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GF Hoteles - Local Sustainability
Local sustainability, the case of GF Hoteles.

GF Hoteles - Sostenibilidad Local
Sostenibilidad local, el caso de GF Hoteles

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this study is to analyse the development and impact of tourism in the Canary Islands and the need for a remodelling of the hotelry and catering sector and the urgent implementation of sustainable practices. An exhaustive study is carried out of the story of GF Hoteles, and of the practices implemented by the Canarian chain at a local level to combat each of the impacts. The results obtained suggest improvements and sustainable proposals for the future.

Keywords: GF Hoteles, sustainability, local, tourism.

RESUMEN

A través de este estudio se pretende analizar el desarrollo e impactos del turismo en las islas Canarias y la necesidad de que se produzca una remodelación en el sector de la hostelería y de implantar prácticas de carácter sostenible de forma urgente. Para ello se realiza un estudio exhaustivo de la historia de GF Hoteles, y de las prácticas puestas en marcha por la empresa Canaria a nivel local para combatir cada uno de los impactos. Con los resultados obtenidos, se proponen mejoras y propuestas sostenibles de cara al futuro.

Palabras clave: GF Hoteles, sostenibilidad, local, turismo.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Final Degree Paper deals with the study of sustainability in the context of the tourism sector in the Canary Islands. To this end, the evolution produced in the islands in recent years by tourism and the economic, environmental, demographic and social impacts generated as a result of an activity that was poorly controlled at the outset and based on a mass tourism of sun and beach have been studied.

It is important to mention that despite the economic benefits that this sector generates in the islands and its significant contribution to GDP, tourism also causes some negative effects due to the magnitude of the industry and the way in which it has developed without prior planning. For this reason and in view of this situation, sustainable tourism has acquired great relevance, as what is sought is to mitigate the effects that for years have affected the main tourism centers, as is the case of Adeje, where we find the hotel chain GF Hoteles, the main point of study of our paper.

We have decided to work with GF Hoteles as it is a hundred percent Canarian company, with all its capital coming from the island. It is also an example of how sustainable measures and projects can be implemented without being a large hotel chain at an international level, demonstrating that it is the local what allows tourism and sustainability to be united. GF Hoteles is a family chain with well-differentiated values, which has allowed it to prosper, since rather than economic profit they put people and the community in which they find themselves at the centre of all their projects. In this way, hotels at the local level, and especially GF Hoteles, are an engine for the protection of heritage and the environment as well as influencing the inclusive process of society.

It should be noted that we have worked hand in hand with the management of the hotel chain, which has allowed us to have a more accurate picture of the current situation of both the chain and the tourism sector in the municipality of Adeje.

1.1 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The accomplishment of this work has as objectives:

- To define the impacts generated by the tourism sector in the Canary Islands.
- To show the need for sustainable tourism at the local level.
- To analyse the work carried out by GF Hoteles as a sustainable and Canarian company.
- To generate proposals for a good application of sustainability in the hotel industry.

In order to carry out the intended objectives, the methodology used has been mainly qualitative research and fieldwork. Thus, in the first phase of the work, a review of primary and secondary sources has been conducted, which basically have been: online newspapers, reading articles and chapters of books, both in English and Spanish, to find relevant information about the sustainability in the hotelery sector and in the Canary Islands.

On the other hand, in the second phase, fieldwork has been carried out, including several interviews. The major source of information was provided directly by the hotel chain, by the

sustainability coordinator, Moises Exposito, in the several meeting we had. We also conducted a personal interview with the president of GF Hoteles, Victoria Lopez. In addition, we completed our investigation with several visits to GF Hoteles and the surroundings hotels to identify and check how the sustainability policy and the corporate social responsibility was managed within the hotel, the employees and clients.

For the last part of our thesis, the information was provided by GlobalStats.

The structure of the paper can be divided into two distinct parts. The first one corresponds to the theoretical framework and where we have been used the qualitative methodology, knowing the repercussion of tourism in the Canary Islands, its history and its impacts. Also, in this first part it will be possible to know in depth the importance of sustainable tourism, its history and the objectives that it pursues at present, as well as the importance of its implementation at a local level and in hotels for an effective management of the tourist activity. In the second part we deal with a case study using GF Hoteles as an example, consisting mainly of fieldwork. In this part we will focus on the solutions carried out by GF Hoteles for the impacts and problems of tourism in the Canary Islands, mentioned in the first part of the work. Finally, you will find a series of recommendations and proposals and the conclusions that will close the paper, indicating whether the objectives set of its development have been met.

2. HISTORY OF TOURISM IN THE CANARY ISLANDS AND ITS IMPACTS

The conversion of our archipelago into one of the most important tourism destinations in the world began just a century ago, in the eighties of the nineteenth century, when thousands of people with illnesses began to frequent the islands of Tenerife and Gran Canaria in pursuit of a way of healing cutaneous, rheumatic and respiratory diseases. In those days, the curative properties of water and the ocean breeze were widespread and bathing was recommended as a therapy. As a result, the Canary coast and its climate gained a lot of importance.

At this time, the Canary islands switched from an economic and territory model based on traditional agricultural activities - established mainly on the midlands and summits - to a new tourism model based on "sun and beach". This led to a physical reorganization of the island. The rural areas were slowly left behind and the number of "resorts" were steadily increasing in the coastal areas. This change in the economic model also caused a change in the environmental, territorial and social reality. We can see the changes with the following data in approximately sixty years (1960-2018), all retrieved from the ISTAC:

- The population of the islands has increased significantly (0.94 to 2.16 million).
- The population density has grown from 126 to 238 inhab/km².
- The cultivated surface has reduced in more than half (from 95,000 to 45,000 hectares), while the useful agricultural land without use amounts to 85,000 ha.
- The consumption of electrical energy raised from 890 to 8,830 GWh.
- The number of cars went from 20,000 to 1,698,331.

According to Impactur 2017 the contribution of tourism in the Canary Islands is of 35.2% (15.573 millions of euros) compared to the 11.2% of the Spanish average. The dependence of the economy on this activity is dangerously high.

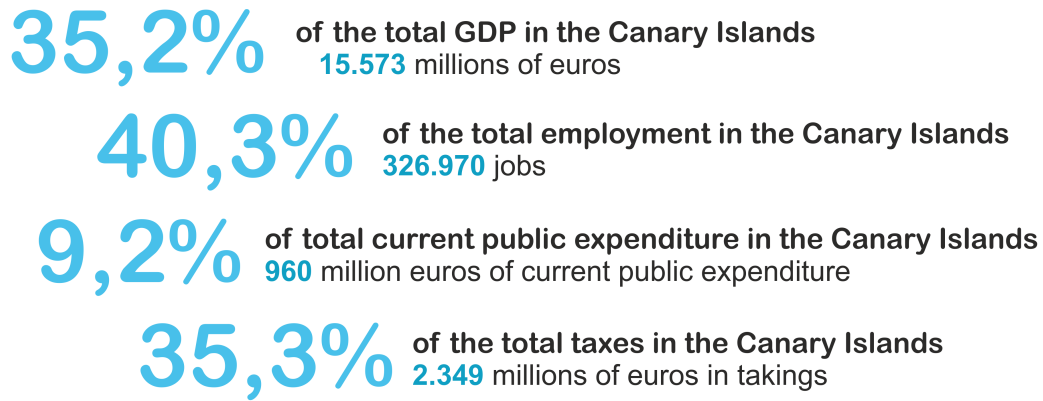


Chart 1: The impact of tourism on the Canary Islands economy

**Contribution of tourism to GDP in the Canary Islands and Spain
(% Tourism GDP over total)**

Year 2017
Source: CSTE, CRE (INE), Estudio Impactur Canarias (Exceltur)

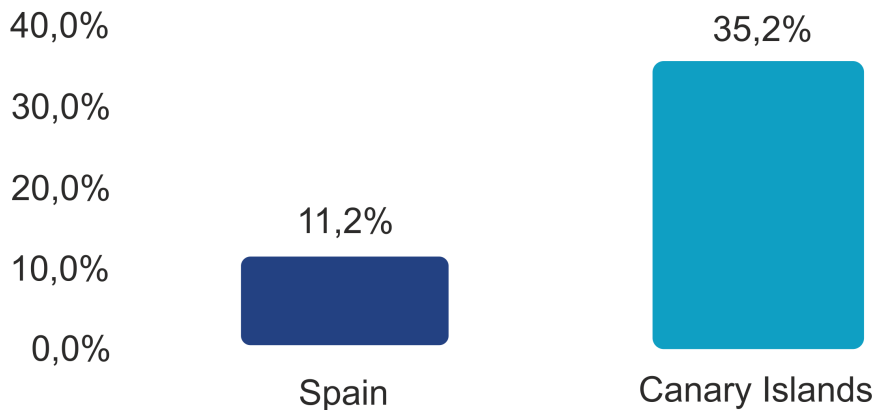


Chart 2- The contribution of tourism to GDP in the Canary Islands and Spain (Exceltur)

The dramatic transformation of the islands has had its consequences and to face them it is necessary to understand the critical role of tourism in all this change. Learning from the past, we must correct dysfunctions and be prepared to face the industry future.

The impacts caused by the tourism model in the Canary Island are quite evident: high energy consumption and water, creation of waste, increase of mobility, consumption of territory, speculation on the land, sociocultural conflict and, in general, a huge landscape change in touristic areas, applicable to almost every island.

It should also be taken into account that the vulnerability of the islands is in itself high due to the fragility of their insular nature, their low productive capacity (i.e their capacity to generate resources) and, therefore, their strong external dependence, together with a small surface area and high population densities.

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Tourism has led to a huge and deep transformation in the island landscape, not only where the accommodation offer was set, but it has also affected the most virgin zones of the island, since it has resulted in the construction of new communication routes and increased the accessibility to the most secluded and well conserved settings and ultimately, modifying the population's way of living.

We can see some examples in the islands of Gran Canaria, Lanzarote o Tenerife, where the human activity was concentrated in middle interior zones. Zones where, from the 60's on, the coast started to be exploited for touristic purposes. Before that, the coast simply holded some old fishermen's houses and stayed unspoilt. It is necessary to remark, that the built-up area in Canary islands expanded a 54% between 1987 and 2002.

The high occupancy rate, combined with a poor urban regulatory plan affected both the coast (with housing states, marinas, boardwalks...) and indirectly the flowing areas (industrial states, villages...). The perfect examples of this rushed tourism boom would be: Los Cristianos and Las Américas in Tenerife, Maspalomas and Costa Canaria in Gran Canaria and Playa del Carmen in Lanzarote.

Therefore, the property speculation and the massive construction, not only in littoral zones but also in rural areas and spaces with a high natural value and with a huge historical-cultural heritage, is one of the main unsustainable practices in the archipelago.

The agrarian surface from the Canaries has reduced drastically in the last years. This is logically due to the neglect of livelihood crops but also to the uptake of labour force for the tourism-construction pairing and the competition that this sector applies over the irrigation water.

Tourism demands a great number of scarce resources (water, land...) at the expense of other activities. It also produces noise, visual and atmospheric pollution and severely worsens the waste management problem, which in an archipelago is especially tricky. It should be noted that, according to Greenpeace (2019), "57% of the sewage goes to the sea without any purification or cleansing". They claim that Canary Islands are the second least autonomous community recycling its wastes.

This, together with the fact that being a group of islands we import the main part of our consumption, increasing our ecological footprint - as the impact of our activities in terms of the area of productive land and water required to produce the food consumed and assimilate the waste produced - especially when our tourism is a mass tourism and we do not adapt to the technological improvements and sustainable management practices. Canary islands is one of the

main tourism centers in Europe and if we compare its ecological footprint to the global, we would need 3'84 planets to bear the intensity of the consumption in the islands.

2.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT - PRODUCTION, INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Tourism is the activity that contributes the most to the GDP and employment rate in the island, as we have already mentioned. That results in a huge unbalance in economy and in the economic dependence of the island with the outside, being forced to import a lot of basic supplies from Europe.

We can state that any region, if it is not able to become self-sufficient, can not be considered sustainable. Now, we will specify some examples of the Canaries dependency with Europe:

- Food: In the year 2011, just 10% of all the foods consumed were produced in Canary Islands. We can certainly infer that the number Canarian products used in hotel establishments and restaurants rounds that number. Furthermore, in the island the primary sector only represent the 4% of the GDP and the cultivated soil is only 256m per inhabitant. This is because of the monoculture (tomato and banana are the 50% of the cultivated land). We have majored in some products leaving other basic foods aside (subsistence policulture).
- Energy: The energy and all the fuel spent in water generation, light and transport in the islands and mainly, in the tourism sector, has to be imported from Europe. Instead of take advantage on the great number of natural resources for clean and renewable energy.
- The materials used in the building of all the tourism infrastructures had to be imported. Except for the few cement mortar produced in the Canaries.
- The "tourism products" themselves are mainly imported; as souvenirs, clothes, shoes...

2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC IMPACT

According to ISTAC, with total area of 7,446 km², the Canary Islands have 1,114 kilometers of coastline and 257 kilometers of beach. The demographic pressure in this space, which is limited, is really high: 2,188,626 inhabitants (year 2018). Therefore the average density is of 294 inhabitants per square kilometer.

To this initial figure we should add more than 13'7 million people who visited the Canary Islands in 2018. We can state that the archipelago is overcrowded and that it has suffered a huge transformation because of the urban-touristic process.

Tourism has increased in coastline zones the number of inhabitants, and most specially, the number of young and adults looking for work and retired coming from another European countries that establish here permanently. We can say that a profound social reorganization happened. A demographic rejuvenation related with the neighbouring countries immigration, labour force attracted for the tourism business. New jobs appear as waiter, entertainer, night guard... jobs that change the social status of other traditional jobs. As a result the local population suffers a huge competition when looking for a job.

Another impact from this demographic growth are the traffic jams. We can see this in the highway to the south of Tenerife or in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

2.4 SOCIAL IMPACT

There is a gradual loss of local culture; tourism causes the subordination of culture to tourism objectives. Before the tourist boom on the islands, an agrarian society predominated. In just 60 years we have evolved into a society where the main activity is tourism. Tourists have been involuntary bearers of a new culture that imposes its rhythm of life: agitation, noise, creation and transformation of infrastructure... They have thus changed some eating habits, clothing, amusements, expressions... and to satisfy the tastes and needs of tourists, the local culture itself has become an object to be sold.

In addition, the increase in the continued participation of foreigners in business and the proliferation of signs in foreign languages is giving locals a sense that the islands are not theirs anymore, that they are in foreign hands. In fact, in some zones of the islands the first language shown is German or English.

Like it or not, these are all ingredients that fuel racism and the situation can become serious in islands as Lanzarote or Fuerteventura, where the number of locals are close to being matched or surpassed by tourists. It should be noted that until the year 80's, the ownership of the offer was basically in the hands of Tenerife capital, but today, these capitals are in the hands of the demand organisers themselves.

3. SUSTAINABILITY – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The World Tourism Organization –UNWTO (2005), defines sustainable tourism as: “Tourism that takes full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts to meet the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities”.

In former times, the nature did not play an important role. Back in the 1800s, the idea of nature being special and beautiful began to develop. Romanticism and European writers begin to “defend” nature, as an example we have the paintings of Constable and Turner.

In the 19th century already some actions were taken: The first National Park, Yellowstone, was established in the United States as a protective measure against economic and individual exploitation and to preserve its natural beauty.

Since the 90s, there has been widespread concern about environmental issues and social awareness in the tourism sector because the impact of tourism activities is increasingly evident. It was then that tourist began to demand tourism that was more respectful with the environment and the local community raised their standards. It was in 1987 that the World Commission on Environment and Development introduced the concept of sustainable development with the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future (1987): “Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising that future generations cannot satisfy their own needs.”

Since the late 20th century, the importance of sustainable tourism and its objective of bringing back together the economic growth, the preservation of natural resources and the well-being of the society has become a priority for the Community Institutions. As we are going to see in the following international events:

- 1992 - UN Conference on Environment and Development of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 Action Plan principles of sustainable development were established.
- 1993 - the creation of the Commission for Sustainable Development to monitor and promote the implementation of Agenda 21.
- 1955 - In April, the World Conference on Sustainable Tourism is held on Lanzarote, where the “World Charter for Sustainable Tourism” was adopted.
- 1999 - The UNWTO General Assembly issued a “Global Code of Ethics for Tourism”.
- 2000 - Millennium Summit in New York, which resulted in the “UN Millennium Declaration”, a set of targets to be achieved by 2015 that included environmental sustainability, the eradication of extreme poverty and equality for women, now known as the “Millennium Development Goals”.
- 2012 - UN conference Rio+20. Twenty years from the Rio conference, report “The future we want” renewed the commitment to the goals of sustainable development and encouraged issues of the global green economy.
- 2015 - UN Sustainable Development Summit. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was published, setting up “17 Millennium Development Goals” which should be achieved by 2030. Tourism appears in goals 8,12 and 14.
- 2017 - International Year of Sustainable Tourism for development, designated by the United Nations General Assembly.



Image 1: Sustainable development goals (UNWTO)

Thus, sustainable tourism should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources, which constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of local communities, conserve their physical and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY AT A LOCAL LEVEL

We can consider that one of the main rules for linking tourism and sustainability is the environment, the local. We must not forget that everytime we talk about sustainable tourism we necessarily have to take into account its context.

Sustainability embraces not only environmental responsibility, but also community engagement and the responsibility of tourists in terms of environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts.

Hotels and tourism enterprises can and must play a fundamental role, becoming an importance source for social development. They can act as a motor with the aim of promoting an inclusive process for society and the protection of the natural, social and cultural heritage of the environment in which it is located.

In addition, the number of tourists interested in sustainability is increasing. A 2014-2015 global survey conducted by the website Booking.com found that the demand for sustainable destinations almost doubled over the previous years. Sustainability is an essential priority for a large number of travellers who are aware of the environment and the community that surrounds them. This awareness is becoming more and more widespread, especially in the new generation of travellers, millennials. Therefore, sustainability will not only attract more tourists, but it will also enable them to take care of the environment without compromising the experience and quality of their trip. In fact, UNWTO forecasts that around 1.6 billion environmentally friendly journeys will have been made by 2020.

3.2 THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ON THE ISLANDS

The tourism sector is a major contributor to climate change, as well as being impacted and affected by it. That is why this sector has a self-interest and a fundamental role in opting for corrective measures and raising awareness of society and tourists on the island.

The archipelago has been characterised by a lack of awareness and sensitisation by the tourism companies involved, mainly concerned with obtaining profits, as well as a lack of administrative

control. This has favoured the fact that many areas have developed uncontrolled tourist activities that degrade the very resource that makes this development possible. (Ex. Hotel del Médano, degradation of the coast). As a result, a conflict has arisen between tourism and the environment and social environment, as we have seen with the impacts mentioned above.

It is therefore clear that sustainable development is an extremely important need for the sector itself. Both the administration and many Canarian businessmen admit that the environmental factor is the key to a long-term survival of the tourism activity. Good environmental and social practices translate into benefits for companies (they reduce internal costs, improve the external image and guarantee the permanent attractiveness of a destination), the environment (conservation of natural resources) and the host community (it increases the well-being of its inhabitants), which in or case depends entirely on it.

3.3 THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE CANARIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Hotels have the highest environmental impact of all commercial buildings. The reason? The breadth of aspects covered by the sector. Some of its main impacts are: Waste (organic, paper, plastic...), water (blackwater and greywater) energy (kitchen, heating and cooling, lighting...)

According to UNWTO, the carbon footprint of hotel establishments accounts for 20% of the total tourism sector. That is why it is necessary to develop new ways to manage its running in a sustainable way to face environmental challenges. Hotels must be involved in the environmental, economic and social aspects so that they can grow and thrive without harming the environment and the society.

Additionally, according to a survey from 2014-2015 carried out by TourOperators says that almost 83% of the tourist would prefer to pay more and stay in a eco-friendly hotel. Nowadays, guests are concerned above all with the hotel's connection to the local community and therefore, guests give great importance to the creation of local jobs, the support of local populations, and to the hotel's role in enriching guests' stay with local experiences.

But... what is a sustainable hotel? According to Cande Perdigón, sustainability coordinator of Hovima Hotels (2019): "A sustainable hotel, is a hotel committed socially, environmentally and culturally to the environment. But also a hotel who takes measures to minimize its negative impacts".

The famous concept of the three Rs has now been extended to a concept with five bases: Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Respect. Based on this, a hotel should manage its six areas of impacts on:

1. Landscape/Architecture
2. Water consumption
3. Carbon emissions
4. Energy consumption
5. Waste reduction
6. Social environment

Sustainable hotels are precisely about making their existence have as a little impact on the world as possible. In addition to the legal ones, what other measures must hotels take in order to be considered sustainable? What should a well-planned Hotel Sustainability Strategy contemplate?

To answer this question we are going to study the case of GF Hoteles, and how they have raised these six essential points of sustainability.

4. CASE STUDY: GF HOTELES - HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE COMPANY

GF Hoteles is one of many companies from GrupoFedola, an organization born in Tenerife with a 100% Canary capital. Mr. Fernando López Arvelo and his brother founded Grupo Fedola in 1957 with the opening of a hardware store in Tacoronte. Today it is a large family company formed by 15 companies and 21 different brands grouped in several sectors as hospitality, nautical, insurance, construction, food and technology, which employ more than 1000 employees. Its consolidated growth in six decades makes it one of the Canarian business organizations with greater national and international recognition.

The group began its journey in the world of hostelry in 1981, when they bought the tourist establishment Noelia Playa in Puerto de la Cruz, on the northern part of the island. In 1992, the hotel was renovated, becoming a 3 star Aparthotel and subsequently reformed in 2004.

A few years later, they expanded their activity to the southern part of the island, to the area of Playa de las Américas. In 1986 they built the Noelia Sur apartments and shortly after the Villa Tagoro tourist complex.

In 1994, they acquired the four-star Hotel Fañabé, which was renovated in 2004. In 1997, the brothers decided to separate the companies. In a friendly agreement, Fernando López kept Grupo Fedola, Hermanos López hardware store and Hotel Fañabé.

After the agreement, in 2000 the company Explotaciones Santonel was incorporated in Grupo Fedola. Two years later, they took the great challenge of constructing a five-star hotel; the GF Gran Costa Adeje hotel, being today one of the most important and highest quality luxury establishments in Tenerife.

In 2006, the company Felaobras S.L.U., promoter and builder for the projects of the group itself was formed. In September of the same year, the company Prefabricados Teide dedicated to the construction of special prefabricated concrete was acquired. In 2008, the food distributor company Pricemesa was also incorporated in Grupo Fedola, with the aim of providing food products to the hospitality industry.

The year 2009 is especially a busy and exciting year for the group with the creation of Broker Fedola Brokerage Insurance and Nautica el Pris and the acquirement of the former hotel RIU Adeje, renamed as GF Isabel Hotel. At the moment, it is a four star hotel located right in front of Hotel Fañabé, specialized in families.

In 2014 the company Camulse was established and the following year the technology and communication company, GF TIC was born.

Its last hotel, GF Victoria, was formally inaugurated on June 2018 and it is labeled as a five star luxury hotel. It is the biggest investment in its 60 year history, approaching 100 million euros. The five-star luxury hotel for families shows that commodity and sustainability can go hand in hand and are not separate entities, as it was born with sustainability as the transversal axis of its proposal. The hotel has become one of the buildings for tourism with the best and most ambitious energy efficiency parameters of our country, without precedent, proof of this is that 90% of all energy consumption comes from renewable sources. All this has made it one of the 10 most sustainable hotels in Spain.

This hotel is not only ambitious for the fact that it is sustainable but also because it is a 5 star hotel for families. The whole complex has been built and designed from the experience of the Fedola family. Victoria has included details and thought of ideas that she would have liked to find in her numerous stays in hotels around the world as a family (miniclub at breakfast, two bathrooms...)

As we can see, the evolution of the company Grupo Fedola S.L. has been coupled with the growth of GF Hoteles, becoming the latter one of the most relevant and outstanding hotel chains in the Canary Islands due to its special involvement in the local economy. For this reason, Grupo Fedola and GF Hoteles constitute an example of successful development at the local level with an international focus. They are living proof that you can grow and evolve from the bottom up, always keeping people and the environment at the core of everything you do. As its founder Don Fernando Lopez said in a recent event of the company that we attended: "At the beginning we were just three (the donkey, the cart and me) but it is thanks to the dedication and hard work that we have become what we are today."

Their values are reflected in the philosophy of the group.

- 1) What we do: Service with heart and professionalism in a close environment.
- 2) What we dream about: To be recognized by their brand, being creative and sustainable.
- 3) What we believe: Credibility, humility, passion, part of the team and open communication.

5. GF HOTELES AND SUSTAINABILITY

"There is no future that is unrelated to environmental sustainability, we understand that guests are going to be demanding it from us and in fact they already are. We want to go ahead and show you that all the actions that we do at GF Hotels have a responsibility linked to our way of being." (Juan Carlos de León, GF Hoteles Operation Manager, 2018).

GF is aware of their responsibility to the welfare of present and future generations. That is one of the reasons why sustainability is considered a strategic value of the chain. The company has always been identified with innovation and environmental respect, undertaking many projects related to sustainability. Thank to its trajectory in this field, the chain has been awarded with a series of recognitions:

- ReThink Hotel Award to Top10 most sustainable hotels in Spain. In 2016 GF Gran Costa Adeje was awarded in the TSMEDIA category, for presenting a quality offer based on an excellent sustainable model.
- Premiodel Plan 70/20. GF Noelia receives the award for its management and separation of waste in 2017.
- Seal of Corporate Social Responsibility of the Cabildo de Tenerife to GF Gran Costa Adeje in 2016.
- ReThink Hotel Award to Top 10 most sustainable hotels in Spain. The GF Victoria was awarded within the TSMEDIA category among the 10 best sustainable hotels in Spain.
- CaixaBank Award for Innovation and Modernization of Tourism Company in the Canary Islands 2017 to GF Victoria.
- ReThink Hotel 2018. GF Fañabé receives recognition for the active management of the use of renewable energies.

The purpose of GF Hotels is to be a source of inspiration in sustainability for the local tourism sector and for clients, showing its commitment to the environment, people and the organization itself. In order to achieve this purpose, a series of challenges are set for:

- The environment: Reduce the impact of the development of your activity.
- People: Improve people's quality of life.
- The organization: Involve its workers, suppliers and customers through the objectives and policies of sustainable development of the company.

Suppliers, customer and workers must be made aware of good environmental practices. The most important thing is to make each and every one of these people see the importance of the environment and the environmental impacts that their activity entails. All these aims and objectives are translated into practice in the different interest groups and people involved in the company:

- Suppliers:

Suppliers have a great importance and must be taken into account within the company's strategy. Hotels should favour and reward those suppliers that are sustainable and local, thus generating less environmental impact.

In this sense, GF Hotels opts for local suppliers, promoting and disseminating local economic growth, while at the same time reducing CO2 emissions into the atmosphere produced by transporting raw materials to the hotel establishment. 90% of its invoicing of products and services are made to suppliers of km0. The Fedola Group also has companies such as Fedola Fresh (fresh and packaged food), GF obras, Ecerosiete, Carlin, GFTic, Pricemesa (stoking), which encourages local trade and can be self-sufficient, always opting for the local.

They also promote the consumption of Canarian products from the land through an agreement with the public company "Management of the Countryside". This is the first collaboration agreement between the tourism and agrarian sector.

– Community:

Tourism and specially hotels, for their power of interaction with society and tourists, are a powerful force that influences community progress and the reduction of inequality. That happens if they involve the local population in the development of their activity.

Among the many purposes and objectives of GF Hotels we find:

- Social intervention projects such as the reinsertion of young people into the labour market, collaborating with the Anchieta Centre.
- Alliances and participative actions: Helping and collaborating with social causes. Donations from the Direction of the company and from the Maid Department of Hotel Isabel to the AECC, to different NGOs, such as AMATE, ACAMAN, AHETE, FAST, CREVO...
- Disclosure and training: An example would be the Agreement between GF and the University of La Laguna with the aim of improving the training of young Canarians and their employability in the main industry of the islands. Its managers also regularly attend forums and talks on the subject.

– Employees

The tourism sector is a key driver of the local economy, and also of employability. According to UNWTO, it is currently responsible for the creation of 1 in 11 jobs. One of the chain's most important social responsibility policies is the hiring of local and young people. The number of employees coming from the islands amounts to 84% of the total number of employees.

According to UNWTO (2015) "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls" is one of the main Sustainable Development Goals. At GF Hoteles it is noteworthy that 48% of its employees are women, as well as many of the management positions are represented by women such as Victoria López, president of GrupoFedola and director of GF Hoteles. The company has carried out work-life balance plans and promotes periods of leave for the care of children under 3 years old. The key to this is open communication.

Another fundamental piece is the awareness of its employees by carrying out training courses on sustainability with the aim that they come to know and assume this commitment and act at all times in accordance with it. In addition, employees will transmit these principles to customers, suppliers and partners.

GF provides a large number of incentives and recognitions among its employees in order to generate greater motivation and participation. GF encourages sustainable practices among its employees incentives such as free parking inside the hotel for those workers who come together by car, thus trying to raise awareness and reduce traffic congestion and the lack of parking in the area.

– Clients:

Customers are the last receivers of activities in the hotel, therefore, transmitting that the activities are carried out with the least environmental impact means a value that places the hotel above other similar ones that do not apply these practices in terms of competitiveness, quality, image, respect for the environment and sustainability.

GF Hoteles' objectives also include innovation and client participation in its sustainability projects, as well as offering products and services in accordance with this policy. A mean of interaction with customers has been created through the Environmental Management System or "Sistema de Gestión Medioambiental (SGMA)". The system allows clients to participate in the choice of changing towels and sheets in the rooms depending on whether or not they require it on a daily basis. This has already saved 574,500 litres of water.

Among other activities, actions have also been developed with the collaboration of the animation department through games that promote awareness of good recycling practices, the proper use of water, or the planting of trees in hotel areas.

5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

5.1.1 Water consumption

Water scarcity is a recognised global problem, as state by the United Nations the demand for water projected to exceed the supply by 40% in 2030. By the same year, half the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress.

No hotel is imaginable without consuming water in a direct (pool, shower, drinking water...) and indirect form (food, gardens, lakes, fonts...). That is the reason why it is really important to preserve and watch out the water consumption. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out an effective management and again, educate employees and customers.

According to Harald Zeiss (2017) "on global average, direct water consumption ranges from 350 l/day for accommodation, and 20 l/day for activities". The tourist consumes 6,575 litres of water per day and most of it comes from food consumption (the dinner buffet requires the largest amount of water) and laundry. Hotel companies have both a strong commercial and moral imperative for addressing water use. Cost is a clear factor; water accounts for 10% of utility bills in many hotels.

For these reasons, GF Hoteles has implemented within its sustainable strategy water saving measures in its laundry, centralising it in the GF Gran Costa Adeje Hotel. This investment was made in 2015 and exceeded 2 million €, in pursuit of three main objectives:

- Economic efficiency
- Energy efficiency
- Better working comfort

Previously to this measure 21L of water were need just per kilo of clothing. With this modification they have managed to reduce consumption to 9.4L per kilo of clothing. More than 31 million litres

of water have been saved and with that, a population such as the one from Santa Cruz de Tenerife could be supplied for one day.

Other benefits of the centralisation are: the reduction of external outsourcing and therefore the use of external transport, one of the main causes of CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. In addition, the reduction of water consumption also reduces the consumption of chemical products and therefore the generation of polluting waste.

Other measures adopted for good water management include replacing the pool filter bed with crushed glass, improving filtration and reducing the cost of water and chemical treatments. They have also opted for intelligent gardening with minimum maintenance.

With all these measures they have obtained a 17% reduction in water expenditure. In 2016 the total consumption of its hotel establishments was around 452,520 m³ and in 2018 was reduced to 375,276 m³.

5.1.2 Carbon Emissions

The hotel sector accounts for around 1% of global emissions and though this may seem small, growth in the sector means that the sector will increase its negative environmental impacts if it does not start to measure and reduce its carbon emissions. Moreover research commissioned by ITP highlights that the hotel industry must reduce its carbon emissions by 66% by 2030 and 90% by 2050 to stay within the 2°C threshold agreed at COP21.

As a measure to reduce the emissions of CO₂ into the atmosphere, GF has replace normal boilers by condensing ones, as a result they have achieved two fundamental things: the reduction of smoke output, cutting CO₂ emissions by 33% by taking advantage of residual heat and also a 20% energy saving in fuel consumption. Between 2009 and 2018 the reduction of CO₂ has been from 61%, going from 3,792.42 to 1,493.65.

A biomass boiler has also been installed, allowing organic waste to be used to produce hot water. This achieves the reduction of propane consumption and also that the emission is considered zero emission because the fuel used absorbs the equivalent of CO₂ emitted during its life cycle.

MINUS 61% less CO₂ into the atmosphere in only 9 years, this means that they have sent 1262 Tons of CO₂ less into the atmosphere. GF Hoteles has managed to achieve these figures by making important investments towards energy saving, by reducing their carbon footprint and the extensive use of renewable energy sources.

Daily carbon emission per occupied room (GF Hoteles)

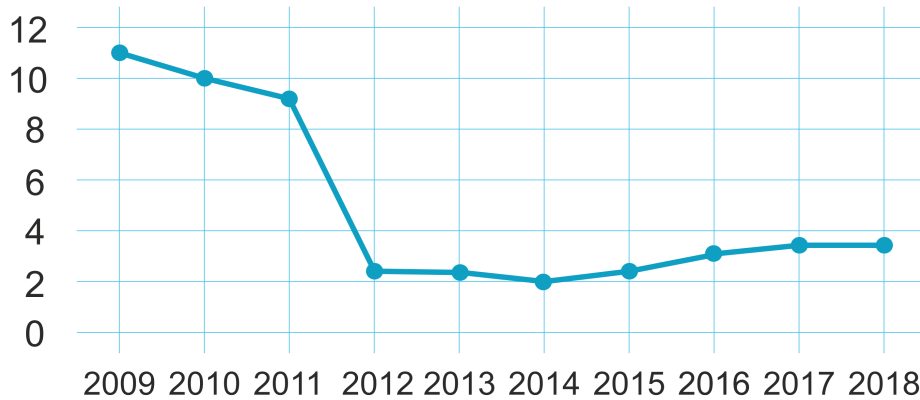


Chart 3 - Daily carbon emission per occupied room- GF Hoteles (2009-2018)

Total Co2 emissions (GF Hoteles)

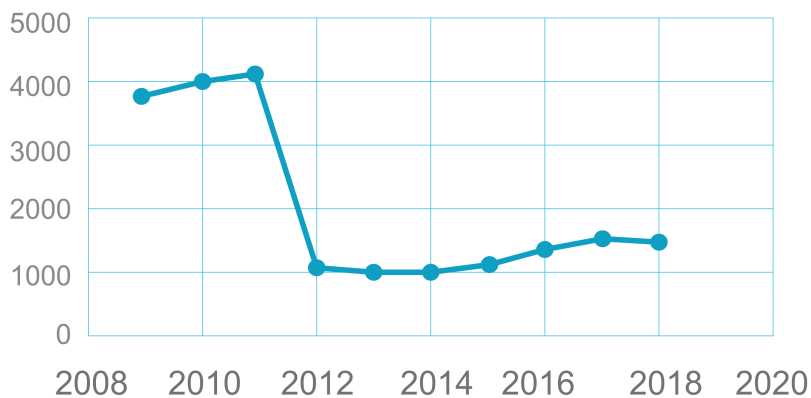


Chart 4 - Total CO2 emissions - GF Hoteles (2008-2020)

As we can see in the graph the daily carbon value per occupied room is well below the accepted standard for the hotel industry, which is around 31.3 CO2 kg per room night. We can see an increase in emissions in 2018, which would be due to the opening of its last hotel, GF Victoria.

5.1.3 Energy consumption

Energy consumption is another point to take into account when developing a sustainable hotel. Another of UNWTO's objectives is the reduction of energy consumption and the use of renewable energy sources. The use of sustainable energy helps, in the long term, to reduce gas emissions, mitigate climate change and implement new and innovative energy solutions.

Energy is the second largest spending for a hotel after employment, representing 3% to 6% of hotel operating costs and accounting for approximately 60% of its CO2 emissions.

During the past decade, energy consumption in hotels has increased from 25% to 30% due to the growth in occupancy but also because of our new way of living and consuming.

Energy in hotels is mainly consumed by temperature regulation, which represents on average 69% of the consumption. Others consuming systems are lighting, electricity (elevators, etc.), cooking...

To reduce energy consumption GF has made use of LED technology, which has a lower energy consumption and longer life expectancy. An example of this is the GF Fañabé where a ton light system with presence sensors and dimmers has been installed. They have achieved that the corridors are constantly illuminated with lower power but with an adequate level, as the guests walk through the corridor the luminosity increases and the power part is reduced.

It should also be noted that 100% of its electricity comes from renewable sources and that all the measures adopted have resulted in a total saving of 310,048 kw/h.

5.1.4 Waste reduction

Waste is a key issue for the hotel sector. Food waste costs hotels worldwide 380 million Euros per year. This includes food procurement, labour, utilities and waste management costs.

On average hotels produce 289,700 tonnes of waste each year, including 79,000 tonnes of food waste. A hotel guest generates about 1kg (2lb) of waste per night, more than half of it in paper, plastic and cardboard.

The biggest gains in the hotel come from waste reduction as you purchase less, save staff time and reduce waste disposal bills.

GF Hoteles waste management is based on the three basic principles of waste: Reuse, Reduce and Recycle. All this has led them to develop a series of actions around the non creation of waste and the use of Canary Islands' natural resources as:

- The climatization of swimming pools or creation of sanitary hot water by means of solar energy. The company already has 1.034 solar panels.
- Creation of defined spaces with precise information regarding the separation of waste (organic, paper, plastic...). Separate spaces have also been created for the separation of contaminated empty containers and aerosols.
- Production of hypochlorite by salt electrolysis and a swimming pool water recycling system.
- Incorporation of new technologies to reduce paper consumption, which has been reduced by 1.18% (96,577.49 Kg to 95,450.78 Kg), In the same way they have managed to reduce the consumption of single-use plastic by 48% (63,10Tn to 34.80 Tn).

5.1.5 Social Environment

GF hoteles boost economic activity, job creation and sustainable development with different measures. Between them:

The creation of the app, B-Green Live (smarthotel), which is nothing more than an extension of the company's philosophy where guests, employees and the environment are informed of the environmental impact of the hotel. Clients can consult their own activity and ecological footprint during the stay.

It is the first data intelligence and environmental communication application developed in the Canary Islands. It aims to meet the following needs: reduce environmental impact, improve hotel positioning, build customer loyalty, improve communication with customers and get involved in sustainability programs.

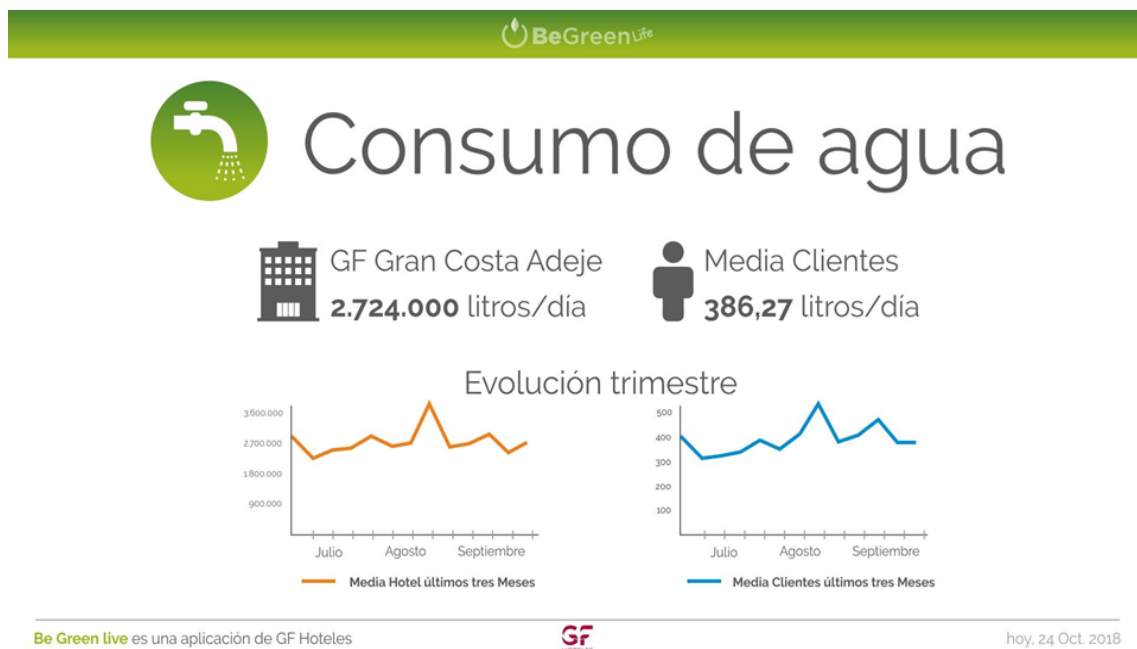


Image 2 - Example of the environmental impact of the hotel and clients

Other measure in which GF Hotels is working is the implementation of a Sustainable Mobility and Road Safety plan that includes actions such as: microbuses lines, parking for bicycles, charging points for electric vehicles, internal sustainable mobility website with car sharing forum etc. In this sense, GF is working together Ashotel and Cabildo of Tenerife to export this policy to the whole sector, their aim is to come up with solutions for a higher quality of life and a lower accident rate during the displacement of employees to the workplace.

They have carried out various studies in which they have found out that the number of daily transfers by hotel employees in Tenerife is around 160,000, an immeasurable amount and thus this shows the need for an immediate solution. Their idea is to enable direct buses from the population centers (Adeje, Arona and San Miguel), placing the bus stop at a strategic point near

the hotel area. Their objective is to remove cars from the road, providing a free and comfortable bus without stops and as a result employees will save money as they won't be spending it on gasoline and the carbon emission will be reduced.

As Victoria López stated (2019)¹ "the keys are the cultural change of those who work in the sector and, of course, in the serious commitment by Titsa."

The third measure that we want to highlight is the creation of a composting area. GF Hoteles is committed to creating a composting point in the southern part of the island for the creation of ecological orchards, favouring and promoting good practices and collaboration between companies in the same sector.

5.1.6 Landscape / Architecture

Measures concerning landscape and architecture have been adopted with the construction of its last hotel. GF Victoria has contributed to the conservation of the environment and biodiversity of the area through the automated irrigation system with low consumption, thus reducing the dependence of the island on aquifers. In addition, the vegetation is adapted to the local climatology and does not introduce any species detrimental to the biodiversity of the area.

True testimony of the ecological focus of the building are the green roof areas: they provide a balance to land sealing, filter dust and reduce noise and have a temperature-balancing effect, meaning, they provide thermal insulation in the winter and cooling in the summer for the underlying rooms - that in itself saves energy costs. Thanks to the green roof, the roof waterproof membrane is also protected from the extremely high summer temperatures, resulting in a longer life.

5.1.7 Current /Future Strategy - Strategic sustainability plan 2018 – 2020.

It is a reference hotel company for other business groups when it comes to sustainability. In this sense, GF Hotels wants to keep improving and being better each day. Some of the aims they want to approach are:

- The 100% single-use plastic reduction. In order to achieve these goals, the chain is implementing joint actions in all its hotels, such as gradual substitution of the consumption of plastic bottles for aluminum ones in guests and employees. They have also reduced plastic by replacing straws and coverings with a material made from 100% compostable corn, and they also use reusable polycarbonate cups. With all this, they will be able to reduce 14 tons of plastic, which is equivalent to 50 tons of CO₂ in the atmosphere.
- Optimize and reduce paper use. A monthly analysis of paper consumption is carried out and the information is transferred to the departments involved.

¹ To read the complete interview, please check the Annexes, pp. 33-37

- The reduction of the carbon footprint by 10% and calculation of CO2 absorption of the landscaped plant.

5.2 SWOT ANALYSIS

After studying all the policies and actions implemented by the chain to solve the existing problems and impacts due to mismanagement and past planning of the tourism industry on the islands, we have carried out a SWOT analysis of sustainability within the company:

Strengths:

- Reuse of swimming pool water.
- Superior laundry technology resources.
- The Group's long environmental track record as a benchmark on the islands in this field.
- Good image among customer of all hotels in the group (high satisfaction rates).
- Establishment of a sustainability plan.
- Diversification of activities with the Fedola Group (insurance, construction, food...)
- Staff involvement in environmental matters.
- The Group's social impact on environmental and sustainability issues through the dissemination of information on the subject.

Weaknesses:

- Slowdown in the process of digital transformation that could lead to gaps in the sector.
- Presence in the Internet and social networks.
- Excess of operative problems in document management inside the hotels of the group when continuously modifying processes.
- Internal communication at a global level.
- Increased paper consumption in administration and other departments.
- Typology of clients with low environmental awareness.
- Geographical location.

Opportunities:

- Implementation of the Mobility Plan.
- Incorporation of B-green life in hotels.
- Improve the image of advertising campaigns.
- Expansion of modification of animation service activities around sustainability awareness.

Threats:

- Increased environmental impact due to lack of customer awareness.
- The tourist and sectoral environment.
- Loss of backing and bargaining power of tour operators and agencies.
- Entry on new competitors with similar themes (Fantasia family hotel).

- Drastic changes in environmental legislation.
- Possible loss of water due to obsolete installations.

5.3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX

The average satisfaction index of all hotels is around 8.85, which is a fairly high satisfaction index with respect to other hotels.

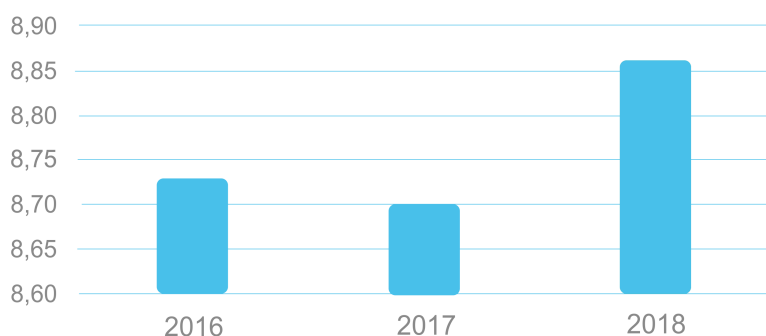


Chart 5 - Customer satisfaction index (GF Hoteles)

However, we have analyzed by hotel the satisfaction index of the different departments and their suggestions. These surveys have been provided by Global Stats, and here is the example of GF Victoria.

2018	Recepción	Relaciones Públicas	Limpieza	Comidas	Servicio de restaurante	Servicio de bar	Estado y equipamiento del hotel	Entretenimiento	Piscina y jardines	Gestión Medio-ambiental	Amabilidad del personal	Valoración Calidad / Precio	Satisfacción general con la estancia
Negociado													
Abril 1													
Abril 2	9,41	9,09	8,79	8,99	9,29	8,82	7,06	7,33	7,75	8,67	9,80	6,87	7,94
Mayo 1	9,33	9,07	9,55	8,86	9,62	9,49	7,70	7,11	8,74	8,33	9,70	7,93	8,37
Mayo 2	9,70	9,20	8,96	8,28	9,25	9,08	8,99	8,47	8,69	8,82	9,80	7,71	9,09
Junio 1	9,62	9,67	9,87	8,85	9,31	9,28	8,80	7,37	8,67	9,28	9,74	7,78	8,89
Junio 2	8,63	8,89	10,00	9,22	9,33	9,33	9,52	7,18	9,61	9,23	10,00	8,13	9,22
Julio 1	9,33	9,39	9,20	9,07	9,58	8,94	8,75	7,54	9,73	8,64	9,72	8,89	9,44
Julio 2	9,84	9,68	10,00	9,83	9,17	8,95	9,52	7,84	10,00	9,67	9,84	9,47	9,68
Agosto 1	9,64	9,66	9,49	7,87	8,57	8,16	9,55	8,29	9,49	9,42	9,71	7,97	9,11
Agosto 2	8,99	9,15	9,09	8,18	8,62	8,62	9,22	8,45	9,09	8,89	9,31	7,94	8,94
Septiembre 1	9,31	8,57	9,10	8,37	9,07	8,56	9,50	7,43	9,15	8,54	9,72	8,09	9,01
Septiembre 2	9,20	9,06	9,07	8,21	8,87	8,47	9,20	8,09	9,50	8,89	9,87	8,01	9,07
Octubre 1	9,11	9,02	9,22	8,46	8,44	8,78	9,42	7,62	9,43	9,05	9,55	8,07	8,90
Octubre 2	8,96	8,75	9,02	8,42	8,67	8,49	9,21	7,00	9,13	8,16	9,14	7,56	8,74
Noviembre 1	9,41	8,99	9,04	8,67	9,03	8,27	9,31	7,30	8,87	8,97	9,57	7,96	9,18
Noviembre 2	9,35	9,17	9,03	8,92	9,20	8,93	9,33	6,94	9,25	8,64	9,67	7,70	9,03
Diciembre 1	9,11	8,26	8,92	8,17	8,45	8,00	9,11	7,78	8,60	9,03	9,40	7,22	8,17
Diciembre 2	9,35	9,14	9,43	8,08	8,63	8,79	9,32	7,47	9,21	8,98	9,67	8,33	8,70
Acumulado 2018	9,28	9,07	9,21	8,51	8,93	8,68	9,08	7,62	9,10	8,86	9,61	7,93	8,90

Chart 6- Customer satisfaction index of the hotel GF Victoria (GF Hoteles)

After the analysis we have come to the following conclusions: In quality surveys the staff friendliness score is always high, this has made them recognized among customers and the rest of the companies. Victoria López says: "I like to think that our employees like working with us and our customers enjoy with us".

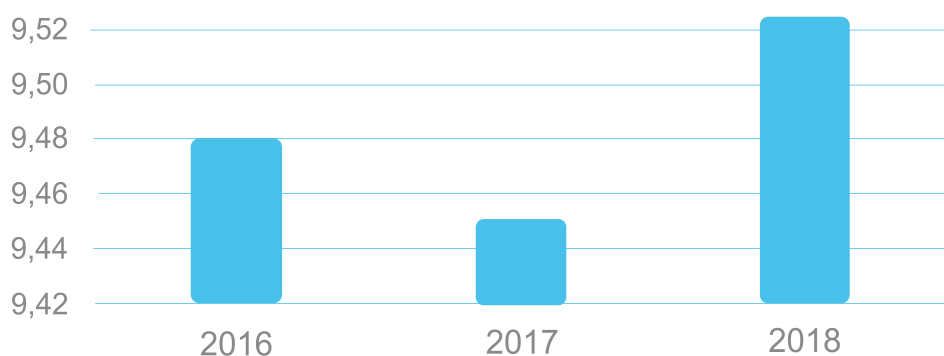


Chart 6 - Staff friendliness Index (2016-2018)

The environmental management index of the hotels is quite high. However, we found some complaints in TripAdvisor about the use of single-use plastics in the pool area, this is due to the lack of communication on environmental issues as these have already been removed and replaced by biodegradable corn starch instruments, but the customer does not always know. Other complaints we were able to find are: “There is no option to separate the garbage in the room” or “The lack of stations to refill water bottles”.

In addition, most of the hotel’s guests are English, German, Finnish or Belgian. These countries have a strong commitment to sustainability and environmental values play a very important role in society. This can be seen more closely in a study conducted by Accor hotels with the following results:



Imagen 3: Sustainability depending on the country of origin

6. PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After analysing all the strengths and weaknesses of the company and knowing all the measures they have implemented for now, we have compiled some ideas that are being developed by other hotel chains and we have developed some proposals that could be implemented.

For example, Riu Hotels offers for most of the destinations in which they are established a “Green Book”; where tourists have recommendations on restaurants, crafts and local souvenirs, use of

public transport, reuse of towels... in short, they have created a guide with options and tips so that the client can be as eco as possible, not only inside but outside their hotels.

Marriott International has innovated and incorporated sustainability in the MICE field, promoting the use of technology and the reduction of paper, sustainable and local food and beverage and the donation of leftovers in all the events...

Within GF Hoteles, according to the director of the company, Victoria López: "One of the main difficulties is the transmission of all their actions and environmental policies to tourists staying in our establishments because in the case of GF Hoteles guests come from abroad and it is difficult to transfer our policy."

The reception of specific actions carried out in collaboration with customers has been positive, so we want to improve communication channels that make visible the effort of environmental commitment carried out by the chain.

In addition, and bearing in mind that all the negative comments that have been found related to sustainability are produced by customer misinformation, we consider that it is necessary an effective implementation of sustainable marketing and image in the market as a differentiation strategy. To make the company's sustainability strategy known through a hashtag or slogan well defined as in the case of Iberostar and its "Wave of Change".

A food management policy should also be implemented, as the Food and Beverage department uses a large number of resources. Some of the possible measures would be: To buy food with reduced packaging waste, reduce portion and plate sizes at buffets, present as many as possible attractive vegetarian or vegan alternatives (producing beef has huge water consumption) or an alliance with the app "Too Good to go". A mobile application born in 2016 that allows establishments to reduce surplus daily food by selling it at a lower price, enabling users to save quality food that would otherwise end up in the trash.

Finally, as Iberostar is doing, they should dispense with the role of check-in and switch to new technologies. Switch to electronic format, applying Information and Communication Technologies both in the administration and invoicing department and in reception, where all the paperwork with the customer is replaced by digital devices to optimize paper waste. This would save on paper, file storage space and streamline the entire internal management of the hotel.

7. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude our paper we would like to mention the words of Moisés, sustainability technician of GF Hoteles at our first meeting and which, it seems to us, summarize the purpose of the work:

"Sustainability is a long-distance race, where the important thing is not to be the fastest, but to maintain a constant pace, we hope that in the future we will stop being lonely corridors and that soon we will have other companies in the sector at our side and the institutional support that these initiatives deserve, after all, it is our planet." (Moisés Exposito, GF Hoteles sustainability coordinator).

The research work and the analysis of both the tourism situation in the archipelago and the work carried out by the Fedola Group have allowed us to have a much broader and more objective view of sustainability, the breadth of its concept and how necessary it is. All this has led us to draw the following conclusions:

Considering the vulnerability of the archipelago due to its insular nature and its strong external dependence on having a low productive capacity and much of its economic strength based on tourism, it is necessary to establish a sustainable tourism plan at a community level. The reason? To ensure the care and conservation in the medium and long term of the resources that today make us such an attractive destination and also to ensure that our economic engine has a promising future. In 2017, 40.3% of jobs in the Canary Islands came from tourism, according to Impacture, data too important to ignore.

The need for collaboration at an insular level and the implementation of urgent measures such as the Tenerife Mobility Plan, in collaboration with public entities.

GF Hoteles is an example of the fact that, over and above the economic incentive what has to be a priority is: the well being of the community where they are located, the conservation of the Canarian resources that we all enjoy and the fact the measures carried out - such as the composting plan for the whole island or the agreement with Universidad de La Laguna - are not only for our own benefit. We have also noticed the importance they give to the local and the need to include the environment in their vision of sustainability by hiring a large percentage of local population, working on awareness and education from the roots, betting Canarian products, and so on.

We have come to the conclusion that, taking into account the wide number of hotel accommodation available on the Canary Islands and after having studied the different measures implemented in the construction of the GF Victoria, the most sustainable hotel built so far in the Canary Islands, we consider that a new legislation should be established in order to limit the construction of new hotels to those with A+ Energy rating.

Sustainability and a tourism that revolves around it should not be considered a strategy for the future, but our present. We only have one planet earth, which we must take care of, and it is everyone's responsibility.

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8.5 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION:

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8.7 OTHER DOCUMENTS

We want to thank GF for their time, first-hand input and providing the following documents for our paper.

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8.8 IMAGES

- Image 1: UNWTO (2015)– Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved July 12, 2019 from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>
- Image 2: Image courtesy of GF Hoteles. Retrieved from Memoria de Sostenibilidad 2018.
- Image 3: AccorHotels (2016). Responsible Guests are looking for sustainable hotels. Retrieved on March 25, 2019 from: https://group.accor.com/-/.../PDF-for.../guest_study_en_2016.pdf

8.9 CHARTS

- Chart 1: The Impact of tourism on the Canary Islands economy (2017). Adapted from information of Impactur Canarias (Julio, 2018).
- Chart 2: The contribution of tourism to GDP in the Canary Islands and Spain (2017) Adapted from information of Impactur Canarias (Julio, 2018).
- Chart 3: Daily carbon emission per occupied room. Retrieved from “Memoria de Sostenibilidad GF Hoteles 2018”.
- Chart 4: Total CO2 emissions. Retrieved from “Memoria de Sostenibilidad GF Hoteles 2018”.
- Chart 5: Customer satisfaction index. Retrieved from “Memoria de Sostenibilidad GF Hoteles 2018”.
- Chart 6: Customer satisfaction index of GF Victoria. Retrieved from “Informe DP – Satisfacción de Clientes GF Victoria. GlobalStats 2018.”
- Chart 7: Staff friendliness Index. Retrieved from “Memoria de Sostenibilidad GF Hoteles 2018”.

9. ANNEXES

Entrevista a Victoria López, presidenta de Grupo Fedola y directora de GF Hoteles-Sostenibilidad local, el caso de GF Hoteles.

• **¿En qué se encuentran trabajando actualmente? ¿Cuáles son sus proyectos? ¿Cuáles son los objetivos de la empresa de cara al futuro?**

Tenemos un proyecto que podría decir que es lo más ambicioso del mundo: quitar los coches de la carretera. Hemos trabajado en este proyecto para aplicarlo dentro de nuestra empresa, habilitando guaguas para transportar a nuestros trabajadores desde sus núcleos hasta nuestros hoteles, pero resultó inviable por el coste y por la variedad de horarios existentes. Algunas guaguas podían ir solo con 3 personas y, otras, con más de 50. Decidimos unirnos con Ashotel y con el Cabildo de Tenerife para exportar la política a todo el sector. De esta forma sería más viable el traslado, ya que a los desplazamientos añadiríamos a compañeros de los establecimientos hoteleros más cercanos.

Se han realizado estudios donde descubrimos que los trabajadores turísticos hacen al día 160.000 traslados en coche, repito, 160.000 traslados. Esto nos dice que tenemos que hacer algo y, desde luego, construir más autopistas no es la solución.

GF Hoteles está liderando este proyecto y no va a permitir que quede en el olvido. También invertimos en maquinaria y trabajamos en la política de plástico cero, eliminado todos los plásticos de un solo uso. Nos apoyamos en nuevos productos, como, por ejemplo, bolsas de basura hechas con fécula de papa, que son capaces de descomponerse al contacto con el agua en aproximadamente un mes.

• **¿En qué creen que se diferencian de otras empresas canarias?**

Yo, realmente, no conozco lo que hacen los demás. Hay muchas empresas con políticas muy buenas, como Iberostar con su Wave of Change enfocado en combatir la contaminación marina y reflexionar sobre la situación medioambiental del planeta.

Sé que hay otras cadenas locales que trabajan la sostenibilidad e, incluso, se han apoyado en nosotros. No digo que seamos mejores ni peores, solo digo que todo lo bueno que hagamos vamos a mirar hacia afuera e intentar que lo hagan los demás. Tenemos a compañeros hoteleros que hacen un trabajo magnífico, un ejemplo es HovimaHotels, una empresa canaria que tiene 7 hoteles y de los que se habla muy poco.

• **Muchas cadenas turísticas se han vuelto sostenibles de manera paulatina por temas de legalidad y regulación ¿Qué llevó a GF Hoteles a realizar este cambio y en qué momento de la historia de la empresa se produjo?**

Empezamos hace unos diez años. Al principio fue un tema meramente económico, porque es verdad que la inversión inicial es muy cara, hay que ser paciente porque tiene una gran rentabilidad económica pero también medioambiental. GF Hoteles fue la primera cadena canaria

que en aquella época invirtió un millón y medio de euros sólo en placas solares. En ese entonces era una locura, pero hicimos números y un estudio de viabilidad para saber cuánto ahorraríamos. A partir de ahí empezamos a inquietarnos y Moisés Expósito,

coordinador de Sostenibilidad de la cadena, empezó a traernos soluciones innovadoras. Él ha sido, sin duda, el artífice de toda esta vertiente de sostenibilidad dentro de la empresa.

• **¿Consideran que la empresa tiene alguna debilidad o punto a mejorar que esté resultando especialmente difícil?**

La debilidad es el entorno, las carreteras, el estrés de nuestros compañeros provocado por el tráfico... Somos muy dependientes del entorno y nos cuesta encontrar soluciones para algunas cosas. Y, siendo sincera, dentro de casa nos queda trabajo con el personal, estamos haciendo talleres sobre sostenibilidad e intentamos que la gente salga concienciada.

• **Podrían hablarnos más en profundidad sobre el Plan de Movilidad para los trabajadores implantado por la empresa. Nos parece un punto y una apuesta muy interesante puesto que es un debate que se ha abierto con vista a las elecciones autonómicas, la necesidad de un Plan de Movilidad renovado para la isla.**

El director insular de Movilidad y Fomento del Cabildo de Tenerife nos dijo desde el principio que quería estar con nosotros en esto y la institución asumió el coste del estudio del Plan de Movilidad. Un estudio que se realizó en una empresa especializada, donde se diseñó un mapa con los trayectos que recorrían día a día los trabajadores del sector. Y es curioso porque pensamos que todos venimos de fuera, pero los trabajadores se concentran en tres puntos poblacionales: Adeje, Arona y San Miguel. La idea es poner guaguas directas desde esos núcleos poblacionales colocando la parada en un punto estratégico. Sin embargo, también nos encontramos casos en los que vienen de La Laguna o Santa Cruz y con ellos estamos propiciando los coches compartidos. De esta manera, nos comprometemos a que si comparten coche tendrán plaza de parking dentro de los hoteles.

Las claves se encuentran en el cambio cultural de los que trabajamos en el sector y, por supuesto, en el compromiso serio por parte de Titsa.

• **El porcentaje de mujeres trabajando dentro de la empresa es espectacular, 52% masculino frente al 48% de porcentaje femenino, al igual que el alto porcentaje de mujeres directivas, usted es el perfecto ejemplo de ello. ¿Se han tomado medidas concretas a lo largo de la historia de la empresa para evitar el techo de cristal?**

La verdad que a veces me cuesta creer que haya limitaciones, pero sí sé que las hay, porque tengo amigas hoteleras que sí se han topado con este techo de cristal. Aparte de que los estudios lo corroboran, a mí me lo han explicado con experiencias propias. En Grupo Fedola no hacemos nada específico, pero tenemos un truco para darle la oportunidad a mujeres. Nosotros tenemos directoras, en este momento dos, y ambas son chicas jóvenes que están en edad de ser madres. Su elección de serlo o no serlo ya es personal, pero tenemos que prepararnos para

ello. ¿Cómo? Con un director en el caso de una y una subdirectora en el caso de otra, con los que se trabaja siempre en equipo.

Siempre decimos que las direcciones de los hoteles son dos, nunca uno, de tal forma que, si la directora se queda embarazada o necesita una baja, siempre tendremos otra persona completamente preparada para eso. Para que funcione necesitamos mucha generosidad de ambas partes, que la hay, tengo mucha suerte con los equipazos que tengo, con comunicación y acompañamiento.

Los equipos no pueden depender de una sola persona, así facilitas la inclusividad, tienes a todos preparados en el mismo término y si tienes que prescindir de uno, tienes al otro.

• ¿En qué consideran que la empresa contribuye positivamente a la comunidad local? Teniendo en cuenta que la sostenibilidad también engloba las poblaciones locales.

La responsabilidad social de la empresa es una parte muy importante para contribuir positivamente a la comunidad local. Somos partícipes de cosas muy bonitas como la ayuda a comedores sociales, a niños en situaciones de desamparo o con familias desestructuradas, en formación, etc. Creo que debemos ser un ejemplo de boquita cerrada.

En estas últimas semanas hemos colaborado con Sensitur, hemos estado en Adeje y en el Puerto de la Cruz y podemos asegurar que la nueva generación está concienciada. De hecho, me sorprendió mucho un niño que, cuando los demás salieron a desayunar, él se quedó recogiendo papeles que habían tirado al suelo.

• Muchas empresas desechan hacer inversiones en sostenibilidad porque creen que tiene un alto coste y no genera grandes beneficios ¿Qué le dirían a dichos establecimientos? ¿Es rentable a corto, medio y largo plazo esta clase de gestión?

Rentable va a ser siempre. Económicamente va a costar al principio, siempre va a ser más barata una botella de plástico, que una de cartón biodegradable con tapón hecho con fécula de trigo. Esto a final de año tiene un coste, pero ¿y la imagen que das?, ¿y la cara del huésped cuando ve que directamente le estás dando algo que es sostenible?

El cliente está cansado de las fotos de piscinas o solárium, ahora piden sostenibilidad. Nos gastamos mucho dinero en vender lo que ya venden los demás, sin tener en cuenta que la sostenibilidad no es una moda. O hacemos algo por lo que nos rodea o nos quedaremos sin nada.

En la época boyante miramos para dentro y nos frotamos los dedos, no invertimos en aeropuertos más sostenibles, en carreteras más sostenibles, no hicimos una política de movilidad sostenible, no nos preocupamos por mantener las playas con contenedores para reciclar y ahora nos echamos las manos a la cabeza con la cantidad de plástico que hay y con el problema de las carreteras.

En GF Hoteles trabajamos en sostenibilidad y vamos a foros a convencer y a extender el mensaje. Nos gustaría que todo lo que se hace en el sector tuviese más difusión.

• ¿Qué les llevó a tomar la decisión de convertir GF Victoria en un hotel 90% sostenible y realizar un proyecto tan ambicioso sin precedentes en Canarias? ¿Cuál es su fin? ¿Cuáles fueron las mayores dificultades tanto en la idea como en la construcción del proyecto?

El hotel GF Victoria tiene una historia muy bonita y muy trágica a la vez. En el año 2002 ya teníamos un proyecto para un hotel familiar, nada parecido a lo que tenemos ahora, pero familiar.

En el 2008 íbamos a empezar la obra, nos encontramos con la crisis y tuvimos que parar el proyecto. Pero nos vino estupendamente porque ahí, del 2008 al 2015 que empezó la obra, nos dio tiempo a darle una vuelta completa al proyecto y fue cuando nos planteamos hacer un hotel sostenible, empezando por los materiales.

Cuando empezamos la gente nos llamaba locos porque decían que un hotel de 5 estrellas gran lujo destinado a familias no iba a funcionar. Sin embargo, la política de ahorro está cambiando y ahora la gente también quiere disfrutar en un sitio donde pueda estar junto a sus hijos y la vez asegurarse un momento de descanso para leer o sentarse en una hamaca. Siempre imaginé un hotel familiar donde las habitaciones tuvieran dos baños, donde los desayunos fueran largos y tranquilos gracias a un mini-club, etc. Acumulamos todas esas ideas y las plasmamos en el proyecto.

• ¿Consideran que los clientes que eligen GF Hoteles, conocen con anterioridad la orientación hacia la sostenibilidad de sus hoteles? ¿O es un valor añadido con el que se encuentran una vez en el hotel?

En el caso de GF Hoteles los huéspedes vienen de fuera y es complicado trasladarles nuestra política. Sin embargo, creo que en general se nos reconoce como una empresa socialmente responsable, que cuida del medioambiente y de sus compañeros. En las encuestas de calidad la puntuación de amabilidad de nuestro personal siempre es alta y esto nos ha hecho ser reconocidos entre los clientes y el resto de las empresas. Tenemos el valor de no engañar nunca, no mentir y menos si es para ganar, porque lo que ganas hoy lo pierdes mañana. Me gusta pensar que a nuestros trabajadores les gusta trabajar con nosotros y a nuestros clientes disfrutar con nosotros.

• ¿La sostenibilidad dentro de la empresa es una estrategia de diferenciación o para atraer nuevos segmentos?

En GF Hoteles no la vemos como estrategia. A lo mejor no le sacamos provecho, pero es una estrategia personal, para nosotros. Si nos ayuda a que nos elijan, genial, pero lo hacemos por conciencia. Que sepamos, somos la única empresa hotelera canaria que está adherida al Pacto Mundial. La adhesión es complicada, son muchos requisitos y hay que cumplirlos todos en la terminología que ellos marcan.