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The Pathway to Sustainability in a Mass Tourism Destination: The Case of Lanzarote

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Abstract: This article delves into the unique evolution of Lanzarote as a benchmark for sustainable tourism. It examines how the island's cultural values and political influences have shaped its sustainable tourism model over the last 50 years. This study utilizes a review of academic literature on tourism sustainability and case studies, emphasising the need for a conceptual and analytical framework. By analysing Lanzarote's sustainable practices and challenges, this article highlights the island's paradoxical status as both a mass tourism hub and a sustainable destination, led by the artist César Manrique's visionary approach, which seamlessly integrates art and nature while providing a blueprint for sustainable tourism. Key milestones and achievements are identified, such as UNESCO's designation of the entire island as a Biosphere Reserve in 1993, showcasing Lanzarote's governance approach to balancing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability. The findings underscore Lanzarote's role as an international benchmark in sustainable tourism, offering insights and lessons applicable to other destinations. The article concludes that Lanzarote's sustained commitment to social awareness and natural resource protection continues to address global challenges, serving as a reference for sustainable development in island tourism destinations.

Keywords: sustainable development; mass destination; land planning; art and nature; sustainable development goals (SDGs) and local community



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1. Introduction

The island of Lanzarote, situated in the Canary Islands, Spain, has played a significant role in tourist destinations in terms of sustainability. It stands out as a paradoxical destination, epitomising both mass tourism and sustainability. On the one hand, it attracts a substantial number of tourists, with 3,179,076 tourists in 2023 [1]. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention the figure for daily tourists coexisting on the island totalling 65,323 (data from 2023), resulting in a total of 224,344 people (tourists and residents) present on the island each day, when the local resident population (159,021) is added.

On the other hand, Lanzarote is distinctively positioned as a destination intricately linked to sustainability. Several legislative measures, external recognitions, and governance practices support this assertion. Notable examples include the control exercised over the accommodation sector, involving the declassification of a significant number of beds. In addition, the island has embraced socially accepted practices, such as banning billboards on roadsides. Internationally, Lanzarote gained prominence by hosting the World Summit on Sustainable Tourism in 1995, a pivotal event that led to the approval of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism [2]. This global recognition was further reinforced by UNESCO's declaration of Lanzarote as a Biosphere Reserve two years earlier.

Likewise, the distinctiveness of Lanzarote is underscored by the influence that nature has had on the design and evolution of the destination. A large proportion of the territory (41.5%) is subject to various forms of protection. This includes 13 protected areas

comprising a National Park, two Natural Parks, one Integral Natural Reserve, five Natural Monuments, two Protected Landscapes, and five Sites of Scientific Interest [3]. The management of these areas involves the implementation of restrictive measures outlined in comprehensive management plans. The formulation of these plans is guided by laws or regulatory frameworks approved by Public Institutions where the influence of the artist César Manrique has been of crucial importance. A determining aspect in the case of Lanzarote and its sustainability journey has been the role of the local community. Some authors referred to this with the understanding that the contribution of the residents is a key factor in the success of a sustainable approach to the destination in the long term [4].

Lanzarote is therefore a unique and paradoxical destination, where different variables have converged over the last 50 years. This convergence has positioned it as a benchmark in terms of sustainability, justifying a thorough analysis of the lessons learned from this destination. These lessons are of interest not only to other destinations in the initial stages of development but also to other consolidated destinations. The cultural values of the local community and the influence of political forces have played a crucial role in managing the destination, with an ongoing discourse and debate centred around a sustainable model. Lanzarote has also been an example of effective governance to ensure economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability as a tourism destination. At the academic level, this relationship was referenced [5].

This article aims to explain this trajectory, identifying the most relevant milestones and achievements. It will also delve into the academic articles and research that have analysed Lanzarote's unique journey. Finally, the article seeks to distil the lessons learned, as well as highlight the lines of research that remain open on this path towards sustainable development.

Initially, a review of the academic literature on tourism sustainability in general is carried out. While not intended to be exhaustive, this review facilitates the identification of the main topics covered by this subject. Subsequently, an analysis of the development of sustainable practices in island destinations, specifically Lanzarote, can be carried out. This approach stems from the shortcomings detected in tourism case studies, which traditionally suffer from a lack of a conceptual and analytical framework to justify them [6].

Another important contribution of this article lies in its emphasis on the analysis of the relationship between sustainability and a mass tourism destination of an insular nature, with the particularities inherent to such environments. These challenges include resource scarcity and the consequent need for supplies by air due to its remoteness and isolation, and a high rate of emissions intrinsic to air transport [7]. Additionally, the destination faces greater difficulties in pursuing a policy of energy self-sufficiency due to its dependence on the outside world. Despite these challenges, Lanzarote is internationally recognised and positioned as a sustainable destination, creating a paradox where it is considered both a mass tourism hub and a sustainable one.

Lanzarote has reached significant quantitative parameters as a tourist destination, which could complicate the coexistence of a strategy based on sustainability. This article aims to provide evidence of the lessons learned from good practices in Lanzarote as a destination with a defined sustainable positioning.

Likewise, the importance of sustainability when designing tourism strategies for destinations is even greater after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergence of health safety as a pivotal consideration underscores its critical role in ensuring a sustainable balance in the interaction between tourists and the local community.

This article also identifies key milestones and achievements that have made Lanzarote an international benchmark in terms of tourism sustainability. It underscores the necessary balance between nature preservation and tourism development. It also emphasizes legislative decisions and social movements geared towards curbing the inherent risks of a disorderly growth that is alien to the peculiarities and values of Lanzarote as a destination. Furthermore, the article outlines new challenges and proposed measures aimed at sustaining the destination, serving as a reference for other territories.

Finally, this article falls into the categories of “island destinations” and “sustainable destination development”, as defined in [8], which aims to bring together the studies on tourist destinations that have been carried out, according to the methodologies used.

Lanzarote’s importance as a case study in sustainability lies in the deep commitment it has maintained since its inception as a tourist destination, combining social awareness with the protection of natural resources. This formula, with the logical differences of the changing times, is still being maintained today in order to deal with the great challenges facing the world as a whole.

2. The Concept of Sustainability Applied to Mass Tourism Destinations

The concept of sustainable tourism began to gain prominence following the Brundtland Report [9], which defines it simply as “the application of sustainable development to the tourism sector”. This concept, as outlined by the UNWTO in 2022, revolves around three pillars: economic, social-cultural, and environmental. It emphasizes the need to achieve a balance between these three dimensions within the tourism industry.

Since then, there has been an evolution of the term, starting with the incorporation of local needs in the same sphere as those of tourists, enhancing the protection and exploitation of future opportunities. In addition, it is associated with objectives such as poverty reduction, and a more holistic, responsible, or collaborative approach.

Hall [10] makes an interesting connection between sustainable development and the tourism industry. The author considered that social awareness of sustainable development has helped to draw attention to the relationship between economic, environmental, and socio-cultural issues in tourism. However, he also understood that despite this awareness, the continuing environmental impact of tourism is holding back the practical effects of public policies on sustainable tourism.

According to Bramwell [11], the relationship between governance, a fundamental aspect in the management of mass destinations, and sustainability is becoming increasingly important. Bramwell asserts that the successful promotion of sustainable tourism is related to the presence of robust governance as a viable instrument for the management and sustainability of resources in tourist destinations. This involves assessing the engagement of both society and private entities in the decision-making and planning processes of tourism development.

The recent association between (sustainable) tourism and climate change is noteworthy, given the generation of greenhouse gases by the tourism industry, particularly through aviation. Weaver [12] warned of the inherent complexity of climate and tourism systems, which makes it imperative to consider multiple variables simultaneously. This complexity underscores the need to critically assess different tourism scenarios in the upcoming years.

Specifically, island tourist destinations face a unique challenge in their dual role as receptors and generators of climate change impacts. They must consider the effects that climate change may cause in their territory, such as the maintenance of the coastline, changes in sea currents affecting beach nourishment, high average temperatures, health concerns, more frequent adverse meteorological phenomena, etc.

The current landscape reflects a growing trend towards not contributing to emissions and shifting the responsibility to the industry itself, particularly the airline industry. There is a growing awareness of the impacts of air travel on the environment, and a change in social norms where air travel is less associated with an elevated social status [13]. Anyway, IATA member airlines passed a resolution to support net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 at its 77th Annual General Meeting, held in Boston, MA, USA, on the 4 October 2021. This resolution brings air transport in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 °C. No less important is ICAO’s Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), a global market-based measure designed to offset international aviation CO₂ emissions to stabilize the levels of such emissions.

Such attitudes involve the rejection and public censure of air travel, and the sensitisation of society to act accordingly. There is a prevalent view that the industry itself bears the

primary responsibility. Consequently, the individual benefits of travel appear to outweigh the social costs of climate change, and the available evidence indicates that many travellers shift responsibility for holiday-related greenhouse gas emissions to the tourism industry and governments [14].

According to the above, there has been a noticeable shift in the assumption of responsibility, where the role of society in general, and travellers in particular, is beginning to take on greater importance through their behaviour and lifestyle choices that can affect the industry itself and tourist destinations. Tourism thus becomes both a causal agent and a victim of the effects of unsustainable development.

In relation to the tourism industry, we cannot fail to mention cruise tourism, which is very important in certain island destinations. It faces criticism for its perceived role as a polluter, and destinations heavily impacted by this type of tourism are also under scrutiny. Notably, places like Venice and Barcelona, recognised as important conventional tourist destinations, have suffered the added impact of the cruise phenomenon. These effects manifest in various ways, including pollution, noise, emissions, heritage and environment alterations, and concerns for citizen safety, architectural and cultural heritage, and the overall environment [15]. According to a study carried out in the Port of Barcelona [16], but which can be extrapolated to other cruise destinations such as Lanzarote, average expenditure is clearly lower in destinations that are only one-day stops compared to those that are arrivals or departures, 156.4 EUR vs. 53.3 EUR per day and passenger. Due to the lack of required services, the Port of Lanzarote is only used for one-day stopovers, resulting in a lesser impact on its economy.

The emergence of the concept of over-tourism [17]) clearly illustrates the risks of the absence of defined policies that make the maintenance of the local community's quality of life compatible with tourist flows and activity. The cases of Barcelona and Venice are the most paradigmatic, with different studies and analyses that showcase the challenges of coexistence among residents, tourists, and cruise passengers. Huete and Mantecón [18] detail the protests in recent years in Barcelona against the impact of tourism, although they question whether this is due to objective reasons or ideological interests.

Authors such as Milano [19] provide strategies to tackle this phenomenon, known as the 5 Ds (deseasonalisation, decongestion, decentralisation, diversification, and deluxe tourism), applied to the city of Barcelona. These strategies provide a framework for future lines of action. However, detailed case studies on island destinations are still scarce [20,21].

Governance, as mentioned, is another key aspect in sustainability applied to tourist destinations, involving different actors, both public and private, with relevant participation of the local community in the decision-making bodies of the policies to be implemented. Thus, governance is configured as a useful model of government to design and activate sustainability in tourist destinations. This inclusive model allows for active involvement from the preliminary diagnosis of the situation to the establishment of objectives and tourism policies [22].

Goodwin [23] uses Barcelona as an example of a good approach to governance in tourist destination management. For instance, "residents are encouraged to actively engage in discussions about tourism policy, informed by a wealth of published data. This approach to policymaking and implementation has resulted in the building of consensus, which secures a high degree of positive engagement by stakeholders and consequently continuity of management of tourism by the city".

In this sense, the reinforcement of sustainability policies, the implementation of actions, and real verification by the tourists themselves during their stay and experience in the destination is crucial. Alongside this, designing a specific communication strategy that transmits the image and credibility necessary to compete in the current context, where climate change is beginning to become an emergency, becomes essential and represents a great opportunity for destinations. This climate emergency framework has become a global phenomenon [24], with implications of all kinds.

The United Nations published the report Human Development 2020 (United Nations Development Program [25], which aims to serve as a warning about the risks posed by human activity and advocates accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report underscores the speed at which changes are occurring, such as the exceeding of certain limits in the planet's equilibrium: climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, rapid consumption of resources and unchecked population growth—all signalling the irreversibility of the process. In all of this, tourism plays a contributing factor in driving us into “unsustainable trends”, as we find ourselves in a period of “great acceleration” [26]. In this new geological era, called the Anthropocene, the vulnerability of the human species is more evident than ever. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) states that “humans depend on stable and healthy ecosystems for their very survival”. Urgent action is needed to put the world on a more sustainable path to a more secure future. The concept of the Anthropocene was popularized by Paul Crutzen, a Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, and used from 2000 onwards. However, in March 2024, the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) as well as the International Union of Geological Sciences (UGS) voted against recognizing it.

Finally, the health crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the emergence of global sustainability as a central element in the tourism strategy of destinations and companies. The relationship between sustainability and the health crisis had already been included in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals [27]), and tourism destinations must therefore devise an action plan incorporating both concepts, where the resilience of the local and business community must be very present. Thus, we are faced with the responsibility of contributing to the reorientation of tourism, both in its supply and demand, towards a truly sustainable and resilient approach. This shift is crucial in order to face a future characterised by constant change and a myriad of new challenges [28]. Furthermore, drawing conclusions and learning from potential models of success in destinations that are fully integrated into the mass tourism system is essential. Such destinations can serve as a reference for others, offering valuable insights and guidance. The very reflection on the process and path travelled by a paradigmatic destination—Lanzarote, in this case—provides an interesting contribution to other institutions and destinations.

2.1. Sustainability Applied to Island Tourism Destinations

Sustainability in island tourism destinations has been analysed by different authors, as there are aspects underlying these analyses that generate greater complexity in the application and strategy of sustainability, both in general and in relation to significant tourism development. Graci and Van Vliet [29] refer to sustainability as imperative on islands, which are particularly vulnerable to the impact of tourism. The risk of overexploitation of resources of great touristic value requires the definition of a sustainable model that allows the long-term continuity of the destination. Islands are part of a complex system of interactions, where tourism is the main economic sector of many islands in the world—9 of the 10 most dependent countries in the world are small islands in developing economies [30].

Island tourism has gained significant academic attention in terms of tourism flows and income [31]. Notably, important tourist regions, such as the Greek Islands, have been the focus of academic studies. Studies have expressed concern about the potential degradation of the environment if sustainable policies and actions are not designed. These initiatives require an analytical diagnosis involving the participation of public and private agents [32].

In the same vein, Robinson [33] highlights that there is a greater difficulty in managing island territories as tourist areas, as the pervasive impact of tourism on island communities generates a high level of interaction. Similarly, Sheldon [34] emphasises the sustainability of islands as tourist destinations, stressing that sustainable policies must be implemented in all facets, environmental, economic, and socio-cultural, in order to maintain the allure associated with the concept of islands.

The effects of massive development in island tourist destinations, or those included in archipelagos, where the carrying capacity is limited by the size or surface area, pose a significant challenge to the implementation of effective sustainable strategies.

The UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) [35] recognises that tourism must be developed and managed in a controlled, integrated, and sustainable manner, in order to prevent or avoid problems in the future. This approach aims to avert or mitigate future problems, while also highlighting the positive aspects of the tourist destination. Understanding the patterns of territorial usage is crucial in managing the social demand imposed on these destinations.

No less important are the economic and social difficulties suffered by island tourist destinations, where aspects such as price inflation, competition for the use of limited resources, economic drain, and seasonal, low-skilled and poorly paid employment [31], among others, obviously complicate any kind of strategic policy on sustainability.

Most of the literature has analysed the sustainability of island destinations from a single perspective or focused on a particular theme. For example, studies have examined the management of water resources and comparisons of tourism models based on quality versus quantity, and the relationship of water consumption, in the tourist destination of the Balearic Islands—Mallorca [36]. We can affirm that the islands, in general, are a paradigmatic case of sustainable tourism, where they are natural hubs of special interest due to their isolation and limitation and control of space [37].

Seasonality significantly influences island tourist destinations. In the case of Mallorca, Coll and Seguí [38] have delved into strategies for addressing this issue by advocating the creation and promotion of “deseasonalising” tourism products, in order to diversify the island’s offerings.

Moreover, the impacts of climate change, particularly evident in rising sea levels, have been studied in the Pacific Islands. Taylor [39] warned of the damage that the region’s diversity will suffer, signalling more than 300 terrestrial species that would be threatened.

2.2. Measuring Sustainability: Objective Indicators

In the planning, application, and evaluation of sustainable policies, it is essential to have the definition of indicators that show performance in the achievement of the objectives set. These indicators serve as benchmarks to measure progress, providing a methodology for their calculation. This is significant both in the field of public policy and in academic research.

International organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with the Core Set of Environmental Indicators [40], and the United Nations itself, through the Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development, together with the Statistics Division, developed the Work Programme on Indicators to make a key set of sustainable development indicators accessible to decision-makers at the national level [41]). The OECD has been very active in measuring sustainability through “Green Growth”, as shown in the publications *Towards Green Growth: Monitoring Progress* [42] and *Green Growth Indicators* [40].

The OECD defines these objective indicators as “a parameter or a value derived from other variables, which suggests, provides information about, or describes the state of a phenomenon, the environment or an area, with a meaning that extends beyond being directly linked to the value of that parameter”. In addition, another international body such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), has also developed systems of statistics and indicators. Kevin [43] referred to the GSTC indicators as those most widely adopted by tourism destinations.

Furthermore, various authors in the academic tourism field have developed their own measurement systems, such as the “Triple Bottom Line” method [44], which emphasises the conjunction of economic, environmental, and social aspects to achieve optimal sustainable tourism development.

Given the existence of a large number of global methodologies, it is important to adapt the framework of analysis and monitoring schemes to evaluate the characteristics of the destinations [45]). These authors provided a framework that measures and monitors sustainability at the local level by introducing a three-level system of indicators, grouped into sets of indicators: core, destination, and specific to the area to be assessed. The core indicators selected for each destination represent the key aspects in terms of sustainable development that should be measured initially at the destination level.

An alternative method presented by Pulido and Sánchez [46] uses weighted indicators to measure sustainability. The rationale for the proposal is that not all indicators are considered to be of equivalent importance in measuring sustainability. It uses a factor analysis model to establish the weight of each partial indicator in the construction of the aggregate index, with each indicator being normalised under the calculation procedure of the United Nations Development Programme.

Another measurement model provided by Thiel [47] is that of synthetic indicators, which reflect the ideas of weak and strong sustainability, allowing for trade-offs between indicators. These dual benchmark multi-criteria techniques have proven to be one of the most suitable methods for quantifying complex issues such as sustainability.

However, challenges persist in comparing sustainability due to the absence of measurement tools and over time given the absence of methodologically comparable periodic data. In many cases, sustainability certifications and their criteria are used as a shortcut for this analysis. Nevertheless, there is a need for generic integrative frameworks with indicators that facilitate homogenisation and comparisons among destinations. In addition, there is a lack of case studies that delve deeper into sustainability, extracting valuable lessons learned from individual journeys and experiences.

2.3. Sustainability Image and Communication: Subjective Indicators

Regardless of the need to manage objective indicators, tourism destinations immersed in sustainability policies which aim to define a positioning in this direction must develop an optimal communication strategy in such a way as to produce the appropriate reaction in residents, the industry, and tourism consumers, so that in their decision to purchase a destination, sustainability is an important deciding factor. According to approximations [48]), one-third of tourists are interested in sustainable tourism or at least in specific aspects of sustainability.

The relationship between image and sustainability has also been extensively analysed, demonstrating how it forms part of the cognitive image that tourists perceive of the destination [49,50] how this sustainability is perceived by residents, industry, and tourists, and how it influences their decisions.

In this sense, the messages that are projected should not only inform about actions and achievements in sustainable matters but also try to establish affective and emotional links with the destination. Tölkes [51] analysed the main websites of sustainable tourism destinations extensively and concluded that their messages were not conducive to sustainable behaviours on the part of tourists. They focused on communicating evidence, such as existing sustainability certifications, but not emotions, and therefore did not encourage tourists to form positive emotional connections or engage in sustainable behaviours at these destinations.

In the same line of analysis, Tölkes [52] states that personal communication channels and the characteristics of the messages most influence consumer reactions. Surprisingly, this has not been the focus of attention, resulting in ineffective communication strategies.

Therefore, tourism destinations need to analyse not just objective indicators but also the communication messages and elements of destination design that influence tourists' perceptions of sustainability. This scrutiny is essential for strengthening emotional bonds and engaging visitors in sustainable practices at the destination.

Therefore, destination case studies not only allow for the identification of lessons learned, levers for change and drivers of objective indicators but also generate narratives

that shape the destination's image and communicate its commitment to sustainability. Effective communication is essential in engaging the local population, industry stakeholders, public actors, and ultimately, the tourists themselves.

After having analysed the concept of sustainability and its application in island destinations, as well as a brief reflection on the objective and subjective indicators of sustainability, our focus now shifts to the case of Lanzarote. Here, we will integrate an analysis of its tourism development with a comprehensive review of the specific literature published on this destination.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method step methodology [53]) based on an inductive qualitative approach. It began with an analysis of the current situation and relevant data applied to this case study, followed by a chronological analysis of the main milestones achieved in sustainability in Lanzarote, using a pattern identification approach (Section 4). This was followed by an in-depth analysis of the academic literature on the case study (Section 5). The study ultimately developed the lessons learned and future challenges for the analysed case (Section 6).

A case study, the most popular method in qualitative research, was conducted, which is widely used in tourism research [54,55]. The case study focused on Lanzarote as a paradigm of a destination successfully combining sustainability with mass tourism. Despite being a single case study, the methodology shows high reliability given its pioneering, unique, and iconic character [56]. Secondary data was chosen as the main source, including tourism indicators, sustainability milestones, and academic literature.

To identify the key features and specifications of this case study, a content analysis of the relevant academic literature focusing on "Lanzarote", "tourism", and "sustainability" perspectives was undertaken, aimed at understanding the concept of sustainability as applied specifically to a paradigmatic island destination. This approach was in line with previous literature review studies and followed general recommendations stated by Krippendorff [57]. To identify suitable articles, the researchers used the most relevant online academic databases: Web of Science and Scopus. Each article containing the keywords "tourism," "sustainability," and "Lanzarote" was meticulously reviewed to ensure alignment with the research objectives. Once the articles were identified, the content was individually assessed to evaluate the main topics covered. Finally, 17 articles were included in the database, and additional analysis was conducted using VOS viewer software (version 1.6.16) to explore the relationships within the collected articles.

Finally, the case study provides an in-depth investigation, adding a contextual analysis and multiple data sources, and offering exploratory and explanatory insights.

4. Lanzarote as a Tourist Destination: Evolution, Situation, and the Role of Sustainability

Lanzarote, in the Canary Islands, has earned its status as a flourishing tourist destination since the late 1960s. This period marked the onset of frequent visits from international tourists and the creation of the first tourist establishments, as well as the beginning of the conception of the Centres for Art, Culture and Tourism (CACTs), owned by the Island Government (Cabildo), as the first public institution on the island dedicated to these endeavours. Lanzarote holds considerable importance in terms of nature, as well as its social, scientific, and touristic aspects, according to Martín, Guaita, Molina and Sartal [58].

The geographical position of the Canary Islands (Scheme 1, benefiting from predominant trade winds, provides this archipelago with the ideal climatic conditions for its year-round appeal as a tourist destination, often termed a "dual season". The primary attraction lies in the enjoyment of these conditions, mainly associated with coastal resources and beaches.



Scheme 1. Geographical position of the Canary Islands and Lanzarote.

In addition to this, the islands' geological formation, stemming from its volcanic origin, presents the island with a unique landscape. The adaptation of this landscape for tourism was directed by the local artist César Manrique, the driving force and architect behind the CATCs. His vision and influence have significantly shaped the island's tourism infrastructure.

As can be seen in Chart 1, Manrique championed the integration of art within the landscape, emphasising the importance of preserving these elements, a concept he called "smart tourism" [59]. This notion undoubtedly underscores the relationship between sustainability and the competitive evolution of tourist destinations. We point out in Chart 2 some concrete examples of this artist in the case of Lanzarote as a tourist destination:



Chart 1. Canary Islands.



Chart 2. Examples of Cesar Manrique's works. (a) Blending viewpoints. (b) Changing volcanic tubes. (c) Transforming volcanic rock quarries into gardens of great visual strength.

An outstanding circumstance when it comes to understanding the value of Lanzarote as a tourist destination is the level of territorial protection that it upholds, through different categories, such as national parks, marine reserves, and natural parks. The surface area of these Protected Natural Spaces (EPNs), according to the Government of the Canary Islands, is 335,060 hectares, which represents 41.5% of the island's total territory. There is undoubtedly a clear correlation between this fact and the strategy as a sustainable tourist destination. The Chinijo Archipelago Natural Park, declared as such in 1996, stands out "due to its peculiar environmental properties" [60].

The evolution of Lanzarote as a tourist destination has been centred on the design of urban planning in the different coastal areas. This focus has spurred the creation of accommodation and leisure facilities. Important in this evolutionary process has been the concept of tourist zoning, which has delineated five different zones: Puerto del Carmen, Costa Teguisse, Playa Blanca, Puerto Calero, and La Santa. Each zone has seen varying developmental trajectories, depending fundamentally on the prevailing urban planning regulations.

The aforementioned planning and the debate surrounding it have been decisive in understanding Lanzarote as a tourist destination. The vision and influence that the artist César Manrique maintained in the political and social spheres of the island contributed to the approval of restrictive regulatory measures regarding the expansive construction phenomenon, which allowed a sustainable tourist model to be cemented. These measures had to be endorsed and negotiated with the State Administration, which at that time still had centralised powers in this area.

The relationship between tourism development and the island's economy has been very significant. The year 1983 marked a pivotal moment termed "transition to a stage of accelerated development" (as stated in the Cabildo of Lanzarote's Advance of Island Tourism Management Plan). This period saw enormous growth in the contribution to gross domestic product from tourism in the subsequent years. The same source points out that tourism displaced the traditional structuring sectors, notably referring to the primary sector, which encompassed specifically agriculture and fishing.

According to [61], a collective awareness was being created in Lanzarote, in parallel to tourism development, of the need to base economic development on more environmentally sustainable formulas. This growing awareness manifested itself through popular mobilisations that influenced public leaders and their legislative actions, leading to the approval of the 1991 Insular Plan for Territorial Planning (PIOT). This plan declassified 250,000 tourist beds, among other measures. The Cabildo has been in negotiations with the owners for either legalization or demolition, which not only incurs economic costs but also generates significant social disruption.

In fact, the debate on growth and sustainability began in the Canary Islands four decades ago, especially in Lanzarote, where this discourse has been intricately woven into the long-term strategy for tourism development [62].

Lanzarote received its Biosphere Reserve designation in 1993, which was the first time this distinction had been awarded on an island level, together with Menorca (Balearic Islands). In order to promote and develop this recognition, the Island Council created the Lanzarote Biosphere Reserve Council, which while having no legal personality of its own, must coordinate the different public administrations and private entities, with the support of a consultative Scientific Cabinet.

Despite this recognition, the evolution of Lanzarote as a destination has been significant, evident in key parameters such as tourist arrivals, growth in the number of beds, rental car fleets, tourist-related employment, and company licences across the tourist service chain. Notably, in terms of airport traffic, Lanzarote's airport is among the top 10 in the Spanish Airports and Air Navigation (AENA) network. No less important is its importance as a cruise stopover, proving highly lucrative for shipping companies due to the appeal and value of its excursions.

Table 1 shows the evolution of Lanzarote as a tourist destination across different parameters, all of which have exhibited an upward trend in the island's journey as a

prominent tourist destination. Alongside these trends, the population dynamics, both the local population and the influence of the immigration phenomenon, hold pivotal roles in shaping the island's tourism industry. This demographic interplay contributes to the functioning of the industry inherent in its conception as a destination.

Table 1. Evolution of Lanzarote as a tourist destination.

Year	Population	Tourists	Domestic Tourists (1)	Beds	Cruise Passengers	% Tourist Employment	GDP per Capita	% Residents Born Lanzarote
2001	111,754	1,844,903		59,735	98,677	NA	21,728 M/EUR	59.94%
2011	142,517	2,169,762	392,312	73,459	257,115	35.60%	21,085 M/EUR	46.61%
2018	149,183	3,063,316	274,206	71,852	423,116	38.57%	23,795 M/EUR	47.06%
2019	152,289	3,065,575	309,550	71,136	520,192	38.36%	24,415 M/EUR	46.45%
2020	155,812	795,423	133,691	34,176	149,450	34.46%	17,797 M/EUR	45.70%
2021	156,189	1,188,784	285,807	41,771	142,677	36.25%	NA	45.86%
2022	156,112	2,816,231	350,194	64,043	335,239	38.20%	NA	42.75%
2023	159,021	3,179,036	325,853	65,223	504,805	39.50%	NA	NA

Source: Institute of Statistics of Canary Islands, (ISTAC). Note (1): "Excluding tourists from the other Canary Islands".

A recurrent topic analysed, not only in Lanzarote but in any tourist destination, is the contribution of tourism development to the well-being of the local population in economic, social, or cultural terms. In the case of Lanzarote, it is important to bear in mind the precariousness of the economy and social structures preceding its emergence as a tourism hotspot.

Lanzarote's current situation as a well-established mass tourist destination, enjoying a favourable image in most of Europe's outbound tourist markets, enables it to sustain regular visitor flows throughout the year.

In the conception of Lanzarote as a tourism destination, the design model linked to sustainability and its fundamental principles has played a key role. The term "sustainable tourism" began to gain popularity following its active use at the International Conference held in Lanzarote in 1995, where the Charter of Sustainable Tourism was approved.

The values associated with the primary sector, natural resources, cultural elements, and local idiosyncrasy have been highly protected, both at a regulatory and social level. This has laid the groundwork for a non-conventional destination proposal in Lanzarote.

Table 2 showcases significant milestones that demonstrate the destination's progress in terms of sustainability, showing both objective and subjective indicators that endorse this progress. However, it is important to note that external recognition of sustainability remains limited to specific areas, lacking a generalised perception of such attributes and a conception of the destination as sustainable. Thus, the main motivation for tourists visiting Lanzarote does not include environmental concerns or sustainability, as highlighted in the Tourist Expenditure Survey conducted by the Canary Islands Institute of Statistics in 2020. This disparity between mass tourism and sustainability also occurs in the subjective sphere.

In the ongoing debate, UNESCO and its MaB (Man and Biosphere) programme have identified Lanzarote as an experiential territory of sustainable tourism. They view it as "a territory of enormous scenic beauty and significant natural wealth yet marked by conflicting interests between preservation and exploitation".

Table 2. Milestones in sustainability in Lanzarote. Chronology.

Year	Innovation Typology	Milestone	Remarks
1961	Technique	Inauguration of Desalination Plant by Termolanza.	Determined the possibility of tourism development and the supply of water—a scarce resource on the island—at a local level.
1963	Cultural/Product/Brand	Opening of the first Art, Culture and Tourism Centre: Cueva de los Verdes (Cave of the Greens).	In this decade, Jameos del Agua was also inaugurated.
1967	Legal/Territorial	Approval of Landscape Defense Regulations.	Incorporates important issues, such as the white colour of the houses or the prohibition of advertising elements in special areas.
1970	Legal/Territorial	Approval of the Subsidiary Norms.	Precedent of the Island Tourism Management Plan.
1974	Cultural/Product/Brand	Creation of the Timanfaya National Park.	Reclassified in 1981. One of the most visited national parks in Spain, it reflects the Land-Art concept of César Manrique.
1974	Cultural	Publication of César Manrique’s work “Lanzarote, arquitectura inédita”.	Important work on popular island architecture. Compendium of the main works. This book was republished in 2019 by the Cabildo of Lanzarote.
1988	Social	Crowded demonstration in Playa de Pocillos against illegal hotel, led by César Manrique.	A plea against the destruction of the landscape and the construction of “monstrous”, even “fascist” architecture is read.
1991	Cultural/Product/Brand	Inauguration of the latest Centre for Art, Culture and Tourism, under the artistic direction of César Manrique: Jardín de Cactus (Garden of Cactus).	It represents a good example of an architectural intervention integrated into the landscape.
1991	Legal/Territorial	Approval of the Island Tourism Management Plan (PIOT).	Among other measures, it declassified 250,000 tourist beds.
1992	Governance	Inauguration of the César Manrique Foundation (Taro—Tahíche).	This foundation has existed since 1983, but under the name “Amigos de Lanzarote”.
1993	Brand/Legal	Declaration of Lanzarote as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO.	For the first time, it applies to island territories in their entirety, together with Menorca.
1995	Brand/Legal	Declaration of the La Graciosa and Islotes Marine Reserve.	Important from an environmental point of view and from the point of view of biological regeneration of the fishing banks.
1995	Brand/Scientific	Celebration of the International Conference on Sustainable Tourism.	The Sustainable Tourism Charter is approved (1).
1997	Strategy/Governance	Sustainable Development Strategy, Lanzarote in the Biosphere.	Life Programme. European Commission, July 1997.
1998	Legal/Territorial	Approval of the Tourism Moratorium by the Island Council of Lanzarote	Limitation of growth by 8687 places in 10 years.
1998	Social/Governance	Presentation of “Manifesto for sustainability” by César Manrique Foundation.	The main message was summed up in the phrase “Stop it now”, which was part of a major publicity campaign in 1999 and 2000.
2009	Legal/Territorial	Annulment by the Supreme Court of the Tourism Moratorium	It does not include the 22 hotels considered “illegal”, according to the judgement of the High Court of Justice of the Canary Islands
2012	Social/Governance	Demonstration against Oil Prospection off the coasts of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura.	More than 20,000 people attended, considered the largest social movement in the history of Lanzarote.

Table 2. Cont.

Year	Innovation Typology	Milestone	Remarks
2012	Brand	Selected as an “Early Adopter” by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for the update of criteria for certification as a sustainable tourism destination.	This selection came from an offer by the tour operator TUI, sponsor of the GSTC.
2015	Brand	Obtained Biosphere Responsible Tourism standard.	Awarded by the Responsible Tourism Institute.
2015	Brand/Legal	Incorporation into the Global Geoparks Network (UNESCO), as Lanzarote and Archipiélago Chinijo.	There are 147 geoparks worldwide, in 41 countries.
2016	Scientific/Brand	Holding the 1st International Conference on Microplastics.	In 2018 and 2020, the second and third editions were also held in Lanzarote, respectively, with different themes on plastics management.
2017	Scientific/Brand	Holding the International Summit ‘Sustainability as a key factor in the competitiveness of the Tourism Industry’.	Co-organised by the Responsible Tourism Institute and the Cabildo of Lanzarote.
2017	Legal/Territorial	Approval of the Law on Land and Protected Spaces of the Canary Islands.	Controversial legal text which, among other things, gives powers to local councils to regulate rural land, a matter which previously fell to the Commission for Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Canary Islands, a body of the Canary Islands Government.
2018	Scientific/Brand	Holding of the International Conference on Tourism & Leisure Studies. Building Bridges to Sustainability-Tourism, Culture, Gastronomy and Sport.	International Tourism Research Congress, organised by Tourism & Leisure Studies and TIDES (ULPGC).
2021	Brand	Presentation of the Biosphere Platform and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.	Aimed at tourism companies so that they can define an individual sustainability plan, on which the overall plan for the destination will be designed.
2021	Governance	Award of the Tourism Sustainability Plan of Lanzarote by the Secretary of State (ordinary call), under the name “Energy of the Earth”.	Overall project budget: 4.5 M/EUR, to be financed by the State, the Canary Islands Regional Government and the Cabildo of Lanzarote.
2022	Measurement	Non-Normative International Agreement (NRA) signed between the Cabildo of Lanzarote and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).	Includes the creation of the United Nations Global Environmental Situation Room adapted for the island of Lanzarote.
2022	Cooperative	Ratification of the Glasgow Accords together with the Government of the Canary Islands, which aim to achieve climate neutrality in 2050 with “0” emissions.	The Cabildo of Lanzarote becomes a signatory of this ratification.

Source: Prepared by the authors. (1) “The main outcome of the conference is the Charter for Sustainable Tourism or Lanzarote Declaration, which, through its 18 principles and objectives, states that tourism must be based on sustainability criteria, as it is and must be sustainable. The Lanzarote Charter becomes the landmark of reference and central axis of what tourism should be from now on” [63].

As previously mentioned, Lanzarote’s tourism model has been the focus of local debate and extensive academic research, as reflected in Table 2 showcasing international conferences on sustainability held in Lanzarote. This model has a critical element, which

is the establishment of boundaries. Hercowitz [64] stated that “the setting of a limit to tourist growth is a recognition that economic growth alone will not necessarily guarantee development, i.e., that the quality of tourists and residents may in fact be reduced”.

The paradigmatic nature of Lanzarote’s tourism model, often more highly valued abroad than locally, has hinged on zoning accommodation into tourist centres (set out in the Island Tourism Management Plan, PIOT, approved in 1991, see Table 2), advocating for a less aggressive architectural style, especially along the coast, and the maintenance of the island landscape as a core element defining the destination’s character, closely linked to its primary sector.

However, the consolidation of a model as such has struggled with the standardisation of the offer. This homogenisation has hindered the creation of a differentiated destination that caters for more appropriate tourist segments. Major operators often fail to perceive Lanzarote as a value-added destination that deserves different commercial treatment than other competing destinations [65].

The dual conception of Lanzarote as both a mass and sustainable tourist destination presents a challenge in terms of communication, which can be considered one of the lessons learned from this case.

The César Manrique Foundation, as custodian of the artist’s ideologies and models since his death in 1992, has participated with notable weight in the debate on sustainability, particularly regarding the definition of tourist carrying capacity, which has occupied a central place in the political, business, and social debate.

Before the approval of the tourist moratorium on the island aimed at curbing excessive growth that could strain the island’s carrying capacity, a quote from 1998 reflects the Foundation’s viewpoint: “Within the framework of possibilities in which it was developed, the approval of the PIOT in 1991 constituted a considerable advance in the regulation of the growth of the supply of accommodation and in land usage planning. Little more than five years later, the perception of reality and public awareness make it advisable to correct the forecasts and rates established therein, by updating the Plan, which can only be restrictive”.

Therefore, the case of Lanzarote, having analysed the main milestones in terms of sustainability, allows us to identify a series of legal, territorial, governance, branding, social, cultural, technical, scientific, product, management and strategic innovations that have shaped the path towards the sustainability of the destination. Together these innovations have formed the ecosystem of this historical evolution.

Among the lessons learned, we can highlight the incorporation of technical elements that facilitate a change of paradigm (for example, the creation of the desalination plants in [66]; the integration of a vision of the future—the vision of the artist Cesar Manrique—with a demonstrative example of transformation and enhancement of the landscape and local identity—the CACTs; the necessary definition of a regulatory framework to regulate aspects such as growth limits or the protection of the territorial areas of greatest landscape-environmental value; the existence of solid social support for such measures; and the continued leadership of a political line in the main institution of local government. In addition, in terms of international recognition and positioning of the island, branding issues such as the designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the underlying body, the Reserve Council, have been very relevant as governance mechanisms for the horizontal implementation of sustainability actions and initiatives, integrating public and private agents.

Additionally, international conferences have significantly contributed to positioning Lanzarote as a focus of study for researchers and academia. The constant reflections and discourse stemming from these conferences continuously inform decisions on the island’s path towards sustainability.

5. Tourism in Lanzarote: Main Topics Analysed

This section aims to analyse the academic literature published on the destination of Lanzarote in relation to the object of this study, providing context for the contribution

of this work within the academic context. Given Lanzarote’s importance as a tourist destination and its significance in sustainable development, it has garnered significant attention from academics and researchers exploring different angles, especially those related to environmental balance and impacts. Researchers have investigated quantitative growth-related aspects, such as energy considerations, waste generation, and the island’s carrying capacity [67].

The academic discourse surrounding Lanzarote extends to other diverse topics like destination marketing, the island’s image, and regulatory aspects of activity on the island. The island’s land-use plan has been identified as an example at a national and international level, not only because of the time of its drafting and approval but also because of its visionary and conclusive nature in the establishment of a sustainable model, with the elimination of thousands of tourist beds [68].

Table 3, as presented below, catalogues academic articles published under the keywords “tourism”, “sustainability”, and “Lanzarote”, with the pairwise combination of these terms in the Web of Science and Scopus. Additionally, a Google Scholar search was performed to verify that no relevant articles were omitted from the analysis.

Table 3. List of articles on Lanzarote, tourism, and the sustainable perspective.

Article	Journal	Author	Year	Subject	Objective	Ref.
Factors influencing destination image	Annals of Tourism Research	Beerli, A. and Martín, JD	2004	Destination marketing, destination image building process, image formation	To develop a model and validate it empirically to explain the factors that influence the formation of the image of a destination once visited. The population sample was taken from tourists in Lanzarote.	[69]
Tourists’ characteristics and the perceived image of tourist destinations: a quantitative analysis—a case study of Lanzarote, Spain	Tourism management	Beerli, A. and Martín, JD	2004	Tourism marketing, destination image and destination image formation	To analyse the process of formation of the tourist image of a destination, and the difference between the perceived image and the motivations of tourists, taking Lanzarote as the focus of the study. The results establish important correlations to be taken into account by the DMO.	[70]
Territory, tourist sources and load capacity, theoretical interpretation of the case of the island of Lanzarote	Vegueta	Hernández, S., Ginés, C. and Sánchez, C.	2006	Territorial tourism resources, spatial planning, carrying capacity, tourism sustainability indicators.	To attempt to go deeper into the theoretical aspects and factors that intervene in the carrying capacity as a fundamental criterion for the qualification of a tourist destination, using the case of Lanzarote. Fundamental criteria for the qualification of a tourist destination, using the case of Lanzarote as an example.	[71]
Ecological footprint analysis of road transport related to tourism activity: The case for Lanzarote Island	Tourism Management	Rendeiro, R. R. and Ramírez, P.	2010	Sustainable road transport, ecological footprint of tourism activity, environmental impacts.	To assess the use of road transport and its implications for sustainable tourism development.	[72]

Table 3. Cont.

Article	Journal	Author	Year	Subject	Objective	Ref.
'We don't need to copy anyone': Cesar Manrique and the Creation of a Development Model for Lanzarote	Urbanities	Pezzi, M.	2013	Destination branding, tourism, authenticity, anthropology of tourism	To analyse the influence that the artist César Manrique has had on tourism development in Lanzarote, as well as the use of this model in the destination's marketing strategies.	[73]
Tourism as an instrument for development: a theoretical and practical study	Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice, Volume 5, 241	Santana, A. and Fernández, H.	2014	Sustainability, governance, Lanzarote	To analyse the case of Lanzarote as a mass destination that has combined growth with environmental protection and political commitment to sustainability.	[74]
The environmental impact caused by road access to Timanfaya Natural Park on Lanzarote Island	Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment	Martín-Cejas, R. R.	2015	Carbon impact, transport sector in tourism, environmental management.	To assess the impact of road transport on access to the Timanfaya Natural Park and its implication for the development of sustainable tourism.	[75]
Human heritage and sustainable development on arid islands: the case of the Eastern Canary Islands	Island Studies Journal	García, J., García, F. and Castilla, C.	2016	Aridity, environment, landscape, local heritage, socio-economic development	To analyse the main socio-economic and land use changes that arise as a result of desalination technology on the islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, both Biosphere Reserves and consolidated tourist destinations.	[76]
Landscape of vineyards as touristic and territorial resource in Lanzarote (Canary Islands, Spain)	ERIA (Journal of Geography)	Hernández, S., González, A. and Ramón, A.	2017	Landscape and tourism, spatial planning, natural spaces	To analyse the implications of tourism on the landscape and its treatment, from the point of view of territorial planning, as an example of policies and coordination of strategies in natural areas.	[77]
Tourist points of interest: Analytical relevance, methodological proposal and study case	PASOS: Journal of Tourism and Cultural Heritage	Padrón, H. y Hernández, R.	2017	Tourism development, tourist attractions, destination as a case study.	To identify and classify the points of tourist interest in Lanzarote in order to establish mobility patterns and activities carried out by tourists.	[78]
The influence of artistically recreated nature on the image of tourist destinations: Lanzarote's art, cultural and tourism visitor centres and their links to sustainable tourism marketing	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Carballo, Rita R. and León, Carmelo J.	2018	Training in tourism image, art in tourism, creativity, nature, environment and sustainability.	To analyse the formation of the tourist image from artistically recreated icons of local nature, and to see how to improve the overall image of the destination.	[79]

Table 3. Cont.

Article	Journal	Author	Year	Subject	Objective	Ref.
Perceived Sustainable Destination Image: Implications for Marketing Strategies in Europe	Sustainability	Almeida, A. and Moreno, S.	2019	Sustainable destination, destination image, marketing strategies, communication, segmentation	To provide recommendations to DMOs for the definition of the destination image based on the concept of sustainability, following a survey of 30,000 tourists from 18 European countries.	[30]
Fighting overtourism in Lanzarote (Spain)	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes.	Carballo, R., León, C. and Carballo, M.	2019	Environmental impacts, sustainable developments, overtourism, mitigation strategies.	To analyse overtourism in the case of Lanzarote, and its consequences for the local population and the environment, and to identify means to mitigate its effects.	[80]
Alternative Product Development as Strategy Towards Sustainability in Tourism: The Case of Lanzarote	Sustainability	Eckert, C. and Pechlaner, H.	2019	Tourism development, Lanzarote; sustainability, development of alternative products, strategy	To identify complementary strategies towards sustainability, such as new types of offers or more specific segments.	[59]
Lanzarote, César Manrique and the Creation of the Art, Culture and Tourism Centres, 1960–1976	In Lanzarote and Chinijo Islands Geopark: From Earth to Space	Ferrer, M.	2019	History of Tourism; history of Lanzarote; history of contemporary art; history of art in Spain; history of the Canary Islands; César Manrique; Tourism; Tourism; Cultural Tourism; Art and Tourism; Geology and Tourism	To describe the guidelines that the work of the artist César Manrique had from the perspective of the Cabildo of Lanzarote, as a Public Administration, the objectives and the dimension of the combination between tourism, public art and territory.	[81]
An Analysis of the Tourist Mobility in the Island of Lanzarote: Car Rental Versus More Sustainable Transportation Alternatives	Sustainability	Martín, J., Guaita, J., Molina, V. and Sartal, A.	2019	Mobility; Sustainable development; Environmental sustainability	To apply a proposal to study the sustainability of tourist mobility in a protected area, the island of Lanzarote, as a Biosphere Reserve.	[58]
Preventing Overtourism by Identifying the Determinants of Tourists' Choice of Attractions	Sustainability	Padrón, H. and Hernández, R.	2019	Tourist attractiveness, overtourism, tourist characteristics, destination management, discrete choice models	To analyse the behaviour of tourists when visiting certain attractions in a destination, in the case of a sustainable island. The discrete choice model is used, under 96 variables, to explain 11 attractions of Lanzarote.	[62]

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The analysis of the 17 articles selected underscores territorial planning and management as one of the most profusely analysed theoretical topics in the literature. In the context of Lanzarote, this is an undoubted achievement, notably as a result of the definition of

the regulatory framework in advance of other tourist destinations, particularly in Spain. This precedence in territorial planning within Lanzarote correlates significantly with the concept of sustainability, allowing a better evolution of key indicators, such as the carrying capacity of the destination.

Integrated environmental policies, understood as the multiple management of the different variables into which the concept of sustainability is broken down, have also been considered extensively at a theoretical level by academics. In Lanzarote, this plural vision has been approached by the local government, the Island Council, with the involvement of other public (local councils) and private, economic, business, cultural, and social actors. A standout example of this collaborative effort is the Sustainable Development Strategy, “Lanzarote in the Biosphere”, drafted in 1997. The outcome of this was thanks to good governance management among multiple local stakeholders.

Other crucial aspects in Lanzarote’s context include destination mobility, the limits, so-called overtourism, and the artistic and cultural perspective. Equally noteworthy is the theoretical treatment of the formation of the tourist image of a destination based on artistically recreated icons of local nature and their contribution to the overall image of the destination. Lanzarote has excelled in this with the creation of the Centres of Art, Culture and Tourism, under the guidance of the artist César Manrique, whose contribution to the overall image of the island has been decisive. These cultural elements have a significant cognitive and affective impact on tourists, contributing immensely to the destination’s overall appeal and perception.

If we compare the topics covered with the historical innovations that have taken place on the path towards the sustainable development of the destination (Table 2), we detect a limitation of studies that address certain specific perspectives, such as social changes, technical innovations, legal aspects, branding and quality certifications, and the impact of research and scientific actions, all of which are related to the sustainability of the destination.

In order to carry out a more in-depth analysis, a study was carried out using VOS viewer to explore the abstract contents of various papers, visually represented in Figure 1, from which the following conclusions can be drawn.

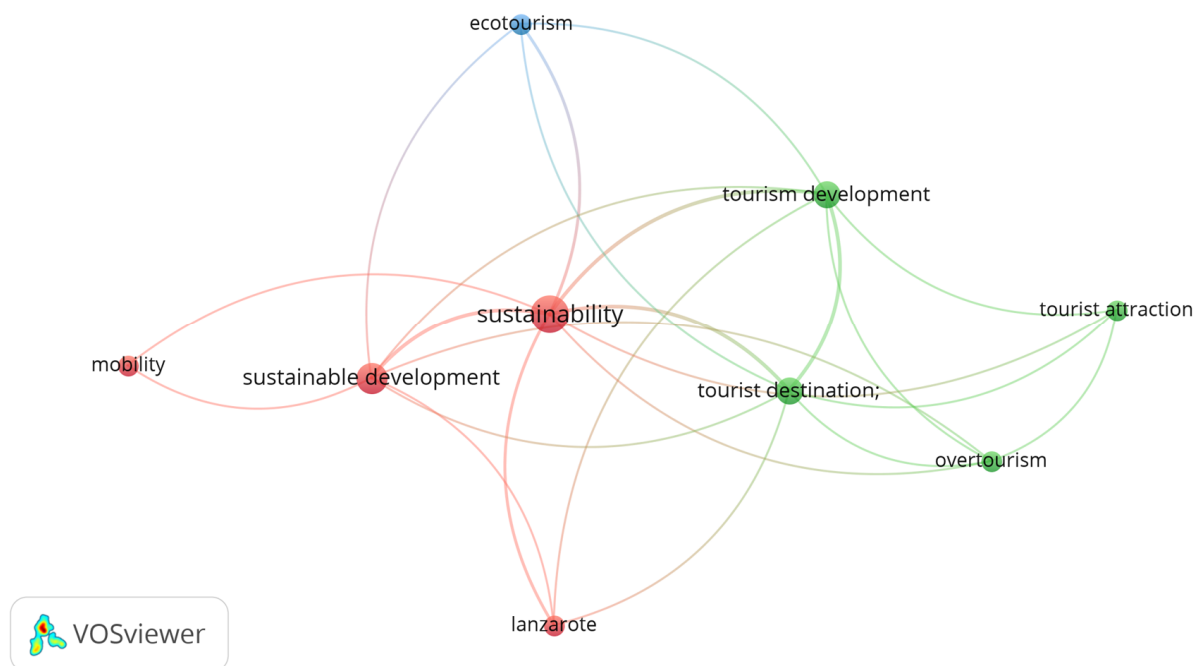


Figure 1. VOS Viewer Graphic.

Two main strands of research into sustainable tourism in Lanzarote can be observed, each linked to the terms “analysis” and “study”. One stream predominantly focuses on

sustainable development, primarily concerning environmental aspects and mobility and the other delves into tourism development centring on the destination, its attractions, and its image perception, be it positive (ecotourism) or negative (overtourism). This highlights the importance of sustainability communication and its role in the construction of narratives, which in turn feed back into new processes of reflection. The analysis also underscores the development dynamics of a mass destination characterised by a perpetual tension surrounding the tourism model.

6. Lessons Learned, Future Challenges and Lines of Research

The journey towards sustainability in an island destination, as evidenced by this case, unveils several valuable lessons learned through a logical chronological development. It starts with the necessary initial vision—César Manrique’s vision—to propose a sustainable model, accompanied by a demonstrative effect, with a series of landscape and artistic actions that configured and reaffirmed the identity of the destination. These actions contributed to the generation of social awareness and societal support for the model leveraged by this sustainable vision, exerting a counterbalancing pressure on the powers of the market.

The subsequent step involved the definition of the regulatory framework that echoed these concerns and values, establishing limits and restrictive frameworks to guide development. This was followed by the arrival of a series of environmental recognitions and certifications, such as the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, GEOPARQUE, etc., which, with greater or lesser success, fed back into the initial vision and the agents’ perception of a sustainable destination. In addition, these acknowledgements have led to the creation of governance bodies, which give rise to new debates and innovative approaches to future challenges.

All of this leads to the need for new scientific forums that foster debate, analysis, and research which will contribute to continuing to promote public policies that support sustainability in order to address the challenges faced by mass tourism destinations, especially islands. Notably, the significance of scientific and technical analysis in destination development, often overlooked according to Picazo, et al. [82], emerges as a critical factor in steering destinations along the path towards sustainability.

Lanzarote faces the challenge of maintaining its status as a sustainable destination in an evolving landscape, marked by the need for transformative actions in the destination and a renewed focus on improving its image and positioning. This occurs amidst a global acceleration of social awareness towards the adoption of commitments in environmental matters, exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

In the same way, important challenges arise regarding how to deal with migratory flows (tourists and residents) to Lanzarote and the wider Canary Islands. Addressing this requires creating a new inclusive vision backed by social support, especially in the face of the societal changes witnessed in recent years. This evolving society still presents important shortcomings and challenges for the future, such as higher poverty rates compared to the European context.

The social sphere will require further study, particularly as we observe how the multicultural aspect is becoming more acute. The implications this multicultural shift could have on the permeability of the concept of sustainability are noteworthy, especially considering that Manrique’s intellectual influence may be in a phase of potential decline in the next generation.

Similarly, Lanzarote grapples with pressing social challenges, leading indicators in social inequality and school dropout rates within the Canary Islands—with this region recording the worst statistics in the country [83]. Thus, the challenge of optimal and solvent management of limited public resources, ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks, and fostering good governance that includes all stakeholders—public, private, and civil—is critical. It is vital to provide them with a narrative thread that can be integrated into the island’s tourism development in this new scenario. This scenario encompasses

diverse changes including new tourist demographics (such as older middle-aged and senior European populations), a post-pandemic personal rethinking of personal priorities, and a rapidly changing digital context.

Exploring future lines of research in the sustainable development of destinations like Lanzarote could yield valuable insights and contribute as reference case studies for others. Here are some key aspects and challenges that could serve as promising avenues for future research in the literature:

- Mobility is a particularly important aspect within the conceptualisation of a sustainable destination in general, and in the case of Lanzarote in particular. Aviation and cruise-related mobility play significant roles considering the impact generated by each visit to the destination. In a recent consulting report, this figure was estimated to be 596/1000; <https://datosdelanzarote.com/item/estudio-sobre-la-capacidad-de-carga-turistica-en-lanzarote-2023>, (accessed on 7 June 2024)), as well as the lack of culture towards the use of public and collective transport, contribute to internal mobility challenges.

Transportation's role in sustainability, particularly in tourism where travel is inherent to the very concept of tourism, is undeniable. "Sustainable tourism has to be linked to the concept of sustainable mobility" [84]. Encouraging alternatives, such as car sharing, electric vehicles, robust public transport systems, cycling infrastructure, and implementing hubs and park-and-ride facilities, is pivotal in reducing emissions and enhancing the island's credibility as a sustainable destination.

Along the same lines, Martín-Cejas et al. [85] state that "the current public transport service on the island is clearly insufficient, with no opportunities to replace the private vehicle, both for residents and tourists".

- The relationship between territorial, fiscal, and environmental regulations, considering this new scenario, significantly influences decision-making in destinations and shapes the perceptions of visitors. The specific regulatory framework, in many cases at the municipal or island level, exerts substantial influence on a destination's environmental performance, directly impacting tourists' perceptions and overall satisfaction with their stay. In parallel to these formal regulatory systems, the development of other popular initiatives around land stewardship systems, integrating residents and tourists, and improving governance models is crucial.

Furthermore, in recent years, concepts closely linked to sustainability such as Circular Economy, Blue Economy, and Zero-Kilometer have appeared, which are of great interest both in terms of their implementation in Lanzarote and their integration into the island's sustainable strategy. These concepts also open new academic lines to explore their impact within a global approach to sustainability.

Likewise, issues like waste treatment, plastics management, transitioning towards cleaner energy sources, and efficiency in the production and distribution of drinking and irrigation water on the island remain critical areas for improvement.

- Similarly, there is a wide field of research on the identification of integrated sustainability indicators in tourism, encompassing both objective and subjective measures. The aim is to integrate this concept into a long-term strategy for destinations, where sustainability becomes not just a goal but also an opportunity. These indicators clearly portray the existing challenges for the industry, the destination's concerns, and the contributions of the companies involved. They also highlight the impact of actions taken or neglected, prioritising social well-being.
- Exploring the role of human resources within sustainable tourism destinations is another potential avenue for future research. It is particularly challenging to elevate the visibility of their commitment so that they play a central role in the sustainable and strategic performance of tourism destinations. Thus, continuous training and the generation of social awareness are key elements.

- Equally important is the adaptation that destinations must undergo in order to align their strategies with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the UN in September 2015. We understand that the visibility that these goals have achieved at a global level gives them unprecedented importance. Their integration into tourism territories can serve as a transformative force, shaping these areas as exemplary models both for the local community and for visitors.
- Communication strategies that go beyond factual information to take into account emotional aspects and their impact on destination positioning are crucial. Understanding how emotional connections influence visitors' perceptions, and their link with related certifications and seals in the current context of effervescent global interest in the relationship between tourism and sustainability, is a significant area of exploration.
- Another aspect that will require extensive analysis and empirical work is the co-existence between contemporary societies and the tourist population in urban and non-urban tourist destinations. Concepts such as over-tourism and tourism-phobia are attracting higher attention due to evolving neighbourhood dynamics that increasingly protect local lifestyles and well-being. The debate arises as to whether Lanzarote, as a sustainable tourist destination, intends to apply an effective limitation of its tourist growth and access to accommodation in view of the significant increase in the number of tourists over the last decade, which has multiplied by almost 50%.
- The use of neurotourism [86]) and neuromarketing in tourism research within the context of our digital society also opens a new reality to the value that tourists place on sustainability, an aspect that may be more camouflaged in more traditional analyses. This will show the importance of responsible behaviour in the human subconscious and how the destination's sustainable policies influence better communication with tourists.

In the case of Lanzarote, there is a pressing need to reassess sustainable tourism communication strategies because, in the current tourism context, the explicitness of its sustainable value might be lacking. This should force us to reconsider whether the messages that are conveyed to the outside world produce the necessary effectiveness. Neuromarketing can contribute to generating the appropriate reactions towards Lanzarote as a tourist destination.

- Finally, as a further aspect of research, we must refer to the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the concept of sustainability, and its impact on tourist destinations. Understanding the interplay between these factors will be a topic for further academic study and a clear line of research, bearing in mind that the SDGs themselves refer to health security, specifically in Goal 3 on Health and Wellbeing.

7. Conclusions

This article provides a brief review of the generic and ambiguous concept of sustainability applied specifically to a paradigmatic island destination, a major tourism hub. It explores objective and subjective indicators that justify its status as a sustainable destination, while also acknowledging other shortcomings still to be resolved.

The value of this work lies in showing the path followed by this destination, culminating in glimpses into the future. It prompts the necessary rethinking of the model towards sustainable development.

The first conclusion we reach is the need for Lanzarote as a tourist destination to reassess the role of sustainability in its future strategy. The island's deep-rooted association with sustainability is evident from its renowned international summits, the drafting of the World Charter in 1995, the declassification of thousands of beds, and societal resistance to the oil prospecting project that a leading multinational wanted to develop off the coast of the island. This historical context signals the need for Lanzarote to delineate and prioritize sustainability as a central pillar in its future endeavours, building upon its established brand and past achievements while addressing ongoing challenges.

The island's sustainability achievements have been overshadowed by significant legal repercussions for public leaders. Periods of political instability have centred on debates over the island's territorial model. Lanzarote has made remarkable progress despite these challenges, but important milestones remain to be reached to firmly establish the island as a benchmark destination for sustainability.

In this sense, the question of how tourism in Lanzarote should contribute to better social structuring and greater homogeneous prosperity throughout the island is also being monitored. How can an integrated approach with various sectors to diversify the economy and uplift society be taken on board? As regards the international arena, how can the island become an open and inclusive destination, welcoming visitors without imposing additional barriers or costs while ensuring environmental preservation? How can they offer the possibility of experiential enjoyment universally, leveraging technologies like the metaverse and virtual reality, alongside physical visits to the destination? In the global context, where tourism is a widespread social phenomenon and a social right, what reflections and proposals should Lanzarote make, and what can it contribute?

In any case, sustainability communication, as has become clear, plays a key role: creating a new narrative demands alignment, and a socially supported, market-aligned, and policy-integrated approach is crucial. One of the key lessons learned is the enormous influence of communication on the perceptions of the residents, tourists, and the collective identity. The challenge lies in reconciling the varying perceptions of sustainability by the local population, the international public, and mass tourists. Lanzarote could potentially become a living laboratory—a hub for innovations, pilot projects, international repercussion and impact, agglutination of and attraction of talent to the island, generating new forums for reflection focused on critical issues, and the use of scientific knowledge and new research techniques. This focus can shed light on the path to follow.

Finally, it should be noted that the case study of Lanzarote presented here provides invaluable insights into the decisions made by a destination in terms of sustainability and their influence on tourism positioning. These insights serve as a valuable resource for policymakers in other destinations seeking to incorporate or enhance sustainability in their tourism development strategies.

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