

The boom of tourist apartments (2019-2024) as a strategy for World Heritage preservation and economic growth in Cáceres (Spain)

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Abstract: In Cáceres, there is a synergy between heritage preservation and economic growth. At the forefront of this phenomena stand tourist apartments (TA), serving not merely as non-hotel accommodation but as custodians of cultural heritage. This paper explores the role played by the growth of this type of accommodation, examining how these establishments function as ambassadors of the city's heritage and as catalysts for economic prosperity by the granting of local business licenses. Through the revision of regulations, the gathering of TA pictures and an extensive literature review, we show how Cáceres is an exemplary case study. Findings reveal: (1) the heritage of Cáceres enhances the global reputation of the region's tourism; (2) the strategic location of the historical town coincides with the new economic viability for TA; and (3) the architectural features of TA draw tourists, thereby catalysing economic activity and Offering a showcase for the heritage of the city.

Keywords: World-heritage site; Cáceres; Tourist apartments; Heritage preservation; Economic growth.

El auge de los apartamentos turísticos (2019-2024) como estrategia de conservación del Patrimonio de la Humanidad y crecimiento económico en Cáceres (España)

Resumen: En Cáceres existe una sinergia entre la conservación del patrimonio y el crecimiento económico. A la vanguardia de este fenómeno se encuentran los apartamentos turísticos (AT), que sirven no sólo como alojamiento no hotelero sino como custodios del patrimonio cultural. Este artículo explora el papel desempeñado por el crecimiento de este tipo de alojamiento, examinando cómo estos establecimientos funcionan como embajadores del patrimonio de la ciudad y como catalizadores de la prosperidad económica mediante la concesión de licencias comerciales locales. A través de la revisión de la normativa, la recopilación de fotografías de AT y una extensa revisión bibliográfica, se constata cómo Cáceres se ha convertido en un caso de estudio. Los hallazgos revelan: (1) el patrimonio de Cáceres mejora la reputación global del turismo de la región; (2) la ubicación estratégica de la ciudad histórica coincide con la nueva viabilidad económica de AT; y (3) las características arquitectónicas de AT atraen a los turistas, catalizando así la actividad económica y convirtiéndose en un escaparate del patrimonio de la ciudad.

Palabras clave: Patrimonio de la humanidad; Cáceres; Apartamentos turísticos; Conservación del patrimonio; Crecimiento económico.

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1. Introduction

Cáceres, located in the heart of western Spain, has a captivating timeless charm as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1986. Enclosed by fortified walls, this city boasts a labyrinth of cobbled alleys cobbled stoned streets lined with Renaissance palaces, Gothic cathedrals, and Moorish fortresses in a strategic position. Its harmonious combination of Roman, Islamic, and Christian influences creates a unique environment that fascinates visitors, inviting them to delve deeper into its legacy (Álvarez, 2006). Among common components are the structural frameworks of vaults, renowned for their inherent role in providing structural integrity and aesthetic magnificence to historical building (Almagro, 2022) along with the presence of granite and stone walls, which represent both foundational keystones and durability of architectural evolution. Additionally, the inclusion of wooden beams constitutes a crucial facet of structural design, characterising a harmonious fusion of natural building materials with robust architectural structures.

Cáceres stands as an example of conservation distinction, where local regulations serve to uphold and protect its architectural wonders and past (García, 2007). From strict construction rules preserving the integrity of ancient structures to initiatives that foster cultural awareness and community engagement, these regulations are the foundation for a city of this category to thrive, ensuring that future generations continue to marvel at its beauty and cultural significance.

Visitor from all over the world eager to explore this World Heritage-listed old town, therefore, it has generated a demand for accommodation options, leading to the rise of TA (Martorell, 2017; Campesino et al., 2019). In the realm of lodging choices for travellers (Morillo & Marysela, 2011), TA have emerged as a formidable choice, offering a compelling balance between flexibility and comfort, leading to guests' satisfaction (Del Bosque et al., 2008). The proliferation of online booking platforms such as Airbnb or Booking.com has significantly streamlined the process for property owners to list and let out their TA, thereby reshaping the landscape of hospitality service provision within heritage-rich cities such as Cáceres.

These TA, exceeding their traditional roles, now offer travellers not just a place to stay but an immersive encounter with architectural and cultural richness. The appeal of a well-designed apartments can stimulate tourism, bolstering local economies through increased spending and job opportunities in the hospitality sector. Such architectural marvels serve as catalysts for regional development (Huang et al., 2016), positioning cities such as Cáceres as a desirable destination for cultural tourism (Rengifo et al., 2015; Campesino et al., 2017). In order to have a legal framework for this new kind of business, every autonomous community has set up local laws. In the autonomous community of Extremadura, short-term accommodation establishments are regulated by Article 61 of Law 2/2011 of January 31, on the Development and Modernization of Tourism in Extremadura, which establishes a framework of rights and obligations for both travellers and property owners, aiding this new business. Furthermore, Article 6 thereof stipulates that tourist apartment owners must adhere to regulations concerning health, safety, industry, environment, consumer protection, and accessibility, among other aspects.

By maintaining and restoring historical properties, these TA owners not only contribute to the aesthetic charm and cultural vibrancy of the city (Báez & Herrero, 2012), but also stimulate tourism (Campesino et al., 2017), thereby boosting local businesses and generating revenue (Sánchez et al., 2013). Furthermore, their commitment to preserving Cáceres' architectural legacy enhances property values and fosters sustainable development. The diligent preservation efforts of the parties involved play a pivotal role in safeguarding the city's rich heritage whilst simultaneously reaping significant economic benefits.

This paper investigates the expanding role of tourist accommodation (TA) in Cáceres, specifically analysing how the growth of such establishments contributes to promoting the city's cultural heritage and stimulates local economic prosperity. It examines how these accommodations act as unofficial ambassadors of Cáceres' historical and cultural identity, attracting visitors and fostering a deeper connection with the city's heritage. Additionally, the paper highlights the role of local authorities in this process by focusing on the issuance of business licenses for TA establishments. By facilitating the legal operation of these businesses, the granting of licenses serves as a key mechanism for enabling local economic growth. All in all, the aims to unveil the current dynamics between the licensing process for TA establishments in Cáceres and its multiple impacts—ranging from preserving the city's historical character to boosting the local economy through increased tourism, job creation, and the support of surrounding small businesses.

Once the key constructs were presented for the literature review that justifies this study, the research question posed was: How can tourist apartments be part of a heritage preservation plan?

2. Theoretical framework

In pursuit of crafting a comprehensive literature review of the study, a systematic search, compilation, and analytical exposition of five primary constructs relevant to the research topic were undertaken; these encompassed the promotion of Cáceres as a World Heritage Site, regulations pertaining to heritage protection, the proliferation of licenses for opening TA(s), the economic implications for the parties involved in the process and the use of heritage guardianship as a strategic measure to safeguard heritage sites. This study aimed at explaining the underlying principles surrounding strategies for heritage preservation.

2.1. Cáceres as a World Heritage Site (PCWHS)

Cáceres, situated in the western region of Extremadura (Spain), stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and architectural significance of the region. Its significance is emphasised by its inscription on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage List in 1986, a recognition given to its well-preserved historical architecture and prominence (UNESCO, 2018).

Such designated cities transcend national borders, holding exceptional universal value. In order to earn this prestigious title, cities must undertake a rigorous evaluation process and meet a set of criteria (Meskell et al., 2014), including authenticity in terms of preservation of urban layout, buildings, monuments, and cultural tradition, integrity and outstanding universal value in the shape of exceptional cultural/natural significance worth of international recognition (Tuan & Navrud, 2008; Bertacchini et al., 2016). These hallmarks also share a historic layout in their streets, squares and neighbourhoods where museums, theatres, festivals, and events find the perfect place to be executed.

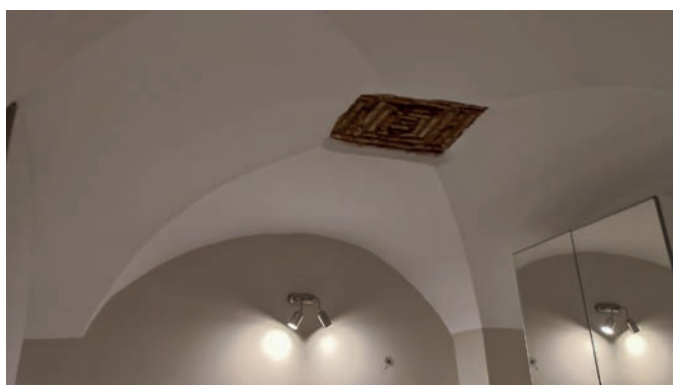
The architectural landscape of Cáceres reflects periods of historical interactions and cultural exchanges; from its Roman origins to Moorish invasions and Renaissance flourishes, the city's environment bears witness to diverse architectural styles (Álvarez, 2006), present in housing construction around the old town (Márquez & Gurriarán, 1999; Hurtado et al. 1989).

2.1.1. Main construction elements in the study: Vaults, granite, stone walls and wooden beams

The Extremadura vaults, commonly referred to as *tabicadas* or *tabicado barrel vaults*, (Sánchez, 2000; Truño 2003), represent a distinctive form of traditional construction predominant in the vernacular architecture of the region (Almagro, 2022; Junta de Extremadura, 2022). Mainly employed in the construction of rural residences and agricultural houses, these vaults also found a place in select urban settings, especially flourishing during the 18th and 19th centuries, drawing influence from *Mudéjar* and Moorish architectural styles alongside techniques that evoke *Roman and Visigothic* craftsmanship (Floriano, 1952; Márquez & Gurriarán, 1999). *Tabicadas* vaults enabled advanced and cost-effective construction in a region with limited economic resources.

Outside their structural value, these vaults hold deep aesthetic and cultural worth (Fortea & López, 2001), contributing to the distinctive architectural scene of Extremadura. Many such structures have undergone careful restoration, serving as custodians of Extremadura's historical and cultural legacy, especially in tourist establishments (image 1).

Image 1: Vaulted ceiling in bedroom in TA La Bóveda



Source: Own

On the other hand, extensive reserves of granite are to be found in Extremadura, therefore it renders an accessible and economical building resource to the city (Campesino, 2004), making structures robust and enduring, with a direct impact on the city’s cultural heritage and architectural appearance (Huang et al., 2016); this can be witnessed inside properties in the old town of Cáceres (image 2).

Image 2: Use of granite at entrance and wall in TA La Casina de Piedra



Source: Own

The prominence of stone walls exemplifies a defining hallmark of its historical urban morphology (García & Calle, 2005). Regarded as Monumental City, Cáceres stands as a bastion of well-preserved medieval and Renaissance-era constructions (Floriano, 1952). These barriers, conceived and erected across different historical periods, functioned as fortifications (Márquez & Gurriarán, 1999), which are reflected in the building nearby (image 3).

Image 3: Granite, brick and stone used in living area



Source: Own

In addition, the incorporation of wooden beams within the architectural framework of Cáceres finds its origins in the Middle Ages, coinciding with the city's promising phases of fortification and urban expansion (Sánchez, 2016), persisting as a fundamental component in the historic part. These elements together display a vivid picture of Extremadura's architectural legacy, where tradition and innovation interlace to create spaces of lasting beauty and cultural worth, serving as a major draw point for tourists.

The integration of TA within the historical fabric of Cáceres offers visitors a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the city's architectural legacy. By providing first-hand experiences of the city's heritage, these accommodations play a crucial role in fostering cultural exchange and promoting heritage tourism (Sánchez et al., 2013), improving, among others, the economy of accommodation providers (Throsby, 2010; Li & Liu, 2022).

H1: The promotion of Cáceres as a World Heritage Site (PCWHS) positively influences the economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

2.2. Heritage protection regulations (HPR)

The fortified boundaries of Cáceres' old town, honoured as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are under the guardianship of strict preservation laws aimed at safeguarding their inherent cultural and historical significance (Martorell, 2017; UNESCO, 2018). Simultaneously, local zoning ordinances play an essential role in regulating the operation of tourist accommodations within this enclave with the aim to mitigate adverse impacts on the historic surrounding (García & Calle, 2005; García, 2007).

Referring to legal frameworks, Art. 20.1 of Law 16/1985, of June 25, of the Spanish Historical Heritage, it mandates that any declared Historic Ensemble must draft a Special Protection Plan for the affected area. Consequently, in 1986, the City Council of Cáceres awarded the drafting of the Special Protection and Revitalisation Plan for the Architectural Heritage of the City of Cáceres (SIG Cáceres, 2024). In 1987, the City Council established the Municipal Rehabilitation Office, which in 1994 expanded its scope to cover the regional level. Its establishment aimed to comply with the provisions of Real Decreto/Royal Decree 726/1993, concerning financing measures for urban-architectural interventions to be carried out in the Historic Ensemble (Rengifo et al, 2015).

The Special Plan for the Old Town of Cáceres represents an urban planning instrument designed for the protection, conservation, and regeneration of the historical and cultural heritage of Cáceres' old town (Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023). This comprehensive plan aims at preserving the architectural, historical, and cultural wealth of the old town while promoting sustainable development and adapting to contemporary needs (Huang et al., 2016). By means of specific regulations and guidelines, the plan addresses land-use regulation, conservation measures, infrastructure improvement, and the promotion of sustainable tourism (Sánchez et al., 2013; Vidickien et al., 2020), ensuring the preservation and enhancement of this substantial historical compound for future generations (Tuan & Navrud, 2008; Martínez-Pérez, 2021).

The implementation of protective measures and subsequent municipal initiatives has stimulated both opportunities and challenges for apartment owners in the historic town of Cáceres (Rengifo et al., 2015). The preservation of architectural heritage enhances the aesthetic appeal and cultural value of properties, potentially augmenting their market value (Ide & Ruth, 2002). Moreover, the designation of Cáceres as a UNESCO World Heritage Site attracts tourism and fosters economic activity (Choi et al., 2010; Li & Liu, 2022), benefiting local businesses and property owners alike.

H2: Heritage protection regulations (HPR) positively influence the economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

2.3. Endless licenses to open TA (ELOTA)

The Special Plan for the Old Town of Cáceres outlines specific regulations and guidelines for managing the territory, conserving architectural heritage, promoting cultural tourism, and enhancing residents' quality of life (SIG, 2024), a plan also to be implemented in TA(S). In order to set up a business of this nature in the old town of Cáceres, it is compulsory to obtain various licenses and permits such as a Tourist Apartment License, Business License, Occupancy License, Health and Safety Certificate, Tax Registration, Community Regulations Compliance, Zoning and Land Use Permit, and Noise Permit (Ley/Law 2 of 2011) to be able to comply with local regulations, ensuring the legality and safety of the business (Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023).

According to Bermejo (2022), the city of Cáceres, as of January 2022, had 262 tourist licenses granted to TA; as of April, 2024, these had amounted to 422 (Inspección territorial de Turismo, 2024). Today, these accommodations are regulated by the Tourism Law of Extremadura (Law 2/2011), which has undergone various modifications in its different articles to prioritize the flexibility of opening such establishments.

TA(s) are a type of tourist accommodation that must be managed in accordance with article 61 (subsections a, c and d, among others) of Ley/Law 2 of 2011, of January 31, on the Development and modernization of tourism in Extremadura, jurisdiction of the municipalities, which states: “[...]The following powers correspond to the City Councils, without prejudice to the powers established by the local regime legislation: a) Protect and conserve its tourist resources, especially the natural environment and the artistic and cultural heritage. c) Collaborate with the Administration of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura as well as with the Provincial Councils and other local entities for the promotion of common areas and resources. d) Grant the licenses that the legislation attributes to them in what affects companies and tourist establishments [...]”.

Advertising and marketing of tourist activities and products must adhere to criteria of usefulness, precision, and veracity, providing business owners with registration numbers in the General Registry of Tourist Companies and Activities of Extremadura (Junta de Extremadura, 2022).

The exponential proliferation of TA (table 1), particularly in Cáceres, has been a remarkable phenomenon over the last decade, exerting a prominent influence on the urban landscapes (Rengifo et al., 2015) and economies of the area. This increase, offer potential benefits for TA owners as well as any other party involved.

H3: Endless licenses to open TA (ELOTA) positively influence the economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

Table 1: Estimation of operating registered hospitality establishments 2019-2023

Tourist offer 2019-2023					
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total tourist establishments in Extremadura	1,792	1,877	1,968	2,127	2,279
Hotel establishments	442	432	430	422	419
Extra-hotels establishments	485	523	572	649	738
Rural Accommodation	865	922	966	1,056	1,122

Source: Adapted from the Observatorio de turismo (2023)

2.4. Economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

In light of the dynamic nature of the tourism sector, accommodation service providers confront a market environment characterised by continuous adaptation and flexibility to meet the demands of travellers seeking to share intangible memorable experiences (Del bosque et al., 2008).

Amid this evolving landscape, the contemporary development of tourism must pivot around three core vectors: the safeguarding and utilisation of natural and historical-artistic heritage, the enhancement of tourist well-being, and the stimulation of growth and competitiveness among tourism-related enterprises (Jamal & Camargo, 2018).

The economic ramifications of TA can be considerable for apartment owners, contributing to their financial stability and prosperity. Rental income derived from renting out properties to travellers provides steady revenue stream (Jiménez, 2015), supported by the old town’s status as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Furthermore, the operation of TA inspires local employment for residents in management and hospitality services, (López-González, 2019; García, 2007). Besides, the operation of TA generates tax revenue for local governments and improvements with a view to protecting heritage sites and their communities (Jamal & Camargo, 2018).

Engaging TA owners as stakeholders in heritage preservation represents a promising strategy for fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the old town of Cáceres, as stated by the local government: “Tourism sustainability now demands another role and much more concrete actions. Sustainability has to be linked to the social responsibility of the resident and the tourist through a real commitment of both, the environment and the local supplier.” (Junta de Extremadura, 2022: 115).

H4: The economic impact on TA owners (EITAO) positively influences becoming heritage guardians as a strategy to protect heritage sites (HGSPHS)

2.5. Heritage guardians as a strategy to protect heritage sites (HGSPHS)

Image 4: TA in Cáceres showing architectural interest



Source: Booking.com (2024)

TA owners within the old town of Cáceres fulfil a fundamental role as custodians of heritage, operating within a framework of laws and regulations designed to uphold the historical and cultural significance of the area (Jamal & Camargo, 2018; Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023). Their contributions to safeguarding the heritage of the old town include essential aspects for owners such as accepting the responsibility of safeguarding the buildings by adhering to heritage preservation regulations, maintaining architectural integrity, protecting original features and employing appropriate materials in renovations (Decree 182 of 2012); also, compliance with zoning laws governing land-use and development is authoritative, as these regulations aid to uphold the area's charm and feel. Furthermore, owners must secure permits and approvals from heritage authorities when undertaking renovation or restoration projects (Barrado et al., 2013), ensuring alignment with and adherence to specific guidelines for historic buildings (Báez & Herrero, 2012).

Through the exploitation of tourist accommodations, TA owners may facilitate heritage tourism, offering visitors an authentic experience while promoting sustainable tourism practices for the region's long-term preservation (Tuan & Navrud, 2008), therefore, playing a fundamental role as guardians of heritage, collaborating with authorities and the community to ensure the preservation of the area's historical and cultural legacy for future generations to enjoy the charm of this UNESCO World Heritage site (García & Calle, 2005).

3. Method

The study is justified by the importance that this new reality may have for the preservation and economic regeneration of the Historic City of Cáceres and its inhabitants. To do this, the hypotheses are taken as a starting point that through the licenses granted to TA in the historic centre of Cáceres, a double purpose is achieved: on the one hand, maintaining the heritage, and on the other, generating economic growth through those in charge of this type of accommodation, with the consequent effects on housing refurbishment and regeneration of the old town area.

Taking this scenario into account, the objective of this article focuses on carrying out a deductive analysis on the evolution of TA licenses by the local and regional administration and the direct impact

on the promotion and care of the world heritage of Cáceres along with the economic growth for the parties involved.

By combining qualitative insights with quantitative data, the objective could effectively be tackled in order to provide a comprehensive exploration of the role of tourist accommodations in both promoting heritage and driving economic prosperity through licensing practices.

First, a literature review examined how TAs in other cities have contributed to cultural heritage preservation and economic development. Interviews with local authorities, business owners, and TA managers provided insights into their role in heritage promotion. On the other hand, a content analysis assessed how TAs market themselves, while case studies of specific accommodations explored their business models and engagement with local heritage.

A mixed exploratory and descriptive method was chosen with the purpose of revealing phenomena (Aramide et al., 2023), understanding it and contributing with proposals associated to this particular case. An extensive review of the bibliographic corpus was carried out and visits to different local administrations regarding tourism and licensing as well as TA located in the old town of Cáceres were performed. Besides, photographs of interior design and refurbishment of TA's in the area of research were compiled to reveal the promotion of the heritage of Cáceres.

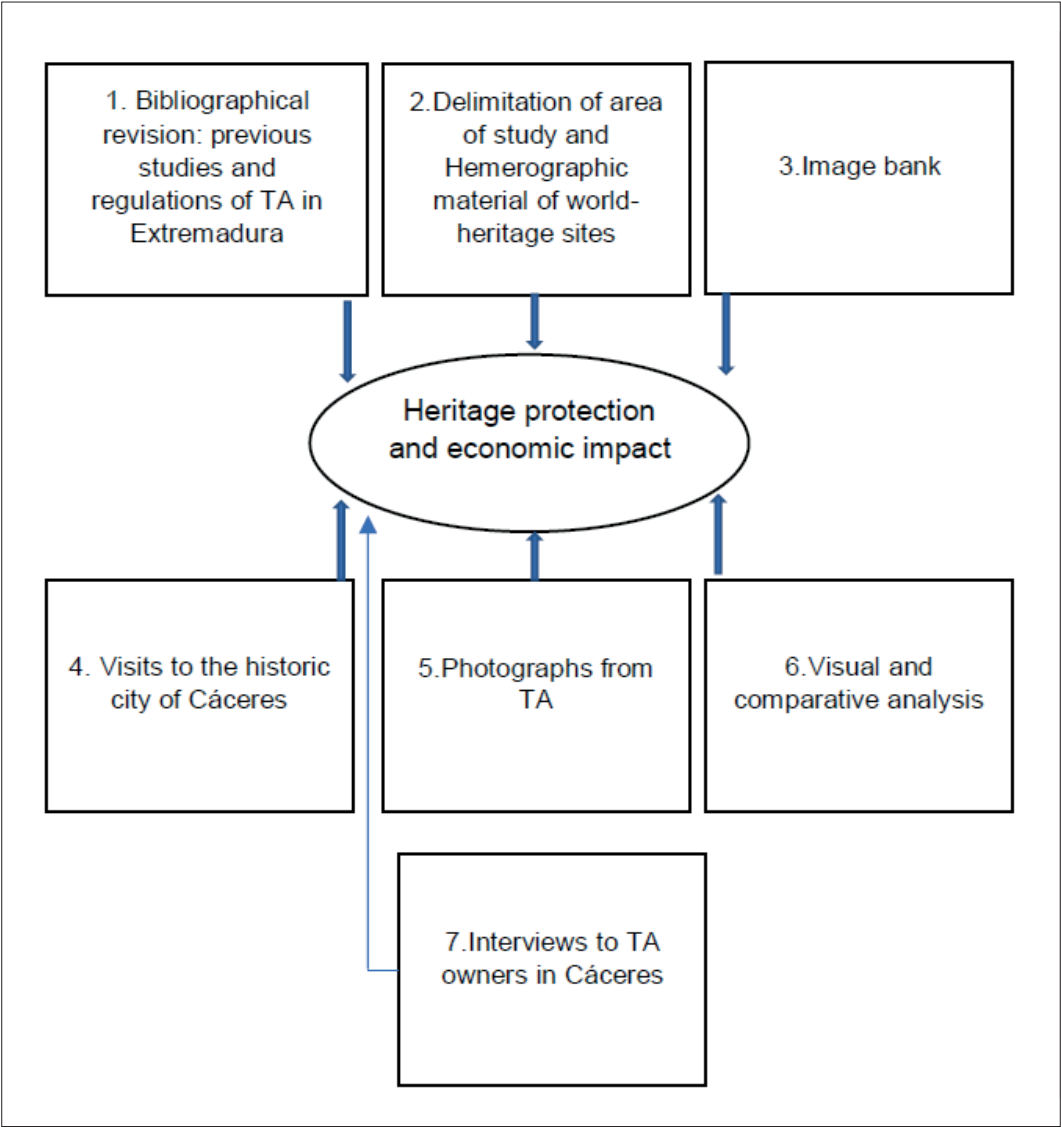
The itinerary followed in the period between February to June 2024 covered:

- Gathering of literature reviews and assessment of regulations for tourist accommodation in Extremadura was conducted as detailed in table 1.
- Collection of relevant pieces of news regarding the phenomenon of TA in Cáceres (table 2)
- The delimitation of the area under study was carefully outlined, which included regions within the boundaries of the Historical Complex of the city. This area is regulated by the Special Plan for the Protection and Revitalisation of the Architectural Heritage of Cáceres.
- Detailed description of the heritage resources was provided by compiling statistical information from the General Directorate of Tourism in Extremadura, including the number of officially registered TA and their registered addresses, as well as data from the Geographic Information System (GIS) of the City Council of Cáceres.
- Google Maps was utilized to graphically represent the location of the study area and to illustrate the distribution of tourist accommodations.
- Fieldwork involved conducting interviews with several owners of tourist accommodations to gather qualitative data.
- Photographs were taken of the architectural elements mentioned in the study, as well as of the blue signs for tourist accommodations, to provide visual evidence of the increase in these establishments.
- Booking.com was used to collect image proof from tourist accommodation in Cáceres, adding another layer of verification to the study.

These activities are summarised in Figure 2:

Table 2 defines the various constructs used alongside their respective authors, forming the foundation for the literature review. Each construct, representing a key concept or variable within the study, highlighting its alignment with foundational theories and empirical findings in the domain.

Figure 2: Methodology itinerary



Source: Own

Table 2: Mains constructs and authors in the study

Constructs	Literature related
PCWHS: promotion of Cáceres as a World Heritage Site	PCWHS: (Floriano, 1952; Hurtado et al. 1989; Márquez & Gurriarán, 1999; Sánchez, 2000; Fortea & López, 2001; Truño 2003; Campesino, 2004; García & Calle, 2005; Tuan & Navrud, 2008; Throsby, 2010; Sánchez et al., 2013; Meskell et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2016; Sánchez, 2016; Bertacchini et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2018; Almagro, 2022; Junta de Extremadura, 2022; Li & Liu, 2022)
HPR: Heritage protection regulations	HPR: (Art. 20.1 of Law 16/1985; Royal Decree 726/1993; Ide & Ruth, 2002; García & Calle, 2005; García, 2007; Tuan & Navrud, 2008; Choi et al., 2010; Law 2/2011; Sánchez et al., 2013; Rengifo et al, 2015; Huang et al., 2016; Martorell, 2017; UNESCO, 2018; Vidickien et al., 2020; Martínez-Pérez, 2021; Li & Liu, 2022; Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023; SIG Cáceres, 2024)
ELOTA: Endless licenses to open TA	ELOTA: (Law 2 of 2011; Rengifo et al., 2015; Bermejo, 2022; Junta de Extremadura, 2022; Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023; SIG, 2024)
EITAO: Economic impact on TA owners	EITAO: (García, 2007; Del bosque et al., 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2018; Jiménez, 2015; López-González, 2019; Junta de Extremadura, 2022)
HGSPHS: Heritage guardians as a strategy to protect heritage sites	HGSPHS: (García & Calle, 2005; Tuan & Navrud, 2008; Decree 182 of 2012; Báez & Herrero, 2012; Barrado et al., 2013; Jamal & Camargo, 2018; Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023)

Source: Own

Consolidating data from various newspapers and websites, illustrating a significant increase in TA in Cáceres over the last five years can be seen in table 3. The data reveal that the influx of tourists, attracted by Cáceres’ historical charm and array of accommodation providers has driven a robust expansion in the hospitality sector, with the number of TA nearly doubling since 2019 and no timeline to limit licenses.

3.1. Timing and analysed streets

Table 3: Local news echoing AT increase and no license limitation 2019-2024

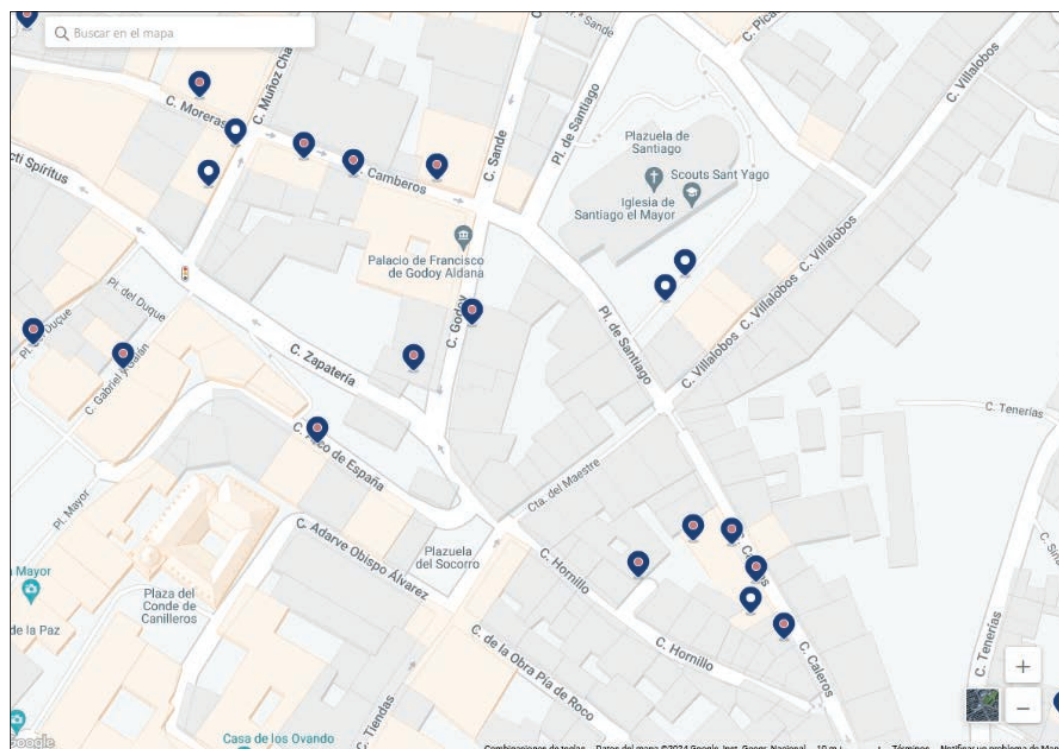
News provider	Year	Heading	Link
El periódico Extremadura	2019	Cáceres concentrates half of the TA in the region	https://urlis.net/67utwiwe
Ayuntamiento Cáceres	2020	Tourism in Cáceres registers a better performance than the national average, according to data from the INE tourist occupancy surveys of July 2020	https://urlis.net/uthnd7p6
El periódico Extremadura	2023	The associated TA now have 450 beds	https://urlis.net/ifidav98
Europa Presss	2023	Cáceres will not increase the limitations of the urban planning plan on the establishment of TA	https://urlis.net/rv5iuzrx
Canal Extremadura	2023	Almost 400 TA operate in Cáceres	https://urlis.net/d3jxkp8e
Región digital	2024	Cáceres is not considering regulating TA because it is “not yet” a problem	https://urlis.net/Thy658g2
El periódico Extremadura	2024	The ordinance for TA in Cáceres is pending a change in the urban planning plan	https://urlis.net/jnpmksy7
Ayuntamiento Cáceres	2024	Cáceres registered a record number of tourists and overnight stays in its accommodations in March	https://urlis.net/t0gnp0xn
El periódico Extremadura	2024	The occupancy of TA in Cáceres skyrockets	https://urlis.net/0qgksxq5

Source: Own

The temporal scope of the research delves into the period spanning from 2019 to 2023, owing to the significant evolution and transformation of the historic district of Cáceres concerning non-hotel accommodation options. The analysed streets (image 5), selected for their high concentration of TA's encompassed Calle Muñoz Chaves, Calle Camberos, Plaza de Santiago, and Calle Caleros.

The map depicting the proliferation of TA in the study area's streets (image 6) corroborates the potential that the old town of Cáceres offers both travellers and business owners in the tourism sector, implying local economic impact.

Image 5: Map of TA



Source: Google maps (2024)

4. Results

The literature review conducted has emphasised the importance of this research project, thereby contributing to the field of study by contextualizing the phenomenon, identifying common patterns among TA. Tables 4 and 5 show the evolution of these in Extremadura in the last four years (2019-2023), showing a remarkable increased over time in the city of Cáceres.

Table 4: Evolution of registered TA in Extremadura (2019-2023)

Evolution of TA Extremadura	Total count June-2019	Total count April-2023	Count variation	Vacancies June-2019	Vacancies April-2023	Vacancies variation Extremadura
TA	350	587	237	2,805	5,774	2,969
TA bed units	803	1,301	498			

Source: Adaptation of data from the Inspección territorial de turismo (2024)

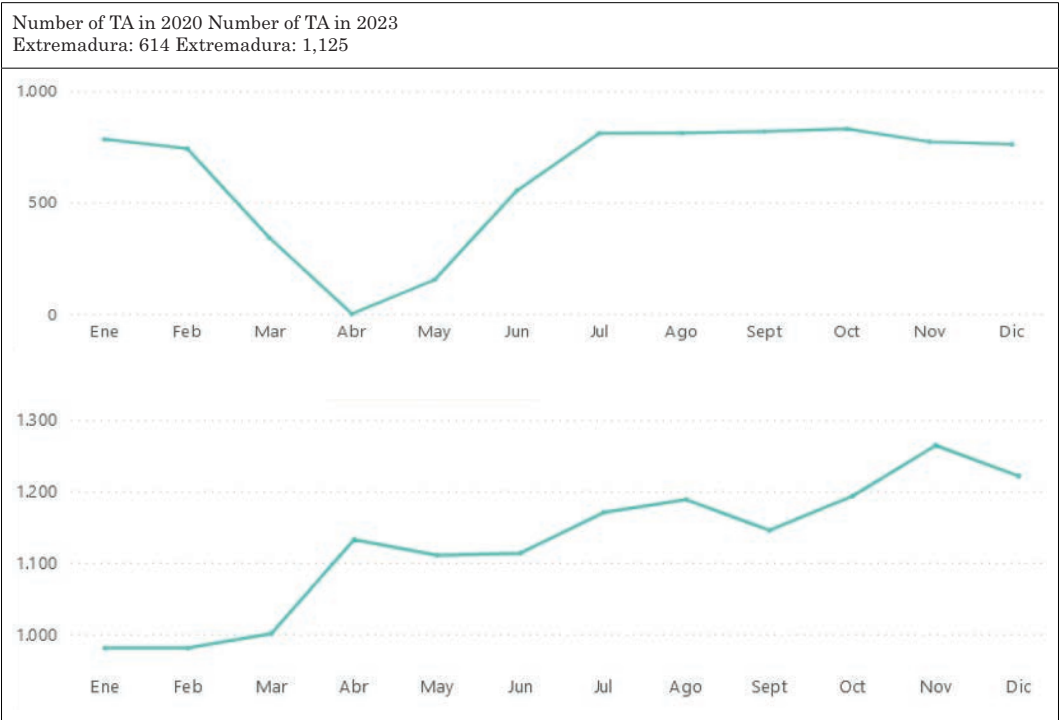
Table 5: Census of registered TA in Extremadura by main cities (2023)

Count Tourist TA 3-4-2023	Badajoz	Cáceres	Extremadura	Vacancies Badajoz	Vacancies Cáceres	Vacancies Extremadura
TA	165	422	587	1,978	3,796	5,774
TA bed units	415	886	1,301			

Source: Adaptation of data from the Inspección territorial de turismo (2024)

Between 2020 and 2023, the number of registered TAs in Cáceres experienced a remarkable surge (figure 3), with 2023 boasting a significantly higher figure compared to previous years. This substantial increase reflects a growing trend in tourism infrastructure development and the growing popularity of Cáceres as a destination. The increase of registered TA not only signifies heightened visitor interest but also underscores the city's efforts to accommodate and attract travellers seeking diverse accommodation options. This rising trajectory in accommodation availability suggests a robust tourism industry, potentially fuelled by factors such as enhanced marketing strategies, improved accessibility, and the city's rich cultural heritage. As Cáceres continues to evolve as a prominent tourist destination, the expansion of its lodging options signals a promising outlook for its tourism sector in the years ahead.

Figure 3: Comparative of number of registered TA 2020-2023 over the months



Source: Adapted from the INE (2024)

Below, a repository of images gathered from various TA within the study area situated in the historic district of Cáceres is presented. These apartments are subject to local regulations aimed at safeguarding the preservation of original architectural elements. The increase of TA over the years indicates viability, suitability and economical benefit (image 6). Notably, TA prominently feature photographs showcasing the city's heritage in their advertising and marketing campaigns (images 7,8 & 9).

Image 6: AT signs (TA) increasing over the years in the streets of reference



Source: Own, from Google street view.

Image 7: Stone wall at entrance and on façade advertised



Source: Own

Image 8: Examples of vaulted ceilings advertised in TA *el Patinillo*



Source: Own

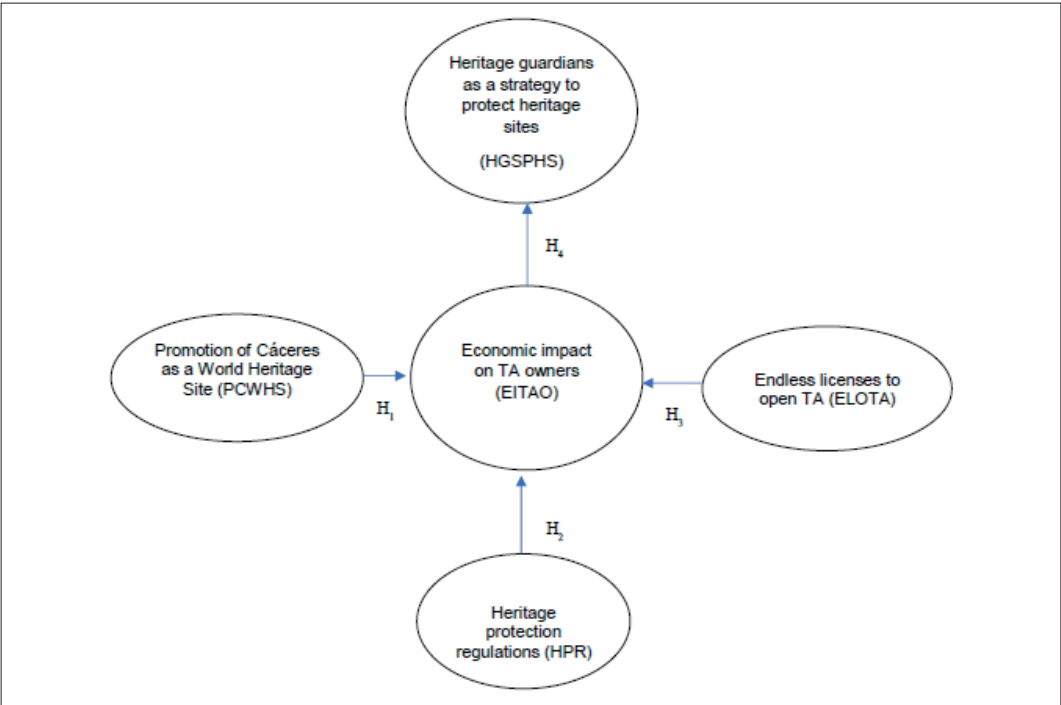
Image 9: Exposed wooden beams



Source: Own and booking.com (2024)

The arrow in Figure 4 represents the variable paths as well as the strong connection among them.

Figure 4: Hypotheses of the study



Source: Own

Considering the previous information, the following hypotheses were generated:

H1: The promotion of Cáceres as a World Heritage Site (PCWHS) positively influences the economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

H2: Heritage protection regulations (HPR) positively influence the economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

H3: Endless licenses to open TA (ELOTA) positively influence the economic impact on TA owners (EITAO)

H4: The economic impact on TA owners (EITAO) positively influences becoming heritage guardians as a strategy to protect heritage sites (HGSPHS)

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Following the confirmation of research hypotheses and the meticulous cross-verification of data sources, a model was proposed, poised to serve as a foundational framework for forthcoming research studies, which facilitated a comprehension of the intricacies inherent on the dimensions of tourist accommodations, a phenomenon emergent over the past few years.

The case of Cáceres and its old historic town provides valuable insights into the transformative influence of century-old buildings on local economies and heritage preservation. By promoting synergies between historical sites and emerging tourist hotspots, Cáceres can position itself as a must-visit destination, attracting both domestic and international tourists interested in exploring its rich cultural tapestry. The economic transformation of this city, encouraged by this historic site has stimulated economic growth through tourism aided by its recognition by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1986, statement reinforced by Rengifo et al. (2015) and, Jamal and Camargo (2018).

Local authorities have made the licensing process more accessible and appealing for property owners to enter the tourism market by means of acquiring the necessary opening license from the local council along with a project plan and a technical report prepared by an architect or engineer. Additionally, ensuring the property meets basic health and safety standards, such as fire safety measures, is usually straightforward and involves standard inspections, as stipulated by the Junta de Extremadura (2022) as well as registration for tax purposes.

The implementation of special protection plans and the establishment of municipal offices dedicated to heritage preservation emphasise the commitment of local authorities to uphold the integrity of Cáceres' architectural legacy, as detailed by Rengifo et al. (2015). Moreover, the proliferation of TA within Cáceres' old town has been accompanied by a surge in licensing requirements and regulatory measures aimed at ensuring compliance with heritage protection laws and safety standards (Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, 2023). Furthermore, engaging apartment owners as stakeholders in heritage preservation fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the old town, thereby enhancing community cohesion and promoting sustainable tourism practices, as suggested by Sánchez et al. (2013) and Vidickien et al. (2020).

The findings regarding the impact of TA in Cáceres, during the studied period, reveal a substantial growth in the tourism sector, particularly in the proliferation of TA in the old town. This expansion has not only contributed to the city's economic development through investments and job creation but has also yielded positive outcomes in the preservation and rehabilitation of its historical heritage. Consequently, the integration of tourist accommodations within Cáceres' historical context becomes paramount in offering visitors an immersive experience into the city's heritage, as stated by Sánchez et al. (2013). These accommodations as suggested by Throsby (2010) and Li & Liu (2022) not only facilitate cultural exchange but also play a pivotal role in boosting heritage tourism and improving the economic prospects of accommodation providers.

The results of the study, supported by the significance of the described model, enable the validation of the variables used, confirming the role of guardians of the heritage that the providers of TA have.

The main objective of the study was the exploration of the role played by the increase of TA on the economy of the city by becoming ambassadors of the heritage exposed in their establishments and the research question involved TA as a local strategy for heritage preservation. It is confirmed that these tourist apartments represent both a respectful intervention in heritage conservation and a positive economic development for the sector. By integrating modern tourism needs with the preservation of cultural and historical value, they offer a balanced approach that enhances the local economy while maintaining the integrity of the area's heritage. This synergy between sustainable tourism and heritage protection demonstrates how economic growth and cultural preservation can coexist harmoniously and therefore, the conclusions derived from the analysis are as follows:

- The granting of licenses to TA owners in Cáceres serves as a key mechanism not only for the preservation of the city's valued heritage sites but also for the boosting of its economic worth.
- By obtaining licenses, tourist apartment owners commit to upholding strict standards of maintenance and conservation, thereby safeguarding the architectural treasures that define Cáceres' cultural scope.
- This determined effort towards heritage preservation not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the city but also contributes to its allure as a leading tourist destination.
- Furthermore, the proliferation of licensed TA fosters economic growth by attracting visitors seeking authentic and immersive experiences within the city's historic boundaries.
- The strategic deployment of TA in Cáceres as a means to safeguard the town's heritage emphasises a multifaceted approach surrounding, sustainable tourism practices, economic revitalisation, and community engagement.

In summary, the case of TA in Cáceres exemplifies the potential to drive economic growth, preserve heritage, and enhance the tourism experience. These conclusions provide a general perspective on the benefits and challenges intrinsic to tourism within destinations with rich historical and cultural legacies.

Future lines of research should focus on the potential negative effects of tourism growth and mass tourism, particularly in terms of gentrification and its impact on the resident population.

Addressing these challenges comprehensively is imperative to ensure sustainable tourism development that benefits both the city and its inhabitants.

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