A new decade
for social changes
The post-Covid urban heritage, between attractiveness and risks, Case of the city of Constantine - Algeria

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Abstract. The aim of this research is to find out and analyze the reasons for the stagnation of the tourist attractiveness of the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine (the old city), and try to make objective suggestions so as to activate the attractiveness of the urban touristic heritage of the city of Constantine all over again, particularly after the Corona crisis that has put the tourism sector in the city into an almost total immovability. In this regards, a questionnaire was used as a tool for the study, and in order to obtain and analyze information through the selected sample of the city’s population. In virtue of which, the results obtained from this study lead to diagnosing the complex problems of the tourists’ urban heritage along with the various risks threatening the same, which negatively affected the city’s tourist attractiveness; inclusive of negative human behaviours, in respect such as disrespecting the values of this heritage and various illegal practices on its spaces, in addition to weak governance and management mechanisms, thus making the city’s urban heritage in a waiting state.

Keywords. Urban heritage; Constantine; Covid 19; Risks; Tourist attractiveness

Introduction

The city, this urban space lived and shared by the whole populations. It includes all users in its dynamics and much more for the tourism promotion of its urban heritage. Likewise, it is a complex system because of the many components encompassed therein: habitat, economic activities, social environment, transport and heritage resources.

Indeed, the contemporary city faces new development challenges imposed by the great classic and new threats, in respect such as the Covid 19 pandemic with the multiple variants thereof. Consequently, it is called upon to be equipped with perspectives of adaptation and resilience, so that it shall be able to uphold its capacity to attract visitors; in other words, to preserve its own attractiveness. Besides, any city with urban tourist heritage potential must ensure the conservation, renovation and reasonable use of urban remains, such as historic monuments. (Garat et al, 2008). Hence, a territory that loses its competitiveness is exposed to...
colossal losses in terms of population, to phenomena of disinvestment and relocation of companies. (Thiard 2009).

According to Coëffé.V (2010), tourism is a strongly urban phenomenon; it represents an invention of city dwellers, thus cities remain the first destinations, as gateways to other tourist places. More to the point, tourism is first and foremost a process of contact and an encounter between the near and the far in anonymous way. (Duhamel & Violier 2009) considers that tourism is fundamentally an urban project. It is promoted by urban societies that project their lifestyles onto space…

In addition, studying urban tourism is an exploration of a multidimensional phenomenon (Ashworth & Page 2011). Referring to multiple disciplines that deal with the links of heritage with tourism, urbanisation as well as the role thereof in public space and the impacts of heritage on the city. If we know that tourism potential is a variety of resources in a particular area that can be developed into a tourist attraction (Prasetya et al. 2022) Thus, urban heritage can constitute a tourist resource that becomes tourist heritage through its development. Besides, it becomes a component of the tourist offer only if its capacity to attract tourist flows justifies its enhancement through this activity (Popescu 2015)

Nowadays, Covid 19 has caused significant changes and is strongly hitting the tourism sector, to the point of stifling its activity across different destinations. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has estimated, for its part, (in July 2020) a decrease of 850 million to 01.1 billion of international tourists over the year 2020. (Babou & Callot 2021) Under the threats generated by urbanisation and globalisation, the term Heritage has come to designate the totality of goods inherited from the past, whether cultural or natural (Merlin & Choay 2010). However, Algeria is one of the countries with an invaluable variety of historical sites. This diversity allows this country to be one of the most sought-after tourist destinations on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. As a fact of matter, the promotion of cultural tourism in this country at present makes it possible to safeguard its heritage, and improve the quality of life and well-being of its inhabitants. (Hamdi Pacha 2016)

The various policies of the Algerian State since independence have shown their limits with insufficient revenues (Fertas et al., 2022). For long time, the tourism sector has been neglected or even underestimated. In this respect, a difficult economic and financial crisis, that has affected Algeria since June 2014 (the drastic drop in the price of oil from 120 dollars a barrel to 26 dollars with the appearance of Covid-19), has led decision-makers to consider a new alternative for the purpose of promoting the tourism sector (Fertas et al., 2022).

Analysis methodology
1. Location of the study area (City of Constantine)

The city of Constantine is located between latitude 36.23 and longitude 07.35 in the centre of eastern Algeria, precisely 245 km from the Algerian-Tunisian borders, 431 km from the capital Algiers to the west, 89 km from Skikda to the north and 235 km from Biskra to the south (Tourist Development Plan of the Province of Constantine 2011).

The Province of Constantine is bordered to the south by the province of Oum El Bouaghi, to the east by the province of Guelma, to the west by the province of Mila and to the north by the province of Skikda (Statistical Yearbook of the Province of Constantine, year of 2009).

For a long time, the city of Constantine has played an important role in the organisation of the Eastern region of Algeria. More to the point, it is a real crossroads for exchanges between the different parts of the region: East, West, North and South; likewise, it represents the cultural
and scientific centre of the eastern region of the country (Tourist Development Plan of the Province of Constantine 2011). The city is located at the centre of the province’s territory and covers an area of 2,297.20 km² (Statistical Yearbook of the Province of Constantine 2009). Administration-wise, it is divided into 12 communes (vide Figure 1).

Furthermore, it represents a central node in Eastern Algeria at the crossroads of the major North-South (Skikda – Biskra) and West-East (Sétif – Annaba) axes. In view of its privileged geographical situation, its historical, economic, scientific and cultural heritage, Constantine has the distinction of being the metropolis of the Eastern region of Algeria.

2. Aims and challenges

In today’s world, major economic, social and environmental upheavals are taking place, a situation that requires awareness-raising through reflection on the problems that arise and threaten the balance of the population in its environment. Moreover, preservation of the urban heritage resources remains a delicate and sensitive task in a trend of sustainable development.

For the purpose of achieving such an objective, and taking advantage of the tourism sector, Algeria has implemented a master plan for tourism development (SDAT 2025), which makes it possible to develop all the natural, cultural and historical potential of the country, all the way through the structuring of seven powerful Tourism Poles of Excellence (TPE) recognised as a model in the Algerian market. “Among these poles, we find the North-East Tourist Pole of Excellence: which includes the following cities: Annaba, El Tarf, Skikda, Guelma, Souk Ahras, and finally Tébessa.” (Ministry of Territory planning and Tourism 2008).

Two contrasts come into view between tourism policy and social practices:

Firstly, as pointed out by Bernié-Boissard and Chevalier (2011), the pursuit of urban tourist attractiveness, which has shown to be essential for maintaining the city’s economy, leads to certain planning choices pertaining to population growth and spatial concentration. A second dilemma confronts urban attractiveness with the maintenance of social equilibrium, since high population densities can transform social space and generate a need for urban facilities of all kinds whatever.
In consequence, the challenge is to know how to consolidate the urban tourist heritage by making the city of Constantine attractive in all its dimensions, without causing discord with the local resident population.

3. Analysis method
In this work, we have opted for the case study as the approach method.
In general, this research method allows for a deep understanding of the phenomena; the objective thereof is to provide a detailed analysis of the studied problem, and offer the possibility of developing historical parameters. More to the point, it ensures a strong internal validity, as the recorded phenomena are authentic representations of the studied reality, although it has important shortcomings in terms of the generalisation of the results (Gagnon, 2012). We used the mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) so as to properly interpret the results quantitatively, and to measure and explore the data in qualitative way.

Research tools:
The study relied on the questionnaire, as it represents the most appropriate and effective tool used in scientific research for collection purpose of data in order to achieve the study objectives. A set of questions was designed, to provide answers for the posed problem, based on some previous studies related to the subject of this study, in particular:-

The Project: (Cultural Heritage and Local Development) of the International Association of French-speaking Mayors (Benin, Cape Verde, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal with the World Heritage Centre, France-UNESCO Convention 2010).

The questionnaire is structured in three segments with 30 questions (10 questions for each of the three segments (Table 01) which highlight firstly the opinion of the resident population in terms of the potential of the tourist heritage of the city of Constantine. The second segment was reserved for the various managers and officials who have a direct relationship with the city’s urban heritage, so as to find out their opinion on the various risks that threaten the tourist potential of the city’s heritage.

It was distributed to two samples of 80 people, according to the questionnaire criteria, with a total assessed to 160 people.

Table.01: Questionnaire criteria and the way of their distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Number of questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the attractiveness of the urban heritage, from the point of view of its residents of the city</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Head of family+ student</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks threatening the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employees of various directorates and municipalities (culture - tourism - housing - environment - civil protection)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local governance of the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employees of various directorates and municipalities (culture - tourism - housing - environment - civil protection)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The criteria’s expressions are divided into a set of degrees arranged according to the (LIKERT) five-point scale, the scale of which is consisted of 05 degrees:

**Table.02: The classification used in the evaluation according to the five-point LIKERT scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First criterion</th>
<th>Absolutely inappropriate</th>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Absolutely appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second criterion</td>
<td>Very weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>Very strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third criterion</td>
<td>Very weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Good consideration</td>
<td>Fully consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grades</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time domain:** Our study extended from November 2021 to January 2022, according to a chronology shown in Table No.3. The field work went through four 04 stages through which the questionnaire forms were distributed to the surveyed individuals, then collecting data and information in detail, then processing the obtained data and finally discussing the results obtained as shown in Figure 2.

**Space domain:** The field work was conducted in the city of Constantine, whilst the questionnaire was distributed to 14 directorates in the city.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 The constituents of the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine

Through presenting the constituents of the urban tourist heritage, it has shown clear that the city of Constantine is characterized by a distinctive location and landscape, which provides the same with urban and architectural privacy, along with richness from the historical and archaeological point of view. Besides, its position on the rock gave it a distinction compared to the rest of the cities in Algeria, and unlike other ancient cities, the ancient city of Constantine remains, and so far it maintains its role as the centre of the city and plays its role through functional, commercial, administrative and handicraft diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The landmarks urban tourist heritage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridges and footbridges: the city of Constantine is distinguished by its many bridges and walkways (14) spanning Oued-Rhumel; and which represents a unique tourist potential in the Arab world by their history and appearance. One can quote among them: The bridge of SidiM’Cid; The Bridge of SidiRached;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Devil's Bridge and the new Saleh By Bridge. Seefig 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4 : the new Saleh By Bridge + The Bridge of Sidi-Rached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Old City of Constantine:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The old city is considered a distinct moral and aesthetic heritage, constituting the memory of the city with all its cultural, social and civilizational components. Constantine was known for specialized markets. Each market specializes in a specific trade or craft, such as: butchers, blacksmiths, deer market, and others... it is classified as national heritage since 2005, see fig 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source : Authors,2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>the path of tourists:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is located on the side of the bank of the Rhummel gorges, with a length of approximately 2800m. Part of this path existed in Roman times, allowing them to access the Baths of Caesar; It runs along petrifying springs. France has set up a circuit that will allow people to discover tourist monuments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Palace of the Bey:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this vast building of 5100m² was built on the order of the last bey Ahmed Bey between 1825/1828 on the site of old houses . The Bey's pavilion stood in the middle of the palace and received light all day, thanks to the 13 windows that overlooked its three gardens. (Constantine's Guide, 2010.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source : Authors,2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monument to the dead:
Positioned on the rock of Sidi M'Cid, dominating the plain of Hamma over 200 meters stands the War Memorial in tribute to the victims of the 14-18 war. It was inaugurated on May 7, 1930. This triumphal arch is inspired by that of Trajan which is located in the ruins of Timgad. (Source: Constantine Yesterday and Today)

The Cirta National Museum:
Located right in the city center, opened to the public in 1931. The museum is shaped like a Greco-Roman villa. It extends over an area of 2,100 m². The archaeological collections were acquired through donations from excavations or fortuitous discoveries in the Eastern region.

Roman arches:
It is one of the landmarks of the Roman civilization, located at the confluence of the Wadi Al-Rimal with the Boumerzouk Valley. It is 60 meters long and 20 meters high. It has 10 arches and only 5 remain. It is built of stones and has been classified as a national heritage.

3.2 The residents’ view of the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine:
According to the questionnaire data recorded in Table No.5 and Figure No.10, which shows the assessment of the attractiveness of the urban heritage of the city of Constantine, from the point of view of its residents, we find that among the 10 indicators that were quoted, 05 of them have presented values above the average (03), which are:

- **Heritage capabilities**, the general situation in preserving the urban heritage, raising the awareness of the local population with regards to the urban heritage, the level of promotion and development of the urban heritage of the city, and the contribution of urban projects to
improving the city’s landscape, whereat 90% of the surveyed individuals believe that the city of Constantine is rich with an important and diverse urban heritage.

- In the last 10 years, the city of Constantine has shown great interest in urban heritage, which coincides with its selection as the capital of Arab culture in 2015. Besides, a group of urban projects that greatly contributed, according to the residents’ standpoints, through the same, to raising population awareness and improving the general condition of urban heritage, promoting and developing it by 87.5% of the surveyed individuals, in addition to improving the general landscape of the city by nearly 99% of the surveyed individuals, mainly with regards to rehabilitation projects for the ancient buildings in the old city.

- Nonetheless, this diversity of urban heritage does not bring the suitable tourist influx, all the way through trips organized by tourism agencies or even school trips, namely during the Covid period that the world is witnessing, according to 90% of the surveyed individuals, whereat their answers were ranged between average, inappropriate and completely inappropriate.

- Consequently, 65% of the surveyed individuals believe that the urban heritage has yet to live up to the economic role that makes it a source of income, and allows the same to activate the local development of the city. More to the point, the main reasons in this respect have shown to be pertaining to the lack of security, according to 56% of the surveyed individuals.

![Fig.10: The relationship of the resident population with the urban tourist heritage of the city](image)

3.3 Risks threatening the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine:
Figure No.11 shows the biggest risks that threaten to the urban tourist heritage of Constantine. However, among the ten (10) risks threatening the population and the geographical area in Algeria, we find that 07 of them have indicators that are higher than the average (03), which are:

1. Does your city have one (or more) remarkable real estate heritage (monument, architecture,...)
2. The frequention of heritage spaces by the population ortouristes pendant le Covid?
3. Is your city's heritage an opportunity for development?
4. The general state of conservation of the heritage?
5. The contribution of heritage activities to local development?
6. Raising local populations' awareness of heritage?
7. The promotion and enhancement of your city's heritage?
8. Educational activities related to heritage during Covid?
9. The contribution of urban projects to the improvement of the city landscape
10. La sécurité dans les espaces du patrimoine de votre ville ?
The risk of the Corona pandemic, as 70% of the surveyed individuals believe that the Corona pandemic was one of the strongest reasons that led to reducing the level of tourist influx towards the city of Constantine, in addition to the risk of pollution, the risk of neglect and the risk of erosion, along with the lack of respect for the values of heritage, robbery, theft and illegal practices on heritage spaces, whilst the rest of the three risks: two of them are natural, whose degree of risk was less than average, represented by the risk of earthquakes, the risk of floods and the risk of fires. Subsequent to which, three types of these risks can be classified, which differently effect on the urban tourist heritage of the city:

A- **Human-source risks:**
It is the most risk threatening to the urban heritage, some of which may be unintended, whilst some of them are intended.
- It is represented for the most part in various types of pollution, unanimously by more than 96% of the surveyed individuals, whether air pollution as a result of mechanical movement in the city, solid pollutants due to throwing rubbish by residents and dirt in destroyed places, as well as water pollution through the flow of sewage water directly onto street floors due to the often clogging of the drains.
- The huge majority of surveyed individuals (99%) consider that the erosion of buildings and their continuous neglect are one of the most significant risks that threaten the urban tourist heritage, mainly at the level of the rear buildings that do not overlook the main streets of the city, in particular with the residents neglecting the periodic maintenance works necessary for the preservation of these buildings as a result of their inability to bear the expenses of maintenance, which reflect a very negative image of the old city: similarly, it creates a sense of insecurity, and lends a hand for the spread of some abnormal activities.
- Lack of respect for the urban heritage values, which results in many robberies, thefts and illegal practices on such spaces, or modifications to the old buildings by use of modern building materials.

B- **Natural-source risks:** They are represented in earthquakes and floods, which do not have a significant impact on the urban heritage. In consequence, the most threatening to the urban heritage of the city of Constantine is the human factor and the behaviours resulting therefrom, that greatly hinder any investment that allows the advancement of the tourism sector and the activation of the local development, and adversely affects the degree of tourist attraction of the city, accordingly.
3.4 Local governance of the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine

According to Figure No.12, which shows the assessment of the performance of local management and its relationship to the urban heritage attractiveness, 10 indicators were used to know the nature of urban heritage management in the city; hence, results were as follows:-

- Four (4) indicators that have yet to live up to the acceptable level, and they have shown to be below the average (03), which are: The initiatives of municipality in projects related to heritage, the extent to which legal texts and regulations in the field of heritage are published in the municipality, the formation of the elements of local communities in the protection of urban heritage and the assessment of local management of urban heritage, which essentially represent field interventions on urban heritage areas.

- We note a large gap between the theoretical and practical sides; from a legislative and legal point of view, only 85% of the surveyed individuals; there exist various legal texts regulating and managing the urban heritage; whilst in practice, the various institutions related to the urban heritage of tourism witness a great shortage in terms of technical and professional competencies, essentially resulting from the weak formation of local community elements in the field of protection of the urban heritage, as per confirmed by 75% of the surveyed individuals; the fact of which hinders the city’s initiatives in such projects, even with the presence of a budget dedicated thereto.

- A total stagnation of various urban heritage protection projects during the last two years due to the Corona pandemic, whether pertaining to the programmed projects, in respect such as bridge strengthening projects (Bab El Kantara and SidiRached), or late projects within the projects of the demonstration of Constantine as the capital of Arab culture (facades of buildings in the Souika town).

- In the light of the facts set out above, we can conclude that the local administration at the city of Constantine does not keep pace with the development of the tourism sector in general, and the preservation of urban heritage and the investment thereof, in particular.
4- Fields of intervention to revive the urban tourist heritage in Constantine

For reviving purpose of the various constituents of the urban tourist heritage of the city of Constantine, it is required to upgrade the general urban centre of the city, all the way through appreciating the heritage value of the old city, and managing the same according to the dictates of the urban tourist heritage preservation scheme, based on the use of information and communication technology so as to enrich the culture of the community with such type of heritage, by placing a set of recommendations, which can be summarized in Figure No.13:

A. Promoting the old city of Constantine and rehabilitating the traditional public spaces, all the way through:
- Rehabilitation of the archaeological sites within the city;
- Reconstruction of the areas whose buildings were completely or partially destroyed;
- Organisation of special awareness-raising and training campaigns for the elected and the actors in the field, as well as for the general community members, with regards to the urban heritage and the mechanisms for preservation thereof;
- Appreciation of the normal appearance of the city of Constantine;
- Rehabilitation of the old bridges;
- Trying to erase the mental image established by the inhabitants of the old city (marginalized, unsafe, unhealthy field), and making it a decent city of decent living.
C. **Supporting the socio-economic dynamics (tourism, traditional crafts, handicrafts and trade), all the way through:**
- Promoting the craft activities all the way through integration and involvement of graduates of vocational training centres and apprenticeships;
- Localizing the unpleasant craft activities that give a qualitative addition to the city’s economy;
- Restoring and reviving some traditional hotels over again;
- Creating a multi-activities pole (trade, crafts, museum ... etc.) through relying on the constituent buildings of the military barracks in Casbah;
- Using some buildings in the lodging of tourists, so as to bring it closer to the old city and make it direct contact with the urban heritage;
- Determining tourist paths within the city, and training qualified tourist guides. Likewise, it is alike possible in this context this framework to re-repair the tourist road (tourist path).

D. **Governance and Local Administration**, all the way through:
- Involving civil society in decision –making;
- Making the citizen as an essential partner in promoting tourism in the city;
- Activating participatory democracy.

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**Figure No.13: Recommendations to stimulate the tourist attractiveness of the city of Constantine**

**Constantine's old City upgrade**
- Relying on the permanent plan to preserve and restore the preserved sectors of the old city of Constantine
- Rehabilitation of archaeological sites and public spaces within the city
- Awareness campaigns and special training

**Supporting the socio-economic dynamism of the city**
- Promotion of craft activities
- Create a multi-activity pole
- Reviving some traditional hotels again

**Governance and local administration**
- Involvement of civil society in the plan to upgrade the city's architectural heritage
- Activating participatory democracy
- Involvement of the local population in the tourism project

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5. **Conclusion**

The city of Constantine possesses an urban, tourist and ancient heritage reserve, not only at the national level, but even at the Arab and global levels, which is mainly due to the succession of various civilizations on the same; starting from the Phoenician to Byzantine, Roman, and finally Islamic and then French, the fact of which made it a mirror of its past, present and global future.
Despite the importance of the tourist urban heritage of the city of Constantine, and the importance of its investment in activating the tourism attractiveness thereof, this heritage still faces obstacles shown by the results of the field study (questionnaire), which can help the managers to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the city’s tourist heritage firstly, and then think about the economic activation thereof in the future. In addition, the field study has alike contributed to the explanation of the complex problems of the tourist urban heritage and the various risks threatening the same, which negatively affected the tourist attractiveness of the city. Nevertheless, the most prominent of these risks is negative human behaviours, in respect such as the failure to respect the values of this heritage, along with the various illegal practices in its spaces; in addition to the weakness of governance and the mechanisms of management and protection of this tourist urban heritage of the city, although the presence of the various legal texts that guarantee the organization and management thereof, especially in light of the Corona pandemic, where at various projects of rehabilitation and retrofitting have witnessed a complete stagnation, which led to the deterioration of the urban heritage of the city more and more.

In closing, the tourist urban heritage of the city of Constantine is becoming more and more fragile, it is likely to deteriorate through neglect; however, its enhancement can contribute either to increasing its economic value or to, on the contrary, reducing it even more.

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