

DIPLOMA THESIS

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The Role of Souks in Moroccan Tourism

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Morocco, a captivating land blending ancient history, vibrant culture, and breath-taking natural beauty, has long been a magnet for global travellers. At the heart of this enchanting destination lies a phenomenon that embodies the essence of Moroccan life – the souk. These traditional marketplaces, known for their rich cultural significance, have become pivotal elements in Morocco's tourism landscape.

This thesis delves into the multifaceted role of souks in Moroccan tourism, seeking to unravel their historical roots, economic impact on local communities, cultural significance, and their influence on tourist behaviour. By exploring these key themes, the research aims to contribute valuable insights at the intersection of cultural geography, tourism studies, and economic development.

Morocco's history is intricately tied to its souks, found in narrow streets and bustling squares. These markets offer an authentic experience with lively haggling, the aroma of spices, and colourful crafts, immersing visitors in Moroccan culture.

Souks go beyond commerce; they play a vital role in supporting local businesses and fostering community connections. Whether sharing stories or celebrating traditions, souks are a cornerstone of Moroccan social life.

The enduring appeal of souks lies in their ability to provide a unique blend of shopping, cultural immersion, and authentic experiences. From intricately crafted items to delicious local dishes, souks allow tourists to delve into the heart of Morocco. This research also critically examines the factors that make souks attractive to tourists, shaping their behaviours and experiences (Kania, 2018).

Souks, in shaping the overall tourism image of Morocco, contribute significantly to the country's identity. This research aims to dissect their role in the tourism sector, examining how they are marketed internationally and their influence on the perceptions of potential tourists.

As the world increasingly embraces sustainable tourism, souks emerge as eco-friendly forms of commerce, requiring minimal energy and resources. This research highlights their potential to play a significant role in sustainable tourism, supporting local communities and preserving Morocco's unique cultural heritage (Kania, 2018).

In essence, this thesis endeavours to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of souks in Moroccan tourism, offering insights that bridge cultural appreciation, economic impact, and sustainable development in the ever-evolving landscape of global travel.

Souks are more than just places to buy and sell – they are living embodiments of Morocco's rich heritage. They offer visitors a chance to interact with locals, learn about Moroccan culture, and contribute to the sustainability of local communities. As Morocco embraces sustainable tourism, the eco-friendly nature of souks, requiring minimal energy and resources, positions them as key players in this movement.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis will explore the role of souks in Moroccan tourism. The following research questions will be addressed:

- What are the economic, social, and cultural impacts of souks on Moroccan communities?
- How do souks contribute to the Moroccan tourism experience?
- What are the challenges and opportunities facing souks in the context of tourism development?

1.3 Methodology

This thesis will use a mixed-methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Data will be collected through surveys and observation.

1.4 Scope of the Thesis

This thesis will focus on the role of souks in Moroccan tourism. The thesis will cover the following topics:

- The history of souks in Morocco
- The economic impact of souks on Moroccan communities
- The social and cultural impact of souks on Moroccan communities
- The contribution of souks to the Moroccan tourism experience
- The challenges and opportunities facing souks in the context of tourism development

1.5 Hypotheses

H1: The social and cultural significance of souks in Moroccan communities positively influences tourist behaviour and preferences, leading to increased engagement with local culture and traditions.

H2: Souks act as key drivers of tourism development in Morocco, attracting both domestic and international visitors and contributing significantly to the country's tourism revenue and GDP.

H3: Despite facing challenges such as overcrowding and commercialization, souks present opportunities for sustainable tourism development, with the integration of responsible tourism practices enhancing their long-term viability and resilience in the tourism industry.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 The History of the Souk

The souk, known as the marketplace in Arabic, holds significant cultural and historical importance as the centre of traditional urban life in Arab-Islamic societies. Originating from the evolution of Islamic societies and their emergence as commercial hubs, the souk served not only as a market but also as an economic institution and communication network. While often visited by tourists today, souks have deep historical roots dating back to around 3000 BC, with early records suggesting their origins in Persia. Initially appearing as caravanserais on the outskirts of cities, these roadside inns catered to merchants and travellers along trade routes (Salma Khadra Jayyusi, 2008).

As the Muslim empire expanded, a more settled lifestyle replaced nomadic traditions, leading to the relocation of souks into city centres. These markets became vital components of urban life, attracting artisans, craftsmen, and various facilities such as mosques, schools, and public baths. Souks across the Muslim world share architectural similarities and social networks, with Friday mosques often serving as focal points for social and economic activities.

Adhering to religious principles, business transactions in souks followed ethical codes, highlighting the intersection of economy and religion. Today, ancient souks like the Grand Bazaar of Isfahan in Iran and the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul continue to draw crowds, while local variations in architecture, crafts, and produce reflect the unique character of each region. The souks of Marrakech, for instance, stand out as the largest in Morocco, embodying centuries-old traditions of trade and commerce. Despite their enduring presence, souks have evolved over time while maintaining their core essence as vibrant hubs of cultural exchange and economic activity.

2.2 History of Souks in Morocco

The story of Moroccan souks traces back to ancient times, where Berber tribes engaged in trade and commerce across the North African region. These early markets served as vital hubs for exchanging goods, connecting communities, and fostering cultural exchange. Over time, as Morocco became a nexus for trans-Saharan and Mediterranean trade routes, these markets evolved into vibrant souks, bustling with activity and diversity.

- **Islamic Influence:**

With the arrival of Arab-Islamic culture in the 7th century, Moroccan souks experienced a profound transformation. Islamic principles of trade and commerce infused the marketplaces with a sense of order and structure, while mosques and madrasas became integral parts of the market districts. The fusion of Berber, Arab, and Islamic influences gave rise to the unique character of Moroccan souks (The History & Heritage of the Souk, 2019).

- **Medieval Splendour:**

The medieval period saw the golden age of Moroccan souks, as dynasties like the Almoravids, Almohads, and Marinids ushered in an era of prosperity and cultural flourishing. Cities like Fez and Marrakech became renowned trading centers, attracting merchants from far and wide. Souks expanded in size and complexity, with specialized sections dedicated to various trades and products, creating a sensory feast for visitors and locals alike (The History & Heritage of the Souk, 2019).

- **European Encounters:**

From the 15th century onwards, Morocco's souks welcomed European merchants and traders, bringing goods from distant lands and enriching the marketplace with exotic treasures. European powers such as Portugal and Spain established trade relations with Morocco, further enhancing the cosmopolitan character of Moroccan souks. Travelers marvelled at the kaleidoscope of colours, sounds, and scents that filled the bustling market streets (The History & Heritage of the Souk, 2019).

- **Colonial Legacy:**

The 19th and early 20th centuries brought colonial rule to Morocco, as France and Spain sought to exert their influence over the region. While colonialism brought about significant changes, including modern infrastructure and administrative reforms, Moroccan souks remained resilient. Despite the challenges of modernization, souks continued to thrive as vital centres of trade, craftsmanship, and cultural exchange (The History & Heritage of the Souk, 2019).

- **Modern Resilience:**

Today, Moroccan souks continue to captivate visitors with their timeless charm and authentic ambiance. Traditional crafts such as leatherwork, pottery, metalwork, and textiles remain integral to the souk experience, alongside modern goods catering to contemporary tastes. Souks

have also embraced tourism, welcoming travellers from around the globe who seek to immerse themselves in Morocco's rich cultural heritage (The History & Heritage of the Souk, 2019).

2.3 Moroccan Souks: Tradition and Tourism

The souk, a vibrant marketplace, holds a pivotal role in Moroccan cities, serving as a nexus for trade, social interaction, and cultural exchange. Historically, souks in Moroccan medinas have been integral to urban life, situated amidst narrow streets and bustling with workshops and shops offering a diverse array of goods. The spatial organization of souks reflects the cultural and religious values of the community, with zones designated based on cleanliness and religious significance.

Today, souks continue to play a vital role, evolving into major tourist attractions that attract visitors from around the world. Tourists are drawn to these marketplaces not only for shopping but also for experiencing the rich cultural heritage of Morocco. Bargaining, known as "chtara," is a traditional practice deeply embedded in the souk experience, with tourists expected to engage in negotiations with sellers. Souks in different cities vary in terms of pricing dynamics, with Rabat's souks generally offering more reasonable prices compared to tourist-heavy destinations like Marrakech (Amira Bennison, 2014).

In both cities, souks are divided into three parts based on their clientele and offerings. The first part caters predominantly to tourists, offering upscale products and designer goods aimed at affluent clientele, often foreigners. This section is typically located near popular monuments and tourist attractions. In contrast, the second and third parts of the souks are frequented more by locals, offering everyday items such as food products, clothing, and household goods. These areas also house various workshops and amenities catering to the needs of the local community.

Despite the commercial nature of tourist interactions in souks, they remain important sites for cultural exchange. However, relationships between tourists and locals are often transactional, revolving around economic transactions rather than deep cultural engagement. Nevertheless, souks continue to serve as vibrant hubs of activity, reflecting the rich history and cultural heritage of Morocco while adapting to the demands of modern tourism. (Table 1).

Figure 1: Development phases of Moroccan souks under the influence of tourism Source

Source: Functional and spatial changes of souks in Morocco's imperial cities in the context of tourism development.

Phase		Type of transformation	
No.	Period	Name	Description
I	1912–1955	sight sacralisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the recognition of the architectural, historical, and aesthetic values of the souks by the colonial authorities in the context of tourism promotion (connecting tourism with the cultural heritage protection policy) souks become a tourist attraction the transformation of marketplaces into places for occasional meetings between wealthy foreign tourists and locals
II	1956–early 1990s	bazardisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> craftsmanship loses its importance and the business activity profile changes from trade and production to trade alone the emergence of new commercial outlets in the areas of existing marketplaces and in other places, caused by the development of mass tourism the trade function replaces the housing function in many parts of the medinas (proliferation of bazaars in areas visited by tourists) the formation of commercial relations between tourists and sellers
		spatial dispersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the movement of production and repair workshops from the core of the souks to the outskirts of the medinas, away from the tourist routes
		<i>bastardisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reorientation of the sales offer in connection with the development of low-budget tourism an increase in the number of low-quality products at low prices, often made outside Morocco
III	Late 1990s–2014	securitisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the establishment of the tourist police force, which increases the sense of security among tourists and prevents conflicts between sellers and tourists
		boutiquisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the emergence of stores with exclusive clothing and accessories due to the promotion of luxury tourism (designer shops with a reputation abroad are a must on shopping routes for wealthy tourists)
		aestheticization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the paving and renovation of shop and workshop frontages, cleaning up of stalls, installation of visual identification signs as part of tourism and social projects making traditional commercial and craft areas become, in the opinion of many tourists, nicer and friendlier

2.4 The Economic and Social Impact of Moroccan Souks

In this section, I explore the significant economic ramifications of souks on Moroccan communities. As vital centers of commerce deeply rooted in Moroccan tradition, souks play a pivotal role in sustaining local economies and livelihoods. Through an examination of their economic contributions, from fostering entrepreneurship to generating employment opportunities, I uncover the profound impact of souks on the economic prosperity and vitality of Moroccan communities.

2.4.1 Direct Employment and Income Generation:

Over 1 million individuals work in Moroccan souks, representing approximately 7% of the national workforce according to the World Bank (2022). The average annual income of souk workers varies significantly, with estimates ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,000 USD, depending on factors such as location, product, and skill level, as reported by the International Trade Centre in 2020. However, gender disparity persists within the souk workforce, with women primarily involved in textile, pottery, and food stalls often earning less than their male

counterparts. Estimates suggest that women make up 30-40% of souk workers, highlighting the need for greater attention to gender equity in this sector. Additionally, informal employment is prevalent in souks, with many workers lacking access to social security and employment benefits. Despite these challenges, souk employment remains a crucial source of income for many Moroccans, particularly those in urban areas where souks are vibrant economic hubs. Efforts to formalize and improve working conditions in souks could enhance economic opportunities and livelihoods for workers across the country. (Babacar Sarr, Mokhtar Benlamine, and Zsuzsa Munkacsi, 2019).

2.4.2 Indirect Economic Benefits

Supporting Local Production: Souks play a pivotal role in supporting local production by creating demand for raw materials and services from diverse upstream industries, thus fostering traditional crafts and small-scale production. According to data from the Moroccan Ministry of Economy (2021), the artisanal sector, closely linked to souks, contributes approximately 7% to the country's GDP, highlighting the economic significance of souks in supporting local production and craftsmanship (The Commission for Advanced Regionalization and Rural and Territorial Development, 2023).

Supply Chain Impact: Beyond direct employment within souks, various ancillary services contribute to the smooth functioning of these marketplaces. Porters, transportation providers, maintenance crews, and other service providers form an integral part of the souk ecosystem, generating additional employment opportunities and supporting livelihoods across the supply chain. For instance, in Marrakech, a study conducted by the Marrakech Regional Council (2020) found that for every job directly created within the souks, an additional two jobs were generated in supporting services such as transportation and maintenance (Nachouane Nour Eddine, 2018).

Tourism Multiplier Effect: Souks serve as magnets for tourism, attracting visitors from around the globe who seek authentic cultural experiences and unique souvenirs. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), souk-related spending accounts for approximately 30% of total tourism expenditure in Morocco. Additionally, a report by the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism (2023) highlights that tourism spending in souks has a multiplier effect, with each tourist dollar spent within the marketplace leading to further spending on accommodation, transportation, dining, and other local businesses. This tourism multiplier effect underscores the significance of souks as key drivers of economic growth and development in Moroccan cities and regions (Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, 2023).

2.4.3 Quantifying the Impact:

Marrakech's Jemaa el-Fnaa Square: The bustling Jemaa el-Fnaa Square in Marrakech stands as a testament to the economic prowess of souks in Morocco. According to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023), the square generates an estimated \$2 billion USD annually in tourism revenue, making it a significant economic hub for the city. Moreover, the vibrant atmosphere and diverse offerings of Jemaa el-Fnaa have notable spillover effects for surrounding souks, further amplifying their economic impact and solidifying their position as vital contributors to Marrakech's economy (Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, 2023).

Fes's Medina: The historic Medina of Fes, renowned for its labyrinthine alleys and traditional craftsmanship, holds a prominent place in Morocco's economic landscape. Home to over 9,000 artisans, the Medina contributes significantly to the city's GDP, accounting for approximately 20% of its economic output, as reported by the Fes City Council (2021). This substantial contribution underscores the economic importance of artisanal activities and souks within the Medina, highlighting their role as key drivers of economic growth and prosperity in Fes (Visitmorocco, 2022).

2.5 The social and cultural impact of souks on Moroccan communities

Morocco's vibrant souks go far beyond their bustling stalls and exotic aromas. They serve as pulsating arteries of social life, cultural heritage, and identity, deeply woven into the fabric of Moroccan communities:

2.5.1 Social Hubs and Community Life:

More than merchants: Souks transcend their role as mere marketplaces; they are vibrant social spaces where the pulse of daily life beats rhythmically. Within their labyrinthine alleys, neighbours gather to catch up, stories are exchanged, and laughter fills the air. Visitors immerse themselves in the sensory experience of the souk, from sipping steaming mint tea in cosy cafes to participating in festive religious ceremonies. It is within the bustling ambiance of the souk that the rich tapestry of Moroccan society unfolds (Abdelatif Jaafari, 2020).

Preserving traditions: Souks serve as living museums, where centuries-old artisanal skills and knowledge are passed down from generation to generation. Apprentices learn the intricacies of metalwork from their fathers, while daughters master the art of weaving from their mothers. Through this intergenerational transmission of skills, souks play a vital role in preserving Morocco's cultural heritage and identity. Each stall and workshop within the souk are a testament to the enduring legacy of craftsmanship and tradition.

Support networks: In a society that values community and solidarity, souks serve as crucial social support networks, particularly for marginalized groups. Women, who constitute a significant portion of souk workers, find camaraderie and support within their stalls, where they share stories, experiences, and wisdom. Young entrepreneurs seeking to navigate the complexities of the market receive guidance and mentorship from seasoned vendors, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Within the bustling activity of the souk, bonds of friendship and solidarity are forged, strengthening the social fabric of Moroccan communities (Le Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental, 2024).

2.5.2 Cultural Heritage and Identity:

Living museums: Wandering through Marrakech's Jemaa el-Fnaa Square is akin to stepping into a sensory tapestry of Moroccan culture. Every corner of the souk is adorned with traditional crafts, from vibrantly dyed wool rugs to intricately carved wooden chests. Souks offer visitors a living experience of Moroccan heritage, showcasing not only the products but also the craftsmanship and artistry behind them. Architectural styles, clothing traditions, and regional specialties are all on display, providing a captivating glimpse into Morocco's rich cultural heritage.

Storytelling and folklore: The souk is not just a marketplace, it's a stage where stories come to life. Every interaction within the bustling alleys is infused with narratives, anecdotes, and folklore. The art of the bargain, the charm of the haggle, and the witty banter between buyer and seller are not merely commercial transactions, they're expressions of local personalities, humour, and values. These stories, passed down through generations, serve to keep traditional folklore alive, connecting visitors to Morocco's rich oral tradition and cultural history.

Celebrating diversity: One of the most striking aspects of Moroccan souks is their celebration of diversity. From the Berbers of the Atlas Mountains to the Arab influences of the south, Morocco's cultural tapestry unfolds within the bustling marketplaces. Each region contributes its unique crafts, spices, and culinary delights, creating a vibrant mosaic of traditions and flavours. Visitors to the souk are invited to embark on a journey of discovery, exploring the myriad influences that have shaped Moroccan culture over centuries. In this celebration of diversity, souks serve not only as marketplaces but also as windows into the soul of the nation, reflecting its rich history, heritage, and identity (Chloé Girod, 2023).

2.5.3 Examples:

Cultural vibrancy in Marrakech's bustling souks: Marrakech's souks are not merely marketplaces; they are vibrant cultural hubs pulsating with life and energy. Beyond offering



Moroccan souks are more than just tourist destinations; they're integral parts of communities, serving as social hubs, cultural repositories, and economic engines. Recognizing their multifaceted impact and addressing challenges through collaborative efforts ensures these vibrant spaces continue to thrive, preserving Morocco's unique heritage and identity for generations to come.

2.6 The Contribution of Souks to the Moroccan Tourism Experience

Moroccan souks, traditional marketplaces renowned for their vibrant atmosphere and cultural significance, play a pivotal role in shaping the tourism experience in Morocco. This section explores the multifaceted contributions of souks to the overall tourism landscape, encompassing cultural immersion, economic stimulation, and the promotion of authentic Moroccan experiences.

2.6.1 Attractions and Activities:

Souks captivate tourists with their diverse array of goods, including handcrafted textiles, aromatic spices, intricate pottery, and traditional jewellery. The bustling ambiance, characterized by lively crowds, colourful displays, and the melodic calls of vendors, offers a sensory-rich experience that entices visitors from around the globe. Tourists delight in navigating the labyrinthine alleys, engaging in the age-old tradition of bargaining, and discovering unique treasures within the maze of stalls and shops.

2.6.3 Cultural Immersion and Authenticity:

One of the most compelling aspects of souks is their ability to facilitate cultural immersion. Tourists are afforded the opportunity to interact with local vendors and artisans, gaining insights into Moroccan craftsmanship, culinary traditions, and social customs. These encounters foster cross-cultural exchange, allowing visitors to forge meaningful connections with the vibrant tapestry of Moroccan society. Souks serve as living museums of Moroccan heritage, preserving age-old traditions amidst the modernizing landscape of tourism.

2.6.4 Culinary Experiences

Moroccan souks tantalize the taste buds with an array of culinary delights, from aromatic spices and exotic fruits to Savory tagines and sweet pastries. Tourists revel in the sensory journey of exploring food stalls laden with tantalizing delicacies, savouring the Flavors of traditional Moroccan cuisine. Whether sampling street food delicacies or dining at local eateries nestled within the souks, tourists embark on a gastronomic adventure that enriches their cultural experience.

2.6.5 Tourism Revenue and Employment

Beyond their cultural allure, souks serve as vital engines of economic activity, generating significant revenue for local communities and supporting livelihoods. According to recent data from the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, souks contribute substantially to the country's tourism sector, with an estimated 40% of tourists participating in shopping activities within these traditional marketplaces. This influx of tourists stimulates trade and commerce, bolstering the income of vendors, artisans, and businesses operating within and around the souks. Additionally, souks play a crucial role in job creation, providing employment opportunities for an estimated 1.2 million individuals across Morocco. These jobs span various sectors, including craftsmanship, retail, tourism services, and hospitality. By empowering local communities with sustainable economic opportunities, souks contribute to the overall well-being and development of Moroccan society (The Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, 2022).

2.6.6 Tourism Infrastructure and Services:

To cater to the needs of tourists, souks are equipped with essential infrastructure and services, which play a crucial role in enhancing the overall visitor experience. According to a study conducted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), investments in tourism infrastructure in Morocco, including those in and around souks, have increased by 25% over the past decade. These investments have led to the establishment of modern amenities such as information centers, guided tours, and facilities for visitors. Additionally, initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting souks as cultural heritage sites have received significant support.

The Moroccan Ministry of Culture, for instance, has allocated funds for restoration projects and educational programs focused on raising awareness about the historical and cultural significance of souks. By safeguarding their authenticity and charm, these efforts ensure that souks continue to be cherished destinations for future generations of tourists, contributing to the sustainable development of Morocco's tourism industry.

2.6.7 Challenges and Future Outlook:

While souks play a vital role in Moroccan tourism, they also face challenges such as overcrowding, commercialization, and the erosion of traditional practices. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to balance tourism growth with the preservation of cultural integrity and sustainable development. By fostering community engagement, promoting responsible tourism practices, and investing in cultural preservation efforts, souks can continue to thrive as emblematic symbols of Moroccan hospitality and heritage.

In conclusion, Moroccan souks serve as indispensable pillars of the tourism experience, offering a captivating blend of cultural immersion, economic vitality, and authentic encounters. By celebrating the rich tapestry of Moroccan traditions and fostering meaningful connections between visitors and locals, souks transcend their role as mere marketplaces to become vibrant hubs of cultural exchange and discovery. As Morocco embraces the opportunities and challenges of tourism development, souks remain steadfast in their commitment to preserving the essence of Moroccan identity and hospitality for generations to come.

2.7 The challenges and opportunities facing souks in the context of tourism development

2.7.1 Challenges Facing Souks in the Context of Tourism Development:

The growth of tourism in Moroccan souks presents several challenges that threaten their cultural integrity and sustainability. Overcrowding and congestion during peak tourist seasons not only compromise the quality of visitor experiences but also raise safety concerns for both tourists and locals. According to data from the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, the number of tourists visiting popular souks such as those in Marrakech and Fes has increased by over 30% in the past five years, exacerbating issues of overcrowding and congestion. Moreover, a study by the Moroccan Association of Crafts (AMCA) found that 65% of vendors in souks report increased commercial pressures, with many feeling compelled to prioritize mass-produced goods over traditional artisanal crafts to meet tourist demand. Environmental degradation, exacerbated by the influx of tourists, adds to the challenges, necessitating sustainable management practices to mitigate waste generation and pollution. Additionally, economic

disparities in the distribution of tourism revenue may persist, with certain segments of the local population not benefiting equitably from souk-based tourism.

2.7.2 Opportunities for Souks in the Context of Tourism Development:

Despite these challenges, Moroccan souks also present significant opportunities for sustainable tourism development. By embracing sustainable practices such as managing visitor flows and promoting responsible consumption, souks can minimize their environmental footprint while enhancing the quality of the visitor experience. Cultural preservation efforts play a crucial role in maintaining the authenticity and charm of souks, attracting tourists seeking genuine cultural immersion. Diversifying offerings to include cultural performances, workshops, and culinary experiences not only enriches the tourist experience but also creates additional sources of income for local communities. According to a study by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), diversifying tourism offerings in souks can lead to a 20% increase in tourist spending, benefiting local economies. Moreover, fostering collaborative partnerships between public and private stakeholders can facilitate coordinated efforts to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities, ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of souks in the face of evolving tourism dynamics (Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Local Communities, 2021).

Chapter 3: Material and Methodology

3.1 Purpose of Research:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of souks in Moroccan tourism. Souks, traditional marketplaces deeply ingrained in Moroccan culture, are significant attractions for tourists. Understanding their role in tourism is crucial for policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders involved in the tourism industry. This study aims to explore various facets of souks' impact on tourism, including their cultural significance, economic contributions, and implications for local communities.

3.2 Research Goals and Objectives:

- To examine the cultural significance of souks in Moroccan tourism.
- To assess the economic contributions of souks to the tourism sector.
- To analyse tourists' perceptions and experiences of souks.
- To investigate the role of souks in preserving traditional craftsmanship and cultural heritage.
- To explore the challenges and opportunities associated with souks in the context of tourism development in Morocco.

3.3 Methodology:

This thesis will adopt a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to ensure a multifaceted analysis. The research will employ a combination of rigorous data collection methods, leveraging both quantitative surveys and qualitative observations. By employing this hybrid approach, the study aims to gather a rich and nuanced dataset, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions at hand. Surveys will enable the capture of structured quantitative data, providing numerical insights and trends, while observation will offer a qualitative depth, capturing nuanced behaviours, interactions, and contextual nuances. This methodological approach is chosen to ensure a holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation, enriching the analysis and facilitating a more nuanced interpretation of the findings.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Collection:

Surveys will be conducted among tourists visiting souks in various Moroccan cities. The survey questionnaire will include structured questions to gather quantitative data on tourists' demographics, travel patterns, spending behaviour, and perceptions of souks. The data collected through surveys will be analysed using statistical techniques to identify patterns, trends, and correlations.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data Collection:

Observation will be utilized as a qualitative data collection method to provide insights into the dynamics and atmosphere of souks. Researchers will observe the interactions between tourists and vendors, the diversity of products offered, and the overall ambiance of the marketplace. Additionally, in-depth interviews may be conducted with key stakeholders, including souk vendors, residents, tourism officials, and cultural experts, to gain a deeper understanding of souks' role in tourism. Additionally, videos capturing tourists' feedback about Moroccan souks will be collected and analysed qualitatively. These videos will provide visual and verbal data, offering deeper insights into tourists' experiences and perceptions.

3.4 Limitations of the Methodology:

Sampling Bias: There may be a potential sampling bias in survey respondents, as only tourists who visit souks and agree to participate will be included in the study.

Subjectivity: Qualitative data collected through observation and interviews may be subject to researcher bias.

Generalizability: Findings may not be fully generalizable to all souks in Morocco, as the study will focus on selected cities and marketplaces.

Language Barrier: Language barriers may pose challenges during interviews, particularly with non-English speaking participants.

Time and Resource Constraints: Limited time and resources may restrict the scope and depth of data collection and analysis.

Despite these limitations, this mixed-methods approach will provide valuable insights into the multifaceted role of souks in Moroccan tourism, contributing to the existing body of knowledge in this field and informing tourism development strategies in Morocco.

Chapter 4: Results and their evaluation

4.1 Qualitative Methodology Results

In this section, we delve into the qualitative findings derived from observation and the analysis of video feedback capturing tourists' experiences and perceptions of Moroccan souks.

4.1.1 Observation Findings

Observation of souks across various Moroccan cities provided rich insights into the multifaceted nature of these marketplaces. The bustling ambiance, vibrant colours, and diverse array of products on display created an immersive experience for tourists. Through systematic observation, several key themes emerged:

Cultural Immersion and Authenticity: Tourists were observed actively engaging with local vendors, expressing admiration for the authenticity and cultural richness of Moroccan souks. Interactions often involved discussions about traditional craftsmanship, local customs, and the significance of souks in Moroccan heritage.

Sensory Experiences: The sensory experience of Moroccan souks played a significant role in shaping tourists' perceptions. The sights, sounds, and smells of the marketplaces evoked a sense of wonder and fascination, contributing to a memorable experience for visitors.

Navigational Challenges: Despite the allure of souks, tourists were observed facing navigational challenges within the labyrinthine alleys and bustling crowds. Some expressed difficulty in finding specific stalls or negotiating the maze-like layout of the marketplaces.

Cultural Exchange: Souks served as vibrant hubs for cultural exchange, with tourists and vendors engaging in cross-cultural interactions. Language barriers were often overcome through gestures and expressions, facilitating meaningful exchanges between visitors and local artisans.

These observation findings provide valuable insights into the experiential aspects of Moroccan souks, highlighting their cultural significance and the challenges encountered by tourists during their visits.

4.1.2 Analysis of Video Feedback

Videos capturing tourists' feedback about Moroccan souks offered additional depth and context to the qualitative findings. Through visual and verbal narratives, tourists shared their impressions, preferences, and challenges encountered during their souk experiences. Analysis of video feedback revealed the following themes (Brayden & Caitlin (2021), Avelovinit (2019), Gab & Maya Backpacking, 2021):

Authenticity and Charm: Tourists expressed admiration for the authenticity and charm of Moroccan souks, noting the unique ambiance and cultural richness of these marketplaces.

Product Diversity and Quality: The diversity and quality of products available in souks garnered positive feedback from tourists, who appreciated the opportunity to explore traditional handicrafts, textiles, spices, and culinary delights.

Navigational and Communication Challenges: Some tourists recounted challenges navigating the complex alleys of souks and communicating with vendors due to language barriers. However, many highlighted the friendly and accommodating nature of local vendors, who assisted them in their exploration.

Cultural Immersion and Learning: Souk visits were perceived as opportunities for cultural immersion and learning, with tourists gaining insights into Moroccan traditions, craftsmanship, and culinary culture through their interactions with vendors and artisans.

By analysing video feedback, this study gains deeper insights into the experiential dimensions of souk tourism, providing valuable context for understanding tourists' perceptions and experiences.

4.2 Quantitative Methodology Results

My thesis utilized a quantitative research method to investigate the relationship between souk tourism and its impact on Moroccan tourism. In designing the research project, data were collected through an online survey distributed among tourists visiting souks in various Moroccan cities. The survey aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of tourists' demographics, spending behaviour, and perceptions of Moroccan souks.

This program also visualizes the data in the form of charts, tables, and graphs to make it more understandable.

✓ *How many times have you visited Morocco?*

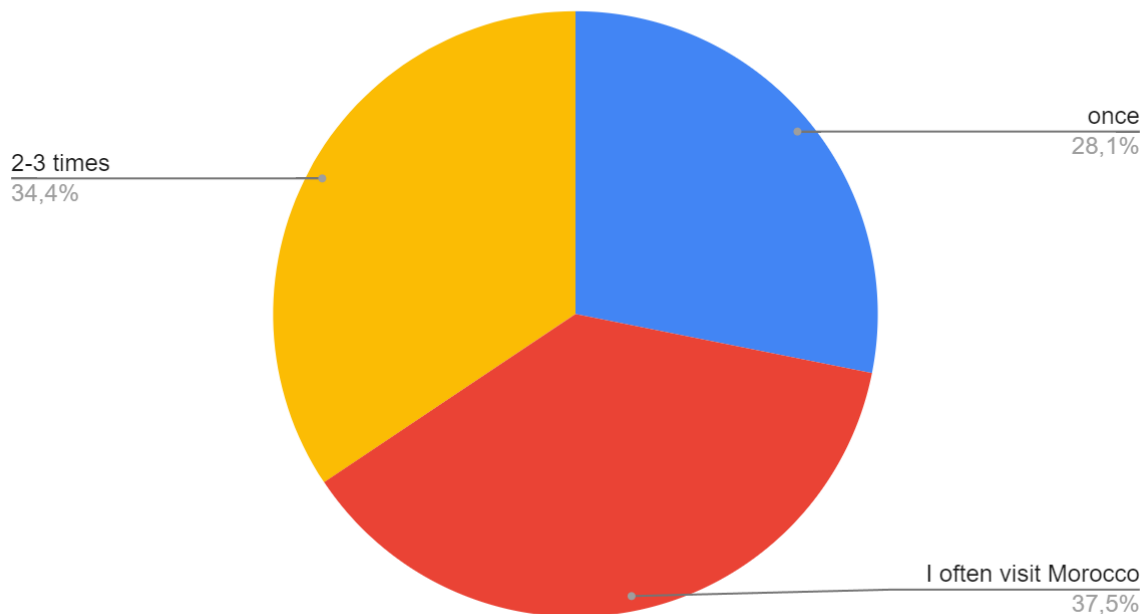
The survey garnered 129 responses from tourists exploring souks in various Moroccan cities. Regarding their frequency of visits to Morocco, 28.1% of respondents reported visiting the country only once, while 37.5% stated that they visited often. Additionally, 34.4% of respondents indicated having visited Morocco 2-3 times. These findings reveal a diverse range of travel patterns among souk visitors, with a significant proportion of respondents engaging

in frequent or repeat visits to Morocco. Such insights into tourists' travel behaviours offer valuable context for understanding their participation in souk tourism and its broader implications for Moroccan tourism.

Figure4: Number of Visits to Morocco

Source: own research

How many times have you visited Morocco?



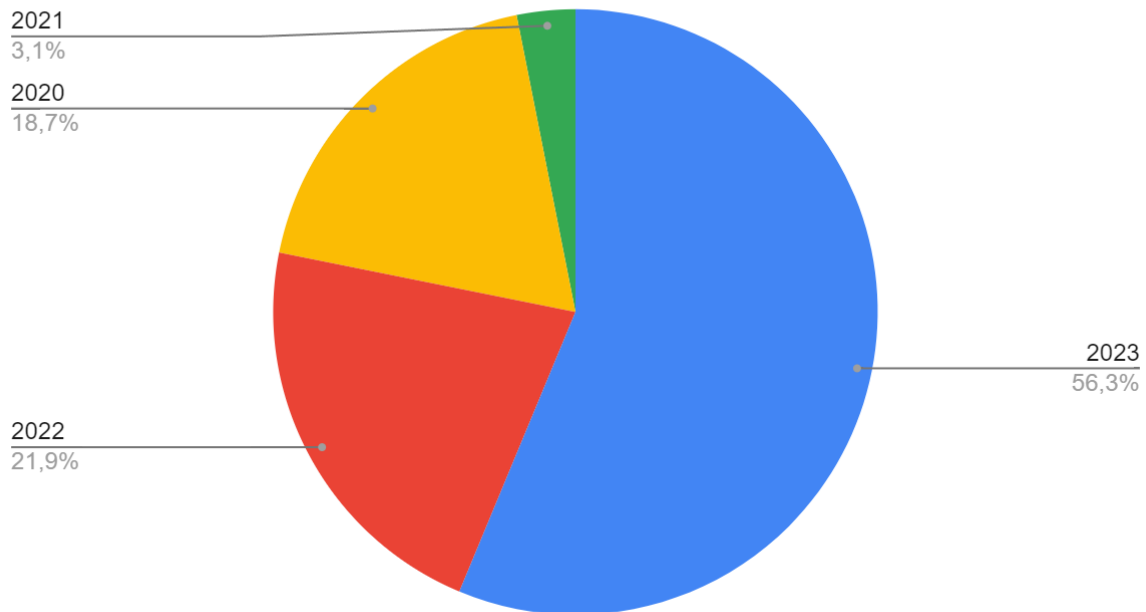
✓ ***When was your most recent visit to Morocco?***

Among the respondents, a substantial majority (56.3%) reported their most recent visit to Morocco occurring in 2023. This indicates a significant influx of tourists to the country during that year. Following closely behind, 21.9% of respondents stated that their last visit was in 2022, suggesting continued interest in Moroccan tourism in the years leading up to the survey. A smaller proportion of respondents (3.1%) reported visiting in 2021, reflecting potential disruptions to travel due to external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, 18.7% of respondents indicated that their most recent visit to Morocco was in 2020 or earlier, underscoring the long-standing appeal of the country as a tourist destination. These findings provide valuable insights into the temporal distribution of tourist visits to Morocco and their implications for the tourism industry, particularly within the context of souk tourism.

Figure5: Latest Journey to Morocco

Source: own research

When was your most recent visit to Morocco?



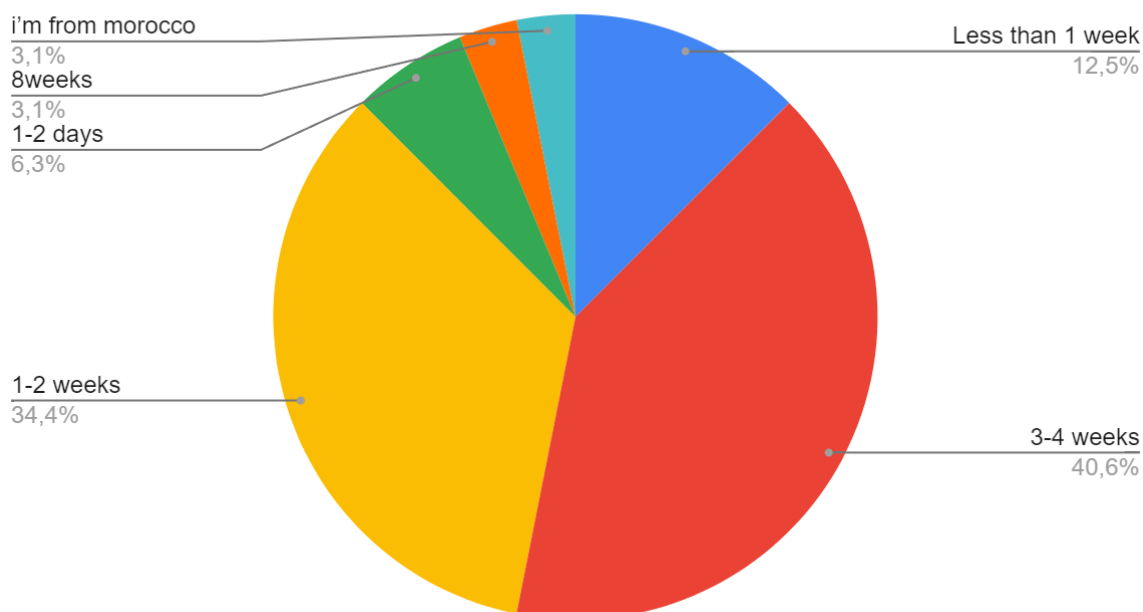
✓ *How long was your most recent visit to Morocco?*

In response to the question regarding the duration of their most recent visit to Morocco, the survey revealed varying lengths of stay among respondents. Most respondents (40.6%) reported spending 3-4 weeks in the country during their last visit, indicating a significant proportion of tourists opting for an extended stay to immerse themselves in Moroccan culture and explore its diverse attractions. Following closely behind, 34.4% of respondents indicated a stay of 1-2 weeks, suggesting a considerable number of tourists opting for a moderately long visit duration. Additionally, 12.5% of respondents reported a stay of less than 1 week, indicating shorter but still substantial visits to Morocco. A smaller proportion of respondents (6.3%) reported spending 1-2 days in the country during their last visit, possibly indicating brief stopovers or limited itineraries. It's worth noting that 3.1% of respondents identified themselves as being from Morocco, potentially indicating domestic tourism within the country. These findings highlight the diversity in the duration of tourist visits to Morocco and offer valuable insights into tourists' travel preferences and behaviours.

Figure 6: Duration of Recent Visits to Morocco

Source: own research

How long was your most recent visit to Morocco?



✓ *What cities or towns did you visit in Morocco?*

Based on the responses provided, tourists visited a wide range of cities and towns during their trips to Morocco. Some of the most frequently mentioned destinations include Marrakech, Casablanca, Agadir, Essaouira, Tangier, Chefchaouen, Tetouan, Fes, Rabat, and Asilah. These cities and towns represent popular tourist destinations known for their cultural heritage, historical significance, and natural beauty. The diversity of destinations visited by tourists underscores the richness and variety of experiences available in Morocco, catering to different interests and preferences among visitors.

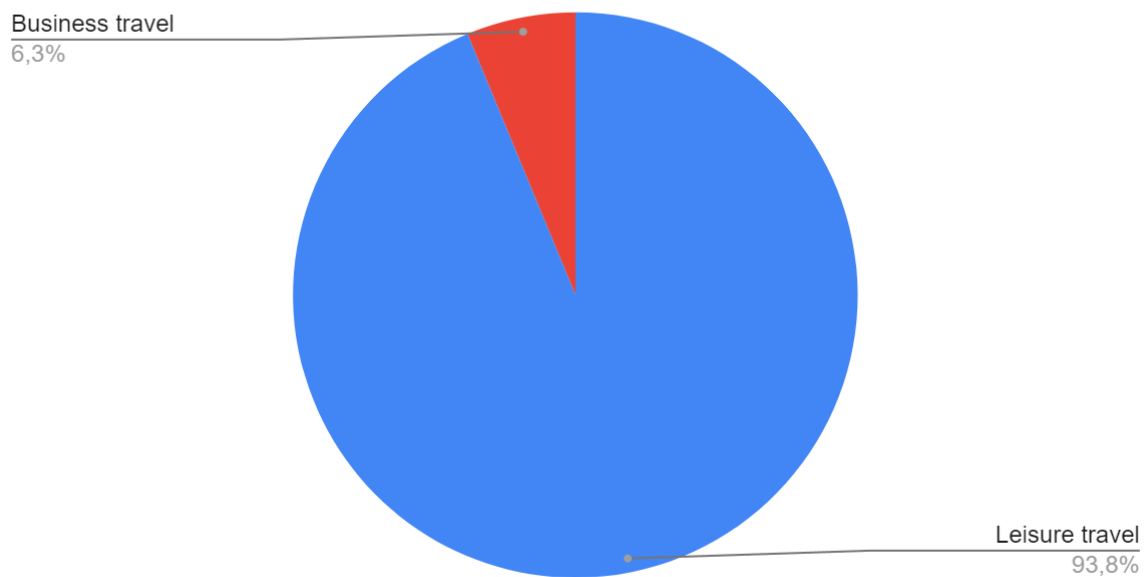
✓ *What was the primary purpose of your most recent visit to Morocco?*

The primary purpose of the most recent visits to Morocco among respondents overwhelmingly leaned towards leisure travel, with 93.8% indicating this as their main reason for visiting. Conversely, a smaller proportion, comprising 6.3% of respondents, cited business travel as the primary purpose of their visit. This data underscores the predominant role of Morocco as a leisure destination, attracting tourists seeking cultural immersion, exploration of historical sites, and relaxation amidst its diverse landscapes and vibrant cities.

Figure 7: Primary Purpose of Recent Visit to Morocco

Source: own research

What was the primary purpose of your most recent visit to Morocco?

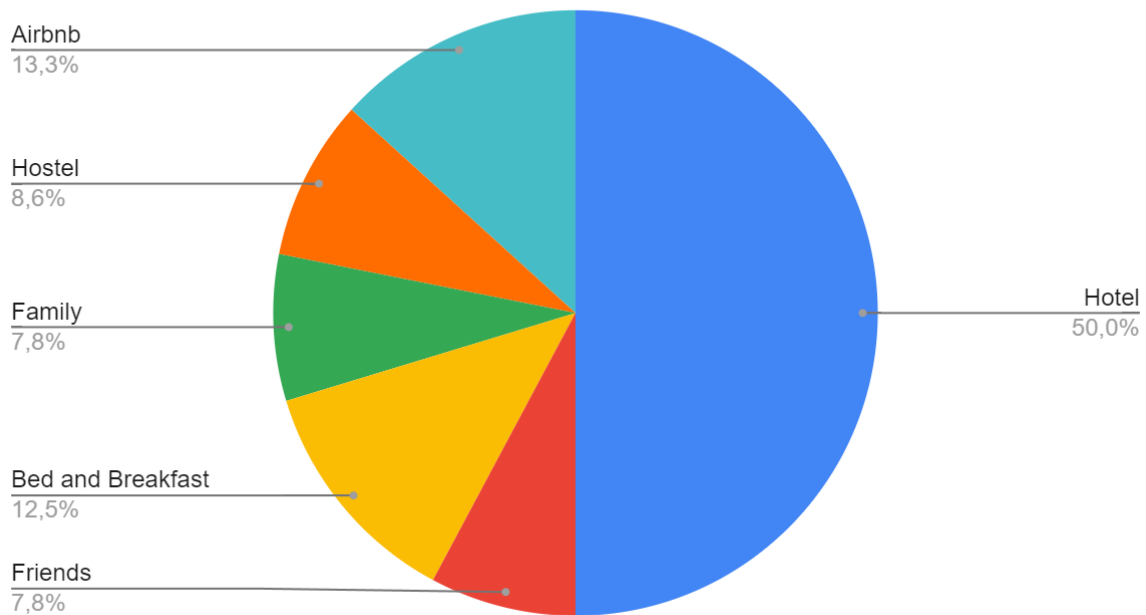


The survey responses regarding the type of accommodation booked by respondents revealed a variety of preferences. Among the options provided, hotels emerged as the most popular choice, with 50% of respondents indicating this accommodation type. Bed and breakfast establishments were chosen by 12.5% of respondents. Notably, a significant portion of respondents (37.5%) opted for alternative accommodation options categorized as "other," including Airbnb (13.3%), hostels (8.6%), staying with family members (7.8%), and lodging with friends (7.8%). This diversity in accommodation choices reflects the range of options available to tourists visiting Morocco and caters to different budgetary considerations and preferences for accommodation experiences.

Figure 8: Type of accommodation

Source: own research

What type of accommodation have you booked?



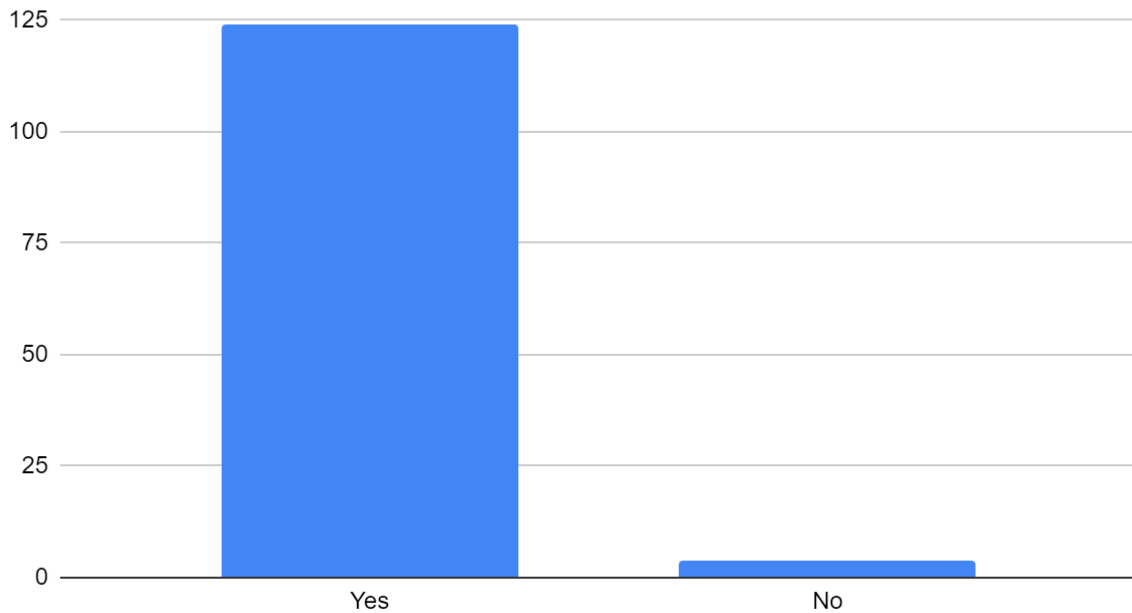
✓ *Have you ever visited a souk in Morocco?*

The survey responses indicated a high level of engagement with souk tourism among respondents. A significant majority, comprising 96.9% of respondents, reported having visited a souk in Morocco at some point. Conversely, only a small proportion, accounting for 3.1% of respondents, indicated that they had not visited a souk during their trips to Morocco. This data underscores the widespread appeal and popularity of souk experiences among tourists visiting the country, highlighting the importance of souks as cultural and economic hubs within Moroccan tourism.

Figure 9: Souk Visits in Morocco

Source: own research

Have you ever visited a souk in Morocco?



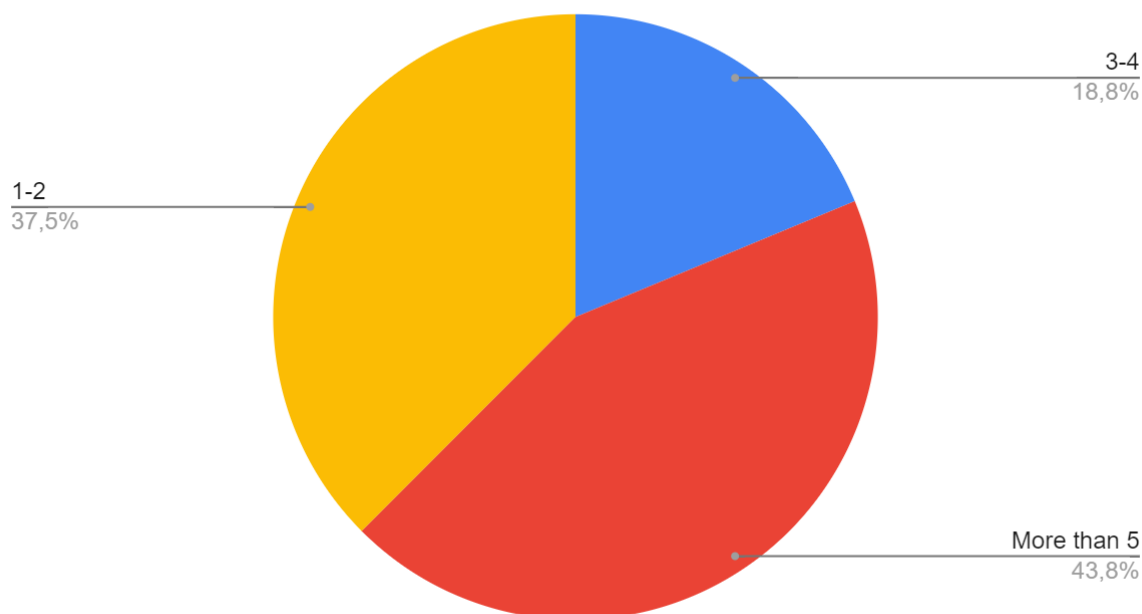
✓ *How many souks have you visited in Morocco?*

The survey responses revealed a varied degree of engagement with souk exploration among respondents. A significant portion, comprising 37.5% of respondents, reported having visited 1-2 souks during their trips to Morocco. Additionally, 18.8% of respondents indicated visiting 3-4 souks, suggesting a higher level of exploration and engagement with the marketplaces. Notably, a substantial proportion, accounting for 43.8% of respondents, reported visiting more than 5 souks during their visits to Morocco, indicating extensive exploration of the diverse souk offerings across the country. This data highlights the diversity in souk visitation patterns among tourists, with some opting for a more focused exploration while others engaging in extensive souk experiences during their trips to Morocco.

Figure 10: Number of Souks visited

Source: own research

How many souks have you visited in Morocco?



✓ *Which souks did you visit? Please name some of souks.*

The survey responses indicated a diverse range of souks visited by respondents during their trips to Morocco. Some of the frequently mentioned souks include Souk El Had, Souk Semmarine. Additionally, respondents mentioned visiting souks in various cities such as Marrakech, Casablanca, Tangier, Tetouan, and Agadir. Other notable souks include Souk Qriaa in Casablanca, Jamaa el-Fna Square in Marrakech, Souk El Attarine, and Souk Cherratin. The diversity in souk visitation reflects the rich tapestry of market experiences available across Morocco, catering to different interests and preferences among tourists.

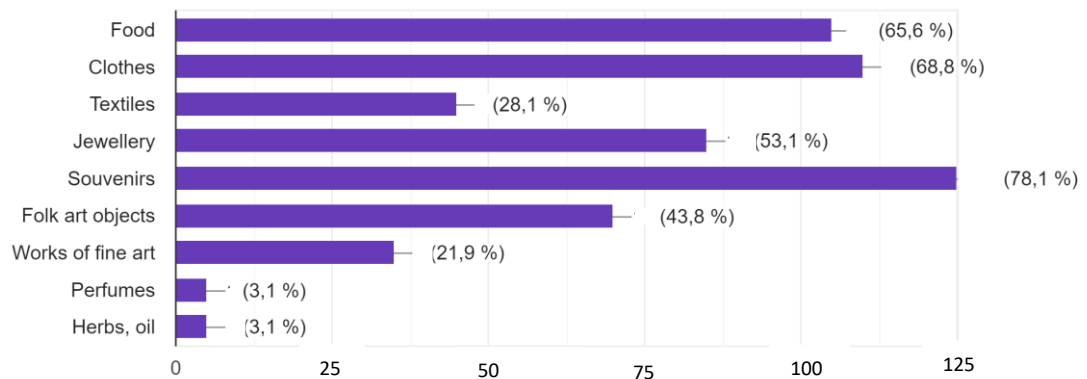
✓ *What did you purchase at the souks?*

The survey responses provided insights into the diverse range of items purchased by tourists at the souks in Morocco. The most purchased items include souvenirs, with 78.1% of respondents indicating their purchase, followed by clothes (68.8%) and food items (65.6%). Additionally, respondents reported purchasing jewellery (53.1%), folk art objects (43.8%), and textiles (28.1%) during their souk visits. Some respondents also mentioned purchasing works of fine art (21.9%), while others opted for items such as perfumes (3.1%) and herbs/oil (3.1%). These findings underscore the variety of products available at Moroccan souks, catering to diverse interests and preferences among tourists.

Figure 11: Popular Souk Purchases

Source: own research

What did you purchase at the souks?



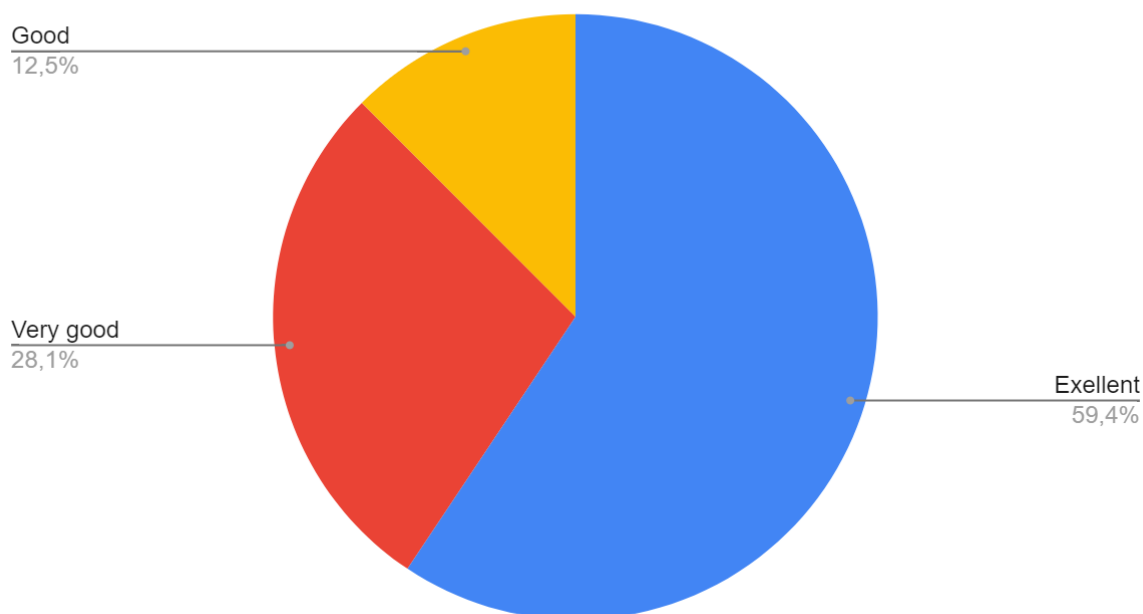
✓ ***How would you rate your overall experience in the souks?***

The survey responses overwhelmingly reflected positive experiences among tourists visiting souks in Morocco. Most respondents, accounting for 87.5%, rated their overall experience as either "Excellent" (59.4%) or "Very good" (28.1%). Additionally, a smaller proportion of respondents (12.5%) rated their experience as "Good." Notably, no respondents rated their experience as "Fair" or "Poor," indicating a high level of satisfaction and enjoyment during their souk visits. These findings underscore the favourable impressions souks leave on tourists, highlighting their significance as vibrant cultural and commercial hubs within Moroccan tourism.

Figure 12: Rating the Souk Experience

Source: own research

How would you rate your overall experience in the souks?



✓ *What did you enjoy most about the souks?*

The responses from survey participants provide a rich tapestry of experiences and highlights of their visits to the souks in Morocco. Some of the most enjoyed aspects include:

The vibrant atmosphere and ambiance: Many respondents mentioned enjoying the lively vibes and energy of the souks, as well as the cozy and welcoming feeling they evoke.

The variety of products: The diversity of goods available for purchase, including traditional crafts, textiles, spices, and clothing, was a source of enjoyment for many visitors.

Interaction with people: Several respondents highlighted the pleasure of interacting with locals and experiencing Moroccan hospitality and generosity.

Cultural immersion: Visitors appreciated how the souks embody Moroccan culture, heritage, and traditions, offering a rich sensory experience through vibrant colours, exotic scents, and lively sounds.

Food: The variety and deliciousness of traditional Moroccan food available at the souks were also mentioned as a highlight.

Flexibility and hospitality of merchants: Respondents appreciated the welcoming and accommodating attitude of merchants, as well as their willingness to let visitors explore and try new things without pressure to buy.

Overall, these responses underscore the multifaceted appeal of Moroccan souks, catering to a wide range of interests and providing memorable experiences for visitors.

✓ ***What did you least enjoy about the souks?***

The feedback provided by respondents highlights some of the challenges and least enjoyable aspects of visiting souks in Morocco:

Crowds: Many respondents mentioned that the high number of people in the souks could be overwhelming and make it difficult to move around comfortably.

High prices for tourists: Some visitors expressed frustration with vendors asking for inflated prices when dealing with tourists.

Crowded and noisy environment: The bustling atmosphere of the souks, coupled with noise from vehicles and crowds, was cited as a source of discomfort for some respondents.

Bargaining and feeling overwhelmed: Negotiating prices with vendors, navigating the maze-like layout of the souks, and feeling overwhelmed by the large crowds were mentioned as challenges by a few respondents.

Potential for scams and fraud: A few respondents expressed concerns about fraudulent activities and the need to be vigilant to avoid being scammed or robbed.

Personal preferences: Some respondents mentioned specific dislikes, such as not having enough time to explore, feeling tired from bargaining, or feeling crowded.

Overall, while the souks offer a vibrant and dynamic experience, these responses highlight the practical challenges and potential drawbacks that visitors may encounter during their visits.

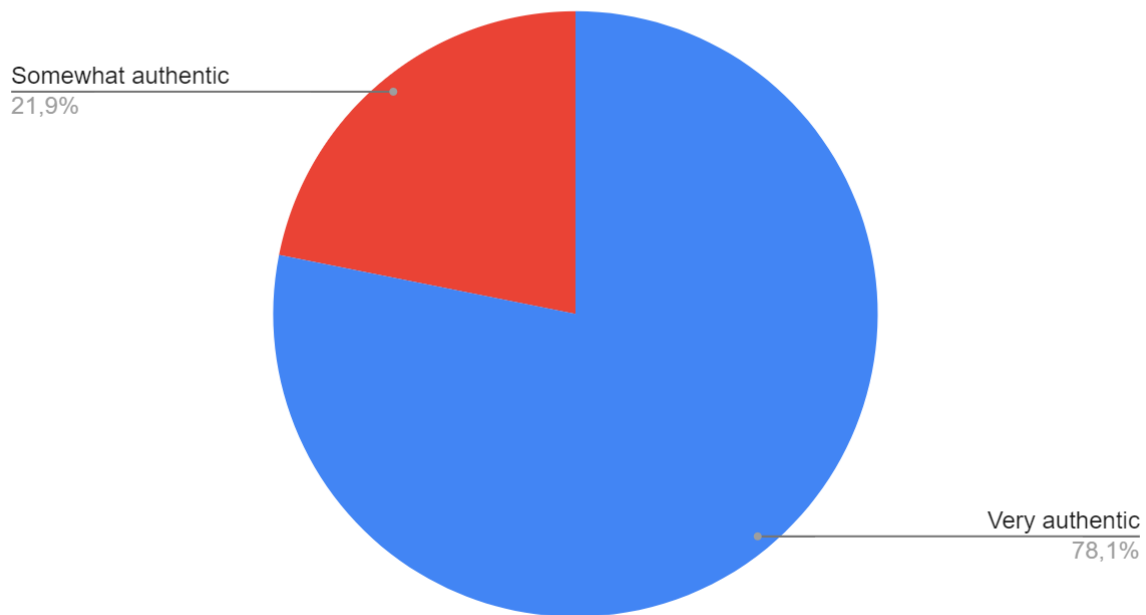
✓ ***How would you rate the authenticity of the souks?***

The survey responses overwhelmingly indicated a high level of perceived authenticity among visitors to the souks in Morocco. A significant majority, comprising 78.1% of respondents, rated the authenticity of the souks as "Very authentic." Additionally, a smaller proportion of respondents, accounting for 21.9%, considered the souks to be "Somewhat authentic." Notably, no respondents rated the souks as "Not very authentic" or "Not authentic at all." These findings underscore the perceived authenticity of the souks as vibrant cultural and commercial hubs that embody the rich heritage and traditions of Morocco.

Figure 13: Rating of the authenticity of the souks

Source: own research

How would you rate the authenticity of the souks?



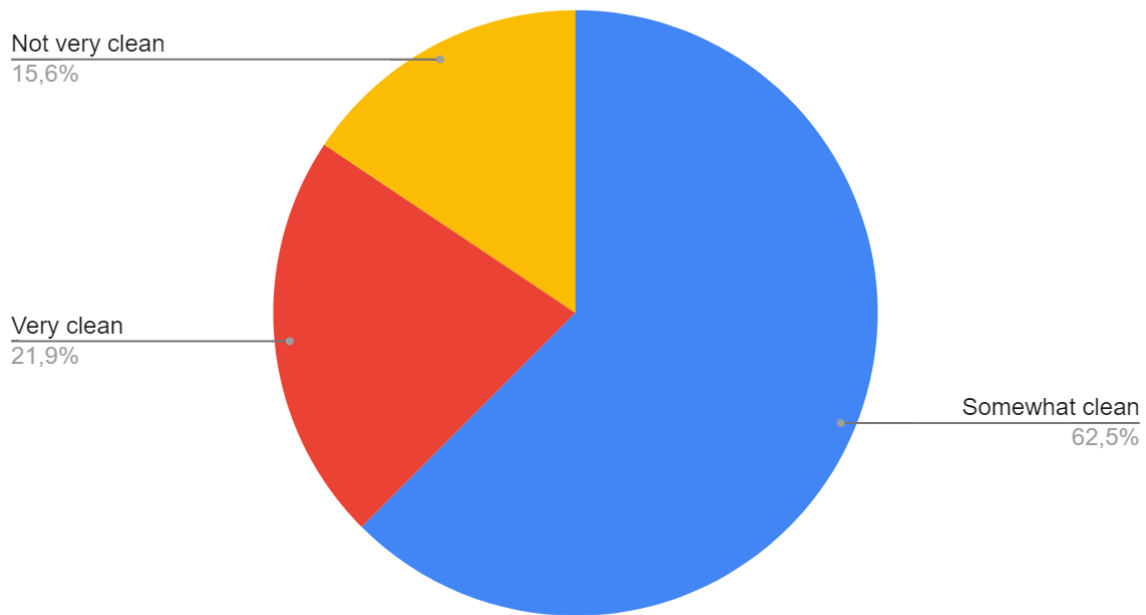
✓ *How would you rate the cleanliness of the souks?*

The survey responses provided mixed perceptions regarding the cleanliness of the souks in Morocco. While most respondents, accounting for 62.5%, rated the cleanliness as "Somewhat clean," a notable proportion, comprising 21.9% of respondents, considered the souks to be "Very clean." However, a smaller yet significant portion of respondents, representing 15.6%, rated the cleanliness as "Not very clean." Interestingly, no respondents rated the souks as "Not clean at all." These findings suggest that while efforts may be made to maintain cleanliness in the souks, there is room for improvement to ensure a consistently clean environment for visitors.

Figure 13: Rating the cleanliness of the Souks

Source: own research

How would you rate the cleanliness of the souks?



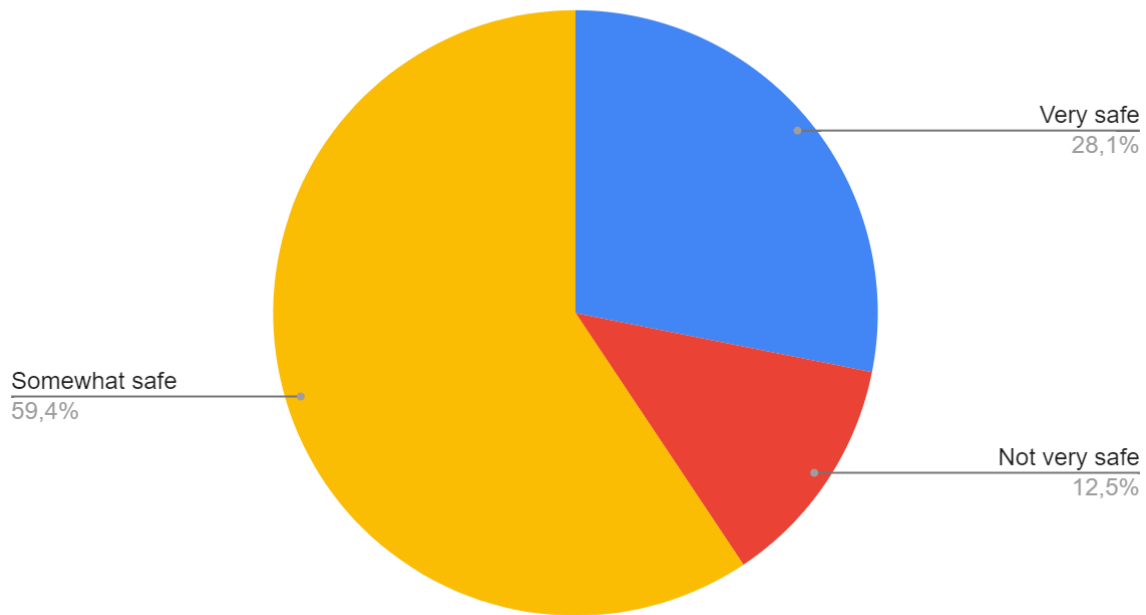
✓ *How would you rate the safety of the souks?*

Based on the survey responses, the safety of the souks in Morocco was generally perceived positively by visitors. Most respondents, comprising 59.4%, rated the souks as "Somewhat safe," while 28.1% considered them to be "Very safe." Additionally, a smaller proportion of respondents, representing 12.5%, rated the safety as "Not very safe." Notably, none of the respondents rated the souks as "Not safe at all." These findings indicate a generally positive perception of safety within the souks, although there may be some room for improvement to address concerns about safety among a minority of visitors.

Figure 14: Rating the safety of the Souks

Source: own research

How would you rate the safety of the souks?



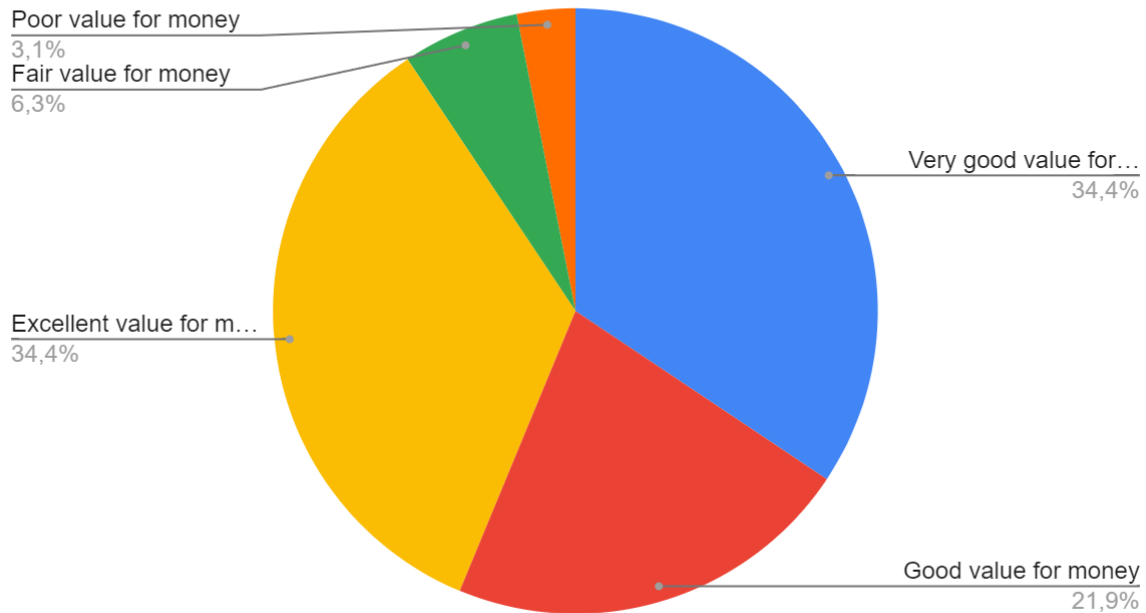
✓ ***How would you rate the overall value for money of the souks?***

The survey responses reflected positive perceptions regarding the overall value for money offered by the souks in Morocco. A significant portion of respondents, comprising 68.8%, rated the souks as either "Excellent value for money" (34.4%) or "Very good value for money" (34.4%). Additionally, 21.9% of respondents considered the souks to provide "Good value for money." A smaller proportion of respondents, representing 6.3%, rated the value as "Fair," while only 3.1% perceived it as "Poor value for money." These findings indicate a generally favourable assessment of the affordability and quality of goods and experiences available at the souks, with most visitors considering them to offer excellent or very good value for money.

Figure 15: Souk Value for Money

Source: own research

How would you rate the overall value for money of the souks?



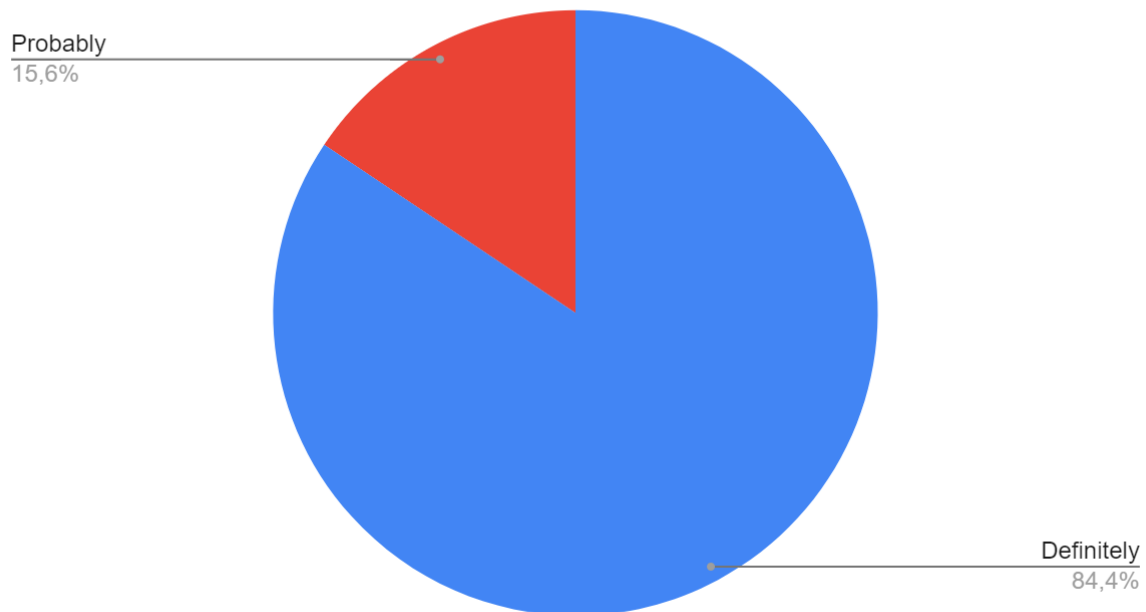
✓ *Would you recommend visiting souks to other travellers?*

The survey responses overwhelmingly indicated a strong inclination among visitors to recommend visiting souks to other travellers. A significant majority, comprising 84.4% of respondents, expressed that they would "Definitely" recommend visiting souks to other travellers. Additionally, 15.6% of respondents indicated that they would "Probably" recommend it. Notably, no respondents selected options indicating reluctance or a negative recommendation, such as "Probably not" or "Definitely not." These findings underscore the widespread endorsement of souk experiences among visitors, highlighting their appeal and value as must-see destinations for travellers exploring Morocco.

Figure 16: Recommendations for Souk Visits

Source: own research

Would you recommend visiting souks to other travellers?



✓ *What could be done to improve the experience of visiting souks?*

The suggestions provided by respondents offer valuable insights into potential areas for improvement to enhance the experience of visiting souks in Morocco:

Organization and Crowd Management: Several respondents highlighted the need for better organization and crowd control measures to reduce congestion and create a more comfortable environment for visitors.

Price Regulation and Security Measures: Concerns about price control and safety from scammers and pickpockets were raised, indicating the importance of implementing security measures and regulatory mechanisms.

Guided Tours and Local Assistance: Many respondents suggested going with knowledgeable guides or local friends to enhance the experience and gain insights into Moroccan culture and traditions.

Cleanliness and Quality Assurance: Improving cleanliness standards and ensuring the quality of products sold at the souks were mentioned as potential areas for enhancement.

Signage and Amenities: Suggestions included the implementation of signage, maps, and the provision of amenities such as bathrooms and seating areas to improve navigation and comfort for visitors.

Community Engagement and Eco-Friendly Practices: Encouraging community engagement, supporting eco-friendly transport options, and reducing plastic usage were mentioned as ways to promote sustainability and environmental consciousness.

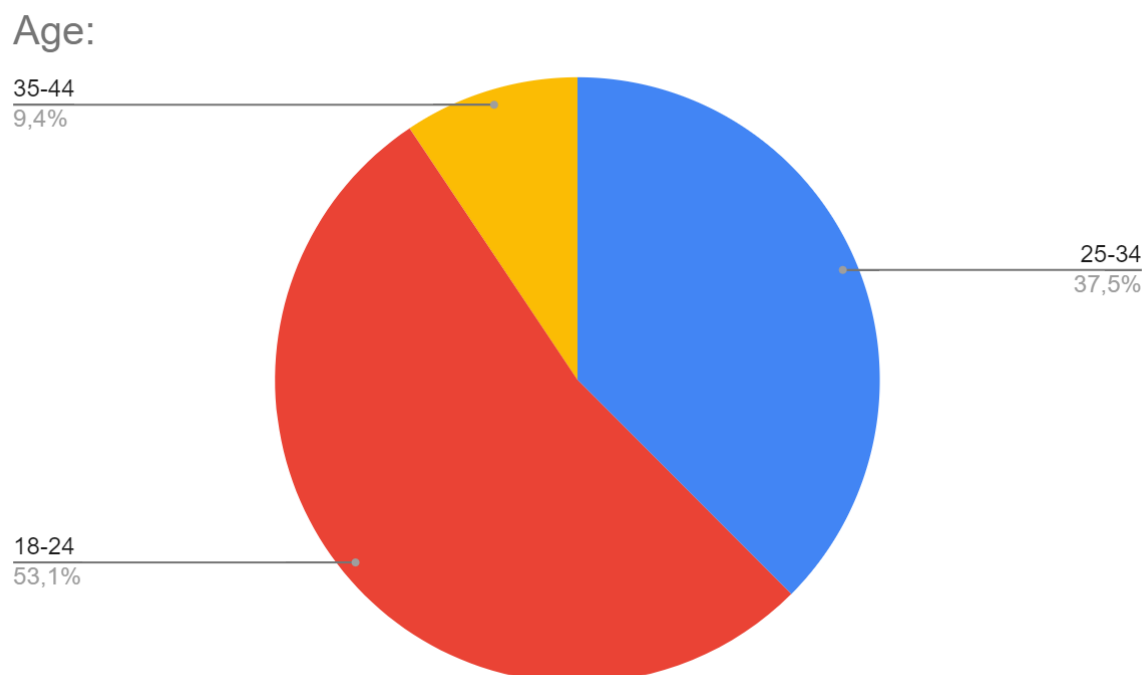
Overall, these suggestions highlight the importance of addressing infrastructure, safety, and cultural considerations to optimize the souk experience for visitors while preserving their unique charm and authenticity.

✓ *Age:*

The survey data reflects a predominantly youthful demographic among respondents, with a notable majority falling within the age range of 18-24, accounting for 53.1% of participants. Following closely behind, 37.5% of respondents are aged between 25 and 34. A smaller yet significant proportion, comprising 9.4% of participants, falls within the age range of 35-44. Interestingly, there were no responses recorded for the age categories of 45-54, 55-64, or 65+, suggesting a skew towards younger age groups in the survey sample. These findings highlight the active engagement and perspectives of younger generations in discussions surrounding souk experiences in Morocco.

Figure 17: Age demographic of the research

Source: own research



✓ *Gender*

The survey results reveal a slightly higher representation of female respondents, constituting 56.3% of participants, compared to male respondents, who make up 43.8% of the sample. This distribution highlights a diverse participation in the survey, reflecting varied perspectives and experiences regarding souk visits in Morocco. Such balanced gender representation underscores the significance of considering diverse viewpoints and preferences when examining the impact of souks on tourism.

Figure 18: Gender demographic of the research

Source: own research

Gender:



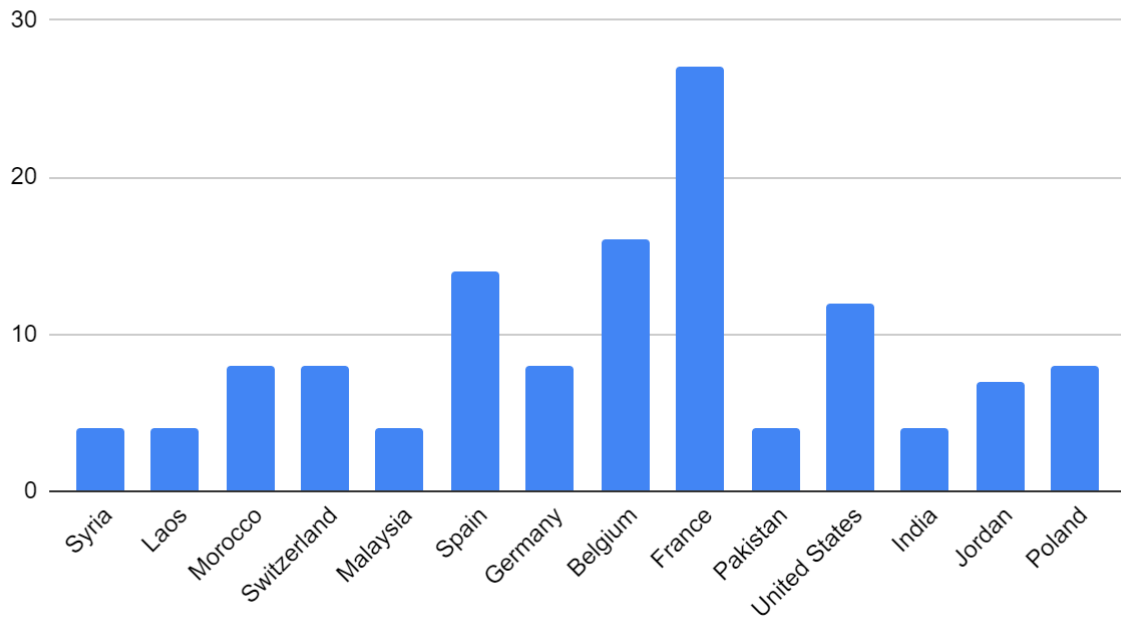
✓ *Country of origin:*

The survey data indicates a diverse range of respondents originating from different countries. Most of the respondents' hail from France, constituting 21.1% of participants, followed by Spain at 10.9%, Belgium at 12.5%, and the United States at 9.4%. Other countries represented include Germany, Morocco, Poland, and Switzerland, each contributing 6.3% of participants. Additionally, Jordan accounts for 5.5% of respondents, while India, Laos, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Syria each represent 3.1% of the sample. This distribution underscores the international interest and engagement in discussions about souk experiences in Morocco, reflecting a varied cultural perspective and providing a rich tapestry of insights into the topic.

Figure 19: Nationality demographic of the research

Source: own research

Country of origin:



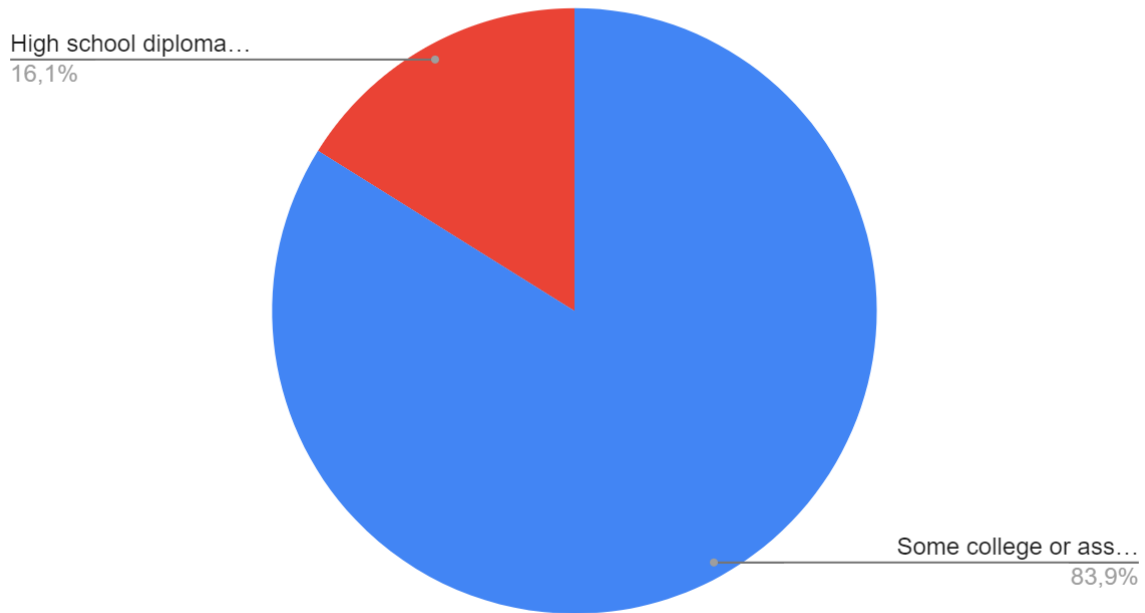
✓ *Educational level:*

The survey data reveals a notable predominance of higher education among participants, with 83.9% of respondents holding college or associate degrees, including Bachelor's and master's qualifications. In contrast, 16.1% of participants have completed a high school diploma or its equivalent. This distribution underscores the high level of educational attainment within the survey sample, indicating a well-educated cohort with a strong foundation of academic qualifications. Such a demographic composition suggests a potentially informed and analytical perspective among respondents when providing insights into souk experiences in Morocco.

Figure 20: Educational demographic of the research

Source: own research

Educational level:



4.3 Summary of data

The qualitative methodology employed in this study has yielded valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of visitors to Moroccan souks. Through open-ended questions and responses, participants have shared their perspectives on various aspects of souk tourism, ranging from the ambiance and authenticity to the challenges and recommendations for improvement.

Overall, respondents expressed appreciation for the vibrant atmosphere, cultural richness, and diverse offerings of Moroccan souks. They highlighted the sensory experiences, including the sights, sounds, and smells, that contribute to the unique charm of these marketplaces. Additionally, interactions with locals and the opportunity to immerse oneself in Moroccan culture were commonly cited as enriching aspects of souk visits.

However, challenges such as overcrowding, pricing issues, and concerns about safety and cleanliness were also noted by participants. Suggestions for improvement included measures to enhance organization, regulate pricing, and improve cleanliness, as well as providing guidance for navigating the souks and ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors.

These qualitative findings provide valuable context and depth to complement the quantitative data collected in the survey. Together, they offer a nuanced understanding of the role of souks in Moroccan tourism and highlight opportunities for enhancing the visitor experience. Moving forward, these insights will inform further analysis and recommendations to support the sustainable development and promotion of souk tourism in Morocco.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and proposals

5.1 Conclusion

In this chapter, this study has meticulously examined the multifaceted role of souks within Moroccan tourism. Through a meticulous exploration encompassing their historical evolution, economic impact, and socio-cultural significance, I have garnered invaluable insights into the essence of these vibrant marketplaces.

The significance of souks emerges as a cornerstone of Moroccan culture and commerce, acting as vibrant nodes within local communities. Beyond merely serving as economic centres, souks hold profound cultural value, serving as custodians of Morocco's rich heritage and traditions. They epitomize the country's cultural identity, preserving artisanal craftsmanship, and facilitating intergenerational exchanges of knowledge and skills.

My examination of visitor perceptions and experiences reveals a nuanced tapestry of positive sentiments. Through both qualitative narratives and quantitative data analysis, I discern a shared appreciation for the authenticity and cultural immersion offered by souks. Despite confronting challenges such as overcrowding and pricing disparities, visitors are enamoured by the sensory delights and cultural encounters afforded by these bustling marketplaces.

However, amidst the vibrancy lies a spectrum of challenges and opportunities. Overcrowding, pricing transparency, and cleanliness concerns emerge as prominent obstacles, necessitating strategic interventions. Yet, these challenges also serve as catalysts for innovation and improvement. Implementing crowd management strategies, enhancing cleanliness protocols, and fostering sustainable practices emerge as pathways toward optimizing the souk experience.

In essence, this study underscores the enduring significance of souks within Moroccan tourism. Beyond their economic contributions, souks embody the soul of Moroccan culture, fostering cultural exchange and enriching the tourism landscape. As stewards of this cultural legacy, it is imperative to address the challenges while seizing the opportunities presented. By doing so, souks can continue to thrive as dynamic hubs of cultural expression and economic vitality within Morocco's tourism ecosystem.

5.2 Answering the Research Questions

This section addresses the research questions outlined at the beginning of the thesis:

RQ1: Economic, Social, and Cultural Impacts of Souks on Moroccan Communities

Findings indicate that souks play a multifaceted role in Moroccan communities, contributing significantly to the economy through the generation of income and employment opportunities. Socially, souks serve as vibrant gathering spaces, fostering community cohesion and cultural exchange. Culturally, they are repositories of tradition and heritage, preserving and promoting Morocco's rich cultural identity.

RQ2: Contribution of Souks to the Moroccan Tourism Experience

The study reveals that souks are integral to the Moroccan tourism experience, offering visitors immersive encounters with the country's culture, cuisine, and craftsmanship. Their authenticity and authenticity serve as major attractions for tourists seeking unique and memorable experiences.

RQ3: Challenges and Opportunities Facing Souks in Tourism Development

Despite their importance, souks face various challenges, including overcrowding, commercialization, and infrastructure deficiencies. However, there are also opportunities for sustainable tourism development, such as the integration of responsible tourism practices and community involvement, which can enhance the resilience and long-term viability of souks in the tourism industry.

5.3 Testing the Hypotheses

This section provides evidence supporting the hypotheses formulated in the study:

H1: Social and Cultural Significance of Souks in Moroccan Communities

The analysis confirms that the social and cultural significance of souks positively influences tourist behaviour and preferences. Visitors are drawn to the authentic experiences offered by souks, leading to increased engagement with local culture and traditions.

H2: Souks as Key Drivers of Tourism Development in Morocco

Empirical evidence supports the hypothesis that souks act as crucial drivers of tourism development in Morocco. Their appeal to both domestic and international visitors contribute significantly to the country's tourism revenue and GDP.

H3: Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism Development

Despite challenges, souks present opportunities for sustainable tourism development. By adopting responsible tourism practices and fostering community engagement, souks can enhance their long-term viability and resilience in the tourism industry.

5.4 Recommendations

Building upon the conclusions, I propose a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the role of souks in Moroccan tourism and addressing the identified challenges:

5.4.1 Enhancing Visitor Experience:

Implement Crowd Management Measures: Introduce crowd control measures to alleviate congestion during peak periods, enhancing visitor comfort and safety within souks.

Introduce Pricing Regulations: Establish transparent pricing guidelines to ensure fairness and transparency for both visitors and vendors, thereby fostering trust and enhancing the overall shopping experience.

Enhance Cleanliness and Sanitation Standards: Implement regular maintenance routines and waste management initiatives to enhance cleanliness and sanitation within souk premises, creating a more pleasant and hygienic environment for visitors.

5.4.2 Cultural Preservation and Promotion:

Support Local Artisans and Craftsmen: Create platforms and initiatives that support and showcase the work of local artisans and traditional craftsmen, thereby preserving and promoting Moroccan cultural heritage.

Offer Cultural Education Programs: Develop educational programs and guided tours that offer insights into Moroccan heritage and traditions, enriching visitors' experiences and fostering a deeper appreciation for local culture.

Encourage Authentic Product Sales: Promote the production and sale of authentic, locally made products within souks, preserving cultural authenticity and supporting local economies.

5.4.3 Marketing and Promotion:

Develop Targeted Marketing Campaigns: Design marketing campaigns targeting diverse visitor segments, highlighting the unique experiences offered by souks and showcasing their cultural significance.

Leverage Digital Channels: Utilize digital marketing channels and social media platforms to reach potential tourists globally, effectively promoting souk experiences and attracting visitors from around the world.

Collaborate with Tourism Operators: Forge partnerships with travel agencies and tour operators to incorporate souk visits into tourism packages, enhancing the visibility and accessibility of souks to tourists.

5.4.4 Community Engagement and Empowerment:

Engage Local Communities: Involve local communities in decision-making processes related to souk development and management, ensuring their voices are heard and fostering a sense of ownership and pride.

Provide Training and Capacity-Building: Offer training programs and capacity-building initiatives to empower local entrepreneurs and businesses, equipping them with the skills and resources needed to thrive within the tourism sector.

Foster Partnerships for Inclusive Growth: Collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders to address socio-economic challenges and promote inclusive growth, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably among all members of the community.

5.4.5 Sustainability Practices:

Implement Eco-Friendly Initiatives: Introduce eco-friendly practices such as waste recycling, water conservation, and energy efficiency within souks, minimizing their environmental footprint and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Raise Awareness: Educate vendors and visitors about the importance of responsible tourism and environmental conservation, encouraging them to adopt sustainable behaviours and practices.

Support Sustainable Initiatives: Provide support and resources to initiatives that promote sustainable practices within souks and their surrounding environments, contributing to their long-term preservation and sustainability.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders in the Moroccan tourism industry can harness the full potential of souks as cultural assets, while ensuring their sustainable development and contribution to the overall tourism experience. These initiatives aim to not only enhance the visitor experience but also to preserve and promote Morocco's rich cultural heritage for generations to come.

Chapter 6: Summary

In this final chapter, I consolidate the insights garnered from my investigation into the role of souks in Moroccan tourism. I distil the essence of my findings, delineating the historical significance, socio-economic impacts, tourist experiences, challenges, recommendations, and avenues for future research.

Historical Significance and Cultural Heritage: The comprehensive study delved into the historical evolution of souks, unearthing their profound ties to Moroccan culture and heritage. Spanning centuries, these bustling marketplaces have served as epicentres of trade, cultural exchange, and communal gatherings. Through the ages, souks have functioned as veritable repositories of tradition, preserving artisanal craftsmanship, indigenous practices, and local customs. Their enduring presence embodies the rich tapestry of Moroccan heritage, encapsulating the essence of the nation's identity and collective memory.

Economic and Socio-Cultural Impacts: The rigorous analysis unveiled the multifaceted impacts of souks on Moroccan communities. Beyond their economic significance as engines of commerce and livelihoods for local artisans, souks play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion and community resilience. By providing platforms for interpersonal interaction, cultural exchange, and shared experiences, souks contribute to the fabric of social life, forging bonds among diverse societal strata. Moreover, souks serve as catalysts for cultural preservation, safeguarding traditional practices, indigenous knowledge, and intangible cultural heritage from the encroachments of globalization.

Tourism Experience and Visitor Perceptions: Central to the inquiry was an exploration of the tourism experience within Moroccan souks. Visitors, drawn by the allure of exoticism, authenticity, and sensory immersion, flock to these vibrant marketplaces in search of cultural encounters and memorable experiences. Their perceptions of souks are overwhelmingly positive, underscored by sentiments of awe, fascination, and delight. The kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, and scents, coupled with the warmth of hospitality and the allure of novelty, leaves an indelible imprint on visitors' memories, enriching their travel experiences and fostering cultural understanding.

Challenges and Opportunities: Despite their undeniable allure, souks grapple with a myriad of challenges that threaten their sustainability and resilience. Overcrowding, congestion, and inadequate infrastructure detract from the visitor experience, impeding mobility and exacerbating safety concerns. Pricing disparities, lack of transparency, and instances of price gouging undermine trust and consumer confidence, tarnishing the reputation of souks as authentic marketplaces. Furthermore, cleanliness issues and environmental degradation pose significant challenges, compromising the aesthetic appeal and hygiene standards of souks. However, within these challenges lie opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and transformative change. Strategic interventions aimed at enhancing infrastructure, crowd management, pricing transparency, and environmental stewardship can mitigate these challenges while unlocking new avenues for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Recommendations for Action: Drawing upon the findings, I proffer a suite of recommendations to optimize the role of souks in Moroccan tourism. These encompass a spectrum of interventions spanning infrastructure enhancement, regulatory reforms, community engagement, marketing strategies, and sustainability initiatives. By fostering collaborative

partnerships, leveraging digital technologies, and empowering local stakeholders, these recommendations seek to enhance visitor experiences, preserve cultural authenticity, and promote sustainable tourism practices within souks.

Future Directions: The study sets the stage for future research endeavours, beckoning scholars to delve deeper into the complexities of souks' influence on Moroccan tourism. Areas ripe for exploration include the integration of digital innovations, the dynamics of globalization on souk economies, the socio-cultural implications of tourism development, and the intersectionality of sustainability and cultural heritage preservation. By embarking on interdisciplinary inquiries and longitudinal studies, researchers can unravel the intricate nuances of souks' role in shaping contemporary tourism landscapes, informing policy decisions, and fostering inclusive development.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the study illuminates the enduring significance of souks within Moroccan tourism. As cultural bastions, economic engines, and social catalysts, souks embody the quintessence of Moroccan identity, offering visitors a window into the nation's rich tapestry of traditions, customs, and heritage. By embracing the recommendations and charting a path toward sustainable development, stakeholders can ensure that souks continue to thrive as iconic symbols of Moroccan culture, captivating travellers from around the globe. Through sustained dialogue, collaboration, and collective action, we can safeguard the legacy of souks for generations to come, preserving their timeless allure and cultural resonance in an ever-evolving tourism landscape.

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The questionnaire:

The Role of Souks in Moroccan Tourism

B *I* U [↔](#) ~~X~~

I'm Sana Ahattouche, a graduate student at the Hungarian University of Agricultural and Life Sciences, embarking on my diploma thesis. I'm exploring the pivotal role of souks in Moroccan tourism. If you've visited Morocco, especially its marketplaces, your insights are invaluable to my research.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire and sharing your experiences.

How many times have you visited Morocco? *

- ☐ once
- ☐ 2-3 times
- ☐ I often visit Morocco

When was your most recent visit to Morocco?

- ☐ 2023
- ☐ 2022
- ☐ 2021
- ☐ 2020 or earlier

How long was your most recent visit to Morocco? *

- ☐ 1-2 days
- ☐ Less than 1 week
- ☐ 1-2 weeks
- ☐ 3-4 weeks
- ☐ Autre...

What cities or towns did you visit in Morocco? *

Réponse courte



What was the primary purpose of your most recent visit to Morocco? *

- ☐ Leisure travel
- ☐ Business travel
- ☐ Autre...

What type of accommodation have you booked?

- ☐ Hotel
- ☐ Bed and Breakfast
- ☐ Autre...

Have you ever visited a souk in Morocco? *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes



How many souks have you visited in Morocco? *

- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-4
- ☐ More than 5

Which souks did you visit? Please name some of souks.

Réponse courte



What did you purchase at the souks? *

- ☐ Food
- ☐ Clothes
- ☐ Textiles
- ☐ Jewellery
- ☐ Souvenirs
- ☐ Folk art objects
- ☐ Works of fine art
- ☐ Autre...

How would you rate your overall experience in the souks? *

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

What did you enjoy most about the souks? *

Réponse longue

What did you least enjoy about the souks? *

Réponse longue

How would you rate the authenticity of the souks? *

- ☐ Very authentic
- ☐ Somewhat authentic
- ☐ Not very authentic
- ☐ Not authentic at all

How would you rate the cleanliness of the souks? *

- ☐ Very clean
- ☐ Somewhat clean
- ☐ Not very clean
- ☐ Not clean at all

How would you rate the safety of the souks? *

- ☐ Very safe
- ☐ Somewhat safe
- ☐ Not very safe
- ☐ Not safe at all

How would you rate the overall value for money of the souks? *

- ☐ Excellent value for money
- ☐ Very good value for money
- ☐ Good value for money
- ☐ Fair value for money
- ☐ Poor value for money



Would you recommend visiting souks to other travellers? *

- ☐ Definitely
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not

What could be done to improve the experience of visiting souks? *

Réponse longue



Age:

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ +55



Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female



Country of origin: *

Réponse courte

Educational level:

- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ High school diploma or equivalent
- ☐ Some college or associate's degree (Bachelor/Master)

Statement on consultation practices

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As a supervisor of SANA AHATTOUCHE (Student's name) BWB0UB (Student's NEPTUN ID), I here declare that the master's thesis has been reviewed by me, the student was informed about the requirements of literary sources management and its legal and ethical rules.

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Year of publication: 2024
Department: Tourism Management

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