The Status of Algerian Cultural Heritage: Mechanisms of Promotion, Publication, Media, and Digital Marketing – Pathways, Achievements, and Challenges

Brahim Chihani[1], Ali Kerzika[2]

[1]PhD Student, Laboratory of Scientific and Cultural Heritage of the Tamanrasset Region, Department of Archeology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Hadj Moussa Akhamokh, Tamanrasset. Email: chihani.brahim@univ-tam.dz
[2]University of Hadj Moussa Akhamokh, Tamanrasset, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Email: alitazrouk@yahoo.fr

Abstract:
This research paper aims to shed light on the most significant official and private sources concerned with publishing and showcasing Algerian cultural heritage in the digital world. It also highlights the role of the scientific elite in enlightening public opinion through intellectual and cultural production that reflects the rich history of Algeria and its people's heritage, particularly in ethnographic and religious contexts. Adhering to the principles of integrity, moderation, and the pursuit of scientific truth, especially in matters related to ethnic and cultural origins, is emphasized. The goal is to establish a solid cultural foundation that remains unaffected by political tensions and cultural changes, such as globalization. We aim to advance toward a stage of cultural production in all its forms, especially in the digital realm, where dominant global powers often exert cultural influence over other nations. The research seeks to value the efforts of cultural investigation and production currently marketed through various media and digital platforms. It also addresses the weaknesses and obstacles facing this sensitive sector from time to time. Finally, it offers organizational proposals to enhance digital marketing to effectively meet the demands of local and international tourism revival across successive periods.

Keywords: Digitization of tourism services, cultural heritage, e-tourism, sustainable development, cultural marketing.

Introduction:

Cultural heritage represents the identity of nations and individuals, serving as their hallmark in defining their civilizational belonging in a world founded on diversity and differences. Cultures and societies vary across countries and continents, making cultural heritage a vital reference and material cornerstone for establishing intellectual life and societal behaviors unique to each national environment.

In Algeria, the diverse geography and cities reflect this cultural richness across various fields, providing an optimal path to value heritage, harness it to serve citizens fundamentally, and project a positive national image internationally. Recognizing the importance of embedding cultural dimensions—regardless of their type, form, or practice—within the ethical framework of the nation, Algeria considers its heritage an invaluable resource within its national territory. It requires earnest appreciation and strategic intervention to strengthen its protection and valorization, ultimately achieving the civilizational and historical objectives that are the cornerstone of Algerian society.

This is especially critical as the world rapidly advances toward digitizing cultural heritage, transforming it into various digital formats and forms—a necessary step for Algeria to

create a unique digital cultural footprint rooted in its ideas and principles. This approach prevents the country's cultural identity from being shaped by nations that categorize people and ideas based on their narrow economic perspectives.

To realize these objectives, Algeria must address these developments by enacting regulations that pave the way for the digitization of its tourism products. This has become a serious challenge in valuing both tangible and intangible assets while aligning with the national policy for regional development and sustainable growth.

From this perspective, we raise the following research problem.

Can national material and human resources embody the digitization of cultural heritage and elevate it to achieving heritage and intellectual tourism through digital marketing?

To answer this central question, we can derive sub-questions that will form the focus of our research:

1. What is meant by the digitization and marketing of cultural heritage?
2. What institutions and sources are responsible for producing and marketing digital cultural content?
3. What are the achievements and obstacles in publishing and marketing Algeria's digitized cultural heritage?

Algerian Cultural Heritage:

Cultural diversity reflects the value of Algeria's heritage and serves as an expression of the country's identity and rich history. It embodies the experiences, customs, and accumulated knowledge of generations, contributing to the strengthening and preservation of national belonging. Algerian cultural heritage is divided into four main categories:

1. **Tangible Heritage**:

Tangible heritage refers to cultural elements that are physical and visible, such as historical landmarks from various eras in North Africa, archaeological sites like the Casbah of Algiers and the Roman city of Timgad, and desert architecture, including the architectural styles of the M'zab Valley, Ouargla, the Touat region, Tidikelt, and Hoggar. It also includes traditional handicrafts and natural heritage sites.

   o *The Casbah of Algiers*: The Casbah in Algiers is one of the most significant archaeological sites, featuring narrow alleys and traditional houses dating back to the Ottoman era. This location is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (*Suleiman bin Issa, 2005, pp. 92–110*).

M'zab Valley:

M'zab Valley is one of the most prominent architectural heritage landmarks established by the Mozabites in 1012 CE (403 AH). It reflects a style of construction well-suited to the desert environment while preserving traditional characteristics, such as houses, mosques, and the old market. (Bouchnaq, 1998, pp. 45–70).

2.Natural Heritage

1. **Ahaggar Mountains (Hoggar Mountains)**

Located in southern Algeria, the Ahaggar Mountains are among the oldest and most significant natural formations. They are characterized by towering peaks, such as Mount Tahat, which rises to 3,003 meters. The region showcases a stunning natural environment with volcanic rocks and unique stone formations. The Ahaggar Mountains are also a

cultural homeland for the Tuareg people and feature prehistoric rock art. *(Atlas des Sahara Préhistoriques, 1973, p. 73).*

2. Tassili n'Ajjer Plateau

The Tassili n'Ajjer Plateau is one of the richest sites of rock art, documenting human life over a span of 6,000 years. Located in the Illizi province, it includes hundreds of caves and rocks adorned with depictions of hunting scenes, animal herds, and cultural life. This area is an archaeological treasure, containing cultural and geological remnants that reflect environmental and climatic changes. *(Linoire, 1969, p. 69).*

3. M'zab Valley

Located in northern Algeria's desert region, the M'zab Valley is surrounded by sandstone mountains and stretches along the M'zab River. It encompasses five traditional towns and is notable for its unique agricultural and architectural systems. The area is recognized as both a cultural and natural reserve. *(Servant, 1984, p. 84).*

4.Algerian Chotts (Desert and Plateau Rainwater Basins)

The Algerian Chotts are areas where rainwater accumulates in the desert and high plateau regions, forming unique ecosystems and landscapes. The Chotts stretch across vast areas of Algeria and include large salt lakes, such as Chott Melrhir and Chott El Jerid. These saline lakes form a unique ecosystem that interacts with the desert climate. The Chotts are a significant geological site for studying salt formations and the effects of desert climates. *(Cabot, 1971, p. 71).*

5.Chenoua Mountain in Tipaza

Chenoua Mountain, located in northern Algeria along the Mediterranean Sea, is one of the most renowned natural landmarks in the Kabyle region. It is famous for its stunning landscapes and rich biodiversity, hosting a variety of Mediterranean plant and animal species. The mountain is also a significant natural and cultural site, with a history rooted in ancient Roman times. *(Gsell, 1950, p. 14).*

3.Intangible Heritage

Intangible heritage includes practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills passed down through generations, reflecting the identity and culture of a community. This heritage encompasses customs, traditions, rituals, folk arts, and oral stories. Examples include:

- **Yennayer (Amazigh New Year):** Widely celebrated in Algeria, it involves preparing special dishes like "assida" as part of a tradition symbolizing joy for the new year.
- **Marriage Rituals and Traditions:** Practiced across Algeria, from the northern to the southern regions, these rituals highlight the cultural richness and diversity of Algerian society. *(Boudina, 2002, pp. 201–210).*

4.Literary and Artistic Heritage

- **Melhoun Poetry:**

This genre of popular poetry expresses the feelings and thoughts of the Algerian people, often focusing on daily life, human emotions, and patriotism. It features local rhythmic structures and is usually written in Algerian Arabic dialect. Melhoun poetry is an integral part of Algerian cultural heritage, transmitted orally and reflecting societal values and traditions.

- **Oral Literature:**

Oral literature includes myths, folktales, and proverbs passed down through generations, such as the saying *"The neighbor comes before the house."* These stories, often shared in Algerian Arabic or Amazigh, convey cultural values and preserve the country's heritage. *(Mansour, 2015, pp. 55–70).*

Definition of Cultural Heritage Digitization and Marketing

Digitization, derived from the word "digit" (as per the *Digital Meanings Dictionary*), refers to the process of converting diverse types of information—such as images, drawings, books, periodicals, audio recordings, and animations—into a format readable by computer systems using binary data (0s and 1s). This binary system, the foundational language of computers, underpins all programming languages developed over time.

Digitizing cultural heritage allows for the creation of digital storage alternatives for articles, periodicals, books, manuscripts, maps, and more, replacing and complementing traditional physical storage. The concept has extended to include tourism services and scientific content across various fields, with both advantages and challenges—particularly concerning intellectual and historical privacy of heritage, as digital environments often witness violations. (*Sougal, "Digitizing Heritage and Its Impact on Sustainable Tourism: International Models and Prospects in Algeria," 2020*).

Successful cultural heritage marketing in the digital age requires bold and intensive promotional efforts through various means, such as documentaries, cultural programs, advertisements, brand logos, and official celebrations. These efforts can involve both legitimate and illegitimate methods, reflecting the competition for visibility and impact in the digital realm.

Institutions and Sources for Producing and Marketing Digital Cultural Content

The effort to showcase cultural heritage in most countries tends to fluctuate, often peaking during national holidays and celebrations. However, this sporadic approach limits cultural production's effectiveness compared to global standards. To address this, Algeria has mobilized institutions and specialized personnel since gaining independence.

The initial focus was on traditional media, starting with print journalism—newspapers, reports, magazines, and periodicals—followed by radio broadcasting, which remains widely popular. Algerian television, with its various branches and languages (Arabic, Amazigh, and French), also plays a significant role.

These platforms work in collaboration with Algeria's primary cultural body, the Ministry of Culture, alongside its affiliated institutions dedicated to preserving, maintaining, and promoting cultural heritage. These include:

- National and Municipal Museums
- Offices and Agencies for Cultural Heritage Protection
- Institutes for Audiovisual Production
- Regional Fine Arts Branches

(*Published on the Algerian Press Service website: "Digitization in the Service of Algerian Cultural Heritage," Wednesday, 14/10/2020*).

Research centers for archaeology, craft industry chambers affiliated with the Ministry of Tourism, and various associations and individual efforts have collectively contributed to the preservation and promotion of Algeria's cultural heritage from multiple perspectives.

This steady cultural activity continued until 2014, when Law No. 14/04, related to audiovisual activities, was enacted.

This legislation introduced freedom of media pluralism, leading to the emergence of private and specialized channels dedicated to specific fields such as cooking, fashion design, cultural and tourism documentaries, films, and religious teachings. Many of these channels incorporated elements of cultural heritage into their programs and products.

Simultaneously, websites, blogs, forums, and social media platforms evolved significantly. Since 2010, Facebook, in particular, has undergone major transformations in how information is shared and disseminated. Through pages, groups, photos, videos (both short and long), audio recordings, and online stores, Facebook has become a leading platform for marketing products and services, alongside other digital platforms.

Challenges in Digital Marketing of Cultural Heritage

Despite the accumulated efforts by institutions, researchers, and experienced cultural enthusiasts, digital marketing for cultural heritage in Algeria still requires additional logistical and intellectual services. These challenges fall under the domain of the knowledge economy and demand the collaboration of the entire cultural production chain—from elite thinkers and scholars to the final stages of marketing heritage in both digital and physical forms.

Achievements and Challenges in Digitizing and Marketing Algerian Cultural Heritage

Algeria has made significant strides in preserving and promoting its cultural heritage, leveraging both public and private institutions. These efforts have produced a mix of successes and setbacks.

After gaining independence, Algeria showcased its rich and diverse cultural heritage, encompassing Amazigh, Arab, African, and Mediterranean influences. Over time, the country transitioned from traditional media to digital platforms to adapt to technological advancements and reach a global audience.

The shift to digitization culminated in 2024, following a series of phased efforts:

Phase One: Algeria's Media Marketing Efforts for Cultural Heritage (1970–1990)

During this phase, the focus was on using traditional media such as print journalism, radio, and state television to highlight cultural heritage. These tools laid the foundation for broader dissemination and awareness of Algeria's diverse heritage. In the 1970s, Algeria relied heavily on newspapers, radio, and television as its primary media tools to promote cultural heritage. This period featured cultural programs and documentaries highlighting historical sites such as the *Casbah of Algiers* and traditional celebrations like the *Harvest Festivals*, *Eid al-Adha*, and *Yennayer*.

The media authorities of the time prioritized creating a unified national identity post-independence. However, challenges such as limited funding, reliance on traditional media, and centralized media policies focused more on political and social issues than cultural promotion. Despite these hurdles, these efforts laid the foundation for future initiatives to showcase Algerian cultural heritage. This groundwork became instrumental in preparing for the digital transformation of the 1990s and beyond.

Phase Two: Transition to Digital Media (1990–2010)

With the advent of the internet in the 1990s, Algeria began investing in digital media to promote its cultural heritage. In 1994, the country launched its first official websites dedicated to cultural tourism and historical sites. The internet became a powerful tool to expand audience reach and provide diverse content about Algerian heritage, including archaeological sites like *Timgad* and *Djemila*, as well as traditional music genres and Algerian cuisine.

During the early 2000s, Algeria made significant strides in promoting its heritage through more interactive digital platforms. This progress made cultural information accessible to a global audience, supported by improvements in digital infrastructure. The expansion of internet coverage to more regions facilitated the broader dissemination of Algeria's rich cultural traditions.

Phase Three: Strengthening Digital Media and Social Networks (2010–2024)

With the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, Algeria significantly enhanced its digital presence. The Ministry of Culture and Algerian media leveraged these platforms to reach a wider audience, particularly young people.

Short videos showcasing Algerian customs and traditions, such as traditional attire, chants, and folk poetry, gained popularity. Livestreams of cultural events like the *Timgad International Festival* provided real-time engagement with audiences.

These efforts have strengthened Algeria's digital cultural marketing strategies, making cultural content more accessible and engaging on a global scale.

This period also witnessed the launch of specialized applications aimed at promoting Algerian culture online, such as apps dedicated to tourist landmarks and others introducing traditional cuisine. Social media platforms have seen significant engagement with cultural content, providing a direct means of interaction between cultural institutions and the public, thereby increasing global interest in Algerian heritage.

Prominent Digital Projects:

As part of efforts towards digital transformation, Algeria has launched several projects to enhance cultural heritage in the digital age. The most notable include:

1. Algerian Digital Library:

The digital library offers a collection of rare books and manuscripts about Algerian cultural heritage, contributing to greater awareness of the local culture across most regions of the country.

2.Digitization and Documentation:

A project for digitizing manuscripts and historical documents, including those related to the Liberation Revolution, has been launched. These are made available online for global audiences.

3.Digitization of the Cultural and Tourism Sectors:

This includes both cultural and service-oriented aspects, marketing domestically and internationally. One of the most significant steps in the digitization and promotion of national cultural heritage was the initiative launched by the Ministry of Culture in 2016. It introduced an electronic portal dedicated to tangible and intangible heritage, covering cinema, theater, literature, various folkloric expressions such as popular poems and chants, arts-related professions, as well as museums and historical and archaeological sites. This

aligns with the 2030 Tourism Master Plan, aiming to stimulate domestic and international tourism through digitization and marketing.

4.Artificial Intelligence Initiatives:

Algeria has collaborated with technology experts to create AI-based projects for the digital inclusion of local dialects and to provide interactive experiences that showcase Algerian history and heritage.

Even tangible heritage is not excluded from digitization, especially what is referred to as "preventive digitization." A notable example is the project by archaeologist Farid Ighil Ahrez, who in 2015 supervised excavations at the funerary monument of Queen Tin Hinan in Tamanrasset. He conducted a "three-dimensional photographic survey" to facilitate future restoration of the site in case of damage. Ahrez shared his insights with the Algerian Press Agency.

In addition to the preventive aspect of digitization, there are other important benefits, such as enhancing the value of archaeological landmarks, promoting and marketing them virtually, and showcasing their architectural and engineering features. Digitization also facilitates archiving, creating accurate replicas, and making it easier for researchers to study and explore these landmarks. Currently, preventive digitization is at the core of research in engineering and archaeological scientific laboratories. These labs work on capturing 3D scans of properties, which can later be used for restoration in case of damage or collapse.

Manuscripts, in particular, have received the most attention in terms of digitization and publication. Baishi Abdullah, head of the Studies and Research Department at the National Center for Manuscripts in Adrar, highlights those 153 digital operations have been carried out on manuscripts, including a disk containing 1,800 digitized manuscripts and 36 digitized documents available at the center. These manuscripts are crucial for preservation due to their age and susceptibility to damage, especially religious and historical manuscripts, which are important witnesses to Algeria's history and heritage. Many of these manuscripts are in the possession of religious schools, associations, and some families scattered across the country. Additionally, private heritage associations, such as the "Abi Ishaq Atfesh Heritage Association" in Ghardaia and the "Heritage Association" in El-Kerara, play an essential role in digitizing and promoting Algerian heritage through websites and social media pages. These associations also organize national and international exhibitions and awareness campaigns about preserving human heritage in all its forms.

Five years ago, the Algerian National Theatre (also known as the "Fourth Art") initiated a project to digitize its works. This includes a guide to its 192 plays (since its founding in 1963). The digitized works consist of "videos, scripts, photos, pamphlets, and posters" to meet the demand from students, researchers, directors, exhibition organizers, and television channels.

The goal of the digital portal is to include as many aspects of Algerian culture as possible, highlighting its richness and diversity. The platform aims to make this content available to a wider audience of users and interested experts. However, it is still limited in service and functionality, with many areas outdated or inactive, as observed on the website. The promotion of this platform and other cultural products through TV programs, schools, and

websites remains minimal or nonexistent at times. This is one of the key areas that need to be addressed in the near future. The name of this platform, along with other heritage products, should be promoted in cultural offices, embassies, and consulates both inside and outside the country, in multiple languages. Various marketing strategies should be adopted to invigorate local heritage and boost tourism, ensuring that it reaches a broad and clear audience across nations and generations.
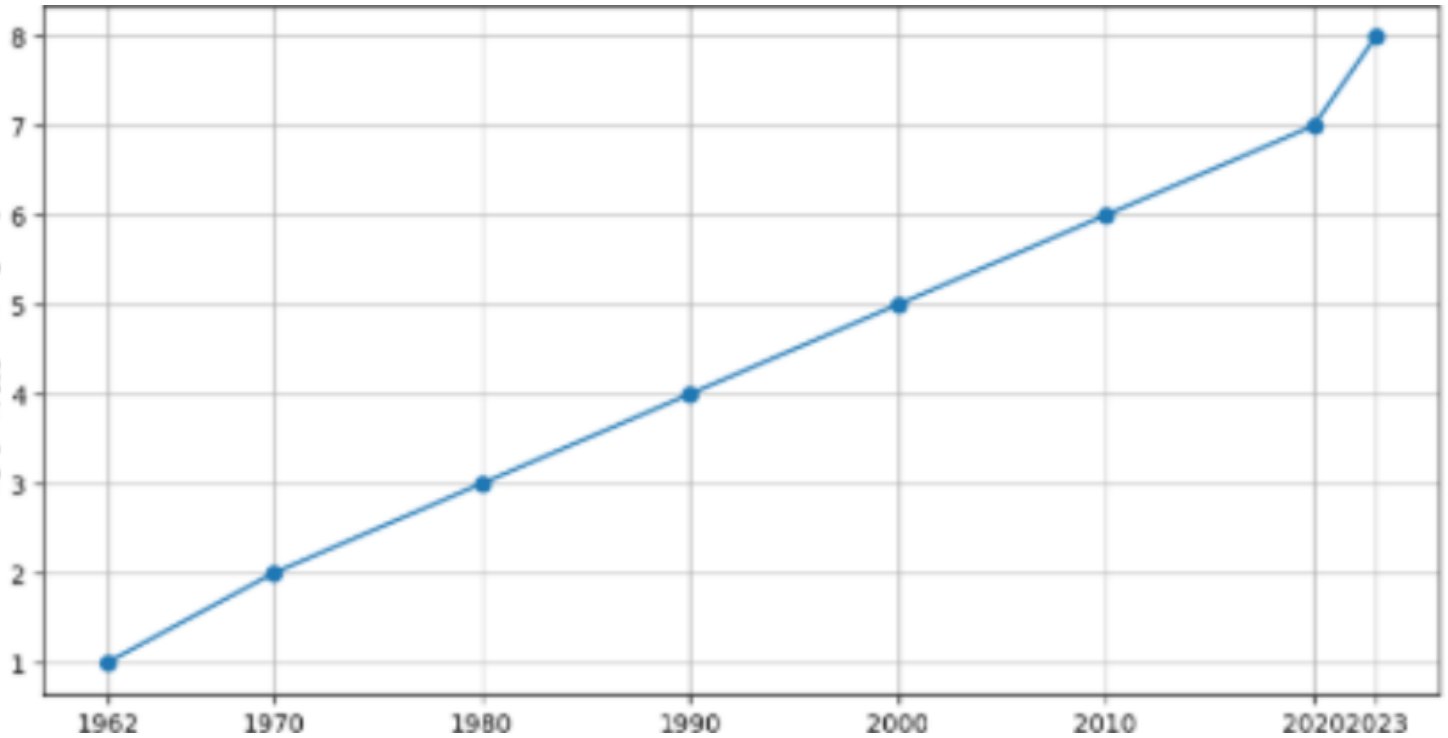
The evolution of the trend of spreading cultural heritage in the digital, radio and television world in Algeria since 1962

between 1962 and 2023. On the digital level, it starts from the early 1990s, showing a continuous upward trend over consecutive decades, documenting the spread of heritage using both traditional and modern media.

Challenges and Obstacles: Algeria faced several challenges in the process of digital transformation, including:
- **Lack of Funding:** Limited funding affected the development of large-scale digital projects aimed at promoting cultural heritage, as well as weak funding for certain cultural projects and the difficulty of preserving intangible heritage due to inadequate documentation. Although digitization offers significant potential for preserving and globally disseminating heritage through digital archiving and the creation of interactive content.
- **Infrastructure:** Some regions of Algeria still suffer from weak digital infrastructure, limiting internet access.

- **Global Competitiveness:** Amidst fierce competition from other countries, Algeria needs to improve the quality of its digital content and make it more competitive and appealing to a broader audience.

Impact of Digital Transformation on Enhancing Cultural Tourism: Digital efforts have contributed to attracting tourists from around the world to Algeria, with increased interest in historical sites such as Constantine, Timgad, and the Hoggar Mountains. The tourism sector benefited from the availability of digital information that made it easier for tourists to explore cultural sites through their smartphones. According to 2023 statistics, the number of visitors to cultural sites increased by 30% compared to previous years, reflecting the success of digital media policies in attracting global attention to Algerian heritage.

Positive Effects of Digital Transformation: Despite the challenges, there have been significant positive effects of digital transformation on Algerian culture:

- **Increased Cultural Awareness:** Digital media helped raise awareness of Algerian culture, enabling people from around the world to learn about cultural heritage and folk arts.
- **Boosting Cultural Tourism:** Digital efforts contributed to attracting tourists to Algeria, supporting the local economy. Cultural events and festivals were promoted online, increasing the number of visitors participating in these activities.
- **Empowering Youth:** Digital media helped empower Algerian youth to express themselves and share their cultural creations, leading to the emergence of a new generation of artists and creativists

Through AL-Jazzirra website

Modern house built in antique style M'zab Valley area Ghardaia

The heritage of Algerian dress from its various regions

Conclusion

After this brief presentation of the trajectory and challenges of the cultural industry and the digital marketing of Algerian cultural heritage, the study reached a set of proposals and recommendations as follows:

- The necessity of identifying and classifying the tangible and intangible components of cultural, literary, intellectual, natural heritage, as well as traditional foods and authentic clothing.
- Engaging researchers in archaeology and history to provide the maximum amount of documented and reliable scientific information to build an effective digital database that aligns with intellectual updates and counter-globalization trends that oppose authenticity and identity.
- Involving various sectors through representatives and delegates from culture, literature, communications, transportation, technology, housing, and energy to produce a comprehensive cultural tourism map.
- Adopting modern marketing methods, such as organizing local and international events, offering full or partial scholarships for students, entrepreneurs, and positive influencers, and providing awards and gifts in the form of books, models, clothing, or furnishings that are deeply rooted in cultural heritage.
- Transitioning from purely service-based tourism to virtual electronic tourism, incorporating the specificities of Algerian society using all available means.
- Reformulating legal and legislative frameworks to address digital breaches, encourage creativity in the digital field, and safeguard intellectual property to promote tourism entrepreneurship and media and marketing service institutions to adapt and deliver optimal outcomes.
- The analysis results and experiments highlighted the significant role of improving information and communication technology in enhancing tourism flows, thus supporting and promoting the tourism sector in Algeria. Enhancing and increasing internet access could lead to a rise in international tourists coming to Algeria, as there is a positive correlation between the number of internet subscribers and the flow of international tourists.
- Drawing on the experiences of leading countries in the tourism sector.
- Focusing on improving Algerian individual behaviors, making them more flexible and adaptable to tourists and foreigners in general.
- Presenting a positive international image of the refinement, luxury, and investment opportunities in Algeria.
- Developing technology in photography and digital production.
- Emphasizing three key indicators for the digital tourism economy: improving network quality as much as possible, ensuring all forms of security, and focusing on the knowledge economy by training frameworks and providing alternatives to hydrocarbon-based economies.

Sources and References :

- Al-Maany Dictionary: https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/
- Supreme Council for the Arabic Language, "The Role of Digital Libraries in Advancing Arabic Digital Content," Proceedings of the National Symposium, Council Publications, 2018.
- *Atlas des Sahara Préhistoriques* (1973). Center National de la Recherche Scientifique, CNRS.
- Cabot, R. (1971). *Les Grands Lacs du Sahara*. Universitaires de France, PUF.

- Gsell, S. (1950). *L'Algérie Antique*. Paris : Editions Picard.
- Linoire. (1969). *Les Gravures Rupestres Sahara.* Editions du Seuil.
- Servant, J. (1984). *Le Sahara Paysages et Civilisations*. Albin Michel.
- Boujemaa Khalf Allah (2019). *Protection of Urban and Architectural Heritage*. Algeria: University Publications Office.
- Belaydi Abderrahim, Belaydi Zakaria, "The Impact of Digitalization on the Promotion of the Tourism Sector in Algeria," *Economic Notebooks Journal,* Issue 1, 2023, pp. 919-930.
- Hamza Mahjoub, Riad Mohamed Labraq, Mariam Manal Bessaoud, "Digitalization of the Tourism Sector in Algeria Between Goals and Opportunities According to the Tourism Development Master Plan: Horizons 2030," *Rafed Research and Studies Journal,* South Algerian Laboratory for Research in History and Islamic Civilization, University of Ghardaia, Vol. 7, Issue 2, 2022.
- Iman Souqal, "Digitization of Heritage and Its Impact on Sustainable Tourism: International Models and Prospects in Algeria," *International Journal of Social Communication,* Abdelhamid Ben Badis University, Mostaganem, Issue 3, Vol. 7, 2020, pp. 58-72.
- Razka Al-Ayn Nawal, "The Importance of Digitalization and Modern Technologies in Managing and Promoting Cultural Heritage," *Journal of Archaeological Heritage Platform,* Institute of Archaeology, University of Algiers 2, Issue 11.
- Dr. Mostafawi Aida, Harkas Zakaria, "The Digital Valorization of Heritage and Its Role in Enhancing Tourism Development," University of Blida.

Websites:
- Published on the Algerian News Agency website: *"Digitalization in Service of Algerian Cultural Heritage,"* Wednesday, 14/10/2020.
- Published on the Al-Arab Newspaper website: *"Algerian Cultural Heritage Suffers from Weak Digitalization,"* Friday, 16/10/2020.
- Master Plan for Tourism Development 2030 (SDAT): Diagnosis and Assessment of Algerian Tourism, Ministry of Regional Planning, Environment, and Tourism, Algeria, Date of Site Visit: 20/11/2003.
- Law No. 04-14 dated June 15, 1998, concerning the Protection of Cultural Heritage.
- Law No. 04-14 dated February 24, 2014, concerning Audiovisual Activities in Algeri