Discrimination in the Leisure Environment: It's a Dog's Life

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Discrimination within the leisure environment can force additional costs onto individuals to enable them to partake in leisure experiences, potentially resulting in a gap between latent and actual leisure demand. One population segment that continues to be relatively neglected within the area of leisure discrimination is dog owners and their pets. This is despite acknowledgement of the health benefits of pet dogs and their owners spending time together. In addition, dogs are one of the most popular pets in the world and the money their owners spend significant amounts on them.

Situated within Australia, this paper assesses government regulations that potentially restrict access to leisure experiences for dogs and their owners. In addition, it studies the extent to which dog owners feel discriminated against in the leisure environment. The study is based on a questionnaire survey distributed to a convenience sample in Brisbane.

The results indicate dog owners face a number of obstacles to participating in the leisure environment, with or without their pets. Dogs are often left at home or in boarding kennels when their owners venture into the leisure environment. If owners wish to be with their dogs then leisure experiences have to be tailored to meet or overcome obstacles. All of these leisure access strategies entail potential financial and/or health costs for dog owners and their pets, as well as potentially depriving the leisure and tourism industries of income.