

Promoting immaterial heritage through content marketing focused on the tourist destination's sustainability

Case study: Essaouira Gnaoua Festival-Morocco

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Abstract:

A crossroads of cultures and civilizations for over a million years, “Morocco is endowed with a cultural heritage of extraordinary richness and variety, reflecting the plurality and diversity of the contributions that have, over the millennia, forged and built what today constitutes the hallmark of Moroccan culture”¹. This cultural heritage is a driving force behind sustainable development.

In this new era of change and evolution, where the tourism sector has become a veritable growth industry, Morocco has created an attractive and well-thought-out tourism offering. With this in mind, players in the tourism sector have focused their development and research on the protection of intangible heritage. This strategy has been supported by the government in such a way as to initiate and promote fruitful actions "for a general mobilization, aiming at the implementation of the principles of the International Convention on Cultural Diversity"². Content marketing combined with sustainability is one of the strategies implemented to communicate on cultural destinations such as Essaouira through its Gnaoua festival, which promotes the Gnaoua culture, an extraordinary cultural heritage available in Morocco. How do Moroccans perceive this promotional approach, and what factors influence their decision to visit?

I. INTRODUCTION

As in many countries around the world, tourism is seen in Morocco as a genuine lever for economic growth. It is a vector for development on several levels, notably social and territorial. As a result, the tourism sector has always been seen as a major consumer of local and rural products. As a result, tourist areas have seen a proliferation of activities thanks to policies to protect heritage, especially intangible heritage. According to UNESCO, this question of intangible cultural heritage concerns in particular "oral expressions, which include language, traditions and customs; social practices, which concern the performing arts, festivities, and rituals; knowledge and know-how relating to the universe and nature, and traditional craftsmanship" (Bortolotto, 2011).

In addition, several studies show that cultural tourism, which includes heritage-related activities, is a significant part of what inspires tourists (Cybertourists). To this end, the use of content marketing techniques is essential to attract Moroccan cultural heritage enthusiasts, so as to make eco-responsible practices a priority choice. In a highly globalized world with a globalized tourism industry, tourism product providers are increasingly aiming for an approach centered on the consumer experience. To achieve this, they rely on a specific marketing strategy: experiential content marketing. Consumers, for their part, are now looking for

¹ Direction du patrimoine culturel (2019), Inventaire du patrimoine culturel marocain, Récupéré le 04/07/2023 du site : <https://mjcc.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/catalogue-exposition-100-inventaire-au-maroc-.pdf>

² CRT. Définition du patrimoine immatériel, Projet de thèse de M Adil Boulghalat, Récupéré le 04/07/2023 du site : <https://portailsudmaroc.com/articlesmenu/290610-102758-7-3-22-2-2-definicion-patrimoine-immateriel.pdf>

experiences that include activities linked to regional or local intangible heritage, in addition to the quality of the welcome and the information provided in advance. The world has undergone profound transformations at every level. We note that today, under the influence of technological innovations, there has been a considerable change in society, and more specifically in consumer behaviors and characteristics (Wenqi Zhou, 2019). Customers have become more sociable, more connected, and more mobile (Kotler et al., 2016). As a result, the sharing of consumer experiences and purchasing decisions is conditioned by the opinions and views circulating on the internet, particularly on social networks. These are the elements that guide us and enable us to take action.

Morocco is a popular destination for tourists in search of cultural discoveries. Faced with the evolution and complexity of consumer behavior, the Moroccan tourism sector needs to adapt to an environment that is more volatile and influenced by new technologies.

Our paper proposes a study of the reasons behind the shift towards the valorization of intangible heritage, and its consideration as one of the factors likely to play a role in the development of tourism in Morocco. protecting cultural identity through content marketing. The aim of this research is to assess the role of content marketing, combined with the notion of sustainability, in promoting intangible heritage in Morocco. We propose the example of Gnawa culture. Today, Gnawa culture is part of many aspects of Moroccan cultural identity, and in 2019 will be included on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This study raises a number of questions:

- How does intangible heritage leverage content marketing to claim a sustainable and authentic positioning?
- How do Moroccans perceive the content strategy used by tourism players to promote Gnawa culture in Morocco?
- To what extent can we consider content marketing as an opportunity to promote Gnawa music in a sustainable way?

The aim is to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing the decision to attend the Gnawa festival. This will give us an idea of the Moroccan tourist's appreciation of the content strategy used by

public and private tourism players to enhance and promote Gnawa culture in Morocco.

II. CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Conceptual Study of Intangible Heritage and Cultural Tourism in a sustainable framework

- *Cultural Tourism*

Tourism can be defined as "the act of traveling, of visiting a site for pleasure" (LAROUSSE, 1999, p. 1020). Furthermore, "Tourism is the set of relationships and phenomena resulting from the travel of people for whom the place of stay is neither their principal and lasting residence nor their usual place of work"³.

By the 1930s, this phenomenon was no longer systematically linked to culture, and other forms of tourism began to appear. Today, there are various forms of tourism, such as seaside and niche tourism... etc. "The 20th century saw cultural tourism open up to a wider audience. In the 1930s, cultural tourism also underwent an evolution. It diversified in terms of destinations, themes, and target audiences. Today, cultural tourism encompasses various types of tourism: religious, historical, artistic, gastronomic, linguistic, artisanal..."⁴.

Culture is the dominant concept in cultural tourism. Before explaining the notion of cultural tourism, it seems necessary to attempt to define culture. The Larousse dictionary defines culture as "the set of material and ideological phenomena that characterize an ethnic group or nation, a civilization as opposed to another group or nation".

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at its 1982 Mexico City World Conference on Cultural Policies, gave a slightly more precise definition of culture: "The set of distinctive features, spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional, which characterize a society or social group. In addition to the arts and letters, it encompasses lifestyles, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

We can therefore describe culture as a set of productions, social practices, and activities of a society or social group. Tourism is a powerful vector

³ TESSA Ahmed, (1999) la zone d'expansion touristique outil d'aménagement du territoire et méthode d'analyse spatiale, thèse de magister,

⁴ TREBEN Margot, « La promotion d'un territoire par la valorisation de son patrimoine culturel

for promoting culture and generating income, contributing to the preservation and development of cultural heritage, cultural production, and creativity. As such, a cultural tourist is someone who travels to satisfy cultural needs. The main reason for their trip is cultural discovery. A cultural tourist generally belongs to a well-educated group of visitors, similar to visitors to most museums, monuments, and historical landmarks. Among those who indulge in cultural tourism include people with a good financial situation and intellectual professions.

- *Intangible cultural heritage*

Heritage is a collection of tangible or intangible assets, one of whose characteristics is to establish a link between past and future generations. It is therefore linked to a legacy to be passed on, stemming from the history, more or less ancient, of the territory or group in question. Heritage, in the sense used here, necessarily has a collective dimension, and its conservation is in the public interest⁵.

Heritage is the instrument of this to-and-fro between past, present, and future, as well as the receptacle of memories, it materializes the symbolic value of cultural identities and constitutes a structuring landmark for all those legacies and riches that still persist. In these times of increasing globalization, protecting, conserving, interpreting, and presenting the heritage and diversity of each place or region is an important issue for everyone, everywhere.

This heritage is made up of tangible assets that are inseparable from our material heritage. Although we sometimes discuss heritage in general, this article focuses on the notion of intangible cultural heritage.

Heritage is also an important factor in enabling individuals to demonstrate their differences from other societies, their way of thinking about the world, and their ability to create culture. Every nation's culture is an original creation that manifests itself in all aspects of life.

The new orientation of development was then to privilege an introspective perspective and to treat development as a process that must be initiated and maintained in the region, taking into account of course its natural resources and human potential.

Intangible heritage plays an increasingly important role in UNESCO's overall planning. Its aim is to

make nations aware of the need to protect their cultural diversity and to help them develop projects to protect, preserve, and develop this heritage.

As defined by UNESCO in its 2003 Seoul Convention, "intangible cultural heritage" refers to "the practices, representations and expressions, knowledge and skills that communities and groups, and in some cases, individuals, recognized as an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups according to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus helping to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity."⁶

Festivals are original creations, each different from the next in terms of size, venue, and program. But they're all driven by a spirit of celebration and conviviality, which encourages the emergence of new audiences who are sometimes put off by the formalities of winter seasons. Teams are made up of both professionals and volunteers. There is no single festival model. According to another definition by Luc Benito, "A festival is a unique form of celebration, a public celebration of an artistic genre in a reduced time-space at annual intervals". It's difficult to give an absolute definition of what a festival is. The constant evolution of festivals makes this a complex test.

There are many spiritual heritage festivals in Morocco, such as the Fès Sacred Music Festival, the Gnaoua Festival and the Tanjazz Festival...etc.

In terms of tourism, events such as festivals attract a large number of visitors, both regular and occasional, and liven up the life of a town or region. They place the region at the center of attention at a given moment. What's more, a region's tourist appeal has a decisive influence on the image and reputation of the city hosting a successful festival and also attracts the interest of businesses and other investors. What's more, this dynamism and added value help to retain local residents, prevent desertification, and attract new ones.

Intangible cultural heritage in a sustainable context
The tourism and leisure industry are the world's leading industry in terms of sales. This sector therefore has every interest in preserving its "goodwill": the natural environment, landscapes,

⁵ VERNIERES Michel, (2011) patrimoine et développement, Etude pluridisciplinaires, Édition Karthala, , p8

⁶ BOUGEON-RENAULT Dominique, (2009) Marketing de l'Art et de la Culture, Dunod, Paris, , p 176.

and natural, historical, and cultural heritage through responsible, integrated, and shared management. Cultural heritage plays a central role in cultural tourism. Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism that aims to minimize impacts. It's a product that reconciles the economy and the environment with a view to sustainable development.

Each community has its own intangible cultural heritage, as well as its own ways of transmitting this heritage, knowledge and know-how. As a general rule, this transmission takes place orally rather than in writing, which means that the people capable of transmitting intangible cultural heritage are essential to its transmission. This is why the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage must be carried out in collaboration with local populations, taking into account their expectations, their modes of transmission, the changes their culture has undergone, and so on. Without the involvement of locals in communities, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is meaningless.

Cultural tourism is an asset for local areas, enabling them to develop economically, socially, and culturally. What's more, it makes up for the seasonal nature of tourism by offering cultural activities all year round. Heritage is an essential element of cultural tourism, and it is therefore essential to safeguard and enhance it, particularly with a view to developing a tourism offering. The promotion of heritage tourism is therefore often the driving force behind its preservation.

2. Content marketing and the promotion of cultural heritage

In marketing, brand image can be defined as the set of associations and impressions that consumers have about a brand (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991).

Content marketing plays a crucial role in promoting cultural heritage and shaping the brand image of a destination. Brand image refers to the overall perception and associations that consumers have with a particular brand. In the context of tourism, different types of brand images are recognized - organic image, induced image, and complex image. The organic image is inherent and natural, while the induced image is created through marketing efforts. The complex image, on the other hand, is formed by tourists after their travel experience.

Through content marketing, destinations can highlight their unique heritage and attract tourists

who are interested in experiencing and learning about different cultures

In this sense, brand image is considered to be a decisive factor in the choice of destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Also, the choice upstream of the purchasing process is based on the ability to generate a positive image (Gartner, 1989) through relevant content.

- *The decision to consume a live show*

Three theoretical currents have influenced the analysis of live performance consumption behavior: economic theory, sociological theory, and marketing research into purchasing decisions and the consumption experience. In this context, we study the concept of decision-making in the consumption of a live performance.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were the first authors to discuss the explanatory model of consumption behavior in the cultural domain. Whereas models of purchase decision-making took into account the cognitive processes involved by the purchaser, namely the search for and processing of information, the experience model considers a theoretical approach in which the decision-maker is not limited to a need for functional utility but needs a gratifying experience.

One of the foundations of this analysis lies in the opposition analyzed by Nelson (1970) between information products, whose characteristics can be accurately assessed before purchase, and experience products, whose characteristics can only be assessed when the good or service is used. While research into consumer behavior was mainly devoted to information products, Holbrook and Hirschman reminded us of the importance of experience products in general, and not just in the cultural sphere. This reminder is crucial because it makes it clear that cultural products can include an informational component, even if this is generally smaller than the experiential component.

This is to say that the consumer experience is an important factor in the decision to buy a live show.

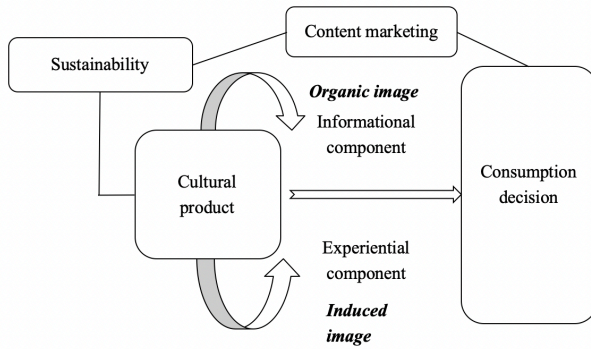


Figure a Concept mapping

III. METHOD

In our methodological approach, we opted in the first instance for a study of cultural heritage, the content marketing strategy, and the weight of the latter in the conservation of heritage and its promotion. Secondly, we have chosen to carry out a quantitative study, the aim of which is to evaluate and measure the variables influencing the relationship between a living festival (taking the example of the Gnaoua festival in Essaouira, which is part of the cultural heritage) and content marketing associated with sustainability. The aim is to explain better and understand the factors influencing the Moroccan tourist's choice and acceptance of the content strategy used by public and private tourism stakeholders to enhance and promote Gnawa culture in Morocco.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION -CASE OF THE ESSAOUIRA GNAOUA FESTIVAL (MOROCCO)

This section deals with the presentation of our research object: the Gnaoua festival, through an analysis of a few socio-economic indicators that will enable us to situate ourselves well and to better refer to ourselves.

The Gnaoua and World Music Festival is a Moroccan music festival created in 1997 to promote the Gnaoua style.

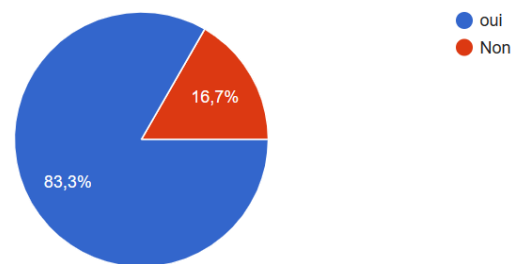
1. General assessment

According to the results we received, the Essaouira Gnaoua Festival stands out as one of the most visited in Morocco due to its originality and the identity of this festival.

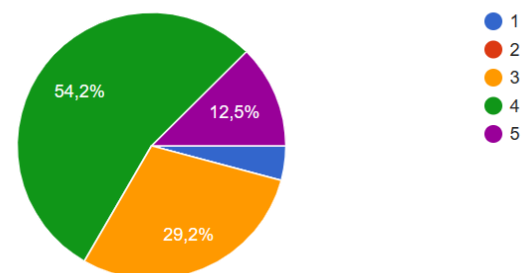
The responses we received defined the cultural and artistic aspect as the festival's distinguishing feature, in addition to the atmosphere devoted to the celebratory festivities. Promotion, communication on social networks, and testimonials also remain crucial in the decision to attend the festival.

65% of respondents said they wanted to return to Essaouira to attend the festival, promoting the city's cultural heritage.

2. Communication and promotion: key factors in the choice of cultural destination

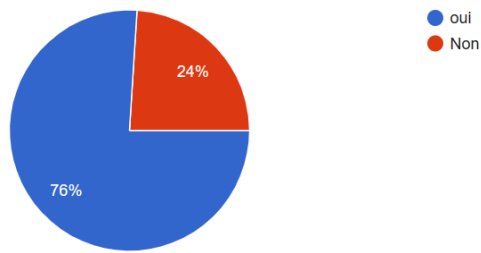


83,3% of respondents stated that they follow the communication campaigns of the Gnaoua festival through the official website and shares and testimonials on social networks. The majority of respondents preferred videos and photos as the type of content used to promote and communicate about the festival.

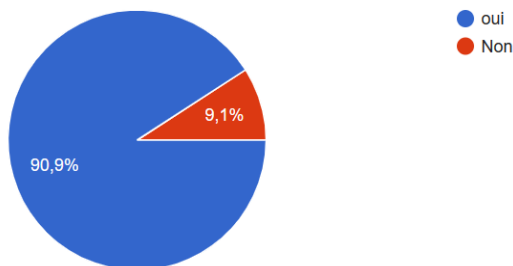


54,2% of respondents rated the promotion and communication of the festival as good on a scale of 4. This does not rule out the recommendation that much more effort be put into communicating the festival's activities and program. That said, promotion, communication on social networks, and testimonials also remain crucial in the decision to attend the festival.

3. Sustainability and content marketing of the festival's promotional material



76% of respondents were interested in a festival highlighting aspects of the intangible heritage of Essaouira city.



The majority of respondents confirmed the importance of content marketing and the sustainable aspect of the destination and products marketed in the promotion of festivals celebrating cultural heritage. The responses give the importance of internet content in marketing cultural heritage, an element of differentiation and decision-making. It partly affects their purchasing and recommendation behavior. Sustainable development is associated with cultural heritage, which is always conveyed through communication about the Gnaoua festival, highlighting the sustainable aspect, a specific feature of the destination, and an element of preservation of the city's intangible heritage.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study aims to highlight the importance of editorial content in promoting Morocco's intangible heritage. The main expected results are the actions taken in this direction and the identification of the impact perceived by Moroccan tourists on content marketing applied to the promotion and enhancement of Gnawa culture. This is without forgetting to integrate sustainability as an element of differentiation of this Moroccan cultural heritage. At the end of this research, which responds to the problem of the contribution of intangible cultural heritage to the tourism promotion of a festival, we

have attempted to highlight some aspects of the phenomenon of cultural tourism, which has experienced strong growth in recent years, particularly by interacting with its essential element, which is heritage. While at first, certain places remained anonymous to tourists, today, thanks to the promotion of their heritage, these places are becoming known and, of course, visited.

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