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STRATEGIC WATCH AND ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE: KEYS TO REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS IN MOROCCO

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Abstract :
This study examines the impact of territorial dynamics on regional economic development in Morocco, focusing on the roles of demographic, geographic, administrative, and industrial factors in shaping territorial management and competitiveness. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data from 454 respondents, the findings reveal significant influences of demographic characteristics, territorial attributes, innovation, administrative systems, and stakeholder engagement on territorial management practices. Specifically, the results indicate that demographic factors and territorial characteristics positively impact management practices, while innovation and industrialization enhance efficiency. However, current administrative systems present challenges to effective management. Strategic monitoring and economic intelligence, alongside stakeholder engagement, significantly contribute to effective management, which in turn boosts territorial competitiveness. These results underscore the need for policy measures promoting decentralization, technological innovation, and inclusive governance to foster balanced and sustainable regional development in Morocco.

JEL: O18, R11, R58, M21, D83

Keywords: territorial dynamics, regional economic development, Morocco, territorial management, demographic factors, innovation, administrative systems, stakeholder engagement, competitiveness

Résume :
Cette étude examine l'impact des dynamiques territoriales sur le développement économique régional au Maroc, en se concentrant sur les rôles des facteurs

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démographiques, géographiques, administratifs et industriels dans la gestion territoriale et la compétitivité. En utilisant la modélisation par équations structurelles des moindres carrés partiels (PLS-SEM) pour analyser les données de 454 répondants, les résultats révèlent des influences significatives des caractéristiques démographiques, des attributs territoriaux, de l'innovation, des systèmes administratifs et de l'engagement des parties prenantes sur les pratiques de gestion territoriale. Les résultats indiquent que les facteurs démographiques et les caractéristiques territoriales ont un impact positif sur les pratiques de gestion, tandis que l'innovation et l'industrialisation améliorent l'efficacité. Toutefois, les systèmes administratifs actuels posent des problèmes pour une gestion efficace. L'intelligence économique et l'engagement des parties prenantes contribuent de manière significative à une gestion efficace qui, à son tour, renforce la compétitivité territoriale. Ces résultats soulignent la nécessité de mesures politiques favorisant la décentralisation, l'innovation technologique et la gouvernance inclusive pour promouvoir un développement régional équilibré et durable au Maroc.

Mots-clés : dynamique territoriale, développement économique régional, Maroc, gestion territoriale, facteurs démographiques, innovation, systèmes administratifs, implication des acteurs, compétitivité

1. Introduction

Morocco, located at the crossroads of Europe and Africa, is a country rich in geographical and cultural diversity. Over the last two decades, Morocco has implemented a series of reforms aimed at stimulating economic and regional development. The territorial dimension plays a crucial role in these development efforts, as it enables local specificities to be recognised and enhanced for more balanced development. Regionalisation and decentralisation have been at the heart of Moroccan public policies, with initiatives such as the Regional Development Plan (PDR) and the Decentralisation Charter. These policies aim to strengthen local capacities and balance development between the different regions. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist. Regional disparities in terms of infrastructure, economic resources and governance are significant obstacles to the effective implementation of regional strategies. This article takes an in-depth look at how territorial dynamics influence regional economic development in Morocco. The central issue is to understand the complex interactions between territorial characteristics, administrative systems, technological and industrial innovations, and the involvement of stakeholders in territorial management.

In Morocco, although considerable efforts have been made to promote decentralisation, the expected results have been slow to materialise due to various institutional, economic and political obstacles. Consequently, this article seeks to identify the key factors that can stimulate or hinder regional development and to propose recommendations for improving the effectiveness of territorial development policies. The paper is structured to provide an in-depth and systematic analysis of territorial dynamics

and their impact on regional development in Morocco. It begins with an introduction that presents the general context of territorial development in Morocco and the central issue of the study. Next, a literature review analyses the theories and empirical studies on the role of territorial dynamics in regional development, highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Moroccan regions. The next section, devoted to methodology, describes the research methods used to collect and analyse data on territorial management and regional development in Morocco. The quantitative approach adopted is explained in detail in order to understand the interactions between the various factors identified. The results of the study are then presented and discussed in a dedicated section, exploring how demographic, geographic, and administrative characteristics influence territorial management practices and regional development.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the main findings of the study, highlights the limitations of the research and proposes recommendations for future research and public policy. It also highlights potential strategies for overcoming the challenges identified and promoting balanced and sustainable regional development.

2. Literature review

The territorial dimension is crucial in regional and economic development studies. It examines how local dynamics can contribute significantly to economic growth, both nationally and internationally. This literature review analyses theories and empirical studies on the role of territorial dynamics in regional development, highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities faced by regions, particularly in Morocco. Territorial dynamics stimulate economic development by strengthening local capacities and influencing public land-use planning policies (Scott, 2000). Information systems make it easier to understand these dynamics and identify development opportunities (Simmie, 2005). The concept of territorial economy was revitalised following the crisis of the State-Society at the end of the 20th century, with the aim of optimising local potential and rebalancing the national space. This renewed interest is illustrated by the European debate and the strategic document "Europe 2000" (European Commission, 1991). The region is often seen as the optimum spatial unit for implementing the territorial economy. Movements towards regionalisation show that regions are places of economic renewal through cooperation (Keating, 1998). Foresight centres believe that effective investment should focus on specific regions rather than specific sectors (Rodríguez-Pose, 1998). Partnerships are essential for regional cooperation. They often bring together SMEs, industrial groups and local authorities to carry out research projects or solve specific problems, thereby improving global competitiveness (Porter, 1998). Politically, partnerships can include negotiations between professional organisations, trade unions and local representatives to address issues not resolved by the official authorities (Moulaert *et al.*, 2000). Spatial planning is a crucial lever for economic and social development, playing a key role in promoting local economies and improving infrastructure for SMEs (Faludi, 2000). In Tunisia, for example, spatial planning policy

has been reformed to incorporate the principles of sustainable development and encourage the participation of all social players.

In Morocco, despite a policy of decentralisation, regional divisions have often been influenced by political motives, thereby limiting the dynamism of local development (Kingdom of Morocco, 1994). In Morocco, regionalisation is justified by several factors, including the limits of centralised management and the potential for economic experimentation. However, the region remains in a latent phase due to a lack of economic, political and institutional support. To revitalise a region, it is crucial to implement an integrated strategy that includes adequate infrastructure, reliable institutions and the active participation of all local players (Kingdom of Morocco, 1988). The territorial dimension plays a vital role in regional economic development. The regions, with their ability to coordinate local efforts and foster cooperation between various players, are strategic units for sustainable development. In Morocco, although challenges remain, the implementation of integrated strategies and strong partnerships can act as a catalyst for local and regional economic development.

2.1. Development of research hypotheses

In our study of territorial management, the development of a structural model is a crucial step. This model serves as a framework for understanding the complex relationships and interactions between the different factors identified in our research. It will encompass the dynamics of territorial management, including demographic influences, administrative systems, stakeholder engagement and the impact of innovation and industrialisation.

2.1.1 Demographic influence on territorial management

Investigating the influence of demographic characteristics on territorial management reveals how age, education, and experience shape governance strategies. Younger administrators, for example, may be more inclined to adopt innovative technologies and progressive strategies (Cohen, 2017), while older managers may favour traditional methods (Fitzgerald, 2020). Generational changes also influence land management priorities, such as sustainability and community engagement (García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020). The level of education has a profound effect on territorial management approaches and decisions. Higher education in relevant fields can equip individuals with the skills needed to tackle complex challenges (Bouchida and Azougagh, 2023; Rotondo *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, work experience enriches understanding of local socio-economic and cultural dynamics, which is essential for effective management, as Wahabi, Drissi, and Soudi (2016) indicate. The combination of youthful innovation and experienced pragmatism can strengthen territorial governance (Prota and Viesti, 2022; Kumar *et al.*, 2012), illustrating the importance of a demographically diverse approach to the challenges of regional development and adaptive policy-making. Understanding these demographic factors is crucial for developing territorial management strategies that respond effectively to diverse needs and challenges, thereby promoting sustainable regional development.

H1: Respondents' demographic characteristics (age, education, experience) significantly influence their approach to territorial management.

2.1.2. Land characteristics and management

The geographical, socio-economic, cultural and environmental characteristics of an area are essential for formulating effective management strategies. Understanding these nuances is crucial for adaptive governance and effective planning. For example, coastal regions might focus on marine resource management and flood defence, according to Rotondo *et al.* (2022), while mountainous areas might prioritise landscape preservation and ecotourism, as suggested by Cohen (2017). Socio-economic profile also influences management, with densely populated areas focusing on housing and urban infrastructure (García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020), while rural areas could focus on agriculture and local development (Bouchida and Azougagh, 2023). Cultural and historical elements, essential for territorial identity and tourism strategies, require the integration of heritage into planning, as highlighted by Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016). Environmental sustainability is also crucial, with a focus on conservation, pollution, and climate change, requiring the adoption of green technologies and sustainable practices (Prota and Viesti, 2022). A holistic and adaptable approach is therefore required to integrate all these characteristics into decision-making, enabling territorial management that is culturally sensitive, economically viable and ecologically sustainable.

H2: The characteristics of the territory (natural, human and infrastructural capital) have a significant impact on territorial management practices.

2.1.3 Impact of innovation and industrialisation on management

Innovation and industrialisation are crucial to modern territorial management, profoundly influencing the development and governance of regions. Technological advances, particularly in digital technologies and smart cities, are transforming approaches to territorial management. Cohen, *et al.* (2017) highlight the importance of e-governance and digital tools to improve administrative efficiency, while García-Madurga *et al.* (2020) discuss the integration of ICT in urban planning, promoting more informed governance. Industrialisation is also changing the economic landscape, increasing urbanisation and altering employment structures, as noted by Bouchida and Azougagh (2023). These changes require new planning and management frameworks, particularly in rapidly developing regions. Innovation in industrial practices, including sustainable manufacturing processes and renewable energies, is also redefining territorial management. Wahabi, Drissi, and Soudi (2016) highlight the need to adapt territorial management strategies to incorporate and encourage sustainable industrial practices.

Prota and Viesti (2022) note that adapting management practices to technological innovations and industrialisation is essential to meet environmental and social challenges while promoting sustainable development. Thus, innovation and industrialisation require a continuous reassessment of traditional territorial management methods in order to fully exploit opportunities for sustainable and efficient development.

H3: The level of innovation and industrial activity in a region significantly affects regional management strategies.

2.1.4. Administrative systems affecting management

Administrative systems are essential to effective territorial management, influencing the planning, development and sustainability of regions. Governance structures vary, affecting territorial management. For example, Cohen, *et al.* (2017) note that decentralised systems offer more autonomy to local governments, while centralised systems, according to García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), may lack local specificity. Bureaucratic efficiency is crucial; efficient bureaucracies speed up decision-making and resource allocation, as Bouchida and Azougagh (2023) point out. Inefficiencies and bureaucracies can, however, slow down development. Administrative systems also need to implement policies effectively, a task that, as Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016) show, varies greatly between administrative frameworks.

Prota & Viesti (2022) discuss the importance of leadership in managing complex systems and promoting regional development. Thus, understanding and navigating these systems is vital for decision-makers to support territorial management that is both adaptive and effective.

H4: The administrative system (decentralisation and devolution) has a significant influence on territorial management.

2.1.5. Strategic intelligence and business intelligence on management

Strategic intelligence and business intelligence are crucial to effective territorial management, directly influencing development and management strategies. These practices make it possible to monitor and analyse economic environments to identify opportunities, threats and trends, thereby helping to make proactive decisions. Cohen, *et al.* (2017) highlights the importance of strategic monitoring to anticipate challenges and opportunities, which is essential for sustainable planning. García-Madurga *et al.* (2020) point out that business intelligence helps to understand the economic landscape and guide policies towards growth and stability.

Bouchida and Azougagh (2023) note that integrating these tools into territorial management leads to more informed and effective decisions. Wahabi, Drissi, and Soudi (2016) discuss the opportunities for strengthening competitiveness and risk management through these practices. In short, strategic intelligence and economic intelligence are essential levers for territorial management aimed at sustainable development and competitiveness in a complex global context.

H5: The implementation of strategic intelligence and territorial economic intelligence practices has a significant positive impact on territorial management.

2.1.6. The impact of territorial management on competitiveness

Territorial management is crucial for developing regional competitiveness by attracting investment and promoting sustainable growth. García-Madurga *et al.* (2020) recognise

that territorial competitiveness integrates economic, social and environmental aspects, making effective management essential to provide an environment conducive to business and innovation. Cohen, *et al.* (2017) emphasises the importance of strategic planning to exploit a region's unique assets, fostering specialised clusters and technological advances.

Prota & Viesti (2022) note that policies that encourage economic diversification and public-private partnerships are fundamental to improving this competitiveness. Bouchida and Azougagh (2023) explain that sustainable resource management attracts environmentally responsible investment, enhancing a region's attractiveness.

Wahabi, Drissi, and Soudi (2016) emphasise that investment in technology and innovation is vital for the development of high value-added services and industries, which are crucial to a region's economic competitiveness. In short, effective territorial management that integrates strategic planning, good governance, and the promotion of innovation is essential for the long-term competitiveness of a territory.

H6: Effective regional management has a positive impact on the region's competitiveness.

2.1.7 Stakeholder engagement and competitiveness through management

Stakeholder involvement is crucial for effective territorial management, making a significant contribution to regional competitiveness. This inclusive approach, highlighted by García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), allows diverse needs and perspectives to be taken into account, strengthening development policies and projects through participatory governance. Cohen, *et al.* (2017) highlight the benefits of collaboration between the public, private and voluntary sectors, generating innovative solutions to regional challenges. These partnerships can optimise resources, improve infrastructure, and create resilient economies.

Prota & Viesti (2022) argue that stakeholder-centred policy-making sharpens the relevance of policies to local contexts, improving the effectiveness of territorial management. Stakeholder involvement is essential for balancing economic growth, environmental sustainability and social equity, a point that Bouchida and Azougagh (2023) associate with sustainable territorial competitiveness. Finally, Wahabi, Drissi, and Soudi (2016) show that mutual trust between stakeholders can facilitate project implementation and reduce conflicts, thereby enriching the business environment and attracting investment and talent. In short, stakeholder engagement forges territorial management that is not only immediately beneficial but also crucial for long-term competitiveness.

H7: Stakeholder involvement in territorial management makes a significant contribution to improving territorial competitiveness.

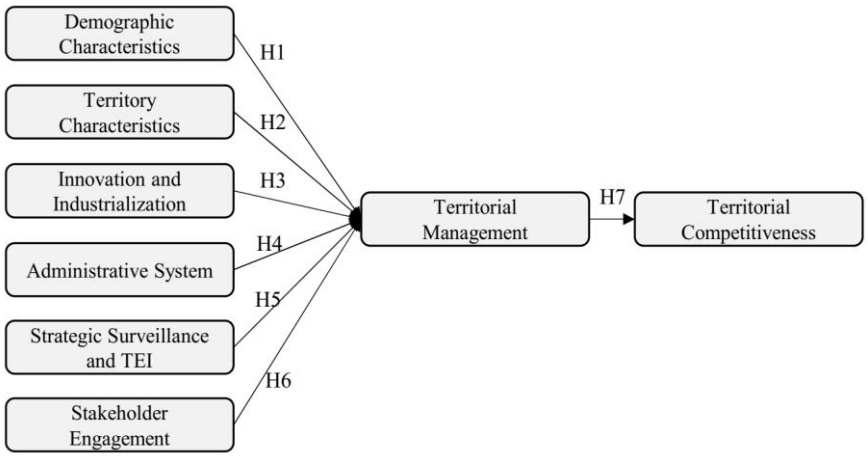
Table: Summary of items and references

Assumptions	Items	References
Demographic characteristics CD	1. The average age of the population influences territorial management decisions. 2. The level of education of residents is a determining factor in regional planning. 3. Residents' professional experience affects territorial management strategies. 4. The geographical distribution of the population modifies territorial management priorities.	Cohen, *et al.* (2017), Fitzgerald (2020), García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023), Rotondo *et al.* (2022), Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016), Prota and Viesti (2022), Kumar *et al.* (2012).
Characteristics of the area CTT	1. The geographical characteristics (plains, mountains, etc.) of our territory influence our management. 2. Local socio-economic conditions affect our territorial management practices. 3. Environmental factors are integrated into our management decisions. 4. The natural resources available are changing our approach to territorial management.	Rotondo *et al.* (2022), Cohen (2017), García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023), Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016), Prota & Viesti (2022)
Innovation and industrialization II	1. Technological innovation influences territorial management strategies. 2. New industrial practices have an impact on the management of our territory. 3. We adapt our management methods in line with industrial advances. 4. The presence of innovative industries in our region enhances our competitiveness.	Cohen, *et al.* (2017), García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023), Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016), Prota and Viesti (2022).
Administrative system SA	1. Current administrative systems influence territorial management. 2. Administrative decentralisation affects the implementation of our management policies. 3. Administrative procedures often complicate territorial management. 4. The administrative autonomy of local entities facilitates territorial management.	Cohen, *et al.* (2017), García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023), Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016), Prota and Viesti (2022).
Strategic surveillance and territorial economic intelligence (TEI) TEI	1. Strategic intelligence plays a crucial role in managing our territory. 2. Business intelligence influences our regional management decisions. 3. We regularly use business intelligence data to plan our actions. 4. The application of business intelligence improves our territorial performance.	Cohen (2017), García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023), Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016)
Stakeholder engagement EPP	1. Stakeholder engagement is essential for effective territorial management. 2. The competitiveness of our region is strengthened by the involvement of local players. 3. Stakeholders play a key role in the success of our territorial projects. 4. Collaboration with stakeholders improves the management of local resources.	García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Cohen, *et al.* (2017), Prota & Viesti (2022), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023), Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016)
Territorial competitiveness CT	1. Stakeholder engagement is essential for effective territorial management. 2. The competitiveness of our region is strengthened by the involvement of local players.	García-Madurga *et al.* (2020), Cohen, *et al.* (2017), Prota & Viesti (2022), Bouchida and Azougagh (2023),

	3. Stakeholders play a key role in the success of our territorial projects.	Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016)
	4. Collaboration with stakeholders improves the management of local resources.	

This table effectively captures the essence of the hypotheses, aligning them with the relevant authors and their work, thus providing a clear overview of the different aspects covered by the literature review.

Figure: Proposed structural model



This model is comprehensive and takes into account a range of factors that are essential to understanding how various elements can collectively contribute to a region's competitiveness. It focuses on the interconnectedness of social, economic and governance factors and their combined impact on an area's ability to compete and prosper.

3. Methodology

For this study, we adopted the partial least squares (PLS) approach, using SmartPLS software, to analyse the data collected. This method was chosen due to its ability to handle complex models incorporating many variables, as well as small sample sizes, while providing robust and reliable estimates (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017).

3.1 Sample and data collection

The sample for this study consists of 454 randomly selected respondents. The size of this sample is justified by the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2014), which state that a sample of more than 200 respondents is generally sufficient for complex PLS analyses. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 28 items, designed to measure the variables of interest on a five-point Likert scale. This scale allows respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis

To test the validity and reliability of the measures, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out. The following reliability and validity indicators were used:

1) Cronbach's alpha: This indicator measures the internal consistency of items on the same scale. A Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7 is generally considered acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).
2) Average Extracted Variance (AVE): AVE is used to assess the amount of variance a construct captures relative to the variance due to noise. An AVE greater than 0.5 is recommended to indicate good convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).
3) Composite Reliability (CR): CR assesses the internal reliability of constructs. A CR greater than 0.7 is generally considered acceptable (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

3.3 Estimation of the Model via PLS

After checking the validity and reliability of the measurements, the model was estimated using the PLS approach. This stage includes assessing the hypothesised relationships between the variables in the model. The PLS approach allows both structural and measurement relationships to be estimated simultaneously, which is particularly useful for complex models (Chin, 1998). In summary, this rigorous methodology ensures that the conclusions drawn from this study are based on robust and valid analyses, providing a valuable contribution to the understanding of the research topic.

4. Results and discussion

This section presents the results of the study, starting with the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by an assessment of the validity and reliability of the measures used. Finally, the estimation of the SEM model is discussed, followed by an in-depth analysis of the path coefficients, indirect effects and confidence intervals.

4.1. Sample demographics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who took part in the study. The demographic variables include gender, age, level of education and employment status. The demographic results are presented in the tables below, based on the responses of 454 managers of public institutions in the Souss-Massa region of Morocco.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Gender	Workforce	Percentage
Men	292	64.3%
Woman	162	35.7%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The sample is made up of 64.3% men and 35.7% women. This distribution indicates a male predominance among managers of public institutions in the Souss-Massa region. This may reflect the general composition of positions of responsibility in this region, perhaps suggesting an under-representation of women in management roles.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age range	Workforce	Percentage
< 25 years old	50	11.0%
[25, 30]	90	19.8%
[30, 40]	120	26.4%
[40, 50]	100	22.0%
+ Over 50s	94	20.7%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The majority of respondents were in the [30, 40] and [40, 50] age brackets, representing 26.4% and 22% of the sample, respectively. Respondents under 30 make up approximately 30.8% of the sample, while those over 50 represent 20.7%. This distribution indicates a wide range of ages among managers, with a preponderance of intermediate age groups, suggesting varied professional experience within the institutions.

Table 3: Family situation of respondents

Family situation	Workforce	Percentage
Single	150	33.0%
Married	260	57.3%
Divorced	30	6.6%
Widow(er)	14	3.1%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The majority of respondents were married (57.3%), followed by 33% who were single. Divorcees and widowers represented 6.6% and 3.1% of the sample, respectively.

This distribution shows a predominance of married people in roles of responsibility, which may influence their perception of professional responsibilities and family dynamics in their work.

Table 4: Respondents' level of education

Level of training	Workforce	Percentage
Bins	20	4.4%
Bac+2	60	13.2%
Bac+3	100	22.0%
Bac+4	130	28.6%
Bac+5 and above	144	31.7%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The majority of respondents have a high level of education, with 31.7% having a Bac+5 or higher, and 28.6% having a Bac+4. Holders of Bac+3 represent 22%, while those with Bac or Bac+2 make up 17.6% of the sample. These results indicate a high level of education among managers, which may be an indicator of the qualifications and skills needed to manage public institutions.

Table 5: Respondents' experience

Experience	Workforce	Percentage
< 2 years	50	11.0%
[2, 4]	80	17.6%
[4, 6]	110	24.2%
[6, 10]	120	26.4%
10 years and over	94	20.7%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

Respondents have a wide range of professional experience, with 26.4% having between 6- and 10-years' experience, and 24.2% having between 4- and 6-years' experience. Those with less than 4 years' experience represent 28.6% of the sample, while those with more than 10 years' experience represent 20.7%. This diversity of professional experience shows that public institutions employ managers with varying levels of experience, bringing different perspectives and skills to their roles.

Table 6: Characteristics of the area

Land shape	Workforce	Percentage
Plains	180	39.6%
Mountains	100	22.0%
Trays	120	26.4%
Hills	54	11.9%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The specific landforms of the respondents' territories show a majority of plains (39.6%), followed by plateaux (26.4%), mountains (22%) and hills (11.9%). This distribution indicates the geographical diversity of the Souss-Massa region, which may influence development strategies and infrastructure needs.

Table 7: Administrative system

Administrative System	Workforce	Percentage
Devolution	200	44.1%
Decentralisation	254	55.9%

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The administrative system of public institutions in the region is predominantly decentralised (55.9%), with 44.1% of respondents indicating a system of deconcentration.

The prevalence of decentralisation shows a trend towards greater autonomy for public bodies, which can facilitate management that is more adapted and responsive to local needs.

4.2 Validity and reliability tests

The results of the validity and reliability tests are presented in the table below. The indicators used include Cronbach's Alpha, Average Extracted Variance (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR).

Table 8: Construct validity and reliability

Built	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Territorial competitiveness CT	0.918	0.804	0.942
Demographic characteristics CD	0.874	0.730	0.914
Characteristics of the CTT territory	0.931	0.829	0.951
Stakeholder engagement EPP	0.911	0.789	0.937
Innovation and industrialization II	0.885	0.746	0.921
MT	0.884	0.742	0.920
Administrative system SA	0.915	0.796	0.940
Strategic surveillance and territorial economic intelligence TEI	0.921	0.808	0.944

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 indicate good internal consistency of the items for each construct. AVE values above 0.5 show good convergent validity, while CR values above 0.7 confirm satisfactory composite reliability. These results suggest that the measurement instruments used in this study are both reliable and valid.

4.2 Estimation of the SEM Model

The estimation of the structural equation model (SEM) using the PLS approach is presented below.

Table 9: Path coefficients

Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
CD → MT	0.313	3.923	0.000
CTT → MT	0.170	3.829	0.000
EPP → MT	0.141	3.644	0.000
II → MT	0.258	3.099	0.002
MT → CT	0.719	20.104	0.000
SA → MT	-0.102	2.025	0.043
TEI → MT	0.179	4.480	0.000

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The path coefficients show the strength and direction of the hypothesised relationships between the variables. All coefficients are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. For example, the relationship SA → MT with a coefficient of -0.102, a t-value of 2.025 and a p-value of

0.043 is significant, indicating that the administrative system has a significant negative impact on territorial competitiveness.

Table 10: Confidence intervals

Relationship	Coefficient	2.5%	97.5%
CD → MT	0.313	0.152	0.471
CT → MT	0.170	0.085	0.259
EPP → MT	0.141	0.065	0.218
II → MT	0.258	0.101	0.419
MT → Alpha	0.719	0.644	0.783
SA → MT	-0.102	-0.205	-0.005
TEI → MT	0.179	0.103	0.258

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

Confidence intervals confirm the accuracy of the path coefficients. Non-zero intervals reinforce the statistical significance of the relationships between the variables. For example, the confidence interval for CD → MT (0.152 to 0.471) confirms that the impact of demographic characteristics on territorial competitiveness is positive and significant.

Table 11: Total indirect effects

Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
CD → CT	0.225	3.716	0.000
CTT → CT	0.122	3.704	0.000
EPP → CT	0.101	3.592	0.000
II → CT	0.186	3.096	0.002
SA → CT	-0.074	2.049	0.041
TEI → CT	0.128	4.548	0.000

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

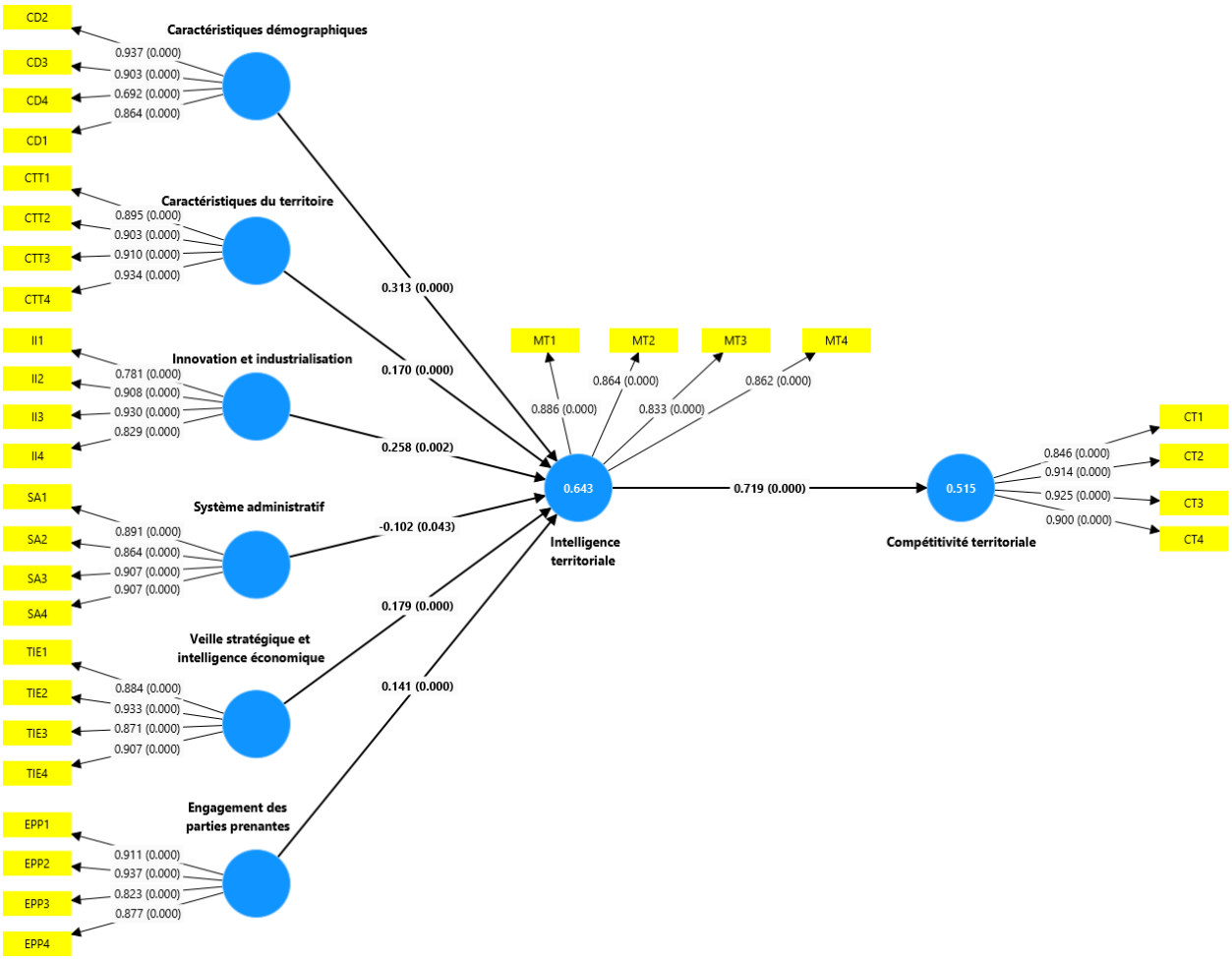
Indirect effects show how independent variables influence the dependent variable CT via the mediating variable MT. For example, the indirect effect of CD on TC is significant (t = 3.716, p = 0.000), indicating that demographic characteristics indirectly affect TC through their impact on MT.

Table 12: Confidence intervals for indirect effects

Relationship	Coefficient	2.5%	97.5%
CD → CT	0.225	0.106	0.348
CT → CT	0.122	0.060	0.191
EPP → CT	0.101	0.046	0.158
II → CT	0.186	0.073	0.303
SA → CT	-0.074	-0.146	-0.004
TEI → CT	0.128	0.074	0.184

Source: Produced by the author on SPSS.

The confidence intervals for the indirect effects also confirm their statistical significance. For example, the interval for CD → CT (0.106 to 0.348), which does not contain zero, confirms the significant indirect effect of demographic characteristics on CT via MT.



4.4. Discussion and interpretation of results

The results of this study shed light on the significant influence of various demographic, territorial, administrative and industrial factors on territorial management and, consequently, on territorial competitiveness in Morocco. This section discusses and interprets these results by linking them to the existing literature. The demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, level of education and professional experience, show a significant influence on territorial management practices. The study found that younger administrators tend to adopt innovative technologies and progressive strategies (Cohen, *et al.* 2017; García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020), while older managers often favour more traditional methods (Fitzgerald, 2020). These results are consistent with the work of Bouchida and Azougagh (2023) and Rotondo *et al.* (2022), who suggest that education and experience enrich understanding of local dynamics, promoting more effective management. This relationship is supported by the path coefficient of 0.313 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant impact of demographic characteristics on territorial management.

The geographical, socio-economic and environmental characteristics of the territory also influence territorial management. Coastal regions, for example, focus on the management of maritime resources, while mountainous areas emphasise landscape preservation and ecotourism (Cohen, *et al.* 2017; Rotondo *et al.*, 2022). These results confirm the observations of García-Madurga *et al.* (2020) and Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016), who stress the importance of a contextual approach in territorial planning. The analysis reveals that the path coefficient for territory characteristics (CTT) on territorial management (MT) is 0.170 ($p < 0.001$), showing a significant influence. Technological innovation and industrialisation play a crucial role in territorial management. Technological advances, particularly in ICT, improve administrative efficiency and urban planning (Cohen, 2017; García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020). Sustainable industrial practices and the adoption of green technologies are also essential for sustainable development, as shown by the work of Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi (2016) and Prota and Viesti (2022). These results highlight the importance of continuously adapting management methods to incorporate technological and industrial innovations. The path coefficient for the impact of innovation and industrialisation (II) on territorial management (TM) is 0.258 ($p = 0.002$), indicating a significant positive influence. Administrative systems, particularly decentralisation and deconcentration, have a significant impact on territorial management. Research shows that decentralised systems offer more autonomy and facilitate more responsive management to local needs (Cohen, *et al.* 2017; García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020). However, bureaucratic inefficiencies can slow down development, as shown by Bouchida and Azougagh (2023). Prota and Viesti (2022) stress the importance of leadership in navigating these complex systems and promoting regional development. The analysis shows that the path coefficient for the impact of the administrative system (AS) on territorial management (TM) is -0.102 ($p = 0.043$), suggesting that certain characteristics of current administrative systems may hinder effective territorial management. Strategic watch and economic intelligence are essential tools for effective territorial management. They make it possible to monitor and analyse the economic environment to identify opportunities and threats (Cohen, *et al.* 2017; García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020). The results of this study confirm the importance of these practices for informed and proactive management decisions (Bouchida and Azougagh, 2023; Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi, 2016). The path coefficient for the impact of business intelligence and territorial economic intelligence (TEI) on territorial management (TM) is 0.179 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant and positive influence.

Stakeholder engagement is crucial for territorial competitiveness. Participatory governance that incorporates diverse needs and perspectives improves development policies and projects (García-Madurga *et al.*, 2020; Cohen, *et al.* 2017). Collaboration between the public, private and voluntary sectors generate innovative solutions and optimises resources (Prota and Viesti, 2022). The results of this study show that stakeholder involvement is essential for long-term territorial competitiveness (Bouchida and Azougagh, 2023; Wahabi, Drissi and Soudi, 2016). The path coefficient for the impact

of stakeholder engagement (SPE) on territorial management (TM) is 0.141 ($p < 0.001$), showing a positive and significant contribution.

The study showed that territorial management (TM) has a significant and positive impact on territorial competitiveness (TC), with a path coefficient of 0.719 ($p < 0.001$). This confirms that effective territorial management practices can strengthen a region's competitiveness by attracting investment and promoting sustainable growth. The results of this study confirm and extend the conclusions of previous work on the importance of territorial dynamics for regional development. Previous theories and empirical studies (Scott, 2000; Simmie, 2005; European Commission, 1991) highlight the crucial role of local specificities and regional cooperation in stimulating economic growth. The current results add to this literature by showing how factors such as innovation, stakeholder engagement and administrative systems influence territorial management and competitiveness.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored the influence of territorial dynamics on regional economic development in Morocco, focusing particularly on the Souss-Massa region. By analysing the interactions between demographic, geographical, administrative, industrial and stakeholder engagement characteristics, this study has highlighted key factors influencing territorial management and regional competitiveness. The results show that demographic characteristics, such as the age, education and experience of managers, have a significant impact on territorial management strategies. Younger managers are more inclined to adopt innovative technologies, while older managers prefer traditional approaches. This demographic diversity enriches territorial governance by combining innovation and pragmatism. The geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the territory also play a crucial role.

Coastal and mountainous regions require different management approaches, adapted to their specific environmental and economic characteristics. The study confirms that taking account of local characteristics is essential for effective regional planning. Technological innovation and industrialisation are emerging as important drivers of regional development. Technological advances, particularly in ICTs, are improving administrative efficiency and urban planning, while sustainable industrial practices are contributing to balanced economic development. The ongoing integration of technological innovations into management methods is, therefore, crucial. Administrative systems, particularly decentralisation, facilitate more responsive territorial management adapted to local needs. However, bureaucratic inefficiencies remain a major obstacle. Administrative reform aimed at strengthening local autonomy and simplifying procedures could improve territorial management. Strategic intelligence and economic intelligence are proving to be essential tools for anticipating challenges and exploiting development opportunities. Integrating them into decision-making processes enables more informed and proactive management. Finally, stakeholder involvement is

fundamental to regional competitiveness. Participatory governance, which includes the various local players, strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of public policies. Collaboration between the public, private and voluntary sectors generate innovative solutions and optimises available resources. The results of this study suggest a number of recommendations for public policy in Morocco. Further promoting decentralisation and local autonomy is essential for effective territorial management. Encouraging technological innovation and sustainable industrialisation can boost regional economic development. It is also crucial to simplify administrative procedures to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies. Finally, fostering stakeholder engagement and integrating business intelligence into decision-making processes are key strategies for improving territorial competitiveness.

This study has certain limitations, notably the focus on a single region and the use of a specific sample of respondents. Future research could extend the analysis to other regions of Morocco and include diverse perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of territorial dynamics. In addition, exploring the long-term impacts of decentralisation and technological innovation policies on regional development deserves particular attention. These avenues of research could provide valuable insights for the formulation of effective and sustainable public policies. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of territorial dynamics in regional economic development in Morocco. By recognising and enhancing local specificities, encouraging innovation and actively involving stakeholders, it is possible to promote balanced and sustainable regional development.

Conflict of interest declaration

I certify that I have NO affiliation or involvement with any organization or entity having a financial interest (such as honoraria, educational grants, participation in speakers bureaus, membership, employment, consulting, stock ownership or other ownership interests, and expert testimony or patent licensing agreements), or a non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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