

SECOND HOME OWNERS AS TOURISM TREND-SETTERS: A CASE OF RESIDENTIAL TOURISTS IN GRAN CANARIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines German-speaking second home owners on Gran Canaria, Spain as an example of one of the growing groups of non-conventional tourists. International second home ownership has been increasing rapidly over the last decades with Spain and particularly the Canary Islands being a hot spot for residential tourism. Despite the maturity of the destination, there are few studies on second home tourists on the Canary Islands. Moreover, while second home tourism, including its international forms, has been present as a distinct type of tourism, academic attention has not sufficiently compared and counterposed mass and residential tourism. The aim of this paper is to investigate distinctions between second home and mass tourists to define the features of non-conventional travellers in light of the contemporary growth of alternative ways to engage in recreation. This paper argues that second home tourism reflects the emerging tourism trends of “home stay tourism” and “living like a local” that will reshape the nature of mass tourism as well as receiving destinations. In order to understand the features of rapidly growing alternative or non-mass tourists, this paper examines the experiences of German-speaking second home owners on Gran Canaria. The results reveal a number of distinctive features that collectively help to understand contemporary non-conventional tourists.

Keywords: Second Home, Residential Tourism, Mobility, Gran Canaria.

JEL Classification: L83, Z32, Z39.

1. INTRODUCTION

International second home ownership and residential mobility have grown rapidly since the 1980s. Socio-political factors like globalisation, individualisation, increased international experiences and mobility, ease of movement, the digitalisation of real estate, flexibility of working lives and increases in global relative wealth (Müller, 1999; Gustafson, 2009; O’Reilly & Benson, 2009) are often mentioned among the main reasons for growth. Driven primarily by climatic reasons and lower costs of living, many individuals have permanently or semi-permanently moved to Mediterranean and Atlantic islands and coastal regions (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004). Academics have written extensively on such residential mobility from northern European countries to southern Europe (see, among others, Rodríguez, Fernández-Mayoralas & Rojo, 1998; O’Reilly, 2000, 2007; Gustafson, 2002, 2009; Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004; Breuer, 2005; O’Reilly & Benson, 2009; Åkerlund, 2013). These studies focus on the issues of motivations, socio-demographic characteristics, visitation patterns, activities, integration, and production of lifestyle mobilities, social distinction of residential tourists and their spatial distribution, as well as the categorisation and conceptualisation of the phenomenon of lifestyle migration.

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Spain is the most popular country in Europe due to its warm climate, developed tourism infrastructure and lower cost of living. A significant number of foreign property owners are found on the Costa del Sol, Costa Blanca, and the Canary and Balearic Islands (Gustafson, 2008). While some migrate permanently, others perform seasonal or temporary movements between their home and Spanish residences. This article focuses on the latter category – residential tourists or second home owners - by examining German-speaking property owners on the island of Gran Canaria, Spain.

The Canary Islands became a tourist destination in the 1960s. The islands have the longest history of retirement settlements in Europe. They are a popular location for both mass and residential tourism (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004; Garín-Muñoz, 2007; Gran Canaria Patronato de Turismo, 2017, 2018; ISTAC, 2017). Breuer (2005: 319) explains the popularity of the Canary Islands by their special status: “The subtropical climate of the Canaries cannot be found on the South European mainland nor on the islands of the Mediterranean. Senior residents find the frost-free mild winters particularly attractive, with their average temperatures of at least 15°C, in the coastal regions close to the ocean.” Thus, the Canaries occupy a special place not just within the European context, but also within the Spanish context.

The number of tourist arrivals has been increasing on the Canary Islands. The share of tourists who stay in their own accommodation on Gran Canaria has grown significantly from 2% in 2015 to 10% in 2017 (Gran Canaria Patronato de Turismo, 2017b, 2018). In absolute numbers this means up to half a million visitors. Yet these second home owners are largely neglected by local tourism development strategies (Gran Canaria Patronato de Turismo, 2017a).

Additionally, despite the maturity of the destination, studies on residential tourists on the Canary Islands are few in number. They include a qualitative study of Swedish retirement migrants (Gustafson, 2002, 2009) and a quantitative study of German residents on the islands (Breuer, 2005). These two studies, as well as the present paper, discuss the motivations, activities, behaviours, mobility patterns, and expectations of residential tourists. The focus here is specifically on the contradistinction of German-speaking property owners in relation to mass tourists.

Large-scale tourism has taken an increasing share of the global tourist market since the 1970s. This development has been almost universally criticised through, among others, the development of alternative forms of tourism in reaction to mass tourism (Harrison, 2012). While second home tourism, including its international forms, has been practiced as a marginal type of tourism, academic attention has not sufficiently compared nor counterposed forms of mass and residential tourism. It goes without saying that the number of international mass tourists is on the rise. However, alongside mass tourism the commercialisation of homes for tourism purposes in the form of home stays has spiked during the last decade. This paper argues that second home tourism reflects the emerging tourism trends of “home stay tourism” and “living like a local” that will reshape both the nature of mass tourism and receiving destinations (Guttentag, 2015). In order to understand the features of rapidly growing alternative or non-mass tourists, this article examines the experiences of German-speaking second home owners on Gran Canaria. In particular, it focuses on the motivations, self-identifications, perceptions, attitudes and activities of residential tourists.

2. A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Numerous studies examining residential mobility from northern European countries towards southern Europe have created an abundance of terminology and great confusion in defining,

classifying and conceptualising such movement. While some authors use certain terms interchangeably without significant distinction, others attempt to explain the logic behind specific vocabulary alternatives.

Terminological choice is often contextual and subjected to a particular pattern of residence (residents vs tourists), the mobility in question (migration vs tourism) and self-identification of residential tourists. Among others, O'Reilly (2000) distinguishes between the following categories of north-to-south movers: *full residents* (permanent residents in Spain who do not consider ever returning to their previous home country); *returning residents* (mainly retired, registered as legal residents who live in their southern destination most of the time, but spend a few months in their country of origin); *seasonal visitors* (visitors during the winter months, not officially registered); and, *peripatetic visitors* (second home owners who visit more or less regularly) (see also Gustafson, 2008). These categories are neither mutually exclusive nor fully inclusive. If one would add ownership as a classification variable, the number of categories would significantly increase.

In addition to the ambiguous classification of residential tourists, the conceptualisation of the phenomenon has also led to academic pluralism. O'Reilly and Benson (2009: 2) argue that umbrella concepts, such as retirement migration, leisure migration, (international) counter urbanisation, second home ownership, amenity-seeking and seasonal migration, fail to address the full complexity of a wider phenomenon. Thus, they introduce *lifestyle migration* as a conceptual framework "to examine both the similarities and differences within this growing trend as well as to begin to draw attention to its location in wider structural and historical forces and its local and global impacts." They define lifestyle migration as "the spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life" (O'Reilly & Benson, 2009: 2). Such a concept is indeed broad enough to encompass a wide variety of movements. Huete, Mantecón and Estévez (2013: 331) argue that "the term 'lifestyle migration' has proved to be too imprecise, since it does not determine clearly which variables characterise the lifestyle migrants."

Hall and Müller (2018: 4), on the contrary, suggest that second home tourism is an umbrella concept, and other terminology, such as lifestyle mobility, lifestyle migration, heterolocal lifestyles, multi-local living, multiple dwelling, and residential tourism, refer to "roughly the same phenomenon." They point out that the term "residential tourism" is often used in southern locations and refers to seasonal mobility "bringing retired North Europeans and North Americans to destinations with more pleasant climatic conditions." In addition, O'Reilly (2007) notes that the term concerns property ownership and short-term residence. Moreover, the wording "residential tourist" is often used by estate agents, council officials, the Spanish tourist board, local newspapers and some Spanish academics (O'Reilly, 2007). Contrasting other second home research, residential tourism addresses urban apartments rather than rural cottages, which dominate in many other parts of the world (Hall & Müller, 2018: 4). The north-to-south dimension, Spanish context and types of recreational residences (apartments) constitute the case here. The term residential tourism "aims at highlighting the blurring of boundaries between primary and secondary homes and home and away" (Hall & Müller, 2018: 9). Following Hall and Müller's (2018) categorisation, second home tourism/mobility and residential tourism/mobility are the main terms employed in this paper to define ownership-related mobilities of German-speaking individuals on Gran Canaria.

3. RESIDENTIAL TOURISM AND SECOND HOME OWNERSHIP

Second home tourism has always been considered as a minor form of tourism. Located at the margins of the tourism discipline, second home owners were not fully accepted as tourists due to the recurring character of their trips, use of a second home as a primary residence, and developed emotional meanings and attachments to a second home (Jaakson, 1986; Kaltenborn & Clout, 1998; Hall & Müller, 2004). Second homes represent “a search for more flexible lifestyle” and “an escape from certain aspects of modern life” (Kaltenborn & Clout, 1998: 133).

Simultaneously, tourism and the tourism industry have undergone significant changes that are linked to wider individual lifestyle choices. As Gustafson (2002: 899) points out: “In today’s world, people sometimes move around in ways that question traditional identifications and categorizations based on, for example, tourists and tourism.” With the growth of the sharing economy and alternative ways to work and travel, contemporary tourists are increasingly interested in “being at home” and “going local” while travelling to various destinations. Second home tourism has been on the forefront of these changes providing ways to engage in recreation activity that contrasts mass tourism.

The growth of second home tourism is linked to a number of social transformations over the last 50-60 years (O’Reilly & Benson, 2009). Increased mobility and ease of movement due to a change in the mobility regime in Europe is one of the most significant transformations. In his study on German second home owners in the Swedish countryside, Müller (1999: 39) states that given the European Unions de-emphasis on internal borders, “the location abroad should not play any significant role”. The process of European integration has indeed had an impact on the proliferation of second home tourism (Hannonen, 2016), and “the establishment of the European Union can be read as an institutional symbol for the ongoing internationalization” (Müller, 1999: 40).

The increased connectivity between places mostly due to the growth of budget airlines has profoundly modified tourism consumption: “mass tourism has ceased to be confined to a radius of a few hundred kilometres around the areas of departure. Many people in Northern Europe have winter vacations in the Canary Islands, Costa del Sol, Majorca, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, or Cyprus” (Claval, 2013: 318). Second home owners utilise these affordable routes to the south of Spain and the Canary Islands, which provide easy access to their foreign home (Casado-Diaz et al., 2004). Among other significant factors inducing international mobility are the proliferation of information on the Internet, the digitalisation of real estate, as well transnationally operating estate agencies that make information about foreign housing markets more readily available (Gustafson, 2009: 69).

Second home tourists are “former mass tourists” who return to the same location. Repetitive visits are a sign of high loyalty to the destination (Hannonen, 2016). Permanent attachment to a place abroad through a second home and recurring visits differentiates attitudes towards the second home area, consumption patterns and behaviours from mass tourists at the same destination. Concerning German tourists in Spain, habit persistence is one of the main features explaining their ongoing demand for tourism (Garín-Muñoz, 2007). As the present study confirms in section 5.1, previous visits and positive experiences are among the main factors in destination choice.

Although second home tourism constitutes a minor share in the spectrum of tourism types, it has experienced significant international growth in Europe during the last decades. Some evidence from the most favoured destination regions and social security administrations in northern countries confirms this growth (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004). Older adults are becoming more and more active travellers, and form the largest group of international second home owners. According to six surveys conducted with northern European seasonal

residents in nine southern European areas, the average age of respondents was 66.5 years (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004). While some of the surveys specifically targeted individuals of older age (e.g. Breuer, 2005), empirical investigations in this study confirm this age interrelation with second home ownership (see Table 1 in section 4).

Among the most common motives for residential tourism are climate and other environmental factors, health reasons, lifestyle, cost of living and other lifestyle related advantages (Rodríguez, Fernández-Mayoralas & Rojo, 1998; Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004). When studying German seasonal residents on the Canary Islands, Breuer (2005: 325) defines the following key motives for coming to Gran Canaria: climate (85.6%), health problems (52.5%), easy access by air (40.5%), crucial event in life (22%), cost of living (7%), and children/family (2%). Air connectivity is crucial for the Canary Islands, and has been emphasised in previous tourism studies as an important advantage: “many skilfully obtain very cheap flight tickets on the frequent charter planes” (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004: 366).

Motives for second home ownership are a set of constant needs (Jaakson, 1986; Hall & Müller, 2004; Lipkina, 2013). This standard set of motives acquires specific connotations when applied to certain national groups in distinct second home locations (Lipkina, 2013). Second home purchases by German nationals in Spain contrasts to that of those in Sweden (see studies by Breuer, 2005 and Müller, 1999). Emphasising, for example, climate in the first case and understating it in the latter. Thus, personal reasons also play an important role in choosing a particular destination (Lipkina, 2013). As Müller (1999: 40) accurately states: “The decision to buy a second home abroad depends on individual preferences and ambitions.” This is why the nationality of the property owner is not the defining factor in the choice of destination, especially given the freedom of mobility in the EU.

Previous studies on foreign residents in Spain suggest some spatial overlap, but perceptual differentiation between second home owners, mass tourists and locals. While most of the residential tourists settle in or next to mass tourist zones, they remain somewhere ‘in-between’ tourists and local residents (Gustafson, 2002; Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004; Breuer, 2005; Åkerlund, 2013). Such spatial distribution of residential tourists has been observed in an earlier study on German residents on the Canary Islands: “the German senior residents are concentrated in those coastal areas of the Canary Islands which are also preferred by international tourism” (Breuer, 2005: 317). Casado-Diaz, Kaiser and Warnes (2004: 355) explain this settlement pattern by “the importance of previous holidays in the destination area as a conditioning pathway.” Nevertheless, despite their close spatial proximity, the two groups of tourists remain rather separated. Gustafson (2002: 902), in his study on Swedish retirees in Spain, notes that “[i]n their everyday life in Spain, they [Swedish retirees – O.H.] do not unequivocally belong either to the local Spanish community or to the tourism community.” Breuer (2005) supports this assumption and concludes that second home ownership is a phenomenon of its own, not a stage between mass tourism and permanent relocation or migration.

Residential tourists express a rather clear distinction from mass tourists through their visitation patterns, activities, service use, as well as through direct differentiation and even “rejection of the label ‘tourist’” (Huete, Mantecón & Estévez, 2013: 334). Gustafson (2002) documents somewhat critical attitudes towards mass tourists by foreign retirees. Among the most common concerns are the inability of mass tourists to discover the “real” place and immerse themselves in the culture due to the limited time of their visits. This partly explains the rise of the “home stay tourism” and “living like a local” trends in tourism, which aim at moving beyond surface experiences of a destination. While residing alongside mass tourists, second home owners tend to use different services and go to alternative locations (Rodríguez, Fernández-Mayoralas & Rojo, 1998; Gustafson, 2002). As Gustafson (2002:

906) summarises: “Visits to “touristy” settings highly increase the risk of being so defined; the respondents described their avoiding such places and instead searching for genuine Spanish settings unaffected by the industry.” Moreover, residential tourists replicate their everyday routines during their stay in second homes. They are active users of local services, markets and grocery stores.

4. METHODOLOGY

Most of the studies on north-to-south residential tourism are conducted either by northern European investigators, so called “sending” countries or local researchers from “receiving” countries (Gustafson, 2008: 473). Such differentiation often reflects “the bias of national research funding bodies” rather than the investigator’s interest (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004: 355). To overcome this feature Gustafson (2008: 473) suggests a methodological turn that would systematically integrate “sending and receiving society perspectives and scholars.” This study conforms to this suggestion and overcomes previous methodological approaches by combining both local and foreign perspectives. The project on residential tourists on Gran Canaria is carried out in cooperation with a local researcher, Dr. Teresa Aguiar Quintana from the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, while the author comes from the University of Eastern Finland. Needless to say that both researchers have somewhat of an outsider’s perspective on the phenomenon, as they do not have any links to German-speaking countries, nationals or language. This provides an objective perspective on the phenomenon, while it also poses certain challenges in conducting fieldwork.

The main methodological challenge in conducting research with foreign second home tourists is accessing them. As many researchers studying lifestyle migration and residential tourism have noted, specifically in the Spanish, the exact numbers of second home owners are difficult to grasp (Rodríguez, Fernández-Mayoralas and Rojo, 1998; O’Reilly, 2000; Gustafson, 2002, 2008). Owners usually have residences in their home country and in Spain, between which they move in a highly flexible manner. Most of them, and in this case as well, do not apply for residence permits, thus they are invisible in Spanish population statistics. While a previous study on German residents on the Canary Islands provides some approximate numbers of residential tourists based on an estimation from the German consulate (Breuer, 2005), in this study the consulate refused to make even a rough guess, except for the official number of residents. The number of permanent German residents on Gran Canaria has decreased from 9358 individuals in 2010 to 5967 in 2017. The number of other German-speaking nationals, Austrians and Swiss, is even less, and the exact numbers are not reflected in the official statistics.

The main selection criteria in this study was to target German nationals who own property on Gran Canaria, but who do not reside there permanently. Applying the snowball technique to recruit respondents for interviews, some of the suggested respondents turned out to be Austrian and Swiss nationals. This is the result of language affiliation rather than national bonding. Previous studies have demonstrated that German nationals avoid national associations, such as societies, clubs etc, but have more private intra-national social contacts (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004; Breuer, 2005). This makes it difficult to gain access to second home owners, even when applying the snowball technique. For this reason, information about the research has been published in the local German language magazine “Viva Canarias”, and some of the respondents were recruited with the help of the editor. Information about the research was also shared through the German Consulate in Las Palmas. Leaflets in English and German were distributed in restaurants, German bakeries and beauty salons. Other ways of finding second home owners included the utilisation of

local contacts – hotel managers, restaurant owners, a car mechanic, and even by stopping foreigners on the street. Local contacts, however, proved to be the least useful channel of recruiting respondents. This demonstrates that despite the high amount of foreign owners on Gran Canaria, local and foreign populations do not socialise much with each other.

The Canary Islands’ retirement settlement has the longest history in Europe along with Tuscany and Malta. Inhabitants aged 75 years or more account for approximately 30% of the European retirees (Casado-Diaz, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004). This age group is, however, a limitation of this study as some senior second home owners could not be reached due to the issue of a language barrier. Many of the respondents expressed this concern, emphasising that other older German-speaking couples do not necessarily speak English and consequently they could not recommend them for an interview.

The interviews were conducted in the spring of 2017 and 2018. The data collection is still in progress, but to date 14 interviews have been conducted. In five cases respondents have moved to their properties permanently. To meet the aim of this paper permanent residents are excluded from the analysis. The eligible respondents consist of five couples and three females (Table 1). The interviews were conducted in English with German-speaking property owners in St. Augustin and Maspalomas in the municipality of St. Bartolome de Tirajana on the island of Gran Canaria. The names of the respondents have been removed to preserve anonymity.

Table 1. Background information on respondents

PARTICIPANT #	GENDER	AGE	OCCUPATION	HOME CITY	HOUSEHOLD INCOME PER MONTH	YEAR OF PURCHASE
1	M; F	75; 70	Pensioners	Hanover, Germany	2-4.000€	1981
2	F	76	Pensioner	Düsseldorf, Germany	2-4.000€	1997
3	F	53	Business owner	Cologne, Germany	4-6.000€	2007
4	M; F	65; 65	Investor, pensioner	Vienna, Austria	4-6.000€	2010
5	M; F	69; 65	Pensioners	Vienna, Austria	6-8.000€	2006
6	M; F	71; 70	Entrepreneur, housewife	Bern, Switzerland	6-8.000€	2002
7	M; F	64; 59	Pharmacy employees	Hannover, Germany	6-8.000€	2010
8	F	77	Pensioner	Nuremberg, Germany	2-4.000€	1987

Source: Own Elaboration

The interview guide included the following sections: the process of property purchase, travel between the two homes, use of services, integration into the local community, sustainable life, and background information. The interviews have been analysed thematically, focusing on the answers to the questions below concerning motivations for second home purchase, expectations, activities, positive and negative changes, and integration.

5. SECOND HOME OWNERS ON GRAN CANARIA

5.1 Motives and expectations

Coming first as tourists to Gran Canaria, second home owners employ rather 'touristic' motives for their property purchases. Motivations bridge the categories of mass tourists and second home owners. When asked about their decision to buy property on Gran Canaria, and in their specific region, the respondents repeatedly provided the following answers: "Nice weather, best climate" (#3), "weather, people" (#1 and #7), "oh, why... because it is nice weather in winter" (#2), "because we like it here, the weather, the sun, the sea" (#5).

Climate is the main reason that Gran Canaria continues to attract new second home owners. It is a constant that spans the different time periods of second home purchases (see Table 1). It is also a defining factor in differentiating between Gran Canaria and other south European locations for possible second home location:

"We realised in winter it's [south of France – O.H.] not good enough. And then we thought the best thing to do is to go further south, and this is the most southern point of the European Union. So, we're kind of having home here as well. What we do like here is the beautiful weather, very nice people, very, very nice people, and on top for us is the democracy you get" (#4).

"The climate is better, in winter it can be in Costa Blanca frio [meaning cold – O.H.]. You don't have to heat the apartments" (#1).

"In winter it's much better here. In central Europe it's not possible in winter to go on vacation, only if you go skiing" (#5).

In relation to climate and warm weather, other additional benefits, such as good connectivity and a seaside location, were often mentioned:

"We wanted to be in a warm place and near the sea" (#3).

"It is the best weather here and it takes only three hours by plane, so it is quite close" (#2).

Surprisingly enough, health reasons or health problems that are the second most popular motive for residential tourism in Spain (Casado-Diaz et al., 2004; Breuer, 2005) were not mentioned by any of the respondents. Another peculiar feature in this case study is the freedom or flexibility that second home ownership is connected to. While previous studies pay little attention to this motive, it is a significant aspect of this case. The flexibility was one of the reasons the respondents preferred ownership over renting:

"We can put our things in here. And we decide it very shortly: on Monday we say and next Sunday we go to Gran Canaria. This is only possible if you have a property" (#5).

"We wanted to be independent on the dates when coming and leaving" (#4).

Individual preferences and ambitions play important roles in residential tourism (Müller, 1999). They depend on personal experiences and values that do not have a shared national or cultural stance. For example, an Austrian couple (#4) had a very peculiar reason for site selection for their second home on Gran Canaria:

"We chose this island because of the capital. We always lived in big capitals [...] we were afraid that if you go to Tenerife or something like that, we will not have

a big city to go for concerts and something like that. Las Palmas is about 400 000 people and it's one of the main things."

Another couple (#1) expressed a rather affectionate reason behind their choice, which is also very personal: "We have travelled to Thailand, to many places, but we fell in love with Gran Canaria" (#1).

Asking about expectations is another way that helps to differentiate second home owners from other tourists. However, answers to the questions "What are you waiting for when you travel here?", "What are your expectations when you come here?", and "What is the best and most important part of being in your Gran Canarian home?" all bring us back to the "sun and sea" connotation:

"Climate, people, walking, restaurants, relaxing atmosphere because of local people's character" (#1).

"Well, it is safe ... the weather, the sea, it is safe, climate ... climate mostly" (#2).

"The sun, the weather [...] The weather will be good, people will be nice, they are always friendly. In Austria, when the weather is cold, people are not so nice. Here people are greeting on the street, they are very friendly, I like it" (#5).

"To run away from the winter" (#4).

In addition to expectations of good weather, the answers also emphasise the cultural side of visits – local people – as an important expectation and motive. This is something that mass tourists lack (Gustafson, 2002) but which second home owners take advantage of.

5.2 Tourists or locals?

The aim of this paper is to compare and counterpose mass and residential tourists. Thus, one of the key questions concerning the dissociation of second home owners from mass tourists addressed their own perceptions. Unlike other studies that completely reject the categorisation of second home owners as tourists (Gustafson, 2002; Huete et al., 2013), the results of this study reveal mixed perceptions. We asked: "How do you perceive yourself on Gran Canaria, are you tourists or locals?"

"As locals" (#3).

"I perceive myself as part of the local community in Gran Canaria" (#1).

"I think local." Later in the conversation, she gave a more explicit statement: "I am not a tourist; I have my own house here" (#2).

"We are more tourist, of course" (#5).

"I don't feel like a tourist, it is like my second home" (#8).

The answers contain both sides of the local-tourist nexus, including the 'in-between' option. In one case (#7) spouses self-identified differently, one as a local and the other as a tourist. It is important to note that self-categorisation as a local or a tourist is not dependent on the length of second home ownership. For example, respondents #3 and #5 purchased their properties one year apart (Table 1), but have opposite perceptions.

The following example shows that self-identification as a tourist or a local does not depend on property ownership nor the length of ownership, but on rather universal criterion:

Author: How do you perceive yourself in Gran Canaria, are you tourists or locals?

Respondent: “Neither, nor”. (#4)

Author: You don’t feel like tourists here?

Respondent: “No, we don’t. We feel at home within the European Union. We would be tourists if Spain was not a member of the European Union. Thank God it is, then we feel at home”. (#4)

Personal perceptions along with motivations and expectations do not provide strict or definite differentiations between mass and residential tourists. There are, however, numerous points in interviews, such as “We want to sleep in our own beds” (#4, also #6) or “we are like at home [...] we come home” (#6), that indicate a rather clear distinction of second home owners from mass tourists.

Respondents also shared their own understandings of how they differ from mass tourists:

“They [tourism business – O.H.] don’t have to pay for us, for advertisement, to motivate us to come. Because the tourist office, they have a budget for advertisement [...] But we are coming for five months every year, we have convinced ourselves. We don’t cost the country any money” (#4).

In addition and similar to findings in other studies, residential tourists tend to choose alternative sites for recreation (Rodríguez et al., 1998; Gustafson, 2002):

Author: Do you visit natural sights, for example, Roque Nublo?

Respondent: “No, too many tourists. If we do sights, we usually go to smaller cities, Arucas, Teror...”. (#4)

Thus, spatial distinction between mass and second home tourists is also present in this research case.

5.3 Second home owners vs tourists

One of the most vivid distinctions between second home owners and mass tourists is their visitation patterns. While the present sample allows for only modest generalisations, the difference in frequency and length of stay is obvious. In contrast to mass tourists, who stay an average of 7.87 days on Gran Canaria (Gran Canaria Patronato de Turismo, 2018), second home owners represent a different dynamic. Respondents provided explicit descriptions of their visitation patterns that indicate both repetitiveness, longer stays and high flexibility: “Two times a year. In winter eleven weeks (from October to January), then go to Germany for four weeks and come back to Gran Canaria for eight more weeks until the end of March” (#1).

This couple (#1) does not have children or family to take care of in Germany, but they go back for some compulsory things like, for example, to clean and maintain their house. Another respondent (#8) mentioned even shorter visits: “Two or three weeks two times a year, in spring and winter,” explaining her visits by a busy life back home. Other examples of flexible visitation patterns include:

“I am not here during the whole winter, one month, eight weeks, sometimes twelve weeks, just how I like it. Three-four times a year. Maybe in winter it is two months, sometimes I come only for two weeks, it depends, you know, just how I like it. No plan.” She continued that, “sometimes I come with my grandchildren in August, when they are on holiday” (#2).

“Two or three months, for two or three weeks, sometimes four weeks. We are free now, we don't work. Last year we have been here in October. Sometimes I came for one week, then came my husband, we stayed together two weeks, then I went home and he stayed two weeks more. Five-six months altogether in one year” (#5).

There is a strong seasonality to visits, but they are personally crafted to meet the needs and desires of second home owners. Only a few respondents stay the entire winter, while the majority make shorter visits throughout the year.

5.4 Activities, plans and relationships with the place

Second home owners resemble ‘slow’ tourists in terms of their pace of life on Gran Canaria. They are not pressed for time while in their second homes, and take time to engage in various activities. We asked: “What do you normally do here? What kind of activities do you prefer?”

“Well, it depends, if it is very hot I prefer to stay here [on the patio outside the apartment block – O.H.], and if there is not much sun, last week I went to Mogan. Very nice from Puerto Rico by ship to Mogan. I left my car in Puerto Rico and took a small boat to Mogan to have coffee there, just like that. You can do quite a lot of things in here, more than in Germany, because you have always difficulty with the weather” (#2).

“Very lazy, three hours in the sun, we make a trip or go shopping. We get up late” (#5).

“Here I have time to work with my hands also. [...] Here I have the possibility to cook. In Switzerland the kitchen is hers [...] but here it is allowed” (#6).

The answers demonstrate different activities in first and second homes. Relaxation, which is a ‘touristic’ motive, is an important part of second home owners’ daily routines. A second home is a place for vacation-like lifestyles.

The future plans of second home owners are ambiguous. Some of the respondents would like to retire to their Gran Canarian home, while others do not have clear plans. It is important to note that most of the respondents have already reached the retirement age, but they keep on moving back and forth between their first and second homes. This questions the idea of plans to move permanently to a second home as it is unclear when individuals see themselves as retired. Regarding future plans, the following questions were asked: “What are your future plans? Would you like to move permanently to your Gran Canarian home? Why?”

“Yes, we want to stay in Gran Canaria” (#1).

“Permanently, not. If we are so old that we cannot fly, we sell it. Kids are not interested, they have their own lives” (#5).

“We want to spend six months in the future” (#7).

A permanent move involves some degree of uncertainty for second home owners. After residing on Gran Canaria for many years, they are still strangers to the local system and society:

“I thought about it [retirement in Gran Canaria – O.H.] several times... [...] I thought about this because taxes are much lower here [...]. If we move here and become permanent and pay taxes, then we lose our medical insurance in Vienna, and we don’t know how it works here. First, we paid it all the way there, and then we cannot just move here” (#4).

It is interesting to note that second homes on Gran Canaria have a generational connotation. Only a few respondents mentioned that their children will take over their properties – mostly those, who are approaching the retirement age themselves, while most of the respondents do not have anyone to pass on their property to.

Regardless of future plans in relation to their recreational residence on Gran Canaria, second home owners have formed a special relationship with the place. Firstly, they are generally critical of the increasing number of tourists, environmental issues and new developments on the island that are among the consequences of mass tourism.

“Puerto Rico [a holiday resort in the south-west coast of Gran Canaria – O.H.], I think it changed to the worse, so many houses. Twenty-five years ago there were only some houses, bungalows near the beach, that was all, and the mountains, there was nothing at all. Now it is all built, you don’t see anything but houses in Puerto Rico, and I thought it looked much nicer, like a small village” (#2).

Another respondent is also terrified by tourism development in Puerto Rico: “San Agustin, people say, it is for old people, it is calm and for old people. Not nice is Puerto Rico, it is a catastrophe. All the mountains are like a beton [meaning concrete – O.H.], a catastrophe” (#8).

“Here in San Agustin it is ok, but on Playa de Ingles it is too much. We bought here, not in Playa de Ingles” (#6).

“I think there is a difference between a tourist and a tourist. Some are only in the hotel, and in the pool, and on the beach. For them, all other is not interesting. [...] People, who are going in all-inclusive hotels, they are not interested in other things” (#5).

All-inclusive hotel developments oriented towards mass tourists coming in on packaged tours were criticised by another respondent (#2). She shared her concerns about the damage done to the local community, such as the subsequent closure of local restaurants. Second home owners, on the contrary, are active contributors to the local economy. Through their longer stays, they utilise local services and support local retail businesses.

Secondly, a special relationship with place is also reflected in attitudes towards second homes on the Canary Islands. None of the respondents rent out their property when they are not present. However, a few other users of their second homes include their children and sometimes other relatives or friends.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the distinctions between second home owners and mass tourists to define the features of non-conventional tourists in light of the contemporary growth of alternative ways to engage in travel and recreation. To explain the dissociation of second home owners from mass tourists, the motivations, expectations, self-identification, perceptions and activities of German-speaking residential tourists on Gran Canaria have been analysed. The

results reveal a number of distinctive features that collectively help to understand non-conventional tourists.

First, the motivations of second home owners are rather 'touristic'. They come to Gran Canaria for the sun and sea, which are the top motives for mass tourism in Spain (Garín-Muñoz, 2007). The climate and warmer temperatures are a significant factor for choosing Gran Canaria over other destinations in southern Europe or around the world. They provide the possibility for year-round visits with guaranteed good weather. This finding supports earlier studies on residential tourists on Gran Canaria (Gustafson 2002; 2008; Breuer, 2005). However, unlike many other studies on seasonal residents and retirees in southern Europe, the seasonality of visits in this research case is rather fragmented. While the majority of the respondents primarily come in late autumn, winter and early spring, only a few stay uninterruptedly for more than two months in their second home. Another distinct feature from previous studies is health issues, which turned out to be a less important motive for second home ownership on Gran Canaria. The absence of this reference to health and healthy lifestyle might also be a consequence of a rather small study sample.

The destination choice is also determined by good connectivity with mainland Europe, and ease of travel due to EU-internal mobility. Both the connectivity of the destination and property ownership provide high recreational freedom and flexibility for residential tourists. Flexibility and flexible lifestyle as an alternative to commercialised mass tourism (Kaltenborn & Clout, 1998) have not been emphasised in other studies on residential tourists. In this case it came to the forefront of overall motivations. Flexibility differentiates second home owners from mass tourists as it does not appear in the motivations of mass tourists (ISTAC, 2017). It also enables individually crafted holidays that are not dependent on tour packages, accommodation availability and prices.

Second home owners tend to have mixed perceptions of their status, taking the position of 'in-between' locals and tourists. While they reside in developed touristic areas in the south of Gran Canaria, they avoid 'touristic' places and are rather critical of recent tourism developments on the island. Thus, second home owners utilise local rather than touristic services to a greater extent. This 'in-betweenness' is also reflected in the future plans of the respondents as some do not plan to move permanently to their second home, so they will maintain their current position between tourists and locals. The expectations and motivations of second home owners emphasise the importance of local culture and people for second home owners. The lack of deeper knowledge of local realities is in turn a criticism of and differentiation from mass tourists.

Alternative tourism, or anti-tourism, has to some extent been trendy among second home owners for several decades. While performing touristic motivations and behaviours, they tend to distance themselves from mass tourism. This is one of the main features of the contemporary trends of "home stay tourism" and "living like a local". Contemporary non-conventional tourists prefer alternative ways of exploring and experiencing their travel destination. While contemporary non-conventional younger tourists do not actively engage in property ownership, they choose modern alternative accommodation options and this trend may indicate that once they reach retirement age the demand for foreign recreational residences might be even higher than among older adults today. This study with German-speaking owners has demonstrated the diversity of mobility patterns and relationships with second homes on Gran Canaria. The results provide an important explanation of the values and attitudes of such non-mass tourists. This is necessary to understand contemporary tourists and tourism, especially in light of the growing sharing economy and alternative ways of engaging in recreation. However, to fully reveal the extent that growing non-conventional forms of recreation play in relation to tourism, there is a need for more complex research and cross-comparison between alternative forms of tourists and tourism.

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