

## Dress to Express

### Gran Canaria Carnival experience beyond the "tourist gaze"



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## **Introduction**

Gran Canaria is a small island, located in the Eastern Atlantic, around 1500 km to the south of Gibraltar. Although, it is officially part of the Kingdom of Spain and the government of Canary islands, the island's culture is a delightful blend of Canary, Spanish, Moorish, Latin-American and South American influences. It is one of the most famous touristic destinations because of its unique nature and moderate climate, food and natural cosmetics. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the island started to expand as a festival tourism destination during the Carnival in February and March.

The word "carnival" might have Latin origins and comes from "carnem" and "levare" which means to leave off meat (Roberts 321). It is celebrated usually before and during the Easter fasting season. Carnivals in Gran Canaria are very spectacular and attractive not only for local people but also for foreign tourists. Every municipality chooses its Carnival narrative and organizes two types of festive events: the street parades where everybody is allowed to participate. The second type consists of staged events where different artists compete with specially prepared performances. Examples for such events are Queen of the Carnival, Drag Queen, *murga* and *comparsa* shows.

As previously mentioned, Carnival street events and performances can be fascinating and entertaining for local and international audience. It is interesting to find out about the touristic perspective in those events in order to make them more attractive in the future. Tourists are very often regarded as passive observers, who are looking for pleasurable experiences, distant, ignorant for deeper meanings and contexts of celebrations. Thus, Urry and Larsen introduce the term "tourist gaze": the way tourists look at a new place "through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and

education"(2). They agree with MacCannell that "the notion of gaze is too static and passive and ignores performance and adventure" (qtd. in Urry and Larsen 190). Although "tourist gaze" has a certain reputation, there is no universal truth how tourists consider new places because they do not come from the same background. Yet, in many situations, tourists can have similar gaze interpretations and emotional experiences to their fellow companions.

Nevertheless, there is something that may go beyond the individual and the collective and remains "unseen and unsaid" like a second gaze (190). What remains uncovered by the perspective of the tourist gaze might be the tourist perceptions and interpretations which are dependent on their experiences. In that sense, festival events "possess an integral capacity to transfix the tourist eye" because they can convert into a multi-sensory experience where the senses intertwine with the emotions that rise from watching and participating in the events. Masks, costumes, music, dancing, eating and drinking, games and ritual performances could represent Canary culture "through exhibition and bodily expression"(Picard and Robinson 18). Therefore, they can be effectively absorbed into the flow of the performance and can probably perceive universal meanings. Considering this, they might have their individual experiences that do not conform with the notion of the "tourist gaze".

According to Picard and Robinson (12-13), many tourists are looking for genuineness in traditions displayed into such events. One reason for that could be because festive traditions can offer a glimpse into "behaviour stripped from social and political frameworks". Secondly, tourists can also have an entertaining experience through performance as a way of gaining knowledge and pleasure. For Reisinger and Steiner, authenticity is "appreciation of what appears, as a gift of being, learning from it, using it, working with it, rather than obsessing over what is withheld of what is different each time...."(qtd. in Knudsen and Waade 10). Handler and Saxton define an

authentic tourism experience as "one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with the "real" world and with their "real" selves (qtd. in Wang 351). Thus, it is important to consider that authenticity might relate both to toured objects and to experiences, appreciating the world as it is. Wang (352) accepts both the material and non-material aspects of that state, thus she introduces the inner human feeling of "existential authenticity":

Existential authenticity refers to a potential existential state of Being that is to be activated by tourist activities. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are to achieve this activated existential state of Being within the liminal process of tourism. Existential authenticity can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects.

Although existential authenticity is related more to emotional experiences than to material objects it is interesting to explore if it can be provoked by Carnival performances. According to Bakhtin (7-8), Carnivals can offer experiences that can be related to existential authenticity: "During carnival time, life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part."

Furthermore, when on holiday, tourists are free from the daily constraints and are in a state of relaxation and enjoyment (Wang 352). In a non-working environment, they have a degree of choice to do certain pleasurable activities and sometimes excessive indulgences to escape from their restrained daily life. Thus, in the context of Carnival, tourists might be free from social restraints and this would allow them to be more open to new experiences. In addition, foreign tourists might also be invited to participate in an established space for entertainment where they can choose a role to play. According to some scholars, tourists not only observe but also identify

themselves as performers. Carnival can be a celebration that people *do*, not just watch: "The gaze and performance should dance together, rather than stare at each other at distance" (Urry and Larsen 189). In this thesis, the tourist Carnival experience in Gran Canaria is examined through research during Las Palmas Carnival. In addition, examples from Carnivals in Agüimes and Maspalomas are also used because they offer further insights and interpretations about Gran Canaria Carnival culture.

The main research question creates the framework of this thesis: "How does the Gran Canaria Carnival experience of contemporary foreign tourists in Gran Canaria relate to the tourist Carnival experience represented in tourism advertisements, newspaper articles and online news articles about Gran Canaria Carnivals?" This question is split into two sub-questions. The first one is: "What is the Carnival experience of contemporary foreign tourists in Gran Canaria?". The primary source material for the first sub-question will be the answers of questionnaires, distributed to tourists and recorded interviews during Las Palmas Carnival 2018. For the second question, "How is the tourist Carnival experience represented in tourism advertisements, newspaper articles and online news articles about Gran Canaria Carnivals?", I will analyze tourism related Carnival brochures, newspapers, information websites and guidebooks about tourism experience in Gran Canaria Carnivals which can be related to Las Palmas Carnival.

In the first chapter, I will introduce different theories to shape the Gran Canaria Carnival experience, analysing common features of Carnivals around the world and in Gran Canaria. By doing this, I will offer an academic vision of the tourist experience in Carnival. In the second chapter, I will interpret questionnaires and recorded interviews with tourists to understand the real tourist experience. Finally, in the third chapter, I will try to discover the media

representation and influence on the tourist Carnival experience through tourism oriented Carnival brochures, posters, newspaper and online articles, blogs and guidebooks.

I will use approaches of discourse analysis to interpret the answers of the interviewed tourists. "Discourse" in this thesis is used as "a process or practice of contextualizing texts, language in use, the situated production of speech acts or a turn-taking practice." (Angermuller and Maingueneau 2). Discourse theory unites power, knowledge and subjectivity, hence symbolic and cultural orders, society and gender roles are formulated through discursive practises. Thus, through discourse, people are not only represented but also united within their social roles. The revelations in this thesis were present during Gran Canaria Carnivals in 2018 and should be regarded as changeable. I hope this thesis will offer interesting interpretations and new possibilities for improvement of the Carnival narrative.

## **Chapter 1: The Academic Recognition of Carnivals**

Carnivals caught the attention to many famous people in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century worldwide: the vibrancy of the Roman Carnival attracted writers such as Goethe and Stendhal; Thomas Gray and Byron observed the lively "pre-Lent Carnevale" in Venice; Mark Twain critically observed the Mardi Gras festival in New Orleans (Picard and Robinson 1). Considering those examples, Carnivals have been considered as interesting touristic events among the higher classes since four centuries. Thus, research into tourism experience in carnivals might be valuable for improving their narratives and attracting tourists who seek those narratives.

To understand better the tourist experience, I would like to show the scholarly significance of Carnivals. This theory will help to understand better the meanings of Carnival images which will help to interpret the tourists' perceptions in the second chapter. I would like to prove that not only is Carnival an entertaining and enjoyable experience but it is also valuable as an artistic and a cultural event. Furthermore, it can also reflect all aspects of life and provoke memorable emotional experiences.

Firstly, I am going to introduce different hypotheses about the origins of carnivals in general by using the theories of academically recognized authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Mircea Eliade. In addition, I will use the theories of Stuart Rockefeller to draw the difference between festivals and carnivals. Waldemar Cudny and Picard and Robinson give useful ideas to discover their interconnections. This would be helpful to have initial insights about possible narratives in Las Palmas Carnival. Furthermore, I will also explain different images and symbols that could be seen in carnival costumes and decorations that are also existent in Las Palmas Carnival using the theories of Eliade and Mathieu. Finally, I will analyze how those theories and

symbols apply in Las Palmas Carnival. López and Quintana explain hypotheses about the different origins of Gran Canaria carnivals.

### **1.1. A carnival and a festival**

The roots of fiestas and festivals could be traced back from pagan rituals to major monotheistic religions, such as Christianity. The cultural processes described above include the development of festivals: "They have always been a major component of human culture, being connected with religious beliefs, from primitive ones (e.g. animism, shamanism, totemism) to the religions currently dominating the world (e.g. Christian religious festivals). Festivals are a part of the non-material culture, as they present art, customs and cultural symbolism" (Cudny 21). Yet, they can be very interesting for tourists who would like to understand the backgrounds of certain beliefs and perceptions that could have formulated the structure of certain rituals and traditions.

Festive events are an essential part of human culture that have various meanings and narratives. Rockefeller (122) differentiates between a fiesta, festival and a carnival: a fiesta is a community celebration, where people sing and dance and can be often related to religious beliefs. Festivals incorporate the most significant elements of the fiestas which are performed in front of an audience. They can have not only religious value but also as a channel of presentation and preservation of art and folklore traditions. In this sense, the local culture is represented by music, dance, clothes and its value comes from the audience appreciation (133). Furthermore, festivals can become vehicles for teaching because they convey a message, related to their narrative, for instance traditional art practices (123).

On the contrary, Carnivals might include the specifics of festivals but the differences between audience and performers are not visible: "Carnival is not something you watch, it is

something you do, and to the extent you watch it, you know that you are being watched as well." (Rockefeller 141). In this sense, Rockefeller agrees with Bakhtin, claiming that "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (Bakhtin 7-8). As a result, it creates equality within a community and can incorporate more social groups. Gran Canaria carnivals are interesting examples because they also incorporate staged "festival " elements into their narratives.

## **1.2. Ancient influences**

Some characteristics of modern carnivals are similar to the Roman pagan celebrations of Saturnalia. It is important to analyze them because some characteristics of ancient Carnivals share similarities with the modern ones. According to the Romanian anthropologist Mircea Eliade, Carnival is an illustration of the life cycle and the contrast between chaos and order (398). According to Eliade's analysis, rebirth and radical reverse of standards is visible in the abolition of all norms and overturning of values in some of the rituals in the Saturnalia (68). Some of those rituals can be also symbolical illustrations of end and death. Thus, not all Carnival rituals are necessarily related to joy and excitement, they can also re-enact negative and difficult aspects of life. Consequently, Carnival can become a reflection of life with all its positive and negative aspects.

One example of a ritual representing a final stage is the burning of an object at the end of Carnival. This act represents "the end of existing forms in order to make room for the birth of a new form, issuing from a new Creation (Eliade 69). In Gran Canaria, it is common to burn a papier- mâché fish at a burlesque performance in front of the grieved audience. Some of the spectators are dressed in black and represent weeping widows. This not only illustrates the end of

Carnival but also symbolises the purification of the old form and its preparation for a new beginning. Furthermore, it is an illustration of the co-existence of positive and negative aspects of the temporary nature of life events. Considering those interpretation, this ritual can be interesting for tourists who would like to know about the meanings of ancient rituals and the cultural significance of Carnival.

Eliade's interpretations lead to the conclusion that Carnival is *lived* and *experienced* in a continuous form: even the concept of time does not exist, there is no past, present or future (69). Thus, he agrees with Bakhtin about Carnival as the universal infinite present (Bakhtin 19-22). Therefore, Carnival is a confirmation of life itself with all its changes. As a result, it also confirms that authority and truth are not static and are always subjected to change. This might be a reason, Carnival to become a culturally important event: the changes it provokes might strongly affect contemporary societies.

As everybody can choose their identity independently of rules and social conventions, Bakhtin claims that abolishing of hierarchy is a regression to a mythical period of Chaos (197). When Christianity was established as a dominant religion in Europe, the Church authorities decided that it would be celebrated before the beginning of the forty day period of pre-Easter fasting, during a short time when some taboo practices would be allowed. For some people this would be the only time when they could celebrate freely which might be an explanation of the frenetic nature of contemporary Carnivals (106). Throughout history, Carnivals have been reformulating social structures but at the same time preserving social continuity and traditional structures of power through codified symbols and rituals (Picard and Robinson 6). Thus, interpretation of carnivals can be very nuanced and this makes them a very interesting topic for cultural and anthropological research. It is possible that carnivals attract tourists who would like

to participate, while adopting a different identity and observing new reflections and interpretations of cyclical life events.

### **1.3. Carnival masks and symbols**

In order to understand Carnival meanings, it is important to consider the images and costumes that appear there. According to Clemence Mathieu, Carnival costumes and masks can have symbolical meanings, representing visible or invisible entities. A mask is a special art form: it can show a person's affiliations transform or enhance someone's identity (Mathieu 1). Thus, Carnival masks and costumes might be valuable for attracting tourists in Gran Canaria Carnivals because they can adopt temporary identities and anonymity to entertain themselves in a different manner.

There are a variety of images that can be seen in Carnivals around the world. Some of them could be noticed through the masks, costumes and decorations and have universal meanings. To start with, images of food can be noticed in many Carnival celebrations as part of the costumes and decorations. For instance, during Las Palmas Carnival in 2018, there were people, disguised as cheese and potatoes. As eating together symbolizes the result of a labour process and is also a social event, and its presence in Carnivals is therefore understandable (Bakhtin 281).

Secondly, people usually dress to reveal certain body parts or make costumes and decorations that exaggerate the body and its functions in an aesthetic or grotesque manner. For instance, illustrations of reproductive organs, sex and giving birth are quite common during Gran Canaria Carnival. For instance, during Las Palmas Carnival in 2018, Drag Grimassira Maeva performed like a pregnant woman at the Drag Queen contest. Bakhtin claims that the human body

is a representation of revival and procreation as during the Carnival, the world itself has been revived and regenerated. Therefore, the body itself becomes a representation of the life cycle itself” (317). Thus, carnivals can be entertaining for tourists because they carry symbolical meanings and reflect on universal truths through carnival images, costumes and decorations. As a result, carnival costumes and decorations can alter identities and be a channel of creative expression.

#### **1.4. Origins of Gran Canaria Carnivals**

It is interesting to know more about the origins of the event particularly in Gran Canaria. It could be logical to think that Carnival traditions were transmitted by the Spanish and Portuguese who also colonized South America. Carnival might be celebrated since the first European people departed on the islands (Peña 1:41). López and Quintana claim that the first masked ballroom dance event on the island was introduced by Bertolome Cairrasco de Figueroa who spent his childhood in Italy. The dances became an inseparable part of the Carnival. Considering this, it could be assumed that Gran Canaria Carnivals are also influenced by Italian carnivals (48).

By the end of nineteenth century, Carnival had already become a special celebration on the island because it offered an opportunity for group entertainment in "festive camaraderie". Carnivalers and dancing groups (comparsas) were visiting homes" to dance and have refreshments offered there." As a result, it strengthened the trust and connectivity in local communities and became a valuable entertaining event which might carry similar meanings to tourists (López and Quintana 49).

Carnival in Gran Canaria is considered to be the most important event during the year. The spectacular performances are prepared all year long with the purpose of entertainment and diversity. Considering the analysis of the historical origins, the event might be very valuable to tourists who are looking for cultural experience.

### **1.5. Specific elements of Las Palmas Carnival**

This part aims to give general information about the different events during Gran Canaria carnivals. In 2018, the theme in Las Palmas, was "Magic and Fantastic Creatures". Many of the scenic performances were designed in accordance with this theme. The most important staged performances every year are Carnival Queen, Drag Queen, *murga* and *comparsa* contests and they attract significant amount of local and international visitors. Some of those staged events could be seen in other Carnivals on the island but with different themes, contexts and variations. Considering Rockefeller's theory, Las Palmas Carnival is different than other Carnivals because it has also an essential festival part (122).

One of the most important elements is the Carnival Queen who physically represents the Carnival (López and Quintana 132). The election ceremonies of Carnival Queen are very opulent: every candidate makes a unique performance inside a specially designed decorum construction. The performances are similar because they specially designed to fit inside the decorum construction but are highly variable in terms of style, costumes and music (see video "Gala de elección de la Reina"). However, there is not enough information about the reasons performances are made in this particular manner which might be very interesting for tourists.

The Drag Queen contests are considered to be the peak of all the performances because of their flamboyance. Drag queens are actors who use feminine qualities to create an imaginative

persona and make a spectacular theatrical performance on very high platform heels. The shows are usually very extravagant, provocative and sometimes grotesque (see video "Gala Drag Queen | Las Palmas GC 2018"). In addition, drag queens can have not only an aesthetic value but can also address gender stereotypes. Referring to Eliade, a drag queen is a representation of unity and completeness: "Male and female sex in the same body become an ideal holistic entity" (Eliade 81-82).

An essential contribution to the performances are the *murga* and *comparsa* competitions. The *murgas* are groups of singers whose songs are usually aim to mock at fellow townspeople, society conventions and politicians. They are probably influenced by the performers of the Carnival of Cádiz (López and Quintana 145). The *comparsas* are dancing groups that are inspired from Brazilian samba schools and other Carnivals in South America (173).

The most participative Las Palmas Carnival element is the parade where all performers, local people and tourists celebrate in the streets. In this thesis, "parade" refers to the "Gran Cabalgata" and not to the smaller parades during the Carnival period. Many visitors consider it the most significant event because of the variety of costumes and decorations they see. In addition, the fact that everyone is allowed to participate makes the event more popular among tourists because it offers them opportunity to have a dynamic Carnival experience.

The Carnival ends with a farce funeral procession, which symbolizes the end of Carnival indulgencies. Participants are dressed in black and a very common costume is that of a mourning widow. A model of a papier-mâché fish is erected and burnt in a spectacular firework show. This part of Carnival illustrates the universal moments of sorrow and gloom. Yet, the burlesque

character of the performance reminds of the temporary nature of those moments and confirms the circular movement of positively and negatively charged moments in life.

Considering the information from the first chapter, Gran Canaria Carnivals have some universal elements from different Carnivals around the world. However, Las Palmas Carnival has both a festival part, illustrated through the staged events, and a Carnival part, through the parade. Many tourists observe and participate in the parades but it is possible that not many tourists visit, observe and perceive the staged events.

In the second chapter, I will analyze the tourist experience in the parade and stage events through questionnaires and recorded interviews. I will try to establish a viewpoint about the most common reasons to visit Las Palmas Carnival and the relation between the real experiences and the aforementioned theories.

## **Chapter 2: Real Tourist Experiences in Las Palmas Carnival**

I would like to dedicate this chapter on the analysis the Carnival experience of contemporary foreign tourists in Gran Canaria. This can give further insights about the significance of the tourism experience during Carnival. Firstly, I will introduce relevant theory regarding tourists' Carnival experiences. The theories of Urry and Larsen and López and Quintana will be especially useful in analysing the role of tourists during Las Palmas Carnival.

Secondly, I will analyze the results of the questionnaires and interviews with visitors to the Carnival in Las Palmas. The results show the reasons people visit the Carnival of Gran Canaria and its significance for them. In addition, I will include the opinion of the Creative Director of Carnival, Israel Reyes about the origins of the event, different influences and its relation to Canary folklore. This is important as it provides further insight on the experience of tourists when attending this event; what they see and what their expectations are.

Wickens (847) differentiates between a profane and a sacred social role. Firstly, the profane role is supposed to be obligatory, imposed by society and is formal. Secondly, the sacred role shows the tourist in a relaxed environment and is related to personal matters and relationships. That role relates to the Authentic Self, shows the person as spontaneous and what he or she truly wishes to be. One possibility for tourists to experience their real Self is through existential authenticity, to fulfil their sacred role, which is very different for every person.

In order to understand the Carnival experience of contemporary foreign tourists in Gran Canaria, it is necessary to analyze the profane role of tourists during festivals. They are often regarded as observers, who are spectators at performance events. In some situations, tourists might be considered as passive outsiders, who are looking for pleasurable experiences (Urry and

Larsen 190). According to Juan Naranjo, at first the tourist experience included only sun and beach, and Carnival was not considered a part of it: "tourists were shown only the painting of our customs". There was a need of cultural activities that not only would show Canary customs but also open acts of co-existence between tourists and local people (López and Quintana 209).

In general, the Carnival in Gran Canaria has become a valuable event of touristic interest and some residence would like to share it: "what I would like is for the customs to be kept for the tourists who visit us, and so that our young people and future generations can have references of the past and of our socio-cultural and ethnographic patrimony" (López and Quintana 51). This opinion could be interpreted as an invitation to tourists to enjoy, participate and spread the tradition of Gran Canaria Carnival, not just to observe it. As a consequence, they may become a channel of cultural change and keep the traditions alive.

Gradually, local participation and expression became crucial and the more it was appreciated, the more attractive the event was to tourists: "it will be established as a show for the tourist visiting us and as a diversion and popular way of expression of our inhabitants" (51). Yet, tourists are considered as spectators of an enactment and not really participating in it. The artistic expression is something that inhabitants perform but it is not clear if they would like to share it with tourists in a more interactive way, so that it can be preserved.

There is an attempt for sharing in the Carnival in Maspalomas: there is a part of it called "Tourist Carnival" which is entirely dedicated to promoting tourism. López and Quintana, call them "open acts at which the coexistence could become the best instrument for the tourist to know [local people] better" (López and Quintana 209). For instance, there is a special comical tradition of rescuing the sardine from the ocean in front of an audience of tourists at the beach,

which has become the identity of Maspalomas Carnival. Then the tourists receive carnations with small notes "Maspalomas is your home"(109). On the one hand, this makes Maspalomas Carnival different than all Carnivals on the island because it has events, which are dedicated especially for tourists. On the other hand, tourists still act as observers to re-enactments and are not integrated in as participants in the Carnival.

Furthermore, there is a special Maspalomas Carnival part, called the Tourists' Carnival when visitors are invited to participate in the celebrations. One example of such event is the Tourist Carnival Queen, which is chosen among the foreign female contestants (211-212). This again confirms the difference between audience and performers but in this situation the local people observe and the tourists perform. In addition, it implies the existence of mutual gaze between hosts and guests which is a production of their interaction (Canziani and Francioni 19). As a result, the roles are changed but still there is no mutual interrelation and engagement between them. Yet, those attempts to engage tourists show that in some places Carnival narratives have been developing towards attracting international audience. In order to understand the tourist experience in Las Palmas Carnival, it is important to analyse the answers from the questionnaires.

## **2.1. Research Methodology**

With this part, I would like to show the reasons tourists visit Gran Canaria Carnival, the most significant events, costumes and images they remember and the meaning they carry for tourists. This might also give some insights about the relation between Carnival and the local customs and traditions. In order to answer the first sub-question "What is the Carnival experience of contemporary foreign tourists in Gran Canaria?", I distributed 33 questionnaires to English,

Spanish, Dutch and German speaking visitors during Las Palmas Carnival in February 2018 at places of large touristic interest during the days after significant Carnival events. In addition, I made recorded interviews with shorter versions of the questions when tourists were not able to stay enough time to fill in the questionnaires. This can be also beneficial because it gives spontaneous feedback about the actual tourist experience. In this section, I will use not only the results of my fieldwork but also examples from Carnivals in Agüimes and Maspalomas that can be beneficial for the final conclusions. As a result, I will create initial impression about the most common tourism experiences during Las Palmas Carnival.

## **2.2. Expectations**

Several people were asked about their expectations about Las Palmas Carnival because this could give useful insights about tourists' knowledge about Gran Canaria Carnivals and its reflection on the questionnaire results. This information is useful because many people might have learned about the Carnival from the media and this reflection is analysed in the third chapter.

Some people expected Carnival to be a highly participative event where everybody is allowed to join, which can be related more to the parade: "I expect lots of costumes, both children and grown-ups in the streets, watching the Carnival and people (...) dancing and enjoying themselves." and other people imagined it to be "fun" and "colourful". Considering this, for some tourists, Carnival is an entertaining experience without any further meaning attached to it. Yet, watching costumes and people dancing could be also related to artistic expression which might also be a source of entertainment.

However, for some tourists the parade might not be enough for having a full impression about the carnival: " We just saw the parade, we came here last night, we were supposing that something was happening but it was not, we thought it was [going to begin] at seven o'clock, but there was nothing." Considering this answer, some tourists probably expected to observe specific scheduled events, which means they would like to see something different than in their home country. Some of the tourists said they did not come to Las Palmas for the Carnival, assuming that it is very similar to this in their home countries. Consequently, the staged events can be one of the most impressive parts of Carnival and the tourist experience might not be fully completed without them.

On the other hand, the presuppositions that Carnival might be entertaining and interesting, provoked a tourist to change his or her plans and to visit the events:" (...)I didn't plan to go but I learnt while we were travelling to Las Palmas today that this was Carnival day so I thought that (...) it could be quite an exciting experience, [it] might be a good thing just to stay here and to have a look." Another tourist also confirmed that Carnival was very important: "(...) I just understand that this is a big day in this country, in this town, and all the shops are closed so people are resting to be really excited about the Carnival in the afternoon ."

Those answers show that some tourists considered the event as entertaining but they did not specify in a what way. There were also tourists who might have expected something extraordinary that would show them the unknown side of Carnival. Others already knew there was Carnival and its importance on a national level, so they made room for it in their schedule. Considering all these answers, Carnival is a very attractive and entertaining event for tourists, albeit for different reasons. These shall now be further examined through discussing the questionnaires' results.

### 2.3. Questionnaire and results

The questionnaire aims to offer several reasons for tourists to visit Carnival and might give insights for future improvement. The first section provides a number of categories (Culture, Education, Togetherness, Creative expression and Entertainment) that could be one's motivation for attending Carnival. Respondents are also asked to elaborate in the comments section under the categories they choose. The second section is to give more details about the reasons for choosing a particular Carnival event and images seen there. The tourists are asked three open questions about the reasons they chose to visit Las Palmas Carnival, the most significant moment for them and memorable masks and costumes they have seen. No one of the interviewed tourists has visited Carnivals in Agüimes and Maspalomas. The quantitative results include only the answers from the questionnaire.

#### Questionnaire on the tourist experience in Gran Canaria Carnival in 2018

##### Radboud University, Nijmegen

What are your reasons of going to Carnival? Could you add your comments?

- Culture

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- Education

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- Togetherness

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- Creative expression

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- Entertainment

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Why did you choose to visit this Carnival event in particular?

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What is the most significant moment of Carnival for you and why?

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What Carnival masks or costumes do you remember? What do those images mean to you?

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Thank you for your participation!

| Reasons for visiting Carnival | Interviewed people | Number of answers |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Culture                       | 27.3%              | 9                 |
| Education                     | 0%                 | 0                 |
| Togetherness                  | 45.5%              | 15                |
| Entertainment                 | 39.4%              | 13                |
| Creative expression           | 27.3%              | 9                 |

### *Culture*

Culture in this context is a set of images that is considered a representation of a certain nation, in this case specifically the culture of Gran Canaria. I will use the definition of Kruber and Kluckhohn (2), compiled by Helen Spenser-Oatey:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups,

including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.

It could be considered that some universal symbols of Bakhtin's and Eliade's theories about Carnival culture are also relevant about Las Palmas Carnival. Nevertheless, the Carnival representations might also belong to a native Gran Canaria folklore and traditions, the visibility of which is examined through recorded interviews. In addition, the international and intergenerational influences are also taken into account.

In the section "reasons for going to Carnival", 9 from 33 participants (27.3%), considered culture as an element of Carnival. The results show that culture is important but not the first element that comes to mind. Some of the answers were that Carnival is a "vital" and "integral" part of Gran Canaria culture. One interviewee highly appreciated it as a symbol of Canary traditions:

The Carnival from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is one of the oldest in the island's capital, and the perfect place for me to find seniors, who would like to share their Carnival experience with me. Nowadays, the festival is a true popular phenomenon and it's one of the main tourist attractions. For me, the Carnival is not just a fashion show, it is culture and tradition in their purest form (...)

For this person, Carnival carries a lot of meaningful representations of Gran Canaria culture. In addition, he or she was the only interviewee who tried to find out valuable information about past Carnival experiences. Considering this answer, this person would like to know Gran Canaria Carnival culture but he/she did not mention participation and integration in the host culture. This is an example of cultural experience that can be more intrusive: a desire to know,

observe, consume Carnival traditions and experiences without participating in them (Boissevain 255). However, Urry and Larsen (2006) and other scholars suggest that the act of consumption is also an act of production, re-interpreting, reflecting and representing. Thus, culture is not static and it is constantly developing and expanding.

Nevertheless, it can be considered that Carnival traditions represent the culture of Gran Canaria, and just sharing them might be the first step towards their recognition. One excellent example is a trilogy selection of Agüimes Carnival memories and traditions, containing celebration customs, Carnival history and interviews with local senior citizens who share their Carnival stories (Tradición Oral III). As a result, Gran Canaria Carnival culture has been preserved and it can be also shared in a national and an intergenerational level.

It is interesting to find out if tourists know about the existence of Gran Canaria folklore and traditions within the Carnival. The recorded interviews aim to give initial insights about the tourists' awareness about Gran Canaria traditions. Bakhtin (220) confirms that Carnival can use images and symbols related to folklore traditions or it can also absorb the folklore meanings to such an extent that they are no longer visible. Thus, Las Palmas Carnival might be also a representation of Gran Canaria folklore and traditions or it can make them unrecognisable.

For some tourists, Gran Canaria traditions are part of the tourists' expectations but they are combined with creativity and entertainment. Two people mentioned Carnival dresses as a "traditional part of Carnival: "I think I am going to see girls with funny and very traditional dresses.", "we know that a lot of people today wear Carnival dresses". Although the interviewees did not give any details about the dresses, their expectations mean that they consider the

existence of Gran Canaria traditions, which might be represented by the clothes. Yet, this does not mean that tourists can recognize traditional Gran Canaria folklore and clothes.

Apparently, there is a part of Carnival in Las Palmas, which is called "Traditional Carnival" where the participants are dressed in white and throw talcum powder in the air. According to López and Quintana, this tradition is one of the characteristics of the Carnivals in La Palma (one of the Canary islands) and it is an aesthetic commemoration of the Canary immigrants who returned home with considerable fortune after working in America. (López and Quintana 74-75). No one of the interviewed tourists knew about the origins and meaning of this tradition but some of them regarded the white costumes and talcum as a changed identity: "Because people want to show they are different person with mask and clothes."

Other tourists could not perceive the presence of Gran Canaria folklore at all: "It depends on what this is. I don't know what I am seeing." As no one of the interviewed tourists was able to recognise Gran Canaria folklore and traditions in Las Palmas Carnival, it could be assumed that tourists are not informed about it or it is very difficult to be distinguished. Those examples confirm Bakhtin's theory that Carnival might diminish the significance of folklore traditions. Considering this, the place of Gran Canaria folkloric elements within the framework of Las Palmas Carnival is not clearly defined and is hardly recognisable.

On the other hand, some tourists speculated about the relation about Las Palmas Carnival and South American Carnivals. One tourist categorised it as a "Latino" Carnival: "Catholic Carnival, focused on Carnival traditions" but did not compare it to any famous South American Carnival. Another tourist assumed that Las Palmas Carnival was different than South American Carnivals but did not know the reasons: "I hear, the way they celebrate is more different than

South America." Considering those answers, many tourists are not aware neither of the presence of any Gran Canaria traditions but there are some speculations about possible international influences. It is true that some scholars have already discovered the origins of some of the performances. In the end of this chapter, this problem would be further examined through an interview with a specialist in the Las Palmas Carnival narrative.

### *Education*

Surprisingly, no one of the participants chose it as a reason to visit Carnival. It is possible that speculations about the origins of Gran Canaria Carnival traditions and its cultural significance can be an attractive topic for academic research or simply an interesting enough to provoke curiosity. For instance, some tourists might like to know about the relation between Gran Canaria history to its Carnival traditions. Furthermore, this can give some valuable insights about the impact of Carnival on generational and community level. In addition, Gran Canaria Carnival might be a valuable topic for tourists who would like to know more about the arts and folklore on the island. Through the analysis of the results, it could be assumed that the educational value of Las Palmas Carnival is not yet discovered, which is not surprising because the topic is relatively under researched. It could be assumed that tourists are also not aware about the educational significance of Gran Canaria Carnivals. This topic will be tackled in the third chapter, which will give more information on the knowledge tourists have from media. Probably there are significant amount of meanings, origins and interpretations of the celebrations, which are yet to be discovered and some possibilities will be discussed in the recommendation part.

### *Togetherness*

Togetherness is included as a reason because it is interesting to know how tourists experience Carnival as a part of their group and in relation with the other tourists and the local community. Generally, it is very common both for tourists and local people to stay in a group during the Carnival celebrations. Turner (1-2) refers to the togetherness as "communitas": an emotion felt by a group of people when their experience takes a full meaning. This experience is usually pleasant and comes from the act of sharing emotions with one's fellows. Thus, a mutual Carnival experience might be considered as a multiplication of different personal experiences.

Thus, it might be considered that togetherness or communitas could be a reflection of the experiences of every participant: "(...)seeing the people as multiple versions of 'each other,'( ...)" (Turner 23). Thus, tourists play important part within the merits of Carnival and together form the tourist Carnival experience which can be reflected through the "tourist gaze" or a "second gaze" beyond it. As a result, if "second gaze" communitas occurs within a group of tourists, it may become significant enough to create an impact.

However, in some cases, tourists might intermingle with local people and form a mutual "communitas" experience with them: "I saw it is alive, all the people, who live here and also tourists feel it", "we feel invited and included", referring to both parades and staged performances. Many interviewees mentioned they liked Carnival parade because it was accessible to everyone and the "Carnival spirit" could be felt. Thus, group experiences in Las Palmas Carnival can be participative, dynamic and engaging when tourists and local people are included in a mutual "communitas", which embraces both collective parades and staged events to form "the Carnival spirit".

Thus, it is not surprising that the highest amount of people have chosen togetherness as the reason to celebrate carnival: 15 out of 33 (45.5%). Equality and freedom of participation were given a special importance: "mix of people of every age and nationality", "Carnival is for everyone, everyone participates, fat, tall and small", "families, kids, teenagers, older people participate". This confirms Bakhtin's theory about Carnival as a representation of the initial state of Chaos, when all the hierarchies are abolished, thus identity can be chosen. Togetherness with other people, non-dependent of their appearance or social status could be the most powerful reason of visiting Carnival because it unites people and allows them to express themselves and be accepted as they are.

However, the fact that togetherness has the highest results could mean that it is common to visit Carnival "en masse", observe it and consume it without reflection. Considering the existence of "tourist gaze", it may offer opportunities to see beyond and offer a meaningful personal experience within the Carnival "communitas". Having this in mind, the Agüimes Carnival experiences shared in Tradición Oral III also embrace the communal "Carnival spirit" in an "unity between residents"(57), to become "all one family" (38). On the other hand, there is an important detail to consider: many residents prepared their disguises in groups with the initial idea to hide their identity. During the street celebrations, they tried to recognise their fellow citizens in a festive and playful manner of communication. As a result, every participant adds his or her own contribution to form the mutual "communitas" and the "en masse" effect can be avoided.

*Entertainment*

Considering the aforementioned group experiences, entertainment can be regarded as a crucial part of Carnival. Thirteen people (39.4%), answered that they came for "having fun", "pleasure" and "enjoyment". Wang (qtd. in Van Egmond 35) refers to a type of entertainment experience which looks for satisfaction and sensation in a "direct, crude and a primitive way" and might be provoked in situations when tourists adopt an anonymous identity and behave in a way they usually avoid in their home countries. Although excessive entertainment might be also part of the tourism Carnival experience, no one of the interviewed tourists referred to examples of such experiences in their answers. Two respondents selected "entertainment" without choosing any of the other reasons. In addition, two other people mentioned it in the recorded interviews without giving any details. Thus, the exact source of their entertainment is difficult to be defined.

For the other eleven people, entertainment was part of the experience but was either combined with the other discussed reasons or as a consequence of all of them: "pleasure, holiday with friends, photos, [we were] dressed like smurphs". For another person, artistic expression and entertainment are not separate entities but a part of one process: "The art, music and theatre are creative expressions of a culture which values these things, not just getting on a show for notoriety." Therefore, entertainment is an important factor which might also include creativity, culture and experience of togetherness in one larger entity. As a result, entertainment could be considered as a combining element of other reasons to visit Carnival.

One local person says that Carnival is a change of the normal life: it meant to do what was not allowed during the rest of the year. (Tradicion Oral III 53). Entertainment for the Carnavalers in the past was very much related to "alegría", which can be translated as "joy" but for some Spanish speakers it can have a further existential meaning beyond the moments of instant pleasure. Some of the people who shared their memories for the book claim that nowadays there

is not enough "alegría" in Carnival: "today it is for the murgas, and competitions, before it was for the local residents and it was more delightful". The Carnival was about joking, making fun when males dressed like females and vice versa, with the idea not to recognize each other (Tradición Oral III 57). Thus, entertainment might not be the primary reason people join Carnival but become a result from the personal contribution to the "Carnival spirit".

### *Creative expression*

Considering the Carnival memories from Agüimes Carnival, creative expression can form part of the communitas and mutual entertainment, especially when preparing the costumes and decorations. The possibility to express through art independently of any norms and hierarchies is part of the most important features of Carnival. The amount of people giving answers for this entity was the same number as those who chose culture. Five of them chose both culture and creative expression in their answers. A possible explanation could be that some people consider creative expression as similar to culture. On the other hand, Lewis suggests that creative expression could be distinguished from culture because it covers the work of a particular artist or artists, whereas culture is a term for the symbolical representations of a whole nation (qtd. in Smith 126). Considering this, creative expression in Gran Canaria Carnival could be a part of a larger entity of Gran Canaria culture.

Nevertheless, in this thesis, creative expression is meant to illustrate the work of Carnival artists both in professional and in social terms. Some participants directly addressed Carnival as a "very expressive form of gathering creative people", "Carnival is different, people participate more", "everything is possible" which means that creative expression covers the Carnival identity of every participant, not only the professional artists. The possibility of more people to have

active roles in Carnivals makes could generate a larger variety of creative expression. This can make it "alive" and is also part of the "communitas" which also contributes to the experience of "existential authenticity."

In addition, this also confirms Bachtin's theory of regression to the initial state of Chaos without any rules. This state could be considered as a starting point for the creation of new order. Picard and Robinson (14) summarise it as: "Creativity relates to an ability to generate symbolic adaptations and alternatives to existing states, but also a process to initiate change that could modify existing states." As a result, Carnival might have the power to change existing states, destroy old forms and to create new ones.

A possible example might be found in the Agüimes Carnival memories: people in the past used old clothes from members of their families, sheets, sacks, scarves and improvised hand-made masks to create their costumes (Tradición Oral III 14). Although it was not possible for everyone to make their own hand-made disguises, it was more important to preserve the narrative of the event: to prevent being recognised and create innuendo through adopting the role, represented by the costume (Mathieu 1). The whole process of disguising was a unique creative form that was used to ironise existing norms such as gender roles. According to the tradition, the majority of men dressed in female clothes and women were also disguised as men (Tradición Oral III 18-19).

The impact of this tradition was the creation of hilarious situations through complete change of identity: "Once a disguised mother danced with her son and he thought she is a young woman. The next day we all laughed at the poor boy."(74). This tradition has been so popular that the community decided to remember this form of creative expression through a statue. Ana Luisa

Benítez, the creator, chose the design of a man and a woman, dressed in the clothes of the opposite gender both imitating typical poses and gestures. The statue is located at a central square in Agüimes (Peña 1:16).

The creativity in making the contemporary costumes and performances might have been inherited from past Carnivals. Similarly, the drag queens are dressed in female clothes and imitate female behaviour in a comical, burlesque manner. Many tourists were astonished by the performing capabilities of the actors and described the shows as "lovely", great, "wonderful", "amazing", "fantastic", "excellent". One tourist categorised it as the most creative event he or she has seen for years. For another person, the whole cross-dressing process was a part of the culture and creative expression of the island. Thus the cultural and creative elements of Carnival are not always strictly defined and might be an integration of both staged and communal events into a holistic continuity.

#### *Combinations of categories*

Tourists are very diverse and their reasons to visit Carnival might be very complex and multi-layered: four people chose all the analysed reasons (Culture, Togetherness, Entertainment and Creative expression), thus for some visitors Carnival might be a combination of different reasons which might fluidly interconnect. For example, "[Carnival is] a vital part of Gran Canaria culture, the mix of people of every age and nationality, very expressive form of gathering creative people. It is easy to watch and [enjoy]." Therefore, it is difficult to categorise the experiences into strict groups, as it could be assumed that the listed reasons might have different meanings for the participants.

In some of the answers, culture and creative expression are in dialogue: participants might consider them as similar or always present together. For instance, creative expression of a particular artist is strongly connected to the culture of Gran Canaria, the same way as individuals belong to larger systems and categories. One reason why the biggest amount of people have chosen "togetherness" could be that it is a multiplied version of personal experiences that forms the *communitas*. Thus, if creative expression is the personal impact of an artist, culture is the whole set of creative expression of all Carnival artists that can form a local Gran Canaria Carnival *communitas*. This triggers feelings of amusement and enjoyment within the tourist *communitas* whilst also conveying Carnival art that belongs to Gran Canaria Carnival Culture.

*Why did you choose to visit this Carnival in particular?*

The island offers many opportunities for tourism, apart from Carnival. Thus, it is not surprising that thirteen visitors (39.4%) were not in Gran Canaria especially for Carnival. One possible reason could be that they were not well informed about the Carnival or it was not among their preferred opportunities. Some interviewees from this group also mentioned "entertainment" and "culture" which shows they might consider it as a valuable event. Thus, it could be assumed that if tourists are informed about Gran Canaria Carnival culture and the entertainment possibilities of Las Palmas Carnival, tourists might be more motivated to visit it.

Two people answered that they came for this Carnival in particular, one of them because it was very popular: "it is one of the most well-known Carnivals in Spain". Another interviewee mentioned its accessibility to visitors as a reason to visit the event. Considering this, it could be assumed that not many tourists visit the island because of the Carnival but some steps towards making it an attractive tourist event have already been made. In addition, its accessibility makes

it easier to attend and perceive its meanings, which are already mentioned in the questionnaire results.

*Which is the most significant moment of Carnival for you and why?*

| Most significant moment | parade | murgas | dancers | Carnival Queen | Drag Queen |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|---------|----------------|------------|
| Number                  | 7      | 2      | 1       | 1              | 0          |
|                         | 21 %   | 6%     | 3%      | 3%             | 0%         |

This part is about the perception of the different Carnival elements and it gives general information about what is liked and what is remembered from the events. It seems that the most significant element is the parade because seven people (21%) have chosen it as their remembered event. The reason might be because of its accessibility: it is free, it takes place in the street and both actors and audience are allowed to participate: "everyone feels welcomed, no matter of age, gender or looks". According to Bakhtin and Rockefeller, lack of rules and scenario and no distinction between audience and performers are typical features of Carnival. One of the interviewees summarises it as: "people can do everything they want". However, the parade resembles free-style, unframed movement without a visible objective and might not be enough to have a feeling of completion.

In contrast, the staged events are strictly organized within exclusive audience-performers framework: the shows are scheduled, the actors and observers are separated, tickets are limited. Considering Rockefeller's theory, the Carnival in Las Palmas is unique because it has also a

festival part that can be very exciting for tourists to observe. Many tourists enjoy the staged performances but they might find it difficult to interpret their meanings and to feel included in the Carnival narrative.

For instance, hardly any people were able to understand the significance of the *murga* shows, which were mentioned in this category only by two people (6%). This is not surprising because they might not have understood the lyrics, judging only from what they saw at the event. However, for one person the *murga* shows were very meaningful: "They sharply critique the different political events that have happened throughout the year, entertaining through irony and satire in order to tease the authorities and act as a musical voice of the people." Although, there are not enough people who can entirely grasp the significance of the murgas, a small amount of tourists managed to interpret their performances. Thus, their value could be used to attract tourists who can appreciate their performances.

The other staged events also seem to be significant but their meaning can depend on the tourists' perceptions about other Carnivals around the world. For example, the dancing groups were chosen by one person as the only detail he or she remembered from Carnival. It might be assumed that the dancing shows are indeed very significant because their style resemble the extremely popular Brazilian samba groups. Thus, they can be perceived as skilful dancers and represented as part of Las Palmas Carnival identity, which can be seen in many tourism media sources about Gran Canaria Carnivals.

Another example of a staged performance is the election of a Carnival Queen, which was chosen as significant by only one tourist (3%). A reason for that could be because all the candidates performed very similar choreographies without enough explanations about them (see

video "Gala de elección de la Reina | Las Palmas GC 2018"). In addition, one tourist claims that Gran Canaria is the only place where the queen is chosen "this way". Thus, some visitors might like to know the characteristics of the ideal Carnival Queen and how she is chosen. The narrative of the event might seem vague to foreign visitors and this would make it difficult to interpret. According to López and Quintana, "the Queens of the Carnival physically represent Carnival apart from the fancy costumes they wear"(132). It means that the costumes and decorations at the Carnival Queen elections are very significant and it could be a good starting point for developing the event's narrative. On the other hand, the authors also imply that there is a possibility for interpretation beyond the costumes and decorations. This could be an inspiration for organizers to research for those meanings and attract tourists who are motivated to see them shown on stage.

Although Drag Queen shows have the reputation to be very spectacular, they were not mentioned in this category. One reason could be that cross-dressing is a very frequent show-act during Carnivals and they do not add any value to this because its framework might not be very clear to tourists. Secondly, as cross-dressing is a typical Carnival act, many people might have seen it before in other Carnivals, which might diminish its significance. As a result, it might become an omnipresent reality and is not a special moment anymore. Yet, in the recorded interviews, the drag queens' performances were mentioned as the most creative, dynamic and entertaining Carnival events (see video "Gala Drag Queen | Las Palmas GC 2018"). Besides, they were considered a part of the island's culture, specifically about the liberal expression of sexuality and gender roles. Furthermore, one person also related the drag queen shows to experiences of togetherness in the film "Pricilla, Queen of the Desert", which means that this category is also existent in the media and combines with the Carnival communitas. As a result of the ecstatic

nature of the shows and all the categories they cover, they might be very much appreciated by the tourist audience.

Yet, judging from the questionnaires' results, the most significant part seems to be the parade. Firstly, because it might have unlimited accessibility because of the equality between audience and performers. Thus, it is logical because the performers are celebrating together with the people who were watching their shows. Secondly, it is the largest event that theoretically has a Carnavalesque nature. Although the staged events are very spectacular, their added value to Carnival might be difficult to be understood by tourists because they are not familiar with the event narrative. Yet, a small amount of tourists considered the meaning of the shows which means that there is a potential to offer Carnival to a broader tourism audience. Several possibilities for that would be discussed in the last part of the thesis.

*What Carnival masks or costumes do you remember? What do those images mean to you?*

The last question aims to give general insights about the masks and costumes that are most frequently seen in Carnival because it is possible that they may have a special meaning to some tourists. A reason for that might be that they could be especially significant for them or the last fragment they saw in Carnival. This information could also be used to form new interpretations to some controversial topics.

Six people (18%) showed their admiration to the creative work of costume designers and decorators: "the great feathers of the girls", "skills of costume makers". Considering this, the effort of costume makers is highly appreciated by the tourists and it might have a potential for more development. Although they did not add any possible meanings to their answers, this means

that Las Palmas Carnival might have a potential as an event with high artistic value. Thus, new possibilities can be offered to tourists who are interested in this topic.

| Costumes | Fantastic creatures | Gender related | Politics related | Religion related |
|----------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Number   | 6                   | 6              | 2                | 1                |
| %        | 18%                 | 18%            | 6%               | 3%               |

It is also important to consider how participants have chosen their costumes. The numbers confirm that fantastic creatures and dressing as the opposite gender are the most frequent images. Thus, when it comes to choosing a costume, the Carnival theme and the opposite gender proved to influence the most. Considering this, it could be assumed that universal Carnival traditions and the Carnival theme are popular trends for costumes because they might be visible among the local people. It is also important to consider that Carnival costumes can enhance someone's identity or can also provide temporal anonymity (Mathieu 1). Thus, themes and universal Carnival trends can be very influential when it comes to attracting the type of tourist who would like to experience the local Carnival culture while choosing his/her identity.

The theme for Las Palmas Carnival 2018 was "Magic and fantastic creatures", thus many participants were wearing thematic costumes such as unicorns, dragons and fairytale characters. For some of the participants, costumes may have emotional value:

One of my favourite costumes was Lumière (which translates from French as "light"), a man who was turned into a candelabra, featured as a supporting character in Disney's 1991 film *[The] Beauty and [the] Beast*. He definitely reminded me of my childhood and he instantly put a smile on my face.

This answer shows that some images present in Carnival might provoke certain memories and emotions. This might be considered as an example of "existential authenticity" which adds value to the personal tourist experience which is not dependent on the authenticity of objective surroundings (Wang 352). However, in this case, the experience is provoked by the costume of a Carnival participant which means that existential authenticity can be strongly influenced by Carnival costumes. Thus, existential authenticity is not necessarily dependent but it may be stimulated by the objects that create its realistic effect. In addition, the importance of media representations should be also taken into account which will be discussed in the third chapter.

Furthermore, Relph (qtd. in MacLeod 224) claims that there is a strong relation between people and places because places can strengthen the feeling of identity. People can have sudden memories and realisations about significant life memories at unknown places. According to Relph, "an existential insider" can feel deeply connected to a place, "completely at one", understands symbols and significations which can be difficult to understand by foreign visitors. This type is often opposed to people who are influenced by different media, literature and films but as it is seen from the example, they can also be emotionally affected.

The next most vivid category is gender identity: some of the interviewed people saw men dressed as women. It is also interesting that no one mentioned any females dressed in male clothes, which is interesting to research from a gender studies perspective. In addition, another

person used the term "transsexual people" which puts the Carnivalers in a completely different category, which is not proven to have any relation to Carnival and might result in underestimating its quality as an artistic performance. Dressing as the opposite gender is a phenomenon which offers many opportunities for future research and cannot be easily put into a single category. Thus, gender artistic representations have an important role both in parades and in the staged events of Las Palmas Carnival and they have a special value to the Gran Canaria Carnival narrative.

Carnival costumes tackled also some politically related topics. Some political dilemmas were expressed in quite a controversial way which can induce stereotypes and provoke negative feelings. Three people (9%) saw instances of expressing political views during the performances:

I remember a man dressed up as Donald Trump, mimicking him perfectly and talking to people exactly like the American president does. I also remember two men wearing Arab long brown robes and head scarves. The people were afraid of them because they said that they looked like terrorists and some of them were really angry so the two men were verbally attacked multiple times.

Judging from this comment, Carnival could be considered as one of the strongest channels to express political views. According to Picard and Robinson, festivals are arenas for social and political change, or to manifest political power (14). If we follow the theory of Bakhtin (169), Carnival is supposed to be a period, free of any rules and restrictions and everything is allowed. It could be assumed that Carnival might be a reflection of phenomena that have already occurred or are currently happening. However, this example shows that expression of political views could still be restricted to a certain extent and can induce negative stereotypes about certain

countries. Cudny confirms Piette's theory that Carnival can be a channel for re-establishing certain categories through the continuity of already fixed social structures (17). Considering this, Carnival can induce or challenge stereotypes and also be an inspiration for reformulation of current political situations.

Cudny (21) and Bakhtin (106) have already confirmed that Christian religious influences might be present in Carnivals. Thus religion is part of the universal Carnival themes but its manifestation at Las Palmas Carnival depends on the narrative of the event. Yet, one person expressed his or her frustration from the performance of Drag Sethlas where the participant addressed religious themes through his costume of the Virgin Mary and the illustration of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion through a controversially expressive narrative: "What they say is liberty of expression, it is not that, it is just dissolute behaviour. I think his performance was horrible." Thus, some Carnival performances might be a channel for questioning already established narratives or for confirming the existing ones. As another interviewee described it, Carnival can provoke feelings of a mixed nature: "we've seen both happy costumes like expressing joy but also some costumes that are death related". Thus, Carnival may be an expression of life itself with all its extremes and indecencies. This comment shows the existential nature of Carnival: it is an illustration of the positive and negative poles of life, as a performance with temporary roles. This is a confirmation of Eliade's findings about Carnival as a reflection of cyclical life events to illustrate their temporary nature (69).

#### **2.4. Discussion with the Creative Director of Las Palmas Carnival, Israel Reyes**

Considering those answers, it might be assumed that tourists are not aware of the exact origin of Las Palmas Carnival and the presence of Gran Canaria traditions and folklore in its

narrative. For this reason, it was important to know the opinion of a specialist in the Las Palmas Carnival creative setting. This information might be very useful to give insights about the tourist experience in Las Palmas Carnival at that moment. He confirmed the existence of international influences of Carnival traditions from different countries in South America such as Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia and other Canary islands, such as Tenerife. Thus, the celebration becomes a representation not only for Gran Canaria but also for the other aforementioned places.

In terms of the representations of Gran Canaria culture, Israel Reyes did not give a clear answer about it: "At this moment, Gran Canaria culture is not strictly defined by the narrative of Carnival, there are very few references to Gran Canaria folklore and aesthetics." and it is important to find a unity between Carnival and the *Canariedad*, as representing Gran Canaria identity. Thus, it might be assumed that Gran Canaria culture does not play a significant role in the narrative of Las Palmas Carnival and tourists should not expect to experience it. Although it is not considered strictly part of Gran Canaria cultural narrative, the unique feature of Las Palmas Carnival is its capacity to absorb different cultures: "Las Palmas is a crossroads of cultures because it used to be an arrival point for many travellers to Europe and the Americas." For this reason, it may be an attraction for tourists who are interested in those cultural streams. Yet, he admitted there is not enough informational materials in hotels and in tourism media sources which would be discussed in the third chapter.

To perceive the results, it might be useful to reflect on the way it is represented in advertisements, brochures and different media channels. The third chapter shall address how the Carnival is presented to visitors through media and how they are informed about the Carnival events. For this reason, I will analyze how the Gran Canaria Carnival experience is represented in tourism brochures, posters, newspaper and online articles and guidebooks about Carnival. I

would like to draw a comparison between the reflection of the tourist experience in Gran Canaria Carnival with the results of the questionnaires.

### **Chapter 3: Tourist Experience Represented**

This chapter will reflect on the media representation of the tourist experience in Gran Canaria Carnival. I will analyze different news articles, brochures and guidebooks that can give insights about the representation of the tourist experience in Gran Canaria Carnival in the media. Firstly, to interpret the role of media in the representation of Carnival, I will offer a theory about image perception: images are signs that represent meanings, which are projected through media and perceived by viewers (Mogan and Pritchard 32). Not only can media influence viewers' perception but viewers can also contribute to the media representations and they are "projected back to the world" (Long and Robinson 99). Thus, the images that tourist see in media about the Carnival are not only influenced by the media but also reflections of previous tourist experiences.

For instance, media channels can project images from the Gran Canaria Carnival that might inspire tourists to visit it. Then visitors produce new images and show them to other people or share them through media. After that, other people could perceive those images and go to Gran Canaria Carnival. Olivia Jenkins calls this process "the circle of representation" (308). According to Long and Robinson, "the function of the media as a way of communicating or distributing messages and images of people, places, and events is central to the workings of international tourism"(99). Therefore, analyzing the representation of Gran Canaria Carnival might give fruitful insights about the tourist experience and potential improvements of the Carnival events.

The results of the questionnaires show that some tourists' perceptions about Gran Canaria Carnival might be inspired by the media. Considering this, it might be assumed that media might have an effect on the tourist experience during Carnival. Furthermore, media can also stimulate the choice of Carnival identity and it can also influence the reaction to it. Similarly, some

expectations towards the Carnival might have been provoked by tourism media, for instance the importance of the event in general. In order to give better analysis on how the tourism experience is represented through the media, I will introduce different media sources that give information about Carnival and reflect on the insights they offer.

### **3.1. "Carnavalera, Carnavalero": Official song for Canary Carnivals 2018**

Every year, a song is chosen to represent carnivals in all Canary islands. This song is played in all national radio and television channels and it becomes a "Carnival hymn", reflecting the common features of all Canary carnivals. The song for 2018, played by the Canary singer Yoel Díaz, mirrors the international nature of Gran Canaria Carnivals and the universal meaning of Carnival in general. This is illustrated through the lyrics: "yo traigo el Carnaval pa'l mundo entero." (I bring the Carnival to the whole world), which reflects Bakhtin's theory that Carnival is for all, everybody participates without exception. Considering this, international visitors also have their part in it and this is shown by the video of the song: there is a person, dressed as a Scottish bagpipe player and dancers who painted their skin black.

Although the international character is confirmed, tourists seem to be non-existent in Carnival performance narrative. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, (qtd. in Picard and Robinson 141) suggests that tourists can misinterpret the Carnival expression through their gaze: "Carnival represented is Carnival tamed". Yet, it is important to consider the reflection of the media because it can affect tourists' perceptions. In addition, it can also influence the choice of a costume: the "terrorist" disguise, mentioned in the questionnaires was also visible in the video. Thus, the media can promote change in perceptions and stereotypes and it may turn out to be a significant reflection of Las Palmas Carnival.

### **3.2. Carnival Posters and Information Brochures**

The Carnival Poster is an illustrative representation of the Carnival for every city in Gran Canaria. Before analyzing different posters, it is important to consider the importance of the visual in tourism media because it might have a priority over text (Long and Roninson 106). According to Mogan and Pritchard, promotional imagery on brochures, billboards, TV commercials and printed advertisements establish a relationship between a consumer and a product. Therefore, Carnival, as a product, is represented by the images in the commercials, which illustrate the product itself, in this case, the Carnival (Mogan and Pritchard 30). There is not enough information on how the poster is chosen but it is probably a depiction of the Carnival which might be considered as an inspiration for different costumes and decorations.

The theme of Las Palmas Carnival 2018 was "Magic and Fantastic Creatures". The Carnival poster aims to illustrate the theme: a dragon with sea, mountains and a city at the background. The Carnival poster can be seen in billboards, brochures and advertisements on different media channels. Consequently, it could be regarded as an important part of the Carnival framework that may influence the choice of costume and the tourist experience itself. On the other hand, the theme is not mentioned in the poster, thus some tourists may not understand its meaning: they wouldn't know what the theme is and why participants are dressed in particular costumes. Therefore, Carnival theme and Carnival poster usually are strongly interrelated and influence each other.

In addition, there is no clear illustrative representation of Gran Canaria except the city, sea and the mountains which may belong to many different landscapes. According to some aforementioned specialists, Las Palmas Carnival is influenced by celebrations in many countries.

Considering the questionnaire results, not many tourists can distinguish Gran Canaria Carnival culture. As a consequence, tourists might think this event does not have any unique features and is not worth visiting.

Considering the theory of Mogan and Pritchard (30), Las Palmas Carnival can be represented by the Carnival information brochures, that can be found in the Tourist Information Office in Las Palmas. The brochure emphasises on the "festival" observation part and not on participation: there are pictures showing the Drag Queen shows, the Carnival Queen and the dancers during their performances. However, according to the questionnaire results, many tourists choose this Carnival because of the experience of togetherness. There are not any photographs of people who are having fun together and enjoying themselves in the streets. Therefore, the message conveyed through the pictures might be interpreted as an invitation to watch but not to participate.

It is true that the festival part of Las Palmas Carnival makes the event unique but there is no information on the set-up of the event, for instance how tourists might be involved in it. The brochure represents the event as a festival performance or an exhibition where locals perform and tourists observe. Considering Rockefeller's theory, during carnivals, there is equality between the roles of the performers and the spectators (141). However, Las Palmas Carnival is an exception because staged events are a very significant element of it but the role of the tourist in them is yet to be defined. As a result, the brochures of Las Palmas Carnival might attract tourists who would rather see Gran Canaria Carnival as an exhibit through the tourist gaze (Urry and Larsen 2).

In contrast, Agüimes Carnival brochure illustrates the locals preparing costumes, decorations and performing together. In addition, the brochure also shows some photographs

from past celebrations which can provoke interest in tourists who would like to know more about Carnivals in the past and feel part of a traditional community event. Therefore, the discrepancy between observers and performers in Agüimes Carnival could be less visible and this may attract tourists who would like to be involved.

Secondly, the brochure includes an invitation from the mayor to local people mentioning some reasons to visit Carnival such as entertainment, togetherness with family and friends, creative expression and also relates the event to contemporary popular culture. Yet, no one of the interviewed tourists visited the Carnival in Agüimes in 2018. Although tourists' presence is not visible in this narrative, the desired experiences from Agüimes Carnival match the reasons tourists visit Las Palmas Carnival. This can confirm that locals participate in Carnival for the same reasons as tourists do.

### **3.3. Newspapers**

The newspapers in this category show that Las Palmas Carnival is attractive to international visitors and is going to develop in the direction of international tourism. Firstly, according to a national newspaper, Carnival in Las Palmas is an event of National Touristic Interest that in the next five years aspires to reach the level of an event of International Touristic Interest ("Yanelly Hernández, Yolanda Ramos y José Carlos Campos...a la Drag"). However, there was no information how this would be achieved.

In order to find out more about the preferences of international visitors, it is important to find examples in foreign tourism oriented newspapers in Gran Canaria. Many scholars agree that pictures can convey stronger message than words, for example the front image in the Swedish newspaper *Dag & Natt* ("Karneval 2018"). From the cover page, it might be considered that

international tourists are interested in Carnival because it is presented as a main topic for the issue of February, showing a Drag Queen's face and make-up in detail. Furthermore, it is visible that the actor is experiencing strong emotions because of the tension of his facial expression. As this Swedish newspaper a glimpse into the Drag Queen's persona and his emotions, it might be assumed that some foreign visitors are interested in Carnival as creative and emotional experience. Considering this, some tourists might be looking for a new dynamic Carnival experience, where they can feel included in the artistic and emotional flow.

### **3.4.Carnival information websites**

The importance of Carnival is also highlighted in tourism websites such as *lpavisit.com*. There is basic historical information about the Carnival and descriptions of the main staged events. In addition, there is an emphasis on the importance and popularity of the event among local people. Tourists are also mentioned but their experience is not discussed: "Every winter, many tourists come to the city to enjoy these festivities..."As a result, visitors might come just to observe the celebrations, without being able to reflect on them or be integrated as performers.

The municipal Carnival website *lpacarnaval.com* does not tell much information about the tourist experience, either. Tourists have their place in Carnival but their role in the narrative is not clearly defined. They are shown as objects that are passively attracted to an event without consciously perceiving its impact:

Over the last thirty years, the Carnival has gone on to become the most socially and economically important festival of the island of Gran Canaria and one of its main tourist attractions. It is a celebration that has known how to adapt to the new demands in leisure and entertainment of a mass media society, while preserving all its traditional flavour.

According to Crouch and Jackson (1), "there is an overarching and necessary interdependence between tourism and the media". Thus, it might be considered that they influence each other in the principle of the "circle of representation": tourists photograph objects, then those objects are reproduced by media and pursued by other tourists (Jenkins 308). The result of this cyclical movement could be the emergence of "popular culture", which is "a mass culture produced by mass production industrial techniques, marketed for profit to a mass public of consumers" (Strinati, qtd. in Jackson 187). Popular culture is often associated with the "immediate, imminent and the contemporary" which often neglects the personal experience and is associated with passivity (Long and Robinson 99). If the media represents the Carnival as "adaptable to the mass media society", then it would become a standardised event oriented towards mass consumers. Becoming a product of mass culture could be a result of the "placelessness" of the event from losing the connection with its roots (MacLeod 225). In addition, it is also suggested that placeless festivals have become dislocated in a sense of place and identity have become "global parties" with a focus on number of visitors and consumption (232).

As a result, Las Palmas Carnival as a tourist event becomes a key element of popular culture because it is not directed towards a particular type of consumers, Zuelow (175) offers further interpretation: "mass tourism demands on the inclusion of everybody by creating targeted products, while keeping costs low requires that everything be standardised". One important feature of mass tourism is the "emphasis on unity, on togetherness, and on a sense of community (168). Considering the results of the questionnaire, this is the most common reason to visit Las Palmas Carnival which makes it part of the mass culture narrative. Thus, when Las Palmas Carnival becomes a "mass culture event", the importance of the individual tourism experience is

diminished, tourists are passive observers who travel to consume Gran Canaria culture without reflecting or contributing to it.

### **3.5 Carnival guidebooks and blogs**

Similarly, some guidebooks shape Las Palmas Carnival as a mass tourism event. *The Touristmaker*, emphasises on the amount of visitors coming to see the Carnival events, describing them as "huge crowds ". The mass effect is strengthened by showing the significant amount of tourists who would like to combine sun, sand and sea holiday with artistic and cultural entertainment: "Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world flock here to enjoy the winter sun, lavish costumes and great music." The emphasis is on quantity of tourists, not on the quality of experiences. *The Touristmaker* also rates Las Palmas Carnival as one of the most interesting events in Spain and the most famous Carnival in the world after the one in Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless, the event is not included in the most famous Spanish Carnivals in the Capitoool Guidebook for Spain but Carnivals in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and in Cádiz are considered as comparable to the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro (Ardagh 39). Considering this, Carnivals in Gran Canaria might be unknown to some famous guidebooks and thus, misinterpreted or underestimated.

In contrast, some guidebooks for Gran Canaria such as Capitoool Kontakt (54), AWBEXTRA (12-13) and Wat &Hoe (34-35) have included Las Palmas Carnival in their content. They describe the most important staged events in Las Palmas Carnival, with few information about the programme and the local Carnival traditions as a narrative of a story without specifying if tourists are allowed to participate in any of the Carnival events and the reason those events are valuable for observation. The photographs are mainly of performing

actors which puts tourists in spectators role without giving them a possibility to choose their role and identity in Carnival. Yet, this does not mean that the role of an observer does not allow to have a meaningful emotional experience. Although it is not directly written, it might be considered that this role is imposed to tourists without saying so. Yet, for Urry and Larsen (191), tourism is a dynamic act: " Through the lens of the performance turn, tourism is a doing, something accomplished through performances." Thus, tourists can not only follow prescribed routes but also can uncover their creativity and communal spirit through performance (193).

This viewpoint is also followed in some popular online guidebooks for Gran Canaria such as *Lonely Planet*: the emphasis is primarily on the staged events such as the Carnival Queen and the Drag Queen elections. In addition, the ceremony of the burial of the sardine is also mentioned as very spectacular. The Carnival in Las Palmas is represented as a celebration that is "on display", to be observed without mentioning participation. Different Carnivals around the island are also indicated but there is no information about the differences between the events.

Alternatively, *Nomadic boys*, an online guidebook, targeted to male gay travellers, offers tourists a different role. Although the tone is quite assertive, the site tries to engage the foreign visitor into the celebrations through participation and possible feeling of communitas: "Inspired to join in? You should be – it's actually traditional for men to dress up as women during carnival, so there's no excuse! Grab a wig, a sexy pair of heels, make up and embrace the carnival spirit." The website refers to a Gran Canaria Carnival tradition offering tourists to participate in it in a very assertive way. As a result, tourists are being given orders about which role to play. Considering the other tourism websites and guidebooks with *Nomadic boys*, there is a difference in the role, asserted to tourists: the aforementioned websites impose a passive, observing role, whereas *Nomadic boys* tries to attract tourists through active participation in a prescribed manner.

This example is different because tourists are part of the narrative but they are still passive and are not given any choice but comply to certain traditions.

By contrast, the blog writer Erica Edwards gives opportunity for a choice: she lists the most important Carnival events, giving recommendations about costumes and telling readers what they can expect. She emphasises on the high amounts of people who are visiting, names the most popular places for Carnival events on the street and offers a different possibility for those who would not like to stay at crowded places: "If Calle Mendizábal is too crowded for your tastes, edge out along the side roads for some fresh air and dancing space." Yet, there is an established viewpoint of the Carnival as a mass event and the visitors are put into the same category: "A. Lot. Of. People. If you hate crowds, well, you'll probably hate this..." It seems that the most common word to describe this event is "crowded" because the author uses it more than ten times, thus frequently emphasising its massive nature. Thus, the writer also addresses the readers assertively and instructs them how to behave: "Costume are a must for the big parade (not to mention your last chance to wear them until next year!) so go big or go home!" Thus, the readers are addressed as passive consumers who obey to a certain trend with a little or no choice.

Considering this, the readers' comments of the blog post are mostly related to how "fun", "colourful" and bizarre the event is. Although there are many recommendations, they are mostly related to the spectator role. Yet, one of the writer's comments relates to a possibility of experiencing existential authenticity. In her article, the writer explains the meaning of Fiesta de los Indianos, where all participants are dressed in white and throw white talcum powder in the air. The tradition is supposed to originate in the island of La Palma: "Apparently the [celebration] in the tiny island of La Palma is even bigger and people really get into the costumes." Firstly, it is possible that the event originates in La Palma, thus it might be considered as more "genuine"

than the one in Las Palmas. Secondly, to get into a costume might possibly mean to *do* Carnival: adopt new role, change identity, appreciate what the existing state and sharing this experience with companions. As a result, toured event and tourist experience can become a whole existential state of Being (Urry and Larsen 189). The experience of existential authenticity could be influenced by the authenticity of the event and on how tourists perceive their role and live their Carnival selves. Consequently, the author's comment could be used as an inspiration for improving Las Palmas Carnival which would be discussed in the last part of the thesis.

Considering the examples, tourists generally have a passive role. On the one hand they are represented as unreceptive crowd who observe Carnival performances and artistic representations without perceiving them emotionally. On the other hand, they follow prescribed narratives and traditions just to imitate the locals. Both approaches consider the sacred role of the tourist as the one of a follower of a prescribed role. Very few media sources offer an active role to tourists and it is still put into a strict framework. In addition, there is hardly any choice offered on how to act during Carnival, tourists either observe or try to copy the behaviour of the local people. As a result, the Carnival experience is limited and following the circle of representation principle, it can attract tourists who would like to compile with this role, forming crowds of followers and confirming the mass character of the Carnival.

Although the tourist Carnival experience can be standardised and the possibility of personal unique Carnival experiences might be reduced, some visitors might like to have more choices. The aforementioned examples show that some tourists might be fascinated by the creative and emotional part of Carnival and would like to feel part of it. In a nutshell, tourists and tourism media reflect each other: the most common reason to visit Carnival is togetherness, thus the media shapes the event as mutual activity of observing or performing in a particular manner.

Fun and colour exist in the media narrative but there is not enough meaning and added value to them, which reflects the questionnaire results about culture and creative expression in Carnival: it exists but it is not a primary reason to visit Carnival.

## Conclusion

This thesis aims to provide an answer of the research question: "How does the Gran Canaria Carnival experience of contemporary foreign tourists in Gran Canaria relate to the tourist Carnival experience represented in tourism advertisements, newspaper articles and online news articles about Gran Canaria Carnivals?". To do this, several concepts are introduced as strongly connected to each other to form the tourist experience in Gran Canaria Carnivals. It is important to consider them as subjects to change, dependent on the local environment and to the tourists' preferences. Firstly, the tourist experience is formed by the "tourist gaze": the filter of ideas which are strongly dependent on the tourist's background, with which he or she arrives at the destination (Urry and Larsen 2). In addition to the "tourist gaze", locals also gaze through their filter of perception which Moufakkir and Reisigner call the host gaze. As a result, the act of gazing becomes mutual, thus tourists and local people view each other through distorted mirrors and their reflections become the mutual tourist-local experience.

It is important to consider the "second gaze", which goes beyond staring the other from a distance but actively engaging, participating and integrating into the destination and can involve all the senses. Wang's existential authenticity and Turner's *communitas* are part of it. Existential authenticity refers to personal experience of existential state of Being which is not dependent on the authenticity of the toured object or event but on the feeling of authenticity itself, appreciation of what appears without questioning its origins. However, the results of the questionnaires show the material representations can contribute to this feeling. It is important to mention that this existential state of Being is usually emotional and it can be triggered by personal memories. On the other hand, *communitas* represents the mutual feelings of existential authenticity and its sharing within a group of people. Some tourists mentioned the "Carnival spirit" in the

questionnaires: this can be the desired feeling of existential authenticity, multiplied within a state of mutual *communitas*.

The tourist experience in Gran Canaria Carnival is interpreted through the questionnaires and interviews and their reflection through the media. Firstly, many tourists expect the event to be magnificent because of its popularity and variety of performances. The results of the questionnaires show that 45.5% of the tourists visit Carnival in order to have an experience of togetherness within a certain group. The second most chosen category, with 39.4% ,was entertainment, followed by culture and creative expression with 27.3 % for both categories. Education was not chosen by anyone of the interviewed tourists. Considering the most chosen category, it can be assumed that tourists in Las Palmas Carnival are looking mainly for group activities that might offer them a sense of belonging and mutual emotional experiences.

The results of the questionnaires confirm that Carnival is a very accessible celebration because everyone is equally considered a part of it and it gives a sense of closeness between those participating. Tourists, as equal participants in the celebrations, can have emotional experiences within the merits of their group and also together with other tourist groups and the local people. Yet, in many media sources, tourists are either considered as observers of different spectacles or are given instructions on how to perform. In both cases the role of the tourist is passive and the emphasis is not on the uniqueness of the tourist experience but on the amount of tourists that visit the Carnival. As a result, the event becomes a part of the mass tourism narrative which offers a standardised experience to as much people as possible which often might compromise the quality.

In this sense, entertainment proved to be one of the most common reasons to visit Carnival, which is very logical because of the festive nature of the event. Yet, it is important to view it through a personal perspective because entertainment might have different meanings to every tourist. For instance, for some tourists culture and creative expression can be also part of the entertainment process. Although, less people chose those categories, they can also be considered as reasons to visit the celebrations. Culture could be regarded as a set of images that represents Gran Canaria nation. Many tourists cannot recognise Canary culture within the fusion of international influences and are confused by the images they are seeing. Although Gran Canaria culture is not strictly defined through the Carnival narrative, it could be important to consider its place in the melting pot of international artistic influences. On the other hand, creative expression covers the work of certain artists and it is more related to artistic practices. For instance, tourists can also choose their identity through Carnival costumes and can have personal emotional experience. Furthermore, Carnival costumes can show the transgressive element in Carnival. Moreover, Carnival can reinforce or challenge stereotypes, which can be influenced and transmitted through the media.

The discussed media sources represent Carnival as a standardised tourist experience where tourists can observe different performances and their unique elements are not very clear. A second possibility is a strictly prescribed role which mirrors the behaviour of the local people. This can be regarded as a possibility to change the passive tourist role but diminishes the unique personal Carnival experience. Yet, in Maspalomas Carnival, roles can be reversed: tourists perform and locals observe, which confirms the existence of "host gaze" but still the two groups are separated.

Yet, some people would like to have dynamic Carnival experience which includes appreciating the emotional part of Carnival and familiarising with the practical and artistic approaches while preparing a performance. This might also offer them an opportunity to be included in a local event. Thus, it is important also to consider Carnival in Agüimes because it can give information about the past influences of Gran Canaria Carnivals, their creative and emotionally-charged elements. So far, tourists are not present within the Agüimes Carnival context but it can offer many interpretations about the communal spirit and entertainment during the celebrations.

In conclusion, Gran Canaria Carnivals have a potential to become valuable tourism events but this is yet to be discovered. Many tourists no longer want to be passive observers, some of them would like to participate and be involved in the event narrative. Gran Canaria Carnivals are unique and interesting because they have not only a communal part but also magnificent staged performances which can provide entertaining experience for tourists. In addition, the multicultural background of Gran Canaria Carnivals can offer exceptional knowledge about different foreign Carnival influences and invite tourists who can consider this valuable.

## **Coda: Recommendations**

After the results from the research, there is one question that remains unanswered: What is the dynamic Carnival experience beyond the tourist gaze and how it can be achieved? The final part of this thesis consists of recommendations for making the Carnival suitable for a wider tourist audience.

As Las Palmas Carnival aspires to be an event of International Tourism Interest, it is important to create a valuable touristic experience. To begin with, tourists should be offered a variety of possibilities because not all of them would prefer only to observe or imitate the local behaviour. In order to have dynamic emotional Carnival experience, it is advised to avoid the possibility of becoming a "placeless" event. Thus it might have positive results if there is more connectivity between the different Carnival traditions and their countries of origin. The presence of Gran Canaria Carnival traditions can be beneficial for offering cultural, entertaining, creative, emotional tourism experiences. In addition, Getz offers several solutions for designing a good quality event. Firstly, it is good to be based on local community traditions and reflect themes which are relevant to the local people, including the international residents that can also play their role in Gran Canaria Carnival traditions. Furthermore, it is important that the event is not exploiting tourists and the goal is not to attract more tourists but to offer a quality experience (131).

According to recent trends, the manner of travelling is changing from destination-based to experience-based. As a result, tourists tend to travel not just to observe but to be immersed in a country's culture (Goeldner and Ritchie 462). Some tourists might be currently looking for *communitas* and existential authenticity experiences. Those experiences might be affected from

the local communitas on which the cultural, creative, entertaining and educational impacts of Carnival can be strongly dependent. As it could be seen from the questionnaires' results and Agüimes Carnival brochure, tourists and hosts communitas experiences can communicate and reflect each other. Thus, tourists should be invited to participate in Carnival in order to appreciate and contribute to its communitas, entertaining, cultural, artistic and possibly educational value. It is important that tourists are integrated in Carnival and they can choose between a variety of activities.

To have benefit for both the tourist and the local side, it would be positive if Gran Canaria Carnival traditions are interactively shared. This could possibly be achieved through offering them to learn new art techniques, for instance costume and decoration making, make-up workshops, performing, dancing, singing, etc. Experiencing the local culture and learning new art skills through dynamic interaction with local people has become a trend, called "creative tourism" (Smith 145-164).

Secondly, some tourists might like to take a glimpse into the preparation of the events behind stage because it may offer them a "real" experience. As a result, tourists would be able to interact with performers, and feel closer to the local culture (MacCannell 94). Furthermore, they might be also interested to see photographs, costumes and props from past Carnivals, thus it might be good to develop a preservation policy and have a designated storage place where those objects can be easily accessed by tourists. In addition, some costumes and decorations can be used for doing a collective theatre play or a performance which can be included as a part of the Carnival staged events. By doing this, tourists can also feel invited and have a dynamic Carnival experience.

Considering Mathieu's theory, the disguised tourist may use the Carnival costume to embrace a new identity, to experience certain emotions and play a new role within the Carnival framework. Engaging in role playing activities within the Carnival environment would be a positive opportunity for tourists to get to know each other and to be included in the local Carnival experience. Appreciation of what appears and accepting what others really are can be the authentic experience many tourists are searching.

I hope that this thesis and the recommendations would be useful to expand the potential of the magnificent Carnivals in Gran Canaria. I would like to thank all the interviewed tourists for their sincere answers and the people from the local community for their kindness and support to make this project possible.

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