

Social Issues of Tourism in the Province of Berkane (Morocco)

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ABSTRACT

The province of Berkane (North-East of Morocco) presents a strategic geographical position, a favorable climate and a multitude of natural structures (geological, geomorphological, geographical, biological, etc.) offering attractive landscapes, alongside a cultural heritage as rich as it is diverse. Under the impetus of local communities and the state's efforts since the beginning of the century, the province has the necessary infrastructure for the development of several economic sectors, including tourism. Nevertheless, the development of tourism entails various economic, environmental and social issues.

Similar to the need for a supportive social framework for tourism development, the expansion of this sector, especially mass tourism, can have several negative effects on the host society.

After the presentation of the province's general framework and tourism data, this work will present the results of a questionnaire-based field survey, which aims to analyze the social issues of tourism in the province. This helps to determine the relationship of local residents with the tourism industry, and with the regional tourism infrastructure, and finally the impact of tourism on the population of the province.

KEYWORDS: Resources, Economic development, Heritage, Berkane, Morocco.

Introduction

Currently, it is recognized throughout the world that tourism offers an optimal alternative for economic growth and social fulfillment, especially in rural areas. However, its expansion, especially mass tourism, can have several negative effects on the host society.

The province of Berkane, in the north-east of the Kingdom (Fig.1), presents a strategic geographical position, a favorable climate and a multitude of geomorphological

structures offering attractive landscapes alongside a rich cultural heritage.

Thanks to the heritage potential and the establishment of the seaside resort of Saidia, the province of Berkane begins to assert itself as a developed tourist destination, capable of attracting a large number of visitors.

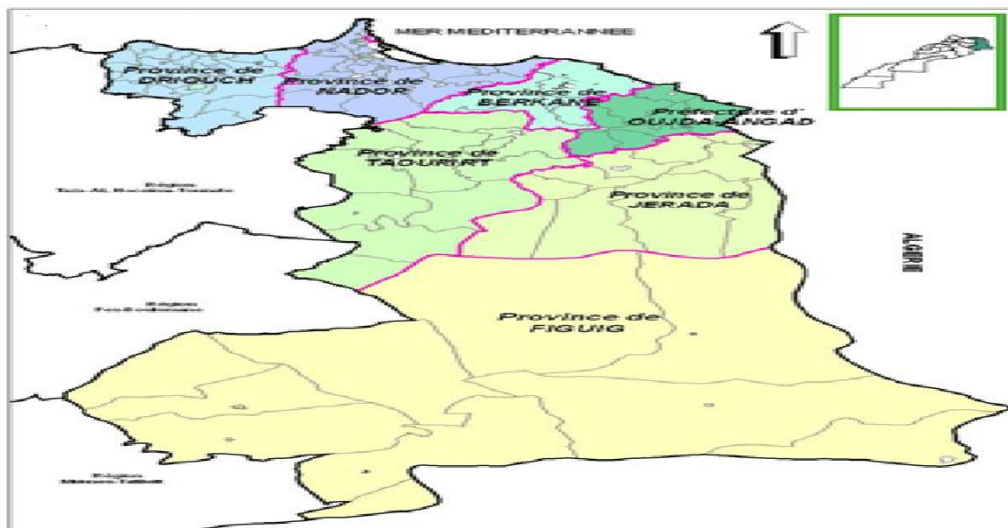


Figure 1: The province of Berkane situation

I. The province of Berkane

I.1. General information

The province of Berkane is located in the extreme north of Morocco. It is marked by a Mediterranean-type climate (Köppen classification, Csa). The average temperature in Berkane is 18.2 ° C with a maximum of 32.4 ° C and a minimum of 6 ° C. The average annual rainfall varies between 350 mm and 530 mm; it is characterized by a spatio-temporal irregularity (Tayebi A., 2011).

The landscape of the province is marked by contrasting reliefs from north to south with east-west oriented geomorphological structures: the Saidia coastal

strip which stretches for 14 km, the hills of Ouled Mansour (200 m above sea level), the plains of Triffa and Sabra and the Béni Snassen massif culminating at 1532 m.

The population (Fig. 2) of the province was 270328 in 2004: 137688 in urban areas (Ahfir, Ain Regada, Aklim, Berkane, Saidia, Sidi Slimane Charaâ) and 132,640 in rural areas (Ahfir and Aklim circles). The average density is 136 Hab./km² (Berkane Monograph, 2006).

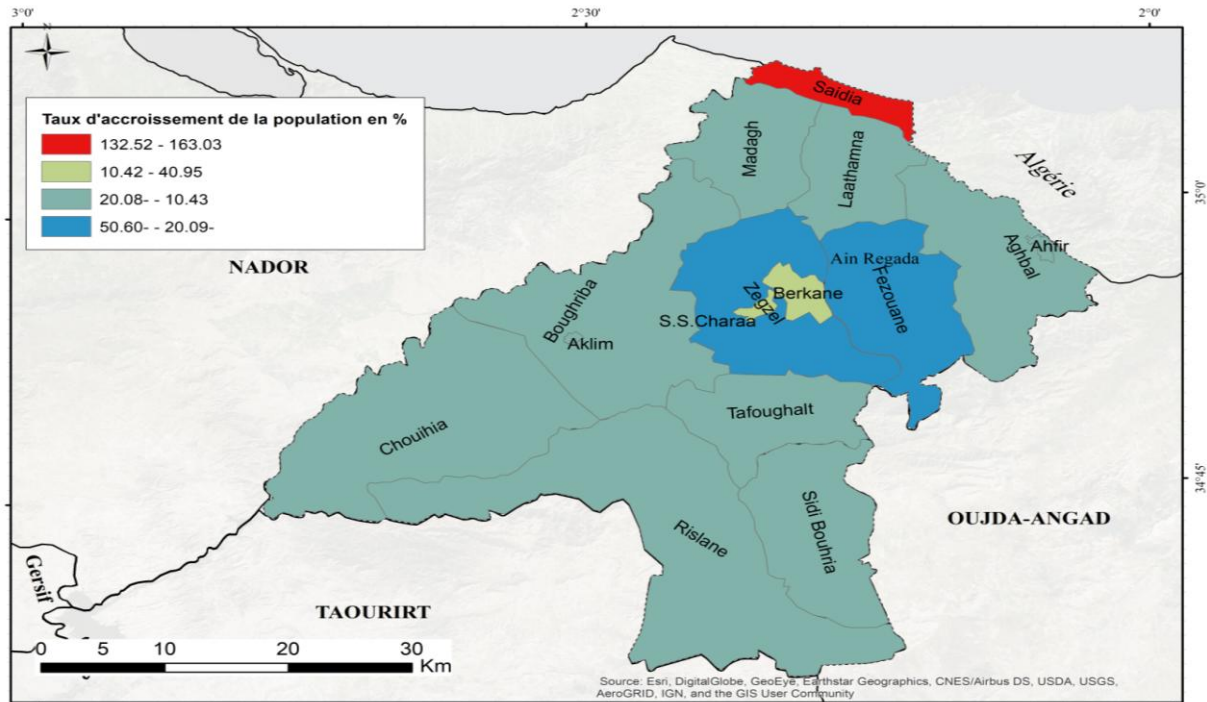


Figure 2: Map of the change in population density

Demography in the province of Berkane has increased by 7.36% during the last decade, from 270328 inhabitants in 2004 to 289137 inhabitants in 2014 (RGPH, 2014). This increase particularly interested the urban centers of Saidia and Berkane. Rural areas are still decreasing.

I.2. Heritage: composed of a varied, relatively protected offer:

- **Geological heritage:** it is practically easy to discover, a good part of the geological history of the earth, by traversing the geomorphological structures of the province. More than 300 million years of stories are exposed in the rocks, from the mountain range of Beni Snassen to the Mediterranean coast.

Karstic phenomena in the Beni Snassen carbonate Jurassic, offer many caves with magnificent speleological panoramas, including the cave of the camel in Zegzel, the cave of Ifri n'Tafaghine in Fezouane, and the caves of Takerboust.

- **Geographical heritage:** three distinct geographical forms: the littoral zone, the plains and the mountains. These forms offer many landscapes: The coastal dune zone with the old

forest of Tazegraret, the estuary of Moulouya, the hills of Oulad Mansour, the plains of Triffa and Sabra, the piedmonts of Beni Snassen, the valleys and Intra-mountainous plains, the permanent gorges and rivers, the mountainous forest areas of Tafoughalt...

- **Biological heritage:** The different habitats and ecosystems have allowed the development of a rich and diversified flora and fauna.

The flora is composed of trees, shrubs and annual or biennial plants. There are 161 species of trees, the most important of which are cedar, holm oak and aleppo pine, with the addition of argan and loquat (Dakki M., 2003).

Aromatic and medicinal plants are widespread especially in Beni Snassen and currently have more than 720 species and subspecies. The remarkable species of which a large part is medicinal plants represent 28.4% of the total flora (Dakki M., 2003).

The fauna is made up of remarkable animal populations, unfortunately in regression. The massive anthropogenic activities that have transgressed its habitat and the drought

that deprives it of food are the main causes. Dakki M. (2003) lists several groups of vertebrates (35 species of mammals, 25 species of reptiles and amphibians, 101 species of avians) and a multitude of invertebrates (insects, arthropods, etc.).

- **Cultural heritage:** has been impregnated throughout its history of traditions inherited from different civilizations that took turns.

The Archaeological Heritage: The first traces of the presence of the Iberomaurus man can be found in the cave of the pigeons in Tafoughalt, whose age is between 10,800 and 21,900 years old (Bouzougard A., 2017).

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Witnesses of former prosperous times are materialized by kasbahs (fortresses), however, forgotten and silenced, including the Kasbahs of Sidi Bouzid, Boughriba, Charaa and Ain Reggada.

The people of Berkane have, since a long time, been in contact with many civilizations, which has allowed them to forge their culture around an Arab-Judeo-Amazigh identity. The result is many special customs in this region including songs and music, gastronomy, clothing, traditional religious festivals (Ouaâda), etc.

The Zaouia Kadiria Boutchichia is the religious and cultural emblem of the province. Located in Madagh, this

Zaouia annually attracts some 100,000 people from around the world, to celebrate the religious holiday of "Maoulid".

So we can say that tourism offers great potential for development. The natural and cultural heritage, which is the raw material of this industry, is rich and diverse. The tourism development knows a considerable impetus, and represents a consistent offer in terms of capacity litter which is reflected on the numbers of the arrivals and overnight stays realized.

II. Tourism development in the province of Berkane

The province of Berkane has enormous heritage assets that can make it a popular tourist destination. The contribution of these potentialities is highlighted thanks to the interventions of the State aimed at creating the adequate legal framework.

In the province of Berkane, tourism is a new industry. Official Ministry of Tourism statistics on commercial accommodation prove that, overall, tourism in Berkane did not begin to take shape until 2009-2010.

The positive effect of the launch of the new seaside resort of Saidia, is marked by the continuous development of accommodation, catering and tourist animation infrastructure. This results in an increase in the number of arrivals and overnight stays.

The litter offer of the province is 6304 beds. However, this offer is highly concentrated in the littoral zone (Fig.3); the hinterland remains undeveloped.

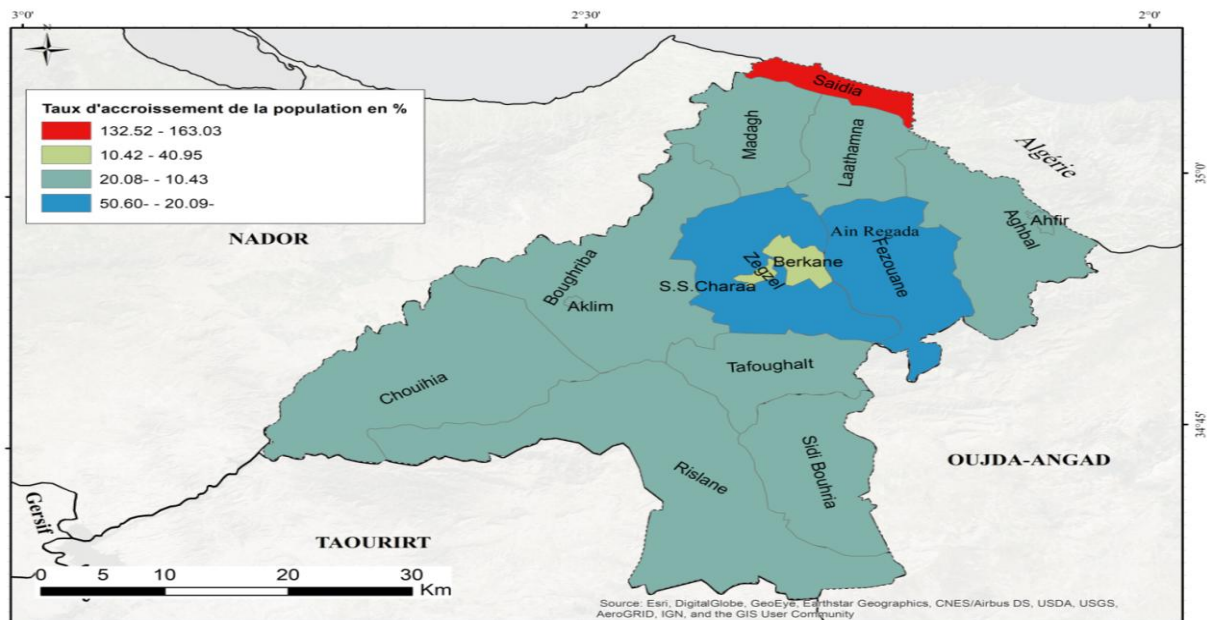


Figure 3: The market litter offer of the Berkane province in 2016. Produced on the basis of unpublished reports from the Tourism Delegation, Oujda

The market litter offer of the province of Berkane consists mainly of 5-star hotels, intended for mass customers (Fig.4). However, the offer in non-market tourist accommodation is very pronounced. It is estimated at 36936 beds and consists mainly of: unclassified campsites, houses or rooms rented

by individuals and unclassified hotels (Table.1). This offer concerns, especially, the city of Saidia and corresponds to almost 600% of the offer in commercial accommodation.

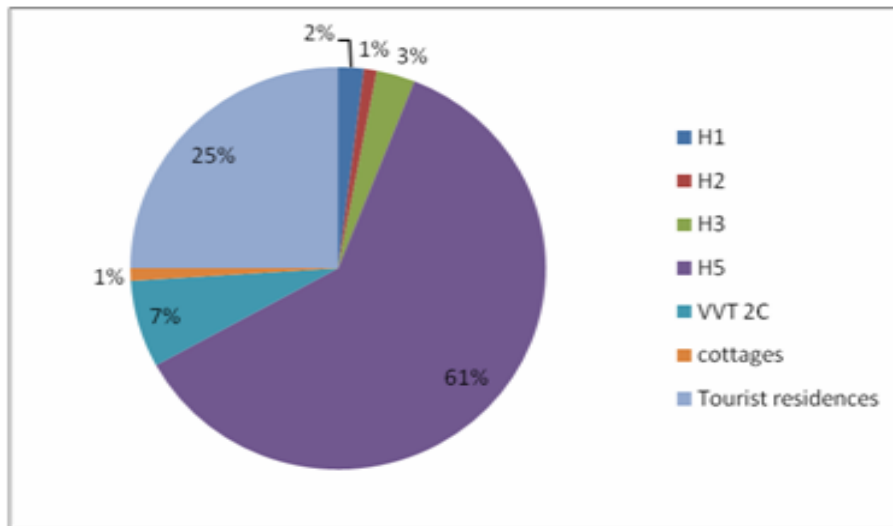


Figure 4: Bedding capacity by type of accommodation in 2016. Produced on the basis of unpublished reports from the Tourism Delegation, Oujda

Table 1: Non-market litter capacity in Berkane province

	Unclas sified hotels	campings	House holds
Non-market tourist beds	307	15 740	20 889

The household heading is calculated based on the following considerations: 50% of the owners of the houses are ready to rent their houses in the municipality of Saidia, which corresponds to 6,963 households, offering an average of 3 tourist beds.

The seaside resort of Saidia, the spearhead of the tourist offer of the province and even of all the Oriental-region, responds only to a demand for international mass tourism, which considerably limits the access of others, types of customer base (internal tourism, family, nature tourism, etc.). These are absorbed by non-market supply, which constitutes a social separation in the consumption and development of tourism products.

Indeed, mass tourism can have the direct consequence of eliminating the middle and poor social categories of the destination. The launch of the modern tourist resort Mediterranea Saidia, is detrimental to the region's holidaymakers and national tourists in general, who frequented the wild site of Al Halg beach and the Tazegraret forest.

III. The social issues of tourism in the province of Berkane

The tourism industry affects the social fabric in a variety of ways, positively, through its infrastructure of accommodation, transport, catering and entertainment. Tourism plays an important role in opening up and modernizing the host society and contributing to social development by improving the economic situation and creating jobs. However, the development of tourism can also

have negative repercussions on society: acculturation and loss of identity, changes in customs and customs, social inequalities, etc.

However, economic development benefits only a few parties. Oversized infrastructures are not made in consultation with the local population; the standard of living and the price of land rise unaffordable; second home owners do not contribute to local life. Tourism development is therefore at the expense of the interests of the local population.

To measure the social issues of tourism, a questionnaire field survey of residents of the province was conducted.

The analysis of the results of the survey will allow us to better appreciate the social effects of tourism in Berkane.

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III. 1. Presentation of the investigation

The goal is to clarify the issues of tourism in the province of Berkane. The chosen variables are:

- The relationship between local residents and the tourism industry in general,
- The relationship between local inhabitants and the regional tourism infrastructure,
- The impact of tourism.

The questionnaire was prepared in two languages (Arabic, French) and was administered to local residents during two periods: from March 1st to April 30th and from July 1st to August 30th 2016, to avoid the abrupt effect of the activity on the perception of the respondents.

The sampling of the survey is conducted using a random method. In order to better distinguish the social effect of tourism, a sample of 300 inhabitants, geographically divided between the attractive tourist centers, namely: Saidia (100

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questioned) and Tafoughalt, Zegzel and Fezouane (100 questioned), and in the towns of Berkane and Ahfir with 100 questioned.

Care was taken to have a certain balance in the selection of respondents, both at the gender level (51% male versus 49% female) and at the age group level: under 20 years old: 8%, 21 to 40: 45%, 41 to 60: 33% and over 61: 14%.

III. 2. Results of the investigation

The relationship of locals with tourist industry: 36% of people in Berkane province say they do not go out on holiday except to visit family members (Fig.5). The majority (58%) of the outings are concentrated in the city of Berkane. The majority (49%) of responses are: one trip per year.

The responses to the duration of each trip showed that the majority (67%) of the trips undertaken by the inhabitants of Berkane province lasted from two days to one week (Fig.6).

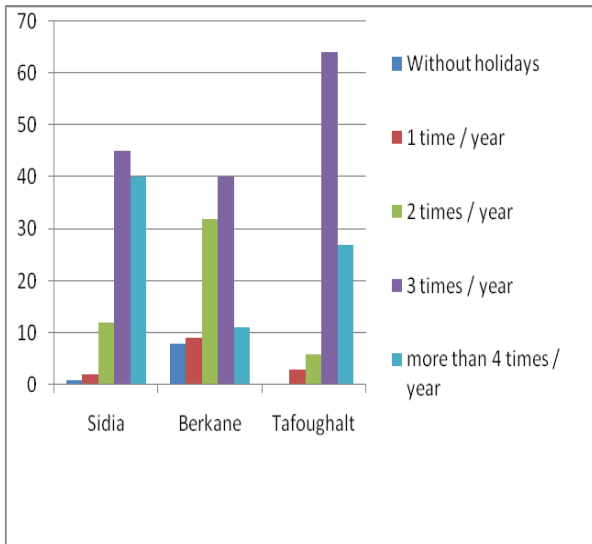


Figure 5: Holiday outings of the locals.

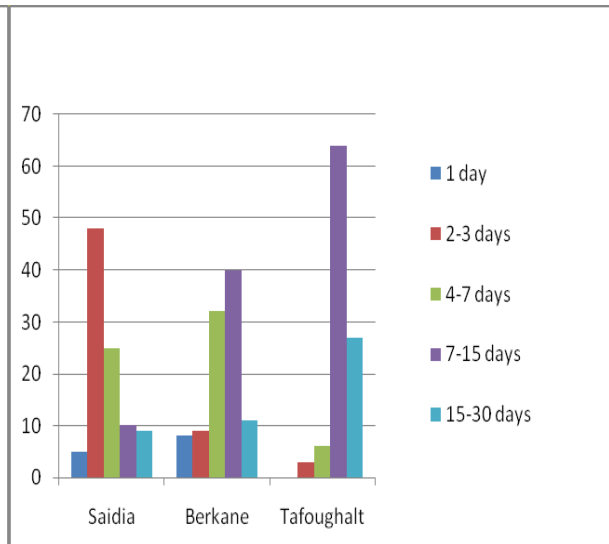


Figure 6: Duration of trips undertaken by locals.

For the acceptance of the population of the arrival of tourists and their activities within the territory the results are positive: 94% of respondents say they agree with the arrival of tourists.

The possibility of hosting tourists (national or international) at home, in his home is usually solicited by the locals who provide specific accommodations for hospitality (Figs 7 and 8).

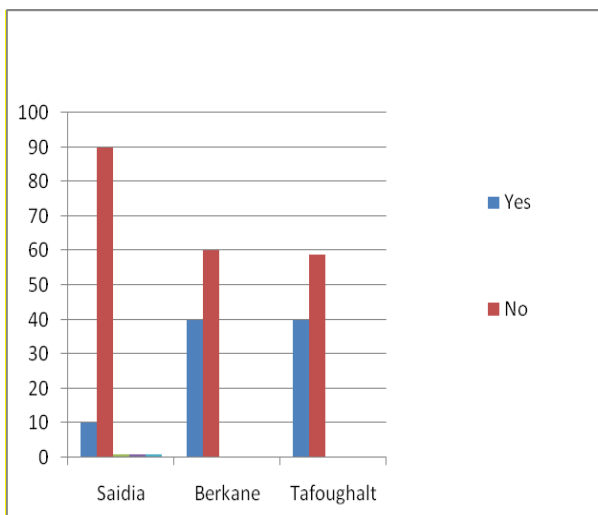


Figure 7: Possibility to welcome tourists by locals.

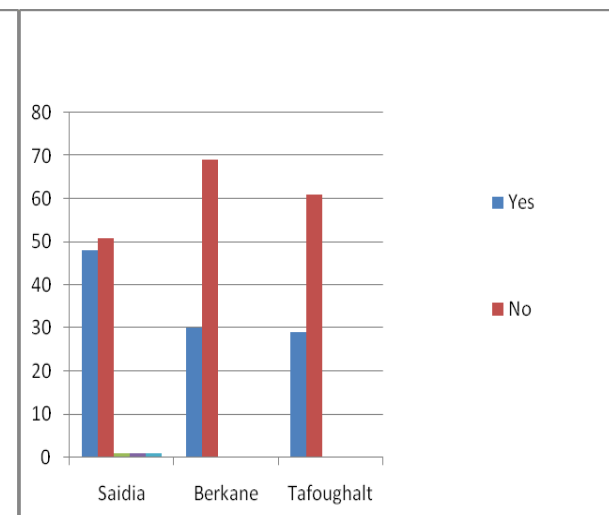


Figure 8: Possession of tourist reception equipment by locals.

60% of respondents say they agree to host tourists. Almost half (47%) have already planned to reserve special equipment for tourist accommodation or their restorations

The majority (90%) of the local inhabitants of Saida City can accommodate tourists at home: 47% have accommodation facilities for this purpose.

In the rest of the province; the majority are not ready to welcome tourists to their homes (60% in Berkane and 58%

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in Tafoughalt). Those who responded positively did not provide facilities for the reception (68% in Berkane and 62% in Tafoughalt).

Local residents of the city of Saidia are much more familiar with tourism. The majority (92%) say that they have already worked in tourism or know relatives who have done

so. Residents of other areas of the province are less in contact with the professional world of tourism; Berkane (32%) and Tafoughalt (37%).

The employment indicator by tourism shows an overall average of 57%. Responses to the nature of the positions held were classified into 6 similar groups (Fig.9).

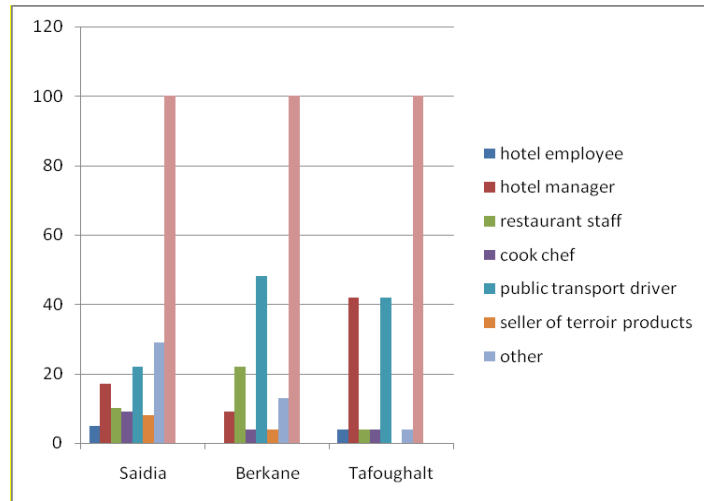


Figure 9: The nature of the positions held

In Tafoughalt, the posts mentioned are generally employees of restaurants or sellers of local products. In Berkane and Ahfir, the positions (46%), most stated are still employees of restaurants next to taxi drivers of public transport (21%). In the city of Saidia, the frequent answer is occupation in the hotel and restaurant trades.

The majority of respondents (70%) said that jobs are seasonal. Many of them are forced to look for work outside the province or to take care of other trades such as agriculture or illegal trading, during the low season that spans more than half of the time of the year.

The local population is moderately familiar with employment in the tourism sector, the nature of the work shows that locals occupy lower positions: 31% of employees

work in restaurants, 22% in hotels and 20% are salesmen of local products.

Relationship of the local population with regional tourism infrastructure:

Accommodation: the respondents indicate that in general (83%) were not in tourist accommodation establishments, they prefer to stay in the tourist areas, and to return home, given the proximity.

Of the 17% confirmed having visited accommodation establishments in the region (Fig.10), 26% choose to rent property. 24% prefer hotels rated 1 *, 2 * and 3 *. Second homes are chosen at 23%.

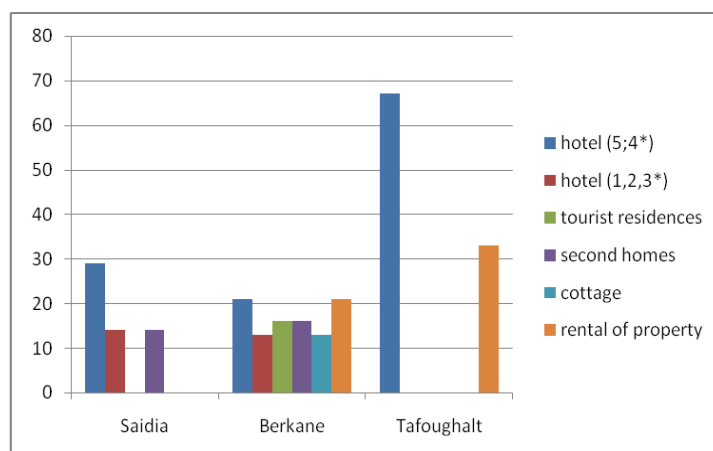


Figure 10: Types of tourist establishments visited by locals

Restoration (Fig.10): 53% of the interviewees indicate that they have already visited the restaurants in their province.

The cities of Berkane and Ahfir recorded positive results (81%). The residents of Saidia (52%) and many more in

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Tafoughalt (69%) say they have not visited the catering establishments.

The most popular restaurants are fish restaurants with 36%. Attendance at Snack, pizzeria, Shawarma reaches 27%. Classified tourist restaurants and bar-restaurants represent only 11% of establishments frequented by locals.

Animation: the answer to the question about the consumption of tourist animation services is positive; 61% of the population is satisfied.

Coffee outings (34%) account for most of the tourist activities (Figs 11 and 12). Fishing activities at sea or in rivers contribute with 17%. Entertainment and evening attendance (private and public) reaches 16%.

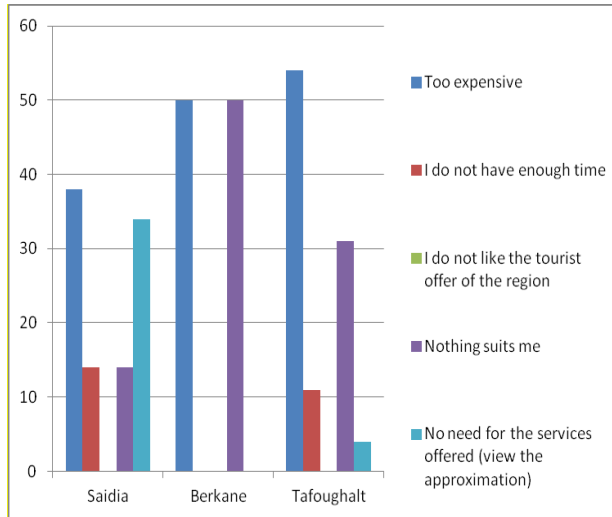


Figure 11: Types of tourist restaurants visited by locals.

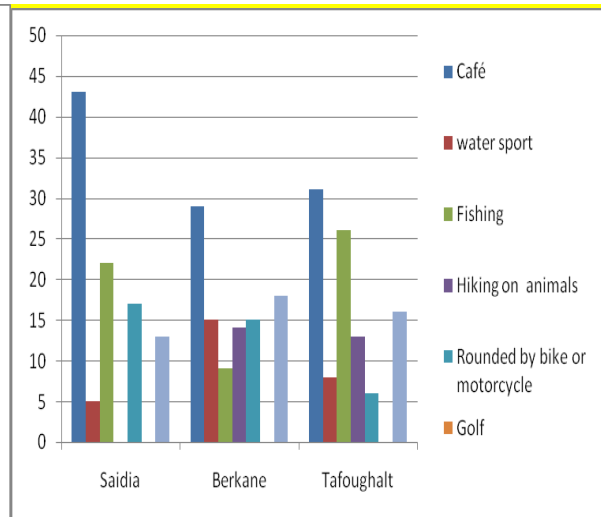


Figure 12: Types of tourist animation services consumed by locals.

The responses recorded (Fig.13) show that the frequent reasons (49%) for the refusal to consume tourism services are the excessive costs and the lack of correspondence between the tastes of locals and the supply provided.

21% report having visited a hotel in the last two years. Many categorical refusals of the consumption of the hosting services of the region, because of their non-conveniences.

Catering and entertainment services record a high average consumption by local residents. This reflects a

significant need and even a confidence in the services offered.

Differences in the qualification of the services offered by the region's tourist infrastructure prove that the massive tourist exploitation in Saidaia, really begins to impact the perception of its local inhabitants.

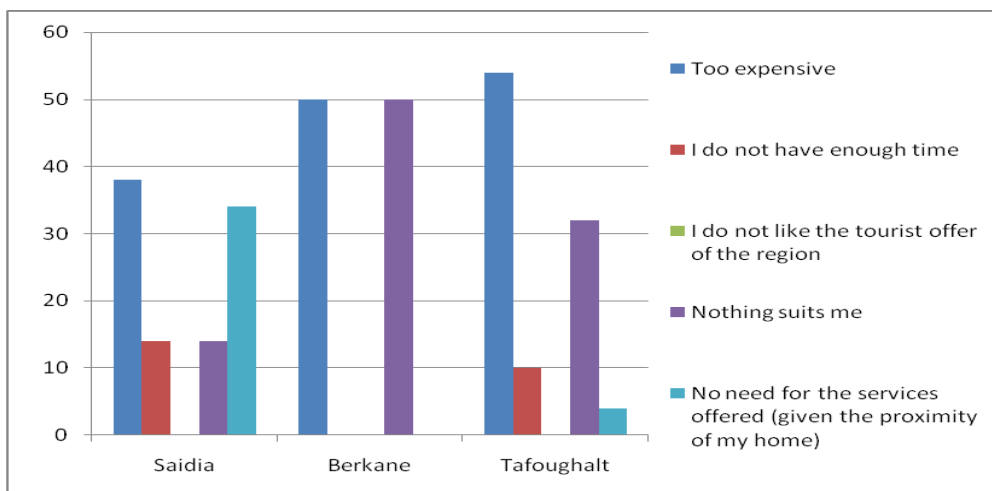


Figure 13: Reason for non-consumption of tourist services.

The impact of tourism

The impact of the tourism industry on local residents is characterized by desired positive effects and fearful negative effects.

Concerning the desired positive effects (Fig.14), we note that the most frequent responses are job creation (28%), heritage valuation (22%) and infrastructure development (21%).

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The negative effects (Fig.15) are pollution and degradation of natural areas (25%) and rising raw material prices (21%). The question of the contributions of this sector shows that 62% of locals consider tourism to be positive. This perception varies by region.

The majority of Saidia residents (72%) consider that tourism has positive effects. This portion of response diminishes in the city of Berkane (60%). In Tafoughalt zone, Zegzel and Fezouane, the answers are almost equal (51% positive versus 49% negative).

Consideration of the positive and negative effects of tourism is done in different ways. The concentration of tourist activity in the city of Saidia does not give direct comfort with the customs and social and economic activities of the region. In Saidia, tourism is seen as a boon, while in Beni Snassen, Tafoughalt and Fezouane, there is still resistance to the massive development of tourism, probably due to the lack of direct contact with tourists and the presence of several other priorities relating to the rural world.

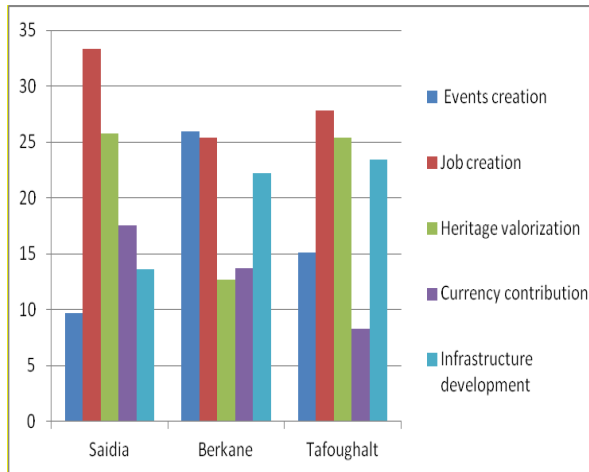


Figure 14: Positive benefits of tourism desired by locals in Berkane.

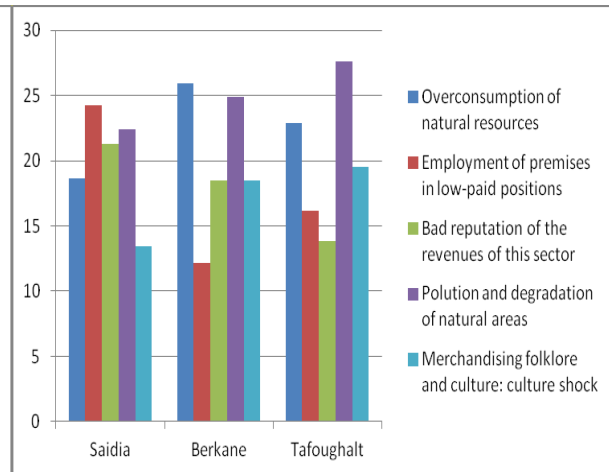


Figure 15: Negative effects of tourism feared by locals in Berkane.

Conclusion

In general, the population of Berkane province has confidence in the tourism potential of its region. It has a positive relationship with the tourism industry, which encourages the development of this sector.

The generally positive relationship of the local population with the tourism industry favors the development of this sector. However, some negative effects of massive touristification are starting to take shape. This is seasonal or permanent employment of local citizens in lower positions. The nature of the works assigned to the locals reveals 3 types of low income items. These are restaurant employees (31%), hotel employees (22%) and sellers of local products (20%).

On the other hand, the closure of the Oriental Bay Beach Hotel, the various sanitation problems and the absence of a new developer to finalize the seaside resort are factors that can have a negative impact on the success of tourism in the province of Berkane.

The actual amounts of foreign exchange and profits acquired by the locals and especially by the local collectivities would be insignificant in front of the expectations of the population. Amounts expended in the province do not include amounts paid abroad to multinational tour operators and those sent to international investors and parent hotels.

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