Socio-cultural and digital transformations of tangible and intangible heritage in light of the adoption of social media:
A field study on a sample of tourist guides in the Casbah neighborhoods of Algiers

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Abstract:

The study that deals with the topic of socio-cultural and digital transformations of cultural heritage under the use of social media aims to explore the nature of the digital transformation of modern professional practices in tourist guiding through the use of social media with the aim of promoting cultural heritage and showing its role in the introduction and presentation of tangible and intangible heritage. Concerning the importance of this study, it lies in the topic itself, which focuses on the socio-cultural and digital transformations of modern professional practices, especially those related to cultural heritage in its tangible and intangible sides, and in standing on the possibility of digitizing this cultural heritage. The results of the study have shown that tourist guides are accompanying the digital transformation through social media, and that the digital transformation of the professional practices of guides contributes to attracting tourists through promotional videos and images of the Casbah neighborhoods.

Keywords: digital transformation, culture, heritage, cultural heritage, social media, tourist guide.

1. The Problemtic:

Social media have become among the most important media used in the process of communication and interaction, and they are now employed in all societal institutions, especially in the field of tourism and cultural promotion with the aim of disseminating Algerian cultural heritage. Tourist guiding has witnessed a qualitative shift from its traditional character confined within Algerian society to a wider scope in the era of social media, taking on a digital media-oriented character that promotes to all parts of the world, and thus Algerian cultural heritage becomes recognized across the entire national territory. These media, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms, have contributed to transmitting this tangible and intangible cultural heritage to the farthest extents, and to striving to preserve it from extinction and disappearance. From all this, the following research problem emerges:

What is the reality of promoting tangible and intangible heritage in light of social media?

Sub-questions:

✓ Does digital transformation affect the professional practices

of tourist guides in light of social media?

- ✓ What are the most used social media platforms in promoting tangible and intangible heritage by tourist guides in the Casbah neighborhoods?

- ✓ What are the problems and obstacles that face the tourist guide in the era of digital transformation?

2. Importance of the Study:

The importance of the study lies in identifying the most used social media platforms for promoting tangible and intangible heritage, while seeking to reach methods of preserving it from extinction and disappearance.

3. Objectives of the Study:

The presented study aims to:

- ✓ Examine the reality of tangible and intangible heritage in the era of social media.

- ✓ Examine the effectiveness and efficiency of promotion through social media by tourist guides in the Casbah neighborhoods in attracting foreign tourists.

- ✓ Identify the challenges and difficulties faced by tourist guides in the Casbah neighborhoods in light of social media and the digital era.

4. Definition of Concepts:

− Digital Transformation:

The concept of digital transformation is linked to how institutions use the power and potential of technology such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and Internet of Things technologies to enhance business operations and customer experience or to create new lines and methods. Digital transformation also refers to the pursuit of achieving organizational strategies and developing innovative and flexible work and operational models through investing in technologies, developing talents, reorganizing processes, and managing change in order to create new value and experiences for customers, employees, and stakeholders (Mohamed Ahmed Abdel Ghani, 2023, p. 137).

− Culture:

Perhaps the first to use the term culture in the West was Edward Tylor, who published in 1871 the most important book on the subject, which became a fundamental reference at the time, namely "Primitive Culture." From his perspective, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and traditions acquired by man as a member of society (Bassem Ali Khreisan, 2001, p. 31).

Dorothy Lee defines culture as "a system of symbols through which individuals give meaning to everything that exists around them. Human behavior, as determined by culture, is a system that links the individual to his world, and the behavior of the individual in any social situation is nothing but an expression of this relationship. The cultural framework of any society shapes the actions, knowledge, thinking, and interpretation of its individuals of everything that revolves around them" (Dalal Malhas Estaitieh, 2004, p. 227).

Malek Bennabi defines culture as a set of moral qualities and social values that affect the individual from birth and unconsciously become the relationship that links his behavior to the style of life in the environment in which he was born (Malek Bennabi, 1984, p. 65).

– Heritage:

All sites of scientific or historical importance, national monuments, wildlife, unique sites, historical buildings and structures, works of art, oral and written heritage, museum collections, and the documentation of all these, which creates a base for shared cultural and artistic creativity.

As for cultural heritage, according to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted by the General Conference at its seventeenth session, Paris, November 1972, the concept of cultural heritage as stated in Article One includes many elements that constitute heritage, including monuments, which comprise "architectural works, works of sculpture and painting on buildings, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, caves, and groups of features which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, or science" (Mahdia Hamel, n.d., p. 304).

– Material Culture:

It refers to all things that humans have made or use to adapt to the environment, ranging from pottery vessels used by primitive humans to space vehicles in the most technologically advanced countries. Thus, material culture is everything that humans can physically touch from elements and objects that are always subject to continuous change, and which humans have sought to acquire or modify in order to satisfy their basic needs (Mostafa Omar Hamada, 2007, p. 205).

– Intangible Culture:

The intangible aspect of culture includes everything that humans create and use in interpreting and guiding their behavior and actions, provided that it does not go beyond the scope of the mind or thought. Therefore, it represents all non-material cultural traits such as artistic skills, standards, beliefs, attitudes, language, and others that have been transmitted by members of society from one generation to another.

Accordingly, the elements of values, beliefs, customs, actions, norms, law, social systems, symbols, myth, stories, and proverbs carry intangible aspects of culture, and thus express the intellectual and ideological dimension of human interaction (Al-Tijani Miyata, 2014, p. 156).

– Social Media:

They are a system of electronic networks that allows the subscriber to create a personal account, and then link it, through an electronic social system, with other members who have the same interests and hobbies, or to connect him with university or secondary school friends. These sites are classified within the second generation of the web (Web 2.0), and they were called social because they came from the concept of "building communities." In this way, the user can get to know people who share common interests on the Internet, discover more websites in fields that concern him, and share his photos, notes, and files with family members, friends, and colleagues at work.

– The Tourist Guide:

The tourist guide is considered one of the pillars of the tourism process, as he undertakes the management and organization of tourist trips by accompanying tourist groups, and carries out the process of clarification and explanation about tourist attraction areas to the members of the tourist group he accompanies. He bears the responsibility of preserving this group, as he is the ambassador, the messenger, and the teacher who transmits the civilization and culture of the nation. The tourist guide has also been defined as "the person who practices the profession of

tourist guiding to various tourist and archaeological places and provides visitors with information about them" (Ghassan Burhan Oweis, 2006, p. 32).

5. Characteristics and Features of Social Networking Sites

1. **Ease of use:** Social networking sites have been developed to be easy to use, as they require only a limited level of knowledge of basic technological principles in order to publish and achieve communication through the Internet.

2. **Communication and self-expression:** Social networking sites have provided attractive communication channels that do not depend on publishing a specific content, and they have become a necessity for those interested in communicating with others and expressing the self.

3. **Forming society in new ways:** Although virtual community concepts have existed since the beginning of electronic applications, social networking sites have provided new means of communication. Users may organize themselves into book readers' communities and communicate through exchanging and reading books they like.

4. **Data extraction:** Most social networking platforms allow their members to browse and view their friends' networks.

5. **Bottom-up activities:** Social networking sites provide ideal platforms through which users who share the same values and interests can cooperate effectively and at lower costs. For example, doctors can share and verify rare cases through health social networking sites such as "within," and protests can also be organized through the use of sites such as "care."

6. **Reorganizing the geography of the Internet:** Social networking sites have made available new entry points to the Internet, referred to as the "global personal identity of people." Until recently, people communicated with each other on the Internet using place-based metaphors (cities, addresses, home pages). These sites transformed place-based metaphors into personal ones (blogs, personal profiles, etc.).

7. **Emotion through content:** Emotional participation is one of the main motives for using microblogging, and the strength and characteristics of social networks are linked to what is known as emotional sharing or emotional exchange (Abdullah Mamdouh Mubarak Al-Raoud, 2012, p. 32).

6. Types of Social Media:

Among them, the following can be mentioned:

‒ **Facebook:**

It is one of the most popular social networking sites, created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University. At first, it was only available for Harvard students, then opened to university students, later to high school students, and some companies, and finally to anyone who wanted to create an account. Facebook has many features such as:

➤ Allowing freedom in expression, cultural exchange, and browsing news.

➤ No limitation in characters for expression, freedom to use images and videos, and sharing them with friends.

➤ Control over who can see personal information, and the ability for page owner to limit some activities, also it allows easily refusing any friend request. This shows Facebook's attention to member privacy.

➤ The permanence feature, meaning information on a person's page may remain for long periods, sometimes up to six months, unlike other media.

➤ The ability to isolate and categorize groups that are intellectually or culturally close, also easy searching for members.

➤ The possibility of repeating ideas that have been posted on the interaction space of the site (Abdel Latif Imad, 2016).

− Twitter:

It is one of the social media that is almost as important as Facebook and considered its main competitor. It provides a micro-service for its users, the "tweeters," which became widely used recently and played big role in political and social events in many countries. Users can write short messages not exceeding 140 characters, which can be called a condensed text containing many details. Its features include:

➤ Easier to use than many other sites.

➤ Always knowing what friends are doing at any time.

➤ Fastest way to ask questions and get immediate answers.

➤ Allows sending urgent or very important news like distress signals.

➤ Keeps users aware of those they follow and care about.

− Snapchat:

It is a social communication tool similar to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other apps. It is totally free. The difference is in how it works: it is a photo-messaging app that allows taking pictures, recording videos, adding text and drawings, and sending them to a controlled list of recipients (Shamdin Majed Mohamed, 2017, p. 281).

7. Social Networking Sites: Difficulties and Challenges:

Despite the great services provided by social media to users, they face several difficulties and challenges which often negatively affect them, including:

1. **Low productivity:** People use electronic tools to organize and expand their social life, but sometimes at the expense of

work productivity, so employers may not favor it.

2. **Membership attachment chains (difficulty leaving):** Even with delete options, many users found it almost impossible to fully remove themselves from Facebook, causing concern about personal data and network use.

3. **Lack of privacy and weak security:** Social media can sell personal information to others, intellectual property is threatened, and works of artists or writers may have uncertain fate. Simple usage and weak security make hacking easy.

4. **Absence of real identity:** Real identity cannot be fully known unless people meet in person. Relationships remain almost mythical if body language and personal behavior are not observed. It is hard to fully understand user behavior and personal traits online.

5. **Legitimacy and impersonation:** Some unofficial organizations can mislead or deceive less careful users, like through fraud or scams.

6. **Content falsification:** Judging credibility online is more complex than traditional media. Multiple sources, free and irregular flow of information, and many providers create errors for those seeking information.

7. **Surveillance and blocking:** Governments, via intelligence agencies, have strong power to monitor media and sometimes block it, as in Egypt. Social media can also be intelligence tools for governments to collect information (Wael Mubarak Khidr Fadlallah, 2010, p. 6).

8. Digital Transformation: Necessity or Choice

The term digital transformation has become widely used in recent years due to its great importance in organizational changes in different administrations, as a result of technological developments. It refers to using digital technologies to create value and change the work style related to applying digital technology in all social, economic, and even cultural aspects. Digital transformation is an urgent necessity imposed by the rapid development in using information technology to achieve and move from paper-based government to digital government.

This transition to new IT systems, or the implementation of digital services, is not a simple or easy process at all. It often requires, and includes, retraining, reorganizing, and creating new positions inside institutions. Therefore, in recent years, digital transformation has become among the strategic priorities in both public and private sectors. Countries worldwide have recognized the importance and necessity of adopting programs based on strategies and studied plans that ensure digital transformation and fulfill its requirements in the age of digitization in all its dimensions and forms. Digitization processes have expanded and become a feature of all functions, tasks, procedures, and vital processes in the digital society, which depends on digital economy,

digital education, digital health, digital commerce, and digital government.

In this context, the Ministry of National Education adopted digitization and included it in its various operations by creating digital accounts for every actor in the educational process, from the director to the teacher, parents, and guidance counselor, as an initial step in applying digitization mechanisms aimed at reducing burdens on employees on one side and improving performance quality on the other (Harfouch Madani, 2023).

9. Objectives of Digital Transformation

These can be summarized as follows:

✓ Providing a huge amount of information on digital media.
✓ Facilitating searching in digital collections and retrieving information by many means and methods.
✓ Providing informational services using new technologies.
✓ Preserving the original sources of information from damage.
✓ Making information available to the largest number of beneficiaries and users through digital platforms.
✓ Objectives linked to strengthening performance to reduce errors resulting from manual input, and smooth transfer of information between different administrations.
✓ Reducing paper-based work and the need to copy documents if they are available electronically.
✓ Optimizing human resources if information is stored digitally

and becomes easy to use, directing human effort to more productive tasks.
✓ Increasing productivity and reducing costs in performance by using technology relying on information networks.
✓ Finding better ways for citizen participation in the executive process (Aswat, 2022, p. 654).

10. Challenges of Digital Transformation

✓ Lack of technical skills among organizational staff is a fundamental factor that must be considered during drafting and preparing the digital strategy.
✓ Organizational culture: a mixture of beliefs, values, customs, and myths, considered a problem that can hinder digital transformation if it is not based on openness to change. Coordination: meaning if communication between different levels is not good, it fails, so roles, responsibilities, and objectives must be clearly defined.
✓ Weak infrastructure related to equipment, information and communication technologies, its oldness, and limited availability.
✓ Lack of competence and experience of organizational staff and their limited ability to handle basics and requirements of digital transformation.
✓ Laws and regulations often form an obstacle that reduces the effectiveness of digital transformation, making it slow

and causing losses to the institution (Grisi Sdouki et al., 2021, pp. 99-109).

11. Types of Tourist Guiding:

Tourist guiding has several types, among them we mention:

A. General Tourist Guide (général guide):

This refers to the guide who accompanies tourist groups and provides guidance, and his field of work includes all areas under his responsibility without exception.

B. Local Tourist Guide (Local guide):

This guide's work is limited to accompanying tourist groups in one specific tourist or archaeological area.

C. Program Guide with Official State Institutions (Gouvernement guide):

This guide accompanies tourist groups of official nature and official guests based on assignment from official institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

D. Adventure Guide (Adventure guide):

This type depends on a tourist program based on adventure and exploration to reach a creative idea that provides a suitable amount of positive influence on tourists through natural beauty and environmental safety. The tourist program requires highly qualified guides for its execution.

E. Tour Managers (Tour managers):

It is observed that tour managers specialize in arranging, organizing, and supervising the implementation of tourist programs. The amount of explanation and information provided by tour managers to the group members varies according to the role of the tourist guide. The latter, when organizing a group at a site, performs explanations and commentary.

12. Field Study:

12.1 Study Location:

The study was conducted in the Kasbah neighborhoods of Algiers, starting from Ketchawa University to the upper parts of the Kasbah.

12.2 Study Time:

The study took place on August 21, 2025.

12.3 Study Methodology:

Determining the methodology in a study is one of the most important steps in scientific research. This is confirmed by Maurice Angers, who said: "The research report must necessarily include a section on methodology, in which the applied method is clarified, because results in themselves do not mean anything; rather, the solid basis and validity of a research appear through the appropriateness of the methodology, its tools, and its application" (Maurice Angers, 2008, p. 37).

The quantitative method is considered the way to describe the studied phenomenon and depict it numerically, by collecting codified information, classifying, analyzing, and subjecting it to detailed study (Abdullah Kamel Al-Himali, n.d., p. 18).

12.4 Study Sample:

This type of sample means equal opportunity for all elements of the community, and it is chosen using lotteries or random number tables. Using this method requires listing and knowing all elements that make up the study population. It is difficult to apply in scattered, distant, or large communities (Massoudi Amhamed, n.d., p. 258).

12.5 Sampling Technique:

The researcher in this study used a non-probability sample type called snowball sampling. In this type, the researcher draws a specific picture of the characteristics required for studying the sample, then asks each participant to suggest one or more participants who meet those characteristics to be included in the sample. The sample grows by recommendation of each participant until the saturation stage is reached (Qandilji Amer & Al-Samra'i Iman, 2009).

The researcher's choice of tourist guides in the popular Kasbah neighborhood (Martyrs' Square) is due to the proximity of her residence and the ease of access to tourist guides, given that they work within an organized network among them.

13. Personal Data:

Table 01. Distribution of Sample Individuals by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Females	2	20
Males	8	80
Total	10	100

From the results shown above, it appears that the percentage of males is higher at 80%, whereas the percentage of females is 20%. This is due to the specificity of the region itself.

Table 02. Distribution of Sample Individuals by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
25–30	1	10
31–35	4	40
36–40	3	30
41+	2	20
Total	10	100

From the above results, the highest percentage among tourist guides falls in the age group 31–35 years at 40%, followed by 36–40 at 30%. The age group 41+ reached 20%, while the lowest percentage was 10% for the age group 25–30.

Table 03. Distribution of Sample Individuals by Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage %
Middle school	4	40
High school	2	20
University	4	40
Total	10	100

The results show equality between the middle and university levels at 40% each. In contrast, 20% represent the high school level of tourist guides in the Kasbah neighborhoods.

Table 04. Method of Joining Tourist Guiding by Gender

Gender	Profession	Hobby	Total Frequency	Percentage %
Male	6	2	8	100
Female	1	1	2	100
Total	7	3	10	100

From the results above, it appears that the general trend in the table is estimated at 70%, supported by male respondents with 75%.

The obtained statistical data confirm that the majority of respondents practice the profession of tourist guiding, which is considered their main daily source of income. A tour is calculated for one person at a price of 1000 DZD or 1200 DZD depending on each guide. If it is a group, the price is calculated at 600 DZD per person. The time and meeting place are set for the start of the journey to explore the deep and ancient walls of the Kasbah. According to their statements, they are natives of the area, and the reason that led them to this profession is the high demand from all over the world. Due to the absence of permanent and secured jobs, they turned to tourist guiding, which has its own rules and professional qualifications. On the other hand, some practice it as a hobby and out of love for exploration to dive deeper into its historical tales.

Table 05. Promotion of Cultural Heritage through Social Media

Gender	Yes	No	Percentage %
Male	7	1	87.5 / 12.5
Female	2	0	100 / 0
Total	9	1	90 / 10

From the results above, it appears that the overwhelming majority of respondents use social media to promote both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, with 90% overall, supported by 87.5% of males. Meanwhile, 10% do not use social media, represented by one individual in the sample due to his age and preference for the simple traditional style of promotion.

The statistical data show that information and communication technologies have entered the field of tourism promotion, as most people in the world use them, especially social media. These platforms have intensified cultural communication between peoples and enabled tourist guides to promote cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) and introduce the customs and traditions of each country, including Algeria, which is rich in many archaeological landmarks, each carrying a story and a tale.

Table 06. Most Used Social Media Type by Gender

Gender	Facebook	TikTok	Instagram	Total %
Male	9 (40.90%)	7 (31.81%)	6 (27.27%)	22 (100%)
Female	2 (33.33%)	2 (33.33%)	2 (33.33%)	6 (100%)
Total	11 (39.28%)	9 (32.14%)	8 (28.57%)	28 (100%)

Note: These numbers indicate the number of responses, not the sample size.

The results above show that the general trend in the table is estimated at 39.28%, supported by the responses of males at 40.90%, which confirms their use of Facebook to promote both tangible and intangible heritage. This is followed by 32.14% of total responses, supported by females at 33.33%, who use Instagram and Facebook at the same rate. The lowest percentage was for TikTok usage at 28.57%, supported by females at 33.33%.

The recorded data confirm that social media has become an inevitable reality in the life of individuals in society. It has become a transcontinental communication tool used for work and even outside the scope of work. These platforms have saved time and effort as they provide information in a very short period. This

is why tourist guides use them to promote and introduce customs, traditions, and everything related to Algerian authenticity, including clothing, food, popular proverbs, folk dances, and other cultural heritage that embodies Algeria's deep-rooted originality.

This is what the tourist guides working in the Kasbah of Algiers do. They know the various historical stories that each street carries, such as Ali La Pointe Street, the Dey Palace, Khadaouj Al-Amia, Dar Aziza, and every house in the ancient Kasbah, each having unique architectural features like the Mausoleum of Sidi Abdel Rahman, among others. These promoters narrate stories for each of the mentioned landmarks.

Table 07. Means of Promoting Tangible and Intangible Heritage by Gender

Gender	Videos	Photos	Total %
Male	9 (56.25%)	7 (38.88%)	16 (100%)
Female	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4 (100%)
Total	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	20 (100%)

From the results above, it is clear that the general trend in the table is estimated at 55%, supported by males at 56.25%, confirming their use of videos to promote various tangible and intangible heritage. In contrast, 45% is supported by females at 50%, who use photos to introduce and promote the different neighborhoods and streets of the Kasbah and everything related to them.

The data show that tourist guides use videos and photos along with explanations and stories for each post uploaded on their pages. Each time, they try to upload images captured from multiple angles to give a clear view for every visitor to the page. Some interact to schedule a tour, while others simply watch and press "like" on a video or photo. In this way, social media brings the heritage closer to viewers. Often, these pages serve as virtual spaces to learn about different peoples, attract various visitors, and introduce them to the Kasbah and its deep neighborhoods.

14. Conclusion:

Cultural heritage is considered the nation's treasure; it asserts its presence, confirms its identity, and achieves its ambitions. These tangible and intangible heritages have a permanent presence in the collective mind of society because they are one of the important means that define its nature and environment. They also reveal its uniqueness as they represent the true record of its various social, intellectual, and cultural aspects.

Given the great value assigned to cultural heritage in all its forms, the Algerian state has sought to preserve it, cling to it, and attempt to revive and reanimate it, especially in the face of the sweeping threats of globalization that endanger its existence, as well as the attempts of some enemies of the nation to erase its identity and scatter its cohesion. Introducing the history of each landmark in Algeria represents a great responsibility borne by every Algerian tourist guide in promoting and introducing it,

particularly regarding Algerian authenticity. There is no harm in using these media as partners contributing to the promotion and transmitting of our heritage to the farthest points in the world.

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