


Article

# Qualitative Impact Analysis of International Tourists and Residents' Perceptions of Málaga-Costa Del Sol Airport

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**Abstract:** Air transport plays a key role especially in countries where tourism has a great impact on the economy. In Spain, the contribution made by this industry to GDP stands at EUR 119 billion, representing 11% of GDP. This case study focuses on the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport due to the growth the city has experienced in recent years. The research examines the impacts of this infrastructure from the perceptions of residents and tourists. We conducted 638 questionnaires and 50 interviews with residents, and 165 questionnaires and 106 interviews with international tourists from August 2019 to January 2020. A qualitative thematic analysis was carried out using the NVivo Pro software. The findings indicate that residents value the ease of travel and employment generated by the airport. However, they are concerned about the environment impacts and mass tourism. For tourists, almost no negative impacts are recorded. Residents and tourists consider the existence of positive effects on other nearby cities of Andalusia. Conclusions have practical and theoretical implications for impact researches.

**Keywords:** airports; impact; qualitative; NVivo; residents; tourism

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the strongest growing activities around the world. Beyond the evolution of the economic indicators (+3.5% in 2019) [1], if attention is paid to the total non-financial business economy, the activities included in this sector account for 9% of people employed [2]. Since 1950, tourism has undergone unprecedented growth due to the creation of commercial aviation [3] and this has materialized through important changes all over the world. According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, all the regions experienced a rise in international arrivals in 2019 [4]. For its part, Spain received 83.7 million international tourists setting a record for the seventh year in a row [5]. In light of this, air travel remains the dominant mode of transportation for this type of tourism [6].

Air transport emerged as one of the most complex global economic industries. This sector plays an important role in facilitating mobility and economic development [7]. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, airports are proving to be the most useful infrastructure. They are carrying out their most basic function, transport. Thanks to them, citizens are returning to their countries of residence and their activity is enabling the purchase and transfer of medical equipment. According to the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) [8], the air travel industry supports USD 2.7 trillion in world economic activity and it comprised the largest share of inbound tourism with 58% in 2018 [9]. As a result, growth in the tourist activity shares synergies with growth in air transport and vice versa [10]. Indeed, the economic problems in the tourism industry after the attacks on the World Trade Center showed the volatility and mutual dependence between tourism and air transportation [11].

According to the Spanish Constitution [12], the Spanish Government is responsible for commercial airports for which there is a ‘general interest.’ This ‘general interest’ has been declared to exist for all commercial airports in Spain and Aena is the state-owned trading company that manages them. As stated by Aena, the number of passengers using the airports in 2019 came to 275.2 million, 4.4% more than in 2018 [13]. These infrastructures are the main gateway for tourists visiting Spain. With regard to the report of Tourist Movement on Borders (Frontur, 2019) [14], more than 68.6 million (82%) used an aircraft as their means of transport. This reveals the importance of air transport for the tourism sector in this country.

From the 1950s to the 1990s Andalusia, one of the Autonomous Communities of Spain has undergone this process with a number of peculiarities. The weakness of the industrial fabric and the lack of so-called “high-level” or “advanced” services have led to the development of those more basic and traditional service activities [15]. The sun and the beach have been the main wealth of Andalusia but as time has shown, this model should change (sustainability). In this sense, airports are now key catalysts for the growth of a territory [16]. Where does this relevance come from? Tertiariation of the Spanish economy and the labor market is certainly not a new phenomenon. In the past 100 years, developed economies have seen a transition from a manufacturing-based economy to one where the tertiary sector dominates. This transformation involves the tertiary sector coming to comprise the key element of the economy. In Spain, part of this greater prominence comes from the collapse of the construction sector. An activity that employed one in four jobs (25%) in 2008 and that now represents just 8% according to the National Statistical Institute (INE) [17]. To halt this decline, there was a transfer of employees from construction to the tourism sector.

Málaga has passed from being a stopover city to be one of the most visited cities in Spain [18]. In this sense, the importance of the airport is undeniable. The Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport has undergone a deep change since 1991 when Terminal 2 was open to the public. This allowed an increase in both the number of routes and destinations. In Andalusia, even though every city—except Huelva—has an airport, the data of passengers introduce wide divergences. As can be seen in Table 1, the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport ranked first in passenger arrivals in 2019 followed by the airports of Seville, Francisco García Lorca Granada Jaén, and Almería. Unfortunately, the city is beginning to suffer the consequences of mass tourism. Low-cost companies currently have a very important weight in airport activity and, although these types of companies are helping to avoid seasonality, residents began to demonstrate against touristification with the slogan “Malaga is not for sale” [19]. The local media have developed awareness-raising campaigns of the need to provide a pact for the quality of the tourism sector [20].

**Table 1.** Sample characteristics.

Geographical Area	The City of Málaga
Universe (Residents/International Tourists)	571,026/129,678
Sampling error	3.14%/5%
Procedure	Simple random sample
Reliability	90%
Fieldwork activities	May 2018–September 2019

Source: Authors.

For several years a great effort has been devoted to the study of the strong relationship among tourism and other economic activities. Tourism impact studies are proliferating worldwide, and it could be due to the fact that these investigations offer both positive and negative effects on territories [21,22] and on local people [23]. A common strategy used to research this cornerstone is to study quantitatively the impact from the economic point of view. In fact, tourism impact studies are numerous in recent years [24] and have different perspectives [21–23]. However, limited attention has been given to the airport in influencing the life of residents, despite their global significance. The foremost problem is the fact that there is no previous research using a qualitative approach in this kind of impact. As far

as we know, no previous research has investigated the qualitative impact of an airport on the city where it is located. The qualitative approach is uncommon although that is not related to their level of importance. Despite the fact that qualitative research has been keenly debated [10], it has proved effective up to now for different kinds of organizations [25–27]. Accordingly, the residents' perspective has experienced something similar. The qualitative methodology is a considerable interest because the residents' perceptions could contribute to the sustainable growth of their territories. This research constitutes a relatively new area that has emerged from a new trend where the role of residents is considered as important as the role of other stakeholders.

The relationship between residents and international tourists (hereafter tourists) is an increasingly useful topic for academic research. Therefore, to illuminate this uncharted area, we examine the resident-tourist perception. The aim is not only to analyze the impact but also, to show that the sophisticated relation among tourist-tourism-airport-resident could help achieve the success of new tourist-economic planning in a city. Synergies and interactions among the stakeholders underpin continuous improvements.

The primary objective was to demonstrate that qualitative impact studies can complement quantitative ones by offering highly relevant data for tourism management at a destination level. To achieve this goal, it is essential to examine the perceptions of the local population and compare them with what international tourists perceive when they visit the city. Despite the fact that Málaga Airport is only 10 km from the city centre, residents may not be aware of the benefits or disadvantages of this infrastructure. Is the airport an unknown element for residents? In Spain where airports belong to the State, there has been a controversy based on profitability. That is, should they be a public service or should they act as companies looking for benefits? Airports, as providers of aviation infrastructure, offer transportation between territories. This is the service that tourism demands. Therefore, if the city of Málaga needs to change the city's planning model for sustainability reasons, it is important to analyze the relationship with the airport as a service provider.

Finally, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, the city needs and is working on a change in the tourist model. In this sense, it is relevant that locals, the infrastructure that allows the arrival of tourists to the city, and tourists work together with institutions to achieve this goal. How can residents' perceptions contribute to this purpose? Are there synergies between residents and Málaga Costa del Sol Airport? Is the airport the economic engine of the city according to its residents? What are the perceptions of tourists? How can they contribute to the sustainable development of the city?

The present paper can provide significant insights for the establishment of new local development policies that support destinations to enhance their competitiveness more efficiently. In addition, the benefit of using the qualitative approach is expected, in this case, to reduce the costs of new policies, avoid touristification, improve city areas, and create and restore the traditional image of the city. The main advantage is that we are capable of integrating qualitative research as a key part for analyzing the airport impacts.

## 2. State of Art

Massive changes in society are evident across generations, but at the same time that society contributes to facilitating these changes, several academic writers have emphasized the links between airports and social development [28,29].

Tourism and transport have a strong relationship in which both benefit from this mutual collaboration [30]. In this sense, as reported by Lohmann and Duval [31], aviation services are "essential support for tourism". The World Tourism Organization [32], as the responsible agency for the promotion of sustainable and universally accessible tourism, stated in 2001 that the air transport sector and tourism walk on parallel tracks. A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have examined the negative and positive effects of this relation. Andereck [33] affirmed that tourism helps preserve culture and traditions. However, since 2014 a popular debate emerged to face this challenge [34].

As reported by Brida, Deidda, and Pulina [35], transport infrastructures are necessary for accessibility and mobility, especially in regions where there is a tourism vocation. Indeed, Bieger and Witmer [36] indicated that the attraction of a tourist destination comes not only from its local culture, its natural resources, or its history but also from the manmade infrastructures in that territory. In this regard, previous studies by Lian and Denstadli [37,38] revealed the enormous effect of transportation for the tourism sector. Gierczak [39] affirmed that transportation and its development are conditions without which tourism would not exist. Recently, some studies have been more concise and have stated that air transport has been key in accelerating the development of low cost and mass tourism [40]. In this context, some authors stated that the economic expansion of territories is historically related to transport [41]. Nonetheless, airport management and tourism do not always go hand in hand [42].

According to the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA), an airport is defined as any defined area of land or water used or intended for the arrival and departure of aircrafts including “appurtenant area used or intended for airport building” [43]. Air transport can be related to many different fields, such as health [44–47], management [48,49], artificial intelligence [50], carriers [51], low-cost companies [52,53], employment [54], global city network [55–60], and governments [61] but all of them agree on the benefits for the communities. Tourism can develop the local economy of a territory, increase employment, and support communities [62–67] but for residents, this perspective could take the opposite direction.

Previous studies have shown that air transport is a key component of the economies as it offers a strong network of connections that allow economic, social, and recreational activity [68]. From this perspective, it was reported in the literature that the sustainable development of a city needs a relationship between airport master plans and urban planning [69]. According to Freestone [70], airports are much more than a place for taking off and landing, they have significant impacts on local areas. On the other hand, Bertolini and Dijst [71] concluded that organizations and people were independent of “urban physical and administrative boundaries”.

Most recent evidence suggests the vulnerability to which we are exposed. Airports break down barriers with the rest of the world, and it has both positive and negative effects. The impact of airports is an important issue due to the large capital investments entailed in regional development. They have extremely important implications for many sectors but particularly for tourism. Air transport is a key piece of tourism activities as it provides fast comfortable transfers of tourists to their destinations [72]. The world is currently suffering from one of the worst crises in its history. As a result of the coronavirus outbreak crisis, the Spanish tourism industry is expected to experience losses of nearly EUR 40 billion in 2020 and if the crisis continues until September, total losses may increase up to EUR one billion [73]. One problem is that an isolated region could become a global issue. In this sense, some authors affirm that the airport connectivity enhances vulnerability to global pandemics [74].

In the opposite corner, the globalization allows the transmission of information and communication with each other regardless of their location [75]. Airports are one of the fundamental pillars upon which the global economy, people, and sustainable development of regions are connected [76].

As stated by Andereck [33], the effects derived from tourism are divided into three categories; economic [77,78], sociocultural [79,80], and environmental [81–83]. In this sense, previous transport studies have almost exclusively focused on these topics. The increasing importance of airports for tourism and local development is based on the use as a resource in the economic-tourist sector and for this reason, economic studies are the most numerous [84,85].

With regard to airports, the literature review shows that economic studies are concentrated on airlines [86–88], productivity and costs [89–91], and economic impact [92,93]. From an environmental point of view, most early studies, as well as current work, focus on emissions [94] and sustainability [95–104] while the social perspective is completed by contributions about passengers’ profile and flight experiences and preferences. It is in this last group that the qualitative method is found.

Although impact studies have been carried out by many authors, the study of the impact of an airport from the view of residents and tourists is still insufficiently explored. The residents' perceptions and opinions are necessary for planning and developing the tourist capacity and the sustainability of destinations [105–112]. For instance, according to Maguire [113], we are faced with cases in which the preparation and planning with the local community are essential for the success of an event.

Although the residents' perspective is less studied in the academic literature [114], the new issues of this age such as touristification and gentrification need local support to become successful [115,116]. In this regard, residents' perceptions are extremely relevant to the reconstruction of a new tourist era [117]. In fact, residents' saturation is not a new phenomenon. The model introduced by Doxey in 1975 [118] explained that residents pass through four behavioural stages in a tourist destination and they depend on the increase in the number of tourists and the growth of this sector. Euphoria is the first phase followed by apathy, irritation, and antagonism.

Marketing campaigns should be a key element in the processes of change of a city. As stated by Laquar [119], these marketing actions should be taken into account as the perspective of tourists and residents. This statement is partly due to the success of some tourism policies in which locals had collaborated [115].

This paper addresses the need for qualitative studies, so far lacking in the scientific literature. In this regard, the qualitative methodology provides insights into this issue and allows the development of a new proposal for further investigations.

In order to properly address this study, the following research questions have been raised:

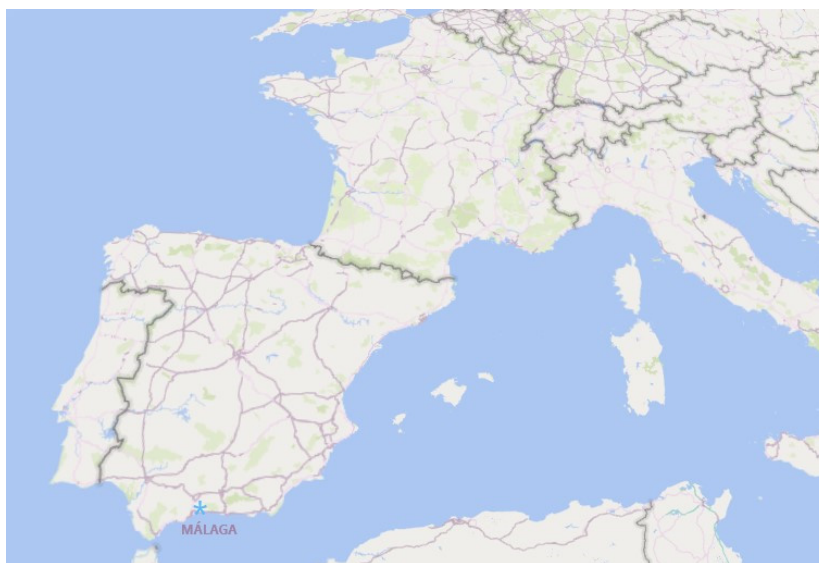
- RQ1 What are the kind of impacts perceived by residents?
- RQ2 What are the kind of impacts perceived by tourists?
- RQ3 Are there significant differences between the two groups?
- RQ4 Is there a relationship between the kind of impact and other variables such as age, gender, or occupation?
- RQ5 What aspects or improvements need to be developed to help sustain tourism development?

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Study Area and Contextual Background

Málaga is one of the fastest-growing cities in Andalusia. The city has undergone significant changes during the last decade. Among the main ongoing initiatives are the new international routes serving the Costa del Sol with connections to over 60 countries [120], the port and its modernization, the new infrastructures, museums, etc. This Mediterranean province is located in southern Spain between the cities of Cádiz and Granada and bordering the provinces of Seville and Cordoba in the north (Figure 1). The capital of the Coast of the Sun covers 154 sq. mi. and is the second most populous city in Andalusia after Seville with 571,026 inhabitants [121,122].

Concerning the volume of tourist revenue generated in 2019, a historic figure of EUR 20.4 billion has been reached. Málaga is still leading the creation of companies in Andalusia [123] and for the first time the city has surpassed the EUR 3 billion economic impact of tourism. These have been largely due to an important tourist activity in which the airport has played a key role. Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport is located 8 km from the Málaga city centre. In the last year, this airport handled 19,856,299 passengers, 144,920 operations, and 3080 tonnes of cargo. This is the first airport in Andalusia with 141 destinations and a total of 129,678 international tourists [124]. International tourists were chosen to participate because according to the data obtained from the Egatur survey (Tourist Expenditure Survey) in 2019, these are the ones that make the biggest economic contribution in Andalusia (EUR 124 per day) [125].



**Figure 1.** Location under study. Source: Authors.

### 3.2. Sampling, Data Collection, and Analysis

The research applies a qualitative approach to deal with the research questions. Although the majority of studies are quantitative, the qualitative point of view could make key contributions to the sustainable development of tourism in some territories [126]. The present study aims to analyze the perception of residents and tourists of the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport's impacts.

To ensure the suitability and relevance of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out during the last week of May and the first week of June. It revealed unexpected changes. The sample of international tourists (21 tourists) was conducted through stratified random sampling. This pre-test was carried out by selecting the days when there were international arrival flights at Málaga Airport. To obtain 21 surveys of international tourists, the researchers had to carry out a total of 117. It should be emphasized that not all passengers were relevant to this study since attention was only given to those passengers who had arrived in Málaga for tourist purposes and came from an international destination. Regarding residents (35 residents), the survey was conducted in the city centre through simple random sampling. The piloting revealed some weaknesses in the questionnaire, so a review and a modification were made for the final study. In the pilot interviews, we asked about the impact on other provinces and the responses were not expected to provide as much information. As a consequence, the responses made us consider expanding the section on impacts in other provinces because of the useful data we obtained. On the other hand, during the pre-test to tourists, we observed that they did not include tourism either as a positive or a negative aspect. To overcome this surprising statement, it was necessary to reconsider the questionnaire and to introduce at the end of the interview a discussion on it. The written questionnaire was also modified in this sense. The pilot study optimized the process to minimize unforeseen events throughout the research.

The survey technique is used as a research procedure since it allows obtaining and preparing data quickly and efficiently [127]. The survey allows massive applications, which through sampling techniques can extend the results to entire communities. This study can be extrapolated and used for any other airport in the world. The interest of the researcher is not the resident who responds to the survey or interview but the residents as a whole. Under this approach, each member of the subset has an equal probability of being chosen. A simple random sample is meant to be an unbiased representation of a group. Some residents were directly invited by mail to participate in the survey while others received the link by WhatsApp. We conducted in-depth interviews and questionnaires with 686 (50 interviews/636 questionnaires) residents of the city of Málaga and 271 (106 interviews/165

questionnaires) tourists from August 2018 to September 2019. In this research, sampling is reflected in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the distribution by country of origin of international tourists in the Airport of Málaga Costa del Sol. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and imported together with the questionnaires into NVivo Pro and SPSS for data management and data analysis. All the respondents participating in this study have given their consent for being a part of this research.

**Table 2.** Universe sample of international tourists in 2019.

Málaga Costa Del Sol Airport (Arrivals)	Total	J	F	M	A	M	J	JUL	AG	S	O	N	D
Total	129,678	2958	3453	5374	6846	6530	15,441	23,251	28,627	14,015	10,509	6749	5925
Montreal Pierre Elliot Trudeau	28,015	213	1094	2533	2883	2087	2544	3163	3374	2951	3879	2169	1125
Casablanca Mohamed V	23,645	1574	1245	1611	1768	1341	2191	2880	3624	1595	1990	1765	2061
Marrakech Menara	18,765				667	1000	1100	2785	2697	2627	2450	2700	2739
New York John F. Kennedy Intl	15,281					828	4262	4720	4989	482			
Hamad International	15,083					97	2242	4347	5774	2623			
Tetuan Sania Ramel	8377				1238	1037	1125	1463	1241	1234	1039		
Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Int.	5781						1009	1529	1224	1033	986		
Kuwait International	4005						411	998	1829	767			
Argel Houari Boumedien	3381	334	294	318	290	140	260	545	685	350	165		
Tanger Boukhalef	2605	766	820	912						107			
Riyadh King Khaled Intl	2484						142	529	1682	131			
Bahrain International	2070						155	292	1508	115			
Bamako	115											115	
Essaouira Mogador	71	71											

Source: Aena, 2020 [128].

The surveys were translated into English and German, because these are the languages spoken by the two most important foreign communities in the city of Málaga. During the interview analysis, special attention was paid to the thoughts, perceptions, feeling, and language to identify when they are talking about advantages or disadvantages. For residents, interviews were designed in Spanish, so all the responses were translated for this paper.

The interviews and questionnaires were structured into six sections. The first section involved social and demographic characteristics, the variables analyzed were gender, age, occupation, and if the respondent is a resident or a tourist, the response options for occupation were ‘employed by others’, ‘self-employed’, ‘unemployed’, ‘student’, and ‘retired’. The second one was integrated by the question: ‘Does your job depend on the existence or activity of the Airport Málaga-Costa del Sol?’. The third and the following points are the most relevant for the study. On the one hand, the third section involved the ‘Benefits and Advantages’ for the city and for residents, while the fourth section was related to the opposite: What are the disadvantages of the Málaga Costa del Sol Airport for the city and for residents? These two were integrated by open questions. The fifth section was dedicated to the impacts on other territories, in this sense, tourists and residents were asked if the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport had impacts on other territories and what these kinds of impacts were. The response options for this aspect were: ‘P Economic and Touristic I’, ‘N Economic and Tourist I’, ‘No effects’, ‘Only Economic Impacts’, ‘Only Tourist Impacts’, and ‘Do not Know/Do not answer’, where ‘P’ is positive, ‘N’ is negative, and ‘I’ are impacts. The rule for this question was: ‘Please, select only one answer per city’.

The last section was integrated by the question: ‘What aspects or improvements need to be developed, by the airport, the city or by yourself, to help sustain development?’ The last part of the questionnaire aimed to collect data about ideas, good practices, and new policies that could move towards sustainable development of the city.

#### 4. Findings

In this section, the results of the research will be presented. It will be highlighted in ways the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport impacts on the city and on local people. In addition, the following sections explore the proposals for ensuring long-term sustainability of the city and the impacts on other territories.

##### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

A total of 957 interviews (271) and questionnaires (686) were completed. The vast majority of residents' responses of men were received through the mobile survey application created in a Lime Survey. There was a large majority of local women who participated in the survey (65.2%). This high participation of women was not unexpected because when the interviewer asked a couple to fill out the survey, in 75% of the questionnaires it was the woman who finally answered the questions. In the case of tourists, the distribution was more representative (126 men and 145 women) although the sample size was smaller (271 tourists). Table 3 illustrates the crosstabulation between the variables 'gender' and 'occupation' of residents and tourists.

**Table 3.** Gender and occupation crosstabulation.

Occupation		Gender		Total	
		MALE	FEMALE		
Residents	EMPLOYED BY OTHERS	Count	121	247	368
		Occupation	32.9%	67.1%	100.0%
		% within Gender	50.8%	52.2%	53.6%
		Count	16	69	85
	SELF-EMPLOYED	Occupation	18.8%	81.2%	100.0%
		% within Gender	6.7%	15.4%	12.4%
	UNEMPLOYED	Count	16	67	83
		Occupation	19.3%	80.7%	100.0%
		% within Gender	6.7%	15%	12.1%
		STUDENT	Count	38	57
Occupation	40.0%		60.0%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	16%	12.7%	13.9%	
	RETIRED	Count	40	15	55
Occupation		72.3%	27.3%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	16.8%	3.3%	8%	
	Total	Count	239	447	686
Occupation		34.9%	65.2%	100.0%	
% within Gender		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Tourists	EMPLOYED BY OTHERS	Count	72	51	123
		Occupation	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
		% within Gender	57.1%	35.1%	45.3%
		Count	30	31	61
	SELF-EMPLOYED	Occupation	49.2%	50.8%	100.0%
		% within Gender	24.5%	21.1%	22.6%
	UNEMPLOYED	Count	0	20	20
		Occupation	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	0.0%	14.0%	7.5%
		STUDENT	Count	11	5
Occupation	66.7%		33.3%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	8.2%	3.5%	5.7%	
	RETIRED	Count	13	38	51
Occupation		25.0%	75.0%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	10.2%	26.3%	18.9%	
	Total	Count	126	145	271
Occupation		46.5%	53.5%	100.0%	
% within Gender		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source: Authors from SPSS.



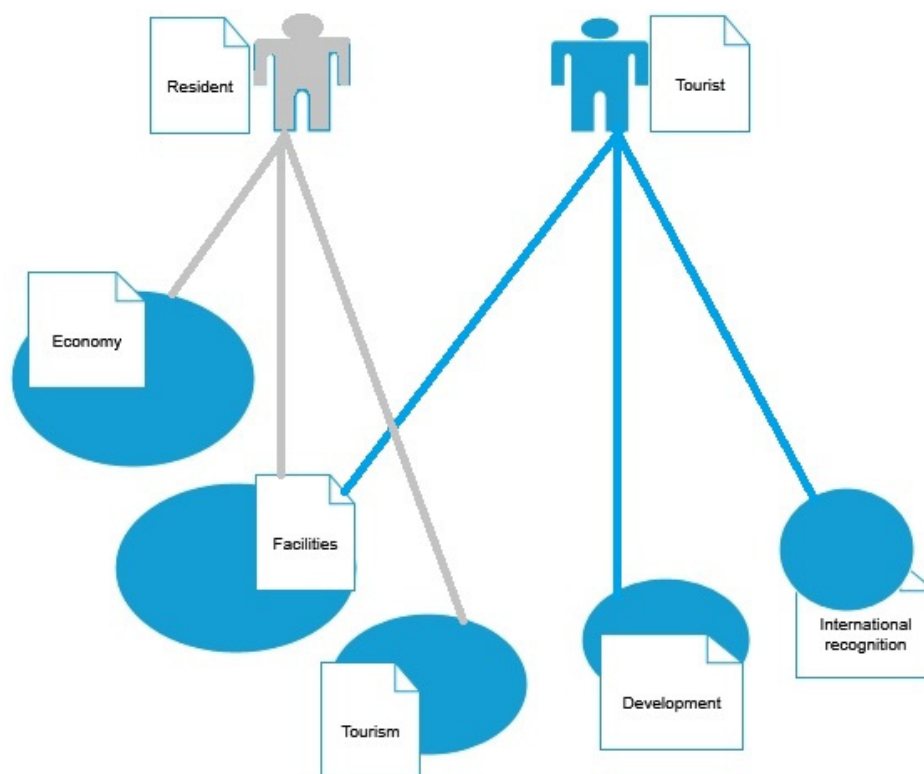
#### 4.2. Impacts on the City of Málaga

To explore the perceptions about the impacts on the city, both residents and tourists were asked about two aspects. First, a question regarding the disadvantages or negative impacts on the city of Málaga. To illustrate the results, a word cloud is presented (Figure 2). This innovative tool is used for detecting trends in large data sets.



**Figure 2.** Overall perception of residents about the negative impacts of the airport. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

As we can see, ‘pollution’ was the effect most mentioned by residents followed by ‘noise’, ‘precarious work’, and ‘low-quality tourism.’ ‘Noise’ was not included in the ‘pollution’ code because only ‘air pollution’ and ‘environmental pollution’ were mentioned. Tourists’ perspective was represented by two assessments: ‘Pollution’ and ‘no negative impacts’ (68%). The word ‘pollution’ whether it be as an exact match or with generalizations, was mainly mentioned by women.



**Figure 3.** Positive perceptions about the airport’s impacts on the city. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

The second question was in relation to the positive effects. Rather surprising, residents and tourists were in agreement. They only differed by an unrepresentative percentage (3%). The codes categorized for the question about positive effects and advantages are visually illustrated by a concept map (Figure 3). The size of the circles represents a higher frequency in the results. The code 'economic' includes wealth, economy, money, profits, and benefits. With 'facilities', integrated perceptions are related to connectivity, travel, good communications, and good infrastructures.

#### 4.3. Impacts on Local People

This section explores the impacts that the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport has on residents. The two groups had statistically significant different perceptions. In particular, while residents, as can be seen in Table 4, mentioned 'ease of travel', tourists (Table 5) indicated that 'employment' was the most important positive impact. Only words with a high weighted percentage are presented.

**Table 4.** Positive airport impacts perceived by residents.

Word/Groups of Words	Length	Count by Answer	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
Ease of Travel	12	299	21.00	travel, journey, voyage, tours, flights, connections
Job	3	180	8.18	job, work, employment, opportunities
Economic	8	106	4.82	economy, money, wealth, profits, benefits
Total			34.00	

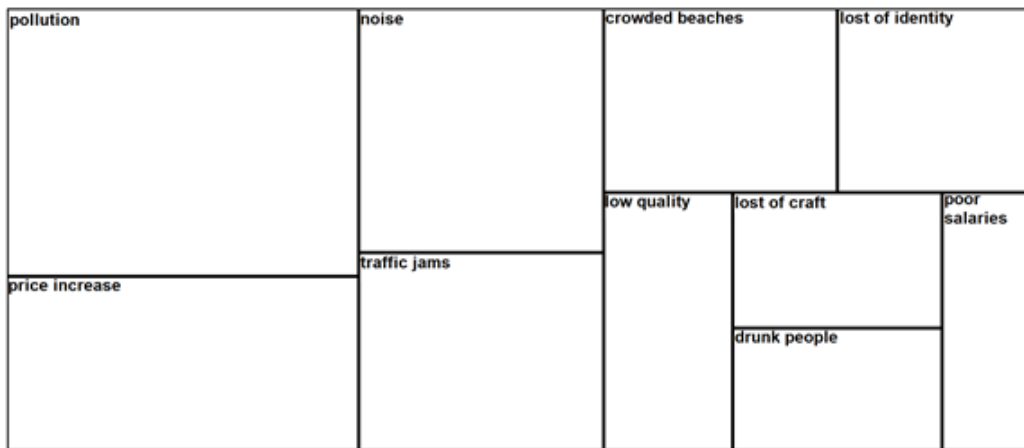
Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

**Table 5.** Positive airport impacts perceived by tourists.

Word/Groups of Words	Length	Count by Answer	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
Job	3	103	53.21	job, work, employment, opportunities
Economic	8	92	26.79	economy, money, wealth, profits, benefits
Total			80.00	

Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

In relation to negative effects, no significant differences were found when comparing the perception of residents and tourists. After a word frequency query (Figure 4) was carried out, the findings showed similar ways of perceiving negative effects. 'Noise', 'pollution', 'traffic jams', and 'price increase' were the most mentioned between the two groups.



**Figure 4.** Negative perceptions about the airport’s impacts on residents. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

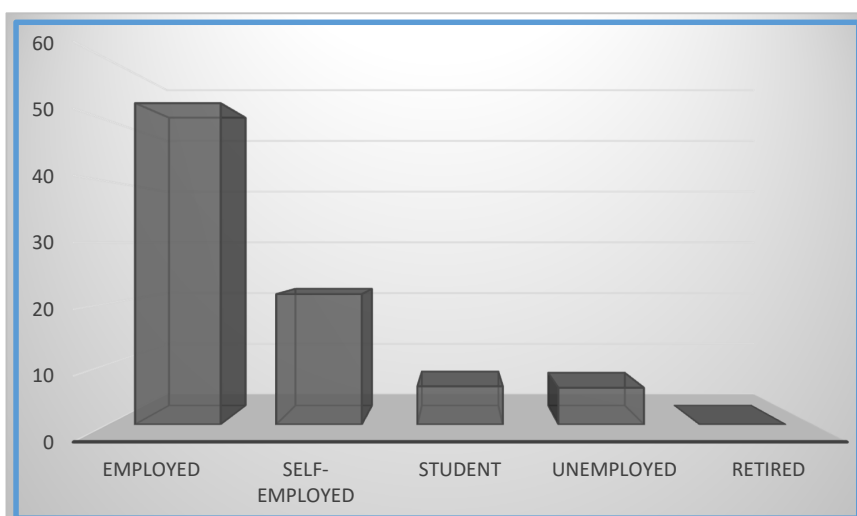
4.4. Specific Study about Impacts

Throughout the previous section, we have visualized the positive and negative effects from the perception of residents and tourists at a widespread level. This section focuses on discussing in detail the main impacts. Based on the responses obtained from both groups, the main categories are employment, economic, tourist, and environmental.

4.4.1. Employment Impact

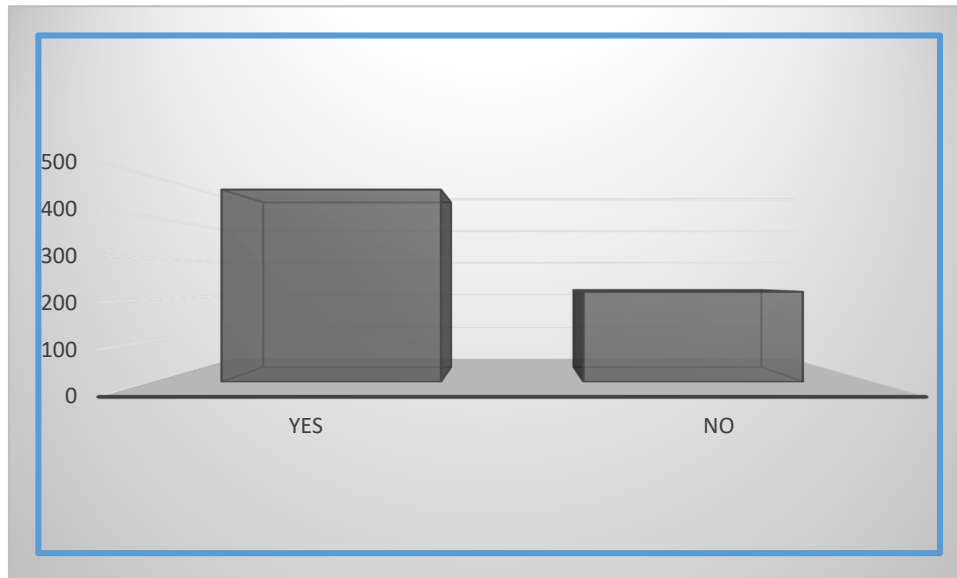
Employment was one of the terms most often mentioned in interviews and questionnaires. That is why this section focuses on finding out the relationship between the airport and employment through the points of view of the interest groups (residents and tourists).

The profile of the resident who included employment as a positive effect not only for the city but also in relation to her/himself was a working man over 50 years of age. The perceptions of the employment impact of the airport gradually improved with age. The self-employed people placed a high importance on employment (21.52%), compared to unemployed people and students with the lowest incidence (6.1% and 6.33%, respectively) (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Distribution of the mentions about employment among residents. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

With regard to tourists' perceptions, employed and self-employed men were the groups in which the employment was most often mentioned. No mention was made on employment by retired people and students. In this study, residents were asked if they thought their jobs depended on airport activity. The majority of the given answers were 'no' (467) (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Dependence on the airport activity. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

#### 4.4.2. Impact on the Tourist Sector

It is important to highlight that tourists did not mention tourism and related words as a positive or negative effect at any moment. They focused their explanations on the implications. Tourists consider that tourism is equal to the economy and employment. As explained in the methodology section, after the pre-test, the questionnaire was modified. The objective was to know why the tourist did not mention the term 'tourism' either as an advantage or as a disadvantage. In order to more easily understand their answers, two transcriptions are shown.

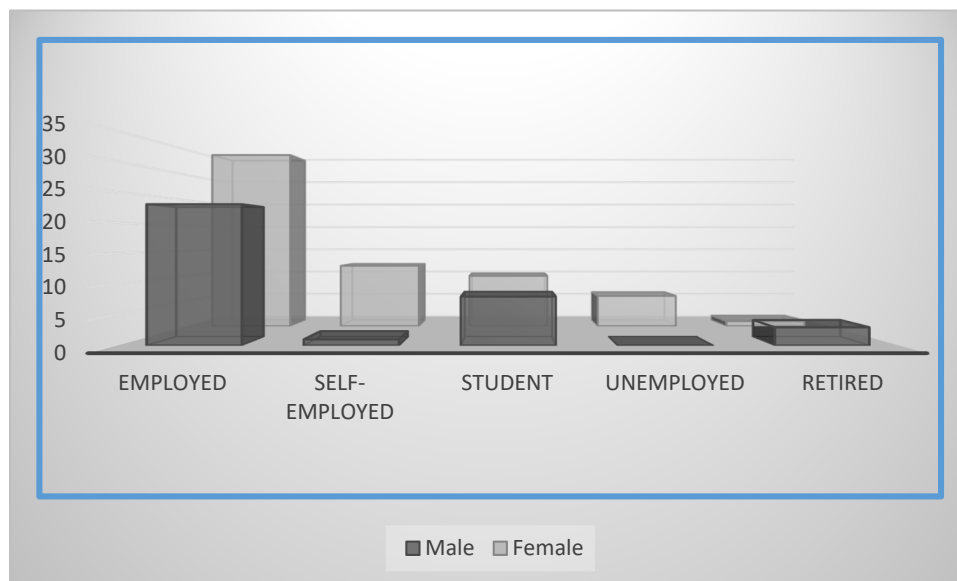
Tourist case 100:

*"Tourism is a complex concept. I'm not 'tourism', I'm not a number, I'm a human . . . Tourism is an empty bubble. By pricking the bubble, you get money, development, jobs . . . Tourism as a concept of movement of people does not mean anything, it is important when we talk about the money I've spent or the tips I've left [ . . . ]"*

Tourist case 75:

*"The relevant for tourism are the implications. This airport has great implications for the community and If I'm here is because of it"*

For a visual representation of residents' perceptions in relation to the tourist impacts generated by the airport, the reader is referred to Figure 7.



**Figure 7.** Mentions of tourist impact among residents. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

The results showed that, despite the importance of the tourist industry in the province of Málaga, the effects on this sector were not considered by some groups. Self-employed (1.02%) and unemployed (0%) men did not mention tourism as an impact; however, women were more optimistic in this sense, and they included tourism as one of the main impacts generated by the airport in the city. In this sense, locals affirmed that the airport was a tool available in the city although they admitted that they did not know many details about its operation or employment possibilities. In one of the interviews, a resident (man-62 years old-employed) explained that despite the fact that he worked as a driver in a rent-a-car, he had doubts about the functioning of the airport. He asserted that he did not know if the airport was a private or public company. This is in contrast to some tourist's perceptions about how little locals value the elements when they have them at their disposal.

#### 4.4.3. Economic Impact

As Figures 8 and 9 indicate, no significant variance existed between residents and tourists. They did not deny the economic impact of Málaga Airport, indeed, all transcribed interviews directly reported benefits for the economy of the city. It is important to state that tourists who had already been in the city years before, perceived an increase in the economic capacity of the city. An increase in investments was also a concern reported by both groups. In addition, residents affirmed that the airport had allowed businessmen and women to take the city of Málaga into consideration for opening new projects. Some quotations provided by interviewees are shown:

Tourist case 35:

*"The airport has attracted many citizens from other countries"*

Tourist case 96:

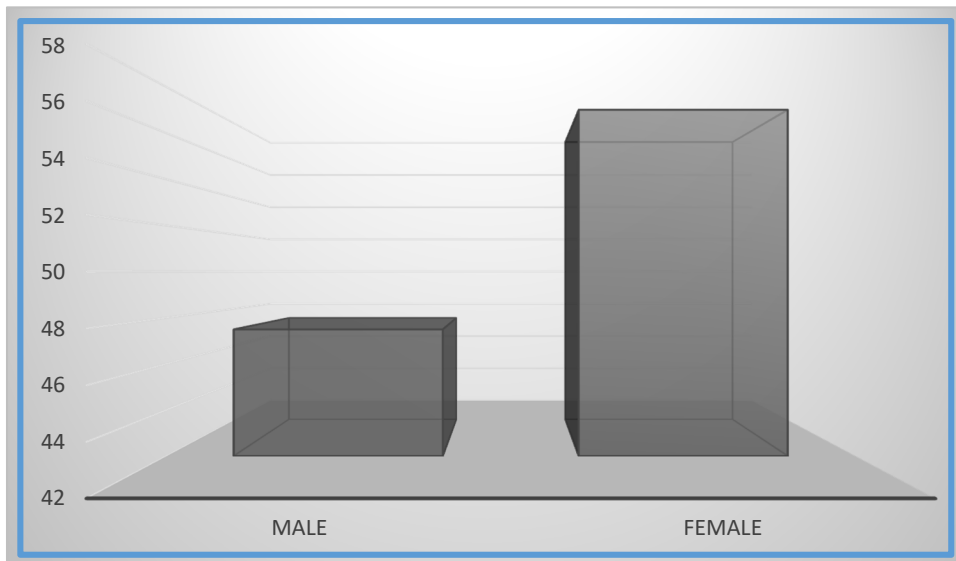
*"The economy of the city revolves around the airport"*

Resident case 3:

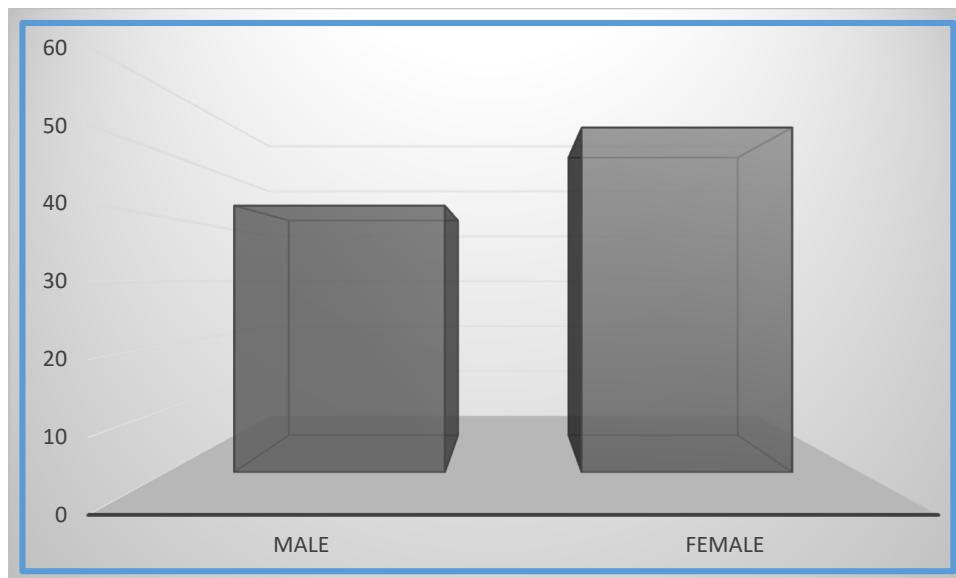
*"We have to assume that the airport is an engine of the economy"*

Resident case 583:

*"The airport brings money"*



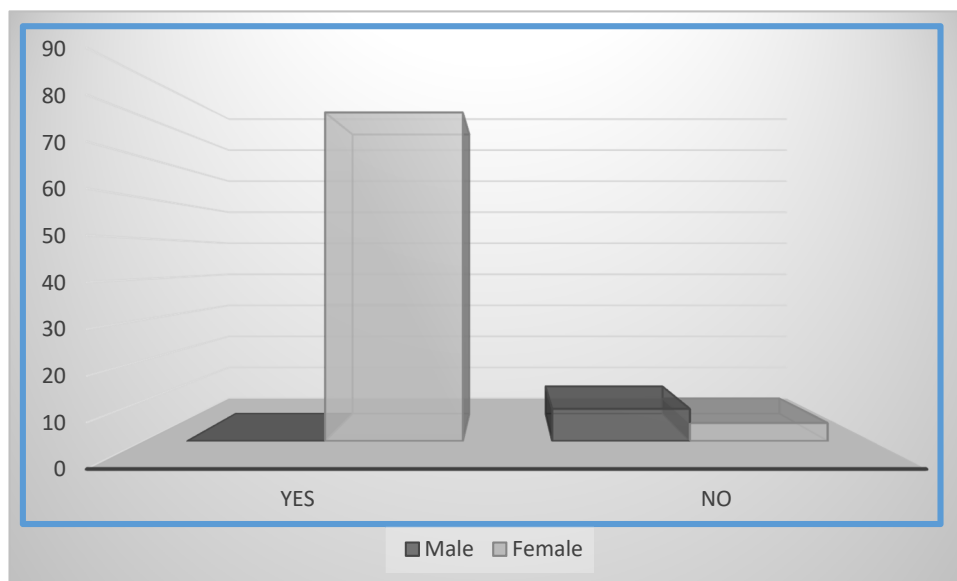
**Figure 8.** Mentions of economic impact among residents (gender distribution). Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.



**Figure 9.** Mentions of economic impact among tourists (gender distribution). Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

#### 4.4.4. Environmental Impact

As well as other risks, pollution is a major concern for many territories. A significant main effect of gender on the environmental impact was found. Our findings show (Figure 10) that men were still not completely conscious about the environmental impact that could cause the airport. Furthermore, tourist men were more concerned about this issue than resident men. With regard to the distribution by occupation, female students and working men in the group of residents were the clusters with a high percentage.



**Figure 10.** Mentions of environmental impact distributed by gender and residence. Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

#### 4.4.5. Improvement and Evaluation Comments for the Sustainable Development of the City at the Tourism Level

Throughout this section, we show a description of the ideas or changes proposed by both, residents and tourists. The answers were categorized as specified in Table 6. To facilitate and illustrate the comprehension of the results, the authors have summarized the opinion with higher frequency.

**Table 6.** Thematic analysis.

Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
Employment	Quality Salary	<p><i>"The residents and the tourist workers are friendly but inexperienced. Specialized courses should be offered to develop new management skills."</i></p> <p><i>"Workers in the tertiary sector have precarious salaries and low-skilled."</i></p> <p><i>"Frustration . . . A bottle of wine is more expensive than my salary."</i></p>
Airport	New routes New issuing countries	<p><i>"Improve connections with Japan and the USA."</i></p> <p><i>"Remove some low-cost routes. A tourist is good for the city but a rich tourist is better."</i></p> <p><i>"There is a world to discover. For example, Saudi Arabia remains an untapped market."</i></p> <p><i>"Low-cost is damaging the competitiveness of our tourist sector. We need quality, not quantity."</i></p> <p><i>"To avoid the seasonality."</i></p>
Decentralization	Tourism Tourist Offer	<p><i>"The interior of the province is more beautiful than the capital. It is worth visiting it."</i></p> <p><i>"If you look for a destination, Málaga is the best one. The only snag is that they don't know what they have. They should promote its brand within and outside its borders."</i></p> <p><i>"Málaga needs to include wine tourism, agrotourism, and inland tourism in the tourist offer."</i></p>
Cleaning	Streets Beaches	<p><i>"Sun and beach are not enough when your beaches are dirty."</i></p> <p><i>"Streets need to be cleaned."</i></p> <p><i>"The weather is perfect however the beaches are the worse in Andalusia...crowded beaches [..]"</i></p>
Language	English	<p><i>"I can't understand how they don't speak English."</i></p>

Table 6. Cont.

Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
Environment	Polluting Emissions	<i>“Cars should be electric. We would reduce greenhouse gas emissions”</i> <i>“The nearest area around the airport could be a great forest. Now, there are only cars and industrial warehouses”</i>
New lines	Tourism products	<i>“Some residents think we are looking for the same services as in the 90s.”</i> <i>“To continue with the idea of a new culture rebirth of the city should be a great step.”</i> <i>“In the historical centre, Larios Street has lost its identity. Traditional businesses and crafts were closed, and multinational brands dominate the street.”</i>

Source: Authors from NVivo Pro.

#### 4.4.6. Impacts on Other Territories

As previously mentioned in the literature review, airports have a large impact on closer territories. In the case of Andalusia and despite the fact that every province has an airport—except Huelva—the figures for the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport surpasses the growth by a large margin with respect to its neighbors. In the not compulsory questions (only 50.8% of the participants answered them) and with multi-option answers, the respondents were asked about this issue. At the end of each question, the respondent could justify his/her answer. The present research’ interviewees affirmed that the tourism of Andalusia relied exclusively on the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport. To establish whether there were impacts on other territories and after the pilot study was corrected, the possible options were divided into six groups. Particular attention shall be given to the impact on Seville, the capital of Andalusia. Residents and tourists stated that the airport had a positive impact on almost all nearby cities. It is also important to keep in mind the number of answers in favor of the assessment ‘Positive and Economic Impact’. This means that there was a certain consciousness about the relevance of the airport out of town (see Tables 7–13).

Table 7. Impacts on the city of Seville.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	P Economic and Tourist I	171	21.7	21.7
	N Economic and Tourist I	85	10.8	10.8
	No effects	119	15.1	15.1
Valid	Only Economic Impacts	18	2.3	2.3
	Only Tourist Impacts	7	0.9	0.9
	Do not know/Do not answer	388	49.2	49.2
	Total	789	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors from SPSS.

Table 8. Impacts on the city of Jaén.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	P Economic and Tourist I	173	21.9	21.9
	No effects	170	21.5	21.5
Valid	Only Economic Impacts	50	6.3	6.3
	Only Tourist Impacts	7	0.9	0.9
	Do not know/Do not answer	388	49.2	49.2
	Total	789	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors from SPSS.



**Table 9.** Impacts on the city of Huelva.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Valid	P Economic and Touristic I	169	21.4	21.4
	No effects	198	25.1	46.6
	Only Economic Impacts	18	2.3	2.3
	Only Tourist Impacts	15	1.9	1.9
	Do not know/Do not answer	388	49.2	49.2
	Total	789	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors from SPSS.

**Table 10.** Impacts on the city of Granada.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Valid	P Economic and Tourist I	283	35.9	35.9
	N Economic and Tourist I	28	3.5	3.5
	No effects	47	6.0	6.0
	Only Economic Impacts	42	5.3	5.3
	Do not know/Do not answer	388	49.2	49.2
	Total	789	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors from SPSS.

**Table 11.** Impacts on the city of Córdoba.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Valid	P Economic and Tourist I	253	32.1	32.1
	N Economic and Tourist I	17	2.2	2.2
	No effects	87	11.0	11.0
	Only Economic Impacts	33	4.2	4.2
	Do not know/Do not answer	398	50.4	50.4
	Total	789	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors from SPSS.

**Table 12.** Impacts on the city of Cádiz.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Valid	P Economic and Tourist I	241	30.5	30.5
	N Economic and Tourist I	4	0.5	0.5
	No effects	113	14.3	14.3
	Only Economic Impacts	42	5.3	5.3
	Do not know/Do not answer	388	49.2	49.2
	Total	789	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors from SPSS.

**Table 13.** Impacts on the city of Almería.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
P Economic and Tourist I	197	25.0	25.0	25.1
N Economic and Tourist I	25	3.2	3.2	28.3
Valid No effects	145	18.4	18.4	46.6
Only Economic Impacts	33	4.2	4.2	50.8
Do not know/Do not answer	388	49.2	49.2	100.0
Total	789	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors from SPSS.

## 5. Discussion

This paper demonstrates that studies with a qualitative methodology can offer a very interesting point of view for the institutions that carry out the planning of tourism policies in the city of Málaga. In this regard, one of the limitations of this research is the inability to compare such results with others from different territories and airports. This results from the fact that there are no previous studies about this topic, from this perspective and with this methodology in the academic literature.

The present research aims to examine the impact of the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport from the perception of residents and tourists. In line with tourism impact studies, it may be concluded that the impacts generated by the airport could also be divided into different sections. In this case, the categories are employment, economic, tourist, and environmental.

In relation to the third research question, the data show that residents and tourists have different points of view about negative impacts. On the one hand, residents are concerned about pollution and noise, the poor quality of the labor market, and mass tourism. On the other hand, tourists, despite the fact that they are concerned about pollution, state in a high percentage of cases that the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport does not have negative effects. Both perceptions illustrate two different and interesting points of view. The reason for these differences might be explained by the fact that tourists have their jobs in their countries of residence but the environment is a responsibility for all of us [129]. The pollution is a global issue and has been discussed by a great number of authors in academic literature. Further studies must be done to show local people how to restore their natural habitat. In this regard, although there are authors who consider that tourism growth can be used as a tool for reducing pollution [130], the present paper shows the negative side of this increase. The perceptions of residents and tourists are in agreement with Choi and Siraka [131] or Andereck et al. [105] when affirming that activities in relation to tourism can cause noise, the destruction of the natural soil and erosion. In relation to future environmental campaigns, special attention must be paid to men. They are the least aware of the environmental effects.

In terms of positive impact, there is a general agreement between the two groups. The responses include impacts on the local economy, the development, and services. The differences lie in the concept of tourist impact and international recognition. Although residents do not mention international recognition, it is undeniable that an airport makes the international community to situate the city on the map. Particular attention is paid to the definition of tourist impact for tourists. In this sense, this paper presents an innovative view of tourism from the tourist's perception. The overwhelming majority of tourist respondents do not consider the positive or negative impact on the tourism sector. Tourists affirm that tourism is not understood by itself but by the transactions resulting from its activity.

In relation to the personal benefits or advantages and disadvantages, tourists highlight the employment (96.17%) and the economy (86.79%) in almost all cases, while residents state that the airport allows them to travel easily (43.59%). During interviews, a generic question emerged: Why residents do not observe a more positive impact on their personal and professional development? Once the data was analyzed we found the answer to this question. The airport is a great unknown. Some statements suggest that only stewardesses, pilots, and mechanics work at the airport and this

has not been borne out by reality. The employment of 222 respondents depends on the activity of the airport, however, the ease of travel is the most highly valued aspect.

The literature review shows that studies related to airports are concentrated on very specific topics. Economic impact studies are the most numerous. This type of quantitative research focuses on offering the purely economic aspect of airports, that is, the direct, indirect, and induced impacts [132]. In this sense, this study also shows that the qualitative analysis offers some direct impacts generated by the airport such as employment and some indirect ones as traffic jams.

Concerning the economic impact, both stakeholders are in agreement. The economy is an issue of concern to them and this is supported by the high percentage of mentions per case under study. In consequence, this also answers the research question on whether there are differences between the two groups.

It is important to mention that mass tourism is of concern to residents. Under their perceptions, the airport is responsible for low-cost tourism. They conceptualize the 'low-cost tourist' as "the one who leaves no profit in the city but uses public services and infrastructures."

Previous studies have emphasized the low-cost airlines' capacity to attract a greater number of tourists [133]. However, this analysis found evidence for one very important aspect. Residents believe that these low-cost airlines are harming the city and the tourism sector by attracting a 'low quality' tourist. Despite that, recent research suggests that these companies offer a wide range of advantages such as affordable fares and many routes [134]. While these academic results appear to contradict the residents' opinions, both can be easily explained. Each person can play the role of resident or tourist depending on the circumstances and based on that role, perceptions can be totally different. What matters to us as tourists may not be relevant from the resident's point of view and vice versa. The airport and the local government must carry out appropriate planning for the city. They should prevent the resident from being intoxicated by tourism due to poor resource management.

In terms of impacts generated in other provinces, the findings provide very valuable data from the perceptions of residents and tourists. Although not all locals answered this question, those who did it offered a representative distribution of the residents of the city of Málaga. As mentioned in previous sections, Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport receives more than 19 million passengers each year, however, not all of them stay and spend their money in the city. A future line of research should focus on why this tourism goes to another city. The high percentages show that both residents and tourists are aware of this issue. In relation to tourists, they recognize that if they want to go to Granada or Seville, surely their best option for price and comfort is to fly to Málaga, and residents, for their part, claim to be witnesses of how buses full of tourists depart from the airport towards other cities.

To conclude the questionnaires and the interviews, the respondents were asked about improvements or other aspects that could contribute to sustaining tourism development. The findings range from improvements in the quality of the beaches to increasing connections with other countries such as Japan or Saudi Arabia. The issue of low wages and low-quality jobs is very important, as is the training of workers. There is abundant space for further progress in analyzing the tourist decentralization. In this sense, tourists value the product that Málaga offers and affirms that it can be key to end the masses that trouble so many of the residents.

## 6. Conclusions

In this study, the main goal was to gather, through the implementation of qualitative methodology, the residents and tourists' perceptions about the impact of the Málaga Costa del Sol Airport in the city of Málaga. This is the main contribution since qualitative impact research is an issue almost ignored in the academic literature. Qualitative research is not a compliment but an important part of academic research so it allows us to understand the linkages between processes and findings.

One difficulty with this approach is the large amount of data involved in the research. The transcription, codification, and categorization should be assessed completely objectively. In this

regard, this study emphasizes the need for more academic contributions to this approach to compare the impacts on other countries around the world.

The limitations of the present study naturally include the sample size and the territorial approach. It would be interesting to extend the sample, including all tourists' perceptions and the opinion of other stakeholders involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the tourist activity. There are plenty of practical applications for the results of this study. Future work should further develop new quantitative and qualitative measurement models. Models that include opinions and offer insight into social and emotional. The goal is to draw out perceptions and to explore the characteristics of settings and culture.

As indicated in other previous studies, an airport has impacts of a very diverse nature. In fact, as we have been able to examine, there are a number of effects that are produced by the airport's activity and others that are produced indirectly. The studies that analyze the economic impact present in most cases positive aspects, while those that mention the environment highlight the negative effects of airports. One of the possible solutions could be to reach an agreement between the airport and the local government on environmental issues. This would be based on encouraging private individuals and airport businesses to purchase electric cars. Pollution can also have its origin in the emissions produced by the airplanes, however, the fact that the beaches are crowded and dirty, the low salaries, or that the workers do not know English are not impacts generated directly by the airport. These may be attributed to a number of factors, including the poor management of resources.

Literature tends to ask tourists about their perceptions in relation to the city, new tourist products, hotels, however, they are not asked about their perceptions in accordance with what they should do to help or what they may not be doing well at destinations. International tourists are the ones who invest the most in the city so their opinions are a key factor in the development of five star services. If the airport operates new routes looking for a quality tourist, it is essential that the city works on services that meet the unique needs of these clients. It is not possible that in a city such as Málaga the tourists keep complaining that the professionals of the sector do not speak English. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the lack of knowledge about airport activity. If the residents think that it is necessary to know English and they do not master the language, it is reasonable to believe that they do not value the airport as a source of employment. This research is contrary to the idea that citizens and infrastructures go separate ways [71]. Although it is recognized that there is still much room for improvement in this respect, institutions are striving to broaden the cultural offer and services, not only for tourists but for residents.

In recent years, particularly in the last ten years, tourism has gone through a period of considerable change. The existence of mass tourism puts pressure on the city elements and while institutions focus on how to innovate new strategies to attract more tourists, they are not paying attention to airports. These infrastructures are the main entrances to any country, however, the vast majority of academic papers research about their economic impacts. In addition, this is particularly important but not in the case of Spain because airports are a public service and not just a business. Spanish airports are one of the few public services that obtain great financial gains since the origin of the public service must be to meet a need and not to obtain an economic benefit. Even so, it is a very profitable and solvent public company.

The sustainable development of the city of Málaga requires practical and innovative solutions. Therefore, what is at stake is if the current tourist model will be able to manage this sector in a sustainable way. Residents have already stated their opinions; the tourist model of the city based on quantity must be replaced by an integrative model that contributes to understanding and prevents the last stage of Doxey [118], the irritation. Additionally, as stated by Addie, airports should be a key element [16]. The Airport of Málaga Costa del Sol should be a tool to control tourism in destinations in which touristification is gaining ground.

To better understand this aspect, it is necessary for researchers to focus their efforts on deepening this issue. If tourism is becoming a serious problem, can we find solutions in the local population? We have shown that residents have many proposals and are very knowledgeable about what the

town needs; therefore, we agree with Maguire [113] and Besculides et al. [117] that the opinion and perception of the residents have to be taken into account.

Residents need to see the opportunities as tourists see them, and tourists must perceive the residents as their neighbors. They have to look at the city as if it was their hometown and they have to learn that tourism is not just about money and jobs, it is about culture, differences, synergies, understanding, and relationships.

The airport for its part might get closer to the city. The airport in the case under study is not an isolated element; it is an infrastructure that supports the main economic activity of the province of Málaga which is the tourism sector. This infrastructure must offer opportunities and with constant communication with other sectors, needs to maintain a united front of the low-cost tourism in the city.

It is useful at the present time to look at other countries' experiences in the battle against the quantity, Málaga needs quality and it is a battle no city can afford to lose.

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