

# A Study on Pet-Friendly Resort Experience: Policies, Practices, and Guest Satisfaction

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**Abstract:** The rise of pet-friendly tourism has significantly transformed the hospitality landscape, driving resorts and accommodations to adjust their services to meet the needs of travellers who bring their pets. This study investigates the policies, operational practices, and guest satisfaction factors that shape the pet-friendly resort experience, using a systematic qualitative approach. A comprehensive literature review guided by the PRISMA framework was conducted to identify established policies, service models, and implementation gaps in pet-friendly accommodations. To complement the review, focus group interviews were carried out with ten stakeholders from pet-friendly resorts in Iloilo, Philippines—including resort managers, frontline staff, and pet-owning guests—selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevant and diverse insights. Thematic analysis using NVivo software was employed to analyse the collected data and extract key patterns related to service quality, guest expectations, policy clarity, and operational challenges. Findings reveal several critical drivers of guest satisfaction, including stringent cleanliness standards, availability of pet amenities, and measures that ensure pet safety and comfort. However, the study also identifies notable challenges that resorts commonly encounter, such as managing disruptive pet behaviour, addressing liability and safety concerns, and handling the increased maintenance demands associated with pet-friendly facilities. Successful strategies observed among well-performing establishments include clear and consistently enforced pet policies, designated pet-friendly areas, enhanced cleaning protocols, trained staff capable of addressing pet-related issues, and effective communication with guests before and during their stay. The study emphasises the need for standardised guidelines, transparent policy communication, and improved operational frameworks to create a balanced environment that accommodates both pet-owning guests and non-pet travelers. The insights generated offer practical recommendations for resorts seeking to strengthen their pet-friendly services and enhance overall guest experiences. Future studies are encouraged to explore the economic contributions of pet-friendly tourism, the integration of technology in pet-service management, and the long-term effects of pet-inclusive policies on guest loyalty within the evolving hospitality sector.

**Keywords:** Pet-Friendly Resorts, Guest Satisfaction, Hospitality Policies, Thematic Analysis, Sustainable Tourism

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## 1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has seen a significant rise in pet-friendly tourism, reshaping service and operational practices as more pet owners choose to travel with their pets. Studies, such as those from the University of Surrey, note that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased dog ownership, which in turn boosted demand for pet-inclusive accommodations. In response, many hotels now offer pet-friendly rooms, on-site pet services, and curated activities designed to enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty. This shift not only caters to the emotional needs of pet owners but also presents a strong business opportunity, with the global pet travel services market valued at \$2 billion in 2023 and expected to grow to \$4.6 billion by 2032. Despite this growth, comprehensive research on pet-friendly accommodation policies and their impact on guest satisfaction remains limited. Existing studies often examine individual aspects, such as economic benefits, but rarely explore the full guest experience or the operational challenges faced by resort managers. While some findings highlight financial advantages linked to adopting pet-friendly policies, they often overlook how guests perceive these services and how staff navigate daily challenges in maintaining pet-friendly environments. This lack of qualitative insight makes it difficult to establish standardised best practices or effective policies that address the needs of both guests and service providers. As a result, there is a clear need for studies that explore the lived experiences of pet-owning guests and the practical realities encountered by resort staff and managers. Such research would offer valuable guidance for improving service quality, shaping more consistent policies, and creating a more seamless and enjoyable experience for all stakeholders involved in pet-friendly hospitality.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To review and analyse the current policies and best practices that guide pet-friendly accommodations.
2. To explore guest experiences, expectations, and overall satisfaction with pet-friendly resorts through focus group discussions.
3. To identify the key challenges resort managers and staff face in implementing and maintaining pet-friendly policies.
4. To provide practical recommendations for improving pet-friendly services based on real-world experiences and industry insights.

## **1.1 Significance of the Study**

This study is important because pet-friendly travel is rapidly growing, yet many resorts still struggle to balance guest needs, pet accommodations, and smooth operations. Understanding what pet owners expect and the challenges faced by resorts can help managers create clearer policies, improve services, and enhance guest satisfaction. It also guides pet owners in choosing genuinely pet-friendly resorts. For policymakers, the findings offer insights for developing standardised regulations to ensure quality and consistency across the industry. This research fills key gaps in pet-friendly hospitality and helps promote a more inclusive, enjoyable travel experience for both guests and their pets.

## **2. Literature Review and Systematic Review (PRISMA Approach)**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study draws on two key theoretical frameworks: the Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) and Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT). The SERVQUAL model, introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), assesses customer satisfaction by examining the gap between expected and perceived service quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Applied to pet-friendly resorts, it helps evaluate how well these establishments meet the specialised needs of pet owners and their pets. Meanwhile, Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) explains satisfaction as the result of how closely actual experiences match or exceed customer expectations. When a pet-friendly resort fulfils or surpasses what guests anticipate, satisfaction and loyalty are more likely to follow. Together, these frameworks offer a structured lens for understanding guest satisfaction and service quality in pet-inclusive accommodations.

### **2.2 Systematic Review Using PRISMA**

This study uses the PRISMA framework to systematically and transparently review literature on pet-friendly resorts, policies, and guest experiences. The review includes peer-reviewed studies from the past ten years that examine policies, operational challenges, and customer satisfaction in pet-friendly accommodations, while excluding research that lacks empirical evidence or does not focus on pet-friendly hospitality. A comprehensive search was conducted in major databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords related to pet-friendly resorts, hospitality policies, guest satisfaction, and pet-inclusive travel. Following the PRISMA flow process—identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021)—the study ensures that only high-quality and relevant sources are analysed. This approach provides a strong foundation for understanding best practices and ongoing challenges in the pet-friendly hospitality sector.

### **2.3 Key Themes Identified from Literature**

Recent studies show that policies for pet-friendly accommodations are continually evolving and must clearly address pet fees, weight or breed limits, and designated pet areas. Buhalis and Chan (2023) emphasise the need for well-defined guidelines that support value co-creation between hotels and pet owners while ensuring safety and smooth operations. Best practices include providing pet-specific amenities, enforcing strict cleaning protocols, and maintaining dedicated relief areas. Their proposed service blueprint also helps managers coordinate policies and services across departments and partners to improve efficiency and guest satisfaction. Guest satisfaction depends on clear communication of rules, pet-focused facilities, and a welcoming environment. However, challenges such as noise control, cleanliness, and balancing the needs of non-pet guests remain. Buhalis and Chan (2023) note that pet owners often anthropomorphise their pets, raising their service expectations. Addressing these concerns is essential for improving the guest experience and encouraging repeat stays in pet-friendly hospitality.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 PRISMA Framework**

This study employed the PRISMA 2020 framework to conduct a systematic and transparent review of literature on pet-friendly resorts, operational policies, and guest satisfaction. The review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2014 and 2024 that examined pet-friendly accommodation practices, service quality,

operational challenges, or customer satisfaction outcomes. Studies not directly related to pet-inclusive hospitality or lacking empirical grounding were excluded.

A structured database search was conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using combinations of the keywords “pet-friendly resorts,” “pet-inclusive hospitality,” “hospitality policies,” “guest satisfaction,” and “pet travel.” The search initially yielded [insert number] records. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts, sixty-seven articles were assessed for eligibility. A final set of twenty-three studies met the inclusion criteria.

The review followed four PRISMA stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion (Page et al., 2021). This systematic process enhanced transparency, reduced selection bias, and ensured that only relevant and high-quality studies informed the conceptual and analytical foundation of the research.

### 3.2 Focus Group Design

To complement the literature synthesis, a qualitative focus group component was conducted to capture practitioner and guest perspectives. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants with direct experience in pet-friendly resort operations and usage. The focus group consisted of ten participants: resort managers (n = 3), frontline staff (n = 3), and pet-owning guests (n = 4) from selected pet-friendly resorts in Iloilo Province.

The semi-structured discussion guide was developed based on themes identified in the PRISMA review, ensuring conceptual alignment between the literature findings and empirical inquiry. Questions explored policy clarity, operational implementation, guest expectations, service challenges, and sustainability practices.

The session lasted approximately 90 minutes and was conducted in a neutral setting to encourage open dialogue. Discussions were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was performed using NVivo software. Coding was conducted inductively, with initial open codes grouped into higher-order themes. To enhance analytical rigour, codes were reviewed iteratively to ensure consistency and thematic coherence.

Data saturation was reached when no new themes emerged during analysis. The qualitative findings were subsequently integrated with the systematic review results during the interpretation stage to provide contextual validation and practical refinement of literature-derived themes.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Themes from PRISMA Review

**Table 1: Common policies and gaps in implementation.**

Policy	Description	Gaps in Implementation	Citation
Pet Fees	Many hotels impose non-refundable pet fees, typically ranging from \$25 to \$150, to cover additional cleaning and maintenance costs.	Inconsistent fee structures and a lack of transparency can lead to guest dissatisfaction. Some hotels may not clearly communicate these fees during booking.	Weinhaus (2022)
Weight and Breed Restrictions	Hotels often enforce weight limits (For example, up to 40 pounds) and may restrict certain breeds considered aggressive.	These restrictions can exclude responsible pet owners with larger or specific breeds, limiting accessibility for some guests.	(Kim et al, 2025; Buhalis and Chan (2023)
Pet Supervision Requirements	Policies may require pets to be crated when left unattended or prohibit leaving pets alone in rooms.	Lack of clarity and consistency in these rules can cause confusion. Some guests may be unaware of such policies until arrival.	Buhalis and Chan (2023)
Designated Pet Areas	Provision of specific areas for pet relief and exercise.	Insufficient or poorly maintained pet areas can detract from the guest experience. Not all hotels provide adequate spaces.	Kim et al. (2025)
Documentation Requirements	Some hotels require proof of up-to-date vaccinations and flea treatments.	Inconsistent enforcement and communication of these requirements can lead to misunderstandings and potential health risks.	Buhalis and Chan (2023)

Table 1 outlines key pet-friendly resort policies and the gaps that undermine guest experience and operations. Pet fees are common, but inconsistent pricing and unclear communication cause frustration. Weight and breed limits aim to ensure safety but can exclude responsible owners. Supervision rules—like crating pets when unattended—are often vague, leaving guests unsure. Designated pet areas exist but are frequently poorly maintained. Vaccination and flea-treatment documentation is required but inconsistently checked, raising health concerns. Greater standardisation, clearer communication, and consistent enforcement would improve the overall pet-friendly hospitality experience.

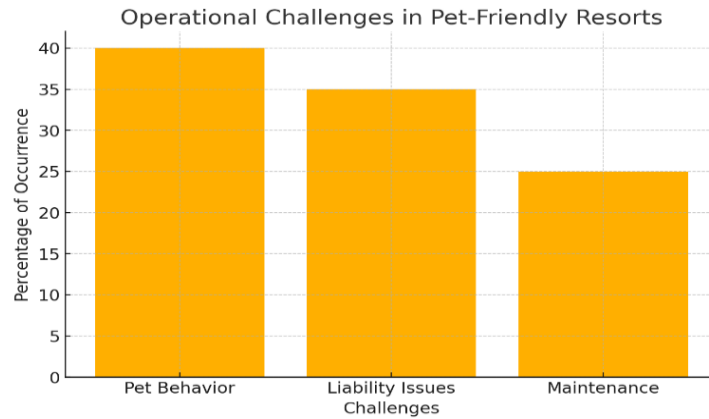
#### 4.2 Focus Group Interview

The following themes and quotations emerged directly from the focus group discussion and represent empirically derived insights from resort stakeholders.

**Table 2: Themes from Focus Group Interview**

Satisfaction Driver	Direct Quote	Interviewee Position
Cleanliness	<i>"Ensuring that rooms and common areas remain clean and allergen-free is essential in a dog-friendly hotel."</i>	Hotel Maintenance Specialist
Amenities	<i>"Providing pet amenities like pet beds, bowls, and treats, hotels can enhance the stay experience for guests."</i>	Hospitality Consultant
Pet Safety	<i>"Implementing rigorous cleaning protocols and providing designated pet relief areas are key to maintaining a safe environment for all guests."</i>	Hotel Operations Manager
Staff Training	<i>"Training staff to handle noise complaints effectively and diplomatically ensures that all guests feel valued and heard."</i>	Front Office Manager
Clear Policies	<i>"Establishing clear guidelines for pet behaviour, such as not leaving pets unattended in rooms, can minimise issues."</i>	Hotel Policy Analyst
Designated Pet Areas	<i>"Allocating specific rooms or floors for guests with pets helps manage interactions and ensures comfort for all."</i>	Hospitality Space Planner
Pet Services	<i>"Offering additional services such as pet grooming and pet-sitting creates multiple upsell opportunities."</i>	Revenue Manager
Guest Communication	<i>"Clearly outlining pet policies during the booking process ensures that all guests are aware of the hotel's guidelines."</i>	Guest Relations Officer
Allergen Management	<i>"Implementing air purification systems can help reduce airborne allergens, ensuring a comfortable environment."</i>	Environmental Health Specialist
Pet-Friendly Facilities	<i>"Investing in furniture and fixtures that can withstand wear and tear from pets reduces the need for frequent replacements."</i>	Interior Designer

Table 2 identifies the main factors that influence guest satisfaction in pet-friendly resorts. Cleanliness remains the top priority, ensuring allergen-free rooms and comfortable shared spaces. Providing basic pet amenities—such as beds, bowls, and treats—helps guests feel their pets are genuinely welcomed. Pet safety is supported through strict cleaning protocols and designated relief areas, while well-trained staff help manage noise and maintain a positive environment. Clear pet behaviour policies, including rules on leaving pets unattended, reduce misunderstandings. Designated pet-only rooms or floors also help manage interactions between guests with and without pets. Additional services like grooming and pet-sitting enhance guest convenience and create added revenue. Effective communication of policies before arrival minimises issues, and allergen management systems improve comfort for all guests. Finally, durable, pet-friendly furnishings help reduce maintenance costs while supporting a practical, guest-friendly environment.



**Figure 1: Operational challenges**

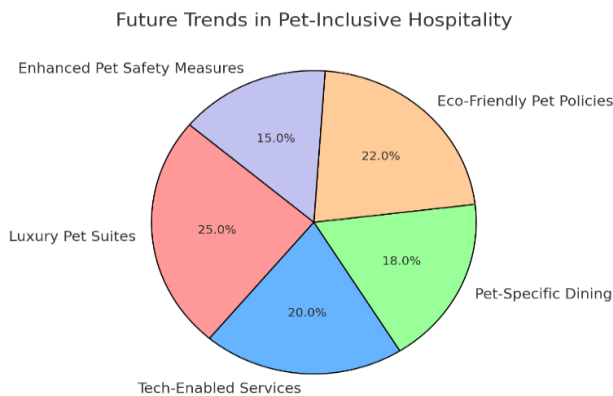
Table 2 summarises key factors that influence satisfaction in pet-friendly resorts. Cleanliness is essential for guest comfort, and amenities like beds and bowls help guests feel welcomed. Safety is improved through proper cleaning and designated relief areas. Staff training is vital, especially for handling noise complaints. Clear behaviour rules, designated pet rooms or floors, and expanded services like grooming add value. Effective communication prevents misunderstandings, while allergen control and durable, pet-friendly furnishings enhance comfort and reduce maintenance.

**4.3 Themes from Systematic Review**



**Figure 2: Successful strategies in handling pet-friendly services.**

Figure 2 showcases key strategies for effective pet-friendly services. Central themes include dedicated pet areas, clear and consistent policies, trained staff, enhanced cleaning protocols, and flexible pet fees. The focus on behaviour management and allergen control reflects the industry’s commitment to cleanliness and guest satisfaction. Additional approaches—such as pet welcome kits, noise control measures, pet-friendly dining options, and access to emergency pet care—further elevate service quality, helping resorts create a safe, comfortable, and well-managed environment for both pet owners and non-pet guests.



**Figure 3: Future trends in pet-inclusive hospitality**

Figure 3 highlights key emerging trends in pet-inclusive hospitality. Luxury pet suites (25%) lead the shift toward premium pet accommodations, while tech-enabled services (20%)—such as smart monitoring and automated check-ins—continue to expand. Pet-specific dining (18%), including customised menus and designated spaces, enhances guest experiences. Eco-friendly pet policies (22%), like biodegradable products and sustainable waste stations, reflect growing environmental priorities. Enhanced safety measures (15%), including improved security and emergency vet access, further support safer and more comfortable stays for pets.

#### **4.4 Integrated Insights**

The integration of the systematic review and focus group findings reveals strong convergence across key themes while providing contextual depth.

Cleanliness emerged as the most influential determinant of satisfaction in both data sources. The literature identifies hygiene and allergen management as essential operational standards in pet-friendly accommodations. Focus group participants reinforced this, describing cleanliness as the most visible indicator of professionalism and guest care. This suggests that hygiene functions not only as a service attribute but as a core driver of trust and perceived sustainability.

Pet safety and behaviour management were similarly consistent across sources. While the literature emphasises structured policies such as breed limits, supervision rules, and designated pet areas, practitioners highlighted the importance of consistent enforcement and staff confidence in managing guest compliance. The findings indicate that clearly defined policies must be supported by trained personnel to positively influence guest satisfaction.

Staff training and communication emerged as critical mediating factors. Although policy frameworks are central in the literature, focus group participants emphasises that guest perceptions are shaped largely through frontline interactions. Clear communication of pet policies during booking and check-in reduced misunderstandings and enhanced satisfaction.

Operational challenges identified in prior studies—including liability concerns, maintenance costs, and balancing pet and non-pet guest expectations—were validated by resort stakeholders. However, practitioners also identified adaptive strategies such as designated pet floors, durable furnishings, and enhanced cleaning routines, demonstrating practical alignment between theory and implementation.

Overall, the integrated findings indicate that successful pet-friendly resort management depends on the alignment of policy clarity, operational execution, and communication practices. Cleanliness, pet safety, and staff competence form the operational core influencing satisfaction, while visibility and consistency determine how sustainability practices are perceived.

This integration strengthens the study's contribution by demonstrating how service quality frameworks are operationalised within pet-inclusive hospitality settings.

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study highlights the rising demand for pet-friendly hospitality and the challenges resorts face in maintaining service quality. Guests value cleanliness, pet-specific amenities, and reliable safety measures, yet inconsistent policies—such as unclear fees, breed restrictions, and supervision rules—often create dissatisfaction. Resorts also encounter issues such as managing pet behaviour, addressing liability risks, and handling increased maintenance needs. Implementing best practices, including designated pet areas, well-trained staff, and strengthened cleaning protocols, can help resolve these concerns. Emerging trends such as luxury pet services, eco-friendly initiatives, and technology-supported pet care are reshaping pet-inclusive travel.

To enhance guest experiences, resorts should adopt clear, standardised policies, invest in staff training, and improve pet-friendly facilities. Effective communication of rules is essential for both pet and non-pet guests. Future research should explore economic impacts, technology's role in pet care, and how strong policies build long-term guest loyalty.

#### **Ethics Declaration**

This study involved focus group discussions with resort managers, staff, and pet-owning guests. The research protocol received approval from the West Visayas State University Research Ethics Committee. Participants were

informed of the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw. Written consent was obtained, and all personal information was anonymised.

## AI Declaration

AI tools were used in this research only to refine grammar, improve formatting, and assist with paraphrasing for clarity and coherence. Their role was limited to enhancing writing structure, while all academic decisions, data interpretation, and analytical judgments were made solely by the researcher. AI was not used to generate findings, analyse data, fabricate results, or replace the researcher's critical thinking. All interpretations, conclusions, and insights presented in this study are entirely the researcher's original work.

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