UNWTO Students' League Competition 2021
Tourism and Rural Development

Name of Challenge: Strategy to enhance the tourism value chain of Tabant, main village of the Happy Valley (Ait Bouguemez) in the province of Azilal (Beni Mellal - Khénifra region) in Morocco

Category: Master (Post-graduate) Students

Participation format: Team of 5 Members + possibility of 1 extra member

Corresponding SDG: 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

1. CONTEXT: TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

Global tourism suffered its worst year on record in 2020 due to the health, social and economic emergency caused by COVID-19. International arrivals dropped by 73% in 2020 due to an unprecedented fall in demand and widespread travel restrictions. This compares with the 4% decline recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis. Destinations worldwide welcomed 1 billion fewer international arrivals in 2020 than in the previous year, due to an unprecedented fall in demand and widespread travel restrictions.

According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, the collapse in international travel represents an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues¹ - more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis. The crisis has put between 100 and 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk, many of them in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Tourism fall has impacted on the economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities in all regions. Due to the evolving nature of the pandemic, many countries are now reintroducing stricter travel restrictions, all weighing on the resumption of international travel. At the same time, the

A gradual rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine is expected to help restore consumer confidence, contribute to the easing travel restrictions and slowly normalize travel during the year ahead.

Around the world, rural communities with significant tourism activity have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Jobs have been lost and small businesses placed at risk as restrictions on travel brought tourism to a standstill.

Tourism is a lifeline for many rural communities and has a unique capacity to provide new opportunities to generate jobs, promote and protect natural and cultural resources as well as empower women and youth. Yet its true force still needs to be fully deployed.

With almost 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals in 2019 and a contribution of almost 10% to global Gross Domestic Product tourism has positive effects in local and national economies.

This represents both a challenge and an opportunity to advance the role of the sector in rural communities. Travellers’ demand for new experiences around nature, open-air activities, local culture and products as well as community engagement in the post COVID-19 context, offer immense opportunities for supporting rural communities, both in the short-term as they recover from the impact of COVID-19, and in the long-term to promote sustainable and inclusive growth.

Tourism in rural areas can particularly benefit traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women - who make up 54% of the workforce in the tourism sector compared to 39% for the whole economy - youth and indigenous people. Tourism is also an easy access sector for micro and small enterprises and for the self-employed, who make up a significant part of the tourism sector and community level entrepreneurship in general.

While sustaining the livelihoods dependent on the sector must be a priority, rebuilding tourism is also an opportunity for transformation with a focus on leveraging its impact on destinations visited and building more resilient communities and businesses through innovation, digitalization, sustainability, and partnerships. This crisis further stresses the importance of building resilience among communities where tourism is an important share of their income through product and market diversification, fighting seasonality, social protection and building added value experiences.

UNWTO designated 2020 the Year of Tourism and Rural Development and, on the occasion of the 2020 World Tourism Day on this same theme it launched the ‘Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development – A Guide to Making Tourism an Effective Tool for Rural Development’. These aim to assist governments as well as the private sector and international community and outline the key steps necessary to fully harness the potential and resilience of tourism to drive inclusive and sustainable social and economic development in rural areas.

Also in 2020, under the Saudi Presidency of the G20, UNWTO and the G20 Tourism Working Group developed the ‘AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development Through Tourism’ aimed at promoting tourism as an effective tool of communities’ empowerment and sustainable future.

---


UNWTO also foresees that domestic tourism will return before international tourism. Managed well, this could benefit rural communities, most notably through protecting livelihoods and boosting local economies.

This brings immense opportunities for rural tourism and for capturing its full social and cross-cutting potential in local economies. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of tourism in rural development is more relevant than ever. As travel restrictions begin to ease, nature-based and open-air activities are among the most demanded, creating countless opportunities for rural tourism, which emerges as one of the drivers for tourism recovery in many countries.

Finally, creating new opportunities for jobs and economic activities in rural areas through tourism requires a holistic approach that engages all other sectors and activities in the tourism value chain and promotes Public-Private-Community (PPC) partnerships.

The development of tourism in rural areas can thus contribute to:

- Reduce regional inequalities in income and development
- Fight migration and rural depopulation
- Promote gender and youth empowerment
- Improve connectivity, infrastructure & access to finance and investment
- Accelerate digitalization
- Innovate in product development and value chain integration
- Promote the relationship between food systems and tourism to preserve biodiversity, agrobiodiversity, cultural heritage and local gastronomy
- Preserve natural and cultural resources and traditional lifestyles
- Promote sustainable practices for a more efficient use of resources and a reduction of emissions and waste
- Enhance education and skills development through capacity building

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the challenge are:

- To allow students work in a real case in a rural tourism destination and to expand their learning in the complexity of tourism value chain from a practical perspective
- To be trained in the implementation of methodologies, instruments and hands-on training in the development and management of tourism products in tourism rural destinations
- To get familiar with the principles for a sustainable and inclusive community development through tourism
- To be able to identify key stakeholders in a rural tourism destination and strengthen a public-private-community governance model in tourism development
- To train analysis and diagnosis capacities to design competitive, innovative, sustainable and inclusive planning and management strategies in rural tourism destinations.
- Enhance team working and ability to adapt to collaborative environments in the tourism sector
- To gain experience and networking opportunities in the tourism sector
3. CHALLENGE

3.1. CHALLENGE:

In light of the immense opportunities that rural tourism brings to destinations, the ability to create better linkages across the tourism value-chain and enhance backward linkages to local suppliers is key to promote employment and opportunities for local communities. This is also true as a means to replace the import of goods and reduce the linkages in tourism and increase spend per visitor.

In order to maximize the spill-overs from tourism to the rest of the economy, we need to be able to stimulate linkages between tourism providers and other sectors.6 If backward linkages are fully utilized, tourism can contribute to economic diversification through the development of other parts of the economy. This is the case for local agriculture, fishing and food processing, if food served to tourists is sourced locally, for handicrafts, for the cosmetics sector as well as for artists and cultural services that can be integrated in the tourism value chain.

Yet, rural development through tourism is often underexplored and many rural destinations need support to boost their full potential, to identify and incorporate the whole tourism value chain in their tourism policies and strategies, product development, marketing and promotion, etc.. This will allow to improve the tourism yield per visitor, maximize the distribution of tourism benefits among a greater part of stakeholders, promote local resources, values and traditions and promote opportunities for populations to stay in the rural areas.

Within this framework the present challenge aims to create a strategy to enhance the tourism value chain of Tabant village in Morocco.

3.2. ASSIGNMENT

In order to solve the challenge, the teams are requested to develop a strategy that allows to untap rural tourism potential in Tabant in Morocco. This value chain strategy will envisage to:

1) map the local tourism value chain and its stakeholders
2) identify opportunities to promote the enhancement of the value chain through other sectors and activities in the village and in nearby areas.
3) identify constraints and barriers that impede their full integration in the tourism value chain in the village.
4) propose a strategy to enhance the backward linkages of tourism.
5) propose specific actions to be developed, including but not limited to the areas of product development, marketing, skills development, quality, etc.

Based on the initial mapping of the local tourism value chain (see 1) above) select one or two tourism products/experiences in Tabant which you consider have highest potential and develop your value chain strategy for the prioritized product(s)/experience(s) (see 2) to 5) above)

---

3.3. STEPS

To prepare your solution please consider the following:

- Get your Team together – remember that you can add 1 Team member to work on the solution with you (total 6) and you will have to present the whole Team in your solution
- Download and read the attached pdf Challenge Document as it may contain more information than this form.
- Take a look at the documents in the documents prepared by the Ministry of Tourism and National Tourism Office in Morocco to help you with your challenge: https://unwto.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/studentsleague/Eq_aVbxOmxHnoh3RiqZqwUBbVuKsVUMTnpa7Vvps-JnGw?e=70KvH5
- Create a strategy that is creative, inclusive, sustainable, feasible and in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (identify which Goals you are tackling)
- When mapping the tourism value chain think of all stakeholders in the destination or close-by which may provide goods and services to visitors and where local suppliers in other economic sectors (e.g. farming, handicrafts, artists, etc.) can be integrated adding value to visitors’ experiences and creating benefit along the value chain.
- When mapping the local/regional supply-side potential of the prioritized product(s)/experience(s) (be creative!), take into account (1) the supply capacity and its seasonality; (2) the potential to upgrade existing products in terms of quality and standards (i.e. Geographical Indications, etc.).
- Identify market failures, barriers and bottlenecks for accessing market and distribution channels – a survey template among stakeholders (MSMEs, entrepreneurs, support Institutions, etc.) to gather data and perspectives is a useful tool.
- Build a visual representation of the possible links and gaps between demand and supply.
- Build a SWOT analysis to base your recommendations for the strategy and include SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) Key Performance Indicators in the strategy.
- In order to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and its KPIs consider setting a mechanism to measure them.
- Consider all aspects of the strategy including product development, marketing, skills, quality, distribution, etc.
- Propose specific and detailed actions or activities to implement the strategy.
- Although you are requested to develop the methodology for evaluating the rural tourism potential and identification of tourism value chain in Tabant try to think global when working on it; the idea is that this methodology can also be useful for other villages and rural destinations in other areas in Morocco as well as in other countries in the region and worldwide.

3.4. SUBMISSION
Your Submission will contain a strategy to improve the rural tourism value chain in Tabant in Morocco.

✔ Your package will be a compressed ZIP file (the zip file name must contain the name of your School).
   Your ZIP file will contain the following:
   
   - a unique pdf document in English with a **maximum of 16 pages** in total including:
     - **Cover** (1 page)
     - **Presentation of Team Members** (1 page), including presentation of the names of five core Team members + name of the optional 6th member
     - **Executive Summary** reflecting all the different elements of the solution (1 page)
     - **Development of Solution** (8 pages with the complete development of the solution including assessment, strategy and actions proposed), including:
       - Description of the solution
       - How to implement the solution
       - Contribution to the SDGs (how and to which SDG)
       - Outcomes of the solution in the short, mid and long-term
     - **Bibliography and/or additional information** (5 optional pages)

   *In case you use less that 5 optional pages for bibliography and/or additional information you can use more than 8 pages for the development of the solution but always keep in mind that the pdf document must not exceed 16 pages maximum in total.

✔ Please upload your package of submission through your Team access on the UNWTO Students’ League Platform. Only one submission per Team can be uploaded (using 1 of the Member accesses)

✔ The Teams will have 6 weeks to answer the Challenge. **THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS 27 JUNE 23:59 CEST.**

✔ **The language for the submission is English.**

4. **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

Your submission will be evaluated by the Jury according to the following criteria:

- Innovation and originality
- Implementation model and its feasibility
- Accuracy and effective contribution to solve the challenge
- Contribution to the SDGs
- Quality, clarity and consistency of the presentation design

The judges evaluate these aspects individually with numbers from 1 to 10. The score given to the team is the sum of the scores of each jury member given for each aspect. The maximum score for this specific challenge (Masters) is 50 points per submission.
5. MENTORING

During the process to prepare the solution to this challenge UNWTO will organize at least two mentoring online sessions with: 1) representative(s) of the Ministry of Tourism of Morocco and/or representative of the village designated for the purpose of this challenge; and 2) a selected expert with the aim to provide the teams with relevant insights on the topics of the challenge.

NOTE: UNWTO will post the dates, schedule and logistics for the mentoring online sessions in advance in the Students’ League platform, on your personal Dashboard. Kindly note that the attendance of one member of each participating team is mandatory.

The first mentoring session is scheduled for Wednesday 19 May 2021 and will be held with the official representative(s) from the Morocco National Tourism Office and representatives of the village of Tabant. The contact details and programme for this mentoring session will be made available in advance.

6. CONTENTS AND RESOURCES TO BE PROVIDED BY UNWTO

Useful reading and sources:


World Tourism Organization (2019), UNWTO Tourism Definitions adopted as recommendations (A/RES/684(XXII)) by the 22 GA held on 11-16 September 2017 in Chengdu (China), UNWTO, Madrid. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858


DOI: [https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284413652](https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284413652)


OECD/UNWTO/WTO (2013). *Aid For Trade And Value Chains In Tourism*.


International Trade Centre (ITC): [https://www.intracen.org/itc/sectors/services/tourism/](https://www.intracen.org/itc/sectors/services/tourism/)