

Tourism Recovery Beyond Growth: Resilience and Territorial Transformation

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ABSTRACT: It has always been said that tourism is one of the most vulnerable industries to any kind of disturbance or changes in the international environment. Any economic, security, and environmental crises can quickly change the flow of tourists and destabilize regions that depend on tourism. In such situations, the capacity of tourism territories to adapt and retain their attractiveness turns out to be a crucial problem for academic and practical research aimed at analyzing regional development and sustainability. This article will explore the connection between tourism crises, territorial adaptation, and sustainable development by using the example of the region of Marrakech-Safi in Morocco. Being one of the main tourist regions in the country, it can serve as an ideal background to analyze the reaction of territories dependent on tourism during crisis times.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, crises, resilience, Territorial development, Tourism destinations, Marrakech-Safi

1. INTRODUCTION

This Tourism has become one of the main forces driving economic growth not only at national but also at regional level, providing for job opportunities, income opportunities and territorial attractiveness, while, at the same time, increasing the integration of local economies within larger structures of exchange and mobility. However, despite its dynamic character, tourism has remained, up until now, one of the sectors most vulnerable to external shocks, due to its very high dependence on factors such as mobility conditions, consumers' confidence and political/economic stability (Zhaoyang S. & al., 2025). Indeed, there is quite a vast literature proving that tourism may react quickly to economic recessions, security threats, environmental problems and structural disequilibria, which are likely to impact on tourist flows and territorial attractiveness.

In the framework of this ongoing debate, resilience has been identified as one key theoretical perspective useful for analyzing the capability of destinations and tourism systems to endure external shocks and transform their structures to preserve their core functions while adapting to new circumstances. Unlike in conventional approaches, resilience is no longer defined in terms of recovery to the status quo following a shock but considered an open-ended process of adaptation, learning, reorganization, and even radical transformation if required (Folke et al., 2010; Martin & Sunley, 2015). Tourism scholars have recently stressed that the resilience of enterprises and tourism destinations depends not only on internal traits but also on territorial attributes, governance arrangements, and stakeholder coordination capacities (Ramos

Jesus, Coelho, & Ramos, 2026; Gozzoli, Gozzoli, & Wattanacharoensil, 2024). Therefore, resilience cannot be separated from territorial development issues and strategies aimed at reconciling competitiveness with sustainability.

The contemporary literature also highlights the increasing necessity for an integrative approach to analyzing tourism which can bridge the gap between economic performance, environmental limitations, and territorial adaptation over time. In particular, whereas some researchers concentrate on the role played by tourism in contributing to economic growth, other studies consider either its impact on the environment or its contribution to sustainable development in a piecemeal way. Most recently, attempts have been made to address this problem by taking a multidimensional view of the relationship between tourism and sustainability and illustrating that tourism may contribute to economic growth, increase resource scarcity, and alter the trajectory of development in various ways (Nguyen & Le, 2026; Zhifeng, 2025). Moreover, in studying sustainable transitions in tourism, it was found that the process of transition to sustainability is not straightforward but consists of iterative stages facilitated by firm actions and cooperation between different actors in the field (Beach, Lee, Chen, & Starr, 2026). This is precisely the context in which the current research has been carried out. Even though there has been quite an extensive body of work related to tourism crises, resilience and sustainability in the literature, these concepts are generally analyzed independently of one another, and there is a relative paucity of works analyzing the adaptive processes by which tourism-dependent regions cope with disturbances while attempting to maintain their competitiveness and strive for sustainable development at the same time (Xosé A. & al., 2025; Gounder, A., & Cox, C., 2022; Smolčić Jurdana, D., & Agbaba, R. 2025). This seems to be especially important in the realm of emerging destinations, where tourism plays an essential role in the local economies while the territorial systems are vulnerable to various types of disturbance. One such region is the Moroccan region of Marrakech-Safi.

The question to be asked in the context of the present study is then the following: how do tourism-dependent territories react to the constant threats and disturbances by fostering resilient capacities without compromising their attractiveness and by moving towards sustainable territorial development? More precisely, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the impacts of tourism crises on the regional dynamics of tourism, the adaptation measures that are taken by local communities and institutions to tackle these challenges, and the contribution that they make to territorial resilience and sustainable development. Therefore, this study aims, firstly, to examine the impacts of disturbances on the dynamics of regional tourism; secondly, to understand the main adaptation strategies taken by local authorities; and finally, to measure to what extent such strategies lead to the development of sustainable territorial development. This paper will try to provide new insights into issues regarding the relationship between tourism resilience, sustainable development, and territorial competitiveness through an analysis of regional tourism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism, crisis and vulnerability

Some of the earliest studies to recognize the high degree of vulnerability of tourism demand to the cycles of macroeconomic trends were those conducted by Smeral (1998) and Song and Lin (2010). recent studies confirm many of the observations made in earlier tourism research, particularly regarding the strong sensitivity of tourism activity to different forms of disturbance. Economic crises, environmental problems and broader structural changes may all affect tourism flows and destination performance in a relatively short period of time. In recent years, tourism systems have become increasingly exposed to multiple risks occurring simultaneously, which makes tourism development more difficult to predict and manage (Liu et al., 2024). This situation partly reflects the growing interdependence between destinations, international mobility and global economic conditions.

Beyond economic factors alone, tourism activity is also strongly influenced by the way tourists perceive risk and uncertainty. Safety conditions, environmental quality and the overall image of destinations may directly influence travel decisions and tourist behaviour. As noted by Becken (2013), even disturbances limited to specific areas may produce wider reputational effects capable of affecting tourism activity

beyond the locations directly concerned. Such reactions illustrate the high sensitivity of tourism demand to perceptions associated with security, stability and environmental conditions. Environmental degradation and climate-related events have also become increasingly important in recent tourism studies. These factors may affect both the quality of tourism resources and the attractiveness of destinations over time (Gössling et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2019). In this context, tourism development appears increasingly dependent on the capacity of destinations to manage environmental pressures while maintaining the conditions necessary for tourism activity and destination attractiveness.

Additionally, the degree of vulnerability varies significantly between locations, which is mostly due to the composition of the local economy and the extent of reliance on tourists. According to Croes (2013) and Holzner (2011), economies with a high degree of tourist specialization typically have poorer levels of resilience to external shocks because of their higher sensitivity to demand swings and lack of diversity. Recent empirical data that suggests that over reliance on tourism may result in structural imbalances and an increase in long-term vulnerability, especially in locations where other economic activities are undeveloped, lends credence to this claim (Ni et al., 2026).

2.2 Tourism resilience and adaptive capacity

According to Folke et al. (2010), resilience refers to the capacity of a system to absorb disturbances while continuing to maintain its main functions. Initially developed in ecological sciences, this concept has progressively been applied to socio-economic systems, including tourism. Martin and Sunley (2015) further argue that resilience should not be understood only as the ability to return to a previous situation after a disturbance. It also involves the capacity of systems to adapt, reorganize and adjust their structures over time. Such an approach has become increasingly important in tourism research, particularly because tourism activities are frequently exposed to repeated shocks and changing external conditions.

According to Ni, Liu and Zhao (2026), the risk of various overlapping challenges in tourism systems necessitates perpetual adaptation to ensure the continuity of operations rather than temporary measures. From such a standpoint, the process of resilience should be viewed as a continual activity influenced by both external stimuli and internal developments. Similarly, the explanation offered by Xing and Zhang (2026) suggests that tourism destinations act as complex adaptive systems wherein institutional structures, stakeholder behavior, and other disruptions impact development. Therefore, it can be argued that the concept of tourism development is quite dynamic and changeable.

As far as the resilience and development nexus is concerned at the destination level, one can say that while the former can contribute to economic growth and regional development, the latter also increases vulnerability to external threats as it makes the area dependent on tourism activities. As explained by Ni, Liu and Zhao (2026), excessive specialization in the field of tourism may hinder economic resilience because it may lead to structural rigidities. Consequently, resilience is determined not only by tourism development itself but also by economic flexibility and diversity in productive activities.

In addition, Gozzoli et al. (2024) prove that tourism systems are far from linear and predictable because they experience cycles including periods of growth, instability, restructuring, and adaptation based on how institutions and other stakeholders are able to cope with emerging challenges. Thus, tourism development may be defined as an evolving process in which constant adaptation to changing conditions plays a key role. The term organizational resilience is usually associated with the ability to react adequately to disruptions and reallocate resources under pressure to survive. It has been found that organizations' capacity to deal with disruption largely relies on the competencies of management teams, workforce, and financial adaptability (Ramos Jesus et al., 2026). Such an approach can be regarded as being related to the resource-based view that focuses on internal resources and their adaptability in uncertain situations.

Moreover, contemporary studies suggest that resilience in organizations presupposes a high level of innovation and organizational learning. According to Amankwah-Amoah (2021) and Duchek (2020), in periods of uncertainty, organizations need to adjust their behavior and develop new competencies due to changes in market conditions. Thus, learning how to deal with disruptions may determine how companies will respond to subsequent crises and uncertainty in the future. From an organizational perspective,

resilience can thus be understood through the concrete responses developed by firms during periods of disruption. In this sense, resilience should not be viewed as a fixed or permanent capacity. It rather depends on the way resources are mobilized, adjusted and sometimes reorganized according to the nature of the crisis and the constraints affecting the organization (Seyfi et al., 2025).

2.3 Sustainable Tourism and Territorial Development

Organizational resilience generally refers to the capacity of firms to respond to disturbances and reorganise their resources during periods of crisis. Ramos Jesus et al. (2026) argue that organizational resilience is directly linked to managerial competence, labor quality and financial flexibility. Such an understanding of the concept can be attributed to the resource-based perspective that emphasizes the key role of the organization's resources and adaptive capabilities under uncertain conditions. Therefore, resilience in such a perspective goes beyond the resistance to crisis and includes the constant transformation of organizational structure and business strategies due to the constantly changing environment (Moussas, K. et al.).

Recently, some studies have pointed to innovation and organizational learning as the key factors contributing to the development of resilience in organizations (Amankwah-Amoah, 2021; Duchek, 2020). Under conditions of instability, organizations are frequently forced to adjust their practices, learn new skills, and change the decision-making process in response to the new market environment. Hence, the experience gained by companies as they react to earlier crises is used to cope with further threats and uncertainties.

Thus, from an organizational perspective, resilience can be characterized as a response strategy developed by organizations during disruptive periods. It means that resilience cannot be viewed as a static phenomenon but rather depends on the ability of firms to mobilize and manage resources under particular conditions (Seyfi et al., 2025).

As was noted above, the transition to sustainable tourism rarely takes place abruptly. Usually, the shift towards sustainable practices happens gradually through various transformations conditioned by the institutional, economic, and stakeholder context of tourism development. For example, according to Beach et al. (2026), businesses usually implement sustainable strategies slowly by responding to the new regulations, pressure from the market, and consumers' growing demands. As a result, the evolution of sustainable tourism practices differs from one destination to another based on local economic, institutional, and developmental conditions.

Therefore, the cooperation of all the parties involved in tourism development is crucial to promoting sustainable tourism. The role of governance should also be emphasized since it plays a significant part in determining how sustainable tourism is integrated into economic, environmental, and sociocultural objectives. Thus, it appears possible that governance mechanisms and approaches to regulating tourism may help alleviate contradictions between its development, preservation of natural resources, and territorial policies.

Literature suggests that crisis management and adaptation in times of instability should include sustainability considerations (Zhang et al., 2025).

Earlier approaches often considered crises mainly as temporary disruptions affecting tourism activity and destination performance. More recent studies, however, suggest that periods of crisis may also encourage the reconsideration of existing development models. However, more recent studies suggest that crisis periods may also encourage changes in existing development models. In some cases, they can create favourable conditions for the adoption of more sustainable practices and for the diversification of tourism activities. Destinations based on diversified tourism products and environmentally responsible strategies may therefore be in a better position to respond to economic or social shocks and to maintain their competitiveness over time (Strippoli et al., 2024). From this perspective, sustainability may also contribute to strengthening the resilience capacity of destinations in periods of uncertainty and change.

Overall, these elements suggest that sustainable tourism should not be considered as a separate objective from territorial development. The management of environmental, economic and social resources may

influence the way destinations adapt to changing conditions and maintain tourism development in the long term.

2.4 Adaptation Strategies and Territorial Governance

Faulkner (2001) was one of the earliest authors who argued that effective crisis management in tourism does not necessarily imply responding to disruptions when they happen. Instead, destinations are expected to anticipate potential problems and coordinate efforts aimed at minimising adverse outcomes. This idea was later further developed by Ritchie and Jiang (2019), who claim that effective crisis management in tourism requires adequate planning, stakeholder collaboration and the capability of institutions to learn from past crises. Finally, contemporary literature shows that adaptation must not be regarded as a short-term response to a crisis situation. On the contrary, adaptation refers to the gradual process determined by the capabilities of locals to engage in resource mobilisation, information sharing and strategy adjustment in uncertain contexts (Prayag, 2018; Sigala, 2020).

There are several ways of adapting at the destination level. For example, adaptation could refer to market diversification, repositioning or developing novel tourism products. Each of these options is aimed at reducing overreliance on a particular tourism segment or destination. In this regard, Novelli, Burgess, and Jones (2006) point out the significance of cluster dynamics, whereby cooperation between organisations facilitates the process of adaptation through the exchange of experience and accumulated knowledge. Another important factor in adaptation process is innovation. For example, according to Hjalager (2010), periods of uncertainty may motivate destinations to reconsider the nature of their tourism products and market positioning. Recent research confirms that market/product/activities diversification reduces vulnerabilities of destinations and increases their adaptive capacity (McKercher, 2018; Raki et al., 2021; Schönherr et al., 2023).

However, the effectiveness of adaptation strategies in the context of tourism depends on specific institutional arrangements and levels of coordination between stakeholders. For instance, Dredge and Jamal (2015) argue that tourism governance should not be viewed as an established framework, but rather as a process of negotiating different interests. As a result, institutions have a significant role not only in setting strategic directions, but also in regulating tourism activities and facilitating local initiatives. Furthermore, Bramwell and Lane (2011) suggest that coordinated approaches to governance, as well as participation, are likely to work better when the goal is to harmonize economic, social and environmental concerns related to tourism development.

Despite the growing recognition of adaptation in tourism, significant differences still exist between actors in terms of their capabilities to engage in adaptation. Adaptation, in particular, depends on access to resources, institutional support and peculiarities of each destination. In general, small firms have a harder time adapting their strategies compared to large organisations due to limited financial and informational resources. Moreover, territorial differences matter too because some destinations have better institutional settings for tourism compared to others. Previous research suggests that such inequalities impact adaptation efforts in tourism (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998; Zach, Nicolau, & Sharma, 2020).

In summary, adaptation must be considered a broader process which does not necessarily include responses to individual crises.

It appears rather as a continuous and collective process linked to broader territorial dynamics. Adaptation involves gradual adjustments intended not only to reduce the impacts of disturbances, but also to reconsider development strategies in relation to long-term sustainability and competitiveness. In this sense, tourism governance increasingly requires more proactive approaches based on anticipation, coordination and progressive transformation processes.

2.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study is mainly based on resilience theory and on its application to tourism systems exposed to crisis situations and external disturbances (C. Michael Hall et al., 2004; Noel Scott et al., 2008). According to Figure 1, disruptions in tourism systems can be economic crises, environmental events, or structural changes that could affect tourism operations in destinations

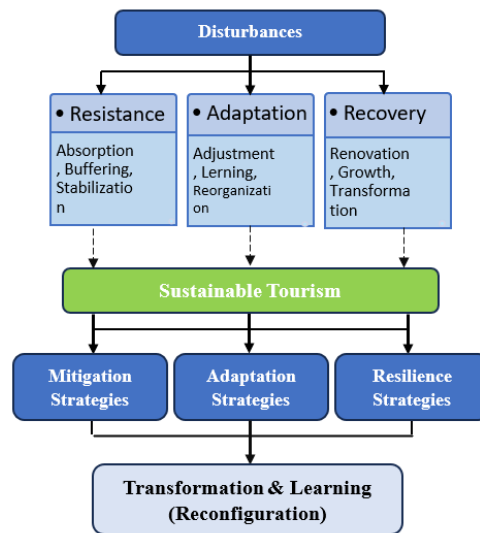
over time (Haiyan Song et al., 2019). In this regard, the notion of tourism resilience can be assessed through three interrelated aspects that include resistance, adaptation, and recovery (Richard Butler, 2017; Alan Lew, 2014).

Resistance in this context means a potential of tourism systems to cope with disruptions and continue functioning in terms of their main activities and functions. It is important to note that the above concept is related to the notion of absorptive capacity studied in resilience research (Fikret Berkes & Carl Folke, 1998). The second notion of adaptation implies a broader process of changes aimed at adjusting the operations of tourism systems in line with changed circumstances. This process is connected with such factors as organizational changes, learning processes, and innovations that help enhance a capacity of tourism systems to operate in unpredictable conditions. In addition, technological innovations can contribute to this process as they facilitate the decision-making process within tourism operations (David Teece, 2007).

Recovery constitutes another important dimension of resilience within tourism systems. In many cases, recovery should not be understood only as a return to the previous situation after a period of disruption. Crisis situations may also lead destinations to reorganise certain activities and reconsider development priorities. As noted by Bruce Prideaux (2004), tourism recovery processes may therefore involve different forms of renewal and adjustment following periods of instability.

These dimensions contribute to explaining the capacity of tourism systems to respond to repeated disturbances while maintaining tourism activity over time. In this sense, resilience approaches also underline the importance of adaptation and organisational flexibility in supporting the long-term development of tourism destinations (Alan A. Lew et al., 2020; Jarkko Saarinen

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of tourism resilience and territorial adaptation in the Marrakech-Safi region.



3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and theoretical positioning

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach in order to examine how tourism-dependent territories respond to repeated disturbances and periods of instability. Such an approach appears useful in contexts where tourism development is affected by uncertainty and structural constraints. Tourism activity does not always evolve in a regular manner and, in many cases, destinations are influenced by several economic, social and institutional factors at the same time. Tourism should therefore not be considered only as an economic sector. It is also linked to territorial dynamics and to the way local systems react to external pressures.

The concept of resilience was initially developed in ecological sciences (Holling, 1973). It was

progressively introduced into tourism research in order to explain how destinations respond to disturbances and reorganise after crisis situations (Walker et al., 2004; Berkes & Seixas, 2005). Early tourism studies mainly focused on the capacity of destinations to maintain tourism activities despite environmental and economic shocks (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004; Biggs et al., 2012). More recent studies suggest that resilience should not be limited only to resistance capacities. Adaptation and recovery processes also appear important in the evolution of tourism systems under changing conditions (Folke, 2006; Martin & Sunley, 2015).

As observed by Sharifi (2016) and Prayag (2018), the study of resilience is not easy from an empirical perspective. The majority of previous studies have been conceptual in nature and limited to case studies, making broad comparative studies quite difficult. This problem is compounded further if tourism systems face disturbances that include more than one aspect. Economic challenges, environmental disruption, and structural change can impact tourist activity and destination development simultaneously. For this reason, there has been an increasing need for tourism research that involves the analysis of change and adaptation in tourism destinations (Sharma et al., 2021).

3.2 Study area

In terms of methodology, the empirical investigation will be conducted within the Marrakech-Safi region, which can be referred to as the most popular destination in terms of tourism in Morocco. In this regard, it should be noted that this territory is characterised by an impressive level of tourism infrastructure concentration and development, and tourism serves as the basis of the local economy and largely depends on tourists coming from abroad and residents. As a result, the region demonstrates considerable vulnerability to external perturbations that might influence tourists' decisions about visits.

According to previous studies, specialisation in the field of tourism tends to make regions more vulnerable to shocks and risks (Beirman, 2021; Xie et al., 2022). While agglomeration of tourism-related activities might lead to increased competitiveness and attractiveness of the destination, at the same time, it may create inherent weaknesses, especially due to the lack of economic diversification (Martin et al., 2015). On the one hand, agglomeration benefits the territory in question in case of the expansion of the tourism sector. On the other hand, the same mechanism may lead to increased vulnerability of destinations during crises and downturns (Yang et al., 2021). As a result, territories that depend on tourism are expected to demonstrate greater sensitivity to changes in tourist flows or international mobility.

However, the economic aspect does not exhaust the issue of vulnerability and resilience of the region. From the point of view of governance, institutions are expected to play a crucial role in this situation (Hall, 2010; Birkland, 2006). Hence, the coordination of actions on the part of local stakeholders might affect the response of the destination in question to the challenge. For this reason, a territorial perspective seems to be relevant to the analysis of a similar situation.

3.3 Data sources

Most of the data used in the analysis will come from secondary sources and will include official and institutional documents such as statistics on tourism, regional development reports and other policy-oriented documents. This type of source includes data that reflect indicators commonly utilized in tourism studies, such as number of tourists, their stays, accommodation capacities and accommodation occupancy levels. While one can conduct an independent analysis for each individual indicator, the aim will be to understand general changes in tourism activity and transformations within this sector throughout the years.

Secondary data are regularly used in tourism research, especially when studying long-term trends and structural changes at destination level (Song & Li, 2008; UNWTO, 2020). Nonetheless, statistical indicators are not always enough to reveal all the changes in tourism activity experienced in periods of instability and crisis. For this reason, institutional reports and documents related to tourism policy and governance should be included in the analysis as well.

This information will help to understand better the factors that determine the development of tourism beyond market changes (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2020). In some cases, institutional policies and

measures can play a crucial role in adapting tourist destinations to the new economic context, especially after experiencing a crisis.

Current research also emphasizes the importance of using tourism data in tourism analysis (Gössling et al., 2023). The availability of quantitative statistics helps to analyze both the indicators themselves and qualitative aspects of tourism related to its governance and institutional adaptations. This may contribute to a broader understanding of tourism dynamics under changing conditions.

3.4 Analytical approach

The analytical approach adopted in this study combines the examination of tourism indicators with a qualitative interpretation of institutional responses and adaptation strategies. The objective is not only to observe the evolution of tourism activity over time, but also to better understand some of the factors that may explain these changes in contexts marked by instability and uncertainty. Tourism activity is therefore analysed in relation to broader issues linked to governance processes and resilience within destinations.

Particular attention is given to the evolution of key tourism indicators in order to identify periods of disruption, decline and recovery. Variations in tourist arrivals, overnight stays and tourism revenues may provide useful information concerning the effects of external shocks on tourism activity. Similar approaches have frequently been used in tourism research examining crisis impacts and recovery processes within tourism destinations (Tang, 2023; Boto-García & Mayor, 2022).

The analysis also considers institutional strategies and governance mechanisms influencing adaptation processes. Attention is paid to public policies, stakeholder coordination and strategic planning processes developed at destination level. Previous studies suggest that such elements may contribute to strengthening tourism resilience, particularly through measures related to crisis management and recovery planning (Cutter et al., 2014; Lam et al., 2016).

Other factors are also considered in the analysis, including diversification processes, industrial structures and efficiency improvements. As stated by Fang et al. (2023) and Kitsos & Bishop (2018), these elements can affect the manner in which tourism systems may adapt, reconfigure, and react when faced with times of instability. In most cases, adaptation can be affected by the fluctuations in the demand for tourism services, along with the capability of the destination to reconfigure its operations and mobilize its resources.

The aim of this framework is not to establish a direct causative relationship between variables. Rather, it intends to identify underlying trends that could contribute to an improved knowledge base on the evolution of tourism systems when subjected to repeated shocks and instability.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation of the dynamics of the tourism industry in the Marrakech-Safi area will rely on a number of indicators, namely tourism arrivals, accommodation, and tourism income. All these indicators are analyzed together because individually, each indicator provides only partial information about the development of the sector. Their combined interpretation makes it possible to obtain a broader understanding of the evolution of the tourism sector within the region over time.

The following sections therefore adopt a progressive reading of the data, moving from the observation of individual trends toward a more general interpretation of tourism dynamics. Such an approach allows the identification of different phases affecting tourism activity, including periods of growth, decline and recovery. It also makes it possible to observe certain discrepancies between indicators, particularly during periods marked by external disturbances affecting tourism demand and tourism performance.

Particular attention is given to the evolution of tourism indicators over time, and also to the way these changes may reflect broader resilience and adaptation processes within tourism-dependent territories. In this sense, variations in tourism activity may provide useful information concerning the capacity of destinations to respond to instability and adjust to changing economic conditions.

4.1 Tourism dynamics across crisis phases

When observed over time, tourism activity in the Marrakech-Safi region does not follow a regular or

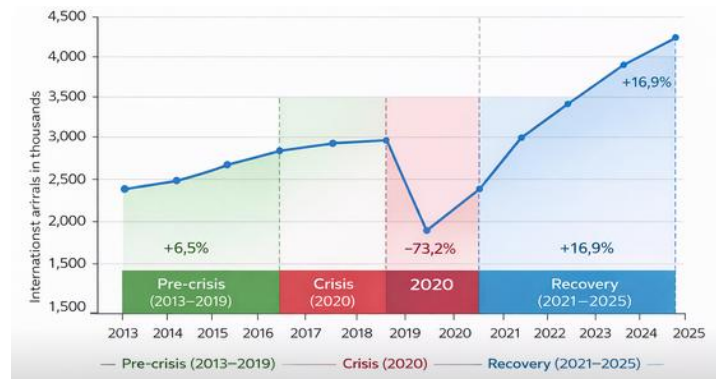
continuous pattern of growth. The evolution of the sector rather reflects different phases marked by periods of expansion, disruption and subsequent recovery. During the first phase, tourism activity shows a relatively stable upward trend supported by the growth of international demand and the development of tourism infrastructure within the region. In other words, tourism activities kept rising, while the importance of the industry increased within the regional economy.

However, this upward trend was interrupted during the disturbance stage because there was a notable drop in tourist visits. This is an indicator of how vulnerable the tourism destination is to external factors such as the economy or international mobility. As shown in destinations that are well integrated into global tourism markets, any developments related to transportation infrastructure, economic stability, or travel restrictions can immediately affect tourism demand and tourism activities. Similar results were noted by Dogru et al. (2023) and Okafor et al. (2024) in their analysis of the effects of external shock on tourism systems.

Finally, the restoration stage cannot be perceived only as reverting to the previous state of affairs before the disturbance stage. On the contrary, this is an example of a process whereby tourism development gradually resumes after experiencing some changes.

In this sense, recovery may also reflect certain forms of reorganization within the tourism system, as destinations progressively adapt their strategies, activities and development priorities following periods of disturbance.

Figure 2. Tourism dynamics across crisis phases in the Marrakech-Safi region (2013-2025)



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from HCP and Moroccan tourism Observatory

4.2 Structural breaks and depth of disruption: evidence from overnight stays

Although tourist arrivals provide an initial indication of changes affecting tourism demand, the analysis of overnight stays offers a broader understanding of the effects of disruption on tourism activity and tourist behaviour. In this sense, overnight stays make it possible to examine not only the evolution of tourist flows, but also certain changes related to the duration of stays and tourism consumption patterns.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the number of overnight stays shows a significant downward trend during the disturbance period, which appears more pronounced than the decline observed in tourist arrivals. Such circumstances illustrate that the impact of the pandemic went further than the drop in the number of tourists. In addition, there were changes in their behaviour, which concerned the length of the stay and the amount of tourism expenditure. Current research confirms that uncertainty is often characterized by a tendency towards a lower number of trips and a smaller amount of tourism expenditures (Brida et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024).

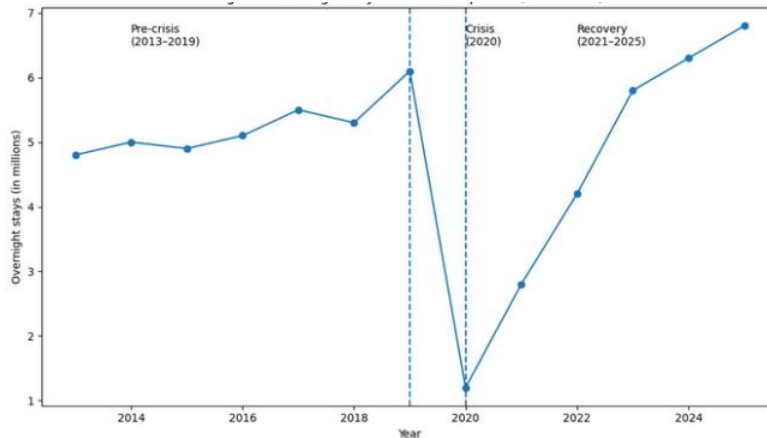
Therefore, in order to compare the number of tourists with the number of overnight stays, it becomes evident that the tourism sector cannot be assessed only in terms of visitor flows, especially when facing a crisis situation. Indicators related to tourism expenditure, such as overnight stays, allow for better understanding of tourism demand not only regarding its volume but also concerning its features (Croes et al., 2024). In the recovery period, the number of overnight stays increases slowly but steadily.

This evolution may indicate that the recovery of tourism flows is accompanied by a more gradual return

of travelers confidence and consumption behavior. Recent studies on tourism recovery have also pointed out that tourism demand may recover more rapidly than tourism consumption patterns themselves (Li et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2024).

The differences observed between the decline and recovery phases further suggest that tourism systems do not adjust immediately after periods of disruption. Adjustment processes generally appear more gradual and involve different forms of adaptation within tourism activities and tourism demand. Recent studies also underline the importance of flexibility and structural adaptation in the recovery of tourism systems after crisis situations (Zhang et al., 2025; Hernández-Maskivker et al., 2023).

Figure 3. Overnight stays across crisis phases in the Marrakech-Safi region (2013–2025)



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from HCP and Moroccan tourism Observatory

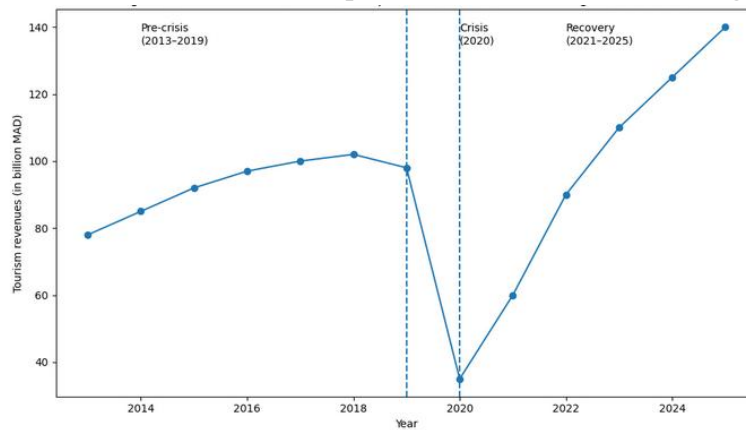
3 Reconfiguration of tourism performance: beyond volume effects

Tourist arrivals and overnight stays provide useful information on the evolution of tourism demand. The analysis of tourism revenues (Figure 4), however, makes it possible to better understand certain changes affecting tourism performance during the recovery period. The increase observed after the disturbance phase concerns not only tourism activity, but also tourism revenues. This situation suggests that the recovery process may involve changes in the characteristics of tourism demand and not simply the return of tourist flows.

The differences observed between volume indicators and tourism revenues may indicate the growing importance of tourism activities associated with higher value-added segments. On such terms, the recovery phase can point at particular qualitative changes that take place within the industry. The current state of the tourism sector does not depend much on traditional forms of tourism development and tends to diversify its activities further. There is evidence of similar processes among those described in the literature dedicated to the study of tourism development following disruptions with an emphasis on value-based and diversification-driven growth instead of simply raising the number of tourists (Gretzel et al., 2024; Duro et al., 2025).

There can be various reasons for the increase in tourism revenues during the recovery phase, changes in tourist behavior, expenditure patterns and travel preferences may have contributed to this evolution. Tourism stakeholders may also have adapted their strategies by promoting different tourism products, improving service quality or targeting tourism segments characterized by higher levels of expenditure. Such adjustments may influence the organization and evolution of tourism activity after periods of instability.

Figure 4. Tourism revenues across crisis phases in the Marrakech-Safi region (2013–2025)



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from HCP and Moroccan tourism Observatory

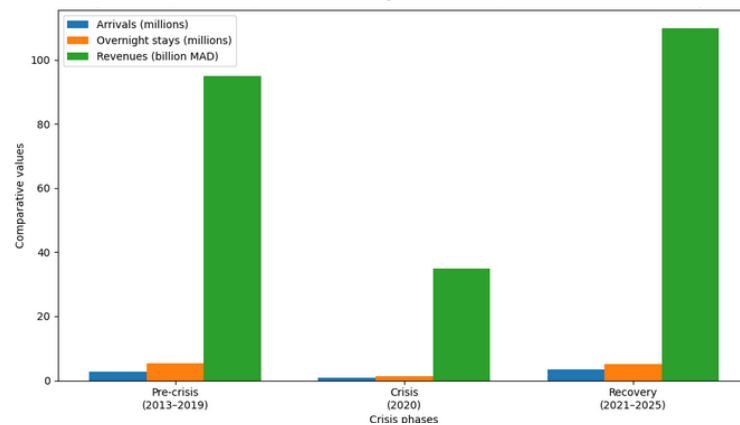
4.4 Comparative analysis of tourism indicators

Comparative analysis of tourism indicators enables gaining an overall picture of how the system responds to the disturbances along all dimensions considered. Although each indicator shows only one particular dimension of tourism, their comparison brings to light a number of significant distinctions regarding the impact experienced at the corresponding stages.

According to Figure 5, tourist arrivals and overnight stays show a noticeable decline in the disturbance phase, while revenues from tourism operations demonstrate more pronounced growth in the following stage. Such disparities indicate a need for further research into the processes of recovery from disturbances as they might include qualitative changes in the tourism demand. The same observation can be made by reviewing other scientific publications dealing with this topic and confirming the need to consider new types of behavior in terms of consumer preferences (Croes et al., 2024; Brida et al., 2023).

On the other hand, comparing indicators allows identifying their peculiarities and, consequently, avoiding certain mistakes associated with choosing one indicator over another. For instance, as Duro et al. (2025) point out, the use of a number of dimensions is required to analyze complex systems such as tourism, especially under conditions of uncertainty.

Figure 5. Comparative analysis of tourism indicators across crises phases in the Marrakech-Safi region



Source: Authors

4.5 Adaptation mechanisms and territorial resilience

However, one should acknowledge that the process of recovery through various indicators would not be possible without analyzing the impacts of adaptation mechanisms adopted by relevant institutions and territories. In this sense, the recovery cannot be viewed as an organic process since it is highly likely that

it was affected by a series of measures taken by tourism stakeholders. For example, the process of diversifying source markets, encouraging domestic tourism, and developing alternative tourism products can be seen as a strategy designed to decrease dependency on certain segments. Additionally, increased cooperation between government agencies and private enterprises helped stabilize the industry amid uncertain periods. According to recent empirical research, coordinated solutions are instrumental in improving resilience and accelerating recovery processes (Sigala, 2023; Gretzel et al., 2024).

It follows that the adaptive capacity of a destination depends on more than just structural features of a region. Indeed, the example of the Marrakech-Safi region indicates that governance regimes and strategic shifts are capable of affecting recovery patterns.

4.6 From recovery to transformation: implications for sustainable development

These developments indicate that the processes occurring during the recovery phase represent not just the resumption of earlier levels of activity, but reflect a larger reconfiguration in the dynamics of tourism. It would seem that the post-crisis phase corresponds to a process through which problems associated with value creation, diversification and positioning become increasingly salient.

One can infer from such an evolution that crises may represent factors that prompt structural change in the configuration of tourism activity. In other words, the post-crisis phase involves a tendency towards incorporating practices which would make the system better equipped to face future challenges rather than merely restore its former configuration. This observation is consistent with the results of recent studies, which have highlighted the role of recovery phases in driving changes in the structure of tourism systems (Lew et al., 2020; Brouder, 2020).

On this basis, one cannot understand resilience simply as resistance to disturbance, but must regard it as part of a larger process of adaptation and transformation. The example presented above indicates that the occurrence of disruptions may have a significant impact on the path of tourism development when they are combined with improvements in coordination and long-term planning. This idea reflects recent research on the intersection between sustainability and resilience in tourism development approaches (Fontanari & Baggio, 2021; Duro et al., 2023). The implications of these findings are clear : public policy must focus more on diversification, support for local actors and resilience-oriented planning.

5. CONCLUSION

The current paper aimed to analyze how tourism activity changes in the environment characterized by disturbances. To achieve this goal, indicators measuring tourist arrivals, overnight stays, and tourism revenues were analyzed over time. The findings obtained demonstrated that tourism activities follow a dynamic pattern characterized by periods of contraction, adjustment and reconfiguration. The comparison performed showed that the impact of disturbance events varies for different dimensions of tourism activity. While flows of tourists and overnight stays are decreasing significantly during periods of disturbances, the changes in revenue streams demonstrate another picture, thus indicating some structural changes taking place during recovery. Such approach based on the analysis of both flow and value indicators provides a richer picture of how tourism destinations operate and highlights the need for multivariate studies in this area (Song et al., 2019; Croes et al., 2024).

In addition to the analysis of the changes occurring at a tourism destination affected by disturbances, this study adds to the existing discussion regarding tourism resilience. Specifically, it shows that the resilience of a tourism destination can be understood not only in terms of structural characteristics but also as an adaptive process. As it is evident from the results presented above, the case of the Marrakech-Safi region demonstrates how adaptation and governance contribute to recovery, in accordance with the latest studies dealing with tourism resilience and destination management (Romão, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2021).

At the same time, the results suggest that disturbances lead not only to short-term adjustments but also have the potential to trigger significant changes to tourism activities. The changes observed in the post-disturbance period indicate that the destination might experience reconfiguration, which would make it possible to focus on issues of value creation and strategic positioning. The idea that crises may serve as an opportunity to implement transformations has already been discussed in recent literature (Brouder,

2020; Lew et al., 2020). For policymakers, the results obtained indicate that efforts made to strengthen the resilience of destinations are to go beyond simple crisis management. More attention is to be paid to diversification and support of local stakeholders in order to build a resilient tourism system. It seems that improving coordination among various parties would facilitate the improvement of resilience levels.

However, one should keep in mind the limitations associated with the methodology used in this study. In particular, this is a secondary data-based analysis that does not allow for analyzing the behavior of individual firms or any local variations in the tourism sector. Moreover, the lack of econometrics prevents the author from establishing any causal connections between the variables under consideration.

Future research could extend the present study through obtaining and analyzing disaggregated data, performing comparative analyses of multiple destinations, or conducting quantitative assessments of the determinants of tourism resilience.

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