



Pet transportation by air:

A study of customer experiences and expectations using AVIH services

Kati Wala-Bruin

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Aviation Business

Bachelor's Thesis

2023

Abstract

Author(s) Kati Wala-Bruin
Degree Bachelor of Business Administration, Aviation Business
Report/Thesis Title Pet transportation by air: a study of customer experiences and expectations using AVIH services
Number of pages and appendix pages 53+19
<p>This research thesis aims to explore the experiences, concerns and expectations of pet owners who use AVIH services to transport their animal(s) by air in order to identify areas of service improvement and provide specific recommendations to airlines that offer AVIH services. The subject of this thesis is inspired by the author's own travel experiences as a dog owner, dog breeder and dog sport participant as well as her background in the airline industry. The author's personal links within the dog sport community and membership in various dog sports associations further helped to guide and conduct the research.</p> <p>The underlying approach to this thesis is based on the theoretical frameworks which position pets in the role of co-consumer when purchasing and consuming products and services. The effect of the co-consumer role of pets is to create a very strong correlation between the customer's experience with the pet's experience, as perceived or interpreted by the customer.</p> <p>The literature review for this study included IATA, EU and Finnish regulations to understand all the relevant connections within the issue under study. Industry representatives were interviewed to become familiar with airline practices and procedures at Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Furthermore, customer experience and in particular the role of the pet owner as a customer were explored. The literature review also included the role of the pet as a co-customer in examining the customer journey.</p> <p>The research for this study was conducted during the timeframe of January to May 2023 and used mixed research methods to gather primary data from pet owners who use Helsinki airport as their departure or arrival point when travelling by air with their pets. An online questionnaire was used to survey pet owners about their past experiences with AVIH as well as their plans and expectations for their next planned international journey with their pets. Based on the questionnaire results, the author selected a small number of respondents to conduct semi-structured interviews with them to elicit more detailed information.</p> <p>The results of the research show that there is a deficiency in the information provided by airlines about the AVIH service. This deficiency matches a corresponding demand by AVIH customers for more information, along with a willingness to pay for a better level of service. Specifically, the research shows that there is a demand to know more about the animal's experience once it is handed over to the airline, as well as a desire to be kept informed as the animal passes through different stages of its journey while separated from its owner. This thesis encourages airlines offering AVIH services to adopt a more human-centric service philosophy and presents a number of practical recommendations for improvements to the service.</p>
Key words Animal in hold, pet transportation, AVIH, customer experience, co-consumer, airline

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background of the topic.....	1
1.2	Key Concepts	2
1.3	Research question and purpose statement.....	3
1.4	Scope of the study.....	3
1.5	Structure of the thesis.....	4
2	Literature review	5
2.1	Transporting an animal by air	5
2.2	Regulations for the transport of animals by air	6
2.2.1	IATA regulations	6
2.2.2	Country-specific regulations.....	9
2.3	Airline procedures.....	9
2.4	Customer experience	13
2.5	Pet owner as a customer.....	14
2.6	Pet as a co-customer in the customer journey	16
3	Methodology	18
3.1	Research question and goal.....	18
3.2	Research approach	18
3.3	Determining the method	19
3.3.1	Quantitative research.....	19
3.3.2	Qualitative research	20
3.3.3	Mixed research method	20
3.4	Conducting the survey.....	21
3.5	Semi-structured interview	23
4	Analysis and results.....	25
4.1	Target groups and response statistics.....	25
4.2	Travel experience with AVIH	26
4.3	Objections against AVIH travel.....	29
4.4	Travel plans with AVIH	31
4.5	General comments about AVIH.....	32
4.6	Interview results.....	35
4.7	Summary of results.....	40
5	Discussion.....	41
5.1	Interpretation of results.....	41
5.2	Key recommendations.....	43

5.3 Reliability of the research	44
5.4 Future research proposals.....	45
5.5 Learning and self-evaluation	45
Sources	48
Appendices.....	54
Appendix 1. IATA Live Animal Acceptance Checklist.....	54
Appendix 2. Checklist for transporting animals as excess baggage in the cargo hold	56
Appendix 3. Survey Pet transportation by air	58
Appendix 4. AVIH survey flowchart	64
Appendix 5. Interview topics and questions.....	65
Appendix 6. General comments about AVIH transport.....	67

1 Introduction

This thesis work discusses air travel from the perspective of a customer group travelling with pets, specifically dogs or cats of such a size that they are transported in the aircraft's hold. The topic for the thesis was chosen because the researcher has experience travelling with dogs and is involved in international dog sports events where it is common for dogs to be transported by air on the same flight as the dog's handler. Having a background in the airline industry, the researcher is interested in determining opportunities for improving the experience for both the animal's owner or handler and for the animal itself. The travel of pets between countries has increased considerably with the growth of pet hobbies and the relaxed regulations on pet travel. Compliance with international rules makes the actual act of travelling for a pet traveller very similar regardless of the point of departure or arrival. This thesis focuses on a comparison of four airlines and their passengers travelling or planning to travel with pets, with Helsinki as their point of origin.

1.1 Background of the topic

The author's assumption, based on experience and knowledge of dog-related hobbies, such as dog shows and agility competitions, was that travel with dogs has increased significantly in recent years, except for limited travel during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it has been very difficult to verify this with statistics from airlines, handling companies or Finavia, the airport authorities. The data either does not exist or is not made available. What is clear, however, is that in Europe, for example, there has been a clear increase in the number of dogs and pet-owning households in almost all countries during the last decade (Bedford, 2022). The amount of money spent on pets has increased considerably, and the pet, which is more often seen as a member of the family, is rarely spared any expense and is even dressed and treated as if it was a child, with the result that affection is shown through various luxuries and services. Similarly, more and more people take their pets on holiday with them, rather than leaving them in the care of a stranger. (Vänskä, 2014.)

The concern often expressed to the researcher by pet owners who transport their pets as animals on hold are the loss of control over their animal and uncertainty about what is happening to their pet when it is taken from them and transported to and from the aircraft. The researcher is motivated to provide greater insight into the concerns of the owner as well as into what happens during the animal's journey and using these insights, to make recommendations that could be followed by airlines and ground handlers to address those concerns.

1.2 Key Concepts

AVIH – Animal in hold

Animal in hold means that the animal, usually a dog or a cat, travels in a cage or container on the same flight as the passenger responsible for the animal. The container is loaded in the aircraft's heated and ventilated cargo space and is separated from the passenger for the entire journey. The animal weighs more than eight kilos, which is the cabin weight limit for most airlines. AVIH is one of the standardised SSR (Special Service Request) codes, which needs to be used to reserve the carriage of an animal in the hold of an aircraft as special baggage for an accompanying passenger. In general, a maximum of two animals can travel in the same container if they are from the same household or litter and weigh no more than 14kg each. The airline controls the number of animal containers accepted on its flight depending on the type of aircraft and destination of the flight. (IATA Padis 18.2, no date; Finnair, 2023a; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2023; Lufthansa, 2023b; Norwegian, 2023.)

IATA – International Air Transportation Association

The International Air Transportation Association represents, leads and serves about 300 airlines in 120 countries worldwide, including setting commercial standards for air transport and helping airlines by simplifying processes. In airline cooperation, IATA plays an important role in promoting safe, secure and economical air transport services for the benefit of the world's consumers. (*IATA - Mission & Vision*, 2023.)

LAR – IATA Live Animals Regulations

The commercial transport of live animals is governed by the IATA Live Animals Regulation. AVIH transport is mainly seen as non-commercial, but airlines are also bound by animal transport regulations when transporting pets to ensure safe and humane transport. ('Live Animals Regulations', 2023.)

PETC – Pet in Cabin

Pet in Cabin means that the pet travels with the passenger in the cabin as an item of hand luggage. There are many differences between airlines, but in most cases, the pet is either a dog or a cat, which can weigh a maximum of eight kilos including a bag or box which complies with the maximum dimensions for hand luggage. The pet must also be booked in advance and the number of accepted PETCs is controlled by the airline's inventory systems. The pet owner carries the

container including the pet which must remain in the transport container for the entire journey, placed under the seat in front of the passenger, on the floor. (Finnair, 2023a.)

SVAN – Passenger with Service Animal in Cabin

A dog that is individually trained to work for a person with a disability such as a physical or mental disability, is accepted for carriage in the cabin and does not need to be within the PETC size limits or in a transport container (Finnair, 2023b).

1.3 Research question and purpose statement

The main objective of this research-oriented thesis is to find, through the experiences and expectations of AVIH product users, an understanding of the current AVIH product. The main research question for this thesis is: Can the AVIH product be improved to make it a more appealing experience for both the pet and the pet owner? The sub-questions further for this thesis are:

- What are the concerns of potential customers who are considering transporting their pets by air?
- What are the reasons for not choosing air transportation?
- Does the pet's journey experience impact the owner's own journey experience?

This paper aims to understand the current procedures and look for improvements to the experience of both the (human) customer and the transported animal. This will result in greater customer satisfaction, potentially leading to an increase in the use of the AVIH product, resulting in improved commercial outcomes for the transporting airlines.

1.4 Scope of the study

The scope of this thesis is the non-commercial transportation of animals travelling as animals in hold departing and arriving from Helsinki airport. This thesis will restrict itself to evaluating the animal handling practices of the national carrier, Finnair, as well as Lufthansa, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Norwegian which regularly carry animals on hold.

Excluded from the scope of this thesis is the carriage of animals as cargo only, PETC as well as SVAN. Animals carried as cargo are generally not accompanied by their owner and are managed very differently from an animal in the hold. PETC, carried into the cabin by their owner or handler, is subject to an entirely different experience as the animal is always under the control of the owner or handler and thus not subject to the loss of the control and visibility experienced by customers

transporting their animals as pets in the hold. Similarly, SVAN, such as a seeing dog, for example, mostly travels with the owner or handler in the cabin.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The introduction section introduces the topic to be covered, and its background and presents the area to be studied. This study consists of five chapters. The first introduces the thesis subject, including an introduction section divided into background information, a presentation of the research objectives and a scoping section. In chapter two the author reviews the literature related to the topic and chapter three presents the methodology. The results of the study are presented in chapter four and chapter five finally discusses the finding and their significance. This paper is a research-based thesis, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, which the author will discuss in the following sections. The author has used the Mendeley Cite program with the style Cite Them Right – Harvard 12 edition for referencing in her work.

A summary of the research questions, related theoretical framework, results and survey or interview questions for this study are presented in the overlay matrix in Table1. The table presents the sub-questions to determine the main research question: Can the AVIH product be improved to make it a more appealing experience for both the pet and the pet owner?

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

Investigative questions	Theoretical framework (chapter)	Results (chapter)	Questionnaire questions	Interview questions
1.What are the concerns of potential customers who are considering transporting their pets by air?	2.1 2.2 2.3	4.3 to 4.7	4,12, 16, 18	12 ,15, 21, 23, 27, 28 ,31
2. What are the reasons given for and against using air transportation?	2.1 2.3 2.5	4.2 to 4.7	4, 16	27
3. Does the pet's journey experience impact the owner's own journey experience?	2.4 2.5 2.6	4.5 4.6 4.7	Covered in the interviews	3 – 8, 14-15

2 Literature review

In this chapter, the author sets out the background of her topic and reviews the literature on the subject. The author has reached out to former colleagues at Finnair and people working at Helsinki Airport related to animal travel to obtain background information and statistics on this form of travel. By way of comparison, the author has studied the practices of both cargo and AVIH at the bigger Frankfurt airport. Not much has been written exactly on this subject, the literature consists mainly of articles or legislative documents. In addition, the websites of the four airlines (Finnair, KLM, Lufthansa and Norwegian) compared, with their detailed guidelines and IATA, EU and Finland-specific regulations have been used to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject. First, the development of animal transport, in general, is discussed, then the rules as set out by IATA, and then the country-specific aspects with the thesis focusing specifically on AVIH travel to and from Helsinki. To explore the customer experiences of passengers travelling with AVIH, the author discusses the relevant material and the theory of the pet's role in consumer choices and the pet as a co-consumer in the last part of this chapter. Key concepts have been introduced to the reader for the sake of clarity in the previous Introduction chapter.

2.1 Transporting an animal by air

There is no real research data available on pet transport, its history or statistics on numbers. Commercial pet operators on their websites, especially in the USA write many articles on the subject, sharing information about travelling with pets. Several pet shippers also specialize in the transport of any size of dogs or cats, which are transported as freight. It is believed that travelling with a PETC-sized pet only began in 1989 when a special type of bag was developed for transport and gradually adopted by airlines in the USA and later elsewhere (*The History of Pet Travel and Traveling with a Pet*, 2023). Since 2003 the free movement of EU citizens and their dogs, cats and ferrets was facilitated by the adoption of rules to allow entry from countries with no or very low levels of rabies. This was made possible by the progress made in the fight against rabies. Further, in 2006, IATA started to regulate rules for animals to be transported in the hold of an aircraft and in 2008 published regulations for the carriage of pets by air in the hold to ensure safe transport. The impact of IATA regulations was to clearly define the rules for pet air transportation, increase pet owners' awareness of safe transport and oblige airlines to comply with security regulations. (European Commission, no date; *The History of Pet Travel and Traveling with a Pet*, 2023.)

Europe has recorded a large increase in both the number of dogs and the number of pet-owning households over the last decade or so. In 2010 there were 73 million dogs in Europe, rising to 92

million in 2021. (Bedford, 2022.) In 2016, statistics show that every third household in Finland had a pet, with a total of around 700,000 dogs and 590,000 cats (Statistics Finland, 2020). According to Statistics Finland (2020), the average amount of money spent on pets has also increased significantly. Pets are increasingly seen as a member of the family, whose nutrition, health and exercise are taken care of in a variety of ways. Pets show non-judgmental attachment, and are open, honest, loyal and consistent, thus substituting even for other social relationships and thereby becoming humanised and seen as equal companions (Smolkovic, Fajfar and Mlinaric, 2012). And even more, the babyfication or childlikeness of dogs has changed the perception of the dog, as a kind of in-between human and animal with their own rights and special needs (Vänskä, 2014). However, dogs do provide exercise benefits, and more and more dog owners are actively participating with their dogs in various activities. According to the Finnish Kennel Club (2023), dog shows are the most popular form of a dog-related hobby in Finland, and the number of dog shows in Europe has also been steadily increasing, except for the Covid-19 pandemic years (Federation Cynologique Internationale, 2023). Both dog shows and various dog competitions, such as agility and obedience, as well as breeding activities, encourage dog owners to participate both in Finland and, increasingly, outside Finland. The increase in pet ownership and participation in pet-related events, both in and outside of Finland, can be assumed to correspond with an increase in the transportation of pets by air, in particular as AVIH.

2.2 Regulations for the transport of animals by air

Long-distance transport of animals by air is considered to be the most appropriate mode of transport. However, the supply chain has many specific requirements to ensure the safety and welfare of animals during air transport. IATA regulations are recognized worldwide and oblige airlines to transport animals safely. Thanks to successes in the work against rabies, first EU regulations and later the PETS scheme was established to enable travelling with a pet globally. This section discusses both IATA and country-specific rules that also affect AVIH travel.

2.2.1 IATA regulations

IATA's CEIV – Excellence in Logistics organization, provides the basic standards to improve competence throughout the supply chain in the handling and transport of live animals. IATA issues a certificate and registers on its website those companies that meet the standards of the program. As a rule, this applies to animals transported as freight, but also to airlines that carry pets on board their flights. (*IATA - CEIV Live Animals*, no date.)

The commercial transport of live animals is governed by the IATA Live Animals Regulations (LAR) (*IATA - Live Animals Regulations (LAR)*, no date), which aim to ensure the safe and humane transport of animals by air. Appendix 1 sets out in full the checklist for animals in the hold, associated with these regulations that airlines should use when accepting animals for transport on their flights ('IATA Live Animal Acceptance Checklist', 2023). This IATA document does not specify whether the animal is carried as cargo or whether it accompanies the passenger as AVIH. However, many airlines use their checklists specifically for checking AVIH transport to ensure that everything that is required for safe air transportation is checked. As an example, Appendix 2 shows "The checklist for transporting animals as excess baggage in the cargo hold", the information release distributed by Lufthansa on its website (Lufthansa, 2023a).

Among many other important regulations related to animal transport, the LAR specifies the requirements for the transport container to be used for AVIH transportation. The container can be constructed from fibreglass, metal, rigid plastics, welded wire mesh, solid wood or plywood. The interior of the container cannot have any extensions that the animal could bite or scratch and to avoid injury to the animal or its handlers, all openings in the container shall be nose and paw-protected but shall allow for the necessary air circulation. Any wheels on the container shall be removed or rendered inoperable. ('Live Animals Regulations', 2023.) Furthermore, the document specifies the exact requirements for the size of the container for AVIH transportation. According to LAR (2023), the animal in the container must have sufficient space to stand, sit upright, lie down in a natural position and turn around normally when standing. Figure 1 shows the calculation of the required container size according to the LAR requirements. The highest point of the dog, either the head or the tip of the ear, together with the height of the bedding determines the minimum height of the container (E). The length of the container is determined by adding the total length of the dog (A) with the $\frac{1}{2}$ height from ground to elbow joint (B). The minimum width of the container should be 2 x the dog's shoulder width (C).

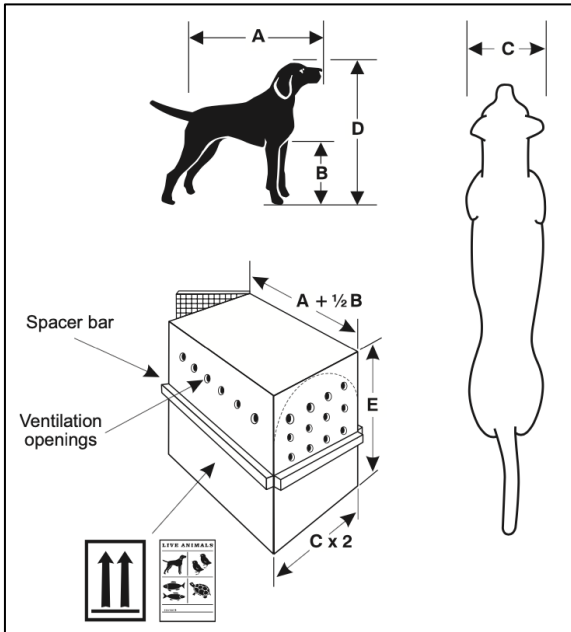


Figure 1. Calculating Minimum container Dimension (Live Animals Regulations, 2023, p.249)

There are regulations on the roof and floor as well as the door to ensure the safe transport of animals. The container must also be marked with a green “Live Animals” label and at least two arrow or “This Way Up” labels to indicate the correct position of the container (Figure 2). LAR also recommends marking the animal’s name on the container, but it does not recommend using any tranquilization of animals as these medications have the effect of lowering blood pressure which already occurs naturally at high altitudes. (‘Live Animals Regulations’, 2023.)

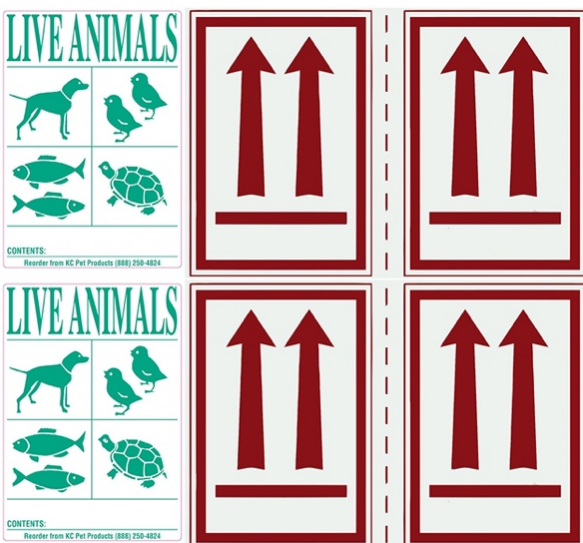


Figure 2. Live Animals and arrows for "This Way Up" (United Airline Pet Transport Label Set, n.d.)

2.2.2 Country-specific regulations

As with the general movement of passengers, EU rules have made it easier to travel with animals. The area covers EU countries plus Norway and Northern Ireland. Since 2001, the pet travel scheme (PETS) includes the UK as well as many other previously with quarantine protected countries, such as Australia, enabling travel with a pet without quarantine requirements. (GOV.UK, 2023; *Pet Travel to Europe - What are the Requirements?*, 2023.) There are few exceptions, but as a basic principle, the animal must be microchipped, vaccinated against rabies and have a valid European animal passport for identification of the pet and its vaccination history. Since the first of January 2021, the UK became a third country regarding the EU legislation, but the PETS scheme is valid with the exception that a pet owner resident in Great Britain requires an animal health certificate issued by an official veterinarian for each entry to the EU (European Commission REV5, 2020, pp. 16–17). Finland is free of the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*, so when travelling to Finland from other than Ireland, Malta, Norway or the UK which are also free of the tapeworm, the dog (cats are excluded) must have a certificate of treatment against this tapeworm. (*Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals and repealing Regulation (EC) No 998/2003*, 2013; *Pets that Travel*, 2022. Your Europe, 2023)

An official body monitors EU regulations and compliance with them in each Member State. In Finland, the Finnish Food Authority controls the movement of animals. The requirements for importing or exporting an animal are sorted into commercial and non-commercial activities. (Finnish Food Authority, 2022b.) The author limits her study to non-commercial animal transport, where the purpose is not to sell or transfer ownership of the animal, but the animal is transported as AVIH transport, where the owner or handler accompanies the animal. The country-specific authority follows EU regulations but gives more specific guidance on them. Similarly, the Finnish Food Authority publishes guidance on the movement of animals from outside the EU or beyond, again following the relevant EU rules (*Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 577/2013*, 2013; Finnish Food Authority, 2022a).

2.3 Airline procedures

As stated in the previous chapters, airlines are obliged to comply with IATA regulations on the safe transport of animals: “The check-in staff is responsible for ensuring the container meets the IATA requirements. Should the container not meet the minimum standards the animal must not be allowed to travel” (*‘Live Animals Regulations’*, 2023). They are also bound by the legislation of the

countries of departure and destination and, accordingly, it is the airline's responsibility to check that the animal being transported has the required transport documents, such as an animal passport with the necessary vaccination information. However, the responsibility for the animal's documentation always lies with the owner, so airlines advise passengers to check the regulations of the country of the destination as well as rules for the correct type of container. (Finnair, 2023a; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2023. Lufthansa, 2023b; Norwegian, 2023)

Airlines vary slightly in the minimum age allowed for AVIH pets, but in the main, they all restrict service to dogs and cats, except Finnair which allows ferrets also to be transported as AVIH, as shown in Table 2. Two of four airlines, German Lufthansa and Dutch KLM ban snub-nosed dogs and cats, whereas the low-cost carrier Norwegian, requires owners of this type of animal to sign a waiver form. Finnair on the other hand makes no mention of this category of animal. (Finnair, 2023a; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2023; Lufthansa, 2023b; Norwegian, 2023.)

Table 2. Restrictions relating to animal transportation (Finnair, 2023a; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2023. Lufthansa, 2023b; Norwegian, 2023)

	Finnair	KLM	Lufthansa	Norwegian
Animal type	Dogs, cats, ferrets	Dogs and cats. Snub-nosed pets not allowed	Dogs and cats. Snub-nosed dogs and cats not allowed. Import ban to DE for certain breeds	Inside Schengen: dogs, cats Svalbard: dogs Snub-nosed breeds: waiver required
Animal minimum age	8 weeks	15 weeks	12 weeks. From/to Germany 15 weeks	n/k
Multiple animals per container	Two adults or max 3 puppies not older than 6 months and from same litter	Two adults or 3 animals up to 6 months old from same litter, each max 14kg	Two animals about the same size, each not heavier than 14kg, or a mother with a young animal	Max 2 cats or 2 dogs, each max 14kg
Special notes	No automatic transfer at HEL airport	Up to 3 pets/passenger. Not possible with transfer longer than 3 hrs or on Boeing 787-9 or 787-10 flights	Through check-in is not possible via MUC Max 2 animals/ each passenger	

In general, the AVIH service requires advance booking, which means that the animal is carried as special baggage required to be declared to the airline before departure. The airlines compared have different operating procedures. Norwegian as a low-cost carrier, transports animals only on point-to-point journeys, without the possibility of transfer transportation. In contrast, full-service network carriers, such as Finnair, allow the AVIH service to be booked with a transfer onwards to the company's partners and KLM and Lufthansa offer a wide network of routes, both on their own and through interline connections. Depending on the airline and the type of aircraft used, there are some differences in making a reservation from online to telephone reservations. Regardless of the type of aircraft used, the number of AVIH containers that can be taken on board is limited. Table 3 compares the main factors related to the booking and check-in of animals between four airlines compared in this study at Helsinki airport. The most flexible way to pre-book is to travel with Dutch KLM, where reservations can be made up to 48 hours in advance. Similarly, Finnair is the strictest, with reservations having to be made at least 7 days before travel.

Table 3. AVIH booking and check-in procedures (Finnair, 2023a; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 2023. Lufthansa, 2023b; Norwegian, 2023)

	Finnair	KLM	Lufthansa	Norwegian
Advanced Booking	Latest 7 days before	No later than 48 hours before departure	No later than 72 hours before departure	In advance
Booking procedure	Online plus information within 24h via chat	KLM Customer Contact Centre by social media or phone	Online registration followed with confirmation by email	Online or call
Check-in	At check-in desk (no self-service channels)	(no details provided)	No later than two hours, no earlier than three hours before departure	Latest 1 hour before the departure
Payment	In advance, while booking via chat service Europe 120€ Intercont. 600€	Differs depending on destination 75€ - 400€	The charge depends on the route and size of the container. Additional transfer charge 150€ via airports BRU/FRA/GVA/VIE/ZRH Paid at check-in or service counter at the airport.	Payment online 150€ - 180€ At the airport 170€ - 200€

At Helsinki airport, airlines require different check-in times for AVIH passengers and none of them allows check-in via self-service devices (Table 3). Finnair uses its own check-in staff, while the other airlines operating at Helsinki airport compared in this research study, are handled by ground handling companies. Some airlines have pre-announced, but variable periods when AVIH passengers are not accepted on flights at all. Some destinations, such as early winter flights to Spain, may be particularly in demand for AVIH travel and AVIH numbers are also affected by international dog shows or competitions. (Ronkainen, 2023.) Both Aviator and Swissport as ground handling companies, as well as Finnair as an airline require that the check-in agent verifies that the transport container meets IATA and airline-specific requirements before accepting the animal for AVIH transport (Heinonen, 2023; Ronkainen, 2023; Väyrynen, 2023).

Once the checks have been completed and the customer has paid or provided proof of payment for the animals' transport, the animal and its container are taken to the security checkpoint, where the security officer checks the animal and the container. The security inspector, together with the agent, checks and secures the locking of the container with zip ties. The animal is then transported

by elevator to the secure basement level of the terminal, where the ownerless journey of the animal begins. Next, a loader from the handling company transports the AVIH container to the baggage hall and onto the plane. This transport typically takes a few minutes. Sometimes the animal has to wait longer in the hall before being loaded onto the aircraft. At Helsinki airport, there is no separate waiting area for AVIH animals in their containers, but they are in the baggage hall with the rest of the luggage. Employees are instructed to keep containers separate if several AVIH animals are travelling in the hall. The animal owner does not automatically receive information about the animal's route, but if asked, the departure gate agent can always confirm with the loader that the AVIH has been loaded onto the plane. The check-in system allows agents to track the loading status but sometimes the customer also contacts the crew on board to inquire about the status of the load of the animal. (Heinonen, 2023; Ronkainen, 2023; Väyrynen, 2023.)

The aircraft's cargo hold and size vary depending on the type of aircraft, but as a general rule, it is quite noisy and dark in the hold. The captain of the flight is always informed separately about the animal to be transported as AVIH so that the temperature in the hold will be adjusted from the cockpit to suit the animal passenger. The floor of the aircraft hold is cold, which is why boards are placed under the container so that it is not in direct contact with the floor. The container is tied to the floor of the hold and must not be loaded with any objects on it. Other baggage or cargo must be loaded in such a way that it cannot damage the container or move over it during the flight. Generally, the AVIH should be loaded first in the hold of the aircraft, so that it has a tie-down area and sufficient space for proper securing. Similarly, the AVIH containers are usually the last to be taken out of the hold, allowing more room to move the container around. AVIH loading is carried out by every trained loader, there is no special staff for this particular work. (Heinonen, 2023; Ronkainen, 2023.) In the arrival hall of Helsinki airport, agents can monitor special baggage arriving and will be informed by the ramp agent once the AVIH has been transferred to a security lock. The passenger contacts the arrival agent who checks the bag tag number and passes the animal on to the owner who is also instructed to keep the animal in the container until it has passed through customs. (Väyrynen, 2023.)

2.4 Customer experience

Consumers demand service and value services more than the products or commodities required to produce them, and so increasingly prefer to spend their time and money on services (Pine and Gilmore, 2019, p. 47). The product or service is provided on demand, but increasingly the quality of customer service matters in terms of how the customer experiences the service or product. Even if the product itself is excellent, but the customer service at any stage of the purchase is poor, the

customer experience received will be modest. The customer experience is shaped by the brand, the product itself, its price and the service transaction. (McKinsey & Company, 2022.) The better the experience, the more often the customer will buy the product again, promote it more and favour it (Hermans, 2022), so more and more companies have come to realise how a company delivers services to its customers is as important as what it delivers (Duncan *et al.*, 2016, p. 2).

From the customers' point of view, the customer journey is a whole experience, as they interact with the company and its products. For the service provider, the journey has a clearly defined beginning and end, and it goes through different touchpoints. In the customer experience, customers do not know, do not care to know or do not need to know about those touchpoints, because from their perspective each stage of the experience is the same journey. Typically, those companies that understand how to make the customer journey seamless and easy for the customer, will thrive and deliver a good customer experience (Duncan *et al.*, 2016, pp. 6–7.) The consumer's service experience is often built up across multiple service providers, with service providers jointly or unknowingly influencing each other's contributions to the customer's experience. A service provider may develop a service or, for example, influence the context in which the service takes place and thus affect the individual customer experience. On the other hand, a service provider cannot influence the entire customer experience, as the customer journey often spans different physical locations, times and channels. For example, even if the service is provided on the service provider's physical premises, the experience may be influenced by another consumer's previous experience of the same service or product, heard elsewhere (Autio *et al.*, 2014.) or, as is the case today, increasingly through social media.

2.5 Pet owner as a customer

As the number of pets has increased, the supply of various products and services for pets has also grown considerably among pet owner-consumers. Pet owners also increasingly regard their pets as members of the family, even personifying their pets or replacing human babies or children with a pet with more and more money being spent not only on their well-being but increasingly on luxuries, gifts and shared holidays (Vänskä, 2014; The Harris Poll, 2015; Bleron, 2019).

Experiences have become more important to the economy and sought after by consumers and so more and more companies are looking to use their services as a stage and goods as props to create immersive and memorable experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 2019, p. 53). Many service providers have learnt that customers want a better experience for themselves but also better experiences for their pets (Bleron, 2019). The pet owner plays two roles from a consumer-centric perspective: consuming different products and services for the pet and interacting with the service

provider in the customer journey. The pet itself is an autonomous actor and influences the consumer's feelings, actions and value experiences. (Autio *et al.*, 2014.)

In their study of the consumer value experience between pet owner and pet, Autio *et al.* (2014), defined the importance of the pet with three equally important areas: a value creator, a mediator of value and an experiencer of value (Figure 3).

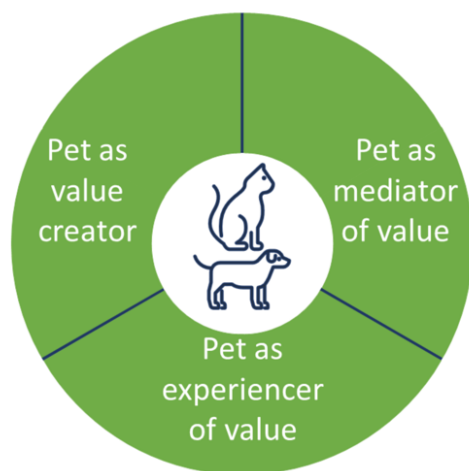


Figure 3. The consumer wheel: Pet as a value creator, as a mediator of value and as an experiencer of value (adapted from Autio *et al.* 2014)

The pet creates value through the experience of service, whereby the pet is positioned as an active subject and often the pet's well-being and experience are perceived as more important than the owner's. The pet as a subject is constructed both from the animal's characteristics and intrinsic nature and the owner's interpretation of the pet's behaviour and nature as well as from the pet's humanization. The relationship between the consumer and the pet enables the formation of a valuable experience. The pet acts as a mediator of value when the consumer justifies, for example, pet food recommendations. Value creation is negotiated through the pet, but the relationship between the service provider and the pet owner is also influenced by the owner's social communities and networks. The pet plays a central role in value creation, although the consumer receives recommendations but decides on the products and services that are purchased for the pet. The value of experience with the service provider is thus defined by the pet for the pet owner. Through the pet's experience, the pet owner's experience of consuming pet services is indirectly created, and the pet is thus positioned between the consumer and the service provider. The dual role of the pet as a consuming subject on the one hand and as an object that transmits the experience to the consumer, on the other hand, becomes apparent when the consumer takes the

pet's experience as a subject for evaluation. The pet is an active experiencer of the service, but how the consumer interprets the pet's experience structures the perception of the relationship with the service provider. (Autio *et al.*, 2014.)

2.6 Pet as a co-customer in the customer journey

Based on the interviews with airline representatives who are responsible for managing AVIH transportation at Helsinki airport, the author has mapped the journey of the customer and the pet as a co-customer (Figure 4). The figure shows phases from the start to the end of the common customer journey with different touchpoints whereby the outer ring represents the pet owner's experience at the airport and during the flight, and the inner ring reflects the pet's parallel journey.

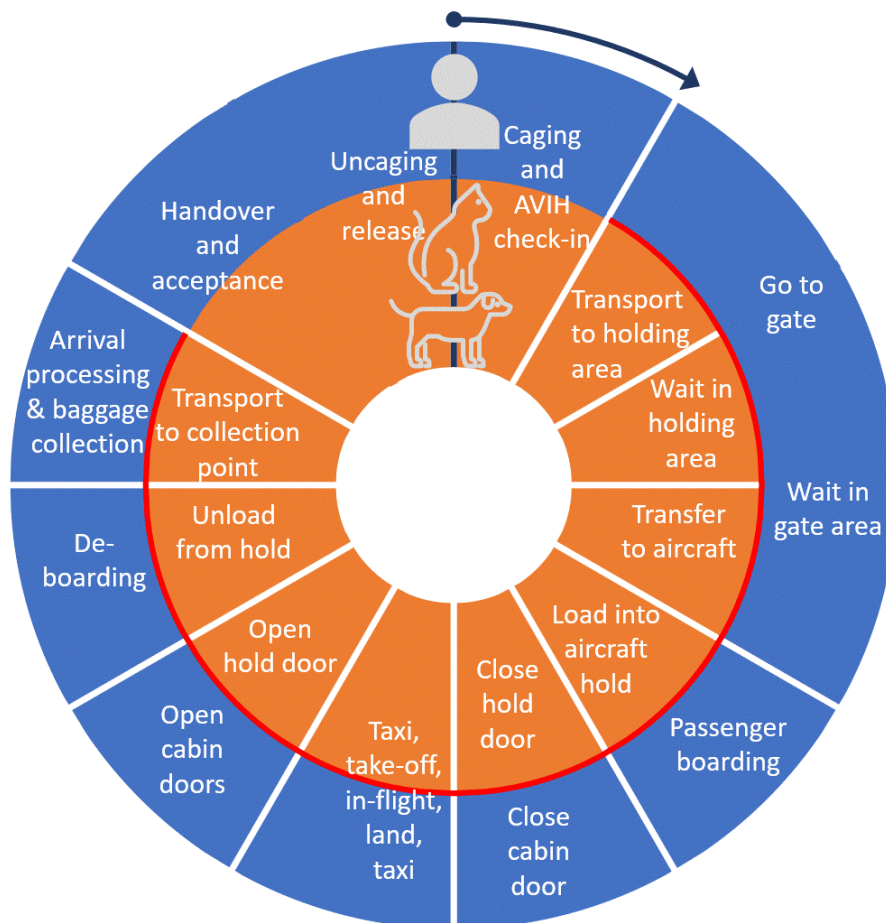


Figure 4. Customer and co-customer journey during AVIH transportation (Wala-Bruin, 2023)

The sections separated by a red arc demonstrate the separated experiences during the common journey, showing that the owner and pet are together only at the beginning and very end of the journey. As pointed out by Smolkovic et al. (2012), the extended separation will not prevent the owner from feeling the bond and hence any negative indicators, such as injuries or obvious stress resulting from the pet's journey will have a corresponding negative influence on the customer's own experience.

As stated earlier, pets are increasingly seen as a member of the family, a companion with whom to participate in activities or to compete in sports. As a consumer, pet owners seek to make the best use of services and products for the benefit of their pets, and thus want to be good "parents" to their pets. The pet may bring value to the pet owner as such, mediate the value or have its own value experience and through all this becomes an important co-customer to the pet owner. (Autio *et al.*, 2014.) In most of the pet owner's experiences with the pet, the owner and the pet are physically together and participate in the event as a unit. In this way, the pet owner has direct visibility of what is happening to the pet and can influence and steer the pet's experience, for example, health services, massage or grooming. Obvious enjoyment by the animal of the service will transfer to the owner and enhance in that way the owner's own customer experience (Autio *et al.*, 2014). In this respect, the AVIH experience is very different, as for most of the journey, the pet owner cannot observe the pet's experience and cannot influence the pet's customer journey, as illustrated in Figure 4.

3 Methodology

This chapter presents the research question and goal as well as the methods for research work with the justification of the choice of the main research methods used for this study. To get an understanding of the decisions pet owners make around travel with their pet(s) and their experiences with and opinions of AVIH pet transportation, the author collected data from pet owners through a survey. The survey questionnaire was distributed via social media, directly to dog and cat organisations and as a mailing to dog owners who had competed in the Finnish national agility team to efficiently reach as many pet owners as possible. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were used to collect more detailed information about travelling using AVIH. The empirical material consists of 113 survey responses and five personal pet owner interviews which were conducted via video call using Microsoft Teams, with automatic transcription enabled. The design of the research and the questions used are presented in the following sections of this chapter.

3.1 Research question and goal

The main research question for this thesis is: Can the AVIH product be improved to make it a more appealing experience for both the pet and the pet owner? The sub-questions further for this thesis are:

- What are the concerns of potential customers who are considering transporting their pets by air?
- What are the reasons for and against using air transportation?
- Does the pet's journey experience impact the owner's own journey experience?

This paper aims to understand the current procedures at the Helsinki airport and look for improvements to the experience of both the (human) customer and the transported animal. This will result in greater customer satisfaction, potentially leading to an increase in the use of the AVIH product, resulting in improved commercial outcomes for the transporting airlines.

3.2 Research approach

As a general rule, research is defined as the process of studying and analysing a particular problem and its associated factors to find a solution or alternative solution. The research approach is either positivist, relativist or critical. (Polonsky and Waller, 2021, pp. 5-6.) This paper adopts the positivist approach, as by the definition of Polonsky & Waller (2021, p. 6) the problem has its perspectives, and the importance of environmental factors can vary depending on the point in time

and so conclusions will vary according to these factors. In the context of this paper, the research subjects, being survey respondents and interview participants, have widely varying individual perspectives of the problem. Furthermore, the research subjects come from a broad range of backgrounds reflecting time-variable environmental factors, such as the number and type of pets, age and disposable income, as well as past experiences with modes of pet travel.

3.3 Determining the method

In her research, the author used both qualitative and quantitative research methods, combining methods and research approaches to best serve this type of research. The justification for this choice and further information on the different research methods are given in this chapter. To understand the number of passengers travelling with AVIH and to gather the experiences of pet owners, the survey aimed to get responses from as many people as possible who had travelled or were planning to travel with their pets. The survey also sought opinions on why pet owners had chosen not to travel internationally by air. The quantitative research used primary data which was obtained through the survey.

In addition to the online questionnaire, the author's idea from the outset was to deepen the research through individual interviews. Those who were interested in participating were sought based on the survey responses and this selected target group of users was interviewed by using semi-structured interview questions via online video call using Teams. The author has relatively extensive knowledge of and experience with travelling with pets, so it was possible to plan the interview and the questions in an informed manner. When designing interview and survey questions, it is important that the researcher understands the topic and can formulate valid and reliable questions in a suitable order, in line with the research question (Bhandari, 2021).

3.3.1 Quantitative research

The quantitative research process collects and analyses numerical data, for example, to find patterns and averages to be subject to statistical analysis (Bhandari, 2020). A quantitative question typically is close-ended and leads to a single correct and definite answer usually describing a numeric value. The quantitative approach uses more respondents than the qualitative approach and produces tables and graphs from the numerical results collected using online surveys, polls and questionnaires. Major advantages to using quantitative research are the reliable, accurate and quick data collection, wider scope of data analysis and elimination of personal comments or biasing of results. Quantitative research methods are either primary where the researcher focuses

on collecting data directly or secondary where the research involves using already existing data. (Fleetwood, 2023.)

3.3.2 Qualitative research

The qualitative research method uses techniques that collect thoughts and ideas from a small number of respondents and draw conclusions about the issue being studied (Polonsky and Waller, 2021, p. 175). Qualitative data consists of words and observations, not numbers, and relies on the views of participants. The text or narrative data can be collected for example with open-ended questions and written comments on questionnaires, individual interviews, discussion groups, observations or using published written material to evaluate that data (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003, p. 1). Qualitative data includes all kinds of statements and observations, not just questionnaire responses, and is based on personal expressions, usually responses to unstructured or semi-structured questions. Respondents can describe their feelings and behavioural characteristics in the interaction situation. (Mariampolski, 2001, pp. 7-8.)

3.3.3 Mixed research method

The mixed research method seeks to answer the research question by combining elements of both quantitative and qualitative research types in a single study. Combining both methods provides a more comprehensive answer and is chosen in situations where one method alone does not provide sufficient data to answer the research question or it can add details to the conclusions and make research results more credible (George, 2021). However, Swain (2017) stresses that the choice of mixed methods will always depend on the purpose of the study and the research questions selected according to Molina-Azorin (2016) require more work and time to investigate, hence the study might be more challenging to finish. Overall, however, using quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination improves the understanding of research problems and phenomena better than either of the methods alone would do by exploiting the strengths of each type and neutralizing their weaknesses (Molina-Azorin, 2016).

Content analysis and interpretation are required to bring order and understanding to the data collected, and this requires creativity, discipline and a systematic approach. (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003, p. 1). According to Polonsky & Waller (2021, pp. 195–196), qualitative research is used in three different ways; to define the area to be investigated, to use it as the primary data collection method or to assist in developing a better understanding of the data relationships identified. The importance to understand the data the researcher is working with is vital and means reading and re-reading the text several times. Before beginning any analysis, the quality of the

data should be considered, and meaningless data should be left out of the analysis. The analysis should focus on what the purpose of the evaluation is planning to find out by answering key questions. The information received should also be categorized by organizing them by themes, for example, and further identifying patterns and connections for analysis purposes. Themes and connections can then explain the findings of the data received and so interpret the data, i.e., adding meaning and significance to the analysis. (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003, pp. 2-5.)

3.4 Conducting the survey

When designing a survey, it is useful to think mainly about the questions intended to be asked in a limited time frame, as the longer the survey, the lower the response rate that can be achieved. It is useful to prepare a draft of the questionnaire for review by experts, colleagues or friends, and comments can be used to refine the questionnaire before it is published. It is also good to pretest the questionnaire with the relevant respondents in the intended study population. (Ornstein, 2013, pp. 45-46.)

In exploring the research questions to be set, the author felt that the best results for this kind of research would be achieved using mixed research methods. By combining research methods, the author aimed to achieve a broader picture of the subject under research. The initial idea was to use a survey with the cooperation of a dog organization, and thus the use of a client register. The Finnish Kennel Club showed interest in the topic, but the contacts did not progress as planned, however, a link to the survey was published on their website. The Finnish Agility Association would have been willing to cooperate more, but timewise it was only appropriate to use their channels to distribute the survey. The author also contacted the Finnish Cat Association hoping for similar cooperation in distributing the survey and that some cat owners could be contacted for the survey through the association. Additionally, the author used her channels, mainly through social media, to distribute the survey to potential respondents. Because of the author's background, posting to social media groups of Finns living in Norway and Germany provided valuable information about travelling with pets on a somewhat regular basis.

In designing the survey, the author identified the personas that the survey sought to sample from among all respondents. These personas were:

- A person who has travelled internationally by air with their pet as AVIH
- A person who has travelled internationally with their AVIH-size pet, but not by air
- A person who has not travelled internationally with their AVIH-size pet at all

- A person who has not travelled internationally by air with their AVIH-size pet but is considering doing so in the next 12 months

As Figure 5 shows, in the introduction to the survey, the key concept, AVIH, was explained, the purpose of the survey was briefly described, and for what purpose the data collected would be used. Additionally, respondents can choose to remain anonymous.



Figure 5. Introduction to the survey

The survey's questionnaire (Appendix 3) includes 19 questions combined with yes and no options, multiple choices, open questions and Likert scale options. The author believed it necessary to only ask the age of the respondent and what kind and how many pets the respondent has as background questions to determine the suitability of the survey population. The other questions sought experiences and opinions about AVIH travel, as well as possible use of the service and its expectations. Supplementary to the questionnaire text, a flowchart reflecting the branching logic and questionnaire flow was created and is provided in Appendix 4. Through the survey, the author also sought to identify potential interviewees and, in the end, the possibility of providing contact details for this purpose was given. The author tested the questions with a small number of dog owners with experience of travelling with their pets, who went through the questionnaire and, based on the feedback given, some changes were made to the questionnaire before it was finalised.

It was very important to use a reliable tool and one that allowed for two language options. It was assumed that most of the respondents would be Finnish speakers, but the possibility of finding respondents in other languages was also wanted, so the author also implemented an English-language survey using the Webropol program. Through Webropol, the responses could be presented, stored and analysed, while at the same time keeping the survey responses anonymous.

3.5 Semi-structured interview

When the research aims to find out how people perceive a phenomenon, what they think or how they feel, or if personal and detailed stories need to be collected to develop the narrative, interviews are the right strategy to choose as a research method, allowing fewer participants to produce a wider range of information (Billups, 2021, p. 37). Interviews typically last between one and two hours but can also be as short as a few minutes. The type of interview is an important factor. In a structured interview, the interviewer prepares the questions, and their order is predetermined. In a semi-structured interview, the questions are formulated and prepared in advance, but the interviewer can change the order of the questions or omit or add questions according to the situation. However, the common feature of any interview is that it should be recorded, making it easy for the researcher to revisit the interview situation afterwards. (Ojasalo, Moilanen and Ritalahti, 2020, pp. 59-61.) When designing interviews, attention should also be paid to potential errors, such as respondent selection, questioning, or recording errors. In general, minimizing errors helps for example by reviewing the definition of the research problem or interviewing methods (Polonsky and Waller, 2021, p. 188).

As mentioned earlier, the semi-structured interview only partially follows pre-planned questions. The interview is conducted with one respondent at a time, using a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions, often with follow-up questions such as “why” or “how”. It is beneficial to plan the interview, not so much by using a precise questionnaire, but more by using an agenda that gives an indication of the topic and the planned questions in the order envisaged. When designing questions, it is also useful to consider whether there is a need to include a pre-comment, such as “someone thinks or someone told us”, when asking for an opinion hence making it easier for the interviewee to identify with or disagree with the question. An interview is always good to start with a positive first impression, addressing confidentiality and suitable small talk before getting into actual interview questions. Possibly stranger or perhaps more embarrassing questions should be left to the end of the interview. (Adams, 2015, pp. 492-501.) Polonsky & Waller (2021, p. 177) point out, that increasingly, technological advances are being used not only to conduct interviews but also to go through the data for analysis. According to Salmons (2012, pp. 215–216), many

researchers use email as an adjunct to the interview, allowing them to familiarize themselves with interviewees and prepare for the interview itself. For a face-to-face and direct interaction interview, video conferencing or various online meeting tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet are comparable to a physical interview situation for obtaining immediate and visual communication (Salmons, 2012, pp. 215–216).

For this study, it was felt beneficial to supplement the survey with interviews to explore the experiences of AVIH users more extensively. The semi-structured model was suitable for this purpose because of its certain freedom in the interview situation. It allowed the narrative of the service users and for new questions to emerge from these experiences. In particular, to explore expectations and ideas for the development of the service. The best approach was, therefore, to be flexible during the interview, rather than simply following a set of prepared questions and their order. The author prepared an agenda for the interviews (Appendix 5); however, it was not binding in the sense that it could vary greatly depending on the situation and the interviewee. Based on the survey responses, the author collected contact details from willing respondents and recruited five interviewees following the semi-structured model. All interviewees were of Finnish nationality, with three living in Finland and two in Germany. Four interviewees were female and one male, ranging in age between 21 and 60, with the average in the range of 41 to 50. The interviews were conducted online in the Finnish language using Microsoft Teams video call with the option enabled to transcribe discussion for further analysis purposes. Four interviews lasted one hour to one hour and 15 minutes. One interview lasted only approximately 20 minutes.

4 Analysis and results

This chapter analyses and presents in detail the results of the survey and interviews. The summary of the results of the research questions of this study is presented at the end of this chapter separately. The survey aimed to find out not only the experiences and expectations of AVIH users but also why owners of pets of AVIH size did not want to choose this service for their international journey. All the relevant questions are analysed and some conclusions are drawn. Through the questionnaire, willing interviewees were identified and the more in-depth discussions with them on this topic have been analysed separately later in this chapter.

As background questions, respondents were asked about the type of pet they have, being a dog or a cat, the number of each type of pet and the age of the respondents. The first part of the survey questionnaire explored the experience of having travelled with a pet by air. If the respondent had no experience of AVIH travel with a pet and no plans to do so in the next 12 months, the survey ended with the option to leave general comments about AVIH travel. Similarly, if a respondent indicated that they had had the experience of travelling with a pet by air, but the pet had not travelled as an AVIH, the respondent was then asked about future intentions to travel with their pet. If there were none, the respondent was also redirected to leave a general comment. For respondents who indicated that they had travelled with an AVIH pet, the survey continued from the beginning, going through all the questions. The second part of the survey sought to identify future plans for AVIH travel if the respondent had any. The full sequence logic of the survey questions can be found in the survey flow chart in Appendix 4.

4.1 Target groups and response statistics

The survey was distributed to members of various animal associations in Finland, specifically the Finnish Agility Association, the Finnish Kennel Club and the Finnish Cat Association. In these associations, the survey was published via their online newsletters or other internal media. In addition, the author published the survey link on her social media pages and various social media-based groups in Finland, Norway and Germany.

A total of 113 survey responses were received from the groups targeted. It is not known how many responses were received from each target group as the survey link provided to each group was identical. Although the survey did not request the nationality or country of residence, the language used for free-form comments is almost exclusively in Finnish, suggesting that most respondents are of Finnish origin.

All the survey respondents owned one or more dogs, with only 12 respondents also indicating that they owned a cat. The number of dogs owned ranged from 1 to 9, with the average at 2,5 dogs and the median response at 2.

4.2 Travel experience with AVIH

The first part of the survey focused on past AVIH travel experiences. The aim was to find out what the travel experience had been like for the owner and the pet. Of the total number of respondents, 99 had travelled internationally by air with their pet(s). Of this number 83, equal to 73 % of all respondents, had used the AVIH service to transport an animal. In response to the question how many times have you travelled with a pet as AVIH during the last 10 years, the median response was 4. Although the survey data does not show how the usage of AVIH has changed during the past 10 years, based on European statistics (2022) showing significant growth in pet-owning households as well as Statistics Finland (2020) reporting a substantial increase in the amount of money spent on pets, it can be assumed that the use of AVIH has grown during recent years and will continue to increase in the coming years.

When asked which airline they had used when travelling with a pet as AVIH (Question 7), 92 % of respondents said they had used Finnair (Figure 6).

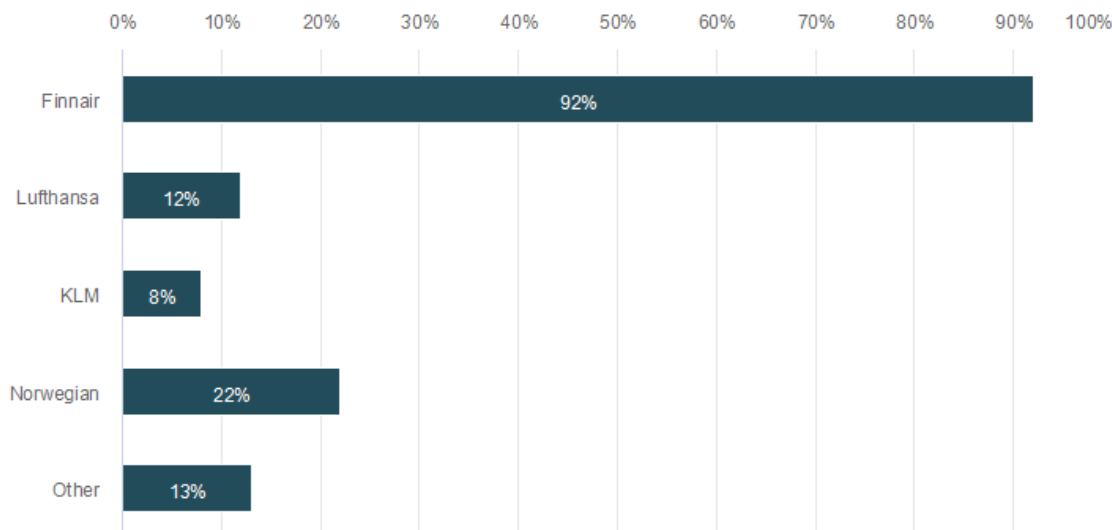


Figure 6. Airlines used when travelling with pets as AVIH (n=83) (multiple answers allowed)

In response to the question, Do you have a preference for an airline, 52 % answered No. Of the 39 respondents who indicated having an airline preference, 33 (84 %) said it was Finnair, with the

most common reasons being the availability of direct flights and being able to communicate in Finnish. The survey specifically targeted international AVIH trips to and from Finland, hence the result showing a preference for the national carrier, Finnair, was not surprising and to be expected.

The following question, Question 10, asked, what was the main reason for your trip? Figure 7 shows that travelling to a dog show or competition was the most frequent reason given for international travel (37 %). This result can be expected given statements by the Finnish Kennel Club (2023) and Federation Cynologique Internationale (2023) that the number of dog shows in Europe had increased in recent years, leading to a growth in the number of competitors and their dogs travelling to attend these events. A significant proportion (24 %) of respondents said they had travelled with their pet by air using AVIH service on holiday which reflects the trend identified by Vänskä (2014), The Harris Poll (2019) and Bleron (2019) to treat pets increasingly as equal members of the family, hence wanting them to join on vacations. The use of the AVIH service to transport a pet for breeding purposes is another significant reason for travel (12 %).

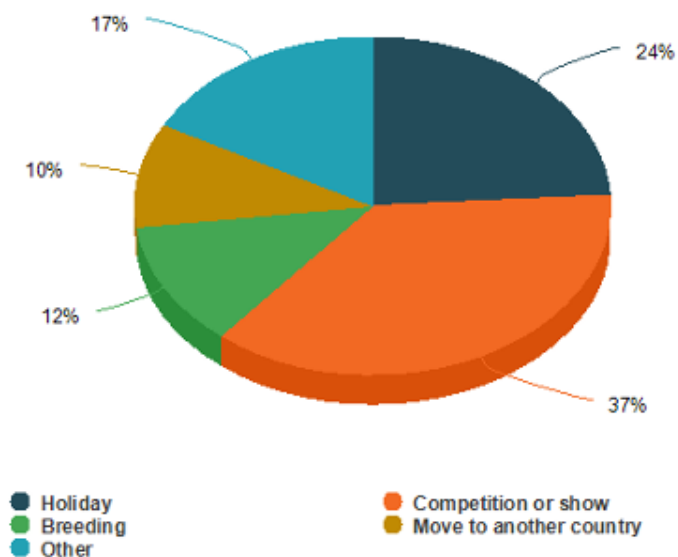


Figure 7. The main purpose of travelling with AVIH (n=83)

Question 11 used a Likert scale to enquire about the most recent AVIH travel experience by asking respondents' agreement with the statement: "I was very satisfied with my experience using AVIH." Of the 83 respondents to this question, 72 % expressed satisfaction with the service by either completely or somewhat agreeing with the statement. As Figure 8 shows, 14 % did not have an

opinion either way and 13 % of respondents somewhat disagreed. Only one respondent completely disagreed. This high satisfaction level is however at odds with the tone of feedback comments given later in the survey. Several survey respondents who expressed satisfaction with their most recent AVIH experience also left strongly negative comments in the final survey question. The survey data does not provide sufficient data to resolve this apparent contradiction.

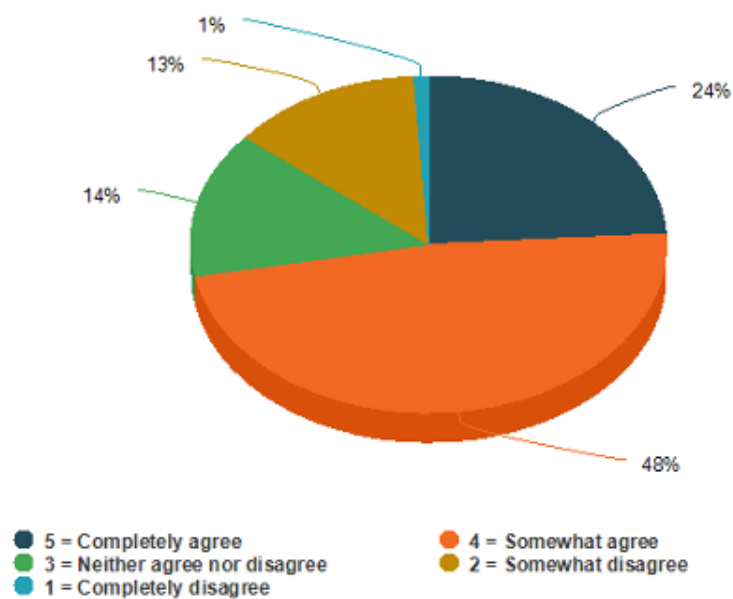


Figure 8. Level of agreement with the statement "I was very satisfied with my experience using AVIH (n=83)

The last experience-based question, Question 12, asked: How does your pet respond to the journey using AVIH? Around half of the 83 respondents (54 %) felt that the AVIH journey did not have any particular impact on their pet, but 36 % felt that the journey was somewhat stressful for them and even 10 % felt that the journey was very stressful (Figure 9).

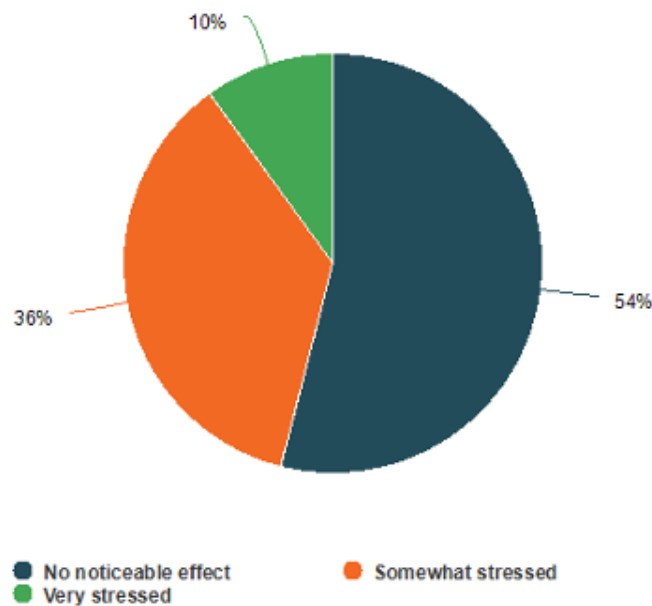


Figure 9. Observation of pet response following an AVIH travel (n=83)

4.3 Objections against AVIH travel

The 14 respondents out of a total of 113 (12 %) who said they had never travelled on an international flight with their pet were then asked in Question 4 for their reasons for not travelling internationally by air. Figure 10 lists all the answers, out of which 71 % of respondents to this question cited concern for their pet's well-being as the reason for not travelling by air. If this respondent group is adjusted by eliminating those that did not have any desire to travel internationally (3), the percentage of respondents expressing concern for their pet's well-being increases to 91 %. The next most frequent reason for not travelling by air, "I prefer other forms of transportation", was chosen by 21 % of respondents. This result indicates that there is a strong concern for pets' well-being during AVIH transportation. As pointed out by Autio et al. (2014) there is a strong correlation between the experience of the consumer and that of the pet. In the case of international air travel, the pet acts as the experiencer of value, whereby the pet is positioned as an active subject and often the pet's well-being and experience are perceived as more important than the owner's (Autio *et al.*, 2014). A customer's expectation of a bad experience will encourage that customer to choose other forms of transport, leading to a loss of business for the airlines.

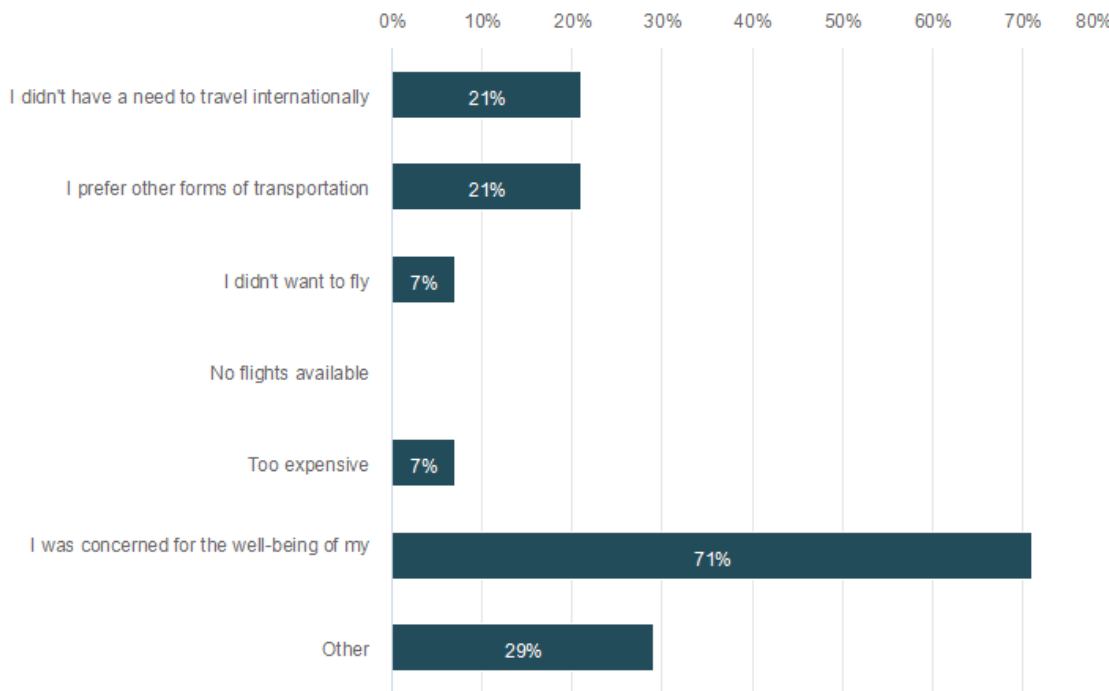


Figure 10. Objections to international travel by air with pet (n=14) (multiple answers allowed)

Similarly, when asked about respondents' plans to travel internationally, as many as 35 % said they would not choose to travel by air. In Question 16, this group of respondents was subsequently asked: Why would you not choose to travel by air? Figure 11 shows that none of the respondents cited the cost of travel as a reason not to travel by air, and 22 % felt that flying with a pet would be too complicated. In addition, as many as 39 % were concerned about their pet's welfare or that they did not know what would happen to their pet during the flight (22 %). At this point, 17 % of respondents said they had had bad experiences with air travel and therefore did not plan another trip. This group of respondents had replied either 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'somewhat disagree' to the earlier question to rate their agreement with the statement "I was very satisfied with my (my most recent) experience using AVIH". Other reasons given for not travelling by air included the fact that it is easier to travel by car or caravan, especially with several pets. Amongst the respondents preferring to travel by motor vehicle the number of dogs ranged from 2 to 8, with the average at 4. For owners travelling with larger groups of dogs, it would be impractical and expensive to use air transportation and AVIH services.

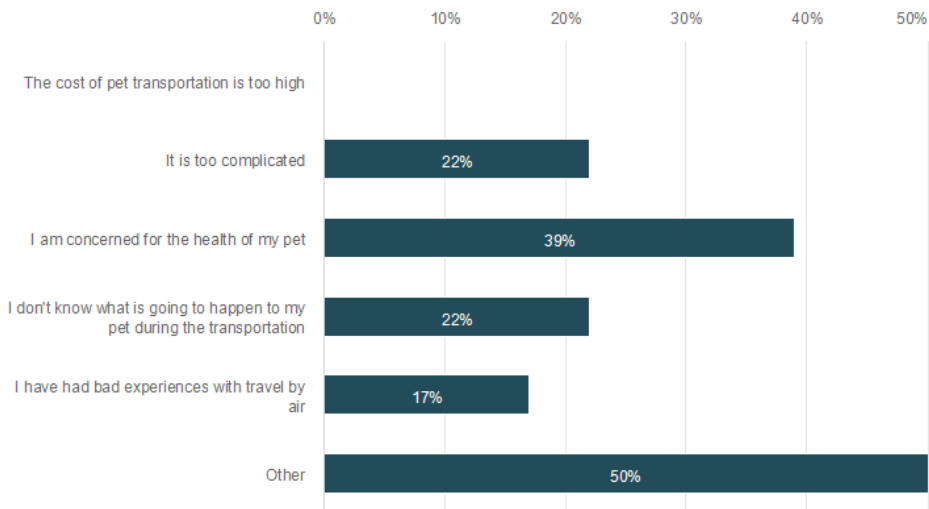


Figure 11. Reasons for not travelling with a pet by air? (n=18) (multiple answers allowed)

4.4 Travel plans with AVIH

Around half of the respondents (46 %) plan an international trip with their pet in the next 12 months, with the remainder (54 %) not planning to do so. Those who are planning an international trip with a pet were asked: what would be the main purpose of your planned trip? Three-quarters of the 52 respondents nominated either competition or show (40 %) or holiday (36 %) as their reason for travel. As can be seen in Figure 12, other reasons given in the answers to Question 14, included breeding or moving to another country. In the category Other, the main reason given was visiting family.

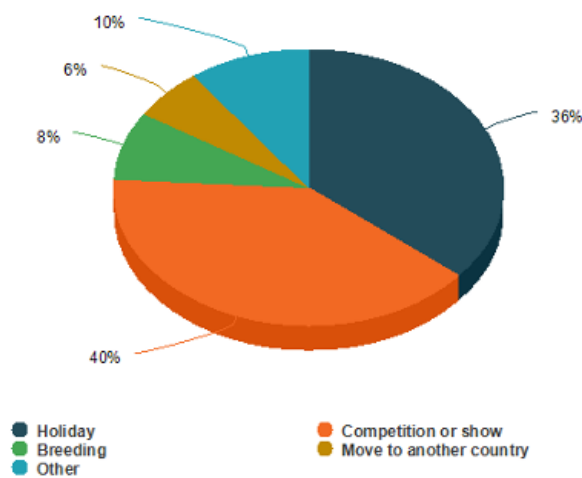


Figure 12. The main purpose of planned travel (n=52)

For those respondents planning international travel, the subsequent questions asked whether the travel involved air transportation (Yes 65 %, n=34) and if so, whether the animal would travel as AVIH (Yes 82 %, n=28). In Question 18, the group of respondents planning to use AVIH were asked to give a Likert rating for the statement: "I am confident that my pet will have a good experience travelling as AVIH." The majority of respondents (47 %) somewhat agree and 32 % completely agree with the statement. None of those planning a trip completely disagreed, but still 14 % somewhat disagreed (Figure 13). This result shows that almost 80 % of respondents expect a positive experience with AVIH travel. Conversely, although several respondents (14 %) are not confident that their pet will have a good experience travelling as AVIH, this group still intends to use AVIH for their planned travel. This would suggest that the purpose of their travel is sufficiently important to accept the possibility of a bad travel experience.

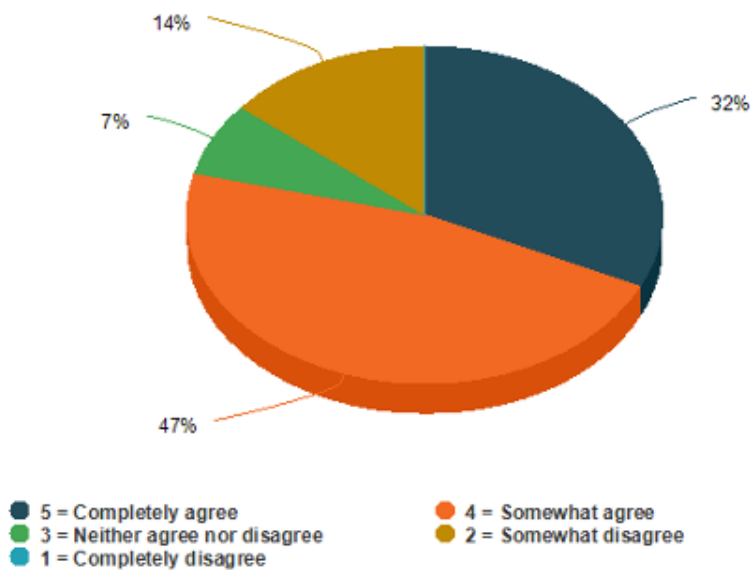


Figure 13. Level of agreement with the statement "I am confident that my pet will have a good experience travelling as AVIH" (n=28)

4.5 General comments about AVIH

81 out of 113 survey respondents left a general comment on AVIH travel. These direct quotes, which were translated from Finnish and categorized by the author as positive, negative and neutral, are listed in Appendix 6. In addition to the good and bad AVIH experiences, the different ways in which airports in different countries handle AVIH passengers were highlighted. Airline booking practices were perceived as poor when travelling with a pet. Not only are the booking

instructions different between airlines and often unclear, but they are difficult to implement to fit the intended date for mating, dog show or competition event into the required booking times as some of the comments below show.

“Booking your own and your dog’s flights at the same time is not easy. It’s easy to get your own, but you don’t know if your dog will make it on the same flight.”

“Booking is tricky, as you have to book the flight and then the dog place. It would be great if you could do it directly when you book your flight.”

“Last time we used Lufthansa, the seat confirmation did not arrive in the promised time. When we called to check it, it turned out that the dog would not fit on the flight we wanted and it became an expensive adjustment.”

“It was a real hassle when you couldn’t get your pet’s seat at the same time as your own plane ticket but had to fiddle with tickets and wait up to two weeks for a place in the hold to be confirmed.”

“Changing aircraft types on the flight does not create confidence, you cannot go to a competition and then find out at the airport or shortly before the flight that you are not going to make it. You would not treat any other competitive athlete that way.”

Both positive and negative comments revealed the importance of pet comfort for a successful travel experience. A few comments that illustrate the impact of a pet on the traveller's experience are listed below.

“The smoother and easier it is to book a seat on a flight and the dog travels well, the more likely I would travel with that airline again.”

“On the return flight, the dog was seen in Helsinki waiting to be loaded onto the plane. Employees chatted with the dog, which made me feel better.”

“The whole flight experience stressed me so much that I would not fly with a dog unless I had to.”

“It is also my own experience that the welfare of animals is not taken into account.”

“I was really stressed about my dog.”

Many respondents also commented on the need for better, more accurate information on what happens when a pet travels alone in AVIH transport. This would help to make the owner's journey easier and more reassuring, thus improving the travel experience. Below are examples of these comments.

“I would welcome detailed information on the airlines' websites about the conditions of AVIH transport (temperature, lighting, noise, strong odours) between the departure and arrival gates and during that time about all the methods used to move the animal.”

“In particular, making more information available would have helped.”

“I wonder why there is no info on how the whole thing works. E.g., a youtube video of what happens after you have given up your dog at the airport. A journey through the eyes of a dog.”

“The skills of the call centre staff in dog booking need to be improved.”

“I think staff should be more willing to tell the customer when the dog is on board and that the lights and heat are on in the hold.”

Respondents' comments also revealed a need for reassurance and information about their pet's situation during the journey. Many respondents had specifically asked either the ground staff or the flight crew for confirmation of the presence of their pet.

“At both Helsinki-Vantaa and Dusseldorf departures, I was ensured that my dog was loaded on the plane. In Helsinki I asked myself, in Dusseldorf I didn't even have to ask. This made me feel a lot better about travelling with a dog”

“I always ask for confirmation from the captain, via the cabin crew, that the type of aircraft being flown is suitable for transporting a pet in the hold. I also want confirmation that the pet has been loaded on board.”

“I was stressed but eased when the hostess came to tell me the dog was on board and the temperature of the hold.”

Many respondents felt that the AVIH pet container was not handled carefully, the container may have been broken, upside down or left out in the cold or hot for an extended length of time. The handover of dogs at the destination was perceived as poor and most surprisingly, no one had asked them for proof of dog ownership when collecting their animal, raising concern about the security of their pet. All of this contributes to a poor customer experience.

“On two out of four occasions, the dog's transport box has broken in the hold during the journey.”

“There was a hole in the corner and the transport crate was upside down when retrieved.”

“After one trip, the transport box was cracked from the bottom, so it had been roughly handled. After that, I became afraid to fly my pet.”

“There has been room for improvement in the return of pets at several airports. Sometimes a dog has just been left alone in a corner of the baggage hall, and I couldn't even find it. Rarely does anyone check who takes the dog.”

“One unpleasant experience was at Helsinki Airport on a very hot day. The plane was late and the dogs' cages were left on the tarmac in the blazing sun.”

“There are big differences in airports and how travelling animals are treated. German airports are generally well-run, Helsinki-Vantaa is a disaster. The reason why we don't let dogs fly to/from Finland.”

“The most stressful thing for the dog is handling and moving the box at the airport, rather than the flight itself.”

“I would have wished that when we asked we had been told where the dogs were coming from so that we could have gone to the right place to pick them up..”

“..the dog and its box were just left in a place where no one was watching to see who would pick it up”

The importance of the pet and the owner's need to take care of their family member in the best possible way was also evident in the free comments, further confirming theories by Vänskä (2014), to take care of pets in a way similar to how children are taken care of during travel.

“The long waiting times both before and after the flight in the back of the airport were stressful for the dogs, I wish I could be with the dog as long as possible before the flight and get it back as quickly as possible.”

“The idea of putting a dog in your luggage feels unpleasant. You can't control how the transport box is handled and if the dog is okay.”

“The dog's box should be lifted by two people so that the dog is not frightened by the movement.”

“Labrador is put in a situation that cannot be rehearsed in advance. strange place, strange cage, strange people and alone for hours. sounds uncomfortable for a dog.”

4.6 Interview results

In this research, it was considered useful to supplement the survey with interviews to explore the experiences of AVIH users more extensively, particularly by exploring the role of the pet as a co-customer. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via video calls using the Microsoft Teams application to gain a more in-depth understanding of AVIH users' experiences. Of the 113 survey respondents, 29 left their contact information for a potential interview. The author approached ten of the candidates and interviewed five of them. Of those interviewed, four had used AVIH or intended to do so and one had not used AVIH nor intended to do so.

The interviewees with experience of AVIH travel had two or more dogs with whom they had travelled by air. The interviewee without AVIH experience, owns an AVIH-sized dog. The author had prepared an agenda for the interview (Appendix 5), but by design aimed for as free a discussion as possible, using questions to frame the interview. Since the study sought to collect data on how owners feel and what they think about their AVIH transportation, narrative interviewing was an appropriate strategy to be used as stated by Billups (2021, p. 37). In this section, the author analyses the interviews using direct quotes translated into English from the interviewees' comments.

The group of four AVIH-using interviewees are experienced users of the AVIH service and also have plans or already booked new journeys using the same method to transport their pets. Three out of the four interviewees travelled with their dog either to a dog show or to various dog competitions such as agility. Only one of the four interviewees used this mode of transport on holiday or when visiting relatives. On the other hand, one of the four interviewees was clearly against travelling with a dog on holiday, saying it was unnecessary stress for the dog: "If there is a dog event I want a dog to go to, then I can fly with it, but I wouldn't fly for fun. It's not so much fun for the dog anyway." Another interviewee expressed that the potential failure of animal transportation would have a significant impact on the owner's subsequent choice of airline: "For me, the dogs are the life, so if the dog's travel would go badly because an airline's operation, then it would be me a showstopper then in the future that I would never fly with that airline again."

The main reason for not choosing the AVIH service given by the interviewee who had not used the service was the lack of clear information about the process and what happens to the dog before, during and after the flight: "I have too little information about that trip. I'm sure the dog will make it, but since the dog is so important to me, I'd rather take the other option."

None of the interviewees had experienced any container breakage, dog sickness or significant dog stress during the journey, but all of them had heard about the mishandling of containers that happened to other pet owners. Three interviewees with experience of AVIH travel said they were concerned about the welfare of their dog, while one interviewee who travelled regularly, felt that AVIH transport was a more convenient way for the dog to travel than, for example, PETC transport, which the interviewee also had experience of. However, all users of the AVIH service said that they would ask for confirmation, both at the gate and on board, that the dog has certainly been loaded on board, as the below comments show.

"I always ask when I get on the plane when I've already boarded and then when I walk onto the plane, I always ask the flight attendants if my dogs are with me."

"I asked them if there was a dog, and they said there was, but how was I to know if there was another dog on board. It would be better if the flight crew would tell me that even at seat 17b you can say that your dog is now on board and you are fine. It would be easier not to worry."

"I ask many times on the plane if there is now the black dog on board so that I really would leave the plane if my dog was not on board so I would not go anywhere."

Every interviewee felt that the airline should inform the passenger, for example by text message or even a photo message, when the animal has been loaded. This would help the passenger to relax during their journey and reduce the feeling of stress. It was hoped that the family member's trip would go well, and they were even prepared to pay extra for the confirmation of the loading.

“If you could just get, like confirmation maybe even with a picture that the stewardess shows you that your dog is now calm in the hold. It would not be an impossibility in this day and age, nor would it be rocket science.”

“It would bring some kind of credibility and an airline that started doing that would get such a wild score.”

“If there was something through a text message to get that OK your dog is loaded. It would be like very comforting information.”

“One could think from a business point of view, that the airlines could think about whether they could offer additional services, against a charge. I pay for the internet connection there and I pay other things there, so there could be like a 5 € fee that you get the text message.”

One of the interviewees gave an example of a simple but customer-friendly communication method used by Sixt car rental by sending a confirmation after the car has been returned in good condition. Similarly, an airline could use communication to alleviate owner concerns and increase customer satisfaction.

“Sixt car rental has a great confirmation message right after you return the car, in huge cat-sized letters, saying that this is the successful return of the car. And thank you thank you again our customer. It's like relaxing. You could get the same at the airport, that the animal is now here safe and loaded.”

Booking a trip was generally perceived as difficult and the prior information received was insufficient. With experience, pet owners had learned what to bring and how to act, but they felt that such an information package could be easily communicated proactively by the airline after each booking, as the quotes below show.

“When I book flights I can book ski boxes and bikes and all the special travel equipment, so why can the system not then show whether you can take the dog with you.”

“There should be some kind of information package, you don't know everything, even if you travel a lot. They leave you kind of alone to know it all.”

“If you were going for the first time, you would be pretty lost, because no one knows that, for example, I know that I always go to a different counter at the airport.”

“It would be good to have some kind of video, even if it's on an airline website, that shows how your dog or pet travels in the hold.”

“It annoys me a little that it has not been clearly expressed openly, that what are the real conditions from the dog's point of view, what is the noise level, what is the engine noise there, that such things would interest me so that I could decide a completely good mood.”

Airlines were perceived to be very unreliable in the face of change. In the worst cases, the pet owner had only been informed of the change of aircraft type or other reasons for cancellation at the airport. Hearing this, especially to someone with no experience of AVIH travel, created mistrust of the airline as a whole: “My friend was going with her dog, they were already at the airport. Then,

not the flight had been cancelled but the dog had been cancelled and it was already in the cage at the departure and so then, it has become even more stressful. I wouldn't trust the whole airline anymore.”

The way airlines and airports handle check-in was perceived as far better than the handover of the animal at the destination. Too often, the location of the handover is not known and there is a long wait. The pet was often left alone in its container in a place where it could have been picked up by anyone. While practices vary widely from airport to airport, none of the interviewees had been asked for proof of ownership at the time of picking up the pet. The absence of an ownership check when collecting a pet mirrors the practice of collecting baggage where no one checks who picks up which bag. However, this approach implies that a pet has a similar security value as a piece of luggage. These comments indicate that pet owners are looking for recognition that their pet has a very high (emotional) value and expect the airline to reflect this in their handover procedures and introduce an ownership check. The lack of security was clearly perceived as worrying and, as this insecure practice was known in advance from previous experience, increased the level of stress during the pet owner's journey.

“It's such a positive experience, if the people who receive the dog there are positive about it, that my dog is not handled as stuff but really as a living member of the family.”

“When you get on the ground to the destination, where + also the fact that you don't know where the dog comes from, that where they are unloaded, and then I many times go to some information desk or grab somebody by the sleeve, even a cleaner or whoever to ask where the dogs come from.”

“Sometimes it may have taken a really long time and there is no information about whether the dog is coming at the same time as the suitcases, or whether it comes earlier or later, and sometimes I have had to wait there for a really long time. It would be good to know where the dog is if it is loaded and when it will arrive. It would be much easier for me.”

“And then I've also noticed that no one has ever asked me for any papers to see if I can even take the dog from there if it's mine. I've been a bit afraid that someone would take my dog.”

One interviewee said to have seen a dog left waiting in a cold and windy place for a long time whilst the loading process and felt real fear for the interviewee's dog. Information about the different stages of the dog's journey would be necessary to ease the owner's journey and create a good customer experience. Many interviewees felt that airlines do not understand the potential business value of pet owners or how valuable and precious dogs are to their owners. Amongst the survey respondents and interviewees cost of travel was not raised as a major concern. On the contrary, customers appeared to pay more for better services.

“When you talk about horses, for example, it can be worth millions that go there, so it's a bit of a different scale. But then again maybe if you think of it as in volumes, so maybe dogs, however, are being transported more often.”

“Dogs have influenced my choice of airline and I would have not had so many trips if I didn't have them.”

“There could be a big potential for why it's worth investing in it, that the money doesn't come directly from travel, but it has such a big multiplier effect. There are dog owners or pet owners in all income levels, so even the most desirable customers, the business class types, have pets too and the word is spreading to them too. If a friend has had a great experience with an airline, it can also have a positive or negative influence on the choice.”

“I think that for a pet owner money is not the thing, as long as you feel good knowing that your dog is happy. The well-being is more important than the money.”

4.7 Summary of results

Table 4 summarises the answers to the main research question and related sub-questions obtained through the survey and interviews.

Table 4. Summary of survey and interview results

Main research question:
Can the AVIH product be improved to make it a more appealing experience for both the pet and the pet owner?
Yes. For the pet, the length of the separation from their owner as well as the time it is locked in the transport container could be reduced. For the pet owner, more information can be given prior the journey, during the booking and planning stage, as well as during travel. In addition, booking procedures could be simplified and impact of schedule changes better managed. Ownership verification should be introduced at the destination's collection point.
Sub-questions:
1. What are the concerns of potential customers who are considering transporting their pets by air?
Complicated booking process, concern for pet's health, uncertain about what happens during transportation and repetition of prior bad experiences with travel by air.
2. What are the reasons given for and against using air transportation?
For: Saves time and often lower cost, less effort and for the animal it is in the end less disruptive. Against: Concern for the well-being of the pet and flexibility of using own motor vehicle
3. Does the pet's journey experience impact the owner's own journey experience?
Yes. A stressed animal or damaged container will cause the owner to be concerned. Not knowing the conditions under which an animal will be transported is stressful in advance and therefore affects owner's travel experience even before the journey. In addition, if pet has been affected by travel previously, it will increase owner's anxiety during subsequent travel.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, the author discusses the results of her research, related practical suggestions and presents further research ideas. The author also reflects on her learning and self-evaluation through the thesis process as well as covering the reliability of the research.

5.1 Interpretation of results

The main objective of this thesis was to find, through the experiences and expectations of AVIH product users, an understanding of the current AVIH product offerings, focusing on international travel to and from Helsinki-Vantaa airport, comparing practices of four commonly used airlines. Furthermore, the study aimed to understand the current procedures and look for product improvements to enhance the experience of both the (human) customer and the transported animal. This section highlights the most significant findings related to the research question and related sub-questions.

The main research question for this thesis was to determine if the AVIH product could be improved to make it more attractive to customers. Feedback from the survey and interviews made it clear that the AVIH product could be much improved. Pets, which are increasingly perceived as equal members of the family, are more often taken along on holiday or to participate in hobbies and competitions and dog or cat shows. The aim is to provide a pleasant travel experience for the pet family member, which, if achieved, also enhances the owner's travel experience. Many pet owners who have used or are considering using the AVIH service would like to have more comprehensive information about the experience their pet will have during a trip by air. During the journey, they would also like to be aware of their pet's movements and be able to trust that their pet's welfare is being looked after. For example, when loading the pet onto the plane, they wanted the containers to be stable and the transit and waiting times to be as short as possible, especially given variable and possibly unfavourable weather conditions.

According to the pet owners who responded to the survey, the practices of AVIH service providers at different airports and between airlines sometimes varied considerably. In general, it was considered difficult to book a pet, as airlines had different lead-time limits for booking AVIH service, which means that when booking a flight, the passenger could not be sure that the pet would also be able to travel on the same flight. Problems had often arisen even before departure, for example, when an airline had changed the type of aircraft on a flight for which an AVIH service had been booked, making it difficult or even impossible for the passenger to travel as originally planned.

Although many pet owners found the AVIH service expensive, they were willing to pay even more for a better service for their pet and thus a better customer experience.

Many dog owners still planned to use the AVIH service, mostly to participate in a dog show or competition, but also to take their pets with them on holiday. However, concerns about the welfare of the pet and the lack of information about what happens to the pet during an AVIH journey and the conditions under which the animal travels in separation from its owner led many of those planning a journey to choose another way of travelling or not to travel at all. Those with experience of AVIH travel may have had first-hand bad experiences of how an animal's journey had failed, making them reluctant to make another trip in the same way. Among the pet owners who responded to the survey, there were experiences such as broken containers or pets left in their containers in cold or hot weather for a longer time. In addition to their own experiences, many had second-hand knowledge of negative experiences, from friends or through social media.

Travelling with a pet by air when travelling internationally was perceived as a time-saving and therefore efficient way for the owner to travel and participate in events or spend a holiday together with the whole family, including the pet. If the same journey was to be made by land, both the duration and cost of transport could be expected to be greater, compared to travel by air. On the other hand, when transporting a pet by air, the aim was to find the most direct and therefore quickest possible connections, thus minimising the time the animal has to spend in its container separated from its owner. It was also hoped that the pet would not have to be handed over too early at the beginning of the journey and that it would be returned to its owner more quickly at the destination.

Contrary to most pet experiences where the owner is not separated from the animal, the AVIH journey contains long periods of separation, combined with customers' lack of understanding of what the pet may be experiencing at any point in time during the journey. The stress and other negative emotions that this situation can trigger in the customer could be reduced by the airline by providing clear information on all the stages of the pet journey combined with regular updates on the status and well-being of the animal. This is seen as an increasingly important and therefore growing gap that airlines could help to fill by providing this information, both for the market in general and for those booking a trip in particular. Many pet owners would even be prepared to pay for additional ancillary products to be informed about their pet's status during AVIH transport. In general, the time that an animal is separated from its owner is very unclear in terms of the associated animal's movements, noise, temperatures and therefore the overall picture.

5.2 Key recommendations

Based on the above findings, in this section, the author summarises the recommendations for AVIH service improvements, specifically for airlines. This research was conducted independently, without a commissioner, so the suggestions are not specific to any airline but could be used generally to improve the AVIH customer experience for any airline. The study focused on travel with an AVIH to and from Finland, but similarly, the recommendations to improve the AVIH travel experience are not geographically bound but could apply anywhere in the world.

The first noteworthy point concerns a change to the fundamental approach towards the pet and the provision of AVIH services. Customers increasingly want their pets to be treated as a member of the family and feel strongly disappointed when their service expectations are not met. Airlines who take note of this and reflect this expectation in their service philosophy and framework will have more satisfied AVIH customers. Airlines should treat AVIH less as breathing baggage items and more as furry family members.

The second issue raised was the lack of information resulting in concern for the well-being of an AVIH animal. Airlines should provide more information to prospective customers describing the journey from the animal's perspective, creating an understanding of the journey through the eyes of an animal. Airlines should provide status messaging to customers during the journey, for example, confirmation that the animal is loaded in the hold. The author has also completed a course on Digital Experience Design at the same time as conducting this research study and as an assignment designed a digital brochure to explain what happens during AVIH travel. The digital brochure could be placed on the airline's website to provide general information about the AVIH pet journey, but it could also serve as a source of information for the pet owner who has booked a journey and is using the AVIH service to inform about the different stages of the journey by linking the status information of each stage of the journey with the digital brochure (Wala-Bruin, 2023).

Another important issue is to improve the reliability of AVIH bookings. The customer must be able to trust that the confirmed travel booking will be honoured by the airline and that he/she will be able to participate in the planned event with the dog. When making schedule or aircraft changes, the airline should take better account of accompanying AVIH passengers, understand the difficulties that flight changes can cause to the AVIH customer and inform them in good time.

Associated with the expectation that pets are treated more as family members, it is difficult to accept that there are generally no identity checks when an AVIH pet is collected at the destination.

The underlying concern expressed by respondents is the possibility that an unknown person could take their pet and disappear.

Lastly, it would be important and beneficial for airlines to ensure consistency of service across the network by informing and educating their staff on the practicalities and complexities of AVIH transport, such as the recommendations outlined above.

5.3 Reliability of the research

In designing the study, the author has sought a reliable and good way to explore the literature on the subject by looking at the relevant legal rules, different practices and issues affecting customer satisfaction with AVIH transportation. The aim has been to find out about the user experience in a truthful way, while preserving the anonymity of respondents, thus using ethical and scientific research methods. As stated by Arene (2019), both Finnish and EU legislation controls the processing of personal data and the privacy of research participants must be protected and taken into consideration in the thesis work. In addition, the study needs to follow good scientific practice and ethical guidelines by informing all participants of the purpose of the study and making appropriate references to other publications, thus avoiding plagiarism (Arene, 2019).

The author used mixed research methods to better understand the topic under study. The questions were prepared to take into account the experiences and opinions of different groups of respondents, based on whether they had previous experience with the AVIH service. The questions were comprehensively designed to elicit experiences and expectations from pet owners. The survey respected privacy, it was not possible to identify the respondent unless the respondent left their contact details for an interview. The responses to the survey are summaries of the research results and the free-form comments provided are included in the appendices to increase reliability and authenticity.

The reliability of the empirical material was increased by interviewing candidates who had volunteered through the questionnaire. The author designed an approach and drafted questions for the interview but used the questions only as a framework for the interview, aiming to collect narrative research data and thus enabling interviewees to describe situations and feelings in their own words. All interviewees were Finnish and the interview was conducted in Finnish using Team video calls to increase authenticity. The interviews were automatically transcribed, allowing the interviewer to focus on the interviewee's facial expressions and gestures in a semi-structured interview situation. The author translated the transcriptions into English following the spoken language style and compiled the comments into the research results in such a way that the identity

of the respondents is not revealed in any way. Personal data collection was minimized but what was collected, will only be kept until the research is published, after which transcriptions of the interviews and contact details volunteered by survey respondents will be destroyed.

In the analysis phase, the researcher has gone through the material collected and brought out the different aspects systematically and in detail. The analysis has taken into account both respondents with and without experience of the subject under study. From the transcripts of the interviews, the core of the interviews has been carefully extracted and used for further analysis of the research.

5.4 Future research proposals

Future research into the behaviour of people travelling with pets and its importance could include, for example, more detailed research on reasons for deciding against AVIH transportation. The study could also be specifically targeted at the operations of an airline and find ways to improve the practices of that airline.

Another area of research could concentrate on developing effective methods to better inform future AVIH customers on the animal's experience, by using, for example, a digital brochure. It would be highly desirable that more airlines would adopt the recommended way to increase awareness among those interested in AVIH travel and those using this service. Another similar topic for future research could then investigate the impact of knowledge enhancement on customer satisfaction.

International sporting events, including dog sports competitions, are attracting more and more participants. Many dog owners and their dogs travel to these events at the same time, making travel under the current restrictions quite challenging. Therefore, in terms of product design, one important area for future research could be options for developing a group travel concept for dog sports teams travelling to a competition.

5.5 Learning and self-evaluation

When designing the thesis, choosing the topic was the first big challenge. However, my interest and experience of travelling with dogs combined with my knowledge of air travel helped me identify this topic quite quickly. My interest in it has grown as the work has progressed. The courses I have taken during my studies and many assignments have helped me prepare for this larger and in many ways more demanding thesis. The start of the work was delayed, but I got up to speed in late January and finished writing it in mid-May 2023.

As the topic of the thesis is in many ways different from perhaps the most common topics in the study of air transport, it has been quite difficult to find information. My initial idea was to get a commissioner, perhaps the Finnish Kennel Club or the Finnish Agility Association, who might have an interest in researching the development of dog travel. Interest was eventually expressed by both associations, but this came too late for my schedule and thus it was not pursued. I decided to limit the topic to Helsinki Airport and the four airlines there from which I hoped to gain insight into their practices. Again, this information was relatively difficult to obtain and took longer than I had planned. The airport authorities did not want to share information, the airlines and ground handlers felt that the responsibility for providing information lay more with the airport authorities. After a painstaking search, I got my information related to practices at the Helsinki airport partly from airlines and from handling companies and found other material to launch my research.

While doing the literature review, I found a lot of interesting material and learned more and more about my topic. A surprising amount of time was spent on creating a suitable, compact survey, that elicits the required research data for further analysis. In addition to the thesis, I had one final course to complete in the spring 2023 programme, Digital Experience Design, and I decided to design a digital brochure specifically for the information problem, which I was aware of, and which also soon became apparent in the survey responses. It was interesting to simultaneously design some kind of solution to a problem that had emerged to a fairly large extent in the context of this research. I very much hope that an airline will start to develop a product of this type and thus distinguish itself by providing improved customer service for this target group.

My initial plan was to work with interview data only, but the decision to use mixed methods was very appropriate for this study and so to create a survey as well as use semi-structured interviews. I received help in distributing my survey, especially from the Finnish Agility Association, but I also used my own targeted social media channels to find users specifically from Finland or travelling to Finland with their pets. I found that I not only received a large number of responses to my questionnaire but also an appropriately broad age range of respondents. I was pleased that many of the respondents signed up to be interviewed, which sped up my research as I did not have to search for them separately. The analysis of the results proved to be much more meaningful than expected.

I had prepared for the thesis by completing all but one of the remaining courses before this semester, to allow me to use all of my study time specifically for the thesis. At times, I was really under pressure, because doing the thesis at the same time as the assignments, which proved to be very demanding, required more time and effort than I had available after starting a new job at

the same time as well. However, I scheduled each day, dividing my days and weeks between these tasks and strictly adhered to the deadlines I had set. It was a test of my ability to work and study, but it also helped me to be efficient and learn how to plan and implement a research project even under pressure.

Sources

Adams, W.C. (2015) 'Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews', *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation: Fourth Edition*, pp. 492–505. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.CH19>.

Arene (2019) *Ethical recommendations for thesis writing at universities of applied sciences*. Available at: https://www.arene.fi/wp-content/uploads/Raportit/2020/ETHICAL%20RECOMMENDATIONS%20FOR%20THESIS%20WRITING%20AT%20UNIVERSITIES%20OF%20APPLIED%20SCIENCES_2020.pdf?_t=1578480382 (Accessed: 7 May 2023).

Autio, J. *et al.* (2014) 'Consumer value journey with pet in multiple service touchpoints', p. 96. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33733336.pdf> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

Bedford, E. (2022) *Dog population in the EU 2021, by country*, Statista. Available at: <https://www-statista-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/statistics/414956/dog-population-european-union-eu-by-country/> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

Bhandari, P. (2020) *What Is Quantitative Research?*, Scribbr. Available at: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/quantitative-research/> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Bhandari, P. (2021) *Questionnaire Design | Methods, Question Types & Examples*, Scribbr. Available at: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/questionnaire/> (Accessed: 27 March 2023).

Billups, F.D. (2021) *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 : SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878699>.

Bleron (2019) *Dogs are Customers, Too: Brands with a Dog Customer Experience*, LiveHelpNow. Available at: https://livehelpnow.net/blog/brands-with-a-dog-customer-experience/?utm_source=youtube&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=JW (Accessed: 26 February 2023).

Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 577/2013 (2013). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R0577&from=EN> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Duncan, E. et al. (2016) *Customer experience: Creating value through transforming customer journeys*, McKinsey & Company. Available at: [https://www.mckinsey.com/~/_/media/mckinsey/industries/public %20and %20social %20sector/our %20insights/customer %20experience/creating %20value %20through %20transforming %20customer %20journeys.pdf](https://www.mckinsey.com/~/_/media/mckinsey/industries/public%20and%20social%20sector/our%20insights/customer%20experience/creating%20value%20through%20transforming%20customer%20journeys.pdf) (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

European Commission (no date) *Movement of pets*, European Commission. Available at: https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/movement-pets_en (Accessed: 19 February 2023).

European Commission REV5 (2020) 'NOTICE ON TRAVELLING BETWEEN THE EU AND THE UNITED KINGDOM AFTER THE END OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD'. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-12/travelling_en_3.pdf (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Federation Cynologique Internationale (2023) *Statistics: Europe*, Federation Cynologique Internationale. Available at: <https://www.fci.be/en/statistics/BySection.aspx?section=3> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

Finnair (2023a) *Pets on Finnair flights*, Finnair. Available at: <https://www.finnair.com/fi-en/pets-on-finnair-flights> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Finnair (2023b) *Travelling with an assistance dog*, Finnair. Available at: <https://www.finnair.com/fi-en/special-assistance-and-health/travelling-with-an-assistance-dog> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Finnish Food Authority (2022a) *Non-commercial movement*, Finnish Food Authority. Available at: <https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/en/themes/import-and-export/import/animals-and-animal-products/animals/dogs-cats-and-ferrets/non-commercial-movement/> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Finnish Food Authority (2022b) *Non-commercial movement of dogs, cats and ferrets from EU countries to Finland*, Finnish Food Authority. Available at: <https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/en/themes/import-and-export/eu-countries-norway-and-switzerland/animals/dogs-cats-and-ferrets/trade-of-dogs-cats-and-ferrets-from-eu-countries-to-finland-non-commercial-movement/> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Fleetwood, D. (2023) *Quantitative Research: What it is, Tips & Examples* | QuestionPro, QuestionPro. Available at: <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/quantitative-research/> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

George, T. (2021) *Mixed Methods Research*, Scribbr. Available at:

<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/mixed-methods-research/> (Accessed: 21 March 2023).

GOV.UK (2023) *Bringing your pet dog, cat or ferret to Great Britain*, GOV.UK. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/bring-pet-to-great-britain> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Heinonen, A. (2023) 'Passenger Service Operation Manager. Swissport Finland Oy. Interview.' Helsinki, 21 February.

Hermans, K. (2022) *What is customer experience? Definition, examples, strategies*, LogRocket Frontend Analytics. Available at: <https://blog.logrocket.com/product-management/what-is-customer-experience-definition-examples-strategies/#why-customer-experience-so-important> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

IATA - CEIV Live Animals (no date) IATA. Available at:

<https://www.iata.org/en/programs/cargo/live-animals/ceiv-animals/> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

IATA - Live Animals Regulations (LAR) (no date) IATA. Available at:

<https://www.iata.org/en/publications/store/live-animals-regulations/> (Accessed: 12 February 2023).

IATA - Mission & Vision (2023) IATA. Available at: <https://www.iata.org/en/about/mission/> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

'IATA Live Animal Acceptance Checklist' (2023) IATA [Preprint]. Available at:

<https://www.iata.org/contentassets/d7c512eb9a704ba2a8056e3186a31921/lar-49-en-acceptance-checklist.pdf> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

IATA Padis 18.2 (no date) *List of Service SSRs*, IATA. Available at:

<https://guides.developer.iata.org/archive/docs/list-of-service-ssrs> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (2023) *Flying with a dog or cat in the cabin or hold*, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. Available at: <https://www.klm.com/information/pets/reservation> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

'Live Animals Regulations' (2023) IATA, pp. 248–253. Available at:

<https://www.iata.org/contentassets/b0016da92c86449f850fe9560827bbea/pet-container-requirements.pdf> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Lufthansa (2023a) *Checklist for transporting animals as excess baggage in the cargo hold*. Available at: <https://www.lufthansa.com/content/dam/lh/documents/prepare-for-your-trip/baggage/travelling-with-animals/animals-excess-baggage/checkliste-tiere-im-frachtraum.pdf> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Lufthansa (2023b) *Transporting animals in the aircraft, Lufthansa*. Available at: <https://www.lufthansa.com/de/en/transporting-animals-as-excess-baggage> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Mariampolski, H. (2001) *What is qualitative research*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America : SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985529>.

McKinsey & Company (2022) *What is CX (Customer Experience)?, McKinsey & Company*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-cx> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

Molina-Azorin, J.F. (2016) *Mixed methods research: An opportunity to improve our studies and our research skills, European Journal of Management and Business Economics*. Available at: <https://www.elsevier.es/en-revista-european-journal-management-business-economics-487-pdf-S244484511630012X> (Accessed: 22 March 2023).

Norwegian (2023) *Matkustaminen lemmikkien kanssa, Norwegian*. Available at: <https://www.norwegian.com/fi/matkusta-kanssamme/matkatavarat/matkustaminen-lemmikkien-kanssa/> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Ojasalo, K., Moilanen, T. and Ritalahti, J. (2020) *Methods for Development Work New kind of competence in business operations*. Available at: [h Moodle.haaga-helia.fi/pluginfile.php/2558640/mod_resource/content/1/Research %20and %20Development %20methods %20- %20Ojasalo_Moilanen_Ritalahti_BOOK.pd](https://h Moodle.haaga-helia.fi/pluginfile.php/2558640/mod_resource/content/1/Research%20and%20Development%20methods%20-%20Ojasalo_Moilanen_Ritalahti_BOOK.pdf) (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Ornstein, M. (2013) *Designing a questionnaire*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom : SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913943>.

Pet Travel to Europe - What are the Requirements? (2023) *Pettravel.com*. Available at: <https://www.pettravel.com/0001209.cfm> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Pets that Travel (2022) *What is The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS)?*, *Pets that Travel*. Available at: <https://www.petsthattravel.com/pet-travel-scheme/> (Accessed: 19 February 2023).

Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. (2019) *The Experience Economy, With a New Preface by the Authors*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Polonsky, M. and Waller, D. (2021) *Designing and Managing a Research Project: A Business Student's Guide*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 : SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544316499>.

Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals and repealing Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 (2013). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R0576&from=FI> (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Ronkainen, K. (2023) 'Passenger service manager. Aviator Finland. Interview', 28 February.

Salmons, J. (2012) *Cases in Online Interview Research*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States : SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335155>.

Smolkovic, I., Fajfar, M. and Mlinaric, V. (2012) 'Attachment to Pets and Interpersonal Relationships', *Journal of European Psychology Students*, 3. Available at: <https://jeps.efpsa.org/articles/10.5334/jeps.aol> (Accessed: 27 February 2023).

Statistics Finland (2020) 'Households' consumption 2016', *Statistics Finland* [Preprint]. Available at: https://www.stat.fi/til/ktutk/2016/ktutk_2016_2020-04-20_en.pdf (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

Suomen Kennelliitto ry (2023) *Koiraharrastustoiminta elpyi koronavuosien jälkeen: Vuonna 2022 yli 373 000 näyttely-, koe- ja kilpailusuoritusta*, *Suomen Kennelliitto*. Available at: <https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/koiraharrastustoiminta-elpyi-koronavuosien-jalkeen-vuonna-2022-yli-373-000-nayttely--koe--ja-kilpailusuoritusta?publisherId=1744&releaseId=69965208> (Accessed: 21 February 2023).

Swain, J. (2017) *Designing Research in Education: Concepts and Methodologies*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP : SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529622775>.

Taylor-Powell, E. and Renner, M. (2003) 'Analyzing Qualitative Data', *Program Development and Evaluation, University of Wisconsin-Extension* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/G3658-12.pdf> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

The Harris Poll (2015) *More Than Ever, Pets are Members of the Family, The Harris Poll*. Available at: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-ever-pets-are-members-of-the-family-300114501.html> (Accessed: 26 February 2023).

The History of Pet Travel and Traveling with a Pet (2023) PetTravel.com. Available at: https://www.pettravel.com/history_pet_travel.cfm (Accessed: 19 February 2023).

Vänskä, A. (2014) 'New kids on the mall: babyfied dogs as fashionable co-consumers', *Young Consumers*, 15, pp. 263–272. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-10-2013-00400>.

Väyrynen, R. (2023) 'Training & Compliance Specialist. Ground Operations. Finnair Oyj. Interview.', 28 February.

Wala-Bruin, K. (2023) *Digital Experience Design assignment*. Available at: <https://youtu.be/Oz64rbysAFk> (Accessed: 11 May 2023).

Your Europe (2023) *EU rules on travelling with pets and other animals in the EU - Your Europe, Your Europe*. Available at: https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/carry/animal-plant/index_en.htm (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Appendices

Appendix 1. IATA Live Animal Acceptance Checklist

IATA Live Animal Acceptance Checklist

Air Waybill No.: Origin: Destination:
 Species/Animal Type: Container Requirement number:

Notes:

1. Prepare form in duplicate.
2. If goods are rejected, hand the original of this form to the Duty Officer and show the shipper's and agent's name below.
3. Never reject a shipment until all items have been checked.
4. If goods are accepted, attach the original of this form to the air waybill. The duplicate must be placed on the appropriate file.
5. Answer "not applicable" only where an "N/A" box is provided.
6. If any question is answered "NO", do not accept the shipment and give the duplicate copy of this form back to the shipper or agent together with the consignment.

	YES	NO*	N/A
General Acceptance			
1. Have advance arrangements/bookings been made with all the operator(s) participating in the carriage of the live animals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. When laboratory animals, such as monkeys, which may carry diseases, communicable to human are being shipped, has the operator(s) been advised in order to make the necessary arrangements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Have advance arrangements been made at the airport of destination, i.e. for quarantine and delivery?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. In the event of attendants accompanying the animal(s), have advance arrangements been made with all the operators concerned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the shipment comply with current regulations in force at transit stations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Where applicable, have operator/governmental exceptions been complied with?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air Waybill			
7. Are the live animals the only entries on the air waybill?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Are all flight numbers for which bookings are held for the entire routing indicated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Is the 24 hour emergency telephone number shown in the "Handling Information" box?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Is the quantity of animals in the consignment, as well as their common names, which must as far as possible correspond with that listed in the IATA Live Animals Regulations, shown in the "Nature and quantity of goods" box?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Are all relevant permits, including CITES where necessary, licences and certificates required for export, transshipment and import, securely attached to the air waybill and copies of those required affixed to the container?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shipper's Certificate			
12. Is it completed in full and in duplicate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Does the description and quantity of animals agree with the information on the air waybill?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. Is it signed by the shipper or their authorised agent? (Check that this is not an IATA cargo agent, consolidator, forwarder or indirect operator.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Clear Form

Print



Documentation

		YES	NO*	N/A
Container				
15.	Does it comply with the specific container requirement(s) as detailed in the IATA Live Animals Regulations?			
(a)	Is the size suitable for the particular type of animal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(b)	Does it provide for sufficient ventilation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(c)	Is the construction adequate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(d)	Does it contain adequate handholds/lifting devices to facilitate handling and to prevent the handler from coming into close proximity of the animal(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(e)	Is it leak and escape proof?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(f)	Is the container clean?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(g)	Does it contain sufficient absorbent material? (Check that this is not straw, as some countries prohibit the importation of straw.).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(h)	Does the container have suitable feeding/watering facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Labelling and Marking				
16.	Is the consignee's name, full address as per the air waybill, and a 24-hour contact phone number shown on each container?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17.	Is the correct number of "Live Animals" and "This Way Up" labels attached to each container?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18.	Has each "Live Animals" label been completed, i.e. reflecting the correct contents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19.	For live animals which can inflict a poisonous bite or sting, is the container marked in bold letters "POISONOUS"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	For Specific Pathogen Free (SPF) animals for laboratory use, are "Laboratory Animals" and "This Way Up" labels attached to each container?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	When the animal has been tranquillised, have details been affixed to the container, i.e. time given, type of sedation, dosage and estimated duration?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Feeding and Watering				
22.	If it is required that the animal(s) must be fed/watered en route, have arrangements been made by the shipper with the operator?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	Are feeding instruction affixed to the container and are supplies (if required) attached to the outer top side of the container?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	Has the shipper confirmed that food or bedding (if provided) for the animal(s) is in accordance with the regulations of the country(ies) of transit or importation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Checked by: Name (Block Letter)

Place: Signature:

Date: AT (STATION):

Time: SHIPPER/AGENT:

*** IF ANY QUESTION IS ANSWERED WITH "NO", DO NOT ACCEPT THE SHIPMENT AND GIVE THE DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS FORM BACK TO THE SHIPPER OR AGENT TOGETHER WITH THE CONSIGNMENT.**

Clear Form

Print

Appendix 2. Checklist for transporting animals as excess baggage in the cargo hold



Checklist for transporting animals as excess baggage in the cargo hold

1. Preparing for your journey

- You have made sure that taking your pet with you on your journey (outbound and return flight) as excess baggage in the air-conditioned cargo hold conforms to the current entry and exit regulations of all the countries concerned.
- Any necessary veterinary examinations or treatments (e.g. vaccinations, microchipping) have been completed in good time before your journey.
- You have asked your vet about any medication that may need to be administered to your pet during the journey.
- The official and veterinary documents required for your pet (e.g. pet passport) are ready.
- You have made sure that you can also transport your pet as excess baggage in the cargo hold on any other airlines involved in your journey.
- You have booked your flight and registered your pet for carriage as excess baggage in the cargo hold in good time (no later than 24 hours before departure) at your travel agency or via the Lufthansa Service Center and have received a corresponding booking confirmation.
- You have obtained a suitable transport container that meets the stated requirements for such containers.
- The transport container is lined with absorbent material (no newspaper, cardboard or straw!).
- Your pet is familiar with the transport container.
- To keep your pet calm, you have put, for example, a 'comfort blanket', an old item of your clothing or your pet's favourite toy in the transport container.
- You have a lead and a suitable harness (recommended) or a collar ready.

2. On the day of departure

- You must bring your pet in a suitable transport container to the check-in counter no later than two hours and no earlier than three hours before departure. In Frankfurt you should arrive at least 90 minutes (but no earlier than three hours) before departure at the check-in counter.
- Please present the following documents for your pet at the check-in counter:
 - your booking confirmation or passenger receipt
 - the official and veterinary documents for your pet (e.g. pet passport)
- You have your booking confirmation or passenger receipt in your carry-on baggage
- You will settle the costs for transporting your pet when checking in or at the Lufthansa counter.
- Your pet is not wearing a collar, lead, muzzle, harness or any items that could cause accidental strangulation.



- You have packed a collar and lead and any medication that needs to be administered to your pet in your carry-on baggage

3. On arrival

- At your destination airport, please ask the staff at baggage reclaim where you can collect your pet. At most airports this is at the reclaim for bulky and special baggage.

Appendix 3. Survey Pet transportation by air



Pet transportation by air

Olen ilmailualan liiketalouden opiskelija, ja kirjoitan opinnäytetyöni lemmikkieläinten kuljettamisesta lentoteitse Helsinki-Vantaan lentoasemalta, erityisesti koskien lemmikkejä, joita kuljetetaan lentokoneen matkatavaratilassa samalla lennolla eläimen omistajan tai ohjaajan kanssa. Tällaista eläinkuljetusta kutsutaan nimellä "Animal in Hold" tai lyhyemmin AVIH. AVIHina matkustava eläin kuljetetaan erityisessä lemmikkikuljetuslaatikossa ja se painaa yleensä yli kahdeksan kiloa.

Olen kiinnostunut sekä niiden ihmisten kokemuksista, jotka ovat käyttäneet AVIH-palvelua sekä myös niiden ihmisten kokemuksista, jotka ovat päättäneet olla käyttämättä AVIH-palvelua. Tämän tutkimuksen avulla toivon löytäväni keinoja parantaa lemmikin kanssa matkustamiskokemusta.

Kyselyyn vastaaminen kestää muutaman minuutin ja voit halutessasi pysyä nimettömänä. Tiedot hävitetään kyselyn analysoinnin jälkeen.

Pyydän sinua täyttämään tutkimuksen, jos lemmikin kanssa matkustaminen suuntautuu Suomeen tai Suomesta riippumatta siitä, matkustatko lentäen tai muulla liikennevälineellä yhdessä lemmikkisi kanssa.

Kiitos paljon jo etukäteen!

1. Minkätyyppisiä ja kuinka monta lemmikkieläintä sinulla on?

Koira

Lukumäärä _____

Kissa

Lukumäärä _____

2. Minkä ikäinen olet?

- < 21
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 60
- > 60

3. Oletko koskaan matkustanut lemmikkisi kanssa kansainvälisillä lentomatkoilla? *

- Kyllä
- En

4. Miksi et ole koskaan matkustanut lemmikkisi kanssa kansainvälisillä lentomatkoilla?

- Minulla ei ole ollut tarvetta matkustaa kansainvälisesti
- Suosin muita matkustustapoja
- En halunnut lentää
- Lentoja ei ollut saatavilla
- Se on liian kallista
- Olin huolissani lemmikkini hyvinvoinnista lennolla

Muu syy - mikä? _____

5. Matkustiko lemmikkisi lentokoneen matkatavaratilassa AVIH-kuljetuksena? *

- Kyllä
 Ei

6. Kuinka usein olet matkustanut lemmikkisi kanssa viimeisten 10 vuoden aikana?

7. Mitä lentoyhtiöitä olet käyttänyt matkustaessasi yhdessä AVIH-lemmikin kanssa?

- Finnair
 Lufthansa
 KLM
 Norwegian
 Muu - mikä? _____

8. Suositko erityisesti jotain lentoyhtiötä AVIH-matkustuksessa?

- Kyllä
 En

9. Mitä ja miksi?

10. Mikä oli matkasi pääsyy?

- Lomamatka
 Kilpailu tai näyttely
 Jalostustyö / astutusmatka
 Muutto toiseen maahan
 Muu syy - mikä? _____

11. Jos ajattelet viimeisintä matkakokemustasi AVIH-lemmikin kanssa, mitä mieltä olet seuraavasta väittämästä: "Olin hyvin tyytyväinen kokemukseeni AVIH-kuljetuksesta" ? *

- 5 = Täysin samaa mieltä
 4 = Jokseenkin samaa mieltä
 3 = Ei samaa eikä eri mieltä
 2 = Jokseenkin eri mieltä
 1 = Täysin eri mieltä

12. Miten lemmikkisi reagoi AVIH-matkaan? *

- Ei havaittavaa vaikutusta
 Hieman stressaantunut
 Hyvin stressaantunut

13. Aiotko matkustaa lemmikkisi kanssa kansainvälisellä matkalla seuraavien 12 kuukauden aikana? *

- Kyllä
 En

14. Mikä on pääasiallinen syy matkaasi?

- Lomamatka
 Kilpailu tai näyttely
 Jalostustyö / astutusmatka
 Muutto toiseen maahan
 Muu syy - mikä? _____

15. Jos aiot matkustaa lemmikkisi kanssa, aiotko matkustaa lentäen? *

- Kyllä
 En

16. Miksi et valitsisi lentokuljetusta?

- Lemmikin kuljetusmaksu on liian kallis
 Se on liian monimutkaista
 Olen huolissani lemmikkini hyvinvoinnista
 En tiedä, mitä lemmikilleni tapahtuu kuljetusprosessin aikana
 Minulla on ollut huonoja kokemuksia lentomatkustuksesta
 Muu syy - mikä? _____

17. Matkustaako lemmikkisi AVIH-kuljetuksena? *

- Kyllä
 Ei

18. Kun ajattelet tulevaa matkakokemustasi AVIH-lemmikin kanssa, mitä mieltä olet seuraavasta väittämästä: "Luotan siihen, että lemmikkini saa hyvän kokemuksen AVIH-matkasta" ? *

- 5 = Täysin samaa mieltä
 4 = Jokseenkin samaa mieltä
 3 = Ei samaa eikä eri mieltä

2 = Jokseenkin eri mieltä

1 = Täysin eri mieltä

19. Onko sinulla jotain erityiskokemuksia tai kommentoitavaa AVIH-kuljetukseen liittyen?

20. Olisin kiinnostunut kuulemaan lisää ajatuksiasi AVIH-kuljetuksista. Jos olet valmis osallistumaan lyhyeen haastatteluun videopuhelun kautta, jätäthän tietosi alle:

Nimi
 Puhelinnumero
 Sähköposti
 Asuinmaa



Pet transportation by air

I am an Aviation Business student writing my thesis on animal transportation by air from Helsinki airport, particularly animals carried in the aircraft's baggage compartment on the same flight as the owner or handler of the animal. This type of animal transportation is called "Animal in Hold" or AVIH. An animal travelling as AVIH is transported in a special pet container and is usually a pet weighing more than 8 kilos.

I am interested in understanding the experiences of people who have used AVIH services and of people who have decided not to use an AVIH service for international travel. With this research, I hope to develop ways to improve the experience of pets and their owners when travelling by air.

It takes a few minutes to complete the survey and you can choose to remain anonymous. The data will be deleted after analysis of the survey.

Please complete the survey only if you travel with a pet to or from Finland, regardless of whether by air or other means of transport.

Thank you for your help!

1. What type and number of pets do you have at home?

Dogs

Number _____

Cats

Number _____

2. How old are you?

- < 21 years
 21 - 30 years
 31 - 40 years
 41 - 50 years
 51 - 60 years
 > 60 years

3. Have you ever travelled internationally with your pet(s) by air? *

- Yes
 No

4. Why haven't you ever travelled internationally with your pet(s) by air?

- I didn't have a need to travel internationally
 I prefer other forms of transportation
 I didn't want to fly
 No flights available
 Too expensive
 I was concerned for the well-being of my pet
 Other _____

5. Did the animal travel in the hold as AVIH? *

Yes
 No

6. How many times have you travelled with a pet as AVIH during the last 10 years?

7. Which airlines have you used when travelling with your pet as AVIH?

Finnair
 Lufthansa
 KLM
 Norwegian
 Other

8. Do you have a preference for an airline?

Yes
 No

9. Which one and why?

10. What was the main purpose of your travel?

Holiday

Competition or show
 Breeding
 Move to another country
 Other

11. Thinking of your most recent travel experience using AVIH, how do you rate the following statement: "I was very satisfied with my experience using AVIH" ? *

5 = Completely agree
 4 = Somewhat agree
 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
 2 = Somewhat disagree
 1 = Completely disagree

12. How does your pet respond to the journey using AVIH? *

No noticeable effect
 Somewhat stressed
 Very stressed

13. Do you plan to travel internationally with your pet(s) in the next 12 months? *

Yes
 No

14. What would be the main purpose of your planned travel?

Holiday
 Competition or show
 Breeding
 Move to another country
 Other

15. For your planned travel with your pet, are you considering travelling by air? *

- Yes
 No

16. Why would you not choose to travel by air?

- The cost of pet transportation is too high
 It is too complicated
 I am concerned for the health of my pet
 I don't know what is going to happen to my pet during the transportation
 I have had bad experiences with travel by air
 Other _____

17. Will the animal travel in the hold as AVIH? *

- Yes
 No

18. Thinking of your future travel experience using AVIH, how do you rate the following statement: "I am confident that my pet will have a good experience travelling as AVIH" ? *

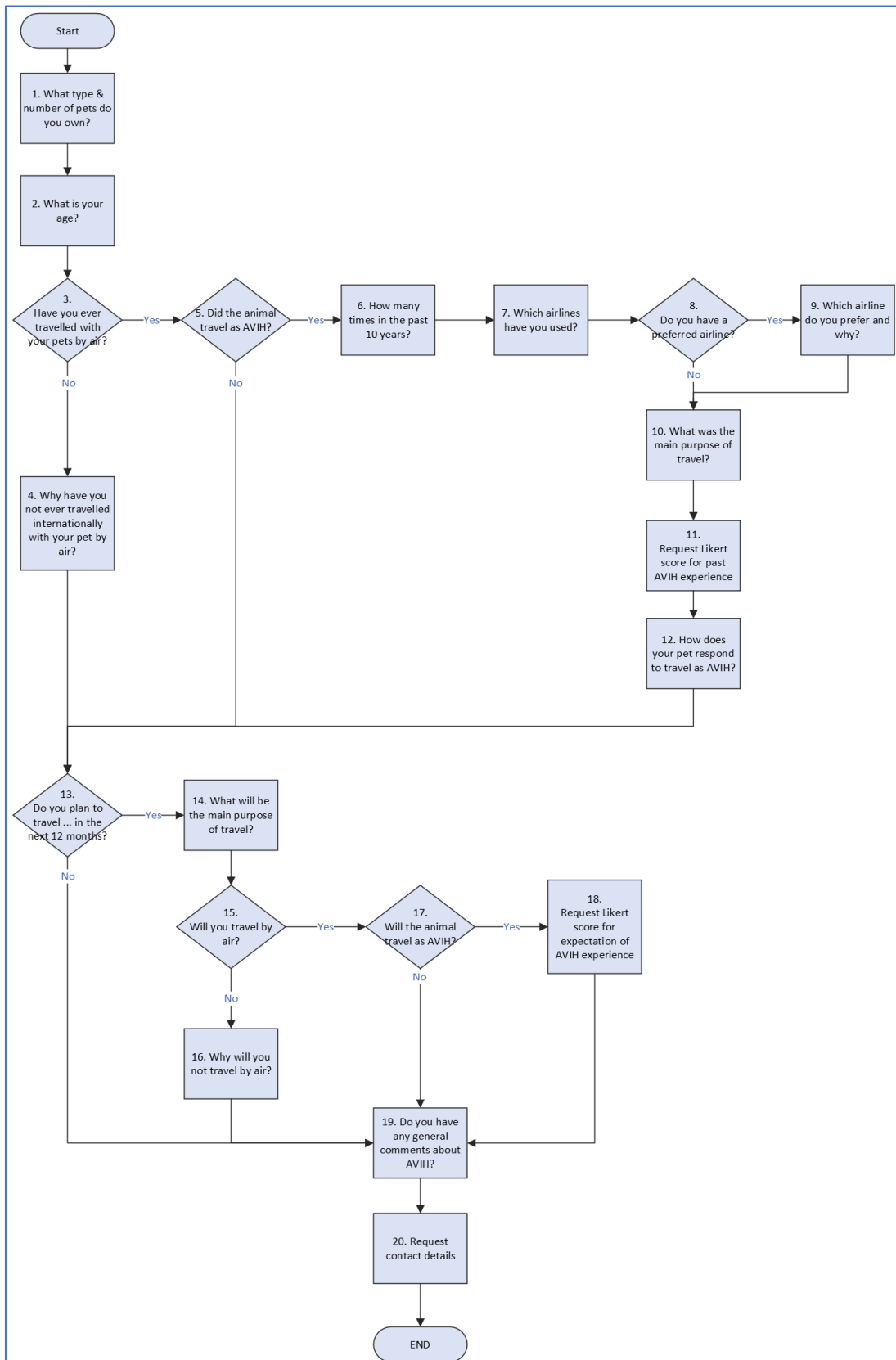
- 5 = Completely agree
 4 = Somewhat agree
 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
 2 = Somewhat disagree
 1 = Completely disagree

19. Do you have any general comments about AVIH transportation?

20. I would be interested to learn more about your thoughts on AVIH transportation. If you are prepared to participate in a short interview via a video call, please leave your details.

Name
 Mobile
 Email
 Country

Appendix 4. AVIH survey flowchart



Appendix 5. Interview topics and questions

Preliminary discussion
Review answers from the survey response with interviewee
Interviewee has used AVIH
1. Tell me about your reasons to fly and use AVIH
2. How did you prepare yourself and your pet for the trip?
3. How was the experience at Helsinki airport?
4. How was the experience at the destination airport?
5. How was your pet afterwards?
6. How did that make you feel?
7. What was done well?
8. What could have been done better?
9. Do you think that the costs are reasonable?
10. Would you use AVIH again?
11. How did you find out about how AVIH works. Did you use websites, talk to friends, speak to the airline?
12. Can you tell me in your own words what you think happens to your pet during AVIH?
13. What are the steps in the journey and who actually handles your pet?
14. Tell me about your best AVIH experience
15. Tell me about your worst AVIH experience
16. What advice would you give someone who wants to transport their pet as AVIH for the first time?
17. What do you think airlines do well?
18. What do you think airlines could do better?
Interviewee plans to use AVIH
19. Tell me about your reasons to fly and use AVIH
20. How did you find out about how AVIH works. Did you use websites, talk to friends, speak to the airline?
21. Can you tell me in your own words what you think happens to your pet during AVIH?
22. What are the steps in the journey and who actually handles your pet?
23. What are your concerns regarding transporting your pet by air?
24. What kind of information do you think is important to give before the journey?
25. What kind of information do you think is important to give during the journey?
26. Do you think that the costs are reasonable?
Interviewee has decided against using AVIH

27. Tell me about your reasons not to fly and use AVIH
28. Do you think that AVIH is a safe and responsible way to transport any pet?
29. If no, what do you think would be a safe and responsible way to transport a pet?
30. How did you find out about how AVIH works. Did you use websites, talk to friends, speak to the airline?
31. Can you tell me in your own words what you think happens to your pet during AVIH?
32. What are the steps in the journey and who actually handles your pet?

Appendix 6. General comments about AVIH transport

The below table lists direct quotes from respondents, translated from Finnish as such and categorized by the author as positive, negative and neutral.

Positive
Everything went well
Especially if the dog is of sound mind, then no problem
Stressful, eased when the hostess came to tell me the dog was on board and the temperature of the hold.
Fortunately, nothing negative has ever happened to me.
The smoother and easier it is to book a seat on a flight and the dog travels well, the more likely I would travel with that airline again.
On the last flight with the dog, the space heater (and apparently the whole plane's ventilation system, discovered when adjusting the space heater at the airport before departure) was broken and the plane was changed to another one. Those of us with dogs were kept well informed throughout, and after the changeover we were visited once again to confirm and explain that the dogs had been loaded onto the plane and that the ventilation and heating in the hold had been tested and was working. Despite the delayed departure and the extra adjustment, hassle and worry caused by the change of aircraft, it was handled excellently by the flight crew!
As a rule, it went well. Sometimes I had to wait a long time for the dogs.
Transport in the cabin with the puppy was easy and smooth, which I would do again. Carrying in the hold doesn't seem like an attractive idea.
At both Helsinki-Vantaa and Dusseldorf departures, I was asked to make sure that my dog was packed on the plane. In Helsinki I asked myself, in Dusseldorf I didn't even have to ask. This really made me feel a lot better about travelling with a dog.
Finnair is the best! My late dog travelled 2 times in the hold. My dog now is smaller than the last one and has a smaller head in the cabin. Already travelled once (on Lufthansa and Finnair) and next time in a month.

Negative
There is very little information about the conditions of AVIH, so I try to fly with my dog in the cabin with me.
As for breeding, it is quite impossible to make a reservation 2 days before the trip due to the bitch's progesterone levels (mating date). A longer travel time is often impossible due to employer, economics, etc.
Extra waiting at the airport on arrival is not nice.
Communication unclear in advance
The room is not for pets. There are no humane conditions and the poor animal has to travel alone and scared. The humans in the cabin are oval-shaped with concern for the animal's conditions. Not a nice way to travel for either of them
The staff at Helsinki Airport were incredibly meticulous and picky a few years ago. The Osl-Hel stopover went off without a hitch, the Hel-Osl stopover a week later was problematic and the dog was left at the airport because the staff claimed that the dog's fur hit the roof of the cage.
Usually the customer service staff were not able to advise on the different steps of the process beforehand, or took the animals in for transport, forgetting to ask us for the necessary information (whether it was because of the rush), so each time we owners have been interrogated around the field to take care of various forgotten things. The customer was always left with a slightly amateurish impression of the way things were handled.
At Vienna airport, the service was very rude when receiving pets.
There are big differences in airports and how travelling animals are treated. German airports are generally well run, Helsinki-Vantaa is a disaster. Reason why we don't let dogs fly to/from Finland.

Negative
<p>Booking your own and your dog's flight at the same time is not easy, it's easy to get your own, but you don't know if your dog will make it on the same flight.</p>
<p>The long waiting times both before and after the flight in the back of the airport were stressful for the dogs, I wish I could be with the dog as long as possible before the flight and get it back as quickly as possible.</p>
<p>Once at Helsinki-Vantaa the dog was outside waiting for loading in the wind and frost for almost an hour, this should not happen.</p>
<p>Sometimes the dog is delivered last, after the other luggage, which increases the time the dog spends in the cage.</p>
<p>Finnair has made access to the service more difficult than before, but still cheaper overall than Lufthansa. Lufthansa has easier access to service, but their service overall is worse and more expensive. Last time we used Lufthansa and the seat confirmation did not arrive in the promised time, when we called to check it turned out that the dog would not fit on the flight we wanted and it became an expensive adjustment. Without being proactive, the trip would have been cancelled. Lufthansa was chosen because Finnair changed their policy and you have to book a seat on a flight unreasonably early, which is not always possible if it is a mating trip and the dog does not have an exact running time.</p>
<p>Sometimes it has taken a really long time to get the dog after a flight. At other airports (not HEL) there have also been some confusion about where to bring the dog after the flight, and this has had to be clarified with several employees.</p>
<p>It was difficult to book a place for the dog, only the third time we managed (the person from the LH hotel had a reservation, but no confirmation). At the airport everything went well. On the plane the flight attendant confirmed the dog was in the hold without asking. On the return flight, the dog was seen in Helsinki waiting to be loaded onto the plane. Employees chatted with the dog, which made me feel better. Waiting in a booth next to the plane (heat and noise) is certainly not comfortable for the dog. Personally, the whole flight experience stressed me out so much that I would not fly with a dog unless I had to. I wonder why there is no info on how the whole thing works. E.g. youtube video of what happens after you have given up your dog at the airport. Where it waits, how to load it and what it looks like in the hold. A journey through the eyes of a dog. Many people don't even know that there is no frost in the hold</p>
<p>I didn't want to put my dog on an AVIH transport because I think he would panic if he had to fly separately from us.</p>
<p>A 27kg Labrador is put in a situation that cannot be rehearsed in advance. strange place, strange cage, strange people and alone for hours. sounds uncomfortable for a dog</p>
<p>My friend's dog came from Finland to Germany in a hold, I was there as an interpreter and we had to wait for ages before we got a box from some hall xy. It was such a nerve-wracking experience that I never want to go through something like that with my own dog.</p>
<p>Flight Ålesund-Oslo-Helsinki. They managed to loose my dog at Oslo airport. No one knew where the dog was for an hour. I myself arrived at the domestic flight lounge, but my dog had been taken to the baggage carousel for international flights. I will never take my dog abroad in a hold again.</p>
<p>On our last holiday from Germany to Finland, our flight was really late, I was away from my dog for about 12 hours in total between check-in and landing. That's a very long time and it would have been important to have had access to the dog during the waiting time. I went to check on my dog during the waiting time and was told, thankfully, that the dog had been offered water and seemed quite calm. That calmed my mind somewhat. After landing, when I got my dog to me, the dog was somewhat stressed and suffering from diarrhea (stress related).</p>
<p>On the previous trip, the dog had been given kibble in the box and the obligatory water bowl had become loose/lost. Clips had also come loose from the box.</p>
<p>A friend of mine is a former airline captain, he has told me that the cargo does not have time to warm up to a comfortable temperature before take-off and that he would not fly his own animals for that reason. It is also my own experience that the welfare of animals is not taken into account. In addition, it should be possible to book tickets for dogs at short notice and not several weeks in advance (e.g. mating trips).</p>
<p>I was really stressed about my dog. It would have been a lot more pleasant to travel with 12 pounds of dog on my lap. I was so scared for my dog that I finally decided that he would stay with my parents in Finland.</p>
<p>it was a real hassle when you couldn't get your pet's seat at the same time as your own plane ticket but had to fiddle with tickets and wait up to two weeks for a seat in the hold to be confirmed.</p>
<p>I think staff should be more willing to tell the customer when the dog is on board and that the lights and heat are on in the hold.</p>

Negative
The definition of a carry-on bag (must fit under the chair of the passenger in front) is not clear and varies from airline to airline, with problems caused by transfers from different airlines. I had a bad experience with Finnair, who insisted that the dog must be in a cage under the chair for the whole flight - when otherwise the bag rule is only for take-offs and landings. That was a real bummer when the puppy was 8 weeks old.
The long break between flights makes me prefer other ways to travel
I have heard of a few experiences where a dog has ended up on the wrong flight during a transfer and/or has run away. Also a couple of cases where the dog has clearly been afraid of things after the flight that it wasn't afraid of before, like men or voices. I have lived in several different countries and would love to fly with my dogs, but I no longer trust them to be handled properly in transfer situations.
After one trip, the transport box was cracked from the bottom, so it had been roughly handled. After that I became afraid to fly my pet and preferred to travel by car.
The current booking procedures seem very cumbersome, you would have to book your dog at the same time as you book your ticket, especially for races where there are several dogs flying at the same time and they are all aiming for the same seats. Also, changing aircraft types on the flight does not create confidence, you cannot go to a race and then find out at the airport or shortly before the flight that you are not going to make it. You would not treat any other competitive athlete that way .So in the future, I definitely prefer driving, even though it takes a lot more time.
I tried to figure this out and felt I couldn't be sure that my pet would be safe and well throughout the journey. I wish that the time outside the flight could be shorter when you leave your pet on the flight, or that there could be flights that specifically have pets on them and have a person who can check on the pets during the trip.
I avoid travelling by air with my dog because my adult dogs can't get into the cabin due to their size. I find the body experience uncomfortable for the pet.
I wouldn't want to have to fly my 15kg dogs as AVIH anymore. I'd rather drive to Paris, for example. 😊 Smaller dog in mind as an option sometime in the future just to get in the cabin.
On two out of four occasions, the dog's transport box has broken in the hold during the journey. On the first occasion, there was a hole in the corner and the transport crate was upside down when retrieved. On the second occasion the crate had a small crack in the bottom corner.
Every airport is different. Handing over a dog and redeeming it out of the hold is always its own mess.
1. It should be possible to transport larger pets in the cabin. The cabin is a much less stressful place for dogs and space could be made available by removing a few chairs (if you want to tie the dog to the flight box) or by having the dog travel at the owner's feet. There are also seat belts for dogs. Some small dogs that can fit in the footwell weigh more than 8 kg so raising the weight limit for pets under the seat could be considered. 2. In addition, changing flight policies should be changed in situations where unexpected situations put the dog's health at risk. My own dog almost got heat stroke once, in a situation where the first flight was an hour late, the connecting aircraft was broken and the dog was kept on the ground for an hour in what must have been 40-50C (an exceptionally warm May 2018). I would have liked to abort the trip and take my dog out of the plane but that wasn't possible as I was standing in the airport bus the whole time adjusting. At least it should have been possible to check the condition of the dog and add water. The dog was not taken to the cool room even though the changeover was supposed to take two hours if everything had gone as planned. I will no longer fly on transfer flights.
3. The skills of the call centre staff in dog booking need to be improved. 70 % of the call centre staff give wrong information and do not understand Finnair's procedures, although as an experienced customer I have tried to advise them in a friendly way. I have been told by an experienced customer service agent that the contradictory information is due to a lack of training which has led to new customer service agents misunderstanding things. My guess is that because of the poor working atmosphere they are afraid to clarify the issue and therefore it is easier to call finnair again if there is a customer service agent on the phone who is clearly inexperienced in pet issues (booking confirmations, payment procedures, aircraft holds, etc.). This has only been a problem for the last couple of years, as in the past the customer service agents were knowledgeable and the service was smooth.
The dog is not in the luggage, I was told that there is a separate space under the cab where the cage is put, that's where the lights are. Often people think that the dogs are thrown in where the market bags are. The challenge I see is the transitions to the aircraft, my own dog was left next to the plane in the heat (+35c) luckily I saw the incident and got the ground officer to call the loading side.
The dog's flight box was treated quite bouncy when transferred to the plane. At Helsinki airport, the staff treated the dog nicely at security. At Frankfurt airport, on the other hand, dog-handling skills were lacking, even though the

Negative
intention was good. On arrival in Frankfurt, the dog in its flight box was left alone at the special baggage pick-up point before I could get there myself.
There are often "complications" with the dimensions of the boxes. Different airlines have different requirements and some can't get a cage big enough to fit in the hold.
I find AVIH so expensive and inconvenient that I prefer to choose a car if at all possible.
Getting the dog after the flights was a bit insecure. On some airlines, the dog was thrown next to the luggage straps in the box. On Finnair, I got the dog from behind the locks.
On returning home (Helsinki-Vantaa), the dogs were left unattended in their boxes in the public area by the staff and were peeked at by strangers before we arrived, although we naturally went to collect them as soon as we saw them being brought in. I would have wished that when we asked we had been told where the dogs were coming from so that we could have gone to the right place to pick them up.
We prefer to go by car (even if it takes several days instead of half a day) when we know that the dog is not alone and is not panicking (alone in hot/cold weather, dogs howling/barking next to us, no water, how the air pressure affects the ears, etc).
The dimensions of the boxes caused confusion at the German end, even though the same boxes had been used to successfully fly a return flight. On the ground, one of the passengers was about to be disqualified from the trip when her dog's ears touched the ceiling while standing, even though the dog could turn around and lie in the box in a relaxed position. In Finland the same boxes were ok. I have heard similar things from other people who have made trips for work (pet supply store clerk).
Airline rules differ quite a lot.
There has been room for improvement in the return of pets at several airports. Sometimes a dog has just been left alone in a corner of the baggage hall, and I couldn't even find it. Rarely does anyone check who takes the dog.
One unpleasant experience was at Helsinki Airport on a very hot day. The plane was late and the dogs' cages were left on the tarmac in the blazing sun. So we just tried to see movement in the cages and hoped for the best. After all, there is not much water in the cups of the cages.
I would like to see an improvement abroad on how to get the dog after the flight. In Holland and Italy, the dog and its box were just left in a place where no one was watching to see who would pick it up. In Holland it was left in the lift... On the Finnish end, the dog is behind a locked door where you can get it by asking, which is fine.
Booking flights for dog is challenging. I usually book about a year before my trip, and flights are cancelled and changed, and my dogs are not necessarily accommodated. I usually fly to big shows, when there are a lot of flying dogs. Travel time gets longer and more expensive because you have to find a flight that can accommodate the dogs. I may have up to 3 dogs with me. 2 in the hold 1 in the cabin.

Neutral
It takes too much explaining. We called both Finnair Customer Service and Finnair Cargo. Different information on the same issue. Fortunately, no problems at either end of the airport (empty box Helsinki-Budapest and dog in box Budapest-Helsinki)
no, just an idea of how different rules are applied by different companies.
I always ask for confirmation from the captain, via the cabin crew, that the type of aircraft being flown is suitable for transporting a pet in the hold. I also want confirmation that the pet has been loaded on board. Sometimes the type of aircraft has been changed to another type and the pet could not be carried on that type (the dog was already being loaded on the aircraft) and my friend's dog was missed on one occasion.
If transport cages could be rented from airports, it would make it easier to get to and from the airport, as you wouldn't have to carry a big cage.
I have received good service from the staff. I think the biggest problem and stressor for my dog is the unfamiliar place (plane, airport) and the strange, loud noises around. On short flights I take my dog (9kg) in the cabin, but on longer flights it gets cramped being in the bag and the dog travels in the hold.

Neutral
<p>I have heard a lot of bad experiences about travelling in a hold. Many dogs have been traumatised by it. I think the weight limit for dogs in a carrier bag in the cabin could be raised (my own 8.3kg dog flew very happily in a carrier bag under the seat on Airberlin when the airline weight limit is 10kg). Taking larger dogs into the cabin should be considered. I would be prepared to pay for an extra seat for one person, for example, if a dog could get into the cabin. Nowadays, dogs are an important member of the human family and people want to treat them as such.</p>
<p>I travelled by plane with the puppy because he was allowed to come into the cabin.</p>
<p>Getting a dog and a crate from the plane is always different at every airport. Sometimes the dog has been with the luggage on a leash, sometimes brought in separately - or left somewhere in the hold where you have to understand to ask at a gate to bring the dog to its owner. Depends on the country of destination - always as exciting and you have to try to keep all options in mind. As well as how to get the dog onto the plane. There are a surprising number of variations.</p>
<p>Booking is tricky, as you have to book the flight and then the dog place. It would be great if you could do it directly when you book your flight.</p>
<p>In particular, making more information available would have helped. The possibility to book a place at your own venue would be helpful.</p>
<p>I would welcome detailed information on the airlines' websites about the conditions of AVIH transport (temperature, lighting, noise, strong odours) between the departure and arrival gates and during that time about all the methods used to move the animal.</p>
<p>The idea of putting a dog in your luggage feels unpleasant. You can't control how the transport box is handled and if the dog is okay. This was one of the reasons why, when picking up an imported puppy, I wanted to go quite early to make sure that the puppy would still fit into a suitable transport crate in the cabin.</p>
<p>I "prepared" my dog for agility by developing an "airport simulator" in advance of a known foreign competition. The dog was first habituated to the flying box at home. Later, we moved the flying box to the platform of the ATV, where the dog was first recruited in a leisurely drive, with the hatch open and an assistant with him. Later, the assistant stayed away from the platform and I also drove uneven stretches on the ATV from time to time while hiring the dog. The dog and the box were also lifted on and off the ATV, always hired. The most stressful thing for the dog is handling and moving the box at the airport, rather than the flight itself. My dog adapted really well to the flights with this little training. The return after the flight was quick because I asked the dog to go back to the box after a short walk and he was happy to do so. This "airport simulator" was also the subject of an article in the agility magazine "Putke".</p>
<p>Large differences in airport practices. The dog was very stressed on arrival in Malaga (the cage came with a luggage strap), but on return to Finland he was fine (picked up from a separate room).</p>
<p>The dog's box should be lifted by two people, so that the dog is not frightened by the movement.</p>
<p>The weight limit for a dog in the cabin could be 10kg and stop fiddling with the height of the box in the cabin - when the box is compliant you always have to push it together to fit under the seat. This would allow all but a few giant breeds to fly in the cabin and avoid the extra stress.</p>
<p>Once, when I had to leave my late dog in the hold, there was a really long queue, including families and passengers with various problems. I got to Vantaa airport well in time 2 hours before the flight but the queue lasted over an hour and no one wanted to help me even though I had informed everyone that the flight was leaving and I had to leave my dog. When I was in the 2nd seat queue the clerk finally helped me, the dog got checked and I literally had to run to get on the plane. From the window I saw that my dog got on at the very last minute and luckily it went well. Then there would be funny stories about the return trip from Italy... otherwise everything is ok. Now that my dog is smaller and can get into the cabin it is much easier. In the future if I got a 2nd dog I would put both in the same cage for AVIH transport.</p>
<p>I'd buy a whole row for me and my dog if I could get it in the cabin. In 2023 and dogs are the new kids, this would be a niche market for any airline - we'd have flown over 20 times in the last year alone if the dog wasn't treated like an object and forced into the hold. It can't be allergies, as small dogs are allowed to fly in the cabin anyway, nor safety -> there are seatbelts for dogs and if people are worried about safety, make people travelling with a dog buy a whole row or use a muzzle.</p>
<p>I would like to see travel prices made suitable for normal families. At the moment travel is very expensive for pets (especially if you have to change planes, then it's double the price), which also increases the risk of abandonment in some cases. For me, it is easy to miss trips these days because of the prices. I wish it was possible for pets to travel in the cabin, for example a limit of max 30kg, this would reduce stress for animals when travelling with owners.</p>

Neutral
I myself have only flown short trips (only between Stockholm and Helsinki), I wouldn't take a pet with me on longer trips, and these trips were also during my studies, for example because of winter and summer holidays.
I usually fly to big shows, when there are a lot of flying dogs. Travel time gets longer and more expensive because you have to find a flight that can accommodate the dogs. I may have up to 3 dogs with me. 2 in the hold 1 in the cabin.
I wonder for example about the temperature (hairless dog), how noisy it is, etc... whether he gets stressed by the sounds of other animals.
The check-in process could be improved to make it smoother and help you to hold your dog during it, especially if you are travelling alone. At the airport and on the flight, everything went very well and passengers and staff were positive about the pet. The dog had been accustomed to the carrier bag beforehand on previous train journeys and slept happily during
Since most dogs cannot travel by AVIH and the flying pollutes the climate, I would love to hear information and tips on travelling by train with a dog abroad.