

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

IN ESSAOUIRA

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Abstract

An attempt is made to investigate the consequences of land tenure policy on the environment enhancing reforestation as a means of ascertaining tenure security in the Gambella region. This paper sheds light on the accelerated pace of deforestation in the study area and its impact on the environment. The theoretical and conceptual issues of the interrelation between reforestation, deforestation, land tenure system, and other socio-economic indicators have been given due attention in the literature review. Research methodology gives much focus on qualitative data analysis that uses ranges of data collection approaches; FGD, KII, semi-structured household interviews with the inclusion of secondary data reviews. The paper considers the effect of land tenure system on the environment and discusses the landholding system in the study area, including customary land rights among the Nuer, the Anywaa, and the Majangir. To this effect, external factors and urban expansions are addressed with the view to understanding the impact of socio-cultural practice on physical environment perception and management. A conclusion and policy implications are also discussed.

Keywords

land tenure, deforestation, reforestation, environment, Gambella

Received: February 27, 2023 | 1st Revision: June 21, 2023 | Accepted: September 10, 2023

Bozsi, Norbert - Mourabite, Sara El (2023). Sustainable Tourism Development in Essaoouira. Hungarian Journal of African Studies [Afrika Tanulmányok], 17(1), 51-67.

Introduction

The term sustainability has been present for decades in scientific papers and in public life. Sustainability is a fashionable concept but it is considered very expensive to put into practice for firms, local authorities, and governments. In 1987, the Brundtland Report defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It requires effort to link the issues of economic development with environmental stability. Sustainable development is often associated with issues like energy use, pollution, or waste. However, these are only the physical components of sustainability; the concept of sustainability encompasses three equally important issues: environment, economy, and society (David & Baross, 2009).

Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is an important part of the global economy and culture. Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world; it contributes significantly to global GDP, and is forecast to grow at an annual rate of 4%. However, the tourism sector also accounts for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which is a very large share when we consider all of the possible sources of emissions (Lenzen et al., 2018). This is the reason why it is crucial to move towards a more sustainable tourism model. Sustainable tourism can be defined as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (UNWTO, 2005). Sustainable tourism includes protecting the environment, providing socio-economic benefits for communities who live in tourist destinations, conserving the cultural heritage, creating authentic tourist experiences, bringing tourists and local communities together for mutual benefit, as well as creating inclusive and accessible tourist opportunities (Guth & Vasa, 2003; Future Learn, 2021). The concept of sustainable tourism is derived from sustainable development. The notion of sustainable tourism is not exclusively an environmental issue, but also a social, economic, cultural, political, and administrative concept.

Developing countries consider tourism as an essential element for economic development and poverty alleviation. In these countries, tourism as a sustainable instrument against poverty depends on how well tourism development policy is linked with other policies, like overall economic, agriculture, energy, and environmental policies (Khan et al., 2020). Long-term commitment is just as important as planning and implementing sustainable tourism practices for it to become a priority in all policies. Additionally, all stakeholders must be included and consulted in the decision-making process regarding tourism, with mandatory reporting of sustainable development issues, to effectively implement sustainable tourism strategies. In this case, the adverse effects on the environment must be minimized, it must have a solid overall concept of the target market to achieve design innovation, originality, a cost-benefit balance, and improve social and economic incomes for local communities and individuals.

As for tourism, it must increase environmental education, for example, by advising the client on how to behave in an environmentally friendly manner. Most importantly, increasing community value, growing local capabilities, respecting natural and cultural values, providing reciprocal incomes for tourists and hosts, and reducing water and energy consumption, are major principles to be followed in the practice of tourism (UNWTO, 2005).

Environmentally sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is closely related to the environment because it uses natural resources. Environmental sustainability is one of the most important parts of tourism. The essence of environmental sustainability is to ensure that resources in a region are well preserved for use by future generations. Tourism relies heavily on natural resources as its main attraction. Therefore, it is crucial for the government or tourism authorities to take necessary measures to conserve the natural environment and wildlife, as they hold immense value as tourism resources. Motivation is extremely important, particularly in developing countries (like Morocco), because if tourism-related organizations are unable to stimulate the government, it can damage the environment and wildlife through industrial and residential development. Residents must make tourists aware of environmental problems and drive them to a campaign to protect the environment. The government must not create new cities, towns, roads, infrastructure for airports, and dams that destroy the natural environment (Swarbrook, 2002). Besides, the tourism sector must also take a leading role in protecting and enhancing the environment on which it depends for the benefit of future generations (OECD, 2020).

Economically sustainable tourism

Economic sustainability is the ability of an economy to sustain a certain level of economic production indefinitely (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010; Remenyik et al., 2021). In other words, economic sustainability is all about using resources responsibly and efficiently. Instead of maximizing profits, firms develop strategies that benefit humans as well as the Earth. Tourism that is economically sustainable can have a beneficial impact on employment, profit, and production. Nevertheless, uncontrolled and haphazard growth in tourism may not be the optimal approach for maximizing long-term production. As the primary source of tourism resources and products, the environment must be safeguarded to ensure the continued growth of tourism and economic development in the future (Lemma, 2014; Priatmoko et al., 2021).

Socially sustainable tourism

McKenzie (2004) defines social sustainability as a life-enhancing condition within communities and a process within communities that can achieve that condition. The concept of social sustainability is the quality of life and the ability to maintain social order. When tourists start to visit the tourist destination, there are social and cultural impacts of these tourists on the host community. Tourist behaviour can have a nega-

tive impact on the quality of life of the host community, for example, overcrowding, drug and alcohol problems, prostitution, and an increase in crime also (Monterrubio & Bello, 2016). Social sustainability minimizes these negative effects and focuses on more positive effects, such as supporting cultural exchanges and maintaining local traditions. This can usually be done by involving the local population in the tourism industry (Swarbrook, 2002). If the local tourism organization can engage the host community in the tourism industry, it can provide visitors with a more realistic experience, and it is expected that the host segment will see tourism positively and will be proud of it as well.

All in all, tourism is not only one of the world's quickest growing industries but also a tremendous source of profit for many countries. Sustainable tourism creates many job opportunities for the local population, which increases quality of life, minimizes poverty, and supports local economies. It protects biological diversity, preserves the natural resources of future generations, and helps the development of innovation and new ideas in the development of sustainable goods and services (Bac, 2014).

Overview of Tourism in Morocco

The Kingdom of Morocco is situated in the northwest of Africa. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Algeria to the east and southeast, and the Sahara Desert to the south. Being separated by the Strait of Gibraltar making it just a few kilometres from Europe, it is approximately 2.5 hours away by plane from main European capitals. Its area stretches 710,850 square kilometres, and its population is approximately 37.1 million. The Moroccan capital Rabat is situated in the northwest of the country and overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. Other big cities are Casablanca on the Atlantic Ocean, Essaouira (the commercial capital) in the centre, and Tangier in the north, on the gorge of Gibraltar. The formal language is Arabic. However, Berber is also an official language and a mutual heritage of all Moroccans. French is still widely used as a business language, mostly in central and southern Morocco. Due to its proximity to Spain, the Spanish language is also spoken, particularly in the north.

Morocco is known for its diverse geography, which includes a 1,835-km coastline, mountainous regions, and vast areas of desert. The Atlas Mountains and countryside stretch from east to west, while the southern border with Mauritania is marked by sandy terrain. The country also boasts dense forests on its central plateau, productive plains in Meseta, arid high plateaus, luxurious meadows in the Sousse basin, and a multitude of rivers and lakes. The dominating weather pattern in Morocco is a Mediterranean climate, moderated in the west and the north by the Atlantic Ocean. Inland, the weather is more continental, with significant variations in temperatures. The Atlas area is very humid with frequent snowfalls and, in the south, there is a desert climate (Worlddata.info, 2021).

Morocco has a diverse cultural heritage, which is the result of a mixture of traditions and customs deriving from various civilizations that have passed through the

country: Berber, Carthaginian, Romanian, Muslim, Hassani, Jewish, Andalusian, Mediterranean, and African, among others. In addition, every region has its own characteristics that sing the entire Moroccan cultural identity. Morocco's diverse landscapes and rich culture make it an ideal destination that caters to a wide range of visitor preferences. Morocco has the world's largest phosphate reserves, a very diverse agricultural sector, numerous fisheries, and a growing tourist industry (Gilliard, 2004). Indeed, tourism is one of the most important economic activities in Morocco. One of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, is the Mediterranean region, to which Morocco belongs.

Historically, tourism began in Morocco during the French and Spanish protectorate period between 1912 and 1956, with the goal of providing for the European community's needs for vacation and leisure. After independence in 1956, the Moroccan government began a process in which tourism was increasingly recognized as a major strategic sector for Morocco's economic development (Hillali, 2005). The primary reasons for these resolutions were that Morocco does not have oil as a resource, and has received significant recommendations from international tourism experts to prioritize tourism as a key economic activity. Additionally, Morocco has long been recognized as a desirable tourist destination among European countries, contributing to its positive reputation in the industry. All this momentum promoted Morocco to consider tourism a major driver of its economic evolution (Aouni, 2015).

Nowadays, Morocco, as one of 29 Mediterranean destinations, supplies a perfect model of an emerging country that has adopted tourism as an important device for its social and economic development. Tourism in Morocco has a significant impact on the country's economy, contributing to its growth in numerous positive ways. It



▲ *Figure 1: Destinations and lines of tourist development in Morocco*
 Source: *Vision 2020 for tourism in Morocco*

serves as the primary source of foreign exchange earnings and is the second-largest contributor to GDP after agriculture and fishery. Additionally, it generates employment opportunities within the country. (Boujrouf, 2005).

There are eight major tourism destinations in Morocco: North Cape, Mediterranean Morocco, Central Atlantic, Central Morocco, Atlas and Valleys, Marrakech Atlantic, Souss Atlantic-desert, and the major South Atlantic coast. (Figure 1)

Development of the tourism sector in Morocco

Morocco is one of the most important destinations for tourists traveling to Africa, with the number of tourists travelling to the country continually increasing. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, international tourism made up 47% of the total tourism in Morocco. In the last decades, tourism of Morocco has been a flourishing sector. Figure 2 shows how many millions of tourists arrived in Morocco between 1995 and 2020. In Figure 2, anyone who spends at least one night in Morocco but remains for less than 12 months is considered a tourist. It can be seen that number of tourists continually increased between 1995 and 2019 from 2.75 million tourists reaching 13.11 million tourists. However, due to COVID-19, the number of tourists declined significantly to 2.8 million tourists for the year 2020. The red line represents the average of six countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan).

In the year 1995, tourism revenues amounted to 1.47 billion USD, and the sector had a 3.8% share of the gross national product (GNP). For the year 2019, the revenue amounted to 9.95 billion USD, accounting for 8.3% of GNP. In the year 2020 (COVID-19 epidemic year), the tourism income of Morocco dropped to 4.51 billion USD, accounting for 3.9% of GNP. However, in 2021 the tourism sector again contributed about 9 billion USD to Morocco’s revenue. The share of domestic tourists was 44%, and that of international tourists was 56% of the total revenue (Statista, 2022).

Overview of tourism in Essaouira

Essaouira is a coastal city along the Atlantic coast of Morocco, about 150 km to the north of Agadir and 180 km to the west of Marrakech. The port city was built in 1765 by Mohammed Ben Abdullah. Essaouira was a commercial centre open to foreign trade in order to strengthen the Moroccan’s European relations at the time. In ancient



Figure 2: Development of the tourism sector in Morocco
Source: WorldData 2021

time, due to its favourable geographical situation, moderate climate, and calm harbour that protected Essaouira, it was a popular anchorage for sailors. The weather is optimal for tourists all year round. It is never cold, nor does it really get hot in Essaouira. During the hotter summer months between June to August, Moroccans come from all over the country, and especially from Marrakech, to relax and enjoy the sun and wind on the beaches of cooler Essaouira. Summers are rarely hotter than 30°C, thanks to the steady breeze from the Atlantic Ocean that cools the city. The city has an amazing beach that curves for kilometres toward the south, and its relaxed atmosphere is in complete contrast to the cities of Marrakesh, Meknès Fès, and Tangier.

Tourism was established in the 1960's when the first European tourists arrived. Essaouira is a cultural commodity for visitors and tourists and has invested in its historic old town. It is known for its historic old town surrounded by complete walls and is a popular tourist destination. The locally produced consumer goods, known as “Essaouira Spirit,” include items such as woodwork, paintings, and experiences like the wind, sea, beach, and music. These goods are marketed effectively and are in high demand among tourists from Morocco and around the world, particularly Europe. (Bauer et al., 2006) In the Maghreb region, the main product of tourism is originality and exoticism, which in the domain of superficial knowledge of otherness (at the point of contact between the West and the Other), buys and orders less ethnographic facts and more representations that can be utilized with the help of the “natives” (A. Gergely, 2007).

Essaouira is poor in resources, so tourism and fishing are the two main activities that form the basis of the economy. The tourism sector provides an opportunity for



^ Figure 3: The coast of Essaouira
Source: www.travelo.hu/tavol/20180212-essaouira-marokko-kek-feher-varos-latinvaloi.html

the city of Essaouira and for all of the country to cover its needs in foreign currency and tax revenues. It is also a good chance for the inhabitants to receive permanent income, jobs, and opportunities to improve the basic infrastructure needs of the city. These are railways, airports, and other facilities that the residents are looking for in everyday life (Hadach & Rachid, 2019).

Research on sustainable tourism in Essaouira

The aim of this research was to reveal the development of sustainable tourism in Essaouira. We applied research by collecting data and by creating a set of questionnaires. Our sample design, known as simple random sampling, ensured that every item in the population had an equal opportunity to be included in the sample and any possible samples. Then, we prepared charts and illustrations to present the information more clearly.

Characteristics of the respondents

During the research, 135 questionnaires were completed. The questionnaire was filled out by 124 Moroccan, 2 Austrian, 2 Egyptian, 2 Indian, 2 Russian, and 3 Tunisian tourists. Most of the respondents (91.8%) were from Morocco whereas the lowest percentage of respondents (9.2%) were foreigners. (Figure 4) In terms of gender, women represented 55.6%, while men represented 44.4%.

Figure 5 shows that the majority of the respondents belonged to the younger age group. Based on age composition, the age group between 15 and 25 years old was dominant (55.6%), followed by those between 26 and 35 years old (37.8%). They were followed by the age 46-55 years old representing 4.4% and the category of over 55 years old made up 2.2%.

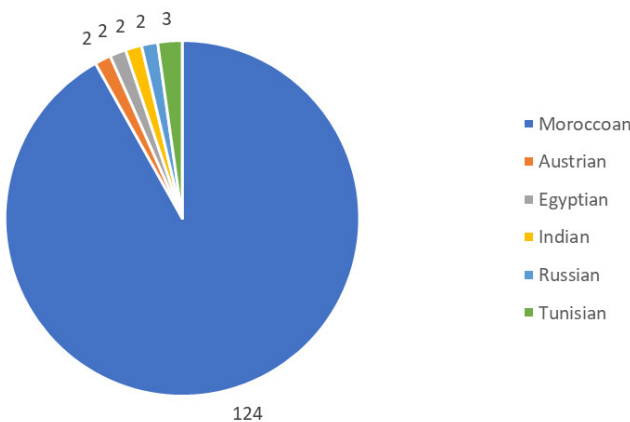
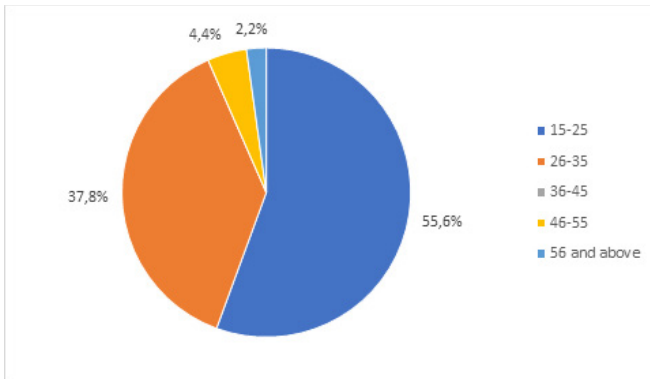


Figure 4: Nationality of Citizenship



▲ Figure 5: Age group of the tourists

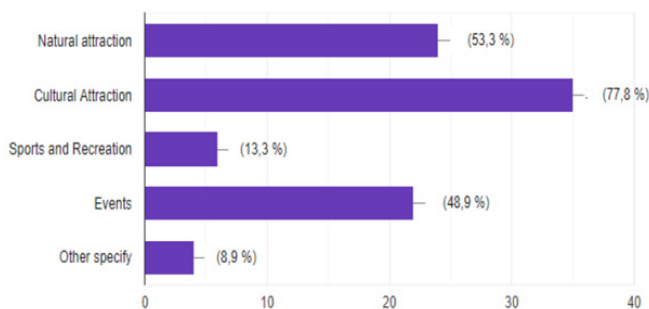
The main attractions in Essaouira

Figure 6 shows the different types of touristic attractions in Essaouira,, such as natural attractions, cultural attractions, sports and recreation,, events, and others. We received the following answers to the question of which main tourist attractions in Essaouira are known by the respondent. (More answers were possible.)

According to 77.8% of the respondents, the main tourist attractions of Essaouira were the cultural attractions, followed by natural attractions making up 53.3% and events having a 48.9% share. The share of sport and reaction had 13.3%, followed by other specify with a share of 8.9%.

Vital role of sustainability

93.3% of the tourists stated that they had already stayed at an accommodation with green accreditation, but 6.7% had no idea about green accreditation. The next question concerned the vital role of sustainability. 62.2% of the respondents agree, and 37.8% strongly agree with the vital role of sustainability. The tourists believe that sustainability can play a vital role in the development of Essaouira. (Figure 7)



▲ Figure 6: Which attractions of Essaouira you know

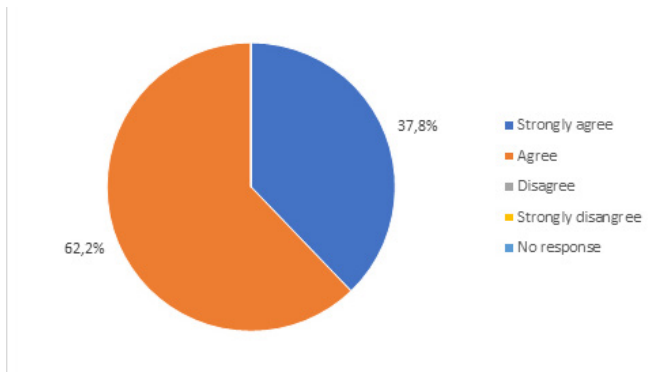


Figure 7: Vital role of Sustainability

Government activity and awareness

The next question concerned the government’s activity and awareness. 48.9% of tourists agree, and another 48.9% strongly agree that the government should be more active and aware of sustainability, while 2.2% of the tourists disagree with this issue. Therefore, Figure 8 clearly shows that majority of the tourists agree with government activity and are aware of the lingering problems.

People’s responsibility and ethicality towards nature

The tourists gave answers to the question of people’s responsibility and ethics towards nature. As shown in Figure 9, 75.6% of the tourists strongly agree, and 20% of them agree and believe that people should be responsible and act ethically towards nature. Only 4.4% of the tourists disagree or strongly disagree with people’s responsibility and ethics towards nature.

Environmental awareness

The next question of the questionnaire asked about the tourists’ environmental awareness. Figure 10 shows that 53.3% of the tourists think that she/he is good

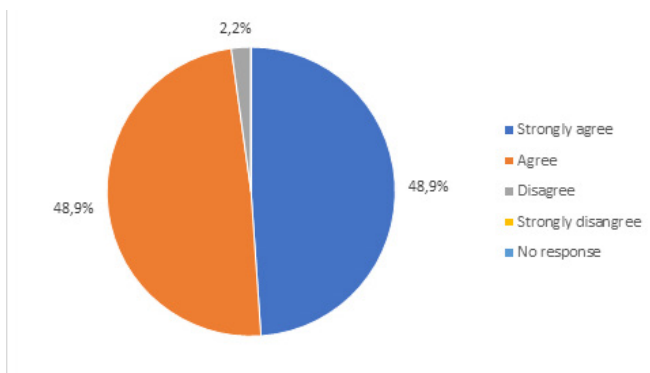


Figure 8: Activeness of Government

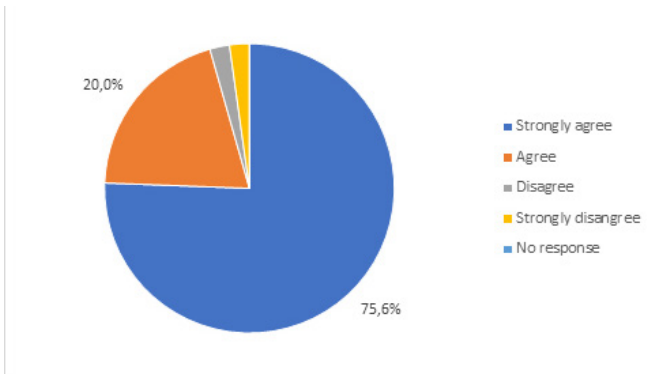


Figure 9: People's responsibility and ethicality towards nature

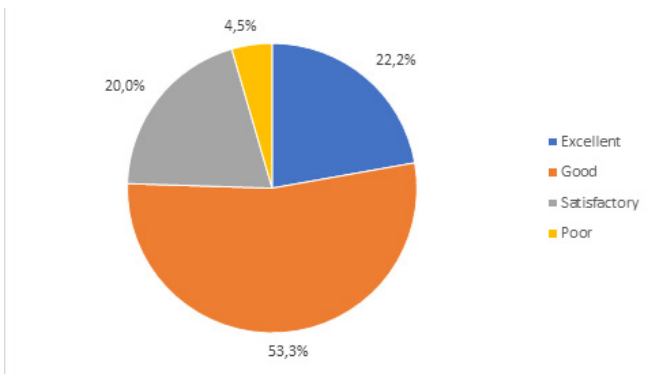


Figure 10: environmental awareness

regarding environmental awareness. Besides, 22.2% of them are excellent and 20% of them are satisfactory regarding environmental awareness. Only 4.5% of tourists think that she/he is poor in this regard.

Practice of sustainability

The next question concerned the practice of sustainability in Morocco. Figure 11 shows that 44.4% of tourists agree that sustainability practices are good in Morocco compared to other countries, while 33.3% of tourists disagree with the statement. Besides, 11.1% of the tourists strongly agreed with the statement, but 11.2% could not answer this question or strongly disagreed.

Factors making tourism more sustainable

The next question was about which factor makes tourism more sustainable in Essaouira. The answers were balanced. Based on the survey, 60% of tourists believed that government policies, 51.1% of tourists answered that local awareness, and 48.9%

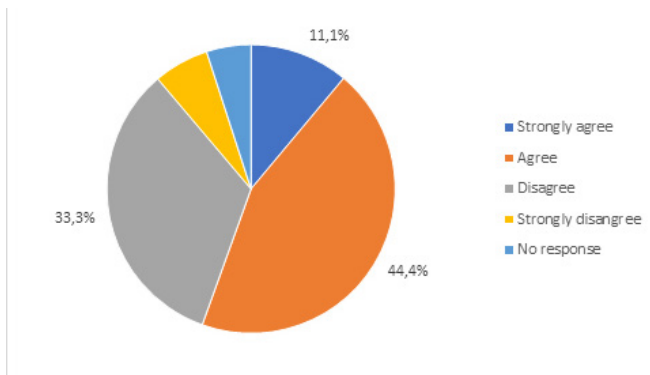


Figure 11: Practice of sustainability in Morocco

of tourists answered that marketing policy could promote tourism more sustainably in Essaouira. In addition, 46.7% of respondents believed that coordination between stakeholders of tourism could promote tourism more sustainably in the city. See Figure 12.

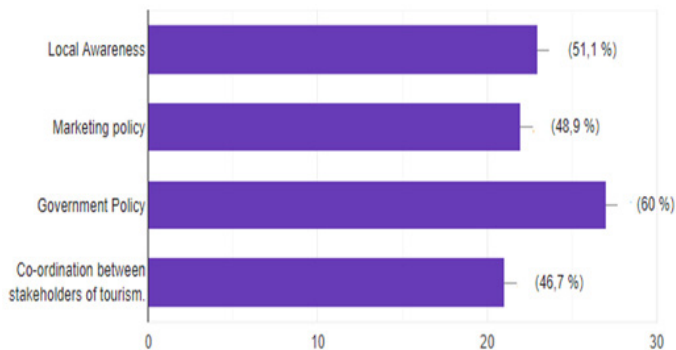


Figure 12: The factor that can create tourism business more sustainably

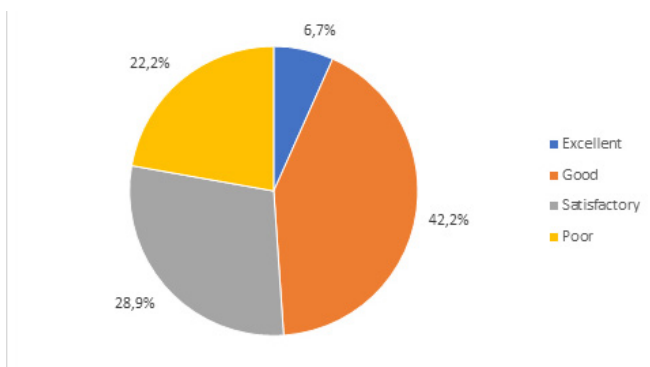


Figure 13: The rate of participation of private sectors and of local entrepreneurs

Participation of the private sector and local entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism

The next question to the tourists was how they evaluate the participation of private sectors and local entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism in Essaouira. Figure 13 showed that 42.2% of the respondents believed that the participation of the private sector and local entrepreneurs was good in sustainable tourism, 28.9% of respondents said that it was satisfactory, while 22.2% of them answered that it was poor. Only 6.7% of the respondents believed that participation in the business sector is excellent for sustainable tourism in Essaouira.

Tourism activities have adverse effects on the environment in Essaouira

Tourists were asked whether tourism activities had any adverse effects on the environment in Essaouira. 64.4% of the tourists agreed and 4.4% of them strongly agreed that tourism activities had a negative impact on the environment in Essaouira. However, 13.3% of the tourists disagreed and 11.1% of them strongly disagreed with this statement. 6.7% of the respondents did not answer. (Figure 14)

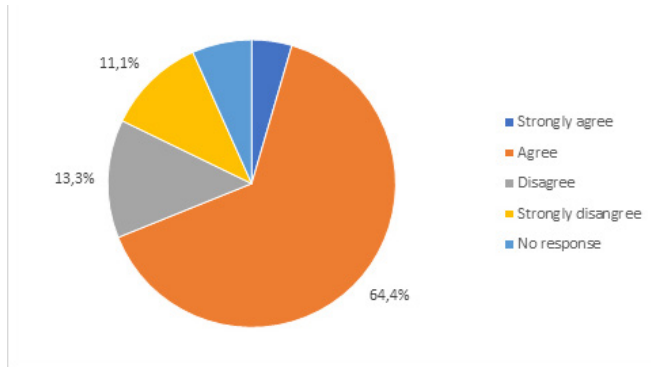


Figure 14: Tourism activities have adverse effects on the environment in Essaouira

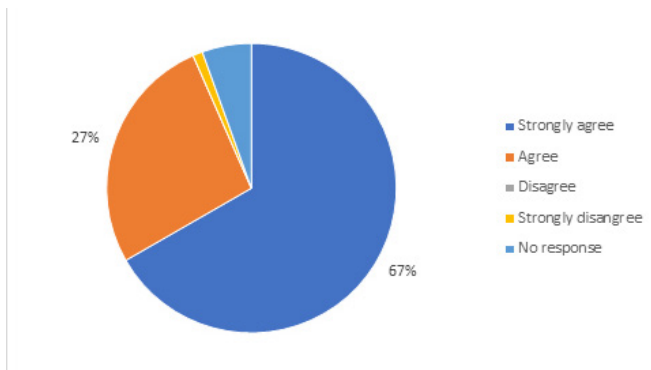


Figure 15: The government and the people should work together to make the environment more ecological and sustainable in Essaouira

The government and the people should work together to make the environment more ecological and sustainable in Essaouira

The next question on the questionnaire asked whether the government and the people should work together to make the environment more ecological and sustainable in Essaouira. As Figure 15 shows, 66.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that the government and the people must work together to make the city more ecological and sustainable in the future. Moreover, 26.7% of the tourists agreed with this statement. The proportion of other answers was negligible.

Tourism organizations and tourism-related companies must develop more sustainable products and follow the Business Sustainability Act

Respondents were asked whether tourism organizations and tourism-related companies should develop more sustainable products and follow the Business Sustainability Act. Figure 16 shows that 84.4% of the respondents agreed that tourism organizations and tourism-related companies must develop more sustainable products and follow the Business Sustainability Act. However, 8.9% of the tourists disagreed and 4.3% of them strongly disagreed with this statement. 2.2% of the respondents did not answer.

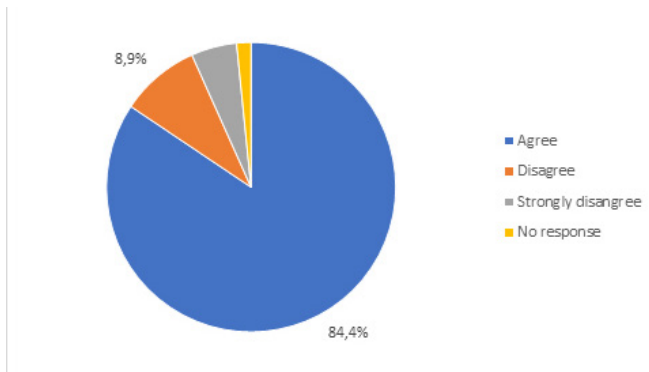
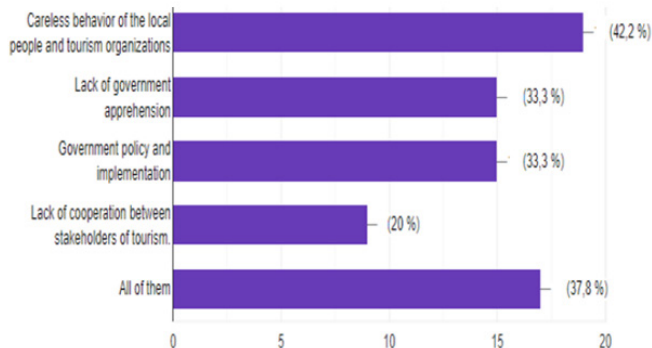


Figure 16: Tourism organizations and tourism-related companies must develop more sustainable products and follow the Business Sustainability Act

Main difficulties of sustainability issues in Essaouira

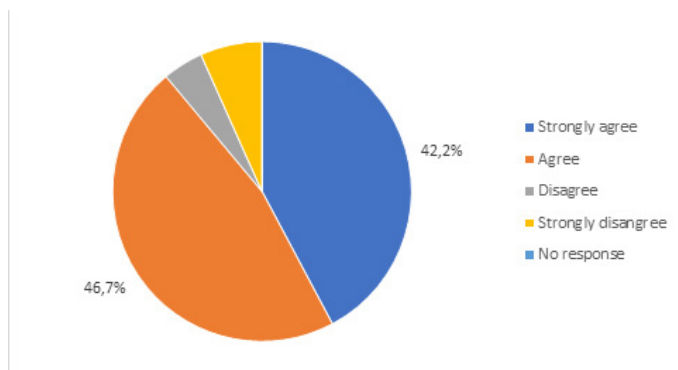
The next question focused on the main difficulties of sustainability issues in Essaouira. 42.2% of tourists answered that the careless behaviour of local residents and tourism organizations presented difficulties in terms of sustainability in Essaouira. One-third of the tourists thought that lack of government apprehension, and an additional one-third of them believed that government policy and implementation are responsible for problems in sustainability in the city. 20% of the respondents believed that the lack of cooperation between tourism stakeholders is a serious problem in terms of sustainability. 37.8% of the tourists thought that each factor is responsible for problems in sustainability in Essaouira. (Figure 17)



▲ Figure 17: Main difficulties of sustainability issues in Essaouira

Local people gain benefits economically and socially from the tourism sector

The tourists were asked whether the local people gain benefits economically and socially from the tourism sector. Figure 18 shows that the majority of the tourists (42.2%) agreed or strongly agreed (46.7%) that the residents receive economic and social benefits from the tourism sector. However, 4.5% of the tourists disagreed and 6.9% of them strongly disagreed with this statement.



▲ Figure 18: Local people gain benefits economically and socially from the tourism sector

Finally, the tourists were asked whether the infrastructure is adequate to host tourism activities in Essaouira. Most of the tourists (80%) believed that the infrastructure is adequate to host tourism activities in Essaouira, while 20% of them did not think so.

Conclusion

For Essaouira, as a city in a developing country, tourism plays an important role in economic growth, and has become a tourist attraction destination in Morocco. Sustainable development is needed in order to increase the length of stay of tourists; therefore, it is necessary to behave responsibly and ethically towards nature. This is

also important because certain tourist activities have negative impacts on Essaouira's environment (for example overcrowding, littering, drug and alcohol consumption). In addition to business organizations, local residents also benefit from the tourism sector, Apart from the local population and tourists, the local government should also take a more active role in creating sustainability (e.g. the local government should utilize natural resources in a sustainable way by preserving biodiversity). Essaouira needs to be a safe city to attract foreign and domestic tourists. Therefore, the local government should consider providing nightlife events throughout the season. On the market side, the properly chosen marketing policy of tourist organizations can also make tourism more sustainable in Essaouira. Tourism organizations and tourism-related companies should develop sustainable products (for example, more frequent use of electric vehicles or camels for transport, use of degradable packaging materials, etc.). There are many avenues, such as those mentioned here, to achieve sustainable development in developing countries whose economy depends on tourism to survive and thrive. ✨

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