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### Finding A “True Morocco:” How Tourists Change Moroccan Economies, Infrastructure and Cultures

Emily Federico  
*SIT Study Abroad*

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Finding A “True Morocco”

*How Tourists Change Moroccan Economies, Infrastructure and Cultures*

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## **Abstract**

The overall purpose of this study was to research the effects of adventure tourism on rural towns and villages, notably their financial cultural and physical aspects. Issues such as the commodification of lived experiences in a post-colonial context will be examined. The study was conducted via interviews from hotel workers and guides in major tourist cities (Fes, Rabat and Merzouga). I found that most international tourists hailed from Western countries; thus, English or French were the primary languages used in the tourism business. Also, significant modes of craftsmanship that faced a cultural extinction, such as folk music, rugs, and pottery, experienced a rebirth with tourist dollars. Finally, communities invested more considerable financial resources to protecting sites of natural and cultural beauty so tourists could use them for recreational activities. In conclusion, tourism was beneficial for cities in generating cash flow and protecting cultural institutions.

*Keywords: neoliberalism, orientalism, international development, globalization*

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

<i>Research Question and Hypothesis</i> .....	5
<i>Importance of Research</i> .....	7
<i>Literature Review</i> .....	9
<i>Defining Neoliberalism</i> .....	10
<i>Defining Orientalism</i> .....	11

### Methods

<i>Recruitment</i> .....	
<i>Interview Process</i> .....	
<i>Ethical Concerns</i> .....	
<i>Barriers</i> .....	

### Findings

<i>Fes</i>	
<i>Merzouga</i>	
<i>Rabat</i>	

### Conclusions

### Appendix A

### Appendix B

## **Introduction**

### *Research Question and Hypothesis*

Following independence from the French and increasing globalization, how has the community changed since the influx of tourists (culturally, physically, socially, or financially)? Is tourism sustainable for the community's future? What effect has tourism had on traditional Moroccan crafts or creative arts, such as rugs, Gnwa music, or folklore? Should the state or the local community control tourists? Overall, has tourism benefited or damaged your community, and why?

The presence of tourists in Moroccan cities and villages is mostly positive and provides beneficial cash-flows. If done ethically, it offers financial revenue and a sense of agency and autonomy among inhabitants. There is a more significant revival of creative traditions and crafts that faced extinction post-independence and emphasis on protecting natural beauty. However, tourism can also be damaging in its ability to exploit cultures for financial benefit. The study indicates that for some Moroccans, the need to simplify and commodify their cultural practices overly was necessary to continue to attract tourists. One wonders whether it is worth it to commodify lived experiences, especially when colonial rule threatened traditional ways of life. Still, for many Moroccans, the tourism business has provided a resurgence of cultural practices and economic independence.

### *Importance of Research*

The impact of adventure tourism on Moroccan development has allowed communities to find some political and economic leverage post-colonial independence and protected sites of natural beauty that would have otherwise to potential profits, such as logging or mining. Also, due to the

required knowledge of English or French and lucrative salaries in the hospitality business, many Moroccans are choosing to continue their education. Thus, the introduction of tourists into towns and villages has given financial agency and alleviated poverty. However, one must also consider the degree of positionality between the tourist and the Moroccan. Most of the visitors come from Western nations with the means to travel across borders and spend cash to 'experience a real Morocco' while some guides and hospitality workers have never left their native country and do not have the funds to join cultural excursions. The economic imbalance between the tourist and the guides thus reflects an economic inequality. It encourages a one-time investment in a tour or class instead of a donation to a community center or school. Thus, the tourist continues to use the toured for their gain.

Another inequality issue is the simplification of an entire culture. To make themselves marketable, hotel owners and adventure guides turn customs into a 'package' that is easily digestible and not too far out of their comfort zones. Why should a tourist's needs be prioritized over the natives? This placation of a whole culture threatens to undermine the rich complexity of traditions and diversity of ethnic environments that the French discouraged. Instead of letting the tourists dictate what they wish to see in a foreign country, the natives should be the ones to decide. However, this might not be the most economically beneficial way to attract visitors. Moroccans must choose between tourist expectations and the promise of cash flow or displaying their culture the way they want but scaring off wallets. No person, especially one who has faced socioeconomic discrimination under a colonial system, should have to sacrifice their cultural morals and values to survive. This study calls attention to that paradox and forces one to think not just about the economic implications of tourism but also the social. Also, one will consider the importance of positionality and how it reflects power dynamics. Only until tourists and those

under their employ during their vacations recognize their economic and social positions and how to mitigate cultural exploitation can tourism be considered sustainable.

### *Literature Review*

Tourism is a lucrative and competitive business and one that can bring in substantial cash flow if appropriately executed. Tour guides feel pressure to deliver a competitive 'product' that appeals to customer desires while acknowledging the stereotypes that exist in popular literature and media. To keep up with the increasing demands, guides and hospitality workers will standardize and simplify their way of life into a 'model culture.'<sup>1</sup> Traditional dress, complex dialects are consumed into easily digestible sound bites and visuals. Tourists no longer must fear the unknown; instead, the "cultural experiences...are consumed in terms of prior knowledge, expectations, fantasies, and mythologies" that fit into their constructed reality of Morocco.<sup>2</sup> Tourism becomes accommodated to the Western traveler instead of the native and forces Moroccans to sacrifice the diversity of their traditions for economic profit. After all, if the tourist fears a culture that seems too foreign, then they would be hesitant to come to the towns or villages. Culture then becomes "sanitized and neatly packaged to neither offend or overload the visitor with foreign information."<sup>3</sup> The business prioritizes tourist needs over the Moroccan for the sake of cash-flow. The commodification of hospitality also reflects the exploitation of cultural norms.

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<sup>1</sup> Buntun , A. C. (2010). Indigenous Tourism: the paradox of gaze and resistance . *La Ricerca Folklorica*, (61), 51–59.

<sup>2</sup> Buntun , A. C. (2010). Indigenous Tourism: the paradox of gaze and resistance . *La Ricerca Folklorica*, (61), 51–59.

<sup>3</sup> Buntun , A. C. (2010). Indigenous Tourism: the paradox of gaze and resistance . *La Ricerca Folklorica*, (61), 51–59.



Hospitality workers speak in the tourist's native language and let them direct the conversations to their liking to ensure guests feel 'safe' around hosts.<sup>4</sup> Once again, the natives must meet tourist needs and reestablish the paradigm of a Western versus domestic dominance that was so prevalent during French colonialism. Guides and other tourism workers wish to present their cultures according to local values. However, the rules of consumer interaction dictate that the tourist must always feel in control of their new surroundings and cannot feel as if they are the outsiders. This “commodification of hospitality” makes it so that visitors needs are placed above the native Moroccan. There is a danger, albeit one reminiscent of colonial standards, of reverting to a relationship between the subordinate and the dominant purely based on socioeconomic station. However, exploitation and tourism do not have to be synonymous. With input from associations and input from the local community, tourism can be ethical and sustainable.

Berraine and Moizio argue that there are many local initiatives in place to protect locals and communities from being taken advantage of. An example is the PAT concept or *Pays d'Accueil Touristiques*, which ensures the revitalization of local craftsmanship and mutual consent from the towns and villages to welcome tourists. Specific geographic areas are given this distinction after undergoing a series of processes to ensure appropriate infrastructure for tourists and the protection of native customs and traditions. Moroccans set up their hiking routes, calendar of events and workshops, and plan a Tourism Destination Center in each city.<sup>5</sup> Local actors also must show a strong will to work together by building an image that celebrates the indigenous

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<sup>4</sup> Buntzen, A. C. (2010). Indigenous Tourism: the paradox of gaze and resistance. *La Ricerca Folklorica*, (61), 51–59.

<sup>5</sup> Berraine, M., & Moizo, B. (2010). Local initiatives, public policies and the development of tourism in rural Morocco: A 15 year perspective on development initiatives in rural tourism. *Frontiers in Science and Engineering*, 1–19.

heritage and guaranteeing that products are to a quality label.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the director must be a local development officer.<sup>7</sup> The implementation of a native officer is especially important, considering the presence of international non-governmental organizations in the country and the charitable work that they do. By enacting their standards and constructing their understanding and portrayal of their respective towns, locals can discard stereotypes and slowly start to change outsiders' perspectives of Morocco. As a result of this concept, guesthouses were staffed by townspeople and built with nearby materials and native cuisine started to become popular among guests. Thus, the "importance assigned to native communities and their perceptions and inputs creation of regional products is indispensable to ensure sustainability."<sup>8</sup> Tourism can be ethically stable if one chooses to include the local population and their needs.

Before starting this project, I agreed with Bunten about the negative aspects of tourism and how it is damaging to positionality, especially considering the country's colonial history. As a Westerner and non-Arabic speaker, I was hyperconscious of my standing and the importance of recognizing the power dynamics. I still concur with her statements and recognize the potential socio-economic dangers in going to explore a 'foreign' land. However, Berraine and Maizo also made a compelling argument for strides the Moroccan state has done to create an inclusive environment for both the tourist and the toured. This ISP will examine critical theories, such as model culture, the commodification of hospitality, and the PAT concept, to determine the advantages and disadvantages of adventure tourism and whether it is worth it in the end.

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<sup>6</sup> Berriane, M., & Moizo, B. (2010). Local initiatives, public policies and the development of tourism in rural Morocco: A 15 year perspective on development initiatives in rural tourism. *Frontiers in Science and Engineering*, 1–19.

<sup>7</sup> Berriane, M., & Moizo, B. (2010). Local initiatives, public policies and the development of tourism in rural Morocco: A 15 year perspective on development initiatives in rural tourism. *Frontiers in Science and Engineering*, 1–19.

<sup>8</sup> Berriane, M., & Moizo, B. (2010). Local initiatives, public policies and the development of tourism in rural Morocco: A 15 year perspective on development initiatives in rural tourism. *Frontiers in Science and Engineering*, 1–19.

### *Defining Neoliberalism*

When looking at the new economic structure post-independence, neoliberalism is an essential economic topic. This theory first became a significant economic force during the 1930s that arose out of laissez-faire capitalism and a focus on the exchange of goods and services.<sup>9</sup> Neoliberalism emphasizes this exchange of wealth among private markets. It particularly values economic growth as the means to achieve human progress, free markets as the equal provider for resource allocation and minimal interference by governments in economic and social affairs.<sup>10</sup> This mode of economic thinking became intertwined with globalization, as neoliberals championed free-trade and international capital. To understand the commodification of lived experiences in the form of guided tours and classes, one also must discuss neoliberalism.

### *Defining Orientalism*

Orientalism is an essential topic in tourist perceptions of the Arab world and a lingering effect of colonialism. Edward Said defined it as the acceptance in the West of "the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny and so on."<sup>11</sup> Americans and Europeans flocked to study and theorize on the 'Oriental' world, notably East Asia, but often used European languages and Western academic theories to conduct their research.<sup>12</sup> Scholars and artists made their deductions about Eastern art, societies, and traditions, thus robbing the native peoples of any form of agency. Orientalism was also justified for colonial governmental policies in the Arab world. The East was considered different

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, N. (2019, June 28). Neoliberalism. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/neoliberalism>

<sup>10</sup> Smith, N. (2019, June 28). Neoliberalism. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/neoliberalism>

<sup>11</sup> Said, E. W. (2006). *Orientalism*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School, Resource Services Library.

<sup>12</sup> Said, E. W. (2006). *Orientalism*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School, Resource Services Library.

and inferior, "therefore, they needed Western intervention or rescue."<sup>13</sup> Christianity versus Islam and the capitalist economic structures of the West were deemed superior. Thus, the notion of colonialism continued to resonate throughout the MENA region and propagated the notion of a white and culturally and spiritually enlightened nation coming to 'save' the people. 19th and 20th-century paintings showed these tropes of an 'uncivilized and backward culture' where Europeans depicted the Middle East and North Africa as exotic landscapes of sand, belly dancers, harems, and snake charmers<sup>14</sup>. Even in contemporary culture, guidebooks, and tourist websites reference snake charmers in Marrakech and the Sahara Desert as emblems of a 'true' Morocco. Orientalism not only threatens and undermines the modern technological and societal innovations by Arab societies but traps them in a narrative that reduces them to fairy tales and exotic fantasies. The Middle East is more than palm trees and turbans but until tourists look past those stereotypes, natives will continue to be viewed in the eyes of their colonizers.

## **Literature Review**

Berraine and Mizio describe a 'tourism fever' in Morocco and the 'great potential' for commercialization of tourism products, explicitly arts and crafts that faced potential extinction before the rush of tourists (CITE THIS). Not only are these skills, such as pottery and weaving, now being passed down for generations, but women are starting to learn the products that define the idea of Morocco. With a focus on heritage products and the assurance of including local associations, Berraine and Moizio conclude that tourism can be "successful in generating cash flow for communities." (CITE THIS). Locals get some form of financial initiative and exposure to cross-cultural dialogues, while associations can receive international recognition and even

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<sup>13</sup> Said, E. W. (2006). *Orientalism*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School, Resource Services Library.

<sup>14</sup> Said, E. W. (2006). *Orientalism*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School, Resource Services Library.

potential donors. There have been recent interventions by local and state authorities to entice tourists while still providing agency and power to local actors. Berraine and Moizio use the PAT concept as an example of the Magreb's attempts to control the country's most significant financial contributor. This directive organizes activities that highlight indigenous cultures and their traditions, constructs tourist specific facilities (restaurants, guest houses, road signs), ensures cooperation from regional actors to build an image with heritage items, and promotes a development officer from the mentioned area. The PAT stresses that there is still native representation and lesser probabilities of cultural exploitation from tourists and government officials (CITE THIS). By recognizing the "importance assigned to local communities and their perceptions in any territorial creation of tourism products," this ensures their sustainability and being treated ethically (CITE THIS). However, Moroccans still face some prejudice in presenting their life to tourists, who can even see them as the 'other.'

BUNTEN

HAZBURN

## **Methods**

### *Recruitment*

For this ISP, I interviewed native Moroccans employed in the hospitality business. Interviewees included city guides from Rabat and Fes and a hiking guide from Merzouga. I especially wanted to find guides who worked in major tourist sites and that had exposure to an international clientele. These guides were also educated in the English language and versed in the artistic, religious and historical aspects of Moroccan culture and their respective regions. In the case of the Merzouga and Rabat interviewees, they were also heavily involved with regional NGO's that were heavily involved with improving socioeconomic conditions for the community. I primarily found the guides in guidebooks, such as *Lonely Planet* and *Fodor's Travels* or

through mutual contacts at SIT. I used these resources because they were catered to tourists and highly reviewed for their hospitality. I also wanted to interview workers that spoke English and Dajreja because I was curious about the education needed to work in the tourism business and whether English was beneficial in forming relationships with their customers. Finally, most of the guides were young (mid-to-late twenties). I did not plan on this demographic but found that guiding has slowly become a lucrative job for Moroccan graduates, especially in rural areas with an agriculture-based economy.

### *Interview Process*

The interview process was more difficult than anticipated. I first contacted the interviewees via email and over WhatsApp. I laid out my research questions and requested an interview the following week. Some businesses never responded to me while others declined the invitation due to limited hours or having to close temporarily. However, I was able to interview with A, Y, and N. I asked pre-written questions from a separate Word document and elaborated on topics, such as women's empowerment initiatives and the resurgence of craftsmanship industries, that seemed especially striking and meaningful to the interviewees.

In the case of cities, I wanted to pick ones that were popular with tourists. According to Lonely Planet, Fes is commonly referred to as the country's cultural capital and has one of the biggest medinas in Morocco. Also, the city is known for its sites, such as the leather tannery, thousands of winding alleys, and madrassas such as Bou Inania and Al Attarine. Thus, Fes was a prominent site to experience a 'true Morocco.' Rabat was also a vital pick due to its political and historical significance. As the official state capital and home to prominent French and Islamic architecture such as the Kasbah of the Udayas and Hassan Tower, Rabat spoke to the strategic position of the country and an essential site for domestic and international tourists looking to explore the

historical heritage of Morocco. Finally, Merzouga is known for its proximity to the Sahara Desert. Tourists flock to this region to fulfill their adrenaline fix in desert sports such as sandboarding and hiking, explore more of Morocco's natural beauty and even engage with local Berber communities. The location of these tourism businesses also prompted a discussion about ecotourism and how tourism has changed conservation.

My first interview with A, a Fes-based tour guide, was over Whatsapp. I asked him about how tourism has impacted Fes and the importance of tourist presence in the economic and social currency of the city, most explicitly in the old medina. Also, we discussed the ways that craftsmanship has resurged under the tourism business and how much artisans rely on foreign visitors to make ends meet. Finally, he shed light on the growing popularity of guiding as a form of employment and the extensive education and cultural knowledge that is required. I also followed up with additional questions over email that specific initiatives taken by local and state governments to regulate tourism. I interviewed in English, so there were no language barriers or loss of information due to translation errors. Overall, the interview process went smoothly, and I gained new information about the guiding business and a deeper appreciation of the need for tourism in specific communities.

My second interview was with Y, the President of Hassilabiad Association. I also interviewed with Y over Whatsapp. I inquired about how tourism has changed the Sahara Desert, particularly the lifestyles of the nomadic peoples. Secondly, I asked him about the impact of tourists on traditional arts, explicitly Gnawa music, and its strong presence in the immigrant communities in Merzouga. Due to his position as head of a local association, we discussed the organization's impact on women's empowerment and its reliance on foreign and domestic visitors. Finally, we talked about how infrastructure meant to accommodate hospitality workers, and travelers have impacted the natural landscape of the desert. I interviewed in English, and for

the most part, I felt as if we had a productive and insightful conversation. However, there were some questions I had to repeat or rephrase due to linguistic barriers. The language difference did not overtly affect the interview, but it did leave me wondering if there was more information that I could have gotten if I spoke Arabic or French.

My final interview was with N, a city tour guide based in Rabat. Like my other participants, we talked over Whatsapp. We discussed topics such as the vulnerability of craftsmanship in the tourism business and the question of authenticity in Gnwna music when presented to travelers. We also highlighted the positive benefit that tourism brings to Morocco's economy and how marginalized groups, especially women and the desert poor, experienced financial relief when visitors came to their towns and cities. Finally, N shared why he wanted to become a tour guide and the different administrative and educational requirements. I interviewed in English; there were no linguistic or technical issues.

### *Ethical Concerns*

One of my biggest concerns during this project was upholding the participant's dignity while ensuring quality research. Before each interview, the participant signed an electronic consent form and was permitted not to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. Also, interviewees were given a copy of their interview notes and reviewed their responses in the ISP draft before final publication. Secondly, each participant did not receive a copy of any other participant's notes or revealed the contents of other interviews, even if they were from the same business. In terms of notes, I destroyed all of them after the ISP was published and was the sole owner of the Microsoft Word account that housed the interview. I ensured that every respondent participated voluntarily, and if they wanted to leave the study, then I did not use any part of their responses. I also only mentioned input in the ISP that was relevant to the research questions. I



avoided harm to the interviewees by maintaining their anonymity and did not discuss any businesses or employee names to the Moroccan government or potential visitors.

### *Barriers*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to conduct my research remotely. Thus, the first time I met my interviewees were over videoconference. I would have preferred to live in the neighboring towns or villages and start to build a relationship with the participants instead of launching questions about potentially sensitive subjects straight at them. This way, they would feel less like research subjects and more like colleagues. I also had issues with technological communications. In some of my interviews with the guides, the connection glitched, cutting out parts of the interviewee's response and leaving me to guess at what they said. Before starting this project, I strove to let the participant's words speak for themselves, instead of my observations and biases. Unfortunately, the telecommunications forced me to input my thoughts. Finally, I am not fluent in French or Dareja. I then could not understand in real-time what the participants were saying or if a participant could not find the word in English, I could not help them think of an equivalent in their native language. This did not greatly affect my research, but it did make some communications difficult.

## **Findings**

### *Fes*

Tourism is the primary economic and social industry in Fes, especially in the old medina. My first interview was with Ahmed Bousfiha, a city guide. According to him, "tourism supports family income." It ensures that every family has access to food and housing, thus work in the hospitality sector has become a lucrative source of employment. However, the competition and

subsequent training to be a guide are fierce. First, Bousfiha described how one must go through exhaustive education, usually in the form of a bachelor's degree in the English language and courses from a nationally recognized tourism school in etiquette and manners. One interesting example was looking tourists in the eyes; Bousfiha described how this is not common among Moroccans, but when they are working with tourists, they must practice this. Also, hospitality workers need to be aware of their cities' and countries' historical, cultural, artistic, and religious history as well as Western preferences. They need to balance tourists' preferences for 'authentic' food and guided tours without putting them in too much of a 'different' setting. One of these places is a store selling traditional crafts, such as rugs or pottery.

In the context of Fes, tourism cannot exist without artisanal skills or vice versa. Bousfiha described the subsistence pay of the workers: "Many employed at carpet or rug factories only make enough money for their daily lives and are not able to save." Thus, the presence of tourists is the only way to ensure economic stability. Once tourism starts to dissipate, and people will be unable to meet their needs, they will go to find another job, and the overall quality and quantity of crafts start to fade. One example Bousfiha described is the iconic Fes tanneries. Once the number of workers decreases, "the knowledge of skills and know-how" also fades. The depletion of craftsmanship skills is dangerous not only for the economic output of materials but also for cultural heritage in preserving artisanal skills that were facing extinction before the rush of tourists. Bousfiha predicted that overall craftsmanship skills would decline in conjunction with tourism. In summary, tourism is essential for the continued cultural and economic well-being of Fes.

*Merzouga*

One of the biggest changes brought about by tourism in the Sahara Desert was the shift from a nomadic to semi-nomadic lifestyle. Yousef Ourana described how families that once lived with no water, electricity or phones now have access to these services as well as education for the children. Thus, the “young people have it easy” with growing up amongst infrastructure and amenities. Ourana also discussed how tourists give money to poor nomadic families and the yearn to discover different cultures. Tourism then, if done sustainably and equitably, can provide financial relief and security for the neighboring towns and community centers, such as the Hassilabiad Association. This organization focuses on environmental conservation and socioeconomic initiatives that “alleviate the unfortunate situations experienced within the population and to improve their living conditions.”<sup>15</sup> Workshops that sell handicrafts and pastry shops run by local women are examples of empowerment initiatives that “give women their own job” and promote financial independence. However, without tourism, the association could not sustain these projects. Thus, tourism is vital for improving socioeconomic conditions in Merzouga.

Despite the benefits of tourism, it has changed the natural landscape of the region. The Sahara now has become developed and commercialized for the likes of tourists. In the beginning, “it was just desert and no buildings” but now it has been built up for tourists. According to Ourana, the region has lost its ‘peace’, both in population numbers and serene natural beauty. One wonders then whether tourism is ecologically sustainable for the desert.

Another unique aspect of the Sahara area is the presence of Gnawa music. Tourists often flock to villages to listen to bands and experience ‘traditional’ Moroccan arts. Just like riding a camel or sandboarding, “music is considered an activity for tourists”, thus ensuring that they will

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<sup>15</sup> “Who are We?”, Association Hassilabiad, May 4 2020, <https://www.hassilabiad.org/qui-sommes-nous.html>

have something to stimulate their cultural understanding and fill their time. However, when there are no tourists the music stops. Like many other forms of Moroccan crafts or performances, Gnawa music relies on tourists to thrive and is primarily marketed for a Western audience. Has the music, like the desert sands, lost its heritage and cultural strength with the rush of tourists?

### *Rabat*

One of the most exciting aspects of this interview was Nabil Akabli's path to becoming a tour guide. He initially worked at the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning as an Arabic teacher and program director. Many of his students complained that his students were not satisfied and not given enough attention; thus, he started leading tours of his own. Akabli ultimately found guiding to be more "interactive and richer than teaching." Another aspect we discussed was the introduction of the exam by the Ministry of Tourism. Instead of relying on the procurement of a bachelor's degree, the review offered Morroccans a chance to "forget about a diploma," and if one thinks they have the skills, then they should be allowed to sit for the test. By allowing those who only had a middle school education or learned English in an unstructured way, the Ministry "gave chances to everyone who thought they deserved it." Before the exam, many uneducated unlicensed guides offered their services, but this gave opportunities for Moroccans to be "integrated into the system in a structured way." Now all Moroccans can showcase their knowledge and love of their country to visitors, regardless of their education levels. The resurgence of craftsmanship also matched this influx of guides.

Akabli believes that arts and crafts could survive in Morocco "because they are part of the tourism business." Parents are encouraged to pass on the tradition to younger generations, and even the government has started funding co-ops for at-risk youth to practice skills. Not only

has this ensured the continuation of craftsmanship skills, but it has also promoted education. Gnawa music is an example of quintessential Moroccan art forms, especially among poorer communities in the Sahara Desert. Akbali describes tourists asking for Gnawa performances: "They have never said no, and one thing they will not discuss is fees...They only ask to respect what we do." This request for understanding and dignity to the music for tourists has influenced other musical forms, both domestically and internationally. The presence of tourism in Gnawa music also made it from "tribal to universal", which for many Moroccans is considered a sign of pride. The fusion of Gnawa with jazz and blues music reflects the ability for tourism to "share cultures and by becoming associated with other musical forms, gives it a sense of belonging." This respect for the music and its role in national pride cements the importance of preserving cultural authenticity and exploitation of tourist stereotypes of what is 'authentically Moroccan.' Akbali relates this phenomenon with goods that present themselves as Moroccan but are mass-produced in other countries. The presence of counterfeit goods "makes it hard for artisans and damages the promotion of arts and cultures." However, if done with the knowledge and consent of the local producers, tourism can be a worthwhile investment for communities in promoting their crafts and traditions. This exposure to international clients can change whole livelihoods for marginalized groups.

With the increase in tourism also comes women's visibility in the public sphere. One example is when Akbali invited female musicians to perform for Rhodes scholars or more restaurants hiring women from the medina to cook due to them being "excellent cooks and tourists feel like they are right at home." However, their work is not often "valued enough because they lack education and capital." While they know how to cook the food or weave the rugs, women do not have the marketing or financial means to sell their products. Another group directly benefitting from tourism is the desert communities. Akbali described how, in the early

80s, the Sahara faced unprecedented drought; however, travelers brought bottled water to share with the residents. For some Moroccans, this was considered an "act of solidarity." Travelers also stayed with residents before the large-scale construction of hotels. This commitment to providing for Sahara communities led to feelings of gratitude and acceptance of foreign visitors and paved the way for equitable tourism.

Tourism has been extremely beneficial for Morocco's economy, especially for a country that does not have a domestic oil supply. Akbali described the 12 million tourists in 2019 as "a sign of pride for the country." However, some hotel owners are taking advantage of the increasing visitor numbers and international recognition for Moroccan beauty and hospitality to support sub-standard operations. According to Akbali, "hotels are taking advantage of how successful Morocco has become, so they took it (service and infrastructure) for granted...there are excellent numbers, so they don't have to worry about quality." The fact that tourists continue to pour in, despite lackluster accommodation, attests to the popularity and renown for the product that is Morocco and the potential exploitation of tourists. It is not just natives who are exposed for their cultures and traditions, sometimes it is the tourists who are taken advantage of. Finally, Akbali elaborated on "every single thing that a traveler encounters are a package of Morocco." To make tourism ethical, tourists need to show respect for the country, and its people and Morocco will continue to welcome travelers for many years to come.

## **Conclusion**

This study discussed how tourism has impacted local development and how it can be ethical and sustainable. After several interviews with city and nature guides and review of background literature, I can attest that it is possible to avoid exploitation and that tourism is

beneficial for Morocco. In every interview, the participants stressed dignity and respect for the native populations and continued investment in social justice and educational initiatives to better local lives before the tourists have departed. Additionally, tourists must remember their Western positionality in a post-colonial context. If done correctly, tourism brings economic and financial opportunities for even the most marginalized groups.

More people are becoming employed in jobs that can feed themselves and their families and remote areas, such as villages in the Sahara Desert, now have access to amenities such as electricity and water. While there was a general sentiment that the influx of tourists does disturb the relative 'peace,' ultimately, their presence brings revenue in communities that were once struggling before. Tourism has also protected craftsmanship skills and creative arts, such as Gnawa music or rug making. There is a stronger incentive to practice these skills and even pass them onto younger generations because visitors, notably international, wish to purchase these products in their wish to experience a 'true Morocco.' These arts and crafts continue to bring tourists into the country's narrative. Without the constant rush of travelers, craftsmanship skills might have decreased or gone extinct. Finally, tourism has increased opportunities for women, especially the uneducated and those living in the medinas. Female presence in restaurants and weaving cooperatives allows for the traditional patriarchal structure of males as the breadwinner gives them a stronger sense of financial independence and confidence in the economic market. While many women, explicitly those with limited education, still face obstacles in procuring their capital and marketing, tourism has yet provided opportunities for female autonomy and self-betterment. Overall, tourism is beneficial for the country, and Morocco should continue to invest in infrastructure for tourists.

One way to continue this study is to examine how COVID-19 and other public health crises have impacted the tourism sector, and by extension, Morocco's economy. With the closing

of international borders and domestic movement restrictions, how are activities reliant on tourism activity faring? What kind of marketing strategies are guides, accommodation providers, and restaurants employing to ensure that tourists feel safe when they return? How are communities with limited medical resources, ensuring that members of their communities are safe? The study of infectious diseases' impact on tourism is an angle that still needs to be studied. Always, the explosion of COVID-19 and its ability to make entire countries grind to a halt makes one wonder about the adaptability of tourism. Another study could be the impact of tourism on natural environments. There was some mention of how tourism has encouraged the preservation of natural resources in poorer communities because of their revenue potential. Still, because of time, I did not have enough time to delve further. The need for infrastructure to make tourists feel comfortable and safe in a new environment is a paradox to the expansion of national parks and interest in adventure holidays, such as hiking, climbing, and surfing. It would be interesting to see what methods Moroccans use to conserve their environment and the increase of ecotourism.



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## **Appendix A**

### Interview Questions

1. Do you think tourism has benefitted or damaged your community? If so, why?
2. Do you think the state, or the local community should control tourists? Has the government sponsored any tourist activities in your area? If so, what are they?
3. How has your community changed since the influx of tourists (culturally, physically, socially, financially)? Do you think tourism is sustainable for your community's future?
4. What kind of cultural services do you provide for tourists (tours, music, cooking classes)? How do tourists describe their experiences with locals after these encounters?
5. What effect has tourism had on 'traditional' Moroccan crafts or creative arts, such as the rug business, or Gnwa music, or folklore? What do you think would happen to these industries if there were no tourists?
6. What differences (if any) are there between domestic and international tourists?

7. What kind of education is required to work in the hospitality business? Was French or English ever emphasized?
8. Do you think of any strategies for enhancing the local community in the local tourist industry and development?
9. How do you think tourism empowers women in your area?
10. How has tourism changed the natural landscape of the area? What steps has the local community taken to protect the environment?

## **Appendix B**

### **School for International Training**

### **Multiculturalism and Human Rights - Rabat**

### **Consent Form**

**Project Title :** *Chasing Adrenaline: How Adventure Tourists Change Rural Economies, Infrastructure and Cultures*

**Researcher :** **Emily Federico**

**Purpose :** You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Emily Federico from Skidmore College. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of adventure tourism on local communities' culture and infrastructure. This study will contribute to my completion of my Independent Study Project.

## **Research Procedures**

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a interview that will be administered to individual participants online. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to study the effects of adventure tourism on local communities. With your permission you will be audio or-and video taped.

## **Time Required**

Participation in this study will require 1 hour of your time or however long the interview takes.

## **Risks**

I do not perceive any risks or more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

## **Benefits**

There are no monetary benefits from this study. This research will determine the integrity of adventure tourism and safe and sustainable ways for tourists to engage with the local culture.

## **Confidentiality**

Your participation is completely voluntary. Confidentiality will be maintained by using only the first initial of the name and strict no-sharing of interview notes or contact information between participants. The results of this research will be documented as an ISP paper and presented orally to the SIT MOR students and staff. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a

secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers (including audio – video tapes) will be destroyed.

### **Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

### **Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact me at [efederic@skidmore.edu](mailto:efederic@skidmore.edu) or 443-377-5323 on Whatsapp.

### **Giving of Consent**

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent to be (video/audio) taped during my interview. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date