

An application of Butler's (1980) Tourist Area Life Cycle to Saly (Senegal)

Mouhamadou Bamba LY

Université de Thiès
Sénégal

Abstract

Richard W. Butler publishes in 1980 a model of evolution of tourist destinations known as TALC -Tourism Area Life Cycle- which stipulates that a site exploited for tourism and leisure knows 6 phases in its evolution: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, decline or rejuvenation. Several experiments of the model will be carried out around the world, however the tourist destinations located in the developing countries constitute a residual category of these applications. This article proposes an exploration of the TALC at the first station developed by the public authorities in West Africa, Saly located on the small coast in Senegal. For this purpose, we used a qualitative research method based on semi-directive interviews with actors at the level of the student site completed by official statistics. Our results show that Saly is in a so-called stagnation phase and that it is important to re-qualify the typology of tourist space in this city, which is experiencing a significant change in relation to its location.

Keywords: Tourist destination, TALC, Saly (Senegal)

Introduction

The life cycle theory used to analyze the progressive, physiological (biology), ecological (ecoevaluation) or socio-economic phenomena has been mobilized by Butler (1980) to study the dynamics of development of touristic destinations. The *Tourism Area Life Cycle* (from now on *TALC*) postulates that the latter are facing different steps of evolution which present each some characteristics. This hypothetical model can then help to identify the mechanisms and factors of change in the piloting of touristic vocation spaces.

From our review of literature, it has appeared to us that several *TALC* applications and tests have been conducted by researchers but few of them are interested in Developing Countries (from now on DC).

The continuous growth of international tourism for around fifty years and the important economic changes which are correlated to them have led many of these DC to retain tourism like a strategic orientation in their development plan.

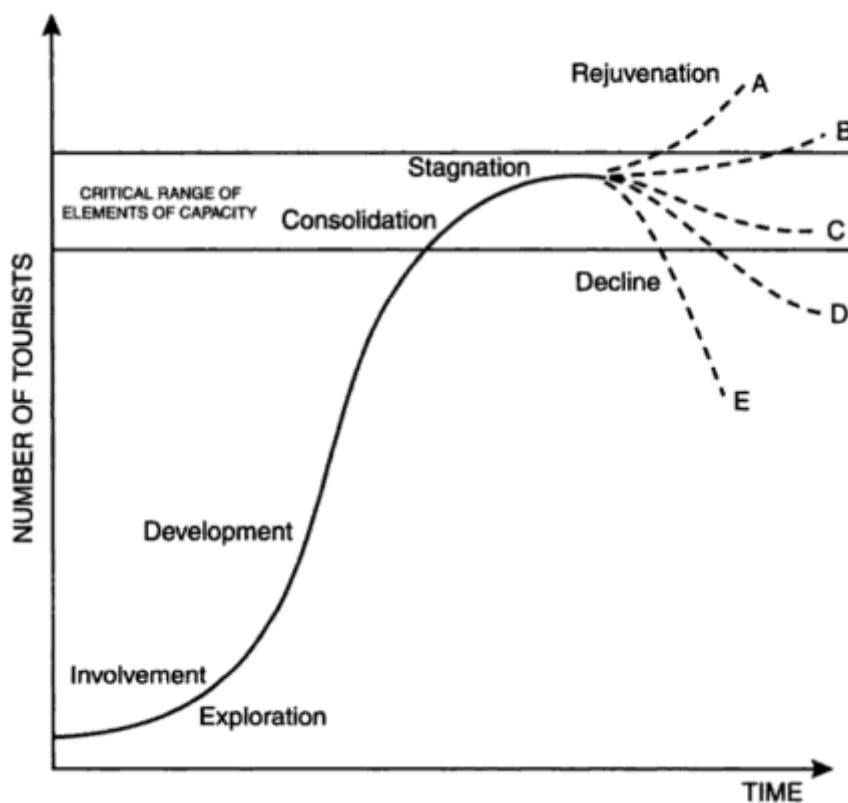
Taking profit by the important natural potential and a favorable geographical position, the Senegalese government has, therefore, wanted to make of the little coastal area a touristic attraction pole. By doing so, the Saly sea resort that was created at the beginning of the 1980s, constitutes the emblem of this economic orientation. It welcomes important public as well as private investments and ends up becoming all along the years a major touristic destination in West Africa.

Our paper proposes to retrace the development direction of this destination and to draw up the profile of its current evolution phase. The principal objective being to discuss the *TALC* applicability to this space located in a DC and which is then, an original context of study, in the theoretical domain of the touristic destination life cycle.

1. The theoretical framework

From the work on the development of touristic poles (Plog, 1973 ; Cohen, 1972) and the life cycle of the product in marketing widely distributed since Levitt (1965), Butler (1980) exposes a theoretical evolution model of the destination. Known under the acronym *TALC* for *Tourism Area Life Cycle*, the model postulates that the touristic sites go through six steps in their evolutions: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, decline or rejuvenation (diagram 1). Each of the different phases is identifiable thanks to the characteristics and a spectrum of social, geographic and economic indicators.

Diagram 1 : The theoretical life cycle of a destination



Richard W. BUTLER, (1980). “The concept of a Tourism Area Life Cycle of Evolution” *Canadian Geographer*. No 24, p.5-12.

Exploration: Few people visit the areas, adventurous tourist; interest in nature/culture; close interaction with local people, word-of-mouth promotion; minimal effect on social, cultural and physical environments; local facilities are used.

Involvement: Increased tourist numbers; still under local control; some advertising; start of tourist market and season; interaction stay high; some changes in social life and pressure on infrastructure; local entrepreneurs start to offer basic specialized service and facilities for tourists.

Development: Tourists' number rapidly increase to equal or exceed local population more foreign-owned facilities, loss of local control; promotion of artificial attraction; intensive and extensive advertising; enhanced accessibility; use of migrant labour; a rapid landscape change.

Consolidation: Growth rate declines; tourism now a major economic sector; heavy advertising; some opposition to tourism due to over-crowded and high-density of tourism destination; product deterioration and abandonment of facilities.

Stagnation: Tourist capacity reached/exceeded; reliance on repeats and conventions; surplus hotel capacity and changes in ownership; focus on package tourist; social, environmental and economic problems.

Decline: Tourist market is lost; vacationers decline; reliance on weekenders and day visitors; conversions of many facilities; local resentment towards visitors

... or **Rejuvenation:** changed attractions; a new tourist market is found.

Since its publication, the Butler model (1980) is one of the most quoted theories in the touristic literature (Cooper, 1994). In fact, more than around fifty applications under the test or even confrontation layout to "real world" have been conducted on several sites throughout the world (Weaver and Lawton, 2006). It is obvious that the *TALC* has been considered badly for its relative simplicity. The recurrent criticisms that are addressed to it underline that on the empirical plan, the process noticed in the life in touristic poles are far from the theoretical model (Haywood, 2006). As a matter of fact, the experimentations often result in modifications and adaptations to a specific case of the surveyed regions.

However, the strength of the model lies in some significant implications concerning destination management.

(i) Destination as a place of production and dissemination of tourism practices is far from static. On the contrary, its identity and position change over time due to several factors:

- Characteristics and consumption patterns of visitors;
- Accessibility and availability of means of transport and tourist facilities;
- Physical and environmental characteristics of the site;
- Dynamics and territorial recompositions of the region;
- Investments and choice of government policies;
- Appearance of new sites (competition)

(ii) The identification of reaching the limits beyond which, the destination can not "technically" continue to be properly exploited, occupies a key place in the *TALC*. This is the critical phase that announces the decline. The challenge therefore remains the prevention of this step by highlighting precursory signs. The difficulty remains in determining and measuring this "carrying capacity". Given the variable geographical characteristics according to the sites and the plethora of indicators likely to be taken into account, it is particularly difficult to define a universal method or "index". The *TALC* has been criticized from this point of view for the simplicity and "poverty" of the only indicator of "visitor numbers" (Getz 1992, Cooper 1994).

(iii) In the absence of intervention in the evolution of the destination, there appear a number of problems making the decline inevitable. It is necessary to take corrective actions in order to have a significant impact on the destination lifetime and thus increase the positive effects while controlling the tensions linked to the tourist exploitation of the site. Thus, the management appears as necessary and constitutes the weft of the TALC. In this respect, the model can be understood and used as a tool for planning and operating tourist destinations. Haywood (1986) in an article entitled "Can the tourist-area cycle be made operational?" Provides a significant number of recommendations for the use of the TALC for analysis, prospective and site management purposes. The last phase of the model involves "the theory of innovation". Butler postulates that the destination is not necessarily doomed to decline, but on the contrary innovation allows to extend it under another identity or a new tourist function.

2. The illustrative case (Saly)

Saly (or Sali) is located at 80 km to the South from Dakar and at 5 km from Mbour, main big city of the Senegalese little coast which extends to around 110 km long (from the Cap Vert peak to the Sangomar one).

Discovered by the Portuguese in 1444, the village has become a flourishing trading post on the Indian sea roads and was named "Saly Portugal" which has become with time the deformed expression "Saly Portudal". Until the 1970s, the village traditional economy was mainly based on agriculture, cattle breeding and fishing. The population¹ is estimated in the last national census at around 4,000 inhabitants but some sources put forward the figure 20,000 inhabitants.

Saly has a touristic function with the adoption of the Senegal 4th economic and social development plan (1969-1973) which is going to consider tourism as a major sector. In fact, from its physical, landscaped and climatic characteristics favorable to tourism, the little coast will be concerned about an adjustment plan in 1972 completed by a feasibility survey in 1976 and the implementation of an adjustment and promotion of tourism company in 1975. If the project planned putting in tourism 6 zones, only the sea resort of Saly would effectively come to light at the beginning of the 1980s. The objective set by the then authorities was to position the little coast and Saly as a foundation of European winter tourism². Two Touristic Adjustment Units (TAU) will be identified on a total perimeter of 600 hectares. The Saly resort has become, throughout the years, one of the main destinations of sea resort tourism in West Africa. During the decade 1990-2000, there has been a rise of 132% in activity there with more than 100,000 international tourists, around 22% of all the tourists registered in a national level (Dehoorne and Diagne, 2008).

In 2015, we count on the domain of the sea resort 17 hotels from 2 to 5 stars and 33 residences for a total of 10,000 beds (according to the company in charge of the development of the little coast, SAPCO). Next to this accommodation and hostelry offer, there is an important number of activities linked to a touristic

¹ It is particularly difficult to give an exact figure of the population due to a very unstable demography which can be explained by the flows of tourists, seasonal workers, Europeans who have got secondary residences in the area.

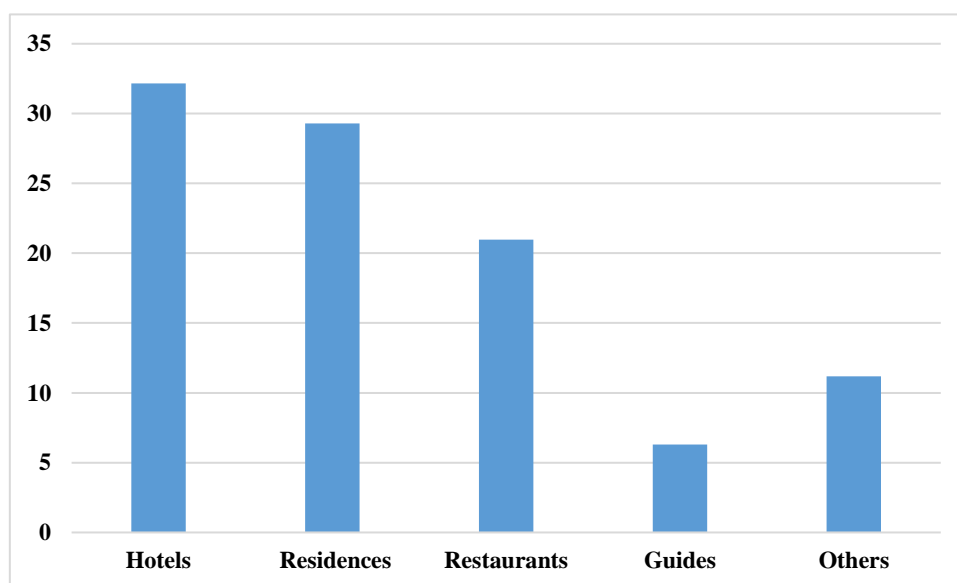
² In the tropical countries and particularly in Sub Saharan African lands, « European winter tourism » is the tourism done by European nationals during the winter in Europe. This period coincides in these countries with season said dry to that is opposed to the rainy season. The sunniness and the temperatures that are particularly mild offer an ideal holiday framework. It also corresponds to the high touristic season from November (n-1) to April (n).

stay namely some chains of agencies, business, restaurants and various leisure equipments. The demand addressed to the destination is essentially composed of two segments: the seaside resort of leasues and for around fifteen years the tourism of congresses and seminars.

We remark therefore an important change in the frequentation of the site that is related these last years to a high proportion of residential tourism.

Tourism is, has become throughout the years, the main economic activity of Saly so much so that all or almost in this city are in a way or another related to the frequentation and the consumption of visitors. The contribution of the sector to the budget of the township is estimated to 70% and a great number of residents has a job in an activity directly in relation with tourism (Diagram 2).

Diagram 2: Distribution of employment in Saly



Source: Senegalese Ministry of Environment (2011)

As a whole, 82.5% of the assets develop in the lodging, hostelry and restaurant sectors. As for the activities indirectly related to tourism, trade has one third of the workers.

3. Methodology

The results obtained are outputs of a land exploring first phase within the context of a doctorate paper. The approach is essentially based on the collect of qualitative data in order to appreciate the actors' perception on the evolution of the resort, their attitude in relation with a transfer of the concepts of sustainable development to their activities and aptitude to adhere to a collective strategy. The material used is a semi-directive maintenance guide articulated around five themes: (i) image and competitiveness of the destination, (ii) level of threat on the ecosystems and the main natural attractions of the site, (iii) commitment of the actors on sustainable tourism, (iv) aptitude of the actors in participating in a collective strategy and (v)

perception of the local populations on the touristic project. Secondly, some quantitative data (statistics of frequentation, weight of the touristic economy in the township) have been collected within the circle of the contractors and official structures. The recruitment of interlocutors has been undertaken from these three criteria :

- *Diversity* so as to touch all types of actors involved in the touristic project ;
- *Knowledge by the speaker of the sustainable development concept* as well as its transfer to the touristic activities in the developing countries ;
- *Length of service* of their activity on the site.

As a whole, 11 (line of semantic saturation) leaders with important positions in public institutions, local authorities (Saly town hall) and managers of hotels have been interviewed face to face with note taking and /or audio recording. The answers have been retranscribed on computer under Word format. Due to the reduced size of the sample, it has not seemed necessary for us to resort to a software of textual analysis or of discursive analysis. A manual thematic analysis of the verbatim has then been conducted. Secondly, we have proceeded to the exploitation of a corpus of historic archives namely press articles and the speech of actors.

4. Results and discussions

4.1 The « Saly destination » life cycle

The answers given by the interviewed actors which are completed by the observation and the exploitation of a rather varied corpus of additional resources (archives, newspaper articles, internet sites) have led us to identify three great phases in the Saly life cycle.

4.1.1 First phase (1980-2000)

A relatively long stage during which the destination has positioned itself like a credible alternative to the destinations « sun » of the West Indies, of the Carribean and Maghreb due to a relative physical proximity (5,000 kms) and cultural proximity (French language, former French colony) of Senegal with the French market, principal provider of tourists in West Africa. That being done, a strategy of promotion of the destination with the TO relayed by a “*charterization*” policy thanks to a funding of the European Economic Community (EEC which is currently EU) has allowed to establish a strong international image. This phase could briefly be cut up into two sequences of evolution of the *TALC* theoretical model:

- « *involvement* » from 1980 to 1986 corresponding to the first investments as well private as public since the state through the support instruments is going to conduct the implantation of the operators on the site. The assumed option to make of tourism the lever of diversification of the Senegalese economy has been shown by important efforts in adjustment, a training of human resources, a policy of fiscal incentive and the participation of the State in the touristic companies.
- « *development* » from 1986 to 2000, a long phase certainly punctuated by « points of discontinuity » corresponding to conjunctural events the main ones of which are :
 - in 1989-1990, the Senegalo-Mauritanian conflict which negatively impacted on the touristic frequentation of the country causing by the way an important drop in the arrivals in Saly which obtained the quarter of them to the national level ;

- in 1994-1995, in the heart of the Casamance conflict, the missing of 4 French tourists in the region provoked a certain disaffection of the destination ;
- after the devaluation of the CFA in 1994, it is noted a recovery of arrivals and investments namely in the residential properties.

But globally, the touristic activity growth tendency on the site and the confirmation of Saly as a major sea-side resort destination in Africa capable of competing with the Maghreb remains :

- important investments in hotel ;
- the marketing of the destination by the TO with the rates of hotel bookings close to 100% in the height of the season ;
- rather varied customers' profiles : young people, unmarried ones, couples, families from different geographical areas even if the French market has remained in the majority ;
- an important training practice of the touristic activity with the flowering of connected activities (craft industry, trade, leisures...) a positive economic impact in all the city of Mbour.

On the ecological domain, it is when the first problems arise, those essentially related to a mismanagement of the natural capital and the landed property. An important program of deforestation initiated without a real environmental impact survey consisted in cutting several vegetable species (filaos, eucalyptus, bougainvilleas...) which were forming "the landscaped belt" to welcome private residences and secondarily those of holiday by besides breaking the law of the adjustment plan. The land speculation and the anarchical development of buildings that resulted from this combined to a whole lot of interventions on the sea-shore are progressively going to sustainably transform the resort.

4.1.2 Second phase (2000-2008)

It is one phase that can be qualified as that of maturity (« *consolidation* » in Butler's model). The destination is well established as a base of sea resort tourism and of leisures in Senegal and even in West Africa and obtains according to estimations a little more than the quarter of the national touristic frequentation (around 800,000 visitors in 2007). Though in the height of the season, the number of visitors exceeds the local population, signs of slackening or even breathtaking start to be apparent :

- accentuation of the deforestation and anarchical construction of new residences ;
- uncontroled urbanization which moreover results in Saly being turned into a township in 2008;
- net slackening of hotel investment ;
- disappearance of the beach up to the level of some sites that is indeed due to the building of infrastructures without dialogue and progressive, previous survey ;
- occupancy rates on a falling tendency ;
- progression of local customers and of the segment « congress and business » ;
- weak progression of the « *first time tourist* » proportion ;
- high rate of return of « habitual ones » (up to 60%) showing then the Saly *product destination* does no longer conquer new parts of the market ;
- strong proportion to residential tourism and rise of property business ;

- the offer is a little diversified and globally suffers from a quality deficit ;
- accentuation of social problems : insecurity, prostitution, cultural depravity.

4.1.3 Current phase (since 2010)

The current phase in which the destination is found is the one called “*stagnation*” in Butler’s model (1980). It is described as being a critical evolution stage of the destination during which the contract capacity of the site is achieved turning to a deterioration of the original offer (primary resources originally from the attractiveness of the territory), a loss of competitiveness, of the erosion of the image and other criteria of several orders (economic, social and even cultural) that we test in table 2.

As a whole 12 of the 14 criteria defined by Butler to qualify the “*stagnation*” stage evolution are verified at Saly presently. Some points have been observed before or have started at anterior phases and are confirmed progressively, it is namely about the criteria 2, 3, 6, 10 and 13.

Table 1 : Test of the indicators of the stagnation phase

	Butler’s criteria (1980) from (Berry, 2001)	YES	NO	Comments
1	Peak of frequentation achieved	X		
2	Environmental issues	X		Progressive disappearance of the landscaped strip, insalubrity, coastal erosion.
3	Social issues	X		Prostitution, begging and soliciting, acculturation
4	Economic problems	X		Promoters’ confidence crisis, land speculation, important seasonality, bankruptcy of many companies, under-utilization of capacities,
5	The image of the destination is established but is no longer so attractive	X		Namely with the segment young / adult European tourist in couple or in a family
6	Strong proportion of « <i>repeat tourist</i> »	X		Up to 60% of frequentation of some establishments and strong tendency to residential tourism
7	Occupancy rate fall	X		Yearly average booking rates of hotels below 50%
8	Important efforts to attract visitors (i.e. publicity, diversification of offers, lengthening of the touristic season,..)	X		Publicity with Senegalese during the periods of school holiday, rise of the congress and seminar segment
9	Montée du profil visiteur en groupe (tourisme de masse par des TO notamment)Rise of the visitor profile in group(mass tourism by namely TO)		X	
10	The equipments built by man become more attractive than the natural and cultural attractions.	X		Development of several leisure equipments (sport, casinos, night clubs)
11	The sea resort image more and more departs from the destination	X		Due to the coastal erosion, a lot of hotels do no longer have beaches and the leisure activities have overtopped the sea resort ones (weekend leisures and namely night clubs)

12	The destination develops with new investments but more and more in periphery of the original site	X		Saly has become very urbanized, building of residences, shopping centers, restaurants and hotels between Saly and Mbour to the South and Saly and Somone to the North.
13	Frequent changes of the propriety (investors-promoters) of the equipments	X		
14	Local people consider that tourists are boring		X	

4.2 Discussions

As it is true that the conjunctural factors like the insecurity related to terrorism, the establishment of an entry visa in Senegal for the French nationals, the airline transport cost and more recently the Ebola virus episode, have affected the destination, it goes without saying that the “*Saly destination product*” has not been able either to renew itself or to preserve and value its main comparative advantages: a natural, landscaped and preserved environment and a good location. Today, it is even the question of the future of Saly tourism which worries the actors since many signs that are presently evoked tend to confirm that Saly is ready to start a *post touristic era* (Baum, 2006). So, it is the typology of Saly touristic space that it is suitable to reconsider. In fact, from a sea resort, Saly has become a “resort with an urban function” (Knafou and al, 2008) and presents the following characteristics:

- Strong urbanization ;
- Development of a « residential tourism »;
- Decline of sea resort tourism and development of business tourism;
- Frequented in major part by local people;
- Diversification of economic functions ;
- Equipments of cultural animation and of leisures;
- Management shared between local authority (Town Hall) and the authorities (SAPCO) with a recurrent conflict of competences.

Conclusion

Butler’s *TALC* applications (1980) have almost concerned destinations localized in rich countries. By experimenting it in Saly, sea-shore resort emblematic of the touristic promotion politics in Senegal, we have been able to show that the theory could also be mobilized to read and qualify the touristic destination evolution dynamics in DC. From our investigations, it has been shown, at the level of our case study, that its evolution trajectory has a little bit been hastened by an absence of a sustainable management of resources. What urges us to postulate that life cycle and sustainability must be complementary concepts in the piloting of touristic destinations.

References

S. Agarwal, “Coastal resort restructuring and the TALC”, in R.W. Butler (ed.), *The Tourism Area Life Cycle Vol.2: Conceptual and theoretical issues*, Chanel View Publications, 2006, pp.201-218.

- T.G. Baum, "Revisiting the TALC: Is there an off-ramp" in R.W. Butler (ed.), *The Tourism Area Life Cycle Vol.2: Conceptual and theoretical issues*, Chanel View Publications, 2006, pp. 219-230.
- E.N. Berry, An application of Butler's (1980) model Tourist Area Life Cycle theory to the Cairns Region, Australia 1876-1998, Doctoral thesis, School of Tropical Environment Studies and Geography, James Cook University of North Queensland, Cairns Campus, 2001.
- R.W. Butler, "The concept of tourism area cycle of evolution: implications for management of resources", *Canadian Geographer* 24, 1980, pp.5-12.
- E. Cohen, "Toward a Sociology of International Tourism", *Social Research* 39, 1972, pp.164-182.
- C.P. Cooper, "The Destination Life Cycle: an Update." In Seaton A. V., Jenkins, C. L., Wood R. C., Dieke, P.U.C., Bennett, M., MacLellan, L. R. et Smith R. (eds.) *Tourism: the State of the Art*, Brisbane: Wiley, 1994, pp. 340-346.
- D. Getz, "Tourism planning and destination life cycle", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(4), 1992, pp.752-770.
- K.M. Haywood, "Can the tourist-area life cycle be made operational?", *Tourism Management*, 7(3), 1986, pp.154-167.
- R. Knafou, (ed.), Duhamel P., Gay J.C., Lazzarotti O., Sacareau I., Stock M., Violier P. *Tourisme I, Lieux communs*, Belin, Mappemonde, 2008.
- T. Levitt, "Exploit the product life cycle", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 43, 1965, pp 81-94.
- S. Plog, "Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity?", *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 14(3), 1973, pp.13-16.
- Senegalese Ministry of Tourism, *Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Tourism (2014-2018)*, 2013.
- D.Weaver, and L. Lawton, *Tourism Management*, 3rd ed., Milton: John Wiley, 2006.
- O. Dehoorne and A. K. Diagne, « Tourisme, développement et enjeux politiques : l'exemple de la Petite Côte (Sénégal) », *Études caribéennes* [Online], 9-10 | April-August 2008, posted on August 15, 2008, accessed on May 11, 2017. URL:
<http://caribbeanreviews.revues.org/1172>; DOI: 10.4000 / Caribbean Studies.1172