

## Resilience, a Relevant Strategy for the Recovery of Tourist Destinations



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**ABSTRACT:** The resilience of tourist destinations is nowadays an essential means for a successful and efficient management of all sectors. In Morocco, the tourism sector, whose revenues are ranked third nationally, should be strengthened and immunized against all risks and contingencies (Covid-19 as an example) that can slow down or hinder its growth and constitute a locomotive of socio-economic development.

This paper is a review of the theoretical literature on the resilience of tourist destinations.

The study focuses on twenty or so articles that have been subjected to a rigorous textual analysis. And finally, it can be concluded that the latter revealed that resilience is determined mainly by two parameters, risk management and vulnerability.

**KEYWORDS:** Resilience, a tourist destination, Socio-economic development, Risk management, Vulnerability.

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of resilience has been used in a number of contexts, but in tourism it refers to the efforts of a destination to bounce back from the damage and risks of natural disasters, health crises, and security threats that may affect the sector.

Allison and Hobbs 2004, Walker and Selt 2006, Folk 2006 state that the multiplication of risks that can affect the tourism sector has made researchers and stakeholders alike aware that the question of resilience must now be approached from a new perspective.

Thus, for Nurse et al 2004, the rapid changes that the world has experienced in recent decades have increased the degree of vulnerability of certain destinations, which has prompted public authorities to take this variable into consideration in their tourism development plans.

In Morocco, this sector has experienced, exponentially, an unprecedented blossoming of attractiveness as a destination not only for operators, but also for investors. This success achieved in the tourism sector draws its origins from a set of factors including

- the royal impetus that the tourism sector has enjoyed since the launch of the 1st vision in January 2010;
- solid fundamentals and political stability of the country
- the country's natural and cultural assets, and its proximity to the main export markets
- exemplary partnership between the public and private sectors;
- mobilization of all stakeholders (public authorities, private sector ... ) Larbi SAFAA, Marie Delaplace and Boualem Kadri cite in their article "risk, resilience and sustainability of tourist destinations", that the particularity of this sector also lies in its high rate of openness (7.5% of GDP, 6.6% of the employed population and 14.8% of balance of payments receipts in 2010)<sup>1</sup>, This has allowed it to benefit from the globalization of service production processes, financing and consumer markets, but it also presents a series of challenges, including increased competitiveness, reduced investment flows and a slowdown in consumer spending as a result of the past economic crisis or the uncertain future of the main countries European emitters in particular. These changes call for the tourism sector to be perceived through the prism of globalization, which implies thinking about a new paradigm for better management of this sector.

Despite the efforts made by the stakeholders, these efforts are still confronted, each time, with these risks that slow down the pace of development and their impacts remain quite insufficient. It should also be noted that these same efforts are related to

<sup>1</sup> Financial Studies and Forecasting Directorate DEPS/SAT - Tourism sector - Progress report and prospective analysis. Page 3.

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factors that we must take into consideration both during the development of strategies and their operationalization, while taking into account the constraints inherent in the objectives to be achieved and this in a manner as prudent as intelligent, demonstrating efficiency and above all originality.

Thanh Tan Vo considers tourism as an element of reconstruction of territories affected by risks, whether tragic events or dangerous situations. Through the networking of private and public actors, which is the cornerstone of tourism, tourism can also be an important vector for the evolution of the governance of a territory. These strategies must imperatively face up to innumerable potential or real risks: natural, epidemiological, political, social, etc.<sup>2</sup>

This challenge is the backdrop and ambition of this contribution, which aims to examine why tourist destinations must ensure their mutation and adaptability in an environment characterized by accelerated but also unpredictable transformations (Covid-19). In this sense, it should be recalled that the purpose of this review article is to establish the need to develop a resilience strategy within a tourist destination in order to rebound and ensure the mechanisms for recovery. It will also rethink and deepen the traditional analysis of the competitiveness of tourism strategies in a context of vulnerability as well as uncertain risk management in order to strengthen the resilience of the strategies implemented.

### 1- Literature review on resilience:

According to Davis M, to set up a tourism prevention protocol, it would be relevant to present the different factors impacting these risks.

- Epidemiological factor: It is presented as the case of the Covid-19 pandemic. To face this risk, we could use the concept of medical tourism;

Which would allow us to match medical-tourism offers, especially since Morocco enjoys a place of mark on the African continent. Following the example of Turkey;<sup>3</sup>

- Cultural factor: This leads us to invoke the gaps between the beliefs and representations of Moroccans and stakeholders, and more specifically with regard to attitudes and behaviors.
- Religious factor: This factor is explained by the insufficiency and sluggishness of the media coverage of certain religious events that can boost this sector. (Example: the Jewish festival in Taroudant "HILOULA" and Essaouira "HANOUCCAH"). This market niche does not benefit from the importance it should have in the development strategy of tourism.
- Economic factor: The scarcity of shopping centers for example decreases the rate of exhaustion of the budget allocated to the tourist activity. For this reason, we must multiply and diversify the assortment in a breathtaking way.
- Political factor: From the institutional point of view, the State guarantees the safety of tourists. Thus, the political stability of Morocco attracts more and more tourists from neighboring countries.

Biggs D, on the other hand, puts forward the concept of resilience as a transdisciplinary concept that has been developed in various disciplines and fields (ecology, system dynamics, materials science, psychology, planning and more recently tourism). Characterizing an ecosystem, a product, an individual, an organization, a community, a destination, a region, etc..., these definitions vary across disciplinary frameworks.<sup>4</sup> Definitions are further varied by the fact that resilience is at once a capability, a process, and an outcome. In an analysis conducted in 2016, Hall et al. (2018: 54-57) highlight this development of occurrences of the term resilience in titles, abstracts and keywords of academic journals.<sup>5</sup>

In this sense, Larbi SAFAA, Sarrasin, and Renaud (2014) mobilize the concept of resilience to analyze how tourism could enable Haiti to rebound. Kadri and Pilette (2017) integrate it into a continuum of circular tourism implementation split into several stages: representation (that of society); realization (diversity of facilities-events), regulation (coordination; governance), resilience (effects of the results of regulation, capacity to renew itself).

Liu and Pratt (2017) in an article in *Tourism Management* show that the resilience of tourism destinations differs by income and indicate that lower income countries are less resilient than middle income countries which in turn are less resilient than high income countries.

### 2- From risk management to the implementation of a resilience strategy:

Generally, risk and its implications for business management is a research direction increasingly explored by authors. However,

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<sup>2</sup> Thanh Tan Vo (2006) " Le temps des risques Une démarche de marketing d'une destination touristique face au nouveau contexte touristique mondial ", *La Revue des Sciences de Gestion*, vol. 6, n° 222.

<sup>3</sup> Meriem IGASS - Morocco, a privileged destination for medical tourism

<sup>4</sup> Biggs D., Hall C-M &Stoeckl N. (2012) « The resilience of formal and informal tourism enterprises to disasters: reef tourism in Phuket », *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 20, n° 5: 645-665

<sup>5</sup> Hall & al. (2018 : 54-57)

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the definitions of risk are numerous and not always consistent with each other (St-Pierre and El Fadil, 2017). Among these, we will retain the one noted by Althaus (2005, p. 569): "Risk (is) a decisional phenomenon, a means of securing wealth or avoiding loss". This definition has the advantage of highlighting that risk-taking is an integral part of the company's decision-making process and that this risk, although often considered from a negative angle, can also have beneficial effects on the company's development. However, even though strategic risk management (or enterprise risk management [Brustbauer, 2016]) is nowadays a major concern for managers and the risk manager in large companies is given an increasingly transversal and strategic function (representation on the board of directors in particular), risk management by and within companies remains little discussed in the management science literature and by company managers themselves. While silence is certainly not the same as the absence of risk management in companies (Corvellec and Boholm, 2009), one must wonder why few researchers have examined this issue conceptually, in a context that is considered particularly fragile and that is faced with a large number of risks.

Several reasons already mentioned by St-Pierre and El Fadil (2017) can be advanced to explain this state of the literature. Risk management in companies often remains the sole prerogative of the manager and is conducted in a tacit manner, without any real specific tools (Jayathilake, 2012). Since it is not necessarily the subject of a specific investment and its effect on performance remains difficult to demonstrate, risk management in companies has not been considered until now either as a particular source of cost or as a significant source of value creation. Moreover, risk management has long been confined to the financial dimensions of the organization, considered as the major risk, because it can lead to its failure and disappearance; this is why many researchers have devoted to studying this issue. However, in recent years, researchers such as Brustbauer, 2016; St-Pierre and El Fadil, 2017 highlighting these elements, have endeavored to federate the hitherto very scattered and sometimes not very conceptual work on risk in business, and to theoretically establish the concept of risk management and the practices that underlie it. In particular, it is a question of going beyond the classic vision of a purely financial risk that affects companies.

### 3- Vulnerability as an approach to projecting a resilience strategy:

The financial difficulties encountered by SMEs are, in fact, often only a manifestation of deeper organizational or strategic difficulties, "ordinary" vulnerabilities (Roux-Dufort, 2010) that could explain why some firms, while growing, go bankrupt, disappear or, for some of them, are bought out. On the other hand, many SMEs that are perennial or are bought out by large groups, whose ability to resist various economic shocks and to rebound has been demonstrated by St-Pierre (2004), continue to grow despite an uncertain environment and economic tension.

It seems to us that, because of their small size and the strong interconnection of processes that characterize their mode of operation, SMEs constitute a real "laboratory" for studying the phenomena of risk cascading that can occur between risks of different kinds, but also for understanding how these SMEs try to avoid them, anticipate them, resist them and bounce back when some of them occur, even though they have few tools at their disposal. Analyzing the way, in which SMEs manage risks, should thus make it possible to analyze the interaction between different types of risk, but also to identify the decision-makers involved in this management and the variables likely to influence it, as Baird and Thomas have already formulated in their recommendations in their 1985 article, the objective of which is to build a risk management model.

Looking into what can be a real strategic risk management in SMEs appears all the more important, as today, in the absence of an identification of the factors that compose it, of a precise study of the link between risks and characteristics of SMEs (Pettit and Singer, 1985; St-Pierre and Fadil, 2011), of a definition of the overall acceptable risk for SMEs and of a systematic evaluation of the impact of investment in risk management on value creation (Scimia, 2010). Partners of SMEs, unable to assess the real risk of these often closely held companies, may continue to increase their requirements in their regard. A strategic risk management could also allow a better evaluation of the risk, its sources, and allow, on the one hand, to the SMEs to better manage it, and in the worst case to limit its impact. But on the other hand, partners can adjust their requirements according to the reality of the risk. These requirements can take the form of disproportionate financing conditions set by potential investors, excessive guarantees demanded by banks that base their risk premium mainly on their small size (St-Pierre and Bahri, 2011), lower prices accessible to customers, uncertain about the sustainability of these companies, are willing to pay, or a risk premium demanded by certain employees with sophisticated skills or whose involvement is to be strongly developed (Paradas, 2012); All of these elements are likely to increase the vulnerability of these organizations by limiting their development possibilities. It therefore seems urgent to us to continue the work of St-Pierre and El Fadil (2017) to outline the contours of a strategic risk management for SMEs and to define its foundations.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the work of some authors (Sterling, 2011; Van der Vegt et al, 2015), we have tried to show that risk management and resilience go hand in hand, we try, notably with the help of the articles present in this special issue and a state of the art of different

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authors who have discussed this strategic capability (Gao, Sung and Zhang, 2013; Nair, Rustambekov, McShane and Fainshmidt, 2014; St-Pierre and El Fadil, 2017), to shed light on what could constitute the foundations of the strategic risk management capability in SMEs

Developing a system's resilience capability "means identifying its capabilities, their interactions with each other and with the environment to predict system performance before and after an event" (Van der Vegt et al., 2015, p. 973).

Thus, strategic risk management capacity is thus an essential foundation for resilience (Van der Vegt et al., 2015) although it is impossible to identify all risks and collect all information to assess them.

Identifying and assessing risks helps to evaluate the level of vulnerability of the company. However, resilience also involves identifying the firm's ability to manage these risks through its ability to mobilize flexible, convertible, and malleable resources and to learn from the unexpected (Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003; Van der Vegt et al., 2015). Resilience, active, thus has a positive connotation of flexibility and reinforcement while vulnerability, passive, is viewed negatively as a source of insecurity or having an inevitability (Becerra, 2012).

To be interested in the resilience of SMEs is therefore to take into account both their capacity to seize positive risks that constitute opportunities, giving rise to possibilities of rebounding or developing, and their capacity to anticipate, mitigate or learn from negative risks in order to reduce the sources of vulnerabilities. Thus, a strategic, dynamic, and positive approach to risk is needed. As several authors (Dickson and Giglierano, 1986; Mullins and Forlani, 2005; Brustbauer, 2016) point out, in a strategic and comprehensive approach to risk, one must know how to command the ship of opportunity (not to "miss the ship") while avoiding causing its sinking by taking too much or poorly calculated risk.

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