

**SEE SPOT HIKE**  
**A Profile of Active and Outdoorsy Dog Owners**  
**By Abby Jeffers**

## **Executive Summary**

This research examines the behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes of active and outdoorsy dog owners. It shows that these dog owners have a strong bond with their dogs and want to help their dogs live a happy life through outdoor activities and exercise as well as high-quality products and services. Moreover, this report explains why brands should advertise using emotional appeals that draw in dog owners through connections to their dogs and their desire to make their dogs happy.

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## **Introduction**

This is a consumer profile that aims to describe and analyze the thoughts, behaviors, and feelings experienced by active and outdoorsy dog owners. In this study, we conducted individual in-depth interviews with active and outdoorsy dog owners to gather insights about their thoughts and experiences, and we conducted secondary research to better understand the demographics, geographics, psychographics, and behavioristics of the group. This study will help us to better understand these consumers so that we can more accurately and effectively market products to them.

### **Research Rationale**

This study was conducted in an effort to better understand the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors experienced by outdoorsy and active dog owners. As we know from anecdotal evidence, dog owners often experience strong positive emotions about and have a powerful bond with their dog. This specific consumer, the active and outdoorsy dog owner, enjoys taking their dog to play and explore in the outdoors, thus helping these individuals create an even stronger bond by allowing them to enjoy time with their dog. Moreover, dog owners often purchase products to support or play with their dog, especially in the outdoors. Products purchased by active and outdoorsy dog owners can be vital to the enhancement, safety, or even success of these outdoor recreation activities and adventures. Therefore, in an effort to more effectively advertise to these dog owners, we decided to conduct this research to discover insights about outdoorsy and active dogs and their owners.

### **Research Method**

This research was conducted using individual in-depth interviews. We chose this method because individual interviews allowed us to better understand individual dog owners' thoughts. In-depth interviews provided the opportunity for us to be flexible and dig deeper into the conversations with individuals, and because we were in one-on-one conversations, the participants were able to share their complete thoughts without fear of judgment by other participants. Moreover, because we were only speaking with one individual at a time, we were able to have deep conversations that covered specifics of each individual's experiences with their dog, and we were able to discover insights that allowed us to create three consumer segments within the given consumer type.

## **Consumer Description**

The active and outdoorsy dog owner is someone who owns and cares for an active dog. This consumer spends time with their dog hiking, walking, running, playing, or doing other activities outside, and they enjoy being with their dog because of their dog's companionship, playful nature, or love of adventure and new experiences. These consumers have strong bonds with their dogs, and their dogs make them feel happy, warm, love, joyful, and other positive feelings.

### **The Affectionate Dog Owner**

This consumer loves their dog for the companionship their dog provides. They love to cuddle with their dog, play with their dog, and just spend time with them, and they all mentioned that their dogs love to be around them, whether that means sleeping at their feet or cuddling with them. One such consumer mentioned that they enjoyed spending time with and talking to their dog; they said that their dog used to lay at their feet and sleep at the foot of their bed. These consumers feel happy and warm around their dog, and their dog makes them feel love.

### **The Playtime Paw-tner Dog Owner**

This consumer loves to play with their dog. They find joy in playing games like chase with their dog, and they feel that their dog finds joy in the same. One such consumer mentioned that their dogs have been "lifesaving" in hard times and that their dogs' playful nature has uplifted them and kept them feeling youthful. Another consumer mentioned that they feel good when their dog always decides to come back to play and seek companionship. This consumer

feels joyful, entertained, comforted, and all-around good when they think about playing with their dog.

#### The Adventure-Seeking Dog Owner

This consumer loves to take their dog to experience new things. They love to be active with their dog and give their dog new experiences that excite and energize both them and their pup. One such consumer mentioned that their dog loves to ride in the car, so they take their dog to run errands whenever possible to make their dog happy. In general, this consumer feels energized and happy when they think about taking their dog for adventures and new experiences.



## **Demographics & Geographics**

Though the specific consumer segment of active and outdoorsy dog owners was not available through sources like Simmons, we were able to find data for three consumer groups who identified themselves as having one dog, two or three dogs, and four or more dogs. In this data, which is taken from a survey of 11,472 respondents from Simmons Research LLC's Fall 2018 NHCS Adult Study 06-month, 52% of respondents identified as female and 48% of respondents identified as male (Simmons Research LLC Data Set). Moreover, the majority of these respondents (83%) identified as White, and the remaining percentage of respondents were split between African-American (6.2%), Asian (3.3%), and Other (7.5%) (Simmons Research LLC Data Set). The age ranges of dog owners in this study were split fairly evenly across the segments, but the age groups tied with the highest percentage (18.4%) were ages 35-44 and 55-64 (Simmons Research LLC Data Set).

In a Mintel April 2020 study of 2,000 internet users aged 18+, 55% of users reported owning a dog (Boesel). Moreover, of these dog owners, 53% identified as female and 47% identified as male, which aligns with Simmons Research LLC's findings in their Fall 2018 NHCS Adult Study 06-month, and though the age range of dog owners was wide, the median age was 41 and the mean age was 43 (Boesel). These owners' racial makeup varied, but much less so than age: 62% were White and non-Hispanic, 17% were Hispanic of any race, 12% were Black and non-Hispanic, 6% were Asian and non-Hispanic, and 3% were another race and non-Hispanic (Boesel).

Moreover, in a survey conducted by APPA of pet owners nationwide, the majority (63.4 million households) reported owning a dog in 2019 and 2020 (APPA). This is the most of any pet listed in the survey, showing that dogs are the most commonly owned pet among pet owners in

the United States. Another survey, this time by Harris Poll and published by TD Ameritrade, showed that roughly 48% of respondents to the survey owned a dog (TD Ameritrade). This number shows that more respondents reported owning a dog than any other animal; the next-most reported animal was a cat, of which only 32% of respondents reported owning (TD Ameritrade).

### **Psychographics**

According to a Mintel study of 2,000 internet users aged 18+ from April 2020, 90% of dog owners agreed that they were the ones responsible for their dog's happiness (Boesel). This number can be broken down further: 64% of dog owners strongly agreed and 25% somewhat agreed that they were responsible for their pet's happiness (Boesel). This reflects what we found in our interviews, where participants talked about taking their dogs outside to play, explore, or adventure to boost their dogs' happiness. These outdoorsy dog owners are often motivated to spend time with their dogs to make their dogs happy.

Similarly, these pet owners feel a sense of guilt when they do not provide enough time with their pet: 72% of dog owners agreed that they felt guilty when they did not spend enough time with their pet, which can be broken down into 36% of dog owners who strongly agreed and 36% of dog owners who somewhat agreed that they felt guilty when they did not spend enough time with their pet.

In the same Mintel study, dog owners reported wanting to provide good things for their pet. 84% of dog owners said that they enjoyed spoiling their pet, 79% of dog owners said that they like to do thorough research before purchasing a service for their pet, and 62% of dog owners said that good pet owners should buy the best brands for their pet (Boesel). Though the respondents in our study did not specify their desire to purchase good products for their dogs, the attitudes reflected in the 2020 Mintel study may be interpreted to reflect the strong bond and emotional connection that our respondents felt with their dogs.

### **Behavioristics**

Through our personal interviews, consumers reported wanting to take their dogs into the outdoors for a variety of reasons, including making their dogs happy, helping their dogs explore and learn, and adventuring with their dogs. Though these reasons vary, the underlying theme is that these dog owners want to ensure that their pets are enjoying their lives and are getting enough time outside. This reflects a desire to make their pets happy, and some of these dog owners' behaviors follow that desire.

Moreover, according to a Mintel study of 2,000 internet users aged 18+ from April 2020, dog owners tend to purchase high-quality products and services for their dogs. As stated earlier in this report, 79% of dog owners said that they like to do thorough research before purchasing a service for their pet and 62% of dog owners said that good pet owners should buy the best brands for their pet (Boesel). This reflects a habit of purchasing high-quality products for their pets so that their pets are happy, healthy, and safe.

The data from Mintel and the anecdotes from our personal interviews together reflect the strong bond that dog owners have with their dogs as well as the dog owners' desire to ensure that their dogs are happy, healthy, and safe.

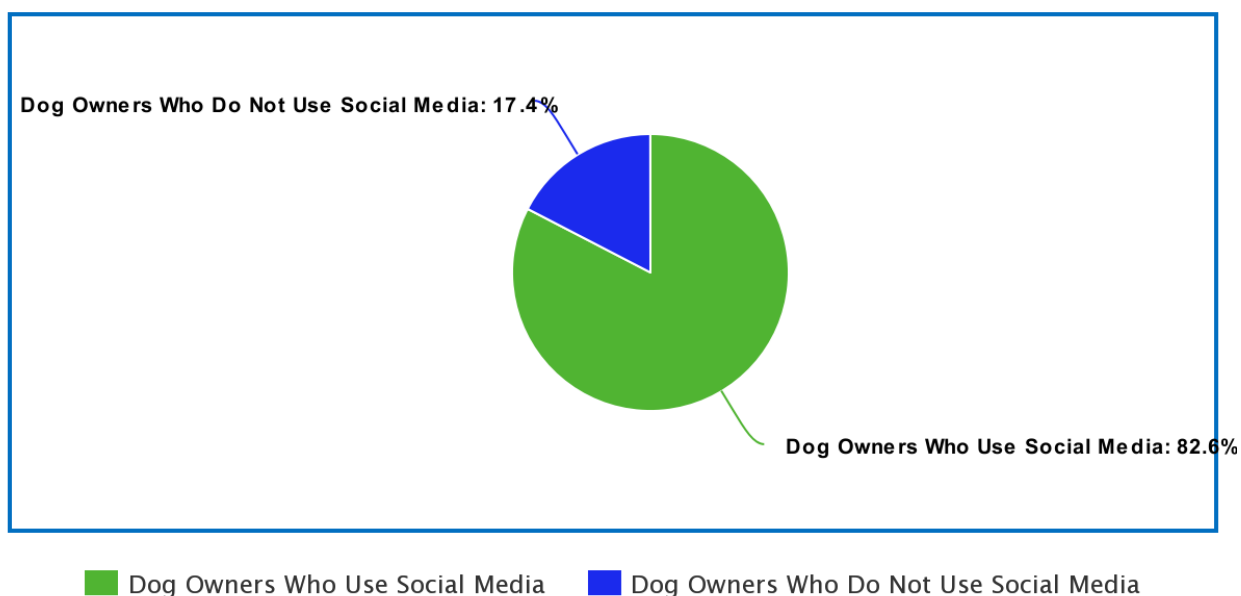
## Media Habits

Using consumers who own dogs as a base, consumers who both own dogs and use social media make up 82.6% of the total dog-owning consumer population, according to Simmons Research LLC (Simmons Research LLC Crosstab Report). This means that 7,478 consumers said that they both used social media and owned one, two to three, or four or more dogs out of the 9,539 consumers who said that they owned one, two to three, or four or more dogs in Simmons Research LLC's Fall 2018 NHCS Adult Study 12-month study (Simmons Research LLC Crosstab Report). Because we have found through secondary research that most dog owners in this Simmons Research LLC study also use social media, social media may be an effective marketing tool for companies and brands who want to market toward dog owners.

### Social Media Use Among Dog Owners

Simmons Research LLC. "Fall 2018 NHCS Adult Study 06-month [( YOUR PETS - HOW MANY IN HH?\_DOGS: 1) OR (YOUR PETS - HOW MANY IN HH?\_DOGS: 2-3) OR (YOUR PETS - HOW MANY IN HH?\_DOGS: 4 OR MORE) AND (SOCIAL MEDIA\_SOCIAL MEDIA USER) )]" [Base: YOUR PETS - HOW MANY IN HH?: DOGS: 1 OR YOUR PETS - HOW MANY IN HH?: DOGS: 2-3 OR YOUR PETS - HOW MANY IN HH?: DOGS: 4 OR MORE] [Crosstab report]."

Simmons Research LLC, 2018b. <https://simmonsinsights.com/>.



meta-chart.com

### **Consumer Insights**

Dog owners, including active and outdoorsy dog owners, report having a strong bond with their dogs, whether anecdotally through our individual interviews or through data from Mintel and Simmons Research LLC. This is shown through their desire to make their dogs happy through products and activities, and it reflects a need to ensure that their dogs are happy, healthy, and safe. This is perhaps the most important insight about dog owners – because of the strength of this bond, brands must understand the bond well in order to market effectively toward this segment.

### **Recommendations**

In order to market most effectively toward this consumer segment, brands must fully understand the strength of these dog owners' bond with their dogs. Brands must engage with dog owners through their bond with their dogs by marketing their products as high-quality, safe, and fun or delicious for dogs. These brands must appeal to the consumers' need to provide a good life for their dog by marketing their products as something that will maximize the dog's happiness and well-being. This emotional appeal will have the strongest impact on the consumer, and this is the most effective way for brands to market their products to consumers. To reach these dog owners with this emotional appeal, brands should engage with dog owners via social media, which this secondary research shows the majority of dog owners use.

## **Conclusion**

Dog owners, including active and outdoorsy dog owners, love their dogs. These consumers love to take their dogs for walks, hikes, swims, and other outdoor exploration adventures. Regardless of these consumers' reasoning for loving their dogs – adventure, fun, cuteness, affection, or playfulness – they all exhibit a strong bond with their dogs. Moreover, the data reflects the same thing: a strong bond with their dogs and a need to provide their dogs with happiness, health, and wellness through high-quality products and services. Thus, brands would do well to appeal to this bond in their emotional appeals, and the most effective advertising will target the emotional bonds and aspects of owning a dog.



### Work Cited

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