

1 **Residents' perceptions of airport construction impacts: A negativity bias**  
2 **approach**

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5 *Tourism Management, Volume 77, April 2020*  
6  
7

8 **Abstract**

9 Airports have significant implications for regional and local tourism development, so  
10 their impacts need to be assessed. Based on in-depth interviews with local residents,  
11 this study examined the effects of an airport development project in Mexico.  
12 Negativity bias theory was adopted as a theoretical framework to gain a fuller  
13 understanding of host communities' perceptions. In accordance with this theory, even  
14 though the economic impacts of the airport's construction are recognised as positive,  
15 its environmental and social effects on locals' everyday lives are perceived more  
16 negatively. As a result, most locals interviewed do not support the airport project. This  
17 is because, in line with negativity bias theory, when perceived negative impacts  
18 outweigh positive ones, a holistic evaluation that integrates negative and positive  
19 events will ultimately be unfavourable. Practical implications in terms of public  
20 consultation, perceived impacts and tourism development are discussed.

21 **Keywords:** airport impacts; residents' perceptions; negativity bias theory; New  
22 Mexico City International Airport

23 **Introduction**

24 Airports have extremely important implications for regional and local tourism  
25 development. Air transport is a vital element of tourism activities as it provides fast,  
26 comfortable transfers of tourists to their destinations (Fernández et al., 2018).  
27 Technological advances in air transport have recently resulted in more frequent  
28 travelling, and the time to get from home to highly attractive tourist destinations has  
29 been significantly reduced (Andriotis, 2018). As a result, airport construction or  
30 expansion has increased in order to satisfy tourists' demand for air transport, but the  
31 subsequent negative and positive impacts have intensified around the world. Despite  
32 the significant interrelationship between air transport and tourism, a limited amount  
33 of published research has examined the effects of air transport from a tourism  
34 perspective (Fernández et al., 2018).

35 The impacts of airport development projects, in general, have been the object of  
36 widespread scholarly attention. According to Franssen et al. (2004), over 500  
37 community surveys have been conducted in English that focused on operating

38 airports between 1943 and 2000. A Scopus database search in January 2019 for the  
39 keywords 'airport' and 'impact' in titles, abstracts and/or keywords found more than  
40 5,000 papers. Almost half of them belong to engineering studies and the rest to the  
41 social, environmental, computer and earth and planetary sciences.

42 However, the bidirectional relationship between tourism and airports, as well as their  
43 mutual impacts, has received little attention. A search using 'tourism', 'airport' and  
44 'impact' located only 182 articles of which half adopted a social sciences perspective.  
45 In addition, some of these studies do not refer specifically to tourism's impacts on  
46 airports or airports' impacts on tourism. Instead, the majority focus on issues such as  
47 the effects of airport technology on traveller satisfaction (Bogicevic et al., 2017),  
48 impact of low-cost carriers on domestic tourism (Tsui, 2017) and evaluation of  
49 tourism demand's effect on airport expansion (Eugenio-Martin, 2016).

50 Prior research has found that airport impact studies have focused largely on the  
51 effects of airports in operation or undergoing relocation or expansion. Researchers  
52 have primarily explored airports' impacts on regional economic development and  
53 local health conditions. However, from a sustainable development perspective,  
54 airports' economic, social and environmental impacts are equally important (Li & Loo,  
55 2016), and they need to be considered in decision-making processes.

56 Furthermore, airport development projects' effects have been studied based on a  
57 narrow perspective. More specifically, the existing literature shows that the  
58 theoretical and empirical understanding of how these impacts are perceived by locals  
59 and why they feel this way is underexplored. From a sociological perspective, little is  
60 known about host communities' perceptions of airports. Since projects' planning and  
61 construction stages have different effects compared with their operation stage  
62 (Interorganizational Committee on Principles and Guidelines for Social Impact  
63 Assessment (ICGP), 1995), more research is needed on local residents' perceptions of  
64 airports' impacts during the construction stage. Recent literature reviews have  
65 revealed that the effects of airports in operation have been widely studied (Cidell,  
66 2015; Dimitriou, 2018; Franssen et al., 2004; Kazda et al., 2017; Lawton & Fujiwara,  
67 2016; Tomkins et al., 1998; Tsui et al., 2019), but analyses of their impacts during the  
68 construction stage have been quite limited. The development of new and/or adoption  
69 of existing theoretical frameworks could thus provide a deeper understanding of  
70 locals' perceptions in this context.

71 In order to advance the theoretical development of research on perceived airport  
72 impacts, the present study adopted a conceptual framework based on negativity bias  
73 theory. This theory recognises that humans tend to give greater weight to negative  
74 situations rather than to positive ones and that negative experiences play a more  
75 prominent role in overall evaluations of events. This theoretical framework could  
76 facilitate a fuller understanding how locals perceive the New Mexico City International  
77 Airport (NMCIA) development. In addition, an approach based on negativity bias

78 theory contributes to expanding the literature on both air transport and tourism. The  
79 literature review conducted for this study confirmed that no researcher has used this  
80 theory to evaluate the importance of residents' negative perceptions of tourism's  
81 impacts. One possible exception is Scholtz and Saayman's (2018) exploration of locals'  
82 role in a scuba diving tourism system, which found that negative perceptions of social  
83 impacts can generate negativity towards tourism activities.

84 In studies of airports' social and environmental effects, host communities' perceptions  
85 are especially significant because locals are some of the main stakeholders affected by  
86 airport construction. Tourism and tourism-related interventions are characterised by  
87 close relationships with various groups and individuals. Sautter and Leisen (1999)  
88 argue that all tourism stakeholders interested in or affected by tourism should  
89 participate in and collectively manage tourism activities. Therefore, regardless of each  
90 stakeholder's relative power or interest, these individuals have a right to be  
91 considered as an end in themselves and not as a means to some other end.

92 All stakeholders must thus actively participate in determining the future path of  
93 tourism (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). However, due to differences in stakeholders' power,  
94 objectives and expectations, local community participation can face challenges arising  
95 from the opposing interests of both private sector and government entities'  
96 representatives (Tosun, 2016). A community-based approach, nonetheless, requires  
97 that local people be active in decision-making processes so that they will be able to  
98 ensure their social wellbeing is safeguarded (Merinero-Rodríguez & Pulido-  
99 Fernández, 2016).

100 Locals' perceptions can be significantly shaped by these citizens' use of airports, with  
101 residents who frequently use airports having stronger positive perceptions. Halpern  
102 and Bråthen's (2011) study compared Norwegian residents' opinions of two airports:  
103 a small-sized facility that serves a relatively remote region and a medium-sized  
104 airport that serves a relatively accessible region. The cited authors found positive  
105 opinions were reported by 98% of respondents who had at some point travelled by  
106 air from their local airport. Different opinions about and support for airports are likely  
107 to be present in populations that do not use airports. For instance, in countries such as  
108 Mexico, where only 30% of its population has ever travelled by airplane (Parametría,  
109 2017), opinions about and support for airports – whether under construction or in  
110 operation – can vary, but this assertion needs further research.

111 The vast majority of studies of airport impacts have been undertaken in developed  
112 countries, including, among others, Amsterdam (Franssen et al., 2004), the United  
113 States (Espey & Lopez, 2000), the United Kingdom (Lawton & Fujiwara, 2016) and  
114 Norway (Halpern & Bråthen, 2011). Only a few researchers have focused on airport  
115 development projects in developing countries (see, for example, Kazda et al., 2017).  
116 Thus, these projects' impacts on the latter countries have overall been insufficiently  
117 explored.

118 To fill the aforementioned gaps, the present study examined local residents'  
119 perceptions of the NMCIA development project's economic, social and environmental  
120 effects. From the central government's perspective, this airport was planned to be  
121 Mexico's largest and most important infrastructure project in recent decades and a  
122 major driver of significant regional social and economic development. In terms of  
123 tourism, the airport was expected to increase tourists' connectivity with the  
124 destination and to promote international tourism investment. During the NMCIA's  
125 construction stage, however, various environmental and social concerns were raised  
126 by different stakeholders, leading to local protests against the project and residents'  
127 demand that it be cancelled.

128 In this context, the current research's results make a significant contribution in five  
129 areas. First, this study sought to expand the literature on airport impacts by focusing  
130 on the perceived effects of an airport project during its construction stage rather than  
131 during its operation or expansion stage. Thus the findings could help project  
132 managers foresee and prevent undesirable airport impacts.

133 Second, various theoretical frameworks have been used to explore residents' attitudes  
134 towards tourism – mainly social exchange theory, social representations and  
135 emotional solidarity. According to various scholars (see, for example, Andriotis &  
136 Vaughan (2003), Fredline & Faulkner (2000), Monterrubio & Andriotis (2014) and  
137 **Woosnam** (2011, 2012)), these frameworks have been found useful for predicting  
138 tourism attitudes, but other frameworks that could potentially be of value for  
139 understanding residents' attitudes have not yet been applied. Thus, to address gaps in  
140 prior research, the present study aimed to provide a unique understanding of local  
141 residents' perceptions of airport development projects' impacts based on a negativity  
142 bias theory approach. By testing this theory, the research was expected to provide a  
143 better understanding of how airport impacts are perceived and how local residents  
144 weigh benefits and costs.

145 Third, the current study used a holistic approach by moving beyond airports' impacts  
146 on regional development and health issues and instead reporting airports' economic,  
147 sociocultural and environmental effects. Fourth, the vast majority of airport impact  
148 research has analysed cases in developed countries, in which local people's significant  
149 mobility has played an important role in defining positive perceptions. In contrast,  
150 this study explored how airport impacts are perceived in a developing country. Last,  
151 the host community affected by the airport construction in question has not been  
152 asked whether they agree with the project or what form such a large-scale  
153 development should take. This research was among the first attempts to explore this  
154 community's opinions.

## 155 **Literature review**

156 Airports fulfil important functions in regional economic development, **particularly in**  
 157 **relation to tourism**. These facilities can act as both transport hubs and growth poles in  
 158 regional economies (Hakfoort et al., 2001). Various studies have found that airport  
 159 expansions are positively related to increases in international tourist flows (Eugenio-  
 160 Martin, 2016). In particular, aviation infrastructure in developing countries reduces  
 161 travel time, which strengthens their tourism potential (Miller & Clarke, 2002).  
 162 Airports are thus an essential part of tourism demand and supply, reducing mobility  
 163 costs and increasing connectivity and regions' attractiveness (Dimitriou, 2018). Quite  
 164 recent studies have revealed that **airport-associated activities** and airline seating  
 165 capacity have a significant impact on tourism demand, particularly in small regions  
 166 and cities, **and thus generate greater economic activity overall** (Tsui et al., 2019).

167 **In regional contexts**, airports' benefits and costs in terms of development can be  
 168 direct, indirect or induced. On the positive side, benefits are related to employment  
 169 generation, productivity and income. Airports can be a region's largest employer,  
 170 especially of less-skilled workers, as well as being magnets for commercial  
 171 development and gateways to tourism (Robertson, 1995). Airport development or  
 172 expansion's value in terms of infrastructure, employment and subsequent region-wide  
 173 benefits, however, has been at local communities' expense (Cidell, 2015). **This cost is**  
 174 **due to airports' spatial scope**. According to Tomkins et al. (1998), many costs  
 175 associated with airports tend to be concentrated in the immediate local environment,  
 176 so their actual benefits at a local level are questionable (Cidell, 2015).

177 Airports' possible effects on local populations and regional development go well  
 178 beyond economic aspects. On the negative side, airports have important  
 179 environmental and social dimensions, so airport expansion and development projects  
 180 often provoke public debate because of their environmental and social costs (Lawton  
 181 & Fujiwara, 2016). These facilities' economic impacts are often perceived more  
 182 positively than their environmental and social effects because the latter tend to be  
 183 perceived more negatively. Li and Loo (2016) thus argue that, in terms of  
 184 sustainability, environmental and social impacts are as important as economic ones.  
 185 Therefore, airports' effects either during construction or expansion need to be  
 186 examined from diverse perspectives. Table 1 summarises the negative and positive  
 187 effects of airports' construction as reported in the literature.

188 **Table 1** Main impacts of airport operation, relocation or expansion.

| Impact          | Economic   | Environmental | Social   |
|-----------------|--|---------------|--|
| <i>Positive</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic growth (Li &amp; Loo, 2016; Robertson, 1995; Tveter, 2017)</li> <li>▪ Income (Hakfoort et al., 2001; Percoco, 2010)</li> <li>▪ Job creation (Appold &amp; Kasarda, 2013; Cidell, 2015; Hakfoort et al., 2001; Li &amp; Loo, 2016;</li> </ul> |               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to air transport (Halpern &amp; Bräthen, 2011; Tomkins et al., 1998)</li> <li>▪ Avoidance of passengers diverting to other airports (Li &amp; Loo, 2016)</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for shopping, tourism and leisure (Zimmermann et al., 2018)</li> </ul> |

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|                 |   |   |  |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
|                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percoco, 2010;</li> <li>Robertson, 1995;</li> <li>Tveter, 2017; Tomkins et al., 1998)</li> <li>▪ Market access (Glaeser et al., 2001)</li> <li>▪ Productivity (Glaeser et al., 2001)</li> <li>▪ Regional development (Halpern &amp; Bråthen, 2011; Percoco, 2010; Tveter, 2017; Van Wijk, 2011)</li> <li>▪ Tourism activity (Tsui et al., 2019; Eugenio-Martin, 2016)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional accessibility and connectivity (Halpern &amp; Bråthen, 2011; Salazar &amp; Gallart, 2017)</li> <li>▪ Resident location and retention (Halpern &amp; Bråthen, 2011)</li> <li>▪ Region's attractiveness (Dimitriou, 2018)</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>Negative</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Airport leakage (Suzuki et al., 2003)</li> <li>▪ Plan, design, operation and maintenance costs (Li &amp; Loo, 2016)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Air pollution (Li &amp; Loo, 2016; Schlenker &amp; Walker, 2016)</li> <li>▪ Aircraft noise (El-Fadel et al., 2002; Lawton &amp; Fujiwara, 2016; Li &amp; Loo, 2016; Rodríguez-Díaz et al., 2017; Sahrir et al., 2014; Tomkins et al., 1998; Wolfe et al., 2017)</li> <li>▪ Ground support vehicle emissions (Hu et al., 2009)</li> <li>▪ Habitat disturbance (Li &amp; Loo, 2016)</li> <li>▪ Waste (Li &amp; Loo, 2016)</li> <li>▪ Water pollution (Li &amp; Loo, 2016)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crowding (Hakfoort et al., 2001)</li> <li>▪ Land grabbing (Vázquez, 2018)</li> <li>▪ Changes in land usage (Rahayu et al., 2016)</li> <li>▪ Population growth (Glaeser et al., 2001; Tveter, 2017)</li> <li>▪ Public resistance and debate (Zimmermann et al., 2018)</li> <li>▪ Quality of life (Halpern &amp; Bråthen, 2011; Sahrir et al., 2014)</li> <li>▪ Residential property values (Batóg et al., 2019; Espey &amp; Lopez, 2000; Tomkins et al., 1998; Trojanek et al., 2017)</li> <li>▪ Road congestion (Li &amp; Loo, 2016; Tsui et al., 2019)</li> <li>▪ Health (Franssen et al., 2004; Sahrir et al., 2014; Wolfe et al., 2017; Yim et al., 2013)</li> </ul> |

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190 Most of the literature relevant to the present study has been largely focused on  
 191 airports' economic and health effects, especially regarding facilities already in  
 192 operation and undergoing expansion. In terms of health issues, researchers have  
 193 found that airports are associated with annoyance, sleep disturbance, higher levels of  
 194 stress, anxiety, depression, possible increased rate of hypertension, reduced  
 195 performance and higher incidences of myocardial infarction and stroke (Franssen et  
 196 al., 2004). **However, airports' impacts are not restricted to their operation since,**  
 197 similar to any other development project, these facilities go through stages that start  
 198 with planning and continue with construction, operation and maintenance (ICGP,  
 199 1995).

200 According to the ICGP (1995), development projects' social impacts will differ in each  
201 stage. In the planning stage, social effects actually begin the day the proposed  
202 development project is announced as residents' hopes and hostilities can both begin  
203 to grow. In the construction stage, actions take place, such as clearing land, building  
204 access roads, developing utilities and relocating people, so locals' reactions in favour  
205 or against the project are likely to emerge. Taking into consideration local individuals'  
206 opinions before and during airport construction is thus necessary as they may mean  
207 the project's success or failure.

208 To explore tourist-host relationships, prior studies have used various theoretical  
209 frameworks, including social exchange theory (Choi & Murray, 2010; Das & Sharma,  
210 2009; Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017; Vieira et al. 2016), social representation  
211 theory (Atzori et al., 2018; Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014; Paraskevaidis & Andriotis,  
212 2017) and emotional solidarity (Li & Wan, 2016; **Woosnam**, 2011, 2012; **Woosnam** &  
213 **Aleshinloye**, 2018). Social exchange theory specifically explores the social  
214 relationships that emerge through the exchange of tangible and/or intangible  
215 resources between individuals and groups in interactions. This theory posits that  
216 residents are more willing to enter into exchange with tourists if locals receive more  
217 benefits versus costs (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003).

218 Social representation theory, in turn, explores residents' representations and the  
219 effect these have on these individuals' perceptions of impacts, as well as taking into  
220 account locals' direct experiences, social interactions and various information sources  
221 (e.g. mass media) (Fredline, 2006). Finally, emotional solidarity is a theoretical  
222 framework that pays attention to how residents' bonding experiences with tourists  
223 can potentially influence locals' attitudes towards tourism (**Woosnam**, 2011).  
224 Empirical research on festivals has demonstrated that residents who identify  
225 emotionally with tourism tend to perceive festivals' impacts more positively (Li &  
226 Wan, 2016). In addition, locals' emotional solidarity with tourists explains a high  
227 degree of variance in how residents' perceive tourism's impacts (**Woosnam** &  
228 **Aleshinloye**, 2018).

229 Given that the aforementioned theoretical frameworks have been extensively tested in  
230 tourism contexts, the present study sought to go one step further by testing an  
231 understudied theoretical framework: negativity bias theory. This approach has  
232 seldom been applied in tourism research. To provide a clear framework for this  
233 study's results and discussion from the beginning, negativity bias theory is presented  
234 in greater detail in the following section.

### 235 **Negativity bias theory**

236 Negativity bias theory has largely been adopted in the field of psychology as a way to  
237 understand how individuals make overall evaluations and form general impressions  
238 about entities. According to Brannon et al. (2017), negativity bias is one of the most

239 prevalent phenomena in social psychology, and this concept is especially well  
240 established in research on impression formation. Negativity bias can be defined as ‘a  
241 greater impact of evaluatively negative [stimuli versus] ... equally intense positive  
242 stimuli on a subject’ (Peeters & Czapinski, 1990, p. 33).

243 As a conceptual framework, negative bias theory postulates that individuals’ innate  
244 predispositions and experiences produce an overall bias in humans towards giving  
245 greater weight to negative events, objects and situations. This theory hypothesises  
246 that, in the majority of situations, negative occurrences and experiences are more  
247 prominent, influential and dominant in combinations of positive and negative  
248 elements and that negative input is generally more influential than positive input is  
249 (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Individuals’ perceptions may thus be a mismatch for  
250 reality, yet both perceptions of development projects and their actual outcomes are  
251 vital in terms of determining policies’ implications (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2008).  
252 Negative perceptions of events must also be explored thoroughly.

253 Events, situations or people that are negatively perceived will have a greater impact  
254 on individuals than will positively perceived aspects of the same experiences or  
255 people. According to Kanouse and Hanson (1972), negative events and relationships  
256 tend to elicit stronger responses from evaluators and have a greater impact on  
257 individuals than positive events do. Baumeister et al. (2001) argue that this is because  
258 negative information requires more processing and contributes more strongly to the  
259 final impression of situations as compared to positive information. In addition,  
260 negative bias tends to be more potent because ‘bad events will have longer, [more]  
261 lasting and more intense consequences than good events [do]. In particular, the effects  
262 of good events should dissipate more rapidly than the effects of bad events’  
263 (Baumeister et al., 2001, p. 325). Unlike positives, which are generally not associated  
264 with irreversible positive consequences, negatives are often associated with  
265 irreversible negative consequences. Consequently, evaluators are more likely to place  
266 greater importance on and give heavier weight and consideration to negative  
267 information and assignment of blame than to positive information.

268 The negativity bias framework also recognises that impressions of individual  
269 attributes can differ from the overall impression of events or situations. Impressions  
270 based on a combination of positive and negative traits are more negative than can be  
271 predicted from the scaled values of each trait considered separately. Kanouse (1984)  
272 reports that, when people combine information, they weigh negative information  
273 more heavily than positive information, and events are evaluated as a whole more  
274 negatively than are the average of their parts. Rozin and Royzman (2001) explain  
275 further that:

276           According to the principle of negativity dominance, the holistic perception and  
277           appraisal of integrated negative and positive events (or objects, individuals,  
278           hedonic episodes, personality traits, etc.) is more negative than the algebraic



279 sum of the subjective values of those individual entities. ... In the purest  
280 condition, negativity dominance holds that the combination of events of equal  
281 but opposite subjective valence will be negative. (pp. 298–299)

282 Negative impressions may also be more inherently contagious, generalise more easily  
283 to neighbouring domains and be more resistant to elimination (Rozin & Royzman,  
284 2001). Regarding elimination or modification, Rothbart and Park (1986) have  
285 demonstrated that positive impressions require fewer negative observations to be  
286 reversed compared with negative impressions, which tend to be more difficult to  
287 disconfirm. Much research has been undertaken on negativity bias (Brannon et al.,  
288 2017), but the range of events and situations covered is still limited.

289 In terms of tourism studies, the adoption of negativity bias theory to explain tourism  
290 phenomena has been quite rare. It has mainly been used to explain tourists'  
291 behaviours, for example, salespeople's selling behaviour and its effects on tourists'  
292 shopping motivation and satisfaction while travelling (Chang et al., 2006). More  
293 recently, this theory was applied to explain how a single negatively evaluated travel  
294 experience can affect visitors' judgement in relation to their future travel decisions  
295 (Pavesi et al., 2016). The theory's postulations, however, have not been entirely  
296 supported by studies of tourism knowledge systems. Researchers (see, for example,  
297 Eitzinger and Wiedemann (2008)) have demonstrated that, in the case of trust in  
298 tourist destinations' safety, the presence of negative or risky information does not  
299 have a higher impact on trust than positive or no risk information. These findings,  
300 among others, confirm a need to explore more fully negativity bias theory's potential  
301 for explaining tourism-related phenomena, including airports and the associated  
302 tourism impacts.

### 303 **The New Mexico City International Airport (NMCIA) Project**

304 Mexico's central government planned for the NMCIA to be its largest and most  
305 important infrastructure project over the next decades. As the NMCIA aimed to be one  
306 of the three largest airports worldwide, officials expected it to create jobs, investment  
307 and income; to support tourism connectivity and international investment; and to  
308 promote regional social and economic development. In the airport's first phase, it  
309 would have 1 terminal and 3 simultaneously operating runways servicing around  
310 191,000 passengers daily (aerpuerto.gob.mx, 10/02/2018).

311 The airport's construction started in September 2015, covering an area of 5,000  
312 hectares mostly in Texcoco, a small city with a population of 240,749 located 5  
313 kilometres (km) away from Mexico City's currently saturated international airport  
314 (Consejo Estatal de Población, 2015). The city's neighbourhoods – some extremely  
315 close to the new airport project – vary in terms of population density and economic  
316 activities. Overall, around 42% of the city's population experiences some level of  
317 poverty and lack of public health services (Moreno, 2015).

318 Despite the benefits publicised by the central government, the project's present and  
319 future environmental costs became a significant concern among locals (Moreno,  
320 2017). Researchers estimated that around 250 endemic and migrant bird species  
321 would be severely affected by the airport construction (Fernández, 2018). Studies also  
322 demonstrated that, due to the chemical composition of the land on which the airport  
323 was being constructed (i.e. the Texcoco lake area), the new facilities' construction and  
324 maintenance would experience severe engineering problems. These would generate a  
325 significant increase in the project's cost and eventually lead to its abandonment in due  
326 course (Ortiz & Gutiérrez, 2015). Other issues were also identified, such as potential  
327 water table reduction, archaeological harm, mine overexploitation and increased  
328 floods and temperatures in urban areas. As a result, locals and various non-  
329 governmental organisations demanded the project be cancelled (Manifiesto, n.d.).

330 Cancellation of the airport's construction was one of the main campaign promises  
331 made by the president elected in 2018. Several demonstrations and road blockades  
332 took place as manifestations of people's disagreement with the development project.  
333 However, other groups – particularly those associated with the aviation and  
334 construction industries – expressed their support for the project (Cantera, 2018). Its  
335 cancellation would negatively impact tourism investment, tourist connectivity, the  
336 tourism industry and especially the aviation industry due to higher operating costs  
337 (Gascón, 2018).

338 The airport's cancellation or continuation thus became a matter requiring public  
339 consultation. A total of just over 1 million citizens in different parts of Mexico  
340 participated in the 4-day referendum in late October 2018. A full 69.9% voted to  
341 cancel the proposed airport and instead to upgrade the city's existing facilities and the  
342 airport in Toluca 65 km from Mexico City's international airport and, simultaneously,  
343 to build two new runways at the Santa Lucía military base (*Mexico News Daily*, 2018).  
344 The new airport's construction was in the end officially cancelled by the newly elected  
345 president. At the time of the cancellation, 32% of the total airport construction had  
346 been completed, including one-third of the control tower and parts of the terminal  
347 and runways (Valle, 2018). The concerns associated with the project's termination  
348 included the loss of investment and existing jobs, broken contracts with constructor  
349 and suppliers and the need to restore the area to its original environmental conditions  
350 (Quadri, 2018).

## 351 **Methodology**

352 The vast majority of studies on airport impacts have been quantitative in nature,  
353 requiring surveys of relatively large samples of people residing in areas surrounding  
354 airports (Franssen et al., 2004; Halpern & Bråthen, 2011; Zimmermann et al., 2018).  
355 While quantitative methods facilitate the development of representative samples and  
356 generalisations of findings, qualitative studies can provide alternative ways to  
357 understand informants' perceived realities. According to Bryman (2004), qualitative

358 research stresses understanding the social world based on an examination of  
 359 participants' interpretations of that world.

360 The present study, therefore, sought to analyse local residents' perceptions of the  
 361 NMCIA's actual economic, social and environmental impacts during its construction  
 362 stage. A total of 23 locals (i.e. 11 women and 12 men) were interviewed in Texcoco  
 363 from August to October 2018. The sample size was determined based on the  
 364 theoretical saturation criterion. Residents' socioeconomic characteristics are likely to  
 365 influence their perceptions and attitudes towards certain forms of development  
 366 (Harrill, 2004), so special attention was paid to incorporating locals with a variety of  
 367 socioeconomic profiles. This included variations in age, occupation, educational level,  
 368 marital status, residence length and native status (see Table 2).

369 **Table 2** Informants' profile

| Variable          | Category  | Number | Variable                 | Category            | Number |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| <b>Gender</b>     |           |        | <b>Educational level</b> |                     |        |
|                   | Female    | 11     |                          | Postgraduate        | 7      |
|                   | Male      | 12     |                          | University          | 9      |
|                   |           |        |                          | High school         | 3      |
| <b>Age</b>        |           |        |                          | Middle school       | 3      |
|                   | 18-30     | 4      |                          | No formal education | 1      |
|                   | 31-45     | 9      | <b>Native status</b>     |                     |        |
|                   | 46-60     | 6      |                          | Native              | 10     |
|                   | Over 60   | 2      |                          | Non-native          | 13     |
| <b>Occupation</b> |           |        | <b>Residence length</b>  |                     |        |
|                   | Academic  | 7      |                          | 5-10                | 1      |
|                   | Housewife | 5      |                          | 11-20               | 2      |
|                   | Student   | 2      |                          | 21-30               | 5      |
|                   | Other     | 9      |                          | 31-40               | 5      |
|                   |           |        |                          | Over 40             | 10     |

370  
 371 Some informants were directly invited to participate based on the research team's  
 372 contacts, while others were recruited through snowball sampling. Respondents were  
 373 selected from different areas. The interview guide included five sections. These  
 374 covered informants' 1) personal information 2) awareness and opinions about the  
 375 public consultation process, as well as perceptions 3) the construction's benefits and  
 376 costs and 4) the future airport operation's expected positive and negative impacts.  
 377 The last section provided space for additional comments.

378 All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. **Given that**  
 379 **computer-aided analysis can often restrict rather than aid data analytical processes**

380 (Blismas & Dainty, 2003), all interview coding was done manually. For analytical  
381 purposes, each interview's content was categorised as part of the economic,  
382 environmental or social domain and of the positive or negative dimension, as specified  
383 in the existing literature. Descriptions, experiences, feelings and examples of these  
384 domains and dimensions were all extracted from each interview transcript for  
385 comparison and contrast with other interviews. During the analysis, particular  
386 attention was paid to the weight interviewees gave to both positive and negative  
387 impacts and to their overall perceptions in order to identify whether positivity or  
388 negativity dominated (Rozin & Royzman, 2001).

389 The interview schedule was designed based on the main themes that emerged from  
390 the literature review conducted for the current research, especially Halpern and  
391 Bråthen (2011), Li and Loo (2016) and Zimmermann et al.'s (2018) studies. The data  
392 collected were transcribed and thoroughly read and reread various times. Next, the  
393 data were coded into the themes and subthemes that emerged both from the  
394 literature review and the coding process. The objective was to impute meaning to all  
395 themes and subthemes and, simultaneously, provide meaningful interpretations of  
396 airport impacts. Data triangulation in the form of comparing primary findings with  
397 secondary ones was used to avoid falsified interpretations of the primary data, as well  
398 as to enhance the findings' validity and credibility. Finally, two informants were asked  
399 to confirm the results and indicate whether they agreed with the findings.

400 The informants' largest age group (i.e. 9 in total) was those between 31 and 40 years  
401 old. Seven worked for the education sector. These academicians' perspectives were  
402 important as they provided more critical, holistic views. The sample also included a  
403 dentist, singer, judge, secretary, businesswoman, business manager, agronomy  
404 engineer and auditor. The interviewees' educational profile varied, with the great  
405 majority (i.e. 16 in total) having at least a university degree and 1 individual with no  
406 formal education.

407 Two of the researchers were residents of the area under study. This helped them to  
408 remain frequently informed and updated through the media, namely, television, radio,  
409 Facebook and other social networks, about the airport's construction and its  
410 associated implications. Their place of residence also allowed them to listen to various  
411 people's opinions on a daily basis and witness various demonstrations primarily  
412 against the airport. Having identities that included being both researchers and  
413 residents was useful in terms of contextualising and understanding interviewees'  
414 responses. Because the researchers' own biases – in this case, their beliefs as residents  
415 – were expected to influence quite naturally the study and its findings (Bourke, 2014),  
416 the researchers' engaged continuously in reflexivity during the current research's  
417 different stages. In addition, one researcher was based in a developed country (i.e. the  
418 United Kingdom) and was unfamiliar with the local context, which helped to enhance  
419 further the research team's objectivity.

## 420 Findings

421 This section reports residents' perceptions of the NMCIA airport construction project  
422 and presents its perceived economic, environmental and social impacts. In addition,  
423 the following subsections explore how the interviewees perceive airport effects and  
424 their associated impacts on tourism development in terms of positivity and negativity.

### 425 *Economic impacts*

426 As previously mentioned, decisions to build airports are largely based on their  
427 potential economic benefits for the regions in question. The reported perceptions of  
428 residents in surrounding communities support the conclusion that, during  
429 construction, airports have an immediate impact, particularly regarding job creation.  
430 A 41-year-old woman who had lived all her life in the locality claimed that 'the airport  
431 construction has already created new jobs for people working in the construction  
432 industry. I even know engineers and architects who come from outside [the city] and  
433 have found a job in the airport.'

434 The existing literature on residents' attitudes towards tourism reveals that  
435 employment generation is strongly associated with support for tourism (Tosun,  
436 2002). However, the airport construction's economic benefits were not necessarily  
437 regarded as positive by locals. Those interviewed recognised that the types of jobs  
438 created were mostly for unskilled workers, such as construction workers and truck  
439 drivers. A locally-born 28-year-old singer described the situation this way: 'there are  
440 more men than women working at the airport, and this is because of rough work such  
441 as driving trucks for construction... I have not heard of any women being hired for  
442 this.'

443 Because gender continues to limit work expectations and opportunities in most of  
444 Mexico (Katz & Correia, 2001), jobs such as construction worker and truck driver are  
445 gender segregated since they are mainly for men. A 36-year-old male native to the  
446 community said, 'I think that, due to gender segregation, the jobs created by the  
447 airport are mostly for men. It is rare to see women working in construction. There is  
448 inequality between men and women in terms of airport employment benefits.' Local  
449 women, therefore, were largely excluded from the initial limited economic benefits of  
450 the airport construction project.

451 Interviewees also acknowledged that some of the high-ranking jobs were held by  
452 outsiders and not by locals. They asserted that construction companies bring their  
453 own professional personnel (e.g. engineers), leaving only hard and unqualified jobs  
454 for residents. This observation is supported by Tosun's (2002) research, which also  
455 confirmed that locals' socioeconomic alienation from tourism development's benefits  
456 can contribute to residents' negative attitudes towards the industry. Concurrently,  
457 economic benefits do not necessarily lead to positive attitudes towards infrastructural  
458 projects that will ultimately increase tourism activity.

459 The interviewees confirmed that local commercial activity on a micro level was  
460 enhanced by the construction project. Informal commercial activities are quite a  
461 common economic and sociocultural feature of Mexico (Mete et al., 2013). Some locals  
462 had opportunities to increase their family income by renting their houses or selling  
463 food in improvised stalls to temporary workers coming from outside the region. A 42-  
464 year-old female academic said:

465           Personally, I don't get any benefit from the airport now, but my children could  
466 work at the airport in the future ... [S]ome people living close to the  
467 construction are experiencing benefits now because some are renting their  
468 properties or preparing and selling food to workers, but these occupations are  
469 very temporary.

470 This type of income for residents, however, was not a planned benefit, so their ability  
471 to profit from the project was a matter of chance. Although the informants recognised  
472 that the construction was bringing certain economic benefits, they insisted that these  
473 gains were of questionable value as they were for unskilled employees and mostly for  
474 outsiders. The literature on tourism concurs with Andriotis and Vaughan (2004) and  
475 Wall and Mathieson's (2006) assertion that employment in the tourism industry is  
476 characterised by low-wage, part-time jobs and low-skilled workers, as well as being  
477 gender segregated. Out of the entire sample, 21 informants in some way  
478 acknowledged the project's economic benefits, but they were quite negative about  
479 them. For instance, a 32-year-old female homemaker living quite near to the  
480 development project claimed, 'I don't think the airport is bringing any benefits. It has  
481 brought [local] people only hard and dirty jobs, and the companies bring their own  
482 workers.'

483 Three informants also mentioned tourism-related benefits. A male resident who had  
484 lived in the city for six years said, 'from a tourism perspective, we would benefit a lot  
485 because we would have opportunities to learn other languages and get international  
486 connections.' A 21-year-old male student added, 'the airport will benefit [those in]  
487 tourism. It will benefit tourism organisations such as restaurants and also the  
488 archaeological sites near here.'

#### 489 *Environmental impacts*

490 Regarding the environmental dimension, the construction project's effects are  
491 assessed only negatively so that none of the environmental impacts reported were  
492 perceived as positive. Studies of attitudes towards tourism have found evidence that  
493 issues related to intangible sociocultural and environmental disadvantages cause  
494 residents to complain the most vociferously (Duffield & Long, 1981). These drawbacks  
495 can foster firm opposition to new tourism development projects (Pérez & Nadal,  
496 2005). The present findings concur with these assertions. In the airport construction

497 stage, environmental issues together with social concerns emerged as locals' most  
498 significant reservations.

499 Eighteen participants specifically reported environmental concerns. Even those  
500 individuals who use the existing airport twice or three times a year felt that damage to  
501 fauna and flora was of prime concern. These informants were particularly worried  
502 about the harm done to bird species inhabiting and migrating to the lake. Residents  
503 claimed that, since the beginning of the construction project, various bird species had  
504 disappeared from the area. A 52-year-old woman born in Texcoco acknowledged that  
505 some vendors had benefitted from the construction, but then she mentioned that  
506 'years ago lots of herons and ducks used to arrive. You could see flocks passing by the  
507 lake, but they don't arrive anymore because of the construction that has already been  
508 done for the airport.'

509 In addition, interviewees reported that the movement of material trucks along some  
510 busy roads had generated heavy traffic, noise and air pollution in different parts of the  
511 area. Deforestation and mining extraction were also mentioned as the project's  
512 negative consequences. Local discontent was also expressed by some residents with  
513 how hazardous wastes had been extracted from the construction site and removed  
514 and placed near quite populated areas. One informant said, 'I have observed that some  
515 mines in surrounding communities are being over extracted. I have also heard that  
516 dangerous wastes extracted from the airport are being carried to these communities.'

517 A woman who had lived for 40 years in the area claimed that water shortages were  
518 also an important concern. A female homemaker living close to the development  
519 asserted that, 'before this, we didn't have problems with water. Now, there are water  
520 shortages. We do not have water every day, and I cannot do my house chores the way  
521 I used to do.' A 58-year-old married man who has lived all his life in the area was  
522 worried because 'water is and will be a serious issue since the airport and new  
523 surrounding localities will need large amounts of water and it will be not enough for  
524 all of us'. Environmental issues were clearly most interviewees' primary concern and  
525 the cause of much local negativity towards the new airport. These results thus confirm  
526 past research findings (e.g. Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Pérez & Nadal, 2005), which  
527 include that tourism development projects' potential harm to the natural environment  
528 is a prime concern for residents.

529 Qualitative approaches are useful in terms of capturing feelings and thoughts that  
530 events or situations provoke (Ritchie, 2003). The present qualitative analysis revealed  
531 that, for most informants, environmental issues were indeed extremely important.  
532 Some interviewees showed clear disagreement, discontent, impotence and even anger  
533 due to the perceived environmental damage. A man with a doctorate, who travels by  
534 plane on average once a year and who had resided for 40 years in the area expressed  
535 this as follows: 'Environmental issues are the ones that worry us the most.'

536 *Social impacts*

537 With regard to social impacts, both positivity and negativity were expressed. Airport  
538 construction inevitably involves infrastructure development in the area. The literature  
539 on attitudes towards tourism shows that the construction of infrastructure that can  
540 also be used by host communities can be a significant factor in generating support for  
541 tourism development projects (Lawson et al., 1998). The present study's interviewees  
542 recognised that the development and modernisation of existing infrastructure –  
543 mainly roads and bridges connecting various areas – could guarantee the most  
544 convenient access to the airport. For some infrastructure users, this had been an  
545 immediate benefit because vehicular traffic had improved, especially when exiting or  
546 entering the city. A male auditor first stated that all types of infrastructure  
547 development would bring immediate disadvantages to the community, but he also  
548 acknowledged that, 'in the future, people will benefit from the infrastructure being  
549 constructed now. In fact, in some parts of the area, roads and bridges are being  
550 improved and are already facilitating access to the city.'

551 The informants did not deny these immediate benefits. However, negativity towards  
552 the project's impacts far exceeded positive perceptions of social issues. The number of  
553 perceived negative effects mentioned was much larger than the positive ones. Twenty  
554 interviewees directly reported less benefits than social and environmental costs and  
555 concerns, such as population growth, traffic congestion, health issues and crime. Some  
556 of these problems have previously been reported as negative effects of tourism  
557 development in Mexico, for example, in Monterrubio (2010) and Monterrubio et al.'s  
558 (2016, 2018) studies.

559 In addition, residents suggested that the airport project was attracting new residents  
560 mainly from other regions, who expected employment opportunities and increased  
561 incomes. A 59-year-old male who had lived in the area for 40 years described  
562 population growth and its associated costs this way: 'Many people will move to  
563 Texcoco and surroundings areas, but the city will not have a large enough capacity  
564 and infrastructure to meet those people's needs in terms of water supply and the  
565 sewerage system.'

566 Because of the large number of construction material trucks, traffic had become an  
567 issue provoking much discontent as people needed more time to commute to work.  
568 The number of trucks circulating on the main motorway was also seen as the cause of  
569 various car accidents and crumbling roads in the area due to excessive weight. A 44-  
570 year-old local born in Texcoco asserted that 'people complain a lot about the large  
571 number of cars and the increase in accidents on the motorway because of  
572 construction trucks. They leave behind material debris on the road and cars skid, all of  
573 which cause accidents.'



574 An increased crime rate was also a concern consistently reported by informants as a  
575 consequence of the increased number of outsiders arriving in the area. Airport-related  
576 crime had taken different forms. A male judge who had lived in Texcoco for 36 years  
577 related an incident from his work:

578 I had a case about extortion in the new airport. An engineer had several people  
579 working for him at the airport. Then a criminal group asked him to give them  
580 money so that he could keep working at the airport.

581 The interviewee added that:

582 The crime rate has increased because of the so called 'ant-effect'. Because the  
583 values [generated] have started increasing here, criminals from surrounding  
584 areas and from Mexico City have started to move into Texcoco and form  
585 criminal groups that operate in the area.

586 Land-related impacts were reported by seven informants. They said that the economic  
587 value of land and properties had increased considerably in recent years as a result of  
588 the airport project. For individuals renting or selling properties, this may have been  
589 an advantage, but, for others who wanted to buy a property, the prices had become  
590 unaffordable. A 57-year-old male academic explained that 'land values have increased  
591 and speculation has intensified. For some, this is good because the value of their  
592 properties has increased, but, for those who want to buy a property, it is now more  
593 expensive.'

594 Land grabbing refers to 'the acquisition or long-term lease of large areas of land by  
595 investors' (De Schutter, 2011, p. 249), which implies a loss of control over the relevant  
596 districts and a consequent concentration of wealth among a minority of individuals  
597 (Vázquez, 2018). The present study found that land grabbing had taken place as a  
598 consequence of the airport project. Several plots of land were sold by local people in  
599 areas surrounding the airport construction site. Some individuals saw this as a benefit  
600 because of the money gained from the sales. Other residents, however, felt this had  
601 meant they had lost their heritage and left behind agriculture, which had been their  
602 traditional way of living. A 76-year-old woman was worried that 'land owners have  
603 taken their [residents'] lands away from them. Their lands have been invaded now. ...  
604 Their children and grandchildren will not have land to work or to live in.'

#### 605 *Local consultation and support*

606 Various forms of protests took place in response to the airport construction. The  
607 population was to some degree divided in their opinions and positions with regard to  
608 the project. A male tourism student who supported the project observed that 'there  
609 are social divisions among us. We have opposite opinions. Some of us are in favour,  
610 while some others are against the airport.' He expected the airport to provide valuable  
611 job opportunities for him in the future. His positivity towards the project could be

612 explained by social exchange theory, which proposes that individuals' attitudes  
613 towards development projects and these individuals' subsequent support will be  
614 shaped by their evaluations of actual and expected outcomes (Monterrubio &  
615 Andriotis, 2014; Ward & Berno, 2011).

616 The current research found that those supporting the airport project rarely organised  
617 protests. However, road blockades, toll booth occupations, marches, meetings and  
618 written petitions were among the many forms of local protest against the construction  
619 (see Figure 1). The residents' negativity explains not only the multiple, diverse  
620 manifestations against the project but also accounts for the demands made to the  
621 federal government that the megaproject be cancelled. This finding corroborates  
622 negativity bias theory's well-established proposition that negative events will elicit  
623 stronger responses from evaluators (Kanouse & Hanson, 1972).



624  
625 **Figure 1** Federal government sign: 'New Mexico City International Airport is being constructed here';  
626 graffiti on the sign's lower left side: 'no airplanes' (translation by authors)

627 Participants were specifically asked whether they were consulted before the project  
628 started and whether they agreed or disagreed overall with the airport construction.  
629 All the informants responded that they were unaware of any public consultation prior  
630 to the development project, and some emphasised the importance of informing and  
631 consulting the relevant population about this type of project. A female local-born  
632 secretary who strongly disagreed with the project asserted that 'consultation is  
633 important, and all financial waste could have been avoided. Land grabbing would not  
634 have taken place, and soil erosion could have been avoided.' A male dentist who had

635 lived in the area for 58 years did not support the project because of the environmental  
636 harm:

637           People should of course have been consulted before the project. Now they do  
638           not know what is going to happen and why they [the central government] are  
639           doing or what benefits or costs this will bring. It is always important to consult  
640           and inform people so that they can give their opinions and developers can take  
641           them into consideration.

642 With regard to overall support, 15 informants openly disagreed with the project. Even  
643 those who mentioned economic benefits and who were current airport users had  
644 negative general perceptions and attitudes towards the airport. For instance, a 59-  
645 year-old female living downtown and renting her house to temporary airport workers  
646 stated:

647           The airport will not bring any benefits to me, but [it has clear] disadvantages,  
648           [such as] pollution, less space, more people, fewer opportunities for leisure  
649           [activities and] noise, air and water pollution. So, I don't support this project at  
650           all.

651 This interview excerpt indicates that, contrary to social exchange theory's  
652 expectations, even those participants who have already received economic benefits  
653 from the airport construction acknowledge its negative effects.

## 654 **Discussion**

655 While a plethora of studies have been conducted on operating airports' impacts  
656 (Dimitriou, 2018; Franssen et al., 2004; Lawton & Fujiwara, 2016; Tomkins et al.,  
657 1998; Tsui et al., 2019), knowledge about airport effects during the construction stage  
658 is limited. This research gap is significant since, as the ICGP (2005) reports, project  
659 impacts at the construction stage are equally important as those felt when the airports  
660 are in operation. The present study examined an airport development project's effects  
661 in Mexico and adopted a negativity bias framework to gain a theoretical  
662 understanding of local residents' perceptions.

663 Unlike previous research published in the literature on both tourism and air  
664 transport, this study examined airports' perceived impacts during the construction  
665 stage. The findings confirm previous research on airports' economic, social and  
666 environmental impacts. While undergoing construction, airports create employment,  
667 but the number of residents who experience these benefits is limited due to the  
668 exclusively unskilled jobs generated. In addition, airports' economic benefits at this  
669 stage are questionable in terms of gender equality. Because of the type of work (i.e.  
670 construction, which is socially assigned to males), women are excluded from the  
671 project's financial benefits, as well as from the associated social advantages (The  
672 World Bank, 2010). If airports and other tourism-related construction projects are to

673 be socially responsible, they need to incorporate initiatives from the beginning that  
674 address gender-based disparities.

675 Li and Loo (2016) suggest that airports' economic, social and environmental impacts  
676 are all equally important. While the three dimensions were reported by the present  
677 informants, the locals' perspective appears to be that environmental and social costs  
678 were far more significant than economic benefits were. Noise, pollution and the harm  
679 done to local fauna and other natural resources can thus become important concerns  
680 for residents during airports' construction. Traffic congestion, disturbances of  
681 everyday life, population growth, land grabbing and crime emerge as prominent  
682 issues eliciting stronger reactions towards airports. This finding is in direct agreement  
683 with researchers' previous assertions that perceived intangible social costs can  
684 significantly contribute to negative reactions to tourism development projects (Pérez  
685 & Nadal, 2005).

686 The current study's main findings include that locals' dominant negative perceptions  
687 of airport impacts can be understood from a negativity bias perspective. Kanouse  
688 (1984) observes that individuals will tend to give more importance to negative  
689 impressions than to positive ones, including that these individuals will assess a  
690 situation as a whole more negatively than the average of their evaluation of its parts  
691 would suggest. The present research revealed that, while airport construction's  
692 positive impacts are acknowledged (e.g. employment and infrastructure  
693 development), environmental and social impacts are perceived as more negative in  
694 locals' everyday lives. This is in accordance with negativity bias theory.

695 These findings are also in line with the results of past studies exploring residents'  
696 attitudes towards a variety of tourism projects (see, for example, Andriotis (2008) and  
697 Monterrubio et al. (2018)). Previous results have indicated that, despite airport  
698 projects' large scale, residents' perceptions are similar to reactions to other types of  
699 tourism development. From a theoretical point of view, the reason that people who  
700 acknowledge airports' economic benefits do not support their construction is due to  
701 how perceived negative impacts outweigh positive ones. According to Rozin and  
702 Royzman (2001), holistic evaluations of events' effects that integrate negative and  
703 positive aspects will reach negative conclusions eventually. A possible explanation is  
704 that negativity towards airport construction's impacts is shaped by the greater  
705 significance that they have on local residents' lives on a daily, more immediate basis.  
706 Issues such as traffic, noise, water shortages and car accidents instantly affect locals'  
707 living conditions, so this could explain why these impacts are of major concern to  
708 most residents.

709 Rozin and Royzman (2001) suggest that negative perceptions and experiences are  
710 more dominant in combinations and generally more effective than positive perceived  
711 effects. In the present study, the combination of environmental and social concerns  
712 was evidently more influential than economic benefits in terms of determining locals'

713 overall support for the project. Baumeister et al. (2001) postulate that bad situations  
714 will have longer lasting, deeper implications than good ones will, which explains why  
715 individuals give more weight to negative situations. The cited authors' postulation  
716 was corroborated by the current findings. The informants felt that the actual and  
717 future impacts of the airport construction on the natural environment were  
718 irreversible and that they overshadowed the limited, temporary financial benefits.

719 The value attributed to the airport's negatively perceived effects make them more  
720 influential than positive perceptions, thereby encouraging the multiple active forms of  
721 protests against the project. Few manifestations took place in favour of the airport,  
722 while negative protests such as marches, road blockades and toll booth occupations  
723 were more frequent, evident and dominant. This finding again confirms the  
724 observation that negatively perceived situations will elicit stronger responses from  
725 evaluators than positive ones will (Kanouse & Hanson, 1972).

726 Due to the present study's qualitative methods, causal relationships could not be  
727 assessed. However, one of the merits of qualitative research is the ability to identify a  
728 full range of issues that can be subsequently investigated in large-scale quantitative  
729 studies (Veal, 2006). For example, the local population's use of airports is a quite  
730 specific variable, but the current research showed that this variable does not  
731 necessarily influence perceptions of airport impacts. While Halpern and Bråthen's  
732 (2011) results suggest that the more people use airports the more positive their  
733 perceptions can be, the present analysis seemed not to provide support for this  
734 assertion. Slightly more than half of this study's interviewees had travelled by air at  
735 some point in time, yet even those who had used the currently available saturated  
736 airport showed negativity and they did not support the airport construction project.  
737 This finding suggests that the relationship between benefits and positive perceptions  
738 is more complex than what is often assumed.

## 739 **Conclusion**

740 Residents and governments are both extremely important tourism stakeholders, so  
741 they should contribute to managing and planning tourism initiatives collectively  
742 (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). According to Merinero-Rodríguez and Pulido-Fernández  
743 (2016), '[t]he resident population must be involved and participate in defining the  
744 tourism interventions and proposals to be developed in the territories they inhabit as  
745 a basic mechanism to ensure the community's social and cultural preservation' (p.  
746 125). While the ideal is that local residents get actively involved in tourism  
747 development decisions, in reality power is held by governments or other stakeholders  
748 who do not regard locals as equal partners (Okazaki, 2008, p. 512). Consequently,  
749 local communities' participation can be limited or conditioned by other stakeholders'  
750 interests (Tosun, 2016). However, even in this kind of situation, local people's  
751 opinions must be elicited.

752 From a stakeholder perspective, the present findings have practical implications for  
753 public consultation processes and projects' perceived effects. Residents' perceptions  
754 are one of the most important aspects of social and environmental impacts (ICGP,  
755 1995). Thus, people's views of and attitudes towards airport operation, relocation,  
756 expansion or construction must be taken into consideration in decision making  
757 processes. In the specific case of airport construction projects, their aims, size, length  
758 and expected benefits and costs need to be informed by locals' beliefs, expectations,  
759 hopes and hostilities, which should be taken into account from the projects' earliest  
760 stages. The current results suggest that once construction has started, consultations  
761 about airport projects' viability may be unnecessary and useless and may lead to  
762 wasted financial resources. Since all development projects will bring both planned  
763 and undesired changes to local communities, constant monitoring is highly  
764 recommended so that any negative impacts can be minimised and residents' potential  
765 negativity can be minimised.

766 The findings further include a number of practical implications for future tourism  
767 policy and management. One important practical implication is that tourism  
768 authorities should involve local residents in decision-making processes. This suggests  
769 a need exists for open discussions about the costs and benefits that may arise from  
770 large-scale development projects before they are implemented. In this way, various  
771 interested local groups can be motivated to support development in their respective  
772 communities and to express their concerns, as well as providing their input early  
773 enough that sufficient time and flexibility is still available to make meaningful  
774 changes. By involving host communities in decision-making processes, better  
775 decisions can be reached, and many forms of protest can be prevented.

776 Due to airports' close association with tourism, the findings reported above also have  
777 practical implications for regional and local tourism development. Constructing a new  
778 airport means the number of incoming tourists will increase – as will the associated  
779 negative and positive impacts. Mexico City is already congested and faces the danger  
780 of overtourism. To deal with this problem, the authorities must develop plans to direct  
781 tourists to other less-congested places. Thus, the new airport might be more effective  
782 if it is constructed further away from Mexico City so that incoming tourists will be less  
783 inclined to visit the city and instead choose other destinations with lower tourist  
784 density.

785 Regardless, to ensure more informed decisions, tourism's regional and local costs and  
786 benefits should become part of public knowledge. Only a few (i.e. three) informants  
787 acknowledged that the airport will benefit tourism businesses, but the specific  
788 potential positive effects were unknown because residents were not well informed  
789 about the project. Government officials need to inform the host community not only  
790 about airports' immediate, direct effects but also about the associated tourism

791 impacts, which in turn may have significant socioeconomic, cultural and  
792 environmental effects on the region's tourism industry.

793 This study's exploratory nature meant that the sample was not representative of the  
794 entire population, so the results cannot be generalised without due caution. Other  
795 limitations are related to the sample size and quantification, which must be  
796 considered by researchers conducting similar studies in the future. In addition,  
797 specific limitations arose from the limited time, low budget and refusal of a significant  
798 number of potential interviewees to participate in the study. Nonetheless, this  
799 research is of undeniable value in terms of context, rich data and the attention paid to  
800 the meanings that locals attribute to airport impacts. Past comparative studies have  
801 been limited and have failed to clarify whether residents in Mexico have different  
802 attitudes towards airport impacts than residents of other communities in developing  
803 or developed countries.

804 Finally, differences in interviewees' sociodemographic characteristics were not used  
805 in this research to explain attitudes towards airport effects. The present study sought  
806 instead to enrich tourism researchers' knowledge about community attitudes by using  
807 an underresearched theoretical framework: negativity bias. Thus, further studies are  
808 required to examine statistically the causal relationships between residents'  
809 perceptions of airport construction impacts and these locals' airport use and other  
810 sociodemographic variables such as age, education, occupation and length of  
811 residency. Future research will also need to examine whether perceived effects  
812 actually match reality since these variations could be essential to improved decision  
813 making.

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