

BUSINESS TOURISM TOWARDS IMPROVING THE TOURISM OFFER IN MOROCCO: CASE OF SEASIDE TOWN OF AGADIR.

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ABSTRACT

Abstract—The business tourism has experienced in the recent years, rapid expansion un interrupted despite successive economic crises that have occurred in the world. The pace of development has surpassed that of other productive sectors goods and services. As an economic factor, the market for tourism business created new occupations, jobs, and as a social factor produces an approximation of entire sections of the international community, even more so, political affiliations, religious, ethnic and cultural. The business tourism market in Morocco, has been transformed in recent years, with some assets, and a real improvement in the general framework (represents 14 %). The tourism business is very profitable for the direct economic benefits and indirectly generated through conferences, meetings, seminars, fairs and exhibitions as Business tourists can spend 2.5 to 3 times more than an ordinary tourist. Casablanca (business capital), Marrakech and Tangier are three cities monopolize the Business Tourism in Morocco market, since they are three business destinations par excellence. The facilities are modern and comfortable. We hope through this work , focus on the concept of tourism Business in Morocco, and to know is that the city of Agadir can better position themselves in this kind of tourism This allows us to ask several issues including: Is the business tourism is the real type of tourism? Can we talk about business tourism in the city of Agadir? How the city of Agadir can access to this market?.

Keywords— Tourism Marketing, Tourism sector in Morocco, Market research.

INTRODUCTION

Business tourism has experienced in the recent years, a continuous and rapid growth despite successive economic crises that the world endured. The pace of its development has outperformed other sectors of goods and services production. As an economic factor, the business tourism market has created new occupations, jobs, and as a social factor it produces a reconciliation of all sections in the international community, even political, religious, ethnic and cultural affiliations. The business tourism market in Morocco has transformed in the recent years, thanks to certain assets, and a real improvement in the general framework (represents 14%). The tourism business is very profitable given the direct and indirect economic benefits harvested through conferences, meetings, seminars, fairs and exhibitions and since a business tourist can spend 2.5 to 3 times more than an ordinary tourist. Casablanca (the business capital), Marrakech and Tangier are three cities that monopolize the business tourism market in Morocco, since these are three excellent destinations for business. The facilities are modern and comfortable. We would like in this article, to focus on the business tourism concept in Morocco, and to know if the city of Agadir can better position itself in this market. This allows us to mention many problematic issues including: Is the business tourism is the real type of tourism? Can we talk about business tourism in the city of Agadir? How the city of Agadir can access to this market

I. BUSINESS TOURISM: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

1.1. The concept of business tourism

Appending the two concepts "tourism" and "business" seems a priori paradoxical. The first immediately evokes holidays, relaxation, pleasure and all the fun aspects related to it. As for the second, on the contrary, it refers to a very different reality, that of trade, wealth creation and employment. However, both have common points induced by the same necessity that of visiting a destination and using the same transportation services, accommodation, catering... What radically separates them is the purpose of the trip, mostly professional for the second, even if the attractiveness of the place, visiting museums, historical monuments, theaters and operas may also be part of the stay and may eventually influence the choice of the destination. According to the WTO, the UN, the INSEE and some professionals, a tourist is "any person who is traveling with at least one overnight stay outside the usual environment, regardless of the reason for the trip." This definition includes the business traveler while for the latter the trip is constrained in its purpose, its duration, its organization and its financial coverage. So his/her connection with any economic activity is thus erased, which is also the case for business travelers who have the freedom to organize themselves their contacts and tours. This concept relating to organizing conferences, seminars, business meetings is mostly concentrated in big cities which include central governments, large manufacturing and processing plants, etc., but also those with adequate infrastructure for the organization of international meetings (conference rooms, convention centers, etc.). All professionals stress that the definition of "business tourism" is imprecise at the national and international level. Business tourism associates on the one hand, tourism meaning the movement and the necessary consumption for people's stays (accommodation, catering, hospitality, transfers and sometimes leisure...).

Generally, we consider that business tourism includes individual or organized trips, made for professional reasons and whose duration is at least 24 hours.

1.2. Business tourism market

1.2.1. Conventions and Corporate Conventions

- Conventions: The term "convention" is used today in the strict sense, it is a gathering of people in order to exchange ideas and communicate the results of their studies, in the broad sense it is used to refer to the different types professional events, such as business conventions, product launches, symposiums, seminars, conferences, road shows, study days, etc. It is generally considered that a convention is a meeting of a large number of participants from the same corporation, federation or association, who do not necessarily share the same profession, but come together to discuss a theme of common interest directly related to their concerns or activities. In fact, the notion of convention is multifaceted because it can include events that are:

- Local, regional, national or international;
- International either with a governmental and non-governmental vocation;
- Pertaining to companies or associations;
- Professional or addressing ideas (political, religious, social ...), etc.

There is also a great multiplicity of terminologies that are not always entirely respected.

- Corporate conventions: The term "Corporate convention" evokes all the events organized by companies that can take many forms: gathering sales force, strategic agreements, product launch convention or a road show. The corporate convention is an internal meeting of a particular organism which may be national or international following the objectives shared by the group. The opportunity to participate in it is restricted to members of this organization and gather either all the staff, managers or sales force. In fact, the use of this term has been limited and is no longer used except for internal company meetings that gather their employees periodically. Moreover, some events that appear under the name conventions are actually corporate conventions.

1.2.2. Fairs and Exhibitions:

- Fairs are formed by the periodic gathering of exhibitors in order to present to professional buyers or the public samples of products or services with the intention of raising awareness of their qualities and prompt sales.

- Exhibitions: When these fairs are especially dedicated to a particular category of goods, they are called exhibitions. Specialized exhibitions cater to a particular sector, activity or a group of specific sectors of activities. Some are open to the public but most are professional trade fairs, not accessible to the general public. Nevertheless, there are some trade shows that are now open to the latter often in limited conditions (evenings, days...). Specialized exhibitions are characterized by a triple vocation:

- Gather at the same time and in the same place the supply and demand of an industry;

- Provide direct, current, and customized information of visitors and exhibitors;

- Place the national and international buyers in a position thanks to which they see, compare and place orders.

1.2.3 Incentives and seminars:

- The incentives: These are professional tours for members of a company or business partners in order to reward them for reaching their quantitative and qualitative objectives. The tourist side, the destination and the schedule of proposed activities are more important than in other professional events since here, the goal is to mark the participants strongly and positively. The increase in corporate demand for European and Mediterranean destinations is a real opportunity for France, which has a very wide range of activities often associated with the richness of different regions. Some Incoming travel agencies specialize in the sector; it is the DMC (Destination Management Companies). They plan for the trip combining logistics and creativity to meet and exceed the companies' marketing and commercial requirements.

- Seminars: These working groups are open to specialists in a certain discipline and are organized by professionals to complete specific training for participants while developing teamwork. If we exclude the companies' internal seminars, this kind of meeting is open to all interested parties, which are also solicited and who pay a contribution for the entire session (one to two weeks). The seminar's particularity is being a meeting with the unifying role which is primarily work. That being said, the seminar may have several objectives more or less assigned depending on the case: information, training, research, creativity, stimulation... . Some types of seminars are also close to the incentives: motivation stays that combine relaxation, leisure and work.

1.2.4 Business travel

These are trips made individually or in small groups strictly for a professional purpose, such as a business appointment in another city, a trip to meet the interlocutors of a client company or an international meeting between

several partners, etc. Unlike incentives, the destination is often dictated by the location of a business or a specific industry. The tourism aspects of the business offer does not come into play here in the choice of the destination for the business travel nor in the related activities, because the business traveler usually has little time to devote to his recreation. Moreover, these movements are quite difficult to quantify because professionals often travel individually and use very diverse means of transport and accommodation.

The new term for business tourism in the world is **MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Events**

II. CASE STUDIES "BUSINESS TOURISM IN AGADIR"

2.1. The tourism sector in the city of Agadir

2.1.1. Agadir Key figures

A. location

Agadir: Agadir (meaning "collective fortified granary" in Tamazight Tifinagh: ⵏ ⵏ ⵏ ⵏ Arabic أكادير) is a city in southwest Morocco, located on the Atlantic coast, in the Souss region, 508 km south of Casablanca, 173 km of Essaouira and 235 km west of Marrakech. It is the capital of the administrative region of Souss-Massa-Draa and the county Agadir Ida Outanane.

- International Airport: Agadir - Al Massira ;
- 260 Km Highway connecting Agadir to Marrakech;
- 5 ports and 8 Dams.
- Area: 72,506 km ² (10% National)
- Population: 3,200,000 hab. (10% national)
- Urbanization: 41%
- Agriculture (national leader with 32% of added value)
- Food, Travel, Sea Fishing
- Energy and Mines
- Infrastructures

B. Tourism in Agadir

First tourist hub, Souss Massa region is very diverse; it's a land of contrasts offering an infinite number of tracks and ambiance.

- Mild, sunny climate;
- Broad and heterogeneous area (beaches, sand dunes, flora, fauna)
- Tourist attraction sites;

- More than 100 hotel establishments listed;
- More than 30,000 beds;
- More than 600,000 tourists a year;
- More than 3 million nights (in the hotels) a year.

Agadir has hit a record of its history in 2012 and it has withstood adverse vagaries of the global crisis which had a negative impact on the global tourism industry.

Arrivals	Evolution (2011 vs. 2012)	Registered room nights	Evolution (2011 vs. 2012)
810 .559	4,05%	4.084.311	0,24%

The cumulative distribution of arrivals and room nights during the year 2012 by major markets.

Market	Saudi	Spanish	Russian	British	National
Arrivals	45,30%	17,63%	19,33%	6,85%	12,15%
Room nights	55,21%	4,76%	37,32%	12,22%	8,31%

According to these results, we believe that Agadir is a destination that is always appreciated by the national and international tourists, Therefore many efforts are needed in order to upgrade product quality and promotion then to find new mechanisms and solutions.

2.1.2. The different types of tourism in the city

Seaside tourism: a main pillar of the economy in the Souss-Massa-Draa region given the enormous tourism potential it contains, it is ranked first in seaside hotel capacity in all of Morocco

- Sports tourism (water sports, Golf);
- Thalassotherapy;
- Tourism events: festival, conference, forum, exhibitions.

2.2. The city's infrastructure

2.2.1. Convention center:

Agadir has no convention center; also the Wilaya of Souss-Massa-Draa is studying a project to equip the city with a convention center. Two sites have already been identified to accommodate the complex and a business plan is being developed: It Will include three conference rooms with a capacity of 350 people each and three committee rooms with a 60 people capacity. Within walking distance of the convention center will be located a 30-rooms hotel.

2.2.2. Transportation

Airport "Al Massira" is the second airport nationally. It is internationally recognized and it is located thirty Km from Agadir, this airport has a 3,200 m runway and annually hosts approximately one million passengers. Modern

equipment allows it to respond to any request for traffic and serve major European and African cities. Tourist Transport: There are 49 companies comprising Agadir travel agencies and other transport companies.

2.3. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One of the best transportation infrastructures in Morocco ▪ An important job market, varied and young ▪ Modern technological Infrastructure ▪ International airport ▪ Diversified and dense industrial and service sector ▪ 4 and 5 stars hotels with large conference rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient infrastructures to host demanding and professional customers. ▪ Accessibility problem ▪ Begging and other social problems ▪ Limited hosting capacity which is relatively not adapted to current customers ▪ There is no Convention center
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rich and diversified heritage ▪ The city is widely known on an international level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rise of the competing cities ▪ The global economic situation ▪ Funding problems of ongoing projects

III. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

3.1. Methodology

The qualitative approach is used to study the underlying motivations of individuals in order to update the variables that influence their attitudes and behaviors; it uses techniques to reach the unconscious and the subconscious because preferences are generally determined by factors which the individual is unaware of. However, the objective of quantitative studies is to quantify a number of variables from a reference population. The quantitative study is best known in the market research conduct. Indeed, it is the development of surveys, large-scale surveys with a sample of people affected by the product. In order to study the importance and place of the "Business Tourism" within the city of Agadir, we conducted two studies:

The first study was conducted using a questionnaire that was administered with travel agencies as well as communication and event planning agencies. We selected our sample based on all the existing agencies in the city of Agadir.

The second study was devoted to different hotels that we targeted (Atlantic Palace, Royal Atlas, Atlas Marina Beach, Sofitel Thalassa Almohads), recommended by the various agencies we interviewed.

3.2. Questionnaires

3.2.1. *Questionnaire administered with travel agencies, communication and event planning companies:*

Analysis and Results Interpretation:

- 88% of travel agencies as well as communication and events planning agencies that operate in the city of Agadir, operate in the area of "Business Tourism".
- The majority (57%) of operators (travel agencies and communication agencies), interviewed organized between 6-10 events per year, as well as 9% hold more than 15 events per year.
- Calls for tender are the most suitable tool for the organizers (77%); since they both guarantee equal opportunities for travel agencies, communication and event planning agencies, as well as a better quality service. We also cannot deny that direct contact is another way that can be used (20%).
- The time devoted to the organization of an event varies according to its importance and its value (Regional, National and International):

Regional	National	International
Some days before the event	Two weeks to two months	Three months and more

- Most agencies surveyed reported that the duration is determined by the organizers.
- 64.50% of the interviewees have a profit margin that is between 15% and 20% we can say that business tourism is a real profit generator as 7% of agencies have more than 20% profit.
- Nowadays business tourists are becoming more demanding, this is why the majority of agencies (73%) offer services in parallel.
- More than half (51%) of the activities are performed within the hotel (animated evenings, Bar ...), outside activities are also present with a percentage of 49% (excursions, city tours ...)
- The French (55%), Spain (25%), Polish (7%) are the promoting markets for Morocco.
- The 5-star hotels (61%) and 4 stars (34%) are the most targeted by the agencies, as they give more importance to this type of tourism, having the proper infrastructure.
- Most agencies (83.25%) confirm the importance of business tourism as a real profit generator. As a business tourist spends 3 times more than an ordinary tourist.

3.2.2. *Questionnaire administered with hotels:*

Analysis and Results interpretation:

- 80% of the hotels surveyed have multi-use rooms devoted to the organization of conferences, forums or conventions, while 20% of these hotels prefer to focus on leisure tourism.
- 40% of hotels that operate in Business Tourism have more than three multi-use rooms, while 20% have less than three multi-use rooms. A number that is low and it cannot meet the expectations of customers (Business tourists).

-20% of the hotels interested by events, organize more than 15 events per year, the same share is occupied by hotels that provide 1 to 5 and 6 to 10 conventions, forums and conferences, while those who organize 11-15 events are the most significant (40%) percent.

- The organized events themes are varied and diverse. With the importance of agriculture in Agadir, this theme represents 20% of the subjects of the events. While health, economy, art, politics and social topics represent 15% each, however sport is the least important issue with only 5%.

- The various managers of the hotels that we interviewed found it difficult to answer this question, but in general they made the comparison between the international and national events and also by the importance of the events:

<i>Events</i>	<i>Time</i>
International	1 year, 6 month, 3 month
National	1 month, 1 to 2 weeks

- Travel agencies are the most used medium to ensure the organization and communication of these events with a percentage of 50% while 25% deploy other means such as advertising and event planning agencies. However, the rest prefer to contact the hotels directly without going through an intermediary.

- Just like the time devoted to the organization, the average duration of events also varies depending on the size of the event and stakeholders. We noticed that 46, 50% last from 1 to 3 days, 39.25% from 4 to 6 days and 14.25% more than a week.

-The cost is generally determined by the client's budget. Directors targeted in the study mentioned that hotels cost between 30,000 and 40,000 Euros.

- According to interviewed officials, while organizing these events, hotels always provide accommodation and food for the participants.

- According to the results of the questionnaire, all hotels not only organize national events but also international ones, so we can say that the city of Agadir is attracting more and more international business tourists.

- Business tourism is an activity that allows the development of destinations since it is considered a real profit generator for tourism establishments. This is what is clear in the responses of the interviewed managers, 90% are aware of its importance.

3.3. Synthesis

All in all, we can say that although the city of Agadir, continues to impress and attract tourists (leisure and business), since what we have noticed in these questionnaires, the business tourists are satisfied with the organization and the quality of services offered at conventions and they are ready to relive the experience ... the city has a number of hotels (which have good quality conference rooms), travel agencies, communication and events planning agencies, as well as professionals trained in this field.

Business tourism remains a new market for the city of Agadir, which is why it is necessary to provide more effort in terms of infrastructures (hotels, convention centers, event management agencies, tourist transport...), not to mention the involvement of the state in the development process, in order to satisfy and retain existing customers and attract others, in order to make the city more competitive nationally and internationally.

3.4. Suggestions and recommendations for improvement

- Create a convention center which meets international standards;
- Encourage investors to create their own projects within the city while facilitating administrative procedures;
- Implement the headquarters of large companies (public and private) to improve the brand image and the economic situation of the city;
- Invest in hotel infrastructure (upscale hotels containing large capacity conference rooms), and in the event management agencies (intermediation role), and to develop means transportation for tourists.
- Promoting the city of Agadir as a destination for business tourism not only a coastal resort in forums and international exhibitions (ONMT & CRT);
- Training specialized personnel in the field of tourism and events.

CONCLUSION

Business Tourism, which had the appearance of a "new concept" once, now plays an important role in a destination's performance. It is a marketing and communication tool whose effectiveness is increasingly recognized. Despite a slowdown in the recent years, the Travel market continues to evolve. However, there has been a restructuring of the latter, through a modification of the demand. Indeed, customers, increasingly sophisticated, new expectations and a new "movement" have sown "panic" among current players in the business tourism. More companies are realizing the importance of an activity, the more they wish to have control. According to this perspective, the current offer for Business tourism must be different in the future: some players will continue, and others are strongly threatened.

However, the current supply of business tourism, normally based on customization, didn't it turn into a standardization process? Indeed, the customer wants the original, easily achievable and this at the lowest possible cost benefits. Such requirements often lead to "basic" benefits. Because of this, Business Tourism loses a little of its nature: unique and unforgettable appearance of an event is often overlooked in favor of "convenience." Do not forget that the Travel business is the image of a destination, both internally and externally. Also, if we continue to neglect the "exceptional" side of an event, won't Business Tourism lose its value?

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