EXTENDED ABSTRACT

TRAVELLING WITH PETS. A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE TOURIST DEMAND

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The relationship between people and dogs is becoming increasingly close and this means that the number of families that have a dog is growing. Pets in general, and dogs in particular, change the lives of the families they live with, generally improving their level of well-being (Greenebaum, 2004; Kirillova *et al*., 2015; Wu and Chang, 2021) as dogs are not considered an object but an important part of the family itself, and consequently are a part of the family when it comes to planning a holiday (Gillespie *et al*., 2002). It is a reality, based on the treatment that these animals received from their families: they provide a name, they are not used to be eaten and they live in the human household.

At the same time, this relationship implies a significant financial outlay for the family, so an important amount of money is used for this every month and year. Obviously, this implies that dogs, as well as, for example, children, influence family holiday planning (Chen *et al*., 2014; Kirillova *et al*., 2015). This change in the way humans and dogs relate to each other has decisive implications in terms of new tourism typologies, affecting the destinations themselves and especially accommodation. In fact, destinations are increasingly defining themselves as "dog friendly" in order to attract this type of traveller who travels with their pets (Ying *et al*., 2021).

On the other hand, it is essential for destinations to analyse where and how the family will stay with their pet. This need on the part of families has strong implications for the destination's accommodation establishments, especially for hotels. In this sense, the hotel

must choose whether or not to allow dogs in the establishment. This decision can involve both positive aspects (it attracts families with their pets) and negative aspects (certain tourists do not want to stay in places where a dog can be accommodated).

Therefore, this new way of travelling, with a new typology of tourist, implies the need to analyse different areas of research in the field of tourism related to pet travel.

The methodology used in this research is based on conducting fieldwork with a representative sample of people who own a dog in Spain in order to find out their opinion regarding the possibility of travelling with their dog.

The data collection process was carried out through a virtual survey platform. The fieldwork was carried out from 8 May 2020 to 29 June 2020, when the survey was closed. In this research, a total of 1,804 were collected, of which 1,637 were valid. To test the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha test was carried out, yielding a value of 0.898, a value above the minimum limits established by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). As for the sampling error, taking as a reference the estimated number of families with dogs in Spain (five million families), and as a guideline if a simple random sampling had been carried out and not a convenience sampling, it would be ± 2.31%, with a confidence level of 95.5%.

The design of the questionnaire was based on previous scientific literature (Carr and Cohen, 2009; Hung *et al*., 2012; Chen *et al*., 2013). The provisional design of the questionnaire was further refined through a pre-test involving several experts in the field of tourism. A pilot study was also conducted with an initial sample of dog owners, which resulted in the final format. The final version of the questionnaire sought maximum clarity of the questions and the greatest possible adjustment of the answers to achieve the objectives set out in the research, and the greatest possible concreteness so as not to make the interview with the owners surveyed too long.

The questionnaire was completely anonymous and was divided into three blocks. The first block included questions related to the respondent's dog (weight, age, gender or how it came into the family). The second block analysed the degree of attachment of the family to the dog. The third block studied the socio-demographic profile of the owners surveyed and addressed aspects such as gender, age, level of education or family income.

The tabulation and statistical analysis of the data was carried out using SPSS v. 26 software. Firstly, an analysis was carried out to determine the socio-demographic profile of the people surveyed, relating this profile to their predisposition to travel. Secondly, an analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between attachment to the pet and willingness to travel. Thirdly, a multiple linear regression was carried out using six independent variables evaluated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1, strongly disagree; 5, strongly agree).

The procedure used for the regression was as follows: first, a factor analysis was carried out using a Varimax rotation, which is indicated for this type of data, and then a principal component analysis was performed, which indicates that only one component should be selected in the analysis. This analysis is fundamental since it clarifies the number of components to be applied in the study before starting the regression itself; secondly, from the six independent variables (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5 and Q6) a dependent variable has

been constructed for the multiple linear regression study. This variable has been named "APPEAL". Once the variable "APPEAL" has been constructed, it has been re-evaluated using a five-point Likert scale so that it follows the same range as the variables used previously; thirdly, a transformation of the variable has been carried out using the visual grouping method with which we obtain a grouped variable "APPEAL". This step is fundamental since we have transformed a quantitative variable into a categorical variable. This new variable is also assessed on a five-point Likert scale, as it is a variable from step 2; fourth, a descriptive analysis has been carried out to determine the percentage of results (1 - 5) obtained by the grouped variable "APPEAL"; and fifth, it has been checked if there is a division by factors to check the "quality" of the grouped variable "APPEAL". The results obtained indicate that it is optimal.

These six questions address the study of the attachment that respondents have to their pets. For this purpose, a new dependent variable (called the grouped variable "APPEAL") was constructed on the basis of the six questions mentioned above.

Once the relationship between pets and their owners had been determined through this dependent variable, we proceeded to analyse how important the attachment to the pet was in relation to both the decision to travel with the pet and the frequency of travelling with the pet. To this end, the relationship between the frequency of travelling with the pet and the grouped categorical dependent variable "ATTACHMENT" was analysed by means of a correlation analysis.

Likewise, the possible responses collected in the questionnaire with respect to the question "How often do you travel with your dog?" are as follows: first, never; second, I only travel with the dog to my second home; third, once a year, not counting trips to my second home; fourth, twice a year, not counting trips to my second home; and fifth, three or more times a year, not counting trips to my second home.

According to all socio-demographic characteristics that are related, in all cases, the option with the highest response was "three or more times a year, not counting trips to a second home" with pets, followed by "once a year, not counting trips to a second home". There is a higher response from women than from men in the survey, with a different result to the one indicated above, since women do follow the pattern indicated, although in the case of men the second most frequent response is "I only travel with the dog to my second home".

In terms of "APPEAL" it can be concluded that there is a direct positive linear relationship between the grouped variable "APPEAL" and the willingness to travel often with their pet among the survey respondents, although it should be noted that this relationship is quite weak (0.190). This could indicate that although there is a clear relationship between pet attachment and willingness to travel, as it is quite weak, it would not imply not travelling without the pet.

In this research it can be observed that the estimated regression model includes all the variables except the variable Q1 "having a dog helps to improve my health", i.e., this variable should not belong to the regression model since it does not affect the attachment to the pet and, therefore, it is not relevant to predict the variable "ATTITUDE". However, the rest of the variables should be included in the final model. Furthermore, and as a consequence of the results obtained from table 5, the variables "no family is complete until

there is a dog in it", "I take my dog with me when I visit friends and/or relatives", "dogs should have the same rights and/or privileges as family members", "I have a picture of my dog in my wallet and/or in my home or office" and "I like my pet because it is more loyal than many people" are relevant for predicting the attachment that the family has to the pet, and none of them can be omitted without a significant loss of information. Finally, of all the variables that define the family's attachment to their dog, the variable "I like my dog because he is more loyal than most people" is the most important in determining the family's attachment to the dog.

In recent years there has been an increase in pet travel. This implies a new market niche and a change in the management of those destinations that want to welcome this type of traveller, as they must provide the destination with a series of infrastructures that are suitable for welcoming dogs. At the same time, this also implies that dog owners must be willing to pay more for their holidays.

This research presents a socio-demographic analysis of the respondents, including their gender, age, children, qualifications and income. This socio-demographic profile is also related to the predisposition of families to travel with their pets and a series of variables have been determined to determine the attachment that families have with their pets.

The results of this research conclude that the attachment that the family has with the pet influences the decision to travel with the pet, a result that is reinforced through linear regression and whose results show that and adjusted have close or identical values, which reflects a good fit of the regression model.

The main practical application of this research is to determine why dog owners travel with their dogs. The results of this research can be useful for designing tourism and cultural products that better meet the needs of tourists travelling with their pets and that, at the same time, are compatible with a sustainable management of the destination.

The main limitation of this research lies in the time period, so we believe that it would be advisable to extend the research to all months of the year. Another limitation of this research is that the study is only based on demand. As a future line of research, we recommend strengthening research that addresses tourism activity related to pet tourism from the point of view of supply, especially in the case of hotel establishments.