

Summer tourism in the socioeconomic context of Oued Laou, Morocco

Abdellatif Khattabi*, Lucia Fanini^o and Younes Chakir*



*Ecole Nationale Forestiere d'Ingenieurs, Salé, Morocco
^oDipartimento di Biologia Animale e Genetica, Università di Firenze, Italy

Introduction

During the summer, the number of people in Oued Laou triplicates. The tourism industry has improved, mainly with the aim of seaside holiday making. It is therefore interesting to analyse the composition of this relevant number of visitors, that periodically come to the site. Assuming that the visitors, their behaviour and use of the environmental goods are strictly related, through feed back dynamics, with the management of the site and its development through time, there is the need to know such visitors profile.

Material and methods

From 8. to 20. August 2004, in the peak period of the arrival of tourists, involving two different weeks in order to have both short and mean term visitors (the house rental minimum period is usually one week), a questionnaire was submitted to people, mainly on the beach (78%), but also in meeting points such as the camping site and the cafés. A total number of 210 interviews was achieved.

The questionnaire was divided in three parts, as follows

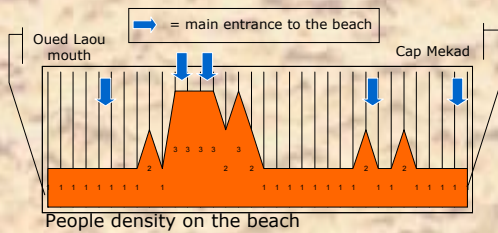
- socio-economic characterisation of the visitors;
- quality perception of the site;
- times and goals of the recreational experience.



Free suggestions to improve the site as tourist centre were also encouraged.

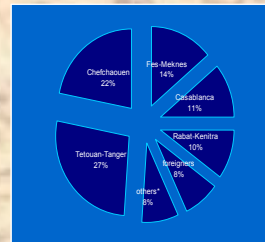
This information was integrated with field observations.

Results



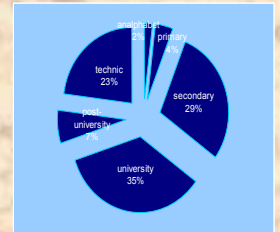
Sex 80% males
Age 41% 25-45 years
 25% 15-25 years

where visitors are coming from



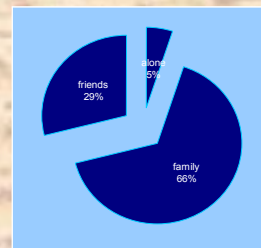
* Marrakech, Sidi Kacem, Agadir, Taza

education level

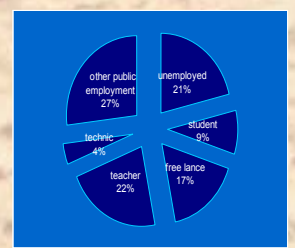


Not only visitors, but owners of cafés and tourist structures are also coming from nearby provinces

patterns



employment



Timing of the visit

99% during summer time, some of them during spring too

Duration:

- 1-2 weeks 35 %;
- 2 weeks and more 44%

Frequency:

- 70% used to come back periodically. Within this group, 36% already came to the site more than 10 times
- 88% declared the intention to be back in Oued Laou the next years

Goal of the visit

- 83% seaside holiday making;
- 21% fishing; possibility to have excursions to the backing mountains or to Tétouan

Critical points identified by the visitors

- The beach is too crowded during summer time;
- Lacking of infrastructures, specially roads, lighting and waste management;
- A control of the building activities is needed.

Conclusions

Oued Laou's beach, classified as "attractive" by the Direction d'Urbanisme in 1995, still attracts visitors because of its natural values.

The kind of visitors resulting from the study appears to be "faithful to the site" and therefore sensitive to its quality, pushing towards the maintaining of good quality levels of the whole environment. Such kind of visitor, mainly with an high cultural level, is likely to be a tool for local managers to improve the responsible use of the environmental goods.

From the other side, local people were not represented within this study, that considered both visitors and managers of tourist activities. So, we didn't get any contributions from those who live in the considered area all year long.

Also women were not represented in the interviews, partly due to the fact that the trip with a group of friends occurs mainly within boys. However, when women were present on the beach, but didn't answer to the questionnaires, thus highlighting the difficulty to collect their contribution to the management of common goods, starting from local level.

Acknowledgments



The study was supported by EU, in the framework of INCO-MED program, project ICA3-CT2002-10003