Universitat de les Illes Balears

Facultat de Turisme

Quality tourism. Attempts to its implementation. Which factors prevent and help?

Mar Serna Soler

Doble Grau de Turisme i Administració d'Empreses

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DNI de l'alumne: 43198828K

Treball tutelat per Tomás Lejarraga
Departament d'Economia de l'Empresa

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Abstract

After 40 years of continuous growth, the Balearic tourism sector still relies on the "sun and beach" tourism, registering increasing numbers of tourist arrivals and expenditure each year. Leading to an atmosphere of discontent among citizens, who see their daily lives disrupted by the massification of their hometowns. Which has propitiated the appearance of pressure groups with the aim of confronting the "touristification" of these regions. Giving a step to the concept of quality tourism. The encouragement of tourism strategies that look out for the social and environmental wellbeing. The aim of this paper is to analyze the attempts of its implementation and the factors that support and prevent it from being achieved. To do so, this paper goes through the Spanish regulatory framework; the 5D strategies; an overview of the last political actions in the Balearic Islands; and some real-life case studies, exposing several quality tourism initiatives from different regions. Then, the key aspects are analyzed and differed into preventive and supporting factors. Concluding the study with a reflexive discussion about the possibilities of quality tourism taking part in the future context.

Introduction

The 60s entailed a radical change for Spanish citizens and the country's image towards foreigners. Mass tourism attracted everyone's attention, especially the government's, to whom it became one of the main priorities for the economy.

After 20 years of massification of sun and beach tourism, the Spanish government started to notice its consequences. Leading to establish new objectives into the tourism sector: engaging quality tourism by diversifying the touristic demand and attracting more culture tourism, out of high season and with greater respect to the Spanish's customs.

Even so, mass tourism still shapes part of the Spanish reality, causing great controversies between residents and tourists.

This is the case of the Balearic Islands, where the "tourism phobia" has risen dramatically over the last decades. Leaving a hatred atmosphere within a huge part of residents towards tourists. In addition, the resource limitation issue arouses as an added contrast, since the tourism industry tends to use big amounts of resources while residents are concerned about its scarcity.

That is why it would be interesting to analyze whether governments have been able to implement the so-called quality tourism and so avoid discontents among residents and tourists. As well as, inquiring into the factors that might support or prevent from this type of tourism to happen.

Therefore, this paper is going to focus on the elements stated referring to the Balearic tourism. Popular for its "party tourism", the Balearic Islands is recently seeking for "deseasonalizing" its tourism with the purpose of depleting mass tourism. Consequently, improving the islanders' life conditions, while, bettering the service offered to tourists.

In fact, some statistical data demonstrate that the Spanish and, concretely, the Balearic tourism still hinge on the sun and beach products. In 2019 the highest numbers of tourist arrivals took place in July and August with 2.34 million and 2.26 million tourists, respectively. While during low season – winter months –, from November to March, the number of tourists oscillates the 200,000 visitors per month (INE, 2019c). Additionally, tourist expenditure lies principally on the "sun and beach" tourism (INE, 2019a).

Framework

Tourism in the Balearic Islands

The "touristic revolution" taken place in the 50s led to a great transformation in the history of the Balearic Islands, conforming to a new social, economic and environmental reality. As Murray et al. (2005) enumerate, this socio-economic evolution took place through several external factors: the "stabilization plan" that triggered the end of the Francoist economical autarchy, the installation of welfare states in the countries who took part in World War II, the introduction of paid holidays to the working class, the continuous breakthrough in air transport, etc.

Scholars such as Salom & Mas (2010) and Murray et al. (2005), refer to the three touristic *booms* as to describe the mentioned "touristic revolution". A concept developed by Onofre Rullan, in which the history of the Balearic tourism is divided into the economical pushes that reverberated across the islands' territories.

The first touristic *boom* occurs, as previously mentioned, at the end of the 50s with the "modernization" of the Francoist economy and ends when the petrol crisis breaks out in 1973. The concentration of hotels along the coasts of Mallorca and Ibiza plays a Fordist stage, where the hotel exercises as the touristic factory (Murray et al., 2005; Salom & Mas, 2010).

The second *boom* concurs along with the transition to post-Fordism by means of a high corporate concentration in the construction and marketing of touristic apartments, also in the coast lines. Most of which were already constructed by the time the regulation appeared; consequently, the illegal contributions made in that period were not controlled. Eventually, the Gulf crisis produces a stagnation that ends the second *boom* and would not be recovered until 1993 (Salom & Mas, 2010).

On the rapid upturn during the 90s, together with the Balkan War – weakening some potential competitors of the Balearic tourism – the third touristic *boom* comes about. This period is marked by the integration of residential tourism. Any property can be turned into touristic, which involves that a big part of the growth shifts towards non-regulated touristic accommodations (Murray et al., 2005).

In the recent years, the situation of the Balearic tourism stands out for its continuous growth. Almost every year the islands beat their own records of number of tourist arrivals and touristic expenditure. In 2019 the total number of arrivals rose up to 16.45 million of tourists, although representing a decrease of 0.6% compared to 2018, when it was beaten the record of hosting almost 16.60 million of tourists. However, 2019 supposed a historical record in touristic expenditure, turnover and profitability, reaching an annual increase of 1.4% with €16,510 million (noticiasmallorca.es, 2020; Verger, 2019). As a consequence of not focusing uniquely on the number of tourists' arrivals, but basing the tourism strategy on the products and offer improvement.

Mass tourism and '*Tourism phobia*'

Both concepts can be considered synonyms to overtourism. Overtourism describes a situation when the exploitation of resources and common goods for tourist purposes is excessive. Noting that it does not only refer to the depletion of resources, but also a rupture of the conditions that make tourism satisfactory for all stakeholders, and the appearance of a discontent atmosphere (Milano, 2018). Conditions that can be disturbed by the saturation of touristic destinations; yet the perception of saturation could differ from destinations and regions and would depend on stakeholders' subjective or collective point of view, instead of being a mere quantitative element.

Milano (2018) states some of the key elements that argue the denunciations and counter discourses towards overtourism and discontent:
- "*increase in dwelling prices (rent and purchase by square meter),*
- *congestion and privatization of public places,*
- *loss or reduction of residents' purchasing power,*
- *imbalances between the number of visitors and residents,*
- *precarious and externalization of employment in the touristic sector,*
- *transformation of the commercial net, growth in the cruise tourism, and*
- *environmental impact, pollution and waste generation.*"

These protests have turned the attention of local policies, social movements and the media to tourism challenges, politicizing tourism and fostering a great debate among public judgements. Yet, the current claims have been reduced to political instruments and sensational media messages, resulting in an incorrect use of the term "tourism phobia" (Milano, 2018).

The concept of "tourism phobia" affirms that the problem does not lay in having tourists, but saturating the cities with tourists (Milano, 2018). It does not state that people have phobia about tourism, but about the consequences of uncontrolled mass tourism (*Todo Incluido. Daños y Consecuencias Del Turismo En Las Islas Baleares*, 2019).

The wrong interpretation of the term has put in the shade the actions, criticism and suggestions of the social movements. Despite that, using the term, even for arguments in favor or in opposition, has given more visibility to the denunciations and grievances to an international level (Milano, 2018).

Furthermore, this discontent is not a stray case of cities such as Barcelona or Palma de Mallorca. European cities like Venice, Milan and Rome in Italy, Dubrovnik and the island Hvar in Croatia, Berlin in Germany, Paris in France and even Reykjavik in Iceland are experiencing the same or similar scenarios (Milano, 2018). For instance, the circumstances in Venice have led to locals marching in demonstrations "*voicing anger at rising rents and the impact of huge cruise ships and the pollution they cause to the city's delicate environment*" (Coldwell, 2017).

Consequently, in an interview carried out by *The Guardian* in 2017, the UNWTO, responding to the increasing denunciations throughout the most popular destinations in Europe, recommended some approaches in crowd management in destinations. Including "*encouraging tourists to visit beyond the central sights,*

diversifying tourist activities, reducing seasonality and, importantly, addressing the need of the local community." (Coldwell, 2017). Remarking that the main intention does not consist of stopping tourists from arriving. Until then, the UNWTO had not given away any specific pronouncement over the matter (Milano, 2018).

However, Duncan McCann, researcher at the New Economics Foundation, believes the problem does not lie in the increased number of tourists, but the lack of politic action addressing the problem. He affirms: "*Until that is addressed I don't think we'll see this protest movement subside.*" (McCann cited on Coldwell, 2017).

As examples of the denunciations previously listed, the charts following the paragraph show the evolution of the dwelling prices for the last six years (see Figure 1) and the evolution of tourist arrivals compared to residents' per capita income in the Balearic Islands (see Figure 2).
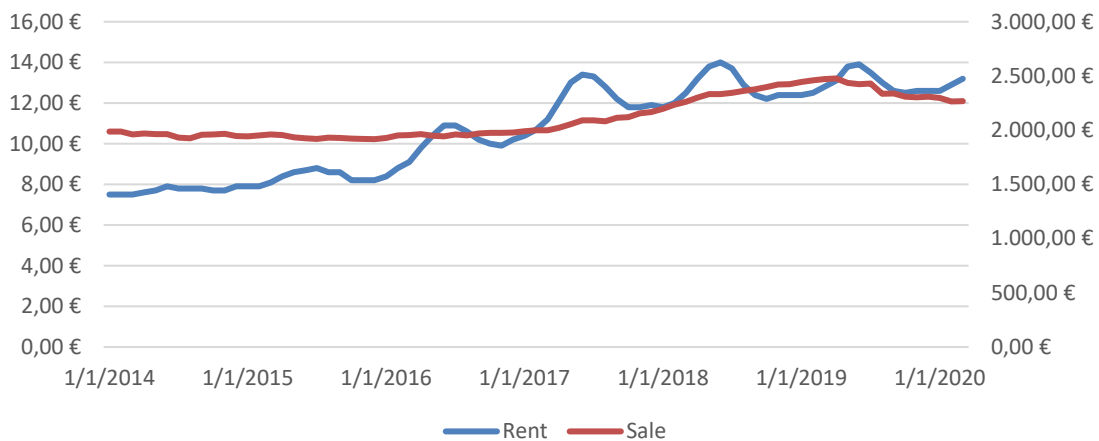
Figure 1. Evolution of dwelling prices per square meter in the Balearic Islands. Comparison between rent and sale. Own elaboration (idealista.com, 2020a); (idealista.com, 2020b).

With the information obtained in *idealista.com* (2020a; 2020b), contrasted with data from INE, it is indeed noticeable the increase of dwelling prices. Remarking the big fluctuations that the rent price experiences during high-season periods. Definitively, the overall increase of rent prices has transformed apartments from 8€/m^2 worth to almost 14€/m^2, thus, a rise of 75%.

Data that, compared to Figure 2, does not seem to be equitable. Although both tourist numbers and per capita income have been growing in the past years, the graph shows that they have not been evolving equally, especially since 2016. Furthermore, the comparison between Figure 1 and 2 could show the decrease in residents' affordability when purchasing or renting a home.

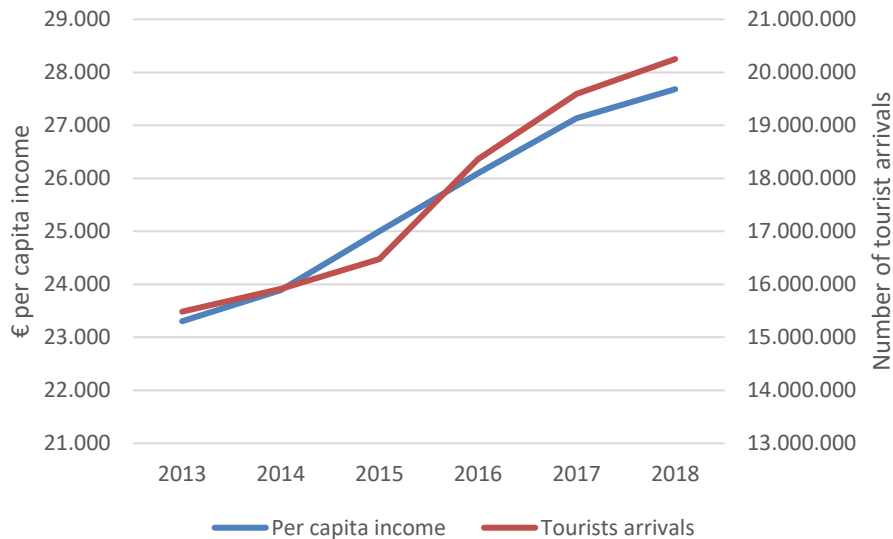*Figure 2. Evolution of the per capita income in the Balearic Islands and the number of tourist arrivals. Own elaboration (INE, 2019b);(Agència d'Estratègia Turística de les Illes Balears & Vicepresidència i Conselleria d'Innovació, Recerca i Turisme, 2019).*

Additionally, related to the precarious employment consequence of the saturation of overtourism, it is worth mention the existence of *Las Kellys* Association. It consists of an autonomous association integrated by maids working in the hotel industry, and those who support their cause – friends and family. There have been established different groups throughout the most touristic regions in Spain; that is Barcelona, Benidorm, Cádiz, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Madrid and Mallorca (Las Kellys Asociación, 2016).

The aim of this association is broadcasting and making visible the problematic situation of the maids and contributing in the improvement of their quality of life. In their manifesto *Las Kellys* state the employment rights and changes that are required in the sector (Las Kellys Asociación, 2016). Among them, it can be highlighted:

- Early retirement and decent pensions; as their jobs should be considered as drudgery.
- The acknowledgement of professional illnesses directly related to the body's mobility and skeletal muscles.
- The elimination of employment externalization, so the equality in recruitment and the prevention of illegal dismissals is granted.
- An increase in labor inspections, and the assurance that are randomly carried out.

To complete the manifesto, *Las Kellys* give away some examples of their situation:

"*In Las Kellys there are different women: some of them are unemployed, others are employed, some are interns, others are paid, some are casual, others are permanent, some work in payroll, others for an external company, […] Some of them have been working a lot of years as maids and are concerned about their health and in which conditions they are going to retire, others have been less time and are concerned about repeating the same or worse career than their predecessors.*
This space is for them, for all of them."(Las Kellys Asociación, 2016).

Furthermore, the current discontent atmosphere has encouraged the appearance of pressure groups such as "*Ciutat per a qui l'habita*". It consists of an open citizen assembly with the purpose of confronting the "touristification" of Palma. With the slogan "*City, for those who dwell in it not for those who visit it!*", they seek the attainment of the following objectives (Ciutat per a qui l'habita, 2017a):

- "*Becoming a meeting space for the social movements that oppose the tourism drift in the city*".
- Bringing together the different neighborhoods and collectives by means of a mutual support network where solidarity and concordance is fostered to face the conflicts produced by tourism.
- Carrying out collective actions – strikes, campaigns, informative material, etc. – with the aim of showing the impacts of the tourism industry on the Balearic territory and, consequently, creating a community capable of preventing this situation.
- Suggesting short- and long-term actions reversing the "touristification".

They claim that their political goal is mobilizing and raising social awareness for tourism conciliation. Among their suggestions, they demand a moratorium on new tourist beds and other kind of touristic establishments; the prohibition of the vacation rental offer in multifamily properties; and the prevention of the city's zoning between tourism and residential uses (Ciutat per a qui l'habita, 2017b).

Lastly, the members of "*Ciutat per a qui l'habita*" (2017b) remark the importance of the Administration's role to make a difference. They express that their principles are not against any particular person (tourist or owner), but against the economic, social and cultural actions that harm a majority of people for the benefit of a minority.

Tourism regulatory framework in Spain

Along with the evolution of the Spanish tourism, Blázquez-Salom et al. (2019) analyze the urban-tourism regulatory context during the last 60 years of activity. Dividing them into the different periods and political circumstances occurred.

After World War II, in the 50s, northern countries start to recover from the war's big expenses, and Spain's coastline turns out to be the perfect escape for families through its landscapes and cheap prices. The "*typical Spanish*" famous promotion is broadcast for the first time (González, 2017). The ministry of tourism is created in 1951 with the name "Ministry of Information and Tourism" (Plumed Lasarte et al., 2018).

The 60s are characterized by the arrival of millions of tourists every year. The decade witnesses a huge development in touristic infrastructure (González, 2017). This period of time, considered until 1975, is named as "*the Spanish tourism miracle*" after the establishment of mass tourism throughout a dictatorial political regime (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). *Boosterism* stared in the tourism plans in this period, by prioritizing growth in the tourism supply of coastal regions.

The dramatic growth of the tourism activity and the non-existent legislative precedents led to "*an unplanned industry that gained strength quickly and uncontrollably*" (Plumed Lasarte et al., 2018).

Therefore, *boosterism* resulted in structural problems difficult to overcome, such as "*deficits in infrastructure and quality standards of the supply, the deterioration of natural and cultural heritage, and even, the first saturation problems of touristic sites*" (Cals, 1974; Murray, 2015, cited on Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019).

With the intention of counteracting these impacts, the new established democracy (1978) carries out a tourism decentralizing process and introduces an urban policy. Then, with the *Ley de Bases de Régimen Local* (1986) the urban planning competences are granted to the municipalities (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019).

As a result, the *boosterism* approach is limited with a greater administrative control and a deeper thought over the possible impacts of planning in the territorial model (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). The Balearic Islands' approach in 1984 conforms an innovative way to protect natural spaces (Blázquez-Salom, 1999, cited on Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). Yet, its protectionist legislation ended up being more palliative than preventative.

The 90s brought about new modifications within the tourism sector. A situation in which corporations attempt to monopolize the hotel revenue, and the market suffers from oversupply, generated a growing social agreement in favor of nature preservation (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). Which propitiated the introduction and evolution of contemplations referring sustainability in tourism policies (Plumed Lasarte et al., 2018).

Plumbed Lasarte et al. (2018) analyzes the chronological succession of tourism political plans from the first mention of nature preservation in *FUTURES I* (1992-1995). A competitive plan that gives importance to consolidating tourism as an economic sector by preserving the natural and urban environments, so it can be compatible with the touristic activity. *FUTURES II* (1996-1999) renovates the political aim towards sustainability – first time this concept is mentioned in any regulation –, considering it a key point and the model to follow for the tourist destinations' development. Then, the last regulation established in the 90s is the *Plan of Strategies and Actions of the General Administration of the State in Tourism Matters* (1997), in which the concept of environmental sustainability is more elaborated, and sets the goal of promoting "sustainable tourism plans" in destinations and introduces the need of environmental management in tourism companies.

During this same period, the Balearic Islands performed a reshaping of tourism urbanization by restraining hotel construction. Concurrently, the promotion of residential enlargement in urban ratios was implemented to reduce dense coastal areas and redirect tourism growth. These measures, contemplated in the Tourism Supply-side Regulation Plans (POOT), constituted "*the first decisive action on a regional scale to contain growth of coastal tourist areas*" (Blázquez-Salom & Yrigoy 2016, cited on Blázquez-Salom et al. 2019).

The end of the century and beginning of XXI witnessed the so-called "urban development tsunami" affecting the Mediterranean coastlines of Spain. During 1997 and 2006 a new adaptation of the Land Law of 1988 incorporated liberalizing procedures, promoting the real estate development. Thus, the number of new constructions dramatically increased (Burriel de Orueta, 2008; López & Rodríguez, 2011, cited on Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019).

This urban development tsunami turned against the hotel industry and endangered the environmental situation. Territorial tourism planning still defended the importance of sustainability, but urban development was prioritized. Moreover, the presence of territorial planning procedures on several regional and local levels caused confrontations, overlaps and contradictions between one another (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). In the meantime, the central government implemented the *PICTE* (Integral Plan for Spanish Tourism Quality) in 2000, advocating the limitation of tourist areas' urban development and the cooperation between tourism and environmental parties to fulfil their program in quality of destinations (Plumed Lasarte et al., 2018).

The great economic crisis in 2008 supposed a sudden decrease of urban expansion. To cancel out the effects of the crisis, the government implemented neoliberal approaches for territorial and tourism policies. First, the *"Plan Horizonte 2020"*, implemented in 2008, in order to cover all kind of touristic realities, enhanced an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration between the different public administrations (Noriega, 2007). Whereas the *PNIT* (*National and Integral Tourism Plan*) in 2012 encouraged the involvement of private investment (Yrigoy, 2016, cited on Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019), and sought the promotion of a new vision for Spain: sustainability as core element for competitiveness (Plumed Lasarte et al., 2018).

This succession of policies have been, however, criticized. Blanco-Romero et al. (2018) argue that factors such as the oversupply of housing, the effects of the so-called urban development tsunami, the resultant high percentage of private loans – after the execution of the *PNIT* –, and the uncertainty of getting a job has led to a situation where tourism corporations hold a significant power within the market, and the appearance and permanence of the rental tourism is supported.

Quality tourism

The concept of quality tourism still comes out to be very troublesome. There is no precise definition. Some argue that it would have to do with a tourism with higher revenues since the more revenue, the greater remuneration and number of job posts. Whereas others defend that a quality tourism is that that interacts with the local economy, people and their customs, by also preserving the environment and quality of life (Xavier Canalís, 2019).

The object of this paper is the study of the second definition. That is, quality not as luxurious destinations, but as eco- and inhabitant friendly.

Yet, it is interesting to mention the presence of the project *"Spain Reloaded"*. Consolidated within the frame of the *Marketing Strategic Plan 2018-2020*, the project seeks to transmit directly to European operators the great potential Spain has as a destination for the "cosmopolitan" consumer segment (tourspain.es, 2019). This denomination refers to a new profile of consumer, characterized by relishing shopping, gastronomy, city tours, art and culture (Turespaña, 2017). The kind of tourist who is considered to be economic and socially sustainable because spends more money than average and consumes local products.

The reasoning for this quality tourism interpretation can be denoted with the following quote by CaixaBank Research (2019) from their annual sector report on tourism in the Balearic Islands:

> *"[…] tourist expenditure still appears to be growing, highlighting the importance of the industry's strategy to attract higher quality tourism. The number of tourists visiting Spain in 2018 may have been similar to the total in 2017 but the amount spent by those tourists increased by 2.8% and daily expenditure rose by 6.4%, both very positive figures."*

On the other hand, when the *Bruntland* report (1987) – managed by the *World Commission on Environment Development* –, it was considered that attaining "*a social, economic and environmentally balanced approach to managing and marketing tourist sites*" constituted a key point for the management of tourism (Gilmore, 2017).

A collaboration between the World Tourism Organization & United Nations Environment Programme (2005) resulted in the book *Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers*, in which it is remarkable the following quote:

> *"It should be increasingly accepted that a quality tourism destination or product is one that addresses the full range of sustainability issues rather than simply concentrating on visitor satisfaction. Indeed, tourists should themselves be encouraged to think in these terms – a place that cares for the environment and its workforce is more likely also to care for them."*

Therefore, this kind of tourism seeks to sort out the overtourism and tourism phobia issues. In fact, the WTO & UNEP (2005) list the necessary policies to be implemented in order to achieve community wellbeing – "*to maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities*" –:

- "*Getting the balance right in the volume*". Stressing the relevance of the carrying capacity of a destination, policies are asked to keep an optimum number of tourists at any one time, taking into account indexes such as "*volume of visits, traffic counts, number of complaints from local people, level litter, etc.*"
- "*Reducing congestion*" is suggested by decreasing seasonality or promoting non-saturated destinations, improving traffic conditions, and controlling activities involving large numbers of visitors at once.
- "*Careful planning and management of tourism enterprises and infrastructure*", in which it could be highlighted the encouragement for tourism companies and visitors to minimize their water consumption, in places where this resource is scarce.
- "*Promoting mutual use of facilities and services by residents and tourists*".
- "*Influencing the behavior of tourists towards local communities*" by informing visitors beforehand about particular habits or sensitivities with which they should be respectful, or providing measures to regulate disruptive behaviors from tourists, like noise and littering.

The 5D strategies

Milano (2018) goes through the denominated 5Ds – "deseasonalization", decongestion, decentralization, diversification and *deluxe* tourism – as suggested techniques to avoid mass tourism and its consequent problems. He argues that these strategies can indeed solve promptly saturation, seasonal pressure or the profits' maximization in a touristic area but seem not to be structurally decisive.

Deseasonalization has become a relevant instrument in order to promote a saturated destination off-season and so shift the tourism presence to less or not massified periods. Nonetheless, Milano (2018) affirms that making these policies effective would depend on multiple factors and would not always ensure the best management of tourism movements. For instance, the study conducted by Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales (2013) demonstrates that cultural tourism works as a tool for deseasonalization in the Andalusian coastline case. Whereas Barcelona has attempted this strategy by means of promoting convention tourism (Milano, 2018).

Often implemented together with deseasonalization, the diversification of touristic products, activities and experiences have the goal of reverting the mass tourism image of a destination to targeting market niches from the cultural and culinary to sport adventures (Milano, 2018). Thus, differentiated to the first strategy by the period in which is carried out.

Strongly related to diversifying tourism activities, the concept of decentralization is defined as the strategy in which the tourism attractions are created and marketed beyond the flagship product at destination (Judd, 1999, cited on Milano, 2018).

The decongestion strategy has been considered as the prior step for decentralization, thus, both operate parallelly one another. It focuses on a center-periphery frame, as well as a redistribution instrument of the tourism flow from certain areas to others (Milano, 2018).

Lastly, Milano (2018) exposes the most differentiated alternative, the Deluxe tourism, which aims to reconvert the tourism offer by raising the cost of visiting a destination. This strategy is also named quality tourism and, in fact, interprets the other mentioned definition. This measure is often related to diversification policies, where not only are the tourism attractions renewed, but its goal is to change its targeted consumers.

Some of these strategies have been implemented or attempted in the Balearic tourism. In 2019, the *Tourism Strategic Agency of the Balearic Islands* (AETIB) focused on the deseasonalization of tourism and the development of sustainable products (Europa Press, 2019). To do so, the focus was centered on the *Tourism Strategic Segments* (SET), a covenant between private and public sectors to improve the competitive positioning of the Balearic Islands. The SETs are organized regarding the different strategic touristic products of the islands: gastronomic, cultural, active tourism, ecotourism, sporting, health and wellness, luxury and MICE (GOIB, 2019). Hence, diversifying the tourism towards other segments, besides the "sun and beach" offer.
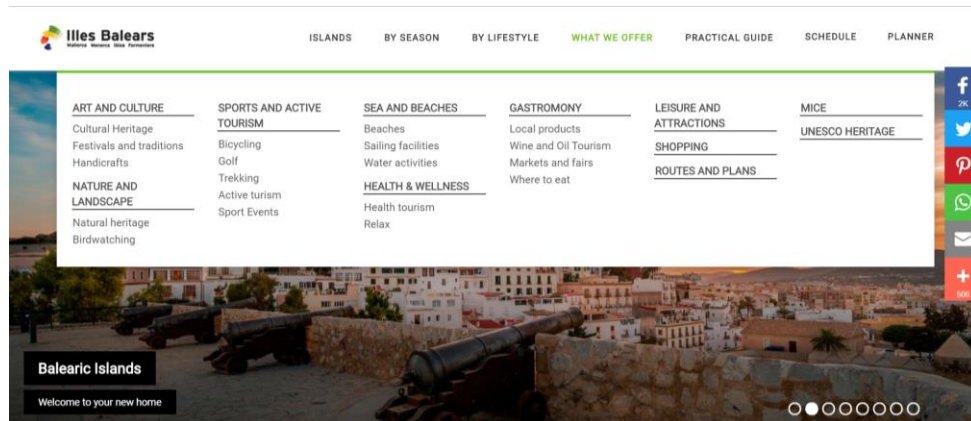
Illustration 1. Screenshot of the "Agencia Estratégica Turística de las Islas Baleares" (AETIB) website (illesbalears.travel, 2020).

As it can be seen in Illustration 2, the AETIB website displays the touristic offer according with the SETs. Then, tourists have direct access to the diversified offer and are able to learn from it before their stay (illesbalears.travel, 2020).

Additionally, the Balearic government enhances the importance of stimulating and developing sustainable touristic products and destinations that further (GOIB & AETIB, 2018):
- the preservation of the natural and cultural resources,
- the tourist participation in the autochthonous lifestyle, and
- the reinvestment of touristic expenditure for the community's benefit.

Likewise, the AETIB (2019) has developed a proposal in favor of the deseasonalization and diversification of the Balearic tourism with the slogan *Better in winter*. The proposal exposes several off-season activities to do throughout the whole year for each island, as well as a monthly agenda from October 2019 to May 2020. For instance, some activities promoted in Mallorca are visiting the cellars by following a wine route, going on excursions with traditional fishermen, competing in a triathlon in Peguera in October, or even visiting an olive fair in Caimari at the end of November.

Activities that are also following the decentralization and decongestion strategies, as they are carried out in non-saturated regions, away from the center of Palma and the typical coastal towns.

Implementation

The biggest challenge encountered, after more than 40 years of unstoppable growth, is submitting strategies that solve the social discontent of mass tourism (Milano, 2018). The Spanish government (Secretaría de Estado de Turismo, 2019) has expressed its concern about the capability of the current tourism model of keeping up with continuous growth and, simultaneously, satisfy the environment's and citizens' needs.

Therefore, following the parameters established at an international level through the UN's *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG) *2030*, the "*Secretaría de Estado de Turismo*" (2019) has developed a new *Strategy for Sustainable Tourism in Spain 2030* that could maintain the Spanish leadership within the world's tourism market. Hence, this new model aims to improve the industry's competitive capability and profitability, the natural and cultural standards, and the fair distribution of tourism profits and burdens, by involving in the 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* set by the United Nations Environment Programme (2016).

On a regional level, the Government of the Balearic Islands has also implemented a personalized *Balearic Agenda 2030* (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2019), since the UN's agenda poses a global case scenario but encourages each region to implement it on account of their own circumstances. Accordingly, the *Balearic Agenda 2030* is structured in relation to the UN's SDGs as follows:

Figure 3. Balearic Agenda 2030 and UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2019);(United Nations Environment Programme, 2016).

Then, the *Balearic Agenda* involves three fundamental matters. Each one of them is formulated as a tool for achieving quality in the different sectors of the Balearic economy. For instance, the tourism and work sectors are included in both *Energy and environmental sustainability* and *Economical sustainability*; whereas mobility and housing are contemplated within all three matters (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2019).

Furthermore, the GOIB has implemented the agenda along with the "*Acords de Bellver*", the definitive governance accord for the 2019-2023 legislature (mallorcadiario.com, 2019b). Hence, the *Balearic Agenda* works as a tool for cohesion, participation and coordination between the government and the private sector and society (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2019).

In fact, one of the tourism objectives of the *Bellver Accords* has been executed in the most recent time. The governance accord declared that during their legislature they would implement a regulatory law over the tourism of excesses and alcohol consumption by introducing limitations founded upon stakeholders' and environment's interests (PSIB/PSOE et al., 2019).

As a result, the government council approved the first rule in all Europe that restricts alcohol promotion and sale in certain touristic regions. More concretely, the regulation affects three saturated areas – Arenal, Magaluf and the popular West End of Sant Antoni –, and will be temporally effective for 5 years. So, it forbids the use of promotional messages boosting alcohol consumption in touristic premises, as well as the practice of dangerous activities (such as jumping from balconies). Likewise, the new rule suspends concessions for new party-boats licenses and constraints the activity in the most affected areas (CAIB, 2020).

Proceeding with the issues raised throughout the *Bellver Accords*, it is worth mentioning some of the objectives that have a strong relation to the social and environmental discontents previously discussed.

For example, regarding the problem of dwelling prices, the coalition government (PSIB/PSOE et al., 2019) plan to create an *Observatory of Dwelling Prices*, in which the real estate market will be analyzed, and price control measures will be proposed, creating, thus, an index of dwelling prices accessible to all stakeholders.

As for environmental protection, PSIB/PSOE et al. (2019) propose the reduction in public transport prices, so they can be affordable to all and encouraged to use for tourists. On the same account, they plan to implement control over car rentals and enhance a transformation into electric cars. Additionally, they seek the procurement of the managerial competences over coastal areas and improve the preservation of the Balearic territory by the approval of a land law. The water consumption and waste generation are, likewise, relevant issues that are intended to be carried out responsibly.

Next, related to the employment situation of groups such as *Las Kellys*, a *Balearic Institute of Labor Security and Health* would be developed in order to reduce the accident rate, recognize professional illnesses and prevent occupational accidents (PSIB/PSOE et al., 2019).

Lastly, from the tourism related measures, the following could be highlighted: fostering investments on the sector to improve the offer's competitiveness and quality, promoting a qualified and adapted training for the new tourism demands, assuring a continuous social dialog by the boost of a *Tourism Sectorial Table*,

and reinforcing the functionality of tourism inspections (for both touristic premises and rental tourism) (PSIB/PSOE et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, the attainment of these measures is, obviously, not possible to analyze. In consequence, it would be interesting to go through some past cases that implemented quality tourism measures. So, it could be found out which factors were favorable and which not.

Quality tourism initiatives: case studies

Calvià, Mallorca

A nearby example for the implementation of quality tourism initiatives can be found within the WTO & UNEP (2005). The non-profit organization remarks the case of Calvià. The community and tourism stakeholders worked together to implement the *Local Agenda 21*, a long-term sustainable plan aiming to get rid of environmental and tourist experience's degradation.

The *Local Agenda 21* was first attempted by carrying out a rigorously analysis of the region, looking into the three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. Making the data compilation document public in 1995, representatives from the tourism industry, the government and the local community reached the agreement of conducting a local action plan towards sustainability. Centered throughout six key matters – "*population and quality of life; ecology; cultural heritage; economy; town planning; and key environmental sectors*" – the Action Plan, ratified two years later, ended up identifying 40 initiatives under 10 strategic lines of action (WTO & UNEP, 2005) (considerably similar to the ones stated in the *Bellver Accords*).

Moreover, it was important, specially at first, to gain support and involvement in the plan. Thus, the Municipality of Calvià implemented some approaches, such as enhancing sustainability as a crucial tourism strategy among politicians and technicians, fostering local engagement by collecting signatures in favor of the plan, achieving consensus in priority actions between different private sector players, and keeping a progress monitoring strategy to obtain adaptive approaches to face changes (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

The report by the WTO & UNEP (2005) also analyses the results obtained from the actions implemented. One of them consisted of the de-classification of land previously assigned for urban development and the demolition of badly ubicated hotel premises. However, these actions seemed to be taken belatedly, since the previous lack of planning over urban development led to too critical environmental impacts, difficult to be completely reversed. In addition, in spite of a transport infrastructure improvement, public transportation could not match the actions due to a lack of coordination with other territorial plans, not enough support from the taxi industry and the preference of local citizens for using private cars.

Similarly, local engagement turned out to be insufficient for water conservation and energy saving, despite the actions carried in support of the resource scarcity issue. Plus, even with the training and education standards applied, it was found that most tourism employment still relied on low-skilled or untrained labor, as tourism enterprises and residents did not prioritize the improvement in education (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

To sum up, the WTO & UNEP (2005) consider that, generally speaking, the *Local Agenda 21* and the Action Plan were a success thanks to the collaborative work at a local level and "*the use of continual monitoring and an adaptive management approach*". On the other hand, however, it is noticeable the number of deficiencies the plan experienced.

Australia and New Zealand

Similarly, the OECD (2010) analyzes worldwide cases that have carried out programs to support the monitoring and evaluation of tourism practices. In Australia, for example, it has been executed the *Tourism Impact Model* that uses cost-benefit analysis to support local governments by helping to comprehend the impacts tourism has on their regions. In addition, the research-focused institution *Tourism Research Australia* has come up with a tool called the *Total Economic Inbound Economic Value of Tourism* that estimates the possible effects derived from changes in tourism demand.

Likewise, the *Tourism Strategy to 2015* executed in New Zealand operates with "*a series of simple measurable targets which can be evaluated at the end of the period*". Together with a *Tourism Planning Toolkit* in which local authorities and touristic enterprises are able to assess their performances so adequate actions can be developed (OECD, 2010).

Namibia

Another example of good practices in the tourism industry is the case of Namibia. In 1996 the *Nature Conservation Amendment Act* granted rural communities with the managerial rights and responsibilities necessary to establish conservancies. Enabling them to control the wildlife and natural resources of certain areas, and, consequently, establishing their own ecotourism enterprises. Moreover, authorizing them to negotiate with private tourism firms to fasten on environmental and social benefits (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

Malta

The tourism situation in Malta resembles the Balearic Islands'. At the end of 1990s, the Maltese government realized the danger of leaving tourism development unplanned. Thus, to avoid the continuous degradation of the islands, they decided to conduct a study about tourism carrying capacity. After a process of data compilation and consultation, five possible future scenarios were considered: "*free development; planned intensive development; sustainable development; restricted up-market tourism; or no tourism.*" (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

Eventually it was agreed upon the sustainable development approach, "*maintaining significant levels of tourism but within recognized limits.*" (WTO & UNEP, 2005). Its implementation was focused on factors that were found to be essential for achieving future growth:

- the need to keep considering tourism as a relevant source of foreign exchange profits;
- stopping the oversupply of accommodation;
- avoiding the congestion in peak seasons, which affects visitors' satisfaction and society's tolerance;
- managing the scarcity of land resources and the use of energy.

Therefore, in order to establish the carrying capacity of the islands, the government set a quantifiable starting point with the number of beds supplied. It was decided that the bed stock should remain at the same number (with 41,000 at that time), so that it could achieve viable occupancy rates. Meanwhile, in order to cancel out the economic effects of this limitation, they executed policies fostering the increase in the per capita expenditure, the reinforcement of the off-season products, and the promotion of resource efficiency. As a result, significant target markets were reached and the quality of the offer, as well as the conservation and interpretation of the archipelago's heritage, were improved (WTO & UNEP, 2005). In fact, this carrying capacity model has become a cornerstone for Malta's future tourism policies.

Egypt

The policy guide made by WTO & UNEP (2005) also deepens through the case of Egypt: "*A comprehensive approach to coastal planning and management involving zoning of areas and the introduction or strengthening of a range of instruments to encourage developers and operators to embrace sustainability.*"

At first, the Egyptian tourism was focused on visitor numbers and accommodation capacity, as the only strategy to grow. However, in 2001 the *Tourism Development Authority* (TDA) concluded that their tourism should embrace environmental concerns towards the destination, and the improvement of its overall quality in the long-term. Three development alternatives were considered for the *Land Use Management Plan* – a conventional strategy of high growth development; a sustainable development; and an ecotourism (low growth) alternative –, and it was eventually decided on the sustainable one (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

The process for its implementation was based on recognizing that different resources can differently deal with tourism activities. Thus, to ensure the use of appropriate types and levels of tourism for each region, a *Sensitivity Map* was created showing the resources' level of sensitiveness concerning their resilience to being used. Then, the zones identified in the zoning scheme had to be managed by safeguarding the area from urban development and ensuring "*the best investment of environmental and cultural resources and the preservation of ecological balance.*" (WTO & UNEP, 2005). Resulting in radical changes for Egypt's planning regulations, leaving serious modifications and development limitations in certain zones. It was the first time their regulations were based on sustainability criteria, combining long-term ecological and economic viability, resources' ethical use and equity among local communities.

Furthermore, the *Environmental impact assessment* (EIA) system divided the tourism projects depending on the severity of their environmental impact – those that must follow EIA's requirements, those that need further screening, and those that no longer require EIA (WTO & UNEP, 2005). However, through an evaluation of these tourism projects' processes, many weaknesses were identified:

- Insufficient guidelines for the implementation of the tourism projects.
- Short interaction between the developers – resulting in delays in the approval and execution of many projects.
- Discordant information between the different authorities.
- Inexistent systematic review securing that the EIA's requirements are followed.

Because of that, some improvements were introduced, such as a *Memorandum of Understanding* between the authorities involved, an improved guidance on initial examination, and the introduction of an EIA tracking system to prove compliance (WTO & UNEP, 2005).

Finally, the WTO & UNEP (2005) conclude the case of Egypt by revealing the most important factors that made this case successful:

- "*The value of experience from elsewhere*". The attainment of the environmental shift in tourism was supported by a bi-lateral accord between the USA and Egypt, which brought about technical assistance and financial aid for the programs. Leading to an encouragement to contemplate alternative strategies and embrace an innovative sustainable approach. Additionally, the decisions were influenced by good practices carried out in other countries.
- The necessity of matching the tourism development plans with the ones for protected areas.
- "*The value of objective information*". By researching about the concept of sustainable tourism and understanding its implications, it provided a thorough insight into the sustainability conception and allowed them to reach a consensus on zoning regulations.

Supporting factors

Having exposed the tourism regulation against "party" tourism, seems interesting to contemplate it alongside the also ongoing initiatives that are being implemented in Magaluf with the denominated *The New Magaluf*. Meliá Hotels International has developed a new promotional campaign for this mature destination, in which the company has already invested €250M since 2011. Their challenge is to deseasonalize the region and get rid of the negative image it has been getting over the years due to the binge tourism and the denominated "balconing", and the violence associated to alcohol consumption. Meliá recognizes that there has been already a big advance in the hotel reconversion, but it is still working on the acquisition of new clients' profiles (ultimahora.es, 2019).

The New Magaluf could be interpreted as an initiative in favor of quality tourism, as it prevents tourists from disturbing the resident's habits by cancelling out the effects of binge tourism. However, it has been demonstrated by a survey conducted by Mathew & Sreejesh (2017) that the perception of a responsible tourism comes about when there is "*community engagement, employment opportunities, skill development programs and public awareness.*" Thus, Meliá's strategy does not seem to fulfill these requirements. In fact, it is also shown that private sectors should work together with authorities in order to be able to meet both tourists and local citizens' needs.

Additionally, Mathew & Sreejesh (2017) state that sustainability and responsible tourism initiatives are key for an overall quality of life at touristic regions.

Some EU regions have come together and implemented the BRANDTour project with the goal of improving the capacity of EU tourism SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) to "*meet the challenges of the market, reduce seasonalization and maximize the economic potential of the sector*" by means of promoting, innovating and diversifying the tourism offer (Interreg Europe, 2020). It is formed by the tourism agencies from Latvia, Crete, regions of the Tuscany, eastern Flanders and South Limburg (The Netherlands), and the Balearic Island. Then, through a phase of interregional exchange, the members of the project exposed a total of 47 cases of good practices in tourism, from which each participant has to select three cases to adapt and implement in its region (mallorcadiario.com, 2019a).

For now, other members of BRANDTour have already selected four of the initiatives that have been executed in the Balearic Islands: the tourism promotional campaign *Better in Winter*, the Sustainable Tourism Tax, the enterprise offering marine trips "*Pescaturismo*" and the *Cathos* platform – a digital catalog that eases the administrative transactions and provides transparency for the public interest (mallorcadiario.com, 2019a).

In fact, the Balearic Parliament promoted the tourism tax as a manner of fundraising in order to invest "*in the acquisition and rehabilitation of dwellings intended for social housing*" (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is shown that the initiatives implemented in the Balearic Islands have attracted the attention of other countries. Meanwhile, the Balearic tourism plans to put into practice three cases that have been successful in other European regions. By promoting weddings, fostering traditional and quaint accommodations, and supporting SMEs, the insular tourism aims to further innovative projects that improve the local firms' competitiveness and act as deseasonalizing elements (mallorcadiario.com, 2019a).

Consequently, the case of Egypt and the latter initiative of BRANDTour have demonstrated the good functioning of tourism strategies that are supported by other countries' tourism agencies.

Preventive factors

It has been generally concluded that quality tourism strategies in Spain have not been able to meet their requirements and improve the situation of mature and saturated touristic regions. In effect, that is observed with the permanence of mass tourism and social discontent in the current times.

For instance, the Calvià study case, although being considered as an overall success, it resulted in many deficiencies (Dodds, 2007b; WTO & UNEP, 2005):
- Not enough integration and collaboration between government sectors.
- Prioritizing the economic considerations over the social and environmental.
- Little engagement in carrying out water and energy saving by both the private side and local community. As well as, weak enforcement of making stakeholders more involved from the beginning.
- The impossibility of achieving an actual sustainability change within one political term. It could take time to present palpable and perceivable upgrades among the social and environmental problems.
- Little assurance that the strategy would last through different political circumstances.

Similarly, the case of Malta's carrying capacity strategy presents some weaknesses, failing to apply a sustainable tourism policy. Among them, Dodds (2007a) refers to: "*absence of political will, lack of awareness of sustainable tourism, lack of stakeholder participation, policy ambiguity, partisan tension, poor coordination and communication within the [authorities], and short term economic prioritization*". Moreover, she states that it is required to find and compromise on an equilibrium between social, environmental and economic issues.

Parallel, regarding the Spanish regulatory framework previously presented, Blázquez-Salom et al. (2019) also reveal some inconsistencies and negative effects of the successive strategies for growth limitation and degrowth. Most issues come from the lack of consistency between the rhetorical discourse and its practical execution, failing in performing what was formulated:
- Although the regulatory instruments are formulated as for constraining urban growth, their implementation came late, making it more complicated to reverse the urban development in the Spanish coast.
- Despite that they are intended to reduce the demographic pressure by reducing the number of tourists, they are, in return, favoring the appearance of property rental for both touristic and real estate purpose.
- The limitation of urban development has led to an elitist strategy, favoring the most affluent customers at the expense of the less favored inhabitants, who suffer evictions and moves.
- The lack of further political measures regarding the social redistribution of benefits when implementing territorial planning instruments to limit growth. Leading to capital accumulation and power in small groups, monopolizing the tourism industry.
- The lack of inspection and penalizing measures.

The 5D approaches also present some inconsistences. Regarding the deseasonalization strategy, Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales (2013) argue that deseasonalizing instruments are usually executed by either the national or regional government, instead of the local tourism administrators. Leaving them not much margin for decision-making on the way their territories would be best diversified.

Concerning the decongestion approach, which is strongly related to decentralization, Milano (2018) defends the necessity of formulating whether the decongestion and decentralization of saturated touristic areas represent a mere shift of the problem. Transferring the over-occupation to more delicate areas that are not prepared to host high numbers of tourists.

Additionally, Milano (2018) criticizes the implementation of the so-called quality tourism (*deluxe* tourism), since it causes a bigger socio-economic gap between tourists and residents. Possibly resulting in an increase in the prices of local goods and products. Leading, likewise, to a little redistribution of benefits, as these touristic flows tend to be managed around concrete sectors.

As a result, it is argued that the 5D measures do not focus on improving the residents' quality of life. As long as the space of touristic destinations is considered as merchandise (Milano, 2018), the environmental and social issues could not be overcome.

Conclusions

Supporting factors	Preventive factors
Coordination and cooperation between the public administrations – working beyond the tourism institutions.	Primeval non-existent regulatory framework, leading to an uncontrolled dramatic tourism growth.
Support from foreign tourism agencies. As the Egyptian case and the project BRANDTour.	Focusing in short-term economic goals, instead of a long-term sustainable approach.
Learning from other tourism agencies' experiences.	Lack of political guidelines or too much ambiguity, leading to confusion.
Involving and enhancing more awareness among stakeholders, even working alongside, considering their ideas. Making them feel accountable.	The "elitization" of tourism through the 5Ds strategies. Resulting in inflation and no redistribution of benefits.
The cession of managerial rights and urban planning to municipalities and local authorities. Together with a collaborative work at the local level.	The implementation of protectionist regulations that result being more palliative than preventive.
The importance of making the concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism clear to all parties. As well as, being able to comprehend the extent of the impacts of tourism.	Lack of inspection and penalization of illegal actions from both public and private sectors.
The creation of a zoning scheme, considering the sensitiveness of each region in front of touristic activities, and implement policies accordingly.	The private sector holding too much power over the tourism decision-making. The difficulty of separating the corporations' needs from the social.
The calculation of the carrying capacity of a touristic area. For instance, by the capacity of its bed occupancy.	Shifting the saturation problem to more delicate areas, not capable to overcome the high numbers of tourists.
Attracting informed and respectful tourists by teaching them beforehand the possible sensitiveness of the area and the local customs. As well as executing measures to regulate disruptive behaviors (the prohibition of alcohol tourism).	The prioritization of urban development over environmental preservation. As what was experienced during the urban development tsunami in the late 90s.
The use of easily measurable targets that could be annually evaluated, as a way of setting milestones in the tourism strategy.	The reliance of the tourism employment on low-skilled and untrained labor. Resulting in precarious employment conditions.
The application of adaptive managerial approaches, capable of going through different tourism frameworks.	The impossibility of achieving palpable and visible changes within the same political term when implementing a sustainable policy.

Table 1. Supporting and preventive factors for the success of quality tourism approaches. Own elaboration.

After going through the different aspects discussed in this paper, the factors exposed in Table 1 are the key elements that have been concluded from them. Conclusions obtained from the framework section – concretely, the *Tourism Regulatory Framework in Spain* – the 5D strategies presentation, and the *Implementation* section, where the analysis of specific real examples work as a guidance for future regulatory applications.

It can be seen that there is the same amount of supporting and preventive factors. Which indicates that there is still room for improvement when implementing quality tourism policies.

It should be highlighted that all the circumstances listed require the action of the Administration. Not only from the tourism institutional agencies but also from all the parties that involve the attainment of social and environmental wellness. Additionally, it is essential that all parties work and interact coherently with each other.

Furthermore, it is concluded that the enhancement of quality tourism strategies needs to involve both the local community and tourists, and the private sector. If stakeholders do not take part in the whole process, there is more likelihood that deficiencies and inconsistencies appear preventing the strategy from fully engaging.

Finally, tourism quality has shown to be an ambiguous concept. It is not clear whether the public institutions differentiate it from the *deluxe* tourism, since several political strategies seek high expenditure as a cancel-out for high occupancy, instead of the improvement and equity of society and the environment. Nevertheless, what is indeed clear is the increasing discontent atmosphere among congested tourist destinations worldwide, and the prompt necessity for action.

Discussion

The analysis of quality tourism strategies has shown the complexity of their execution; involving a great amount of people and institutions that tend not to share the same values and principles. Bringing so many parties together constitutes a challenge. Especially considering that the government usually changes every four or eight years, leaving little time for completely fulfilling their governance plans. Which could stagger and overwhelm those who seek a future where quality tourism is spread globally.

However, it is also noticeable that, even though at the expense of environmental and quality of life degradation, political regulations have been improving and updating throughout the decades. I reckon that the implementation of sustainable tourism milestones, and the collaboration between countries, could make a difference and support its long-term durability.

It is worth mentioning that the conclusions obtained in this paper correspond to a completely different situation from what we are nowadays living since the end of 2019. The current context is starred by the threat of the COVID-19 expansion. I consider it to be an important factor nowadays since there is still uncertainty on how the new tourism reality is going to be.

The spread of this virus has threatened the continuance of mass tourism. Thus, regulatory actions are going to be adapted to this new reality. Moreover, it is, hence, noticeable the importance of how governments will act towards the implementation of quality tourism strategies. It could mean the end of mass tourism.

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