


Chapter 15

Ifrane as a Mountain Tourism Hub: Challenges and Economic Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The integration of tourism into the economic structure of the province of Ifrane represents a crucial lever for the socio-economic transformation of this region. This article explores the current dynamics of the tourism sector in Ifrane, highlighting its impacts on the local economy and its interactions with other economic sectors. This article assesses how tourism contributes to diversifying the economy of the province, generating jobs. The results highlight the need for an integrated approach to maximize the benefits of tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The province of Ifrane, located in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco, is known for its lush green landscapes and pleasant climate, which attract many visitors. The Middle Atlas benefits from a moderate and humid climate, characterized by cold, snowy winters and mild summers, making it an attractive year-round destination.

However, beyond its tourist appeal, Ifrane has a rich agricultural tradition that is an important pillar of its local economy. Agriculture in the region encompasses a variety of crops and livestock that contribute significantly to the income and livelihood of residents.

This economic context dominated by agriculture, associated with the emergence of tourism as a growth sector, raises the question of the integration of these two areas into the overall economic structure of the province. This study explores how the development of the tourism sector can influence the local economy.

2. The Province of Ifrane: A Changing Socio-Economic Structure

The socio-economic structure of the province of Ifrane reflects a complex interplay of education levels, employment trends, and dominant economic activities. To understand these dynamics, we analyze key indicators such as illiteracy rates, schooling levels, and the region's economic fabric.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-8764-1.ch015

2.1 Illiteracy: A Major Obstacle to Development

Illiteracy remains one of the most significant barriers to development in rural communities, reinforcing poverty and slowing socio-economic progress. In the province of Ifrane, the illiteracy rate in rural communes is notably higher than both the national average and the overall rural average in Morocco. This educational gap hinders access to better employment opportunities, limiting social mobility and economic diversification.

2.2 An Economy Dominated by Agriculture

Before analyzing the socio-professional structure of the population, it is important to highlight the activity rate in the province of Ifrane, which stands at 48.7%. This figure is marked by a strong gender disparity:

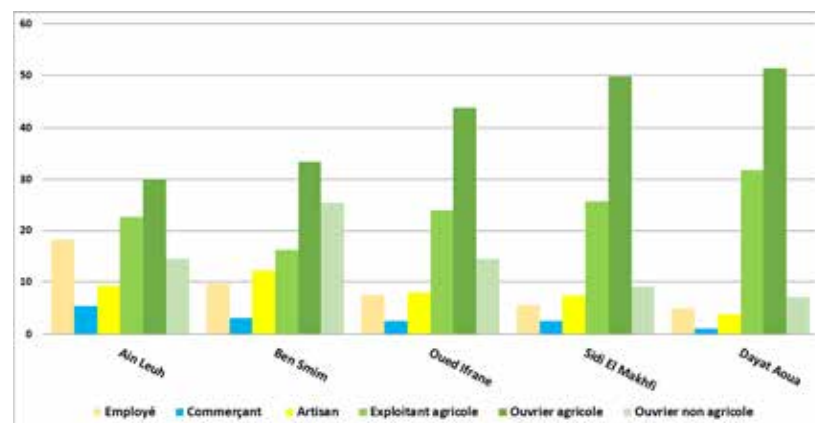
- Male activity rate: 76.8%
- Female activity rate: 22.2% (RGPH 2014)

2.2.1 Agricultural Employment: The Backbone of the Economy

Agriculture dominates the local economy, employing approximately 66% of the active population in the studied municipalities. The breakdown of socio-professional categories is as follows:

- Agricultural workers & farmers: 66%
- Non-agricultural activities: 14.1%
- Employees: 9.2%
- Artisans: 8.1%
- Traders: 2.9% (Source: RGPH 2014)

Figure 1. Socio-professional category of the population according to municipalities (%)



Source: RGPH 2014

Despite agriculture's predominance, non-agricultural sectors are emerging, particularly in rural areas, as a result of Morocco's evolving socio-economic landscape (Jennan, 2022). This transition calls for greater synergy between agriculture and other income-generating activities, such as rural tourism, ecotourism, and crafts, which can stimulate local economic growth and job creation (CESE Annual Report, 2017).

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