



# **Factors Influencing Tourism Destinations Attractiveness**

## **The Case of Malaga**



**Master Thesis**

**MSc. European Spatial Planning, Environmental Policy and Regional Development**

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*“Nothing stranger and more picturesque can be imagined than the surroundings of Malaga. One feels as if one has been transported to Africa: the dazzling whiteness of the houses, the deep indigo tones of the sea, the glaring intensity of the light all add to the illusion.”*

*Theophile Gautier, visit to Malaga, 1840.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Destination attractiveness is a subjective concept that has raised discussions among academics and researchers within the field of tourism. Attractiveness has been studied from different approaches, and due to the importance of tourism in contemporary societies, it has also been studied within different disciplines of knowledge, without achieving an agreement on its definition, measure and creation. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to these discussions through the analysis of the case of Malaga, Spain, a city with a long and strong relation to tourism, but which for particular reasons and context, had to develop its tourism sector almost from the scratch over the course of recent decades, before becoming one of the most important urban cultural destinations in Spain.

This thesis will explore the factors that influenced the creation of Malaga's attractiveness and the strategies that supported this evolution.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism as it is currently known, is a phenomenon present in the society for at least two centuries ago when only individuals from the highest socio-economic classes were able to travel to different places other than their residence countries for leisure purposes. However, tourism gained its global character by the decade of 1950s with the development of the commercial trans-oceanic flights (Smith, 2004). From this moment, tourism has been an important factor in the world economy; the WTO declares that tourism provided almost the 10% of world GDP in 2015. Due to its important contribution to the economic growth, tourism has experienced a steady expansion and diversification, and cities around the world are relying on tourism as an important source of revenue. The WTO (2016) points out the indisputable leadership position of certain regions and countries that have reached a high level of specialization or whose specific features and elements make them the most attractive destinations for tourists. The top three consists of France, the USA and Spain. But, what are those features? What does it make these three countries to be more attractive than the others?

Given the relevance of tourism in modern societies, there exists lively scholarly debate about theoretical approaches to tourism concepts. One of them, tourism destinations attractiveness, will be discussed in this Masters thesis. Academic discussions center on the lack of agreement in defining the concept and the narrow traditional approaches used to define it, with limited capacity to explain the multidimensional character and the multiple layers and actors that composed the dynamic of tourism destinations (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Going further, the authors propose alternative approaches to understand the complexity of the concept, arguing for the use of market theories to examine the factors that boost the attractiveness of a destination and make consumers select certain places over others (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011; Klenosky, 2002).

Taking into account existing theories and beyond the economic impact of tourism over the regions and the world, the aim of this dissertation is to study the factors that determine the attractiveness of a city for tourism using a case study methodology. The subject of the case study is the city of Malaga, chosen for a number of relevant factors. As capital city of the Costa del Sol and the province of Malaga it was, however, lagging behind the other coastal villages and cities by the 1990s due to a lack of adequate infrastructures. To tackle this issue a strategic plan was formulated with the objective of turning Malaga into the “European touristic capital of leisure and culture” (Royo et al., 2014:441). The strategic plans focused on the consolidation of Malaga as a culture and tourism mecca (Royo et al., 2014). According to City Council reports, the number of visitors increases every year, and Malaga has passed from being the transfer point to other destinations on the Costa del Sol to be one of the most visited cities in Spain. This indicates that as a destination it has developed factors and attributes that have contributed to increasing its attractiveness,

making it an interesting case to study. In an attempt to analyze the process Malaga underwent to achieve its current position in the European tourism market, the investigation will seek to answer the following research question: *what are the factors that have determined Malaga's destination attractiveness?* And the sub-research question: *what type of strategies and actions are used to influence this attractiveness?* It is important to clarify that this thesis is not going to analyze the economic impact of tourism in Malaga.

The relevance of this thesis lies in the topicality of the theme in the academic and societal fields. Academically, it contributes to discussions using current theories to derive alternative conceptual models, using them to analyze a specific geographical area. Furthermore, most of the academic debates about tourist destinations and destination attractiveness concentrate on the definition of the concept, methods to measure the attractiveness, or either the competitiveness of the destination. This academic work differs somewhat from the aforementioned tendencies in that is an attempt to analyze the factors that lead a city to become an attractive tourist destination.

Malaga cannot be considered an exceptional case for tourism positive evolution, as there are many other cities that might have grown at similar levels or greater rate. The cases analyzed in chapter 3 are proof of it. Consequently, the results of this study could be considered generic, to some extent and also could be used as a base or be extrapolated to analyze cases comparable to Malaga.

The document is structured as follows:

- 1) Introduction: briefly introduces the academic discussion on tourism destinations. Presents the justification for the topic, and its scientific and societal relevance, concluding with the formulation of the research questions.
- 2) Theoretical framework: debates the relevant theories and approaches related to tourism destinations, tourism attractions and tourist typologies and behaviors.
- 3) Overview of attractive cities: a brief review of some tourist destinations similar to Malaga which will serve as a support and guide to analyze the attractiveness factors of our case study.
- 4) Methodology and limitations of the study: explains the choice of the case study as research strategy and the different source material. Additionally, analyzes the limitations of the thesis, as regards both methodology and content.
- 5) Case study: characterizes the subject of the thesis. Based on the information collected from different sources and interviews describes the evolutionary process of the tourist attractiveness of Malaga and its consolidation as a preferred destination.
- 6) Discussion about Malaga's tourism attractiveness: is the final discussion of findings and answers the research questions.
- 7) Conclusions: presents the general conclusions about theories and the case study.



## **2. TOURISM DESTINATIONS: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The tourism industry gained a higher profile in developed countries due to changes in consumer and travel behavior at the beginning of this century. These changes have made researchers and academics to rethink the traditional theories and concepts around tourism (Hall, Williams & Lew, 2004). Hall, Williams and Lew (2004), point to the predominance of theories and concepts that look to study the economic impact and supply aspects of tourism. They cite Smith (1998), who defined tourism as “the aggregate of all businesses that directly provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure, and leisure activities away from the home environment” (Hall et al., 2004:4) to illustrate how this definition does not account other dimensions of tourism, such as tourism destinations and all the social, cultural and organizational elements that can explain their attractiveness, which is the focus of this academic research work.

In the words of Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011) tourism destinations are the “most appropriate units of analysis in tourism” (p.133) because destinations are where the tourist experience happens. Despite its importance for tourism studies, these two authors highlight the existing disagreement on how to define tourism destinations. Similarly, they discuss the traditional approaches to the study of tourism destinations, which mostly focus on either marketing consumer satisfaction oriented, or regard the issue as merely one of economic transactions. These approaches do not include the analysis of more subjective elements like the reasons a tourist choose a destination over the rest.

In order to be able to discover the factors that make attractive a destination, it is necessary to begin by offering a definition of tourism destination which goes beyond marketing, branding and economy. In this regard, on the one hand, tourism destinations can be described as dynamic spatial units where production – consumption tourism activities and host communities interact. On the other hand, from an organizational point of view, tourism destinations can be considered as complex networks of multiple co-producing actors delivering tourism products and services (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011; Haugland et al., 2011). According to these definitions, destinations are about interactions, thus, it can be inferred that the quality and level of the interactions would allow the creation of conditions for attractiveness.

Given the complexity of tourism, its diversity of aspects and different meanings ascribed to it depending on the entity that is evaluating it and to what purpose, there exist several definitions of tourism (Morachat, 2003). Consequently, this theoretical framework will discuss the closest definitions and theories related to the objective of the present thesis, encompassing the relevant dimensions for this study. Therefore the theoretical inquiry will concentrate on the following aspects: the definition of tourism, the supply and demand aspects of tourism, tourism destinations and tourism destinations attractiveness.

## **2.1. Definition of tourism**

As stated above, tourism is a phenomenon with a high level of complexity covering a diversity of aspects and multiple definitions depending on the studies to which it is subject. Tourism is about the interactions between the different players from both a supply and demand side (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Tribe (1997) provides a definition that includes the diverse dimensions of the aforementioned interactions, where tourism is “the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction in generating and host regions, of tourists, business suppliers, governments, communities and environments” (p.4). The WTO (2014) defines a tourist as someone who spends at least an overnight stay at the destination, otherwise is classified as an excursionist. Later in this chapter we will further explain the concept of tourist.

The presented definition of tourism shows that it is a dynamic changing system composed of two key elements: suppliers and consumers that interact in a determined space: the destination (Morachat, 2003). The tourism system is formed by an origin and a destination, where the origin consists of the demand side (consumers / tourists) and the destination the supply side (Uysal, 1998). The system functions because of the products and attractions the destinations have to offer to the market, without attractions, tourism would not exist. Simultaneously, without demand, attractions would not be needed, and therefore, tourism would not exist. Formica (2004) identifies a third component in the tourism system: “the linkage” (p. 20). Linkages have a complementary role in the system, but they are essential for its functioning. They refer to transportation services, information and promotional activities which critically influence the selection process of the destination and all the holiday experience.

The importance tourism has gained during the last years in the contemporary society, especially in the developed countries, which are supposedly the principal tourism consumers at the international level, has led to a highly competitive environment in the global tourism market, forcing the traditional destinations to maintain and even increase their attractiveness aiming to face the emergence of alternative and competitive destinations (Kresic & Prebezac, 2011). At the same time, these emergent destinations must work on their attractiveness with the purpose of conquering a relevant place in the tourism market. However, it is vital for destinations, both mature and emergent, to be aware of the needs, wants and tastes of the market. Equally, tourists need to be conscious and informed about the attractions and resources at destinations, then information is an influencing factor on the selection of the destination. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the attractiveness issue from both sides of the system. A way to achieve this, would be through an integrated model, investigating the factors that attract tourists to a destination through the interactions between the demand and supply indicators (Formica, 2004). This thesis will propose an integrated empirical model that will present the elements composing

both sides of the system in a determined destination (the city of Malaga), exploring how they are related, and how they produce attractiveness capability.

The subsequent sections will study the elements of the tourism system that will be used to construct the aforementioned conceptual model.

## **2.2. Consumers: Tourists and tourist behavior**

The first component of the tourism system is the demand-side, namely the consumers of tourism represented by tourists. Similarly to the definition of tourism, the literature review reveals it is difficult to find agreement on the definition of tourists. Consequently, based on the Glossary of Tourism Terms (WTO, 2014), this thesis defines tourist as someone who moves from their usual place of residence to a different place for leisure, study or work purposes for a short term period between a couple of days to one year maximum.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, just as tourism has evolved, so has the perception of tourists from the researchers' point of view. Contemporary tourists are no longer considered just consumers of the tourism products, but are seen as producers of experiences. This is because, currently, certain types of tourists seek out more "in-depth" travel experiences, looking to interact with the host community, not only with the tourist suppliers. Nowadays, tourism is more about feelings than consumption in a materialistic way (Crouch, 2004; Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Cohen (1979) compared the conceptions researchers had about tourists, which ranged from considering them as "travelers for pleasure" (p.179) to authenticity seekers. He claims that those views, even though both have contributed to the theoretical discussions, cannot be considered as "universally valid" (p.180) due to the diversity of motivations people have to undertake a trip, to the different ways they appreciate it and the various desires and expectations they have for touristic experiences. In this regard, a variety of classifications of tourists have been proposed to better understand and to predict tourists' behavior (Hosany & Prayag, 2013).

For instance, Cohen's (1972) suggested four typologies of tourists depending on their relationship with the host place and the tourist business establishment, focusing on the search of novelty versus familiar experiences. These are: 1) organized mass tourist: he or she is confined to his/her "environmental bubble" - that is to say, this type of tourist purchases a package tour and delegates all the arrangements to a tour operator agency. He/she does not get involved with the host community and tries to stay within his/her comfort zone avoiding unfamiliar situations to his/her reality. 2) Individual mass tourist: this tourist has a similar behavior to the previous one, but does not delegate all the organization of the activities to the tour operator agency, he/she seeks for a little novelty, but still remains inside the "bubble". 3) The explorer: arranges the trip on his/her own, goes out of the "bubble", but tries to stay close to his/her reality looking for comfortable accommodations and reliable transportation, enjoys interacting with the host community, but does

not get deeply immersed in it. Finally, 4) the drifter: this type of tourist goes completely off the “beaten track”, he/she tries to completely immerse themselves in the host society, usually travels on a low budget and does not have well-defined goals of travel or a fixed itinerary. He/she seeks novelty and tries to go as far as possible from his/her comfort zone.

Equally, Plog (2001) proposed a set of tourist typologies based on personality patterns, going from dependables to venturers, with shades of both types in between. Dependables prefer mass tourist destinations and try to stay in their comfort zone, prefer guided tours and are characterized by low activity levels like partying by a pool, or sunbathing at the beach. On the end of the spectrum, Plog depicted the venturers as those tourists who are enthusiastic about traveling as much as they can to different places. They travel on their own, hence they do not hire the services of travel agencies. They have a preference for exotic destinations, avoid crowded and typical tourists places, and are characterized by choosing high activity levels like exploring and learning about the place they are visiting.

From the perceptions of these two authors, it is possible to say there exists a diversity of tourist types. Even in the case of classification, it should be understood that diversity exists among these types and, as such, there will also exist diversity of behavioral patterns depending on multiple factors, like age, income, level of education, taste, social and cultural origin, etc. (Morachat, 2003). However, it can be said that there are common reasons for people to decide to go on a trip: interest in learning about and trying different customs and cultures, seeing new places, relaxation, escape, study and work (Cohen, 1972; Klenosky, 2002). In the same way, tourist behavior is also conditioned by what suppliers offer: advertising, newspapers, travel magazines, blogs and social media all awaken people’s curiosity for exotic or distant places and stimulate the need to move temporarily from their homes according to the indistinct offer which suits them the best (Prentice, 2004). Here, pull and push factors and linkages enter into play.

It is possible to distinguish three different phases of tourist behavior: 1) before travel (whether going or not), 2) the choice of destination, and 3) the level of (dis)satisfaction after the trip. The motivations behind the tourist behavior are determined by push and pull factors, of which the first the “specific forces in our lives that lead to take a vacation..., while pull factors refer to those [factors] that lead an individual to select one destination over another once the decision to travel has been made” (Klenosky, 2002:385). Linkages, as mentioned above, and as it implies by the word itself, refer to the elements that work as connectors between the tourist and the destination; for example available information about sites in any format and the means of transportation.

Due to the variety in types of tourists that it is possible to find in real life, this thesis proposes two archetypes based on the models in the literature (see Figure 1), keeping in mind that making such

a short classification is due to the limits of time and space set to prepare this dissertation: the organized tourist and the self-organized tourist.

The organized tourist is defined as one who would prefer to take a prearranged tour somewhere or go on a cruise. His/her decision/attraction will almost completely be influenced by what it has been offered to him/her. He/she has a preference for the typical tourist mass destinations like Paris, Rome, Ibiza or any resort in the Caribbean. This type of tourist would choose soft activities like going to the beach, clubbing, making short visits to the main monuments in the destination and would spend time at established, well-known places for eating or shopping. If he/she is not going on an organized tour, his/her attraction might be influenced by currently popular tourist destinations at the moment or by the recommendations of acquaintances. Equally, he/she will spend time in where most tourists go without major concerns for the folkloric characteristics of the destination.

On the other hand, the self-organized tourist one who will gather relevant information about the chosen destination from specialized magazines, guidebooks, specialized tourist guides, reliable travel blogs or recommendations from friends who share the same taste for traveling. He/she will organize the trip by his own. At the same time, he/she has deep personal motivations to go to a specific place, and might be attracted by typical features of that place: a specific sort of art, a cultural movement, and special natural characteristics ideal for practicing a particular type of sport or curiosity for the culture, language and habits of a place. To a major or minor extent, this type of tourist will avoid crowded places for “organized” tourists and will try to enter into contact with the host society, will visit the places frequented by locals and will try to get deeply involved in the experience of everyday life.

From the literature and the proposed models of tourist in this document, it can be inferred that it is a difficult task to discern all the reasons and motivations behind the behavior of tourists due to the many different personal, social, cultural, economic and educational values that exist in every society worldwide. Researchers from various disciplines (anthropology, ethnography, psychology) have tried to explain behavior patterns, but a gap always remains between theory and the multitude of lived experience. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted to a minor or major extent, every tourist's choice is influenced by the offers of the supply side and the marketing skills and attraction expertise of the destination.

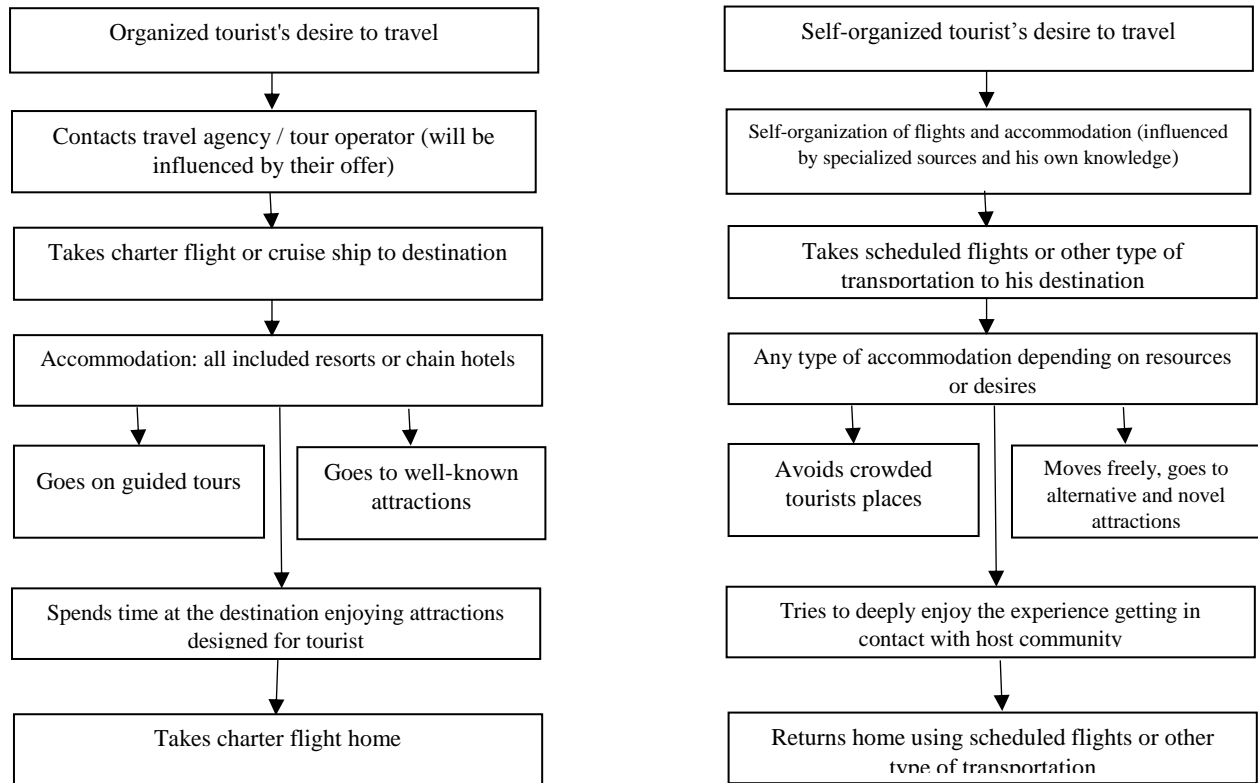


Figure 1. Archetypes of tourists. J. Corrales, 2017, based on literature.

### 2.3. Suppliers and Tourism products

The second element of the tourism system is the supply-side, namely, the co-producing actors in the destination who are responsible for delivering products and services (Haugland et al. 2011). This study defines the co-producing actors as all the institutions and organizations related to tourism activities and services, among them local authorities and the private sector. According to Formica (2004), tourism supply comprises basically attractions, transportation, accommodation, support services and infrastructure. In the context of tourism, products refer to the resources, tangibles and intangibles, available to the market at the destination. Morachat (2003), based on Gunn (1988), defines tourism products as the human experience that integrates attractions, lodgings, transportation and services. The academic literature provides several visions about tourism products, especially from fields such as geography, economics and planning. History, although recently, is also a field that has studied tourism development and products (Chatkaewnapanon, 2011).

Ashworth and Tunbridge (2004) put forth that every place in the world and its inhabitants have a past and a history unique to the place and dwellers, whereby its transformation into heritage should deliver a distinctive product which should represent a unique place or group identity. Over time, this idea of uniqueness has caused the development of cities around tourism, which are the cases of cities like Venice (Italy) and Bruges (Belgium). These cities have developed an almost

mono-functional use, especially in the city centers, jeopardizing the heritage and turning the cities into scenarios for tourists (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2004). On the other hand, other cities facing socio-economic decline have dipped into heritage as a way to, firstly, foster a local pride in residents, and secondly, to create preconditions for successful external marketing (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2004). In the same vein, Chatkaewnapanon (2011), citing Walton (2009) states that historical events and heritage have been used to engender regional identity and distinctiveness contributing to the development of the tourism industry. Furthermore, historical legacy has been used as an instrument for economic regeneration in tourist destinations (Chatkaewnapanon, 2011).

Places like Malaga where tourism has played an important role in the local history, a historical approach represents a proficient tool to analyze its development and success as tourist destination (Chatkaewnapanon, 2011). Figure 2 represents a tourism history model useful to summarize the development of the tourist destination during its different stages. The model proposes a time line featuring the crucial events in the tourism development. The model is considered interesting for this thesis because it allows to depict the long relationship between Malaga and tourism.

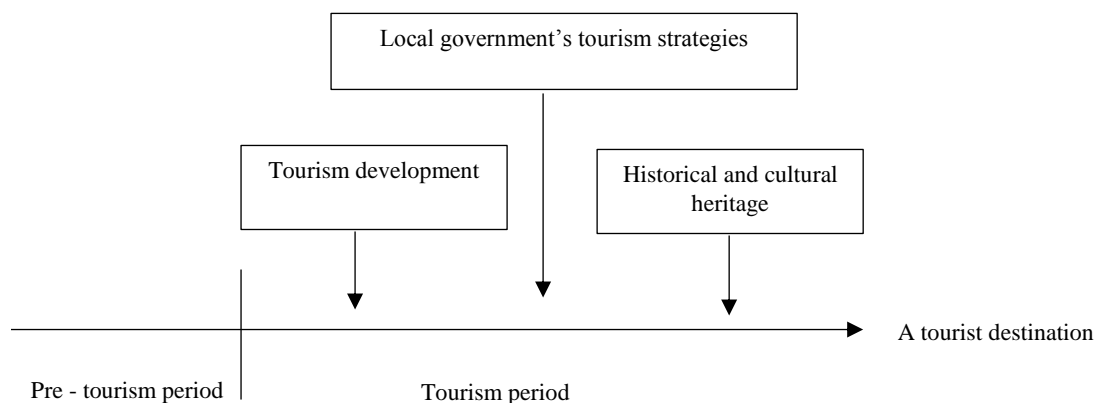


Figure 2. Tourism history model. Chatkaewnapanon, 2011.

For their part, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2004) declare historical legacy has become so important that several cities in Western countries are making efforts to recover their legacy, reaching the point where interventions are being replicated: waterfront parades, markets, pedestrianized shopping streets, landmark museums, etc. are appearing in every destination. It follows that these sites are where co-producing actors enter into play to warranty the preservation of the “uniqueness” of the destination through their strategies and actions.

Tourism supply side is generally discussed from three perspectives: a comprehensive planning approach, product specific analysis or a statistical measuring of supply side development (Smith,

1994). Planning is considered essential to stimulate the development of the destination, therefore it is essential for its attractiveness. Tourism is interdisciplinary: different industries and natural settings, whereby planning is vital to avoid unexpected and unintended consequences in the destination that would cause the dissatisfaction of tourists and residents (Formica, 2004). In this regard, a delightful tourist experience, that is to say, the product, will be the result of efficient coordination and the integration of the co-producing actors and the capacity to effectively design and integrate the elements of the experience (Formica, 2004; Haugland et al., 2011). Since coordination and integration between co-producing actors has been brought into this discussion, we can consider that the supply-side is structured in a multilevel manner due to the different actors and resources that come into play, thus the planning of the destination should encompass development strategies across multiple actor's boundaries (Haugland et al., 2011). At the local level, a typical tourism council is composed of representatives of: the private sector (lodging, foodservices, transportation, entertainment and travel business), the non-profit sector (tourism associations, festival promoters, cultural, recreational and sports associations) and the government agencies managing transportation, leisure, culture, health and any other sector directly or indirectly related to tourism activities (Formica, 2004).

The literature gives insight on the studies that have been carried out about the organization of the supply side of tourism. To mention some examples, Haugland et al. (2011) proposed combinations of inter-organizational models from other industries applied to tourism, highlighting corporate, conventional, administered and contractual approaches and combinations of all to support efficient relationships between co-producing actors. Font and Ahjem (1999) argued for a combination of market-led orientation and resourced-based orientation, where government, private and non-profit sectors, and communities work together under the control of a public agency, with the goal of assuring sustainable tourism development without leaving aside economic benefits. Summarizing, the literature offers a broad amount of approaches to the functioning of the supply side, although most of them agree that interrelation, cooperation and integration are key elements to develop a desirable tourism product and hence a high level of attractiveness (Figure 3).

The concept of tourism products has been widely discussed in the literature, some authors arguing that tourism cannot be considered an industry because it does not produce a tangible product, other authors contending that it actually can, as it produces an experience made of tangible and intangible elements (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). Smith (1994) presents a literature review with several definitions and views on tourism product, most of them coinciding with the definition given previously in this chapter. He cites Medlik and Middleton (1973) as the originators of the concept, as they consider tourism products as "a bundle of activities, services and benefits that



constitute the entire tourism experience” (Smith, 1994:584), composed of five elements: destination attractions, destinations facilities, accessibility, images and price.

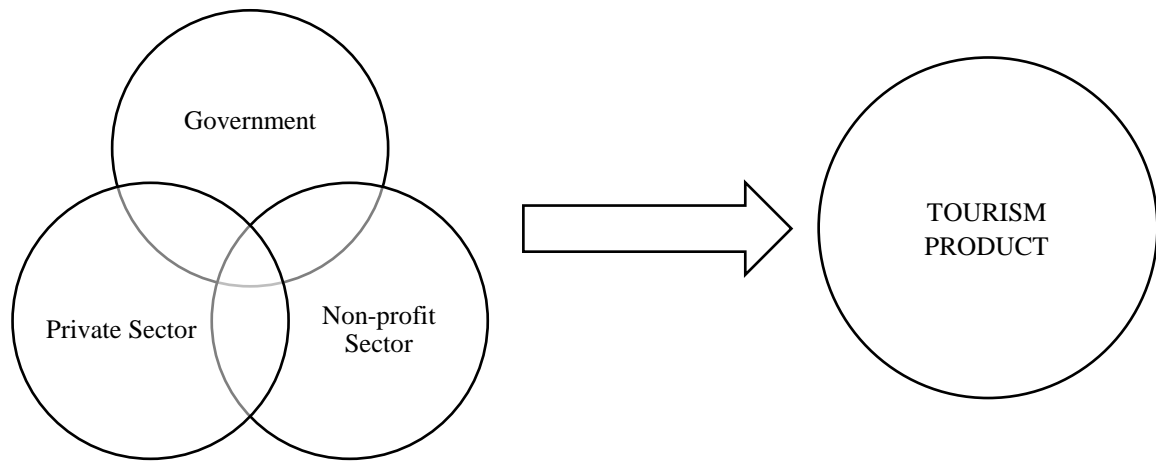


Figure 3. Structure of supply-side from different spheres in the community, J. Corrales, 2017, based on literature.

#### 2.4. Tourism destinations

As with tourism, there exist a diversity of definitions of tourism destinations dependent on the context of the study. Zemla (2017) and Timon (2004) argue that a single accepted definition of tourism destinations does not exist, nor a single accepted approach for their analysis. The literature review demonstrates researchers from different disciplines have studied tourism destinations leading to in-depth analysis from their own approaches, but at the same time complicating understanding between academics of the different fields.

Similar to tourism, tourism destination is multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral, as are the definitions related to it (Morachat, 2003; Zemla, 2017; Timon, 2004). Zemla (2017) compiles the different definitions that appear in the literature, which range from a spatial approach to a network approach, passing by economic, managerial and systemic approaches. The spatial approach considers destinations as the geographical spaces where tourism activities are developed. Economic approaches consider destinations either from the supply side (tourism destinations are the combination of the services and experiences locally provided) or from the demand side (the place where a tourist subjectively decides to travel depending on his desires and motivations and how she/he perceives the experience). The managerial approach sees destinations as a product formed by the services and offers a tourist consumes. Finally, the systemic and network approaches understand tourism destinations as complex systems of actors co-producing services and offering products in a not completely coordinated way. The different insights and considerations of tourism destinations lead to imply they are not only a something, a place that

exists, but also a something that is created in the minds of tourists: a perceptual and subjective concept dependent on the lens of the tourist and his/her travel motivations, cultural and educational background and previous experiences.

In this thesis tourism destinations are defined as the geographical space where co-producing actors, the local community and tourists interact around tourism related activities, goods and services, and where tourists create their own perception and holiday experience. Geographical space is understood as a city, region or country. In the case of this dissertation the geographical space is the city of Malaga. This definition is proposed based on the aforementioned definitions by Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011), and Haugland et al. (2011). From the proposed definition, tourism activities, goods and services refer to every action that directly or indirectly affects the performance of tourism in the destination, whether these are institutional strategies, marketing, general infrastructures, resources and image of the destination. Figure N°4 represents a definition of tourism destination proposed by Timon (2004), for whom a destination is composed of sectoral and territorial elements interacting in a geographical space.

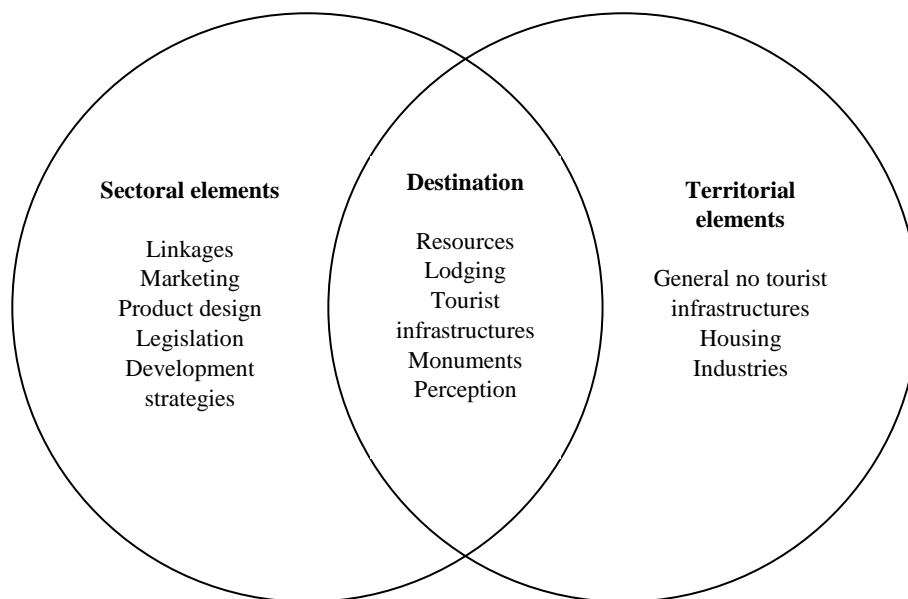


Figure 4. Tourism destinations. Source: D. Timon, 2004.

In the same way as there are different elements interacting in a tourism destination, there are different typologies of destinations depending on the attractions they have to offer and on what tourists are looking for. However, it is difficult to establish an accurate classification due to the flexibility of a destination on offering various types of attractions to different types of tourists (Petroman, 2015; Zemla, 2017). Bigné et al. (2000) propose a classification of six general typologies: 1) urban destinations: large or small cities with interesting sites, 2) coastal and tourist

resorts: seaside areas, 3) mountain destinations: places to practice winter sports, 4) rural destinations: countryside, 5) unexplored destinations: places with little tourism development, 6) and exotic, unique and exclusive destinations: luxurious destinations visited for special purposes like a honeymoon. Petroman (2015), proposes a similar general categorization: 1) heritage and cultural destinations: places with a rich heritage, UNESCO sites, 2) tourism-built destinations: theme parks, resorts, 3) small and large business and conference towns/cities, 4) small and large tourism towns/cities: towns and cities with interesting cultural and artistic attractions, 5) coastal areas: natural and/or man-made attractions by the sea, and 6) rural areas: green areas with fresh air and facilities for outdoor activities. All of these are included in three main categories: classical tourism destinations, natural tourism destinations and business/short-stay tourism destinations.

#### **2.4.1. Components of tourism destinations**

The information presented in the previous sub-chapters demonstrated that tourism destinations are complex systems that function due to the interactions of the elements of the supply and demand sides of tourism. There are various factors that form the destination, either explicitly related or oriented to tourism, like accommodations and food services, or oriented to residents, like drugstores and supermarkets, but whose existence increases the probabilities of attracting tourists, since they contribute to the feeling of comfort in any location and can stimulate the extension of the stay. Formica and Uysal (2006), citing Jafari (1982) include the “background tourism elements” (p. 419), referring to the natural, cultural and man-made attractions that are usually the main attracting factors for tourists. This thesis will mainly study the tourist oriented and background tourism components, however, it will also mention some resident oriented components with the purpose of indicating the attractiveness power of Malaga.

The aforementioned components of tourism destinations can be divided in two type of resources: primary and secondary, where primary ones are considered the key pull factors for tourists. Primary resources are nature and human values like climate, landscape, hospitality, traditions, culture and heritage. Secondary are those related to services: accommodations, transportation, catering, shopping facilities, night life, etc. One can observe the elements composing the destination are different in nature, but they not exclude each other; on the contrary, they are complementary and from their synergy the tourism experience is created (Formica & Uysal, 2006).

As reviewed in the section concerning the supply side (of tourism), the efficient management of the destination’s resources will increased its attractiveness power. Although it is true that climate, landscape and tradition elements are difficult to influence through policy or development strategies, they can be protected, for example by avoiding the degradation of the landscape, or the loss of traditions. On the other hand, secondary resources can be influenced by policy makers

through strategies that stimulate the creation of tourism business related activities, the attraction of airlines or cruise ships lines to a determined location or the creation of networks within the destination and between neighbouring destinations (Haugland et al., 2011).

#### **2.4.2. Attractiveness of tourism destinations**

The literature review revealed that the attractiveness of tourism destinations has been a widely studied topic, both from the supply and the demand side approaches, and from a combination of the two (Klenosky, 2002; Morachat, 2003; Formica, 2004; Formica & Uysal, 2006). The current scholarship on destination attractiveness demonstrates attractiveness depends on both the demand and the supply side of tourism. From the demand side view, attractiveness is made up of the feelings, beliefs and opinions a tourist constructs about what he/she is going to receive from a destination. The supply side considers attractiveness as the force created from all the attractions present in a place at a particular moment (Formica & Uysal, 2006). Consequently, and from the previously given definitions tourism destination attractiveness is defined in this thesis as the sum of feelings and perceptions a tourist develops towards the attributes of a specific destination. This definition demonstrates destination attractiveness is a concept mostly dependent on subjective factors, which makes difficult its analysis.

Calvo et al. (2011) argue for the intimate relation between the attractiveness of a destination and its image, the latter having the power to influence the tourist's perception of quality, satisfaction and willingness to return or recommend the destination. Furthermore, the construction of the attractiveness includes every component of the destination and the linkages between them. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, linkages have a strong effect on the tourist's decision. A destination with an efficient, broad and strong marketing campaign and easy accessibility would be more attractive than one that is barely present in diverse media (Calvo et al. 2011). However, a marketing campaign can be a two-edged sword if it is not based on what the destination has truly to offer. An unsatisfied tourist will not be willing to return or recommend the destination, inhibiting the word of mouth chain that would contribute to build the name of the destination.

The management of the destination and its resources is also a vital factor on building the attractiveness. The development of infrastructures, the creation of facilities and promotion of tourist activities, as well as the stimulation of professional development of capabilities of people working on the tourism sector, will enhance the competitiveness of the destination and as a consequence will increase its attractiveness power. Furthermore, the efficient management of the destination will foster adequate and satisfactory living conditions for both residents and tourists, assuring a friendly environment for everyone and avoiding the negative consequences of mass tourism like scarce and expensive lodging, and disturbance caused by tourists in residential areas (Valls et al., 2014). All this indicates that the development of attractiveness of tourism

destinations is closely related to the development and formulation of not only tourism strategic plans, but also to urban or regional strategic plans depending on the geographic area one wants to develop, due to the various items and processes of tourism and urban management. As the principal factors that influence the attractiveness of a destination Formica (2004) identifies economic factors (exchange rates, cost of living), socio – cultural factors (hospitality, attitude towards the tourist), infrastructures and natural factors.

The majority of the studies about destination attractiveness are focused on analyzing or measuring the attractiveness. Only few are dedicated to proposing a universal conception of attractiveness due to the complexity in defining the concept, which tends to be extremely subjective, as mentioned before. Formica (2004) evaluates different methods to measure the attractiveness of a destination; the most used are either from the supply-side making an inventory of the attractions and facilities of the destination, or from the demand-side, analyzing the revenues obtained from tourism and the number of tourist arrivals. Formica (2004) for his part, proposes a method combining the tourism assets of the destination, the perception of tourists through surveys and interviews of tourism experts.

The concepts and information presented along this chapter lead us to conclude that destination attractiveness should be analyzed through the relationships between the supply, demand and their linkages. The following conceptual model summarizes these relationships.

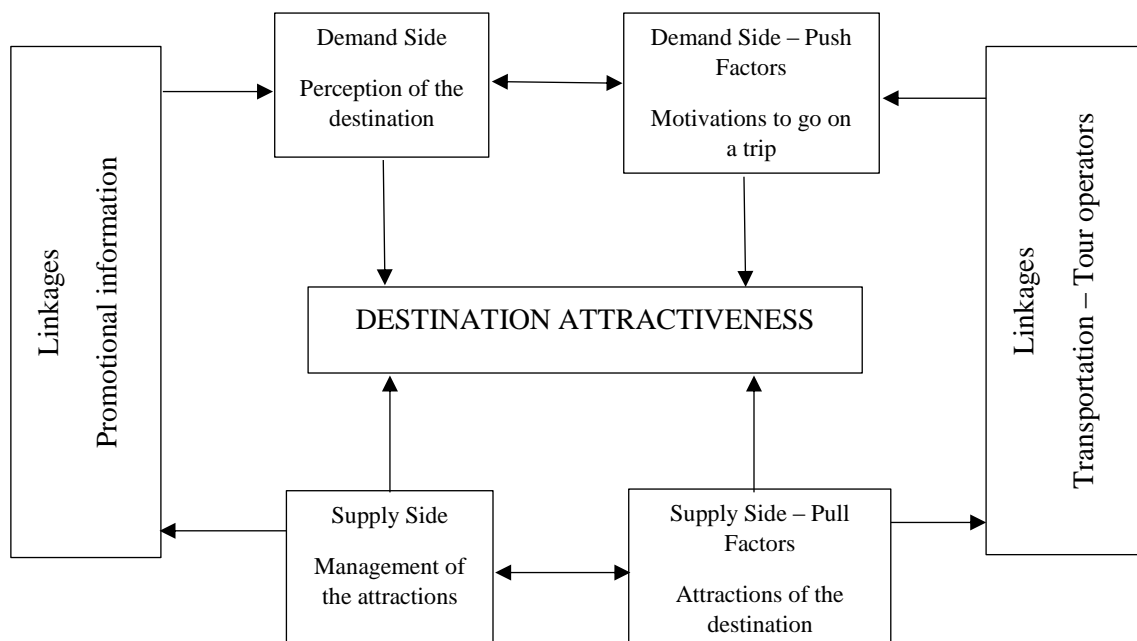


Figure 5. Destination attractiveness conceptual model. Source: J. Corrales based on literature, 2017.

Figure 5 represents the proposed model of destination attractiveness, in which there are observed the factors that influence the attractiveness of a destination and how they interact. First, we have the supply side with the pull factors, namely the attractions or resources a destination owns. Simultaneously, the supply side is responsible for the management of the resources, meaning the strategies and actions that are taken to develop the capacities of the destination. Coincidentally, the (in)efficient management of the destination influences the linkages, represented by the easiness to reach the destination (transport) and to obtain information about it and its attractions. In this regard, social media plays an important role due to the extensive use of internet as a constant information tool. Linkages are useful, as well, to identify the latest trends within the tourism market.

Continuing with the cycle, we have the demand side with the push factors: the personal motivations or reasons potential tourists have to decide to travel (Klenosky, 2002). The selection of the destination will be based on the desires of the tourist and what the destination offers to fulfill the tourist's expectations. To make their choice, tourists draw on linkages to discover the suitability of the possible destination. In a second step, from the demand side, we have the tourist's perception of the destination, this is a subjective issue leaning on the sensitivity he or she developed for the destination. In this part, the management of the resources is important; an efficient administration is likely to better support the enhancement of the attraction capacity of a place. Finally, the existence of attractive resources adequately managed would arouse satisfactory feelings in consumers towards the destination, influencing the production of attractiveness as a result.

Having established the state of tourism, we follow this chapter with our case study. This will be structured according to the elements that compose the previously described model.

### **3. OVERVIEW OF ATTRACTIVE TOURIST CITIES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA**

This chapter will present an overview of some attractive tourism destinations with similarities to Malaga, located in the south of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea coast. The objective of this chapter is to provide an idea of the processes these cities have experienced and what features make them tourist attractive with the purpose of contrasting to the case of Malaga in the following chapters.

Bilbao (Spain), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Tunis (Tunisia), Genoa (Italy) and Marseille (France), are the cities selected for the analysis because they were considered to share similarities with the tourism development of Malaga. The similarities are related to natural features, type of attractions and to the reinvention of these cities through tourism, where it retains a continued importance. Due to the limited academic information about attractiveness factors for the selected cities, the overview is principally based on the information gathered from the official tourism sites of the cities, travel blogs and other internet sources<sup>1</sup>.

The research indicated that, for different reasons the five cities suffered from urban degradation and socio-economic decline, resulting in a negative image to the exterior. However, after some years, their situation has changed. Some of them, former industrial cities, have achieved a position in the European tourism market. Therefore, it can be implied tourism was one of the tools they used to tackle these issues.

The online exploration evidenced that tourism was part of integral municipal development plans. Bilbao, Genoa and Marseille went through important urban interventions projects including rehabilitation and regeneration processes with the aim to reinvent the cities from their industrial pasts and rich heritage. The port areas were rehabilitated for leisure and cultural purposes. The interventions and infrastructure improvements in port areas had as consequence the incorporation of the cities to cruise ships routes, increasing their visibility for organized tourists (Bilbao, Genoa and Marseille tourism offices, 2017). In Tunisia and Dubrovnik ancient buildings were renovated to host luxurious hotels and restaurants as a way to attract an exclusive tourism segment (Dubrovnik and Tunisia tourism offices, 2017).

Culture and heritage integrated into tourism, are also important elements for the attractiveness power of these cities. Dubrovnik's old town is included in the list of UNESCO heritage sites. Bilbao, Genoa and Marseille pedestrianized their ancient historic centers making them more attractive for residents and visitors. Traditions and culture are also capitalized for tourism. Basque culture is unique in Spain and Europe. Mediterranean cities, due to the mix of cultures throughout

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<sup>1</sup> Internet sources are listed in the references section.

history, are rich in traditions and cultural heritage. Consequently, it can be suggested authorities exploited the local characteristics to make the destinations more attractive and to differentiate them from other with similar natural features.

Regarding culture, the focus has been not only on traditions and heritage, but also on diverse forms of artistic expressions and creativity. The most relevant example is Bilbao. Bilbao focused its development around the construction of the internationally known Guggenheim Museum. In this case, the astonishing silhouette of the building gave the image to the city. Additionally, other forms of arts were developed such as the art district, representative buildings of the XXI century, avant-garde cuisine, etc (Bilbao tourism office, 2017). Genoa and Marseille were selected European Cities of Cultures in the past years, resulting in the inauguration of several museums and other arts sites (Genoa tourism office, 2017; Marseille tourism office, 2017). Tunisia has the second most important museum in North Africa and festivals and concerts in both the old and new town are celebrated all year long (Tunisia tourism office, 2017). Meanwhile, Dubrovnik developed a luxurious infrastructure for wellness and nautical leisure. Spas, marinas and other equipment and facilities have positioned Dubrovnik as destination for special events such as honeymoons or to practice high-class aquatic sports (Dubrovnik tourism office, 2017).

Additionally, the five cities exhibited concern for the development of transportation infrastructure, lodgings and other tourism facilities. Transportation increases the accessibility of the destinations and lodgment increases its capacity. Apart from that, infrastructures for alternative forms of tourism are being developed in the destinations. The most prominent are convention centers for the organization of congresses and fairs, with the objective to attract the segment market of business and conference tourism.

Unfortunately, for this study the overview is based mostly on information from the supply-side or the linkages due to the unavailability of data from the demand-side, which are perceptions of the destinations or motivations to select them. However, data from the Bilbao Tourism Observatory (2015) and the tourism offices of Genoa and Marseille (2017), through tourist surveys aiming to find out the profile, tastes and preferences of tourists, demonstrate tourists in general are attracted to places where they can learn and experience a new culture. These same reports stated hospitality and gastronomy are valuable factors, too. Southern cultures are famous for their hospitality and gastronomy as natural characteristics, thus one can imply tourists are beforehand motivated to visit a destination in the South, taking into account just these two factors, which is already an advantage for cities like Malaga.

The brief analysis of these five destinations demonstrated destinations have implemented different strategies to attract tourists. However, some actions seem to be popular for the development of tourism attractiveness, such as urban interventions in deprived areas, new



buildings and revitalization of heritage in the cases where there are elements of value. Additionally, the improvement of transport infrastructures and the expansion of accommodation infrastructures appear to be key factors for the development of tourism. The development of infrastructures for alternative and complementary activities to tourism like convention centers and facilities for cruise ships are likewise important elements for tourism development.

The selected cases suggest that despite being coastal cities, tourism strategies have clearly concentrated on efforts to capitalize other elements than the traditional sea and beaches. Instead, they have taken advantage of heritage, culture and infrastructures to offer a holistic experience with complementary activities in order to create attractive and competitive tourism destinations. Nevertheless, this does not mean natural features are not taken into account, as a good climate and the possibility of easily access to the beach have always been considered important pull factors when selecting a holiday destination, and places in the Mediterranean region have historically been attractive for these reasons.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

This thesis can be classified as a combination of explanatory and descriptive research work. The study of Fernandez (2010) was the source for choosing the most appropriate research method for the realization of this dissertation. The decision was made based on the explanation the author gives about both types of research, which were considered adequate for the purpose of the thesis. On the one hand, the explanatory research looks to clarify the causal relations between variables and facts. On the other hand, the descriptive research aims to present the situation just as it is (Fernandez, 2010). A combination of both approaches is helpful to better explain how Malaga has developed conditions and attributes to become an attractive city for tourism. Consequently, the study describes and analyzes the development of tourism in Malaga since the second half of the twentieth century until the present days.

In the same way, the thesis merges qualitative and quantitative approaches. During the month of March 2017, I conducted four qualitative interviews with relevant actors in the area of tourism and strategic planning of the Malaga City Council: Paula Cerezo, officer in the Department of Urbanism, Historic Centre Project (16<sup>th</sup> March), Fatima Salmon, Director of Communication, Fundación CIEDES (21<sup>st</sup> March), Salvador Aguilar, Director of Marketing and Promotion, Department of Tourism (24<sup>th</sup> March) and Gema del Corral, Councilor of Culture (31<sup>st</sup> March).

Each interview was preceded by the preparation of guiding questions (see annex 1). However, the interviewees were allowed to freely expand on topics related to these questions and the theme of the thesis. Each questionnaire was designed thinking about the position of the interviewee, thus all the questionnaires are different from each other. The questions were related to the development of tourism and the interviewees were asked to express their opinions about the strengths of Malaga compared to other cities of the region. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and the length was between 30 minutes and one hour (see annexes 2 to 5).

The secondary data used to write chapter 5 was gathered using statistical information produced by the tourism office and the City Council (Ayuntamiento de Malaga). The subchapter of management of the destination was made using information from the interviews and the strategic plans of Malaga. Official tourism office sites of Malaga, Bilbao, Marseille, Dubrovnik, Tunisia and Genoa and sites of international tourist guides were consulted to write chapter 3 and the inventory of Malaga's attractions. Additionally, old and modern tourist guides of Malaga were checked to find out what has been the tourist offer of the city over time. The section dedicated to the tourists' profile in chapter 5 was written based on information of the last edition of the Tourism Observatory (2016), thus it is important to remark that conclusions about the tourists of Malaga should not be considered completely valid. As the data were collected by a secondary source and the author is not aware of what type of questions were asked or the public of the survey, there

might be certain types of tourists who visit the city for different reasons and get involved in activities other than the ones mentioned there. Consequently, this would result in a different perception of the destination.

In line with the descriptive approach, it was decided to use the case study strategy due to its characteristics. Yin (2009) defines case study as “...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (p.13). Furthermore, case studies allow to preserve the holistic and important characteristics of real-life events and are an ideal method when the researcher has little or no control over the circumstance. Finally, case study as a research strategy grants the flexibility to collect information through several techniques like direct observation, interviewing and any kind of documents (Yin, 2009).

Consequently, as the topic of this thesis is a contemporary phenomenon like tourism, relevant for modern society, whose behavior cannot be manipulated by the author, the case study was considered the most adequate method for this academic research. The case study also allows for an effective and in-depth analysis taking into account the restrictions on time and technical resources of the author. For example, a survey would be an efficient tool to establish firsthand the motivations of tourists to visit and select Malaga over other destinations and it would be possible to assess the level of attractiveness of Malaga using any method put forth in the literature. However, it would require the support of a team to conduct the survey and reach the proper sample to get accurate survey results.

The conceptual model of tourism attractiveness was designed after the literature studied in chapter 2. The idea was to design a model based on the work of Formica (2004), who proposes a conceptual model to measure the attractiveness. The model presented in this thesis unifies the elements that academics consider influential for attractiveness. The idea of this model is to help explaining how the elements of the tourism system interconnect and influence the tourism attractiveness of the destination. The empirical chapter was built following the components of the model, using mostly quantitative and qualitative data from the City Council and the interviews. Internet sources were useful for the linkages and inventory sections<sup>2</sup>.

The conceptual model has an integral character that uses elements that can be found in every tourist destination around the world. Moreover, it is flexible in the sense that researchers have the possibility to include the factors and elements they consider more appropriate. As an accompaniment to a case study it can be useful to gauge the tourism attractiveness factors of any destination.

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<sup>2</sup> When internet sources are not directly cited in the text, they are listed in the bibliography section.

#### **4.1. Limitations of the research**

The aim of this thesis is to study the factors that influenced the tourism attractiveness of Malaga and to describe its evolution through the second half of the past century until today. To achieve this goal, we studied the features of supply and demand. However, the analysis faced some limitations due to the lack of data pertinent in some aspects.

Regarding the analysis of demand, due to restrictions on time and resources, the study had to be supported by the tourism office information on tourist preferences. The ideal scenario would be a survey designed and conducted by the author with personalized questions for this thesis, but it would be impossible for a single person to interview the necessary number of people to reach an adequate take. Regarding the supply side, we only know the view of the public sector, and do not have the view(s) from the private sector. Despite efforts to set appointments with actors from the hotel industry, commercial associations and museums, the responses were negatives or the requests ignored.

The analysis of a single case study will not provide universally valid results due to the different contexts in which the different destinations develop. This is the reason for presenting a brief overview of other destinations to compare and contrast their developments. The overview resulted unsuited for making larger comparisons, however, despite its limitations, this thesis can lead the way to similar studies carried in the future.

## **5. CASE STUDY: MALAGA, THE RISE OF AN ATTRACTIVE CITY**

This chapter presents the case study of the thesis. The chapter expands on the description of the development of the tourism in Malaga since the second half of the twentieth century until present days. Furthermore, it describes the components of the destination accordingly to the conceptual model presented in chapter 2. The case study has as purpose to find out more about Malaga's attractiveness factors. The theories and the analysis of the other cities overview will support at some extent the case study findings. The theories and the overview provide preliminary indications of what these influencing factors could be, and what strategies might be used. The overview demonstrates heritage, culture and monuments are important for building a destination's attractiveness, especially for urban destinations. Theories point out their importance as well (Formica, 2004). Theories state natural features are also crucial for attractiveness (Klenoski, 2002). Regarding the strategies, the overview suggests urban rehabilitation and revitalization processes, and the development of complementary infrastructures are popular actions aiming at attractiveness building. These preliminary insights indicate some of the factors that can be expected from our case study.

Before entering into detail to the case study, we offer some brief information about Malaga's characteristics, which will serve to introduce the case. Malaga is the fifth most populated city in Spain with 569,009 inhabitants in 2015. It is the capital of the province of the same name, located in the south of Spain, in the autonomous community of Andalusia. Malaga is also the capital of the Costa del Sol, one of the most important tourist regions in the country (Costa del Sol, 2016). Malaga city is geographically privileged, surrounded in the north by the Montes de Malaga that protect the city from the inland cold and the heat. The Mediterranean Sea in the south acts as a thermal regulator which creates the conditions for an agreeable weather throughout the year. The climate of Malaga is temperate in winter with mild minimum temperatures. Summers are moderated by the proximity of the sea. The average temperatures are between 13°C and 22.8°C, and Malaga receives around 2901 hours of sunshine per year, being the sunniest region in the country. The warmest months are July and August and the coldest are December and January. In addition to beaches, Malaga possesses rich nature: the estuary of the Guadalhorce River, in the western zone of the city, hosts a diversity of migratory species and the Montes de Malaga is the habitat of more than 160 animal species and more than 230 vegetal species (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).



Picture 1. Localization of Malaga. [www.malagaturismo.com](http://www.malagaturismo.com), 2017

The origin of Malaga goes almost 3000 years back when the Phoenicians founded their colony, Malaka, in the Guadalhorce estuary area. Pedrero (1993) and Sarria (2004) report that the story of Malaga, since its foundation, has been a sequence of conquests by diverse civilizations. After the Phoenicians settled in the area, the Carthaginians occupied the territory. Later, Romans dominated them and Malaga became a confederate and autonomous city with its own laws. Around the year 711, Malaga was conquered by the Moors who ruled until the year 1487, when Christians reconquered the city. These diversity of cultures left a rich heritage, of which the most representative monuments are the Roman Theatre, Alcazaba, Gibralfaro Castle, the Cathedral and numerous churches and buildings representative of different epochs which are current tourist attractions.

### 5.1. History of tourism in Malaga

The creation of the *Sociedad Propagandista del Clima y Embellecimiento de Malaga* (Advocacy Society for the Climate and the Embellishment) in 1897 was the first step to turn Malaga into a winter getaway destination for the wealthy travelers of North and Central Europe. The main focus of the Sociedad Propagandista was the promotion of the city and its benign weather at the international level, the improvement of hygiene conditions and the support of its traditions and culture. This first initiative had positive results partly because Malaga was already known in

Europe for its commercial activity and its appearance in travel stories of nineteenth century writers. In addition, Malaga has established and important colonies of British and French citizens who still had strong relations with their countries of origin. All of this, added to the easy access by the sea, by train from Gibraltar and Cordoba, and the many road connections to Granada and Seville made Malaga an attractive destination for Europeans (Pellejero, 2005). The outcomes of the Sociedad Propagandista were several urban interventions. The most important were the construction of Calle Marques de Larios, which replaced the Alameda in importance through the establishment of high class hotels and shops there. Other results were the creation of the bourgeois quarters of El Limonar and La Caleta in the eastern zone of the city. These quarters turned into preferred areas for renting summer villas and second residences, namely it was a sort of early residential tourism (Barke et al., 2010).

Tourism in Malaga evolved positively, and by the decade of 1920 it was already a summer destination for a wealthy public. The tourist industry grew, more hotels and the Nuestra Señora del Carmen Baths opened. The first golf course was inaugurated in Torremolinos, a Malaga district at that moment. Improvements in transport infrastructures were realized and the airport of Malaga was selected as one of the stopover points for flights between Toulouse and Casablanca. In 1930, Malaga was the fifth most visited Spanish city after Barcelona, Madrid, Seville and Granada. The tourism sector continued its evolution; the offer grew and was improved with the comfort of the visitors in mind. The Spanish Civil War and the WWII stalled this evolution, however it never stopped completely (Pellejero, 2005).

There is a lack of information about the profile of the tourists in Malaga during this period. However, Mowl and Barke (2014) disclose that most of the tourists were attracted by the travel diaries of romantic writers and travelers of the nineteenth century. Tourists were mostly wealthy people from Britain, France and Germany who were looking for a different and exotic reality, but in a familiar environment. Malaga, still part of Western Europe, but with its Moorish past and proximity to Africa was the perfect place for them (Mowl & Barke, 2014). The introduction of tourist packages such as those of Thomas Cook during the second half of the nineteenth century facilitated the arrival of British middle class to Malaga (Mowl & Barke, 2014). One can notice an early presence of linkages in the tourism system. Incidentally, the typical tourist of this time, is closer to the self-organized type. Pellejero (2005) and Mowl and Barke (2014) argue that the typical tourist was a wealthy person, from which can be discerned that they were well-educated people looking for more than leisure. Effectively, they were on a quest for experiences and novelty, characteristic that coincides with the self-organized type.

### 5.1.1. Torremolinos, the consolidation of a mass tourism destination: 1950 to 1988

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s brought a tourism boom to Malaga city and the rest of the Costa del Sol. Malaga was a preferred destination for northern Europeans because it was considered a sort of “exotic place” for its closeness to Africa, its Muslim heritage, famous good weather and its gastronomy (Pellejero, 2005; F. Salmon, personal interview, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2017). During this period, the tourism offer grew intensively due to the increase in demand. Tourism turned into a “basic necessity” for the middle class in western societies due to the changes on labour policies which allowed longer holiday periods, but above all, the economic boom in the USA and northern European countries that benefited the middle class in these countries (Smith, 2004; Aguilar, 2016). Sun and beach tourism was the fashion at that moment and Malaga, for its natural characteristics become a reference destination, not only for the mass tourist, who represented the average tourist at that time, but also for a more selective public like Hollywood stars and multimillionaire Arabs (Pellejero, 2005; F. Salmon, personal interview, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2017). Tourist developments, especially hotels were localized in the district of Torremolinos. This centralization provoked: 1) Malaga city developed a service industry based on food and drinks to serve the hotels in Torremolinos and the rest of the province, and 2) Malaga was lagging behind other cities of the Costa de Sol (Barke & Newton, 1995).

Nevertheless, the tourist demand for Malaga increased more than in any other Andalusian city, keeping in mind, the demand was mainly for Torremolinos. Data from the Junta de Andalusia (2006), based on the National Statistics Institute demonstrate a growth of the 103.6% on the number of visitors to Malaga for the period 1966 – 1973. Unfortunately, due to the lack of data for the decades 1960 to 1990, this thesis is relying on the statistics of visitors staying in hotels, there is not available information for other type of lodgment.

<i>Period</i>	<i>1966-1973</i>	<i>1973-1975</i>	<i>1975-1976</i>	<i>1976-1977</i>	<i>1977-1980</i>	<i>1980-1987</i>
<i>Visitors</i>	103.6	42.0	-9.2	27.3	-22.3	40.6
<i>Overnight stays</i>	117.8	9.5	-5.2	36.0	-25.6	60.4

*Table 1. Hotels dynamic 1966 – 1987. Source: Junta de Andalusia, 2006.*

Table N°1 shows the positive growing tendency of tourism and overnight stays in Malaga, except for two periods where the index is negative coinciding with economic crisis at the international level that obviously affected the tourism sector.



At the same time demand grew, so did supply, the number of hotels went from around 20 in the 1950s, mostly owned by locals, to 63 in 1988, where the majority were international chains or big hotels (Salmon, 2017).

Fatima Salmon, declares in a personal interview conducted in March 2017, and supported by Pellejero (2005), that a key factor for the tourism boom in Malaga in the 1960s was the airport. The airport experienced several improvement works to receive regular and charter flights and became one of the most important airports in Spain.

Meanwhile, the investments in the tourism sector grew, and so did Malaga city, but with no order or planning. Citizens started to abandon the city center and moved to other areas looking for bigger houses and apartments. Consequently, the old town transformed into a deprived area with no leisure or tourist attractions, nor dynamism, a residential place for elders and people with limited economic resources (Royo et al., 2014; P. Cerezo, personal interview, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2017). During the tourism boom, most of the investments made in Malaga were intended for tourism but either focused on the development of beach hotels and coastal holiday residences, due to the importance of sun and beach tourism had at that moment, or on the development of real estate projects that were carried out without guidance and with no respect for urban regulations. For example, beachfront high rise residential buildings in the area of La Malagueta near to the old town (Pellejero, 2005; Royo et al., 2014; P. Cerezo, personal interview, 2017). As a result, while the district of Torremolinos developed around tourism, Malaga transformed into a disorderly, unattractive city that lived for serving Torremolinos, turned its back on the sea and forgot other features that could contribute to its development.

Six tourist guidebooks were revised from 1961 to 1992 to discover the tourist offers from that period. The guides from the period 1960 – 1970 present Malaga as an international tourist city. Their focus is on itineraries of churches and monuments, putting special attention on the Cathedral as main architectural or heritage attraction. The other main focus is on the beaches of Torremolinos and its hotels. According to a guide of 1969, Malaga was able to accommodate more than 20,000 visitors at that moment. This same guide reveals seven airlines had regular flights to Malaga airport. A guide of 1981 focuses on the historic center, proposing a variety of tours of the area, including a museums tour. Noticeable is the lack of changes in tourism offer in a period of twenty years: the Cathedral, some other churches and Calle Larios, the main street of the city, were in the spotlight. Nevertheless, the guides proposed Malaga as a one day destination. The main focus were Torremolinos and other destinations in the province like Marbella. In the 1980s, as the tourists' taste started to change to a more active tourism rather than spending hours lying at the sun (Pellejero, 2005), the guides offered golf activities, aquatic and nautical sports,

and marinas in Torremolinos and Marbella; thus again, Malaga city was left behind due to the lack of adequate infrastructures.

The international economic context of this period allowed the expansion of tourism as a popular activity rather than the elitist it used to be (Pellejero, 2005). This enabled the growth of tourism in Malaga, principally in Torremolinos, as it was stated previously. The generalization of tourism and the strong incidence of tour operators in the tourism system brought to Torremolinos an overcrowding of tourists (Pellejero, 2005). These tourists attracted by sun and beaches and the resorts that have opened in the area are identified as organized tourists. Unfortunately, there is not available information to be certain about the actual profile of the tourists of this period. However, Pellejero (2005) remarks the efforts tour operators made to attract national and international tourists to Malaga. Consequently, it can be implied most of tourists hired the services of a tour operator, then this matches the characteristics of the organized classification.

#### **5.1.2. Malaga, the rise of an attractive city: 1988 - 2016**

The year 1988 marked a milestone for tourism in Malaga. Torremolinos separated from Malaga and achieved its administrative independence leaving Malaga without a solid tourism product (Barke & Newton, 1995; S. Aguilar, personal interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2017). Malaga went from having 63 hotels to having 13. In terms of accommodation, the city went from having 14945 beds to just 1824, in hotels of medium or low level (Salmon, 2017). In a manner of speaking, Malaga entered into a tourism crisis: it lost most of its hotels, it had scarce tourist attractions, and the old town was in decline. Summarizing, it was a deprived, unfriendly and unattractive city that had invested in a territory that did not belong to it anymore (Barke & Newton, 1995; Aguilar, 2017).

This situation and others that made evident the clear lack of Malaga's competitiveness compared to other Spanish cities like Barcelona that was hosting the Olympic Games and Seville which hosted the International Exposition, both in 1992, caused the need to reinvent the city through the capitalization of its resources in a creative manner (Barke & Newton, 1995; S. Aguilar, personal interview, 2017). This led to the formulation of the first Strategic Plan of the city (IPEM by its initials in Spanish). Malaga was the first city in Andalusia to apply this kind of strategic planning at an urban scale, allowing the model of "Malaga of the future" to be designed in a participatory, consensual and plural way (Royo et al., 2014).

The IPEM developed over four strategic lines, the fourth of which was directed at tourism and titled "European capital of tourism and leisure". This had as purpose the promotion of Malaga to an international public and efforts to make it more attractive. The second phase of the strategic planning came with the formulation of the second strategic plan, IPEM. On this occasion, over ten flagship projects. Again, one of them was envisaged to tourism: "Malaga TUR. A city for

tourism” (Aguilar, 2016). Another, “Agora Mediterraneo”, strongly focused on culture and was partially geared towards tourism (Royo et al., 2014).

The separation of Torremolinos and the first actions of the IPEM started to be evident when two guides of 1991 and 1992, respectively, gave more relevance to Malaga city, proposing basic itineraries including more points of interest. Furthermore, for the first time in 1991, urban beaches in Malaga city are recommended as places to visit. In spite of presenting Malaga as a cultural destination, the guide of 1992 emphasizes on congress tourism, enhancing the infrastructures for this type of tourism in Torremolinos and Marbella, indicating that Malaga continued playing a secondary role to these two localities.

Both, the IPEM and the IPEM, and the tourism strategies that derived from them had as consequence the steady growth of the tourism sector throughout the following decades. In his declaration about IPEM and IPEM, Salvador Aguilar, director of marketing of the tourism department of the city council of Malaga, states that tourism development was based on four sectors: urban-cultural tourism, language tourism, congress and meetings tourism and cruise ship tourism. The IPEM document supports this statement, presenting a list of objectives aiming to develop these tourism sectors. The idea was to capitalize upon the tourism resources that were not taken into account until that moment and turn them into assets that would contribute to build a uniqueness for the destination. At the same time, would complement the well-established sun and beach tourism in the neighbouring coastal towns and would not compete in against them, which would suppose a disadvantage for Malaga (Barke & Newton, 1995; S. Aguilar, personal interview, 2017).

The positive results of the strategies implemented during the IPEM started to be evident by the year 2000 with the increase of the number of lodging establishments from 13 in 1988 to 63 in 2000. These included hotels, guesthouses and apartments with a total of 4141 beds and an average overnight stay of 1.97 (CIEDES, 2000). In the same year, the department of tourism of the city council recommended on its website and tourist information offices 34 interest sites, including monuments and museums (CIEDES, 2000). In spite of the increase in offer, Malaga was not at that moment a favorite destination in the Costa del Sol. CIEDES (2000) reports that in 2000 around 8 million tourists arrived in the region, but just the 2.9% intended to spend their holidays in Malaga city. Furthermore, the sun and beach segment was still extremely linked to Malaga and the rest of the province. A survey conducted by the Patronato de Turismo (2000) revealed that the 91.5% of the visitors were motivated by leisure and relaxing and the remaining 8.5% were divided between different activities like golf and congresses, among others (CIEDES, 2000). Data from the port authority gathered by CIEDES (2000) revealed that 231 cruise ships docked in Malaga port and 134,429 passengers disembarked in the city.

The tourism sector continued to grow during the next years. In 2005, around 456,500 travelers stayed in Malaga, with a total of 972,500 overnight stays (Aguilar, 2016). In the same year, there were 82 lodging establishments in Malaga with 6238 beds. The lodgings included hotels (4, 3, 2 and 1 stars), guesthouses, youth hostels and apartments. Four-star hotels represented 47% of the lodgings and the average overnight stay in them was 4.1 (CIEDES, 2005). Cruise tourism faced a decrease compared to the data of 2001. In 2005, 213 cruise ships with around 200,000 passengers docked in the port of Malaga. Despite this decrease, the port of Malaga stood as the second Spanish port for cruise ships in the peninsula (CIEDES, 2005). The inauguration of the Palacio de Ferias y Congresos (Trade Fairs and Congress Center) in Malaga contributed to the growth of congress tourism. During the year 2005 more than 100 events were celebrated in the Palacio; 33 of them were international, which reflects the position Malaga was achieving in this type of tourism. In total, 43,615 persons in total participated in these events (CIEDES, 2005).

Statistics for the year 2010 show the positive evolution the tourism sector was experiencing in Malaga: 862,599 travelers were lodged in the city. Fundacion CIEDES (2010) with data from the city council reports the existence of 90 lodging establishments with a capacity of 9086 beds. During that year, the average overnight stay was 1.84 nights, implying that tourists were visiting Malaga in a city break manner. Cruise tourism reached its highest point in twenty years with the arrival of 659,123 passengers on more than 300 cruise ships (CIEDES, 2010). The arrival of travelers via the airport of Malaga observed a yearly increase of 3.7%. The number for 2010 is 11,996,139 travelers, but it is important to clarify that this number is for the entire province. The use of low-cost airlines experienced an increase, as well, turning Malaga airport into the number three for low-cost passengers in Spain (CIEDES, 2010).

By the year 2015, tourism was the most dynamic economic sector in Malaga and the one generating more employments in the city. At this point, Malaga is considered a mature tourism destination at the national and international levels. The number of visitors and overnight stays are considerably higher than in the previous years: around 4,000,000 tourists arrived in Malaga and overnights stays are calculated at 2,259,297 in 103 establishments (CIEDES, 2015; Aguilar, 2016). The arrival of cruise ships passengers suffered a decrease. However the port of Malaga continues to occupy an important place for cruises in Spain, holding the fifth place in 2015 (CIEDES, 2015). The latest data from October 2016 demonstrate the growth of the number of lodging establishments to 290 with a capacity of 14,304 beds and a rise of the 6.9% in overnight stays (Ayuntamiento de Málaga, 2016).

From the year 2004 cultural activities and visits to monuments and museums are reported as important elements for the development of tourism. The inauguration of many different museums and the high quality of the exhibitions and permanent collections contribute to the attraction of

national and international tourists. The most prominent are the Picasso Foundation Birthplace House and Museum, The Picasso Museum, The Contemporary Art Centre, The Museum of Malaga, The Museum Carmen Thyssen, The Centre Pompidou, The Collection of Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg and The Museum of Fine Arts. According to Gema del Corral, councilor of culture, it is possible to relate the yearly rise of visitors to the inauguration of the museums. Fundacion CIEDES also associates the increase in the number of tourist to the expansion of the museums network and, above all, the international prestige of brands (CIEDES, 2005; Garcia & Garcia, 2014; G. del Corral, personal interview, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.). Likewise, the most visited monuments are the Alcazaba, Gibralfaro Castle and the Cathedral, which improved their interest after rehabilitation works (Garcia & Garcia, 2014; Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

Shown below table N°2 describes the evolution of the number of visitors to the principal monuments and museums over a period of eleven years. As can be noticed, all the monuments and museums showed a general positive evolution, except in some years when the number of visitors decreased slightly. One can assumed the decline was caused by a decrease in the number of visitors in general to the city, or by less interesting exhibitions during those years. However, the data show the number of visits have been consistently high.

	<i>Alcazaba</i>	<i>Gibralfaro</i>	<i>Cathedral</i>	<i>Picasso Museum</i>	<i>Picasso Birthplace home</i>	<i>Contemporary Art Centre</i>	<i>Carmen Thyssen Museum</i>	<i>Collection Russian Museum</i>	<i>Centre Pompidou</i>
2004	214,194	237,219	300,259	383,819	n/a	131,671	-	-	-
2005	218,005	225,884	252,460	304,658	n/a	173,502	-	-	-
2006	381,141	356,408	262,379	342,824	n/a	238,996	-	-	-
2007	303,885	282,167	298,656	340,688	114,009	280,689	-	-	-
2008	277,541	257,653	308,178	336,522	122,965	657,271	-	-	-
2009	290,423	264,006	298,818	324,861	117,131	392,638	-	-	-
2010	312,129	283,330	325,753	345,742	130,095	390,919	-	-	-
2011	346,722	307,579	331,641	391,319	118,522	368,960	184,233	-	-
2012	342,979	285,523	299,251	381,055	130,431	408,100	120,309	-	-
2013	398,455	300,083	272,411	406,465	110,766	463,763	154,523	-	-
2014	438,455	314,086	294,984	410,568	114,305	495,417	150,747	-	-
2015	509,457	358,736	319,953	489,610	133,822	555,888	168,482	88,660	175,131

Table 2. Evolution of visits to main monuments and museums. Source: Garcia & Garcia, 2016.

The position Malaga has reached as national and international tourist destination is noticeable in its presence in important international newspapers that have selected it as a city to travel to in the past few years. Malaga is currently considered the third urban Spanish destination after Madrid and Barcelona (Aguilar, 2016). Similarly, consultations of the official tourism website present a steady growth since the year 2000 (CIEDES, 2015).

Undoubtedly, the formulation of the IPEM was the base for the development of the tourism sector. The aim of improving cultural infrastructure and heritage, not only for tourism purposes, but also as a way to improve the living conditions of the citizens, triggered the development process that translated into the positive numbers presented above.

Table N°3 presents the evolution of the main indicators of the tourism in Malaga. As mentioned before, the tendency is growth. One can observe the high rise in the average overnight stays in 2016; this indicates that more travelers are choosing Malaga as their main destination, contrasting to the data from 2000 when only the 2.9% of the visitors to Costa del Sol had the city of Malaga as their final destination. These numbers lead to conclude that in two decades, Malaga stopped being the dormitory and service city of the Costa del Sol and became its actual capital city.

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016<sup>3</sup></i>
<i>N° of visitors</i>	n/a	456,560	862,599	4,000,000	3,950,562
<i>Lodging establishments</i>	63	82	90	103	290 <sup>4</sup>
<i>N° of beds</i>	4141	6238	9086	12,502	14,304 <sup>5</sup>
<i>Overnight stays</i>	n/a	975,560	n/a	2,259,297	2,366,024
<i>Overnight stay average</i>	1.97	4.1	1.84	n/a	5.93
<i>Cruise ships on dock</i>	231	213	300	238	n/a
<i>Passengers on cruises</i>	134,429	200,000	659,123	418,503	n/a

Table 3. Tourism indicators. Source: J. Corrales, 2017 with data of CIEDES and tourism office.

Although Malaga has shown a steady tourism growth, the actions directed at its improvement have not stopped. The Tourism Office (2016) continues working to maintain the position Malaga has reached in the tourism market through the formulation of the Tourism Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, the goal of which is the complete consolidation of Malaga as one of the most important cultural destinations in the country with the star project “Malaga city of museums”.

This section of the thesis indicates the evolution of tourism in Malaga experienced many ups and downs throughout its history, with positive recent outcomes that have turned the city into one of the most important urban destinations in the country (Aguilar, 2016). This evolution is synthetized in Figure N°6, emphasizing its most important moments.

<sup>3</sup> Data until October 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Not included tourist apartments.

<sup>5</sup> Tourism apartments increase the offer in 4015 beds.

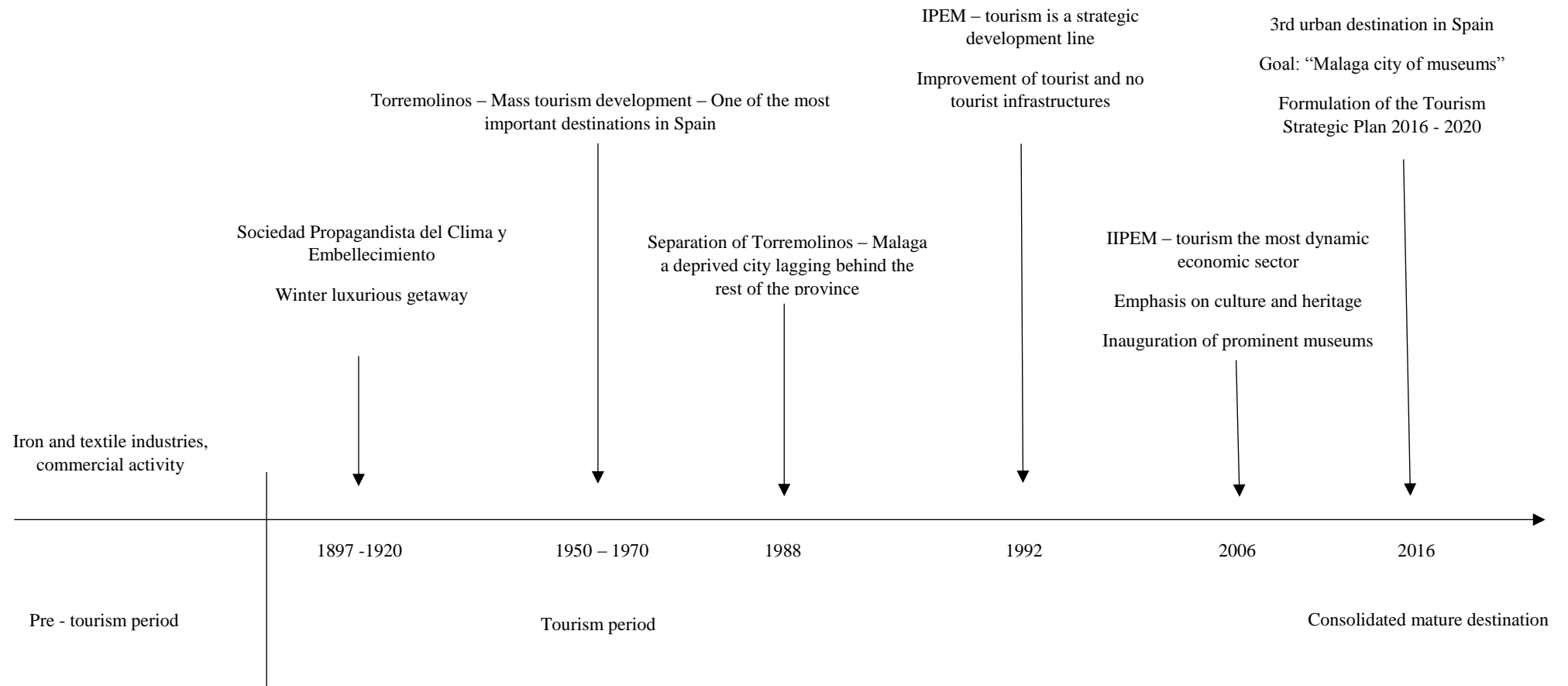


Figure 6. History of Malaga's tourism. J. Corrales, 2017

## **5.2. Linkages**

Historically, Malaga has been a preferred destination for British and German travelers (Pellejero, 2005). Recently, visitor numbers from France, The Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries have increased (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017). Based on this information, we conducted online research regarding tour operators who offer Malaga as a tourist destination. First, however, we undertake an analysis of linkages in the past.

The role of tourism linkages has changed over time. During the period of the 1960s until the 1990s, when mass tourism was the most popular form of tourism, tour operators and travel agencies were vital in connecting demand to supply (Pellejero, 2005). The analysis of guidebooks of Malaga from those years, revealed the high number of tour operators promoting hotels and resorts in Torremolinos. The same guides showed the extensive offer of tourist packages including flights and accommodation. At the same time, travel agencies were the direct link between travelers and airlines. Since the 1960s, and at least 20 years prior, Malaga airport has occupied an important position in the travel market to Andalusia. Charter companies and standards airlines opened flights to and from Malaga after it became a commercial airport around the year 1940 (Pellejero, 2005).

The online research revealed that Malaga is currently present in well-known tour operators' catalogues from United Kingdom, Germany, France and Norway. Also, it is being offered on Russian sites. It is interesting to draw attention to the fact these sites offer Malaga as a cultural destination. They certainly praise its weather and beaches, but highlight its cultural offer and distinguish Malaga over the other typical destinations of the Costa del Sol. The offered packages include Malaga as part of cultural tours around Andalusia. Another interesting fact, is that Malaga is especially offered as a luxurious destination to potential Russian visitors. Recently, an international site for luxurious hotels (4 and 5 stars) included Malaga as one of their new destinations (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017). These details reflect the efforts Malaga's authorities are making to create an international image different to the sun and beach destination. Remarkable, as well, is the presence of Malaga in influential blogs of Southeast Asia and China, demonstrating the interest to open it up to new markets (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

In addition, the research demonstrated not only the public sector is making agreements with airlines, tour operators and others, but also that the private sector is working on the visibility of the city. Advertisements of hotels, flights and car rentals in at least three languages appear on different sites since the research was carried out. Moreover, low cost airlines offer promotional tickets to and from Malaga to different destinations in UK, Germany and France, in particular.

Concerning transportation, Malaga airport is the fourth most important in Spain and it is the main gateway to the Costa del Sol and Andalusia. In total 58 airlines among standards, low-cost and



charters carriers offer regular flights to European capitals and other important cities in Europe, as well as connections to other continents (Malaga airport, 2017). Recently, a weekly direct flight to Tel Aviv, Israel, has been inaugurated (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

Malaga is connected to Madrid and Barcelona by the high speed train in a few hours. Additionally, other important Spanish cities are easily accessible by train (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2016b). Spain in general, has an efficient and modern network of roads and highways that connects the whole country, hence the access to Malaga using private vehicles is also easy.

Malaga is also well connected by sea. There is a regular ferry service to and from the north of Africa. Furthermore, every month around 40 cruise ships from 32 different companies make stops in Malaga for at least 8 hours, bringing hundreds of tourists to the city. What is more, the site Cruise Critics (2017) divulges that Malaga has been included in the 2016 top ten ports with the best tourist offer for cruise passengers.

Salvador Aguilar (personal interview, March 2017) and the news portal of the city council (2017) reveal that Malaga appears on the sites of important European tour operators and an increasing number of airlines and cruise ships arrive at the airport and port, as a result of the marketing campaign the Malaga tourism office and the private sector started years ago as a way to sell the new cultural image of the city. The tourism board has made agreements with tour operators who also have agreements with airlines to offer complete tourist packages to Malaga (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017). The tourism office continues working on the expansion of its campaign participating in international tourism fairs, inviting representative of tour operators, cruise lines, airlines and influential international bloggers on inspection trips to present the city's tourism and broaden its market appeal (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017; CIEDES, 2017; S. Aguilar, personal interview, 2017).

### **5.3. The supply-side**

Barker and Newton (1995) consider the independence of Torremolinos as the triggering event for the realization of the development plans in Malaga. Local authorities saw in tourism an important tool for urban regeneration through the stimulation of business in shops, restaurants, bars and nightclubs. Moreover, the capitalization of heritage, culture and infrastructures and the promotion of investment and enterprise were seen as an integrated project for developing the city (Barker & Newton, 1995). In both, the public and private sectors, this sparked actions directed at improving, in the first place the living conditions for residents and, as causal fact, the tourist-oriented infrastructure.

The formulation of the strategic plans for Malaga were an important boost for the organization of the co-producing actors of the supply-side. The strategic plans went through a process of public consultations that included all the relevant actors in every strategic line from the public and the

private sectors, and tourism was not the exception. The organization of these advisory boards resulted in the creation of the Tourism Forum of Malaga. The purpose of this Forum is to provide a space for debating, analyzing and decision-making about the tourism situation in the city (CIEDES, 2006).

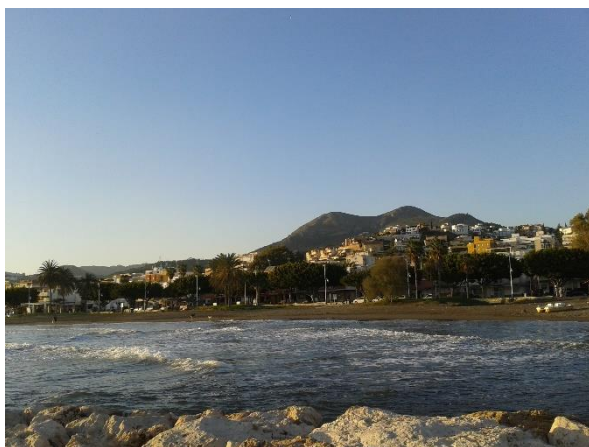
The Forum has been vital on building the competitiveness and attractiveness of Malaga as a tourism destination, and most of the actions and strategies that have been implemented in favour of the tourism development were planned within the Tourism Forum (Ayuntamiento de Málaga, 2016b). In other words, coordination and collaboration between actors was and is still strongly present in the case of Malaga.

The Tourism Forum is a public private initiative that includes all the co-producing actors of Malaga tourism industry. Its members are: the City Council represented by the departments of Tourism, Culture and Sports, Malaga – Costa del Sol Airport, Malaga Port, Planning and Tourism Costa del Sol, The Chamber of Commerce, The Association of Hoteliers of the Costa del Sol, The Trade Federation of Malaga, The Association of Hostelry Professional, The Association of Tourist Guides, Trade Fairs and Congress Centre, The Association of the Historic Center, The Association of Travel Agencies, Association The of rent-a-car professionals, Malaga Convention Bureau and The University of Malaga (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2016b).

### 5.3.1. Attractions of Malaga

The analysis of the evolution of tourism in Malaga makes evident the relevance that was given to the cultural and heritage assets as tourist attractions. However, natural features were demonstrably the historical builders of Malaga's image. In the following, we describe the tourist attractions considered the most important according to the opinions of interviewees and the tourist guides and online sources consulted.

- Climate and nature.



Picture 2. El Palo Beach, J. Corrales, 2017

Historically, Malaga's weather has been one of its main attractions for tourists. Mild winters, soft summers and its almost 3000 hours of sunshine per year, make it an ideal destination no matter the season.

Along the 14 km of coast, Malaga has urban beaches with all the facilities for visitors and easy access from every point of the city. In addition to beaches, Malaga has two different natural reserves. The first is the estuary of the

Guadalhorce, a good place for birdwatching and with a unique urban nudist beach in its surroundings. The other natural reserve is the Montes de Malaga, a small chain of mountains bordering Malaga, which offers hiking facilities and other outdoors activities. Also, located in the Montes de Malaga are “las ventas”, former farmhouses transformed in restaurants of typical food from the hinterlands that are mostly frequented during the winter (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

- Culture and heritage.

The archeological collection of Malaga is principally composed of three monuments: the Alcazaba, Gibralfaro Castle and the ruins of the Roman Theater. The Alcazaba was built around the eleventh century during the Muslim occupation, when it was the residence of their governors. Gibralfaro Castle was also built during the Muslim occupation over Phoenician ruins. The Roman Theater, built around the first century B.C. is situated at the foot of the Alcazaba. It was restored in 2009 and is used again as a scenic space (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

The consulted sources recommend, in addition to the archeological collection, the visits to certain churches, squares and streets that make up part of the architectural legacy of different epochs, among them the Cathedral, Plaza de la Constitución, former central square of the city, Calle Marqués de Larios, the main street of the old town that has been the center of the commerce and where the most famous shops are, Palacio Episcopal and its square, Church of the Sagrario, Church of Saint Jacob where Picasso was christened, the Plaza de Toros de la Malagueta, among others. The cultural heritage of Malaga goes beyond antique buildings, and the intangible heritage is best represented by the biggest local celebrations: Semana Santa and the Feria de Agosto.

The preservation of the cultural assets has been a constant element of the tourism strategy. The rehabilitation of the old town and the archeological ensemble were among the first actions to make the city attractive. The revitalization of old buildings also sought to increase the attractiveness of the destination (P. Cerezo, F. Salmon, personal interviews, 2017; IPREM, 1996). The creation of monumental and heritage tours were conceived to advertise those elements of the city (CIEDES, 2017). Semana Santa and the Feria de Agosto have been promoted for some years at the national and international levels to turn them into some of the most recognized events in Andalusia (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

- Network of museums of different themes.

Malaga is one of the cities with a major density of museums in its old town (Garcia & Garcia, 2016). Its 37 museums are frequently mentioned in tourist guides as the main features of the city, revealing the emphasis Malaga has placed on cultural tourism, specifically, on museums. The most important are The Picasso Museum, The Carmen Thyssen Museum, The Contemporary Art

Centre, The Collection of the Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg, The Centre Pompidou, The Picasso Foundation and the recently inaugurated Museum of Fine Arts. The other museums are related to different themes: religious art, costumes, science, etc. Malaga's tourism strategy strongly invests in museums, aiming to be recognized as the City of Museums in Southern Europe (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2016b and 2017; G. del Corral, personal interview, March 2017).

- Cultural events and festivals.

In addition, to museums, Malaga has a rich cultural offer for residents and visitors. Throughout the year several festivals and art exhibits take place. The Spanish Film Festival is the event that has the highest profile. The Cervantes and Echegaray theaters stage concerts and performances throughout the year.

Cultural events and festivals are proposed in the IIPEM (CIEDES, 2006) as tools to demonstrate the variety and high quality of Malaga's cultural offering. The celebration of attractive and recurring cultural events aims to position Malaga as a leader among cultural Mediterranean destinations. The star project Agora Mediterraneo includes the promotion of this type of events as a key asset for increasing the attractiveness power of Malaga (CIEDES, 2006).

- Hospitality.

Chapter 3 suggested hospitality is a cultural value appreciated by tourists while on a trip. Bilbao, Genoa and Marseille were valued by tourists for their hospitality, an important factor for a destination's attractiveness (Bilbao, Marseille and Genoa tourism offices, 2017). IIPEM emphasizes the "*capacidad de acogida de los Malagueños*" (welcoming capacity) (CIEDES, 2006:181) as one of the major assets of the city. Malacitans are well known for their friendliness towards foreigners. This is reflected in the perception tourists had of the destination, which will be further explained later on this chapter.

- Secondary attractions and facilities.

In addition to the attractions described before, which are considered the most important, Malaga offers secondary attractions, tourist oriented services and facilities. The city center and other attractive zones like Pedregalejo and El Palo, two of the most iconic popular quarters, are full of restaurants with typical and international food. As with hotels, there are restaurants for every budget and taste, from the most authentic tapas bar where local residents go to have their morning coffee to gastrobar of new cuisine in the elegant Muelle Uno or the trendy neighbourhood of Soho (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

For congresses and conventions, Malaga has the Trade Fairs and Congress Center located a few minutes from the city center easily reachable by public and private transportation. The Malaga

Convention Bureau, a public agency that was created to support and promote the celebration of congresses and conventions in Malaga, works closely with a network of service providers to these events, such as transport services, translators, travel agencies, hotels and catering services (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

Shopping is also an attractive activity in Malaga, and the city center, especially Calle Larios, presents different types of shops. As part of initiative Malaga Cruise Shops, a network of shops and stores open at special hours when cruise passengers are in the city (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

Regarding language tourism, Malaga has 16 Spanish schools for foreigners, accredited by the Cervantes Institute. These schools, besides languages courses offers other facilities to students, like transfers to and from the airport, lodgings and leisure and recreational activities (Costa del Sol, 2017).

In addition to the tourist infrastructure and services, Malaga is well served with other than tourist-oriented infrastructures. The city center and all the urban area have hospitals, banks, supermarkets, drugstores, public libraries, parks and any other services for residents to make use of and that can be useful or give comfort to tourists (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

This section presented the inventory of the main tourist attractions of Malaga. Evidently, these attractions would not exist without the implementation of development strategies and actions that guided to an efficient development of the resources. The next section will analyze these strategies.

### 5.3.2. Management of the destination

The strategies the public sector has been implementing since the separation of Torremolinos, demonstrate a clear urge to develop a tourist product for both tourists and residents (Barke & Newton, 1995). The political will of the authorities to reinvent the city as one of urban interventions and tourism, sound administration and the positive outcomes of the strategies since their beginning, stimulated the willingness of the private sector to be part of the



Picture 3. Roman Theater and Alcazaba. J.Corrales, 2017

development process by increasing the number of lodging establishments, shops, bars, restaurants and other type of business (Barke & Newton, 1995; S. Aguilar, personal interview March, 2017).

The strategies devised in Malaga were not exclusively tourist oriented. The urban interventions were contextual key factors in the development of the tourism sector. What is more, both strategic plans were conceived in an integrated way aiming to develop every economic sector (Barke & Newton, 1995; Royo et al., 2014; P. Cerezo, F. Salmon, S. Aguilar, G. del Corral, personal interviews, March 2017).

Next, we detail the actions carried out by public and private sectors. The information was collected from the strategic plans, data from the tourism office and interviews.

The rehabilitation of the historic city center was the first step in the transformation of Malaga. This project was achieved thanks to EU funds through URBAN program, whose aim was to support the rehabilitation of city centers in the least developed European regions. Andalusia was



*Picture 4. Palmeral de las Sorpresas. J. Corrales, 2017.*

priority number 1 and Malaga took advantage of the situation and made an efficient use of the funds (Royo et al., 2014; P. Cerezo, F. Salmon, personal interviews, March, 2017). The objective of the rehabilitation of the city center was not only to prepare the city for tourists, it was also to recuperate the history of Malaga through the revitalization of buildings. Also, it was presented as the recovery of the commercial dynamism that characterized the area. Likewise, it envisaged

recovery of the residential use of buildings and the area in general (CIEDES, 1995; F. Salmon, personal interview, March 2017). In brief, the aim was to restore Malaga's former vitality and foster continued urban use of space for the benefit of residents. The rehabilitation of the city center includes actions like the financial support for the rehabilitation of facades and interiors in houses and shops, the removal of visual pollution elements, financial support for new and traditional businesses to recover the economic dynamism of the area and the installation of elements such as benches in the urban environment (CIEDES, 1995; P. Cerezo; F. Salmon, personal interviews, 2017).

Beside the rehabilitation of the old town, different types of urban interventions were executed in Malaga. The following are worth mentioning: 1) Streets in the historic center and its surroundings were pedestrianized as a way to upgrade and boost the urban living, to stimulate the commercial activity and to relieve the center from the intense traffic load (CIEDES, 1995). The effects of the pedestrianization are evident: there are plenty shops, bars and restaurants with terraces, and residents and tourists are usually walking around at every time. 2) Integration of the port area with



the old town: the old town used to be disconnected from the sea. The Port Authority and the Town Hall worked together in this action. The objective was to give new use to an area that was misused and segregated from the city, despite the short walking distance from the historic center, and to open the city to the sea (CIEDES, 2006, P. Cerezo, personal interview, 2017). The outcomes were two different pedestrian zones, Muelle Uno and Palmeral de las Sorpresas, intended for leisure activities, with bars, restaurants and shops. The Centre Pompidou is also located here. The area was conceived, as well, as a transition zone for cruise passengers between the port and the city centre. 3) Revalorization of the area currently known as Soho, a former degraded zone right close to the city center, which is now considered the “cultural quarter”. The area is developing a modern cultural environment, different



Picture 5. Graffiti facade at Soho. J. Corrales, 2017.

from the rest of the city (Garcia & Garcia, 2016). This place attracts renowned urban artists who had left their art in the facades of the neighbourhood (Soho Malaga, 2017). The Contemporary Art Centre is located in the Soho, contributing to the air of modernity of the zone. 4) Rehabilitation of green areas, of which the most remarkable is the rehabilitation of the Malaga Park, located right next to the city center (CIEDES, 1995).

The Cathedral and the archeological collection are the most important pieces of Malaga’s heritage. They were refurbished and their surroundings improved to make them more attractive to visits and to be revalued as the representative pieces of Malaga’s origins. Other ancient and representative buildings of different architectonic styles were revitalized giving them new uses (CIEDES, 1995; CIEDES, 2006, P. Cerezo; F. Salmon, personal interviews, March 2017). This is the case of the rationalist building of the wholesale market that currently hosts the Contemporary Art Centre. Another example is the Buenavista Palace, a building from the sixteenth century, representative of the Andalusian architecture of that period, which houses the Picasso Museum (Museum Picasso, 2017). The Villalon Palace, another jewel of that century, houses the Carmen Thyssen Museum (Museum Carmen Thyssen, 2017). The establishment of these museums brought back dynamism to these zones. For example, Carmen Thyssen Museum gave birth to the Thyssen Environment, where shops, galleries, bars and restaurants are installed.

The airport and port have undergone through improvement works to increase their capacity for receiving passengers. These improvements have resulted in Malaga’s inclusion among the five principal ports in the peninsula for cruises (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017). Malaga airport

opened a second landing track, enlarging its capacity to receive more flights and turning it into one of the most important airports for low-cost airlines in Spain (Malaga Airport, 2017). The railway infrastructure was improved to be part of the high speed train network. Today, Malaga is connected to Madrid in 2 ½ hours via train. Regarding the transport inside the city and the neighbouring localities, there are several bus lines that serve the urban area. There is also a commuter train that connects the city center to the airport, Torremolinos and other coastal towns (Ayuntamiento de Málaga, 2017).

The strategies described until now are not exclusively tourist oriented. They were conceived for the general development of the city. It is evident that the improvement of infrastructures and urban interventions are key factors for the development of any region. However, their collateral effects benefited the tourism sector. The outcomes of these actions have contributed to the enhancement of the attractiveness power of Malaga and were developed conjointly with the tourism oriented actions. The supply side in Malaga, namely public and private sectors, work conjointly and separately on the development of the destination attractiveness through actions aiming to result in a high quality and unique tourism product. The public sector has developed actions based on the cultural wealth and heritage of Malaga. The strategy has been to exploit the resources that make Malaga different from the other destinations in the Costa del Sol and to offer tourists a deeper experience to the typical sun and beach holiday that has characterized the region since more than sixty years ago. These actions are set out below.

The use of Picasso's image to build the city brand of Malaga: the figure of Picasso has been central in the tourism strategy from the cultural point of view. As Picasso's birthplace, the Tourism and Culture offices have worked to tie the artist's image to Malaga, aiming to build a singular image that no other city on the Costa del Sol would have. The first action in this line was the opening of the Picasso Foundation and Birthplace House and Museum. Then, the inauguration of the Picasso Museum with the support of Picasso's family, who lent their private collection to Malaga, strengthened the strategy and paid off in a positive way (CIEDES, 1995; Sarria, 2004; CIEDES, 2006; Garcia & Garcia, 2016; G. del Corral, personal interview, 2017). According to the reports of the tourism office, the Picasso Museum is the most visited attraction in the city.

Negotiations to establish important museums in Malaga: culture is central in the tourism strategy. In this aspect, museums have been key elements in the transformation of Malaga into a cultural urban destination. According to Royo et al. (2014), Malaga is among the cities that have more museums per square kilometer. Malaga competed against other cities and invested much money in the establishment of the renowned Carmen Thyssen Museum, The Collection of the Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg and The Centre Pompidou (G. del Corral, personal interview,



March, 2017). The more than 30 museums located in the city center, have led to the project “Malaga, city of museums” aimed at converting Malaga into the national destination for museum visits (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2016). The inauguration of the museums intends to support the cultural and economic revitalization of the city center and consolidate its image of excellence and centrality within the city (CIEDES, 2006).

The marketing and promotion of the destination at the national and international levels has been considered vital in the tourism strategy. Participation in international tourism fairs and cruises lines conventions, commercial visits to shipping companies, welcoming and reception of travel bloggers and journalists are some of the actions realized to introduce what Malaga as a destination has to offer. Participation in these events has as purpose the presentation of the new image of the city as an urban cultural destination (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017; S. Aguilar, personal interview, 2017).

The creation of the tourism observatory aims to obtain actual data of the tourism performance. The tourism office has a network of tourist information stores in the main spots of the city. In addition, the website offers information about the activities and events the city will host, and general information about the tourist offer in the city (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

Participation in tourism clusters with other cities: recently Malaga joined the initiative Andalusian Soul with Cordoba, Seville and Granada, aiming to market the four main cities of Andalusia as an ensemble. The aim of Malaga is to demonstrate that it can be more than just the gateway to the region. It is to show that it has as much to offer as these other three cities (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017; S. Aguilar, personal interview, 2017).

The promotion of private investment in hotels and other tourism related activities like restaurants, shops, tourism activities and services (CIEDES, 1995; CIEDES, 2006). The stimulation of private investment had as an outcome the expansion of the number of lodging facilities in the city. In continuation, we provide details of the current lodgings on offer of Malaga and other actions from the private sector.

Malaga city has a broad offer of lodgings for every budget and need. Hotels have the highest percentage of beds, even though they represent just the 6.8% of the establishments. Tourist houses and apartments are taking importance in the lodging offer since the last two years, representing in 2016 the 21.9% of beds (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2016). Showing up next, table 4 summarizes the lodging offer of the city.

<i>Type of lodgment</i>	<i>Nº of establishments</i>	<i>Nº of beds</i>
<i>Hotels</i>		
<i>1 star</i>	6	151
<i>2 stars</i>	19	1283
<i>3 stars</i>	23	2330
<i>4 stars</i>	23	4586
<i>5 stars</i>	1	212
<i>Hostels and guesthouses</i>		
<i>Hostel 1 star</i>	8	352
<i>Hostel 2 stars</i>	8	383
<i>Guesthouses</i>	57	1738
<i>Apartments</i>		
<i>First class</i>	10	319
<i>Second class</i>	65	1513
<i>Third class</i>	46	1124
<i>Rural houses</i>		
<i>Basic</i>	17	137
<i>Superior</i>	6	62
<i>Rural tourist house</i>	17	108
<i>Tourist house</i>	821	4015
<i>Camping</i>	1	114
<i>Total</i>	1128	18,427

Table 4. Lodging offer in Malaga. Source: Ayuntamiento de Málaga, 2016.

The initiatives of the private sector go beyond accommodation. Malaga, as mentioned before, has a broad offer of bars and restaurants. Our research revealed the existence of different tourist oriented services like bike and Segway rentals, tourist guides companies, car rentals, and translator services for congresses and meetings. In this regard, the biggest hotels have developed facilities to host meetings and these types of events (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

All these actions are either an integral part of or the outcome of both strategic plans. Tourism was only one strategic line of a holistic development view. The formulation of star projects like Malaga TUR and Agora Mediterraneo included diverse actions foreseen to strengthen the sector, among them the professionalization of personal working in tourism services, the improvement of cultural and tourism infrastructures and equipment, the sustainable use of resources, the stimulation of citizen's interest in culture and heritage and, to combat the seasonality of tourism, the inclusion of alternative models of tourism like language, congress and sports tourism. Furthermore, a first tourism strategic plan for the period 2016 – 2020 has been formulated as a tool to give continuity to all the projects that have been carried out so far.

These actions illustrate the clear need to reinvent the city not only for tourism purposes, but also for general public well-being. One can observe that the strategies either have a strong cultural focus or center on the improvement of infrastructures and the urban environment. Also noticeable are the efforts in promoting the destination and gaining an important position at the international level. The private–public collaboration that can be discerned from the initiatives is also noteworthy.

#### **5.4. Demand side**

This section reports on the characterization of the demand side in Malaga. It analyzes the profile of the tourists and the most popular activities among them. The last edition of the Tourism Observatory (Nov. 2015 – Oct. 2016) was used as an information source to write this subchapter.

##### **5.4.1. The tourist profile**

The Tourism Observatory reports that the greatest percentage of tourists in Malaga are from Spain, followed by British, Italian, German and Scandinavian tourists. However, this profile will not undertake a differentiation because the preferences and characteristics according to nationality are unknown. Data from the Tourism Observatory indicates the average tourist in Malaga could be classified as a mix of the organized and self-organized types. However, as the report suggests, the majority of tourists arrive in Malaga in a self-organized way, so one can predict the tendency for the coming years adheres to the self-organized classification.

Most tourists in Malaga plan their trip by themselves, they reserve their lodgings and airplane tickets (in the case they come from farther places in Spain or from other countries) using mostly internet sites. Just a low percentage (9.1%) relies on a travel agency to make this arrangements. The report also reveals the majority choose Malaga as their main or only destination. This indicates their willingness to stay longer and to better appreciate what the city has to offer. It also indicates distancing from organized tours and all-inclusive packages that characterized the fashion of tourism on the Costa del Sol during the last decades of the past century, and which is still common in other places in the region, such as Torremolinos.

Despite hotels being the preferred type of lodgings, the steady increase in the use of tourist apartments and houses reveals a desire to be close to a more authentic tourist experience. Staying in an apartment allows closeness to the community and permits different experiences which would not be possible staying in a hotel: to do grocery shopping, to have a coffee in the same bar as residents, to see day to day movement in a neighbourhood, etc.

The average age of the visitors (40.8) can serve as an indicator of what visitors are looking for; they are young enough to look for nightlife and sun and beach activities, nor old enough for only rest and relaxing activities. The age also indicates a higher purchase power, which is interesting to the destination for economic purposes. The age also indicates a greater desire to try more

“mature” activities, like attending a play in a theater or appreciating an especial exhibition in a museum, increasing the value of the cultural offer of Malaga in the eyes of visitors and potential visitors.

The main push-factors specified in the report were the desire for leisure, culture and trying a new experience. Again, the desire for culture and a new experience implies the need to have a non-traditional tourist experience, evincing detachment from the former organized way of tourism experiences that prevailed in Malaga some decades ago.

#### 5.4.2. The activities of the tourists and perception of the destination

The pull factors of Malaga seem to be its leisure and tourist offer in first place, followed by natural assets like beaches and weather. Hospitality is also an attractive element for tourists. In line with



Picture 6. Semana Santa procession. L. Saari, 2017.

the pull factors, the Tourism Observatory reveals the most popular activities among tourists are visits to the old town, visits to monuments and museums and walks around the city. Gastronomic experiences also occupy an important position among the preferred activities. Sun and beach activities and revelry are located in

the third position in the preference of tourists, meanwhile traditional festivities are in the last place. As can be seen, the activities described in the report are the most traditional in any tourist destination. These characteristics suggest tourists' activities reflects similarities with the organized type of tourist, while travel patterns are primarily self-organized. In spite of the many efforts of the supply side to provide an image of uniqueness and to offer creative and different attractions, like festivals, theaters and the modern and artistic experiences in Soho, or outdoor activities, people still go to Malaga to do similar activities they could do in any other destination. However, it is important to highlight that culture has a higher value than beach and sun and revelry, which separates Malaga from the other destinations on the Costa del Sol.

Notwithstanding the above, the general perception that tourists have towards Malaga is one of satisfaction. They value, primarily the hospitality, gastronomy, museums, leisure offer and the feeling of safety, which make them willing to return and recommend the destination to others.

Once Malaga's tourism system has been studied, Figure N°7 summarizes the elements involved in the construction of the destination attractiveness.

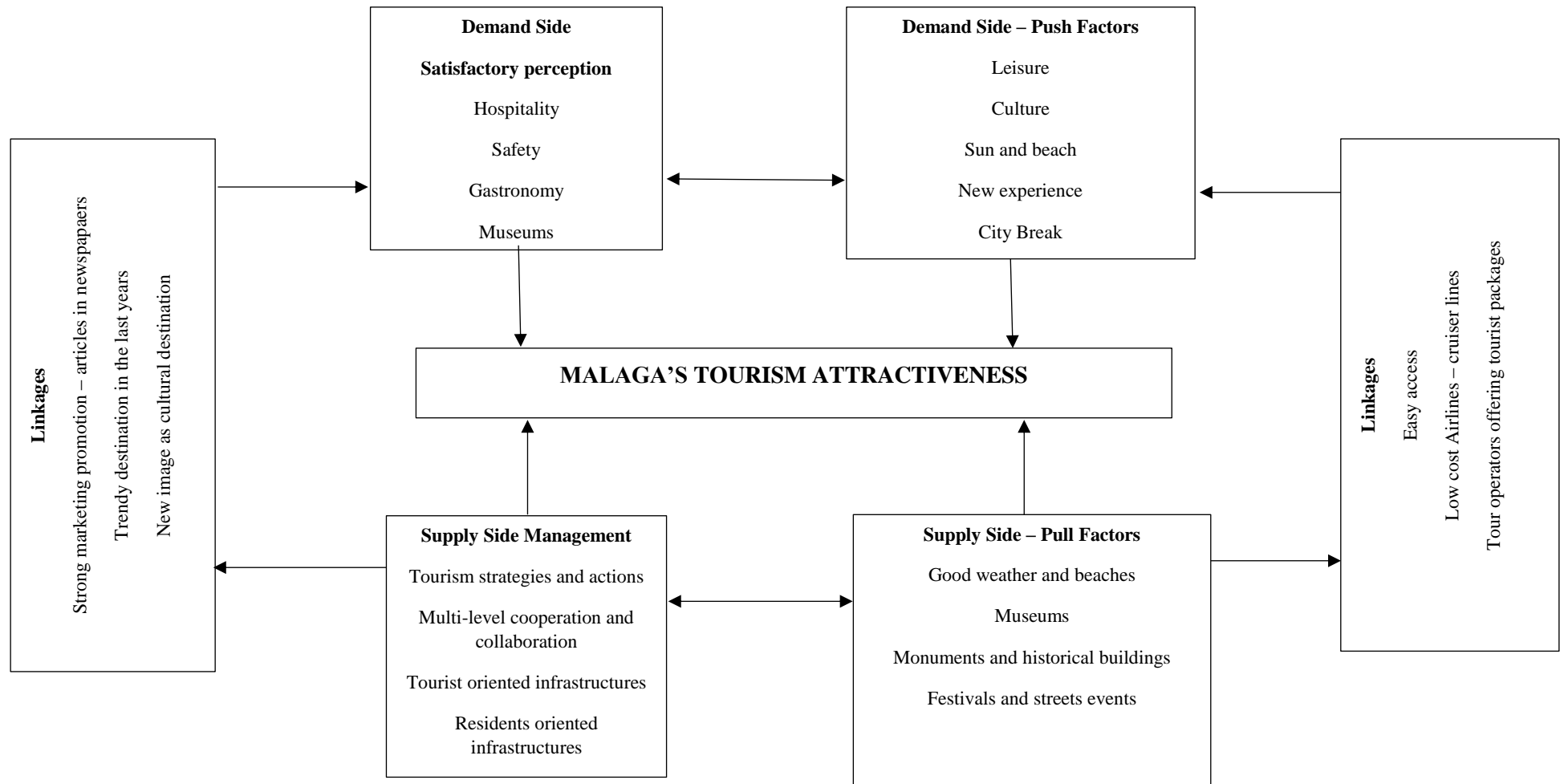


Figure 7. Malaga's tourism attractiveness model. J. Corrales, 2017.

Figure 7 depicts how elements from the supply side, the demand side and linkages interconnect to build the attractiveness capability of Malaga. Tourists' motivations to travel are inspired by the need for leisure, culture and good weather. Malaga with its good weather, beaches, museums, monuments and heritage fulfils the needs of tourist. Furthermore, all these attractions develop parallel to tourist and no tourist oriented infrastructures and interventions aiming to provide a high quality tourism product, creating a satisfactory tourism experience. Besides this, actions from the supply side attract the attention of linkages, enhancing the proximity between demand and supply. All of this results in the attractiveness of Malaga.

## **6. DISCUSSION ABOUT MALAGA'S TOURISM ATTRACTIVENESS**

Throughout this thesis, the factors influencing the attractiveness of tourism destinations were studied from a theoretical approach and from a practical point of view by means of the case study of the city of Malaga. Additionally, a brief analysis of other five tourist cities, Bilbao, Marseille, Genoa, Dubrovnik and Tunisia, was performed, aiming to broadly explain the causes of the growth of tourism attractiveness in these destinations, and to contrast the results to Malaga's.

Both, theory and the cases reveal destination attractiveness depends on the combination of factors and elements that compose destinations (Klenosky, 2002; Formica & Uysal, 2006; Calvo et al., 2011). The overview of the aforementioned cities suggests south European and Mediterranean destinations have applied different strategies aiming to attract tourists. Urban interventions to beautify and rehabilitate cities and the expansion and improvement of lodging infrastructures appear to be popular actions in tourism strategies. Transport and the development of complementary infrastructures constitute important elements in the attraction of tourists as well. Intangible assets, like culture, traditions, hospitality and life quality are promoted to attract tourists too. Regarding the main case study, we found out that Malaga's attractiveness has developed as a result of similar actions.

Recalling Malaga's tourism history, we observe the first tourism strategy included actions intended to ameliorate the urban quality of the city and revitalize the townscape. These actions and the recognized year round good weather of the Andalusian coast, attracted wealthy self-organized citizens from countries of the north of Europe who were looking for nicer weather conditions and new and different cultural experiences. In this way, Malaga became one of the most important tourism destinations in Spain until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The economic and social context of the second half of the twentieth century brought changes to the consumer behaviour, and with them a boom in mass tourism. Mass tourism meant a completely new manner of experiencing tourism. Malaga's tourism experienced rapid growth, reflected in the inauguration of several hotels, resorts and complementary tourist infrastructure to cover the steady demand of organized tourists for sun and beach, the greatest exponents of mass tourism. This became a double-edged sword for Malaga. On the one hand, Malaga, specifically Torremolinos, developed to become a reference destination for mass tourism. On the other, the development was so narrowly focused in the tourism sector in Torremolinos that Malaga's old town got into a situation of decline that extended to the devaluation of cultural and heritage assets, urban sprawl and general urban degradation. Culminating in the political independence of Torremolinos, the result was a decadent Malaga with scarce tourism attractions. Nevertheless, this separation can be considered one of the triggering events for the quest of tourism revival (Barke & Newton, 1995). Malaga authorities, being conscious on the role of tourism in the history

of Malaga, selected this sector as one of the strategic lines of action for the general development of the city (S. Aguilar, F. Salmon, personal interviews, March 2017). At that time, actions whose identifiably similar to our comparative cases began to be implemented. While Bilbao grew around the Guggenheim Museum and the rehabilitation of the port area, Malaga did so around the rehabilitation of the archeological ensemble and the integration of the port into the old town. As in Bilbao, Genoa and Marseille, Malaga's historic center underwent through urban interventions like pedestrianisation, as a way to humanize and stimulate the revitalization of the area and make it attractive not only for tourists, but also for residents.

At this point, it is important to mention the evolution in the tastes with respect to demand. Mass tourism is lagging behind a more conscious tourism. The contemporary tourist is usually self-organized and looks for deeper experiences, wants to connect with the host community and is curious about local culture and traditions (Crouch, 2004; Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Malaga's supply side worked on the generation of a set of cultural and artistic attractions to catch the attention of this self-organized tourist and transformed the image of a classic sun and beach destination into the image of a cultural Malaga, the birthplace of Picasso. These attractions were generated thanks to the implementation of actions aiming at not only tourism development, but also at strengthening and promoting local culture and tradition. Furthermore, the initiatives devised improvements in the urban appearance and functioning of the city, stimulation of private investments on the tourism sector and upgrading all transport infrastructures and services. The positive outcomes of the actions suggest efficient management of the resources of the destination that generate an attractive tourism product, which translates into a satisfactory tourism experience that tourists would repeat and recommend to others.

All the above, permits us to answer the main research question: *what are the factors that have determined Malaga's destination attractiveness?* Formica (2004) identifies economic, socio-cultural and natural factors, and infrastructures as the main influencers of attractiveness. Other authors, Haugland et al., (2011), Calvo et al. (2011) and Valls et al. (2014) argue for the importance of the management of the destination as the main factor to create attractiveness. Our case study reveals that Malaga's tourism attractiveness is produced by a combination of the factors these researchers suggest. In the first place, natural factors, specifically weather, has been and is still the main factor for the attractiveness of Malaga. Socio-cultural factors are identified as the second most important influencers of attractiveness. Malaga's culture and heritage represented in its museums, monuments and traditional festivities attract an important number of tourists annually. Malaga augmented its attractiveness using the image of Picasso and museums, and succeeded in doing so. Gema del Corral (personal interview, March, 2017) and Garcia and Garcia (2016) agree on relating the increase of the number of visitors to the inauguration of museums. Furthermore, the changes in tourist preferences for an urban cultural destination rather



than a classic sun and beach, contribute to the attractiveness power of Malaga. Third, attractive tourist and not exclusively tourist oriented infrastructures that contributes to the revitalization of the urban environment in general, and influences the comfort perception of tourists, among them museums, monuments, hotels, restaurants and shops. Finally, the efficient management of resources and a collaborative supply side make possible the formulation and implementation of initiatives aiming to build a high quality tourism product.

This last tourism attractiveness factor leads us to answer the secondary research question: *what type of strategies and actions are used to influence this attractiveness?* The answer to this question is found in the case study. The actions already carried out and still being implemented are more than tourism oriented. Urban interventions, not only aiming to beautify the city, but also to improve living conditions for residents, were the starting point of the attractiveness building. The improvement of general infrastructure was also crucial in the creation of attractiveness. Easy accessibility, an airport and a port with modern and comfortable facilities made possible the arrival of cruises ships and airlines. The high speed train facilitates communication with the north of the country, making the destination more attractive to people in that part of the country. Initiatives to stimulate the consumption of culture were implemented as well. Finally, the tourism oriented actions are related to the investments on tourism services and infrastructures, the professionalization of people working on the tourism sector, and the development of creative and attractive tourism products. Strategies promoting and marketing the destination play an important role, as well. Malaga has managed to sell a different image to one of a sun and beach destination. The outcome is that Malaga is currently known as the city of Picasso, as one of the most important urban cultural destinations in Spain (Ayuntamiento de Malaga, 2017).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this thesis was to study the factors that make attractive a tourism destination and the actions that contribute to build this attractiveness. For this purpose a case study, Malaga, an emergent destination is analyzed. The thesis reviewed the available literature on the topic of tourism, addressing concepts related to tourism, such as tourism system and its components, tourism destinations and destination attractiveness. In addition to the literature review and the analysis of the case study, a brief overview of other destinations, considered to share similarities with Malaga, is presented to check what is being done in other destinations and whether Malaga is in line with these strategies.

The thesis illustrates the process of evolution tourism has undergone from the academic point of view and from the perspective of living it and practicing it. Tourism has gained so much importance for modern society since the second half of the past century, when the expansion of commercial flights, a healthy international economy and the improvement of labour policies allowed the middle class of Northern countries to travel abroad creating as a consequence the mass tourism. During this period, academics saw tourism as a mere economic transaction, as a completely consumerist activity. Consequently, the theories from this period treated the topic from a consumer oriented approach. Inasmuch as the behaviour of demand was changing, so was the offer and the approaches to study it.

Today, academics and researchers are aware of the complexity of tourism. Tourism turns out to be so complex that even its definition and the definition of its components like tourist, destination and destination attractiveness have not been standardized or agreed upon to date. Tourist attractiveness, the topic that concerns us, demonstrates as well the complexity of the study of the sector in general. This study have demonstrated the difficulty to create attractiveness and to prove it, considering the high level of intangibility of attractiveness in what respects to the demand side.

The case study and the literature review helped to study the factors influencing the attractiveness of a destination. We learned that beyond the evident natural and man-made features, issues like good governance and creativity to make use of resources are also important. The case of Malaga and the short analysis of the other cities, taught us a beautiful location with impressive hotels is important, but not enough to attract the contemporary tourist. Attractiveness is about fulfilling the tourist's perceptions and expectations through the creation of adequate conditions using the local resources of the destination. The brief analysis of Bilbao, Marseille, Genoa and Dubrovnik suggests this was the case for this cities too. It is noticeable how urban interventions and rehabilitation projects in the old towns, without being direct tourism actions, supported the boost of these cities as tourism destinations. Furthermore, in the case of Malaga, the implemented actions look for the creation of a holistic tourism product where tourists have the opportunity to

interact with the host community rather than be segregated to a “tourist ghetto” like in the decades of the 1960s – 1970s during the mass tourism boom, or like in other destinations, not only in the Costa del Sol, but also in other parts of the world.

In conclusion, attractiveness is influenced by a diversity of factors, depending on the destination and the context where it has developed. Therefore, the factors studied in this thesis would not necessarily be valid for other cases, but the similarities found between Malaga and the cases of cities briefly analyzed, leads to conclude this is the modern vision of tourism development. For instance, this study could serve as a guide or starting point. So far, the study allows us to argue that attractiveness can be considered achieved when the tourism destinations have developed the ideal conditions to attract and re-attract tourists, and to be capable of satisfying their perceptions and expectations each time. Attractiveness is attained when a sort of sustainable tourism system is achieved where resources are used in a creative way, aiming to deliver real experiences to tourists and not just a prepared scenery, keeping always in mind that residents are going to be the principal beneficiaries of this development. However, as demonstrated tastes and ways of thinking evolves. Thus attractiveness is subjective, and destinations must evolve in accordingly.

Analyzing this thesis from a different approach, it demonstrates that even tourism destination attractiveness is a topical subject, information gathering was challenging, especially in the academic aspect for the case of Malaga. That is why the case study mostly bases on official reports. Although this official information was crucial for the thesis, there is a lack of alternative views, taking into account the highly subjective character of attractiveness. A preliminary idea for the thesis was the presentation and comparison of attractiveness perspectives from the different components of the tourism system. However, a lack of reliable sources made it impossible.

Surprisingly, the comparison between the case of Malaga and the cases of the other five cities, suggests there is a tendency to replicate successful tourism strategies, resulting in a loss of creative solutions and the “repetition” of attractions in different contexts (landmark museums, seafront promenades, etc.). At least, this is what it seems to happen in European emergent destinations. The study of tourism destinations in other continents would help to have a broader perspective on the attractiveness influential factors and might show different strategies and actions.

This thesis tries to contribute to the discussions presenting the attractiveness factors of a tourism destination mostly from a supply side approach. A deeper analysis of the demand side point of view is required to have a complete analysis and to prevent a biased perspective in the study of any other case.

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<sup>6</sup> All these sites were consulted between March and May 2017.



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## **9. ANNEX I. GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS<sup>7</sup>**

### **1. Interview to Ms Paula Cerezo, officer in the Department of Urbanism of the City Council of Malaga conducted on the 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.**

- The historic center has faced a process of “abandonment” for several years, what were the causes for this phenomenon?
- How did it come the idea of rehabilitating it?
- What kind of policies and strategies have been used during the rehabilitation process?
- What are the principal heritage elements of the historic center?
- At which extent is the rehabilitation of the historic center related to the boosting of tourism? Was it a plan since the beginning or is it a consequence?
- What are the expected results for the city?
- How are integrated historic center and tourism?
- What would be the consequences (positive and negative) for the historic center and heritage of a mass tourism?

### **2. Interview to Ms Fatima Salmon, director of communication Fundación CIEDES, conducted on the 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2017.**

- What has been the role of Fundación Ciedes on the development of tourism in Malaga?
- How was the Fundación organized? What actors are part of it?
- How was the general situation and specifically, the situation of tourism in Malaga in the past?
- What measures were taken to influence the improvement of the situation?
- When the changes did start to be noticeable?
- How are the tourism actors organized?
- What are the plans for the future?
- What do you think are the attractive factors of Malaga?

### **3. Interview to Mr Salvador Aguilar, director of marketing and promotion, Department of Tourism, City Council of Malaga, conducted on the 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2017**

- What are the actions that have been taken to stimulate the development of tourism?
- How are organized the public and private sector in terms of tourism? Are there interactions?
- Does it exist a report on the tourist perception towards Malaga?
- What are the factors that make Malaga an attractive destination? How has this been achieved?
- What is the type of tourist the city looks to attract?
- What type of tourism model has been designed?
- How is Malaga promoted at the international level? What is the image desired to sell?

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<sup>7</sup> Recordings of the interviews are in separate annexes.

**4. Interview to Gema del Corral, Councilor of Culture, City Council of Malaga, conducted on the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2017.**

- What are the main strategies and actions that are being taken to develop culture in Malaga?
- What type of negotiations have been done to create cultural attractions in Malaga?
- What is the meaning culture has over the overall attractiveness of Malaga?
- What is the cultural competitiveness of Malaga against other cities, for example Seville, Cordoba and Granada?
- What cultural factors do make it more attractive?

**Summary of the interviews**

The guides of the interviews were prepared in advanced, however during the interviews they were not strictly followed. The interviews were fluid conversations about the evolution of tourism in Malaga. As the interviewees were from different fields of expertise, each one expressed their opinions and knowledge of the issue. However, all of them have coinciding points like the separation of Torremolinos was the stimulus the local authorities needed to develop a plan to direct the growth of Malaga. Other coinciding point is the consideration of the rehabilitation of the old town as the first step to the consolidation of Malaga as a tourism destination.

The interviews argued the importance of the strategic plans in the evolution of the tourism sector. The improvement of infrastructures, the rehabilitation of monuments, the inauguration of museums and the gradual detachment from the sun and beach image are mentioned as crucial events for the construction of Malaga's attractiveness.

The interview of Paula Cerezo focuses on the rehabilitation of the city center. She explains the reasons why the historic city center declined and the actions implemented for its recovery. In addition, Cerezo talks about the important role of this rehabilitation for the development of tourism and the general development of Malaga. She also gives insights on the architectural heritage and its conservation and importance for tourism.

Fatima Salmon makes a broad explanation of the history of tourism in Malaga. She explains the role of Fundacion CIEDES in the formulation of IPEM and IPEM and for instance its role on the implementation of actions aimed at the development of tourism. The interview with her was useful to create a preliminary idea of the historical background and the evolutionary process of tourism.

Salvador Aguilar talks about the current situation of tourism. He makes clear statements about what is being done, what the achievements are and how they were achieved. Aguilar strongly emphasizes on the success of marketing campaigns and the introduction to new markets. He also points out the advantages and strengths of Malaga in the highly competitive Andalusian tourism market, highlighting its cultural and leisure offers, infrastructures and weather conditions.

The interview with Gema del Corral focuses on the role of culture in the development of tourism. She emphasizes the enhancement of the cultural and heritage assets as some of the main drivers for Malaga's tourism attractiveness. Del Corral explains the investments and actions the public sector realizes to create a high quality cultural product. She also highlights as a success the inauguration of The Picasso Museum and the international brands such as The Carmen Thyssen Museum, The Centre Pompidou and The Collection of the Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg. She claims that the celebration of the Spanish Film Festival and other arts events are important for the positioning of Malaga as an urban cultural destination.