

Terms and References

UN Tourism Morocco Startup Competition: Digitalization, Gaming, Gastronomy

Country of Execution: National - Morocco

Title of the Project: UN Tourism National Startup Competition: Digitalization of the Tourism Services, Gaming-Leisure, Moroccan Gastronomy.

1.) Introduction and Background:

UN TOURISM and the Moroccan Agency of Tourism Development Société Marocaine d'Ingénierie Touristique (SMIT), are joining forces in this national startup competition to source the most innovative business models the digitalization of tourism services, gaming-leisure and in Moroccan gastronomy

Morocco offers the ideal balance of dynamic landscapes, colourful architecture, and vibrant cities. These cities and regions increasingly need to generate new experiences for their inhabitants and for the tourists they receive annually while preserving their natural and cultural heritage.

This competition will source entrepreneurs that can offer new experiences and solutions for tourists in a more sustainable way. The call will identify and support those that contribute to the digitalization of tourism services, the development of innovative leisure activities involving the creation of gaming experiences and the preservation and valorisation of Moroccan gastronomy.

Morocco's tourism sector has further solidified its role as a key economic driver, contributing approximately 7 % of GDP in 2024. The country welcomed a record 17.4 million international tourists—20 % more than in 2023 and 35 % above 2019 levels— making it the most-visited country in all of Africa.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, in 2024 tourism in Morocco generated about 112 billion dirhams (roughly USD 11 billion) in revenue, marking a 7 % increase over the previous year.

By promoting connections among the actors that form part of the tourism entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem, UN TOURISM aims to generate employment and business opportunities to support Moroccan tourism.

2.) The Competition:

UN TOURISM proposes the launch of a competition designed to identify startups in Morocco. This Competition will culminate in a high-profile final Pitch, known as the "Tourism Tech Adventures (TTA)."

The overarching goal is to collaboratively source, nurture, and support startups in Morocco at the forefront of Digitalization of the Tourism Services, Gaming-Leisure and Gastronomy

Four months before the event there will be a launch of a call for Moroccan startups in these fields. Entrepreneurs who apply will be evaluated by a defined committee, following the successful methodology applied in UN Tourism's Innovation programs.

For these categories, standout initiatives that meet the required characteristics and excel in their potential will be selected. These initiatives will have the opportunity to pitch their ideas at the UN TOURISM Tech Adventures innovation forum.

3.) Conditions for Participation:

The business must offer an innovative solution and be legally based in Morocco, and whose representatives have not been convicted by a final judgement for intentional crimes, with a penalty of six months or more, insofar as the criminal responsibility has not expired. In addition, the competition will require the following requirements to participate:

- The projects must in at least one the categories of the competition: Digitalization of Tourism Services, Gaming-Leisure, Moroccan gastronomy.
- Be innovative/disruptive in nature providing value-added solutions.
- Be sustainable driven.
- Harnessing the impact of new technologies.
- Have a tested pilot and a viable business plan.
- Be in Seed Stage or Early Stage (have a minimum viable product or an idea that is ready to be developed and funded).
- Be scalable: to have potential for international growth and potential to be applied in corporations and destinations (countries, regions).
- Entrepreneur/promoter team: Suitability of the promoter team, motivation, and interest. Emphasize the promotion of gender equity, digitalization, environmental preservation, local communities, and youth leadership.
- The projects must be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations and preferably also allow for an introduction or adaptation of digital and technological elements.

4.) Requirements:

4.1 Categories:

The applicant startups should belong to at least one of the following categories:

1. Digitalization of the Tourism Services:

Digitalization is transforming every aspect of the tourism value chain, from how travellers discover and book experiences to how local businesses operate and deliver services.

In Morocco, the adoption of digital tools offers significant potential to increase competitiveness, improve visitor satisfaction, and empower small tourism providers. Through mobile apps, digital payment systems, AI-driven recommendations, and virtual assistants, AR/VR based apps, tourists can navigate Morocco more efficiently while gaining deeper insights into local culture.

For rural or lesser-known destinations, digitalization helps unlock visibility and market access. For tour guides, artisans, and hospitality providers, it enables streamlined operations and direct customer engagement

Furthermore, the use of data analytics and digital feedback loops can help improve quality of service and

sustainability practices.

As digital transformation accelerates, inclusive and accessible solutions are key to ensuring that the benefits reach all regions and communities.

In this category, we are looking for startups offering digital solutions that enhance tourism services or activities, including booking, guiding, logistics, communication, and overall visitor experience.

2. Gaming-Leisure:

The convergence of gaming and leisure is reshaping how travellers engage with destinations, turning tourism into a more interactive, personalized, and entertaining experience. Gaming, both in its entertainment and educational forms, is an emerging but highly promising vertical, particularly for engaging younger generations and digital travellers, seeking active, playful and meaningful interactions.

With its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and vibrant cities, Morocco provides fertile ground for immersive storytelling and gamified experiences.

The integration of gamification, AR/VR, and interactive storytelling into travel and leisure experiences opens significant new avenues. Virtual treasure hunts in the medinas, mobile apps that guide tourists through historical sites using game mechanics, or digital Competitions that connect gastronomy with local culture are examples of how gaming can enhance exploration and learning.

By fostering partnerships between the tourism and gaming sectors, Morocco has the potential to pioneer a new kind of visitor engagement that is immersive, inclusive, and future facing.

In this vertical we are looking for Startups using gamification, AR/VR, or interactive storytelling to promote leisure activities in Morocco in engaging and immersive ways.

3. Moroccan Gastronomy:

Gastronomy is a cornerstone of Morocco's cultural identity and a powerful driver of tourism. Moroccan cuisine offers a rich sensory journey that attracts millions of tourists every year.

Gastronomic tourism also supports rural economies, especially where culinary traditions are preserved through generations. Women-led cooperatives producing argan oil or saffron exemplify how local gastronomy intersects with empowerment and sustainability.

The preservation and enhancement of Morocco's culinary heritage can serve as a bridge between tradition and innovation. As tourists seek more authentic, local, and sustainable experiences, Morocco's gastronomy provides a compelling offer that enhances its global tourism appeal while reinforcing national identity and regional pride.

Our Mission is to identify Competitions and projects with innovations that can transform the Gastronomy Tourism sector in Morocco.

In this category, we are looking for solutions offering tech-enabled culinary experiences, local food tourism platforms, or solutions that promote and preserve traditional Moroccan cuisine and agri-products, amongst other innovative solutions in the Gastronomy sector.

4.2. Key Requirements

The initiatives submitted to the Competition will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Proven Innovation: Deployment of solutions that showcase technological advancements relevant to tourism.

- Scalability: The ability to scale the solution in the market and potentially internationally.
- Sustainability and SDG Alignment: Demonstrated commitment to sustainability the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Market Readiness and Customer Fit: Evidence of customer demand, market fit, and readiness for real-world implementation.
- Financial Stability: Robust financial backing and a solid business model to support long-term growth.
- Innovation Ecosystem Engagement: Participation in multi-stakeholder collaborations to ensure broader adoption and integration within the tourism sector.

Standout initiatives that meet the criteria below will be invited to pitch their solutions at the "UN Tourism Tech Adventure" (TTA), providing a unique opportunity to present to a multidisciplinary high-level audience.

4.3 Purpose

- Encourage the development of cutting-edge of the tourism sector through collaborative new business models and technologies, leveraging the strengths of both startups and large corporations.
- Gather representatives from tourism innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, including startups and large corporations, to share knowledge, business models, and success stories, fostering a collaborative environment for mutual growth and innovation.
- Stimulate synergies between public sector entities, startups, academia, corporations, investors, and accelerators.

4.4. Exclusion from participation

Participants who initially or at any moment during the competition fail to comply with any of the requirements established in these terms and conditions shall be excluded from said competition and from any potential service or prize they would have received through their participation.

Employees of UN TOURISM may not participate. Minors are excluded from participating in the competition.

UN TOURISM shall not be liable for any false, inaccurate, obsolete, incomplete or erroneous data submitted by the participants. In such cases, the participant shall be automatically excluded from the Competition and lose the right to the enjoyment of the prize.

UN Tourism reserves the right of accepting or removing from the competition, without prior notice, any participants who, in their opinion, act fraudulently, in an abusive manner, or in a manner contrary to the spirit of the competition, the principles of the United Nations or the law, third-party rights and/or good faith. Likewise, any participant or related person whose action may be contrary to the reputation or good name of UN Tourism may be removed from the competition. None of the abovementioned actions shall entitle any potential or excluded participants to make claims against UN TOURISM for any damages, expenses incurred, or otherwise.

5.) Application Process

Startups which comply with all the requirements described in section 4 "requirements" can apply to this Competition by selecting one of the categories of section 4.1 above.

Although projects commonly contribute to more than one objective, the category in which the positive impact is expected to be stronger should be selected. To become a Participant, applicants shall complete the Online registration form available on the website.

Applicants shall complete in English or French all required fields requested in the form. The data that participants provide when registering in the program must be true, and therefore any participants whose data is incorrect, or incomplete shall lose any option to participate in the program and to receive any service.

UN TOURISM will use the contact information provided through the online registration to contact participants. UN TOURISM will not be responsible for incomplete or incorrect contact information.

6.) Schedule:

October - November 2025:

Launch of Call for Applications: Announcement and opening of the application process for the startup competition.

November - December 2025:

Promotion and Outreach: Active promotion of the Competition through various channels to attract high-potential startups.

January:

Application Submission Deadline: Closing date for startups to submit their applications.

January – February 2025:

Initial Screening: Review and screening of all submitted applications to shortlist high-potential startups together with the partners.

Announcement of Shortlisted Startups: Public announcement of the startups that have been shortlisted for the next round.

February 2026:

Acceleration and Mentorship to the finalists by experts in the Field.

Mid-February – March (tbc):

Event Tourism Tech Adventures Morocco.

7.) Selection Process and Criteria

7.1. A panel of experts from UN TOURISM and the partners of the Competition will evaluate the proposals based on the below criteria.

Each criterion is scored from 1 to 4 with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest:

- Innovation and creativity of the product/service: originality, disruptiveness
- Viability of the business model
- Maturity of the solution: proven business model
- Scalability and Internationalization of the solution
- Team composition, maturity of the team and diversity of the team
- The solution presents digital components
- Social and environmental impact of the solution. Alignment with SDGs

7.2. Based on the above-mentioned criteria, initial screening and filtering of all applying entities will be carried out by UN TOURISM and its partners.

7.3. An Expert Committee will be appointed by UN TOURISM. It will be composed of an international network of allies. The Committee will evaluate the filtered projects per category and will carry out the selection of each winner. Decisions made by the Committee are final.

7.4 The evaluation process is strictly based on the specific project, not on other initiatives developed by the participants or their previous background. If the evaluation of the specific project reveals irregularities, the application will be disqualified.

8.) Benefits

Benefits will include:

- Global visibility for their project and connection with investors.
- Possibility to present solutions at the UN Tourism Tech Adventures.
- Become part of the UN Tourism Innovation Network.
- Access scholarships from the UN Tourism Online Academy.
- Mentorships and support by UN Tourism and its top-tier partners.

9.) Industrial and Intellectual Property and Personal Data Protection

In case the processing of personal data is required due to the development of the Program, the organizers of this Program assume the following commitments:

- To use the data provided only for the purpose of the call.
- To ensure that authorized persons for processing personal data (UN TOURISM) will commit to respecting confidentiality and that the data will not be shared with third parties without the participants' authorization.
- To take all necessary measures to offer an appropriate level of security to the risks that may arise from processing personal data, ensuring their security and integrity, as well as preventing their alteration, loss, accidental or unlawful destruction, processing, disclosure, or unauthorized access.

UN Tourism and any other data processor will follow the protection obligations established by applicable regulations. The participant may exercise their rights of access, rectification, cancellation, and opposition by sending a postal mail to the Organizer's address provided in the header of these Terms and Conditions or by sending an email to comm@untourism.int to contact the Organizer, indicating the right they wish to exercise and attaching a copy of their Passport, National Identity Document (DNI), or equivalent documentation.

- The participant expressly consents, solely by participating in the Program presented here, that UN TOURISM may use their name for the purpose of announcing the winning project to the other participants, without any remuneration in their favor.

When submitting applications, project promoters guarantee that:

- The projects are original to their authors and/or they have free disposal or ownership over them. Participants agree to indemnify and hold the organizers harmless against any legal actions, claims, or demands regarding intellectual property rights or personal data of third parties related to the projects they present.
- If the projects result from the collaboration of several participants, the project will be treated as a collaborative work, with the resulting rights belonging to all of them as co-authors.

- The participant authorizes UN TOURISM to upload the project summaries to their respective official websites and agrees that website visitors will have access to such information according to the website's terms of use.
- The participant authorizes UN TOURISM to use the name and title of their project, with no time limit, to be mentioned on the website or for any actions or events related in any way to UN TOURISM, as well as for inclusion in UN TOURISM's historical records and various media linked to the program.
- UN TOURISM will not claim any ownership of the information provided or any industrial or intellectual property it may contain. The participant does not assign any industrial or intellectual property rights derived from the projects to UN TOURISM.
- The participant expressly authorizes UN TOURISM to use their data to provide information about events and activities that may be of interest.
- Participants accept the transfer of their data to UN TOURISM after the competition ends.

10.) Final Considerations

This Program may be modified, interrupted, and/or cancelled if justified circumstances require it. Likewise, UN TOURISM reserves the right to declare all or some of the benefits void if no project meets the expected quality according to the decision team's criteria. UN TOURISM is not responsible for any deficiencies in the platform or problems related to computers, networks, or any other cause that may result in the loss, damage, or delay of entries.

11.) Applicable Law and Dispute Resolution

These Terms and Conditions will be interpreted in accordance with the general principles of international law, excluding any specific national law.

Nothing within these Terms and Conditions or related to them shall be understood as a waiver of UN Tourism's prerogatives and immunities.

12.) Use of Name, Emblem, and Logo

Participants will not use in any way the name, emblem, or official seal of UN Tourism or the United Nations, or any abbreviation of the name of UN Tourism or the United Nations, in relation to their businesses or any other domain, without prior written authorization from UN Tourism. Under no circumstances will authorization be granted to use the name, emblem, or official seal of UN Tourism or the United Nations, or any abbreviation of their names, for commercial purposes. This obligation does not end with the termination of the Competition.

13.) Indemnity and Limitation of Liability

UN Tourism will not be responsible under any circumstances for loss, direct, indirect, or accidental damage, liability, or expense incurred or suffered by the participant and alleged to be a consequence of the Competition or related to it.

Participants agree to indemnify UN Tourism and hold it harmless from any legal responsibility, claims, losses, damages, and expenses that may arise, directly or indirectly, as a result of this Competition or in relation to it, including but not limited to any infringement of intellectual property rights or other rights of third parties related to the submitted projects.

14.) Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

Participation in the Competition implies full acceptance of these Terms and Conditions. The failure to accept any part of these Terms and Conditions will result in non-participation in the Competition, and if selected and/or awarded, automatic renunciation of recognition.