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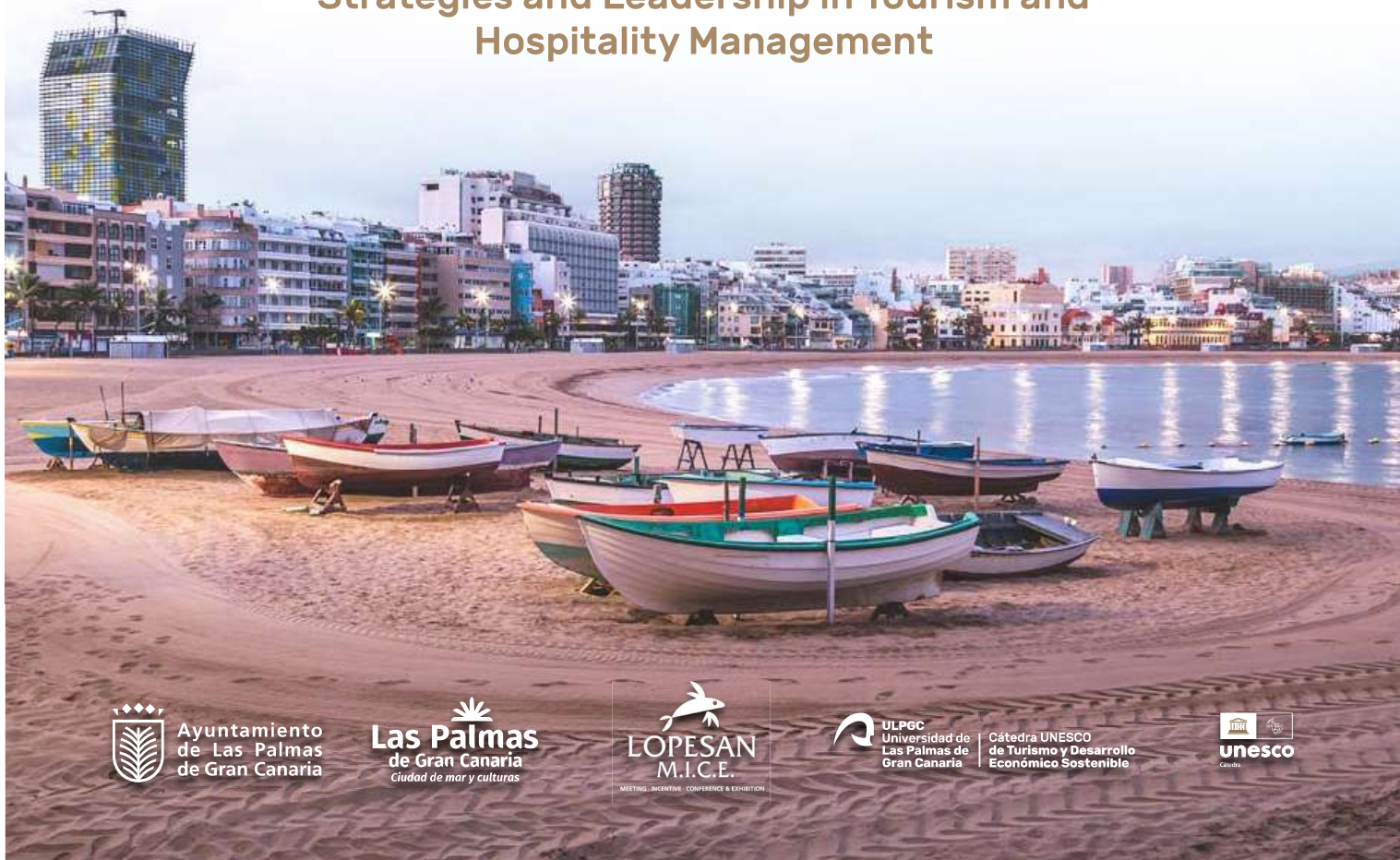


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Abstract 29

Blue Tourism: A Path Towards Sustainable Tourism Development in Blue Spaces.

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KEYWORDS: Blue tourism, sustainability, health and well-being.

ABSTRACT: Over time, there has been a standardizing trend in the analysis of territories that have similar natural characteristics, for example having a coastline, and consequently a generalization in the approach to the tourist offer in these territories. Currently, the competitiveness and sustainability of territories depends on a paradigm that is antagonistic to the one that for decades guided tourism planning and management, giving uniformity a place for differentiation and singularity. The landscape, aromas, flavours, sounds and textures associated with blue spaces constitute a symphony that simultaneously appeals to the different senses and that greatly contributes to the quality of visitors' experiences, but also to the quality of life of residents.

In this context, Blue Tourism emerges, which includes all tourist practices developed in aquatic environments, that is, which has as its main resource water in its multiple forms (seas, inland seas, rivers, reservoir lakes, streams, among others), and in the territories adjacent to it, have the concept of wellness intrinsic, that is, they contribute to health and well-being, and whose planning and development is based on a sustainability model (Brito & Silveira, 2023). It is a tourist product that, due to its characteristics, fits into the paradigm of Sustainable Tourism, and can contribute to the differentiation of Blue Spaces, promote employment and entrepreneurship, to attract investment, to mitigate seasonality, to complement other tourist offer, to identify and preserve material resources and intangible resources, in short to promote the sustainable development of territories.

Based on this theoretical framework, and the assumption that the relationship between human beings and water has a positive nature, which contributed to the residential and tourist attractiveness of Blue Spaces, we applied a questionnaire survey through the LimeSurvey platform to residents in Portuguese territory (born until 2008), with responses collected from 23 November 2022 to 26 April 2023 (five months), with 2930 valid responses obtained, with the aim of assessing the residential and tourist attractiveness of Blue Spaces, based in the relationship and impacts between proximity and contact with water (in the place of residence and/or in places of leisure and tourism) and people's health and well-being.

We aim to share the preliminary conclusions of this study which allow us to state that, for reasons of varying nature, for most people the presence of water in their territories is a determining factor when choosing holiday and/or visiting destinations; present their relationship with water and its impacts on their health and well-being, and the experiences related to water that they favor.

The conclusions drawn from this study allow Blue Spaces to guide their tourism planning and development strategy, to make their conventional and unconventional resources profitable for tourism, in a context in a context of sustainability.