

## Article

# An Analysis of the Demand for Tourist Accommodation to Travel with Dogs in Spain

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**Abstract:** Pets, generally, and dogs have become an essential part of families. This situation implies that people consider their dogs when planning family holidays, excluding moving to a second home. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of dog owners according to the demand for tourist establishments where they can stay with their pets. A total of 1391 dog owners' surveys were collected and analyzed, and various covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was developed to determine the suitability of the measurement model, the second-order factors, and the relationships between the different constructs. The main results of this research show that the motivations for traveling with the dog, the limitations this encounters, and, above all, the attachment that the family has with its pet significantly influence the choice of accommodation. The findings of this research will help hotel managers with the design of policies that meet the needs of families travelling with their dogs. The analysis of dog owners' motivations for choosing tourist accommodation due to their attachment and the limitations for travelling allows us to obtain more accurate information.

**Keywords:** destination; accommodation; pets; motivations; Spain



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## 1. Introduction

The number of families that own a pet, specifically a dog, is growing in Spain, currently standing at about 5 million families with an estimated canine census of about 7.5 million living in Spanish houses, representing approximately 24% of households. Pets are understood as animals that live with people at home, are not served as food, and have a name by which they are known [1]. Among these pets, dogs occupy the most notable place. Pets, especially dogs, change and improve the lives of the families they live with, increasing their well-being [2,3], especially older people. Thus, dogs become an essential part of the family itself, and the interdependence between them and their families means that dog ownership affects the family spending structure, as each dog has an average cost of about EUR 1200 per year [4].

All these data support the importance of the role that dogs have in human life [5–7], and this implies that the planning of family vacations can be influenced by dogs, as occurs when a family has children, commonly young ones [3,8], especially in the case of family trips and holidays that do not include the moving of the family to a second home or those located in the same country. Additionally, dogs are essential travel companions [9], so activities that were usually considered human-friendly are now also considered suitable for non-human travelers [10] because dogs consume goods and services during their vacation trips [10,11].

According to previous research [12], a change is taking place in the way people interact with dogs that is of decisive importance for tourist activity, affecting destinations

and especially the accommodation of families with their pets. The number of destinations that are defined as dog-friendly in order to attract travelers with their pets is increasing [9]. On the other hand, it is essential to study where and how the pet stays with its family at the tourist destination. Thus, the need to look for accommodation in a destination adapted for dogs, especially a hotel, is essential. In this sense, this accommodation must choose whether to allow dogs in the establishment. This decision can involve both positive aspects (it attracts families travelling with their pets) and negative (some tourists do not want to stay in a place that allows dogs).

Traveling with pets is an endeavor that is becoming more and more relevant nowadays, which leads to the fact that there have not been many investigations carried out in this field of research. In the scientific literature, we find research conducted in different places, such as Taiwan [13], China [14], Spain [15], or the United States [3], although this research has been focused on different areas of knowledge. Mainly, the studies that can be found are focused on understanding the decision process that leads pet owners to include their pets in their tourism plans and activities, determining the motivations that lead them to make this decision, and their predisposition [13,15,16]. On the other hand, other research focuses on understanding the pet travel experience at all stages of the process, before, during, and after travel, and on understanding pet owners' perceptions of travel, providing useful information on the positive and negative aspects reported by people who travel with their pets [3,14]. Finally, other studies are focused on the sociodemographic analysis and predisposition to travel with pets [16], on the limitations encountered [3] and in pet owners' willingness to pay more for accommodations [17].

That is to say, different studies have contributed to showing the growing importance of different types of dog-related motivations in tourist choices. They have also shown the influence that the limitations that accommodations give to traveling with pets has. The study combines the influence of the set of motivations (of people and dogs) and the limitations (specific, interpersonal, and structural) on the choice of destination by families with dogs. Furthermore, it adds, as a mediating construct, the degree of family attachment to the pet, a fundamental variable generally relegated. This constitutes one of the main contributions of this study, since it allows us to delve deeper into the mediating role of attachment, an aspect that has been little developed in other research.

## 2. Literature Review

### 1.1. Travelling with Dogs

Historically, vacationers seldom brought their pets along on trips. Presently, numerous owners consider their pets as integral family members, providing companionship, love, and affection [14]. More and more families are travelling with their dogs, especially during holidays. This implies the need to address the study of the importance of dogs in the tourist experience itself [18]. Thus, it is necessary to analyze the influence that dogs have on the planning of the trip and the consumption of certain goods and services in destination places for families [19]. Consequently, the role of dogs as consumers would have to be analyzed [20], both in their place of origin and in the tourist destination.

Several studies have been carried out in different countries in order to analyze how owners travel with their dogs. Among these, the following can be highlighted: Australia [5,21], Canada [22], China [9,23], United States [3,6], United Kingdom [24–26], Spain [15], Taiwan [7,19,27], and Turkey [18]. This research aims to provide the results of a study carried out in Spain on this subject.

All these studies show the need for the scientific literature to analyze this type of trip to detect the pros and cons of travelling with dogs, considering both demand and supply. It is also necessary to understand the needs, desires, and limitations of “non-human travelers” and their relationship in destinations with other travelers, both human and “non-human” [28]. This implies studying the relationship between people who travel with dogs and their interrelation with those without dogs. That means analyzing the division between guests with dogs and guests without dogs (focused on hotel establishments) [1].

An in-depth analysis is needed in hotel establishments about the possibility of creating dog-friendly spaces [10] and, in general terms, researching the creation of new market niches focused on this type of traveler [10]. Thus, hotels, restaurants, or shopping centers have emerged that offer products and services for dogs [3] and, consequently, dog admission.

However, there are currently many barriers to travelling with a dog, notably the lack of accommodation [22]. In this sense, it may also be an appropriate policy for hotel accommodation to accept dogs, augmenting revenue per hotel room [1,3], an increase that could be called “pet-fee” [1] and that would serve to pay the additional cost of cleaning the room where the dog was staying [1]. Thus, the accommodation of dogs becomes one of the critical elements in the development of a destination to attract this type of tourist, due to the search for the emotional experience that all tourists who travel with their dogs want to have [20]. All this is without prejudice to the fact that tourist destinations and places of residence themselves must adapt tourist infrastructures for accessible tourism, which is sometimes carried out accompanied by a dog, as would be the case for those people who are accompanied by their guide dogs [29].

Despite this, perhaps the most significant element of the debate that destinations may confront is determining whether dogs, either from tourists or from the local community itself, can or cannot enter beaches during the summer period and/or swimming hours. In this sense, [30] four factors that delimit the dimensions of this debate can be pointed out: first, compliance with the rules and regulations concerning this activity; second, the perception about the behavior of the dog and the control that the owner has over it; third, the rights that the rules grant to dogs; and fourth, the relationship between the rights of dogs and the necessary conservation of wild species that inhabit coastal areas.

All these aspects imply the need to formulate a series of characteristics that define this type of traveler. Thus, among these, the following can be highlighted [10]: first, dogs do not participate in the decision making of where and how to travel; second, dogs do not participate in deciding what goods and services are going to be consumed at the destination; third, dogs do not pay for their travel; and fourth, dogs do not show a level of satisfaction at the destination, but the evaluation of this corresponds exclusively to humans, an assessment that will also be highly influenced by the well-being of their dog during the trip. This type of tourist finds, in the well-being of their dog during their vacations, a fundamental element to determine their loyalty or not towards a certain destination [23].

## *1.2. Motivations*

### *1.2.1. Human Motivations*

Studying tourists’ motivation to travel to a specific destination is crucial for analyzing travel plans, especially when travelling with a dog. Thus, Carr and Cohen [5] point out the following motivations for travelling with a dog: first, the dog is a member of the family; second, the fun is greater when families travel with their dog; third, families value their vacations better when they travel with their dog; fourth, when travelling with a dog, the family ensures more entertainment and an excuse to carry out activities in which the whole family participates; and fifth, despite the higher cost of the trip, the family has the perception that leaving the dog in their usual place of residence also entails a significant economic cost. Owners with a focus on human–pet relationships were inclined to travel with their pets, driven by perceived benefits for the pets, attachment to their pets, and the desire for compensation and reciprocation [31].

### *1.2.2. Dog Motivations*

When deciding to make a trip and planning it, a family that wants to travel with their dog must analyze the conditions of the destination, especially the accommodation, and verify that they meet their dog’s needs. An exception is a trip to a second home located in the same country, provided that it is undergone with an owned vehicle. In this sense, the existence of leisure activities in which family members can participate, including the

dog, is essential [2], and becomes a decisive aspect when choosing between one destination or another.

When a family plans their holidays thinking that their dog will accompany them, the primary motivations would be the following [5]: first, the possibility that the dog acquires new skills, reinforcing its socialization; second, the change of environment for a few days can imply greater happiness for the dog; third, the anxiety of the animal when separated from its family during the holidays is avoided; and fourth, the family think their dog also needs a holiday.

### *1.3. Family Attachment to the Dog*

People who own dogs go to the hospital less often, have lower blood pressure, and are less likely to suffer from heart disease [5]. Likewise, the dog plays the role of social facilitator [5], influencing the socialization of its owner by promoting contact with other owners and/or people interested in the canine world. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the number of families that have a dog [5] who would be willing to spend more on their holidays to be able to take their dogs with them, ensuring that their dog has greater comfort in their vacations [5]. On the other hand, concerning the previous statements, it is necessary to analyze the attachment to the dog that families have, to understand better the behavior that families have regarding trips [19], or even their willingness to pay more to travel with their dog [3,22].

There are some emotional bonds that make up and identify the relationship between the dog and its human family [11]. These links would be the following: first, having a dog favorably influences the health of the owners; second, no family is complete until there is a dog in it; third, families often bring their dog when visiting friends and/or relatives; fourth, dog owners consider that they should have the same rights and/or privileges as family members; fifth, most owners have a photo of their dog in their home and/or office; and sixth, dog owners consider pets to be more loyal than many people. Consequently, dogs become a part of the family [28].

Seven aspects to analyze in the relationship between the owner and their dog can be identified [32]: (1) symbiotic relationship; (2) dog-oriented self-concept; (3) anthropomorphism; (4) activity/youth; (5) boundaries; (6) specialty purchases; and (7) willingness to adapt. Thus, the possibility of travelling with a dog is within the scope of so-called specialty purchases. The emotional attachment between the dog and the family is essential for determining the tourist destination [9]. Pets, as domesticated animals, and fundamentally dogs, establish a powerful emotional bond with their owners and become part of their nuclear family [18], which determinates the family's choice of a tourist destination.

### *1.4. Limitations for Travelling with Dogs*

Travelling with a dog entails a series of limitations for families, both in terms of travel and regarding the destination. The use of an owned vehicle for travel removes quite a lot of limitations in terms of travel, and if the destination is the second home of the family, located in the same country, most of these limitations disappear. From the preceding, it can be deduced that travelling with the dog implies, for the family, the need for more significant planning and an increase in the budget of the trip [24], since dogs need other types of services than humans [28]. These limitations can be divided into three large groups [7]. The first would correspond to the inherent limitation to each dog, such as if the animal does not like to travel, is scared or tends to get dizzy when moving, or tires easily due to its age or physical condition. The second group comprises the dog's interpersonal limitations, its ability to socialize with other people or dogs. The third includes structural limitations, such as the economic cost that taking the dog on the trip might entail or the difficulties that taking the dog to a destination that is not dog-friendly imply for the family.

The use of public transport to travel to the destination tends to be complicated if the family travels with their dog, especially if the means of transport is a plane [3], so the majority of families travelling with their dog opt for an owned vehicle as a means of travel.

Likewise, families will choose national destinations when travelling with their dog, thus avoiding problems with the health regulations of the country of destination and the means of transport being used [3].

#### Limitations for Travelling with Dogs

As stated in the last section, families confront numerous barriers to travel with their dog [11,19], accommodation being one of the most important. Although the number of hotel establishments that offer the possibility for families to stay with their dog is gradually increasing, mainly in destinations that define themselves as being dog-friendly [6,10], their number is still scarce [22]. Additionally, it is typical for the price per room to be higher in those establishments that allow dogs, justifying the higher price by the increase in the cost of cleaning per room [1,9], thus giving rise to what has been called “pet-fee” [1].

However, despite the penalizing nature of this supplement, those people who show a stronger emotional bond with their dog would be willing to pay it [22]. In this sense, dog owners would be willing to pay more if the hotel allowed them to stay with their dogs [3]. Likewise, owners who travel with their dogs tend to stay in hotels for more extended periods than the average traveler and show greater loyalty towards the accommodation [3]. Similar results have been obtained by other studies, suggesting the existence of strong loyalty towards certain destinations and accommodations with the consideration of dog-friendliness by families that travel with their dogs [6], making the level of satisfaction of these families, regarding accommodations that allow dogs, very high [3]; however, except for composites [5], the number of accommodations that allow pets is still low [6].

Dog-friendly hotels are not yet a market segment that is being exploited by hotel chains [1], due to the low number of guests who demand to stay with their pets (between 2% and 5%) and, on the other hand, due to the fear that a significant part of # hotel guests would reject the presence of dogs in the establishment [1].

#### 1.5. Accommodation with Dogs

The rising prevalence of companion animals in our homes and our growing inclination to travel with them reflect a noteworthy societal shift that ought to be recognized and embraced by the tourism and hospitality sectors [33]. Accommodation is currently the main critical point in the promotion of this type of tourism, being the main obstacle for travellers [19]. Therefore, although people who travel with their pets represent a new market niche in the tourism sector and an opportunity for tourist destinations, on the other hand, it represents a need for accommodation to adapt to the requirements of this new modality. Attachment to a brand significantly contributes to consumers’ decision making, as it has a more substantial influence on trust, satisfaction, and commitment compared to its impact on loyalty [34].

The need for services accommodating pets has experienced a substantial increase since the onset of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic [35]. Pet travel services is a continuously growing global market, for which an annual compound growth between 2024 and 2030 is estimated at 9.69% [36]. This gives rise to the emergence of travel agencies specialized in organizing trips with pets. In fact, studies such as that of [25] demonstrate how those people who consider that traveling with pets has multiple benefits are more proactive towards using this type of agency, in order to have a more pleasant experience.

When people travel with dogs, there are many things that they take into account, which is why the service of travel agencies specialized in trips with pets can be the answer to many of the doubts and questions that these people have. These agencies could provide them with updated information about accommodations where pets are allowed, since, for owners, it is sometimes difficult to enter these accommodations where pets are allowed, as well as understand their rates [6]. Likewise, these agencies could also provide them with information services about places to dine with pets and other services that pets can access [25].

In addition to the accommodation itself, there are other issues that concern pet guardians when traveling. Firstly, the offer of veterinary services by the accommodation

included in the rate, or having access to veterinary services close to the accommodation [25]. Secondly, the location in which these pet-friendly accommodations are located is also important, as it is necessary that there are places for pets to relax, or the possibility of entering nearby beaches, an aspect currently being debated [30]. All of these services generate trust in consumers towards the destination, which promotes this type of tourist activity.

### *1.6. The Relationship between Motivations, Limitations, Attachment, and Accommodation*

Human motivations, expressed through dimensions such as considering the dog to be an integral part of the family [5,7] and deriving pleasure from sharing travel experiences with the canine companion [5–7], stand out as fundamental elements driving individuals to seek accommodations that allow the presence of their pets. Similarly, canine motivations, evidenced by the perception of increased well-being and happiness when traveling [2,5,37], contribute to the search for accommodations that encourage the active participation of dogs in tourist activities.

However, these motivations are confronted with various limitations, classified into specific, interpersonal, and structural categories. Specific limitations, such as the dog's discomfort in crowded environments and its lack of sociability with other pets or people [3,7], impose concrete restrictions on accommodation choices. Interpersonal limitations, such as the costs associated with taking the dog on vacation and the scarcity of information on travel options with pets [24,28], add complexity and challenges to accommodation planning. Finally, structural limitations, represented by the lack of establishments allowing dogs to sleep in the same room, establish physical constraints that directly impact the choice of accommodations compatible with canine needs [38].

In line with this, the degree of attachment between the owner and their dog, evidenced by manifestations such as considering the pet to be an indispensable family member and preferring destinations that facilitate the active inclusion of the dog in daily activities, plays a crucial role in decision making regarding accommodation choices during travel [6,14,32]. Pet attachment has been studied in pet medical tourism [39], but not yet in the field of recreational travel. Thus, this research aims to shed light on the complex interactions between human and canine motivations, inherent limitations, and the degree of attachment to comprehensively understand how these elements influence the capacity for dog accommodations and, consequently, the travel experience of their owners.

## **2. Research Design, Materials, and Methods**

### *2.1. Research Design*

The research reviewed has contributed to analyzing the weight of human motivations regarding dogs in tourist choices [5,7] and the motivations attributed directly to these pets [2,5,37]. Analyzing the influence of accommodation limitations, which can be divided into specific, interpersonal, and structural, has also been studied [3,7,24,28]. On the other hand, the way to measure attachment to pets and its influence on tourism have been studied [3,5,9,11,18,19,22,32,40]. On this basis, this study aims to analyze, in an integrated way, the influence of these motivations and limitations on the choice of destination, including the influence of the attachment to the pet. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed (Figure 1):

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** *The motivations of humans regarding their dogs and the motivations attributed directly to dogs form a common construct, which we can call motivations.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** *The specific, interpersonal, and structural limitations of accommodation form a common construct, which we can call travel limitations.*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** *The motivations are related to the family's attachment to the pet.*

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** *The limitations relate to the family's attachment to the pet.*

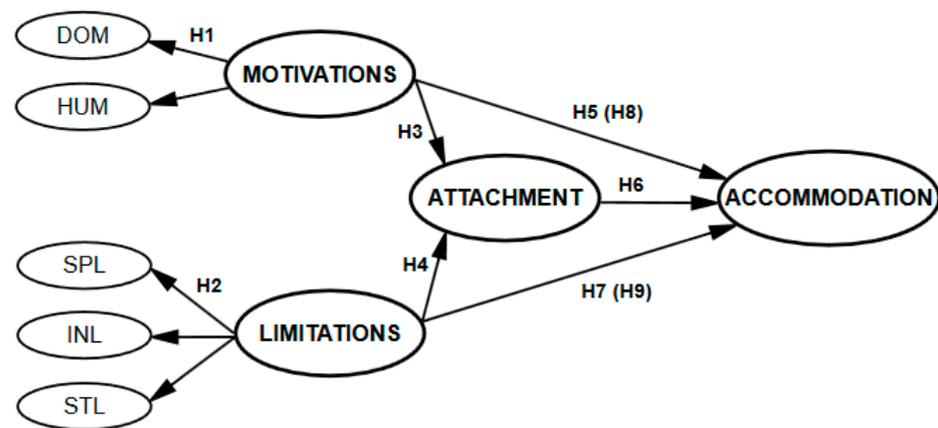
**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** Motivations directly influence the choice of accommodation.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6):** The family's attachment to the pet directly influences the choice of accommodation.

**Hypothesis 7 (H7):** The limitations directly influence the choice of accommodation.

**Hypothesis 8 (H8):** Motivations influence the choice of accommodation through their relationship with the family's attachment to the pet.

**Hypothesis 9 (H9):** The limitations influence the choice of accommodation through their relationship with the family's attachment to the pet.



**Figure 1.** Relationship model. In parentheses, hypotheses for indirect effects. DOM: Dog motivations. HUM: Human motivations. SPL: Specific limitations. INL: Interpersonal limitations. STL: Structural limitations.

## 2.2. Data Collection

The methodology used in this research is based on carrying out fieldwork on a representative sample of people who own a dog in Spain. This work aims to obtain the opinions of the people surveyed concerning the possibility of taking a trip with their dog.

The data collection process was developed through a virtual survey platform. The fieldwork was carried out between May and July 2020. This fieldwork procedure has several advantages, such as the cost/effectiveness ratio, the ease of covering a larger population, the ease of selecting the sample, the rapid collection of the questionnaires, and the minimization of errors in the tabulation process [41]. Furthermore, this type of data collection is widely accepted in tourism research [42].

A total of 1418 surveys were collected, 1391 of which were valid. To check the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha test was carried out, reaching a value of 0.898, which is above the minimum limits usually accepted [43]. Regarding the sampling error, it would be  $\pm 2.62\%$  with a confidence level of 95.5%, taking, as a reference, the estimated number of families that live with a dog in Spain (five million families) if simple random sampling had been carried out and not convenience sampling.

## 2.3. Survey Design

The design of the questionnaire was based on previous scientific research [5,11,23]. Table A1 (Appendix A) shows the items used in this research and the references used in their elaboration. A pre-test to the initial questionnaire was made by different tourism managers and university professors. This pre-test led to a more elaborate questionnaire design that was employed in a pilot study involving 50 families with a dog. Once the pre-test and the pilot study were completed, the final version of the designed questionnaire was employed, aiming at the achieving great clarity in its questions, the most significant

adjustment of the answers to achieve the objectives set in the research, and the most excellent possible precision, with the purpose of not excessively lengthening the interview with the surveyed participants.

The questionnaire was completely anonymous and was divided into three parts. The first included questions related to the dog (weight, age, gender, and method of acquisition of the dog). The second analyzed aspects related to the degree of family attachment to the dog, the motivations and limitations for travelling with the dog, as well as the types of accommodation used in the destinations. The third part studied the sociodemographic characteristics of the people surveyed, including aspects such as gender, age, educational level, or family income.

The questions included in the second part of the questionnaire were formulated using five-point Likert scales, where 1 referred to “strongly disagree”, 3 to “neither disagree nor agree”, and 5 to “strongly agree”. All the questions in this part used this measure, except for the question that addressed motivations, in which 1 represented “a little”, 3 “indifference”, and 5 “a lot”. On the other hand, the questions collected in the first and third parts were closed-type.

#### 2.4. Data Analysis

Once the fieldwork was conducted, the questionnaires were refined, discarding those that showed errors or missing values in any item. Next, statistical treatment of the data was carried out, for which the SPSS v28 and AMOS v23 software were used. Subsequently, various covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was developed to determine the suitability of the measurement model, the second-order factors, and the relationships between the different constructs.

### 3. Results

The sociodemographic profiles of the dog owners interviewed are presented in Table 1. The high percentage of women who own dogs in Spain, and those who have a university level of education, should be highlighted. These results support the previous ones, which detected a significant presence of women dog owners (85%) with a university degree (80.4%) [3], and other previous studies that have also pointed out that women represent a higher percentage of dog owners (57.2%) and that they have university degrees (89.3%) [6].

**Table 1.** Sample descriptive data.

	n	%	Mean (Sd)
Age			39.9 (11.4)
Gender			
Feminine	1239	89.1	
Masculine	152	10.9	
Educational level			
Primary education	44	3.2	
Secondary education/professional training	510	36.9	
University degree	597	43.2	
Postgraduate/Master/PhD	232	16.8	
Family income (euros per month)			
<700	84	6.4	
701–1000	203	15.5	
1001–1500	375	28.6	
1501–2500	385	29.4	
2501–3500	184	14.0	
>3500	79	6.0	

#### 3.1. Measure Model

To test the adequacy of the measurement scale, a confirmatory factorial analysis was carried out with structural equations using the maximum likelihood method, which

allowed for confirming the composition of the factors by the items that comprised them (Table 2). The estimated parameters were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the factor loadings had values greater than 0.5 (Table 3). Therefore, it can be pointed out that all the indicators saturated successfully with each of their latent variables and that the AVE values were greater than 0.5, which shows convergent validity. Regarding the internal consistency of the model, the values of Cronbach's alpha and those of the composite reliability were greater than 0.8. The discriminant validity was also adjusted acceptably since, in all cases, the square root of the AVE of each of the constructs was greater than the correlation of one construct with any other (Table 4). Likewise, the fit indices were adequate:  $\chi^2/df = 2.46$ , GFI = 0.972, AGFI = 0.957, CFI = 0.978, NFI = 0.957, TLI = 0.965, and RMSEA = 0.041.

**Table 2.** Confirmatory factor analysis.

Travel Motivations	Stand. Loadings	Travel Limitations	Stand. Loadings
Dog motivations (DOM)		Specific limitations (SPL)	
Q141	0.687	Q165	0.701
Q142	0.748	Q166	0.683
Q143	0.671	Q167	0.861
Q144	0.741	Interpersonal limitations (INL)	
Q145	0.629	Q168	0.609
Human motivations (HUM)		Q169	0.621
Q146	0.587	Q1610	0.521
Q147	0.768	Q1611	0.524
Q148	0.642	Q1612	0.575
Q149	0.603	Q1613	0.562
Q1410	0.531	Structural limitations (STL)	
Q1411	0.613	Q161	0.616
Q1412	0.589	Q162	0.776
Q1413	0.756	Q163	0.636
Q1414	0.607	Q164	0.659
Degree of attachment	Stand. loadings	Accommodation attributes value	Stand. loadings
Q51	0.647	Q111	0.522
Q52	0.647	Q112	0.588
Q53	0.459	Q113	0.584
Q54	0.704	Q114	0.653
Q55	0.560	Q115	0.547
Q56	0.671	Q116	0.661
		Q117	0.458

**Table 3.** Internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

	$\alpha$	$\rho_c$	AVE	DOM	HUM	SPL	INL	STL	ATT	ACC
Dog motivations (DOM)	0.88	0.87	0.65	0.81 <sup>†</sup>						
Human motivations (HUM)	0.87	0.91	0.68	0.57 <sup>‡</sup>	0.82					
Specific limitations (SPL)	0.81	0.86	0.71	−0.08	−0.11	0.84				
Interpersonal limitations (INL)	0.85	0.90	0.69	−0.11	−0.13	0.36	0.83			
Structural limitations (STL)	0.88	0.84	0.67	−0.06	−0.23	0.64	0.48	0.82		
Attachment (ATT)	0.84	0.87	0.69	0.46	0.59	−0.2	−0.07	−0.21	0.83	
Accommodation (ACC)	0.83	0.88	0.71	0.45	0.59	−0.01	0.01	−0.08	0.5	0.84

$\alpha$ : Alfa Cronbach,  $\rho_c$ : Composite reliability. AVE: average variance extracted. <sup>†</sup> Square root of the AVE on the diagonal. <sup>‡</sup> Correlations between constructs below the diagonal.

**Table 4.** Standardized factor loadings.

	Standardized Loadings
Motivations → DOM	0.88
Motivations → HUM	0.81
Limitations → SPL	0.80
Limitations → INL	0.78
Limitations → STL	0.80

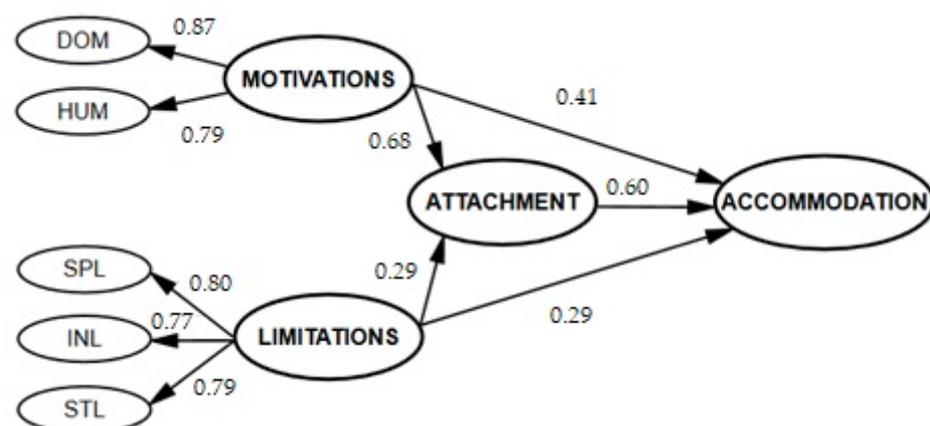
Additionally, the “Motivations” (H1) and “Limitations” (H2) constructs were also specified as second-order aggregate variables, resulting in the three cases of the relationships between the first-order and second-order factors being statistically significant and the factor loadings being greater than 0.75 (Table 5). Likewise, the fit indices were adequate:  $\chi^2/df = 2.76$ , GFI = 0.976, AGFI = 0.964, CFI = 0.982, NFI = 0.957, TLI = 0.961, and RMSEA = 0.038.

**Table 5.** Statistical inference of path coefficients: hypothesis contrast.

Hypothesis	Coeff. Path ( $\beta$ )	t
H3: Motivations → Attachment	0.68	0.001
H4: Limitations → Attachment	0.29	0.001
H5: Motivations → Accommodation	0.41	0.001
H6: Attachment → Accommodation	0.60	0.001
H7: Limitations → Accommodation	0.29	0.001
H8: Motivations → Attachment → Accommodation	0.82	0.001
H9: Limitations → Attachment → Accommodation	0.46	0.001

### 3.2. Structural Model

After the measurement model, a structural equation model was proposed (Figure 2) to analyze the possible relationships among the motivations to travel with the dog, the limitations that affect this type of trip, the attachment of the family to their dog, and accommodation. Likewise, the role of the construct “Attachment” as a mediator in the relationship between the constructs “Motivations” and “Limitations” to travel with the dog with the construct “Accommodation” was studied. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Figure 2.** Structural model.

As can be observed (Table 5), the total effect (H8) between the constructs “Motivations” and “Accommodation” with the mediating variable “Attachment” was  $\beta = 0.82$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), being higher than the direct relationship (H5) between the construct “Motivations” and the construct “Accommodation” (0.41). The same occurred in the total effect (H9) between the constructs “Limitations” and “Accommodation” with the moderator variable “Attachment”,

reaching a value of  $\beta = 0.46$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), higher than the direct relationship (H7) between the constructs "Limitations" and "Accommodation" (0.29). The model explained 59.7% ( $R^2 = 0.597$ ) of the total variance in the "Accommodation" construct. On the other hand, the different fit indices of this model were adequate:  $\chi^2/df = 2.81$ , GFI = 0.967, AGFI = 0.955, CFI = 0.978, NFI = 0.968, TLI = 0.963, and RMSEA = 0.033. Figure 2 presents the structural model derived from the research carried out.

#### 4. Discussion

The sociodemographic profiles of the dog owners in our study aligned with previous findings, emphasizing a significant presence of women (85%) with a university degree (80.4%) [3], reinforcing the understanding that women constitute a substantial portion of dog owners [6]. Methodologically, the introduction of second-order aggregate variables for "Motivations" and "Limitations" builds upon significant relationships and factor loadings exceeding 0.75, being consistent with prior research and emphasizing the need for an integrated analytical approach [2,5,37].

The structural equation model, delving into the relationships among motivations, limitations, attachment, and accommodation choices, revealed substantial connections. Considering the mediating role of attachment, the total effects of motivations and limitations on accommodation choice were notably higher, echoing existing research that has underscored the pivotal influence of emotional attachment on travel decision making [9,18,22,32,42].

Moreover, a mediation analysis unveiled that attachment to the pet plays a crucial mediating role in the relationships between motivations and accommodation choice (H8) and between limitations and accommodation choice (H9), aligning with the concept that emotional attachment significantly shapes travel decisions [11,18,19,22,32]. Importantly, these findings are comparable to or even surpass those reported in previous studies exploring similar relationships within the realm of dog-friendly tourism [5,9,19].

The relevance of these results lies in their examination of the interplay between motivations, limitations, emotional attachment, and accommodation choices in the context of dog-friendly tourism. By extending and refining existing models, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing travel decisions among dog owners, providing valuable insights for the tourism industry, policymakers, and researchers interested in catering to the evolving needs of this growing demographic.

#### 5. Conclusions

In recent years, the number of trips undertaken with dogs has increased. This suggests the existence of a new market segment and implies the need for changes in the management of destinations that want to accommodate this type of traveler, since they must provide the destination with a series of adequate infrastructure to accommodate dogs. In turn, this also means that dog owners are willing to accept a higher cost for their holidays.

This research concludes that the accommodation that a family chooses in its tourist destination is closely related to the motivations that the family has to travel with their dog, to the specific, interpersonal, and structural designed that it finds, especially to stay at the destination, and, fundamentally, the attachment relationship that exists between the family and the dog.

The main practical application derived from this research is to specify and determine the needs indicated by dog owners to find adequate accommodation when travelling with their pets. The results obtained can help hotels in the design of policies that meet the needs of families travelling with their dogs. It also highlights the need to adapt infrastructure to pets, as they are becoming an increasingly important part of families and when it comes to travelling, which means that a pet-friendly destination has a competitive advantage over destinations or establishments that are not. This research provides solutions that will contribute to the adaptation of accommodation offerings in a destination, addressing the growing significance of a specific type of tourism. This relevance stems from the

increasingly important role that pets play in families. Additionally, this study will prove valuable information for destinations seeking to attract this new form of tourism, by offering crucial insights into the interplay between accommodation requirements and the motivations, limitations, and attachment dynamics within families and their pets. Finally, this research may also have social and awareness-raising implications. That is, providing solutions to tourist establishments on how to adapt their facilities to the requirements of those who travel with pets may lead, in the long term, to a reduction in the rates of pet abandonment, which mainly has a greater incidence during vacation periods. On the other hand, this research can also be an awareness-raising tool that highlights the importance that this type of tourism is currently taking on and, therefore, the need to adapt to this new reality to make possible the reconciliation of family and pets in tourism activities.

Regarding limitations, one was the period in which the study was carried out, since it would be convenient to extend the study to cover the entire year. Another limitation of the study is that it was based solely on demand. As a line of future research, it is proposed to strengthen the scope of the study, including the hotel offer, analyzing the policies followed regarding the accommodation of dogs, including the pros and cons that it represents for hotel chains.

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## Appendix A. Survey Provided to Collect Data

**Table A1.** Variables and theoretical references.

Code	Variable	References
Travel Motivations		
Dog Motivation (DOM)		
Q141	My dog can learn skills by travelling to other places	
Q142	Travelling to another place, we make the dog happier	
Q143	We prevent the dog from becoming depressed or anxious	[2,5,37]
Q144	We achieve greater socialization of the dog	
Q145	Dogs also need holidays	
Human motivations (HUM)		
Q146	My dog is part of my family	
Q147	I get fun and pleasure travelling with my dog	
Q148	Help us relax and make a better holiday	
Q149	We avoid leaving the dog alone	
Q1410	The dog helps us to exercise	[5,7]
Q1411	We feel safer with the dog	
Q1412	It is cheaper to travel with it than to leave it at home	
Q1413	Travelling with my dog allows me to enjoy myself with him	
Q1414	I travel with my dog because I have nowhere to leave it	

Table A1. Cont.

Code	Variable	References
Degree of attachment		
Q51	Having a dog helps improve my health	
Q52	No family is complete until there is a dog in it	
Q53	I bring my dog with me when I visit friends and/or family	
Q54	Dogs must have the same rights and/or privileges as family members	[3,5,9,11,18,19,22,28,32,42]
Q55	I have a photo of my dog in my wallet and/or in my home or office	
Q56	I like my pet because he is more loyal than many people	
Travel limitations		
Specific limitations (SPL)		
Q165	My dog does not feel comfortable when there are many people	
Q166	My dog may not be social with other dogs and/or humans	[3,7,24,28,42]
Q167	My dog does not like strangers	
Interpersonal limitations (INL)		
Q168	Taking a dog on holidays involves a significant cost	
Q169	I have a hard time finding information to be able to travel with my dog	
Q1610	Certain destinations are not suitable for my dog	
Q1611	Getting your dog used to travel takes a long time	[3,7,24,28,42]
Q1612	Travelling with my dog implies having a double responsibility	
Q1613	There are no suitable accommodations that allow the dog to sleep in the same room	
Structural limitations (STL)		
Q161	My dog lacks self-control	
Q162	My dog is not suitable for spending the holidays with me	
Q163	My dog does not like to travel	[3,7,24,28,42]
Q164	My dog gets tired and bored right away	
Accommodation attributes value		
Q111	Being able to sleep with the dogs in the same room	
Q112	Friendliness of the accommodation staff	
Q113	Providing information on places or routes that you can visit with the dog	
Q114	Have the possibility to go to the vet	[1,3,5,6,10,11,19,22]
Q115	Ease in buying food for the dog	
Q116	Recreation places to walk with the dog	
Q117	No noises that may annoy the dog	

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