

The resident population's perception of tourism in the historic centre of Havana (Cuba)¹

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Abstract

Purpose. Heritage cities face the challenge of sustainable management of activities related to leisure and tourism due to the vulnerability of the environment. Every tourist destination has a social carrying capacity from which levels of the development of the activity are unacceptable. This research analyses the perception of the impacts generated by tourism in the residents of the Historic Centre of Havana, Cuba.

Design/methodology/approach. Firstly, it has been proceeded to a review on the literature about residents' perception of the impacts generated by tourism to set a theoretical framework. The references related to the relationship between tourism, heritage and city

¹ Dedicated to the memory of Miguel Ángel Troitiño Vinuesa who was an outstanding researcher in Geography of Tourism in Historic centres.

have been considered to elaborate the context of the tourist development in the Historic Centre of Havana. Afterwards, it has been implemented qualitative methodologies commonly used in the Geography of Perception, based on the administration of surveys among the city's inhabitants.

Findings. The results extracted in the research can be used to decision-making, as they reflect the impacts associated with the insertion of tourism in the socioeconomic panorama of local actors, which can support the establishment of management models focused on the resident population.

Originality. The research focuses on the resident population's view of tourist activity in Havana. The analysis of the data from the questionnaires offers valuable information obtained from primary sources.

Keywords: Local Population, Urban Tourism, Perception, Social Indicator, Territorial Management, Havana.

1 Introduction

In a scenario of growing tourism demand, historic cities, as systems of heritage, are confronted by the challenge of responsibly and sustainably managing leisure and tourism activities (Echarri and Salinas, 2005; García, 2000), the significance of which was enhanced by the framework of the declaration of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) stated that the aim of the declaration was to raise awareness among tourism leaders and the general public to take decisions on the contribution of sustainable tourism to development, mobilizing all the stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive social change (UNWTO, 2017).

However, the more tourism development increases, the greater are its impacts. The historic centres of cities form part of this dynamic, being unable to avoid the problems caused by the increase in the tourism phenomenon. Such environments suffer the impacts of tourism and witness transformations in visitors and the resident populations. As part of the commitment to minimizing the negative impacts, development plans are implemented in tourism

destinations, intended to set limits on the growth in activity and to promote consideration of the carrying capacity of these locations. In this sense, a number of authors (García, 2000; García et al., 2011; Mexa and Coccossis, 2004) have proposed at least six basic dimensions of tourism carrying capacity: ecological, physical, economic, political, community perception and visitor perception. Community perception refers to the social dimension of the carrying capacity of a destination to absorb tourism without its generating negative impacts on the local population.

The Special Plan for Integrated Development (SPID) designed by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (OHCH) features a set of objectives and actions based on information gathered by urban, sociological and psychological studies, generally related to the city's physical carrying capacity. This suggests that no research has been conducted that truly allows us to determine, from a community perspective, the impacts of tourism activity in the city. Indeed, the analyses thus far made of the impacts have not addressed the local population in terms of their satisfaction.

The aim of this work is thus to assess the impacts of tourism activity on the resident population of the Historic Center of Havana. To this end, we implemented qualitative methodologies commonly used in the Geography of Perception, based on the administration of surveys among the city's inhabitants. The analysis of the results served to draw a series of conclusions related to the four axes around which the questionnaire was structured, which may be useful for those managing tourism in the city. We conducted an exhaustive review of the literature on residents' perception of the impacts of tourism and the relationships between tourism, heritage and city as a base on which to construct our research. It can be said that the inhabitants' perception of tourism has been the subject of little study in relation to other aspects of the tourism system, such as visitors or destinations and their attractions. The present work is thus considered a novel contribution, given that scant interest has been paid to the residents' view of tourism activity in Havana. We characterized the tourism development in heritage cities, in general terms, in order to determine the model of tourism development undertaken in the Historic Center of Havana. The content of this work is directly related to achieving the specific objectives, which are as follows: To methodologically substantiate the relationship between the impacts of tourism

and the carrying capacity in the urban environment, to characterize the tourism development of World Heritage Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Historic Center of Havana, and to identify the primary impacts of tourism on the resident population.

2 Residents' perception in urban heritage destinations. Theoretical framework

Cities have emerged as important focal points to attract tourism and receive visitors, despite having lost some ground in recent years to other forms of tourism. The growing interest of visitors in urban environments is the result of the integration of the tourism products concentrated in such destinations which are principally based on three types of activity: cultural (visiting monuments, museums, exhibitions, cultural life...); recreational (shopping, festivals, events, gastronomy, nightlife...); and professional (congresses, seminars, fairs, visits to clients...). The growth in tourism in heritage cities and historic centres has not ceased. In 2009, around 37 to 49 % of international tourists travelled for reasons of culture, accounting for nearly 500 million visitors (OECD/SECTUR, 2009). According to FAMILITUR (2017, cited by Troitiño, 2018), cultural tourism represented 38.26 % of world tourism in 2017. This survey also revealed a 114.4 % increase between 2008 and 2013, despite being the years of the world economic crisis.

This preference poses a challenge for cities and their urban environments, with problems revolving around managing tourist flows, town planning, protecting the heritage, accessibility and mobility (Troitiño, 2006). Thus, there is a need for responsible, planned management aimed at benefitting local communities, not only to avoid deteriorating the environment but also to drive continuous improvement through economic and political transformation and improved infrastructures (Echarri, 2006). It is necessary to boost the multifunctionality of heritage cities and historic centres, as a multidimensional resource reflecting the interdependencies between the environmental, economic, social and cultural elements, which should be integrated and holistically managed (Ballart and Tresserras, 2001; Baños, 2012; Hiernaux-Nicolas and González-Gómez, 2014; Pedersen, 2005; Prats, 2006; Russo, 2002; Troitiño, 2011; Troitiño, 2015).

As heritage, the city has two dimensions: the first is cultural, that is, the historic legacy, the roots of its identity and the collective wealth of a community; the second is economic, as an emergent vision of its heritage and culture, considered a motor of development. The tourist function of historic cities and heritage sites has thus bolstered the symbiosis between heritage, city and tourism, which represents an enormously valuable economic resource for such spaces (De la Calle, 2002).

The exploitation of a city's heritage for tourism is able to enhance the development of the local economy, create employment, increase the inhabitants' average income and reevaluate such locations, generating significant funds that can be used to conserve and renovate the city, frequently driven by specific public policies. However, the massive influx of visitors can instill substantive changes in the behavior and moral values of residents and trivialize the resources and culture, while gentrifying and congesting historic centres (Torres et al., 2019). It can also lead to a loss of identity, increased prostitution, drug consumption and criminal offenses, which triggers social tension and leads to residents rejecting tourism (tourismphobia) (Romero-Padilla et al., 2019).

A recent study conducted by the UNWTO and Ipsos (2019), involving interviews with residents from 15 countries, found that 49 % of the respondents thought measures should be taken to better manage tourism. In addition, 72 % said that experiences and attractions should be created that benefit both residents and visitors and 65 % feel that the aim should be for local communities to reap the rewards of tourism activity. Limiting the number of establishments (16 %) and tourists (12 %) was also mentioned as a measure to be undertaken, albeit to a much lower degree.

Heritage destinations are receiving growing numbers of visitors and now form part of the mass tourism circuit where certain assets transform their use value into exchange value as they enter this type of market (Harvey, 2005; López and Marín, 2010). It is increasingly necessary for the tourism and culture sectors to cooperate in a social commitment on the active and responsible use and management of cultural heritage, as espoused in various official documents and conferences of the UNWTO and other international or regional organizations, such as the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization of World Heritage Cities.

Heritage should be treated as a legacy, an especially valuable inheritance that needs to be identified, protected, conserved, renovated, cherished and transmitted to future generations. It is the fruit of a dynamic, historic process that arises from the interaction of different agents and situations, which obliges a long-term view of both the conception and use of the resources (Fernández and Guzmán, 2002). This approach will allow a cultural revaluation of World Heritage Cities and other historic centres that have become magnets attracting millions of visitors. Integrated planning can help such spaces acquire a new tourist function that can energize and highlight the opportunities of this heritage to diversify and condition destinations. Among other things, it will facilitate better distribution of the economic flows generated and avoid the problems of the massive influx of tourist visitors (De la Calle, 2002; UNWTO, 2004; Troitiño and Troitiño, 2010).

In this setting, the boom in tourism and the diversification of tourism activities emerge as an opportunity for such cultural assets to be perceived holistically as a tourist product and destination (Almirón et al., 2006; Velazco, 2009). Heritage cities and historic centres are home to multiple resources with a great capacity for attracting the development of different recreational and tourist activities that serve for postmodern societies to reevaluate their historical inheritance (Morales-Fernández and Lanquar, 2014; Calvo-Mora et al., 2011). Cities and historic centres that have been declared World Heritage Sites by the UNESCO have particularly become icons of both cultural and mass tourism. Mass media and social networks have contributed to the spectacularization of visiting such places (Boos de Quadros et al., 2018; Senabre, 2006). This transformation into objects of desire and consumption for tourists gives rise to novel challenges for sustainability, which should be associated with the revaluation and refunctionalization of the heritage in all its dimensions and its bond with its own community.

The local population should be at the heart of the implementation and development of tourism. It is a core part of a tourist-receiving region, an element that is key to understanding how the tourism system works. Residents have the greatest interest in knowing the situation of their territory and deciding on the tourism development of their area, embracing the benefits and disadvantages this can involve (Valls, 2004, cited by Vera et al., 2011). Tourism activity generates a series of impacts (social cultural and environmental), which the local

population should mitigate, while exercising control over its economic effects. The level of satisfaction with tourism will depend on the perceived benefits and costs in the economic, environmental and social spheres (García et al., 2015; Royo and Ruiz, 2009), aspects that allow the sustainability of a destination to be assessed (Covarrubias et al., 2010).

A positive perception of, and attitude towards, tourism as an activity benefitting the economic development of their hometown and the wellbeing of its inhabitants fosters greater involvement in their city's development, as the support of the residents is essential to ensure the quality of the tourism services (Royo and Ruiz, 2009). Broadly speaking, the impacts of tourism are seen as positive. According to the previously mentioned study, 52 % of the residents surveyed declared that tourism had a large or moderate impact on wealth and income generation. As regards the promotion of cultural exchange, 51 % indicated the same levels of impact, while 46 % thought it generated overcrowding in streets, stores and/or transport (UNWTO & Ipsos, 2019).

Determining residents' level of satisfaction is thus key to assessing the development of tourism activity and to being able to orient suitable strategies for the local population and the tourism industry to live in harmony. It is a useful tool to allow planners to detect the conflicts generated by the activity and to design indicators to be utilized to better manage the tourist territory. Their coordinated participation with the other agents involved in the tourism dynamics (governments and enterprises) determines the model of development in a given region, which is increasingly oriented towards sustainability. These participatory processes in the tourism destinations and their involvement in resolving conflicts provoked by the tourism business are key aspects of managing the region. Perception cannot be neglected when designing instruments to plan and manage tourism development, which should include adequate mechanisms of participation that ensure awareness of them is raised (Mercado and Fernández, 2018). In this way, the relationship between citizens and the world they live in is positioned at the centre of the analysis intended to facilitate understanding of the tourism phenomenon.

Studying residents' perception brings a subjective dimension and personal experience to tourism research. In the recent literature focused on tourism geography, residents' perception is a familiar topic due to the global dimension of the tourism phenomenon, which

has conditioned the environmental sustainability and cultural authenticity of regions, which have become “touristified” . The transformations generated by tourism activity influence the residents’ behaviour through interaction with the tourists, which gives rise to changes in individuals’ and the local community’ s attitudes, value systems and quality of life, among other elements. Nonetheless, studies analysing tourist satisfaction are more common than those on residents’ satisfaction (Castillo et al., 2012; Covarrubias et al., 2010). Most works on the perception of the local population are empirical in nature, although a limited number follow a theoretical approach (Cacciutto et al., 2014). These studies are developed and elaborated using qualitative techniques found in the Geography of Perception, utilizing interviews and fieldwork (Millán, 2004). The use of these approaches and techniques has resulted in studies on different territories, where different types of tourism are implemented, and which present varying degrees of development.

We think it’s necessary to mention some examples conducted in Latin America. In regions where tourism is more consolidated, the studies have revealed the advantages and disadvantages of developing tourism, aspects that are of use to planners to orient their policies towards effective management. Such studies include research carried out in established sun and sand tourism destinations in Brazil (Poli and Torres, 2013) and Costa Rica (Bartels, 2013) or eco-tourism destinations in Brazil (Perdigão et al., 2019). In regions where tourism is an emerging activity, studies have focused on assessing the potential of tourism for local development. In this case, inland areas (García et al., 2015) and rural environments have become the focus of research, examples being the studies conducted in the so-called Pueblos Mágicos (Magical Towns) in Mexico (Cornejo-Ortega et al., 2017; Covarrubias et al., 2010).

In the case that concerns us, urban tourism in the Historic Centre of Havana has been the subject of studies by a number of authors, who have analysed the tourism development of the location (Echarri and Salinas, 2003; Echarri and Salinas, 2005; OHCH, 2016), the innovative system of heritage management (Cruz, 2018; Pérez, 2015; Levrard, 2019) or the proposed indicators for territorial sustainability assessment (Salinas et al., 2008). The perception of residents continues to be unaddressed in this type of study, which marks a

challenge to delve deeply into the understanding of the tourism phenomenon in an area characterized by its great vulnerability.

3 Tourism in the Historic Centre of Havana. Current context and perspectives

The historic centre of Havana comprises two clearly defined areas: the walled old town and what was once the Las Murallas district. It covers a surface of 214 hectares, comprising 242 blocks and a population of 55,484 in 2012. It represents 3 % of the city and 49 % of the municipality of La Habana Vieja (Old Havana). La Habana Vieja and its fortification system were declared a National Monument in 1978 and were included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites in 1982, aspects which placed a burden of responsibility on the State of Cuba, which, in 1981, implemented the first five-year plan for the restoration of La Habana to ensure the safeguarding of this heritage site (OHCH, 2017).

In 1993, with the adoption of Decree Law 143, La Habana Vieja was awarded the category of Prioritized Conservation Area, and the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (OHCH) was elected as the figure responsible for the heritage site, establishing a novel model of management oriented towards the integrated renovation of the territory. Subsequently, in 1995, Agreement n° 2951 of the Council of Ministers declared the Historic Centre an Area of Great Significance for Tourism (Zona de Alta Significación para el Turismo), which led to the definition of a strategy to promote and consolidate the centre's potential, focused on urban regeneration and opening museums and sites of cultural interest (Bailey, 2008; Echarri, 2006; Echarri y Salinas, 2003; Echarri and Salinas, 2005; González et al., 2015). This strategy was then guided by the Integral Development Plan (OHCH, 1998), a planning instrument conceived by the OHCH to organize the investment scheduled for the area by the State.

This instrument evolved over the years into the Special Integral Development Plan (SIDP) 2030 (OHCH, 2016), which recognizes the territory's potential for tourism and conceives such tourism as a viable economic activity that forms part of the sustainable management model for heritage. Chapter 2 of the SIDP 2030, on Territorial and Urban Planning, lists, among other specific tourism-related aims, the following: to increase the capacity of accommodations and associated activities, such as culture, gastronomy, and specialized

commerce, recreation and physical culture; and to promote other forms of tourism (cruises and marinas, conventions, business fairs, senior citizen and family holidays).

The tourism company Habaguanex and the San Cristóbal travel agency, founded in the 1990s to support the rehabilitation programs led by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana, were the principal administrators of the territory's tourism. At the end of 2015, with the aim of separating state-budgeted and business activities, it was decided that Habaguanex would form part of the Business Administration Group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Thus, hotels are now managed by Grupo Hotelero Gaviota S.A. (under the trade name of Habaguanex by Gaviota), restaurants are administered by CIMEX (the Cuban Import-Export Corporation) and the network of retail stores are managed by the TRD chain. There is a total of 29 hotels, which account for 37 % of those in Havana. The number of hotel rooms in 2018 was 3,455, representing 14 % of the state-run rooms in the destination, while those belonging to the private sector totalled 1,390, accounting for 28 % of the total private sector capacity. The overnight stays reached a total of 669,863, accounting for 22 %, the average occupancy was 70 % and the average length of stay was 2.6 days, which is lower than the average for the city itself, which was 3.4 days. Of these hotels, 18 % are five-star establishments, 50 % are four-star, 28.5 % are three-star and 3.5 %, two-star. The planned state investment process through to 2030, according to the OHCH (2017), includes 16 new hotel facilities (1,044 new rooms). Of these, Gaviota S.A. plans to finish three new five-star hotels by 2020, which are: Hotel Prado y Malecón (264 rooms), that has already completed, Hotel Regis (61 rooms) and Hotel Obispo y Cuba (120 rooms), that is already in completion phase.

A growing element of international tourism is the reception of cruise ships. In 2016, 220,000 cruise passengers arrived in Havana, while the total increased by 166 % to 587,000 in 2017. In 2018, 23 cruise ship companies made 706 stops in nine destinations in Cuba. Of these stops, 304 were in the port of Havana (Cruz, 2018, Echarri et al., 2017). The recent measures adopted by the United States Government, however, have restricted the arrival of cruise ships, with a subsequent negative impact on the destination and the country's overall tourism statistics.

Not only does tourism development create income that goes back into comprehensive development of the territory, but it also attracts investment from both the public, private and international sectors, generates direct and indirect employment and contributes to the rehabilitation of properties. It is also worth noting the public investment in infrastructure, which revitalizes and benefits the local population. The impact of the physical rehabilitation and maintenance of properties is typically positive, as the tourism fabric, of great net worth, emerges as a unique, competitive product in the national and international market. In the historic centre, 300 properties have been renovated for tourism purposes, having been refurbished for accommodation, gastronomy (restaurants, cafeterias, bars), cultural activities (museums, art galleries, concert halls, theatres), including spaces for holding events.

The opening up to the non-state sector in recent years, in the form of self-employed workers and cooperatives, has prompted the emergence of local entrepreneurs of highly varying characteristics. The administrators of the territory are then tasked with ensuring their regulated and orderly integration and with maintaining the balance between strategies to conserve the heritage, its promotion and the needs and aspirations of the local community. This sector must respect the dynamic of the territorial development and the public sector must generate policies to foster activities and entrepreneurship that respect the heritage and favour a social and solidarity-based economy. These new forms of management have great economic potential for the development of the Historic Centre of Havana, funding the rehabilitation of properties, creating direct and indirect employment, developing activities that help to diversify the tourism offer and generating tax revenues and contributions for the territory (Echarri et al., 2019).

4 The residents' view. Analysis of the research conducted

The results presented in this section are from the analysis of the resident population's perception of the tourism activity in the tourism destination of the Historic Centre of Havana (Aguiló and Roselló, 2005; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Fredline and Faulkner, 2007; Royo and Ruiz, 2009). These results were obtained by surveying the resident population (Jumolka, 2016) using simple random sampling and the formula for analysis of small samples shown as follows, where N is the population size, e is the sampling error (0.05), K is the confidence level (2) and $P(1-P)$ is the variance (0.25):

$$n = \frac{NK^2P(1-P)}{(N-1)e^2 + K^2P(1-P)}$$

To select the sample, we chose the *Consejo Popular Catedral*², as requested by the Master Plan of the OHCH, in line with its interests in our research. This Consejo Popular has undergone a comprehensive process of rehabilitation of its homes and services and its main function is tertiary activity. It is home to many significant tourist attractions and resources, under both state and private management, and is also the location of the majority of the guided tours offered as optional activities. The district has a population of 122,552, and so our formula yielded a sample size of 387 individuals. During the first semester of 2018, this population group was surveyed. The data were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Specialists from the Master Plan of the OHCH and Professors from the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Havana took part in the survey design process. It was designed with the aim of getting to know the opinion of residents about the effects generated by the development of tourism in the Historic Centre. The respondents were made to see that the obtained results by the analysis would be considered as useful elements to influence the planning and management of the territory.

The items were organized into four sections, comprising a total of 41, mainly closed answer, questions. The structure of the document had been organized to facilitate the systematization of the information to be collected. Module A, entitled Respondent profile, consisted of 16 questions asking about sociodemographic aspects to establish a profile of the people who participated in the sample (age, gender, marital status, occupation, time of residence in the place, schooling, occupation, income...). According to Harrill (2004), the characteristics of the population act as factors that influence the process of perception that residents have of the social impacts of tourism. Module B, Evaluation of the territory, contained 9 questions that included elements related to the heritage and cultural values of the Historic Centre, so that the respondents were able to express their assessment of the

² In Cuba, the Consejos Populares (People's Councils) are the lowest level of political-administrative administration and form part of a municipality, in this case that of La Habana Vieja, which comprises seven Consejos Populares, being Prado, Catedral, Plaza Vieja, Belén, Jesús María, San Isidro and Tallapiedra.

territorial context where they are living. Likewise, they included aspects of the Historic Centre to determine the level of satisfaction of the population with the elements related to the basic services offered to citizens, such as infrastructure networks, housing, the cost of living or environmental quality, as well as the territory's offers (gastronomic, accommodation, commercial, cultural, leisure...). Thus, module C structured around 10 questions, had properly focused on the impacts of tourism in order to, based on this evaluation, determine what tourism means for the local community and how it has influenced the development of this activity in the territory. Finally, Module D, entitled Projection, regarded 6 questions focused on the attitude of residents to the increase in tourist activity in the Historic Centre. They would also have to assess the host capacity of the territory and what actions could be carried out to promote an improvement in tourism in that area of the city.

4.1 Section A: Respondent profile

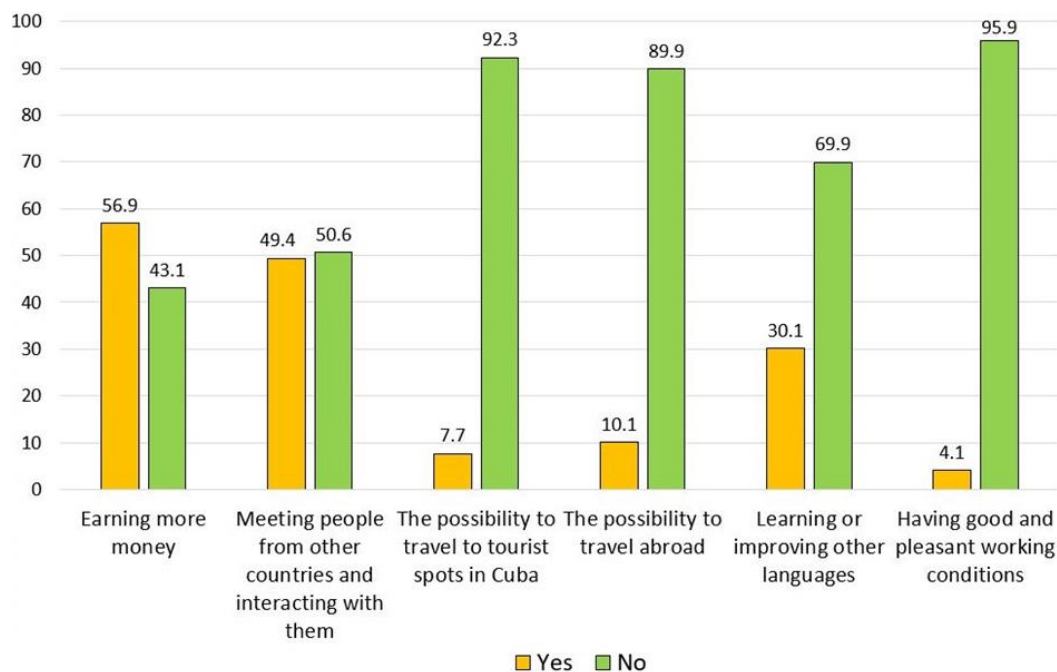
Of the respondents, 216 were female and 171 males, representing 56 % and 44 %, respectively. Ages ranged from 18 to 89 years, with the largest age range being from 30 to 50 years, accounting for 39 % of the sample. As regards marital status, there was a predominance of single people, representing just over a third of the sample. A total of 33 % had completed 12th grade studies (pre-university). In addition, 45 % of the individuals had always lived in the historic center, while 44 % had lived there for less than 20 years. Of the remaining 11 %, 39 % had lived in another municipality of Havana, in another province of Cuba (15 %) or in another country (0.5 %).

With regard to current employment, the largest group were workers (64 %). The remaining individuals were retired (13 %), homemakers (10 %), students (8 %), unemployed (3 %) and disabled (0.3 %). A total of 40 % were self-employed, with gastronomy (17 %), commerce (16 %) and tourism (9 %) being the dominant sectors. The monthly income data revealed that the largest proportion (13 %) of the respondents earned between 201 and 300 Cuban Pesos (CUP), followed by those earning between 501 and 600 CUP (11 %) and then those whose income was between 301 and 400 CUP (10 %).

Despite being dedicated to sociodemographic data, this section included a question designed to investigate the reasons why citizens worked or would like to work in tourism, so

as to provide an initial approach to the topic and the ideas of the population in this regard. The respondents reported preferring to work in this sector because of the financial remuneration, the possibility to meet and interact with persons from other countries, or to learn or improve their knowledge of other languages (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Reasons why respondents are interested in working in tourism (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors.

4.2 Section B: Evaluation of the territory

Of the respondents, 71 % knew that the Historic Center was declared a National Monument in 1978 and a World Heritage Site in 1982, while 29 % were unaware of this. It is also worth noting that 334 individuals (86 %) knew that the Historic Center and the Malecón (from Prado to Calle Marina) were declared Areas of Great Significance for Tourism.

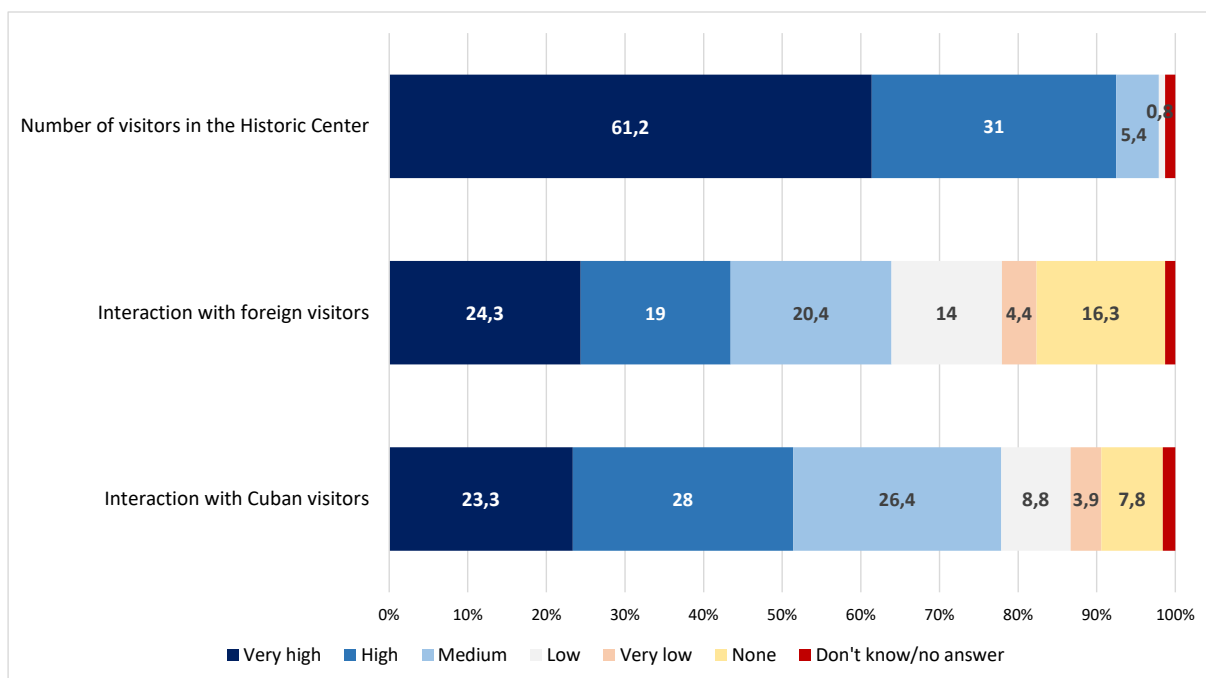
A total of 86 % of the sample classified the area's cultural value as high or very high. The analysis of the expressions of cultural heritage showed that the most valued were the history (87 %), the squares and the architecture. In addition, 98 % of the respondents coincided in the cultural heritage of the Historic Center representing a reason for a visit from citizens from any part of the world.

We then evaluated residents' satisfaction with 34 aspects related to services, infrastructure, housing, environmental quality, the cost of living and the management of the territory. The items that obtained a rating of high satisfaction were the following: the gas supply (65 %), electricity supply (62 %), protection of the cultural heritage (59 %), public spaces (58 %) and the gastronomy services (57 %). In contrast, the aspects about which the residents reported greatest dissatisfaction were the cost of living (prices), the state of streets and sidewalks, the phone service, the sewerage system and hygiene, housing, and environmental quality (noise, waste, water, etc.). It is worth noting that a large proportion, namely 157 respondents (41 %), were dissatisfied with the cost of living.

4.3 Section C: impacts of tourism

A large percentage of the respondents (95 %) recognized the importance of tourism for the development of the Historic Center, rating it as high or very high in importance. A total of 92 % considered the number of visitors to be between high and very high, while 43 % reported their level of interaction with foreign visitors was high or very high. As regards, their level of interaction and relationship with Cuban visitors, 51 % described it as high or very high. It should be noted that there are only very small differences in the percentages regarding interaction with Cuban visitors and foreign visitors, with the former being slightly higher (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Assessment of the resident/tourist interaction according to the number of visitors in the Historic Center

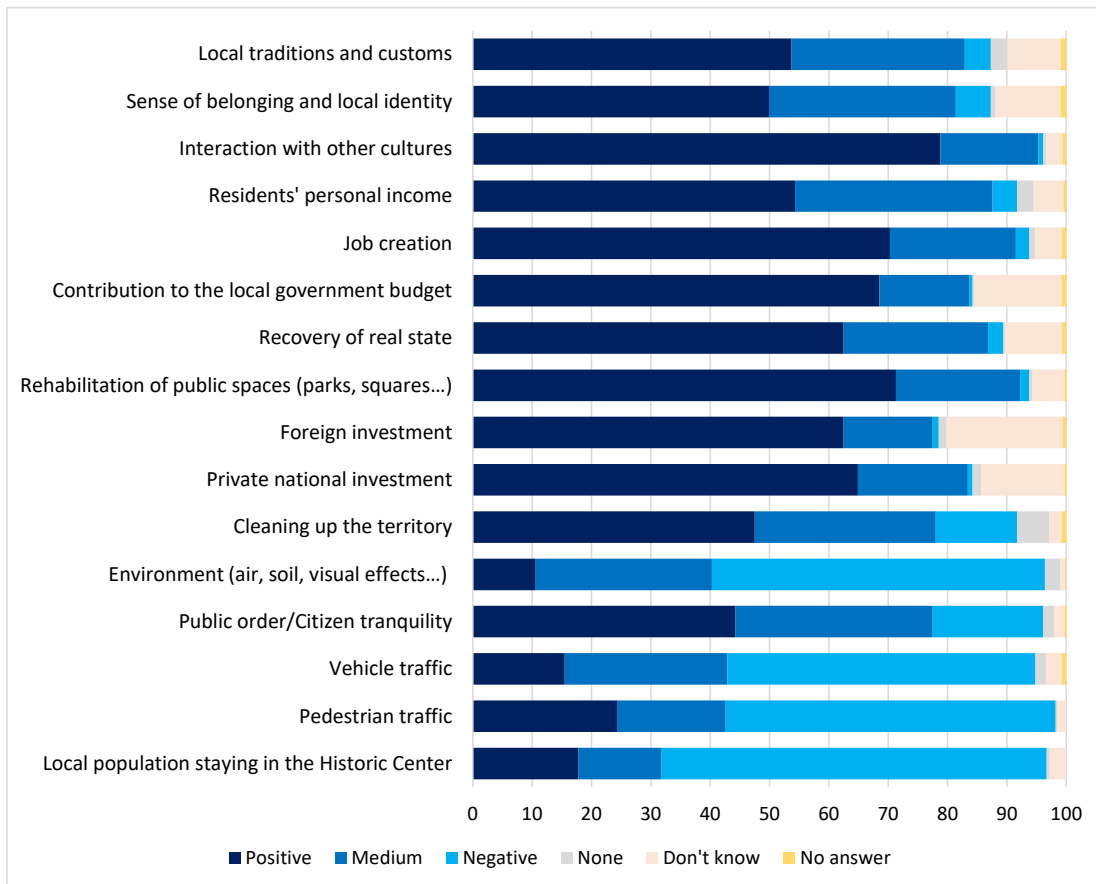


Source: Prepared by the authors.

The largest percentage (29 %) of the respondents thought that tourism benefitted many of the residents, while 26 % thought it benefitted everybody and 24 % thought it was positive for the majority. Thus, overall, 79 % of the respondents have a positive perception of the phenomenon. In contrast, negative opinions were that tourism benefitted only a few (13 %), a few (5 %) or nobody (0.5 %). A total of 57 % of the residents said that tourism was beneficial or very beneficial. Nonetheless, 37 % of the sample saw no clear benefit of tourism in their lives, affirming it was inconsequential for them.

The respondents recognized that tourism impacted positively on interaction with other cultures (79 %), the rehabilitation of public spaces (71 %) and job creation (70 %), although its impact was seen as negative on local population staying in the Historic Center (65 %), the environment (56 %), pedestrian traffic (56 %) and vehicle traffic (52 %). A total of 68 % of the sample agreed or completely agreed that tourism drove up the cost of living in the Historic Center (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The impacts of tourism in the territory



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The aspects residents talked about most were those they identified as being related to the negative impacts of tourism. Regarding the local population staying in the Historic Center, the respondents felt that, due to the growth of tourism in the territory, many economically advantaged individuals acquired properties in the area to start up private businesses (rentals, gastronomy, and the sale of handicrafts) and this displaced residents who had lived in the area most of their lives, which exemplifies the process of gentrification and tertiarization of the territory (Echarri and Salinas, 2005). They also argue that the growing influx of tourists increases the consumption of water and electricity, with a subsequent effect on the environment. Other respondents underlined the recent rise in cruise tourism and, despite being unsure of the exact effects of this from on the environment, they thought it might affect even more the environmental quality of the bay area.

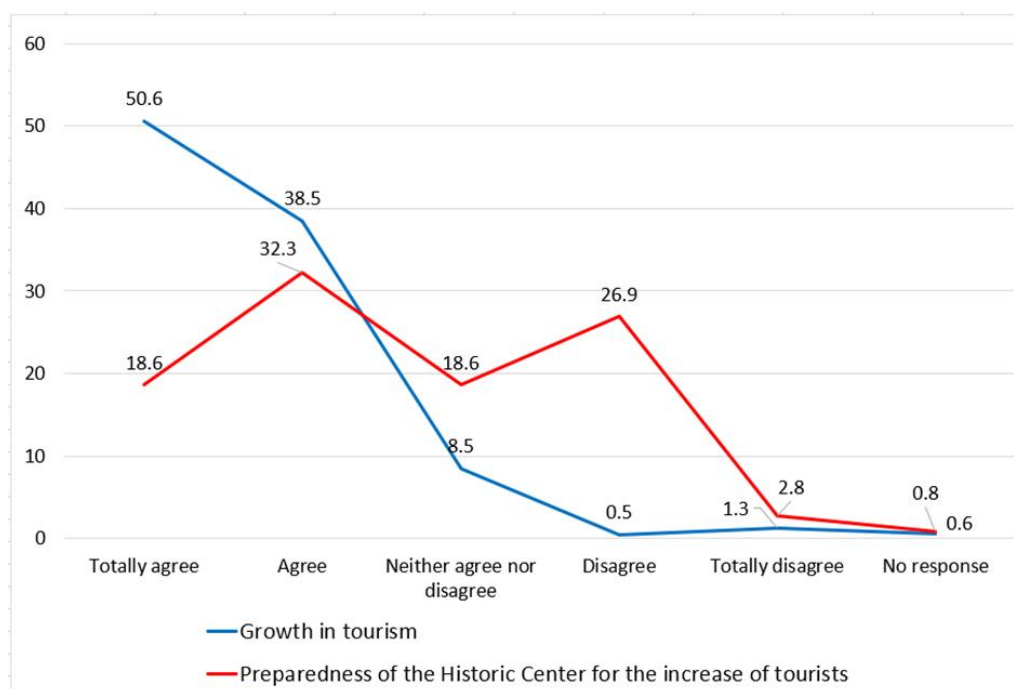
With regard to pedestrian traffic, the respondents recognized that the Historic Center has a great number of attractions, places which bring the visits of many people. However, they feel

that this has been exacerbated by tourism and the public spaces (streets, squares, parks, stores, restaurants, banks, etc.) were overcrowded and that this was annoying. They also underlined the increase in tourist buses that drive around the area on a daily basis and park there, further limiting the few parking spaces available. They also recognized that certain forms of tourist transport hamper the flow of traffic in the Historic Center, citing the colonial-era cars and the cocotaxis (rickshaw-type vehicles).

4.4 Section D: Forecast

With regard to the Historic Center's preparedness for an increased number of visitors, there was a greater diversity of opinions among the respondents. Although a large proportion of the residents agreed or totally agree that the Historic Center is ready for the growth in the number of visitors, a considerable percentage of the sample is more unsure, and reported disagreeing or totally disagreeing with this idea. The residents' responses showed that although they approve of the increase in tourism activity, they are less sure that the Historic Center is prepared for a rise in visitor numbers (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Relationship between the increase in tourists and the preparedness of the Historic Center to receive them (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors.

5 Conclusions

Identifying the resident population's perception of the impacts of tourism allowed us to analyze the relationships between significant variables that lead to this population's positive assessment of the tourism activity. The results of the survey highlight the population's considerable knowledge of the cultural of the Historic Center of Havana. They recognize the unquestionable potential and the wealth of material and intangible heritage contained within the urban environment in which they live. Moreover, the vast majority consider these elements to be the main asset which might motivate tourists to travel to their part of the city. The residents also have a good opinion of the services, as most of the respondents were pleased to live in the particular space, regardless of their reporting some dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the territory.

All the above leads us to conclude that a large percentage of the respondents agree with the idea that the area's tourism activity is generally of great importance for the development of the Historic Center. They perceive that the area is the focus of a notable number of visitors, with whom their level of interaction is high. In addition, they consider this cultural exchange to have a positive impact on the residents. Tourism is regarded as a beneficial activity for many of the area's inhabitants, but when they are specifically asked to assess what tourism represents for them and their families, a substantial percentage describes its effect as insignificant or inconsequential. In this sense, the current scenario and the projections for tourism in the Historic Center of Havana pose challenges for management and planning in the sector, given that the growing influx of visitors enhances the manifestations of the negative impacts of tourism related to the tertiarization of the urban space and its gentrification, the migration of workers towards tourism for economic reasons and the irrelevance the sector represents for some from an individual or family perspective, as they see no clear benefit of tourism in their lives.

It is essential then to have knowledge of the resident population's perception of the impact's tourism can generate on their local community. This is facilitated by applying qualitative techniques where people are positioned at the center of the research. The surveys conducted allow us to learn about the view of the residents, an element of the tourism system to which traditional studies in the field have paid scant attention. In addition, all the actors

engaged in the dynamics of the tourism business need to work together in collaboration to plan the integral development of the territory in spaces whose original function has clearly shifted towards tourism.

As can be seen, it is impossible to separate the stands of the relationship between population, heritage, and tourism. Indeed, it is necessary for all these elements to co-exist to ensure the tourism activity functions properly, even more so in the case of spaces characterized by great vulnerability (economic, environmental, social cultural, political, etc.), and in which ineffective management of such tourism can enhance the already present imbalances in a population with high expectations placed in the activity. Moreover, this is essential when there exists a generalized opinion among the population of the Historic Center of Havana that the area needs to be better prepared to receive an ever-increasing number of tourists.

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