

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

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*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 and interviews 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

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regenerate the existing tourist activity by diversifying it and renewing the image of the island, which is overflowing with heritage assets.

With the change in international demand, island destinations such as Mallorca (Seguí Llinas 2000) and French Polynesia (De Barnier et al. 2024) have been forced to develop new products other than seaside tourism. The development and governance of tourism across the entire destination contributes to its resilience (Gardère 2022, Delaplace et al. 2018). Thus, the use of digital technology and artificial intelligence contributes to the spread of tourism across the territory and to improving interaction between tourists and locals (Larbi et al. 2021, Viallon and Merah 2025).

What's more, today's 'tourism experience' can only be envisaged through encounters with the societies and individuals who evolve in the environments visited and who become objects of discovery. This approach to deploying inclusive tourism makes it possible to envisage territorial development processes based on the income generated by more carefully thought-out and organised tourist consumption (Blamey 2001, quoted by Dehoorne 2011). In this context of the 're-territorialisation' of tourism in Djerba (Binkhorst and Den Dekker 2009, Neuhofer et al. 2012), local stakeholders have the opportunity to develop events and brand the island's cultural assets to enhance 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.

The tourism system (Hellal 2020, Knafo and Fournier 2023) of Djerba, recognised as a mass tourism destination, faces the challenge of renewing its image in the context of sustainable development and digital transformation. Thus, the central question of this article is: how does Djerba's tourism system, which is reputed to be a mass tourism destination, meet the challenge of renewing its image in the era of sustainable development and digital transformation? To answer this question, we use direct observations and interviews in the field, supported by official statistics on the development of tourism in Djerba and webgraphic research, all of which are compared with theories in the literature.

To better explore governance issues in the island territory of Djerba, we analyzed local statistical data and conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with 13 municipal officials and 9 local elected representatives from the municipality of Houmt Souk in 2021, supplemented by 12 additional semi-structured interviews conducted in 2024 with experts in local governance and decentralization and local officials (mayors and municipal councilors).

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

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 seaside tourism of today, which is concentrated in the coastal area around the commune of Midoun, and which turns its back on the island's built-up areas.

Kassah and Bourgou (2008) consider foundouks to be the first tourist establishments in Djerba. These establishments were designed to accommodate foreigners passing

through, whatever their reason for coming to Djerba: merchants, civil servants, craftsmen, fishermen, missionaries and others. These foundouks, of which there were around twenty, are concentrated in the main town of Djerba: Houmet Essouk. These are traditional 2-storey structures with a patio serving as an inn for travellers, a shop for goods and a stable for draught animals.

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

The first modern hotel dates back to the early 1930s. It had just 25 rooms and was paradoxically called 'the Grand Hotel'. The arrival on the scene of an international tourism player was to give a new impetus to tourism and give it its current character of seaside tourism geared towards a large clientele. This was Club Méditerranée, which set up a holiday village in Djerba in 1954. This club represented the start of international mass tourism on the island. Since then, tourism in Djerba has developed as an extroverted sector geared towards satisfying the needs and expectations of a European clientele. The main attractions that fascinated this European clientele at the time were the oasis landscape, the fine sandy beaches and the peaceful lifestyle. To these resources, we must add a major asset for Djerba: its island character.

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

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

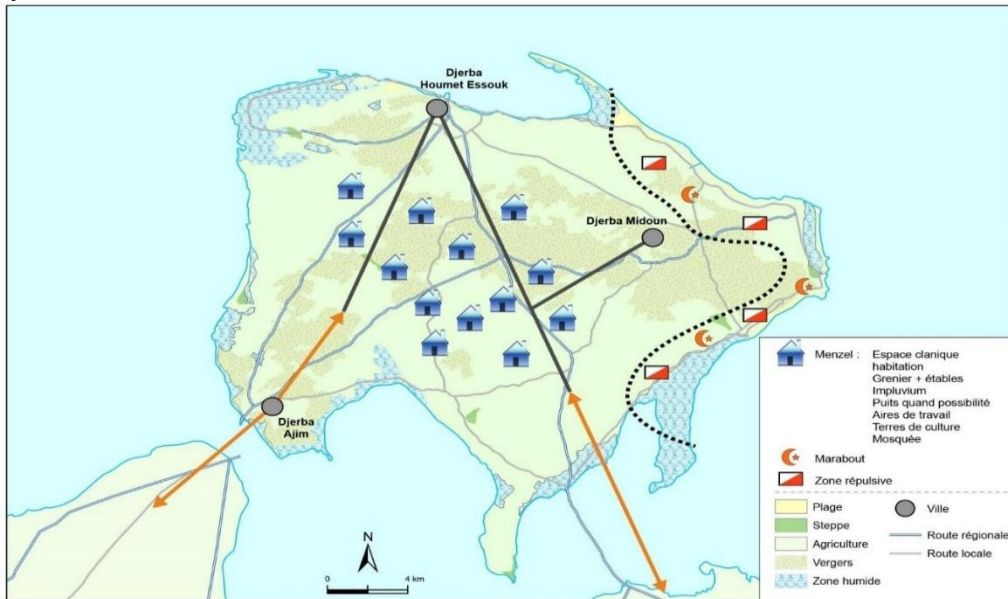
Since the 1960s, with the development of mass seaside tourism and the emergence of Djerba as a destination, tourist accommodation has continued to grow at a steady pace. In 1967, tourist accommodation capacity in the south-east, including Djerba, which accounts for most of the capacity, was 3,349 beds,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

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

In Djerba, the majority of hotels are located on the eastern and southern coasts, which fall within the municipality of Midoun. Tourist establishments occupy the

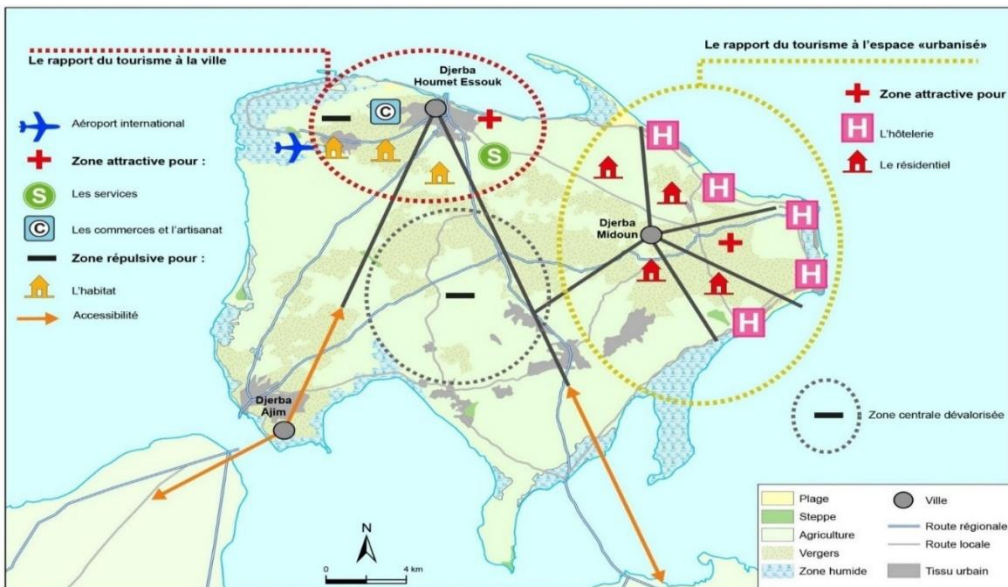
entire seafront over a length of around 30 km. The entire island is thus influenced by the expansion of the tourism sector. On the other hand, the centre of the island is marginalised from this sector. As a result, the island's territory, which is by definition fragile, is under strain and suffering irreversible damage. This territorial and ecological imbalance even threatens tourism, whose future depends on the quality of the surrounding environment (see Figure 1 and 2).

**Figure 1.** *The Organisation of the Djerbian Territory before the Development of Mass Tourism*



Source: UNEP/MAP2011, reproduced by M. HELLAL

**Figure 2.** *The Organisation of the Island Territory after the Development of Mass Tourism*



Source: PNUE /PAM2011, reproduced M. HELLAL

In her doctoral thesis, Dribek A. (2013) clearly shows that human action linked to the establishment of tourist activity in Djerba, as well as the island's specific natural features, are gradually weakening the balance of the natural coastal environment. The beach at the El Jazira hotel has disappeared due to coastal erosion. Between the Sirène and Dar Midoun hotels, the beautiful beaches have also begun to deteriorate. Then, at the Club Med Djerba la Fidèle, the beach has retreated significantly and outcrops are visible. However, action is being taken to deal with the damage. Most often, these involve the construction of defence works using large boulders on the foreshore or the creation of groins and riprap by the APAL (Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral - Coastal Protection and Development Agency). But as well as being unsightly, these structures sometimes pose an additional threat by exacerbating erosion.

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

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

### **Attempts by Local Stakeholders to Renew the 'Djerba Destination' through Labelling and Events**

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

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

Sixty years on from the development of this one-size-fits-all economic model, the area is overexploited and the island ecosystem is under threat (Mansour L., 2017). Faced with this situation, civil society organisations such as the Association for the protection of the island of Djerba (ASSIDJE founded in 1975), and other younger organisations that emerged just after the Revolution, are raising awareness of the environmental (waste management) and heritage (preservation of vernacular architecture) issues. This mobilisation is part and parcel of citizen participation in

environmental management, which has been encouraged by the climate of climatic transition since the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution on 17 December 2010.

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

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

**Figure 3.** Logo Green Djerba



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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup>L'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.tunisiassmartcities.com/whoarewe.php>.

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

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

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

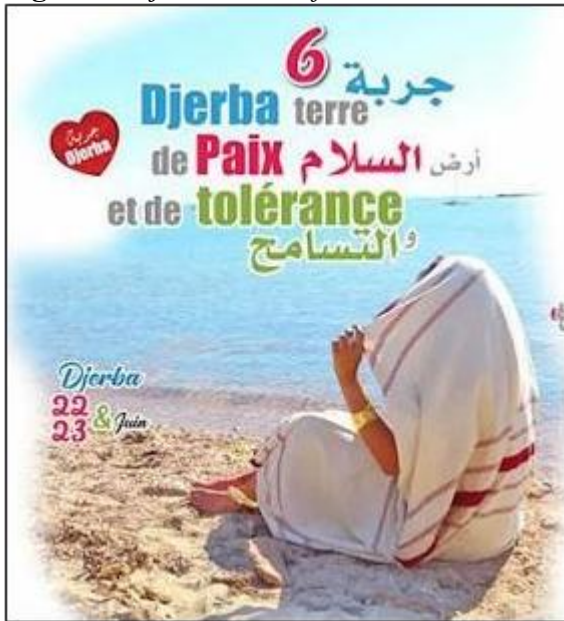


Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Djerba.UNESCO/>

Local stakeholders are trying to improve the image of their island through events linked to its heritage. In fact, ‘Djerba land of peace and tolerance’ is an event organised every first Sunday in June since 2014 by the Hibiscus Association<sup>2</sup> with the aim of promoting tourism in Tunisia and Djerba through one of Djerba's special features: tolerance and peace between the island's inhabitants. In this island territory, the three monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) have always coexisted in exceptional social peace. This ‘Djerba - Land of Peace and Tolerance’ events initiative is part of a wider strategy of territorial marketing and image management, essential for attracting tourists and strengthening local identity (Kotler et al. 1993). Here, in the case of Djerba, territorial marketing uses cultural events to create a positive and distinctive image of a place, which can have significant effects on tourist appeal and social cohesion (Hospers 2011).

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

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

**Figure 5.** *Djerba Land of Peace and Tolerance Poster*

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

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

In Tunisia, at least in the case of Djerba, the transition to a more decentralized form of governance, despite being enshrined in the 2022 Constitution, remains incomplete. Many respondents cited an institutional context marked by instability, persistent centralization, and opaque decision-making processes. Seventy-five percent of respondents (9 out of 12) consider that the absence of regulatory texts implementing Organic Law No. 2018-29 is the main obstacle to the effective implementation of local autonomy. This legal recognition of local authorities as the fourth branch of government therefore remains largely theoretical, which weakens their ability to promote appropriate territorial development policies.

Finally, 20 respondents (90.9%) emphasize the lack of a collective and coherent narrative around Djerba. The image of the destination remains fragmented, trapped in stereotypical representations (beach, sun, folklore), without strong links to contemporary issues of sustainability, social justice, or digital transition.

### **Using Digital Technology to attract Tourists to Djerba**

Today, digital marketing is emerging as a response to the need to enhance the attractiveness of regions (Cova and Cova 2009). Digital communication, particularly via the social web, is emerging as a means of diversifying the brand's message, going beyond its traditional role. Consumer-citizens, referred to as 'consom'actors' (Aubry,

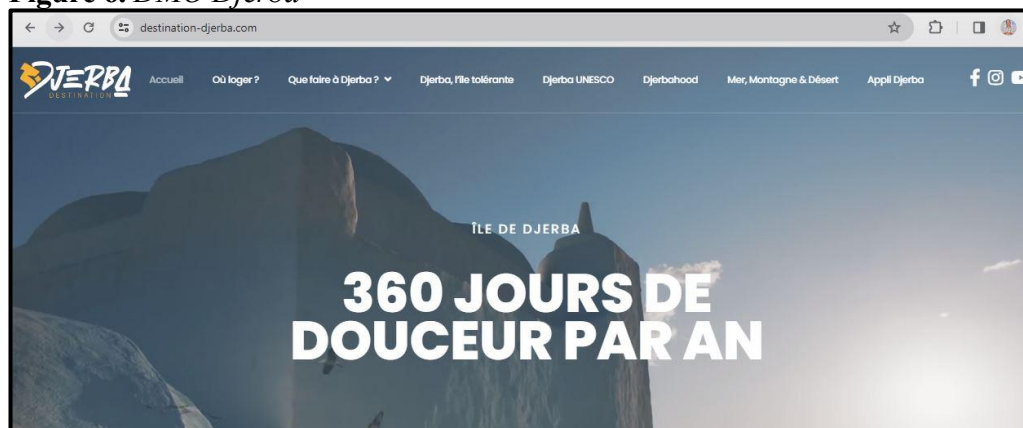
C. Ibid), are playing an increasingly active role in promoting the area and improving municipal services (Cova and Cova 2009, Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

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

The creation of Djerba's Destination Management Organization (DMO)<sup>3</sup>, which involves local stakeholders (local authorities, civil society, local promoters in tourism and para-tourism projects), marks a decisive turning point in Djerba's tourism development strategy. By resolutely embracing digital technology, the DMO is orchestrating a holistic transformation aimed at reinventing Djerba as a destination through a sustainable and intelligent approach (in relation to digital technology). This transition is marked by environmental, cultural and technological awareness (Gretzel et al. 2015, Xiang and Gretzel 2010).

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

**Figure 6.** DMO Djerba



Source: destination-djerba.com

A concrete example of this trend is the Djerba Guide application<sup>4</sup>, initiated by the DMO (Djerba Management Organisation). This application is being developed as

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

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

part of the 'Destination Sud-Est Tunis' project, supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and implemented by Swisscontact, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tunisian National Tourist Office. Free of charge and operating in offline mode, it offers users the opportunity to geolocate and guide themselves as they discover and enjoy their destination (Swisscontact 2020, SECO 2021).

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



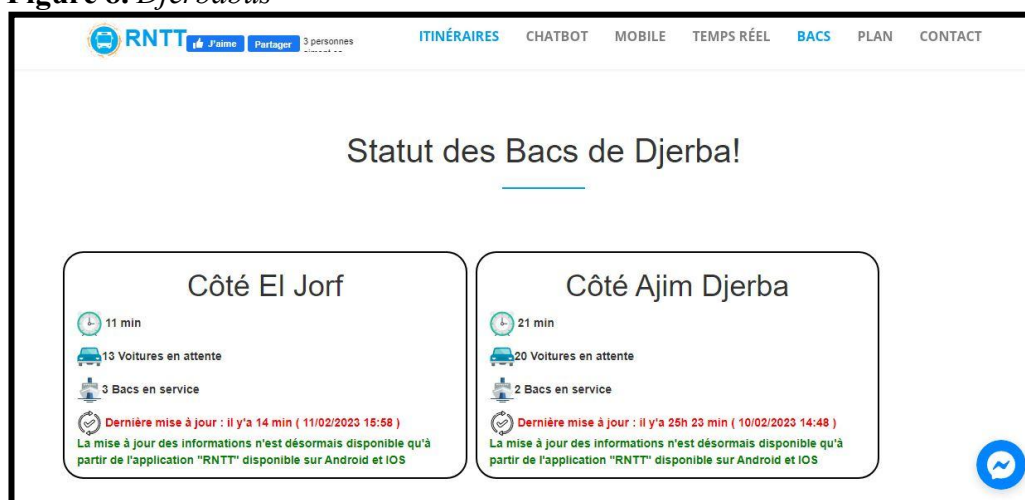
Source: Djerba 360°

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.

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

**Figure 8.** *Djerbabus*



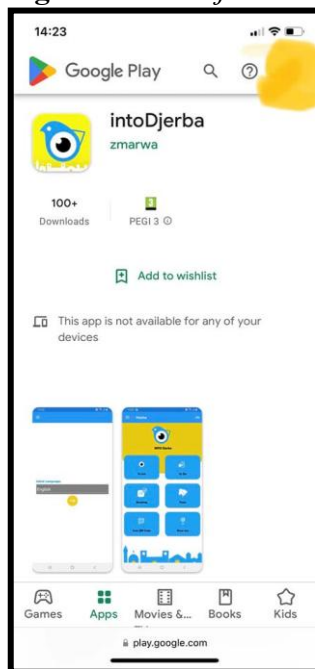
Source: Application Djerbabus

Heritage sites are omnipresent in most of the applications operating on the island, including one such as Into Djerba<sup>5</sup>. Launched by the Djerba Insolite association<sup>6</sup>, this application aims to raise awareness among the local population and visitors to the island of Djerba's tangible and intangible heritage, as well as its preservation. This is being achieved by digitising and presenting fifteen historic monuments, with financial support from the Normandy Region and the Tunis International Center for Digital Cultural Economy (TICDCE) (Normandy 2020, TICDCE 2021).

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

<sup>5</sup>[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.djerba\\_insolite.guide&fbclid=IwAR2kARtphtE49we-rZpDofw4Wt7RSK5ZFsm0Wqhqhunc9wbHmSYyohhywloE](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.djerba_insolite.guide&fbclid=IwAR2kARtphtE49we-rZpDofw4Wt7RSK5ZFsm0Wqhqhunc9wbHmSYyohhywloE).

<sup>6</sup><https://djerba-insolite.com/>.

**Figure 9.** *Into Djerba*

Source: Into Djerba

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

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

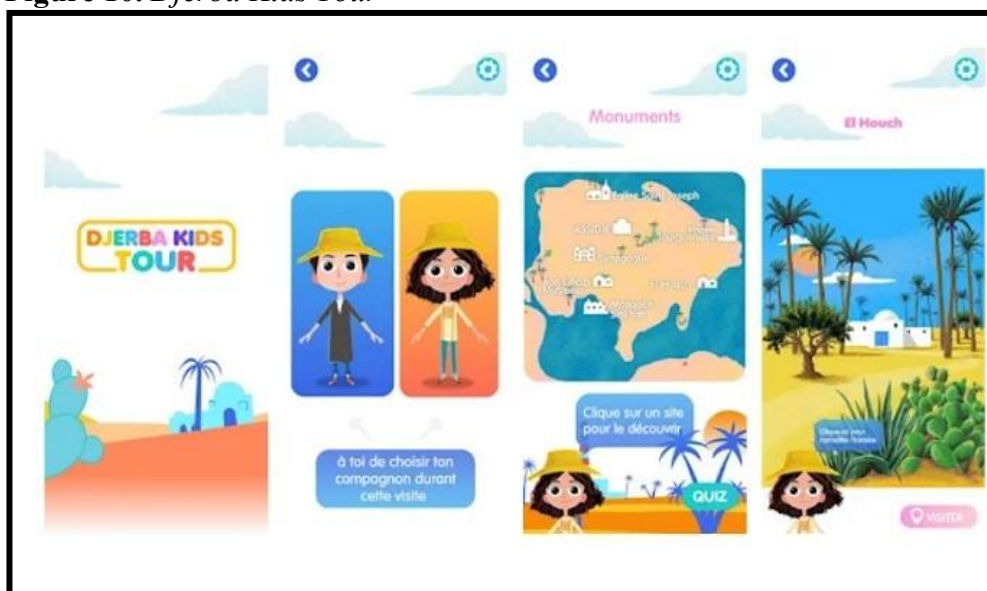
Through Djerba Kids Tour, young visitors are invited on an exciting adventure to discover the island's museums, monuments, picturesque villages, enchanting parks and magnificent beaches. The main aim of the application is to highlight Djerba's rich natural, cultural and historical heritage, offering an experience that is both educational and entertaining.

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

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

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

**Figure 10.** *Djerba Kids Tour*



Source: Application of Djerba Kids Tour

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

In the search for alternative strategies to propel Djerba Houmt Souk towards Mediterranean and international appeal, the growing use of mobile platforms and applications is proving to be a modern and effective approach. In a world where the majority of the population owns a mobile phone, this strategy is particularly relevant. The active participation of contemporary tourists, who are intrinsically connected, in the co-creation of destinations through online communities, illustrates a significant change. This collaborative dynamic even extends to destination management organisations, such as Djerba's DMO, which are adopting innovative approaches to co-creating

personalised experiences, reflecting the evolution of the contemporary tourist into an autonomous and sometimes 'participative' player.

Despite all the efforts made by local stakeholders to improve Djerba's tourism image and environmental resilience by promoting tourism practices throughout the region, we note that there are still areas of weakness. The 18 people interviewed in local administrations (81.8%) point out that the digital tools used by the municipality or tourist offices are mainly used for administrative management or top-down communication. They believe that very few digital applications are geared towards the visitor experience or interactive cultural mediation.

## **Conclusion**

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

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

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

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

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

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