

Original Paper

Innovation and Tourism: Between Territorial Reproduction and Sustainable Development

Dr. LAMYA MAGHNAOUI^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, University Cadi Ayyad, Marrakesh, Morocco

* Dr. LAMYA MAGHNAOUI, E-mail: lamya.maghnaoui@gmail.com

Received: September 10, 2022 Accepted: November 6, 2022 Online Published: November 10, 2022

doi:10.22158/ijssse.v2n2p21

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/ijssse.v2n2p21>

Abstract

The Ourika Valley, located less than an hour from the red city of Marrakech, is now experiencing various and rapid environmental, demographic, socio-cultural, economic changes, etc. These changes also affect traditional productive systems and the local way of life.

Its authentic and unspoiled places, with a good reputation and a wealth of therapeutic processes and treatments based on natural products and medicinal plants in a territory. This strong potential at the level of products and resources linked to well-being tourism, until now not well exploited, and omitted on the part of those responsible for tourism, it constitutes a good ground to exploit in order to implement this type. Tourism, thus strongly contributing to the diversification of the tourism product and offer on offer.

Indeed, the projects of the tourist gardens of Ourika, present an innovative tourist product in the valley, thanks to the valorization and the mobilization of the aromatic and medicinal plants, which are finalized in the laboratories of the gardens of natural cosmetic products. Thus, authenticity and specificity can become a support for the creation of wealth and territorial innovation, through the diversification of the tourist offer.

This is not just a new tourist product, but it is about trying to understand how to structure local initiatives and mobilization processes around the promotion of a heritage collective heritage and territorial order around a mountain territory?

1. Introduction

1.1 Tourism, a Key Sector for Morocco

Tourism represents a key sector of activity for Morocco. The variety of its landscapes, the presence of a seaside and mountain offer, as well as its cultural heritage ensure its excellence.

However, Moroccan tourism suffers from several weaknesses. The increase in international tourist arrivals is lower than in other countries that are gaining ground, notably Spain, Tunisia and Turkey, where international competition is increasing. The tourism sector is also characterized by a great atomization: alongside a few major players, especially in the field of transport and accommodation, several forms and offers constitute the economic sector of tourism. This diversity makes the structuring of the sector and its promotion more complex, as well as the possibility of groupings generating synergies in the perspective of supporting innovation.

Health and well-being are among the major current concerns of individuals. Thus, Morocco, like other countries, is part of this essential perspective of sustainable development: to give the means to live a healthy life and to promote the well-being of all at all ages, thus, the tourism of well-being proves to be an interesting means to achieve this.

Knowing the alternative medicines, combining Naturopathy and Aromatherapy to feel good during a wellness stay where it is possible, in a relaxing setting, to enjoy all kinds of care and wellness activities: Therapies, cures for example, yoga classes, hiking, workshops to learn how to make your natural cosmetics, essential oils, remedies, use of wellness products with a proximity to nature, etc. The aging European population that favors preventive health care is a good prospect. In addition to this, the clientele is increasingly young and active, but under pressure from the stress and burnout of daily life and work.

It should be noted that, health and wellness tourism has experienced “double-digit growth in 2013 (+12%)”, with “revenues reaching 500 billion dollars”, which represents nearly 15% of global tourism spending. A segment that “is growing 50% faster than tourism in general,” said Neil Jacobs before an audience of 500 participants from 40 different countries.

The fact that the Global Spa and Wellness Summit (GSWS), one of the largest gatherings of the profession, is held in Morocco is no coincidence: Morocco has attracted in 2013 some 2.2 million visitors, relying, among other things, on its proximity to Europe and on “its practices and rituals such as the hammam,” said the chairman of the board of the Moroccan Society of Tourism Engineering (Smit), Imad Barrakad.

Morocco has set itself the goal of reaching 20 million tourists per year by 2020 (compared to 10 million). It intends to expand its specific offers to wellness tourism and health tourism, two sectors that offer “rather complementary offers,” according to Imad Barrakad. As a result, the availability of resources in terms of quality wellness, does not cover the entire need, and leaves the opportunity to alternative medicine or care to develop. Reinforced by the principle of prevention is better than cure, which promotes prevention and the adoption of the philosophy of wellness.

As tourism and wellness are two concepts often linked and associated, as the latter is often the opportunity to take care of his body and mind. The development of treatments and cures based on alternative medicine is a real opportunity via this association to develop an innovative wellness tourism in the Ourika Valley. More and more Moroccans are turning to alternative medicine as an alternative or

complementary treatment. Homeopathy, phytotherapy, acupuncture, manual or thermal massages, etc. They no longer hesitate to try new methods to relieve themselves. Curiosity quickly gives way to a real craze for these new therapies that are considered effective.

1.2 Innovation in the Tourism Sector

Innovation in tourism in Morocco has become a necessity. It can come from the tourism sector itself or from companies outside the sector. It can also be measured on a global scale, for a destination, or for a tourism operator.

As in many economic sectors, the most visible innovation in the tourism sector today is that brought about by new technologies and offers, which modify behaviors, facilitate and enrich travel experiences in many ways.

After the arrival of e-tourism, with the development of online sales sites for tourism services, the sector then experienced the m-tourism revolution, via the rise of smartphones and the applications that accompany them. But innovation is also generated by new expectations on the part of tourist customers, whether in their mode of consumption or in the products and services they seek, responding to new concerns. Current trends are to seek more authenticity, respect for the environment, local development, travel experiences, etc. The creation of new “experiences” for tourists is therefore one of the current foundations of innovation in the sector, even if innovation also concerns companies and operators internally, to improve their organization, their processes, and their competitiveness.

This innovation is thus protean, which makes it all the more complex to measure and identify, and, in fact, the support policies that will have to be implemented to encourage it and ensure its dissemination. The need to specifically support innovation in this sector is also relatively recent.

In addition to the awareness of the public authorities, many initiatives have been implemented at the local level by various actors. In addition, support for innovation in the sector is part of the more global policies conducted at the national level, in terms of funding and aid for innovation.

In the OURIKA valley, the concept of tourist gardens is being developed alongside a sector of aromatic and medicinal plants considered one of the most important in Morocco. Thus initiating a possible tourism of well-being in the valley and the region. A new market that seems promising, because it is difficult to imagine that Morocco, a country whose heritage is very rich in medicinal plants, does not exploit this potential in favor of this type of tourism.

Moreover, Moroccans are still attached to an ancestral way of care. This attachment is linked to the chronic insufficiency of the infrastructure and the budget of the Ministry of Health, insufficiency increases in view of the economic difficulties that the country lives and the sedentarization of the medicine which, in the cities, monopolizes the hospitals and the dispensaries to the detriment of the rural population.

1.3 Study Objectives

Our research axis will lead the reflection and will inscribe it in the framework of a territory project aiming at the structuring of these resources / territory (what can be done, what happens there, offers

channels, events). Innovation, their valorisation, combination and connection to give different forms of wellness tourism in a transversal and territorial sustainable approach.

Hence our general question on: how can we enhance the local resources of our study area, based on its existing authentic heritage, in order to innovate the “wellness” tourism product as a complement to the current tourism offer of the region? We will privilege, in the heart of this problematic, the analysis of the mechanisms of constitution of an innovative tourist product and of localized concrete systems of action, designating the dynamic forms of organization between individual and/or collective actors, mobilized around projects of territorial construction.

This makes us go beyond the notion of territorial resource, the only notion of attractiveness of a territory (what can attract from the outside towards the territory?) to develop that of specificity, (what can come from the geography of the territory to valorize?)

We also understand that the territorial context, the history and culture of the place, the accumulated know-how and even the landscape itself, constitute a whole that directly modifies the value of the territorial and local resource where innovation must adapt to the particularities of the territory and attach itself to the specificities.

2. The Geographical Context of the Ourika Valley

OURIKA is the most frequented destination of the High Atlas, green and with pretty Berber villages. It offers a landscape of exceptional beauty and a climate less hot of a dozen degrees than Marrakech, is located at about thirty kilometers from Marrakech. It knows a remarkable tourist dynamics on the international scale especially with activities consuming nature as the excursion, excursions and others.

Its catchment area is 503 km² is located in the Western High Atlas in the center of the province of Al Haouz at 35 km from Marrakech. It is limited to the south by the province of Taroudante, to the east by the watershed of ZAT and to the west by the watershed of Ghighaia. The basin is distributed mainly on 3 rural Communes, namely OURIKA, Setti Fadma, and Oukaïmeden.

The altitude varies between 431 m at the level of the Tensift, wadi to 4 011 m at the level of the High Atlas or OURIKA is located at the foot of the mountain, with a semi-arid climate with fresh winter. Let us add an arid climate with temperate winter covering all the plain area of the sub-basin (29% of the sub-basin in terms of area), and a wet climate less important in terms of area (19%), covers part of the mountain area and a cold winter, which covers the high mountains and represents 13% of the area of the sub-basin of the OURIKA.

2.1 The Aromatic and Medicinal Plants Sector of OURIKA, a Boon of Territorial Resources

Aware that it is a real lever of local development, Morocco deploys these last years of great efforts in order to develop and propel the culture of aromatic and medicinal plants. The valley of OURIKA constitutes one of the regions concerned by this national strategy since it has very important potentialities in this field, which confers him a not negligible place in the national market.

We have on the valley of OURIKA two categories aromatic and medicinal plants: the spontaneous

aromatic and medicinal plants and the cultivated and domesticated aromatic and medicinal plants with a variety of very important species. Outside the cultivated areas, aromatic and medicinal plants are collected in the local forests, around the rivers, paths and tracks. They are used in part in food as herbal teas and infusions, added with other ingredients for flavoring or in treatments and procedures of traditional medicine. In addition, the aromatic and medicinal plant sector constitutes a significant source of income for the local population and can participate in the local development of the region.

2.2 The Concept of "FARM TOURISM" of OURIKA, a Flourishing Tourist Activity

The field survey carried out around the main tourist sites concentrated in the commune of OURIKA is enough to show how what makes it a resource has deeply evolved. The development of these sites, based on relatively common resources (generic), on geographical particularities (nature and landscape) or a rich historical and cultural heritage.

The mediocre resource that the land represents for an agricultural development, becomes here a very advantageous innovating resource for a tourist development. Thus can be read the creation of a real value to the mixed use of agriculture and tourism.

In addition, in this territory long devoted to mixed farming and livestock within small farms, the externalities of agriculture have been vigorously valued during the last three decades, for outdoor tourist activities. Here too, the "defects" of the Causse with regard to the agricultural modernization of the 1990s have become precious advantages. Thus, multiple hiking itineraries have been conceived and marked out, on paths that were originally agricultural, at the bend of which one discovers very worked landscapes, enamelled with multiple shelters and low dry stone walls.

Also, many farm buildings have been converted into gardens and "gîtes de caractère" where know-how considered as traditional is mobilized as a resource for both agricultural development and tourism development, within educational farms or sales outlets for "local" products.

The Anglo-Saxons distinguish two agritourism practices: "tourism on farms" (when the environment and the essence of the farm are an integral part of the product, for example: help with farm work, tractor rides, picking on the farm, etc.) and "farm tourism" (when the accommodation is not on the farm, such as a bed and breakfast) (Clarke, 1996 cited by Fleischer, Tchetchik, 2005), see also (Ilbery, Bowler et al. 1998).

Other intentional relationships take the form of strategic cooperation: in the case of cooperation between two different sectors of activity, the framework and trigger is often a territorial project and the associated incentive mechanisms. This is the essence of our thinking and the trajectory we wish to propose.

Therefore, we have observed during the field survey, that several gardens have emerged and developed and concentrated in the municipality of OURIKA, offering innovative products and services, of high quality and thus attracting customers and special visitors who are looking for another type of tourism away from hiking, they are looking for relaxation, nature products and well-being.



Figure 1. Different Cosmetic Products from the Tourist Organic Gardens of OURIKA



Figure 2. Safran Garden The Organic Aromatic Garden of OURIKA

2.3 An Innovative Tourism Product and a New Form of Tourism in the Valley

The MAP sector in the valley is full of potential, with several cultivated or spontaneous species, even if the share of spontaneous plants is much more important, thanks to the geographical nature of the region: forest, paths, sides of watercourses, etc. Different activities have been created around them, ranging from cultivation, picking, preparation, distillation, street sales of bulk products, sales of finished products based on MAP, to tourist gardens.

Even if it is true that the activity of production of finished products including PAM remains less developed and even constitutes an axis of national strategic development, we noted local examples which knew how to impose themselves on the market even at the international level thanks to a production of products of great quality and very top of the range. We quote in first, the brand NECTAROME, attached to the first tourist garden to the commune of OURIKA: The Garden Bio Aromatic. According to the local actors, this garden constitutes a successful model of the tourist gardens, and it was able to create a range of cosmetic products very competitive at the international level. And thanks to this innovative garden, the valley has seen the birth of other creative gardens.

Indeed, this brand was created by three specialists in essential oils and cosmetics, with the aim of revalorizing the richness and local heritage, and reviving the existing recipes of care and well-being of grandmothers, all framed by the scientific know-how of its creators.

With a very complete line of care products, NECTAROME offers 150 references/products, packaged for individuals and also in bulk for professionals. A complete range of products designed to provide total well-being for body and mind.

This new concept of tourist gardens around the culture of the PAM born in the commune of OURIKA, brings a new product and a new attractiveness to the existing tourism in the valley. Indeed, these gardens offer to their visitors, guided tours, workshops, circuits around the MAP, but also products and services of care and well-being in an atypical and specific framework: care of the face, the body and the feet using local products of high quality containing MAP.

This, participates in the reinforcement of the anchoring of the tourist activity around the gardens in the commune of the OURIKA while this one was only a point of stopover and passage of the tourists wishing to engage further in the mountain.

Today, the commune of OURIKA and thanks to this concept has become a tourist stopover that attracts thousands of tourists annually (500 tourists per month in the high season at the (Aromatic Organic Garden). This successful tourist model is due to a strong mobilization of private actors and investors who know and are passionate about the cultural, social and natural heritage of the valley.



Figure 2. Pedicure Treatment and Foot Bath in the Organic aromatic Garden of OURIKA

2.4 Aromatic and Medicinal Plants and Wellness Tourism: Complementarity and Sustainability

Through this analysis, we can see that the implementation of wellness tourism in the OURIKA valley through the innovative offer of the tourist gardens and its local products, requires a territorial

governance where the role of each of the actors is essential. Indeed, they must all accept and adhere to the same territorial project, accompany it and do everything possible to achieve it and above all to sustain it over time. The synergy of the actors is a key element of this success and the conditions and prerequisites must be present and favorable to its achievement.

On the other hand, it emerges from our analysis that the marketing of aromatic plants always takes the upper hand over the activity of wellness tourism. These is not sufficiently emphasized in tourism, but especially in the sale of plants and derived products and the services around serve more as a demonstration for commercial purposes.

However, this sector of aromatic and medicinal plants and therapeutic waters has inescapable and very complementary assets with wellness tourism, and therefore can support each other. Today, the visitors of the valley buy limited quantities of plants and derived products, their valorization within the framework of a tourism of wellbeing is very opportune, and can boost their sale via a tourist activity of wellbeing.

On the other hand, valorizing these aromatic plants as a specific resource with the culture and the authentic local know-how in a wellness tourism can boost the number of visitors, who will become potential buyers of Plants and its products.

Through this diagnosis of the study territory and the different links and relationships of its actors, our reflection is oriented towards a joint valorization of the resources within the framework of a sustainable development project integrated to the territory, engaging all its actors.

3. Conclusion

He product of the tourist gardens constitutes an opportunity to be seized to supplement the current tourist activity in the valley with a new one. And the aromatic and medicinal plants are no longer to be demonstrated or described in the OURIKA valley. Indeed, this industry is well established, well managed and has a very strong image. Several national and international brands are supplied with these plants and recognise their quality and value in the cosmetic and care and well-being fields.

This is in the face of a growing and developing market with major projects at national and regional level (e.g., Marrakech Heath & Beauty Valley). This is in line with the priorities and strategies of economic development of the State.

This sector, with its assets and potential, constitutes a real opportunity to be seized in order to support the implementation of new tourist activities around well-being, and using and developing products and services based on locally produced aromatic plants. This is an innovative alternative to the purely commercial use of these plants. The OURIKA tourist garden concept is a perfect example of this.

That said, there are weaknesses and obstacles to be corrected, and risks that may also derail any attempt to set up a sustainable, fair, competitive and attractive territory. Indeed, the sector is still at the stage of bulk sales and some regional distilleries. Its economic and social spin-offs are limited and do not achieve the expected objectives because they are not part of local projects that bring together public

and private players.

In fact, the development of the aromatic plant sector, and the innovative offer of tourist gardens within the framework of wellbeing tourist activities instead of a purely commercial development, constitute a real opportunity for the territory. It is a timely axis of valorisation that can bring new economic and social dynamics to the OURIKA valley, and improve the difficult living conditions in this mountain area.

Bibliography

- ANTOINE J-M et MILIAN, J. (2012). La ressource Montagne entre potentialités et contraintes. *Edi L'Harmattan* (p. 287).
- BARRERE, C., BARTHELEMY, D., NIEDDU, M., VIVIEN F (dir.). (2005). Réinventer le patrimoine. De la culture à l'économie: Une nouvelle pensée du patrimoine ? Paris, L'Harmattan
- BENCHAABANE A et ABBAD, A. (2009). *Les plantes médicinales commercialisées à Marrakech. Collection La main verte* (p. 74).
- BERRIANE M et MICHON, G. (2016), Les territoires au Sud, vers un nouveau modèle? Une expérience marocaine. *Edi Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines de Rabat* (p. 372).