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Rural Tourism as a Development Strategy in Low-Density Areas: Case Study in Northern Extremadura (Spain)

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Abstract: The appearance of new trends and models of tourism consumption has allowed the proliferation of rural tourist facilities in northern Extremadura. This article analyzes the economic, social, and heritage (natural and cultural) variables to relate them to the tourism offer and demand in these areas. The present study used geostatistical techniques such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and their spatial location through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to determine the distribution and degree of incidence of these variables in the territories. The results obtained confirm the existence of imbalances in the tourism sector, which made it possible to determine which tourist territories have implemented the best lines of action to receive visitors, increase economic income, and preserve the population in rural areas with deficiencies in their tourism development.

Keywords: rural tourism; travelers; principal component analysis; geographic information systems; tourist accommodation; Extremadura

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Citation: Nieto Masot, A.; Ríos Rodríguez, N. Rural Tourism as a Development Strategy in Low-Density Areas: Case Study in Northern Extremadura (Spain). *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 239. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010239

Received: 29 October 2020
Accepted: 27 November 2020
Published: 29 December 2020

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1. Introduction

Tourism has been an economic sector of great importance and has undergone development, especially since the middle of the 20th century, when it was consolidated as a mass phenomenon. From the 1960s onwards, the tourism sector in Spain began to have an important role in the country's economy, as well as being used to end the isolation that the country had due to the Franco dictatorship. For this reason, a series of policies and actions were initiated to promote the "sun and beach" tourism, also known as "tourism of the 3: sea, sand, sun". In addition, the climatic conditions (with more than 2000 h of sunlight per year and pleasant temperatures) and the territorial conditions (with more than 8000 km of coastline) of Spain led to this type of tourism and a positive impact on the Spanish economy.

This promotion of "sun and beach" tourism during the following decades, with little control in its constructive expansion, led to the massification of certain areas, deterioration of natural spaces, and a crisis of the model. In these areas, the building of many tourist accommodations was prioritized without considering the possible impacts on the environment and society. In some cases, this could cause the deterioration of a tourist destination that entails the loss of travelers and a detriment to its economy [1,2].

Moreover, the appearance of new trends and consumption models for tourism, such as the search for other offers related to cultural o natural heritage and short-term overnight stays (weekend) of urbanites in rural areas in search of rest and nature with little degradation [3,4], promote new tourist models. These trends have been developing in European countries since the 1960s, where a series of events created rapid and strong growth in this type of tourism [5–7] as well as the improvement of communication routes, changes in the tourist market, and a demand for new products or the rural environment. These factors have contributed to the promotion and prominence of tourism in rural areas today [8]. In European countries such as France, Germany, England, or Austria, rural tourism started with rental rooms in private homes. These countries have a diversified rural tourism offer because of their long tradition in this tourism. In Spain, the introduction of this tourism

emerged later and is still expanding. Several authors, such as Cànoves [8], established that while in Western Europe (France, England and Austria) rural tourism would be in a phase of consolidation; in the Mediterranean countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece), it would still be in a phase of increasing development with the important challenges of specialization and diversification, beginning in the 1990s and the beginning of the 20th century [7].

In Spain, the sector of rural tourism began its development in the late 1980s and early 1990s; taking into account the high historical, cultural, and natural value of many Spanish territories, the development of new tourist destinations was chosen whereby the main characteristics were: The little transformation of the territory, a rich gastronomic offer, a wide set of enclaves and natural landscapes, and their traditional crafts and folklore [9]. Thus, conservation and development cannot be conceived as antagonistic concepts and their compatibility is essential to stimulate local resources [10].

As travelers' interest in new tourist typologies such as rural tourism, inland tourism, agrotourism, ecotourism, or ornithological tourism increased, public administrations and the private sector also increased [8,11,12]. This change in the concept of Spanish tourism has notably benefited tourism in Extremadura, specifically rural areas in the province of Cáceres. In recent decades, the European Union has promoted a series of actions and new economic policies destined to develop tourism and agrotourism in rural areas through aid from the structural funds or specific initiatives such as INTERREG or LEADER [13–16] for its transformation into a complementary activity to agricultural income in areas affected by depopulation [17]. Moreover, regional or state initiatives have promoted rural tourism development as a new economic sector that can improve rural areas, boost economic activity, and create employment and public services [18].

In 2006, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in its opinion on 'The contribution of tourism to the socio-economic recovery of areas in decline' established the importance of transforming areas, such as rural areas in Extremadura, that are economically stagnant or have had their traditional productive agricultural model begin disappearing.

In summary, the massification and stagnation of the sun and beach tourism model; the crisis in the agricultural sector due to its traditional poor productive agricultural model; the new desires of the demand are beginning to acquire an important complexity and qualification [19] were the events that caused the growth of rural tourism in many regions of Spain. In the 1980s, this rural tourism emerged as a strategy for the survival and complementarity of agricultural incomes, and since the 1990s, it has become the focus of their local development strategy [7]. In most cases, rural tourism is identified with dispersed tourism without large infrastructures, developed in small towns with small populations, and whose main tourist attraction is focused on nature tourism that offers tourists landscapes, tranquility, and traditional gastronomy [14,20–22].

Rural Tourism Strategies

In the last half-century, rural tourism has had significant changes in some autonomous communities such as Galicia [23], Andalucía [24], Balearic Islands, or Aragon; however, its evolution has been different and can be explained according to the level of tourist development in these areas.

In the case of Galicia, this rural tourism has been influenced by the attractiveness of the Camino de Santiago [6]. This territory has a management model with a rich architectural, natural-landscape heritage, and a quality-centered tourism model in a compact territory with a wide cultural, heritage, and gastronomic offering [25–27]. Moreover, the thermal sector in Galicia is configured as a tourist alternative that combines health, wellness, relaxation, and leisure. Galicia is the second largest thermal region in all of Europe. Thus, the locations of the Galician spas are in areas of inland Galicia that are characterized by rural areas with depopulation, low per capita income, and the presence of a productive structure with a predominance of the primary sector. However, the emergence of tourism as a new source of income helps to slow down the depopulation of these areas.

On the other hand, in Andalucía [24], there are tourist destinations in mountain areas such as La Alpujarra (a region south of Granada). This area has taken advantage of its natural and scenic environment, as well as the originality of its gastronomy, customs, crafts, and architecture. All these attractions are at the base of the success of the tourist phenomenon in La Alpujarra. This sector's success contributed to the increase of the economy and demography of a territory that was in decline and presented new positive demographic dynamics (maintenance or increase of the population in many of its municipalities) due to an increase in employment and economic income.

In the Balearic Islands, rural tourism is an internalization of coastal tourism and a high-quality product for a high-income population. This archipelago is one of the main tourist destinations in Europe and receives 16.5 million tourists annually [28]. These islands suffer from the most intense seasonality of tourism of all Spanish destinations, and for this reason, they are committed to the demassification of tourism and a new model of tourism that respects nature and the environment [29,30].

In other communities, rural tourism has re-slowed the rural exodus, as is Aragon's case with adventure sports, natural resources of Pirineos, or Culture Potential [31].

Rural tourism in Spain is present in all the autonomous communities as a different, complementary, and recent offer that allows income diversification in rural areas, more or less backward [32], where rural tourism has played an important role as an alternative to traditional agricultural activities. In addition to contributing to local development, this tourism can be promoted as a complementary source of income and create employment for the rural population in these areas.

In the case study, Extremadura has been one of the tourist destinations most benefited by changes in tourist habits. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the growth in the number of travelers in the region has increased by 35% (the Spanish average is 41.29%), above destinations such as Castilla y León (32.92%) or Canarias (24.97%), an increase of 40% in the case of overnight stays (much higher than the Spanish average of 25%) and an increase in the number of establishments of 54.9%. Although this contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) is 5.6%, it is still well below the Spanish average (11.7%), its trend is increasing, and it is becoming the economic sector that is growing the most in the region in 2018, with 27,000 jobs and 922 new jobs [33].

From the 1980s to the mid-1990s, tourism was an almost non-existent sector in the Extremadura region. While in other regions, due to the sun and beach tourism's existence or the proximity to it of rural areas, these have decades of development in their tourist infrastructure, both accommodation and leisure, have a greater number of travelers and overnight stays than the Extremadura region.

Tourism is becoming a strategic sector for the wealth of the region, as an activity that can complement agricultural incomes, especially in areas affected by depopulation and the growing crisis of its production model, thus being able to achieve economic growth, a revitalization of abandoned or isolated areas, and the maintenance or growth of their population [34]. Establishing a consolidation of the economy and the population of the most vulnerable regions and rural tourism is an important economic aid. This tourism must continue diversifying its offer, establishing categories, and, as it already exists in many other regions, obtain a thematic, territorial, and leisure activities specialization.

This study's main objective was to analyze the rural tourism of rural areas in Cáceres and its relationship with other context variables such as demographic and economic sectors or natural and heritage resources. Its investigated area of work was the Tourism Territories established by the Directorate General of the Junta de Extremadura [35,36], as it is the spatial scope of action for the design of different tourism policies in our region. Specifically, we analyzed tourism demand in detail (travelers and overnight stays) and the tourist offer through the offer of places for tourist accommodation (hotels, rural, and non-hotels), and the offer of resources. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the tourism sector in Extremadura and its relationship with other context variables, such as maintaining its population and GDP.

In addition, through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and statistical techniques, we can know whether tourist territories have achieved an optimal design of their tourist structure and verify if the current design of their resources' offer and demand is achieving population maintenance and avoiding demographic regression. To achieve this objective, the GIS software was used as a tool to obtain appropriate cartographic outputs. Furthermore, the SPSS software was employed as a statistical analysis tool. This research's methodological approach was limited to the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Pearson's bivariate correlations [37–41].

Next, considering the above considerations, this paper's materials and methods are presented, followed by Section 3, in which the results obtained are shown. Then, the results are discussed in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusions.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

The study area of this paper (Figure 1) is represented by seven rural tourist territories located in the north of the Extremadura region (except the municipal terms of urban centers such as Cáceres and Plasencia) [36].

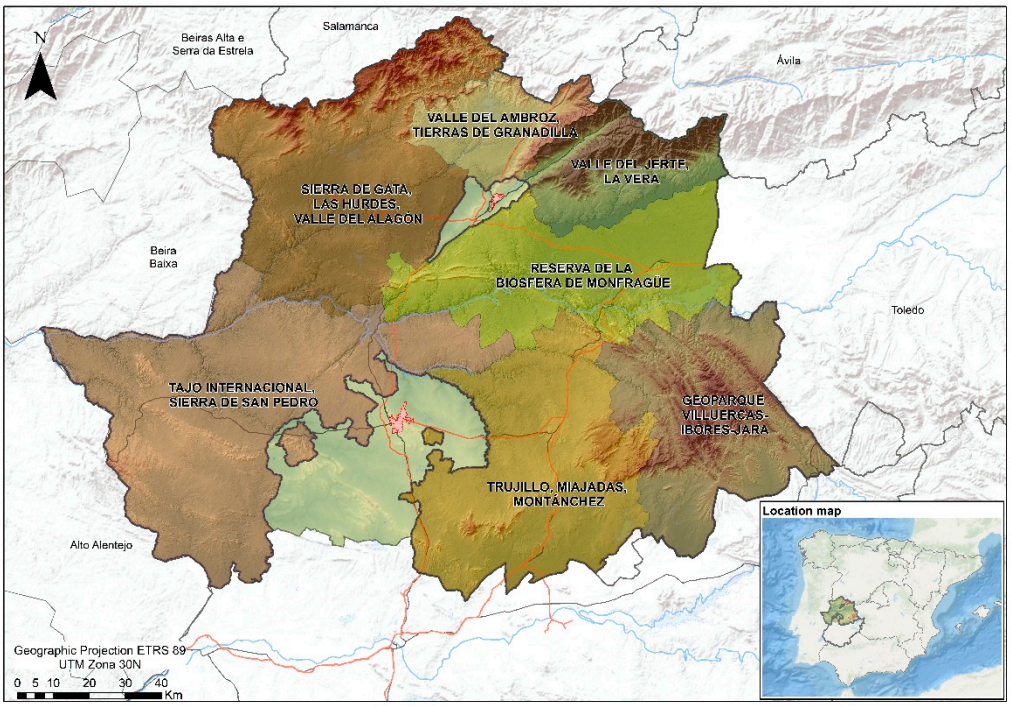


Figure 1. Study area, seven tourist territories in northern Extremadura.

These territories are made up of 18,987 km^2, this being 90.59% of the total of the northern province of Extremadura (the urban territories of Cáceres and Plasencia were excluded). These rural territories consist of a total of 224 municipalities that house a total of 273,621 inhabitants (66.76% of the total), according to the National Statistical Institute (NSI) as of 1 January 2018 [28]. The territories are:

1. Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara.
2. Reserva de la Biosfera de Monfragüe.
3. Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Valle del Alagón.
4. Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro.
5. Trujillo, Miajadas, Montánchez.
6. Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla.
7. Valle del Jerte, La Vera.

As shown in the table below (Table 1), the average of the territories in terms of number of municipalities per territory is 32, with territories such as Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, and Valle del Alagón; Trujillo, Miajadas, and Montánchez with more than 40 municipalities to others located in mountain areas such as Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara; Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla, and Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro with just over 20 municipalities. As for the size of the population, the territorial average is 39,089 inhabitants; a higher population volume is located Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Valle del Alagón, with more than 63,963 inhabitants, and those of smaller size in areas such as Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara and Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla, with less than 20,000 inhabitants.

Table 1. Territorial and demographic indicators of the tourist territories of northern Extremadura.

Tourist Territories	Municipalities	Population 2018	Population Growth (2010–2018) (%)	Surface (Km^2)	Density of Population (Km^2)	Index Old Age *	Index of Youth **
Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara	19	12,885	−11.00	2546.8	5.06	33.16	9.19
Reserva de la Biosfera de Monfragüe	30	46,893	−3.08	2714.71	16.64	18.80	15.46
Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Valle del Alagón	53	63,963	−7.19	3516.2	18.19	26.34	11.84
Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro	27	49,676	−8.63	4733.0	10.50	25.42	11.67
Trujillo, Miajadas, Montánchez	42	48,610	−7.78	3318.03	15.31	25.83	11.17
Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla	23	16,610	−4.90	942.8	17.62	30.18	10.28
Valle del Jerte, La Vera	30	34,984	−6.37	1258.6	27.80	25.39	11.48
Total	224	273,621	−6.99	19,030.1	14.41	26.45	11.58

* Index old age: represents the proportion of older people 65 years over the total population per 100. ** Index of youth: represents the proportion of people between 0 and 15 years over the total population per 100.

In indicative variables such as the old age index and youth index, the territorial average is 26.45% old age and 11.58% in youth, which shows us a characteristic of Extremadura territory, with its aging population that is much more significant in the mountain and frontier area territories such as Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara with a high of 33.16%. Moreover, all rural tourist territories of the growth of population in the last five years had an average of −6.99%, and values found below this average in the territories of the Reserva de la Biosfera de Monfragüe (−3.08%), Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla (−4.90%), and Valle del Jerte, La Vera (−6.37%).

The map below (Figure 2) represents each municipality's population in the tourist territories of the province of Cáceres in 2018. In this area, only twelve municipalities of the two hundred and twenty-four have more than 5000 inhabitants: Navalmoral de la Mata (17,170), Coria (12,531), Miajadas (9685), Trujillo (9193), Talayuela (7345), Moraleja (6792), Jaraíz de la Vera (6477), Arroyo de la Luz (5851), Montehermoso (5731), San Vicente de Alcántara (5475), Valencia de Alcántara (5439), and Alburquerque (5371). Eighteen municipalities are found in the following category (2000 to 5000 inhabitants); therefore, one hundred and ninety-four municipalities do not exceed 2000 inhabitants and are highly ruralized.

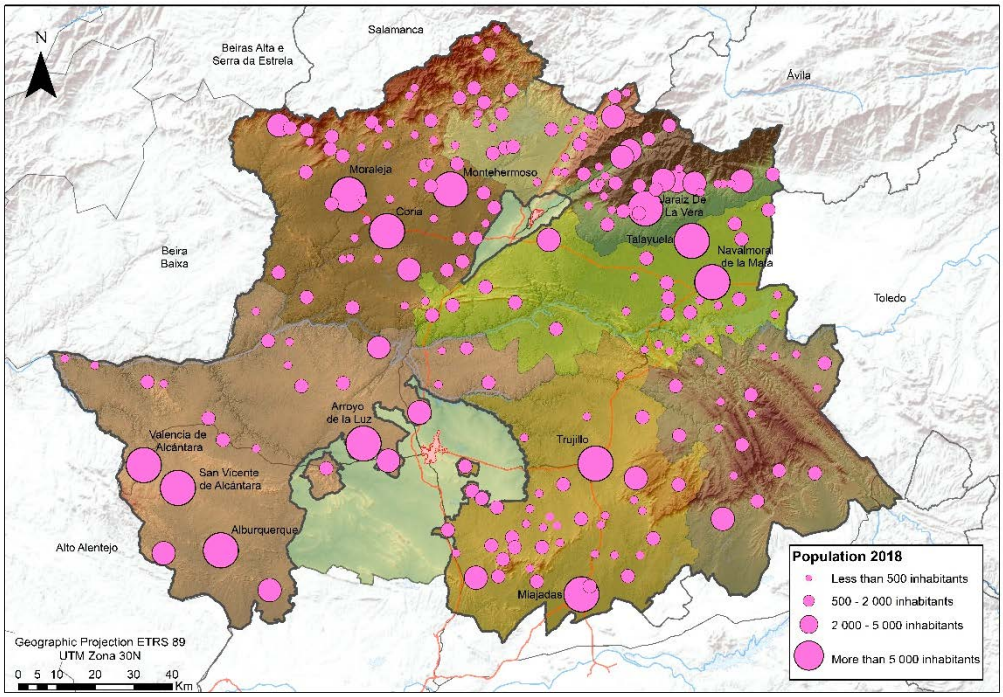


Figure 2. Contextual demographic indicator: Population 2018.

2.2. Cartographic Database

The mapping of the rural tourist territories was made from the polygonal cartography layer of municipalities obtained from the National Cartographic Base 1:200,000 (BCN200) of Spain's National Geographical Institute. This cartographic layer was established as tabular information on the seven rural tourist territories of the province of Cáceres, which were delimited by the Extremadura Tourism Observatory [35] and the Junta de Extremadura. These territories were developed to carry out performances, itineraries, and experiences as they encourage tourists' arrival in the region.

2.3. Alphanumeric Database

The alphanumeric database collects variables characteristic of tourist territories considering the tourist, demographic, economic, and heritage variables. A Geographic Information System is one of the most appropriate and most-used information management tools since it allows the union of alphanumeric variables to a set of cartographic information. Furthermore, it is an optimal tool to analyze the spatial location, distribution, and evolution of the population and the region's economic and productive systems [42–45].

The first step was to know the definition of travelers and overnight stays, as well as the classification of the accommodation made by the NSI for its occupancy surveys. This organism considers travelers as any person who performs one or more overnight stays in the same accommodation taking into account their place of residence (domestic or foreign), and overnight stays as every night a traveler stays at the tourist establishment. As for tourist accommodation, it determines the following five classes: hotel establishments, which include those classified as a hotel, hotel apartment, aparthotel, motel hostel, or guesthouse; rural tourism accommodation, such as those establishments that are located in rural environments and that include rural apartments, rural hotels, and rural houses; camping sites, such as those spaces of land duly delimited, equipped, and conditioned to provide people with a place to live outdoors for a limited time; youth hostels, those establishments that offer the public the accommodation service mainly in multiple rooms, with or without complementary services, and usually with the possibility of practicing some activity related to the environment; tourist apartments whose exclusive or main activity is that of tourist accommodation, distributed in furnished units such as apartments, chalets,

bungalows, etc. The last three classes (camping, youth hostels, and tourist apartments) have been grouped in non-hotel accommodation classification. We analyzed the accommodation offered in the three groups: hotels, rural tourism, and non-hotel accommodation.

These data were provided at the National Statistics Institute (NSI) in microdata format and had to be analyzed, filtered, and grouped by tourist territory with the organism's different weighting methodologies. Thus, the number of travelers and total overnight stays of 2018 was calculated by tourist territories and they were introduced into a polygonal mapping layer in the geographic information system, in this case, ArcGIS 10.5. To standardize the data, they were relativized to rates per 1000 inhabitants so that population weight would not influence the number of travelers or overnight stays.

Similarly, tourist territories' main demographic, economic, and heritage characteristics were introduced into the geographic information system.

- Demographic data obtained from the different population registers from the year 2000 to 2018 of all the municipalities that make up the tourist territories of the NSI. In addition, the birth rate, the mortality rate, the natural growth rate, migration rate, aging rate, youth index, population density, and the percentage of population growth were calculated with these population data.
- Economic variables published in the Experimental Atlas of the National Statistics Institute, such as the average income per capita of the year 2018, was the variable chosen to be analyzed. Job seekers' data was obtained from the Public State Employment Service (PSES) for the year 2018. The unemployment rate was calculated by considering the possible active population (population between 16 and 64 years old) because the active population data at the municipal level are not available.
- Heritage variables. The Assets of Cultural Interest database registered in the Register of Assets of Cultural Interest of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Government of Spain [46] was consulted. These Assets of Cultural Interest were georeferenced to know the number that exists in each municipality of Extremadura. Thus, the percentage per thousand inhabitants of these Assets of Cultural Interest was calculated. On the other hand, the Natural Protected Areas: the layers of the Protected Natural Spaces of Extremadura (RENPEX) were obtained from the Extremambiente website of the Junta de Extremadura [47] the Special Protection Areas for Birds (ZEPA), of the Zones of Special Conservation (ZEC), RAMSAR areas, Biosphere Reserves, Private Areas of Ecological Interest, and National Parks. The percentage of protected natural areas in each tourist territory was calculated with these data.

As a result of this study, more than 30 variables were considered clear exponents of the territorial reality of northern Extremadura's tourist territories. All variables refer to years within the period 2000–2018, which was analyzed in this paper.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

2.4.1. Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

PCA is a factorial and multivariate analysis method that aims to treat a set of observed variables so that the data are reduced by creating a new set of dummy variables called components, which are the result of the combination of the original variables [48]. In this way, the first principal component is the combination that explains the highest variance, then the second-highest, and the following components explain progressively lesser proportions of the variance [49]. These components are classified by the amount of original variance it presents, making this method effective in synthesizing the data set's dimensionality. Then, different representative results are obtained; first, the more communities that indicate each variable's explanation factor, the greater the degree of explanation they will have in all the main components obtained in the analysis, the closer they will be to 1 [50].

Furthermore, PCA permits for the extraction of latent magnitudes of a set of variables and the shrinkage of the vector space, which is defined by an extensive set of original variables, to a minor number of factors independent of each other, which are ordered by explanatory power [37,48,51–53]. So, the objective is to extract a reduced set of variables

of components, or underlying factors that explain most of the variance from a set of p variables. Thus, the underlying factors are obtained through a correlation between the variables and calculated as a weighted sum. The factor i would be (1):

$$F_i = W_{i1 \times 1} + W_{i2}X_2 + \ldots + W_{ip}X_p \quad (1)$$

Thus, this method is appropriate to study complex structures in the application in research in the social and human sciences due to the reduction of a large amount of information [54]. Many authors [53,55] establish that data reduction methods are used to know which variables are important to carry out the analysis since the results of a first analysis show which influence the phenomenon and present little information [41].

PCA was used as a statistical process to study the correlations between the tourist, demographic, economic, and patrimonial variables to know which variables are significant and the explanation factor of the same in the different tourist territories of the north of Extremadura. In this study, more than 30 variables were chosen. The variables had to be objective and neutral to perform PCA so that collinearities or repetitions were avoided; thus, variables with a coefficient of less than 0.3 were eliminated because they were not statistically explanatory in the set. The variables finally used in the PCA provide the greatest significance and explanation of the whole. In this case, the final variables used numbered 14 (Table 2):

Table 2. Variables used in the principal component analysis (PCA) analysis.

Variables
Total travelers per 1000 inhabitants (TTravel)
Total overnight stays per 1000 inhabitants (TOverNight)
Total accommodation places per 1000 inhabitants (TAcom)
Total hotel beds per 1000 inhabitants (THotel)
Total rural places per 1000 inhabitants (TRural)
Total non-hotel beds per 1000 inhabitants (TNonhot)
Natural growth rate (2010–2018) (NatGrowth)
Aging rate (2010–2018) (AgingR)
Population growth rate (2010–2018) (PopGrowth)
Migration rate (2010–2018) (MigrationR)
Average income per capita (2018) (AverIncome)
Unemployment rate (2018) (UnemployR)
Assets of Cultural Interest per 1000 inhabitants (AssetsCuturalI)
Natural Protected Areas (%) (NatProtecA)

2.4.2. Pearson's Bivariate Correlations

The bivariate correlations were calculated with the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's bivariate correlation) to determine the degree of correlation [56]. Bivariate correlations are based on linear association; that is, when one variable increases, the values of the other variable can increase or decrease proportionally. Moreover, determine the degree of quantitative relationship of two in two variables and which group of the analyzed variables have the highest degree of co-dependence with each other. Furthermore, this index measures the degree of covariation between different linearly related variables, and values ranging between −1 and +1 are obtained. It is calculated with the following Formula (2):

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\Sigma z_x z_y}{N} \quad (2)$$

The magnitude of the variables' relationship is specified by the numerical value obtained from the coefficient, where the values are within the closed interval (−1, 1), but a value of −1 or +1. The sign of the coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship, this being direct or perfect positive, in the case of positive values (+1) or perfect negative (−1), in the case of negative values. Thus, the correlation between two variables X and Y

is a perfect positive when one increases the other, and it is a perfect negative when one increases the other decreases. So, its absolute value shows its strength, such that the highest values indicate that the dependency relationship between the two variables is tighter, in the sense of being stronger. On the other hand, if it presents a value of 0, it indicates that the two variables, X and Y, are independent or have no relationship between them [57,58].

3. Results

First, we discuss the results of the spatial analysis of tourism demand in 2018, Extremadura received 1,866,168 travelers, of which 581,992 travelers correspond with the study area (31%). The distribution is homogeneous with increases in the Easter months (March–April) and the summer months (June, July, and August). The demand of travelers by seasons of 36% in summer, 26% in spring, 24% in autumn, and 14% in winter. All this contrasts with the influx of travelers in the national territory that concentrates 41% in the summer months and is more seasonal, with a sun and beach tourism that concentrates its travelers in the summer months as opposed to more Extremadura tourism focused on other types of tourism such as rural, gastronomic, cultural, etc., that take place throughout the year and, especially, on weekends.

The map represents (Figure 3) total travelers, and by the season of the year per thousand inhabitants; thus, the tourist territories with a high number of travelers are the Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla with 6036 travelers per thousand inhabitants, and Valle del Jerte, La Vera with 4220 travelers per thousand inhabitants. In these two territories, the high number of travelers in the spring months stands out with 1520 and 1046 per thousand inhabitants, respectively. On the other hand, Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro has a small number of travelers, specifically, 856 travelers per thousand inhabitants.

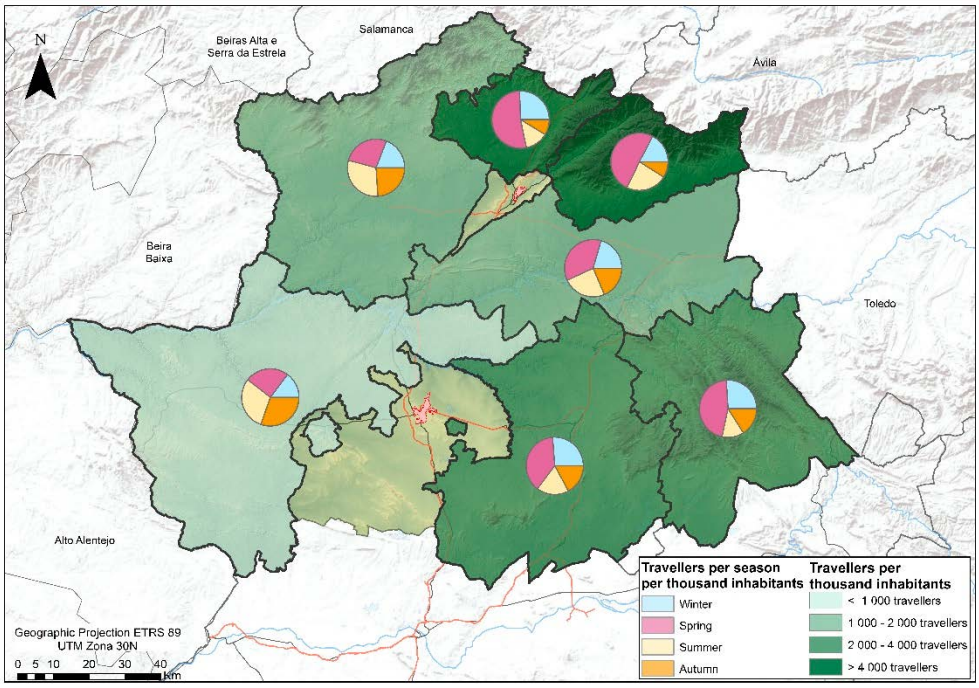


Figure 3. The number of travelers per season of the year per thousand inhabitants.

Regarding overnight stays in 2018, there were 3,438,641, of which 1,281,374 correspond to the analyzed area (37%). These overnight stays (37%), compared to travelers (31%) in northern Extremadura areas, are much higher; because overnight stays in rural tourism are higher than other types such as hotels that predominate in urban areas of Extremadura.

These overnight stays have the same distribution pattern as travelers, with 36% in the summer, 26% in the spring, 23% in the autumn, and 12% in the winter, and having a duration of the stay of 1.84% relative to weekend nights (Friday and Saturday). This

duration is lower than the national average of the stay's duration, which is 3.23 days, because this tourism is more for the weekend or holidays with a smaller number of stays. The map represents (Figure 4) the total number of overnight stays by the season of the year per thousand inhabitants; as previously mentioned, overnight stays have a similar pattern to travelers. The tourist territories with a high number of overnight stays are the Valle de Ambroz y Tierras de Granadilla with 17,469 overnight stays per thousand inhabitants and Valle del Jerte, La Vera with 10,529 overnight stays per thousand inhabitants, in this case, the high number of overnight stays is in summer in the two territories with 6757 and 5741 per thousand inhabitants, respectively. Similarly, Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro, has a small number of overnight stays, with just over 1500 per thousand inhabitants.

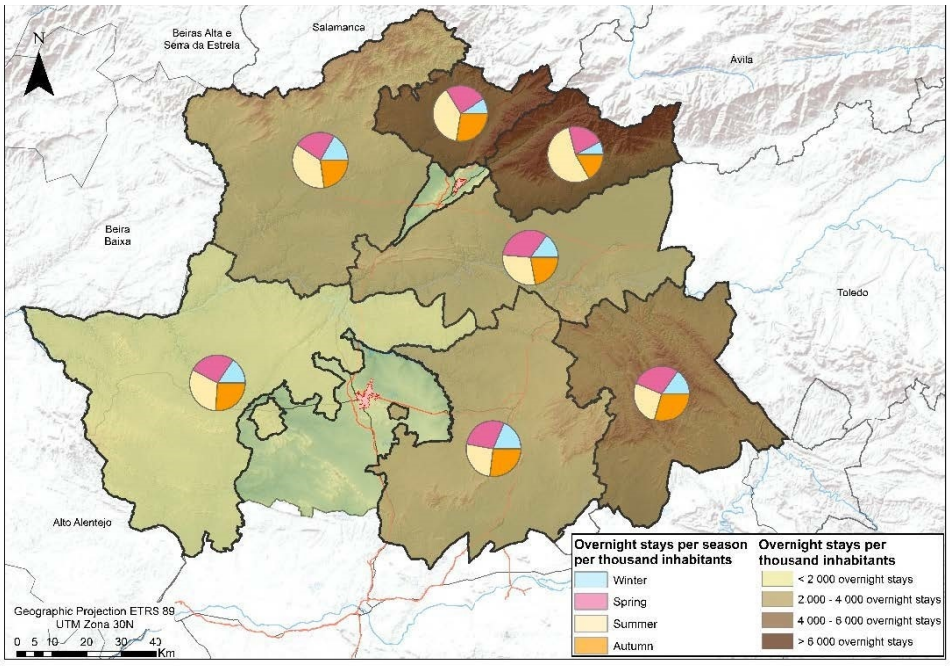


Figure 4. The number of overnight stays per season of the year per thousand inhabitants.

Second, the results obtained in the calculation of Pearson's bivariate correlations (Table 3) are presented to establish the relationship between the exposed variables and determine whether there is a homogeneous behavior in the tourist structures of rural areas. The Table shows that there are many highly significant correlations between some of the variables used. The greatest relationships (close to value 1) were extracted between the total overnight stays with the total number of travelers in each tourist territory and between the number of accommodation places and the places of tourist accommodation of a hotel type. In Extremadura, there is a typology of medium-sized hotels with 20–50 beds as opposed to most of the rural tourism houses that do not offer more than ten beds [35].

The relationship between the total number of travelers and the number of accommodation places (0.94) has significantly high values. In other words, the offer of places is being adapted to demand. In recent years, territories that are receiving travelers are where the offer of accommodation has expanded most, considering the full effect of demand and because most of this offer is private facilities that do not invest in new accommodation but consider it to be a growing sector in that territory.

To a lesser extent, but also with positive relationships, other correlations stand out, such as the variables of the squares of tourist accommodation of a hotel type with the total number of travelers and the total number of overnight stays and the number of places with the total number of travelers and overnight stays. For the same reasons, a greater offer of hotel accommodation capacity has a positive effect on a greater number of travelers and on increasing their stays.

Table 3. Pearson's bivariate correlations.

Correlations	TTravel	TOverNight	TAcom	THotel	TRural	TNonhot	NatGrowth	AgingR	PopGrowth	MigrationR	AverIncome	UnemployR	AssetsCuturalI	NatProtecA
TTravel	1	0.98	0.94	0.72	0.76	0.91	0.13	0.65	0.59	0.59	0.14	−0.55	−0.70	0.11
TOverNight	0.98	1	0.92	0.61	0.72	0.93	0.26	0.56	0.67	0.54	0.18	−0.57	−0.62	0.19
TAcom	0.94	0.92	1	0.55	0.93	0.98	0.29	0.44	0.48	0.29	0.04	−0.79	−0.60	0.24
THotel	0.72	0.61	0.55	1	0.42	0.40	−0.50	0.92	0.25	0.80	0.14	0.01	−0.73	−0.21
TRural	0.76	0.72	0.93	0.42	1	0.88	0.24	0.29	0.19	0.02	−0.15	−0.89	−0.44	0.27
TNonhot	0.91	0.93	0.98	0.40	0.88	1	0.46	0.31	0.58	0.24	0.09	−0.82	−0.53	0.30
NatGrowth	0.13	0.26	0.29	−0.50	0.24	0.46	1	−0.53	0.58	−0.39	0.32	−0.49	0.01	0.53
AgingR	0.65	0.56	0.44	0.92	0.29	0.31	−0.53	1	0.15	0.73	−0.12	0.07	−0.62	−0.43
PopGrowth	0.59	0.67	0.48	0.25	0.19	0.58	0.58	0.15	1	0.52	0.76	−0.11	−0.60	0.29
MigrationR	0.59	0.54	0.29	0.80	0.02	0.24	−0.39	0.73	0.52	1	0.47	0.31	−0.66	−0.20
AverIncome	0.14	0.18	0.04	0.14	-0.15	0.09	0.32	−0.12	0.76	0.47	1	0.30	−0.40	0.41
UnemployR	−0.55	−0.57	−0.79	0.01	−0.89	−0.82	−0.49	0.07	−0.11	0.31	0.30	1	0.12	−0.33
AssetsCuturalI	−0.70	−0.62	−0.60	−0.73	−0.44	−0.53	0.01	−0.62	−0.60	−0.66	−0.40	0.12	1	0.29
NatProtecA	0.11	0.19	0.24	−0.21	0.27	0.30	0.53	−0.43	0.29	−0.20	0.41	−0.33	0.29	1

In the context variables, the relationships are significant, but not with those defining values. Positive demographic variables such as population growth, birth rate, or migratory movements are correlated with travelers and overnight stays (greater than 0.6), offer of accommodation places (0.48) and especially non-hotel accommodation places (0.58), followed by hoteliers (0.25), and rural tourism (0.19). Moreover, and more determinants between income and population growth (0.76). Thus, afterward, the mapping of the PCA's results will show that the territories with the highest number of travelers and overnight stays have the least risk of depopulation and have increased their income.

On the contrary, there is a high negative trend (higher than −0.8) between the accommodation places (especially rural and non-hotel accommodation) with the unemployment rate. If it is positively related, although with a not very determining factor, the offer of hotel places decreases unemployment. Without being repetitive, these are larger accommodation facilities that offer a greater number of jobs (e.g., cleaning workers and waiters for food services) than rural tourism houses, which tend to be family businesses with 1–2 employees, or youth hostels or camping sites with minor additional services (e.g., catering and cleaning, which, in many cases, are carried out by travelers themselves).

Finally, and concerning resources, it should be noted that cultural resources (e.g., Assets of Cultural Interest such as historical centers and unique buildings) do not positively affect the increase in travelers, demographics, and income; these variables are negatively correlated. On the contrary, the presence of protected natural resources (e.g., parks and reserves) does positively affect these variables. The travelers who visit the north of Cáceres demand natural spaces and lodges in those territories where there are many hectares or protected figures of this typology.

Next, in PCA analysis, values known as communalities are obtained for each variable [38,41,49]. The communality expresses the proportion of the total variance of the variable x that is established with the remaining $p-1$ variable observed and extracted with m factors, where m is the number of factors accumulated. If m is equal to the total number of variables, communality is equal to 1 [59].

Table 4 shows how all the variables have values greater than 0.587 to 0.997, which shows a high explanation of the whole. The variables that refer to the total number of accommodation places, the non-hotel beds, and total travelers per thousand inhabitants provide the best explanation, as well as the unemployment rate, overnight stays per thousand inhabitants, and the population growth rate. These six variables have weights greater than 0.93.

Table 4. Communalities.

Variables	Initial	Extraction
Total accommodation places per 1000 inhabitants (TAcom)	1	0.997
Total non-hotel beds per 1000 inhabitants (TNonhot)	1	0.989
Total travelers per 1000 inhabitants (TTravel)	1	0.985
Unemployment rate (2018) (UnemployR)	1	0.982
Total overnight stays per 1000 inhabitants (TOverNight)	1	0.94
Population growth rate (2010–2018) (PopGrowth)	1	0.94
Total rural places per 1000 inhabitants (TRural)	1	0.927
Aging rate (2010–2018) (AgingR)	1	0.927
Average income per capita (2018) (AverIncome)	1	0.927
Total hotel beds per 1000 inhabitants (THotel)	1	0.926
Migration rate (2010–2018) (MigrationR)	1	0.925
Natural growth rate (2010–2018) (NatGrowth)	1	0.874
Assets of Cultural Interest per 1000 inhabitants (AssetsCuturalI)	1	0.757
Natural Protected Areas (%) (NatProtecA)	1	0.587

In other words, the variables that define the tourism sector are the number of places, travelers, and overnight stays, so the analysis will determine where the areas with the highest success rate in this economic sector are located—all of them with values higher than

0.94. Regarding the type of accommodation, the offer of places in non-hotel accommodation (camping, youth hostels, and apartments) has a greater explanation, followed by rural tourism and, finally, hotel places, with values in all cases very high, from 0.82 to 0.98 in hotels.

It will also be possible to determine if they are favoring the growth or maintenance of the population and the generation of employment because these two variables have a high explanatory value. The demographic variables such as the aging rate and migratory balances also have a high explanatory value; these variables define whether the population is growing or decreasing.

As the context variables are closely related to the demographic and economic variables, it is evident that the choice of variables was correct as they all have a high explanatory value. Its relationship with population growth or maintenance will be possible because population growth (0.94) and, to a lesser extent, influential, migratory balances, and the aging rate both appear with 0.92.

Furthermore, in the economic variables such as employment generation and income, both have a high explanatory value (over 0.92). They are used to determine whether areas with high economic capacity have better developed the tourism offer.

The variables with the least explanatory factor are the cultural (0.75) and natural resources (0.58) that complement the offer of accommodation, such as the Assets of Cultural Interest and natural protected areas. Next, we verified that these variables have not been so decisive for developing tourist infrastructure and increased income.

Furthermore, the main components were obtained with their total variance explained (Table 5). Considering the percentage of explained variance, the first three components are the most demonstrative of the model (90.586%). This percentage is of high value due to the homogeneity of the northern rural territories of Extremadura and to the fact that the tourist, demographic, social, and economic characteristics are similar. Furthermore, the variables used show the model of tourism offer and resources of each territory. These models are correlated with demographic and economic variables, which is why they indicate their importance in their structures. The eigenvalues associated with the initial components are usually high, but decrease as they are extracted, reaching a point where they are low and similar to each other. It should be taken into account that the first five components explain 100% of the accumulated variance where the first component has a high explanation value (49.06%). Due to its high explanatory value and the variables that condition it, this first factor defines the tourist sector in the rural areas of the province of Cáceres.

Table 5. Total variance explained.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	**% of Variance**	**% Accumulated**
1	6.869	49.065	49.065
2	3.484	24.886	73.951
3	2.329	16.634	90.586
4	0.751	5.367	95.953
5	0.413	2.948	98.901
6	0.154	1.099	100.000

In Table 6, the variables' explanatory factors were recorded in Component 1, and the tourist territories are represented on a map similar to Figure 5.

Table 6. Factor weights of the variables in the first component.

Variables	Component 1
Total travelers per 1000 inhabitants (TTravel)	0989
Total overnight stays per 1000 inhabitants (TOverNight)	0967
Total accommodation places per 1000 inhabitants (TAcom)	0949
Total non-hotel beds per 1000 inhabitants (TNonhot)	0921
Total rural places per 1000 inhabitants (TRural)	0788
Total hotel beds per 1000 inhabitants (THotel)	0706
Population growth rate (2010–2018) (PopGrowth)	0642
Aging rate (2010–2018) (AgingR)	0597
Migration rate (2010–2018) (MigrationR)	0559
Average income per capita (2018) (AverIncome)	0229
Natural growth rate (2010–2018) (NatGrowth)	0199
Natural Protected Areas (%) (NatProtecA)	0145
Unemployment rate (2018) (UnemployR)	−0565
Assets of Cultural Interest per 1000 inhabitants (AssetsCuturalI)	−0758

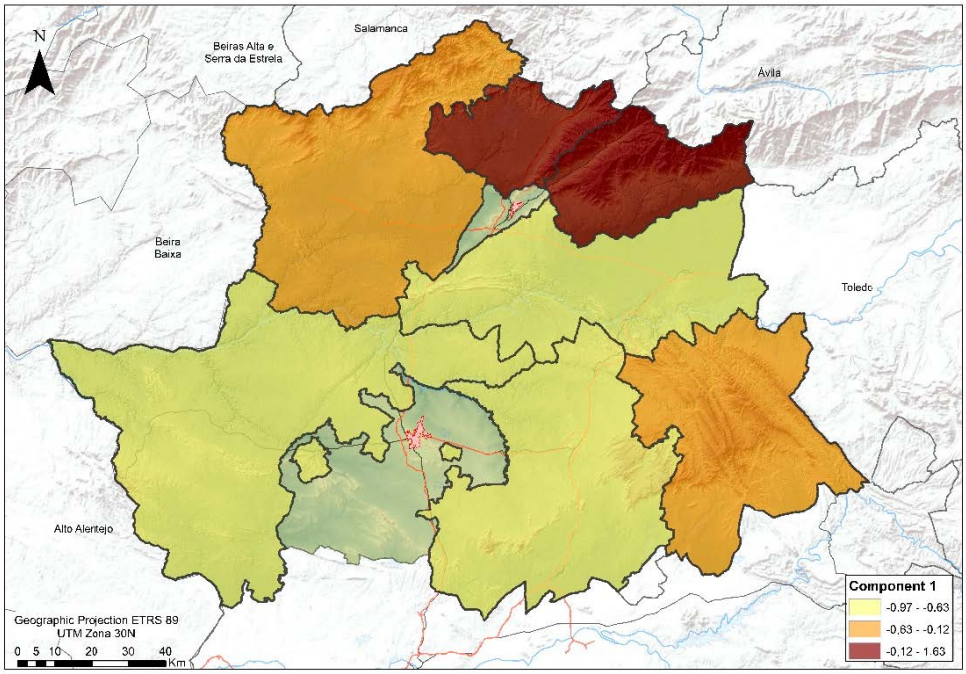


Figure 5. Tourist territories with respect to Component 1.

Finally, the variables that influence Component 1 present 49.06% of the explained variance and define our work. This component interrelates most of the variables related to tourism with positive values.

Its positive substructure is represented by the variables with the highest meanings: the total number of travelers, overnight stays, and total accommodation places, all with a higher explanation factor 0.94. Concerning the type of accommodation, the offer of non-hotel accommodation (camping, youth hostels, and apartments) is more decisive than the rural tourism houses and, to a lesser extent, the hotel offer. Thus, in the data analyzed, there were many non-hotel accommodation places, 9388 (40.6%), in a total of 154 (16.2%) establishments; for rural accommodation places, there were 7277 (31.5%) located in 603 (63.4%) rural establishments; there were 6463 (27.9%) in a total of 194 (20.4%) establishments of this type.

In rural areas, the offer of accommodation with a large number of places, such as camping or youth hostels, has a greater positive impact on the number of travelers and overnight stays than other types of establishment (such as rural houses), which are typologies of establishments with a lower capacity [35] and in these areas, the demand for

hotels is not decisive. There is a smaller number of this type of establishment because rural tourism travelers demand contact with nature and an offer integrated into the landscape, as well as being, in most cases, family tourism that also wants complementary leisure offers to be included as they exist in the majority of camping sites or youth hostels.

Following these variables, also correlated, although to a lesser value, we find demographic variables whose rates refer to the period from 2010 to 2018 and, to a lesser extent, with migratory balances, the rate of old age and natural growth. In these territories, slight population growth and/or maintenance occur, which may be favored by the new economic income that the tourist sector is generating due to the high value of travelers and overnight stays. However, it is still not enough to stop the aging of all the municipalities in these territories (especially those with less than 500 inhabitants) or to make the economic income much higher than in other territories of Extremadura.

All these variables are correlated with the tourist territories of Valle del Jerte, La Vera, and Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla. These territories are mountain areas, with high landscape value with numerous banks, gorges, natural routes, etc., and in some of them, this sector is complementary to more productive agriculture than in other rural territories of Extremadura. Thus, areas like Jerte with the importance of cherry, La Vera with tobacco and paprika, and Ambroz with wood.

Tourism contributes to the economic growth and slight maintenance of the population, and, in addition, it is being complementary to an integral offer related to the small agro-industrial sector of the products previously mentioned.

Another aspect that stands out is these spaces' location, which benefits from their proximity to Madrid's urban agglomeration, the main pole of rural tourism, and nature travelers in Extremadura. All these territories are in the range of maximum travel time of 2–3 h and favor the high number of travelers from this origin when they are weekend stays [35]. When the stays are longer, the travelers' origin is already extended and is more related to the summer offer.

Conversely, in the negative substructure of Component 1, Assets of Cultural Interest per 1000 inhabitants and the percentage of protected natural areas appear with values higher than 0.75 and, with a lower value, the unemployment rate in 2018. These variables are correlated with the Tourist territories of the Monfragüe; Trujillo, Miajadas, Montánchez, and Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro. These are territories where tourism is not, in global figures and concerning their population's size, a determining factor. Territories located in peneplain areas do not present such attractive natural resources as the mountain areas and are not highly valued by tourists, especially in the summer periods. However, they have some important tourist enclaves, such as Trujillo, for its high heritage value, or the natural protected areas of Monfragüe or the Tajo Internacional—this does not have enough of an effect on resources to encourage an increase in the offer of accommodation and, consequently, in the number of potential travelers and overnight stays.

There is a third intermediate group in Component 1 formed by the tourist territories of Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Valle del Alagón, and Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara; these territories have characteristics of both the positive and negative variables of Component 1. These territories have a greater number of travelers and overnight stays than the territories of the negative value. However, they are still scarce for their population and generate synergies that produce positive effects on demographic and economic variables. With a less competitive agricultural offer and not as related to tourism as in territories with a positive component such as El Jerte or La Vera, very old territories have poorer accessibility as a negative factor that negatively influences the increase in tourism offer. Areas with great natural and scenic wealth located in the mountains such as the Sierra de Gata, Hurdes, or Villuercas, but their distance (more than 4 h in many cases) from travelers' main source is Madrid, negatively impact the increase in travelers. For example, its location in Hurdes and Gata on the Portuguese border does not achieve the expected positive effects, and international tourism from Portugal's neighboring country should be encouraged.

4. Discussion

Based on the results secured and discussed previously, our hypothesis is verified; in other words, demographic, economic, and territorial characteristics are related to tourism development in the north of Extremadura.

Through PCA, it can be appreciated that different components represent different territorial realities; therefore, in the calculations of this analysis, the result has been a very well defined first component. This component's positive substructure directly links the total number of travelers, overnight stays, and total accommodation places with those rural areas in the northeast of the region [60,61]. This is the case of the tourist territory of Valle del Jerte and La Vera that has numerous rivers and geomorphological and landscape structures that receive travelers especially in the summer months, in addition to tasting the gastronomy of the area, where there are resources such as paprika or cherry. It is also the case with the Denomination of Origin of Paprika de la Vera and the impressive and hardly comparable spectacle of the Cherry Blossom. In both territories, rural tourism and agrotourism predominate given the conditions in the area; therefore, the number of rural tourist accommodation has currently increased to meet this sector's demand [62–64]. On the other hand, and with similar characteristics, the tourist territory Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla with a great tourist attraction as it is a mountain area, with large forests and river banks, with Roman enclaves such as Cáparra or the Jewish quarter of Hervás. It is necessary to mention historical heritage sites such as the case of Granadilla, located in the municipality of Zarza de Granadilla.

This development of tourism is also related to demographic variables that are less regressive than in the other tourist territories of Extremadura as the maintenance of the population or a lesser loss, migratory balances, or natural growth, although these two to a lesser extent, and with greater wealth because of the higher income compared to other territories. It should be noted that, in terms of the offer, it should be borne in mind that what influences most is the non-hotel accommodation sector and, to a lesser extent, rural tourism and, finally, hotels. The presence of camping sites and youth hostels with many places also generates many jobs (cleaning, leisure, catering in the accommodation) and a high number of overnight stays because they tend to be more occupied in the summer seasons [65,66]. This produces greater positive effects than other types of accommodation such as rural houses, more family-run businesses with fewer places and complementary offers, and hotels that are not so in demand in these natural enclaves, as tourism in greater contact with nature is preferred [67,68].

Thus, resources with a protected figure (heritage or natural) are not closely related to a high number of travelers. However, if it is relevant that these territories are located in mountain areas, the presence in these valleys of numerous rivers and gorges is a great tourist attraction with a water resource. However, the most influence between some territories with great natural resources of water and mountains presents greater numbers of travelers, and overnight stays are near Madrid, the main source of rural tourism travelers in Extremadura. The accessibility to Spain's capital is a territorial variable and a determining factor in rural tourism [69–71].

In opposition, the territories with the negative values of component 1 are determined by their location in the dry areas of the peninsula, the unemployment rate, and Assets of Cultural Interest per 1000 inhabitants of territories. Furthermore, they do not present relevant values in travelers, overnight stays, and accommodation offers. These are the territories where tourism is not sufficiently developed. These territories are Monfragüe, Trujillo, Miajadas, Montánchez, and Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro.

There is an intermediate structure, territories located in the border areas with Portugal and Castilla-La Mancha, which have a higher demand for travelers than those located in dry areas and with regressive demographic variables (very pronounced aging and worrying demographic losses). Moreover, these regions have landscape resources related to mountains and water of great value. Therefore, they have many travelers but not enough to present such dynamic demographic and economic variables as the positive

territories in component 1—they are Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Valle del Alagón, and Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara. The latter territory was declared a Geopark in 2011 [72] because it has geological features of special relevance and rarity; the Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe was also declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, which is located in this area [73]. In both territories, numerous routes can be made through the mountains surrounding them, and they also have resources related to nature and water (e.g., riverbanks and natural gorges). Although some of these territories are located close to Portugal (Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Valle del Alagón), they have not managed to attract a high number of foreign tourists, as can be seen from the volume of international travelers in these territories and thus could present a high numbers of travelers like the mountain areas of the NE region that have a high demand for the proximity to Madrid. In addition, these tourist territories have municipalities with very old populations and with less entrepreneurial initiative to promote new leisure alternatives, the more obsolete communication system (territories located far from highways such as the Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara) and the more peripheral location of these territories to the capital of Spain is proving detrimental to the development of this sector.

The impact of tourism on different rural areas is not homogeneous [74]. In this article, we show that the influence of factors such as location, accessibility, and proximity to the capital of Spain (the main focus of natural and cultural tourism travelers in Extremadura) [71,75–77], the tourist attractions related to water and mountain resources or the complementarity of the tourist offer are determining factors for the success of projects [14]. Several authors establish that the existence of optimum accessibility and proximity to big cities is necessary for the influx of a high number of tourists, such as the influence of the existence of the high-speed railway on the Costa Dorada in Cataluña [71] or the accessibility of land transport infrastructures in the community of Castilla-La Mancha [77].

In addition to the existence of natural resources related to water and landscape in mountain areas, the increase in non-hotel accommodation such as campsites and to a lesser extent rural houses, and in some territories the complementarity with the exploitation of their agricultural resources has encouraged the increase of travelers and overnight stays in these areas.

The investment in rural tourism is not the solution for all rural areas, because there are territories where their resources are less attractive (e.g., peneplain areas, more adverse climate in summer); these territories are located in less accessible and far from the cities with a high flow of travelers, other activities do not complement their offer of cultural heritage or protected space, and therefore, the strategies of these territories have to be designed to complement this activity with the development of others such as a more powerful agro-industrial sector.

5. Conclusions

Extremadura is one of the communities with the greatest increase in traveler rates and overnight stays in recent years, but these values are much lower than national values. This is due to several problems: that Extremadura has areas with an older population, and the emigration of young people leaving these areas for the big cities. As a result, it is necessary to include new economic activities so that municipalities are not abandoned, as has happened in other autonomous communities of Spain, such as Castilla y León or Aragón.

The development of tourism is not the same in all the tourist territories in the north of Extremadura; this is due to the demographic, social, and economic structures and characteristics. Thus, in this work, the objectives and the starting hypothesis were verified through the methodology used.

In this way, there are territories with a high level of tourist development, such as the territories in the northeast of Extremadura, specifically in the Valle del Jerte, La Vera, and the Valle del Ambroz, Tierras de Granadilla. These territories are characterized by a wide range of non-hotel and rural accommodation due to the great natural and scenic

attraction (for its natural resources of mountain and water), culture, and proximity to Madrid's capital.

Other territories such as Sierra de Gata, Las Hurdes, Alagón, and Geoparque Villuercas-Ibores-Jara, which also have a great natural resource of water and mountains, have lesser development mainly due to the distance to big cities like Madrid. Moreover, these areas have not succeeded in attracting tourists from neighboring Portugal, and these territories have not diversified their tourist offer with a complimentary offer from the agricultural sector.

Finally, for other territories located in the peneplain, more dry areas and that are not optimally promoting their cultural and natural heritage, they do not get to attract a large number of travelers as is the case of Trujillo, Miajadas, Montánchez, Monfragüe, and Tajo Internacional, Sierra de San Pedro. This is also because Extremadura receives the highest number of travelers in summer; some of these areas are less attractive for the traveler as they do not have so many high water and mountain resources. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of this crisis will vary in the different rural territories depending on their dependence on the tourism sector and the tourism model that the territories have developed, and the tourist profile in which they have specialized. It is expected that rural and mountain destinations based on natural and cultural resources will benefit from increased demand. These territories can offer a product with the main characteristics demanded, such as individual accommodation, open and wide spaces, and territorial quality and service supply.

We intend to continue this study by analyzing newly updated data to check whether the trends studied are maintained in future work. In addition, we intend to investigate the impact of the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourist territories, which will be the first study to adapt to the new tourism models (e.g., the number of travelers, their accommodation preferences, the duration of stays).

One of our study's strengths is that it proposes a methodology that can be replicated in other rural areas to determine how variables (e.g., the different types of accommodation, the supply of natural resources of water and mountain) complement tourism offers related to the agricultural sector, or the proximity to urban areas that are positively or negatively influencing the attraction of travelers and contribute to the maintenance of the population in rural areas. For these reasons, quality tourism must continue to be promoted, especially in those territories where tourism cannot yet consider an economic sector to become its engine of development and should be as complementary income to the traditional agrarian ones, or even compliment them with leisure activities. For that, the involvement is necessary of public administrations and the private sector in new investments and improvements in the sector, very much related to an improvement of accessibility in less developed areas (boosting of high-speed rail, improvement of fast tracks in mountain areas in the west of the region). Its inhabitants must commit themselves to the maintenance and conservation of the heritage and natural resources of their region because the main incentive for most tourists traveling to Extremadura are these resources.

Author Contributions: A.N.M. and N.R.R. conceived and designed the experiments; A.N.M. and N.R.R. performed the experiments, analyzed the data, and contributed analysis tools; A.N.M. and N.R.R. supervised the article. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research has had the support and funding of the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), European Social Fund (ESF) and Government of Extremadura (Spain) funded this research and the APC to the DESOSTE research group (Grant number GR18052) and with PhD scholarship of the Fernando Valhondo Calaff Foundation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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