

Tourism in Morocco:  
The challenge to attract 10 million foreign visitors by 2010

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## Abstract

This research paper deals with studying the Moroccan ability to meet the challenge of receiving 10 million foreign tourists by 2010 and evaluating the probable economic and social impacts of this challenge. The literature review revealed that some governments' attempts to expand tourism had both positive and negative results. The data collection tools used to carry out the research project were 49 surveys handed out at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI); 37 surveys to Moroccan students and 12 surveys to exchange students. Also, one interview was conducted with two Business School faculty members. Findings confirmed that the majority of the AUI respondents are optimistic about achieving the challenge of 2010. Moreover, they all agreed that the economic impacts of this challenge will be mostly positive while the social ones will be mostly negative. To sum up, the Moroccan government should make more efforts to develop the tourism sector, such as developing the infrastructure and the tourism industry, in order to realize this national project of sustainable development.

## Introduction

Moroccan Kingdom is an Arab developing country situated on the extreme north-western corner of Africa. Because it is one of the rare Arab countries that don't have oil and gas resources, Morocco's economy is mainly based on agriculture and industry. Indeed, these two sectors cannot constantly provide the Moroccan government with needed and expected incomes; besides, they are unable to solve Morocco's crucial social and economic problems such as unemployment and poverty. The country's strategic geographical situation and unique natural assets encourage the whole society to see tourism as the future economic sector that society can rely on. Consequently, the government sacrifices a great budget and energy to develop tourism. Moreover, it has established new agreements with many countries to bring investors and create a beneficial competition. The government's biggest challenge, from which the whole society expects a lot, is the attraction of 10 million tourists by 2010.

The challenge of receiving 10 million foreign tourists by the year 2010 is a big national project that, if realized, will have a great impact on all Moroccans, among them Al Akhawayn University (AUI) and Ifrane community. In fact, AUI and Ifrane community constituted the main source of this research.

The main purpose of this research paper is to investigate whether Morocco, with its set strategies, will be ready to receive 10 million tourists by 2010. This challenge has been the hope of all Moroccans since the famous speech of the king Mohammed the sixth in 2001. It was chosen to explore this topic because of its importance to the economic and social life in Morocco. Moroccans believe that, if the country could receive 10 million visitors by 2010, it will contribute to ensure a continuous development.

The challenge that the Moroccan government made about receiving 10 million tourists by the year 2010 brought up a set of assumptions that needed to be discussed. The first assumption about this issue was that some of tourism negative impacts on society, such as sexual tourism, will increase in many cities all over Morocco, especially in the touristy ones. Another assumption was that insecurity will spread in the country. Additionally, many Moroccans are pessimistic about the government's ability to achieve this goal.

This research paper has some important concepts that need to be explained and clarified in order to have a better understanding of the topic. The one that was frequently used because of its importance in this study is the word "challenge" which is defined as "Something needing great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully, or the situation of facing this kind of effort" according to Cambridge Dictionary. Another concept is "infrastructure", which means "The stock of basic facilities and capital equipment needed for the functioning of a country" according to WordReference dictionary. In addition, "entertainment industry" is another word that means "An industry which consists of a large number of sub-industries devoted to entertainment."(Wikipedia Encyclopedia). Another unclear term in this research paper is "Gross Domestic Product (GDP)". According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, The GDP of a country is defined as "The market value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time".

This paper was set out to answer the following research question: Is Morocco ready to receive 10 million foreign visitors by 2010 and, if so, what are the possible effects of this on the economic and social life of the country?

## Literature Review

Today, Morocco is halfway through its nine-year programme to increase tourists' number to 10 million by the end of the decade, a challenge introduced by the King Mohammed VI in January 2001. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate some of many studies that were conducted about tourism development. Thus, the first part of it compares the Moroccan natural and cultural assets with those of other countries. The second part talks about the strategies that were settled by some countries in order to improve their tourism sector. Finally, this part of the paper copes with giving both economic and social impacts of tourism development.

In the majority of developing countries, tourism is mainly based on natural and cultural assets. For instance, "Most of foreign visitors to South Africa indicate that the wildlife is what attracted them to South Africa and that it had exceeded their expectations." (Saayman, 2001). Also, "Cyprus has long been a popular tourist destination because of its physical and climatic characteristics" (Sharpley, 2001). Another example is Malta which is one of the most popular Mediterranean tourist destinations because of some important factors such as "The temperate winters and subtropical summers, complemented by long daily hours of sunshine" (Markwick, 2001). Tourism has a lot of to do with the historical and cultural assets of countries which is the case in Singapore where "tourism is based on urban historical quarters reflecting a multicultural population" (Chang, 1999). Similarly, Moroccan tourism is mainly based on natural and cultural assets because of its strategic geographical situation. For instance, Morocco is known by its 3500 km of coastlines that include many beautiful sandy beaches, and its unique Mediterranean climate and multicultural population.

Natural assets are fundamental but not enough to attract tourists and develop tourism sector. Thus, countries have to set well-studied and fitting strategies to get profit from their natural assets. Taking the example of Mexico, “In the 1960s and 1970, tourism promotion policies in developing countries focused primarily on providing infrastructural support for large-scale, enclave- like projects in order to meet the demand of an ever-wealthier international clientele that was anxious to spend its leisure time abroad.” (Brenner, 2005). This example illustrates the importance of infrastructures in developing tourism sector.

Sharpley (2001) stated that Cypriot tourism authorities, whilst accepting that tourism has become the primary engine driving the economy, proposes a number of policies designed to overcome many of current challenges at the same time as providing a stable foundation for the future development of tourism. Making challenges is essential for the development of tourism in any country. Cyprus and Morocco are good examples that illustrate this idea. Nowadays, Morocco tends to set strategies to meet the challenge of attracting 10 million tourists by 2010.

Tourism development affects the whole country, especially its economic and social sectors. As an example of economic impacts, the Kurger National Park in South Africa had a significant impact on the development of the tourism industry in the province. This industry is currently a significant sector in the Mpumalanga economy in terms of both contribution to production and employment, (Sayman, 2006). As Gunn and Var (2002) stated, “Through the development of tourism, more people will be employed, obtain incomes, new tax revenues will be received, and new wealth will accumulate” (p. 105). In another example, tourism is a proven employment sector in Canada. In 2004, Ontario tourism generated \$21.8 billion in annual revenues and accounted for approximately 486,000 jobs. (Ontario, n.d). On the other hand, tourism development has also social impacts on the country. For instance, in Malta the impacts

of the natural and sex tourism were characterized by some negative effects. According to Markwick (2001), the most important impact was the growing awareness of the dangers of skin cancer and AIDS. These bad impacts can affect negatively the progress of tourism sector in Malta. However, tourism development can also have a positive impact on the social life in any country. One of the most important positive impacts of developing tourism is that it can reduce discrimination and prejudice among people. As Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) stated, "One to one interaction between hosts and guest can break down stereotypes, or the act of categorizing groups of people based upon a single dimension" (p.303).

There is considerable body of researches that have been conducted on tourism development in many countries. However, this research paper focused only on Moroccan tourism development and the possible impacts of it on the economic and social sectors in Morocco. Moroccan tourism development mainly relies on meeting the challenge of attracting 10 million foreign visitors. This research project investigated whether Morocco can meet this challenge or not and the possible outcomes of it on the economic and social life once this challenge is met.

## Methodology

### Design

Approaching the Moroccan challenge of attracting 10 million tourists by 2010 required conducting analyzing and predictive research. First, investigating whether Morocco is ready to receive 10 million tourists by 2010 necessitated doing an explanatory research; analyzing information from different perspectives to end up with better understanding of the issue was necessary. Second, the future impact of achieving this challenge required predictive answers which were mainly supported by other countries' experiences on tourism sector like Spain,

focusing on how increased tourism affected their economic and social sectors. Thus, a comparison of the Moroccan economic and social conditions could be done to see if similar results have any chance to take place in Morocco.

In exploring the issue, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods constituted an efficient way for gathering information necessary for statistics needed to reinforce the research. It was an appropriate way for approaching the two sides of the issue that deal with studying the probability of meeting the challenge and its effects on Morocco. Using qualitative methods in this investigation was also important because it afforded additional data for accomplishing the study; it was more suitable for investigating the first part of this Moroccan national project than the second one, for the fact that it was a source of detailed information about the actual situation of tourism in Morocco.

### Subjects

An interview was held with two faculty members of Business Administration School because they constituted a more appropriate and relevant source for needed information, especially because of the fact that they have expertise in economic issues in Morocco of which tourism is a part of.

Concerning the surveys, two types of surveys were developed; one for exchange students and the other for Moroccan students. In this research, exchange students were considered as tourists, because they are foreigners who travel in Morocco in their free time as any tourists. The second survey group was Moroccan students. They were chosen because of the fact that they have been living in Morocco and aware of national issues.

Concerning the sample size, it was 100 due to the small number of students in the summer session which is approximately 300 students. Also, this number of surveys has an acceptable

percentage of errors which is approximately 10%. The sample was randomly selected; 25 surveys were given to exchange students and 75 surveys to Moroccan students, either males or females from all levels of studies. In fact, 49 surveys were returned back: 12 surveys of exchange students and 37 surveys of Moroccan students.

### Procedures

The team members were separated into two pairs. Each pair was responsible for collecting data about the issue using one specific method either interview or surveys. These two methods have been chosen to collect data because interview was the appropriate way to gather detailed information about the topic, while surveys were an easy and a quick method to collect statistical data.

The first pair was responsible for conducting the interview and recording it. Two members of the team were required to talk to the faculty members during their office hours. Interview questions were developed depending on the position of the interviewees. It included 6 general questions about the three main parts of the topic that cope with the possibility of meeting the challenge 2010, the strategies adopted in promoting tourism in Morocco and its predicted impacts on the country. In addition, some sub-questions were included to give more specific details about the subject (Appendix 1).

The second pair handed out the surveys at random to AUI Moroccan and exchange students during lunchtime and whenever they meet them on campus.

The majority of survey questions prepared for AUI Moroccan students had the purpose to collect answers about the following issues: does Morocco have the ability to host an increased number of tourists; strategies that will facilitate meeting the 2010 challenge and possible impact of increased numbers of tourists. The surveys contained 10 closed and open-ended questions. For

one remaining question, subjects were asked to rank their response on a scale of 1 to 3 (Appendix 2). Concerning survey questions for exchange students, they also consisted of 10 closed and open-ended questions with one question that needed to be ranked from 1 to 3. These questions mostly focused on the experience of exchange students as visitors to Morocco (Appendix 3).

## Results

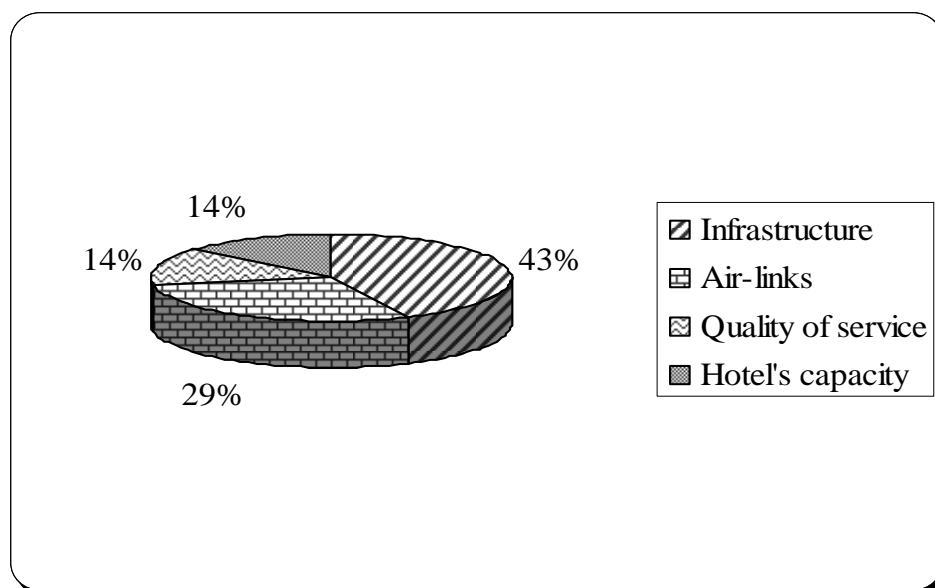
After handing on 37 surveys to AUI students and 12 surveys to exchange students, and holding an interview, many valuable results were found about the topic of the Moroccan challenge to attract 10 million foreign visitors by 2010. These results satisfied both the research question and the assumptions about the issue.

### Surveys

Among 25 surveys that were distributed to exchange students, 12 surveys were returned. These students were considered as tourists in order to evaluate their opinions about tourism in Morocco.

The chart below represents the level of priority accorded by exchange students to develop different services that are essential to meet the challenge of attracting 10 million tourists in Morocco.

Figure 1: Amenities to Develop to Meet the Challenge of 2010



N=12

As Figure 1 shows, the majority of exchange students (43%) claimed that the infrastructure of the country (e.g. roads, railways, public buildings) is the most important service that needs to be developed, followed by air-links (29%), then the quality of service and hotel's capacity (14 %). Moreover, some students had other suggestions about what Morocco needs to develop to realize Vision 2010. Some of these suggestions are the following:

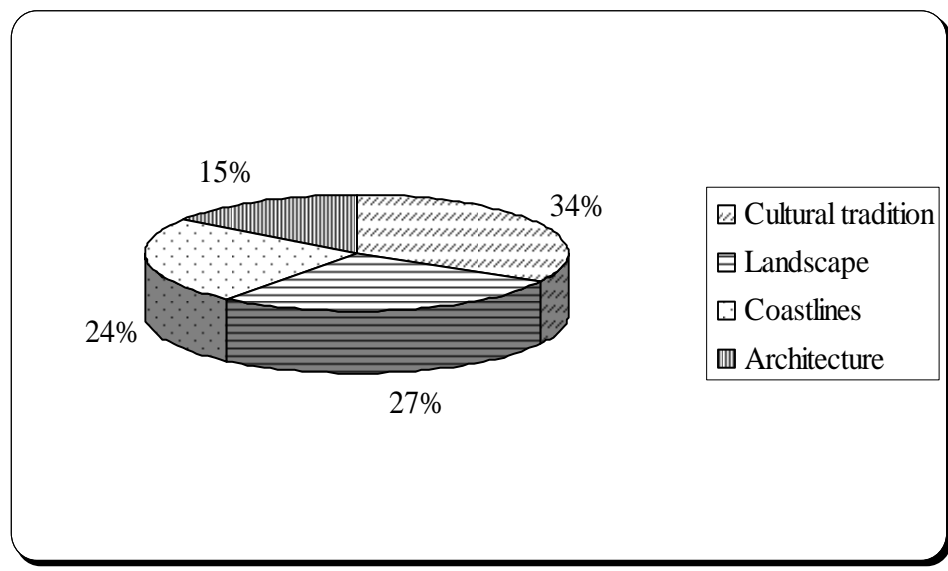
- Wildlife and promotion of Amazigh culture.
- To upgrade resort-beach areas which attract people.
- To create more entertainment industry.

Concerning the impact of this challenge if achieved, 100 % of students surveyed (N=12) thought that it will have a positive impact for several reasons:

- It will help the country to progress and develop positively and will upgrade the standard of living and influence in the world.
- It will bring in a lot of money to Morocco and help the economy.

Exchange students were also asked about what will attract 10 million tourists to visit Morocco. Figure 2 illustrates the results gotten for this question in which students were supposed to choose at least one answer between four elements: Moroccan culture, Moroccan landscapes, Moroccan coastline and Moroccan architecture.

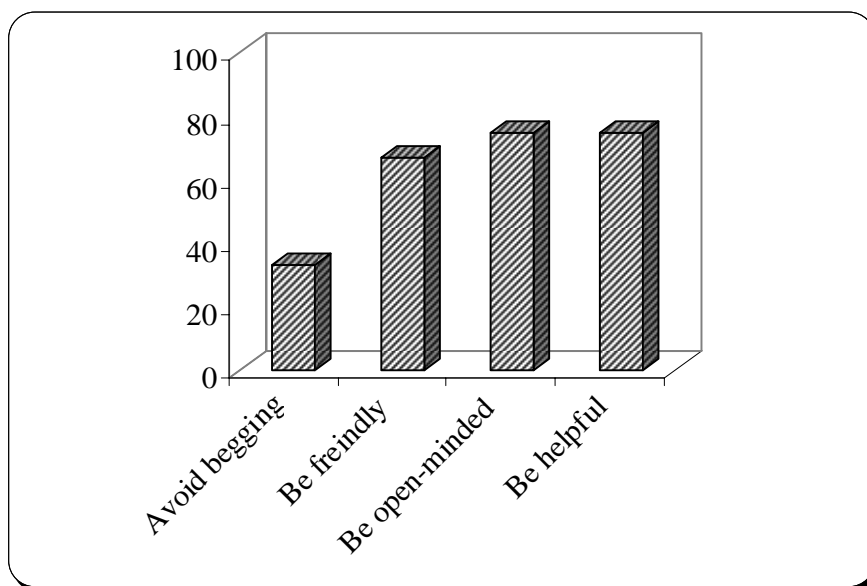
Figure 2: Tourist Attractions in Morocco



N=12

Many students insisted that a combination of all of these elements is vital for the tourism sector in Morocco.

Figure 3: The Role of Moroccans to Meet the Challenge

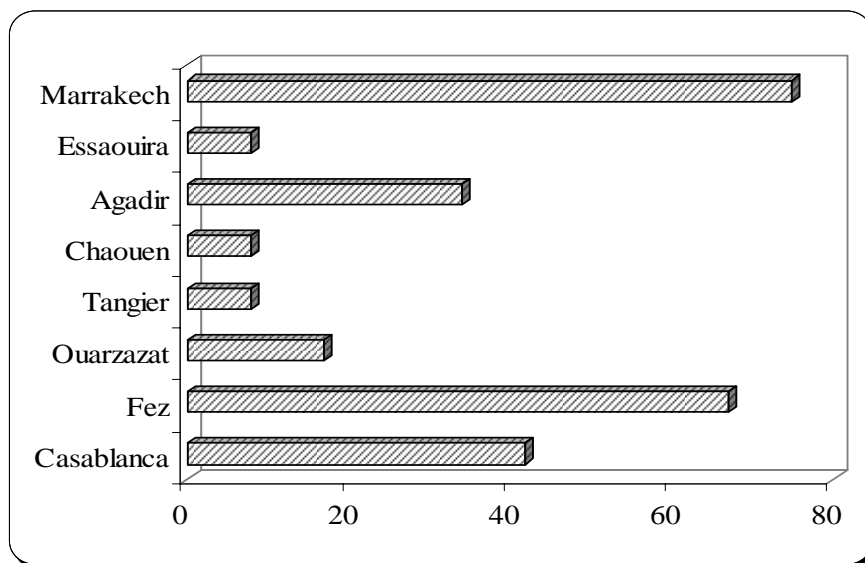


N=12

Moroccan population plays an important role for the success of the challenge. 75% of exchange students think that Moroccan citizens' role in meeting this challenge is to be helpful, 67% of them think that they should be friendly while 75% of them think that they should be open-minded. However, only 33% of them claim that Moroccans should avoid begging. In fact, 83 % of exchange students find that Moroccans outside AUI are helpful, 75% of these students find Moroccans kind people. However, none of these students describe Moroccans as unsociable, racist, or unfriendly people.

The following chart shows the most attractive cities in Morocco according to students' points of view.

Figure 4: The Most Attractive Destinations in Morocco



N=12

Some students proposed other Moroccan cities, which were not proposed in the given list of cities, that they think are attractive. An example of them is Tangier and Chaouen (Chefchaouen).

The exchange students had different attitudes concerning safety in Morocco before and after coming. 67% of students stated that they had some concerns about safety and security in this country; however, after they came to Morocco, 92% of students feel that they are in a safe country.

In this survey, exchange students were asked whether they want to come back to Morocco or not. All students surveyed want to come back to Morocco except two students who were indifferent. The main reason for coming back to Morocco, that the majority of subjects (83%) gave, is the beauty of the country including the good weather, beaches, landscapes, and its culture. In addition, two students (17%) intend to study here and do research about Amazigh

culture, while the two indifferent students want to see other places before coming back to Morocco.

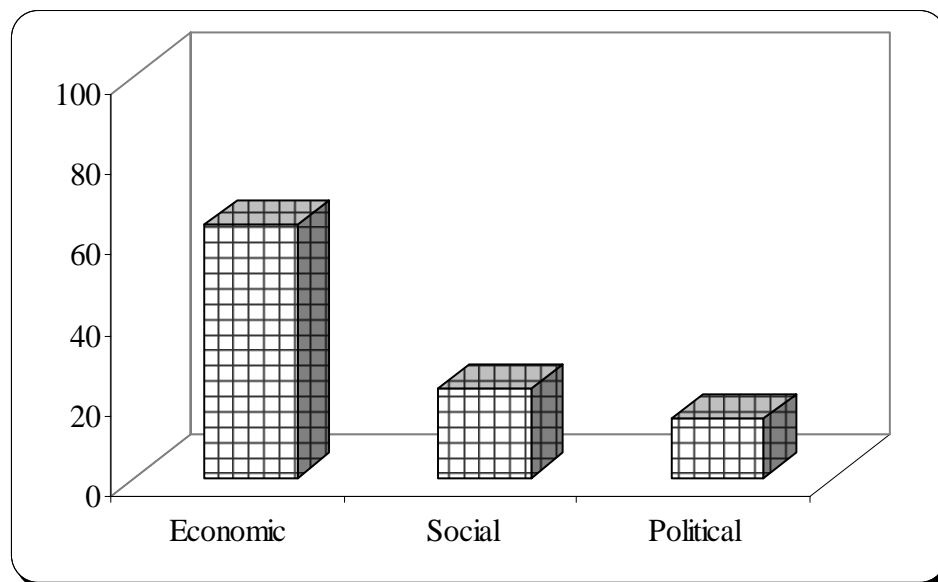
As the exchange student survey results illustrated, 50% of them found some problems while they were traveling in Morocco. For instance, the language barrier is the major problem of these students since the majority of Moroccans do not speak English. While 50% did not find any problem during their journeys in Morocco.

Concerning Moroccans' surveys, 37 surveys were returned among 75 surveys hand out to AUI Moroccan students.

Since this research project first investigates Moroccan capability to meet this challenge, one of the surveys' outcomes showed that 22 Moroccan students out of 37 (60%) believe that Morocco will be able to meet this challenge and 15 students (40%) disbelieve on this capability.

Concerning the aspects that Morocco needs to develop the most in order to meet this challenge in which students can choose more than one answer, almost all of the respondents agreed that the infrastructure are the ones that need to be developed the most. Quality of service and hospitality came in the second place with 70% of voices. Moreover, 54% of the respondents said that air-links have to be developed and only 5% thinks that hotel capacity has to be improved in Morocco. Some respondents suggested other aspects to develop. For example, they said that Morocco needs to enhance the rate of foreign investments, develop administration, improve the Moroccan mentality, develop justice, ethical concerns and health issues, and also enhance the service provided to visitors in order to attract and retain them.

Figure 5: The Affected Sectors by the Moroccan Challenge



N= 37

The chart above obviously demonstrates that students surveyed think that the economic sector will be the most affected by the meeting of this challenge, after that comes the social sector and finally the political sector. Many reasons were given for choosing the economic sector. Students said that by achieving this goal, a decrease in the unemployment rate will occur and more job opportunities will be created. They also said that Morocco will receive more hard currencies which are helpful for its economic balance. Furthermore, that will increase the income of the country, and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Concerning the social sector, some students stated that the huge coming of foreign tourists will have a very big effect on young people's behavior and mentality. Also, they said that the social layers and different people from different countries may create problems such as insecurity, and cause the disappearance of Moroccan culture. However, some of them had a positive view of the impact of this challenge over the social sector. They stated that people will be more tolerant and mutual respect for individual differences will occur. For the political sector which was the least

selected, some respondents said that by meeting this challenge, Morocco will change its political relationships with other countries, especially the ones from which the tourists come. Moreover, they claimed that there will be more secularism in the regime and the 10 million tourists might serve as an implicit means of public relations to promote a good image for Morocco.

Concerning the question that investigated if Morocco needs foreign investors or not to meet this challenge, 22 Moroccan students out of 35 answered yes and 13 answered no. The respondents that answered yes to this question gave many reasons for their choice. For instance, they said that Morocco needs foreign investors because they have more experience, can bring foreign currencies, will create lots of job opportunities and are also a source of more capital and expertise. They also said that Morocco is a poor country that cannot afford all the needed money for this huge project, the Moroccan capacities are limited, Morocco lacks the know-how and capital and also they need foreign investors in order to follow the international norms. For the respondents who answered no to this question, they also gave their reasons for doing so. They said that Morocco should first use its own energies because that will encourage young people to make investments. It should also be responsible for this challenge and employ Moroccan investors.

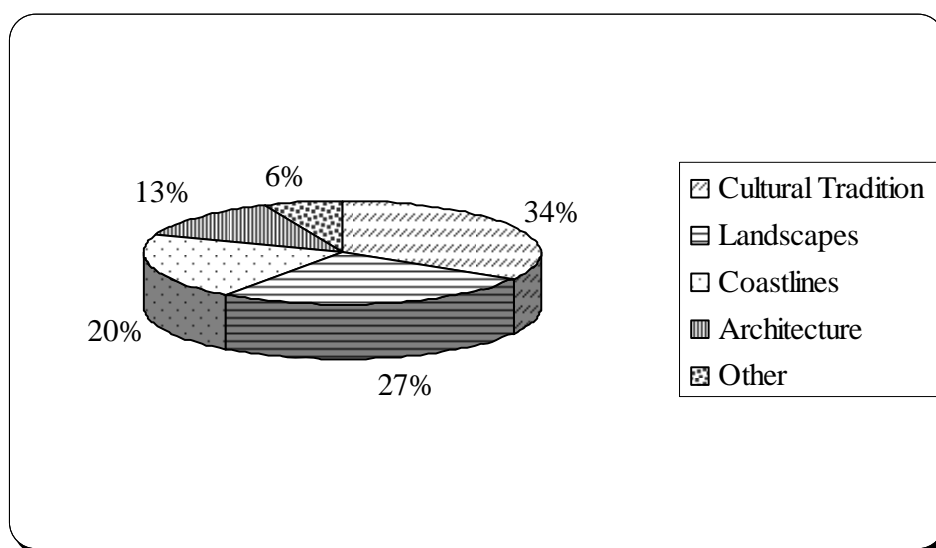
Figure 6: Media Effectiveness in Meeting this Challenge

| Frequency          | Very effective | Somewhat effective | Not very effective |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Number of students | 18             | 11                 | 5                  |
| Percentage         | 53%            | 32.3%              | 14.7%              |

N= 34

It is clear from the table above that most of the Moroccan students that answered this question think that the media would be very effective in meeting the challenge put forth by the Moroccan government.

Figure 7: Tourist Attractions in Morocco



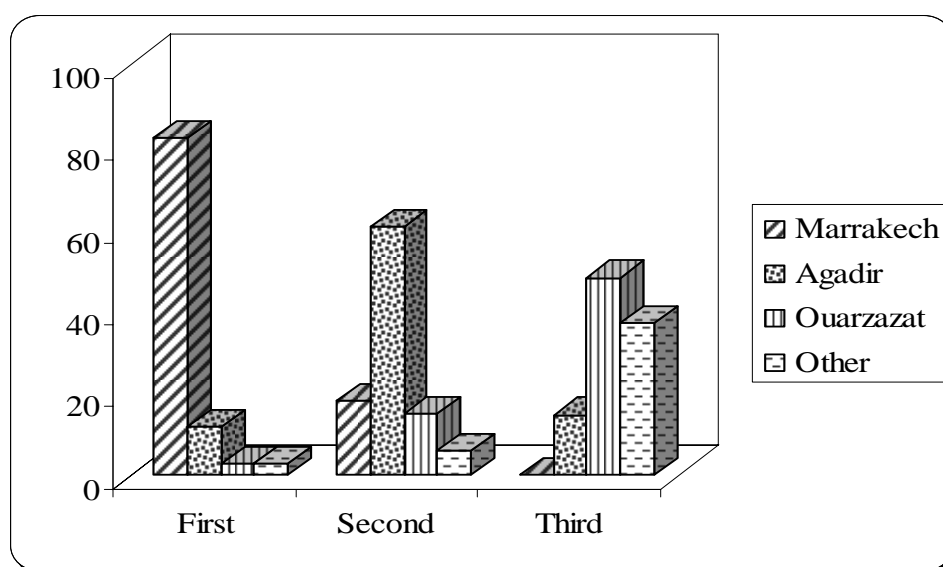
N= 37

The “other” option for this question according to the respondents included the Moroccan weather, Moroccan geographical situation to Europe, and Moroccan political stability which means no rebellions and no revolutions.

When AUI Moroccan students were asked about the role of the Moroccan population in meeting this challenge, 36% of them said that Moroccans have to be open-minded, 23% chose avoid begging as an answer to this question, 22% said that Moroccans must be helpful to tourists and only 18% said that they have to be friendly. Some students wrote in the “other” option that Moroccans have to avoid over-pricing products and services, stop looking at people from other cultures, avoid stealing from tourists and do not get tourists involved in fraud.

Another point in this survey deals with whether Morocco can assure being a safe place to visit by 2010 or not. According to the results, 85% of the Moroccan students said yes to this question and no more than 14% said no.

Figure 8: Ranking of the Most Attractive Cities for Tourists



N= 37

The chart above illustrates that the respondents chose Marrakech as the most attractive destination for tourists with 82% of the voices. The second choice was the city of Agadir with 61% votes. In the third place comes Ouarzazat with 39% of the voices. For the other cities, students chose among Casablanca, Essaouira, Fez, and Meknes. Moreover, other respondents proposed Tangier as a good destination for tourists even if the survey did not include it.

Students were asked to choose more than one answer in the expectations about the season that will recognize the largest number of tourists. According to students' answers, 83% said that the summer is the season that will recognize the largest number of tourists. After that comes the spring season then winter, and finally fall season with only three votes (8%).

## Interview

An interview was conducted with two faculty members from the School of Business Administration, who are experts in Tourism.

First, the professors were asked about their opinions of the new Moroccan policy of promoting tourism, and they think that it is a good idea in the sense that tourism is a big industry that can have positive benefits on the country's economy. In addition, they were asked a question about whether they are pessimistic or optimistic about meeting the challenge 2010. As an answer, they claimed that they are both pessimistic about the number of tourists expected; they don't believe that Morocco will receive 10 million tourists by 2010 because of many reasons. Some of these reasons are that Morocco needs to make serious projects and to make the industry more professional. However, these faculty members are both optimistic about the progress of tourism in Morocco.

Second, the business faculty members agreed that Morocco is a beautiful country; there are some fantastic things to do and to see in Morocco; however, they criticized some vendors behavior toward tourists.

Finally, for the question that deals with the probable impacts of this challenge if met, the answer can be divided into two parts; economic and social impacts. For the economic impacts, increasing tourism creates jobs opportunities, for instance, 16 new tourists create one full time job. In addition, it will bring the hard currency that Morocco needs. For social effects, when tourists come to Morocco, different cultures come and then it may affect the Moroccan traditional culture, that is why Moroccans should care about traditional Moroccan culture and let it as it is according to these professors.

## Discussion

The purpose of this research project was to identify whether Morocco can meet the challenge of attracting 10 million foreign visitors by 2010 or not and the probable impacts of this challenge over economic and social sectors. The results collected from surveys for both AUI and exchange students and also from an interview with two Business School faculty members were interpreted in the discussion section. This interpretation allowed the group to answer the research question and to verify the project's assumptions in the conclusion section.

The majority of students who were asked about the Moroccan capability to meet the challenge of attracting 10 million tourists by 2010 believe that the Moroccan government can achieve this goal. This was because these students trust the Moroccan willingness to attend the set goal by; for example, building-up new hotels and providing a lot of conveniences for the investors in the tourism sector.

However, these students agreed that the Moroccan government has to develop and change a lot of aspects in order to accomplish this aim. Almost all students are convinced that the infrastructures are the ones that need to be developed the most. One possible reason is that students are witnesses of the poor condition of the roads, railways, public buildings and other infrastructures. The high percentage of students, who checked the quality of service and hospitality as another aspect to be developed, showed that these students are not satisfied with the quality of service in their country and hope that Morocco provides formal training in the service and hospitality sectors for students who take tourism related courses. Also, almost half of the students stated that air-links are another important aspect to develop in Morocco because they may think that tourists are very concerned about the quality of air-links in host countries. The

fact that only 5% of Moroccan students think that hotel capacity has to be improved in Morocco indicated that this aspect is not an obstacle for the Moroccan government and that Morocco already has good hotel capacity. This belief may be because these students do not use frequently hotels. The fact that other students added other options to be develop in Morocco such as enhancing the rate of foreign investments, develop ethical concerns and health issues, and develop administrations. This means that Morocco has many things to accomplish and improve in order to meet this challenge. It also means that a lot of efforts and time have to be spent in this project to make it come true.

The results showed that the economic sector is the one that will be the most affected by this challenge. This is because all students are convinced that the improvement of the tourism sector encourages the growth of the economy by affording hard currencies and creating new investments. The social sector had also a considerable percentage. Most of the comments that were given behind choosing social sector are negative. One of the interpretations is that students are afraid to loose their culture, customs and habits because of the huge number of tourists that will visit Morocco by 2010. Concerning the political sector, few students think that it will be affected when meeting this challenge. One possible reason is that students may think that Morocco will not change its political approach by the coming of this number of tourists.

Students who said that Morocco needs foreign investors to meet this challenge are more than those who declined it. One reason for this may be because these students do not trust Moroccan investors and doubt their capability and experience in the tourism sector. This belief can be due to the fact that Moroccan investors lack qualification.

In response to the question that evaluated media effectiveness to meet this challenge, the majority of students said that the media will be very effective. This result may be explained by

saying that students are aware of the role that can be played by the media and its importance in advertising any new project, especially if it is a huge project like this one. One example that illustrates the important role of Media was its contribution in the Moroccan candidature to hold the world cup of 2010.

When students were asked which tourist attractions are most interesting to foreign visitors, the highest percentages responded for the cultural traditions and landscapes. The reason behind this may be that students are proud of their cultural traditions and believe that they will be a good attraction for tourists. Concerning Moroccan landscapes, students are also aware of the importance of this tourist attraction and they are satisfied about the beauty and the diversity of their landscapes. Moroccan coastlines and architecture were not selected as important tourist attractions. One possible reason for that may be the poor conditions of the Moroccan coastlines including garbage, lack of beach activities and hygiene and also the bad conditions of Moroccan houses and buildings, especially in old Medinas and public districts. Students proposed other aspects that might attract tourists, such as Moroccan weather and food. This may be due to Morocco's diverse climate and traditional food.

One of the tourists' primary concern about the host countries is their population. Tourists do not expect to feel as they are home, but at least they have to be fairly and respectfully treated. In their answer to the question about the Moroccan population's role to meet this challenge, more than one third of students underlined the need for Moroccans to be open-minded. When host citizens are open-minded, tourists feel more relaxed and confident while talking to the citizens. According to the surveys, 20% of students want Moroccans to avoid begging. This response reveals social problems, however. This act gives a negative impression to tourists. Hence, it is the responsibility of the Tourism Sector to address the poverty that leads to begging. This small

percentage of students who claimed that begging has to be avoided may imply that AUI students do not attend the places crowded of beggars. Another 20% of students said that Moroccans have to be helpful to tourists. A probable reason behind this low number is that the majority of tourists use travel agencies to guide them during their trip. Moreover, only one fifth of surveyed students ask Moroccans to be friendly perhaps because the interaction between Moroccan citizens and tourists is limited. Furthermore, students reproach Moroccan sellers who over-price products and services to tourists, and they also ask Moroccans to stop stealing. Such behaviour can cause a bad reputation of the society; besides, tourists can consider them as a real threat to their safety.

Safety is a required aspect in host countries because tourists' first concern is to insure their safety before any other considerations. As a response for the question that asked whether Morocco is a safe country or not, almost all Moroccan students are optimistic about their country's security system to assure the population safety. Moroccans rely on their security system because the Moroccan government is aware that any mistake, and even a very small one, will cause security perturbations which will cost the country a lot.

Another survey question consisted on rating the three most attractive destinations for tourists in Morocco. The evaluation of the collected data resulted on the following classification: Marrakech, Agadir then Ouarzazat. Other cities were mentioned also, such as, Tanger, Fez, Essaouira and others. In fact, almost of the time, tourists look for a place which both reflects the history and culture of the host country and guaranties a comfortable and enjoyable vacation. In other words, tourists are looking for a city which assembles tradition and modernity such as Marrakech, Agadir and Ouarzazat.

Referring to the results, summer season was chosen to be the most preferable period to visit Morocco. Summer in Morocco is characterized by its sunny days and diverse tourist

activities. Besides, it is the vacation period in Morocco when Moroccan immigrants come to visit their motherland. Spring came second as good period to visit Morocco because in this season, Morocco takes a totally different shape. Few students see fall and winter as the least attractive season's maybe because the majority of tourists who come to Morocco are Europeans who seek for the sun and hot climate. However, there are some natural sites and cities to visit in this period such as, Ifrane, Oukaymadan (Marrakech), Michlifen (Ifrane), Midelt and other places, where the snow falls and creates new touristy activities like skiing.

Exchange students constituted an important source of information in this study since they were considered as tourists.

Almost half of the exchange students surveyed (47%) believe that the infrastructure of the country is very important for the success of the challenge. This belief shows that tourists are not satisfied with the current infrastructure of Morocco. On the other hand, only 19% of these students think that the hotel capacity and the quality of service must develop to meet the challenge of 2010. We can infer from this that tourists are pleased with the level of these services. Thus, despite of the big projects made by the Moroccan government, it still needs most improvement in the domain of the infrastructure.

The major interest of 92% of exchange students for coming to Morocco is its cultural tradition because of its diversity. Each region has specific traditions which give it a particular charisma. For instance, Arab and Amazigh cultures cohabitate in Morocco with their different traditions. This diversity is the main element that attracts a big number of tourists. In addition, almost 70% of the exchange students agree that landscapes and coastlines constitute vital tourism attractions. Morocco is characterized by its beautiful beaches, good climate (hot summers and mild winters), large desert, and its high Atlas Mountains. These assets make Morocco a good

destination for tourists. Similarly, Malta is one of the most popular Mediterranean tourist destinations because of some important factors such as “the temperate winters and subtropical summers, complemented by long daily hours of sunshine” (Markwick, 2001). Therefore, Morocco can also reach such popularity if the government focuses more on tourism industry, because the country also has a Mediterranean climate.

Before coming to Morocco, almost 67% of the exchange students surveyed believed that Morocco is not a safe country. This is the result of a negative reputation of the country in some places in the world. Foreigners think that the majority of Moroccan citizens are terrorists due to the fact that it is an Arab Muslim country. This idea was enhanced by the bombings that happened in 2003 in Casablanca, which targeted places tourists were likely to be. Thus, this belief makes from Morocco an unsafe destination. However, when these exchange students came to Morocco, they were surprised by its friendly and peaceful citizens. So, the majority of these students (92%) agreed that Morocco is a safe country, and they have changed their assumptions about it. Besides, the other 8% of students who think that Morocco is not a safe country may have faced some problems which negatively affected their beliefs about the country. In fact, people can face problems in any country because a perfect country where people can live 100% safe does not exist.

The role of Moroccan population is very important since it is the Moroccan citizens who interact directly with tourists. The results have shown that almost 70 % of exchange students think that Moroccans' role in tourism is to be helpful, open-minded and friendly while the minority thinks that they should avoid begging. Actually, the majority of surveyed students find Moroccans outside AUI helpful and kind. These results demonstrated that tourists feel comfortable with the helpfulness and friendliness of Moroccans. On the other hand, this data also

confirms that begging disturbs tourists during their journey in Morocco in spite of the governmental efforts done to avoid this social phenomenon.

Concerning the question which deals with the impacts of this challenge if achieved, all exchange students believe that the impacts will be mostly positive in which concerns the Moroccan economy. This result may confirm that these optimistic people see the development of the tourism sector as a key to resolve many social and economic problems like unemployment and poverty. As Gunn and Var (2002) stated, "Through the development of tourism, more people will be employed, obtain incomes, new tax revenues will be received, and new wealth will accumulate" (p. 105). None of these students have mentioned the social impacts of the challenge and that may be due to the fact that they are materialistic people, or they may think that the economic sector is the most important sector in the development of a country.

Concerning the interview answers, the major result was the pessimism of the faculty members about the fact that Morocco will receive 10 million tourists by 2010. They think that Morocco should make serious projects to be ready to meet a professional challenge. On the other hand, they are optimistic about the progress of tourism in Morocco in the coming years. These beliefs are based on the vast experience of these faculty members in the business domain. As they said, the most effected sector by this challenge will be the economy. In addition, they stated that the challenge may affect negatively the Moroccan traditional culture due to the meeting of different cultures presented by tourists. That is why Moroccans should do their best to protect and preserve their traditional culture.

### Conclusion

After conducting this research project, the group succeeded in answering the research question and verifying some of the assumptions about the topic. After interpreting the results

collected from three different data gathering tools, the team found out that the majority of the study's subjects are optimistic about Morocco meeting the challenge of attracting 10 million tourists by 2010. Moreover, the team noted that the economic impacts of this challenge, if met, will be mostly positive while the social impacts will be mostly negative. Concerning the assumptions about this topic, the team could also verify some of them. The first assumption was that sexual tourism will increase in many cities all over Morocco, especially in the touristy ones. Unfortunately, the group could not verify if this assumption is right or wrong. Furthermore, the results could not confirm the second assumption which said that insecurity will increase in the country because of the huge number of tourists. However, the group could verify the third assumption which stated that many Moroccans are pessimistic about the government's ability to achieve this goal. This assumption was shown to be wrong because the majority of AUI students believed on the Moroccan capability to meet this challenge.

In this last part of the paper, it is crucial to state some of the problems encountered during the process. For example, the team ended up with a small sample to study because some students were not very cooperative and refused to fill in the surveys. Also, after collecting the surveys, the group realized that some questions were not answered or not accomplished. Concerning the interviews which were planned, the team did not succeed to hold two of them due to the unavailability of a faculty member and the refusal of the director of the National Office of Tourism. However, one interview was held with two faculty members from the school of Business Administration who are experts in this area.

As a solution, the team suggests that the Moroccan government should learn from other countries' experiences on the tourism sector, especially Spain. This is because of the similarities between Moroccan and Spanish natural assets that should be well exploited. Moreover, Morocco

should not focus only on promoting the tourism sector, but a promotion of all sectors connected to the economy is essential to assure a sustainable development for the country.

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### Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Faculty Members

1. What do you think about the new Moroccan policy of promoting tourism?
2. Being an experienced professor of business in Morocco, and regarding the national assets, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the fact that Morocco will receive 10 million tourists by 2010? Explain.
3. If this challenge succeeds, what would be its probable effects on the economy? Is it sufficient to move the economy of the country forward?
4. If this challenge succeeds, what effects do you think it will have on Moroccan society?
5. From your background knowledge about this topic, do you know some examples of countries who tried similar programs? If so, what were the results of their challenge?

## Appendix 2: Survey Questions for AUI Exchange Students



**The Moroccan challenge to attract  
10 million foreign visitors by 2010**

This is a survey whose purpose is to gather valuable information about our topic which is the Moroccan challenge to attract 10 million foreign tourists by 2010. If you could take a few minutes of your time to complete this survey, we will be very grateful. Your answers will be anonymous.

**1. What does Morocco need to develop the most in order to meet this challenge?**

- The infrastructure (e.g. roads, railways, public buildings)
- Air-links
- Quality of service/ Hospitality
- Hotels' capacity

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. If Morocco is successful, do you think the impact will be mostly positive? Why?**

- Yes  No

Why?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. What will attract 10 million tourists to visit Morocco by 2010? (Choose as many as apply)**

- Moroccan cultural tradition
- Moroccan landscapes
- Moroccan coastline
- Moroccan architecture

Other: \_\_\_\_\_



Yes No

If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you ☺**

## Appendix 3: Survey Questions for AUI Moroccan Students



**The Moroccan challenge to attract  
10 million foreign visitors by 2010**

This is a survey whose purpose is to gather valuable information for a SSK 1202 project. Our topic is the Moroccan challenge to attract 10 million foreign tourists by 2010. If you could take a few minutes of your time to complete this survey, we will be very grateful. Your answers will be anonymous.

**2. Do you believe on Moroccan capability to meet this challenge by 2010?**

Yes

No

**3. What does Morocco need to develop the most in order to meet this challenge?**

The infrastructure (e.g. roads, railways, public buildings)

Air-links

Quality of service/ Hospitality

Hotels' capacity

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Does Morocco need foreign investors to develop tourism sector to meet this challenge?**

Yes

No

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Which sectors do you think will be affected the most once this goal achieved?**

Economic

Social

Political

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the use of media in meeting this challenge through advertising?

- Very effective       Somewhat effective       Not very effective

7. What will attract 10 million tourists to visit Morocco by 2010? ( Choose as many as apply)

- Moroccan cultural tradition  
 Moroccan landscapes  
 Moroccan coastline  
 Moroccan architecture

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. What is the role of the Moroccan population in meeting this challenge? (Choose as many as apply)

- Avoid begging       Be friendly       Be open-minded       Be helpful

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Can Morocco assure being a safe place to visit by 2010?

- Yes       No

10. What do you think are the three most attractive destinations for tourists in Morocco? ( Please rate the following 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> )

- Marrakech    Agadir    Casablanca    Essaouira    Ouarzazat    Fez    Meknes

① \_\_\_\_\_

② \_\_\_\_\_

③ \_\_\_\_\_

11. Which period of the year do you think will recognize the largest number of tourists? ( You can choose more than one answer)

- Fall       Winter       Spring       Summer

Thank you ☺