

# Domestic tourism: what alternative for the resilience of the Malian tourism sector ?

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**Abstract**—Faced with the effects of the multidimensional crisis that Mali is going through, those in charge of tourism express at every opportunity their wish to see domestic tourism develop. Of course, leisure mobility and travel by nationals, for business purposes, visits to parents, participation in cultural and religious events, keep busy a broad mass of the population. However, little is known about these types of travel by the national tourism administration, which has traditionally been orientated towards inbound tourism. Based on the results of a study involving a sample of 233 individuals, and the configurations of tourist markets under the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, this contribution seeks to question the prospects for domestic tourism in Mali.

**Keywords**— *domestic tourism, crisis, resilience, Mali, culture*

## Introduction

In recent decades, few concepts have taken on such importance as resilience. Originally, resilience is a term in physics that defines the resistance capacity of a body or a material to a shock or deformation. The principle of resilience designates their ability to regain their original shape after a violent shock (Tisseron, 2009). The semantic field of resilience then extended to other fields: biology, psychology, economics, sociology, ecology, etc. There is a real explosion of research on how to promote (or risk to) the resilience of various systems (Gulsun, 2020), be it a community, a landscape, a region, a city, an activity, business, etc. As such, resilience is highly constructed, nowadays, on the basis of anticipation in order to integrate as much as possible factors likely to hinder or disrupt the functioning of the system in general (Quenault, 2013). However, this conception of resilience as a capacity for anticipation seems limited in the face of a number of phenomena that suddenly arise and sometimes threaten human societies, such as climatic, environmental or health disasters.

While the tourism sector worldwide is facing the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic (Masclanis, 2020), this one is the result of a security crisis in the Sahel

region, which was not anticipated at all by tourism policies. Thus, the tourism sector is facing one of the unprecedented crises in the history of Mali. The main destinations, such as the city of Djenné, which recorded 5,782 overnight stays in 2010, recorded none in 2016 (Tessougué et al., 2017). According to statistics from the National Directorate of Tourism and Hospitality (DNTH), direct and indirect jobs in the sector, which were respectively 6,555 and 13,110 in 2008, are only 760 and 1,520 in 2017. However, areas and categories of tourism are variously affected. Business and event tourism (congresses, conferences, seminars, symposiums, fairs or other types of events) concentrated in particular in and around the district of Bamako has not really come to a halt. On the other hand, the important centers of leisure or discovery tourism embodied by certain large cities in the Center and North regions of Mali (Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal) no longer receive international visitors. This sudden halt in tourist activities in several regions of the country incurs enormous socio-economic cost with thousands of people forced out of employment in the tourism sectors. The major hubs of pleasure or discovery tourism embodied by certain large cities in the Center and North regions of Mali (Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal) no longer receive international visitors. This sudden stop in tourist activities in several regions of the country has an enormous socio-economic cost with the forced unemployment of people in the tourism sectors. The major hubs of pleasure or discovery tourism embodied by certain large cities in the Center and North regions of Mali (Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal) no longer receive international visitors. This sudden stop in tourist activities in several regions of the country incurs enormous socio-economic cost with thousands of people forced out of employment of people in the tourism sectors (MAT, 2016).

Thus, by getting bogged down over time, this multidimensional crisis has become a serious problem threatening the ability of actors in an entire economic sector to survive. Although the return to security is a determining factor for the recovery and development in

this sector, the national tourism and crafts administrations are engaged in the search for alternatives, with regard to the themes used in various events organized to revitalize the sector.

To what extent can domestic tourism, having affinities with national, domestic or internal tourism, defined as tourism involving residents of a country traveling only in that country, be an alternative enabling this sector to partially overcome the adverse impact caused by this multidimensional crisis?

From the outset, it should be noted that the tourist sector as we have always known it is over: seeing Westerners freely visiting the Dogon Country, Timbuktu or Djenné will not become a reality anytime soon. Also, we believe that the emergence of a new type of tourism is nevertheless conditional on a good knowledge of the various leisure and travel practices of nationals. As much as it requires to make a deep break in the perceptions, the configurations of the tourism sector to leave room for the development and the implementation of a project which is spread over the long term.

Moreover, although it has been the subject of very few studies in Africa (Moouloud and Ezaidi, 2005; Bélanger et al., 2007; Berriane, 2009; Kihima, 2010, 2015; Bidet, 2015), the theme domestic tourism focuses attention today. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist arrivals worldwide fell by 83% in the first quarter of 2021 due to continued widespread travel restrictions. Unable to go abroad, tourists tend to stay at home and discover their own countries, often with the support of their governments. The UNWTO considers that this domestic or local tourism is "an important lever for the resilience of the sector in the face of limitations to international travel". In the United States, domestic tourism is breaking all records". The 150 million Chinese tourists, who had fueled the global growth of the sector before the Covid-19 crisis, are now traveling within their country, which makes the newspaper Le Monde say, in its edition of October 01, 2021, that "Chinese domestic travel leaves world tourism orphaned". In addition, during the 63rd meeting of the UNWTO members of the Regional Commission for Africa, held on June 8, 2020, it emerged that "Domestic tourism will be essential for the revival of African tourism".

This strong interest worldwide in domestic tourism contributes to changing outlook on tourist activities and the perception of the tourist himself by helping reassess approaches according to which "(tourist) otherness can be found... around the corner (Équipe MIT, 2002: 84) and that one can "travel in one's city" (Lévy et al., 2002: 7). In any case, "Tourism(s) [remains] in motion(s) between adaptation, resilience and paradigm shift" (Cholat et al., 2019: 16). In this perspective where the inhabitant becomes the new paradigm of resilient tourism (Meier, 2021), local tourism is widely considered as a solution that can alleviate the current difficulties.

Thus, from the results of a survey carried out by questionnaire on 233 individuals, we propose to

characterize the journeys of the category of workers in Malian companies and administrations, while determining the conditions and modalities of this mobility. An understanding of the opportunities for mobility in a territory can guide the national tourism administration in its promotion policy as well as the territorial actors to organize themselves better to channel them more and strengthen their impact on the territories visited. In the following lines, we will begin by outlining the details of our methodology before presenting and discussing the main results of our study.

## materials and methods

In this contribution, we use data from an exploratory survey conducted by questionnaire using Google Forms online in 2015 in which 233 individuals participated. The link to the survey had been relayed on several social networks (including Facebook) and sent via the email addresses we had. By urging each study participant to share the link with their network of contacts, we were able to go from contacts to contacts until we reached this significant threshold of participants.

Table. 1: Characteristics of the sample studied

Categories	Denomination	No. Cit.	Frequency (%)
Sex	Male	144	61.8
	Women	89	38.2
Age	Under 25	28	19.1
	Between 25-45 years old	101	43.3
	Between 45-65 years old	87	30.3
	Over 65	17	7.3
Instruction (Level)	Secondary	38	16.3
	higher education	77	33.0
	Non-university higher	95	40.8
	Other	23	9.9
Function	Boss	14	6.0
	Senior	37	15.9
	Middle management	69	29.6
	Employee	55	23.6
	Liberal profession	26	11.2
	Teacher	32	13.7
Residential locations	District of Bamako	143	61.4
	Other regions of Mali	66	28.3

	Other countries	24	10.3
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Source : Personal investigation, 2015

The survey tool used is organized around three (3) parts. The first part relates to the identification of the respondent: his sex, place of residence, his sector of activity, his level of education as well as his concepts of holidays. The second part concerns his travel, his movements within Mali. Since the past, Malians have been known to be great travelers both within the country and abroad. The certificate is given by the rise of the Joulas (traders) establishing exchange relations with countries such as the current Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Forest Guinea, etc. In this study, our interest is to be able to determine their main domestic destinations, the hierarchy of the reasons for travel, the average time spent during the journeys, as well as their frequency. And as a potential tourist, the last part identifies the respondent's centers of interest, his propensity to visit the country's attractions as well as the conditions necessary to start this domestic tourism.

The sample, whose main characteristics are provided in the table above, is made up of men for more than 60%. It is also made up of executives working in the public and private sectors based mainly in Bamako but also in other localities in Mali and even in other countries.

The results were exported to Sphinx Lexica software and processed through uni, bi and multivariate analyses.

## results and discussion

The main results of our study are highlighted with the literature on domestic tourism and on tourism in relation to (crises) conflicts in general.

### Tourism or national mobility in the form of travel exists but is unexplored by the tourism administration

The first result that we can assess remains the frequency of travel showing that Malians travel enough in their country (see the table. 2 below).

Table. 2: Travel frequency within Mali

Inside Mali, do you travel...?	No. cit.	Freq.
Exceptionally (less than once a year)	42	18.0%
Sometimes (between 1 to 3 times a year)	76	32.6%
Often (between 3 to 5 times a year)	62	26.6%
Very often (between 2 to 3 times a quarter)	27	11.6%
All the time (once a month or more)	26	11.2%
TOTAL OBS.	233	100%

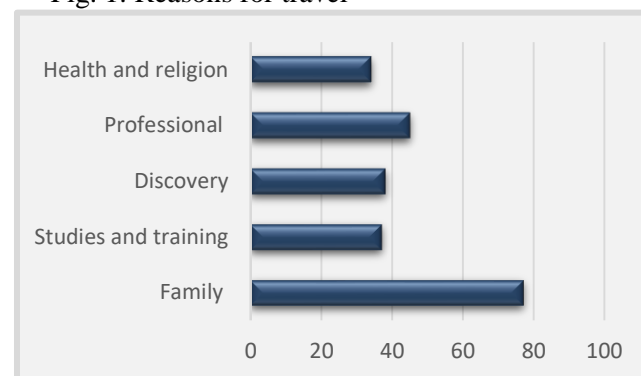
Source: Personal investigation, 2015

Thus, more than 32% of the sample travel at least once a year; 26% travel up to 3 times a year, while 11% believe they travel all the time, ie at least once a month. On their

last trip, people traveled slightly more to villages (61%) compared to other urban centers in the country.

The main reasons for these movements (as shown in the fig. 1 below) are primarily family issues: visits to parents, participation in social events such as naming ceremonies, weddings, etc.

Fig. 1: Reasons for travel



Source: Personal investigation, 2015

The other patterns tend to be equivalent. Nevertheless, it should be noted the relative importance of reasons related to discovery, that is to say visits to one's region of origin, historical places, in order to better know one's village or local realities.

Travel is mostly over relatively long distances. Only 10% of trips were made over a distance of less than 50 km, 38% took place between 100 and 200km and trips of more than 400km represent 18% of the total.

Half of the trips were made by public bus transport. Personal car was used in 18% of the trips, the plane and river transport (boats, pinnaces) respectively in less than 5% of the cases.

As for the time spent during these trips, we can note that 30% of trips lasted between 1 to 3 days, 16% lasted up to a week, while 34% exceeded a week.

Only 13% of the travelers stayed in a commercial establishment (hotel, camp or rental), otherwise the stays mainly take place with family, friends or acquaintances or other forms of community accommodation under the authority of the town hall or youth.

Over 66% of travelers remember making purchases. The minimum amount is 3000FCFA and the maximum is 50,000FCFA (approximately 76€) with an average of 14,728 FCFA.

In the absence of tourism observatories in the regions, and of studies on domestic tourism, these various stays or journeys made by Malians are only exceptionally counted in the statistics on tourist activities. Malian visitors, moreover sub-regional, counted include those who mainly seek officially recognized tourist accommodation. Official data overlook domestic tourism. But this does not mean that the practices do not exist, because 38% of our sample believe they have already done tourism inside Mali and 18% abroad.

However, this raises the question of the very definition of "tourist", globally perceived as foreigner and in this part

of the world, as Westerner (French, English, American, etc.). The global definition of tourist tends to obscure national residents. And in the permanent debate between researchers on the definition of tourism (Dewailly, 2006), even those who have opted for a simple definition of "tourist" tend either to consider it as "any person who is not 'd' here'" the Equipe MIT (2002: 80), or, as "the visitor, usually domiciled abroad [coming]... for a stay of limited duration, in "recreation" or not, and leaves his money in the country. » Jean Ginier (1969), quoted by Stock et al. (2003: 264).

This fact is reinforced by the definitions of tourism underpinned by the need to have statistics on exports and to count tourist consumption based essentially on the number of border entries. In its system of international tourism accounts, the UNWTO does not take into account statistics on domestic tourism.

Consequently, the Equipe MIT (2002: 57) observes that: "It is not a question of denying that the world of tourism is still very unequal and that the majority of tourists come from rich countries, but of inviting not to stick to an overly miserable image of national tourism in developing countries...". Likewise, "the existence of these tourist practices (national tourism) is generally ignored or underestimated, because it goes against the ideas of those who would like to reduce the countries of the South to a simple reception area for tourists from the North, as if it were shameful to recognize in poor countries the existence of an internal demand" (MIT, 2002: 58).

However, as some authors have pointed out (Liliehlm and Romney, 2000: 138), there are more and more Africans who are doing tourism within their countries. In South Africa, for example, 60% of overall visitation to national parks is by residents of the country, while 20% come from African countries. In the national parks of Mauritius and Nigeria, 40% and 80% of visitors are respectively residents of these countries.

In short, these definitions of the tourist activity and of the tourist himself tend to know many limits these days with the profusion of initiatives and practices of "Staycation". The tourist is no longer just the distant foreigner, coming from another continent or country, but above all the "inhabitant", the national of the region, and of the country...

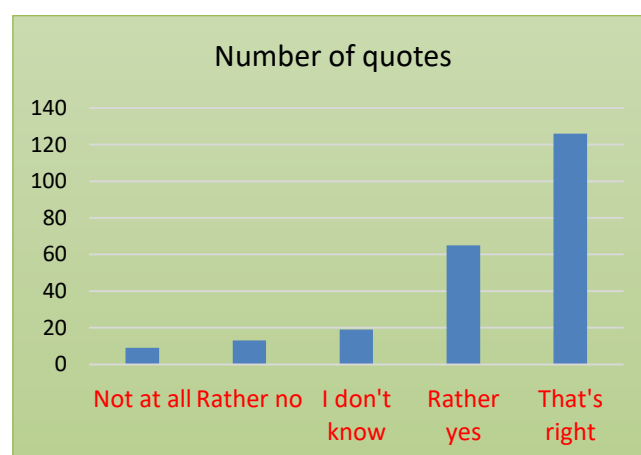
In this unique context, marked by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Revue Espaces, which supports and advises tourism professionals and administrators, questioned the tourism of tomorrow in its July 2021 issue 361. Experts have argued in particular that the "inhabitant", the resident of the destination, is the essential link in the tourism of tomorrow. It is now integrated into tourism development policies and strategies for creating desire for territories, it is centerstage and takes on different facets by becoming both a target for professionals in the sector, an object of tourist interest, an author and accompanist of more authentic offers. Thus, it is at the center of this fundamental trend, which is part of the vision of a tourism of the future, more

social, benevolent.

### **The existence of a latent need to practice tourist mobility that must be identified by specifying the habits of Western visitors**

Some existing practices, together with an analysis of the predisposition of Malians to travel, show that there is a significant propensity to stay for reasons of tourism within the country. The fig. 2 below presents the answers to the question: "Do you think there are attractions in Mali that would be worth a trip on your part?" "

Fig. 2: The existence of attractions worth the trip



Source: Personal investigation, 2015

Thus, to varying degree, more than 80% of our sample believe that there are attractions for the discovery of which they are prepared to consider the trip, up to 56%. The fig. 3 below shows the data on this predisposition. Note the high numbers of doubters who condition their trip to the fulfillment of other factors, which will be detailed in the following subsection (in particular in fig. 5).

Fig. 3: Predisposition to engage in tourism in Mali





Source: Personal investigation, 2015

Favorite places, worth visiting, are given in the following table with the number of occurrences for each word mentioned.

Table. 3: Places and attractions that Malians would like to visit

Attractions	Number of quotes
Timbuktu	65
Djenne	63
mosque	58
museum	42
dogon country	32
Sikasso	27
cliff	20
Askia	19
Park	16
Segou	13
Family	12
Hombori	10
Kayes	10
Bamako	9
Dam	8
Medina	8
Mande	7

Source: Personal investigation, 2015

The content of the table comes from the results of the open question "Which places in Mali would you like to visit?"

The analysis of the table shows that the historic cities of Timbuktu and Djenné are among the places Malians most want to visit. In the rest of the data from the responses, their remarkable mosques, mausoleums of saints as well as their libraries of manuscripts follow these cities. These places are

followed by the attractions of the Dogon Country with its cliffs and the town of Bandiagara as its epicenter. Visiting museums has an important role in the imagination of visitors. These institutions are somewhat scattered in the main urban centers mentioned in the table. The evocations of Sikasso are mainly associated with its tata (walls), the caves of Missirikoro, the falls of Farako, etc. Gao or the City of Askia forms a common front with the Tomb of the same name. The parks concern the zoological one and the national ones of biosphere reserves of the country. In short, it should be noted that the places that people would like to visit are as much related to nature as to culture and especially heritage.

As such, some domestic tourism attractions overlap with those of international tourism. However, there are still notable differences in the ways of practicing this tourism. This can be confirmed by the practices that people would like to carry out during their stay (cf. fig.4).

Fig. 4: Level of interest in the activities to be practiced



Source: Personal investigation, 2015

If all the proposed activities are considered very interesting, those most favored are visits to the towns and villages of national heritage, next come visits to villages in general (Peulh, Dogon, Bambara, etc.), then visits to museums, and finally the desire to attend festivals and traditional ceremonies and festivities.

In the segment of people who "plan to do tourism in Mali", their interest goes in order of importance

towards activities such as visiting villages (Peul, Dogon, Bamanan) (43/96); visiting museums (42/96); that of heritage towns or villages (36/98); and to attend festivals and ceremonies (36/88). The activities they consider “not at all interesting” are summarized as Going into the desert and taking a walk (34/68); Walk in nature to discover the fauna and flora (33/81); Nautical activities such as boat trips or pirogues (32/72).

From this perspective on domestic tourism, 19% of the sample believe they are “completely interested” in the services of a travel organization such as a travel agency. Although 14% feel that they are not at all interested, more than half of the sample remain skeptical, however, believing that “it depends” on the type of organization and therefore on the terms of access to the services provided. People prefer to travel first with friends, then with family, then with co-workers. The choices for catering first concern the close circle of family or friends, then traditional local restaurants. Note that barely 5% preferred to eat in high-end restaurants. The same is true for the mode of accommodation, the choice for top-of-the-range hotels is only 13% against around 40% for accommodation with relatives or friends and 11% of the choices relate to camps and small inns. The means of travel that will be used by national tourists primarily concern public transport for more than 28%, personal vehicles for 26% and transport by specialized tourism agencies for 19%.

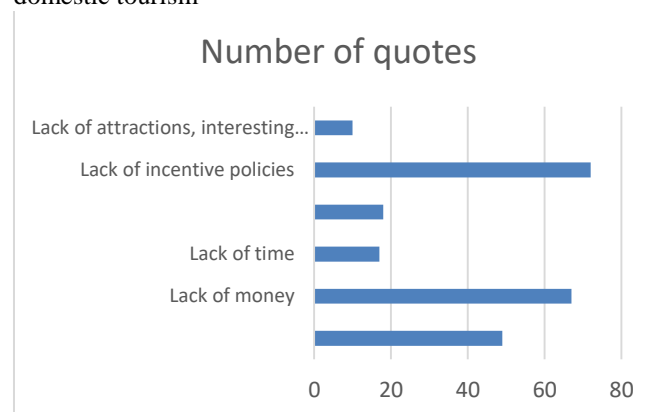
These main characteristics that we have just presented differ from those of international visitors who receive the full attention of tourism stakeholders. The profile of the tourist looked for by the stakeholders in hospitality and tourism development relates to that of inbound tourism, even if in their motivation the two categories meet marginally as regards their choice for culture and heritage. There are, however, notable differences in their way of housing. Attendance at hospitality establishments, such as hotels, is one of the sources of accounting for this tourism, while nationals have shown relatively little interest in these establishments. The same applies to the use of the services of travel agencies and the means of transport usually used by foreign tourists.

### **The need to deal with blocking factors and support existing initiatives while boosting the effects on the receiving territories**

Three main factors have been identified as obstacles to the

development of domestic tourism in Mali (see Fig. 5). The absence of incentive policies is the first element called into question. This is primarily the responsibility of public authorities, but also of private actors. Government incentives can have a significant impact on the private sector, which can therefore provide suitable services, according to the expectations and budgets of national visitors and thus have an effect on mentality by positively affecting the cultural habits of Malians in matter of traveling and discovering.

Fig. 5: Perception of obstacles to the development of domestic tourism



Source: Personal investigation, 2015

The factors identified above have been repeatedly pointed to in other work on domestic tourism. It emerges, in fact, from the work of Mohamed Berriane (2009), Brahim Moudoud and Abdelkrim Ezaidi (2005) on the case of Morocco that the involvement of public authorities through the implementation of incentive policies is essential to the growth and promotion of national tourist mobility. Morocco is one of the first receiving countries of international tourism in Africa in terms of arrivals. However, its industry suffered from the consequences of the Gulf crisis in 1991 with cascading cancellations for hoteliers, as well as those of September 11, 2001, hampering the free movement and movement of people around the world. These various crises were an opportunity to discuss the issue of domestic tourism in this country. One of the main support measures adopted was the "Konouz Biladi" initiative intended to foster a national clientele that was still waiting for specific promotional actions (Berriane, 2009). This operation, initiated in its first edition in 2003, consisted of bringing together a large number of hotel establishments (of different categories) and travel agencies around a promotional offer aimed at national customers which is both sufficiently homogeneous and, as far as possible, adapted to its needs. During a given period, these tourism

professionals agree to reduce the price of their services and benefits by half, all this was framed by a media campaign to encourage nationals.

Brahim Moudoud and Abdelkrim Ezaidi (2005) report that these measures have had a positive effect on the figures for tourist activities. Indeed, in 2003, the arrivals of national tourism at the level of hotels, dethroned for the first time those of the French market, considered as the traditional tourist market for Morocco, by representing 33.8% of the total share of arrivals of tourist markets, against 32.6% supplied by the French market.

In Rwanda, reports Moutiou Adjibi Nourou (2020), the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) has adopted measures aimed at stimulating local people's desire for tourist visits. To this end, the authorities have reduced from \$1,500 to \$200 the cost of visiting national parks home to mountain gorillas, one of the country's main tourist attractions.

In Burkina Faso, to compensate for the drastic drop in arrivals of international visitors, the State is relying on the "Do you know your beautiful country?" program. », and the private sector on the campaign to reduce the price of services by 25% for the benefit of national tourists during the holidays. Thus, in 2018 Burkina recorded 395,898 arrivals due to domestic tourism, compared to 144,492 for foreign tourism (Ido, 2020).

In the Kenyan context, Bonface Odiara Kihima (2010) reports some examples of initiatives to foster national tourism, particularly from the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the organization responsible for managing national parks. Among its promotional actions, there is the acquisition of shuttles intended for guided tours in the national parks of the country during all weekends, including public holidays and school vacation periods to encourage Kenyans to participate in tourism. In addition, the KWS pricing policy differentiates between the different market segments: adults, children, and students. All these segments are further divided into different categories: "Citizens of Kenya, Residents of Kenya and Non-Residents". The entrance fee to the parks for international tourists remains higher than that of nationals. For example, for an income generated by an international tourist, in terms of entry fee only, it takes seven (sometimes 15) Kenyan tourists to make the same income.

All of these initiatives (Moroccan, Rwandan and Kenyan) are the result of a real national political will. For example in the case of Kenya, it was exerted in the Kenya Tourist Board, the Domestic Tourism Council in order to single out the issue of

domestic tourism. In the case of Mali as well, a strong involvement of the public authorities is essential to first understand and characterize the existing initiatives.

Although engaged in the search for alternatives with a view to the emergence of a new type of tourism, the national tourism administration must first and foremost undertake in-depth studies of the existing situation in order to have a good level of knowledge of the various practices of leisure and travel for nationals which have not hitherto been the subject of specific study interest. As indicated above, the current initiatives have a very strong link with culture and heritage. Indeed, in addition to visits to families, the greatest internal mobility occurs during cultural or religious events such as ziaras, festivals, religious holidays, traditional ceremonies (often to religious places to welcome "dafalen", that is to say vows with hints of conjuration like the tombs of Mari and Fadiè in Sagabala, the tomb of Babougou Tchi, the tombs of Oumou and Modibo in Dilly, etc.), the Sankémon, the Septennial Refection of the sacred hut of Kangaba, etc.). It suffices, to be convinced of this, to take an interest in the high number of coaches from the regions and countries of the sub-region for the Maouloud celebrations organized by the Ansar-din association of Ousmane Chérif Madani Haidara. A similar flow heads towards Nioro, Tamani, Hamdalahi, Timbuktu, Djenné, etc. If some of these events have actually been studied, it is not in terms of the mobility of people, in an attempt to get the most of the territories. What should be done.

In the same vein, it will then be a question of creating the conditions to promote these existing practices and popularize them. In this regard, it is necessary to foresee different strategies for the development of domestic tourism activities by considering the words of Gabriel Wackermann (2017). For whom, tourism is not an end in itself, but just a means, an instrument at the service of a territory development strategy. It promotes local resources mobilized to meet local needs. Thus, it is necessary to create a synergy between state actors, local authorities, academics, private operators and local communities. The success of projects promoting local development depends on the motivation of these actors as well as the project leaders, but also on good coordination of the public/private partnership. In the territories, projects must be designed and carried out to, with and by the local populations themselves. In addition, it is necessary to think this tourist project in a general

spirit of sustainable development of the territory. It is primarily a question of registering tourist activities in the territories, of valuing the specific resources of each territory considered (Tangara et al., 2021). It is also necessary to stimulate complementarities and federate local actors. It is therefore necessary to favor synergies between tourism and other sectors of activity, such as agriculture, crafts, fishing, forestry and other local productive sectors. Such a unifying project makes it possible to associate tourist service providers with other producers: from homestay accommodation to local catering, from meetings with producers to guided hikes. Artisanry, agriculture, processing activities are part of a logic of diversification and complementarity of the local economy. This approach makes it possible to anchor tourism revenues in the territory.

The development of domestic tourism also involves the establishment, in the medium and long term, of a culture of discovery of the country within the socio-professional world, the university and school public. It will also be necessary to promote the legislative and managerial conditions for the creation of decent jobs in the tourism sector to take advantage of the various opportunities relating to national mobility. Even if we do not have data relating to the visits of Malians to other countries, it must be recognized that more and more Malians, Malian women, and their families are going to neighboring countries (such as Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana, etc.). These movements are very frequent during holiday periods. It remains to see to what extent,

Similarly, many Malians residing abroad return each year to their country of origin. It can be assumed with a negligible risk of being wrong that this category of potential clientele is wealthier than the national average. They are also more likely to be interested in recreational activities as they reside in countries where these practices are much more common. They must also feel the need and the desire to better visit their region or country of origin since they can experience nostalgia because they live abroad. So back home, they are more likely to want to explore the country.

## CONCLUSION

In the history of tourism or that of destinations, several episodes of crisis have seriously and sometimes permanently hit the tourism sector throughout the world. Dewailly (2006) demonstrates that nothing is ever taken for granted in the field of

tourism. Fashion, events, natural disasters, wars, energy prices, and many other factors, come into play to weaken the geographical configurations of tourism.

If all crises have the direct effect of reducing or stopping flows and therefore tourist numbers, security crises are the most difficult to curb, they are the most incapacitating or can have much more lasting effects over time (Novelli et al., 2012; Matthews, 1974). Moreover, the crisis is often revealing of certain new dynamics of creativity, flexibility and innovation. As the saying goes “to something, misfortune is good”. Thus, many destinations have been able to cushion or recover from the crises that have deeply affected them thanks to domestic tourism, and even today, this is identified as strategically relevant for the resilience of the sector at global level.

Generally, less remunerative than international tourism, domestic tourism nevertheless provides a stable customer base for tourism professionals throughout the year. For this reason, most countries are developing strategies for strengthening it. Mali, whose sector is suffering from the consequences of a multidimensional crisis, is not to be outdone, because public authorities have been initiating limited reflections in this direction for several years. However, it became clear, throughout this work, that the resilience of the sector depends as much on better control of the security situation as on the definition and implementation of a global strategy for sustainable local development.

Several categories of Malians travel regularly for various reasons ranging from visits to families, to business trips or attendance to various events. The private and public sectors generate other types of trips. Internal pleasure travel, including the motives related to “holidays and leisure, religion and pilgrimage, culture and research”, is very limited for both economic and cultural reasons. They therefore generate few stays in hotel. The prospects for its development lie in the long term; the rise in the standards of living and the valuing of products for a Malian clientele are among the conditions to be met.

However, it is important to know that among the participants in the “ziaras” and other major cultural events, for example, a good majority would like to spend their stay in conditions (of travel, accommodation, catering, etc.) other than rustic. If their effects can be limited in time (between 3 and 8 days), it should be understood that these opportunities for mobility continue in very reduced number during the rest of the year. We can also



assume that better organization and the proposal of enticing offers will ensure that attendance could be maintained outside the periods or calendar of events. While taking into account that the needs and monetary capacities of this potential clientele and those to which tourism professionals are accustomed are very different, micro-enterprises can therefore intelligently structure themselves around these niches to meet such latent needs. Therefore, moving towards some professionalization of the methods of organization for these events is potentially important for the development of domestic tourism, which has already existing activities. Visitor flows to domestic destinations must be supported by a local organization in order to make the most of the economic opportunities offered by the presence of these different categories of visitors.

In this regard, the revival of tourism in Mali requires commitment from all stakeholders, particularly national, regional and local decision-makers, to set the framework for this strategy according to the specificities (environmental, historical, social, economic, administrative and cultural, etc.) of the territories.

In the current context of insecurity in the northern and central regions of Mali, one of the perspectives could be research-action on domestic tourism in the Mandé region, the historic heartland of the Empire of Mali, located in the close vicinity of Bamako. This region, with many natural, cultural and historical assets, experienced a late emergence (Doquet, 2007). This contrasts with the rapidly rising development of the destination through the development of new activities in Mali such as canoeing in Bankoumana region, climbing in Siby, and the proliferation of accommodation facilities and entertainment initiatives. This research-action will ultimately make it possible to find arrangements or forms of organization that are attractive to potential visitors, profitable for professionals in the sector.

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