. However, the result does

not portray a significant distinction between males and females in being impacted by breeders and pet shop staff.

Moreover, male respondents are significantly more influenced by the factors of the market mix, most specifically price, place, and promotion. This outcome reinforces the previous research about the distinct purchasing behavior in males and females (Gasiorowska, 2011). Interestingly, male respondents have been greatly impacted by price more than females. This also correlates with the previous study explaining how males are more sensitive towards price than females (Chen & Hu, 2012). Accordingly, other research also concluded that males seek low prices whereas females seek value (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006). This research finds no significant difference between male and female in being influenced by product.

**Table 5** Spending on wet dog food, level of influences by experts and marketing mixes factors: male and female comparison

Factors		Male	Female	F	t	Sig
Wet food Spending (Baht/month)		445.15	873.93	13.797	-3.675	.000*
Experts	Breeder	3.1845	3.1524	.072	.395	.693
	Veterinarian	3.6602	3.2276	35.800	5.086	.000*
	Pet Shop Staff	3.1521	3.1413	2.252	.139	.890
	Website	3.3398	3.0884	27.383	2.612	.010*
	Family and Friends	3.5793	3.0589	37.423	4.878	.000*
Marketing Mixes	Product	3.6731	3.5579	12.064	1.476	.141
	Price	3.8479	3.6199	44.152	3.117	.002*
	Place	3.7573	3.5325	34.608	3.293	.001*
	Promotion	3.5955	3.2449	6.290	4.489	.000*

### Conclusions and recommendations

1. Descriptive statistics of this research show the majority of respondents are single. Although income level varies, 73.78 percent of respondents have an income above 25,000 Baht per month. 60.79 percent of respondents have the income above 35,000 Baht per month. The average spending for their dogs is 3,614.45 Baht/month. This finding suggests that the target customers of wet food for dog are medium to high income group.

Regarding places to buy dog food, it is interesting to find that 58 percent of respondents buy dog food from pet shops, followed by department stores (50.34%), clinics or animal hospitals (19.03%), and online stores (0.46%). This finding gives some useful insights that pet shops are the most effective point of sales in Thailand and dog food companies should place

greater emphasis to stimulate sales through this channel. Department stores are not unimportant. This is a traditional channel and perhaps the most convenient place for to buy food for dogs.

It is found that veterinarian are the most influential of the expert group, followed by breeders, pet shop staff, websites, and family and friends, respectively. A research conducted by Suarez et al. (2012) is evident to be in line with this result as it suggests that veterinarian food recommendations to improve health issues are vital in the consumer's food choice. Since the veterinarians are experts in the field of nutrition and health of domestic animals, consumers are most likely going to listen to their advices, especially consumers whose pets suffer from health problems in which can be made better through certain nutrition. Therefore, veterinarians' recommendations have a firm

impact on the consumer's purchasing decisions.

With this in mind, more sales could be enlarged through partnering with clinics or animal hospitals where the buyers can consult with veterinarians. Moreover, other marketing campaigns should also incorporate veterinarians as brand ambassadors, small talks, or educational programs to give knowledge and understanding on dogs and dog food. More could be done to give additional training for staff of specialty pet shops in order to be able to provide deeper or more information on dog food to customers.

For marketing mixes, price is the most influential factor, followed by product, place, and promotion. The finding that price is the most influential factor on the decision to buy wet food does not correlate with the study indicating how the demand of pet food is inelastic (Prasad, 2010). Pricing strategy has to be carefully drawn and must reflect the value of products.

2. With regards to gender difference, this research finds that males and females are different in their spending of wet dog food and are influenced by certain influential factors differently. Therefore, customized marketing strategies for males and females are necessary. Spending on wet food for dogs between males and females is significantly different. Female respondents' average expenditures on wet food is almost two times higher than male's spending. From a marketing perspective, females are key customers to target. However, more effective marketing strategies could be implemented to

reach male customers, and three points from the research findings are worth further consideration.

Regarding key influencers on wet dog food purchasing, male respondents are influenced significantly more by veterinarians, online dog forums/ websites, and family and friends than females. However, the result shows no significant difference between males and females in terms of being influenced by breeders and pet shop staff. From these findings, more sales can be stipulated to male customers through the channels of veterinarians, online dog forums/ websites, and family and friends.

In terms of marketing mixes, product is a significant element for both males and females. Consumers will choose dog foods that are suitable for their dogs. Moreover, quality of a product cannot be compromised due to the nature of premium food. High quality products will also lead to favorable word-of-mouth referrals, and it will have a domino effect as pointed out in this research that online forums/ pet blogs, and family and friends can influence the purchasing of wet food.

Moreover, male respondents are notably more impacted by the factors of the market mix than females, most specifically price, place, and promotion. Marketers should provide rich information on quality of dog food to increase the perceived benefits and value of the products. This would justify relative high price of premium dog food. Promotional campaigns should be done from time to time to attract price-sensitive customers, especially males.

### Limitation of the Study

Although this research has achieved its objectives and pointed out the potential market space of wet food for dogs, and helps contribute to the practical knowledge of the pet food industry, this research inevitably contains some weaknesses. First, this study was confined to a single city and the sampling method was based on convenient sampling. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable. Moreover, a quantitative design framework was

utilized in conducting this research. Hence, this research did not subsume any further components that could have potentially affected the purchasing decisions of dog owners. Further research could extend towards psychological aspects of humanization of pets by adding factors such as characteristics and personalities of dog's owners and examine correlation between the owner's characteristics and personalities and product's brand personalities.

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