



PRESS RELEASE
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CDG GROUP INSTITUTE

BOOSTING TOURISM ECOSYSTEMS

Tourism is a key driver for employment and national growth. But Covid-19 has radically changed the equation. The impact upon businesses and workers in the tourism sector has been unprecedented in terms of corporate failures, losses of jobs, and investment decline. Besides, and to maintain its position, Morocco must also adapt to the shifts affecting tourism: meaningful experience over standardized products, emergence of new touristic territories, diversity of stakeholders, modifications of existing practices, and development of new technologies.

In this context, to take up the challenge of resilience and to exploit this current recovery phase to its fullest potential, it becomes essential to innovate, and ensure that sustainability is front and center in all tourism strategies. To make a tourist destination sustainable, it is essential to foster the emergence of ecosystems to make it attractive, and to activate territorial marketing policies.

To think about these matters, the CDG Group Institute and Madaëf - the CDG Group's tourism investment fund – brought together the following guest speakers in a webinar under the theme of **“Boosting Tourism Ecosystems”** :

- **Housna Medaghri Alaoui**, Director of Innovation & Business Transformation, Madaëf,
- **Othmane Cherif Alami**, President of the Regional Council of Tourism for the Casablanca-Settat region,
- **Larbi Safaa**, Professor at the École Supérieure de Technologie in Essaouira, Cadi Ayyad University,
- **Jean Luc Boulin**, tourism consultant.

The future of tourist destinations depends increasingly upon the intelligent coordination of tourist activities at the heart of the existing ecosystems coordinated or not. These ecosystems are the end product of synergization among disparate stakeholders from the areas of public authorities, decentralised national agencies, delegates from the public and private sectors: hotels, restaurants, entertainment, transportation...including, for the latter, business models and clear strategic objectives. These heterogeneities make the process of constituting ecosystems extremely complex. These ecosystems must be engendered by progressive expansion of stakeholders, to the point of complete integration.

This value chain must provide tourists—in the context of a “traveller journey”—an integrated offer of services that, through the quality of cooperation between the public and private sectors, form the cornerstone of success for these ecosystems, and in fine, the resilience of the tourism sector.

In this respect, the Special Commission on the Development Model (CSMD) has included the sector in its vision for the future of Morocco by recommending, among other propositions, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, particularly for the development of very small and medium-sized local businesses.

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This was also Madaëf's choice, in 2020, as stated by Housna Medaghri Alaoui with the implementation of the Madaëf Éco6 entrepreneurial program across five territories— Taghazout Bay, Saïdia, Tamuda Bay, Al Hoceïma, and Fez— and a specific activity: golf. The program accepted 75 projects from a pool of 600 applications. This first step made it possible to pave the way for the first coordinated tourism ecosystems. Through this program, Madaëf Eco6 has reinforced its local roots with each successive edition, as nearly 80% of award winners are locals. These projects benefit from quite a few services as an intensive program of support from experts and access to the market via orders from Madaëf hotels, and an administrative fast-tracking service to facilitate relationships with different administrations. Finally, all awardees enjoy the benefit of “meeting-clubs”, designed to leverage exchanges and stimulate synergies within the program.

In addition, the role of a pivotal organization is very important in terms of steering actions away from promotion, and toward tourism engineering, thus bringing momentum that is in sync with the travel experience offer and the territorial brand image. In this sense, Mr Larbi Safaa points out that the riads ecosystem for in terms of global outreach for the city of Marrakech also benefits the luxury hotels that offer a riad atmosphere to their clientele.

Similarly, the public-private governance must be virtuous enough to develop an operating crisis management system in a world described by Mr Jean-Luc Boulin as “normastrophic” (contraction of normal and catastrophic). This system would safeguard production tools and efficiently allocate the means necessary for rapid recovery.

To accomplish this, it is particularly important for stakeholders to eschew traditional modes of operation, thinking outside the box and taking the time necessary for dialogue and forecasting, to commit to adaptability and resilience. Indeed, in view of evolutions in the world of tourism, as Mr Othmane Cherif Alami reminds us, it is time to consider new KPIs, as outdated indicators such as overnight stays no longer provide clear insight to market reality.

Finally, in terms of human resources, the sector continues to suffer from the training levels of its employees, which influences service quality directly, and negatively, in the framework of a traveller journey. This subject is crucial within the perspective of sector development because, as our speakers remind us, a satisfied visitor is a loyal visitor.

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