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Beyond the Price Tag: Impact of AI-Driven Emotional Appeals and Price Sensitivity on Pet Product Purchase Decisions

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Abstract *- The pet product industry is seen to grow with the involvement of pet humanization in consumer behaviour patterns. The high use of artificial intelligence in digital marketing has a significant influence on customers' pet product purchase decisions. This study uses the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework so as to study the impact of price sensitivity and emotional influence on pet product purchase decisions. In this model, price sensitivity forms the stimulus, emotional attachment and emotional response are treated as the organism, and purchase decision represents the response. Through a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 205 pet owners. To test the proposed relationships, statistical tools such as correlation, regression, and path analysis were conducted. To strengthen the predictive insights, machine learning techniques such as linear regression, random forest, and decision tree models were used. The findings reveal that the emotional response plays the most significant role in influencing purchase decisions, followed by price sensitivity, while emotional attachment shows a weaker direct effect. Earlier studies on emotional consumption and pet humanization are supported by these results. The increasing importance of emotional AI in shaping consumer behaviour in digital pet product markets is highlighted in this study.*

Keywords: *Price Sensitivity – Emotional Appeals – AI-Driven Marketing – Pet Products – Purchase Decision – S–O–R Model – Emotional response, Emotional Attachment, Machine Learning.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, pets are viewed as part of the extended self, and this has resulted in the significant growth of global pet care market. For the consumers to make purchase decisions, price is considered to be a relevant factor. The degree to which price considerations influence decision making is understood as price sensitivity. It is observed that decision-making for purchasing pet products may likely be influenced by both emotional considerations, which is relatively unique to scenarios of decision-making influenced by both rationality and emotions. Additionally, advancements in digital technologies and Advertisements are continually reshaping how consumers engage with marketing content. AI-powered marketing enables a firm to communicate emotionally engaging content that appeals to each consumer. Emotional appeals in advertising can be used to change customer attitudes, evoke behaviours, and create emotional responses. Emotional advertising appeals are used to persuade consumers whose products are considered to be of high involvement for them. Pet care products may be one of these types of products. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework is a conceptual model with an acceptable theoretical base to study the relationship between stimuli, such as price-related stimuli, emotional responses to those stimuli, and behavioural responses. According to the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, external stimuli, such as price sensitivity, influence consumers' internal emotional responses, which eventually influence behavioural responses. Although the Stimulus-Organism-Response model has widely been used in many studies in the realm of retail and online marketing, insufficient attention has been given to study of the application of the model in the context of price sensitivity and AI-generated emotional responses especially when it comes to the purchase of pet products. With the increasing growth of AI-based recommendation, consumers are getting personalized product suggestions. For pet owners, such AI-driven content may have an influence in their purchase decisions for the pet products. Yet, this process has not been studied enough using a renowned framework. Based on this study gap, the

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current research aims to apply the S-O-R mechanism with a view to examining how price sensitivity, as a stimulus, and emotion, as an organism, are combined with respect to pet product consumption through its common usage, as well as novel technology related to the use of Machine Learning, to provide a basis for understanding purchase decisions.

The pet care sector is no longer just about food and basic supplies. It has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar industry covering grooming, healthcare, clothing, and personalized accessories. This shift has been driven by changing lifestyle patterns, nuclear family structures, and the emotional dependency people have on their pets. Pet owners now make purchasing choices similar to how parents make decisions for children. This behavioural pattern makes the pet product market an interesting and emotionally rich space for studying consumer psychology. Digital platforms have further accelerated this shift. Social media feeds are filled with pet-related content, and AI tools curate this content based on past behaviour. When a consumer sees a well-placed product recommendation for their dog after watching a pet care video, it is not random. It is a calculated, algorithm-driven decision by the platform. Understanding how this process affects real buying behaviour is important for both marketers and researchers. This study attempts to bring clarity to that process.

Based on the gap mentioned, the below questions were framed.

1. How do Price sensitivity Influence purchase decisions of pet owners in the pet product market?
2. Does emotional attachment towards pets significantly affect Purchase decision- making among pet owners?
3. Which factors act as most influential predictor of purchase decisions based on machine learning models?

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To address the identified research gap and to gain more insight into the drivers of pet product buying decisions in the case of AI-driven marketing, this research aims to examine both emotional and price-related factors that determine consumer behaviour. Based on the above, the following research objectives have been developed.

- To study the effect of price sensitivity in the purchase of pet products.
- To analyze the effect of emotional attachment towards pets on purchase decision making.
- To determine the extent of influence of the emotional responses triggered by the marketing of AI-based products in the pet market.
- To apply the Stimulus-Organism-Response Model to understand how both price sensitivity and emotional responses impact purchase decisions for pet products.
- To know the factor which influences more on Consumers' Pet Product Purchase decision.

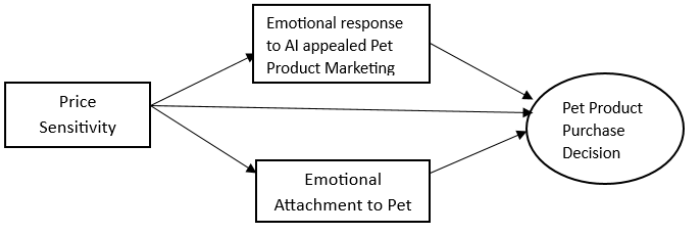

Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research is thus based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, which describes how various environmental activations of life organisms affect internal psychological states and eventually behavioural outcomes. According to this model, price-related cues are stimuli or environmental factors which the consumer evaluates in the course of making his decisions. These stimulate organism responses, described as emotional attachment and emotional responses across time when products are being evaluated. In turn, such internal states determine the final

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response, namely the decision to buy. The S–O–R model has been in several applications in consumer behaviour and marketing research in understanding emotionally laden consumption, especially in contexts where personal involvement is high. Within the context of pet products, where emotional bonds between the owners and pets are high, the S–O–R model provides an adequate theoretical lens through which the price sensitivity of a buyer, combined with emotional motives, can be examined together to analyze choice.

The S-O-R model is especially useful here because it does not treat the consumer as passive. The model acknowledges that the same stimulus can produce different responses in different people. A pet owner who is highly attached to their dog may respond to an AI-driven ad very differently from someone who just adopted a bird recently. This variation in response is what makes emotional attachment and emotional response two separate but related constructs in this study. Price sensitivity, meanwhile, acts as the external trigger. It signals to the consumer whether a product is within reach or beyond budget. But as prior research shows, this signal does not always translate into a rational decision. Emotion often overrides it. The S-O-R model gives a structured way to trace this journey from stimulus to purchase. This is why it was selected as the theoretical backbone of this research.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Price Sensitivity and Purchase Decision:

When it comes to consumer purchase behaviour, price sensitivity is recognized as a key determinant. It is the extent to which consumers respond to changes in price when making purchase decisions. Studies have shown that highly price sensitive consumers compare prices across brands and naturally incline towards low-priced alternatives. However, as identified from the recent study results, emotional satisfaction becomes the driving factor in consumer purchase decision than cost considerations.

H1: Price sensitivity positively influences the purchase decision of pet products.

Price Sensitivity and Emotional Response:

Price sensitivity influences emotional experience of customers along with the usual price considerations. Emotions such as anxiety, excitement or satisfaction influences purchase decisions independent of price. Personalization based on customer preferences in this AI-driven environment might improve emotional experience of customers. This AI-based marketing might reduce the risk of high prices due to personalization.

It is also worth noting that not all emotional responses are positive. A consumer who feels that a product is overpriced might feel frustration or distrust, even if the AI-powered recommendation was well-targeted. In such cases, the emotional response works against the purchase. This dual nature of emotional response is often overlooked in studies that focus only on positive affect. In the context of pet products, however, the emotional stakes are generally higher. Pet owners tend to associate product quality with the health and happiness of their animals. So even when prices are high, the emotional response can shift from resistance to acceptance when the product is positioned as being essential for pet well-being. This interaction between price-driven emotions and pet-specific emotional drivers is a nuanced area that this study seeks to capture.

H2: There is a positive relationship between price sensitivity and emotional response to AI-driven product suggestions.

Price Sensitivity and Emotional Attachment:

Consumers who are emotionally attached to the products are known to have lower price sensitivity. The primary motivation for purchase is because of emotional factors than economic ones. When it comes to pet products, the emotional attachment towards the pet decreases price sensitivity. This shows the pet owners who are emotionally attached value care over price.

H3: There is a positive relationship between price sensitivity and emotional attachment towards pets.

Emotional Response and Purchase Decision:

In case of online and social media marketing, the consumers might have various responses towards

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the advertisements. Positive emotions can influence consumers in making a purchase. It also increases perceived satisfaction. Emotionally engaging content in AI-based marketing can enhance emotional responses. These further influences purchase decisions. This makes more sense in pet products marketing because of the engaging marketing efforts.

It is also important to understand that emotional responses can vary based on the type of content used in marketing. Video content tends to generate stronger emotional reactions compared to static images or text-based posts. AI algorithms on platforms like Instagram and YouTube have become very good at predicting which format will work best for each user. For pet product brands, this means that short video clips showing real pets using a product tend to outperform standard promotional content. The emotional spike that a viewer experiences when they see a happy, healthy pet can directly translate into a purchase. This emotional-to-behavioural chain is short and fast. It does not require much deliberation. The consumer feels good, they connect that feeling to the product, and they click to buy. This is the core mechanism this study aims to measure and validate within the S-O-R framework.

H4: Emotional response to AI-driven product suggestions has a positive relationship with purchase decision of pet products.

Emotional Attachment and Purchase Decision:

Emotional attachment affects purchase decisions because it establishes a long-term psychological link between consumers and products or brands. If consumers are emotionally attached to products or brands, they are likely to show loyalty and repeat purchasing behaviour, even in a competitive market. In the pet product industry, the emotional attachment is amplified by the humanization of pets, where owners believe that the products help with the well-being of their pets. In this case, emotionally attached consumers are likely to make purchase decisions that are driven by emotional satisfaction rather than functional or economic considerations.

Pet humanization plays a large role in strengthening this attachment. When owners begin to see their pets as family members, every product purchase becomes a statement of care and responsibility. They are not just buying a food brand. They are choosing something they believe reflects how much they value their pet's comfort and health. This mindset makes pet owners more willing to spend on premium products. It also makes them more receptive to marketing that speaks to this emotional bond. AI tools can detect signals of this attachment through browsing history, saved posts, and purchase patterns. A consumer who regularly watches dog grooming videos and follows pet wellness accounts is clearly invested in their pet's quality of life. Serving them emotionally resonant content about a high-quality product is not manipulation. It is relevance. And relevance, in marketing, is what drives action.

H5: Emotional attachment towards pets positively influences the purchase decision of pet products.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from various type of pet owners who own pets like cat, dog, birds, fish and also multiple pets across Tamil Nadu. The data was collected through online platforms such as Pet owner communities, social media groups and personal networks. The total sample size is 205. After collection of data, the analysis was done using SPSS and Jupyter python. In SPSS, the study utilized Reliability analysis, Descriptive statistics, Regression analysis and in machine learning techniques such as Linear Regression, Random Forest Regression, and Support Vector Regression were used. To identify the primary influential factors affecting purchase behaviour, Feature Importance analysis was performed. The instruments were taken for measuring Price Sensitivity, Emotional Attachment to Pet, Emotional Responses to AI appeal marketing and Purchase Decision making. As this study is exploratory in nature, convenience sampling was adopted.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections corresponding to the four constructs: price sensitivity, emotional attachment, emotional response, and purchase decision. Each section used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale was chosen because it allows respondents to express the degree of their agreement rather than giving binary answers. The questions were framed in simple language to

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ensure that respondents across different educational backgrounds could understand and answer without confusion. Before the final data collection, a pilot test was conducted with 20 respondents. Their feedback was used to refine the wording of a few questions. The final questionnaire had 24 items in total. Data collection took place over a period of six weeks. Since online communities were the primary channel, the responses came from a geographically diverse group within Tamil Nadu, which adds some degree of representativeness to the sample.

VI. RESULTS

Respondent Profile

The data was collected from 205 pet owners. A frequency analysis was conducted using SPSS software to analyze the demographic factors. Among the factors, 52% of respondents are between the age of 21-30, 29.6% of the respondents have a monthly income between rupees 20,001-40,000, 55.7% of respondents own dog as their pet, 41.9% of the respondents own a pet for less than one year and 47.8% of the respondents spend less than rupees 1000 for pet products in a month. The internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha and the value was 0.926 which was well above than recommended level of 0.70. This indicates that the internal consistency is high ensuring the reliability of data for further analysis.

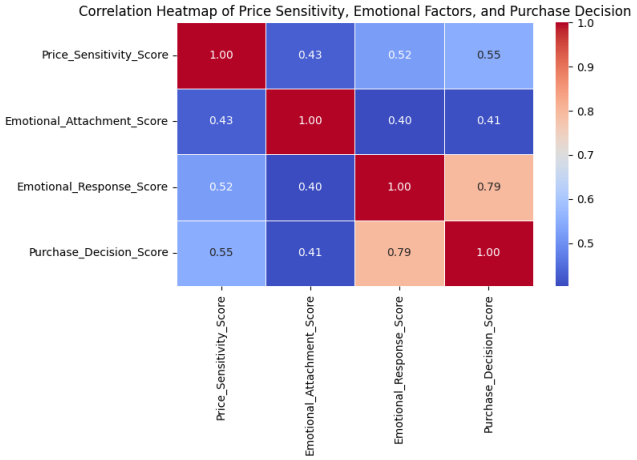

Fig.2: Correlation Heatmap

Correlation Analysis

By using Jupyter python, the machine learning analysis were executed. The correlation analysis was used to find the relationship between the study variables. It is observed from the above Fig 2 that there is a strong positive relationship between Emotional response to AI appealed marketing and Purchase decisions (r = 0.795). Price sensitivity also has a moderate but positive relationship with Purchase decision (r = 0.548), while Emotional attachment has a weaker but positive relationship (r = 0.409). The results of correlation framework provide evidence for Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, as to how Emotional response to AI appealed marketing influences Purchase decisions.

TABLE I: Multiple Regression Results

Multiple Regression analysis				
Estimation	**R**	**RSquare**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
the Estimate	.548[a]	.301	.297	.70869
PR -PD	.409[a]	.168	.164	.77318
EA-PD	.795[a]	.632	.630	.51390
ER-PD	.518[a]	.268	.264	.68276
PS-PR	.430[a]	.185	.181	.67903

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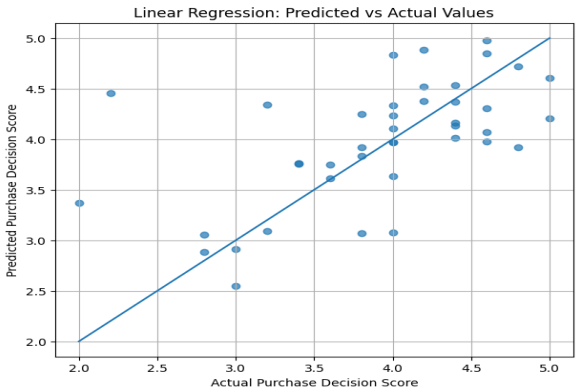

Fig.3- Linear regression Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

To study the effect of Price sensitivity, Emotional attachment, and Emotional response altogether on Purchase decision, multiple linear regression analysis was used. Based on the results from Table I and Fig 3, it is observed that model had a large amount of variation in purchase decision, as a good explanatory fit. Among the predictors, Emotional Response was found to be the strongest predictor of purchase decision, followed by Price Sensitivity. Emotional Attachment did not have a significant direct impact on purchase decision. This implies that the emotional responses generated by AI-driven recommendations have a more significant influence than emotional attachments on purchase decisions.

TABLE II: Machine Learning Model Performance Metrics

	Model	R^2 Score	RMSE	MAE
0	Linear Regression	0.267	0.603	0.421
1	Random Forest	0.230	0.618	0.439
2	SVR	0.212	0.625	0.435

The above Table II was used to assess the model's predictive performance. The R^2 value obtained by the Random Forest, along with a small RMSE value, making it a good predictor. Although the model has a slightly lower R^2 value than the linear regression model, it also takes into account the non-linear relationships and interactions that are not accounted for in the linear regression model. According to the test, it is established that purchase decision is a result of complex emotional processes.

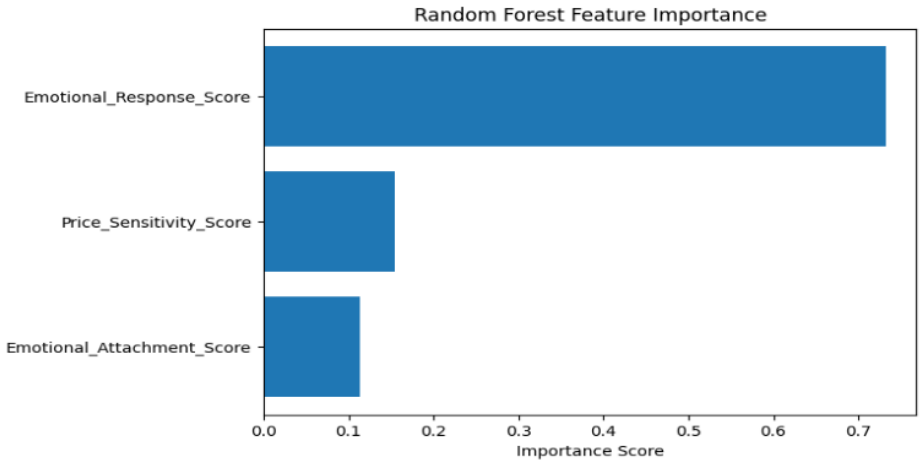

Fig.4: Random Forest Feature Importance Plot

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Random Forest Feature Importance Analysis

The feature importance analysis is used to rank the input variables based on their contribution to the accuracy of the model. The result from Fig 4 shows Emotional response as the most important predictor. This is followed by Price sensitivity and Emotional attachment.

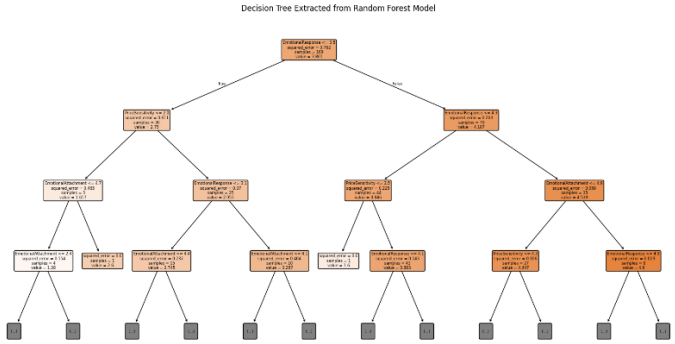

Fig 5: Decision Tree Visualization

Decision Tree Regression Analysis

The effect of different variables on purchase decision was examined using decision tree regression. The result from Fig 5 show that Emotional response is the key variable for splitting and is a key factor in decision making. The secondary splits are from price sensitivity and emotional attachment has a minimum impact. This provides a clarity in the high influence of emotional response towards purchase decision.

VII. DISCUSSION

This research paper investigates the connection between AI marketing and the psychological processes of pet owners in determining purchase decisions on digital marketplaces. The results reveal that emotional response has a more significant influence on the purchase of pet products than price sensitivity and emotional response. This suggests that AI-powered social media sites are influential in making recommendations and using emotional content. Price sensitivity is still taken into account, but to a much smaller extent when the emotional value and care for pets are conveyed. Meanwhile, emotional attachment fosters purchasing decisions by nurturing feelings of responsibility and concern for the well-being of pets; the immediate emotional reactions set off by AI-driven content motivate the purchasing behaviour most. These results are in line with the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, where the AI-based stimuli trigger the emotional processes that result in purchasing behaviour. Collectively, these findings highlight the increasing significance of emotion-centric and AI-driven marketing approaches in influencing consumer behaviour in the pet product market.

These findings have practical relevance for brands operating in the pet product space. Marketers who invest in emotional storytelling through AI-curated content are likely to see better conversion rates than those who rely solely on price-based promotions. A well-crafted video showing a dog recovering with a specific health supplement, for instance, can connect with a pet owner far more deeply than a discount offer. The key is authenticity. AI can personalize the delivery of such content, but the emotional core has to feel real and relatable. This study also suggests that emotional attachment works differently from emotional response. Attachment is a deeper, slower-forming bond. Response is immediate and reactive. Brands that understand this distinction can design better campaign strategies. Long-term loyalty programs may target attachment, while short-term campaign ads can focus on triggering positive emotional responses. Both are valid but they operate on different timescales and through different psychological pathways.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that price sensitivity and emotions, as a whole, drive purchase decisions regarding pet products; and among these factors,

emotions have proven to be the dominant force in such purchase decisions made regarding pet products. Indeed, the findings of this research have confirmed that emotions played a very crucial and dominant part in influencing purchase decisions regarding AI-powered emotions and digital/social media platforms as they significantly shaped purchase decisions made by pet owners on their pets as they evoke a sense of responsibility and concern regarding their pets. Although price sensitivity is still a part of purchase decisions, it is of secondary importance when emotions and the need to provide a sense of comfort and protection to pets are considered. Emotional response reinforces purchase decisions. It solidifies a sense of responsibility and concern regarding pets as it resides within a sense of providing comfort and happiness to pets.

This study also contributes to the growing body of research on AI and consumer behaviour by applying established frameworks to a relatively underexplored market. The pet product industry has often been treated as a niche segment. But the data from this study shows that the same psychological forces that drive purchase decisions in mainstream markets are equally active here. Emotional processing is central to how pet owners decide what to buy, and AI tools are becoming effective at triggering these processes. From a managerial standpoint, this means that firms in the pet care space should not underestimate the power of digital content and personalized marketing. Investing in emotional branding, building community around pet care, and using AI to serve the right message at the right time can all strengthen brand-consumer relationships. These are not abstract recommendations. They follow directly from what the data in this study has shown across multiple analytical methods.

IX. FUTURE SCOPE

Future research on this study can be done by examining how deep personalization through AI can drive pet products purchase. This can be done by having emotion as an important factor across cultures. Further insights can be based on trust in AI recommendations. The authenticity of digital content can also be considered for making purchase decisions. Another direction worth exploring is the role of pet type in shaping purchase behaviour. This study included owners of dogs, cats, birds, and fish. Each of these groups may have different levels of emotional attachment and different spending patterns. Dog owners, for instance, tend to spend more on grooming and health products than fish owners. A segmented analysis based on pet type could reveal important differences in how emotional and price-related factors operate across groups. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track how purchase behaviour changes over time as AI marketing becomes more sophisticated. A consumer who was price-sensitive two years ago may now make decisions primarily on emotional grounds due to prolonged exposure to personalized content. Capturing this shift over time would add significant depth to the current cross-sectional findings. These extensions would help build a more complete picture of how AI marketing shapes pet owner behaviour. Emotional responses changing over time can be studied. These future paths can provide stronger evidence on influence of pet owners emotional response based on AI-driven marketing of pet products.

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