

The Challenge of Renewing Djerba as a Destination in the Age of Sustainable Development and Digital Technology

Over time, tourism has changed its relationship with the island of Djerba. At the start of its development, tourism to this island in south-east Tunisia was more territorial than the mass beach tourism of today, which is concentrated in the eastern coastal area of the island. This has had consequences for the destination itself, which has shown little resilience in the face of crises (Hellal, 2021), and has been responsible for the permanent closure of several hotels in Djerba, which are signs of the end of the tourism cycle (Butler, 1980). So, after the upheaval of the island's economic system under the crushing weight of tourism, the latter is now tending to renew itself in order to survive. This is reflected in the attempt to upgrade the existing tourism product by diversifying it and renewing the image of the island, which is overflowing with heritage assets. With a view to developing tourism in Djerba on a regional basis, local stakeholders are being encouraged to develop events and to promote the island's cultural assets as a way of enhancing its appeal. In the age of digital technology and m-tourism, mobile applications are helping to develop a form of tourism that is more local and more sustainable. By way of problem, we ask here: how can Djerba's tourism system, which is reputed to be a mass tourism destination, meet the challenge of renewing its image in the age of sustainable development and digital technology? To answer this question, we use direct observations in the field, supported by official statistics on the development of tourism in Djerba and webgraphic research, which are compared with theory and literature.

Keywords: *Djerba, tourism, image, renewal, sustainable and digital development*

Introduction

Djerba has been an established tourist destination since the 1960s. It has benefited from its island location and rather rural lifestyle to forge its own specific image: 'Djerba la douce'. However, it has also fallen victim to the development of mass tourism, which has had a detrimental effect, particularly on the environment: erosion of the coastline, pollution from solid waste, depletion of water resources, and so on. This has had consequences for the destination itself, which has shown little resilience in the face of crises, and has been responsible for the permanent closure of several hotels, which are signs of the end of the tourism cycle (Butler, 1980) in Djerba. So, after the upheaval of the island's economic system under the crushing weight of tourism, the latter is now tending to renew itself in order to survive. This is reflected in the attempt to regenerate the existing tourist activity by diversifying it and renewing the image of the island, which is overflowing with heritage assets.

What's more, today's 'tourism experience' can only be envisaged through encounters with the societies and individuals who evolve in the environments

1 visited and who become objects of discovery. This approach to deploying
 2 inclusive tourism makes it possible to envisage territorial development processes
 3 based on the income generated by more carefully thought-out and organised
 4 tourist consumption (Blamey, 2001, quoted by Dehoorne 2011). In this context
 5 of the ‘re-territorialisation’ of tourism in Djerba (Binkhorst, E., & Den Dekker,
 6 T. (2009) ; Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A. (2012)), local stakeholders
 7 have the opportunity to develop events and brand the island’s cultural assets to
 8 enhance its appeal. In the age of digital technology and m-tourism, mobile
 9 applications are helping to develop a form of tourism that is more local and more
 10 sustainable.

11 The tourism system (Hellal M. 2020, Knafou, R., & Fournier, C., 2023) of
 12 Djerba, recognised as a mass tourism destination, faces the challenge of
 13 renewing its image in the context of sustainable development and digital
 14 transformation. Thus, the central question of this article is: how does Djerba’s
 15 tourism system, which is reputed to be a mass tourism destination, meet the
 16 challenge of renewing its image in the era of sustainable development and digital
 17 transformation? To answer this question, we use direct observations in the field,
 18 supported by official statistics on the development of tourism in Djerba and
 19 webgraphic research, all of which are compared with theories in the literature.

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22 **Djerba: A Mass Tourism Destination at the End of the Cycle**

23

24 Over time, tourism has changed its relationship with the island of Djerba.
 25 At the start of its development, tourism to this island in south-east Tunisia was
 26 more territorial than the mass seaside tourism of today, which is concentrated in
 27 the coastal area around the commune of Midoun, and which turns its back on the
 28 island’s built-up areas.

29 Kassah and Bourgou (2008) consider foundouks to be the first tourist
 30 establishments in Djerba. These establishments were designed to accommodate
 31 foreigners passing through, whatever their reason for coming to Djerba:
 32 merchants, civil servants, craftsmen, fishermen, missionaries and others. These
 33 foundouks, of which there were around twenty, are concentrated in the main
 34 town of Djerba: Houmet Essouk. These are traditional 2-storey structures with a
 35 patio serving as an inn for travellers, a shop for goods and a stable for draught
 36 animals.

37 The location of these fondouks in the old urban centre, Houmet Essouk,
 38 reflected its multiple functions as the ‘capital of the island’, fishing port and
 39 commercial centre for the whole island. In modern times, urban development
 40 was gradually grafted onto this ancient core, before the socio-economic system
 41 was turned upside down by the development of mass tourism.

42 The first modern hotel dates back to the early 1930s. It had just 25 rooms
 43 and was paradoxically called ‘the Grand Hotel’. The arrival on the scene of an
 44 international tourism player was to give a new impetus to tourism and give it its
 45 current character of seaside tourism geared towards a large clientele. This was
 46 Club Méditerranée, which set up a holiday village in Djerba in 1954. This club

1 represented the start of international mass tourism on the island. Since then,
2 tourism in Djerba has developed as an extroverted sector geared towards
3 satisfying the needs and expectations of a European clientele. The main
4 attractions that fascinated this European clientele at the time were the oasis
5 landscape, the fine sandy beaches and the peaceful lifestyle. To these resources,
6 we must add a major asset for Djerba: its island character.

7 In the early 1960s, the role of the state after independence was paramount
8 in the development and establishment of a modern infrastructure: hotels, roads,
9 drinking water supply, electricity and telephone network, sewage treatment
10 plant, airport, in addition to encouraging private investment.

11 After Club-Med, El Jazira was the result of the initiative of a tourism
12 promoter who set up a hotel on the island's eastern coastline. This unit was built
13 very close to the beach and on the edge of the dune. This was the first attack on
14 the fragile coastal ecosystem. The beach quickly deteriorated and the waves
15 attacked the hotel.

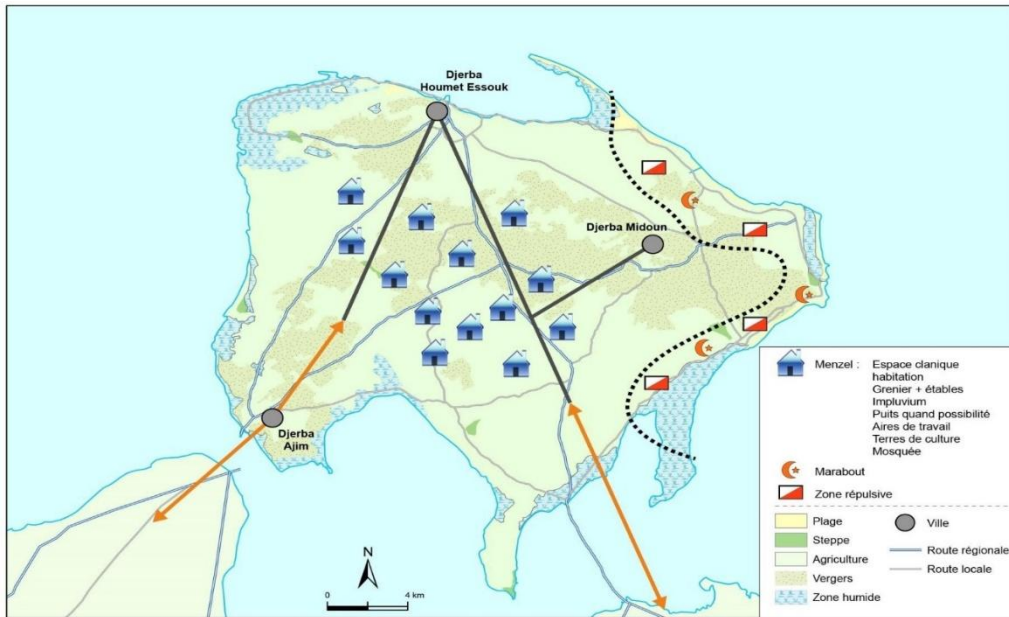
16 Since the 1960s, with the development of mass seaside tourism and the
17 emergence of Djerba as a destination, tourist accommodation has continued to
18 grow at a steady pace. In 1967, tourist accommodation capacity in the south-
19 east, including Djerba, which accounts for most of the capacity, was 3,349 beds,
20 or 18% of the accommodation capacity of the whole of Tunisia. Between 1962
21 and 1971, more than 6,000 beds were created in 20 hotels. In 1973, the island of
22 Djerba already had around 7,500 beds. Ten years later, capacity had risen to
23 8,650 beds (Kassah and Bourgou, 2008).

24 In 2003, the Jerba-Zarzis-Gabès tourist zone had a total of 49,317 beds,
25 accounting for 22% of national capacity. In 2019, the Djerba-Zarzis zone had
26 53,079 beds spread over 144 hotel establishments. During the same year, it
27 recorded 1,214,495 tourist arrivals and 7,222,833 overnight stays (ONTT, 2019).
28 In addition to hotels, Djerba also has other types of tourist establishments:
29 apartment hotels, guest houses, etc. There are also thousands of second homes
30 on the island of Djerba, especially near the coast.

31 In Djerba, the majority of hotels are located on the eastern and southern
32 coasts, which fall within the municipality of Midoun. Tourist establishments
33 occupy the entire seafront over a length of around 30 km. The entire island is
34 thus influenced by the expansion of the tourism sector. On the other hand, the
35 centre of the island is marginalised from this sector. As a result, the island's
36 territory, which is by definition fragile, is under strain and suffering irreversible
37 damage. This territorial and ecological imbalance even threatens tourism, whose
38 future depends on the quality of the surrounding environment (see Fig 1 and 2).

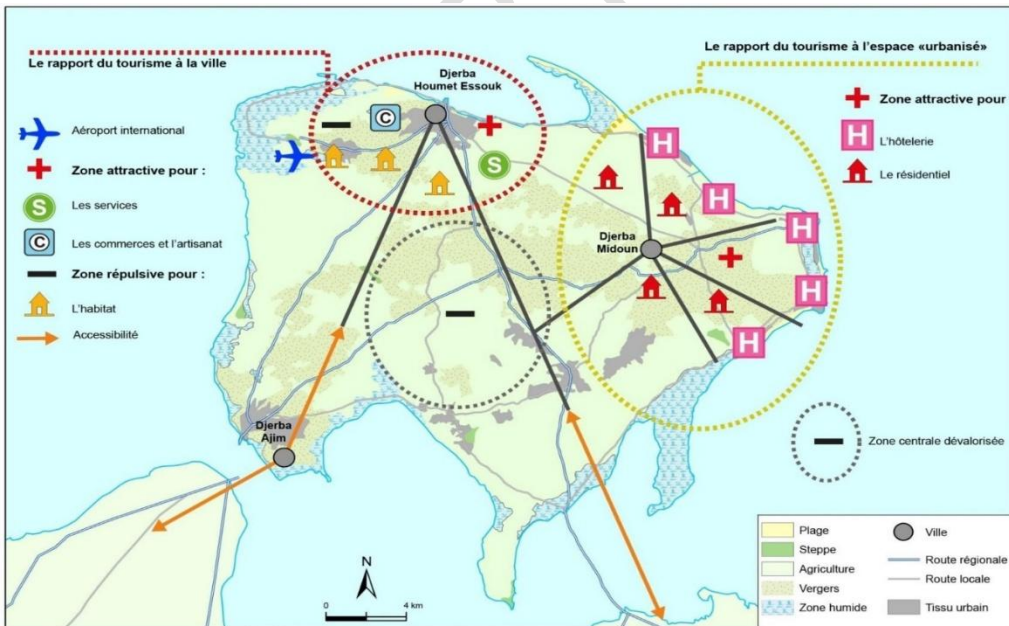
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1 **Figure 1.** *The organisation of the Djerbian territory before the development of*
 2 *mass tourism*



3 **Source:** UNEP/MAP2011, reproduced by M.HELLAL
 4

5 **Figure 2.** *The organisation of the island territory after the development of mass*
 6 *tourism*
 7



8 **Source:** PNUE /PAM2011, repris par M.HELLAL
 9

10
 11 In her doctoral thesis, Dribek A. (2013) clearly shows that human action
 12 linked to the establishment of tourist activity in Djerba, as well as the island's
 13 specific natural features, are gradually weakening the balance of the natural
 14 coastal environment. The beach at the El Jazira hotel has disappeared due to
 15 coastal erosion. Between the Sirène and Dar Midoun hotels, the beautiful

1 beaches have also begun to deteriorate. Then, at the Club Med Djerba la Fidèle,
 2 the beach has retreated significantly and outcrops are visible. However, action is
 3 being taken to deal with the damage. Most often, these involve the construction
 4 of defence works using large boulders on the foreshore or the creation of groins
 5 and riprap by the APAL (Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral -
 6 Coastal Protection and Development Agency). But as well as being unsightly,
 7 these structures sometimes pose an additional threat by exacerbating erosion.

8 In addition to the saturation of the tourist zone, the interior of the island has
 9 also suffered the effects of the expansion of the urban fabric. In addition to the
 10 urban sprawl of farmland, the high demand for building materials has led to the
 11 uncontrolled and illegal quarrying of sand and stone. Similarly, the island's
 12 territory has been invaded by uncontrolled rubbish dumps as a result of the
 13 explosion in the number of holidaymakers, tourists and secondary residents
 14 during the summer season.

15 Finally, the island of Djerba has suffered the full impact of mass beach
 16 tourism. In the new climate of sustainable development, tourism on the island is
 17 forced to renew itself if it is to survive.

18 19 20 **Attempts by local stakeholders to renew the 'Djerba destination' through** 21 **labelling and events**

22
23 The island of Djerba boasts a rich and varied architectural, archaeological
 24 and craft heritage, with the island's specific human settlement pattern centred
 25 around the menzels, the traditional rural houses (Bourgou & Kasah, 2008). These
 26 are mainly structures that have fostered traditional economic activities around
 27 underground oil mills, weaving workshops, lime kilns and potters' kilns, but
 28 above all thanks to a varied agriculture, despite an arid climate, producing unique
 29 local products such as the Djerba sweet apple, the Meski grape, the Baccour
 30 apricot tree, the Djerba fig, the "sakasli" lime, and the "Lemsi" and "Metata"
 31 dates.

32 Thanks to its coastline and position in the Gulf of Gabès, the island of Djerba
 33 benefits from a certain wealth of fishery resources, which has led to significant
 34 fishing activity, particularly through the fixed 'zrayeb' fisheries (which have
 35 nothing to envy the Cherfia of Kerkenah, a UNESCO World Heritage site),
 36 sponge fishing and octopus fishing (Tlatli, S.-E., 1967).

37 Sixty years on from the development of this one-size-fits-all economic
 38 model, the area is overexploited and the island ecosystem is under threat
 39 (Mansour L., 2017). Faced with this situation, civil society organisations such as
 40 the Association for the protection of the island of Djerba (ASSIDJE, founded in
 41 1975), and other younger organisations that emerged just after the Revolution,
 42 are raising awareness of the environmental (waste management) and heritage
 43 (preservation of vernacular architecture) issues. This mobilisation is part and
 44 parcel of citizen participation in environmental management, which has been
 45 encouraged by the climate of climatic transition since the outbreak of the
 46 Tunisian revolution on 17 December 2010.

1 Since then, Djerba has seen a number of sustainable development initiatives,
 2 such as the Djerba Smart Island. This idea, promoted by the Tunisian Smart
 3 Cities association¹, aims to boost the island's capacity to produce renewable
 4 energy, optimise waste management and facilitate land access to the island as
 5 part of an inter-communal approach.

6 Green Djerba is another societal initiative, the aim of which is to develop a
 7 strategic vision for establishing a sustainable development label for the island of
 8 Djerba. The aim is to ensure better sectoral and territorial organisation, as well
 9 as efficient mobilisation of residents and tourists. The initiative seeks to
 10 strengthen the capacities of local authorities in terms of decentralisation and
 11 local governance, by rehabilitating the brand image of the island of Djerba as a
 12 distinguished tourist destination on a national and international scale, and by
 13 ensuring greater resilience of the natural and cultural heritage in the face of
 14 environmental degradation and the risks associated with the impacts of climate
 15 change.

16
 17 **Figure 3. Logo Green Djerba**



18 Source: <https://www.green-djerba.net/>

19
 20
 21 Another initiative aimed at raising Djerba's profile is the preparation of a
 22 file for its inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List as a unique living
 23 environment. The island boasts 250 archaeological sites, including Mininx,
 24 which was originally a Phoenician trading post before becoming a prosperous
 25 city in Roman times. The built heritage of other eras (Menzel, Houch, mosques,
 26 fondouks, oil mills, etc.) also constitutes an Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)
 27 selected for Djerba's application. This approach is in line with the criteria defined
 28 by UNESCO for the recognition of World Heritage sites, which include
 29 historical, cultural and architectural significance (UNESCO, 2008).

30 Studies on heritage enhancement and its impact on local development argue
 31 that World Heritage listing can have significant effects on heritage conservation
 32 and promotion, while strengthening local identity and stimulating tourism
 33 (Labadi, 2013; Ashworth, 1994). Indeed, the inscription of sites on the World
 34 Heritage List is often associated with an increase in international visibility and
 35 economic and social benefits for local communities (Fyall & Rakic, 2006).

36 The preparation of Djerba's nomination dossier also involves close
 37 collaboration with local communities and authorities, an approach advocated by

¹L'association Tunisian Smart Cities est une association nationale de prospection, porteuse du programme qui sera matérialisé à terme par un réseau national des villes intelligentes. <https://www.tunisiasmartcities.com/whoarewe.php>.

1 heritage management experts to ensure inclusive participation and sustainable
2 management of heritage sites.

3 Finally, on 18 September 2023, Djerba was officially included on the World
4 Heritage List at the 45th enlarged session of the World Heritage Committee in
5 Saudi Arabia. This international label is a useful advertising tool for renewing
6 Djerba's tourist image.

7
8 **Figure 4.** *Logo Djerba World Heritage Site*



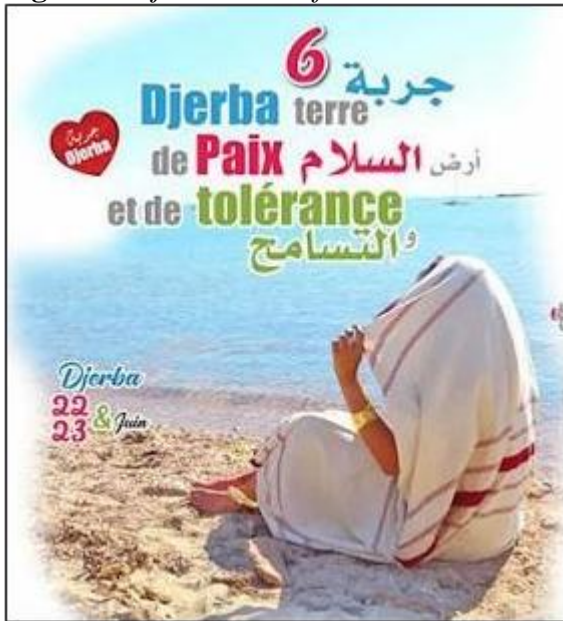
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10 Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Djerba.UNESCO/>

11
12 Local stakeholders are trying to improve the image of their island through
13 events linked to its heritage. In fact, 'Djerba land of peace and tolerance' is an
14 event organised every first Sunday in June since 2014 by the Hibiscus
15 Association² with the aim of promoting tourism in Tunisia and Djerba through
16 one of Djerba's special features: tolerance and peace between the island's
17 inhabitants. In this island territory, the three monotheistic religions (Islam,
18 Christianity and Judaism) have always coexisted in exceptional social peace.
19 This 'Djerba - Land of Peace and Tolerance' events initiative is part of a wider
20 strategy of territorial marketing and image management, essential for attracting
21 tourists and strengthening local identity (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). Here, in
22 the case of Djerba, territorial marketing uses cultural events to create a positive
23 and distinctive image of a place, which can have significant effects on tourist
24 appeal and social cohesion (Hospers, 2011).

25 By highlighting religious tolerance and social peace, this type of event helps
26 to reinforce a sense of belonging and identity among local residents, while
27 drawing tourists' attention to the unique cultural and heritage aspects of Djerba.
28 The result is a climate of tolerance and security that encourages the spread of
29 tourism throughout the island.

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31
32

²<https://www.facebook.com/hibiscus.djerba/>

1 **Figure 5.** *Djerba Land of Peace and Tolerance poster*

2
3 Source: <http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2019/06/21/hibiscus-djerba-organise-djerba-terre-de-paix-et-de-tolerance>

4
5
6 The XVIIIth Summit of the Francophonie, to be held in November 2021, is
7 the most important event on which local stakeholders are betting to give a new
8 lease of life to the destination of Djerba following the tourism crisis linked to the
9 COVID-19. The member countries of the Francophonie meet every two years
10 and their Heads of State are present, making it a high-profile event.

11 In the wake of these events, local stakeholders in Djerba have mobilised
12 digital technology to enhance the appeal of their island territory.

13 14 15 **Using Digital Technology to attract Tourists to Djerba**

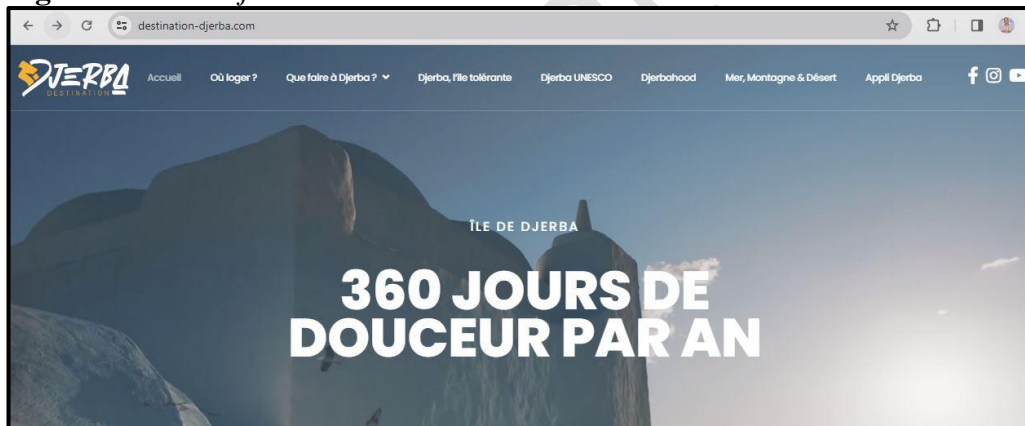
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17 Today, digital marketing is emerging as a response to the need to enhance the
18 attractiveness of regions (Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2009). Digital communication,
19 particularly via the social web, is emerging as a means of diversifying the brand's
20 message, going beyond its traditional role. Consumer-citizens, referred to as
21 'consom'actors' (Aubry, C. Ibid), are playing an increasingly active role in
22 promoting the area and improving municipal services (Cova & Cova, 2009; Kaplan
23 & Haenlein, 2010).

24 In our case study, the town of Houmt Souk, the capital of the island of
25 Djerba, is part of this dynamic approach to territorial and digital communication.
26 Implementing digital marketing strategies enables local authorities to reach a
27 wider audience and create meaningful interactions with residents and visitors
28 (tourists and non-tourists). Digital initiatives, such as the creation of online
29 platforms and the use of social networks, are essential for engaging local
30 communities in a process of developing a new image for the island by promoting
31 its tourism and cultural assets (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

1 The creation of Djerba's Destination Management Organization (DMO)³,
 2 which involves local stakeholders (local authorities, civil society, local
 3 promoters in tourism and para-tourism projects), marks a decisive turning point
 4 in Djerba's tourism development strategy. By resolutely embracing digital
 5 technology, the DMO is orchestrating a holistic transformation aimed at
 6 reinventing Djerba as a destination through a sustainable and intelligent
 7 approach (in relation to digital technology). This transition is marked by
 8 environmental, cultural and technological awareness (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang &
 9 Koo, 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

10 Djerba's DMO is part of this dynamic, focusing on enhancing the island's
 11 rich tangible and intangible heritage. The preservation and promotion of
 12 archaeological sites, historical monuments and traditional architecture are
 13 supported by digital initiatives such as virtual tours and interactive applications
 14 (Huang, Backman, Backman, & Moore, 2013; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).
 15 At the same time, the DMO is committed to highlighting intangible heritage,
 16 disseminating craft traditions, distinctive local cuisine, festivals, and other
 17 unique cultural practices via its website, social networks, blogs, interactive
 18 platforms and mobile applications.

19
 20 **Figure 6. DMO Djerba**



21
 22 Source: destination-djerba.com

23
 24 A concrete example of this trend is the Djerba Guide application⁴, initiated
 25 by the DMO (Djerba Management Organisation). This application is being
 26 developed as part of the 'Destination Sud-Est Tunis' project, supported by the
 27 Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and implemented by
 28 Swisscontact, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tunisian
 29 National Tourist Office. Free of charge and operating in offline mode, it offers
 30 users the opportunity to geolocate and guide themselves as they discover and
 31 enjoy their destination (Swisscontact, 2020; SECO, 2021).

32 Customisable and interactive, the Djerba Guide application lets users
 33 explore the labyrinths of the island's medinas, discover the colourful markets and

³<https://www.destination-djerba.com/>

⁴<https://apps.apple.com/tt/app/djerba-guide/id1563972993>

lively café terraces, or explore the centuries-old workshops of potters, basket-makers and others. By offering an immersive and enriching experience, it encourages the discovery and promotion of Djerba's cultural riches to a wider audience. This application embodies the convergence between the search for information located in the urban space and the judicious use of mobile technologies to offer a personalised and enriching tourist experience.

Figure 7. Djerba Guide

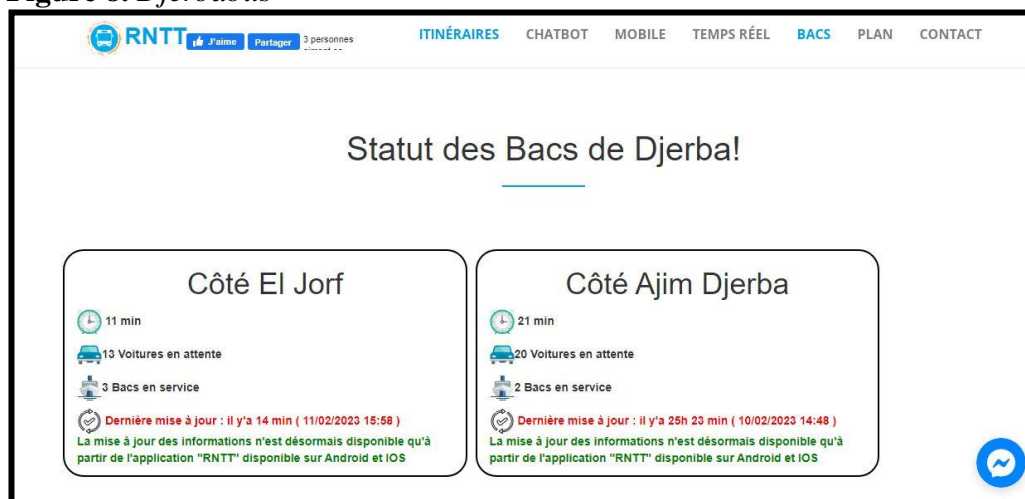


Source: Djerba 360°

Although the Djerba Guide application seems to be regaining ground, competing with Tunisia's Routard thanks to its reliability and its exhaustive flow of information on the island, it does have a shortcoming in terms of the immediacy of some crucial information, particularly for ferry users. In fact, the interminable queues and the resulting loss of time and stress on the Ajim and Jorf sides remain one of the thorniest issues for the mobility of visitors entering and leaving the island. To remedy this shortcoming, Djerbabus, a private initiative launched by young start-up entrepreneurs, represents a revolutionary advance in the field of public transport, both nationally and in Djerba in particular. The application, used by more than 2.5K users, including locals and visitors from Tunisia and abroad, is the first of its kind on Messenger. Djerbabus is unique in that it combines data from different means of transport to provide users with a complete overview of their journey, including itinerary, timetables, lines, stations, buses, ferries, taxis, and so on. This approach allows users to save time and travel more comfortably.

1 Currently operational on the island of Djerba, Djerbabus plans to extend its
 2 coverage to the whole of Tunisia. This expansion promises to bring significant
 3 benefits to users by simplifying access to transport information, contributing to
 4 a smoother and more efficient travel experience for local residents and visitors
 5 alike.

6
 7 **Figure 8. Djerbabus**



8
 9 Source: Application Djerbabus

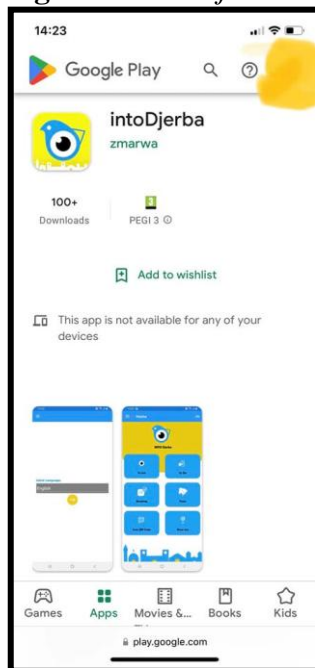
10
 11 Heritage sites are omnipresent in most of the applications operating on the
 12 island, including one such as Into Djerba⁵. Launched by the Djerba Insolite
 13 association⁶, this application aims to raise awareness among the local population
 14 and visitors to the island of Djerba's tangible and intangible heritage, as well as
 15 its preservation. This is being achieved by digitising and presenting fifteen
 16 historic monuments, with financial support from the Normandy Region and the
 17 Tunis International Center for Digital Cultural Economy (TICDCE) (Normandy,
 18 2020; TICDCE, 2021).

19 The application Djerbabus offers visitors to Djerba, as well as local residents,
 20 an unusual way to discover the island through six distinct sections: 'things to
 21 see', 'things to do', 'bike booking', 'tours', 'augmented reality' and an 'online
 22 craft shop'. This innovative application allows users to view the monuments in
 23 3D and listen to the history of each site through voice-over narration.

24
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 26

⁵https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.djerba_insolite.guide&fbclid=IwAR2kARtphtE49we-rZpDofw4Wt7RSK5ZFmM0Wqghunc9wbHmSYyohhywloE

⁶<https://djerba-insolite.com/>

1 **Figure 9. Into Djerba**

2
3 Source: Into Djerba

4
5 The Into Djerba app appears to be an extension of ‘Djerba Guide’, offering
6 a variety of new sites and historical monuments, including an eco-tourism
7 dimension with bike tours. However, on a technical level, it is imperative that
8 the designers revise the application, as some of its features, such as the voice-
9 over, no longer seem to work. In addition, a major point of concern is that the
10 application seems to focus on a foreign clientele, using mainly English and
11 French as the languages of communication. This approach may be disappointing
12 for the local population, which is mainly Arabic-speaking. It would make sense
13 to include Arabic in the languages available, to ensure equitable accessibility for
14 all users, while recognising and valuing the cultural and linguistic richness of
15 the region (Hassan et al., 2019, *ibid*). It follows that although the app offers
16 interesting and diverse features, technical and linguistic adjustments are needed
17 to ensure an optimal and inclusive experience for all users, whether local or
18 foreign.

19 Another application has also just seen the light of day thanks to the good
20 offices of the Association for the Safeguarding of the Island of Djerba, known
21 as ASSIDJE, which recently unveiled an innovative new mobile application
22 entitled ‘Djerba Kids Tour’⁷. This application is specially designed for children,
23 offering a magical journey through the island of Djerba.

24 Through Djerba Kids Tour, young visitors are invited on an exciting
25 adventure to discover the island's museums, monuments, picturesque villages,
26 enchanting parks and magnificent beaches. The main aim of the application is to

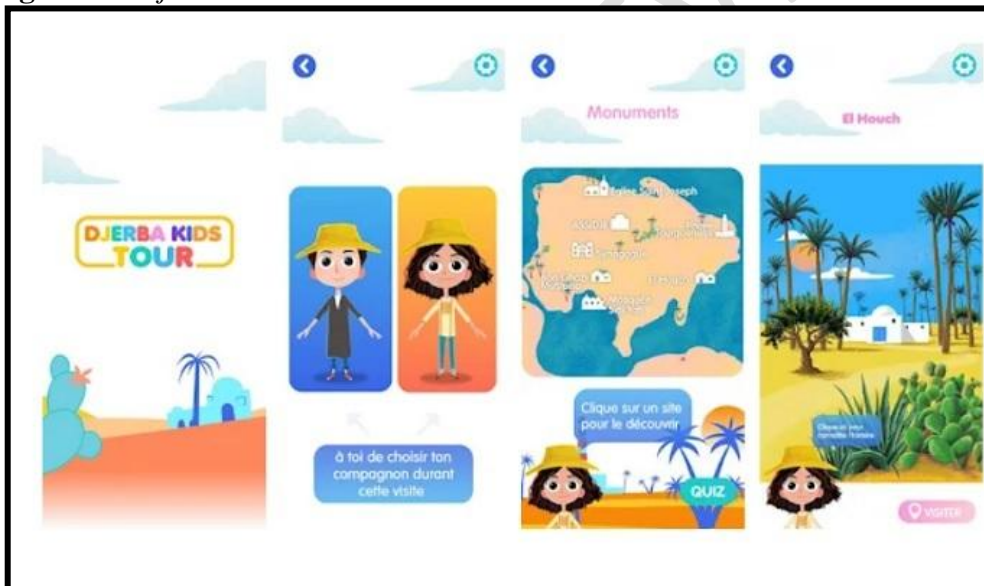
⁷<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087569901849>

1 highlight Djerba's rich natural, cultural and historical heritage, offering an
2 experience that is both educational and entertaining.

3 Guided by the two endearing companions, Djerbi and Djerbia, children
4 enjoy a specially designed journey highlighting the island's must-sees through
5 simple stories and playful illustrations. The illustrators have opted for a
6 colourful, fairytale style, paying particular attention to detail and presentation to
7 capture the attention of visitors young and old.

8 The application is the result of a fruitful collaboration between the
9 Association pour la Sauvegarde de l'Île de Djerba (ASSIDJE) and the Tunis
10 International Center for Digital Cultural Economy (TIC DCE), in association
11 with talented young artists. This joint initiative illustrates ASSIDJE's
12 commitment to preserving the heritage of the island of Djerba by taking
13 advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology and the cultural
14 economy. TIC DCE's contribution, as a public incubator, underlines the
15 importance of supporting innovative and creative projects that merge digital
16 technology with local cultural wealth.

17
18 **Figure 10.** *Djerba Kids Tour*



19
20 Source: Application of Djerba Kids Tour

21
22 This application, although appreciated by many Francophiles for its educational
23 and recreational value, is causing a certain amount of frustration among the
24 Arabic-speaking population because of its exclusive use of the French language.
25 What's more, the voice-over accompanying the dialogue of the characters Djerbi
26 and Djerbia seems unnatural and rather artificial.

27 In the search for alternative strategies to propel Djerba Houmt Souk towards
28 Mediterranean and international appeal, the growing use of mobile platforms and
29 applications is proving to be a modern and effective approach. In a world where
30 the majority of the population owns a mobile phone, this strategy is particularly
31 relevant. The active participation of contemporary tourists, who are intrinsically

1 connected, in the co-creation of destinations through online communities,
2 illustrates a significant change. This collaborative dynamic even extends to
3 destination management organisations, such as Djerba's DMO, which are
4 adopting innovative approaches to co-creating personalised experiences,
5 reflecting the evolution of the contemporary tourist into an autonomous and
6 sometimes 'participative' player.

9 **Conclusion**

11 This article highlights the challenges and transformations facing the tourist
12 destination of Djerba. Since the 1960s, Djerba has evolved into a mass tourism
13 destination, with significant environmental and territorial consequences. Coastal
14 erosion, pollution and the over-exploitation of natural resources have weakened
15 the island's ecosystem, compromising the long-term sustainability of tourism.

16 Faced with these challenges, local initiatives are emerging to diversify and
17 renew Djerba's image by highlighting its rich heritage and cultural assets.
18 Reconciling tourism with the island's territory involves promoting its
19 architectural, archaeological and craft heritage, as well as sustainable
20 development projects such as Djerba Smart Island and Green Djerba. These
21 initiatives aim to renew the destination's image and strengthen the island's
22 resilience in the face of environmental and economic crises, while promoting
23 local and participatory governance.

24 Djerba's application for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List and
25 the organisation of events such as the 18th Francophonie Summit are part of a
26 strategy to enhance its appeal and international visibility. These efforts reflect a
27 desire to improve the island's image by fully integrating local communities and
28 promoting the island's cultural assets.

29 Digital technology plays a crucial role in this process of renewal. Digital
30 technologies and mobile applications can be used to disseminate an integrated
31 tourism offer that covers the whole of the island, promoting more sustainable
32 and inclusive tourism. These digital tools are essential for attracting a new
33 category of tourists looking for authentic and personalised experiences (Kotler,
34 Haider, & Rein, 1993; Hospers, 2011, *ibid*).

35 By examining the opportunities offered by digital technologies, we see that
36 they play a crucial role in transforming the tourism experience. Digital initiatives
37 implemented by local stakeholders offer tools for active collaboration between
38 individual travellers and destination management organisations, fostering the co-
39 creation of personalised tourism offers and experiences. In this way, the
40 transformation of Djerba into a sustainable and resilient tourist destination is
41 based on an integrated approach combining heritage enhancement, ecological
42 initiatives and the strategic use of digital technologies.

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