

The Role of Tourism SMEs' Internationalization in Achieving Economic Transformation: A Conceptual Framework from the Algerian Context

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Abstract: Algeria's long-standing dependence on hydrocarbon revenues has made economic diversification a national priority, and tourism has emerged as a strategic alternative. This conceptual paper develops an integrative framework linking the internationalization of tourism small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to broader economic transformation in resource-dependent economies. Drawing on the resource-based view, the dynamic capabilities perspective, the Uppsala model, the network approach, and institutional theory, the paper synthesizes international and Algerian-specific literatures. The framework proposes four antecedent clusters — intangible resources, digital and dynamic capabilities, network embeddedness, and institutional conditions — that shape internationalization trajectories, which in turn drive three economic transformation outcomes: productive diversification, foreign exchange and employment generation, and knowledge spillovers. Eight testable propositions and a multi-method empirical agenda are advanced, contributing to international business, tourism management, and development economics scholarship.

Keywords: Tourism SMEs; internationalization; economic transformation; dynamic capabilities; Algeria

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century global economy has been shaped by two intertwined dynamics: the accelerating integration of national markets through trade, investment, and digital networks, and the growing recognition that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are central actors in this integration rather than marginal followers of multinational incumbents (Knight & Liesch, 2016; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). For emerging and resource-dependent economies, these dynamics carry a specific strategic weight. Countries whose public finances and export earnings rest on a narrow commodity base confront recurrent cycles of macroeconomic volatility, vulnerability to external shocks, and constrained employment generation, and they face a persistent imperative to diversify the productive structure toward tradable activities with higher knowledge content and broader local linkages (Hvidt, 2013; Lederman & Maloney, 2012).

Algeria exemplifies this predicament in a particularly acute form. Hydrocarbons have, for several decades, accounted for the bulk of export revenues and a large share of fiscal receipts, and successive governments have articulated diversification strategies that identify services, agriculture, and manufacturing as pillars of a post-oil economy (Achy, 2013; World Bank, 2022). Within this agenda, tourism occupies a distinctive position. The country combines Mediterranean coastlines, Saharan landscapes recognized by UNESCO, Roman and Ottoman heritage sites, and cultural assets that are widely acknowledged as internationally competitive (Ghanem, 2017; Khiati, 2019). Yet Algeria's share of Mediterranean and African tourist arrivals and receipts remains modest relative to regional neighbors such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, and the sector's contribution to gross domestic product has historically trailed the regional average (UNWTO, 2023; World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2023).

The tourism ecosystem in Algeria is overwhelmingly populated by SMEs — travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, transport providers, handicraft producers, and cultural-heritage enterprises (Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Zahaf, 2018; Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts [Algeria], 2020). These firms operate at the interface between domestic production and the international demand that tourism inherently mobilizes, because the customer physically crosses borders to consume the service. Strengthening their capacity to attract, serve, and retain international visitors is therefore not only a matter of firm-level competitiveness; it is also a potentially powerful mechanism for national

economic transformation, because every international visitor represents an export of services that generates foreign currency, employs local labor, and stimulates upstream linkages in agriculture, crafts, and transport (Brida et al., 2016; Sharpley, 2022).

Despite this strategic significance, the scholarly literature on tourism SME internationalization in Algeria remains thin and fragmented. International business scholarship has produced a rich body of theory on why and how SMEs cross borders, including the Uppsala process model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009), the network approach (Johanson & Mattsson, 1988), the international new venture perspective (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994), and resource- and capability-based accounts (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2007). Tourism management scholarship, in parallel, has investigated destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999), service internationalization, and the role of digital platforms in travel distribution (Buhalis, 2020; Hjalager, 2010). Yet these two streams have been imperfectly integrated, and the intersection of tourism, SMEs, internationalization, and economic transformation in North Africa has received limited systematic attention (Hashim et al., 2021).

This paper addresses that gap by developing an integrative conceptual framework that links the internationalization of tourism SMEs to economic transformation, grounded in the Algerian context but designed to travel to comparable emerging economies. The research problem can be stated as follows: how can the internationalization of tourism SMEs contribute to the structural transformation of a resource-dependent economy such as Algeria, and what firm-level, relational, and institutional conditions shape this contribution? To address this problem, the paper is organized around four research questions: first, which theoretical perspectives most productively illuminate the internationalization of tourism SMEs in an emerging, resource-dependent economy; second, what firm-level, relational, and institutional antecedents plausibly shape the internationalization trajectories of Algerian tourism SMEs; third, through what mechanisms can the internationalization of tourism SMEs contribute to economic transformation; and fourth, what empirical strategies would allow future research to test the framework's propositions rigorously.

The paper is explicitly conceptual and theory-building: it does not report primary empirical data but synthesizes international and Algerian-specific literatures, articulates a framework, and advances testable propositions together with a future empirical agenda. Its methodological approach is that of an integrative literature review, a design well established for generating new theoretical insight in

maturing research fields (Cronin & George, 2023; Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2005). The paper makes three principal contributions. Theoretically, it extends internationalization scholarship to a service-intensive, place-bound sector in an understudied regional context, and it couples the dominant micro-level focus of that literature with a macro-level transformation outcome. Conceptually, it offers an integrative framework that reconciles competing internationalization theories by positioning them as complementary lenses on different firm segments within a heterogeneous tourism population. Practically, it provides a platform from which policymakers in Algeria and comparable economies can design targeted interventions, and from which managers of tourism SMEs can calibrate their international strategies.

THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Understanding the internationalization of tourism SMEs in Algeria requires weaving together two distinct but complementary strands of scholarship. The first strand comprises the dominant theoretical traditions in international business that explain why and how firms cross borders. The second strand concerns the specific structural, institutional, and sectoral features of the Algerian tourism economy within which such internationalization must unfold. This section reviews both in turn, beginning with theory and then situating that theory in the Algerian context.

Theoretical Foundations of SME Internationalization

The internationalization of SMEs has generated one of the most vigorous and cumulative research programs in international business over the past half-century. Rather than treat competing theories as rival explanations, this paper follows an integrative strategy that positions them as complementary lenses, each illuminating different facets of a heterogeneous phenomenon (Hashai & Almor, 2004; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). Six theoretical traditions inform the framework developed in the next section, and this subsection reviews them briefly.

The resource-based view (RBV) conceives of the firm as a bundle of resources and argues that sustained competitive advantage derives from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Applied to internationalization, the RBV predicts that firms with distinctive resource bundles — particularly intangible resources such as reputation,

brand equity, organizational culture, and relational capital — will be more likely and more able to enter foreign markets and perform well once there (Benrebiha & Dahmani, 2023; Dhanaraj & Beamish, 2003; İpek, 2018). For tourism SMEs, the RBV highlights resources that are only partially captured by the typical manufacturing-centric literature: location-specific heritage, authentic cultural knowledge, language capabilities, service-quality reputation, and embeddedness in local supplier networks are all potentially valuable and difficult-to-imitate resources (Hjalager, 2010).

The dynamic capabilities perspective extends the RBV by recognizing that competitive advantage in volatile environments depends not only on static resource endowments but on the firm's capacity to sense opportunities and threats, seize them through appropriate business model and investment choices, and reconfigure the resource base as conditions change (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). For SMEs operating in turbulent environments — and emerging-economy tourism is paradigmatically such an environment — dynamic capabilities are particularly salient, and recent scholarship has identified international market sensing, cross-cultural adaptation, digital transformation, and strategic renewal as capabilities of specific relevance (Matarazzo et al., 2021; Warner & Wäger, 2019; Weerawardena et al., 2007).

The Uppsala internationalization process model, originally formulated by Johanson and Vahlne (1977) and revised in subsequent decades, conceives of internationalization as an incremental, experiential learning process. Firms are hypothesized to begin in psychically close markets, to use low-commitment entry modes initially, and to progressively increase their foreign commitment as they acquire knowledge and reduce uncertainty. The 2009 revision reframed the core constraint as a liability of outsidership, emphasizing network position for foreign market access (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). The network approach, developed in parallel, argues that firms internationalize through and within networks of exchange relationships with customers, suppliers, competitors, distributors, and institutional actors (Coviello, 2006; Johanson & Mattsson, 1988). For SMEs in particular, networks compensate for internal resource limitations by providing access to information, legitimacy, and complementary capabilities (Musteen et al., 2010). Tourism is an inherently networked sector, with destination management organizations, airlines, online travel agencies, tour operators, professional associations, and diaspora communities all forming relational infrastructures through which international demand reaches individual SMEs (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

The international new venture and born-global perspective identifies a growing population of firms that internationalize rapidly after founding rather than following a gradual domestic-first trajectory (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Oviatt & McDougall, 1994). Enabling conditions include digital technologies that reduce communication and transaction costs, global niche demand too small to attract large incumbents, and entrepreneurial teams with prior international experience (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). Algerian tourism includes firms that plausibly fit this profile, particularly digitally-native platforms catering to Saharan adventure tourism, cultural circuits, or diaspora-oriented travel. Finally, institutional theory directs attention to the regulatory, normative, and cognitive structures that shape firm behavior (North, 1990; Scott, 2014). For SMEs in emerging economies, institutional conditions — including the quality of regulation, the predictability of enforcement, the availability of supporting infrastructure, and the legitimacy accorded to entrepreneurial activity — can be decisive for internationalization prospects (Peng et al., 2008).

These six theoretical traditions are not mutually exclusive. Each captures a different dimension of the internationalization phenomenon, and the integrative framework developed in Section 3 draws on all of them. A further theoretical ingredient is necessary to bridge firm-level internationalization and national-level outcomes: the literature on economic transformation and structural change. Drawing on McMillan et al. (2017) and Rodrik (2016), this paper understands economic transformation as a durable shift in the structure of production and employment toward activities with higher productivity, greater tradability, and denser linkages. Tourism's contribution to transformation, so defined, depends on the sector's ability to upgrade productivity over time, to foster knowledge spillovers, and to integrate with rather than displace other productive activities (Sharpley, 2022).

Tourism SMEs in the Algerian Context

Algeria is the largest country in Africa by surface area and among the continent's most populous economies. Its economic trajectory since independence has been shaped by the dominant role of the hydrocarbon sector, which at various points has accounted for more than ninety percent of export earnings and a substantial share of public revenue (Achy, 2013; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2023). This configuration has produced the familiar symptoms of resource dependence: procyclical fiscal policy, currency overvaluation relative to the productive base, and limited incentives for private investment in tradable non-resource activities — a

pattern extensively analyzed in the broader literature on the resource curse (Frankel, 2012; Ross, 2012). Successive Algerian development plans since the mid-2000s have consequently identified diversification as a central strategic objective, with tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and digital services repeatedly designated as priority sectors (Ghanem, 2017). Implementation has nonetheless been uneven, constrained by regulatory complexity, exchange controls, limited access to finance for private firms, and a historically cautious posture toward foreign direct investment (Chekouri et al., 2017; World Bank, 2022).

Algeria's tourism endowment is substantial. The country contains seven UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the Casbah of Algiers, the Roman ruins of Tipaza and Djémila, and the Tassili n'Ajjer rock art in the Sahara. Its coastline extends for more than 1,600 kilometers along the Mediterranean, and the southern desert regions offer landscapes that are increasingly attractive to niche segments such as adventure, wellness, and cultural tourists (Ghanem, 2017; Khiati, 2019). Despite this endowment, international tourist arrivals have remained modest in comparative perspective. Regional neighbors with comparable or smaller natural endowments have recorded multiples of Algerian arrivals, and tourism's direct contribution to gross domestic product has typically oscillated in the low single digits (UNWTO, 2023; WTTC, 2023). Several factors have been advanced to explain this gap: visa and entry procedures that remain more restrictive than those of regional competitors; limited direct international air connectivity; underdeveloped accommodation capacity outside major cities; security perceptions shaped by the legacy of the 1990s civil conflict, even though security conditions have markedly improved; and limited international marketing and branding relative to peer destinations (Boudiaf, 2019; Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Zahaf, 2018).

Tourism SMEs in Algeria span a wide range of activities, including inbound and outbound travel agencies, small and medium-sized hotels and guesthouses, tour operators specializing in Saharan and cultural circuits, restaurants and food service establishments with touristic orientation, handicraft producers, and transport providers serving international visitors. The formal registered universe of licensed travel agencies alone numbers in the low thousands, with substantial additional informal activity in accommodation and guiding services (Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts [Algeria], 2020). Like SMEs elsewhere, these firms face the classic liability of smallness — limited financial slack, thin managerial capacity, constrained access to international information, and fragile negotiating

positions vis-à-vis larger platform intermediaries (Lu & Beamish, 2001; Ruzzier et al., 2006).

Several features distinguish Algerian tourism SMEs from their counterparts in manufacturing or industrial services and make them particularly interesting for internationalization research. First, their core output — the tourism experience — is produced and consumed in situ, meaning that internationalization occurs primarily through inbound flows of foreign customers rather than outbound shipments of goods, a pattern that partially inverts the assumptions of classical internationalization theory. Second, digital distribution channels play an outsized role in customer acquisition, because international travelers increasingly book through global online travel agencies and metasearch platforms (Buhalis, 2020; Sigala, 2020). Third, reputational signals and third-party reviews strongly mediate demand, giving rise to information asymmetries that can either penalize or reward SMEs depending on their digital presence. Fourth, the sector is exposed to environmental, security, and public health shocks to an unusual degree, as illustrated by the severe and asymmetric impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism firms worldwide (Gössling et al., 2021).

These features establish the analytical terrain of the paper. Tourism SMEs operate in a sector that is both strategically important for national economic transformation and structurally distinct from the contexts in which most internationalization theory was developed. The digital transformation of tourism distribution has been one of the most consequential structural changes of the past two decades, and it is double-edged for SMEs. On one hand, platforms lower the entry barriers to international visibility: a small guesthouse in the Sahara can, in principle, be discovered and booked by a traveler in Europe or Asia with minimal intermediary infrastructure (Brouthers et al., 2016). On the other hand, platforms concentrate bargaining power, impose commission structures, and require digital capabilities that many SMEs lack, creating new forms of dependence and exclusion (Hjalager, 2010). A framework that takes these distinctive features seriously is therefore needed, and the next section develops one.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

This section synthesizes the theoretical foundations and contextual features reviewed above into an integrative conceptual framework. The framework has four antecedent clusters, one focal process construct, and three outcome dimensions. The

antecedent clusters are firm-level intangible resources, digital and dynamic capabilities, network embeddedness, and institutional conditions. The focal construct is the internationalization trajectory of the tourism SME, operationalized in terms of breadth (number of source markets served), depth (share of foreign revenue), mode (inbound, outbound, digital, partnership-based), and speed (gradual versus born-global). The outcome dimensions are productive diversification, foreign exchange and employment generation, and knowledge upgrading spillovers. Table 1 (see end of manuscript) summarizes the framework, and eight testable propositions are advanced in the remainder of this section.

Antecedents of Internationalization

Intangible resources are particularly salient for tourism SMEs because the tourism experience is produced largely through knowledge, culture, and reputation rather than through physical capital. Four intangible resources are especially consequential. The first is organizational culture, defined in terms of shared values, assumptions, and behavioral norms (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Schein, 1984). Cultures characterized by external orientation, innovation, and flexibility have been consistently linked to internationalization propensity (Benrebiha & Dahmani, 2023; Dosoglu-Guner, 2001). The second is reputational capital, which in tourism is heavily mediated by digital review platforms and word of mouth. The third is heritage and cultural knowledge — tacit understanding of the destination's history, cuisine, crafts, and natural features — that cannot be easily replicated by foreign entrants. The fourth is language and cross-cultural competence, which directly affects the quality of service delivered to international customers.

Proposition 1: Tourism SMEs with more developed intangible resources — organizational culture oriented toward external markets, strong reputational capital, deep heritage knowledge, and cross-cultural competence — exhibit greater breadth and depth of internationalization than otherwise comparable firms.

Digital capabilities, understood as the integrated set of infrastructure, skills, strategy, and culture that enable the effective deployment of digital technologies, are central to contemporary tourism distribution. Tourism SMEs that can maintain a high-quality website, manage presence on major online travel agencies and metasearch platforms, respond to reviews strategically, and use customer data to refine their offerings are better positioned to attract and retain international customers than those

that cannot (Buhalis, 2020; Sigala, 2020). Dynamic capabilities extend beyond digital adoption to encompass the firm's ability to sense changing international demand patterns, seize opportunities through business model adjustment, and reconfigure resources when external conditions shift (Teece, 2007; Warner & Wäger, 2019).

Proposition 2a: The positive relationship between a tourism SME's digital capabilities and its internationalization trajectory is stronger than the corresponding relationship for non-digital resources, because tourism distribution is heavily intermediated by digital platforms.

Proposition 2b: Dynamic capabilities mediate the relationship between static resource endowments and internationalization outcomes, such that firms with equivalent resource bases but stronger dynamic capabilities achieve superior international performance.

Network embeddedness captures the density and strategic value of the firm's relationships with other actors in the tourism value system. Relevant relationships include those with upstream suppliers (transport providers, local guides, artisan producers), horizontal peers (other SMEs in complementary niches), downstream intermediaries (foreign tour operators, online travel agencies, diaspora networks), and institutional actors (destination management organizations, sectoral associations, public promotion agencies). A well-embedded SME can mobilize information, legitimacy, and complementary resources that it could not generate internally, which is particularly valuable in foreign markets where the liability of outsidership is acute (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Musteen et al., 2010).

Proposition 3: The breadth and depth of a tourism SME's international network embeddedness are positively associated with its internationalization trajectory, and this relationship is partially mediated by the firm's access to foreign market information and legitimacy.

Institutional conditions encompass the formal rules (visa regimes, currency regulations, tax treatment of tourism services, export-finance instruments) and informal norms (prevailing attitudes toward foreign visitors, public-sector service orientation) that shape the environment in which tourism SMEs operate. In Algeria, specific institutional features have historically moderated internationalization prospects, including exchange controls that complicate foreign revenue repatriation and

reinvestment, visa procedures that affect source market accessibility, and sectoral promotion frameworks of varying effectiveness (Chekouri et al., 2017; World Bank, 2022). Institutional conditions are conceived here both as direct antecedents and as moderators of the other three clusters.

Proposition 4a: Favorable institutional conditions — including regulatory predictability, streamlined visa procedures, access to export-finance instruments, and effective sectoral promotion — are positively associated with the internationalization trajectories of tourism SMEs.

Proposition 4b: Institutional conditions moderate the strength of the relationships between the other antecedent clusters and internationalization outcomes, such that weak institutions attenuate the returns to firm-level resources and capabilities.

Linking Internationalization to Economic Transformation

The framework's distinctive contribution lies in connecting firm-level internationalization to macro-level economic transformation, a linkage that international business research has tended to leave implicit. Three mechanisms are proposed. The first is productive diversification: as tourism SMEs expand their international footprint, they shift the composition of export earnings away from hydrocarbons and toward service exports with different macroeconomic properties, including lower commodity-price exposure and higher labor intensity (McMillan et al., 2017; Rodrik, 2016). The second is foreign exchange and employment generation: inbound tourism brings foreign currency into the economy and supports employment directly in tourism SMEs and indirectly in upstream suppliers such as agriculture, transport, and crafts (Brida et al., 2016; WTTC, 2023). The third is knowledge upgrading: internationally engaged tourism SMEs learn from foreign customers, platforms, and partners, and these learnings diffuse to the wider service economy through labor mobility, demonstration effects, and supplier upgrading (Hjalager, 2010; Sharpley, 2022).

Proposition 5: The internationalization of tourism SMEs contributes to productive diversification by increasing the share of non-hydrocarbon tradable services in national exports.

Proposition 6: The internationalization of tourism SMEs generates foreign exchange and employment effects that are disproportionate to the sector's share of gross value added, because of the sector's high

labor intensity and upstream linkages to agriculture, crafts, and transport.

Proposition 7: The internationalization of tourism SMEs produces knowledge spillovers that upgrade adjacent sectors through labor mobility, supplier learning, and demonstration effects, and these spillovers strengthen over time as the internationalized firm population grows.

The framework also includes a feedback loop from economic transformation outcomes back to antecedent conditions. Successful internationalization outcomes generate fiscal revenues that can finance institutional improvements, demonstration effects that strengthen the organizational cultures of peer firms, and network expansions that lower entry costs for subsequent entrants. This feedback produces the possibility of virtuous or vicious cycles, captured in the eighth proposition.

Proposition 8: Successful internationalization by a critical mass of tourism SMEs generates positive feedback effects that improve the antecedent conditions faced by subsequent cohorts of firms, producing a cumulative trajectory of sectoral transformation over time.

The framework carries implications for theory, practice, and policy. Theoretically, it extends an established analytical apparatus to a service-intensive, place-bound sector in a regional context that has received limited systematic attention, responding to calls for greater geographic and sectoral diversity in international business research (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2019; Meyer, 2017). It also challenges the tendency of that literature to treat internationalization as a uniform outward flow, by emphasizing the inbound nature of tourism service exports and the attendant implications for marketing, distribution, and regulatory strategy. For managers of Algerian tourism SMEs, the framework suggests that investment in digital capabilities, cultivation of externally oriented organizational cultures, strategic management of network relationships, and systematic attention to dynamic capabilities are complementary priorities. For policymakers, it highlights complementary areas of intervention: institutional reforms that streamline visa procedures and simplify foreign revenue handling, targeted support programs that enhance digital capabilities, sectoral promotion strategies that foster network embeddedness through cluster development, and a coherent measurement framework that tracks firm-level and sectoral outcomes.

The framework's propositions are formulated to be testable. A future empirical agenda is therefore appropriate, and several complementary strategies can be identified. A large-sample survey of Algerian tourism SMEs, stratified by subsector and region, would allow the antecedent-to-internationalization propositions (P1–P4) to be tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019). Multiple case studies of purposively selected firms would allow the mechanisms underlying P2b, P3, and P7 to be traced process-analytically (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Panel data would be required to address the dynamic claims of P2b, P7, and P8, and input-output analysis combined with macro-level econometric work would address P5 and P6. Comparative research in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan would establish the framework's external validity beyond the Algerian case.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has developed an integrative conceptual framework linking the internationalization of tourism SMEs to economic transformation in the Algerian context, with implications for comparable emerging, resource-dependent economies. Drawing on the resource-based view, the dynamic capabilities perspective, the Uppsala model, the network approach, the international new venture paradigm, and institutional theory, the framework identifies four antecedent clusters — intangible resources, digital and dynamic capabilities, network embeddedness, and institutional conditions — that jointly shape the internationalization trajectories of tourism SMEs. These trajectories, in turn, contribute to three dimensions of economic transformation: productive diversification, foreign exchange and employment generation, and knowledge upgrading. Eight testable propositions articulate these relationships, and a multi-method empirical agenda outlines how they can be evaluated in future research.

The paper's central argument is that tourism SME internationalization in Algeria is neither a straightforward outward extension of the manufacturing internationalization described in classical theory, nor a peripheral sectoral issue separable from national development strategy. It is, instead, a specific mechanism through which a resource-dependent economy can diversify its productive base, generate employment and foreign exchange with distinctive macroeconomic properties, and upgrade the knowledge content of its wider service economy. Realizing this potential requires complementary firm-level, network-level,

and institutional conditions, none of which is sufficient in isolation.

The paper's limitations are acknowledged. As a conceptual work, it does not provide empirical validation of its claims, and its framework is calibrated to a specific national context whose generalizability must be established through comparative research. Yet conceptual contributions of this kind are a legitimate and indeed necessary component of a maturing research field, because they provide the structured hypotheses that disciplined empirical work requires. The framework presented here is offered in that spirit: as a platform from which future empirical research, policy experimentation, and managerial practice can proceed with greater theoretical clarity. For Algerian tourism SMEs navigating a difficult but opportunity-rich environment, for policymakers charged with engineering diversification away from hydrocarbons, and for international business and tourism scholars seeking to extend their field's geographic and sectoral coverage, the agenda laid out in this paper identifies concrete next steps.

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LIST OF TABLES**Table 1.**

Conceptual framework linking tourism SME internationalization to economic transformation

Antecedents	Internationalization Trajectory	Economic Transformation Outcomes
• Intangible resources (organizational culture, reputation, heritage knowledge, cross-cultural competence) • Digital and dynamic capabilities • Network embeddedness • Institutional conditions	• Breadth (number of source markets) • Depth (share of foreign revenue) • Mode (inbound, outbound, digital, partnership) • Speed (gradual vs. born-global)	• Productive diversification • Foreign exchange and employment generation • Knowledge upgrading and spillovers

Note: Authors' elaboration (2026)