

Tourism and residents: the case of Gran Canaria (Spain)

Pedro Ernesto Moreira Gregoriⁱ

Tourism in the Canary Islands reached in 2018 almost 14 million of international tourists and almost 2 million of national tourists: involving about 30% of the regional GDP and almost 38% of the total employment of the islands. Specifically, on the island of Gran Canaria and for that same year, the number of international tourists was almost 4 million and more than half a million national tourists. What, for a population of less than 900.000 inhabitants, is a very considerable tourist/resident proportion. Data that merit a rigorous study of the social perception of tourism on the island: analyzing the public opinion of residents about the main economic activity and detailing the valuations on the positive and negative impacts generated by tourism and tourists at destination. Therefore, based on a review of the main tourist indicators of Gran Canaria, we have studied the opinions and attitudes of residents about the social and economic impact of tourism.

As a research methodology we mainly used the quantitative technique of the survey (proper survey of 504 residents), subsequently clarifying conclusions with the qualitative technique of in-depth interviews. Concluding among other things that the opinions and attitudes about tourism in Gran Canaria are largely conditioned by: (1) the area of residence (tourist or not tourist), (2) the personal and/or familiar link with the tourist sector (to work / have worked at tourism or not), and (3) the Theory of the Social Exchange. Standing out between the positive impacts: (1) the generation of employment and wealth, (2) the maintenance of the infrastructures, and (3) a greater supply of leisure and most cosmopolitan atmosphere. Prevailing extensively the positive impacts over the negative ones. Such as: (1) overcrowding, (2) the most expensive prices in goods and services, and (3) the spatial segregation. At the same time, it is worth highlighting the difference of opinion between those who work or have worked in tourism, in this group the large majority considers that tourism it is the most important productive sector in the economy and is very interested in that activity. The labor linkage is decisive in the interest generated. Those who have or have had such linkages are the most aware of the importance and weight of tourism, and are also in turn who have more critical opinions about it.

This communication corresponds to the Doctoral Thesis (International mention) titled "Social Perception of tourism in Gran Canaria. Costs and benefits perceived by residents. " Assigned to the PhD program in Tourism, Economics and Management of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain). Thesis to be defended in October 2019.

ⁱ University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria ULPGC – Spain. Mail: pedro.moreira.gregori@gmail.com Web site: <http://www.tides.ulpgc.es/tides/>