

Climate, political and health vulnerabilities of tourism in Mozambique

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Climate, political and health vulnerabilities of tourism in Mozambique

Abstract

In Mozambique's development strategies, tourism occupies a prominent place. This fact is the result of the belief in the value (or potential) of the physical-geographical conditions and in the cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, among which the extensive coastline, around 2,700 km, stands out. The other part, probably the fundamental one, are tourists (without whom there is no tourism) for whom there must be mobility, safety, health conditions, etc., so that they can access tourist destinations. In order to reflect on the vulnerability of tourism in Mozambique, based on the bibliographic and documentary review, and on the data collected by the Mozambican segment of the international research network "tourism in times of a pandemic", it is concluded that the barrier to mobility, for climatic, safety and health reasons, affects tourism, as happened with the Covid-19 pandemic, which highlighted the vulnerabilities of this sector in Mozambique and in the world.

Keywords: Tourism. Vulnerability. Covid-19 pandemic. Mozambique.

Vulnerabilidade climática, política e sanitária do turismo em Moçambique

Resumo

Nas estratégias de desenvolvimento de Moçambique, o turismo ocupa um lugar de relevo. Tal fato é resultado da crença no valor (ou potencial) das condições físico-geográficas e no património cultural, tangível e intangível, entre as quais se evidenciam a extensa linha costeira, cerca de 2.700 km. A outra parte são os turistas (sem os quais não há turismo), para quem devem existir condições de mobilidade, de segurança, sanitárias etc., para que possam aceder aos destinos turísticos. Com objetivo de refletir sobre a vulnerabilidade do turismo em Moçambique, a partir da revisão bibliográfica e documental e dos dados coletados pelo segmento moçambicano da rede internacional de pesquisa "turismo em tempos de pandemia", conclui-se que o impedimento à mobilidade, por razões climáticas, segurança e sanitárias, afeta o turismo, como aconteceu com a pandemia da Covid-19, que pôs em evidência as vulnerabilidades deste setor em Moçambique e no mundo.

Vulnérabilités climatiques, politiques et sanitaires du tourisme au Mozambique

Résumé

Dans les stratégies de développement du Mozambique, le tourisme occupe une place prépondérante. Ce fait est le résultat de la croyance en la valeur (ou le potentiel) des conditions physiques et géographiques et du patrimoine culturel, matériel et immatériel, parmi lequel se distingue le vaste littoral, environ 2.700 km. L'autre partie, probablement la plus fondamentale, sont les touristes (sans lesquels il n'y a pas de tourisme) pour lesquels il doit y avoir mobilité, sécurité, conditions sanitaires, etc., afin qu'ils puissent accéder aux destinations touristiques. Afin de réfléchir à la vulnérabilité du tourisme au Mozambique, sur la base de l'examen bibliographique et documentaire, et des données recueillies par le segment mozambicain du réseau international de recherche "le tourisme en temps de pandémie", il est conclu que l'obstacle à la mobilité, pour des raisons climatiques, de sécurité et de santé, affecte le tourisme, comme cela s'est produit avec la pandémie de Covid-19, qui a mis en évidence les vulnérabilités de ce secteur au Mozambique et dans le monde.

Mots-clés: Tourisme. Vulnérabilité. Pandémie de Covid-19. Mozambique.

Introduction

Mozambique is a developing country, located in southern Africa that has a wide range of natural, heritage, and cultural riches favorable to development in general and in tourism in particular.

Regarding tourism, one of the characteristics that Mozambique is proud of and is recurrently mentioned to is its long coastline bathed by Indian Ocean with about 2,700 km (Guambe, 2018). Another aspect that has been highlighted is the great landscape diversity associated with the considerable longitudinal development, giving it differentiated climatic regions, and consequently a great biodiversity represented by important conservation areas, namely national park, integrated nature reserve, and cultural and natural monument (Mozambique, 2014). Along with these aspects that can be considered "gifts of nature", from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history resulted a cultural product full with African, Asian and European traits that are strong points of tourism in Mozambique.

Finally, as Da Silva states (2007), Mozambique is a linguistic island bordered by English-speaking neighbors, and the difference does not only refers to the fact that it is Lusophone country (the official language, although the country has many languages) but to several cultural aspects (material and immaterial heritage), which constitutes an attraction factor.

In fact, what has just been presented was and still is a factor of attraction for tourists from neighboring countries, headed by South Africa, an economic power in the region.

However, tourism in Mozambique has proven to be a fragile and risky activity, not only for tourists, but also specially for investors in the sector and for the country in general. Indeed, Mozambique has been hit by some natural events such as cyclical tropical cyclones that are increasingly frequent and severe (Dineo, Idai, Kenneth, Guambe, Eloise, Ana, Gombe etc.), military conflicts (civil war, armed attacks in the central part of the country, already ended, and, currently, terrorism in the northern part of the country, particularly in Cabo Delgado province), and the health crisis provoked by Covid-19, which have had very damaging consequences on tourism (Guambe, 2019; Feijó, 2020; Guambe et al, 2021; Usaid, [n.d.]).

Thus, the general goal of this article is a reflection on the climatic, political and health vulnerability of tourism in Mozambique.

To achieve this goal, a qualitative approach was preferred, and the reflection was based on a literature review and documentary research. In addition, we relied on data collected by the Mozambican segment of the international research network “Tourism in times of pandemic”, to which the authors of this article are members.

Besides the introduction, in which the goals, justification of the study and methodology were presented, this article is structured on the following subjects: general presentation of tourism activity in Mozambique, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and challenges; a discussion around the concept of “vulnerability” and its application to tourism; a reflection on the vulnerability factors of tourism in Mozambique, highlighting the role of the pandemic in this vulnerability process. The article ends with some conclusions followed by the bibliographical references.

Discussion about the concept of vulnerability and its application to tourism

The term vulnerability has been, in recent years, widely used, even becoming part of current vocabulary, with several perspectives of interpretation. It is generally associated with the terms risk, danger and threat.

The notion of risk is commonly associated with dangerousness, i.e., the probability of occurrence of a process or an action capable to destroy natural and human elements, always evaluated according to intensity and severity, presenting impacts spatially and temporally expressed, but not necessarily meaning a dangerous situation (Nossa; Santos; Cravidão, 2013). According to the same authors, the approaches for risk assessment, in our programmed society, in continuous search for safety, individual and general, imply the identification of its qualification and quantification. For example, going out on the streets represents a risk, since you can be mugged, run over by a car, fall and break your leg, etc. Any of these situations can clearly

occur, but it does not mean that they are imminent. Therefore, it does not seem appropriate to guarantee that the simple act of leaving the house is a danger.

It is in this sense that the idea of probability takes on its role, since such events are likely to occur, but there is no certainty that they will happen.

Nossa, Santos e Cravidão (2013, p. 47) state that “Risk assessment is often carried out based on the equation: risk = dangerousness * vulnerability”.

Indeed, as Nossa, Santos and Cravidão point out, the danger can be unpredictable and causes harmful situations such as loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, and environmental damage.

The same authors refer that in the characterization of risk, the concept of dangerousness appears to be very useful, since,

It is the occurrence probability of a process or action with the capacity to destroy natural and human elements, always evaluated according to the intensity and severity, presenting impacts spatially and temporally expressed (susceptibility and probability) [...] (Nossa; Santos; Cravidão, 2013, p. 47).

The authors also state that when this probability of a dangerous occurrence is combined with the estimation of its consequences for people, property, or the environment, accountable for the damages and losses directly or indirectly caused (bodily, material, and functional), we are talking about risk.

The vulnerability analysis process starts with identifying the dangers most likely to cause an emergency situation.

The risk associated to tourism is often seen as the probability of a negative situation occurring in the travel process as a result of events, whether natural or man-made. According to Rogers and Ballantyne (2008), there are many sources of vulnerability, but it is possible to establish a basic typification: extrinsic vulnerability, caused by external circumstances, such as lack of socioeconomic power, poverty; and intrinsic vulnerability, caused by characteristics related to individuals themselves. Similarly, in the case of tourism, vulnerability can arise from intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Regarding the intrinsic characteristics, one wants to refer to the very tourism essence that involves the following main components:

- the tourist, who does not belong to the tourist destination and “voluntarily” moves to the place of tourist practices;
- mobility, movement and accessibility, i.e., the displacement of tourists from their usual place of life to the destinations or places of tourist practices, in a coming and going movement.

Participating in tourism or leisure in general is not a basic or primary action, although it is important for the health and well-being of individuals. Therefore, in a framework of concurrence (competition) with other basic or primary goods and services they are at a disadvantage.

The immobility of the product is another no less important aspect, since it is impossible to transport it from one place to another. Unlike other goods and services that are brought to the consumer through distribution chains, in tourism, the consumer is the one who is brought to the product, which points to mobility conditions.

In fact, by its nature, tourism implies mobility. The relationship between mobility and tourism is characterized by being interdependent. As mentioned by Coriolano and Fernandes (2012, p. 2), “without mobility there is no tourism”, because tourism supposes displacement change of place, movement. So as long as the conditions of mobility are affected, whether by natural, human or other factors, tourism activity is also affected.

On the other hand, for existing mobility there must be accessibility, or, as Cocco (2011) states, some easiness to reach the desired destinations.

Evidently, for accessibility to make mobility possible, investments in infrastructure resources are necessary, such as public transport, transport structures and circulation spaces for the development of human activities. The greater the availability of these resources, their interconnection and transport accessibility (fast and efficient), the greater the mobility of people, information and goods (Allis, 2010).

Regarding extrinsic factors, they refer to geographical conditions such as the geographic location that can place tourist destinations more or less exposed to undesirable situations for tourism.

International destinations can also be placed in this category. Considering that international tourism seems to be the most desired by most countries, due to the resulting gains, especially foreign exchange (i.e. foreign currency), one cannot fail to mention international relations as a factor to be taken into account, since, as explained by Pecequilo (2010, p. 15), its subjects will be “actors, events and phenomena that exist and interact in the international system, in other words, beyond the domestic borders of societies”. According to Ribas and Da Silva (2013, p. 10), “The importance of International Tourism, as a factor for the economic development of States, marks a new period for the social factors of connection between peoples and, also, as a motivating agent for both economic and social integration”.

Tourism, as an activity that crosses borders, is an important component of international relations. The States maintain among themselves, in addition to commercial relations, diplomatic relations for the access of people coming from other nations. These relationships can act as facilitators or obstacles to the international tourist flow.

Because of that, any change in relations between countries has an effect in mobility and, consequently, on tourist activity. In general, the emergence of conflicts or world peace frameworks have implications for tourism. Indeed, according to Barretto, Burgos and Frenkel (2003), both wars and peace, subjects of international relations, influence tourism.

Furthermore, as Ribas and Da Silva (2013) mention, by quoting Beni (2003), the nature and numbers of tourist flows can be influenced by administrative and bureaucratic impositions and controls, such as visa regulations, currency exchange controls, and prohibitions on movement or on tourists' activity. This is the context under which tourism vulnerability in Mozambique to climate, political and health risks is analyzed.

Climate change is one of the most complex challenges of this century, and no country is immune to its possible impacts (PBMC, 2013). However, considering that vulnerability is something inherent to a given population or activity, it will vary according to its cultural, social and economic possibilities (Conrado et al., 2019). Indeed, according to the IPCC (2001), those who have fewer resources will be the ones who will have more difficulty adapting and, therefore, are the most vulnerable, as is Mozambique case.

Costa e Figueira (2017), based on Chemark (1992), say that political risk is affected by sociocultural, political, and economic phenomena, and that it is an important dimension of the institutional environment. Indeed, both investors and tourists are subject to the local norms of tourist practices. “In this context, the State regulatory environment can become a risk factor for international business” (Costa; Figueira, 2017) in which tourism, to some extent, fits. This fact highlights the vulnerability of tourism activity.

The notion of health risk encompasses the idea of a threat to health and, consequently, the idea of human health vulnerability. The perception of this risk constitutes an inhibiting factor for the movement of tourists.

Generalities on tourism in Mozambique

Since the 1995-1999 five-year period, tourism became a prominent element of Mozambique’s development policy, something that was materialized by the creation of a specific Ministry (Guambe, 2007). According to the same author, the government program:

[...] defined tourism as sector to maximize the inflow of foreign exchange and job creation, reinforce regional development and distribute its benefits to all areas of the country, project a prestigious image of Mozambique abroad and promote greater participation of national business community in tourist enterprises (Guambe, 2007, p. 43).

Also according to Guambe (2007), the government’s approval, by Resolution n. 14, of April 14, 2003, of the “tourism policy and strategy for its implementation”, and the growth record of over 37% in international arrivals in 2005 (INE, 2015), confirmed the interest of the State in tourism.

Mozambique, a developing country, ranked among the poorest countries, with a low human development index (0.446) (Tempos incertos, 2022), has several economic potentialities. International tourism, playing the role of a development engine, is interesting for its economic and social contributions, namely the most obvious and direct ones: job creation, the possibility for inhabitants to increase their income and standard of living, and for the secondary gains in other sectors. According to the the Ministry of Tourism’s discourse, tourism should allow a well-being improvement of the country population in general and especially of the population of the concerned areas.

This is essentially a tourism of proximity, since the bulk of the flows come from neighboring countries, especially South Africa, where, by the way, most of the investments in the sector come from (Guambe, 2018).

A brief history of tourism

A more or less intense tourism activity marked the past of Mozambique, more precisely the colonial period. In the 1950s, the first information and tourism centers were created and, in 1962, the first 18 tourism zones were established, which were increased to 26 in 1972 (Guambe, 2007).

According to Da Silva (2007), data show an average annual flow of about 200,000 entries between 1962 and 1971, mainly from neighboring countries, namely South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and also from Portugal, the colonizing country.

The same author states that after national independence in 1975, political orientation inhibited tourism development. Tourism was seen as an elite activity, which was opposed to ideological principles, as it posed a risk of “capitalist pollution”. Added to these changes was the civil war that broke out a few years after Independence, until 1992, causing the degradation of many infrastructures.

From the 1990s onwards, at the end of the war and through the new political and economic guidelines of the government, Mozambique appeared in the international media as a country destroyed by war, virgin and eager for development, an example of peaceful transition to democracy. This image attracted the attention of neighboring countries, and particularly and especially South Africans and Portuguese people living in South Africa, but also Mozambicans living abroad (Da Silva, 2007).

According to the same author, at the beginning of this post-civil war and new neoliberal political and economic orientations phase, of , visitors from South Africa came on their own initiative. It was the period when the government focused a lot on attracting investments, in other words, Mozambique was for those who arrived first, the land was a good market, all that was needed was to make the request. These were adventures looking for the best opportunities in agriculture, in commerce etc. The majority found in tourism a safer business, with installation of bars, restaurants, and tourist facilities on the beaches.

Thus, the spontaneous and disorderly installations of small hotels, campsites without control and without minimum security began. The property title was generally agreed not by a competent authority, but by a chain of officials, each one of them “giving a hand” to get the land concession (Da Silva, 2007; Guambe, 2018).

In this process without any organization or intervention by the official authorities, investors were apparently the only beneficiaries, from which raises the question about the place and validity of tourism for the development of the country. One can consider this period a moment of spontaneous and, consequently, disorganized tourism development, and very vulnerable infrastructures.

The occupation of space was carried out without the least planning, obeying the only law of immediate profit, prevailing economic logic. In this framework of disorderly implantations, as a result of the lack of planning, several conflicts have emerged between foreigners and locals, in the process of production of space, accompanied by effects on landscapes and on the environment in general which threatens the tourism development itself, as pointed out by Guambe (2007; 2018) in the researches “Tourism contributions in local development: case of Inhambane coastal zone” and “Tourism in the Inhambane coastal zone: conflicts in the production of space”.

Despite the spontaneous development of tourism right after the end of the civil war in 1992, it should be noted that from the creation of the Ministry of Tourism, as mentioned above, the sector has been better organized by the introduction of development policies and strategies. Significant milestones are, for example, Law n. 4, of June 17, 2004 (Tourism Law, which included the tourism policy and the strategic plan for tourism development) and Decree n. 49, of November 1, 2016 (regulation that establish the legal regime for the installation, exploitation and operation of tourism enterprises, dining and drinking establishments and dance halls, as well as the system of their classification and registration). One can also mention management bodies such as the National Institute of Tourism (Inatur) and the Tourism Forum (Fortur), created in 2017 to support the government in tourism and related matters, in addition to various events such as festivals, which have boosted tourism in Mozambique.

Tourism statistics in Mozambique

Throughout the evolution of tourism in Mozambique, the effects of this process had, however, the merit of drawing the attention of the competent authorities to the role and importance of tourism, because the activity extent resumption was significant: if in 1995 the frequency was estimated at about 160,000 international tourists, two years later Mozambique recorded about 300,000 international tourists (INE, 1999), and in 2001 it reached 400,000 (Mozambique, 2002). In the same period, the accommodation capacity increased from 7500 to 8500 beds, reaching about 12,200 beds in 2001 (Mozambique, 2002).

Recent data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), regarding the use of lodging establishments in the period 2004 to 2018, reveal that in general, over the last two decades, Mozambican tourism has been characterized by a progressive growth of international guests (57%), as well as domestic guests (61%), as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 - Evolution of guests number in Mozambique - 2004-2018.

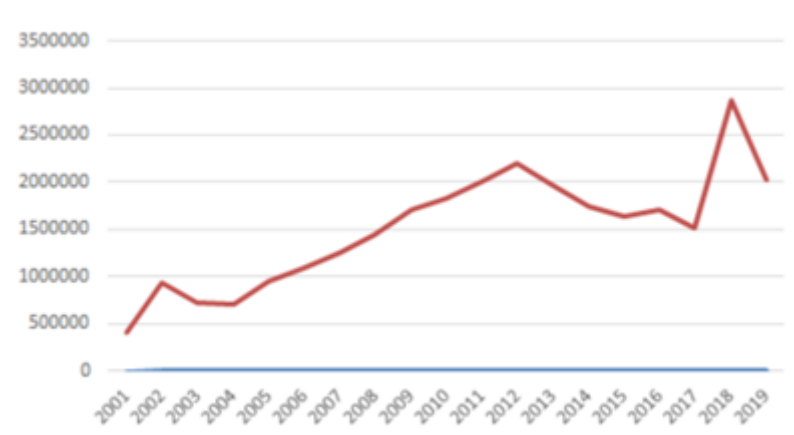
| Year | Total guests | National guests | Foreign guests |
|------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 2004 | 322.392 | 159.225 | 163.167 |
| 2005 | 339.049 | 167.490 | 171.559 |
| 2006 | 419.746 | 181.393 | 238.353 |
| 2007 | 474.360 | 217.075 | 257.285 |
| 2008 | 502.152 | 245.106 | 257.046 |
| 2009 | 482.550 | 245.891 | 236.659 |
| 2010 | 522.207 | 254.898 | 267.718 |
| 2011 | 555.985 | 277.754 | 278.231 |
| 2012 | 501.747 | 253.874 | 247.873 |
| 2013 | 511.109 | 251.400 | 259.709 |
| 2014 | 536.884 | 264.288 | 272.596 |
| 2015 | 513.109 | 257.031 | 256.077 |
| 2016 | 488.821 | 207.988 | 240.833 |
| 2017 | 488.821 | 207.988 | 240.833 |
| 2018 | 373.881 | 196.989 | 176.892 |

Source: INE (2015, 2017, 2018).

Similarly, in Graphic 1, looking at data on the number of international tourism arrivals in Mozambique from 2001 to 2019 (World Bank, [s.d]), one can clearly see the activity progressive growth.

Regarding tourism infrastructure, in Mozambique, according to INE (2019), among the main contributors, Maputo City represents 35.3% of the accommodation and restaurant complex, with a gradual increase in recent years, with records of 33.7% and 34.9% in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

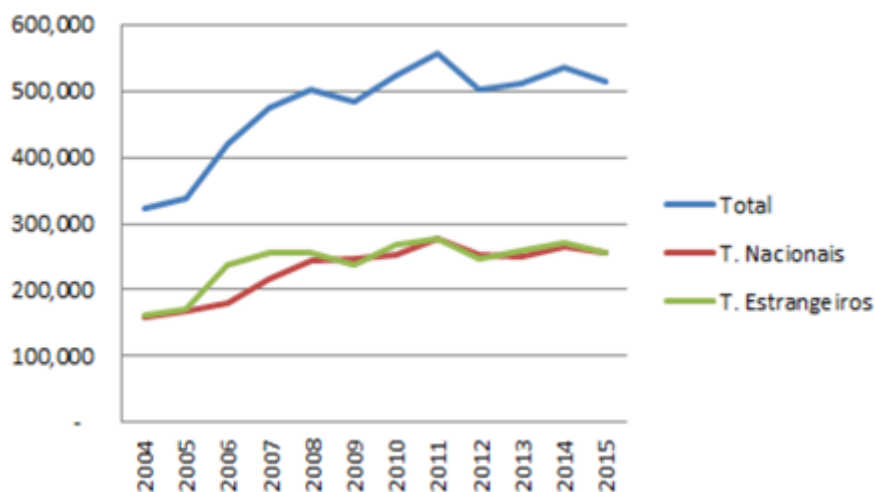
Graphic 1 – Evolution of international arrivals - 2001-2019



Source: Banco Mundial ([s.d.]).

However, despite the progressive growth of Mozambican tourism it is possible to notice a decreasing trend in the number of both international and domestic guests between 2014 and 2018, as shown in Graphic 2.

Graphic 2 – Guest flows in Mozambique - 2004-2018.



Source: INE (2015, 2017, 2018).

The same goes for the international arrivals flow. This situation is probably related to the various crises that plague the country, namely, the economic crisis experienced in recent years, the endless political and military conflicts, mainly in the central region of the country, terrorism in Cabo Delgado province since 2017, added to some cyclical weather phenomena, such as tropical cyclones, floods and coastal erosion that tend to become, increasingly, severe and, recently, the major health crisis of Covid-19, starting in early 2020.

Climate, political and health vulnerability of tourism in Mozambique

The geographical location that constitutes one of Mozambique's main strengths associated with the arrangement relief, also constitutes an important vulnerability factor, since the country is subject to the influence of the Mozambique Channel, responsible for the occurrence of adverse situations such as cyclones, floods and inundations, which has called into question the investments made in infrastructure in general and in tourism facilities in particular, putting investments and the development of the activity at risk (Da Silva, 2019, p. 38).

Indeed, Matavel (2012) notes that historical data show that four events are most likely to occur in Mozambique, namely: floods, tropical cyclones, droughts, and epidemics, and between the three regions of the country, the central and southern regions are the most vulnerable to the risks of floods, droughts, and tropical cyclones, while the northern region is prone to the occurrence of tropical cyclones.

Cyclones, storms, and tropical depressions are an ever-present feature along the summer season in the southwest Indian Ocean and the Mozambique Channel. This fact places the country in a very vulnerable position to this climatic hazard.

In fact, every year, this region produces about 10% of all cyclones in the world. The tropical cyclones formed in this zone hit Mozambique once a year on average, while the lower intensity depressions occur three to four times a year (Matavel, 2012).

The same author also recalls that in 2000, Mozambique suffered the effects of another devastating cyclone, the Eline, which caused the death of 800 people in subsequent floods, and was more intense than Idai in 2019 (about 600 deaths in Mozambique), reaching level 4 on a scale of 5, adding that the socioeconomic impacts of Idai were actually and potentially more dramatic. According to International Committee of the Red Cross (Cyclone Idai..., 2019), Cyclone Idai hit the city of Beira, central Mozambique, reaching Zimbabwe and Malawi, affecting more than 3 million people in these three southern African countries. According to the same source, more than a thousand people died due to the cyclone, which left many others displaced and in search of shelter, food, access to drinking water and sanitation. Indeed, the so-called extreme events are increasingly intense.

In the past five years, Mozambique has been hit by eight cyclones and tropical storms, namely, tropical cyclone Dineo (2017), tropical cyclones Idai and Kenneth (2019), tropical storm Chalane (2020), tropical cyclones Guambe and Eloise (2021), and tropical storm Ana and tropical cyclone Gombe (2022).

On the other hand, it should be added that between 1976 and 1992, tourism in Mozambique was stagnant and it can even be said that it suffered a setback because of an armed conflict that started immediately after the national independence. This situation was made worse by the fact that Mozambique supported the African National Congress (ANC), a South African organization that fought against Apartheid in South Africa, the main source of tourists to Mozambique. According to Guambe (2018, p. 171):

After the independence of the country in 1975, the second phase of Mozambican tourism entered, characterized by a crisis. This situation was due to the following reasons: the change in the ideological orientation of the country, as Mozambique moves from capitalist ideology to socialist which, in a way, saw tourism as a typically capitalist socio-economic practice and therefore not compatible with the new orientation, resulting in the abandonment of the country by many Portuguese, including some owners of tourism infrastructures; the regional political situation; and, the war that started in the country a year after independence and only ended in 1992.

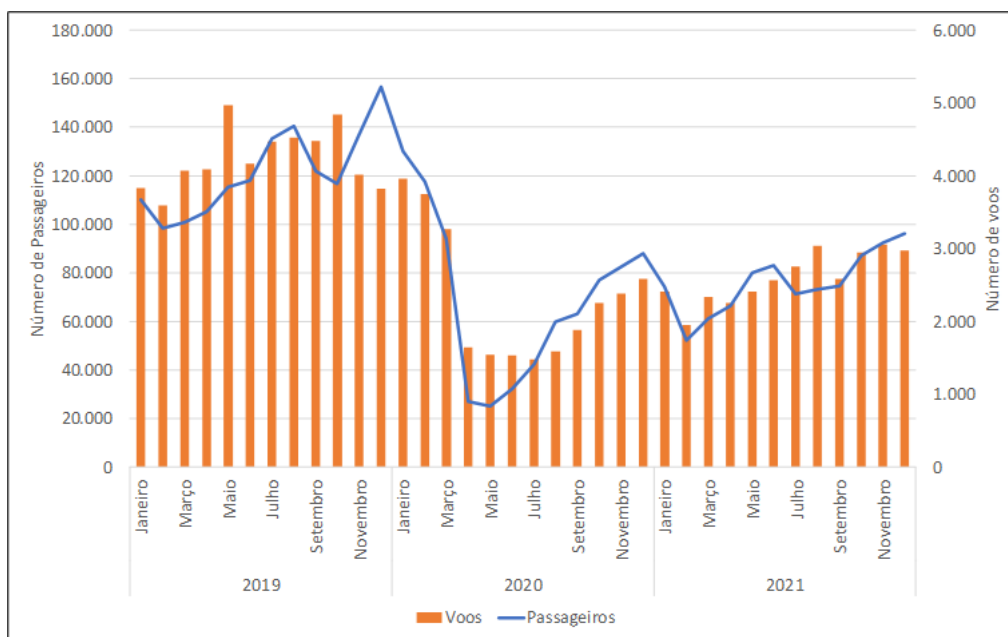
Even after the end of the armed conflict and the opening of Mozambique to the global market, South Africa continued and continues to be the main source of tourists to Mozambique, and one of the main investors in the sector. This makes tourism in Mozambique vulnerable, since any change in the relations between the two countries could have negative consequences for tourism, as it has already happened in the past.

Nowadays, a similar situation, with adverse effects for tourism in Mozambique, is terrorism. In fact, the northern region of Mozambique, more precisely the province of Cabo Delgado, is, since the year 2017, hit by terrorist actions, constituting, obviously, an inhibiting factor for tourists to visit that region, in particular, and for the country in general, because the images that circulate globally about terrorism in Cabo Delgado generates an idea of a generalized insecurity in the country, and not only something restricted to that region, even if it does not correspond to what is, in fact, happening in other regions of the country.

Finally, we cannot fail to mention that since the beginning of 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic, among the different economic sectors, tourism has been one of the most affected. This fact was due to the measures taken at international, regional and local levels in order to reduce geographical mobility. According to Guambe (2019, p 76), the outbreak of the new coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 showed the world, and especially those who govern it, how vulnerable society, without exception, is to epidemics, exposing the great health weaknesses. This health crisis and the measures adopted for its confrontation, from the closing of borders to lockdown, showed to society the possibility of deglobalization, with the isolation of countries, with all its social, economic, political, etc., effects resulting therefrom and, above all, the vulnerability of tourism, a socio-economic practice that involves traveling, in the face of issues of insecurity, in this case, health insecurity.

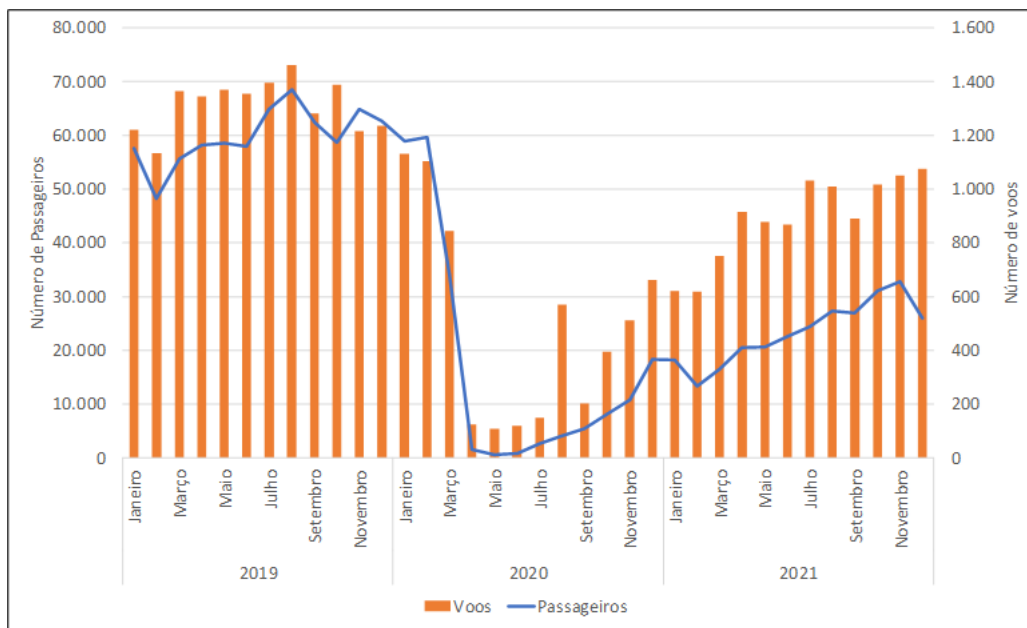
Now, considering that tourism facilities such as hotels and other forms of accommodation, restaurants, among others, were created to serve international and domestic travelers, one can easily understand how they were affected by the pandemic by analyzing the negative impacts on the air transport sector in Mozambique in 2020 and 2021, compared to 2019, and the direct consequences on tourism, as illustrated in Graphics 3 and 4.

Graphic 3 – Number of passengers and domestic flights in Mozambique - 2019, 2020, 2021.



Source: ADM (2022). Organizations: authors (2022).

Graphic 4 – Number of passengers and international flights in Mozambique - 2019, 2020, 2021.



Source: ADM (2022). Organization: authors (2022).

The abrupt and drastic reduction in the number of flights and national and international passengers had direct reflections on tourism activity, given that in 2019 Mozambique received 2,535,706 tourists, among which 1,324,940 were domestic and 1,210,766 foreign, and in 2020 and 2021, the total number of tourists received by the country dropped dramatically to 625,859 and 867,420, reductions of 75.4% and 65.8%, respectively (INE, 2022). Similarly and according to the same source, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the number of tourism jobs in Mozambique, which declined from 6,178 workers in 2019, to 3,943 and 4,977 in 2020 and 2021, reductions of 36.2% and 19.5%, respectively.

According to Guambe et al. (2021), the reduction in the number of national and international flights and passenger/tourist arrivals has had negative consequences in the tourism sector, as regular or new visitors have been forced to cancel or reschedule trips, which has led to the closure of tourist establishments due to the lack of customers, once again demonstrating the tourism vulnerability to adverse events that directly affect people mobility.

According to data from INE (2022), in 2019, for example, there were 250 travel agencies in the country, which were reduced to 122 (a 51.2% reduction) in 2021, most notably in the city of Maputo, where in the same period the number of travel agencies went from 217 to 90 (a 59% reduction).

Closing remarks

Mozambique is strongly engaged in tourism strongly believing that it has great potential for the development of the activity. This belief is justified by the fact that nature has been favorable, providing it with an attractive regional location for coastal tourism, i.e., an extensive coastline of about 2,700 km and a combination of beaches with fine white sand and rocks. In addition to this natural component, Mozambique also has a unique cultural mosaic as a result of its history, which explanation is in part in its geographical location. In the region, Mozambique presents itself as a linguistic island, given that it is surrounded by English-speaking countries. Thus, the opportunities for tourism development are many and diversified, most of them resulting from the physical-natural conditions, to which are added aspects of cultural nature, which have benefited from the extensive opening to the Indian Ocean.

However, it should be noted that, while Mozambique's geographical location is one of its most favorable elements, which allows it to have comparative advantages in some sectors, it is also one of the main conditions that contributes for the country vulnerability, especially due to extreme events such as cyclones, which affect the coastal areas favorable for tourism, also increasing the propensity to flooding.

Thus, the development of tourism involves risks, some of which result from the very essence of this activity, characterized by being fed by travelers, visitors, i.e., individuals "strangers to tourist destinations". If there is no travel, tourism stops, which has implications to all areas to which tourism is related to.

In fact, as soon as the mobility conditions, that are essential for tourism, are affected, the tourism activity feels its effects, as it happened very recently because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, the perception of risks by potential tourists also contributes to their decision. The northern region of Mozambique has been the target of terrorist actions, which are national and international news, and clearly, this situation negatively influences the tourist activity.

Finally, in Mozambique, despite the recognized social, economic, and environmental role of tourism, it is quite vulnerable to crises resulting from natural and/or man-made disasters, namely cyclones and tropical storms, including terrorist attacks, political instability, wars, and diseases such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which contribute to a growing sense of insecurity and uncertainty.

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Authors' contribution

José Júlio Júnior Guambe: Introduction and part of the article, abstract in English, references and corrections according to the reviewers' requests.

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