

## **Territorial marketing and tourist attractiveness: Case of Souss Massa region**

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<b>Disclosure Statement :</b>	Authors are not aware of any findings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this study and they are responsible for any plagiarism in this paper.
<b>Conflict of Interest :</b>	The authors report no conflicts of interest.
<b>Cite this article :</b>	STAILI, S., ABDELLATIF, N., DRIOUCH, S., & BOUDOHAY, Y. (2024). Territorial marketing and tourist attractiveness: Case of Souss Massa region. <i>International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics</i> , 5(5), 526-546. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11261528">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11261528</a>
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Received: April 20, 2024

Accepted: May 22, 2024

**International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics - IJAFAME**

**ISSN: 2658-8455**

**Volume 5, Issue 5 (2024)**

## **Territorial marketing and tourist attractiveness: Case of Souss Massa region**

### **Abstract:**

This article delves into the pivotal role of territorial marketing in boosting tourism attraction, with the Agadir Souss Massa region serving as a case study. It examines how the region has formulated and implemented territorial marketing tactics to elevate its status as a top tourist destination. The investigation of regional players' perceptions of Territorial Marketing in Souss Massa underscores numerous crucial aspects vital for the region's development and promotion. Through an analysis encompassing theoretical frameworks, practical applications, and empirical findings, the article aims to address the following query: To what extent does territorial marketing contribute to the allure of the Souss Massa region for tourists? Employing a qualitative approach, the study endeavors to facilitate free expression of views among informants and field workers on the subject matter.

The paper extensively explores the core components of these strategies, encompassing the promotion of natural and cultural attractions alongside local infrastructure. It underscores Agadir Souss Massa's success in crafting a unique and memorable identity through strategic and innovative marketing endeavors. In summary, the research underscores the intricacies of how Territorial Marketing is perceived within the Souss Massa region. While stakeholders acknowledge its potential as a competitive asset, persistent challenges such as funding constraints, skills shortages, and resistance to change remain. Ensuring successful integration requires close collaboration, heightened coordination, and an innovative mindset. By seizing the opportunity to steer their strategies towards well-conceived and well-coordinated Territorial Marketing, regional players can propel the Souss Massa region towards new vistas of development and attractiveness.

**Key words:** Territorial marketing, tourist appeal, promotion.

**JEL Classification :** Z33, M31, O18, R11

**Paper type:** Empirical research

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, territorial marketing has become a crucial issue at the heart of national concerns. Attracting foreign companies, tourists, skilled residents and even overcoming crises has become essential to strengthening local economic foundations. Indeed, territorial marketing has become the tool of choice for local development.

In this context, territories need to highlight their uniqueness and unique assets in order to protect their position, enhance their image and ensure a sustainable strategic positioning. In other words, leveraging a territory's distinctive features is key to ensuring its long-term economic development and competitiveness.

Territorial marketing is the application of traditional marketing principles to territorial contexts. It's a comprehensive approach designed to highlight a region's assets, resources and specific characteristics, in order to attract external players and develop lasting relationships with them. Unlike a simple promotional approach, territorial marketing encompasses in-depth strategic thinking to shape a positive, attractive image of the territory.

In this context, tourist appeal plays a key role. Tourist destinations have to compete to attract visitors and stand out in a competitive global market. Territorial marketing has thus become the spearhead of tourism development strategies. By focusing on a territory's unique features, the experiences it offers travelers, and the quality of its services and infrastructures, territorial marketing seeks to create a positive and desirable image for potential tourists.

From this point of view, the relationship between territorial marketing and tourist appeal is complex and multidimensional. Territorial marketing acts as a lever for improving tourist attraction by highlighting a region's natural, cultural and economic resources. It also enhances the competitiveness of tourist destinations by giving them a strong identity and communicating effectively with target markets.

The question of the attractiveness of tourist destinations has sparked keen interest among tourism researchers, with numerous approaches explored (Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Vengesai et al., 2009; Lee and King, 2019). In the field of tourism marketing, territorial marketing is a widely studied subject, with a particular emphasis on the impact of destination image on tourist choices (Mayo, 1973) and their perception of the place (Lawson and Baud-Bovy, 1977). Over time, this field has developed under different names such as "destination marketing" or "destination branding", sometimes leading to some confusion in terminology (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Some researchers have called for distinguishing between "destination branding", aligned with a product or service brand, and "place branding", aligned with a corporate brand (Kerr, 2006). The term "territory" gradually replaced "destination" in the 1990s, but terms such as "territorial marketing" and "territorial branding" are still used interchangeably (Berrada, 2018). However, an observation has shown that the term "destination" remains predominant in describing territories in tourism literature, while "territory" is more common in publications related to branding (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Skinner, 2008).

This close relationship between territorial marketing and tourism attractiveness is at the heart of the concerns of territorial development players. In this study, we look at this complex and essential dynamic to better understand how territorial marketing can contribute significantly to the tourist attraction of destinations, with a particular focus on the example of the Souss Massa region. By analyzing theoretical foundations, concrete practices and empirical results, we seek to answer the following question: To what extent does territorial marketing contribute to the tourist attraction of the Souss Massa region?

In our quest to answer our problem, we have formulated research sub-questions to better grasp the various dimensions of the subject. First, we sought to understand what territorial attractiveness is and what its essential components are. We then turned our attention to tourism attractiveness and its specific features. We then explored the potential role of territorial

marketing in improving a region's tourist attraction. Finally, our study focused on the precise contribution of territorial marketing to the tourist attraction of the Souss Massa destination. Through these research questions, we aim to shed significant light on the link between territorial marketing and tourist attraction.

As part of this research, we will begin by examining the crucial impact of territorial marketing on tourist attraction. To achieve this objective, we have chosen a qualitative approach that aims to allow informants and field workers to freely express their views on the subject under study. In this case, the semi-structured personal interview is the best technique for developing knowledge in the field and achieving our objectives. For this reason, the structure of the interview guide was retained, based on the axes of the literature and the model, in five sections.

## **2. Theoretical comparison of territorial marketing**

The questions that guide this section seek to understand the theoretical emergence of Territorial Marketing. This concept can be broken down into 2 parts:

On the one hand, the territory as an organic framework in which a territorially integrated set of relationships, not only inter-firm, but mainly non-market relationships, partnerships, cooperation and information exchanges, are inscribed. These relationships are the dual expression of localized players' strategies and a territory's history, culture and identity.

On the other hand, marketing as a set of techniques, mainly used in the commercial sector, which seek to match a company's "product" offering with consumer expectations, in order to optimize sales.

The aim is therefore to define and specify the conditions under which the marketing approach and the tools it mobilizes can be envisaged for a territory perceived as a product.

### **2.1.The marketing:**

Territorial competition is a truth that every conurbation needs to take into account in order to develop. The use of modern public and management techniques helps reduce the uncertainties and errors attributed to local authorities. The primary role of marketing is to promote the territory with the ultimate goal of economic, social and cultural development.

Several definitions have been given to marketing, and in the following we have chosen to develop the most widely recognized and used terminologies in works dealing with this discipline, before situating the territorial marketing approach in the general context of territorial management. Marketing is an approach that makes it possible to conquer profitable markets in the long term by analyzing potential customer needs and proposing an appropriate offer.

According to Belabes and Naji M. (2004), marketing is based on the notion of need, desire and demand. From the study of these elements, the product and its attributes are defined and designed to serve a purpose and bring satisfaction to the customer, the user of the product, through an exchange or transaction on a market. (I. BELABESS & M NAJI, 2004).

"Marketing is both a social and a management process by which individuals and groups satisfy their needs and desires through the creation and exchange of goods and services. (Kotler, 1994)

"Marketing is the set of actions whose aim is to anticipate or ascertain, and if necessary, stimulate, arouse or renew consumer needs in a given category of products and services, and to continuously adapt a company's production and sales apparatus to the needs thus determined". (P. Kotler, 2000).

The complexity of territorial marketing compared with commercial marketing lies in the fact that it has to combine several levels of "sellers" (local authorities, economic and social development players, etc.), and several categories of customers (investors, tourists, the population, events, etc.). It is also due to the complexity of the offer, in the sense that the

elements of the marketing mix are not mastered, with complex packaging (combination of product packaging and services).

## **2.2.The area:**

The territory is therefore the basis of this study. To avoid any confusion, it may be useful to clarify its meaning.

### **2.2.1. Definition of the "territory" concept**

In the literature, territorialization, space-territory and territorial development are all declensions of the same term, territory, which has come to the fore in development economics in recent decades, and which at the same time has largely penetrated the political sphere, notably through local development programs.

It's a notion that's hard to pin down, given the many definitions it's given today in the social sciences. Today, it is no longer understood by anyone as a fixed space, a passive support for development projects or actions. Rather, it is considered as "a construct of actors that involves not only companies but also other players, trainers, researchers, public authorities, even consumers themselves" (Pecqueur, 2007). It is therefore a dynamic object, "a tool for learning and intermediation... more important for what it enables than for what it is or what it represents" (Andrieu, 2004).

The territory can be multiple, local or international, rural or urban, natural or artificial, According to Autes (2005), there are three types of territory: territory with a geographical and spatial dimension, i.e. natural territory; political territory, which reflects the investment of space by a legitimate power; and symbolic or cultural territory, which is the expression of people's relationship with their land and their political territory, i.e. traditions, family structures, belief systems, etc. (Autes, 2005).

The result is that the territory is a surface for exchanges between players; it is akin to a reticular organization endowed with a collective identity whose stakeholders invest resources in a shared vision. The territory takes the form of a socio-economic construct produced between local players (economic, technical, social, institutional) who participate in solving a common problem or in realizing a collective development project.

### **2.2.2. Identifying the territory's profile**

The territory's profile can be identified on the basis of 8 components, which can be further developed according to each individual's situation or expectations:

- Physical resources and their management (in particular natural resources, facilities and infrastructures, historical and architectural heritage, etc.);
- Human resources (the men and women who live in the area, move there or leave; demographic characteristics and social structure of the population);
- Activities (companies, their sector, their place in this sector, their size, their degree of geographical concentration, etc.) and jobs (structure, stability, status, etc.) ;
- Know-how and skills (implicit and explicit, degree of mastery of technologies, research and development capabilities, etc.);
- The territory's culture and identity (values commonly shared by the territory's players, their interests, mentality, attitudes, forms of recognition, habits and customs, etc.);
- The level of "governance" (local institutions and administrations, rules of the political game, collective players, relations between all these players, the degree of autonomy in managing development, including financial resources) and democracy (forms of consultation and participation);
- The image and perception of the territory (by the inhabitants themselves and by outsiders), territorial communication.

- External relations (in particular the degree of integration of the territory on the various markets, contacts with other territories, exchange networks, etc.).

### **2.2.3. Territorial marketing**

The transposition of Marketing to territoriality has developed in recent years with the emergence of competition and territorial specialization.

- ***Emerging factors***

Broadly speaking, four factors have contributed to the emergence of regional marketing: (G. BENKO)

- a - Globalization and expanding competition:*

In the era of globalization, we are witnessing the emergence of productive areas with increased specialization. "Globalization" now means differentiation and specialization. Major economic hubs have emerged, forming a global economy of "oases";

- b- A new paradigm in regional planning has emerged:*

Development "from below", or local development, which replaces development "from above", managed by the State. This reorganization of powers provides local authorities with more extensive means of action and greater autonomy. The question of development is becoming more "local", and we are now in an era of competition between cities and territories, both nationally and internationally. Local economic areas are different from one another, and the various strategies for exploiting their resources put them in competition with one another. We can therefore distinguish two levels: a first, quantifiable level, which concerns the control of conflicts linked to the optimal allocation of production factors. A second, qualitative level (which concerns the provision of a differentiated offer, not in terms of cost, but in terms of territorial specificities, which are essential in the constitution of cities' competitive advantages); Rapidly evolving communication tools: Rapidly evolving technologies enable the use of a large number of communication tools (internet, media, etc.). Everyone is communicating, while methods, media and transmission channels have changed considerably. Today, cities need to know how to promote themselves and "look after their image"; but the acceleration of economic processes has really increased cities' need for new tools to increase their attractiveness;

A new stage in the evolution of marketing: The basic marketing concepts of market, customer, competitor, offer and price are a daily reality for city representatives. Now, more than ever, it seems necessary to adapt the major foundations of a marketing approach to the conceptualization of the development process.

- ***Defining territorial marketing:***

To date, there is no single definition that is universally accepted by researchers and experts in the field of territorial marketing.

Territorial marketing can be defined as the desire of a territorial organization (city, conurbation, local authority, etc.) to orient its development according to the needs of its inhabitants (demographic marketing), its economic players (endogenous/exogenous promotion) or its guests (tourism).

The problem of transposing corporate marketing concepts to territories is a recurring one. The complexity of such an approach may lie in the originality of the community product and the desire to reinforce, by way of example, the advantages of one sector over another. (F. HATEM, 2007) Major shortcomings generally penalize the success of territorial marketing:

- ***Inadequate definition of objectives***

Inadequate answers to the questions posed by the approach. Three concepts need to be clarified in order to devise a definition of marketing that is valid at the territorial level. First, the concept

of the market. The market, as defined by P. Köhler, is the "formal or virtual place on which goods and services of various kinds are exchanged". The notion of a territorial "market" thus appears complex to delimit and estimate, insofar as it is difficult to define the very contours of territorial boundaries. We will describe the territorial market as follows: it is the administrative area in which the entire territorial offer is grouped, as well as the products and services close to this area that "consumers" can enjoy because of this proximity;

Secondly, the concept of the customer or consumer. The customer is a natural or legal person to whom we wish to sell a good or service. In a given region, the term "customer" can be applied to users and residents, as well as endogenous and exogenous companies and associations. What makes them special is that they are economic subjects in their capacity as consumers of the territory's offer, and can also become partners or players in the territory in question. From then on, we can no longer speak of customers, but rather of stakeholders;

Finally, the concept of supply. The concept of market supply, in the sense of corporate marketing, implies the production of goods, yet the territory neither produces nor transforms any goods in the strict sense. Marketing is useful for strategic thinking, as it helps to situate the territory within wider economic and human spaces. The aims of this concept are to

- Mobilize players to meet investors' expectations when developing territorial promotion strategies;

- Develop and sustain partnerships by highlighting each other's strengths and complementarities;

- Build a regional image and reputation;

- Increase the attractiveness of the region through promotional initiatives. Local authorities, on the other hand, develop space through urban and environmental projects that give shape to the territory: cultural complexes, community facilities, residential and business districts, railway stations... There are two markets:

- The internal market: concerns the users of public goods and services in a given area, and their degree of involvement in the creation of a territorial project drawn up by the local authority's management team;

- The external domain: the most legitimate of territorial marketing aims, in an increasingly competitive environment, to attract attention and enhance its assets by attempting to attract a multiplicity of potential targets.

Rather than goods and services, the territorial offer describes a global environment conducive to the realization of projects in the broadest sense (business locations, cultural creations, housing development...). He defines it as a "space of opportunities to be seized". (Decoutère, 1996)

From a practical point of view, Territorial Marketing aims to understand what the region has to offer in relation to market demand, as well as the promotional approach to be implemented. It enables strategic choices to be made, taking into account the region's potential and specific features, as well as global competition.

✚ The components of territorial marketing:

Territorial marketing involves an operational phase that transposes the key concepts of commercial action into territorial specificities. This involves defining a marketing mix policy, combining the elements of: Product, Price, Placement and Promotion for greater effectiveness and impact.

In addition to the four above-mentioned components, a fifth component, Partnership, would appear to be an ideal complement to this study:

- Product policy: to meet customers' expectations, product policy consists in organizing the enhancement of the regional offer in association with a range of services. The aim is to promote the performance and advantages of the business environment offered by

the region and turn them into selling points.

- Pricing policy: Pricing policy is more complex to define for a territory than for a company. In territorial marketing, it often involves directly or indirectly influencing initial investment costs, or even operating costs.
- It is only possible to act on certain cost levels present in the territory through policies of free or subsidized services, preferential real estate prices, specific subsidies, tax credits, repayable advances...etc.
- Placement policy: This refers to possible actions to make the local offer accessible. This refers to aspects linked to the facilities and infrastructures that make the territory in question easily accessible to potential customers.
- Promotional policy: this consists of all implicit or explicit actions to attract the attention of potential demand by expressing the territory's positioning and strategy with regard to its targets.
- Partnership policy: this is an attitude based on the ability and willingness of development players to cooperate. It's a key concept that goes hand in hand with good communication.

- ***Territorial marketing in Anglo-Saxon works:***

Depending on the purpose for which it is applied, territorial marketing is described in Anglo-Saxon works under different names:

- Place Branding: for the process of giving a territory a brand name;
- City Branding: for all city marketing initiatives;
- Destination Branding: for tourism initiatives designed to develop the attractiveness of a vacation spot.

### **2.3.The theoretical framework of "perceived territorial attractiveness"**

#### **2.3.1. Definition**

Perception is the activity by which a subject experiences objects or properties present in its environment. This activity is usually based on information provided by the senses. In the human species, perception is also linked to the mechanisms of cognition. The word "perception" designates:

- Either the process of gathering and processing sensory information (in cognitive psychology, for example),
- or the resulting awareness (in the philosophy of perception, for example).

In experimental psychology, particularly in human beings, a distinction is made between scales of conscious perception, on the one hand, and unconscious perception, on the other. The latter is sometimes referred to as "implicit" or "subliminal". Perception of a situation involves both an organism's physiological senses and its cognitive capacities, at an elementary or conscious level.

#### **2.3.2. The different forms of perception:**

The perceptual process itself breaks down into 2 specific forms, which we will distinguish in detail below:

- Subjective perception.
- Selective perception.

One form of perception is "subjective" perception. It varies from one individual to another. The way an environment is perceived depends on an individual's characteristics and history. Two people can have two different interpretations of the same stimulus, because they have different backgrounds and experiences.



Then there's so-called "selective" perception. In this type of situation, the individual receives a lot of information. With too much information, the individual can't retain it all. Consequently, the individual will select some information by sorting it out. As we have limited cognitive capacities, faced with all the information we receive, the human brain has developed processes to sort, select and store some of it. In this way, the brain can retrieve stored information for immediate or future use.

The primary aim of this chapter is to present how the concept of "territorial branding" is understood in practice by professionals and in the scientific literature by researchers. It presents an overview of the different approaches, some converging, some diverging, and then leads to the definition used in this study. Next, the strategic issues associated with territorial branding are discussed. Finally, we examine the functions of the territorial brand and the expectations placed on the mobilization of this marketing tool.

#### **2.4. The territorial brand as a legal, communication and marketing tool**

The topic of tourist destination attraction has garnered significant interest among tourism researchers, who have explored various approaches (Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Vengesai et al., 2009; Lee and King, 2019). In the realm of tourism marketing, territorial marketing has received considerable attention, particularly focusing on how the image of a destination influences tourists' decisions (Mayo, 1973) and their perceptions of the location (Lawson and Baud-Bovy, 1977). Over time, this field has evolved under different names such as "destination marketing" or "destination branding," occasionally leading to confusion in terminology (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Some scholars have advocated for differentiating between "destination branding," which aligns with a product or service brand, and "place branding," which aligns with a corporate brand (Kerr, 2006). While the term "territory" gradually supplanted "destination" in the 1990s, terms like "territorial marketing" and "territorial branding" are still used interchangeably (Berrada, 2018). However, observations indicate that "destination" remains the prevalent term for describing territories in tourism literature, whereas "territory" is more commonly used in branding-related publications (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Skinner, 2008).

The notion of brand is polysemous, and can be approached by multiple disciplines, including marketing, law, economics, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, anthropology and geography<sup>48</sup>. In the field of marketing studies, a vast literature has been devoted to the notion of brand and the branding process in general for several decades. The works of Aaker (Jennifer L. and David A.), de Chernatony, Fournier, Kapferer and Keller feature as frequently cited references (D. A. Aaker, 1994, 1996; Kapferer, 2013b; Kapferer & Thoenig, 1989; Keller, 1993; D. A. Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2012; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998; de Chernatony & McWilliam, 1990; Fournier, 1994; Fournier, Breazeale & Avery, 2015; Fournier, Breazeale & Fetscherin, 2012; J. L. Aaker, 1997; Kapferer, 2007). Although there is virtually no agreement on what a brand "really" is (Bently, Davis & Ginsburg, 2008), the following definition is agreed upon: A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or any combination thereof used to identify the goods or services of a vendor or group of vendors and to differentiate them from competitors (American Marketing Association, 2015).

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design**

The aim of this article is to explore territorial marketing practices in the Souss Massa region. To achieve this objective, we have chosen a qualitative approach that aims to allow informants and field workers to freely express their views on the subject under study. In this case, the semi-structured personal interview is the best technique for developing knowledge in the field and

achieving our objectives. For this reason, the structure of the interview guide was retained, based on the axes of the literature and the model, in five sections.

### 3.2. Field presentation

The table above summarizes the characteristics of the interviews conducted as part of this study on the perception of Territorial Marketing in the Souss Massa region. Each interview was conducted with individuals occupying key positions in different regional entities, including the Souss Massa Regional Council, the Société de Développement Régional du Territoire de la Province d'Agadir Ida Outanane et de la Province de Tata (SDR TPMET SM), the Société de Développement Régional du Tourisme (SDR Tourisme SM), the Conseil Régional du Tourisme (CRT), the Délégation Régionale du Tourisme and the Réseau de Développement Territorial de la Région Souss Massa (RDTR). The interviews varied in length, from 30 to 60 minutes, and involved professionals with diverse experience in their respective fields. These interviews provided key information for analyzing regional players' perceptions of Territorial Marketing, and helped identify significant trends and insights for the study.

*Table N°1: Length of interviews*

Maintenance	Interviewee Position	Experience	Entity	Duration (min)
01	Head of Economic Affairs Division	21 years	Souss Massa Regional Council	60min
02	Migration Department Manager	11 years	Souss Massa Regional Council	45min
03	General Manager	25 years	SDR TPMET SM	35min
04	Administrative and financial manager	24 years	SDR TPMET SM	40min
05	General Manager	30 years	SDR Tourisme SM	30min
06	Administrative and financial manager	12 years	SDR Tourisme SM	45min
07	Financial Manager	12 years	CRT	40min
08	Communications Manager	7 years	CRT	50min
09	Regional Tourism Delegate	15years	Regional Tourism Delegation	45min
10	Chairman	24years	RDTR	40min

*Source: Prepared by the authors*

### 3.3. Interview guide analysis procedure

The process of analyzing the interview guide was a methodical and essential step in identifying the main themes and elements of regional players' perceptions of Territorial Marketing. After meticulously transcribing the interviews, a thematic analysis was undertaken to identify recurring motifs and key concepts in the participants' responses. This analysis enabled the relevant extracts to be coded according to the themes identified, thus facilitating the organization of the data. By grouping themes into broader categories, the researchers were able to examine similarities and differences between interviews, providing an overview of participants' opinions and perspectives. Significant quotes were selected to support conclusions drawn from the data. By combining these steps, a comprehensive and informed interpretation was developed, offering a detailed and nuanced insight into the perception of Territorial Marketing within the Souss Massa region, as reported in the article.

### **3.4. Interview process:**

As part of our study, we conducted interviews in and around the city of Agadir. Given the circumstances and constraints of travel.

The interviews followed a rigorous methodology to ensure the collection of coherent and informative data. Each interview began with a brief introduction by the researcher, explaining the aim of the study and the importance of the interviewee's participation. Next, the interview guide was presented, indicating the questions to be addressed while ensuring that participants understood the context and specific terms related to Territorial Marketing.

During the interviews, participants were encouraged to express their views freely and openly. The researcher asked open-ended questions to enable interviewees to share their experiences, knowledge and opinions on Territorial Marketing. Follow-up questions were used to clarify certain aspects and to deepen participants' responses.

Interviews were conducted individually, either face-to-face or by remote means of communication, according to participants' preferences and availability. Each interview was recorded with the participants' consent, and additional notes were taken to capture non-verbal expressions and contextual elements.

The duration of the interviews varied between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the nature of the responses and discussions. This variability enabled us to obtain in-depth and diversified perspectives on Territorial Marketing within the Souss Massa region.

In summary, the interview process was carefully planned and executed to ensure the collection of high-quality information, reflecting the participants' views and knowledge of Territorial Marketing and its impact in the region.

### **3.5. interview processing.**

To exploit the responses collected, it was necessary to transcribe the data gathered through the interview guide and collate them in a table, which was then used to draw conclusions. To build our analysis and take stock of the territorial marketing concepts and practices studied, and ultimately to synthesize them, we used a textual analysis based on the variables presented in the guide. We first compared the axes of the study with the responses collected (horizontal analysis), then approached each company according to the categories in the interview guide (vertical analysis).

The table above summarizes the main perspectives and objectives of interviewees from various entities: the Centre Régional d'Investissement (CRI), the Société Marocaine d'Ingénierie Touristique (SMIT), the Conseil Régional du Tourisme (CRT) and the Conseil Régional Souss Massa (CRSM). Each entity expresses its specific priorities and orientations in terms of Territorial Marketing, reflecting the diversity of the players involved in the development and promotion of the Souss Massa region. Perspectives range from the promotion of investment potential to the creation of a regional brand, via economic and tourism development. This variety of viewpoints provides a comprehensive vision of the expectations and objectives of Territorial Marketing in the region.

**Table N° 2: Processing grid**

The interviewees	CRI	SMIT	CRT	CRSM	
<b>T1</b>	Promoting the region's investment potential.	Developing the regional tourism product.	Promoting the region internationally.	The region's economic development.	
<b>T2</b>	The TM is a tool for regional competitiveness.	The TM is a tool for identifying the profile of a territory in order to position it for sale.	Little knowledge of the concept.	The MT is to highlight regional values to create a regional brand in partnership with the players involved, and to monitor customer satisfaction.	
<b>T3</b>	National and international communication.	Madinati project. Kariati project.	-Organization of international events. -Organization of press trips. -Execution of action plans	Design of the Regional Development Program (RDP).	
<b>T4</b>	Creating synergy between all components to speak the same language.	A vision of territorial equity. We need to showcase the region's different regions.	Integration of TM into the various action plans of partners and donors.	A vision of promoting neglected regional potential to increase wealth and compete.	
<b>T 5</b>	<b>Financial</b>	State-dependent.	Dependent on partners and donors.	Dependent on partners and donors.	State and regional funding.
	<b>Humans</b>	Territorial Marketing department.	Creation of a qualified team to sell the region.	Recruiting new employees	Increase the number of qualified employees and create a team in the field.
	<b>others</b>	Participation in trade shows and design of digital media.		Participation in trade shows and design of guides and digital media.	- Participation in trade shows and design of digital media. -Support for regional players; -Creation of a Tourism SDR.
<b>T6</b>	Absolute and complete coordination.	Creation of an exchange platform.	Creation of an exchange platform.	Corporate communication.	
<b>T7</b>	Poor communication.	Good communication.	Good communication.	Good communication.	
<b>T8</b>	Lack of communication and incompatibility of human resources.	Human reluctance.	Lack of budgets.	-Lack of funds to implement the PDR and a lack of human resources; -Local actors' resistance to change; -Global security changes.	
<b>T9</b>	Visibility of procedures and availability of information.	The hinterland.	The seaside resorts.	-Sustainable development; -Cultural richness; -Entrepreneurship; -Tolerance.	
<b>T10</b>	A rich and fertile region for investment.	Seaside and hinterland profile.	A destination for well-being, sport and discovery.	Innovative, agricultural, craft and seaside region.	
<b>T11</b>	The regionals	Nationals	The regionals	The citizens	
	Nationals	Internationals	Nationals	Les institutions	
	Internationals		Internationals	The general public	

Source: Produced by the authors

On the basis of this table, which we consider rich and fruitful, we will interpret these elements through thematic analysis. In analyzing the table presented, it becomes clear that the various regional entities have varied perspectives when it comes to Territorial Marketing. Each entity, whether CRI, SMIT, CRT or CRSM, approaches Territorial Marketing with specific objectives that reflect their missions and responsibilities. The CRI focuses on promoting investment potential, while SMIT concentrates on developing the regional tourism product. For its part, the CRT seeks to promote the region internationally, while the CRSM's priority is local economic development. These divergent perspectives underline the complexity and richness of the issues involved in Territorial Marketing, highlighting the need for coordination and synergy between these players for a comprehensive and coherent approach to regional development. Ultimately, the combination of these varied perspectives can help create a holistic and balanced Territorial Marketing strategy, capitalizing on the unique assets of the Souss Massa region to attract investment, stimulate tourism and foster sustainable development.

#### **4. Results and discussion**

In-depth analysis of the seventeen points emerging from interviews with regional players reveals a complex mosaic of perspectives and interests related to Territorial Marketing within the Souss Massa region. This study reveals that the fundamental mission of all stakeholders converges on the development and promotion of the region, providing a solid basis for integrating Territorial Marketing into their strategies. Although knowledge varies, a common notion emerges, linking Territorial Marketing to competitiveness, identification of the regional profile and creation of a territorial brand, with the underlying objective of conquering profitable markets to promote the RSM. Current actions are largely focused on communication and events, however, the CRSM's Regional Development Program (RDP) is positioned as a significant initiative to steer stakeholders towards holistic development. Various visions are emerging as to how to apply Territorial Marketing, but the idea of harnessing hitherto neglected potential, with a view to creating wealth and increasing competitiveness, seems to be a sound strategic vision, put forward by the President of the CRSM. However, a number of obstacles, such as financial constraints and limited staff skills, as well as resistance to change on the part of regional players, highlight major challenges to the successful implementation of Territorial Marketing. Nevertheless, it is clear that the will to integrate this practice into regional strategies is strong, with investments envisaged in qualified human resources. Ultimately, this analysis highlights the complexity of integrating Territorial Marketing into RSM, revealing a multitude of considerations, opinions and priorities, while underlining the potential of this practice to shape the region's future development and promotion.

##### **4.1. Vertical analysis**

Vertical analysis is a treatment carried out within a single interview. This analysis traces the order of appearance of the defined units. It focuses on the categories evoked or omitted by the respondent. The table below groups together all mentions of each designated unit of analysis, by listening to the interviews and asking the question: How many times was the "unit of analysis" mentioned during the interview?

This thematic classification directly reflects CRI's interests. This institution has a regional working spirit, meaning that it has in mind that the region is not a single institution, but a whole dynamic that should be encouraged to develop the territory. This is also marked by the minimal mention of the term "Agadir", unlike the others interviewed. Territorial marketing was often mentioned during the interview. Firstly, because they dedicate a specialized

department to this practice within the CRI. Secondly, because it is an essential tool for attracting investors and promoting the region economically. Finally, the "PDR" unit was mentioned several times. The CRI believes that it is important to have confidence in organic law 111-14, which assigned to the CRSM the mission of creating the PDR, the driving force behind regional development. Mr. Khalil stressed the importance of this program, created in consultation with the various players, to pool their efforts and promote the Souss Massa region properly.

*Table N° 3: Vertical analysis table*

	Units	CRI	SMIT	CRT	CRSM
Principal	Territorial marketing	14	11	5	3
Supplementary	Branding Territorial	2	1	9	0
	Territorial Communication	4	0	3	2
	Region	15	14	14	6
	Agadir	3	5	9	5
	Identity	6	5	2	0
	Tourism	1	13	15	4
	Investment	9	2	3	2
	Language	7	1	3	0
	PDR	10	3	8	15

*Source: Produced by the authors*

« Language » and « Identity » are 2 units that were repeatedly mentioned as a reminder that regional players will have to unify their language to effectively promote a Capital Identity for the RSM.

- Vertical analysis of interviews with representatives of SMIT, CRT and CRSM reveals distinct trends in the way these entities perceive and integrate Territorial Marketing (TM) into their strategies. At SMIT, TM is seen as a tool in line with Vision 2030, but its execution remains superficial, reflecting a lack of coordination and depth in TM tools. The Region, Tourist Attractiveness and Territorial Marketing are linked to develop regional tourism. For the CRT, despite a poor understanding of TM, priorities remain focused on promoting regional tourism and Agadir, highlighting a need to clarify practice. In contrast, the CRSM has a clearer perception of TM, influenced by the Regional Development Program, although mastery of certain aspects of TM is still limited. The CRSM aims to enhance regional potential with a clear vision of increasing the attractiveness of the region. In short, while SMIT and CRT need to better integrate TM, CRSM has a clearer vision and seeks to use the practice to strengthen regional dynamics and local governance.

#### **4.2.Horizontal analysis:**

Horizontal analysis is a cross-sectional operation that studies how each element was addressed by all respondents. The most frequent categories and sub-categories are easily identified, as follows in table 4 below.

This table represents the sum of mentions for each analysis unit. The Table 4, below is an interpretation of the table to illustrate the importance of the data.

A horizontal analysis of all the interviews reveals a diversity of perspectives and approaches among regional players about Territorial Marketing. Although the main unit "Territorial Marketing" ranks fourth in the ranking of terms mentioned, this position reflects the interests and priorities of regional players rather than the priority given to the concept itself. The

predominance of the "Region" unit underlines a shared understanding of the importance of taking the whole territory into account in strategies. The "RDP" emerges as a central pillar for regional development, offering an opportunity to integrate Territorial Marketing into its implementation. "Tourism" represents a key area, although other topics may deserve more attention. Regional players' perception of Territorial Marketing appears to be subjective and selective, characterized by habits and preferences, but analysis of the interviews has yielded significant information and stimulated awareness of practices related to this discipline. An analysis of the various facets associated with Territorial Marketing highlights several key points. Firstly, it is seen as a crucial tool for determining the positioning of the Souss Massa Region (RSM) and facing up to the competition, but it is noted that this should not limit its potential as a tool for regional development.

*Table N° 4: Horizontal analysis table*

	Units	Total mentions
Principal	Territorial marketing	<b>33</b>
	Branding Territorial	12
Supplementary	Territorial Communication	9
	Region	<b>49</b>
	Agadir	22
	Identity	13
	Tourism	<b>34</b>
	Investment	16
	Language	11
	PDR	<b>36</b>

*Source: Produced by the authors*

There is a strong desire to integrate Territorial Marketing into the strategies of regional players, as it is seen as an ideal approach for guiding strategic choices in terms of promoting and attracting the region.

Promotion of the region is unanimously recognized as an essential pillar for economic development, although the current focus is more on promotion than on substantive development of the region.

The integration of Territorial Marketing into regional strategies is seen as essential to developing the profile of the RSM, but it remains to be seen who will drive this integration and how this will take place.

The creation of synergy between regional players and their mobilization are identified as the foundations for the MSR's influence, underlining the importance of a collective approach to regional development.

The Regional Development Program (PDR) appears to be an opportunity to adopt Territorial Marketing in the challenges of tourist attraction, with the need for a thorough study of the territory to define evaluation indicators for the projects implemented.

However, obstacles and shortcomings are also identified: the absence of clearly defined strategic choices, the lack of a direct approach to integrating Territorial Marketing, the lack of qualified human resources to support its implementation, the absence of a positioning study of the territorial offer and resistance to change are all challenges to be met. Finally, it is noted that the concept of Territorial Marketing is often reduced to promotion and communication, whereas it encompasses a complete development process, from product creation to the evaluation of customer satisfaction.

In this context, the Souss Massa Regional Council is emerging as a key player and potential

leader for the promotion of Territorial Marketing in the region, with the confidence of other players and the support of organic law 111-14, as well as the RDP as an opportunity conducive to this integration.

*Table N° 5: Types of analysis*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Vertical Analysis</b>	<b>Horizontal analysis</b>
Mission & Objective	Development and promotion	Shared mission to promote and develop the region
Knowledge of Territorial Marketing	Different interpretations of TM	TM seen as a tool for competitiveness and winning new markets
Actions Actuals	Communication and events	Current efforts focused on communication and the creation of the RDP
Strategic Vision	Different strategic visions	CRSM's vision: harnessing neglected potential for competitiveness
Resources to be invested	Financial constraints, investment in teams	Financial dependence, willingness to invest in dedicated teams
Coordination between regional institutions	Recognition of the importance of coordination	Need for close coordination between players and creation of an exchange platform
Internal Communication	Quality variability	The importance of internal communication for coordination
Obstacles to Application	Financial constraints, lack of skills, resistance to change	Main obstacles identified: finance, skills, resistance to change
Regional Values to Create	Traditional and innovative values	Promoting innovative values in addition to traditional ones
Regional Profile to Promote	Diverse identities, need for focus	Choose a focal profile for development and promotion
Targets	Local and regional citizens as primary targets	Importance of local and regional citizens as major targets

*Source: Produced by the authors*

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of the perception of Territorial Marketing by regional players in the Souss Massa region highlights a multitude of aspects crucial to the development and promotion of this region. The vertical analysis enabled us to identify the specific concerns of each institution, while the horizontal analysis revealed common trends and challenges. The results reflect a unanimous recognition of the potential of Territorial Marketing as a strategic tool for enhancing the attractiveness of the region.

The shared mission of developing and promoting the region creates a solid foundation for the integration of Territorial Marketing. However, there are still differences in awareness and understanding of the concept. Stakeholders recognize the need to coordinate their efforts and strengthen internal communication to maximize the impact of their actions.

The strategic vision varies from one institution to another, but the Souss Massa Regional Council stands out by emphasizing the development of neglected regional potential. The resources to be invested vary according to financial constraints and the willingness to dedicate teams to Territorial Marketing. Nevertheless, the need for close coordination between all players is universally recognized as a prerequisite for successful strategies.

Obstacles to the application of Territorial Marketing include financial constraints, lack of skills and resistance to change. Identifying innovative as well as traditional regional values is crucial



to creating a unique territorial profile to promote. Local and regional citizens are seen as key targets, but the need for strategic focus remains.

In short, this study highlights the complexity of the perception of Territorial Marketing within the Souss Massa region. Stakeholders recognize its potential as a competitive tool, but challenges persist, notably in terms of funding, skills and resistance to change. To ensure its successful integration, close collaboration, increased coordination and an innovative approach are essential. By seizing the opportunity to direct their strategies towards a well thought-out and well-coordinated Territorial Marketing, regional players can propel the Souss Massa region towards new horizons of development and attractiveness.

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