

THEORETICAL REVIEW AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES OF THE TOURISM SECTOR IN RIOHACHA, COLOMBIA

Edilberto Rafael Santos Moreno¹, Lorena Esther Gómez Bermúdez², Martha Josefina Castrillon
Rois³

¹*Universidad de La Guajira. Colombia*
esantos@uniguajira.edu.co

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4775-1317>

²*Universidad de La Guajira. Colombia*
lgomez@uniguajira.edu.co

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1638-7428>

³*Universidad de La Guajira. Colombia*
mcastrillon@uniguajira.edu.co

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7099-1493>

Abstract

The objective of the study is to analyze the principles of strategic planning in SMEs in the tourism sector in the city of Riohacha, as well as to carry out a documentary review of the theory that frames the study of these variables, to constitute an important bibliographic material to support the future research. This study bases its methodology on documentary analysis since it has analyzed what has been written and published by different authors and researchers, through their works related to the principles of strategic planning in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector. Among the main contributions made by this research, it is established that thanks to the proposed documentary analysis, it was possible to know the most general and most important aspects within the management of SMEs in terms of strategic planning, addressing areas such as personnel management, inventory management, and design of marketing strategies, among others, which allow building theoretical foundations for the generation of new knowledge in this regard.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, SMEs, Tourism Sector.

I. Introduction

The importance of SMEs has several aspects: first, they are a source of employment for, mainly, economically disadvantaged people; second, they promote the economic and social development of a given locality; third, they provide support to large companies, helping to solve some production-related problems; and fourth, they

generate employment for people with entrepreneurial initiatives.

The economic spectrum is fundamental for the development of SMEs, considering the dynamism of this spectrum given the progressive globalization experienced by the economies of the region as they integrate into world economies.

This has led Latin American countries to turn their attention to underutilized economic potential, such

as tourism, to promote the creation and development of SMEs. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), by the year 2015, SMEs in the tourism sector will represent up to 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and will account for up to 11% of global employment, equivalent to 2.6 million jobs.

However, in Colombia, tourism activity has been poorly organized. It was in 2002 that tourism began to develop as an indicator of economic growth, given the climate of confidence and security experienced in the country, the tax incentives implemented, and the rescue of foreign investment: fundamental aspects for the transformation of tourism.

Likewise, the economic development strategy agreed upon in 2011 under the name Pacific Alliance, agreed by the leaders of Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Colombia to move towards the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, contributed significantly to the development of tourism activity (Chavarro and Sellamén, 2016).

To be more specific about the content of this work: in July 2015, through Law 1766, the Colombian Congress granted Riohacha the category of Special, Tourist, and Cultural District, given the existing vocations and potentialities.

In addition to the above, SMEs have experienced growth in the district. In 2014, there were 298 small companies (224 in 2013) and 47 medium-sized companies (38 in 2013), according to figures from the Chamber of Commerce of La Guajira.

In general, all companies, regardless of their capacity and the economic sector in which they operate, must increase their productivity and competitiveness to remain in the market. This implies an organization with a mission, vision, objectives, and functions established and aligned with the business strategy. Likewise, they must establish a marketing plan that will allow them to capture the opportunities of the environment, and new clients and build the loyalty of the existing ones.

Considering the previously established premises, and adding the scientific initiative, it was decided to undertake a study to analyze the principles of strategic planning in the SMEs of the tourism

sector located in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha.

2. General objective

To analyze the theory that frames the principles of strategic planning in the SMEs of the tourism sector located in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha.

3. Methodology

Considering the parameters to which the category related to the documentary objective (number 1) is subject in terms of analyzing the external environment of SMEs, a documentary type of research was necessary. In this sense, Montero and Hochman (2005) point out that documentary research is in which the researcher systematically analyzes a set of valid documentation to clarify the application of concepts.

For his part, Chávez (2007, p. 137) defines documentary studies as “those conducted based on documents or bibliographic review (...) to collect information from written and unwritten documents susceptible of being analyzed”. Consequently, the approach to the documentary objective followed the criteria of the aforementioned authors in that the various sources that constitute the units of analysis were analyzed.

3.1 Data collection technique and instrument

From the documentary research approach of bibliographic design, the data collection technique was the documentary review since the analysis was made directly from the bibliographic material selected by the researchers as units of analysis. In this regard, Arias (2016, p. 155) points out that these techniques “are the different forms or ways of obtaining information. Examples of techniques are direct observation, the survey in its two modalities (interview or questionnaire), documentary observation”.

For his part, Mendicoa (2003) points out that the documentary review makes use of various documents that make up units of analysis on which

the researcher will provide his treatment inspired by his perceptions and interpretations, different from those that can be the object of quantification. This technique can be used as an observation instrument in which coding categories are developed as concretely as possible, to select those categories that enhance logical relationships

according to the research objectives (Mendicoa, 2013).

For the specific case of this research, an observation script was designed to measure the external environment category of SMEs.

Table 1. Documentary observation script

Category:				
Elements of analysis	Document title	Author	Year	Elements observed in the review

Source: Gómez *et al.* (2016).

4. Results

4.1 Previous research relevant to the study

In any research process, regardless of the paradigm or approach that characterizes it, the researcher(s) usually review previous studies related to the variable to obtain some theoretical or methodological references to guide their research in a given context. This chapter contains the scientific productions related to the present research.

The first work to be cited is that of Barrios (2011) in his research entitled “Strategic planning in Spanish schools in the city of Quetzaltenango”. The study was conducted with owners and directors of Spanish schools in the city of Quetzaltenango and the general objective was to determine how strategic planning is applied in Spanish schools. The author used the descriptive model as the research design and the collection of information consisted of a survey to evaluate the degree of existence and application of strategic planning in the schools. Barrios was able to verify that most owners have formulated general and specific objectives, which help schools to direct their operations and to materialize what is established in their mission and vision.

The author concluded that most owners of Spanish schools in Quetzaltenango empirically apply strategic planning, and in this sense, she recommends that school owners receive training to learn more about the elements and tools to apply planning professionally.

The contribution of this study to the present research was theoretical and methodological, taking as a reference the cited authors and the research techniques used to evaluate its applicability in the context of the SMEs of the tourism sector located in the Special Tourist and Cultural District of Riohacha.

The second research cited was that of Castaño (2011) entitled “Strategic planning in SMEs in Bogota: future orientation and uncertainty avoidance”. The objective of this research was to analyze qualitatively how strategic planning processes are carried out in three service sector companies. The research was developed under the qualitative paradigm, with an ethnographic model, using as a technique for data collection the in-depth interview to explore the strategic planning activities and to delimit the presence of the conceptual elements outlined in the international and national literature.

Three cases were selected that show different organizational compositions and attitudes towards

strategic planning. The first case is that of a couple that became independent and consolidated their company: Productos Alimenticios el Pilón. The second case is that of a family company with an already consolidated business: Madechem Ltda. The third case is that of a non-family business, with several years of work, but to grow: Grupo ACLAB Ltda.

Regarding the results, the informal processes of the three cases studied show that a strategic planning exercise is carried out every year, in which internal and market behavior information is gathered to set objectives and goals for each year. This procedure is recorded in a final document. How this planning is developed is quite broad, allowing them to abandon what was planned in the face of new circumstances.

The intuitive nature of strategic planning was also analyzed, and in this regard, a high degree of emotionality was evidenced in such planning, which decides to assume a form of distribution without judiciously exploring the conditions implied by this new form of distribution.

Regarding the main conclusions, when comparing the cases studied in the application (or not) of strategic planning processes, it is evident that the case in which strategic planning is not carried out shows a traditional form of companies in Bogotá: those that are immersed in a social network that supports them and provides them with stability. The ability is implicit, based on the strengthening of the social network of the manager (owners) and their family, and does not need to be documented, formalized, or formulated through administrative processes.

Castañó's research (2011) constituted a contribution to the study presented in this work, from the theoretical point of view, since it deployed a conceptual dissertation on strategic planning used as a reference in the theoretical foundation of this research.

The third study subject to documentary review was that of Aguirre (2014) entitled "Strategic planning and labor productivity in the hotel Del Campo, Quetzaltenango". The objective of this research was to identify whether three-star hotels in the city of Quetzaltenango have strategic planning to promote good customer service and

meet the needs of consumers. The study used the descriptive model as a research design; for the collection of information, an interview with twenty-six questions was conducted and answered by the managers. The research proved that strategic planning will allow more effective and efficient decision-making in the solution of both administrative and business problems.

This study concluded that three-star hotels in the city of Quetzaltenango use strategic planning, considering it a great help because it also benefits administrative processes. Planning helps all personnel to know their work area and to be more efficient when offering the service needed. The value of this study for this research consisted of being an enriching experience both in the methodology used and in the theoretical foundations applied to evaluate the strategic planning process in organizations.

The fourth research consulted was that of Callejas *et al.* (2012) entitled "Competitive advantages for SMEs based on strategic planning". The objective of this study was to formulate a strategic planning proposal for SMEs, aimed at promoting their growth, competitiveness, and market positioning. It was a documentary-type study, with a bibliographic design, using as techniques the elaboration of summaries and the file; content analysis was used to process the information.

As a result of the documentary review, the study showed that strategic planning is a flexible management pattern through which modifications, changes, restructurings, or reorganizations can be made in companies. The review also revealed that the principles of planning focus on having a clear organizational profile (mission, vision, objectives, strategies, policies, values, among others) and on the aspects of formalizing the environment.

As main conclusions, the authors argue that strategic planning allows companies to coordinate and orient their productive and organizational activities towards the achievement of their goals; likewise, it is argued that planning does not generate greater investment or resources beyond the institution's reach. On the other hand, planning also helps to represent possible problems and reduces uncertainty, facts that result in higher productivity and competitiveness.

The work of Callejas *et al.* (2012) provides an exhaustive theoretical exposition on strategic planning that contributed to strengthening the bibliographic references used in this study, becoming a solid contribution.

A fifth scientific reference was presented by Mora *et al.* (2014) entitled: “Strategic planning and competitiveness levels of MSMEs in the commerce sector in Bogota”. The objective of this study was to analyze the relationship between the dimension of strategic planning and competitiveness in MSMEs in the trade sector in the city of Bogota. It was a study under the positivist approach, of descriptive type, with a cross-sectional field design. The instrument used to collect information on business competitiveness was the “IDB Competitiveness Map” questionnaire. The statistical analysis was based on direct and partial correlation tests (using SPSS software).

Among the main results of the study by Mora *et al.* (2014), it was obtained that the average level of competitiveness of the commerce sector (of SMEs and microenterprises) is 70%, a relatively high figure with opportunities for improvement considering that for the year 2011 it was one of the sectors that contributed most to the growth of Bogota's GDP. On the other hand, it was possible to identify that micro-enterprises (in 7 of the 8 dimensions studied) have competitiveness levels below 80%, which indicates that they have problems when competing in the market. For these microenterprises, their overall competitiveness index is 69%.

Among the main conclusions, it was found that there is a direct and significant relationship between strategic planning and the dimensions of competitiveness of MSMEs in the commerce sector in Bogota. Likewise, in the case of micro-enterprises, low performance was observed in the different dimensions, which affects the overall competitiveness of the commerce sector (more than 90% of its structure is made up of micro-enterprises).

In the research by Mora *et al.* (2014) a balance of SMEs in Colombia was presented with the planning process, this is undoubtedly a significant contribution to the argumentation presented in this

chapter. It was considered pertinent to include as a scientific reference the article by Córdoba *et al.* (2014): “Strategic planning and its effect on the permanence and consolidation of small and medium-sized family businesses”. The objective of this article is to determine whether the lack of implementation of strategic planning is among the closure factors of SMEs. This was a positivist and descriptive research; the survey technique was used for data collection with the design of a questionnaire. The analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics with the use of absolute and relative frequencies.

The results of the study showed that there is a strong resistance in the family SME sector to invest time and energy in the application of strategic planning principles. Nevertheless, actions are carried out that allow the SMEs to maintain their operations during periods, achieving their prosperity and attenuating their competitiveness in the market.

The main conclusions were: a) the time of operation of the companies analyzed was four years, which indicates that they were not positioned in the market; b) the inexistence of strategic plans of an action directed to the organization; c) the creation of the companies was oriented to satisfy the needs of the families and not with a perspective of competitiveness; d) the propensity of the managers of the SMEs is not to plan, nor to establish mechanisms of supervision and control.

It was pertinent to cite this study, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, since the process of formation of SMEs, in general, arises from the interest of a family group; and their behavior to some extent marks the application of the principles of strategic planning; in this sense, knowing the result and conclusions of the research by Córdoba *et al.* (2014) guided the observation guide of the authors of this work.

4.2 Theoretical and conceptual elements of planning

Planning sets a direction, reduces uncertainty and redundancies, and allows the establishment of criteria for control. Above all, it answers the

questions: what, how, when, where, and by whom determines organizational strategies to achieve goals.

It sets a direction since the members of the organization know where the organization is heading, can coordinate their activities, cooperate and do what is necessary to achieve the institutional goals. It reduces uncertainty since it allows directors or managers to anticipate changes, consider their impacts and prepare responses that adjust.

Likewise, planning reduces the overlapping of activities, as well as coordinating them according to an established procedure. In this context, planning makes it possible to identify the organization's means and ends, thus highlighting inefficiencies and correcting and/or eliminating them. Likewise, the principles of planning make it possible to establish goals and control criteria for work practices and micro-practices to monitor and compare the performance of the goals.

Planning involves several epistemic elements: the subject who plans, the population context from which decisions are made, the work environment, and giving meaning to decisions. In other words, planning is framed within rationality and logic (Lopera, 2014).

In this tenor, it can be stated that planning is to guide the political processes of global and higher order in such a way that they intervene in the decision-making of the actor or actors that lead the social game, this to lead society towards the desired futures through a rational model (Martinez, 2013).

However, the manager or decision-maker has debated since the 1970s between two options: normative planning and strategic planning.

Normative planning is characterized by a set of actions and interactions that cannot be foreseen. Strategic planning is long-term and approaches the organization as a whole. Further development of both concepts will be presented in the following section.

4.2.1 From policy planning to strategic planning

Normative planning was initially a simple technique of economic projections used in economic and social development planning. It is deterministic planning that ignores the actors of the social process, as well as politics (Lopera, 2014). This type of planning sets rules of rational representation in the economic and social aspects and quantifies the goals. In this sense, it is a directive planning, based on "prescriptions", with technocratic criteria and does not generate spaces for participation. The methodology of normative planning focuses on:

- The formulation of the problem, has the function of identifying the problems present, in addition to explaining the reason for their existence.
- The identification and design of solutions with possible forms of intervention, as well as the preparation of the programs, budgets, and designs required to move on to the implementation phase.
- The control of results, where every plan is subject to adjustments.

According to Gonzalez (2014), strategic planning is the effort aimed at generating those decisions and actions considered fundamental by social and economic agents to realize the desired vision of the future, through a relationship between objectives and measures to achieve them with well-established priorities. In this sense, the characteristics of this type of planning include flexibility, dynamic reality, participation of different actors, work in virtual scenarios, permanent evaluation, and the existence of objections and obstacles.

According to Matus (2010), the strategic planning methodology is guided by moments or phases: analytical-explanatory moment, normative moment, strategic moment, and tactical/operational moment.

The analytical-explanatory moment responds to the questions: what is happening and what is the situation. It is about explaining the reality from the perspective of the planner and the environment; it is a diagnosis of the situation where the perspectives of all those involved are considered. In normative planning, on the other hand, it is assumed that reality is one and only one.

Concerning the normative moment, this refers to the point at which one visualizes where one wants to go. In other words, it is the moment at which the strategy is designed as opposed to the problems identified in the explanatory moment. It also includes how the decision and execution of the strategies should be. For the strategic moment, it is where the road to be traveled is identified, in this sense, the strategy will consist of overcoming the obstacles to create and travel that road. This means “making the road as we go, first as a simulation to foresee possibilities, then as a reality, learning from each experience. The strategy supposes the previous will to reach the situation-objective.

The tactical/operational moment is where it is elucidated on how to do and what measures to take to achieve the objectives. Operations are commitments to do something to modify the characteristics of one or several problems so that the plan is composed centrally of commitments and complementarily of statements and directives related to the former. The previously identified moments run under the principles of planning, aspects that will be reviewed below.

4.2.2 Principles of strategic planning

According to Armijo (2009), the principles of strategic planning are mission, vision, strategic objectives, and strategies and/or action plans.

For the author, the mission is a description of the organization's *raison d'être*, establishing its

institutional tasks, the goods, and services it provides, and the main functions that distinguish it and make it different from other institutions and justify its existence. This mission should be agreed upon by the management team and communicated to the other members of the organization.

A proper definition of the mission should contain: a) what is the purpose of the organization; b) what it does; c) for whom it is done; d) identification of the users or beneficiaries for whom the final products are intended; e) what is the expected effect to be achieved, i.e., the final result.

The vision concerns the desired future of the company. It refers to how the company wants to be recognized; it represents the values on which its actions will be based in the provision of goods and/or services. It must contain elements that allow the members of the organization and users to identify what they can expect in terms of values, creation of opportunities, and projection, among other aspects.

The strategic objectives correspond to the achievements that the organization expects to achieve in a given time (greater than one year) to fulfill its mission efficiently and effectively.

The time horizon in which the mission, vision, and strategic objectives are elaborated is between two and fifteen years, as shown in Figure 1.

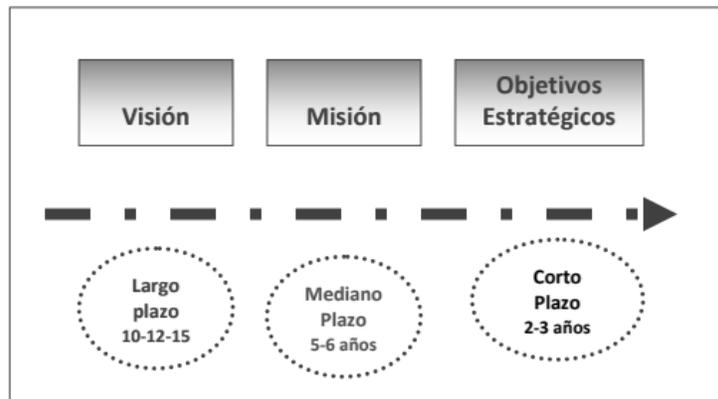


Figure 1. Mission, vision, and objectives time horizon

Source: Armijo (2009)

As can be seen in Figure 1, the vision is written for a period of between ten and fifteen years. The mission is medium-term (between five and six years). And the strategic objectives are short-term (between two and three years). In this context, the strategic objectives establish the basis for the configuration of the indicators through which the progress of the company's actions is measured. They also make it possible to ascertain the intention of a change or transformation in the quality, efficiency, economy, or result in the products, goods, or services.

Concerning the strategies and action plans, these constitute the guidelines that help to choose the appropriate actions to achieve the company's goals. They allow the definition of goals, programs, and action plans and the basis for priorities in the allocation of resources.

In this respect, the action plans form the set of tasks that the organization will establish to achieve the results: they have to facilitate the closing of the gaps that exist between the current situation and the desired situation.

In the case of SMEs, the strategies are business strategies to generate productivity and competitiveness: a) concentration of existing products or services; b) market and/or product development; c) concentration on innovation and technology; d) strategic alliance; e) diversification; f) cost reduction; and g) liquidation.

Thus, action plans are drawn up once the strategies are established that will make it possible to reduce the gaps between what is desired and the difficulties faced by the current organization and the environment. These plans are operational and are developed at the level of each of the business units or areas, and establish the respective human and financial resource requirements that subsequently allow the formulation of the budget.

For Lopera (2014), what makes the planning process strategic is the ability to know the contexts and configure the components and resources that obey the particular purposes, objectives, and orientations in a given space. This process interacts with different actors, which requires creativity and flexibility.

In this sense, according to Sánchez (2010), the principles of strategic planning focus on the generation and evaluation of alternatives, the formulation of strategic bases, and the development of solutions.

The generation and evaluation of alternatives refer to establishing the organization's objectives, which will be systematically evaluated to identify the constraints to their implementation.

Regarding the formulation of the strategic bases, according to Sanchez (2010), it is necessary to order the ideals to which the managers of the organizations aspire, based on the present reality and future effects. It is a matter of devising functional and comprehensive solutions through action plans that bring together operational programs and budgets.

In this context, managers may consider redesigning the organization if it does not respond to the solutions proposed, analyzing all those variables that may move the company away from the desired productivity and competitiveness. This involves reviewing the organizational profile (mission, vision, objectives, functions, and processes, among others).

The idea is to conceive a strategic plan that facilitates a framework to determine the direction of the organization, the future environment, and the highest level of decision-making that could affect the company's long-term strength. In other words, it is a process through which present and future corporate objectives are identified, as well as the activities and resources needed to achieve them.

The approaches of Armijo (2009) and Sánchez (2010) on the principles of strategic planning are not mutually exclusive; both conceive the organizational elements (mission, vision, objectives, among others) as characterizing these principles. From a theoretical point of view, Armijo (2009) is more detailed on the principles, while Sanchez (2010) corresponds much more to an abstract level.

4.3 Socioeconomic aspects: Theoretical elements that characterize the district

This section presents some theoretical constructs linked to the objective of the research, referring to the analysis of the external environment of SMEs in the tourism sector located in the Special, Tourist, and Cultural District of Riohacha. In this regard, reference is made to concepts of the social and economic areas present in the environment of these organizations.

4.3.1 Economic aspects

According to Benedetti and Romero (2016), the department of La Guajira has a particularly productive disposition in comparison to what happens at the national level. It is the third department, after Casanare and Meta, that mostly depends on the exploitation of natural resources, which is its main economic activity. More than half of the department's production is represented by mining and quarrying, which includes all activities related to coal extraction. The second economic activity is social, communal, and personal services with a 19% share, followed by commerce with 7%, public services with 5.5%, and transportation with 5%. The sectors of the economy that experienced growth during 2015 were construction, public services, and financial and real estate services.

Likewise, economic activities related to agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry, and fishing accounted for 3.7% of the departmental GDP in 2015. However, this sector has had stagnation mainly due to the drought affecting much of the department and the lack of infrastructure for its development.

On the other hand, the Socioeconomic Report of the Department of La Guajira, presented by the Chamber of Commerce at the end of 2015, highlights that up to November of that year in Colombia 22,887,273 m² were approved for building, which translates into an increase of 1.0% compared to the same period of 2014. However, in Guajira there was a reduction in the approval of total construction licenses, however for housing specifically there was an increase of 7.2% compared to what was approved in 2014.

The same report distinguishes that the branch of economic activity with the highest participation in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with 22%, was insurance, real estate, and business services; followed by social, communal, and personal services with 17%; manufacturing industries with 13%; and trade, restaurants, and hotels with 13%. This last percentage is very low considering the tourism potential of the department.

Regarding the population variable, the department has a low population density: being of ample territorial extension the department is home to less than half of the population of the Atlántico; preventing it from taking advantage of economies of scale. Such population represents 2% of the national population with 985,452 inhabitants (for the year 2015) being La Guajira a more rural department than the rest of the country (Benedetti and Romero, 2016).

4.3.2 Social aspects

These aspects include the tourism and cultural potential of the department, not only because they are directly related to the research, but also because they are relevant to the dynamics of La Guajira.

4.3.2.1 Tourism potential of the district

Riohacha is the capital of the Department of La Guajira. In July 2015, highlighting its tourism potential, it was elevated to a Special, Tourist, and Cultural District, governed by Law 1617 of 2013 where the operation of special districts is regulated.

It is precisely the tourism potential of the department that moved the interest of the national government to change its category. In addition to this, La Guajira has a privileged strategic geographical positioning both by air and land, and its proximity to major coastal cities such as Santa Marta and Barranquilla, its border with Venezuela, and its proximity to the insular Caribbean add to the tourist potential of this region.

On the other hand, there has been a growth in the frequency of foreign travelers to La Guajira: between 2013 and 2014 this frequency was higher

than that of Bogota and Magdalena. Also, the number of visitors to the department increased by 8% going from 8,486 to 9,187 people from 2013 to 2014. The implementation of the Aruba-Riohacha international route in 2012 represented a 62% jump in the number of foreigners visiting the peninsula by that date concerning the immediately preceding year (Benedetti and Romero, 2016).

In this regard, according to Mejía and Bolaño (2014), the quality of service and tourist satisfaction are fundamental aspects given the relevance given to the district; in that sense, a higher quality of service will lead to an increase in consumer satisfaction, i.e., the former should be treated as an antecedent of satisfaction.

For these authors, tourism supply is characterized by: a) the production of services that take place in a geographically determined place and cannot be transported; b) tourism resources are natural and cultural attractions that are not useful in the market if they are not valued and exploited; and c) natural tourism resources are inexhaustible, that is, they are not consumed when properly exploited.

4.3.2.2 Cultural dynamics of the district

For Ansa and Yicon (2009) culture is shaped by traditions and lifestyles, it is configured by cosmology and ethnography. From the point of view of cosmology, it is the scope of the ideological system shaped by the origin, structure, and universe. In the ethnographic sense, it corresponds to knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

The idea is that people adopt a system of representations and symbols used to define their world, articulate their feelings and conceive their judgments; this system contributes to guiding their behaviors and perceptions throughout their socialization process.

In this respect, La Guajira is a department favored by an ethnic fusion that makes indigenous people, whites, and blacks coexist. It is a coexistence in the form of racial and cultural miscegenation (the latter specifically due to the Wayuu culture) making it an attractive place where exchange and sharing take place (Hostein, 2010).

However, the quality of life in La Guajira is affected by the lack of water, soil salinization, and poor vegetation, among other environmental and geographic aspects that contribute to the increase of desert, resulting in a deficiency in the daily life of its inhabitants who struggle to find means to meet their basic needs (Hostein, 2010).

According to the National Cultural Information System (SINIC, 2015), the department of La Guajira is home to more than 500,000 people belonging to various indigenous, Arab, and Creole cultures. There is a permanent flow of people, whether for tourism, trade, or exploitation of mining and energy resources. Likewise, La Guajira receives a migratory flow derived from the processes of violence that the country is experiencing, populations in search of peace, work, and well-being.

According to SINIC (2015), La Guajira is multilingual and multicultural. Five indigenous groups that reside between the pampas and the mountains are the Wayuu, Kinqui, Ika, Kogui, and Wiwa, while Creoles live mainly in urban settlements, and Eurasians (mainly Arabs or Turks) live in Maicao.

4.4 Theoretical considerations on the organizational capabilities of SMEs

According to Castro and Hernández (2015), companies expand their competitive advantages based on their resources, which can be controlled in a diversified manner to implement strategies to increase productivity and competitiveness.

The resources in question refer to the accumulation of assets, processes, organizations, human talent, technology, information, knowledge, innovation, and marketing, among others, which can be controlled and enhanced as capabilities. For this study, resources related to human talent, technology, and marketing were considered. Theoretical considerations in this regard are presented below.

4.4.1 Human talent capacity

According to Montoya and Boyero (2016), human talent capability seeks to achieve alignment between how to evaluate, motivate and retain the

employees the organization needs to operate efficiently. The growing importance of human resources is due to several trends and crises in society in general, and in the world of work in particular. Added to this is the recognition that human resource management can have a major impact on organizational objectives.

To outline the major developments that have influenced the growing importance of human resource management, Dolan, Schuler, and Valle (2010) have identified six key trends and crises:

- a) Increased competition.
- b) Costs and advantages related to the use of human resources.
- c) Productivity crisis.
- d) The increase in the pace and complexity of social, cultural, regulatory, demographic, and educational changes.
- e) Symptoms of alterations in the functioning of the workplace.

f) Trends for the next decade.

Chiavenato (2010) states that the main processes of modern human resource management are centered on 6 aspects: the admission of people directly related to recruitment and selection; the application of people (design and performance evaluation); labor compensation; the development of people; the retention of personnel (training, etc.); and the monitoring of people based on management information systems and databases. These processes are influenced by the external and internal conditions of the organization.

These new precepts regarding the human factor have been incorporated to a greater or lesser extent according to each organization, and have triggered the need to have a human resources system that meets organizational requirements.

What has been explained in the preceding paragraphs is reflected in the subsystems of the human resources management system shown in Figure 2, which are described in greater detail below.

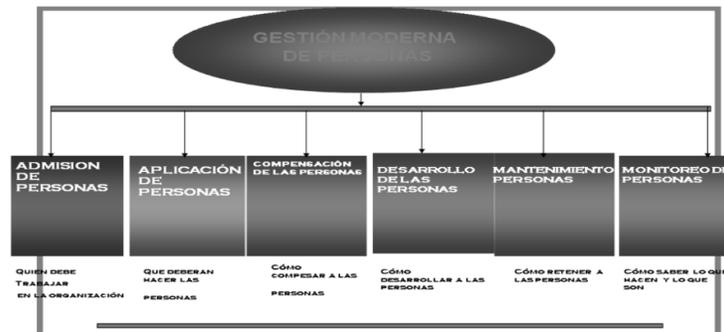


Figure 2. Subsystems of the human talent management system

Source: Chiavenato (2010).

1.- Admission of persons: variable related to the recruitment and selection of personnel. It constitutes the access routes of people to the organization, representing the entrance door, open only to candidates capable of adapting their characteristics to the predominant characteristics of the organization. Each institution codifies the human characteristics important for the achievement of the organizational objectives,

identifies them with the internal culture, and selects the people who possess them to a high degree. The selection process is the search for adequacy between what the organization intends and what the people offer (Chiavenato, 2010).

2.- The application of people: includes job design and performance evaluation. Recruiting is one of the most important issues in any organization, as well as selecting and training its participants for

the job positions so that they fulfill their role with maximum efficiency. It follows that it is important to fill the various job positions in an organization with a pool of people who meet the required qualifications (Chiavenato, 2010).

3.- Compensation of persons: involves remuneration, benefits, and services. From the perspective of people management, a viable organization is one that not only succeeds in attracting and properly applying its human resources, but also in keeping them satisfied in the organization over the long term. Maintaining people's working conditions requires special care, including management styles, employee relations, and occupational health programs (Chiavenato 2010).

4.- People development: This is understood as training, change programs, and communication. Human resource development processes are closely linked to education. Development processes involve three overlapping layers: training, people development, and organizational development. These processes can be approached in a modern way when they follow a planned model: training as part of a culture and training all people to maintain a proactive attitude, anticipating needs, and allowing a long-term vision. This development is based on consensus, i.e., people are consulted and participate in the process (Chiavenato, 2010).

5.- Maintenance of people: It mainly refers to discipline, hygiene, safety, and quality of life, as well as its relationship with labor unions. It is a process created to generate appropriate environmental and psychological conditions for people's activities. The relationship of this subsystem with the others has an important effect on human resources management because it deals with the occupational health of workers, improving their quality of life, and optimizing relations with the environment, i.e., with all those associations, foundations, and unions that are part of society, both internally and externally of the institution (Chiavenato, 2010).

6.- Monitoring of people: This aspect includes databases and management information systems. It is the process of managing people's knowledge and providing information to workers to know

where the organization's knowledge is located (Chiavenato, 2010). Organizations do not operate randomly, but according to determined plans to achieve objectives. Organizations set their missions and establish strategies; their behavior is not erratic, but rational and deliberate. For these characteristics to exist, there must be control. This subsystem must exist so that the various sections of the institution can carry out their line responsibility about personnel. It includes the databases and information systems and the auditing of them. Control is a four-stage process; establishment of desired standards; observation of performance; comparison of performance with desired standards; and corrective action to eliminate or correct deviations. Control is based on information obtained by processing data to generate databases.

Technological capacity

Technology and its use, in the process of organizational change, is becoming more and more forceful. One aspect of this is evident in the modifications of organizational designs, i.e., structures are developing from vertical to flat and flexible. On the other hand, processes (both core and support) are susceptible to improvement. And internal communication finds agile mechanisms to socialize the messages that contribute to the provision of services.

Because of the above, technology provides organizations with the possibility of putting themselves at the service of their clients' development. Through it, and in the context of information units, the user is offered access and guidance on the good or service provided.

According to Solleiro and Castañón (2016), properly managing technology implies knowing the market, technological trends, and the capacity of competitors; acquiring most favorably the technologies that are not convenient to develop internally, as well as those to be contracted abroad, guaranteeing their financing; adequately supervising their development and reacting to unforeseen events; evaluating their results, duly protecting the technology generated and obtaining the highest returns from their exploitation; achieving the optimization of production processes.

In this sense, technology is a fundamental resource of a company's strategy. It is the decisive factor in achieving a difference based on superior products/services or in building a low-cost operation. Likewise, technology can also be the basis for generating competitive advantages for other organizations (Solleiro and Castañón, 2016).

Technology must be conceived in a technological plan, included in turn within the organization's strategic plan, having as fundamental elements: a) corporate guidelines; b) basic purpose; c) objectives; d) strategies; and e) resources and capabilities (Bellido, 2012).

Likewise, technology must be evaluated, i.e., it is relevant to assess the information, knowledge, and results in terms of the impact that such technology has on the organization. In this regard, it can be said that it is a systematic process that includes: a) clear identification of the object to be evaluated; b) identification of sources of information, knowledge, and experimentation; c) extraction of data from these sources; d) an assessment of each extracted data in terms of its relevance to the object being evaluated; e) an interrelation of the data obtained with a further assessment to establish the weaknesses, threats, strengths, and opportunities of the technology in the organization; f) an assessment of the impact of the technology on the organization (Bellido, 2012).

Marketing capacity

Marketing capability is more than selling or advertising. In the words of Kotler and Armstrong (2013), it is the process by which organizations create value for their customers and establish relationships with them: the goal is to achieve customer loyalty or capitalize more.

Value creation is achieved through the company's business planning, immersed in its strategic planning, where objectives and resources are adjusted to the changing market opportunities, to reorganize the business areas to increase productivity and competitiveness.

In this regard, the core of strategic planning lies in the identification of the opportunities and threats that the company finds in its environment, which, when combined with the company's strengths and weaknesses, provide the company with the basis for defining where it wants to go in the future (Monferrer, 2013).

Planning takes the form of concrete plans consistent with the organization's mission, consisting of four stages:

- **Analysis:** study the company's environment to identify opportunities and avoid threats. The company's strengths and weaknesses should also be analyzed.
- **Planning:** moment when the organization, through its managers, establishes the objectives and the strategies to achieve them.
- **Execution:** involves putting the strategy into operation through the design of actions.
- **Control:** monitoring activities by measuring results, analyzing their causes, and taking corrective actions to ensure compliance with established objectives (Monferrer, 2013).

These stages are represented by the aforementioned author as shown in Figure 3:

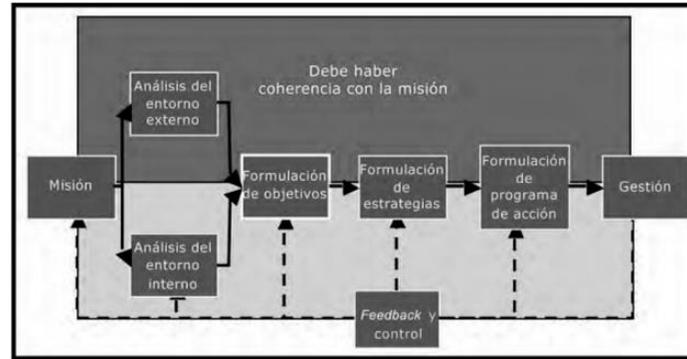


Figure 3. Stages in the development of a strategic plan.

Source: Monferrer (2013).

Regardless of the size or dimensions of the company, the stages of strategic planning make it possible to: a) develop strategic thinking; b) precisely define objectives, goals, policies, and programs; c) coordinate efforts and resources; and

d) anticipate and respond to environmental opportunities. Strategic planning includes the marketing plan aimed at establishing the company's marketing actions. Figure 4 shows the stages in the formulation of a marketing plan.



Figure 4. Stages in the preparation of a marketing plan.

Source: Monferrer (2013).

The situation analysis stage involves the development of an internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) study of the organization about its products. According to Monferrer (2013), this study consists of analyzing both the macro-environment (economic, political, social, cultural, technological, etc.) and the company's micro-environment (competition, suppliers, distributors, customers, stakeholders) to identify opportunities

that can be exploited, as well as the threats that the company must face.

This study will also allow the creation of the organization's mission for marketing; likewise, it will be able to formulate marketing objectives and strategies, which must be configured within the framework of this mission.

Marketing strategies must be aimed at meeting the marketing objectives. These strategies will allow

growth through the commercialization of the products in new markets; and, also, progress through new products or improvements of the existing ones, optimizing their quality, to be directed to other markets.

Once the analysis is carried out and the marketing strategies have been established, the next stage is implementation. In this stage, four aspects are established: product, price, distribution, and communication. These aspects correspond to the specific actions of a marketing plan (strategies) that can focus on one or all of them, depending on the needs of the organization and its customers.

The actions must be coordinated and consistent, since they contribute to the achievement of the marketing objectives, and therefore a temporal order of these actions and the allocation of resources for their development must be established.

Once it is ensured that the marketing objectives have been achieved, the last stage of planning begins with the control phase, measuring the results of these objectives, and making a comparison between what was planned and what was developed to determine the corrective actions to be taken.

Final considerations

Thanks to the documentary study proposed for the development of this document, it was possible to define the fundamental principles of strategic planning in SMEs in general terms, within which are involved the processes of human talent management, inventory control, and marketing strategies, among others, which are essential at any stage of this type of companies, either in its birth, in its maturity or in the search for strategies that increase the levels of competitiveness within a specific market, as was the case studied and described in this document, of the city of Riohacha as a Special and Tourist District and the SMEs that belong precisely to the tourism sector, evaluating the potential they may have in the development of strategies for the permanence and competitiveness within a sector whose main characteristic is the high supply and informality.

It is expected that, through the generation of documentary reviews such as the one proposed in this article, it will be possible to acquire a useful theoretical basis in the construction of new knowledge related to the design of strategies for measuring the impact and scope of SMEs in the tourism sector not only in the Special and Tourist District of Riohacha, but also to be replicated in cities with similar characteristics in the Caribbean region and even at the international level.

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