Study 1: Semi-Structured Interview

Pet owners and how they choose vet care

Background
According to my research, 65% of households in the United States own a pet, which equates to approximately 85 million families that own a pet. Out of those pet owners, 67% of dog owners and 41% of cat owners took their pet to receive vet care between 2017 and 2018. I am interested in creating an app for adults that own pets, or will own pets in the future, and are looking for vet care in their area. There are plenty of pet owners, myself included, that will move to a new state or city and have to find a new vet for their companion; this app is geared towards making that a simple process.

Research Goal
I want to learn what the key factors are when adult pet owners are choosing vet care, which would include why those key factors are important. I want to determine what criteria there is for choosing a location for vet care and how my app could assist with making that decision process easiest for the user.

Research Questions
1. What takes priority when choosing where to receive vet care?
2. How has a vet care location been chosen in the past?
3. Are pets in the household currently receiving vet care from a particular location?
4. Does the demeaner of the veterinarian that provides vet care matter?
5. Do users need an app for choosing a place for vet care?
6. What current struggles exist or previously existed when looking for vet care?

Method

- 15-minute video semi-structured interview to gather in-depth qualitative data

- A follow-up digital survey will be given to participants to provide any crucial information that may not have been mentioned during the video interview.

- An interview script will be used as a guide and additional probing questions will be asked based on the user response.

Recruiting

- 8 participants

- Adult pet-owners
    - Currently own pets and care about vet care
    - Owned pets in the past and previously used vet care
    - Looking to own a pet in the near future and will need vet care for a new pet

- Participants will be recruited from a pool of friends and family members.

- Screening questions will not be conducted based on established relationships with the participants.

Script

Introduction
My name is Ciara. Thank you very much for participating in this study. I am currently working on a project related to vet care for pet owners. I would love to learn more about your experience with finding vet care [or your plan for finding vet care for future pet owners]. This interview will take approximately 15 minutes. If at any point during the session you need to leave or you need a break, please do not hesitate to let me know. Are there any questions before we start?

Do you mind if I record this session for note-taking purposes? The recording won't be shared with anyone outside of our team.

Warm-up Questions
1. Do you currently own any pets?
2. What types of pets do you currently own?
3. Have you ever taken a pet to a vet?

Questions
1. In the past year, how many times did you use vet care?
   [Figuring out how necessary our app would be for the user.]
   - Were the times you needed vet care for routine reasons, like vaccines?
   - Did you go to the same vet care location each time?

2. When initially searching for a vet care location did you search online, ask a friend or use another route? *[Figuring out how many users are turning to a search engine to find vet care.]*

   - What terms did you use to search for a vet care location?
   - Did you click on results that were close to you or that had better reviews?
   - Did you look at the photos for the vet care location results?

3. When was the last time you took your pet(s) to the vet?
   [Finding out how recent their last vet care experience was.]

   - Could you walk me through the process you went through to book your last vet care appointment? [Finding out the steps the user went through to find a vet and book care.]

- Depending on the process – Was the initial appointment that you wanted available?

- Did you receive a confirmation of any kind after you booked your appointment?

- Was the process simple overall?

- Is there anything you think could make the process easier?

4. Could you walk me through the process you went through to book your last vet care appointment? [Finding out the steps the user went through to find a vet and book care.]
    - Depending on the process – Was the initial appointment that you wanted available?

    - Did you receive a confirmation of any kind after you booked your appointment?

    - Was the process simple overall?

    - Is there anything you think could make the process easier?

5. When choosing your last vet care location, did reviews from other pet owners matter to you? *[Seeing if reviews of other pet owners would need to be included in the app for the location results.]*
    - What did you look for in those reviews?

    - Did you move on to other search results if a location had 1 star reviews?

    - Is there anything in particular that you remember from a review that made you feel more comfortable with choosing that location?

6. If yes, why do other pet owner reviews matter to you? *[Figuring out why the experiences of other pet owners play a part in the decision for choosing a vet care location.]*

- Even though you don't know the people that leave the reviews personally, do you have more confidence in your choice based on those reviews?

7. Does the distance to the vet care location matter to you? *[Finding out if having results shown by distance would be important for the user.]*

- Does your pet get stressed in the car?
- How far is your current vet care location?

8. Would you be willing to travel further for a vet care location that had better reviews by pet owners? *[Figuring out just how important distance is for the user.]*

- How far would you be willing to travel to a vet care location?
- Do you usually book vet care appointments on the weekends or during the week?
- If booked during the week – Do you book appointments after the work day or during?

9. Was your last vet care experience positive or negative? *[Trying to find out reasons why a user wouldn't like a certain vet care location.]*

- If positive – Would you recommend your vet care location to family and friends?
- If negative – Would you tell your family and friends not to go to that location?
- Would you leave a review for that location to warn other pet owners? *[Does the design need to offer a way to leave reviews for locations?]*

10. If last experience was positive, what factors made it positive? If last experience was negative, what factors made it negative? [Figuring out what factors of a vet care location are important to the user.]

11. Do you use the same vet care location every time or do you go to a vet care location based on appointment availability? [Finding out how often the user may use the app.]

- If your usual vet care location did not have an available appointment for weeks, would you be willing to look at other locations?

- Does your vet care location offer emergency care? If not, how would you find an emergency vet care location?

Wrap-up

Thank you so much for sharing your experience and insights. Your answers will help our team build a better product. If you have any additional thoughts and comments, I would love to hear about them at any time. I can be reached at fischer9212@gmail.com. Hope you have a wonderful day.

Study 2: Survey

What Factors Matter Most When Choosing a Vet Care Location

Background
In my previous study, I learned that pet owners found their vet care location online when they were initially searching and that the reviews of other pet owners played a key role in deciding on a location. That specific information provides an opportunity that I can target with my product, but more data is needed to gain a better understanding of the larger population of pet owners.

Research Goal
This study focuses on finding out what characteristics matter most to pet owners when choosing a vet care location, like distance from their home, ease of scheduling appointments, reviews, etc.

Research Questions
How can a digital app best support pet owners in finding and choosing a vet care location?
- What features/functions would be helpful?

Method & Recruiting
- Use a survey to collect data from at least 30 pet owners
- Test survey questions with 5 volunteers recruited from design colleagues that I know
- Send survey to a set of family and friends that are current pet owners

Survey Questions
Questions
1. How many pets do you currently own? [People with multiple pets may have different priorities when choosing a vet care location.]

Survey Questions

Questions

1. How many pets do you currently own? *[People with multiple pets may have different priorities when choosing a vet care location.]*
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5+

2. What kind of pet(s) do you own? *[Does the type of pet change how pet owners view vet care?.]*
   a. Dog(s)
   b. Cat(s)
   c. Bird(s)
   d. Reptile(s)
   e. Other (Specify____)
   f. Multiple Types (Specify_____)

3. In the past year, how many times did you search for a vet care location? *[Finding out how often pet owners switch their vet care location.]*
   a. 0 Times– Have used the same vet care location for over a year
   b. 1 time
   c. 2 times
   d. 3 or more times

4. When searching for a vet care location, did the hours of operation play a role in your decision? *[Seeing how many users need vet care locations with weekend or evening hours.]*
   a. Yes – I needed a location that was open on weekends
   b. Yes – I needed a location that was open after 5 PM on weekdays
   c. No – No hours of operation didn't play a role in choosing a vet care location

5. How far away is your current vet care location from where you live? *[Do a majority of pet owners prefer locations closer to their home?]*
   a. Less than 5 miles
   b. 5-10 miles
   c. 11-15 miles
   d. 16-20 miles
   e. Over 20 miles

6. In regards to reviews,, how many stars do you prefer a vet care location has out of 5? *[Will pet owners choose vet care locations with low star reviews for convenience?]*
   a. 5 Stars
   b. 4 Stars
   c. 3 Stars
   d. 2 Stars
   e. 1 Star
   f. Reviews of a location don't matter to me

7. If your usual vet care location doesn't have an open appointment for several weeks, would you book their earliest appointment or search for another vet care location? *[Are pet owners willing to try a different vet care location based on appointment availability?]*

   ❑ Book earliest appointment with current vet
   ❑ Look for another vet care location with a sooner appointment

8. How important is it that a vet care location offers pet insurance options? [Is pet insurance a common need when searching for a vet care location?]
   a. Very Important
   b. Somewhat Important
   c. Neutral – Would like the option, but not critical
   d. Somewhat not important
   e. Not important

9. When looking for a vet care location, do they have to have an option for emergency care? *[Is emergency care a required option for pet owners when choosing a vet care location?]*

   a. Yes, vet care location must offer emergency care
   b. No, vet care location does not have to offer emergency care

10. How important is the attitude of the vet and their staff when deciding if you will return to a vet care location? *[Does the attitude of the staff at a vet care location matter to pet owners?]*

    a. Very Important
    b. Somewhat Important
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat not important
    e. Not important

Demographic Questions

11. How long have you been a pet owner? *[New pet owners may have higher concern for characteristics of a vet care location than those that have owned pets for years.]*
    a. Less than 6 months
    b. 6-12 months
    c. 1-3 years
    d. 4-6 years
    e. 7-9 years
    f. 10 or more years

12. What is your age? *[People in different age groups may have different preferences when choosing a vet care location.]*
    a. Under 18
    b. 18-25
    c. 26-35
    d. 36-50
    e. 51-65
    f. Over 65

13. Do you live in an urban, suburban or rural area? [Depending on the area that pet owners live in, their needs in a vet care location may vary.]

   a. Urban (Areas of high population that is both for living and working purposes)

   b. Suburban (Larger population than rural areas, but typically outlying from a larger city)

   c. Rural (Referred to as open and spread-out country)

Citation for Initial Statistics in Background:

Bir, Courtney et al. "Familiarity and Use of Veterinary Services by US Resident Dog and Cat Owners." Animals : an open access journal from MDPI vol. 10,3 483. 13 Mar. 2020, doi:10.3390/ani10030483

Miller, Ceila et al. "Pet Ownership Statistics." Spots: https://spots.com/pet-ownership-statistics/, 13 Mar. 2021.